

# An introduction to the Kabbalah for beginners

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**This, for you dearest beginner (we were all beginners at some time), is as simple as it gets. You will need to virtually learn this introduction off by heart. From here on prepare to expend blood, sweat, toil and tears. Make no mistake, if you make the decision to continue you are about to take the first step on a lifetime's journey.**

The word Kabbalah is derived from the root Qibel (QBL), which means "to receive". This refers to the ancient custom of transmitting Kabbalistic knowledge by the method of oral transmission. The Kabbalah is the "received" doctrine, the esoteric side of the scriptures, the "Chokmah Nistorah" or Secret Wisdom of the Inner School, that is the inner truth as opposed to the outer form.

The Kabbalah is, in essence, an esoteric system of personal self-initiation. It cannot be taught to anyone; it must be experienced by every individual in their own unique way. The real secrets and true mysteries of the Kabbalah must be discovered for and by oneself. This introduction and indeed any of the other texts are not designed to teach you the Kabbalah, but rather they are here to help you understand its fundamental principles and traditions.

The Kabbalah is properly classed under four headings:

1. The Practical Kabbalah (Talismanic and Ceremonial Magick).
2. The Literal Kabbalah: Divided into three parts:
  1. Gematria (Grk. "Geometria")
  2. Notariqon (Ltn. "Notarius", a short hand writer)
  3. Temurah (Heb. "Permutation")
3. The Unwritten Kabbalah (only communicated orally).
4. The Dogmatic Kabbalah (the doctrinal portion).

In Kabbalistic philosophy there are Four Worlds which constitute the Universe. After a certain manner they correspond with the Four Magical Elements. The Four Elements of Fire, Water, Air, and Earth are reflections of the Four Worlds of the Kabbalah. Thus is fulfilled the divine saying, "As above, so below."

The Four Worlds and the Four Elements correspond with the Four Letters of the Tetragrammaton (Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh or IHVH), which is the so-called Incommunicable Name of God which, in occult science, represents a magical formula of supreme universal importance.

The Four Kabbalistic Worlds are:

- Olahm Ha-Atziluth (World of Emanations or Archetypal World)  
Atziluth is the World of Emanations and corresponds with the element of Fire and the letter Yod of the Tetragrammaton
- Olahm Ha-Beriyah (World of Creation. Also called Khorsia, Throne)  
Beriyah is the World of Archangels and corresponds with the element of Water and the letter Heh of the Tetragrammaton
- Olahm Ha-Yetzirah (World of Formation and of Angels)  
Yetzirah is the World of Angels and corresponds with the element of Air and the letter Vav of the Tetragrammaton
- Olahm Ha-Asiyah (Material World. Also called Olahm Ha-Qliphoth, the World of Shells)  
Asiyah is the World of Action and corresponds with the element of Earth and the final letter Heh of the Tetragrammaton

In each of the Four Worlds there is contained a Tree of Life. The Tree of Life is, after a certain fashion, a symbolic figure of the Universe. It is made of Ten Spheres (Sephiroth) and twenty-two Paths connecting them. Since there is a Tree of Life in each of the Four Worlds, there are forty Spheres in all. Yet in each Sphere there is contained its own Tree of Life and in each Sphere of that Tree is contained yet another Tree, so that there are an infinite amount of Trees and Spheres in Kabbalistic Philosophy.

The Tree of Life is, after a certain manner, a "western mandala". It is a supreme magical symbol of all the forces which constitute the operations of the Universe in its evolving scheme for absolute freedom of expression. It is a perfect model of the Universal Plan and it plays a great role in the training of any Magician. It comprehends and synthesizes all forces, forms, and concepts of the Universe, and it embraces all essential keys to attain true union with the Divine.

There are, in the Kabbalah, three essential parts of the Soul. These are:

- Neschamah (Soul, Intuition)
- Ruach (Spirit, Mind)
- Nephesch (Animal soul)

Neschamah is the Supernal Triad of Kether, Chokmah and Binah on the Tree of Life, but most especially is it related to Binah. Ruach is the next six Sephiroth (Chesed to Yesod). Nephesch is Malkuth.

Eliphas Levi said the following concerning the three parts of the Soul: "The body is the veil of Nephesch. Nephesch is the veil of Ruach. Ruach is the veil of the shroud of Neschamah."

There are also two other parts of the Soul in Kabbalistic Philosophy. These are called the Yechidah and Chiah. The Yechidah (Indivisible Self) is related to Kether; the Chiah (Life Force, or True Will) is related to Chokmah. These two are contained in the Immortal Neschamah.

The Neschamah is represented in Tarot by the Empress Atu (Card III of the Major Arcana). The Empress is Isis in Nature, and also the Queen of Heaven. She is the source and the fulfillment of all sublime things terrestrial and celestial, material and spiritual. She is Mother Venus, Goddess of all. The symbol of Venus, which is also the symbol of Woman, is a Cross surmounted by a Circle. It is a symbol which contains in itself the idea of all the Sephiroth of the Tree of Life; it contains all of the forces of Nature, just as the Holy Neschamah contains all.

In the Hebrew language there are twenty-two letters. These correspond with the twenty-two Paths of the Tree of Life. The Hebrew Alphabet has been properly called the Holy Alphabet of the Gods and the Angelic Alphabet. The famous Sefer Yetzirah divides the twenty-two Hebrew letters into three classes of three, seven and twelve. These are:

- The three Mother Letters (Aleph, Mem, Shin).
- The seven Double Letters (Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Peh, Resh, Tav).
- The twelve Single Letters (Heh, Vav, Zain, Cheth, Teth, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samech, Ayin, Tzaddi, Qoph).

The three Mother Letters correspond with the three Philosophic Elements of Air (Aleph), Water (Mem), and Fire (Shin). They also correspond with the three Gunas of Samkhya Philosophy (Aleph = Sattva, Mem = Tapas, Shin = Rajas) and also with the three Principles of Alkhemi (Aleph = Mercury, Mem = Salt, Shin = Sulphur). These three letters are reflections of the Supernal Triad of Light, Wisdom and Understanding. The seven Double Letters correspond with the Seven Ancient Planets, the Seven Chakras, the Seven Alkhemical Metals, the Seven Steps of Initiation, the Seven Days of the Week, the Seven Elohim or Spirits of God, the Seven Eyes of God, the Seven Archangels, the Seven Masters, the Seven Steps of Solomon's Temple, the Seven Colors, the Seven Senses, and the Seven Musical Tones. The twelve Single Letters correspond with the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac.

The twenty-two Paths also correspond with the twenty-two Atus of Thoth, or the Major Arcana Cards of the Tarot numbers 0-21. Aleph is The Fool, Beth is The Magician, Gimel is The High Priestess, Daleth is The Empress, Heh is The Star (or The Emperor), Vav is The Hierophant, Zayin is The Lovers, Cheth is The Chariot, Teth is Strength (or Lust), Yod is The Hermit, Kaph is The Wheel of Fortune, Lamed is Justice (or Adjustment), Mem is The Hanged Man, Nun is Death, Samech is Temperance (or Art), Ayin is The Devil, Peh is The Tower, Tzaddi is The Emperor (or The Star), Qoph is The Moon, Resh is The Sun, Shin is Judgement (or The Aeon), and Tav is The World (or The Universe).

The twenty-two Paths are microcosmic realities which concentrate and equilibrate the macrocosmic forces represented by the Sephiroth on the Tree of Life. They are subjective, whereas the Sephiroth are objective. Each Path is a door to achieving union with the divine forces of the Universe, and they inevitably lead to the Secret Wisdom. The force of each Path is represented by its corresponding Tarot Card related to its corresponding Hebrew letter. Thus the eleventh Path of Aleph is The Fool on the Tree of Life. This particular Path connects Kether and Chokmah, and represents the spiritual consciousness related thereto.

The Sefer Yetzirah speaks of Thirty-two Paths of Wisdom. Thirty-two is the numerical value of the word Laib (LB) which means the Heart of Man. Thus the Thirty-two Paths are the occult mysteries of the Doctrine of the Heart.

These are the Ten Sephiroth and their twenty-two connecting links on the Tree of Life. Sefhira is singular, Sephiroth is plural. It means "numerical emanation."

The first Sefhira is called the Crown or the Inscrutable Height; the second is called Wisdom; the third is called Understanding; the fourth is called Love, Mercy or Majesty; the fifth is called Severity, Justice or Fear; the sixth is called Beauty; the seventh is called Victory; the eighth is called Splendour or Glory; the ninth is called Foundation; and the tenth is called the Kingdom.

The Ten Sephiroth have a direct relationship with the Sun, Moon, Planets and Elements. Pluto corresponds with Kether or the Crown; Uranus corresponds with Chokmah or Wisdom; Saturn corresponds with Binah or Understanding; Jupiter corresponds with Chesed or Mercy; Mars corresponds with Geburah or Severity; the Sun corresponds with Tiphareth or Beauty; Venus corresponds with Netzach or Victory; Mercury corresponds with Hod or Glory; the Moon corresponds with Yesod or the Foundation; and the Four Elements of Fire, Water, Air, and Earth correspond with Malkuth or the Kingdom. All the planets have been listed but Neptune. Neptune corresponds with the so-called Invisible Sefhira on the Tree of Life. This hidden Sefhira is called Daath or Knowledge and is located in the Abyss below Chokmah and Binah on the Tree. It was the original location of Malkuth before the so-called Fall of Man.

The Ten Sephiroth correspond in Tarot with the Minor Arcana cards:

1. The four aces are Kether
2. The four twos are Chokmah
3. The four threes are Binah
4. The four fours are Chesed
5. The four fives are Geburah
6. The four sixes are Tiphareth
7. The four sevens are Netzach
8. The four eights are Hod
9. The four nines are Yesod
10. The four tens are Malkuth

Each of these Minor Arcana suits represent the operation of one of the Sephiroth in a particular element:

1. Wands represents the operation of Tiphareth in the element of fire
2. Cups represent the operation of the Sephiroth in the element of Water
3. Swords represent the operation of the Sephiroth in the element of Air
4. Coins/Pentacles represent the operation of the Sephiroth in the element of Earth

The Tree of Life contains three Triads. The first triad has been called the Intellectual World or Olahm Mevshekal, the second is called the Moral World or Olahm Morgash, and the third is called the Material World or Olahm Ha-Mevetbau. These three triads have been properly defined by Dion Fortune as the Supernal Triad, the Ethical Triad and the Astral Triad.

The Tree of Life is, to all practical intents and purposes, an occult system of classification. It should be committed to memory by every Occultist and it should become the automatic background of all their thinking. For the Kabbalistic Tree of Life should play a vital role in the training and initiation of any Magician. Every idea and every experience should be classified in the Tree according to the occult principle of analogy. By this means the practicing Magician will organize his mind and strengthen his magical knowledge, and he will inevitably be able to unify that knowledge and transmute the Many into the One.

The three principal Kabbalistic Books (*All available on this site*) are:

- The Sefer Yetzirah (Book of Formation)
- The Sefer Ha-Bahir (Book of Illumination)
- The Sefer Ha-Zohar (Book of Splendour)

Other important books (*Eventually to be available on this site*) are:

- Sefer Raziel (Book of Raziel)
- Sefer Sephiroth (Book of Emanations)
- Asch Metzareph (Book of Purifying Fire)

The Sefer Yetzirah was written down in Hebrew by a man named Akibha ben Joseph, who was a Rabbi of the first century. It first appeared in actual print in a Latin translation by a man named William Postel, which was published in Paris in 1552, and ten years later the original Hebrew appeared in print. Akibha founded the first Kabbalistic School. He was succeeded by his pupil named Simeon ben Yochai. Akibha suffered persecution by the Romans, and was finally martyred by them. Sefer Yetzirah did not originate in the mind of Akibha; it was transmitted to him orally; he was simply a scribe of the Ageless Wisdom. The mythical Abraham, as tradition has it, was the true

originator or receiver of the Sefer Yetzirah. Traditionally, Abraham is the author of the Kabbalah, and it was to his son Isaac that he transmitted its Sacred Wisdom, whereas to his other son Ishmael he transmitted the sacred mysteries of Alchemy.

The Sefer Ha-Bahir is attributed to Rabbi Nehunia ben haKana. The Bahir is one of the oldest and most important of all Kabbalistic texts. Until the publication of the Zohar, the Bahir was the most influential source of Kabbalistic teachings. It is quoted in virtually every major Kabbalistic work and is cited numerous times by the Ramban in his commentary on the Torah. It is also paraphrased and quoted many times in the Zohar.

Sefer Ha-Zohar was said to be composed by Simeon ben Yochai, the pupil of Akibha. But it was not written down until the year 1290, from the pen of Rabbi Moses ben Leon. It was written in Aramaic by him under the pseudonym of Simeon ben Yochai. Moses ben Leon was certainly the first to write it down, but its origin is much older. Much of the Zohar goes back to Mishnic times, around A.D. 70- 200. The Zohar first appeared in printed form in the Hebrew language in Mantua in 1558. The Zohar is essentially a commentary on the Torah (Pentateuch).