Tree of Life

Course Glossary

This glossary is provided to help you during your reading of the course material, and study for the test. There is no need to memorize this material- it is merely for reference purposes.

***Ain***: Nothingness- the highest manifestation of the Divine Source.

***Ain Soph***: Limitlessness- another common term for the highest Divine Source.

***Ain Soph Aur***: Limitless Light- that aspect of the highest Divine Source that can be "viewed" from the physical as Pure White Brilliance. This rests just above Kether, and is nearly synonymous with it.

***Etz haChaim***: The Tree of Life. This is the central philosophical glyph of the Western Qabalah, depicting the fundamental energies and natural cycles that govern creation.

***LVX***: Latin for "Light" and indicating the Light of God. This is generally associated with Solar Light, and is considered the cyclic energy of the Tree of Life and Nature.

**Macrocosm**: The "Greater Universe" â€“ indicating the manifest physical realm of planets, stars, Earth, etc. (See also Microcosm.)

***Mahaseh Berashith***: The "Work of Creation." A branch of the Qabalah that focuses upon the creation of the Universe by God. This is the primary focus of the Qabalah proper. (See also Mahaseh Merkavah.)

***Mahaseh Merkavah***: The "Work of the Chariot." A branch of the Qabalah that focuses upon a personal journey from the Earth-plane back toward the Creator, and the concept that humans have the divine right to create as does God. Qabalistic Magick all falls under this practice. (See also Merkavah, and Mahaseh Berashith.)

***Merkavah***: Hebrew for "Chariot." This is the name given to the Throne of God- that often doubled as a chariot when the Deity would ride into battle on behalf of Israel. (See Ezekiel 1, Revelation 4, and 1Enoch.) A vision of the Merkavah was the primary goal of the Merkavah Mystic- ancient Jewish Mages who astral traveled through the Seven Heavenly Palaces. (See also Mahaseh Merkavah.)

**Microcosm**: The "Lesser Universe" â€“ indicating the inner workings of the human aura (or psyche), which theoretically mirror the patterns and conditions of one's larger environment. As above, so below. (see Macrocosm.)

***Qabalah***: "Tradition." This is the term given to Jewish mysticism of the thirteenth century that focused on contemplation of Biblical scripture. It adopted much from both Merkavah Mysticism and ancient Gnosticism. It was eventually adopted by Christian mystic sects- such as the Hermeticists and Rosicrucians- who have passed it on to us as modern Western Hermetic Qabalah. (See also Mahaseh Berashith.)

***Qliphoth***: "Shells." The Kingdom of Shells is the demonic realm that exists just below Malkuth on the Tree of Life. Most often, this Kingdom is illustrated as an inverted Tree of Life (or Tree of Death).

***Sephirah*** (pl- *Sephiroth*): "Saying." A Sephirah represents one of the ten instances of "God said..." in Genesis 1. The ten Sephiroth make up the Spheres of manifestation upon the Tree of Life glyph.

***Shekhinah***: "Divine Presence." The Shekhinah represents the physical aspect of God- the Divine Presence on Earth. Traditionally, the Shekhinah is viewed as a feminine entity, related closely to the Gnostic Mother Goddess named Sophia. She is the Bride of God described in Hermetic texts.

**Introduction to the Holy Tree of Life**

(*Mahaseh Berashith*: the Work of Creation)

**Aaron Leitch**

**To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life,**

**which is in the midst of the paradise of God. [Rev 2:7]**

**Introduction**

The study of traditional Hebraic Qabalah can be loosely divided between two particular schools. The principal of these is called *Mahaseh Berashith*- the Work of Creation. This is what we might call the "Qabalah proper"- based upon philosophical interpretation of Biblical literature, especially those books dealing with God's creation of the Universe. (Such as Genesis I.) This is the school that gives us the Tree of Life and the Four Worlds, the practice of Gematria, etc.

The second school of Qabalah is termed *Mahaseh Merkavah*- the Work of the Chariot. This is actually a direct reference to the ancient Jewish shamans known today the "Merkavah Mystics." These mystics focused heavily upon prophetical and apocalyptic literature- especially the first chapter of Ezekiel, wherein the prophet is granted a vision of the Divine Throne of God. This Throne is actually described in the text as a kind of Chariot (*Merkavah*), drawn by four mighty Kherubic Angels. Other Jewish legends depict the Chariot as drawn by terrible Seraphim (angelic Serpents of Fire), upon which Yahweh rushes into celestial battle. The Merkavah Mystics believed that man- as the manifest Image of God- had the authority and birth-right to act after the manner of God. This meant that they believed in mankind's right to create, to perform magick, and to journey into the heavens (like the prophets Enoch and Elijah) in their own personal Chariots of Fire.

*Mahaseh Merkavah* could not be practiced without first engaging in deep studies of the *Mahaseh Berashith*. Yet, this did not always work the other way around. During the Middle Ages, those Rabbis who adhered fundamentally to Jewish law, and studied the Work of Creation themselves, were outspoken against the Work of the Chariot. The Merkavah Mystics were a sub-culture of mages who did not intermingle with "official" Jewish religious authority.

Meanwhile, their philosophies and practices were of much interest to their Christian counterparts- the Alchemists, Hermeticists, and especially the occultists who wrote and utilized the medieval grimoires like the *Key of Solomon the King*. Thus, a large amount of Jewish-based practical magick found its way into Western European occultism, and survives there in several forms today. Aspects of it have been preserved in the grimoires, of course. Other aspects have come to us largely through the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and you might recognize them as the Pentagram Rituals, the Middle Pillar, the making of talismans, the summoning of Angels and spirits, etc.

Over the course of your studies, we shall explore many aspects of both the *Mahaseh Berashith* and the *Mahaseh Merkavah*. However, in this particular class, we shall be focusing exclusively upon the Work of Creation. First and foremost, I will explain in detail a vital foundational aspect of the Hermetic Qabalah- the Holy Tree of Life. Afterward, I will cover a related subject of equal importance, the Hebrew Alphabet.

This course assumes the student is a beginner with no knowledge what-so-ever on the Tree of Life, the Hebrew Alphabet, or the Qabalah in general. Therefore, the novices among you can use this as your own study material to come to a working knowledge of the Qabalah, and thus read further works on the Qabalah with a solid foundation and fuller comprehension. If you are not a novice, I hope you will find new ideas and viewpoints herein that will further expand your knowledge and experience of the Spheres.

This is doubly true, beginner or not, if you will take the information contained here and apply it to your everyday life. The Qabalah focuses heavily upon Archetypal Forces- that is, blueprint concepts behind all physical things and non-physical ideas. Take, for instance, a simple oak tree. Any given single oak tree is only one oak tree out of millions of close and distant relatives. It is **AN** oak tree, rather than **THE** oak tree. And yet, when you sat in school and learned what an "oak tree" was, you were not taught about this tree or that tree. You were taught about "oak trees" in general- you were being taught about **THE** oak tree. This all-encompassing- even hypothetical- oak tree that stands for all oak trees everywhere is an Archetype.

Therefore, as you can see, every little mundane object or concept has an Archetype behind it (or- better- over it). Of course, of all the creatures on planet Earth, only humans (as far as we know) have conceived of Archetypal Forces. Like Adam naming all the things and creatures in the Garden of Eden, human beings are uniquely and naturally wired to apply archetypal labels and classifications to all things.

The Qabalah, particularly *Mahaseh Berashith*, could be classified as a direct study of Archetypes and their interaction with the human mind or soul. In order for one's study to be successful, the student must eventually be able to think in terms of the Qabalah without any specific mental effort to do so. This means that one should look around the mundane world, seeing the invisible Archetypes that lie behind everything. This is what is meant by Biblical literature that insists- Let him who hath eyes, see!

"This war is an aspect of Gevurah", or "That book would classify under Hod" should become second nature to your thinking as you encounter things throughout the day. People's moods and mentalities can be classified the same way, helping one to understand both people and their emotions better. The same goes for any idea or concept one encounters, or experiences, or wishes to create. All things comprehended by humans have a classification of some kind- sometimes for good or ill. Doing this with the classifications of the Qabalah is a great way to make good mental associations. Then, further study of the Qabalah (especially the Hermetic variety) will be most fruitful.

The method of achieving this end is simple enough. We will begin here in this course, by exploring the glyph of the Tree of Life in some detail. We shall take things one step at a time, allowing foundational ideas to sink in by themselves before moving on to more advanced concepts. Here, the student can concentrate on the structure, content and (most importantly!) the **terminology** of the Tree of Life. Once that is familiar, further courses in this curriculum will outline the many correspondences between the Tree's Archetypes, the soul of each human being, and the many "things" that make up the world around us.

**Part One: The Tree of Life (*Etz haChaim*)**

The seeds of the Western Renaissance era were sown in the black historical soil known as the Dark Ages. This is to say that the educational and social revolutions enjoyed during the 1400s-1600s CE were created and popularized among intellectuals in the days when the Roman Church still held the world in its grip. They are the reason the Renaissance took place once the Church lost some of that grip.

Just one of these early manifestations of the Renaissance came in the form of educational reform. A new method of taking notes had been developed for scholars and students- known as the Tree pattern. If any of you have seen an Amway(tm) presentation, you'll be quite familiar with the Tree pattern of displaying information:



This Tree pattern makes recording, studying, and referencing information incredibly easy. Many related but different classifications can be grouped together under larger classifications. Graphically, this is drawn as many small circles connected to a single circle. These larger classifications can then be grouped together under even higher classifications- so that entire clusters of circles are connected to one or more circles at the very top. More and more refined classifications can be added, making the "tree" branch out as far as necessary. It shows one at a quick glance exactly how different subjects of information all interrelate to one another.

For instance, as in the diagram below, all oak trees could be grouped together in a single circle of classification. That circle can be labeled "oak trees." However, there are different species of oak trees out there, such as live oak, red oak, white oak, and pin oak. Thus we can add these sub-species of oak as a group of circles beneath "oak trees"- each connected to their common circle.



Meanwhile, the oak tree is only one type of tree. Therefore, it is possible to add higher classifications than "oak trees"- such as just "trees" in our example. Then we can add branches to the diagram for elm trees, willow trees, pine trees, etc, etc.

If you relate this to our early discussion, you can easily see how perfectly the Tree pattern lends itself to the concept of Archetypes. Any thing or idea can be mapped into a Tree pattern, and by following the natural logic of higher and higher classifications, one will necessarily reach the top of the pyramid and the purest Archetypal blueprint of that idea. "Oak trees" traces itself invariably to the Archetype of "Trees."



**Divine Realms**

Some of the earliest representations of the Heavenly Realms in Western civilization were created in the Ancient cities of Babylonia, as the great Ziggurat Temples. These massive "stepped pyramid" structures consisted (in some examples) of seven levels, each one dedicated to a Planetary God, with the Temple of the city's Patron God perched upon it's summit. These structures were said to be exact replicas of the Heavens themselves- an idea that continues to this day in Churches and other Holy Places. As the Babylonian Wizard-Priest ascended the steps of the Ziggurat on holy occasions, so too did his soul symbolically ascend the Planetary Spheres toward the Divine.

The lowest level of these structures was said to be the Sphere of Saturn, dedicated to Ninib, the God of the Earth, Lord of the Hunt and Harvest- of Life gained through Death and Sacrifice. Next up was the level of Jupiter, dedicated to Marduk, the Ruler and King of the Gods, who was Wisdom, Power, and Abundance. Thirdly was the Martian level, dedicated to Nergal, Lord of the Underworld, War, and Pestilence. Fourth rested the level of the Sun, dedicated to Shamash, the Sun God, and the Judge of the World. Upon this rested the level of Venus, dedicated to Inanna Herself, the Goddess of the people, Lady of the Womb, Reproduction and Passion. Then followed the level of Mercury, and of Marduk's son Nabu, lord of Writing, Art, and Wisdom. And, finally, was found the level of the Moon, dedicated to the Father of the Gods Nanna, Lord of the Waxing and Waning Tides of Nature. Once these seven heavenly spheres were ascended, the Wizard-Priest would reach his destination at the Temple, House of the Divine.

It was this concept that the Hebrew people discovered upon their captivity in Babylon around 600 BCE. During the process of adoption into the Jewish cosmology, the Spheres were reversed so that the level of the Moon was lowest in the Heavens, and the level of Saturn was upper-most. (The ordering of the seven ancient Planets is based upon each Planet's relative speed to earth. The Moon is the fastest object in the sky, followed by Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Jupiter, Mars, and then finally the slow and stolid Saturn.)

The orbital circles of these Planets became the famed Seven Hebrew Heavens or Palaces. What is perhaps the first recorded description of these Heavens (most likely written right there in Babylon) is the Ethiopian *Book of Enoch* (or 1Enoch). In this legend, we see the Patriarch Enoch- "who walked with God"- whisked away by Angels to the Heavenly Palaces and given a tour of the Cosmic realm- ending with an audience at the Throne of God Himself. This book was one of the most popular writings among the Merkavah Mystics who made a practice of Astral Traveling through the heavens on a journey toward God.

There are many versions of these Heavens. Perhaps the first is the basic concept of each one being stacked upon the other, just as with the Ziggurats. Following this would be the concept of a group of Concentric Circles (based upon the planetary orbital paths). This latter model places the Divine Plane as the outermost circle (encompassing all of creation), showing an upward Ascension from Earth toward the highest Divine realm.



It would be just as valid to inverse these same Circles- the Divine Plane innermost, showing an outward radiation from the Divine to the physical realm. (This latter model is shown in the famous diagram of the Nine Angelic Choirs of Heaven, surrounding the Throne of God in several sets of concentric circles.)



**Emanation**

This "outward radiation from the Divine" has a name in the Qabalah. It is called "Emanation." This is simply the process by which the Divine- usually seen as being "out there" somewhere, or "down deep" within us- reaches out from its own realm to manifest onto ours. The various Heavenly Spheres are these different stages of emanation. In modern terms, we could think of emanation taking place through various physical dimensions. We might start with the quantum realm, which leads to the atomic realm, which leads to the molecular realm, which leads to the realm of matter. Another point of view is by way of geometry: begin with a point, which has no mathematical dimension. The point, then, leads to the first dimension- the line. Beyond the line we come to the second dimension- the plane, which finally leads to the third dimension of geometric shapes (cubes, spheres, etc.).

As you can see, Emanation is (like the Tree pattern) based upon logical progression- starting from an archetypal source-point, then branching into further levels with new attributes added to each along the way. In ancient Mythologies, we see Emanation in the form of the birth of various Gods. The Babylonian Creation Epic, *Enuma Elish* ("When Skies Above"), begins with an empty abyss inhabited only by Tiamat and Apsu- the Mother and Father who represent the Divine Source. (In these primitive terms, Apsu represented the fresh waters of the rivers, and Tiamat the salt waters of the sea. These were the ultimate source of life as understood by the Mesopotamian people.) The Epic goes on with the generations spawned by these two Cosmic Beings; each generation better (or at least stronger and more grossly refined) than the one before:

Lahmu and Lahamu emerged, Their Names pronounced. As soon as they matured, were fully formed, Anshar and Kishar were born, surpassing them. They passed the days at length, they added to the years. Anu, Their first-born son, rivaled his Forefathers; Anshar made His son Anu like Himself, And Anu begot Nudimmud in His likeness. He, Nudimmud, was superior to His Forefathers; Profound of understanding, He was wise, was very strong at arms Mightier by far than Anshar His father's begetter, He had no rival among the Gods His peers.

Conversely, some cultures- such as the ancient Christian-mystics known as the Gnostics- viewed Divine Emanation as a process of increased imperfection. For instance, think of a cassette tape or photocopy. The original is perfect. Then a copy is made which is slightly imperfect. From that copy another is made, and so on and so forth, until the end result is a horrible excuse for the original- not even recognizable. This is why the Gnostics viewed the physical realm (the end result of Divine Emanation) as corrupted and even evil- something from which to escape.

However, the Merkavah Mystics had other ideas. They believed in the immutability of the Divine. That is: the Divine could not be divided, lessened, or made imperfect in any way. Therefore, each new emanation of the Divine must actually contain the whole of Divinity within it- so that no Heaven was lesser than another. For example, imagine viewing a faceted gem very closely, so the face of only one facet is visible at a time. The entire gem is always there, though most of it is hidden. Another view is that the emanation of the Heavens is similar to flames spreading outward among a sea of candles. Each flame is lit by the one before it- and no single flame is lessened or increased by those before or after it. Thus, the Merkavah Mystics' ascension through the Heavenly Palaces became a descent into the Heart of Creation, rather than an escape from the physical realm.

**The Sephiroth (Fruits of the Tree of Life)**

Ten Ineffable Sephiroth Ten and not nine Ten and not eleven Understand with Wisdom Be wise with Understanding Examine with them And probe from them Make each thing stand on its essence And make the Creator sit on His base. [-*Sepher Yetzirah*, 1:4]

The common Tree of Life diagram was born when medieval Qabalists decided to map this process of Divine Emanation into the new Tree diagram style. It allowed for a more sophisticated illustration of the interrelationships between the Spheres of Heaven than the old stacked "Ziggurat" diagram. Of course, since this kind of glyph was already called a Tree, the new "Qabalistic Tree" diagram earned an assumed relationship with that famous Tree of Life from Genesis.

The Biblical Tree of Life finds it roots very deep in history. From the most ancient of times, including Sumeria itself, there have been Sacred Trees and Sacred Plants. This comes from the earliest Shamanic Religions; Druids were said to worship the Divine in trees, and Shamans are well known for their use of mind-altering plants such as mushrooms. The Sacred Tree appears in just about every Mythology known to man; Inanna's Sacred Tree, the Tree from which Odin was suspended, the Tree in which Osiris' Casket was embedded, and the Tree of Life itself in the Hebrew Mythos to name just a few.

Interestingly, the origin of the Biblical Tree that gives Eternal Life comes from a (possibly psychedelic) plant in Sumer-Babylonia called the *Kiskanu*. In the mythologies, a wise man was taken into the Garden Paradise of Eridu (the pre-cursor of Eden) and offered to partake of the plant. Due to a grave misunderstanding, however, the man refused to comply. He was thus denied eternal life, and sent from the Garden for having insulted the Gods. This, then, is not only the origin of the Tree of Life, but of the entire Eden story itself.

Of this Tree, however, it is the fruit, which concerns us most. Hebrew and even Christian Legends tell us constantly of the wonderful fruit born by this Sacred Tree. It is fed by the Waters of Life that run directly from Heaven Itself, and its fruit reflects in its many different tastes and fragrances the diversity of the Universe. Of course, there is an obvious point to this imagery beyond a really nice-looking tree and its great-tasting fruits. It is an allegory for the Universe as a whole- and the Tree of Life is the Divine Root from which all reality stems. The fruits do not "reflect" the World's diversity, they literally embody it.

Thus it is that the Fruits of the Tree of Life came to be synonymous with the various levels of emanation from Divinity. The Waters of Life which nourishes its roots is the Divine Current Itself, the Tree is the extension of that Divine Current into our World, and the Fruits are today called the Holy and Ineffable *Sephiroth*. (Singular: *Sephirah*)

The term *Sephiroth* has been explained in various ways- some more likely than others. One is that it derives from the Greek word for "Sphere" (as in the various Spheres of Heaven). Another is that it comes from the Hebrew word for "Sapphire" (indicating the color of the star-filled sky). Of course, either of these could be the case, but are not likely in my opinion.

Instead, we must look at the word's Hebrew root: SPhR. Because Biblical Hebrew had no vowels, many words were left with more than one possible interpretation. By adding different vowels, SPhR can be translated variously as "Sepher" (Book), "Saphar" (Count), or "Siphur" (Say). The first time the Sephiroth are mentioned in written form- in the *Sepher Yetzirah* (the Book of Formation)- all three interpretations are suggested. Perhaps the form of "to Count" was of most importance- as the Sephiroth are described as the base numbers 1 through 10, arranged for the Creation of the Universe. On the other hand, the *Sepher Bahir* (the Book of Glory) refers to the Sephiroth as the "Ten Sayings." This seems firmly based upon the fact that there are a total of ten instances in Genesis I where it is written "God said...".

I should also point out here that it is at the time of the *Sepher Yetzirah* that the seven traditional Heavens were divided into ten Sephiroth. This change is apparently based on Greek (Pythagorean) influence where the number-system of 10 was most important. In this new model, the lowest of the Seven Heavens was divided between the Lunar and Earth Sephiroth, and the highest heaven contains no less than three spheres- the Saturn, Zodiacal, and Divine.

**The Sephiroth went through many forms in history. Today the most common is the medieval tree pattern version discussed earlier. It became the primary Qabalistic glyph for the the 19th century Hermetic order known as the Golden Dawn. Its form is:**

****

**The Names of these Sephiroth are translated as follows:**

**1) *Kether* (keh-ther) - Crown**

**2) *Chokmah*(hock-mah) - Wisdom**

**3) *Binah* (bee-nah) - Understanding**

**4) *Chesed* (hes-ed) - Mercy**

**5) *Gevurah* (gev-oo-rah) - Severity**

**6) *Tiphareth* (tif-ar-eth) - Beauty or Majesty**

**7) *Netzach* (nets-ock) - Victory**

**8) *Hod* (hoad) - Splendor**

**9) *Yesod* (yeh-soad) - Foundation**

**10)*Malkuth* (mal-kooth) - Kingdom**

**We will discuss the nature of each of these Divine Spheres in lessons to follow.**

**Notice that the Sephiroth, in numerical order, fall in a zigzag (lightning bolt) pattern down the Tree- this is the Bolt of Creation, often represented as a sword. It is even written that this is the ever-turning sword of flame mentioned in Genesis. There are also a series of 22 Paths that connect these Sephiroth with each other, but those are for later discussion. I might also mention that many pictures of the Tree depict a Serpent ascending the Spheres- a coil touching each and every Path. This is not the Serpent of Genesis- who is associated with the Tree of Knowledge. This is *Nahushtan* (see Numbers 21), and he represents the Ascension along the Paths that is the way of the Mage.**



**There are also many other aspects to the Tree. There is the Three Pillars- notice that the Sephiroth line up in three distinct columns. There are the Four Worlds- among which the Sephiroth are divided from highest to lowest. There are the Three Veils that reside above Kether (which needn't concern us at all at this time). There is even a different Tree pattern for before and after the Biblical Fall from Eden. Finally, there is also a "non-Sephirah" which rests in the great space between the three upper (Supernal) Sephiroth, and the seven lower Sephiroth. This is called *Daath* (Knowledge) and represents the Abyss that separates man from God. I will discuss most of this later in this class, and in following lessons.**

**There is another obscure aspect of the Tree of Life that I have hinted at previously in this lesson. Remember that I mentioned a philosophy that regarded the Divine as something "immutable"- changeless and without division. This immutability of the Divine means that each emanated Sphere of the Tree actually contains the whole of Divinity within it. (The faceted gem.) That means that every apparent division upon the Tree of Life actually contains an entire Tree within itself. Each of the Four Worlds is a Tree and each Sephirah is a Tree. This makes for at least 400 Sephiroth, and can actually go on to infinity (as each of these 400 Sephiroth also has 400 within it). However, the beginner needn't worry about this right now. It will become more important later for an advanced understanding of the Tarot.**

**Macrocosm and Microcosm**

We have learned that the Tree of Life is an illustration of the traditional Seven Heavens of Jewish mysticism (divided by ten)- depicting the emanation and flow of Divine energy from God to Earth. However, remember the Hermetic axiom that states "As Above, So Below"- meaning that what we find spelled out in the Heavens can always be found reflected in the soul of man. Therefore, if the Tree of Life is a suitable diagram of the Mind of God, then it is also a suitable diagram for the minds of human beings.

This theory gives rise to a study known as "Qabalistic Psychology." There will be a class offered on this subject later in this curriculum. For the time being, I merely wish to introduce the new student to the concept, and define some of the language you might encounter throughout these lessons.



In the terms of Qabalistic Psychology, the Sphere of Malkuth relates to the conscious mind (and its interaction with the physical body). The Spheres of Yesod through Chesed represent the "Spirit"- meaning the memories, the personality, etc; everything that makes you the "you" that you know. Binah and Chokmah, together, make up the Higher Self- that part of you which is not truly separate from the Divine at all. Finally, Kether is the Divine Spark within each of us- the root and origin of the soul, the "Holy Spirit."

The Tree as the Universe (Heavens) is called the Macrocosm, or "Greater Universe". The Tree as the Mind and Soul is called the Microcosm, or "Lesser Universe." The fact that the same model is used to map out both realms shows forth the mystery behind the concept that Man was created in God's Image. "As Above, So Below".

Once again, these concepts will be discussed as this work progresses. Hopefully, the above has given you a good grounding in the subject of the Tree of Life.

**The Ten Divine Sayings (The Holy Sephiroth)**

**The Tree Related to Creation**

In the early Qabalistical writing called the *Sepher Bahir*, the word "Sephiroth" obviously relates to the Hebrew word *Sipher* (Saying); as the Sephiroth are referred to therein as the "Ten Sayings." When we look at the first chapter of the Biblical book of Genesis, we find that exactly ten instances where it is written "Elohim said..."

In most of the ancient Middle Eastern mythologies, the universe was created through a Divine Word. In Babylon, Apsu and Tiamat gave birth to the first Gods by pronouncing Their Names:

When skies above were not yet named Nor earth below pronounced by name, Apsu, the First One, Their begetter And Mummu Tiamat, who bore them all, Had mixed their waters together, But had not formed pastures, nor discovered reed-bed; When yet no Gods were manifest, nor Names pronounced, nor destinies decreed, Then Gods were born within Them.

Lahmu and Lahamu emerged, Their Names pronounced. As soon as they matured, were fully formed, Anshar and Kishar were born, surpassing them. They passed the days at length, they added to the years.

Notice the constant references to assigning Names and pronouncing them. The Egyptians, too, included this in their creation mythos- the universe being created by one simple utterance of Re: *Djehuti*. In the Christian Mythos, the same concept (descended directly from the Egyptians) is embodied in the fact that God created the universe by uttering *Christos* (John 1:1, 14, 18). And finally, to the people of Israel, creation occurred through Ten Utterances of God- each one quoted in Genesis 1. These Ten Sayings will form the bases of my analysis of the Sephiroth.

The following is not meant, by any means, as an exhaustive work on the Sephiroth. Such an effort would take many volumes! My intention is simply to "give the basics" on their energies, and then offer a model or two for interpreting that information. Along with the Ten Sayings, I will offer at least two other important views of the Sephiroth: Numerology (as per the *Sepher Yetzirah*, which so insistently reminds us "Ten and not nine, ten and not eleven!) and Sacred Geometry (a rather Pythagorean view of the universe).

As explained in the introduction, these lessons intend to focus upon *Mahaseh Berashith*, the Work of Creation. This man we will discuss the Sephiroth from the apex of the Tree (Kether) to the lowermost Sphere (Malkuth). The function of each Sephirah will be explained inasmuch as it relates to the creation and manifestation of the universe.

The study of *Mahaseh Merkavah*, the Work of the Chariot, would explore the Sephiroth in reverse order from Malkuth to Kether. The energies of the Tree do flow in both directions, and the Spheres possess a dual nature to allow for each operation. This is the inbreathing and out breathing of God.

Note that, according to Hebrew grammar, the words "Sephirah" and "Sephiroth" are assigned a feminine gender by their suffixes ("-ah" and "-oth"). This is because their primary nature is feminine- each Sphere passively receiving the energies of the Sphere before it. However, when the reflux of energies ascends the Spheres back toward Kether, the Sephiroth take on a more masculine orientation. Each Sephirah must actively push its energies to the next highest Sphere.

In the following, of course, we will examine the Ten Sephiroth of the Tree of Life in their feminine and creative aspect. This information is essential to understanding all further work involving the Tree of Life. In time, the student should expand his or her contemplations upon the Tree beyond what follows- such as the color of each Sephirah, the Divine Names associated with each, their Angelic Choirs, etc. This information and further teachings will follow in later classes. For now, we shall begin our first journey through the Heavenly Spheres:

**1. Kether (Crown)**

**"Elohim said, 'Let there be Light.' and there was Light." -Gen. 1:3**

Above Kether in the model of the Tree is pure Divinity. There are sometimes three "veils" of the Divine described above Kether- the *Ain* (Nothingness), *Ain Soph* (Limitlessness), and *Ain Soph Aur* (Limitless Light)- but I will not concern the student with them at this time.

It is sufficient here to consider all forces above Kether as a singular Divine Source. This Sea of Pure Divinity (the Limitless Light) created within itself an empty space in which it could form the Universe- a limitless void which we know as the Abyss in Hermeticism, or as "the Deep" in Genesis. ("And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the Deep." -Genesis 1:2) Within the darkness of this Abyss is where *Elohim* (God) uttered the First Words- "Let there be Light!"- and thus was Kether born.

Kether, itself, is not really distinguished from the limitless Divinity above it; it is simply where the Divine first extends itself toward manifestation. However, unlike the *Ain Soph*, Kether is the Divine Light that we can view from our physical existence. In line with this concept, the proper color of Kether is a brilliant white. Just as the color white contains within it all colors, so too does Kether contain within it the whole of Creation.

However, at the emanation of Kether, everything is still pure potential- existing only as ideas. It predates the dual (masculine-feminine) processes of creation- which would take the ideas into the blueprint and then building stages. Yet, while Kether is definitely not "male" or "female", it still possesses the potential (or seeds) for both.

Therefore, Kether is both male/female and completely unified at once. Consider, for example, Adam in the Book of Genesis *before* Eve was separated from him. Perhaps even better, consider Kether as a Mother pregnant with a male child. The pregnant female certainly embodies Life-in-Potential. The Mother and unborn (male) Child are a perfect representation of the two primordial forces of creation (female and male), existing yet as one Being.

Students of Gnosticism will recognize herein the Mother Sophia, still pregnant with the Creator God Ialdabaoth- well before the formation of the Earth and Heavens. Biblical literature preserves aspects of this in the Book of Revelation, chapter 12:

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. [...] And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. [Rev 12:1-2,5]

This also reminds me of more primitive versions of the myth, such as the Babylonian Goddess Tiamat- existing as One with Her husband and pregnant with the Great Gods of Creation:

Apsu, the First One, Their begetter And Mummu Tiamat, who bore them all Had mixed their waters together [...] Then Gods were born within them.

On a more Scientific Note, I tend to relate Kether to the "Cosmic Egg" of the Big Bang Theory. The Cosmic Egg, too, contained the entire physical universe within it, yet was in a state of Unity prior to its explosion.

Simply, Kether is the Divine Source of All- the Sphere which will pour out its energy into the Tree. When I think of Elohim declaring "Let there be Light!", it brings to mind the image of the Seraphim- the Angels of Fire said to surround the Divine Throne (Kether itself)- bursting forth with Their eternal Song of Praise. This is called the *Trisagion*:

Holy Holy Holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole world is full of Thy Glory!

It is a love song, and the Song of Creation. It is the Divine Energy which runs through the Tree. Keep in mind the Thelemic phrase: "Love is the Law..."

As for Numerology, it is perhaps plainly obvious how the Number One embodies all of the above concepts. It is a single digit- Unity; yet it is from the number one that all other numbers arise.

Finally, I refer to Sacred Geometry. In this view, Kether is the geometric point. The point has no mathematical dimensions (no length, width, or depth), and therefore does not "exist" in that sense. It is hypothetical, accepted merely on the strength of logic, and faith in that logic. The line (length, the first dimension) can not exist without a point at either end. Therefore, the geometric point is a nothingness from which everything manifests.

This description also fits Kether as the pure potential that pre-exists any actual creation or manifestation. The point itself is something of a mathematical paradox- how can one join together two "nothings" (the points) and end up with one "something" (a line)? This is the same paradox of Creation- how did something manifest out of absolute Nothingness? This *ex nihilo* birth of the Tree of Life from the Divine Source is embodied in Kether, the Crown (and root) of the Tree.

**Chokmah (Wisdom)**

**"Elohim said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the Water, that it may separate Water from Water." - Gen. 1:6**

Now, if the Cosmic Egg is representative of Unity, then the universe which sprang from it is representative of Duality. Magickal theory has long described the universe as essentially dual in nature. The most immediate example would be the "As Above, So Below" tenet of Hermeticism. The Yin and Yang of Eastern mysticism, the Masonic Pillars of Solomon's Temple, and the Lord and Lady of Neopaganism are further examples. All that exists- rather physical or merely conceptual- must also have its equal and opposite. Positive and negative (also called Active and Passive, or Male and Female) are the two building blocks of reality.

The explosion of the Cosmic Egg would seem to be a direct result of Duality (the basic law of nature) being inflicted upon Unity. Looking to the Tree diagram, this great division of Kether is shown by the existence of Chokmah and Binah (the Masculine and Feminine Principals of the universe respectively).

Meanwhile, the actual act of the separation is embodied in Chokmah (Wisdom). Hebrew legend tells us that the Goddess Hokhmah (known to the Gnostics as Sophia) assisted in the Creation:

At the first, before the beginning of Earth, when He established the Heavens, I was there, when He drew out a circle upon the face of the Deep." (Proverbs 8:23, 28)

This is mirrored by other Hebrew references to God consulting the Goddess Torah (who is synonymous with Hokhma) before beginning the act of Creation.

In a practical sense, the Sphere of Chokmah is where the Unity of Kether is first divided into the two principals of God and Goddess. In Egypt, the "expanse" that separated Water from Water was known as the Air God Shu, who separated the Earth God Geb and the Sky Goddess Nut. In Sumeria, it was the Air God Enlil separating the Heaven God Anu from the Earth Goddess Ki. There are many mysteries linked to this Separation of Waters- mainly those concerning the creation and operation of the *Qliphothic* (or demonic) forces. These forces are further explained in classes to follow.

All in all, as mentioned above, the Sphere of Chokmah represents a masculine force, or active energy. It is the All-Father who receives His energies directly from Kether, and then impregnates the Goddess (Binah). Its color is a pearly-gray; a perfect cross between Kether's white brilliance and Binah's black darkness. The Sphere of the Zodiac is found here, because the belt of fixed stars represents a great barrier that separates the Divine Realm from the manifest universe.

Numerology reflects the simple ideas established above. The number One leads naturally to Two- Unity is split into Duality. I find it interesting to note that Two is the natural number of Chokmah, while Eleven (two ones side by side) is the number of the *Qliphoth* which arose out of the actions of the actions of Chokmah. However, the two Ones that compose the number Eleven show a "duplication" of Kether, while Chokmah and the number Two shows a more natural progression from One. It is the Father and Mother come forth as a Divine Couple.

Finally, we return to Sacred Geometry. The "shape" of Chokmah is the Line- possessing only length (the first dimension). The singular Kether has now become Two- the two points needed to form a Line. The only thing in physical reality that is truly of the first dimension is energy- as it can travel from point A to point B (length) yet has absolutely no width to speak of. Thus it fits well that Chokmah is the very explosion of the Cosmic Egg Itself- Active Energies, the God.

**Binah (Understanding)**

**"Elohim said, 'Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear.' And it was so." - Gen. 1:9**

For the sake of illustration, Binah seems to manifest directly from Chokmah. However, this is not an entirely accurate description of Binah's origin. Instead, Binah descended, along with Chokmah, directly from Kether as that original Sphere was split in two. Of course, Chokmah can be said to have originated slightly ahead of Binah, because it embodies the Separation responsible for Binah's existence. Thus it is that Binah is depicted as a natural progression from Chokmah. Binah is the Feminine or Passive Force, the Receptive Energies of the Universe. Its receptivity is symbolized by its color of black- the color which absorbs all other colors and does not allow them to reflect outward again.

Along these same lines, Binah is also the Sphere of Saturn- the slowest of the Planets, which also marks the upper barrier of the Seven Heavens. Saturn is known to astrologers as the force of Limitation. In the first chapter of Genesis, this is shown by the restriction of the Waters into one area; it is the confining of the Waters of the Abyss. At the same time, Binah is the Great Mother impregnated by the God-Force of Chokmah, and from whom the lower Spheres of the Tree will emanate.

Like the Goddess of Neopagan mythos, Saturn can both cut down and "limit" energies, or it can give them birth. In fact, what makes up the very essence of the Goddess (i.e., the Triple Goddess of Maiden, Mother, and Crone) is the fact that she is both of these Forces at the same time- and the same goes for Saturn.

Saturn is the harvest, "cutting down". Yet it is the harvest that brings life to us. In the Babylonian Mythos, Marduk slew Tiamat (She representing Chaos, Destruction, and Saturnian Forces overall). Yet it was with her body that Marduk fashioned the World. That is to say, it is Saturn that gave birth to all life via its own restriction or "death."

At the same time, Saturn represents the energy of the seed: resting in darkness, yet germinating life that will eventually spring forth. Therefore, Saturn is not simply defined as "Limitation" and left at that. I see it more along the lines of "germination." Its color is the not only the black of the grave, but also of the soil where the seed first sprouts. Binah receives the Seed for all Life from Chokmah, and is only waiting for the right time to give it birth.

Let us now consider Binah further. Remember earlier in these lessons, when I described the division of the Seven Heavens of Jewish mysticism into the Ten Sephiroth of the *Sepher Bahir.* In this scheme, the highest (or Seventh) Heaven of Saturn contains Binah, Chomah, and Kether. The lowest (First) Heaven of Luna contains Yesod and Malkuth. Thus, all ten Spheres fit into the even traditional levels of Heaven.



It makes sense that the Lunar Sphere encompasses both the Earth and the Moon, because of the undeniable symbioses between these two bodies. The other planets each operate by themselves. Then, Saturn contains the Saturnian (Binah), Zodiacal (Chockmah), and Divine Unity (Kether) Spheres.

It was this picture of the Tree that caused me to mediate deeply upon Binah. I wondered why the Spheres of Unity, the God and the Goddess should all be grouped under the planet Saturn. However, when you think of it in terms of Germination it makes perfect sense. The seed, which contains all, is the Sphere of Unity. The God and the Goddess united within the seed is what makes it sprout. And that's why all three of these Spheres can be grouped under Saturn. In many ways, the symbolism I discussed for Kether is reflected into the sphere of Saturn and Binah- the Mother awaiting the birth of Her Child.

At this point the Numerology begins to take on some depth. Three is born from two, just as Mother and Father create Child. In this case, the Children are the lower seven Sephiroth of the Tree. Three is a number of much mystery; one of which was hinted at above by the mention of the Triple Goddess within Binah. Duality is, indeed, the essential Law of the Universe- but Duality naturally produces Triplicity. For every Thesis there is an Antithesis, and for each pair of these there is a Synthesis. The Maiden Conceives (Binah impregnated by Chokmah), the Crone cuts down (Saturnian Energies), and it is the Mother betwixt the Two who gives Birth. This latter is the major aspect of Binah proper.

In the realm of Sacred Geometry, we enter the second dimension- the plane (length plus width). Incidentally, the most basic form a plane can take is the Triangle- corresponding to Binah's natural number Three. In this case, the plane in question is the plane of manifestation. No physical matter is involved at the stage of Binah, but the "space-time continuum" has been fixed. As mentioned above, this is the seed just waiting to sprout.

**Daath (Knowledge)**

Daath does not exist. It is an empty space that signifies the Abyss, a position upon the Tree diagram where a proper Sephirah once resided. (In more advanced lessons, we will discuss the two versions of the Tree of Life before and after the fall of this mis-placed Sephirah.)

The three Spheres explained above (Kether, Chokmah, and Binah) are collectively known as the "Supernals" or the Supernal Eden. The Abyss of Daath separates the created world from that Supernal Eden. It is where God set the "Kherubim and the ever-turning Sword of Flame to keep the way of the Tree of Life" (Genesis 3:24) after Adam and Eve "fell" into manifest reality. That is to say it is the narrow Gateway that must be passed to gain entry to Enlightenment.

However, while Daath generally represents "the Abyss" in Qabalistic thought, it is important to remember that the entire Tree of Life actually exists within the confines of the Abyss. (Read the description of Kether above.) Daath, being an empty space of sorts between Spheres, is merely an open gap in the structure of the Tree. Therefore, it is more proper to think of Daath as an open fissure in the ground. It does not embody the whole of the Abyss, but merely leads to it.

Beyond these few words nothing more needs to be said here, as the Abyss is explained at length in later lessons.

**Chesed (Mercy)**

**"And Elohim said, 'Let the Earth sprout vegetation, seed bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on Earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so." - Gen. 1:11**

Now we move to the second Trinity upon the Tree, composed of Chesed, Gevurah, and Tiphareth. These three Spheres are said to be reflections of the Supernals (as above, so below). Therefore, Chesed is a lower manifestation of Chokmah, and is related to the God-Force. Where Chokmah is the All-Father (such as Chronos of Greece), Chesed is the sphere of the Ruler-God of the pantheon (such as Zeus in the same example).

Chesed is the Sphere of Jupiter, the Force of Mercy and Abundance- especially the abundance of vegetation (as shown in the Genesis verse). This Sphere brings forth the life that was germinated in Binah. It is the Ruler God Marduk who divided Tiamat into Earth and Sky, and ruled the new world through wisdom and kindness.

Chesed is Sphere Four, and it is at this point that an important turn is taken. Number four is not a simple progression from three alone. Instead, it is a new beginning that arises from the combination of the previous three stages. The best example of this is the four Philosophical Elements. In truth, there are only three Elements proper- those of Fire, Water, and Air. (As described in the *Sepher Yetzriah*.) Earth, a kind of hypothetical fourth Element, is actually a combination of the other Three. Thus it is that Chesed is also a God-Force, and begins anew the process described for the Supernals; only on a lower level.

Four also indicates the shape of Chesed in Sacred Geometry, the Square- or, better, the equal-armed Cross. This is a fixed sign, representing all four Elements, which are the basic building blocks of reality. They are the qualities that will make up the matter of the universe- adding a third dimension of depth to the length and width. Thus, rather than a square, it is properly a cube we find here. This is the Third Dimension in which you and I live; yet it is important to understand that nothing is manifest at this stage upon the Tree. This Sphere might be likened to the sub-atomic realm, which contains all the basic components of reality, but still exists in a state of perceived Chaos.

**Gevurah (Strength or Severity)**

**"Elohim said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times- the days and the years; and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the Earth.' And it was so." - Gen. 1:14-15**

Gevurah exists as the lower-reflection of Binah, and is thus another Goddess Force. Normally, a male is pictured here, as Gevurah is the sphere of Mars- the Warrior and the Ruler with the Iron Hand. However, in the Ancient pantheons, it was the figure of the Goddess who best resided in this Sphere. This was because the Goddess was a Being of Passion, and the Ancient mind did not see a separation between the passions of Love and the passions of War.

The Sumerian Goddess Inanna, for instance, was both a Goddess of Fertility and a Goddess of War. The Canaanite Astarte (a well known Fertility figure) was also known as the terrible Anath. Anath was definitely the most bloody and vengeful Divine Being (on record) in ancient Canaan, and she protected her brother/lover Baal with the ferocity of the lion. (The martial lion, incidentally, is a well-known cult-figure for the Goddess). As mighty as Baal was, he was a Chesedic (Merciful) Ruler God, and he did fall prey to his enemies from time to time. It was Anath, balancing him in Gevurah, who came to his rescue time and time again. I might also add that Baal would normally send Anath to ask the Father God El for things that he wanted. Anath's way of "asking" was to threaten her Father with all sorts of physical discomfort. Though he never indicated fear of Anath, He certainly never accused her of an offense or attempted to attack er!

The above should sum up Gevurah well enough. It is more than simply the Sphere of the Warrior- it is Divine Severity overall. Gevurah represents the trials by fire that meets us in life, which is called "ordeals" in mystical terms. As an aside, I might point out that the Hittites (and certainly most Middle-Eastern peoples) regarded war as such an ordeal. They felt war to be a necessary thing by which Gods settled disputes between kingdoms.. It is thus that Gevurah is upon the Holy Tree of Life, rather than relegated to the demonic *Qliphoth* beneath the Tree.

In this case, the Sacred Geometry and Numerology are combined into one. Gevurah's number is five, which relates to the points of the Pentagram. This is a direct continuation of the Four Elements concept of Chesed. Now, however, the Fifth Element of Spirit has been added to rule over and bind the others. It is the Spirit that reigns in the Elements and forces them into an order that will allow manifestation. All of this is embodied in the Genesis verse by the symbolism of the Luminaries: The Sun and Moon are traditionally seen as Rulers of the Earth, as well as the Sources of the Divine Spirit that shines upon the Earth. Thus, they are fitting symbols of the "Rule of Spirit over the Elements"- or the Pentagram.

**Tiphareth (Beauty or Majesty)**

**"Elohim said, 'Let the Waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and birds that fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.'" - Gen. 1:20**

Tiphareth, the Sphere of the Sun, is a very special sphere indeed. It is the lower manifestation of Kether, the center of *LVX* ("Lukes" â€“ ancient Greek for "Light" with heavy solar connotations) in the universe, and the Heart of the Tree over-all. Though Kether is the source of energy to the Tree, it is Tiphareth which meters that energy directly to the other Spheres. (Notice the paths that radiate from Tiphareth to *all* of the central Sephiroth on the Tree diagram.) This sphere embodies the concept of the Sun as the Source of Spirit unto the world. Just as the Moon is a reflection of the Sun, so too is the Sun a reflection of the Divine Light of Kether.

LVX is the product of a process summed up in the ancient Gnostic Divine Name *IAO*. The Golden Dawn breaks this Name down, letter by letter, into three principal parts: Isis, Apophis, and Osiris. These three (plus Horus, who is an aspect of Osiris) are the characters of the Egyptian Osirian Cycle- the yearly journey of the Sun through the Heavens (solstices and equinoxes). In the story, the Pharaoh Osiris is slain by his brother Set (called Apophis in this case)- symbolizing the summer equinox when the days begin to grow shorter towards winter. (Set also scattered the body of Osiris like chaff from wheat, which further links this tale to the harvesting of grain.) His Queen, Isis, searches for the body of Osiris in order to give it proper burial. When she finally collects the pieces, she uses magick to restore Osiris to temporary life- during which time the lovers unite in order to produce their son Horus. Horus, then, grew to finally reclaim his father's Throne- as the winter must eventually give way to summer once more.

To best understand Tiphareth, the natures of the Supernals must be kept in mind: Kether is the Divine Unity of God and Goddess in One. Chokmah and Binah, then, are the God and Goddess separated into two individual Entities. Finally, Tiphareth is the God and Goddess rejoined in Sacred (sexual) Union; two individual forces joined as if one, but not actually one as they were in Kether. This Love making, as the Wiccan Mysteries teach, is what sustains, heals, and brings Life to the World. This is the active Force of the Song of the Seraphim (The Love Song of Creation) previously mentioned.

Remember that the Wheel of the Year is not based solely on the Lovemaking of the God and Goddess. It also includes the Death and Rebirth of the Forces of Life. Possessing the natures of Chokmah and Binah, it thus reflects the Rising and Falling Forces of the Universe embodied by hem. The Sun descends into the Underworld each night, and rises the next morning; the Lord of the Waxing Year gives way to the Lord of the Waning Year upon each summer solstice, and returns to the world at the Winter Solstice. Tiphareth embodies both of these Forces because it is the very center, and balancing point, of the Tree.

This is the Sphere of the Initiation of the Adept- Christ upon the Cross. It is where the Spirit comes face to face with it's Divine Nature, and the Self is purified by its Solar Fires. Literally, Tiphareth is as far as the Spiritual can descend the Tree and still be Spiritual, and it is as far as the Physical can ascend and remain physical- thus the Initiatory Death/Rebirth necessary to pass through this Sphere. Like Christ sacrificed upon the Cross of the Elements, the physical dross must perish and be left behind in order to ascend onward to Heaven. By the same token, those Spiritual forces that attempt to descend past Tiphareth toward manifestation must adopt physical shells here to continue.

The Genesis verse for this Tiphareth speaks of the first life in the world arising from the sea. Tiphareth is often referred to as the Son of the God and Goddess (Chockmah and Binah)- the sum and source of all the lower Sephiroth. Therefore, Tiphareth properly embodies the life that sprang from the Sea of Binah.

The processes and Divine cycles that govern the universe become apparent here, as illustrated by IAO and the Solar Wheel of the Year. It's shape, then, is the next step from the Pentagram- the Hexagram. The Golden Dawn uses this symbol to represent the six Planets orbiting the Sun (implied in the center of the Hexagram); once again indicating the Cycles of the universe. Also keep in mind that it is formed of two interlocking triangles- one pointing up and the other down. This further indicates the "in between" nature of Tiphareth to Spirit and Matter. (The Triangles specifically represent the Fires above intersecting with the Waters below- as seen in the *Sepher Yetzriah.*

The number Six has some interesting applications of its own. It is two Threes, indicating the God and Goddess each possessing three Aspects. If seen as three Twos, it displays the God and Goddess interacting in three different ways; once again indicating their three Aspects. It is the Maiden who seduces the Young God, the Mother who Mates with the Father God, and the Crone who follows the Dark God into the grave.

**Netzach (Victory)**

**"Elohim Blessed them, saying, 'Be fertile and increase, fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the Earth.'" - Gen. 1:22**

Just as with the previous triangle (Chesed, Gevurah, Tiphareth), Netzach begins another reflected triangle. However, take note that this new triangle is not inverted to its higher manifestation- the apex still points downward. Instead, this new Triangle is transposed from side to side. Its right side has become its left and vise-versa.

Literally, Netzach is the result of the Severity of Gevurah passing though the Majesty of Tiphareth. Netzach is the Sphere of Venus- the seat of passion. It represents the basic instincts that lead to reproduction, though it is not a sphere of reproduction itself. It is the sphere of the passions of both love and war; embodying the mating rituals as well as the battle and hunting rituals of the animal kingdom (including the human animal). I have already discussed the Ancient Goddess' relation to both Love and War (see Gevurah).

Netzach is also the sphere of inspiration, expression, creativity, and insight. It receives the spiritual influx from the Solar Sphere- and is thus the result of the cyclic processes initiated within Tiphareth. Therefore, we can suggest that flashes of inspiration arise within us as rays of LVX flashing into Netzach from Tiphareth.

On a material level, Netzach is the first expression of the newly manifest matter from Tiphareth. That is, within Tiphareth, spiritual energy was first converted into the raw materials for matter. Netzach, then, is where these materials are organized into matter as we know it- such as, perhaps, atoms and molecules. On a less microscopic level, think of Netzach as pristine Nature as yet untouched by mankind.

Netzach's number is Seven, the number of the classical planets. In the study of astrology, the seven planets act as rulers and shapers of the "astral weather" depicted by a chart. Therefore, the planetary forces mediate the output of the cycles of the Sun/Tiphareth.

Netzach is the Gate through which the Spiritual Forces enter physical reality. For instance, Netzach has been described as a kind of laser beam- receiving influxes of LVX from Tiphareth, concentrating them, and blasting them into the structural Sephirah of Hod. Netzach is thus the Sphere from which the Mage (who exists in Hod, see below) draws the energies with which he works. And, as the intermediate (or Adept) knows, it is the Mage's own passion which is this energy. The Seven Planets are embodiments of the various manifestations of the emotions and other mental states. Of course, that is not the totality of what the Planets represent, but it serves for the description of Netzach's operation.

The sacred geometric figure of Netzach- the seven-pointed star or Heptagram- provides some unique insight of its own. For instance, take note of the attributions of the planets to the seven points:



You may note that these are assigned (counterclockwise) in the order of the days of the week. Venus (Friday) is at the summit simply because this is a Star of Venus. Otherwise it doesn't matter which point is placed on top, as it does not affect the ordering of the Planets.

What can affect that order, however, is the manner in which one chooses to connect the seven points to create a geometric figure. Drawing one continuous line from point to point, it is possible to create a proper Heptagram reflected from every second point *or* from every other point. I personally find more significance in connecting every other point- from Venus to Mercury to Luna, etc. In this way, the Planets are connected in the order of the Seven Heavens- Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, and Luna. At the same time, the ordering of Seven Days of the Week is preserved when read counterclockwise around the star.

**Hod (Splendor)**

**"And Elohim said, 'Let us make Adam in Our Image, after Our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole Earth, and all the creeping things that creep on Earth.'" - Gen. 1:26**

Hod is the sphere of Mercury. This is traditionally the Sphere of language- both speech and writing. It is the seat of practical invention (as opposed to the inspiration found in passionate Netzach). Hod is the seat of the scientific process, classification and knowledge, technology and communication.

In the physical sense, the molecules that formed in Netzach are structured into specific "strings" of matter through the operations of Hod. At this stage upon the Tree of Life, we are finally viewing the world as seen on a microscopic level. This is where any given Spiritual pattern is expanded into the "thing" it is to become- a new idea, or a tree, or a person. Hod takes the untouched natural landscape produced in Netzach, and transforms it into an ordered agricultural project. In this sense, Hod is the human intellect applied to natural processes.

Because Hod represents logical order and classification, it is the Sphere of the mystery of the "True Name." Shamanic and occult legends have long insisted that knowledge of something's (or someone's) True Name was to enjoy some degree of control over it. All forms of exorcism and evocation known to the West are ultimately dependent on that very principle. Scientists also influence nature via knowledge of True Names- some by understanding its atomic and molecular structure, others by classifications and accumulated knowledge, and still others through understanding mathematics and physics.

The same applies equally to the Mage, who knows a more mystical interpretation of True Names, and influences the world around him in his own scientific way. (You may note in later lessons that the Tarot card entitled "The Mage" is assigned to Mercury.) In the case of either the Mage or the Scientist, each is moving behind the veil of the visible world to influence the fundamental forces through which the world manifests. By altering it there, he changes the end product- and thus reality.

The Biblical Adam embodies this principal quite well. He is described as the manifest Image of God (In other words an icon. Iconography falls partly within the sphere of Hod, and partly within Netzach.) He was also charged with giving names to "all the beasts of the field"- depicting the birth of names and classification among human society. Along these same lines, Hebrew legend tells us that Adam created all languages and sciences while in Eden. Adam created the True Names of the universe, the very molecular structure, by which it finally manifested.

Hod's Number is Eight, or two Fours. Remember that Hod is the manifestation of Chesed after it crosses through Tiphareth, and Chesed's number is Four. Hod, then, represents the Four Elements manifesting in both their positive and negative physical extremes:

Fire(+) and Fire(-) Water(+) and Water(-) Air(+)and Air(-) Earth(+) and Earth(-)

Duality, remember, is the most fundamental law of nature. This duality creates a stabilized environment necessary for manifestation. The waxing and waning forces pull between one another, and the mid-point between them is where Reality exists. Once again, this illustrates the Hodic process of giving Form to Energies.

Finally, the Geometry for this Sephirah is the Eight-pointed Star, or Octagram- formed of two Squares interconnected. This simply embodies the same concepts as above- the doubling of the Chesedic Force (whose shape was the Square).

**Yesod (Foundation)**

**"Elohim blessed them and Elohim said to them, 'Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all of the living things that creep upon the Earth.'" - Gen. 1:28**

Yesod is the sphere of the Moon, and like the Moon, is a reflection of the Sun of Tiphareth. Tiphareth itself is a reflection of the three Supernals, and embodies the various cycles of the universe brought from potential in Kether, Chokmah, and Binah. (Potential, Active, and Passive.) Likewise does Yesod embody a triple-cycle reflected from higher Spheres.

This begins in Chokmah, which transmits the universal Active Force into Tiphareth. This force is then reflected in the face of Yesod, where it manifests as the Waxing Moon and all of its associated mysteries. Binah transmits the universal Passive Force into Tiphareth, from whence it is reflected by Yesod as the Waning Moon. Kether also transmits its White Brilliance to Tiphareth, which naturally strikes Yesod with the intensity of the Full Moon. Even the dark non-sphere of Daath transmits influence to Tiphareth, which finally manifests in Yesod as the phase of the Dark Moon- when Luna is absent from the sky altogether.

The religion of Wicca focuses here to a large degree. Their understanding of the Triple Goddess could very well be called the mysteries of Yesod. Although, the teachings are by no means unique to Neopaganism. The Gnostics referred to the Mother of Nature as *Sophia* (Wisdom), and the Jewish Qabalists called Her *Shekhinah* (Presence of God). The Hermeticists also honored Nature as a Goddess- adopting much from the Gnostics and Qabalists- and called her the Soul of the World.

Like the Goddess, Yesod receives an influx of Life from Tiphareth (the God), and passes it on to Malkuth (the physical plane). This is the feminine (receptive) nature of the Moon as it is impregnated by the Divine Light of the Sun and gives birth to the natural tides of the Earth. The Goddess is responsible for the physical manifestation of all the cycles and tides that govern the laws of nature. She mediates the LVX and dispenses it to Earth as would a nurturing mother. (On the other hand, if this LVX were to descend directly from Tiphareth, the universe would be uninhabitable.)

Therefore, it is the function of Yesod to receive all of the energies from the higher Spheres of the Tree, filter them, and finally pass the product onward to Malkuth. You can see in the diagram that Yesod exists at the lowest junction point of all the higher Sephiroth, and is thus properly named the Foundation of the Tree.

Taking all of this into account, we can further establish that Yesod represents what we usually call the "Astral Plane." In fact, there has long existed an association between the astral and Luna, especially when the astral is depicted as a place of visions and dreams. Yesod is a place of visions and illusions, where the chaotic natural universe is filtered and given its outward appearances. For instance, this is why a chair appears to us as a chair- rather than the mass of writhing molecules and empty space it really is. Thus, Yesod gives the final physical forms to things that exist- but they are not yet physical here. If we travel in the astral to place where our chair rests, and try to touch it, we find it is only a phantom image.

Yesod is also the sphere of sexual reproduction. This is certainly in line with the blessing given to Adam and Eve in the Genesis verse quote above. Yesod is the sphere that aligns with the reproductive organs when we display the Tree of Life in the human aura. In the study of Qabalistic psychology, Yesod is considered the seat of the Lower Self. That is, the instinctual and habitual aspect of the mind, or subconscious. The hard-wired instincts that drive sexual reproduction would exist here. Even a woman's natural ability to produce life is governed by Yesodic cycles- which have long been associated with the Moon.

The Sacred Number of Yesod is Nine, and its Geometry is the Nine-pointed Star, or Enneagram, composed of three interlocking Triangles. Both number and shape traditionally refer to a "trinity of trinities"- or three groups of three at work.

Of course, each triangle of the Enneagram can represent one phase of the Moon: the one which leans toward the right is the Waxing Moon, the one which leans toward the left is the Waning Moon, and the one resting upright is the Full Moon. Because these are three triangles, it also indicates a triple aspect to each lunar phase. We might interpret this as the point in time when one phase manifests, one during which it exists at full strength, and finally a point when it gives way to the following phase.

This shape could also indicate the Three Supernals reflected into three phases- each Supernal manifesting at the apex of a triangle, with the other two Supernals residing as potentials on the lower points. In this sense the Enneagram is an established symbol of the Christian Trinity.

**Malkuth (Kingdom)**

**"Elohim said, 'See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the Earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on Earth, in which there is the breath of Life, I give all the green plants for food.' And it was so." - Gen. 1:29-30**

Malkuth is the Divine Kingdom, the final destination and result of all the above Spheres of Manifestation. This is the manifest *Shekhinah*, the Presence of the Divine within the created universe. (Hermeticism knows her as the Bride of God.) As the above Genesis verse indicates, Malkuth is the finished product of Creation, given to mankind to govern.

Malkuth is often referred to as the physical world itself, and even called Earth in many cases. However, this association for Malkuth is somewhat misleading. While it is certainly the plane upon which the physical exists, concrete matter does not encompass the entirety of the Malkuthic Sphere.

The Golden Dawn utilizes the unique convention of dividing Malkuth into four distinct quadrants- illustrated in their Tree of Life diagram by four different earth-toned colors. Three of these colors (olive, citrine and russet) are aligned individually to the three paths leading to the three lowermost Sephiroth. The lowest quadrant of the Sphere is colored black. According to the Judaic Qabalah, the lowermost portions of Malkuth intersect with the demonic Kingdom of Shells (the *Qliphoth*)- hence the Golden Dawn's choice of black for its color. This peculiar place where the Light and Darkness intermingle is where physical reality happens. This is where Adam fell when he lost Paradise, and had to live in a real world of labor and hardship.

The other three quarters of Malkuth are non-physical, and might correspond to what we call the "Etheric Plane." That is, the lowermost portion of the astral plane that is directly conjunct to, and identical with, concrete reality. If we return to our example of a simple chair, we find that the outward form assigned to the chair in Yesod is fully formed in Malkuth and ready to manifest in the real world.

"Out of Body Experiences"- projection to real-world locations like a friend's house- could be termed etheric travel. This is distinguishable from the astral plane accessed at Yesod- which is much more dream-like and plastic. It is where we visit far off astral kingdoms inhabited by Angels and spirits. Etheric travel, meanwhile, is projection to locations elsewhere on the physical plane, or Malkuth.

Its shape is the Ten-pointed Star, or Dodecagram, composed of two interlocking Pentagrams- one right and one inverted. It operates much like the double-square of Hod in relation to the square of Chesed- a doubling of the Forces. Malkuth is the Four Elements plus the Spirit which rules them. It is the positive and negative balance of all the Forces of the Tree operating together. Even more important than this, it represents the Spiritual Forces of the Tree (the Pentagram) meeting head-on with the Kingdom of Shells (the Inverted Pentagram)- making reality possible.

Malkuth's number is Ten, and it represents a very obscure Qabalistic axiom: "Kether is in Malkuth, and Malkuth is in Kether." In our decimal numbering system, the number Ten marks the end of the first cycle of numbers (0-9) and the beginning of the next cycle (10-19). Malkuth, then, embodies a second beginning of the Tree- a new Kether of another Tree of Life.

For instance, I previously mentioned in passing that there exist four "Worlds" of manifestation in the Qabalah, and that each World contains its own 10-Sphere Tree. By this model, the Malkuth of the First Qabalistic World is the Kether of the Second (lower) World. This continues through the Second and Third Worlds, until the Malkuth of the Third World rests as the Kether of the Fourth and lowermost World.

This indicates that Creation and Life is not a one-way trip, but a cycle which ends where it began (and thus has no end or beginning at all). The Qabalah also indicates this with the fact that the Archangel associated with Kether (Metetron) is said to be the twin brother of the Archangel of Malkuth (Sandalphon). To the Golden Dawn, these two Angels are the balancing forces on the Arc of the Covenant, and the Angels of the twin pillars of the Temple of Solomon. Metetron and Sandalphon are two sides of the same coin, the Alpha and the Omega

**Further Aspects of the Tree of Life**

In this final lesson, I will briefly outline several additional aspects of the Tree of Life diagram. These are further divisions and classifications that can bring many insights to the diligent student. Most importantly, many terms will be introduced below so the student will be familiar with them to some extent before encountering them elsewhere.

**The Three Pillars: The Temple of Solomon**

There are, of course, many mysteries that could be covered concerning the Pillars of Solomon. They are the embodiments of all Duality in creation. Masonry, especially, has produced many contemplative essays on the mystical implications of the twin Pillars. The Golden Dawn felt they were vitally important as well.

The Tree of Life possesses these two Pillars- called Mercy and Severity- along with a "Middle Pillar of Mildness" representing a synthesis of the principal two and the Path of the Middle Way. The Three Pillars of the Tree consist of the three vertical rows of Sephiroth:

**Pillar of Mercy**: Contains the three Sephiroth of Chokmah, Chesed, and Netzach. These are the "Building up", "Active", or Male Forces of the Tree.

**Pillar of Severity**: Contains the three Sephiroth of Binah, Gevurah, and Hod. These are the "Breaking Down", "Receptive", or Female Forces of the Tree.

**Pillar of Mildness**: Contains the Sephiroth of Kether, Tiphareth, Yesod, and Malkuth. These are the junction of the Two Forces, and the most stable (if cyclic) Forces of the Tree.

Notice that, in analyzing the Sephiroth, the Spheres of the Middle Pillar are those which grant Life, while the waxing and waning powers are those Spheres which modify and structure that Life.

Overall, the Three Pillars are closely related to the famed Arc of the Covenant- which rested in the Holy of Holies (inner sanctum) of the Temple. Descriptions of this Arc describe its lid as displaying two Angels, one on each side, who represented the positive and negative polarities of the universe. The same two Angels were said to be the Pillars which upheld the Temple of Solomon. These are nearly the oldest appearances of the Great Kherubim- the two Polar Forces through which all manifested. Yahweh was said to appear between the two Kherubic figures on the Arc- thus Himself representing the perfect and balanced Middle Pillar.

**The Twenty Two Paths**

The concept of the Paths is simple, while their application is more complex. They are the twenty two Paths of Divine Energy that connect the Sephiroth together. Each Path is assigned in modern Hermeticism to both a Hebrew Letter and a Tarot Card correspondence. However, the specific arrangement of these correspondences upon the Paths differs from tradition to tradition.

One of the oldest examples comes from the *Sepher Yetzirah*. Looking at our diagram of the Tree of Life, you will see that there are three horizontal Paths, seven vertical Paths, and twelve diagonal Paths. The *Sepher Yetzirah* assigns the three Hebrew Letters associated with the three principal Elements to the horizontals, the seven Letters of the Planets to the verticals, and the twelve zodiacal Letters to the twelve diagonals.

The Golden Dawn, meanwhile, assigns the Hebrew Alphabet to the Paths in order- beginning with the first letter (*Aleph*) at the first Path leading from Kether, and ending with the last letter (*Tav*) connecting directly to Malkuth. This allows the Tarot cards to play out in order down the Tree from Fool to Universe- telling their own unique story of Creation.

Most systems of Qabalah present these assignments as fixed, but I do not personally agree. Unlike the fixed Sephiroth, the Paths are extremely dynamic- even unpredictable. They represent mutable energies that pass from one Sphere to another- gathering virtues and adding to each along the way. Both of the associations of Hebrew Letters to Paths described above (and many others besides) are perfectly valid in their own rights. The Paths, like the Tarot that represents them, are meant to be shuffled and dealt out in various patterns. These "arrangements of Numbers and Letters" are how God accomplished the Creation according to the *Sepher Yetzirah*.

**The Four Worlds of the Qabalah**

I will spend a little more time introducing the Four Qabalistic Worlds, as they are very important to a full understanding of the Tree of Life. These "Worlds" (*Olam*) represent four specific stages of manifestation- from the spiritual to the gross- encountered by the Divine Energy as it descends the Spheres. The Four Worlds are assigned to the Tree as follows:



1. Olam Atziluth (Majesty): The Divine Source

2. Olam Briah (Creation): The Creative Plane

3. Olam Yetzirah (Formation): The Formative or Astral Plane

4. Olam Assiah (Action): The Ethereal Plane

In Jewish Merkavah literature, the Throne of God is usually depicted with four "Holy Living Creatures" (*Chaioth haQodesh*) as its direct attendants. These Angels are mighty and fiery creatures, whose purpose is to uphold the Divine Throne upon their backs, or to draw the Chariot of God behind them into battle. In the Book of Revelation, chapter 4, St. John encounters these Angels surrounding the Divine Throne in the form of a Lion, Eagle, Man, and Ox. In Ezekiel, chapter 1, the prophet encounters the same Angels in composite forms- each one with four faces representing the Lion, Eagle, Man, and Ox.

Other texts, such as 1Enoch, do not describe any such animalistic forms attending the Throne. Instead, we find in these cases the Four "Cardinal" Archangels who govern all of the Angelic hosts. (The Golden Dawn lists these as Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Auriel- a convention we will follow in these lessons. However, the fourth Archangel tends to shift from system to system. 1Enoch, lists Phanuel instead of Auriel.) These Four Archangels are not technically the same as the Chaioth haQodesh, yet they fulfill the same roll in each case.

The Cardinal Archangels represent the four-fold nature of the universe- the Four Elements, the four compass directions, the four seasons, the four times of day, etc. Even the highest Qabalistic Name of God- *YHVH*- is a four-lettered word associated with the Four Angelic powers. Most importantly, as the Chaioth haQodesh who support the Throne of God, they embody the process of the Qabalistic Worlds of Manifestation.

***Olam Atziluth* (World of Royalty)**: The First Qabalistic World is often called the Archetypal World, though I tend to think of archetypes as existing below in the Briatic level (see below). The reason Atziluth is called "archetypal" is because all energy here is strictly Potential- or pure Idea. Notice that Atziluth contains only the Sphere of Kether, and is thus synonymous with it. It is normally associated with Philosophical Fire and the Yod of *YHVH*, and its Archangel is Michael, the General of Angels.

Also remember that each of the Four Worlds can be described as a full Tree of ten Spheres. Here in Atziluth, there are Ten Names of God associated with the Sephiroth:

1. *Eheieh* (I am)
2. *Yah* (God)
3. *YHVH Elohim* (Lord God)
4. *El* (God)
5. *Elohim Gibor* (God of Severity)
6. *YHVH Eloah vDaath* (Lord God of Knowledge)
7. *YHVH Tzabaoth* (Lord of Hosts)
8. *Elohim Tzabaoth* (God's Hosts)
9. *Shaddai El Chai* (Almighty Living God, or He of the Living Mountain)
10. *Adonai haAretz*(Lord of Earth)

***Olam Briah* (World of Creation)**: The Second Qabalistic World is where the singularity of Kether is split into Chokmah and Binah. This is called the World of Creation, because it represents the universal duality that makes creation possible. However, it is because of this universal duality that I tend to view Briah as the true home of archetypal forces. Briah is the Twin Pillars, the Eastern Yin and Yang and the Wiccan God and Goddess- the fundamental positive and negative archetypes of all created reality. It is normally associated with Philosophical Water (the Waters of Creation) and the first Heh of *YHVH*, and its Archangel is Gabriel.

Briah is particularly the World of the Archangels, who are themselves archetypal forces. I tend to think of an Archangel as a kind of "blueprint". The Force of Atziluth is that which draws the blueprint, and the Archangel (the Briatic Force) is the blueprint itself.

The Archangels of the Briatic Tree (each one subservient to the corresponding Divine Name above) are as follows. I must point out to you, however, that this list is only for practical use, and no Archangel is truly "trapped" within any Sephirah.

1) Metetron

2) Raziel

3) Tzaphkiel

 4) Tzadkiel

5) Khamael

6) Raphael

 7) Haniel

 8) Michael

9) Gabriel

10) Sandalphon

***Olam Yetzirah* (World of Formation)**: The Third Qabalistic World is the World of Formation (or Dawning). In this World an object that will eventually manifest is constructed from raw matter according to the Archangelic "blueprint." The forces through which this construction occurs are known as Angels. As it is written, "Every blade of grass has over it an Angel bidding it, 'Grow'." The World of Yetzirah is equivalent to the astral plane, which is normally understood as the "behind the scenes" of the physical realm.

The Angelic Orders ruled by the Archangelic Princes listed above are:

1) Chaioth haQodesh

 2) Auphanim

 3) Aralim

4) Chashmalim

5) Seraphim

 6) Malakhim

7) Elohim

 8) Beney Elohim

 9) Kherubim

 10) Ashim

***Olam Assaiah* (World of Action)**: The Fourth Qabalistic World is often described as the physical Universe itself. However, this World contains only Malkuth, and is thus synonymous with it. Like Malkuth, Assiah is the ethereal plane- a perfect duplicate of our world, yet lacking solidity. This is the final step of emanation before the Divine Energy strikes the surface of reality in the lower regions of Malkuth. The inhabitants of this realm are the Elementals, who are not Angels but can be controlled by them. Elementals are the building blocks of the physical realm which the Angels use to form its manifestation.

Being the World of Action, the Sephiroth of the Assiatic Tree are assigned to Planetary Energies. The Planets are representative of the cycles that govern the World.

1) Premium Mobile (Cosmic Egg)

 2) Zodiac

 3) Saturn

4) Jupiter

 5) Mars

 6) Sol

7) Venus

8) Mercury

 9) Luna

10) Physical realm

So, a definite line of descent can be traced from the Divine to the Physical World. For instance, using the analogy of the blades of grass: We begin with the Divinity which contains the potential for the grass. Then, that potential becomes kinetic (in motion) as various Archangels come forth from the Divine Source- each set over a different kind of grass. From there each Archangel governs (or breaks down into) an entire Angelic Order. In the case of the blades of grass, the Archangel rules an infinite number of Angels who each work to manifest a single blade. The Angel, working under a Planetary Force, organizes various Elementals together to form the blade itself. Finally, the blade manifests as you and I see it.

Thus is the infinite wonder and complexity of Creation. Magick is performed by accessing these various levels of Manifestation (specifically Yetzirah- the Astral Plane) and altering them to change the end result here on the physical.

The lesson to follow will begin a deeper exploration of the Letters of the Hebrew Alphabet and some of their associations. Once that lesson is complete, the student will have a basic grasp of the Qabalah, and enough vocabulary to make sense of further Qabalistic writings.