

TRADITIONAL MARTINIST ORDER DISCOURSE

KABBALAH (The Tree of the Sephiroth)

We present below a sample discourse from the teachings of the Traditional Martinist Order, this one featuring a discussion of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life.



I greet you before the luminaries of the Traditional Martinist Order!

In the *Sepher Yetzirah*, it is said that the benevolent and merciful God created the universe through thirty-two wonderful paths of Wisdom. These thirty-two paths correspond to the twenty-two Hebrew letters and to the ten Sephiroth. After having studied the twenty-two letters in the two previous discourses, the moment has now come to approach the topic of the ten Sephiroth.

The Kabbalists say that when the Primordial Light descended from the Ain-Soph, or in other words the Infinite, to give the breath of life to all the worlds and all creatures, It arrayed itself in the shape of ten lights. These are the Sephiroth, which the Zohar compares to the “ten forms that God produced to direct the unknown and invisible worlds, and the visible worlds.” In the first chapter of the *Sepher Yetzirah*, it is said that they came out of the nothingness and that their appearance “is as a flash of light whose extremities are without limit.” One can also read in this book that the Word of the Divine “comes and goes within them and [that] when the Word speaks, such as a hurricane, they bow before the Divine Throne and they celebrate.”

The word sephiroth is the plural of sephira, a feminine word that means numeration. As you know, the ten Sephiroth are arranged in a hierarchical manner and are linked one to another by channels. They are: Kether, Chokhmah, Binah, Chesed,

Geburah, Tiphereth, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and Malkuth. Together they form The Tree of the Sephiroth, which is, in some manner, the invisible skeleton of Creation. As indicated in the *Sepher Bahir*, the branches of this tree nourish themselves in the Ain-Soph, the hidden transcendence. Rather than discuss the Ain-Soph today, we will study this concept in the next discourse.

As you will notice on the diagram, the ten Sephiroth are arranged in three columns forming a symbolic structure called Binyan.

The left column is Severity. It extends from the sephira Binah to the sephira Hod. Associated with the letter Mem, and with water, it symbolizes passivity and has a negative polarity.

The right column is Mercy, sometimes called Clemency. It extends from the sephira Chokhmah to the sephira Netzach. Associated with the letter Shin and with fire, it symbolizes the force of expansion and has a positive polarity.

Finally, the central column is Equilibrium. It extends from the sephira Kether to the sephira Malkuth. Associated with the letter Aleph, and with air, it symbolizes the equilibrium between the two polarities, as well as the union between the Divine World and the Material World.

The kabbalistic tradition relates these three columns with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You will also note that the columns descend from the infinite to the finite through the four levels, or four materialized worlds, indicated by the dotted lines in the diagram.

The first level is the *Olam Atziluth*, the World of Emanation. Formed by the sephiroth Kether, Chokhmah, and Binah, it represents the Divine Will in a pure state.

The second level is the *Olam Briah*, the World of Creation. Formed by the sephiroth Chesed, Geburah, and Tiphereth, it is the world where Divine Will is transformed into creative energy.

The third level is the *Olam Yetzirah*, the World of Formation. Formed by the sephiroth Netzach, Hod, and Yesod, it is the world of movement and generation, where all forms are elaborated.

Finally, the fourth level is *Olam Assiah*, the World of Action. Formed by the sephira Malkuth, it is the world of phenomena, of matter and human beings.

It can be said that the four worlds symbolize the expansion of the Divine through the visible and invisible planes of Creation. It is the reason why they are associated with the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, the Sacred Name of the Divine. As one can see in the diagram, Atziluth corresponds to Yod, the first letter of the Tetragrammaton; Briah to He, the second letter; Yetzirah to Vav, the third letter; and Assiah to He, the fourth letter.

Kabbalists consider that the Tree of the Sephiroth is an expression of the face of the Divine and the means by which the Invisible acquires a certain visibility. They divide it into two faces: *Arik Anpin* (the Long Face), and *Zeir Anpin* (the Small Face). The long face comprises the three superior sephiroth: Kether, Chokhmah, and Binah. As has previously been said, the Long Face represents the superior world, the world of the Divine Will. The Small Face is made up of the following six sephiroth: Chesed, Geburah, Tiphereth, Netzach, Hod, and Yesod. These are the sephiroth that are said to be of Construction, fully manifested in Malkuth, the tenth, or last sephira.

Let us now examine one by one the Sephiroth of the Kabbalistic Tree. The first

is Kether, a word that we can translate as Crown. It represents Divine Will, the beginning of existence, and the eternal present. The *Sepher Yetzirah* associates it with the “Breath of the living Elohim.”

The second sephira is Chokhmah, a word meaning “Wisdom.” Some Kabbalists compare it with the Primordial Torah, the Secret Wisdom. It represents the masculine and active principle. The *Sepher Yetzirah* associates it with the “Breath coming from the Breath.”

The third sephira is Binah, a word meaning “Intelligence.” It represents the feminine and passive principle. The *Sepher Yetzirah* associates it with the “Waters coming from the Breath.” We should note that the Kabbalists call it Ima meaning “Mother,” whereas they refer to Chokhmah by the name Abba, meaning “Father.”

If the first three sephiroth are intimately linked to the Divine World, the next seven sephiroth are more particularly linked to the Terrestrial World. Some Kabbalists associate them with the seven days of Creation. Between these two worlds, we find Daath, a hidden sephira whose name means “Knowledge.” It represents the Knowledge that directly emanates from the Divine. As such, it is inaccessible to incarnate Humanity.

The fourth sephira is Chesed, meaning “Mercy.” Sometimes called Gedolah, it is the first sephira of the World of Briah, the world of Creation. It represents sharing, goodness, and love. That is why the Zohar relates Chesed to the patriarch Abraham, who personifies these qualities. It is also associated with the Oral Torah, the Esoteric Revelation. The *Sepher Yetzirah* considers Chesed the “Fire coming from the Waters.”

The fifth sephira is Geburah, meaning “Rigor” or “Justice.” Sometimes called Din, it is associated with the Written Torah, the Exoteric Revelation. The Zohar relates Geburah with the patriarch Isaac, because of his absolute obedience to God’s commands.



The sixth sephira is Tiphereth, meaning “Beauty.” Placed between Chesed and Geburah, in the middle of the central column, it symbolizes the equilibrium of oppositions. The Zohar relates Tiphereth with the patriarch Jacob, whose manner is a model of equilibrium between love and rigor. Among the six sephiroth of Construction, it is the only one to be directly linked to Kether.

The seventh sephira is Netzach, meaning “Victory,” in the sense of mastery. This sephira is often associated with Joseph. The Bible says that it is after having resisted his passions, symbolized by Potiphar’s wife, that he became the Pharaoh’s minister and succeeded in reorganizing the economy of Egypt. Netzach is at the base of the column of Mercy and receives its energy from Chesed, placed directly above it.

The eighth sephira is Hod, meaning “Glory” or “Splendor.” Across from Netzach, it is placed at the base of the column of Rigor and receives its energy from Geburah, situated just above it. It represents the accomplishment of Divine Will.

The ninth sephira is Yesod, meaning “Foundation” or “Transmission.” As the last sephira of the world of Yetzirah, World of Formation, it represents the foundation of the created world. It also transmits the breath of life, which comes from the higher sephiroth, toward Malkuth.

The tenth and last sephira is Malkuth, meaning “Kingdom.” As the synthesis of all the sephiroth, it represents the material world, the accomplishment of the process of Creation. Kabbalists see in it the hidden presence of God in exile on the earthly plane. They designate this presence by the word Shekhinah, a word meaning, “Divine Presence.” That being said, the notion of Shekhinah cannot be reduced to Malkuth. In Kabbalah, there is a reference of the Shekhinah Below, and the Shekhinah Above, which resides in Binah.

As indicated at the beginning of this discourse, the *Sepher Yetzirah* states that

the merciful and benevolent God created the universe through thirty-two wonderful paths of Wisdom, which correspond to the twenty-two Hebrew letters and to the ten Sephiroth. Here is what Athanasius Kircher, an adept of Kabbalah, said concerning these paths:

“The thirty-two paths of Wisdom are the luminous paths by which the holy men and women, devoted to God, are able to understand hidden things by a great application of the Divine Laws and a long meditation upon them.”

Note that each of these thirty-two paths has a name and a precise signification that is shown on Table 1. As you can see, each path corresponds to a Hebrew letter or a sephira, with which is associated a quality of Divine Wisdom. Thus, Kether, the first path, is Wisdom of Supreme Will; Aleph, the second, Wisdom of Celestial Unity; Chokhmah, the third, Superior Wisdom; etc.

This first approach to the Tree of the Sephiroth may seem complex to you. That being said, the most important thing is to become familiar with the name and the position of each of these sephiroth. After that, it is recommended that you follow the advice given in the *Sepher Yetzirah*: “Keep your mouth from speaking of it, and your heart from thinking of it.”

Brothers and Sisters, may you ever dwell in the Eternal Light of Divine Wisdom.

SUMMARY

- The thirty-two paths, to which the *Sepher Yetzirah* refers, correspond to the twenty-two Hebrew letters and to the ten Sephiroth.
- Kether, a word that can be translated as “Crown,” represents Divine Will, the beginning of existence and the eternal present. The *Sepher Yetzirah* associates it with the “Breath of the Living Elohim.”

- Chokhmah, meaning “Wisdom,” represents the masculine and active principle. The *Sepher Yetzirah* associates it with the “Breath coming from the Breath.”
- Binah, meaning “Intelligence,” represents the feminine and passive principle. The *Sepher Yetzirah* associates it with the “Waters coming from the Breath.”
- Chesed, meaning “Mercy,” represents sharing, goodness, and love. The *Sepher Yetzirah* describes Chesed as the “Fire coming from the Waters.”
- Geburah, meaning “Rigor” or “Justice,” is associated with the Written Torah, the Exoteric Revelation. The Zohar associates it with the Patriarch Isaac.
- Tiphereth, meaning “Beauty,” symbolizes the equilibrium of oppositions. *The Zohar* associates it with the patriarch Jacob.
- Netzach, meaning “Victory” in the sense of mastery, is often associated with Joseph.
- Hod, meaning “Glory” or “Splendor,” represents the accomplishment of the Divine Will.
- Yesod, meaning “Foundation” or “Transmission,” represents the foundations of the created world.
- Malkuth, meaning “Kingdom,” represents the material world, the accomplishment of the process of Creation.
- Each of the thirty-two paths has a name that corresponds to an attribute of Divine Wisdom.

EXPERIMENT

Brothers and Sisters, we will now proceed to an experiment whose goal is to harmonize us with the ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalistic Tree, in order to be in communion with their corresponding planes of consciousness, and to receive their spiritual influx.

Please sit comfortably.

Close your eyes and relax for a few moments, as is comfortable for you.

Now, we will evoke the ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalistic Tree, one by one. Join mentally in each evocation, and then remain receptive to any impressions you may receive.

○ Kether, Crown, Breath of the living Elohim, reveal Yourself to my consciousness.

○ Chokhmah, Wisdom, Breath from the Breath, reveal Yourself to my consciousness.

○ Binah, Intelligence, Waters from the Breath, reveal Yourself to my consciousness.

○ Chesed, Mercy, Abraham’s inspiration, reveal Yourself to my consciousness.

○ Geburah, Rigor, Isaac’s inspiration, reveal Yourself to my consciousness.

○ Tiphereth, Beauty, Jacob’s inspiration, reveal Yourself to my consciousness.

○ Netzach, Victory, Joseph’s inspiration, reveal Yourself to my consciousness.

○ Hod, Glory, Agent of Divine Will, reveal Yourself to my consciousness.

○ Yesod, Foundation, giver of the Breath of Life, reveal Yourself to my consciousness.

○ Malkuth, Kingdom, where the Shekhinah Below resides, reveal Yourself to my consciousness.

Brothers and Sisters, as long as we journey between the two pillars, may we be receptive to the spiritual influx emanating from the Sephiroth, so that their united powers may illumine our body, our soul, and our spirit. Amen!



THE TREE OF

·A'IN
·A'IN SOPH
·A'IN SOPH AUR

THE SEPHIROTH

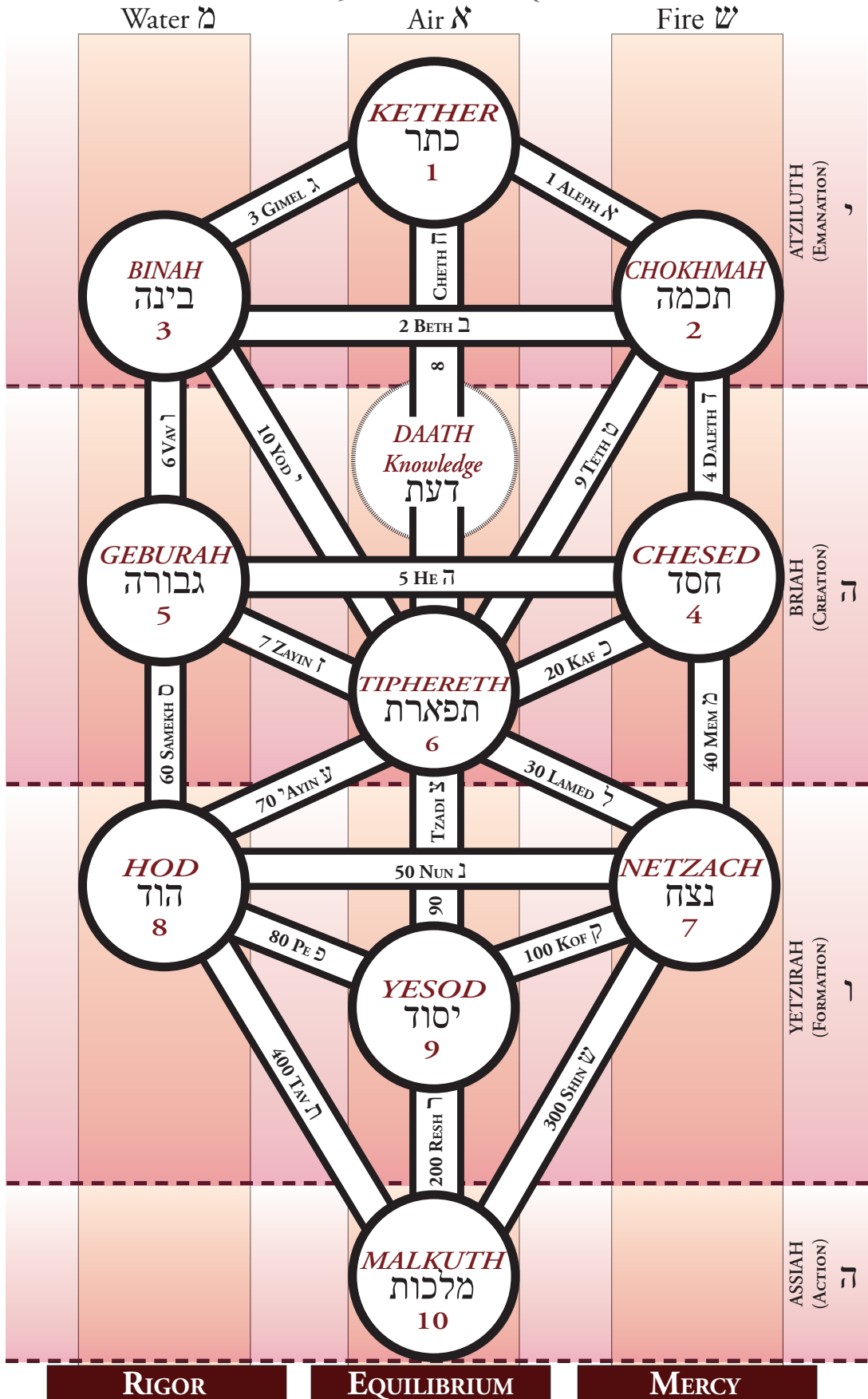




Table 1
The Thirty-two Paths of Wisdom
(Ten Sephiroth + Twenty-Two Hebrew letters)

NUMBER	PATH	NAME	MEANING
1	Kether	Chokhmah Ratson Elyon	Supreme Will Wisdom
2	Aleph	Chokhmah Yihoude Elyon	Wisdom of Celestial Unity
3	Chokhmah	Chokhmah Ilaah	Superior Wisdom
4	Beth	Chokhmah Qabalah	Received Wisdom
5	Gimel	Chokhmah Maqor	Wisdom of the Source
6	Binah	Chokhmah Hashmal	Wisdom of Introduction
7	Daleth	Chokhmah Teseniah	Wisdom of Humility
8	Chesed	Chokhmah Bahir	Wisdom of Clarity
9	He	Chokhmah Birour	Infiltrating Wisdom
10	Vav	Chokhmah Mishmaath	Disciplined Wisdom
11	Geburah	Chokhmah Garayin	Wisdom of the Nucleus
12	Zayin	Chokhmah Hazon	Wisdom of Vision
13	Cheth	Chokhmah Aur	Luminous Wisdom
14	Teth	Chokhmah Nevouat-Haley	Intuitive Wisdom
15	Yod	Chokhmah Shoqal	Reflecting Wisdom
16	Kaf	Chokhmah Makhnaah	Submissive Wisdom
17	Tiphereth	Chokhmah Shaiphae	Plentiful Wisdom
18	Lamed	Chokhmah Laimaid	Wisdom of Study
19	Mem	Chokhmah Kawanah	Wisdom of Intention
20	Netzach	Chokhmah Maashith	Practical Wisdom
21	Nun	Chokhmah Shiwoui	Wisdom of Equilibrium
22	Samekh	Chokhmah Hirhoraith	Contemplative Wisdom
23	Ayin	Chokhmah Sod	Secret Wisdom
24	Hod	Chokhmah Ayiouni	Speculative Wisdom
25	Pe	Chokhmah Nissayon	Wisdom of Trial and Testing
26	Tzadi	Chokhmah Datioth	Devoted Wisdom
27	Kof	Chokhmah Mishqal	Wisdom of the Rhythm
28	Yesod	Chokhmah Talmud	Wisdom of Study
29	Resh	Chokhmah Hithaorroth	Wisdom of Awakening
30	Shin	Chokhmah Hamah	Warm Wisdom
31	Tav	Chokhmah Qarah	Cold Wisdom
32	Malkuth	Chokhmah Makif	Enveloping Wisdom

