

Review and Synthesis

We have traced the Kabbalah's development through two millennia of history, examined its mystical and theological dimensions, and explored its relevance to religious and philosophical systems beyond its native Judaism. Now, in addition to reflecting on what has been learned, we can strive toward a synthesis of understanding and practice that can carry an expanded Kabbalah into the 21st century. In particular, we need to build upon the various traditions of West and East discussed in Segment 6 and integrate the Kabbalah into esoteric systems that may already be familiar to students.

We begin by revisiting the question posed in Segment 1: What is the Kabbalah? Then we shall review and elaborate upon several key Kabbalistic concepts, including the role of mysticism in modern esotericism, implications of the concept of divine emanation, trinitarian concepts in the Kabbalah, and the richness of the human constitution. This final segment of the course is divided into the following sections:

- What is the Kabbalah?
- The Mystical/Ecstatic Kabbalah
- The Theoretical Kabbalah: Emanation and Duality
- Trinities in the Kabbalah
- The Soul and Angelic Presences
- Final Reflections, Resources, and Assignment.

What Is the Kabbalah?

The Kabbalah developed from traditions of esoteric Judaism that began in biblical times and gathered steam in the rabbinic period and the early Middle Ages. At what point it became recognizable as “the Kabbalah” is unclear. What we do know is that it acquired its distinct identity no later than the 11th century, and the High Middle Ages represented one of the most significant periods of its development.

With the publication of the classical texts, the Kabbalah emerged from the secrecy of a few rabbinic schools and became accessible to a growing audience throughout Europe. Whether the texts were composed in an unprecedented flurry of creative activity or were compiled from earlier manuscripts or fragments matters little to us in the 21st century. Had it not been for the expansion of oral teaching and dissemination of published texts, Kabbalistic teachings would likely have remained a small, fringe interest within Judaism. As it turned out, the Kabbalah became the major component of western esotericism.

Is the Kabbalah a system of mysticism, metaphysics or, invocatory magic? The *Sefer Yetzirah* provided a basis for all three. By the 13th century the three branches were distinct and have remained so since that time. The theoretical Kabbalah, which combined traditional Judaic religious beliefs with Gnosticism and other forms of late-Hellenic thought, remains the main pillar of the modern Kabbalah. We noted in Segment 4 that the theoretical Kabbalah was as much a reaction against the scholasticism of Moses Maimonides as it was a response to it. The intellect was never held in as high regard in Judaism as it was, for instance, in Roman Christianity or the Vedantic school of Hinduism. The theoretical Kabbalah can be compared more closely with the mystical theology of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Nevertheless the medieval and

Safed Kabbalists wrestled with many of the same theological and philosophical issues that challenged their counterparts in Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. And in many areas the Kabbalists offered better solutions than did their counterparts elsewhere.

The Tree of Life and the four worlds offer a conceptual framework for detailed and systematic exploration of the divine nature, the nature of man, and the relationship between them. Golden Dawn member Aleister Crowley described the Kabbalah as:

- a. A language for describing classes of phenomena or ideas which escape regular phraseology.
- b. A terminology for unifying the mental processes of people of different cultural or religious persuasions.
- c. A symbolism for the precise formulation of ideas or expression of complex thoughts.
- d. An instrument for interpreting symbols in terms of forms, sounds, simple ideas, and their spiritual, moral or intellectual equivalents.
- e. A system of classification for testing new ideas for coherence with the existing body of truth.

This last is possibly the Kabbalah's most important feature. Ideas can be "plugged into" to see how well they fit. Because of the symbolism of the sefiroth and worlds, and the detailed and specific interrelationships among them, inconsistencies between one concept and another—or between one metaphysical model and another—can readily be identified. For example, we have already seen that the attempt to incorporate the Tarot into the Hermetic Kabbalah was not entirely satisfactory.

That is not to say that the fundamental concepts of, say, the theoretical Kabbalah are free from paradoxes. For example, Chokmah is a feminine noun, yet it is associated with Abba, the primeval masculine force. It also heads what customarily is termed the Pillar of Mercy, which contains the mildest of sefiroth, Chesed. Binah heads the Pillar of Severity, which contains Geburah, a sefirah with distinctly "unfeminine," aggressive characteristics. Is there something wrong with the Tree of Life, as it has been presented? Is our understanding of masculine and feminine, of aggressiveness and passivity, faulty? Perhaps they are, or perhaps we have misunderstood the Kabbalah's lessons. In any event, further reflection is encouraged. Perhaps the inconsistencies will vanish and a larger synthesis will emerge if we can view the problem from a higher vantage point of consciousness.

Esoteric teachings, philosophical concepts, and religious doctrine are all part of the perennial philosophy, the Ageless Wisdom, that has flowed like an underground stream below the world's philosophical, religious and esoteric paradigms. Regardless of what authoritative bodies might claim, all philosophical, religious and esoteric truths are partial truths. They are all partial and temporal expressions of a greater overarching TRUTH which humanity has yet to grasp in its entirety. We affirm, as an act of faith, that esoteric systems, particularly as they evolve over time, are especially perfect expressions of that larger truth. Accordingly, it is natural to seek correspondences among different esoteric systems. Where close correspondences are found we feel confident of their validity and encouraged that the great synthesis is within sight. Where correspondences are less clear, or where inconsistencies come to light, we know that more work awaits us.

A major priority for us is to seek correspondences between the Kabbalah and the teachings of the Theosophical Society and other individuals, such as Alice Bailey, who owe their lineage to Helena Blavatsky. We shall now examine some major concepts of the Kabbalah and attempt to relate them to human affairs and the spiritual journey.

The Mystical/Ecstatic Kabbalah

The Kabbalah is often referred to as “a system of Jewish mysticism.” Whether that characterization is accurate depends in part of how we define “mystical.” As Gershom Scholem points out, a narrow definition would force much of the Kabbalah into a separate category. However, by a broader definition, the Kabbalah is entirely mystical because it rests on premises that are neither self-evident nor derived from empirical observation. Rather the premises come from intuitive processes or from some kind of revelation.

Accordingly, what we term the “theoretical Kabbalah” is in a certain sense the product of mysticism. Isaac Luria, counted among the most influential contributors to the theoretical Kabbalah, was a mystic rather than a scholar. Academic scholars who have never had mystical experiences have difficulty appreciating what the Ain Sof, the sefiroth, or the levels of the soul really mean. At the very least we need to listen to what the mystics had to say, in order to gain a useful understanding of important areas of Kabbalistic theory. Who or what was the God they encountered? What was the world they saw? How did they break through the veil that ordinarily divides the everyday world from the higher realms? What part of the human constitution was involved? What were the powerful forces that transformed the mystics’ lives? What opportunities do we have to harness similar forces for purposes of service?

Meanwhile it is worthwhile to reflect on the mystical Kabbalah in the narrow sense of the word. And Segment 3 showed that the Kabbalah offered fruitful ways to penetrate the veil separating the everyday world from realities that lay beyond. Outcomes from penetrating that veil ranged from new insights, to a sense of union with the Divine, to states of ecstasy. Our motivation for studying the mystical Kabbalah may be to try to understand what mystics have experienced, or perhaps to experience it ourselves.

Understanding the Mystical Experience

Anything as arcane as the Kabbalah was sure to acquire a mystical dimension. The mystical Kabbalah tapped into vibrant currents of Jewish mysticism in biblical times and into the equally vibrant Merkabah movement of the early Common Era. Kabbalistic mysticism may have gone further than Merkabah mysticism in overcoming the natural human-divine dualism. Whereas the Merkabah mystic never sought to surmount the fundamental gulf between man and God, the Kabbalah mystic had greater opportunities to do so. The Ain Sof might lay beyond the reach of the human mind, heart and soul, but it still beckoned and instilled that intense yearning to which all mystics refer. Moreover mystical access to the sefiroth was possible, and the diversity of the sefirothic attributes offered opportunities for a rich diversity of experience.

Attempts to understand the mystical experience are conditioned by religious tradition, beliefs and expectations. When the mystic tries to rationalize the experience, he or she places it in a theological, philosophical, psychological or social context. For example the mystic may reflect on whether the God whose presence was sensed in a mystical encounter is the same God described in the sacred literature or canonical teachings. Caution has to be exercised; perhaps the mystic was deluded or had come into contact with entities masquerading as divine. The mystic who tries to communicate the content of the experience to others faces the additional problem of finding terminology to capture the ineffable. What listeners hear may be only a small or distorted part of what the mystic actually experienced.

Attempts to understand other people’s mystical experiences are even harder. As religious systems mature, emphasis often shifts from direct experience to official doctrine. Theologians may not have had personal religious experiences but are forced—or perhaps prefer—to rely on those of an individual or group long dead. Once a body of canonical teachings is in place, efforts may be made to discourage or stifle new experiences. Christianity is a case in point: the mystical

experiences of Paul were valued, but those of Montanus, who lived a mere 150 years later, were seen as a threat to the emerging orthodoxy. Even the experiences of Thomas, who was a contemporary of Paul but was seen as an outsider, were discounted. Hildegard of Bingen was never canonized, and Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. Judaism was more accommodating. And, for the most part, the Kabbalists did not demonize mystical experience but managed to balance experience and doctrine. Although individuals like Abraham Abulafia were ostracized by the Jewish establishment, that was on suspicion that he had messianic ambitions rather than because of hostility to his mysticism *per se*.

Armed with our knowledge of psychology we can speculate about the nature of mystical the experiences reported by leading Jewish mystics, whether they were associated with “ordinary” meditation, ascent to the throne-world, ascent through the sefiroth, or recitation of divine names. Moshe Idel emphasizes that, in the case of Merkabah mysticism, the body remained asleep or in some form of trance state, while the soul ascended through the palaces. He distinguishes the process from alternatives where the body might ascend to heaven, or where the mind might range through higher levels of reality. Idel’s model might be compared with the out-of-body experience. But a descriptive model that ignores the effects on the physical body would scarcely apply to the experiences of the ecstatic Kabbalists.

Mysticism certainly is not dead in the 21st century. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the religions of south Asia can all count large numbers of practicing mystics. Many other people express their mystical spirituality without identifying with any specific religious tradition. The Kabbalah—Judaic, Hermetic or modern—offers rich opportunities for all who wish to turn away from the things of this world, for brief or longer periods, and seek the higher worlds accessible through the heart and mind. Meditation on the Tarot cards, which as we saw in Segment 6 can be regarded as modern-day talismans, has been popular since the time of Antoine Court de Gébelin.

For us, as much as for biblical mystics, Merkabah mystics, and the mystics of the Ashkenazic Kabbalah, a major goal of mystical pursuits is transformation. Whatever the specific nature of the mystical experience, no matter how fleeting it may be, and no matter how it is understood, the resulting transformation can be lasting. Moreover, though the experience may be highly focused in the individual consciousness, the transformation can scarcely fail to extend to others—possibly to the whole human race. With that realization, we should be cautious before criticizing the mystical path as being self-serving. In particular, in suitable situations, the mystical Kabbalah can branch onto the practical Kabbalah. Invocation of the sefiroth, particularly those on the middle pillar, as in the Golden Dawn exercise documented by Israel Regardie, offers great potential for healing work.

Ecstatic Practices

Any type of meditation can produce altered states of consciousness. Ecstatic meditation is distinguished by the intensity of the experience and its effects on the physical, emotional and mental vehicles. Ecstatic religious rites date back to pre-history; and certainly were not confined to Judaism. Abulafia did not even invent the ecstatic Kabbalah. Nor was he the first or last to explore the mysticism of letters and numbers. However he created a distinctive system of meditation that was impressive in its scope and detail, and the ecstatic Kabbalah cannot be understood without reference to him.

We may ask why the ecstatic Kabbalah did not enjoy broader popularity in its own time. The early Kabbalah could have developed in any of several different ways. As it turned out, the theoretical Kabbalah soon became dominant, eclipsing the work of Abulafia and his disciples. Significantly, the enormously influential *Sefer ha-Zohar*, which was compiled at roughly the same time Abulafia wrote his books, does not discuss meditation. The Safed scholars of the 17th

century built their teachings on the *Zohar*—though we have seen that they were not indifferent to ecstatic meditation,

Perhaps Abulafia's work was considered too dangerous. Perhaps his own personality and prophetic ambitions soured rabbinic opinion to the point where his work was doomed. Perhaps his ecstatic mysticism was linked too closely with the more sensational and bizarre aspects of Ashkenazic Kabbalah, like the creation of *golems*, even though Abulafia tried to distance himself from such practices. Regrettably, Abraham of Worms had not yet developed his concept of the Holy Guardian Angel that would have shed light on the visions Abulafia and his disciples encountered. In any event, the growth of modern Hassidism in the 17th and 18th centuries channeled what remained of the ecstatic Kabbalistic impulse in northern Europe into popular religious pietism.

Recent years have seen a revival of interest in the ecstatic Kabbalah. Umberto Eco's novel *Foucault's Pendulum* makes numerous references to Abulafia. Its leading characters invent fictitious occult societies by permuting names in a personal computer fondly called "Abu." In Myla Goldberg's novel *Bee Season*—made into a movie starring Richard Gere—Saul Naumann, a professor of Judaic studies, teaches his daughter Eliza Abulafia's methods, propelling her to national prominence in spelling bees. At the end of the story Eliza achieves the ecstatic state, complete with convulsions and subsequent "enlightenment," which had eluded Saul throughout his life.

Why has the ecstatic Kabbalah caught the modern popular imagination? One reason may be a widespread fascination with perceived patterns in letters, numbers, and other entities, even—or perhaps especially—in random or chaotic patterns. From time immemorial, people have gazed at flights of birds or at the stars and seen significance in what lay before them. Mathematicians frequently report similar fascination when they contemplate patterns in topology, algebra and number theory—though rarely do they experience convulsions. Another reason is an interest in exotic spiritual practices of the past, practices that might have relevance to our own times.

Modern interest in the ecstatic Kabbalah is also based in large measure on the juxtaposition of intellectual and mystical elements that Abulafia managed to capture. The intellectual dimension of his work is evident in Abulafia's use of the term "Active Intellect" for God. It is still more evident in the structure and precision of his meditation procedures and in his interpretations of the experiences that resulted from them. On the other hand, symbolism, which plays a major role in other branches of Kabbalah, is almost entirely absent in Abulafia's work. Interest is also motivated by a desire to see how the broad and popular field of Kabbalah might have evolved under different circumstances, along with curiosity as to its continued relevance.

What special character did Abulafia's system have that could produce states of ecstasy? How essential to the process was the permutation of letters in divine names? How reliable were the procedures in producing the desired psychological states? Short of running extensive trials, we can only offer tentative answers to these questions. We can surmise that the controlled breathing may induced hyperventilation, and the repetitive gestures may also play a role. Recitation of long lists of words, with heavy emphasis on following the precise sequence, affords a powerful exercise in concentration.

We can only speculate on whether the divine significance attached to the words has any bearing on the outcome. The "divine names" recited by Abulafia and his disciples resemble mantras, but a conspicuous difference between his method and conventional mantra meditation is his avoidance of repetition: even during hours of meditation, every spoken, chanted or mentalized word was unique. Abulafia's system can be compared with glossolalia, or "speaking in tongues," in charismatic Christianity. But glossolalia is essentially unscripted, whereas the structured permutation of letters was central to Abulafia methods.

With regard to reliability, Abulafia and his students testified that the procedures could work, but we do not know how often they tried and failed. Nor do we know whether the procedures could be applied successfully in a modern environment. Regardless of the effectiveness of the procedures, we would have to consider the ethics of following such a path. The validity of the insights gained during ecstatic experiences and the extent to which they are supportive of spiritual growth depend heavily on the purity of seekers' lives and the intent with which they approach the work. What ongoing transformative effects could be achieved? Is the experience entirely personal and self-rewarding, or could it have some service potential? Even in the 16th century, concerns were being expressed that man might have lost the necessary purity to meditate safely on the names of God. Whether that is true today is a question each of us can ponder, recognizing both the potential and the responsibilities involved.

Today, relatively few people seek to attain ecstatic states, and they have options ranging from the use of hallucinogenic drugs, to various types of yoga, to the Hesychastic practices of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, to forms of worship in western charismatic Christianity. Some practices produce intense physical symptoms, for example the *kriyas* exhibited by certain yogis and the convulsions of worshippers in Holiness and Pentecostal church services. If the symptoms of the ecstatic experience seem to resemble epileptic seizures, we must remember that from earliest times epilepsy was regarded as a sign of exceptional mystical or prophetic potential.

Even fewer people would probably be willing to commit to the kind of discipline Abulafia demanded of his followers, even though his methods were less extreme than other forms of mysticism in their asceticism. Moreover the ecstatic experience poses a risk of psychological or even physical harm. The dangers of Kundalini Yoga and experimentation with hallucinogens are well-known. The comparable dangers of the ecstatic Kabbalah need to be evaluated.

Whether seekers could gain insights of any validity or would experience spiritual growth from the ecstatic Kabbalah depends heavily on the purity of their lives and the intent with which they approach the work. The same comment could be made about the practical Kabbalah. As we have seen, even in the 16th century concerns were being expressed that humankind might have lost the necessary purity to meditate safely on the names of God. Whether that remains true is a question each of us can ponder, recognizing both the potential and the responsibilities involved in pursuing such a path.

The Theoretical Kabbalah: Emanation and Duality

Divine Manifestation

The Neoplatonist concept of emanation was embraced with few modifications in the theoretical Kabbalah. Emanation is a kind of "birthing" process in which new manifestations of reality emerge from within existing reality. Thus Kether emanates from the Ain Sof, Chokmah from Kether, and so forth. Similarly, the worlds of Briah, Yetzirah and Assiah emanate from Atziluth. Examples of emanation can be found throughout the universe we know. New realities emerge as complexity increases and interrelationships become stronger. Subatomic particles come together to form atoms, atoms to form molecules, molecules to form organic systems, and organic systems to form communities. Ideas from different scientific disciplines combine to provide new understanding. Cross-fertilization among different philosophical, religious and esoteric traditions offers new insights and synthesis.

Emanation contrasts with the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, "from nothing." The relative merits of emanation and creation were debated during the ecumenical councils of the early centuries of Christianity. In their attempt to explain the progression of the persons of the

Trinity, the church fathers had the opportunity to embrace emanation, but all they could offer were the tautologies of *filiation* of the Son and *spiration* of the Holy Spirit. In explaining the origins of the universe, the fathers—motivated at least in part by anti-Neoplatonic politics—unwisely decided in favor of creation. The inescapable implication of creation “at the end of a magic wand” is that the universe is not divine. The further implication is that it may not just be separate from God but antagonistic to God.

For the most part, the Kabbalah adheres uniformly to the notion of Neoplatonic emanation. To be sure, *Briah*, the second of the four worlds, means “creation,” but there is no sense of rigid separation among the worlds, any more than there is among the sefiroth. The sefiroth and the worlds are regarded as of one essence. The only significant departure from the purity of the emanation doctrine came in the creation story where the Divine had to undergo *tzimtzum*, or contraction, to make room for creation. Apparently the Safed scholars felt compelled to make that concession to the growing influence of scholastic theology.

We saw in Segment 4 that Isaac Luria correlated the four worlds of the Kabbalah with the letters of the Tetragrammaton (YHVH), the unutterable name of God. Other Kabbalists correlated them with the elements of fire, air, water and earth. Therein we find a parallel with Greek philosophy. In *Timaeus* Plato explained that God created the “body of the universe” from fire and earth, but that “two things cannot be rightly put together”—that is, put together harmoniously—“without a third; there must be some bond of union between them.” However, in an interesting subtlety, Plato insisted that because the universe is “solid” this bond requires not one but *two* intervening elements: air and water.

The Creation Story

The Kabbalist creation story may seem archaic and anachronistic—a relic of primitive superstition to be studied, if at all, as an historical curiosity. But it offers important insights. *Tzimtzum* provides a worthy conceptual model of how the Infinite could become finite, and it competes well with models offered by other major world philosophies and religions.

Correspondingly, the notion of the cosmic catastrophe could be interpreted as divine miscalculation on an even larger scale than is implied in the Fall of Adam and Eve. However the 18th-century Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl viewed the scattering of the divine sparks as symbolic of the Jewish Diaspora. And he regarded efforts to encourage observance among Jews in secular environments, and conversion of Gentiles to Judaism, as integral parts of the *tikkun olam*, the “repairing of the world.” The *tikkun olam*, is a powerful concept, capable of multiple, useful meanings.

The Ashkenazic mystic Abraham Isaac Kook, who was appointed chief rabbi of Palestine in 1921, viewed the ongoing collection of the scattered sparks as supportive of Darwin’s theory of evolution. More generally, he viewed evolution as an illustration of the continued unfoldment of the Ain Sof in the universe. Kook is often compared to the Christian Jesuit paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin. In addition to seeking to build bridges between religion and science, Kook sought to bridge divisions among disparate Jewish groups and between Jews and Gentiles.

The Safed scholars’ assertion that humanity should play a role in cosmic redemption is of the utmost importance. The assertion contrasts with Christian—particularly Protestant—notions of passive redemption. The realization of human responsibility is refreshing and challenging. The Safed rabbis’ redemption agenda was sweeping in its scope. It included strengthening the sefirothic vehicles through which the Divine descends into manifestation, restoring the primeval harmony lost when those vessels were shattered, and uniting the Shekinah and the Holy One in the cosmic Sabbath-Wedding. This last could be interpreted as symbolic of restoring gender harmony to the Divine—or at last to our perception of it. Our understanding of “redemption”

might even go beyond what the Safed Kabbalists intended, and it would go far beyond what traditional religious teachings offer. As esotericists, we would add concern for the planet and the younger kingdoms of nature: the elemental, mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms. We would see connections between the *tikkun olam* and “restoring the Plan on Earth.”

The Sefiroth Revisited

Kabbalistic teachers are unanimous in asserting that the divine light of the Ain Sof manifests through ten sefiroth—together with an 11th “unnumbered,” quasi-sefirah, Daath. The sefiroth express notions of number, language, sound and light. As Moses Cordovero explained, they can be viewed both as expressions of the divine light and as the forms into which the light flows.

Kether, Chokmah and Binah can be associated with the first, second and third aspects of Deity—or in terminology adopted by some Theosophical writers the first, second and third *Logoi*. Correspondingly, the lower seven sefiroth: Chesed through Malkuth, represent the septenary manifestation of Deity below the level of the upper triplicity. They can be related to the seven rays mentioned in Theosophical literature and discussed in much greater detail in the writings of Alice Bailey. It would be convenient to assign the rays to the sefiroth in numerical order, but the result is not satisfying. Some of the associations would work; for example, the fifth ray matches well with Hod, the sixth ray with Yesod, and the seventh ray with Malkuth. However, the first and second rays need to be reversed: the first ray with Geburah and the second ray with Chesed. The fourth ray would be a better match with Tifareth, and the third ray with Netzach. These tentative associations are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Lower Sefiroth and Seven Rays
(tentative correspondences)**

Sefirah	Ray
4 Chesed	2 Love-Wisdom
5 Geburah	1 Will or Power
6 Tifareth	4 Harmony through Conflict
7 Netzach	3 Active Intelligence
8 Hod	5 Concrete Science
9 Yesod	6 Devotion or Idealism
10 Malkuth	7 Ceremonial Order

Many writers have associated the chakras with the seven levels in the Tree of Life: the root chakra with Malkuth, the sacral chakra with Yesod, the solar plexus chakra with Hod and Netzach, and so on up to the crown chakra, paired with Kether. Caroline Myss, in *Anatomy of the Spirit* (1997), endorses these associations, but also associates the various levels with the seven traditional sacraments of Catholic and Orthodox Christianity. The sacraments are arranged according to perceived affinities with the sefiroth. Baptism is paired with Malkuth, the Eucharist with Yesod, Confirmation with Hod and Netzach, Matrimony with Tifareth (“love is divine power”), Penance/Reconciliation with Geburah and Chesed (“surrender to divine will”), Holy Orders with Binah and Chokmah, and the Anointing of the Sick with Kether (“live in the present moment”). Whether or not we agree with Myss’ specific correspondences, her three-way correlations among the sefiroth, sacraments and chakras is thought-provoking.

The *netivoth*, or pathways, through the Tree of Life have analogs in many other religious systems. Even before the term “Christian” came into common usage, the followers of Jesus referred to their movement as “the Way.” In the *Qur’an* we read: “Guide us to the straight path, the path of those upon whom Your grace abounds, not upon those whom anger falls, nor those who are lost.” Sufism speaks of the spiritual pilgrimage through seven *maqam*, or “stations of the heart.” The seeker could not move on until the lessons of the particular station were mastered. In the teachings of Alice Bailey the *antahkarana* is viewed both as a bridge in consciousness from the lower to the higher mind and as the path of discipleship.

If the *netivoth* represent stages in the spiritual journey, each *sefirah* can be viewed as an initiation. The particular mastery marked by an initiation can be related to the particular energy and quality of the related *sefirah*. For example, mastery of the physical nature can be related to Malkuth, mastery of the emotional nature can be related to Yesod, and so on. Blavatsky viewed the Kabbalah as series of ancient mysteries associated with graded levels of initiation. Moreover its relevance extends far beyond Judaism which nurtured it:

[The Kabbalah] is not allied to “tradition” but to the seven veils or seven truths orally revealed at Initiation... Thus, if Kabbalah as a word is Hebrew, the system itself if no more Jewish than is sunlight; it is universal.

To back up that claim of inclusiveness, Blavatsky named Jesus; the apostles Peter, James and John; Paul or Tarsus; and John the Evangelist all as Kabbalists.

The initiatory grades of the Golden Dawn were associated with the *sefiroth*: “Zelator” to Malkuth, “Theoricus” to Yesod, “Practicus” to Hod, and so forth up to “Ipsissimus,” associated with Kether. Modestly, the three highest grades of “Magister Templi,” “Magus” and “Ipsissimus” were reserved for the “Secret Chiefs” with whom McGregor Mathers and others claimed to be in contact. But prominent members of the Society claimed to have reached the grades corresponding to Geburah and Chesed. The Golden Dawn initiations were comparable with those of Masonic and other occult lodges; they were *exoteric* initiations, determined—no doubt with care—by the Society’s rules.

However, before we make comparisons between the initiatory grades in the eastern and western systems, we must be clear about what we mean by “initiation.” The initiations referred to in Theosophical teachings and the teachings of Alice Bailey are *esoteric* initiations, or soul-level initiations, as major milestones in the expansions of consciousness. Moreover they are recognized by the Planetary Hierarchy, not just prescribed by the rules of an occult society. For a detailed discussion of these esoteric initiations see Bailey’s *Initiation: Human and Solar* or *The Rays and the Initiations*.

The fifth initiation is the stage of adeptship, the stage of perfection in the present phase of human development. An adept who chooses to remain on this planet to serve humanity is referred to as a master; examples are the Master Jesus and the Master Djwhal Khul. If the initiations are paired with the *sefiroth*, the fifth initiation would correspond to Tifareth, leaving five *sefiroth* (six if Daath is included) corresponding to initiations higher than Jesus’. Alternatively, if they are paired with levels in the Tree of Life, the fifth initiation would correspond to Chesed and Geburah. In either case, claiming to have attained an initiation corresponding to one of the higher *sefiroth* should be made with due caution.

A further cautionary note needs to be sounded with respect to the term “adept.” In Theosophical writings and Bailey’s work, “adept” is defined specifically in relation to the fifth initiation. In the western esoteric tradition, the term is used more liberally. Many individuals described as “adepts” could scarcely be characterized as having attained perfection.

Duality

In the Kabbalah duality is often expressed in gender terms. The partzufim Abba and Imma, identified respectively with Chokmah and Binah, are the cosmic parents. Their offspring are the Zeir Anpin (“the Holy One”), associated with Tifareth, and the daughter Nukvah, associated with Malkuth. The sexual union of Abba and Imma has been consummated, while that between the Holy One and Nukvah remains to be consummated in the final act of redemption—to which humanity can contribute. Those gender polarities carry over to the corresponding sefiroth. Only the androgynous, or pre-sexual, Arikh Anpin/Kether remains aloof from the gender polarities. The only polarity in which it participates is the ultimate duality of spirit and matter.

The gender polarities in the Tree of Life can be compared with the complementary pairs of *aeons* considered in Gnosticism. Aeons were conceived of as entities dwelling at various levels of reality between heaven and earth, and they often came in male-female pairs. The most famous pair, at a very high level, consisted of the Logos and Sophia.

In Table 2 Chokmah/Abba and Binah/Imma were assigned jointly to the monadic plane, suggesting that gender may have meaning at the level of the human monad. At the very least we should be aware that the monad, regarded from our viewpoint as the epitome of oneness, exhibits a greater degree of duality than does the Planetary Logos who resides in “physical” form on the logoc plane. Interestingly, in Hindu teachings, the monadic plane is referred to as the plane of *anupadaka*, where the latter term literally means “parentless.” The cosmic parents have no parents themselves.

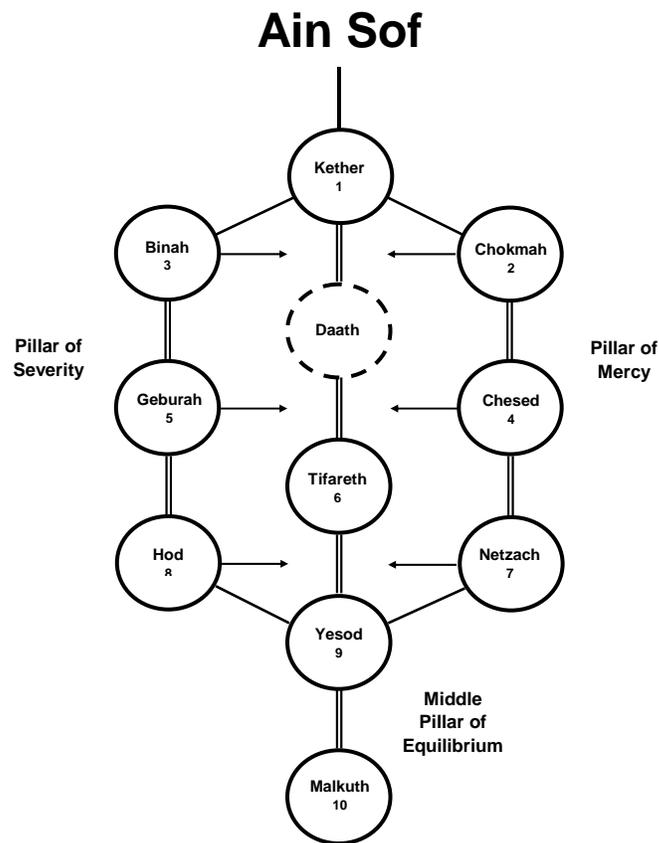
Duality also extends beyond gender. The whole structure of the conventional Tree of Life—the one based on the sefiroth—emphasizes the tension between polar opposites, including the “vertical” polarity of spirit and matter and the “horizontal” polarities associated with sefiroth on the outer pillars. Duality is seen as an essential ingredient of divine manifestation: the Godhead manifests in contrasting attributes as well as in their harmonious resolution. A similar concept can be found in Islam; Allah is often described as both the Judge and the Merciful One. From the human standpoint, contrasting sefiroth offer opportunities for experience, learning and growth. The three horizontal pairs of opposites (Figure 1) are most important to our theme and we shall examine them in turn.

Chokmah and Binah. Chokmah and Binah represent the fundamental polarity of force versus form. They represent the polarity of gender in its broadest sense. They are the primal masculine and feminine realities, the giver and the receiver of the divine essence. Chokmah represents pure, untamed potency, while Binah represents the form which receives and contains its energy. Chokmah’s energy would be wasted if it were not captured and nurtured in the “womb” of Binah. On the other hand, without the potency of Chokmah, Binah would become a lifeless vessel, mired in inertia. We are reminded here of the *rajas* and *tamas* of Hindu philosophy.

The Chokmah–Binah polarity can be seen in the quest for controlled thermonuclear energy. The technology to produce thermonuclear reactions, releasing enormous amounts of energy, was demonstrated more than 50 years ago; but we still do not have the means to harness it for constructive purposes. That polarity remains unresolved.

Chesed and Geburah. The second and third pair of polarities, Chesed-Geburah and Netzach-Hod, continue the theme of force versus form. Chesed expresses blessing and grace, while Geburah provides necessary, but occasionally forceful, limitation. The assignment of Chesed and Geburah to the atmic plane, the plane of *nirvana* (Table 2), is evocative and may aid our understanding of all the qualities involved. It will be noted that the atmic plane is sometimes referred to as the plane of spiritual will.

Figure 1. Tension Between the Pairs of Opposites



The mutual tension between Chesed and Geburah can readily be understood at the human level. Chesed is represented by indulgent, permissive parents, Geburah by harsh, demanding ones. The first would spoil their children; the second would produce cowering, insecure children. In a balanced environment, children grow up feeling loved but also accepting boundaries and acquiring a sense of value. The tension between Chesed and Geburah can also be seen in government welfare programs. Such programs are well-intentioned and meet real need; but they can also result in waste, corruption, and welfare dependency. Public policy often fluctuates between a desire to alleviate hardship and a desire to maintain fiscal responsibility, “tighten up” on welfare eligibility, and strengthen the work ethic. Miscellaneous examples of the Chesed-Geburah polarity are listed in Table 3.

Netzach and Hod. Netzach and Hod, which occupy the fifth level in the Tree of Life, are assigned jointly to the mental plane (Table 2). Perhaps they could be correlated, respectively, with the higher and lower aspects of mind. However it might be preferable just to associate the two sefirot with the creative and intellectual aspects of mind and to omit a value judgment about their relative importance. Netzach and Hod represent the polarity of passionate enthusiasm versus measured caution. Netzach overflows with emotion, imagination and ambition. It stimulates creativity, but with no thought of what might be practical, and oblivious to failure. Netzach can produce expansive optimism but also reckless action. Its opposite, Hod, introduces a note of realism. But Hod lacks vision and by itself it is overly analytical and pessimistic: “We

Table 3. Examples of Chesed-Geburah Duality

Field	Chesed	Geburah
Metaphysics	Creation of new forms	Destruction of outworn forms
Divine attributes	Overflowing grace, lovingkindness	Stern justice, retribution
Spiritual role models	Francis of Assisi, Mother Theresa	The Crusades, the Samurai
Nature	Exuberant growth, wilderness	Limitation, contraction, manicured lawns
Biology	Birth, emergence of new species	Death, extinction
Physiological life cycle	Growth, cancer	Maturity, decay
Child psychology	Generosity	Setting limits, discipline
Political movements	Empire-building, alliances, liberalism	Conquest, domination, fascism
Foreign policy	Peace, foreign aid, appeasement	Aggression, “police action,” “just war”
Social policy	Welfare, welfare dependency	Fiscal responsibility, building self-sufficiency
Negotiating strategies	Carrot	Stick
Economics	Expansion	Recession
Electrical technology	Cathode.	Anode

already tried that; it won’t work.” In organizational contexts, an excess of Hod energy leads to “analysis paralysis.”

The Netzach-Hod polarity can be seen in the tension between mysticism and religious dogma. Mystics yearn for the Divine and may encounter gods, angels, and fantastic landscapes or may experience feelings of omnipotence. Ecclesiastical authorities are nervous about mystical experience, lest it threaten dogma or church discipline. Where mysticism is tolerated at all, efforts may be made to restrict it to the cloister where it can be controlled more readily or its potential concealed from the masses. The fear is that the gods and angels encountered by the mystics might not be recognized ones; the landscapes might trigger discontent with the dismal surroundings of everyday life; feelings of omnipotence might undermine obedience to the authorities.

The Netzach-Hod polarity can also be seen in the tension between art and science—and separately between science and technology. Art is more freely creative than science because the latter is constrained by the need for empirical observation and rigorous inductive logic. However, science is freer because it is not constrained by the need for practical, and cost-effective, applications. Miscellaneous examples of the Netzach-Hod duality are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Examples of Netzach-Hod Duality

Field	Netzach	Hod
General:	Exuberance	Caution, clarity
	Creativity	Logic, analysis
People types	Right brain	Left brain
Mental function:	Intuition	Intellect
	Imagination	Definition
Life's journey	Experience	Description
Life outlook	Idealism	Realism
Spirituality	The sacred	Theology
Esotericism	Mysticism	Occultism
Art/science	Art	Science
Science/technology	Science	Technology
Economics	Expansion	Recession
Work slogans:	“The sky's the limit!”	“Let's be practical.”
	“Just do it!”	“Let's plan carefully.”
	“Go for broke!”	“How much will it cost?”
	“I know it will work!”	“We tried that before.”

Resolving the Dualities

The Chokmah-Binah polarity is resolved in “birthing” the lower seven sefiroth, and the tension between Chesed and Geburah is resolved in the harmony and beauty of Tifareth. The tension between Netzach and Hod is resolved in Yesod, the seat of emotion and desire. Alice Bailey's comment on magic reminds us that this last is by no means trivial:

[E]very thought-form which [the disciple] builds is built under the impulse of some emotion or of some desire; in rarer cases it may be built in the light of illumination and embody, therefore, some intuition. But with the majority, the motivating impulse which sweeps the mindstuff into activity is an emotional one, or a potent desire.” [*Treatise on White Magic*, p. 484.]

Emotion serves to energize and propel creative thoughtforms toward their destination: the physical plane of Malkuth. Importantly, Malkuth corresponds to the physical world, but it is still permeated by divine light, in this case the feminine energy of the Shekinah. In Malkuth/Shekinah we find the immanent deity, contrasting with the transcendent deity of Kether.

Our human journey requires us to experience the various qualities of the sefiroth. To confine ourselves to the middle pillar might be appealing, but Kabbalists urge us to experience the horizontal polarities on the Tree of Life: the optimistic vision of Netzach as well as the pessimistic caution of Hod; the generosity of Chesed as well as the suspicious, even spiteful,

severity of Geburah; the potent masculinity of Chokmah as well as the receptive femininity of Binah.

We all have characteristics—latent or actualized—of both Chokmah and Binah, both Chesed and Geburah, and both Netzach and Hod. The latent ones may be repressed into what psychologist Carl Jung called our “shadow”—the totality of instincts, impulses and drives that we find unacceptable and cannot admit into the fragile persona we are trying to protect. We may repress one half of a polarity: for example, our Netzach characteristics, while trying to convince ourselves (and others) that we are totally driven by Hod. Or we may suppress our Binah characteristics while frantically accentuating those of Chokmah. What we repress we may also project out onto other people and call it “evil.” The attitudes and behavior we most angrily condemn in others are likely to be those lurking in our own shadow.

We have probably resolved some of the polarities, but in others balance has yet to be attained. The results of residual imbalance can be devastating. As we have seen, in the area of nuclear fusion the raw force of Chokmah has not been captured by the form of Binah. Instead of having an endless supply of “free” energy, humanity has long been threatened by thermonuclear war. The aggressive judgmentalism of Geburah, unrelieved by the compassion of Chesed, can produce religious crusades, witch hunts, and terrorism.

We may experience the opposites serially, at different times of our lives. However the transitions should be smooth, and the goal should be to move toward stable equilibrium. Wild swings of the pendulum from one extreme to the other are dangerous. For example, the manic-depressive oscillates between Netzach and Hod, in each half-cycle experiencing the worst features of each. Alternatively, we may experience the opposites in successive lifetimes, in which case residual imbalances would manifest through karma. Reincarnation will be discussed later.

Economic cycles are caused by imbalance in both the Chesed-Geburah and the Netzach-Hod polarities. During periods of economic expansion, financial institutions freely lend money, businesses invest in plant and equipment and hire additional employees, and consumers buy extravagantly—typically on credit. Securities prices are bid up by what Alan Greenspan, former Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank, once called “irrational exuberance.” But, as nations have experienced time and time again, expansion does not last forever. Eventually—and to everyone’s “surprise”—the bubble bursts. Fears of inflation cause businesses to pull back, innovation is overshadowed by control of costs, employees are laid off, consumer spending declines, and securities prices plunge. The wild fluctuations in markets show that equilibrium conditions of steady, sustainable growth are hardly ever achieved.

Life on the outer pillars can provide rich learning opportunities. It is likely to be exciting, turbulent—and painful. But through suffering we eventually recognize the need to resolve the pairs of opposites and seek tranquility on the middle Pillar of Equilibrium. The Buddha called the resulting tranquility the Noble Middle Way.

The Problem of Evil

Geburah is often regarded as “the evil sefirah,” but that is true only when it is in an unbalanced state. None of the sefirot is inherently evil, but any of them can cause grief when its energies are experienced to extreme and in isolation.

The conventional story, shared by Jews and Christians alike, was that evil came into the world through Adam’s and Eve’s disobedience. But, according to the early Kabbalists, its disruptive effects were not confined to our first parents or even to humanity. They spread upward from the world of human activity to the higher worlds because the microcosm and macrocosm were linked. “When Adam sinned,” we read in the *Zohar*, “he caused a defect, separating the woman from her husband. The fault of this defect stood out in the moon.” “The husband” is the Holy One,

identified with Tifareth, while “the woman” is identified with Malkuth/Shekinah. Adam’s sin tore the very fabric of creation. Nowhere in the Kabbalah is there an evil demigod comparable to the Zoroastrian Ahriman—or even the Christian/Islamic Satan. The wicked angel Samael is a relatively mind figure.

A contrasting story, developed by the later Kabbalists, was that evil originated in the cosmic catastrophe, the breaking of the vessels, and then spread downward. Man fell from grace because he was created in a world already torn asunder by forces far greater than his own. What we call “evil” might even be an unfortunate—perhaps unforeseen—side-effect of manifest existence. However the world was repaired, or at least is in the process of being repaired, and man’s redemption is also in process through an ongoing process of purification. Hermetic Kabbalists saw parallels between this purification and the refinement of metal in the alchemist’s furnace.

Evil arises at least in part from unbalanced duality. The shards of the broken vessels—the *klifoth*—can be viewed as a parallel set of sefiroth that have become detached from the Tree of Life and incapable of being brought into equilibrium. Normally, a discarded or outworn form disintegrates, but sometimes it retains enough residual life—or is artificially sustained—to continue exerting negative influence. The klifoth are to the sefiroth what the wraith is to a living person.

It is not difficult to identify the klifoth in terms of their expression in human affairs. And in most cases we can easily identify them with the sefiroth from which they became separated. For instance: the vindictive “Jehovah–God” of fundamentalist religion can be associated with Chokmah and/or Geburah; Socialism with Chesed; 1960s “flower children” and commodities traders with Netzach; and sterile academic research with Hod. Klifoth can even be found on the middle pillar. Ungrounded mysticism can be associated with Tifareth and Yesod, and materialism with Malkuth. In these cases the imbalance is “vertical;” for example, materialism is the failure to allow life to penetrate and ensoul physical reality.

The notion of the klifoth as outworn forms finds a strong echo in the teachings of Alice Bailey. For example, with respect to esoteric organizations, she asserts: “The principles of the Ageless Wisdom must be preserved, but all outworn forms must go,” adding that the leaders of one such group were “too old for the work of reconstruction and too crystallized.” [*Discipleship in the New Age*, II, p. 85.] With regard to obsolete theological constructs, Bailey adds:

I have called to your notice the urgency of the incoming life, producing tension, spiritual recognitions of a far-reaching nature, the immediate overthrow of false Gods and standards, and the destruction of outworn and crystallised interpretations...of the spiritual realities. By these means, the way is cleared for a new and simple recognition of divinity which will satisfy not only the heart of the simplest person, but which will meet the need of the most intelligent. [*Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 423.]

The charge is sometimes leveled that the Kabbalah dismisses evil *simply* as unresolved duality. To be sure, the Kabbalah avoided the stark good-versus-evil dualism of Gnosticism, which found its way into Augustinian Christianity as an equally stark moral theology. Kabbalistic teachings offered a healthier understanding of the need to bring contrasting impulses into balance. However, “vertical” duality also needs to be overcome, and therein a well-defined moral compass is offered, urging the human soul to rise toward the higher sefiroth and the higher worlds.

Kabbalists never quite abandoned the notion of the Last Judgment.” Nor did they embrace the highly developed doctrine of karma found in the eastern religions. Importantly, they never lost sight of the moral imperatives of Mosaic Law. In addition to experiencing the outer sefiroth—or perhaps as a result of doing so—the seeker strives to move from the lower to the higher sefiroth, to return to the divine source of all life.

Trinities in the Kabbalah

The Tree of Life is rich in potential for geometric analysis. Lines can be drawn in innumerable ways joining selected sefiroth to create geometric figures of theological, psychological or practical interest. The 22 netivth (see Segment 4), provided one of the earliest examples, and Segment 6 showed other traditional and modern constructions. Numerous writers linked Kether, Chokmah and Binah to form the supernal triangle. Adolphe Franck identified a “moral triangle” involving Chesed, Geburah and Tifareth, and an “intellectual triangle” involving Netzach, Hod and Yesod.

Christian Kabbalists, not unexpectedly, have tried to identify a triangle in the Tree of Life that could represent the Trinity. The concept of a triune God is not restricted to Christianity. Egyptian religion had a trinity; in fact it had several. Hinduism has the *trimurti* of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. And the Neoplatonist Plotinus of Alexandria (204–270 CE) proposed a trinity that competed with the Christian one formulated in the early church. Plotinus’ trinity built upon the Platonic notion of essential “threeness” in all creation. Theosophical teachings refer to a triune Logos.

Alice Bailey makes several references to “the nine sefiroth”: that is the nine sefiroth above Malkuth. In *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* she explains them as triple manifestations of each of the three aspects of the Solar Logos; in other words they form a trinity of trinities. She notes that the nine sefiroth are the vehicles through which the nine “Lipikas who are the sumtotal of the agents for the Law [of Karma].” *Lipikas* are said to be spiritual beings charged with recording every event or thought in the phenomenal universe. This is an interesting inversion of conventional Kabbalistic belief: instead of the sefiroth revealing the nature of God, they encapsulate the unfolding drama of an already manifest reality.

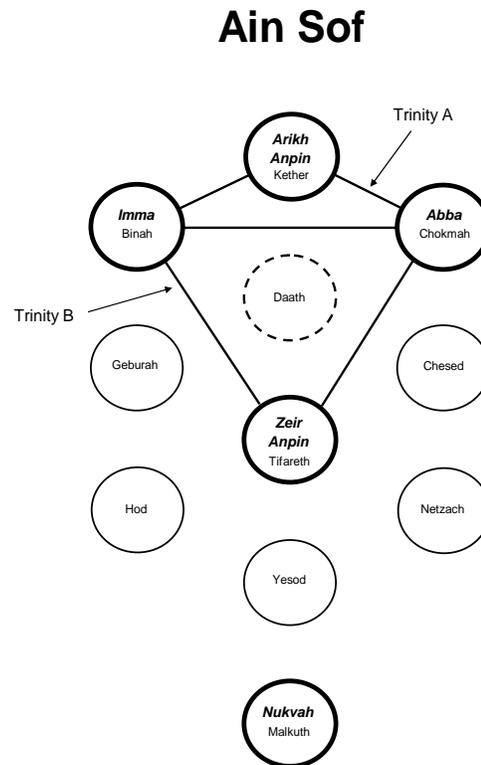
To evaluate how well the Kabbalah can express trinitarian doctrine, it will be worthwhile to examine the Tree of Life not just in its conventional form but also in its simplified form constructed from the partzufim.

Supernal Triangle

The supernal triangle was the obvious choice to represent the Trinity, and many writers made it a central feature of the Christian Kabbalah. In the simplified Tree of Life (Figure 2) it links the first three partzufim: the Arikh Anpin, Abba and Imma. In the conventional Tree (Figure 3) it links the sefiroth Kether, Chokmah and Binah. Designated in both figures as Trinity A, it correctly models the procession of the persons of the Christian Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—though it should be noted that Eastern and western Christianity differ on whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone or jointly from the Father and Son. The sefiroth of the supernal triangle are numbered 1 through 3, precisely matching the first, second and third persons of the Trinity. Furthermore, in relating the Holy Spirit to Imma/Binah, it affirms a notion popular in the first few centuries CE—and also in modern feminist theology—that the Holy Spirit is feminine.

However, as a model of the Christian Trinity, the supernal triangle has two conceptual weaknesses. First, *Abba* means “father” rather than “son”; the Kabbalistic son is the Zeir Anpin. Second, the Judaic Kabbalists conceived of the Arikh Anpin/Kether as androgynous, or pre-sexual. It offers a poor representation of the obviously masculine God the Father. Moreover, the implication that the first manifestation of the Divine is masculine may be consistent with traditional Christian teachings, but many modern people find it offensive. To correlate the supernal triangle with the Trinity sacrifices the appealing gender symmetry of the Judaic Kabbalah.

Figure 2. Trinities in the Partzufim.

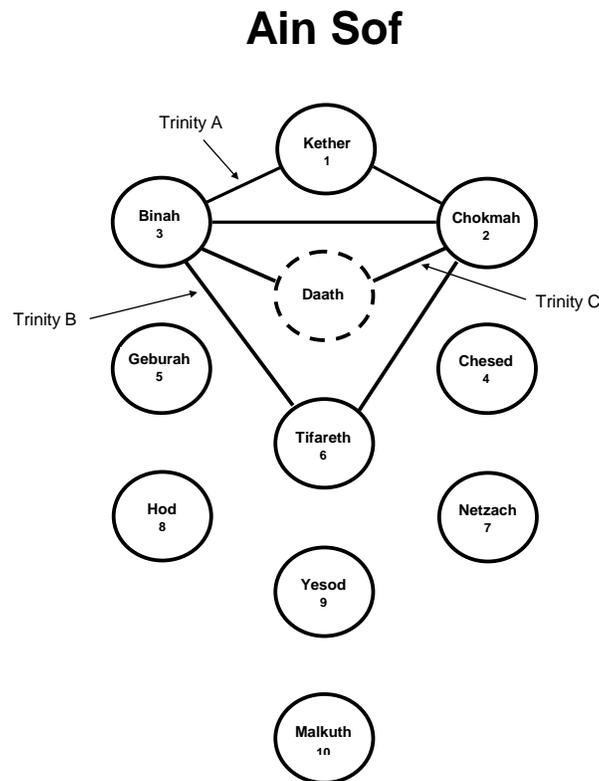


The supernal triangle correlates well with the Neoplatonist trinity proposed by Plotinus. The close correlation is not surprising, when we recall that the Kabbalah and Neoplatonism shared common roots in late-Platonic spiritual philosophy. Plotinus' trinity consisted of *Monad* ("the One," "Unity"), *Nous* ("Mind"), and *Psyche* ("Soul"), which formed a cascading hierarchy of emanation. The Monad was considered ineffable and beyond comprehension or description: "The Unity [Monad] is not a being... strictly no name is apt to it... It eludes our knowledge, so that the nearer approach to it is through its offspring." *Nous* is the divine intellect, "the Intellectual-Principle itself," while *Psyche*, is the creator, the author of all living things. Thus the emanation of divine essence continues into the created universe—just as it continues to the lower sefiroth in the Tree of Life.

Like the Arikh Anpin and Kether, the Monad in Plotinus' formulation is androgynous. *Nous*, both grammatically and in terms of polarity, is masculine, while *Psyche*—the name of a Greek goddess—is feminine. If *Psyche* is the mother of the created world, *Nous* could be considered its father, and the world the product of their union. *Psyche*, according to Plotinus, is twofold in its activity; one part looks up "in devotion" toward Spirit, while the other looks down to the created universe. Gender balance is achieved in Plotinus' trinity, though the feminine is lower than the masculine in the hierarchy of emanation.

When we try to explore the numerological symbolism of the first, second and third persons of the Christian Trinity, we encounter difficulties that already exist in the Tree of Life. The Greeks considered odd numbers to be masculine and even numbers to be feminine. The second sefirah is

Figure 3. Trinities in the Sefiroth.



appropriately numbered to the extent that Chokmah is a feminine noun and was referred to as “she” throughout the Hebrew Bible. However, in the Kabbalah, Chokmah became identified with the partzuf Abba, the archetypal Father and primeval masculine force. Thus “two,” a feminine number, is assigned to the masculinized Chokmah and to God the Son. “Three,” a masculine number is assigned to Binah/Imma, the primeval feminine form, and to the Holy Spirit.

The same difficulties arise in connection with the Neoplatonic trinity. “Two” is assigned to the masculine Nous, and “three” to the feminine Psyche. Perhaps, following Plotinus, we should distinguish dual functions in the third aspect, one participating in the collective divinity of the trinity, and the other serving as the link to the created world. At the risk of exposing ourselves to the charge of “quarternitarianism”—a medieval heresy that supposedly threatened trinitarian doctrine—we might solve the numerological problem by assigning both 3 and 4 to the third aspect of Plotinus’ trinity. In a sense Christianity does this through the intimate relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. The alchemists recognized Mary as a personification of virgin matter, echoing the “lower” Psyche’s link with creation. On the other hand, traditional Kabbalists—like Moses Cordovero—would be outraged by any suggestion that the sefiroth should be renumbered.

The supernal triangle correlates well with the “trinity” considered in Theosophical teachings. In *The Secret Doctrine* Helena Blavatsky discusses the Godhead, “the Absolute; the *Parabrahm* of the Vedantins,” and its triune manifestation. In due course, the manifestations came to be called the first, second and third aspects of the Logos, or simply the first, second and third *Logoi*. Alice

Bailey lists their qualities as: Will or Power, Love-Wisdom, and Active Intelligence. The Theosophical definition of the Logos should carefully be noted. Whereas Christianity equates it with the second person of the Trinity, Theosophical teachings regard the Logos as the manifest God, itself triune in nature.

Theosophical writers provided valuable insight into how the trinitarian aspects manifest through the created universe and humankind. Charles Leadbeater identifies three “outpourings” of the divine essence. They occur in reverse order. The first outpouring, corresponding to the third Logos, penetrates and vitalizes the “virgin matter” of seven planes of creation: the physical, sentient (“astral”), mental, buddhic, atmic, monadic and logoic. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the Nicene Creed referred to the Holy Spirit as the “giver of life.” Also, we see here a cosmic symbol of the Holy Spirit’s impregnation of the Virgin Mary. Theosophical descriptions of creation by the third aspect closely parallel Plotinus’ creation of the world by Psyche. Indeed, the very term “World Soul” appears in Blavatsky’s discussion of the divine manifestations. They also parallel the depiction of the Kabbalistic Imma/Binah as the creator of lower forms.

The second outpouring: the second Logos, builds forms from the vitalized matter of the planes. It descends to the physical plane and then begins an upward-sweeping arc, ensouling lives on successive planes and urging them forward on their evolutionary paths. The third outpouring: the first Logos, remains at a high level. But tension between it and the second outpouring provides an evolutionary urge unique to humanity. In Leadbeater’s words:

[The third outpouring] appears to be unable of itself to descend lower than the Buddhic plane, and there it hovers like a mighty cloud, waiting for an opportunity of effecting a junction with the second outpouring, which is slowly rising to meet it. [*Man Visible and Invisible*, p. 48.]

The third outpouring provides human entities with the potential for unlimited expansion of consciousness. Theosophy views the Christ as the example, per excellence, of human evolution, and Leadbeater’s words recall Jesus’ remark: “I go to the Father.” [*John* 16:16-17, 28.]

The outpourings operate on a much larger scale in the three solar systems described in Theosophical teachings. Each solar system, we are told, brings to full expression one of the divine aspects. Our present solar system, the second, expresses the Second Aspect of Love–Wisdom, which embraces the notions of coherence and form-building. As Alice Bailey notes:

The method employed by the Logos in this the second solar system is definitely the use of form for purposes of manifestation, as a medium of expression and as the vehicle whereby the indwelling life may grow, expand, experience and find itself. [*Letters on Occult Meditation*, p. 141.]

She adds that this is true whether the form is an entire solar system, a human being, or a form constructed by a human being. The forms are built from undifferentiated matter, comparable with the *prakriti* of Hindu teachings, left over from the first solar system which expressed the Third Aspect of deity.

Alternative Trinities

An alternative trinitarian model is designated Trinity B in Figures 1 and 2. It links Abba, Imma, and the Zeir Anpin in the simplified Tree of Life; and Chokmah, Binah and Tifareth in the conventional Tree. Trinity B emphasizes the birth of the Son from Abba and Imma—Father and Mother—just as the Egyptian Horus was born from Osiris and Isis. “Birthing” immediately recalls the process of emanation on which the whole of Kabbalistic theology is based. Although the Daughter, Nukvah, is excluded from the “holy family,” she enjoys a connection with Imma as well as the anticipated nuptial bond with the Zeir Anpin.

A variant on this model, designated Trinity C in Figure 2, substitutes Daath for Tifareth as the “son” aspect of the Trinity. Christian Kabbalists identified Tifareth with Christ, but esoteric Christians would no problem understanding the association of the Christ with Daath and Jesus with Tifareth. Theosophical teachings assert that the Christ “overshadowed” the Master Jesus during the ministry in Palestine, but they are distinct entities. We saw in Segment 5 that, as early as the 11th century, Petrus Alphonsi drew a glyph relating the Tetragrammaton to the Trinity, and his glyph resembles Trinity B or C.

The Safed Kabbalists centered the Zeir Anpin on Tifareth, but the partzuf expanded into six other sefiroth, including Daath. Moreover, we have already argued that Daath was omitted from the original ten sefiroth because it is only slowly emerging into manifestation. A similar argument could explain why the Safed scholars did not grasp the dual nature of the divine son. Now. Perhaps, we can affirm that Daath is a higher aspect of Tifareth.

Models B and C preserve of the unity of the overshadowing Godhead and the symmetry of its first manifestation. Both the Ain Soph and Arikh Anpin/Kether remain aloof from the scission that produced Abba/Chokmah and Imma/Binah. We note that in the religion of ancient Egypt Amen-Ra reigned supreme above the trinity of Osiris, Isis and Horus. Similarly, Blavatsky’s *Parabrahm* overshadowed the triune Logos. Christianity never warmed to the notion of an overshadowing Godhead distinct from the Trinity, fearing that it suggests a quarternity. Instead it made the gender-asymmetric God the Father play the role of a Godhead. That strategy eroded divine unicity, which Thomas Aquinas regarded as an essential attribute of the divine nature, as well as offending modern understanding of gender and the Divine.

Trinities B and C emphasize the emergence of duality at the high level of Abba/Chokmah and Imma/Binah. That duality can easily be anthropomorphized as a masculine–feminine polarity with generative potential: the archetypal Father and Mother bear a Son—and along with him the created universe. Abba/Chokmah and Imma/Binah emerge in close succession, suggesting virtually equal status. Recognition of a feminine archetype at the same high level as the masculine provides a gender-balanced view of the divine.

Osiris and Isis were not only husband and wife but also siblings. That might offend the modern consciousness, reminding us of the incestuous relationships common in pharaonic Egypt. But we can also interpret the blood relationship as a strong affirmation of gender equality. We have already seen that the Zeir Anpin and Nukvah were siblings betrothed to be married. In any event, Trinities B and C express hypostatic duality exists at a high level, and the tension between them is resolved in a “birth”—not only of Daath and/or Tifareth but of all the lower sefiroth.

Models B and C do not lend themselves readily to the enumeration of the first, second and third persons of the Christian Trinity or the first, second and third aspects of the Theosophical trinity. The archetypal Father and Mother would need to be regarded as the first and second persons, and the Son as the Third. This would conform to the notion of masculine odd numbers and feminine even numbers; but it would violate the traditional belief that the second person is God the Son. In any event, the conventional sefirothic numbering system would have to be supplemented by a separate one for the trinitarian aspects.

Yet another trinity emerged from Dion Fortune’s work in Britain during the darkest days of World War II. Described in Gareth Knight’s *Dion Fortune & the Inner Light*, it was a meditation symbol recommended for use by members of the Fraternity of the Inner Light for the protection of the nation against German attack. Initially the symbol was a triangle defined by three colored spheres: a red sphere containing an image of King Arthur grasping a sword, a blue sphere containing an image of Merlin holding a diamond scepter, and a purple sphere containing an image of Christ holding the Holy Grail. Later, the triangle was expanded to a tetrahedron with specific associations with the Tree of Life. The triangular base was defined by the red King-

Arthur sphere, associated with Geburah; the blue Merlin sphere, associated with Chesed, and the purple sphere, now containing the Virgin Mary holding the Grail, associated with Yesod. Christ was raised to the apex of the tetrahedron in a golden sphere corresponding to Tifareth. Both the three-dimensional representation of the sefirot, and the combination of Christian and Celtic imagery, are evocative.

The Soul and Angelic Presences

Kabbalistic Concepts of the Soul

The multi-level model of the soul, hinted at in the *Zohar* and developed more fully by the Safed Kabbalists, has had lasting appeal. Four of the five levels mentioned in the *Zohar*: the *nefesh*, *ruach*, *neshamah* and *yechidah*, were discussed in many works after the Safed period. Pinchas of Koretz, an early disciple of Rabbi Baal Shem Tov, provided further insights into the *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*:

Man is possessed of a ghost [*nefesh*], a spirit [*ruach*], and a soul [*neshamah*] in this order of importance. At the Sabbath meal, the eating is the ghost, the singing of hymns is the spirit, and the discussion of Torah is the soul. Abraham is the ghost of Israel; Moses, his spirit; and the Messiah, his soul.

Depiction of the *nefesh* as “a ghost” recalls ancient associations of the soul with the wraith seen after death.

The Safed scholars assigned the various aspects of the soul to particular worlds: the *ruach* to Yetzirah, the *neshamah* to Briah, and the *yechidah* to Atziluth. Presumably they believed that the *nefesh* resides on the world of Assiah. Israel Regardie took a different perspective, associating the soul’s aspects to sefirot on the middle pillar of the Tree of Life: the *nefesh* to Yesod, the *ruach* to Tifareth, the *neshamah* to Daath, and the *yechidah* to Kether. We can easily relate the *nefesh* to the etheric body of Theosophical teachings, and, with somewhat more difficulty, the *yechidah* to the monad. The *ruach* and *neshamah* are harder to classify but may correspond, respectively, to the lower and higher mental bodies. On the other hand, if, as suggested in Table 1, Tifareth can be equated to the buddhic plane, and Daath to some level above the atmic plane, the *ruach* and *neshamah* might have to be reclassified. Anna Kingsford, whose interests spanned the eastern and western esoteric traditions, commented that the *neshamah* “is the immediate receptacle of the deific Spirit.” Presumably that “Spirit” is the monad—or the *yechidah*.

The remaining level of the soul mentioned in the *Zohar*, the *chayah*, is interposed between the *neshamah* and the *yechidah*. It has rarely been mentioned. However, Regardie commented that it “is the real Life Principle, as distinct from the more illusionary life of the physical body.”

Several other terms pertaining to the soul appear in the literature. Kabbalists and others in esoteric Judaism have often spoken of the “divine sparks.” As noted in Segment 4, Isaac Luria taught that, as a result of the fall, Adam’s soul fragmented into “thousands of thousands of sparks” which subsequently became incarnated in the human race. The sparks or “seeds of light” affirm man’s divinity; but like the Gnostic Sophia, they fell from the Pleroma into matter and forever seek release from the demons encountered there.

Hassidic writers also explored the notion of “sparks of holiness,” which should be nurtured through the spiritual life. For example, the 20th-century Rabbi I. Berger suggested:

Each of us possesses a Holy Spark, but not everyone exhibits it to the best advantage. It is like the diamond which cannot cast its luster if buried in the earth. But when disclosed in its appropriate setting, there is light.

The *tzelem*, referred to in *Genesis*, has become a popular term for the soul in Kabbalistic writings. Originally defined as the “shadow self,” it has been described more poetically as “the image of God in man.” According to Papus, the tzelem can clothe itself again with physical matter to create an apparition visible on the earthly plane after death. In English-language Kabbalistic literature, tzelem is often translated as *astral body*. However “astral body” is an ambiguous term—with different meanings in the western and eastern esoteric traditions.

“Astral body” suggests that it is filled with stars or points of light. Neither Hermetic nor Judaic Kabbalists spelled out its relationship to the nefesh, ruach and neshamah. But their usage of the term implied that it was a region of the human constitution corresponding roughly to what Theosophists call the etheric, sentient, and lower mental bodies. Unfortunately 19th-century Theosophists assigned “astral body” just to the “emotional” or “sentient body.” Ironically, clairvoyants describe the emotional body as being filled with swirling clouds or fog, hardly consistent with the notion of twinkling stars! Equating the astral body to the “shadow self” is equally problematic. “Astral body” and “astral plane” have given rise to so much misunderstanding that they should be dropped from common usage.

Dion Fortune did not concern herself to any significant degree with the traditional multi-level soul. But she shared a valuable insight into the soul’s relationship with celestial and divine entities that lie above it on the worlds of Yetzirah, Briah and Atziluth. The function of the Tree of Life, she wrote in a magazine article, is

to reveal the relationship between the different factors in the soul of man and the corresponding factors in the cosmic life from which they derive, causing a tremendous flow of energy and inspiration into the aspect of the soul thus linked with its cosmic prototype. These prototypes are invariably dramatized as angels, archangels, gods, elemental kings, and [everything of the kind]... They are the channels of the corresponding spiritual channels...

Evidently the images, symbols, and angelic entities listed in Table 2 of Segment 6 are to be treated as prototypes or aspects of the soul and sources of energy inspiring those aspects.

Gareth, Knight adhered to Theosophical concepts when he embraces the notion of a threefold human constitution, consisting of personality, individuality and spirit, where the personality is the vehicle of a specific incarnation, “individuality” spans several incarnations, and “spirit” is equivalent to the monad.

Death and Rebirth

What, in everyday terms, we call “death” is death of the physical body. At least some of the higher aspects of the human constitution survive that transition. Modern Hermetic Kabbalists have offered descriptions of the soul’s experience immediately after death. According to Arthur Waite “the High Priest Michael” offers ruach as a sacrifice to the Holy One. In another account the soul—presumably ruach—prostrates itself before the Shekinah. Thereafter, in a scene reminiscent of Egyptian funeral rites, the soul is led to a cavern, where it confronts Adam and the patriarchs. Eventually it is permitted to enter Paradise. After death, the nefesh, ruach, and neshamah retain a form resembling the deceased person. However few writers have suggested any kind of corporeal resurrection comparable with traditional Christian belief. Moses Maimonides wrote: “In the world to come there are no bodies, but only the souls of the righteous alone, without bodies, like the angels.”

Belief in reincarnation set Kabbalistic teachings apart from both mainstream Judaic and Christian teachings. Notions of reincarnation, or *gilgul*, were promoted in the classical Kabbalistic texts and also in the writings of the Safed scholars. The doctrine never developed to the level found in Hinduism and Buddhism—though, interestingly, the very word *gilgul* (“revolving”) hints at the Wheel of Rebirth. Opinions varied among Kabbalists concerning the applicability and extent of

reincarnation: whether it applied to everyone or only to the wicked, as an alternative to hell; and how many lifetimes might be permitted. Those who saw reincarnation in a negative light speculated that the souls of the wicked might be reborn as an animal, a Gentile, or a woman! In modern times belief in reincarnation has received new impetus from the synthesis of western and eastern philosophies. From the vantage point of the new synthesis we would reject any suggestion of transmigration into animal, or even lower, forms. Human consciousness, however depraved, simply would not “fit” into such forms.

Any reincarnational doctrine raises the issue of precisely what aspect of the self reincarnates: the nefesh, ruach, neshamah, the tzelem, or something else. A few Kabbalists have suggested that the tzelem connects successive incarnations. More commonly the assumption is that it is the neshamah that spans incarnations. Indeed the doctrine is often referred to as *gilgul ha-neshamoth*, or reincarnation of “neshamahs.” Anna Kingsford affirmed that the neshamah may have as many former lives “as a man may have changes of raiment.” It retains particularly powerful memories of its past lives, while the ruach “remembers... the history of one incarnation only.” Interestingly, Kingsford stated that the ruach does not decay soon after physical death but can survive for several centuries in the “lower Eden,” independent of the neshamah. What purpose it serves, or what influence it might have on the neshamah or its future incarnations, is unclear.

Another issue is why souls might assume physical embodiment multiple times—or in fact why the soul would incarnate at all. Plato believed that souls were reluctant to descend into physical bodies, and the Gnostics taught that souls would want to escape as soon as possible because, in their view, the physical world was evil. The 20th-century Hasidic writer I. M. Rabinowitz acknowledged the soul’s reluctance but suggested that other considerations would prevail:

A soul usually does not wish to descend to earth in a body, inasmuch as it may easily become corrupted and lose its purity. But when the souls observed an entire generation of souls ascend to Heaven after departing their bodies in increased purity and holiness, a multitude of them petitioned the Lord for permission to enter bodies and gain the opportunity to become holier.

However incarnation need not be viewed simply as a means to attain personal holiness. Any increase in sanctity could be regarded as a favorable by-product of a life of service. Humanity’s descent into physical manifestation leaves an indelible mark on the physical world and the lives that inhabit it. Our sojourn on Earth contributes to the larger process in which the Divine manifested in the universe. If, as Theosophical teachings insist, we need to incarnate multiple times in order to reach the level of sanctity necessary to graduate to higher levels of reality, we also need to incarnate multiple times in order to fulfill our mission of raising the consciousness of the Earth.

Personal Angels

Belief in guardian spirits and personal angels was common in ancient cultures. Guardian spirits were represented in Babylonian and Assyrian art. According to the 19th-century French esotericist Edouard Schuré, Zoroaster had a vision of a bridge of light on which stood a woman “veiled in light [and radiating] superhuman joy and pride... It seemed to Zoroaster that he had known her forever; yet he could not name her.” When questioned, she identified herself as Ardouizur. “Thou hast created me. I am more than myself; I am thine immortal soul... we will drink the cup of immortal life from the source of light!” The woman then transformed herself into the Angel of Victory.

In *Phaedo* Plato referred to “the guardian spirit who was allotted to [us] in life,” and who will lead us to the underworld, whereupon “another guide” will lead us back to the next incarnation.

Both Iamblichus and Plotinus tried to conjure their own spirits. In *Timaeus*, Plato stated that God created human souls “equal in number to the stars, and assigned each soul to a star.” A passage in the *Zohar* tells a closely similar story:

The Holy One, blessed be He, brought forth all the hosts and companies and stars, each one by name and none was missing. Throughout the stars and constellations of all the firmaments, leaders, and supervisors were appointed to minister the world, each one as is worthy for him. There is not even one small blade of grass in the world that does not have a star and constellation in the firmament that rules over it, and over each and every star is an appointee that serves before the Holy One, blessed be He, as is proper for Him.

Maggidim, or “mentor angels,” guided a number of prominent Kabbalists before and during the Safed period. Joseph Karo’s maggid counseled him over a period of years on matters of ethics and spiritual practice, even prophesying: “I shall give you the merit of being burned for the sanctification of My name. All your sins and faults will be purged by fire so that you will rise from there like pure wool.” The possibility of martyrdom was not unwelcome to the pious Karo, but reportedly he died a natural death.

Merkabah mystics and ecstatic Kabbalists described situations in which, in a heightened state of awareness, they saw an image and recognized it as themselves. For example: “Suddenly I saw the form of myself standing before me.” Even Ezekiel seems to have had such an experience. Texts described the image as the tzelem, the individual’s “perfected nature,” or a maggid. A passage in the *Zohar* contends that “the likeness of a righteous man is literally an angel.” Perhaps the vision was of the Holy Guardian Angel.

Ashkenazic Judaism, with particular reference to Abraham of Worms, provided the concept of the Holy Guardian Angel. The Society of the Golden Dawn embraced that concept but generally preferred the term “Higher Genius.” Contact with the Angel/Genius came to be regarded as a transformative act of the greatest significance. The Society’s initiatory oath included the following affirmation:

I will... purify and exalt my Spiritual Nature so that with the Divine Aid I may at length attain to be more than human and thus gradually raise and unite myself to my Higher and Divine Genius.

We saw in Segment 3 that Abraham of Worms developed a ritual for contacting the Angel. That same ritual became a focus of interest by Aleister Crowley. Crowley’s ritual required the participation of a child “of the age of six, seven, or eight years at the most” dressed in white and bearing, on his forehead, a prescribed magical sigil. The child invoked the angel and transmitted its message to the supplicant. Fulfillment of the rites enabled the supplicant

to enjoy the admirable presence of the Holy Guardian Angel, in order to obtain the end so earnestly desired, and which shall not fail thee is thou followest the Path which He shall show unto thee.

Anna Kingsford discussed her Higher Genius in very personal terms:

Every human being has attached to him a Genius or Daimon, as with Socrates; a ministering spirit, as with the apostles; or an angel, as with Jesus. All these are but different names for the same thing. My Genius says that he does not care for the term angel because it is misinterpreted. He prefers the Christian nomenclature, and to be called minister, as their office is to guide, admonish, and illumine.

She compared the relationships among God, the human being, and the Genius to that among the sun, a planet, and a moon. “The Genius is the moon to the planet man, reflecting to him the sun,

or the God of the man... The Genius is the complement of the man; and [its] “sex” is always the converse of the planet’s.” Accordingly, Kingford’s Genius appeared as a male figure.

Kingsford referred to the Higher Genius as a “flame.” We may also see a connection with the divine sparks discussed earlier. Dion Fortune put the two concepts together, describing three swarms of sparks, respectively, as the “lords of the flame,” “lords of form,” and “lords of mind.” These are Theosophical terms, which will be discussed shortly. McGregor Mathers brought several concepts together in a remarkable synthesis:

The Shining Flame of the Divine Fire, the Kether of the Body, is the Real Self of the Incarnation... This Yechidah is only part of the man which can truly say—EHEIEH, I am. This is then but the Kether of the Assiah of the Microcosm, that is, it is the highest part of Man... Behind Yechidah are Angelic Forces of which Yechidah is the manifestor. It is therefore the Lower Genius or Victory of the Higher Genius which is beyond, an Angel Mighty and Terrible. This Great Angel in the higher Genius, beyond which are the Archangelic and Divine.

Holy Guardian Angels have close counterparts in the various kinds of personal angel encountered in Hinduism. They can be correlated even more closely with the Solar Angels discussed in Theosophical literature and in the writings of Alice Bailey. Indian Theosophist T. Subba Row related the personal angel firmly to the soul: “Each human soul is a little girl, which is the man’s guardian angel, which is his Soul. This girl will ultimately have to be married to the man’s own Logos [the monad].” However he added the confusing remark: “The guardian angel is and yet is not one of the principles of the human soul, because it pervades the whole human being.”

Helena Blavatsky referred to personal angels most often using the Sanskrit term *manasaputras* (literally “sons of mind”). But she also used a number of other terms, including: *sons of wisdom*; *lords of persevering ceaseless devotion*; *brahmaputras* (“sons of Brahma”), and *B’nai-Elohim* (“sons of God”). This last, conspicuous insofar as it is the only Hebrew term, is a reference to the passage in *Genesis* where “the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.” [*Genesis* 6:2] In one passage in *The Secret Doctrine*, Blavatsky used the term “Solar Angels,” explaining that they are “the endowers of man with his conscious, immortal Ego.” [*Secret Doctrine*, II, p. 88] She added that they can be equated “with those who in India are termed Kumaras, Agnishwattas, and the Barhishads.”

“Solar angel” is Alice Bailey’s preferred term for the Holy Guardian Angel or Higher Genius, but she also uses *manasaputra*, *angel of the presence*, *Ego* (capitalized), *overshadowing soul*, or *soul on its own level*.” We continue to wrestle with issues of terminology, sometimes suspecting that the variations comprise an occult blind.

Dion Fortune’s comment on the “three swarms,” quoted earlier, may refer to the arrival of the Solar Angels on earth. Gareth Knight explores this connection further. The Angel, in his account is: “[T]hat aspect of the ‘Group Thought-form’ of God which impressed the Swarm of Divine Sparks at the beginning of Time.” He adds: “The Holy Guardian Angel may be considered to be that part of a human being which reveals his purpose in manifestation to him in accordance with the Divine Plan.”

According to Bailey, the Solar Angel has overshadowed the lower human nature for an extended period of time:

The great solar Angel, Who embodies the real man and is his expression on the plane of higher mind, is literally his divine ancestor, the “Watcher” Who, through long cycles of incarnation, has poured Himself out in sacrifice in order that man might BE. [*Initiation, Human and Solar*, p. 115.]

Bailey also asserts that the Solar Angel has served as “the medium of expression for the monad or pure spirit, just as is the personality for the Ego on the lower level.” It has orchestrated its human charge’s long sequence of incarnations, paying attention to evolutionary needs, bonds of relationship, and karmic constraints.

Whereas the Jewish Kabbalists viewed the progression of the sefiroth, from Kether to Malkuth, purely in terms of the descent of the divine light into manifestation, Bailey also views it as describing the creation of the human forms at the beginning of a new incarnation. The Solar Angel proceeds in stages. The primary stage of manifestation resembles “the work of the first three Sephiroths [sic] of the Kabbalah.” “Then the next two groups of Sephiroth are seen reproduced in man.”

The Angel created our lower vehicles and nurtures the development of consciousness, responsibilities that the human soul is not yet ready to assume. The Solar Angel’s nurturing role is analogous to that of a mother toward her baby, or a regent to an infant monarch. The human soul, like the child, will eventually acquire the capability for autonomous existence. When the soul is awakened and gains the necessary experience—reckoned to be attained at the Fourth Initiation, the “Crucifixion”—it will take over the Solar Angel’s responsibilities.

Final Reflections

In this segment we have tried to summarize and comment upon major areas of the mystical and theoretical Kabbalah. In few other systems of esotericism have the mystical and theoretical been so closely intertwined. Mystical insights and intellectual concepts came together as Kabbalists sought to understand God, humanity, and the relationship between them. That said, both the mystical and theoretical branches of Kabbalah maintain distinct identities, and both have relevance to the spiritual quest of the 21st century.

The doctrine of emanation is a singularly powerful way to explain the descent of the Divine into manifestation, God’s action in an organic universe, and the promise of the eventual return to Spirit. According to the doctrine, the whole of “creation” is divine, possessing dignity and endowed with spiritual potential and destiny. Emanation is a “birthing” process, which captures notions of new realities emerging from the resolution of sexual tension at a cosmic level.

Manifestation requires a progression from the divine Unity to increasing degrees of complexity. And as Pythagoras taught, this progression appears to conform to a numerical sequence: the one gives way to two, to three, to seven, to 12, and finally to infinite variety. Significantly, the Hebrew alphabet is divided into three mother letters, seven doubles, and 12 singles. Duality, the first product of the primeval scission, is fundamental to existence and to consciousness of our environment and ourselves. It presents challenge, it is the cause of pain, but it is also the opportunity for growth as we make choices in our individual and collective lives.

As emanation proceeds, triplicity and septenary follow from duality. The Christian, Neoplatonic, Egyptian and Hindu trinities can all be reconciled with triangles in the Tree of Life. Like so many attempts to reconcile disparate esoteric, philosophical and religious systems, an exact match is hard to achieve. Nevertheless the attempt to do so challenges us to explore the underlying symbolism and provides opportunities for new insights. Septenary emanation is revealed clearly in traditional Kabbalistic teachings, and those teachings can be reconciled to a remarkable degree with the modern esoteric teachings of Blavatsky, Leadbeater, Bailey, and others.

The Kabbalists, like so many other thoughtful people throughout history, struggled to understand the complexities of the human constitution. At an early date they recognized the multi-level nature of the soul. From the triplicity suggested by the Greeks, the Kabbalists speculated that fourth or fifth levels might exist. They even grasped the possibility that an angelic presence

played a role in the human constitution, and that dialog with the angel was possible. Conflation of the maggid, the Holy Guardian Angel, the Higher Genius, and the Solar Angel provide one of the most remarkable examples of esoteric synthesis. Clearly these terms all refer to a higher element of the human constitution, seemingly of independent origin, that serves as our guide and mentor us and urges us forward on our spiritual journey.

As we look back on the history of the Kabbalah over two millennia, we cannot fail to be impressed by the sophistication of an esoteric system, which developed in a western—primarily Judaic—mystical and intellectual environment, but which more than holds its own in the new synthesis of global esoteric teachings. A single course cannot do justice to such a comprehensive esoteric system. But I hope that this course has covered enough to whet students' appetites to learn more. The bibliography listed at the end of each segment, and the more extensive bibliography provided in Appendix 4, offer opportunities for several years' study. I hope to hear from you as you go forward on your quest.

Resources

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|-------------------------|--|
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| Alice A. Bailey | <i>Initiation, Human and Solar</i> . Lucis Publishing Co., 1922.
<i>Letters on Occult Meditation</i> . Lucis Publishing Co., 1922.
<i>A Treatise on White Magic</i> . Lucis Publishing Co., 1934.
<i>Discipleship in the New Age, II</i> . Lucis Publishing Co., 1955.
<i>The Rays and the Initiation</i> . Lucis Publishing Co., 1960.
<i>The Externalisation of the Hierarchy</i> . Lucis Publishing Co., 1974. |
| Paul Foster Case | <i>The Tarot</i> . Macoy Publishing Company, 1947. |
| Dion Fortune. | <i>The Mystical Qabalah</i> , revised edition. Weiser Books, 1935/2000. |
| Adolphe Franck | <i>The Kabbalah: The Religious Philosophy of the Hebrews</i> . Bell Publishing Co., 1843/1940. |
| Aryeh Kaplan | <i>Sefer Yetzirah</i> . Weiser Books, 1997. |
| Anna Kingsford | <i>Clothed with the Sun</i> . J. M. Watkins, 1889. Republished 2008 by Forgotten Books. |
| Gareth Knight | <i>Guide to Practical Kabbalah Symbolism</i> , 1965.
<i>Dion Fortune & the Inner Light</i> , Thoth Publications, 2000, |
| Grace F. Knoche | <i>Theosophy in the Qabalah</i> . Theosophical Publishing House, 2006. |
| Charles W. Leadbeater | <i>Man Visible and Invisible</i> . Theosophical Publishing House, 1902.
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| Leonora Leet | <i>The Secret Doctrine of the Kabbalah</i> . Inner Traditions, 1999. |
| H. Spencer Lewis | <i>Rosicrucian Manual</i> . Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1918/1978 |
| S. L. MacGregor Mathers | <i>The Kabbalah Unveiled</i> . Arkana, 1926. |
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- John F. Nash *Quest for the Soul*, 1stBooks Library, 2004.
 The Soul and Its Destiny. Authorhouse, 2004.
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- Papus *The Qabalah*. Weiser, 1892/1977.
- Israel Regardie *The Qabalah of Aleister Crowley*. Weiser, 1973
- Gershom Scholem *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. Schocken Books, 1946/1954.
 Kabbalah. Meridian Books, 1974.
- Arthur E. Waite. *The Holy Kabbalah*. Citadel Press, 1929.

Journal Articles:

- Donna M. Brown “The Qabalah and the Aquarian Avatar.” *Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2005, pp. 25-32.
- John F. Nash. “Duality, the Pairs of Opposites, and the Approach to Harmony.” *The Esoteric Quarterly*, Fall 2004, pp. 15-25.
- “The Trinity and Its Symbolism.” *The Esoteric Quarterly*, Spring 2005, pp. 33-46.
- “The Seven Rays: a Case Study in the Dissemination of Esoteric Knowledge.” *The Esoteric Quarterly*, Winter 2007, pp. 33-50.

Other Online Resources:

- Ariel Bar Tzadok “Bereshit, the Beginning.” <http://www.koshertorah.com/bereshit.pdf>.

Assignment

Instructions for preparing your report are provided below. Your report should be headed SES Kabbalah Course, Segment 7, and should include your name, email address, and date of submittal. Send your report to seselectives@gmail.com.

- Following are a number of issues raised in this segment of the course. Write a paper discussing two or more of the issues in depth, or all of them more briefly.
 - (a) What have you learned about the process by which the Divine reveals itself through the manifest universe—interpreting “universe” to include the lives, great and small, that inhabit it?
 - (b) Does the concept of a triune God have meaning to you? How do you understand “the Trinity” from the standpoint of esoteric and/or religious teachings?
 - (c) Can a plausible case be made that the Kabbalah embodies triune and septenary divine manifestations? Discuss.
 - (d) Analyze the worldwide economic recession/depression of 2008–2009 from the standpoint of polarities in the Tree of Life. Identify the major causes and effects with specific sefiroth.
 - (e) “The soul” clearly is a complex concept, and attempts by Kabbalists and many others to discuss it have given rise to a complicated and often inconsistent

terminology. Identify major elements of the soul and discuss them in your own words.

- (f) Discuss the Kabbalistic concepts of the maggid and the Holy Guardian Angel in relation to the Blavatsky-Bailey Solar Angel.
- (g) Can we continue to speak of the Kabbalah as an identifiable esoteric system, or has it merged with other systems to the point where distinctions are meaningless?
- Do you have any questions or comments about this segment, or about the course as a whole?

The instructor will critique the report, respond to questions, and offer suggestions for further study in the Kabbalah or elsewhere. You will also receive your Certificate of Completion. Thank you for taking the course. We hope you will consider taking other courses offered by the School for Esoteric Studies. Meanwhile, we wish you the very best for the future.