

תיקון עולם

Tikkun Olam
The Holy Magic of
Healing
And
Transformation

By Bill Heilbronn



Worshipper at the Kotel -(Western wall of the Temple in Jerusalem

Photograph by Bill Heilbronn

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PREFACE

I am neither a Kabbalist nor a Magician. I worship in a Progressive Jewish Synagogue and take my personal stand in Progressive Judaism. However I rejoice in the rich traditions and history of the Jewish Faith that have stemmed from the past, and that still influence Jewish thought today. The one Kabbalist ritual that I do regularly perform is on a Friday evening, in the company of my fellow worshippers in all Synagogues, when we chant the lovely invocation to the Sabbath bride – Lecha Dodi – composed in the sixteenth century by Rabbi Shlomo Alkabletz, one of the disciples of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria. The latter was certainly the greatest Kabbalist of his time if not of all time. It was he who introduced the concept of **‘Tikkun Olam’**, that is more fully explained in the Introduction.

So why have I written this booklet? Perhaps the clue lays in the philosophy of Tevye the milkman as expressed in the musical “Fiddler on the roof” when he replies to questions about his approach to his practices: ***“Because of our traditions, we know who we are, where we stand and what God demands of us.”*** And so, many years ago I was driven to research the traditions that have shaped my personal ethos and philosophy and that have included Kabbalah and its Magic. The material that forms chapters 2 to 13 and the appendix has lain dormant in my files for far too long, and recently I was stimulated to complete it by adding the four front pages, the back page and the introductory chapter 1. I decided to publish it for limited circulation as an e-book,

I have included in Chapter 9, in somewhat over-simplified form, some information about the Chakras and Kundalini that are part of Yoga spiritual physiology, This should help to understand some of the techniques used in Meditation. I must emphasise that they are my own personal interpretation.

It is the history and psychology behind the two disciplines that interests me. There are writers on Kabbalah that have delved deeply into the complexities and correspondences within its scope, but I am not drawn to those aspects. Should you wish to go deeper into those aspects, the references in the ‘Suggestions for further reading’ are all excellent sources to follow. As I have already said, I am neither a Magician nor a Kabbalist, but occasionally I have had spontaneous experiences that some knowledge of these disciplines has helped me understand and appreciate. However I have been very conscious of, and obeyed, the wise dictum of Martin Buber.

“He who knows the breath of the Spirit, trespasses if he desires to gain power over the Spirit or to ascertain its nature and qualities, but he is also disloyal who fails to give thanks.”

Many years ago I took part in a guided meditation where I visualised myself as part of a team on a great and demanding adventure. I had got to a point when I realised that I had to stop short of the destination in order to build a rest house, and to remain there to provide guidance for those who would follow, provide for their needs and learn from them as they returned. That is when I realised my limitations, and yet knew that within those limitations I had a worth-while task to perform. That has been my life!

And so I offer the thoughts in this booklet, both to give an introduction to what Kabbalah and Magic are really about if they are to be Holy rather than Mundane or lead to Evil, and to emphasise that they are not mental playthings, but have an ultimate purpose in **‘Tikkun Olam’** – the healing and transformation of this fractured world and its people.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of Kabbalah

Every time the Jewish people have suffered trauma and been taken into exile, it has led to a great era of constructive spiritual development. 2500 years ago, after the Babylonian conquest and the destruction of the first Temple, when the Jewish people were taken into slavery in Babylon, the hereditary priesthood lost its unique power and position. Superseding them, not only did a new and more democratic mode of worship arise in the creation of Synagogues (in which the people were participants in place of the ancient rituals in which the people were merely spectators), but also Teachers, known as Rabbis, replaced Priests and began their serious attempts to comment and enlarge upon the Hebrew scriptures through study and debate.

This process continued when the Jews returned to Israel after the Persians defeated the Babylonians, even though the Temple had been rebuilt and the Priesthood regained their traditional function, But then first the Greeks and then the Romans conquered Israel, The Priesthood became corrupt and subservient to the Romans. Finally, about 1900 years ago, there was an uprising that was brutally suppressed. The Temple was destroyed leaving only the Western Wall – the Kotel – standing. The Priesthood was no more, and a new phase of Jewish history and spiritual development commenced under the influence of the Rabbis.

The Hebrew scriptures, known as the TeNaK, an acronym for Torah, Nevim, Ketubah – Teaching, Prophets, Writings, and translated – not always accurately – as the Christian Old Testament, had been accompanied for a long time by an Oral tradition which commented on it. This was eventually written down in the Mishneh Torah and the Gemarrah, ultimately in the Talmud.

The Rabbis used various methods of interpretation to extract the full significance of the text of the Torah, and to make it relevant to the problems of their own times. They were mindful of the fact that the way that different people evolve spiritually meant that they needed progressive faculties for understanding the depths of meaning in a text. So they used four techniques, each related to a different level of comprehension, known by the acronym **PaRDeS**, where the word Pardes means Orchard (or Paradise) and the consonants stand for the four levels:

- | | | |
|------------------|------------|---|
| · P eshat | Plain | The literal and direct interpretation |
| · R emez | Allusion | The allegorical and philosophical explanation |
| · D erash | Exposition | The homiletical commentary on its subtleties |
| · S od | Secret | The esoteric or mystical teaching |

However they emphasised that no one should try to explore the higher levels until they had mastered the lower ones. Their debates on the interpretation of the Torah were recorded and the second and third levels were embodied in the Talmud, which included both the ethical and ritual law itself – Halachah, and the legends – Aggadah, that were the spirit of the law and illuminated it.

The first level – Peshat – is where small children can comprehend the stories of the Bible, and it is also the level where, on the one hand the ‘Creationists’ and Fundamentalists, and on

the other hand, the Humanists and Atheists, get stuck, none of whom being able to see any further than the Literal understanding - or misunderstanding, as the case may be.

The fourth level – Sod - eventually became the realm of Kabbalah – Jewish mysticism and spiritual psychology.

The origins of Kabbalah are surrounded by Myth and uncertainty. There is a somewhat questionable legend that it was revealed to Abraham..

Individual mystics had been known throughout Biblical history, The Nazirites were amongst these. However it was in the time of the Romans that the first authentic mention of an actual mystical community appeared. These were the Chassidim of Galilee. They were healers and, it is said, rainmakers. It is quite possible that Jesus of Nazareth (or should it be Jesus the Nazirite) was one of their number.

The first books on Kabbalah were the Sepher Bahir and the Sepher Yetzirah, detailing the mechanics of the Tree of Life. It is thought that they were originally oral works with some manuscripts and appeared in the early years of the Common Era. They were compiled and edited into their present form in the 12th century. They might be termed Jewish Theosophy. (It should be noted that during the Renaissance period, Christian scholars such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and John Dee turned to them in their own mystical studies, as did later on, Blavatsky's Theosophical Society when it was formed in the 19th century.)

The Sepher Ha Zohar appeared in the 13th century, and was essentially a mystical commentary on the book of Genesis. It is generally ascribed to the Spanish Rabbi Moses de Leon. He claimed that it was the work that he had discovered by the much earlier Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai of Safed in Galilee at the time of the Roman occupation, but this is generally disputed by forensic historians. The question remains: did he discover fragments of Shimon ben Yochai's work and edit them into a whole, or was it an example of pseudoepigraphia which he composed from scratch and used the name of a Kabbalist from the past to promote it. Whichever is the truth, it became regarded as a Holy book amongst the Kabbalists, and remains so to this day.

In the year 1492, a major disaster struck the Sephardic Jews of Spain. For many centuries they had enjoyed a "golden age" wherein Jews, Moslems and Christians had lived together in peace and friendship. However, the marriage between Ferdinand and Isabella introduced an era of gross intolerance. Moslems and Jews were offered three choices: death, conversion or exile. The Jews of Spain fled to the Netherlands, North Africa, the Balkans and Italy. Many of them fled to Israel to the little town of Safed in the Galilee, where a community of Kabbalist scholars was set up under the guidance of the great Rabbi Moses Cordovero. It included luminaries such as Rabbi Joseph Caro, Rabbi Shlomo Alkabletz, Rabbi Chaim Vital and others.

Subsequently, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria 1534 -1572, who was known as the Ari, and was later reckoned to be the greatest Kabbalist of his time, (possibly even of all time) came to join the community. He had been born in Jerusalem but came to Cairo in Egypt in his youth. At a very early age he had become a brilliant exponent of Halacha, the Jewish ethical system. Then he became immersed in the Kabbalah – the Jewish Mystical system. Moving to Safed he studied under Rabbi Moses Cordovero, and when the latter died, his genius was recognized and he became the leader of the community.

His greatest achievements were: Firstly the introduction of the concepts of "Tzimtzum", an explanation of the act of creation, described in Chapter 11, and secondly - even more important, that of "Tikkun Olam". This phrase means 'Repair of the Universe'.

One of the most ancient Jewish Prayers is the “Aleynu” in which these ‘Messianic’ words are used:

“In that day shall the Lord be One and his Name One”

This could be said to imply that in the process of Creation, the unity of the Holy One was broken, and that the task of Tikkun Olam is for Humanity to repair the damage, (and because Humans are made in the image of the Divine, to repair their own fractured Psyches). Associated with this is the concept of Gilgul ha Nefesh – the transmigration of the Soul, for one life time may not be enough for the individual to complete the repair work demanded of him, so he comes back to try and complete his task

The concept of Tikkun Olam has been adopted by modern Judaism, both Orthodox and Progressive, where it has to a large extent lost its original mystical significance and come to emphasise the vital importance of social justice and care of the environment,

However, even more important, nowadays, in the context of this essay, it has also influenced Transpersonal Psychology, in particular the system of Psychosynthesis founded by Roberto Assagioli, who was also one of the founders of the Liberal Synagogue in Florence, and who was influenced by Kabbalah as mentioned in greater detail in Chapter 9

Chassidism recurred at various times and places over the centuries, including Germany in the Middle Ages. Finally it emerged in its modern form in the 18th century in between Poland and the area of Russia known as the Pale of Settlement under the genius of Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer - the Baal Shem Tov – Master of the Holy Name. Initially it was ostracised by the Kabbalists who regarded it as an ecstatic movement for the masses rather than as a serious study for the elite. In the last two hundred years the hostility has given way to a synthesis and today amongst the Chassidim, in particular the Lubavitch / Chabad sect, there are some of the foremost authorities on Kabbalah, who are greatly respected in the Jewish community.

In the aftermath of the Shoah (Holocaust), there has been a revival of interest in the Kabbalah both in the Jewish community and beyond,, accompanied by both scholarly work – see suggestions for further reading - and, unfortunately, by some cult activity.

The Evolution of Magic

There are occasions when, on reading a book, or on hearing someone speak, a phrase resonates in one's consciousness and precipitates one into reflective meditation on its potential for deeper meaning. The fortuitous discovery of the literal meaning of Abra k'a Dabra, revealed whilst I was reading Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's commentary on the earliest Kabbalist text - the Sepher Yetzirah, (see Chapter 13) inspired me to explore the various manifestations of Magic. In the course of my studies I was introduced to Rabbi Gershon Winkler's book - 'Magic of the Ordinary' which sympathetically studied the beliefs and practices of the Choctaw Shamans of New Mexico and demonstrated what Judaism could learn from them. This gave me a remarkable insight into the mind of the Shaman. Together these stimulated me into writing this booklet.

When we use the word “Magic” nowadays, it brings inevitably to mind: - firstly its literary forms, such as the Harry Potter books and films, or the novels by Dennis Wheatley, C S Lewis, etc; - secondly the stage magician, with his clever patter and his use (in total ignorance of their true meaning and significance), of ancient occult words ripped out of context, as he performs his sleight-of- hand conjuring tricks: and lastly something more sinister. But none of

these are Magic in the true sense of the word, and this booklet is intended to delve deeper: into its origins, its history, and above all, its real meaning and continuing subtle relevance. Magic is a vast subject and many books have been written about it. My excuse for writing another is that I am ignoring the aspects normally considered by writers on the subject:- the rituals of spells and conjurations, the psychic fairs, the abominations of 'black magicians', the manipulation of demonic forces and the means of protection against them. Instead I am examining its deeper significance, both spiritually and psychologically, its place in the evolution of Religion - Judaism in particular - and the lessons it teaches us in understanding human spiritual psychology and the search for meaning.

The ancient Hebrews encountered magic in the time of Abraham and again in the time of Moses, who as a prince of Egypt was fully aware of Egyptian magical practices. As a wanderer in the desert, Moses learned much of the magic of the Midianites from Jethro, their high priest, whose daughter he married. But what he subsequently learned was that pagan magic (despite its abuses that had to be challenged and overcome) had to be understood and transmuted so that it might be made Holy.

It is essential to understand the place of the Magical in Religion, for as with Man himself, with his twin lobed mind embodying the intellectual and the intuitive, Religion seeks the marriage of the intellectual, (manifested as ethical monotheism) and the intuitive, (manifested as Awe in the face of the Numinous).

Judaism acknowledged this in the Oral Torah (the instrument to interpret the written Torah for changing times and circumstances) where the Halachah detailed the Laws for ethical living while the Aggadah illuminated it with the Spirit of the Law through legend and mysticism. It is in the latter that Jewish Magic takes its place.

One cannot explore Magic without studying the mind and world view of the Magician. The ancient Jewish mystical discipline of Kabbalah provides a good provisional insight through its symbol of Jacob's ladder. This enables us to have a faint understanding of the whole continuum of consciousness between the Holy and the most fundamental cell and is explained in Chapter 2. Kabbalah was essentially Jewish mysticism in its origins, but in recent times has served as a valuable tool in creating a Spiritual Psychology that people may use to understand themselves, and that therapists, using the insights of transpersonal psychology, may use for healing psycho-spiritual malaises.

There are those who consider that what we call 'magic' is that which has not yet been explained by science. It should be emphasised that by 'science', they imply the natural sciences. However this ignores the fact that the natural sciences are limited in their scope to those phenomenon that occur in the dimensions of Time and Space. The Transcendental sciences such as Judaic Kabbalah and Hindu Yoga (on whose insights I also draw) are concerned with the events of the Psyche and Spirit, which stand on the bridge between Time/Space and Eternity/Infinity. These can only be investigated scientifically by those who recognise the importance of those dimensions.

The word 'magic' is derived from the sect known as the 'Magi'. They were the hereditary priesthood of the Medes (whose modern descendants are the Kurds) who were credited with profound wisdom and extraordinary religious knowledge. After some Magi at the court of their rulers proved to be expert in the interpretation of dreams, Darius the Great established them over the state religion of Persia and they became the supreme priestly caste of the Persian empire.)

The fortunes of the Hebrews became closely intertwined with the Medes and Persians after the latter conquered the Babylonians (who previously had ravaged Jerusalem and carried

the Hebrews into exile). The Bible tells us of the prophet Daniel whose unusual career included being a principal administrator in two world empires--the Babylonian and the subsequent Persian Empire. Darius appointed him, a Jew, over the previously hereditary Median priesthood. One of the titles given to him was 'Rab-mag', the Chief of the Magi.

The concept of 'Magic' has developed over many millenia and has changed its significance throughout the ages. Firstly there is the ancient practice of Shamanism that was used for divination and healing by our hunter/herder/gatherer ancestors, and that still persists today amongst those people who are psychically sensitive. Secondly amongst the early urbanised Pagan communities of Babylon and Egypt whose priests and rulers would use magical ritual in an attempt to influence their 'gods' so as to control nature and their communities.

At a deeper level, Magic is concerned with the transformation and expansion of consciousness, but most important for all that is to follow is the exploration of the distinction between the transcendental and the mundane in the mind of the Magician – that is: the essential differences between:

Magic as personal transcendence

Magic as transformation,

Magic as manipulation,

Higher Magic as it is understood today in the Western world has developed out of the purer forms of Shamanism and is essentially the science of the transformation of the level of consciousness. It is not confined to any elite but can be developed by anyone whose intuitive faculties have not been stultified by their prejudices or intellectual blockages, provided that they understand their responsibilities and the necessity for the growth of spiritual maturity.

Magic can take several different forms and the major ones are defined as:

- Firstly: Causing changes in accordance with the will. This is the Magic of manipulation and is directed towards manipulating both other people and the things of nature. It is in the manipulation of natural events where it is most difficult to distinguish between fact and legend or fiction. If one is to set about causing changes in another person, it may be legitimately done only with their permission, and in such a manner as to assist them, lovingly, in their actions and thoughts freely chosen in full consciousness regarding the spiritual life pattern that they are developing for themselves. This is where the magician needs the all important qualities of compassion and humility. It is for this reason that the unholy magic of spells is forbidden, whether they are curses or charms, because their intention is to overturn free will, bind the client into dependency on the magician and inflate the ego of the latter.

- Secondly: Knowing through intuitive rather than through intellectual means. This is generally known as Extra Sensory Perception. The mindset of the Shaman is still present in many of us and dormant in others waiting to be re-energised. In altered states of consciousness, one can cross the bridge that can either join or separate time and eternity. The World of Eternity is a dimension that transcends that of mundane human consciousness (which is limited to the World of Time). In it there is a repository of all knowledge past, present and future. To the Oriental philosopher/mystic this is known as the Akashic record. To the Kabbalist this is the province of the world of Beriah (see chapter 2) where

the Maggid or Guardian Angel watches over the heart centre in the Human psyche. In enhanced consciousness, the intuitive mind can reach out to and communicate with this higher knowledge.

● Thirdly: The ability to 'cause or achieve changes **IN CONSCIOUSNESS** in accordance with the will'. This is associated with a number of related phenomena, essentially meditative in their nature, including: achieving a state of ecstasy, an oceanic experience of wholeness, being overwhelmed by the Presence of the Holy, or the bliss of total Nothingness or Emptiness. The field of meditation is studied in depth in chapter 9 and includes a study of the nature of the mind and its potential relationship to the transcendental Worlds. It shows how transpersonal psychology, including, in particular, Psychosynthesis with its use of Guided Meditation became an aid to Self-understanding through altered states of consciousness. Psychosynthesis is explored in greater depth in Chapter 9

It should be appreciated that changes in consciousness may be in the nature of either an expansion or a contraction. In the latter case, the intellect no longer stands in the way of KNOWING GOD, so that in true humility we may become as NOTHING - AYIN standing before the NOTHINGNESS - AYIN of God that is described in chapters 11 and 12. To appreciate the utter difficulty in achieving this true humility, it has to be understood that amongst the role playing sub-personalities that inhabit our ego-complex, there hides the 'magician' who can emerge into consciousness in either its holy or unholy aspect.

In the way it uses speech, magic can function: either as that encouragement which can transform another person by releasing those blockages that prevent them from becoming what they truly are, or as that deprecation which can denigrate and cripple their growth.

It is this which marks the ultimate spiritual significance of the Aramaic word **ABRA KA DABRA** – I will create as I speak, which is discussed in greater detail in chapter 13

NOTE: If we are to perform a scientific analysis of these phenomena of 'Alterations in Consciousness', it is necessary to understand the nature of the formative body which acts as an interface between body and mind. This is explained in Chapter 9.

However, one of the big problems that we have to face is what significance should we place on the achievements of Magic and Miracle – What do they actually prove? In the same way as Prejudice should never be used to deny the existence of the Super-conscious, so Magic, and for that matter Miracle, may never be used to overthrow Reason. This is illustrated in the following story that was written in the Talmud two millennia ago, in the text Baba Mezia 59, and gives a realistic view of how we should regard the relationship between supernatural phenomena and the power of reason

"A number of famous rabbinical scholars disagreed with Rabbi Eliezar's views in regard to a point of ritual law. "Rabbi Eliezar said to them: 'If the law is as I think it is, then this tree shall let us know.' Whereupon the tree jumped from its place a hundred yards (others say four hundred yards). His colleagues said to him, 'One does not prove anything from a tree.' He said, 'If I am right then this brook shall let us know. ' Whereupon the brook ran upstream. His colleagues said to him, 'One does not prove anything from a brook.' He continued and said,

'If the law is as I think, then the walls of this house will tell. '

Whereupon the walls began to fall. But Rabbi Joshua shouted at the walls and said, 'If scholars argue a point of law, what business have you to fall?' So the walls fell no further out of respect for Rabbi Joshua, but out of respect for Rabbi Eliezar they did not straighten up. And that is the way they still are.

Rabbi Eliezar took up the argument again and said, 'If the law is as I think, they shall tell us from heaven'. Whereupon a voice from heaven said, 'What have you against Rabbi Eliezar, because the law is as he says'. Whereupon Rabbi Joshua got up and said, 'It is written in the Bible: The law is not in heaven'.

What does this mean? According to Rabbi Jirmijahu it means - since the Torah has been given on Mount Sinai we no longer pay attention to voices from heaven because it is written: 'You make your decision according to the majority opinion.'

It then happened that Rabbi Nathan, one of the participants in the discussion, met the Prophet Elijah, who had taken a stroll on earth, and he asked the Prophet, 'What did God himself say when we had this discussion?'"

He replied - God smiled and said: My children have won, my children have won".

The great Jewish philosopher/psychologist, Erich Fromm, commented on this story in his book "Psychoanalysis and Religion" in the following words:

"This story is hardly in need of comment. It emphasizes the autonomy of Man's reason with which even the supernatural voices of heaven cannot interfere.

God smiles, Man has done what God wanted him to do, he has become his own master, capable and resolved to make his own decisions by himself, according to rational democratic methods"

This is supported by Vivekananda, one of the pioneers of the revival of Yoga at the end of the Nineteenth century, who wrote in a perceptive essay: -

"To get any reason out of the mass of incongruity we call human life, we have to transcend our reason, but we must do it scientifically, slowly, by regular practice, and we must cast off all superstition. We must take up the study of the superconscious state just as any other science. On reason we must lay our foundation, we must follow reason as far as it leads; and when reason fails, reason itself will show us the way to the highest plane. Real inspiration never contradicts reason, but comes to fulfil it and to be in harmony with it.

2. THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION

Anthropologists have demonstrated that the religious impulse is innate in the nature of Man and that it is manifested in the most primitive communities in their awe in the face of the mysteries of life and death. In the beginning, primitive religion was centred on the magical power of ritual and the concept of binding the 'gods', that is, invoking them to fulfil human needs. Amongst some it was the belief in the "Great Spirit" - an early example of the acceptance of a transcendental dimension of Being. However, the higher religions became morality touched with emotion, as Rudolph Otto expressed it in his seminal book "The Idea of the Holy".

Morality, or the ethical, is that which constitutes the intellectual, rational, scientific and philosophical element of religion - the Law arising from the interpretation of Prophetic revelation, for living at peace with God, oneself, the community and humanity.

Emotion is the feeling of exaltation, the thrill of awe or reverence, the sense of the awful, mysterious, or to use Rudolph Otto's word, the 'Numinous'. This is the super-rational and intuitive aspect of religion that lives on, both in the hidden aspects of the human psyche and in Mythology. It embodies the Legend that illuminates the Law.

As Rudolph Otto pointed out, true religion dwells in the tension between the two, and it must accommodate both of them. We dare neglect neither. If we are to explore the growth of spirituality and the subtle connections between the psychic and the spiritual, we have to understand the history of the evolution, both of religion and of Man's consciousness, from pre-historic times.

The Primitive elements in Religion originated during the ancient pre-history of Mankind in the unsophisticated Paganism of the hunter / gatherer / shepherd people who were close to Nature and who had a powerful intuitive sense. Their Paganism was essentially Pantheistic and Tribal, they worshipped the unseen forces of nature and the flow of the seasons. They believed that through the use of the right ritual, they could conjure their 'gods' and control them to obtain favourable results with regard to fertility. This was essentially a belief in Magic that pervaded all such societies.

In the next stage of the evolutionary process, Humanity was still at the instinctive or imaginative level in which they worshipped the archetypes of the collective unconscious as though they were gods.

It was an era of myth making marked by a considerable intimacy between mankind and the archetypal 'gods'. Extra sensory perception came naturally to them because they had not yet developed their intellectual faculties and they were still very close to the influence of the collective unconscious. The ecstatic rituals, the use of strong rhythmic dancing and chanting, and the ritual use of those items of food and drink that are notorious for their strong hallucinogenic or psychedelic effects, were all calculated to have an effect upon people that would open them to possession by their 'gods'.

Anthropological evidence shows that this sensitivity still persists today in the Shamans found amongst what intellectually biased 'civilised' Man patronisingly calls aboriginal or primitive people. Moreover it also persisted through the ages amongst those Western people who have a talent for sensitivity towards 'extra-sensory-perception'. However, in Britain throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period, and particularly in Stuart times,

those who manifested these abilities and failed to conceal them were in severe danger from the Church, which regarded them as Witches to be tortured and burnt. This was also true in many other European countries and also in North America where the trial of the Witches of Salem was a horrible example of the worst form of inquisition. Happily, today, we have taken a more enlightened attitude and the genuine talents of those who in an earlier age would have been proscribed are now understood and accepted by open-minded people.

About five thousand years ago, an entirely different and more sophisticated form of Paganism developed amongst the ancient cultures of urban Babylon and Egypt. Much later this appeared in Rome and in Greece (prior to the great reforming and highly intellectual philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle). This was essentially Polytheistic and of an entirely different nature from the Pantheism of simple tribal people. Their 'gods' were not 'gods' of Nature so much as 'gods' of Power. They included Baal and Moloch in Babylonia, where human sacrifice was its worst manifestation, Ra in Egypt, Wotan in the Norselands, Jupiter (Jove) in Rome and Zeus in pre-Socratic Greece - each accompanied with its full pantheon of 'gods' and 'goddesses' mirroring both the best and worst of human attributes.

This Polytheistic Paganism was essentially an instrument of State, used by the Emperors and Pharaohs to dominate their own people and to conquer and subjugate others. The Babylonians, Egyptians, Romans and Greeks made and worshipped the 'graven images' or idols that represented their 'gods'. At times the rulers set themselves up as 'gods' to be worshipped. They also held the magical belief that by uttering the name of a 'god', they could conjure it to secure victory over their enemies.

But all this was about to change. About four millenia ago, the first stirrings of higher religion appeared amongst the Indian and Hebrew people with the evolution of Hinduism, Jainism and the Abrahamic revelation of the Transcendent God. This was followed by the revelations to Moses on Mount Sinai and to Zoroaster in Iran.

About two and a half millennia ago these were followed by Buddhism in India, the Philosophic traditions of Socrates and his successors in Greece, of Confucius and Lao Tse in China, together with the development of Rabbinic Judaism in Israel. From out of Judaism (together with some elements of Gnostic thought) sprang Christianity. After another six hundred years, Mohammed, inspired, according to Moslem tradition, by the archangel Gabriel and also probably influenced by the local Jewish tribes that had found refuge in Arabia, revived and fulfilled the promise made to Ishmael at the time of Abraham, and converted the Arabs from the Pagan worship of Djinnns to Islam and monotheism. Six hundred years ago, Sikhism was revealed in India, and the Renaissance manifested itself in Europe.

Neither argument nor experiment can ever give unequivocal proof to others of the existence of the Holy One. Individual experiences of Transcendence, by those who were sensitive to it, were for the recipient, - to teach them to modify their thinking, their lives and their actions, and to convince others, by their example, that there were better ways of conducting themselves in relationship to their fellow beings.

But to those who are vouchsafed an experience of the Transcendent, the words of the Jewish philosopher and mystic, Martin Buber, are a salutary reminder:

'He who knows the breath of the Spirit trespasses if he desires to seek power over the Spirit or to ascertain its nature or processes.

But he is also disloyal if he fails to give thanks".

The Evolution of the Concept of God

In the ancient pagan polytheistic religions of Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Rome and the Norselands, the gods were perceived as entities with names, created in the image of Man, and with attributes that mirrored the best and worst of those found in human beings. Each of the many aspects of natural phenomena, the wind, rain, thunder, and the power of the sea were visualised as gods, often jealously at odds with one another. They were represented by idols in semi-human, often monstrous, form.

However, the great monotheistic religions introduced the concept that God is utterly transcendent and yet immanent in the World, and recognised that He/She/It is manifested by its attributes. This is recognised (for example) in the higher elements of the Hindu Faith where the utterly Transcendent God ‘Brahman’, who can only be defined as ‘Neti Neti - ‘Not This Not That’, is immanent in every individual being as ‘Atman’, the indwelling Divinity. (It should be appreciated that Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are essentially personifications of the archetypal attributes of Creation, Nurturing and Fulfilment. They are given these names and regarded as ‘gods’, essentially to be given form as icons used as a focus for worship.) Buddhism differs in that it rejects the concept of a Transcendental God but recognises God’s Immanence in the Buddhi nature of the enlightened Man. In the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the God of history and ethical conduct superseded the Pagan gods of nature and all idol worship was forbidden.

One of the most fascinating and glorious aspects of humanity is its vast diversity. Every community, every single person is unique. This is seen both in race, in culture, and in religious belief. In the case of the latter, great variety is found not only between each religion, and between the sects of each religion, but also in the personal beliefs of the individual adherents of each sect. And this is how it should be, although, sadly, that is not accepted by those fundamentalists who believe that only their beliefs can be right.

A valuable clue is found within the Jewish faith in the words that open the prayer known as the Amidah - “ Our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob”. Why is the prayer so worded? For example, why not simplify the last bit to “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”? The rabbis answered that each of the Patriarchs experienced God in a different way, so God had a different meaning to each of them.

What about “Our God and God of our Fathers”? - Why the distinction? “Our God” refers to that aspect of God that we meet through our own personal experience, for the experience of each one of us is unique. Just as I have no right to try and insist that my experience is more valid than yours, so is it the other way round.

What of “God of our Fathers”. This refers to the fact that we all have traditions marked out by the evolution of thought through generations of wise teachers and leaders. These great thinkers from the past, can say (as did scientists and mathematicians such as Sir Isaac Newton), “If I can see a little further than those who came before, it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants”. In their book ‘Finding God - Ten Jewish responses’, Rifat Soncio and Daniel Syme trace the search for, and evolving beliefs in, God over 4000 years of Jewish thought.

The 'Name' of God in Judaism

There are very searching questions asked by religious thinkers regarding the Name and nature of God:

Is God an entity with attributes? - If so, then the Name of God is a **Noun**.

Or is God pure transcendental 'Being-ness', the super-conscious source of evolutionary consciousness? - If so, then the Name of God is a **Verb**.

Or is God the pure potential of 'Nothingness', the spiritual counterpart of the 'Singularity of the cosmic scientist'? - If so then the Name of God is **Nameless**.

Or is God all of these?

The Hebrew word for 'God' is **El**. The word '**Elohim**' is its plural form. **El** is never used alone but always with a pronoun or an adjective following it, for example: '**Elohenu**' - our God, or '**El Rachamim**' - 'Compassionate God'. It must be understood that the use of the word **Elohim** does not mean that the Hebrews were polytheistic and worshipped 'gods' as such, nor that **El** was the name of God. It meant that the **Elohim** were the attributes of God manifested in the Universe as the archetypal forms and forces. The term **El** was also used as an honorific for a Judge.

In the early history of the Hebrew Bible, Abraham met and knew God as a noun, an entity - **EL SHADDAI** - 'The Nurturing God', (from the root Shad meaning 'Breast'). Many centuries later, the understanding of the utterly transcendent nature of God was revealed to Moses as the Holy One whose "Names" are not nouns but constructs of the verb 'To be': Firstly at the episode of the "Bush that burnt but was not consumed" where it was given as - **EHYEH ASHER EHYEH** (translated as "I am as I shall be"). Then later as the unpronounceable **YHVH**, (a contraction of "**HaYaH, HoVeH, YiHYeH**" meaning "Was, Is, Will be" and best translated as "the Eternal One").

After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews from the Holy Land, the Rabbis used another noun to describe the immanent nature of God as the feminine **SHEKHINA**, meaning the Presence of the Divine Indwelling in the life of mankind.

The medieval Jewish philosopher, Yehudah Halevi, expressed the mystical yearning for God, linking the two concepts of Transcendence and Immanence in a beautiful poem beginning:

"Oh my God where shall I find You, Your place is utterly transcendent and beyond our comprehension,

And yet Oh my God, where shall I not find you, the whole World is full of the presence of your Glory".

3-MODELS OF REALITY

Science

Science, in itself, is neither a statement of morality nor of emotion; yet scientists, being human, should and generally do concern themselves with the former and, whether they like it or not, are rarely so objective as to be free of being overcome subconsciously by the latter.

Science explores and endeavours to explain nature by devising a theoretical framework that will forecast experimental results and establish the reasons for their patterns. Its theories are valid to the extent that they correspond with nature, including both its sub-nuclear and cosmic forms.

Science also attempts to understand the Reality that underlies the world of appearances. We normally think of it in terms of the natural sciences, the speculative enquiries into the laws of physics and chemistry and biology. The aspects of reality that are of particular interest to the scientist of today, and the educated layman who follows their work with interest, include theoretical and experimental work to give us an understanding of:

- Cosmology - the creation of the universe and of time.
- Particle physics - the ultimate building blocks of energy and matter.
- Genetics - the secret of life and evolution.
- Psychology - the nature of consciousness.

There is, however, no clear dividing line between religion and science, and the practitioners of religion step over the boundary when they turn to what one might describe as the supernatural or esoteric sciences, the equally speculative disciplines of theology, meta-physics and meta-psychology which enquire into the nature of the Holy and its immanence in the world.

In the past, the field of Cosmology was claimed by the theologians and the metaphysicians as their own - one on which they could make dogmatic assertions and enforce them by the power of the inquisition. The early scientists were regarded as trespassers and persecuted for their intrusions with the full force of ecclesiastical law. Happily religion has now recognised the supremacy of the experimental technique and the boundaries are no longer a zone of warfare.

However, we still have the problem of the vast field of psychology with its conflicting materialist and spiritual theories as to whether the human psyche is a cybernetic machine that can be reduced to a mechanism, with consciousness no more than a product of endocrine and neurone function; or whether it has a supernatural basis and a transpersonal content where consciousness is the precursor of physical development.

*Science and Religion are opposed
But only in the sense that thumb and
forefinger are opposed
Using both, one can grasp anything*

Religion



Science

*Quotation attributed to
Sir William Bragg*

Mystics and Scientists

A frequently made observation is that, on the one hand, the religious mystic, and on the other hand, the astronomer and the particle physicist, have a view of the unity of the universe that is remarkably similar. In many cases it has been found that if statements made by representatives of each of these disciplines are presented without signature or identification, it is very difficult to tell whether they issue from religious mystics or scientists.

Albert Einstein once said:

***Science without religion is lame.
Religion without science is blind***

and so we can debate whether Albert Einstein was speaking as Jewish mystic or as Jewish scientist when he replied to the question of how he was inspired to discover his theory of relativity by saying that it was because he:

***was so strongly convinced of the harmony
and unity of the Universe***

On another occasion he proclaimed:

***The finest emotion we can endure is the mystic sensation. It is the
base of all real science. He, who does not know this emotion and
cannot be surprised any more, has rather died already. The knowledge
that the impenetrable exists yet manifests itself in the greatest
wisdom and the most radiant beauty, can be understood only in a
weak and primitive form, yet this realisation is the pith of all real
religion.***

On the other hand, this does not mean that the statements of mystics and scientists are the same. The mystic (and the transpersonal psychologist) are seeking one aspect of God - that which is expressed as supreme meaning, love and consciousness. The esoteric scientist (and the quantum physicist etc) are seeking another aspect of God - that which is expressed as supreme creative energy. Yet both these aspects are but manifestations of the same underlying unity as is shown in Chapter 11 where the Nothingness of the Singularity of the Scientist and the Nothingness of the AYIN of God are described.

The Scientific Model

***In the beginning, all was darkness and black night.
God said "Let Newton be" and all was light.
It did not last, the devil, crying "Ho!"
Said "Let Einstein be", and restored the status quo***

The first two lines of this couplet are attributed to Alexander Pope, the second to the ubiquitous Anon.

The different approaches of Newton and Einstein to finding a model for explaining gravity illustrate the problem that we have to face.

- For Newton, gravity was a force that attracted two objects together and was instantaneous.

- For Einstein, gravity was a warping of space due to the presence of an object. This governed the motion of it in relation to other objects and was propagated at the speed of light.

Newton's laws of physics were adequate for all scientific endeavour up to less than a century ago and remain valid in predicting the vast majority of natural phenomena. However they became inadequate when it came to explaining why astronomers discovered by observation that large objects such as the Sun could bend the light from stars. This was something that Einstein's model predicted and explained.

Einstein's model was an advance on Newton's but recent workers have found minor anomalies in it that have needed improvement. The perfect model may yet have to be discovered.

The Spiritual Model

The nature of one's belief in God necessitates accepting a model of reality but recognising that it can only be provisional.

Our world view is conditioned by our experience, and is reflected in the model that we create for understanding the world that we live in, and of which we have a limited knowledge, whether it be scientific or religious. Yet, in a way, our openness to experience is itself conditioned by the model that we are willing to accept as valid, or by means of which our mind-set has been indoctrinated. Far too often we fall into the error of forgetting that the map is not the country, and looking at a map is not the same as experiencing the terrain.

When one regards the model of reality as if it were reality itself rather than as a signpost, one is guilty of the sin of idolatry. This phenomenon is well known in the field of religion. We do not always recognise how often it occurs in the field of science. Scientists are less than true to themselves when they defend their theories against data that do not fit it, rather than continue the search for truth. And the same must be said for the practitioners of religion.

At regular intervals, there are major paradigm shifts in the history of mankind's growth in understanding. If we react with intellectual and spiritual integrity to these as they occur, we are forced to change our view of ultimate reality, whether that be from a spiritual or scientific angle. In particular, if we are to understand the complexities of human consciousness, a radical re-appraisal of our psychology and philosophy is essential in order to make comprehensible that which we call the underlying realities.

Material science can neither understand nor explore human consciousness adequately, for it regards consciousness as no more than the product of biological processes in the body. The spiritual sciences start from utterly different premises, regarding consciousness as the primary phenomenon and the biological processes as secondary. They offer keys to understanding consciousness through direct experience by using techniques of meditation.

When one explores the unknown regions and contents of one's own consciousness, using meditation as a tool and practising its disciplines, one can be helped by using an effective map.

Reality eludes us, whatever our viewpoint, and when we endeavour to express our intuitions, we come up against the problem of language and our inability to articulate the

unspeakable. In responding to these paradigm shifts, we are forced to create new models or analogues to give expression to our understanding, and devise theories to explain it. Thus we have to create maps, symbols and metaphors to serve as representations of Reality, onto which we then try to fit our experiences.

The essence of progress is twofold:

- Firstly, adapting to time and place, yet being aware that the result of our efforts is not necessarily more valid.
- Secondly, being willing to maintain old paradigms only until such time as they can no longer contain new evidence and account adequately for new experience.

If we want a visual symbol for progress, it might be that of a spiral staircase, where, at every half turn, we not only rise to new heights, but also stand for a moment over the historical experience of the other pole of being.

And so we come up against one of the facts of life - that objectivity is an illusion. One cannot separate the experimenter from his experiment nor the theorist from his theory. In each, the first is bound to the second by the strength of his emotional attachment, and all observation is in the end subjective. If we could be honest about this, it would save all the suffering caused by both religious and scientific dogma. For our maps, models, symbols and metaphors too easily become idols which we worship as though they were the immutable truth, and castigate healthy sceptics and iconoclasts as heretics.

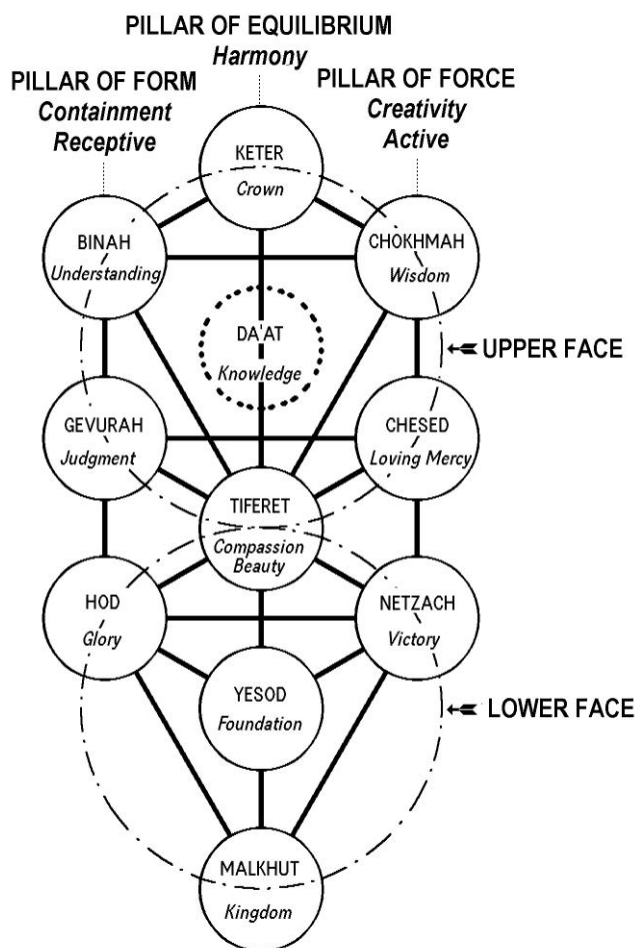
Those who have been conditioned to limit themselves to a rationalist world view, inevitably reject, as absurd or irrational, those phenomena that transcend our normal perceptions and which their model cannot accommodate. This includes all those phenomena that come under the heading of extra-sensory-perception, ie knowing by means other than those of the five senses or of any logical process, together with all spiritual experience.

However, if our minds are open and willing enough to use it **provisionally** as an experimental tool, a skilfully designed model, such as the Jacob's ladder with its four Trees of Life described in Chapter 4, can accommodate such phenomena and place them accurately on the map. That does not mean to say that it is the only provisionally valid model, nor that it will not be replaced by a superior one in the future. But it does seem to work.

4-THE KABBALIST MODEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The Tree of Life

In common with other spiritual sciences, the Judaic mystical tradition, known as Kabbalah, postulates a continuum of consciousness in which the human form and physical being are the ultimate products of thought patterns originating in the supreme, infinite and eternal super-consciousness of the domain of the Holy. Furthermore, it teaches that this continuum is in the form of a number of discrete worlds of being. The spiritual energies within each of these are reflected in those manifested in the one below, but they are increasingly differentiated in the process as they become involved in the world of matter and the sphere of physical action.



The Tree of Life is a symbolic representation of the evolutionary process and is a distillation of the wisdom of the Kabbalah. It tells of the relationship between God, creation and man.

According to Kabbalah, in the beginning there was the nothingness of the utterly transcendent and unknowable Divinity. This nothingness, referred to as AYIN - literally the void (dimensionally infinite and eternal) - contracted into itself to make a space and a time for the phenomenal universe to come into existence. It then made itself manifest in the universe as a series of powers, forces and attributes known as the sefirot (the singular is sefirah). These are all that any human being can possibly know of God.

There are ten of the sefirot and they form the first manifestation of what is known as the Tree of Life. There are a number of symbolic representations of the Tree. The earliest known portrayal was the Menorah, the seven branched candelabra used in the Temple in Jerusalem. Subsequently, other models were used including ones with concentric circles,

reminiscent of the modern understanding of the structure of the atom. The present geometrical representation, as shown in the illustration, emerged between 1500 and 1000 years ago and is the form that is universally used nowadays.

The construction of the Tree is illuminating. The two large chain dotted circles in the

illustration symbolise the upper and lower faces. Overlaying these two faces are the three pillars that provide the framework for the dialectical process.

The two outer pillars symbolise the polarities to which all life is subjected:

That on the right is the expansive, energising and driving force that is ascribed to the masculine element.

That on the left is the containing, nurturing, patterning and structuring form that is ascribed to the feminine element.

The central pillar is the balancing effect of harmony which manifests itself as Truth, Beauty and Consciousness.

On these three pillars are sited the ten sefirot which, apart from the first and tenth, are arranged in triads. There is also the non-sefira known as Da'at.

In creating the Tree, each of the groups of triads is generated in turn, with the right hand member (active), preceding the left hand member (passive) and the two elements harmonising to produce the central third. The Kingdom, or Divine Presence in the Universe, at the foot of the Tree is the final stage of this process in which the enigma of the philosopher becomes the Holy Presence in the historical life of existential man. One can think of the Tree of Life as though it were an octave on the keyboard of creation, repeating itself as the vibratory rate becomes slower and slower, less spiritual and more material. Beyond the keyboard, beyond all images of octaves, is the utterly transcendent AYIN - eternal, infinite and unknowable, embracing all, at rest and at peace. Then, in love, it withdrew to make room for creation and made itself known in creation through its attributes - the sefirot, in the highest octave of creation.

Atzilut

These emanations of primary thought and energy, through which the attributes of God were manifested in the Universe, constituted the first world, or Tree, of emanation.

Beri'ah

The sefirot of this first world were reflected into the second - the creation of those focal points of energy that guide the stars in their courses and, through the primordial unconscious known as Adam, mould our own spiritual being and our personal existence. The ancients called these energies 'Angels' and gave them names. Spiritually aware psychologists now use the word Archetypes to describe them. They are the preconscious patterns that mould and form our own psychological processes. These archetypal energies are the source of all the great myths, the psychological expressions of spiritual truth in allegorical form, on whose foundations cultures and civilisations have grown.

Yetzirah

And then in the next octave, one sees how the second world was reflected into the third - the formation of the processes within the human spirit and psyche, and the evolution of human being from pure spirit, through thinking, relating, and willing being into the foundation of its phenomenal life - the ego.

Asiyah

Finally into the fourth and final world - the making of the formative force field with its energy centres and the gross physical body.

It must be appreciated that the undifferentiated singularity of the Eternal One cannot be represented in any diagram, and its utter transcendence and unfathomable nature is not counted amongst the Trees. Some writers do speak of it as though it were a fifth Tree without attempting to represent it symbolically.

Each octave is a replica of the Tree of Life. The statement that Man is made in the image of God means that in Man are mirrored the Sefirot as the qualities that mark his potential for spiritual growth. The return of Man to spiritual being is a retracing of the steps of evolution, and only by a true insight into the processes of evolution and by a spiritual fulfilment of the moral laws is it possible to return to the source.

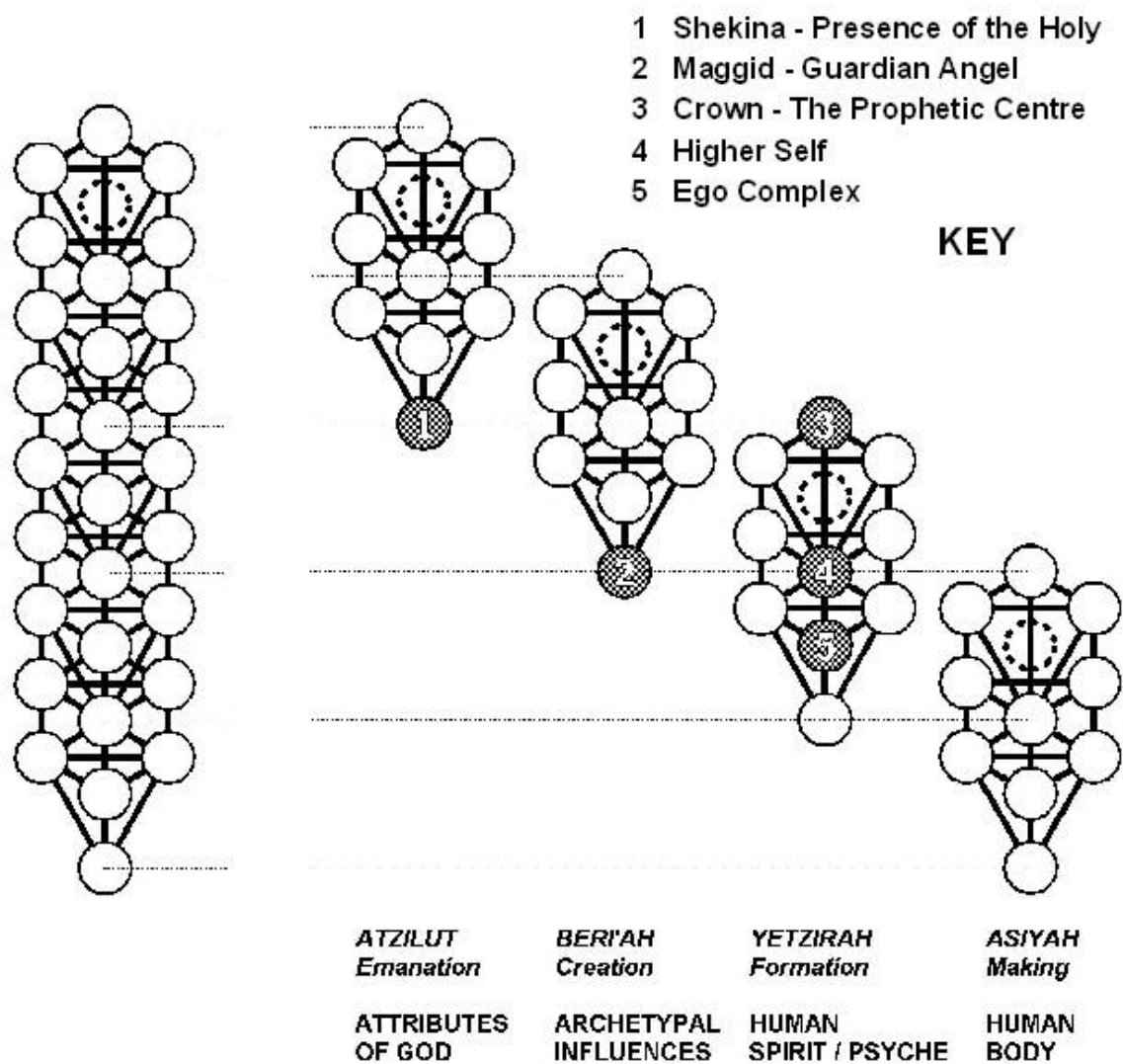
Jacob's Ladder



The Bible recounts how Jacob had a dream in which he saw the angels ascending and descending a ladder between heaven and earth. In Kabbalah, Jacob's ladder becomes the name of a model that describes the keyboard of creation, with its four octaves, that links the humblest cell to That which is Holy and which is the source of all consciousness. It illustrates the relationship between these four octaves (Trees), each of which represents a dimension of consciousness: Divine, Archetypal, Psychological and Physical. They are not separate but overlap in such a way that the lower face of one Tree overshadows the upper face of the one below it.

The diagram on the next page shows, on the left, how the individual Trees are combined into the 'Jacob's Ladder', and on the right, and level with it, the individual 'Trees' and how they relate to one another on the 'Ladder'. It will use them to study the locations of consciousness on the pillar

of harmony. Some of the Sefirot in the diagram are highlighted and numbered. They are used to relate these personalities to the ways that, as we grow spiritually, we can centre our consciousness in different aspects of our total being and relate each in turn to the Higher Worlds.



In the World of Atzilut – The World of Divine Attributes

❶ The Shekinah (or Presence of the Holy in the phenomenal world) is all that any human being, however spiritualised, can ever know of the Divine life.

In the World of Beriah – The World of Angels and Archetypes

❷ The Maggid is the Guardian Angel (known in the terminology of spiritual psychology as the wise counsellor).

In the World of Yetzirah – the Psycho-spiritual nature of Man

At the centre of the Psyche is the ego complex - our normal conscious self, with all its complexes, problems and limitations. In Kabbalah, Yesod is known as the foundation. It might be regarded as our animal nature that enables us to survive in a hostile world. Without it, we would follow a vegetable existence. But if that were all, we would never realise our spiritual potential.

This is the place where Jacob stands at his moment of existential crisis when he represents unredeemed everyman.

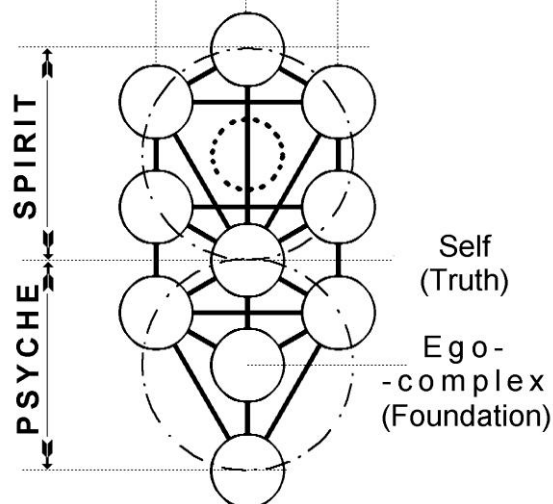
④ The Higher Self resides at the heart centre, where Spirit and Psyche meet. In Jacob's wrestling match with the Angel he stands here when he is transformed from his ego-centric self to the spiritually awakened and re-named Israel.

③ The Crown is the highest peak of human attainment, which only the true prophet or mystic can reach briefly in his moment of enlightenment. In the Book of Genesis, it is manifested in such men as Abraham, who walked with God, and Moses who went up into the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments.

Yetzirah in depth

In common with all the trees, Yetzirah has two faces.

THE THREE PILLARS OF : Loving Mercy Consciousness Discernment



The illustration on the left shows the relationship between the psyche and the spirit, that is the personal and transpersonal aspects of personality

The upper face (spirit) is a manifestation of all that is potentially Holy in our being. It is often called the spark of Divinity in us, and in the language of spiritual psychology it is termed the transpersonal Self.

The lower face (psyche) corresponds to the individual self. It must be emphasised that the individual self, whose ego lies at its centre, is equally an essential part of our being. In Kabbalistic terms it is often called the foundation for there can be no complete biological existence without it.

It is indeed its foundation, for a person with no individuality would have no ability to ground the spirit in the world of action,

essential for the fulfilment of our destiny. A person without an ego is, psychologically speaking, in the vegetable state, completely dependent upon others for survival. In the language of spiritual psychology it is termed the personal self.

It must be appreciated that these allegories and graphic illustrations must not be mistaken for representations of discrete entities. Spirit and psyche are qualities of awareness in which

the human unity may elect to take its stand: either by being egocentric and denying its potential, or by taking responsibility for becoming truly human and opening itself to the Holy.

Although the ego is an essential part of our total humanity, it has within it a potential for psychic disaster if it assumes the central position in the personality, that is if one becomes egocentric. It is this ego-centricity that has to be overcome and not the ego itself.

The personal self has within it the potential for growth into maturity if it can establish an authentic communion with the transpersonal Self. The first task of spiritual development and integration of the personality is to become aware of the reality of the nature of the transpersonal Self.

When consciousness is centred on the lower face, one is subjected to the laws of causality and determinism that are the hallmarks of nature. Nor can there be any communion with the higher trees.

But when it is re-centred on the Self at the meeting point of the lower face and the upper face, one transcends nature and exerts the truly human faculty for free will, giving it the ability to choose the good and express one's integrity whatever the cost.

In meditation, when awareness is re-centred on truth, communion can be made with the guardian angel at the foot of the second tree, that of Beri'ah.

The Sephiroth as a Guide to Human Nature

The natural sciences regard human consciousness as the product of the working of the nervous system and endocrine function. They see evolution in purely Darwinian terms, as the result of natural selection.

The spiritual sciences, such as Kabbalah and its Indian counterpart - Yoga, differ markedly in that they regard consciousness as primary and the physiology as a product. Evolution is seen as being driven by the stream of consciousness that flows down from the supreme source of consciousness through the four 'Worlds' to the simplest cell.

The previous paragraphs have studied certain of the Sefirot on the central pillar of truth and harmony. An understanding of the function of the Sefiroth on the side pillars of mercy and justice (or energy and structure) and the interaction between them is very helpful both to our self-understanding and to the way of compassion, both inwardly and towards our neighbours.

Kabbalah was in its origins essentially a mystical discipline, and to many of its adherents still is just that. But it is also a practical discipline directed to psychological methods of self understanding and the application of spirituality to meeting the challenges of everyday life so as to imbue it with meaning and purpose.

Rabbi Laibl Wolf shows in simple language, in his book on "Practical Kabbalah" how the ten energy centres known as the Sefiroth can be used to satisfy our spiritual longings and lead us to fulfil our purpose. In a manner similar to Patanjali's sutras, Kabbalah provides the disciplinary tools to tame the ego mind, to enable us to stand back from our thoughts and emotions so that we can look at them objectively, and thus understand the inner conflicts that obstruct our growth.

The Sefiroth are arranged in the form of 'Dialectical Triads'. The philosopher Hegel described these as the interaction of 'thesis' - an original proposition, which gives rise to 'antithesis' - which tests and counteracts it, so that the two may give rise to a 'synthesis' -

which harmonises them. These triads are somewhat akin to the three Gunas, and to the three divine principles of Brahma (Creativity), Vishnu (Sustenance) and Shiva (Fulfilment) that will be familiar to students of Yoga

Modern Practical Kabbalah uses the same technique as Theoretical Kabbalah to describe and understand the interaction of the Sefiroth as dialectical triads at three levels. At each level, energy (force) is contained by structure (form) and the two find a new harmony that is the trigger for the events in the next triad down the line.

Chapter 9 page 50 describes the function of the Yoga Chakras during meditation. It is a matter of opinion amongst authoritative writers as to whether or not there is any correspondence or relationship between the Sefiroth of Kabbalah and the Chakras of Yoga, especially as the Sefiroth are repeated at every octave of the Tree whereas the Chakras, if there were a correspondence would be limited to the Yetziratic Tree. For the sake of completeness, I am including the table below as though there were a genuine correspondence.

SEFIRA	CHAKRA		ENDOCRINE FUNCTION
Keter`	Sahasrara	Crown	Pineal
<i>Binah</i> & Chokmah	Ajnah	Brow	Pituitary
Gevurah & Chesed	Vishudhi	Throat	Thyroid
Teferet	Anahata	Heart	Thymus
Hod & Netzah	Manipurah	Solar Plexus	Pancreas
Yesod	Swadhisthana	Sacral Plexus	Genitalia
Malkhut	Muladhara	Base	Adrenals

It shows how the Sefiroth (which are manifested in each of the four worlds) relate to the Chakras described in Yoga theory. The corresponding Endocrine functions in the Physiological World of Assiyah are included merely to give those interested in Yoga an approximate point of reference, but they are not really relevant to the Psychological World of Yetzirah, the third of the four Worlds, which is the subject of this chapter. An excellent coverage of this relationship is given by Rebekah Kenton in her essay "A Kabbalist View of the Chakras"

The highest Sefira - Keter is the Crown of ultimate human potential, approximating to the Sahasrara Chakra, where in the moment of true Mystical or Prophetic experience, one stands in the Presence of the Holy. Evolving from that point are the three Sefiroth of the first triad of MIND: Chokmah (Wisdom) and Binah (Understanding), which, together approximate to the Chakra of Ajna and - the odd one that is not generally counted amongst the ten Sefiroth but, nevertheless has a most important linking function – Da'at (Knowledge), which approximates to the Vishuddhi Chakra.

Da'at is the link to the three Sefiroth of the second triad of:

INTERNALISED EMOTION: Chesed (Loving Mercy) and Gevurah (Judgment), together approximating to the Chakra of Anahata, with Tiferet (Compassion or Beauty) approximating to the Manipura Chakra.

Tiferet leads to the three Sefiroth of the third triad of:

EXTERNALISED EMOTION: Netzach (Victory) and Hod (Glory), together approximating to the Chakra of Swadhisthana, with Yesod (Foundation) approximating to the Base Chakra of Mulhadara.

From Yesod stems the single Sefira of Malchut (The Kingdom) that is the Ground of Being in the physical world.

Having shown how the Sefiroth form a pattern of evolution, it is now time to examine the significance of each in detail:

Keter (Crown) is the point within the unconscious where the first stirrings of consciousness are made possible. Ideas are as yet unformed. They are but possibilities within the soul

The three Sefiroth of Mind

The counterpart of the mind in physiological terms is the brain. But it must be remembered that the brain is not the originator of consciousness, but only its transmitter. As Rabbi Laibl Wolf expressed it:

Mind is the way that the Soul expresses itself through the physiology of the Brain.

Chokmah (Wisdom) is the point where the inspirational powers of the soul are first drawn down into the World of ideas and given their initial drive to creativity. However it is embryonic in its nature and too easily can run out of steam and wither before its time. Chokmah is essentially the impulsive side of our mind

Binah (Understanding) gives direction and structure to the drive of Chokmah. Moreover its feminine nature is one of nurturing the creative spark to help bring it to fruition and make it tangible. Binah is essentially the calculating side of our mind.

Da'at (Knowledge) is that which enables the inspirational thought of Wisdom and the nurturing direction of Understanding to interact fully and provide the bridge for both to feed down into the emotions

The three Sefirot of Internalised Emotion

The counterpart of the emotions in physiological terms is the heart.

Quoting Rabbi Wolf once more:

Emotion is the way the Soul expresses itself through the metaphoric heart

The Rabbi used the word metaphoric advisedly for unlike the relationship between mind and brain, which is quite clear-cut; the emotions have their physical reactions throughout the body. He points out that modern scientific work supports the concepts described in Kabbalist and Chassidic psychology.

Chesed (Mercy or Loving Kindness) is the emotion of giving and sharing. It lies at the heart of our desire to make our contribution to making the world a better place. It is the concept of Karma Yoga in the sense of unconditional service to humanity that underlies all possibility of spiritual happiness. However, it needs to be focussed lest it become too diffuse or too draining. One can become ineffective by trying to give too much and too unwisely.

Gevurah (Judgment) directs and focuses our spiritual energies so that they can achieve the goal through concentrated and disciplined effort. Just as Chesed is expansive, and sometimes in danger of losing itself through lack of direction, so is Gevurah contractive and limiting so that it can restrict the spiritual flow to what is within our limitations, and focus it into a narrow stream of energy that can become effective.

If Chesed is like the flow of water coming into the hose from the tap, then Gevurah is like the spray head on the end of the hose that modifies the flow to become a powerful jet. Its drawback is that it can turn it off altogether even when to do so is inappropriate.

Tiferet (Compassion or Beauty) provides the harmonising influence that balances undue loving kindness against the tendency to be over judgmental or to play the harsh disciplinarian. Magistrates have to be particularly aware of their Tiferet centre when they temper judgment with mercy in difficult cases where extenuating circumstances may point to a need to modify the demands of the law. The parent or teacher has to do the same with the children in their care.

The three Sefirot of Externalised Emotion

Chesed, Gevurah and Tiferet are emotional dispositions that need the next triad of sefirot to become effectively externalised.

Netzach, Hod and Yesod are the tools of expression that enable us to reach out into the world of human relationships.

Netzach (Victory) is the impetus to accept the challenge to express our feelings and to overcome our reticence. Netzach takes the spiritual energy of loving kindness in Chesed and breaks down the boundaries between the Self and the loved one in the authentic I-Thou relationship. However it has to be kept in check lest love turns to possessiveness or jealousy.

Hod (Glory) is the counterbalance to Netzach. It is the ability to share rather than to impose, to practice empathy so as to feel the other person's needs and fears in the relationship. It is that which leads us to be honest and open in our relationships. As Rabbi Wolf points out, it can be manifested in a simple and sincere "Thank you".

Yesod (Foundation) is the harmonising principle that balances Netach and Hod. It is also the quality of caring communication that can achieve a true bond between two people. This communication may be verbal or may even be direct from mind to mind. Positive thinking can direct healing energies even at a distance from one person to another. Negative thinking from Yesod can cause terrible harm not only to the other but also to the originator of the thought. Yesod becomes the funnel through which all the influences of the other Sefiroth are channelled down into Malchut

Malchut (Kingdom) Is the Sefira through which the activities of all the other Sefiroth are channelled into the world and are actualised so that they may become effective.

5. THE NATURE OF THE EGO-CENTERED MAGICIAN

The 'Powers' of Magic

Magic might be thought irrational and pre-scientific, yet it has a rationale and a science of its own. Moreover, leaving aside the legends associated with it, it works: sometimes successfully and sometimes disastrously. What usually we call “science” are the Natural Sciences. But there are also those sciences that transcend “Natural” science and that might be called the “Intuitive” sciences. These include Magic and such disciplines as “Transpersonal Psychology” to which reference is made later.

To establish what Magic really is, and how we should react to it, we have to find a healthy balance between our intellectual and our intuitive faculties. We must avoid a sterile rationalism on the one hand and credulous superstition on the other.

The natural sciences are based: partly on theoretical study, based on intuition to a certain extent as, for example, in some of the “strange” particles that have been postulated and then discovered in nuclear physics; and partly on the intellectual and experimental method, using observation and statistics.

Magic is subject to the same dichotomy of approach. This can be observed in the correlation of experimental data in such phenomena within the category of Extra Sensory Perception as, for example, Map Dowsing. The magical facilities are what Patanjali, the Yoga codifier, referred to as Siddhis, (meaning Powers). However, in his aphorisms, he warns us:

3.51 – By giving up even these powers, the seed of evil is destroyed and liberation follows.

3.52 – When tempted by the invisible beings in high places. let the Yogi feel neither allured nor flattered; for he is in danger of being caught once more by ignorance

Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, append to the first of these (3.51) the following comment:

“The ego centred personality is intent upon satisfying its desires and acquiring possessions and power over external nature. Of all powers, the psychic powers are, from the standpoint of the ego, the most desirable, and of the psychic powers, omnipotence and omniscience are obviously the greatest. The Yogi who has held these powers in his grasp, and has nevertheless rejected them, has rejected the ultimate temptation of the ego. Henceforth he is freed from bondage”.

The Nature of the Ego

The adult psyche has the ego at its centre. However this is an aspect of one's total being that evolves and is not inborn. The newborn baby is pure potential, and its psyche manifests only in the very lowest element of the Tree - that is the sensory perceptions. The remaining Sefirot are potential

awaiting activation. However, very speedily, the two Sefirot on either side of the lower face, namely memory responses (which embody the psychic **structure**) and instinctual drives (which constitute the psychic **energy**) are activated and, as they do so, the infant becomes a creature of imagination and instinct. This is the preconscious state. Then as growth commences and infancy gives way to childhood, the ego manifests itself, as the growing personality becomes aware of itself as a separate and individual identity.

The ego is an essential part of our being, and in Kabbalistic terms it is often called the foundation, for there can be no complete biological existence without it. A person without an ego is, psychologically speaking, in the vegetable state, completely dependent upon others for survival. Indeed those charlatans who bid us destroy our ego do so as their first step in taking over the direction of our lives for their own ends.

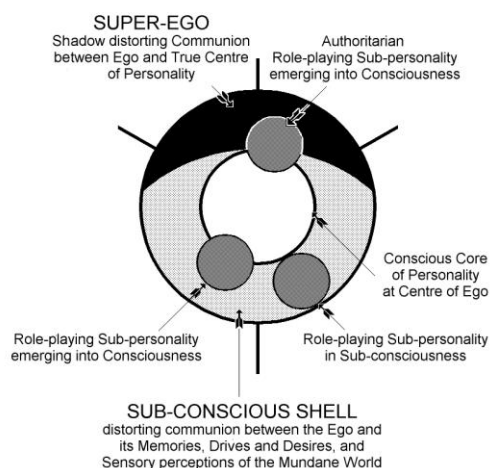
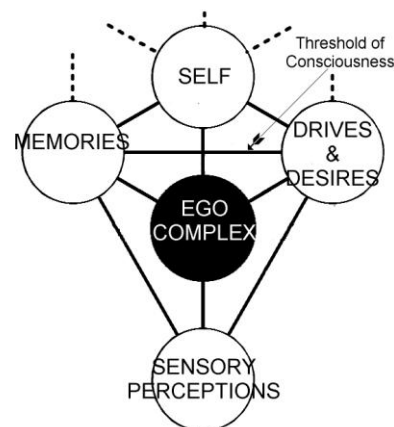
The impact of the relationship of the ego to the pre-conscious elements of personality causes the development of cognition, feeling and consciously willed activity. These are the faculties that mark the potential emergence of homo-sapiens for, without them, the individual would only be able to react to his surroundings and not be able to consciously interpret or manipulate them.

The first illustration shows the Psyche in greater detail and, in particular, how the Ego complex relates to the memories, drives and sensory impressions that shape it in the world of action. Although the ego is an essential part of our total humanity, it has within it a potential for psychic disaster if it assumes a central position in the personality, that is if one becomes ego-centric. It is this ego-centricity that has to be overcome and not the ego itself.

The second illustration focuses on the ego-complex and its problems. The ego is the sense of personal identity. It may be strong and simple or it may be weak and complex. In the former case, (that is when it is well integrated), it knows both itself and its limitations and is content to take its rightful place. However when it is weak and complex, it plays roles that are not truly its own.

If we meditate upon the nature of our being, we find that within our ego complex there is a spark of conscious personality constrained within a prison. This spark is the natural child within us that needs to become open to the intuition of the transpersonal self in order that it may become the natural adult with a potential for clear intellectual thought, emotional feeling, and sensitivity. The prison is the subconscious shell (sometimes called reactive shell) which masks the individual self from reality by obscuring, distorting or colouring all incoming messages:- from our sensory perceptions, from our memories and instinctual drives, and also from our Self, the gateway to our transpersonal self and our highest aspirations. Within the shell is the web of neurotic memories, frenetic desires, sensory impressions and imposed authoritarian indoctrination that condition its thoughts, feelings and reactions to life.

Looking at these in greater depth, they manifest as:



- The neurotic memories that are the recollections of the little hurts of past events, not seen in their true perspective, that distort our true memories. They should have been evaluated and digested as teaching lessons, but instead are continually regurgitated to deform and discolour our emotions, thus serving as the foundation for bearing the grudges that haunt and destroy us.

- Frenetic drives stemming from the desire for glamour and sensation; the covetings and ego-centric demands of the petulant child within the personality that colour our energies.

- Distortion of the sensory impressions of events in the mundane world that colour them and prevent them from being perceived for what they are.

- The authoritarian element is known as the superego, or shadow. This is the immature parent within the personality structure that puts up a barrier of prejudice and guilt built upon indoctrination - that is, all the dogmatic instruction imposed upon the personality by authoritarian parents, teachers, cults, peer groups and books. Its biggest danger is that it may appear at times to be the voice of conscience; but it is bogus, for the true voice of conscience resides in the transpersonal self. The shadow stands in opposition to the natural child that is in all of us, and which, all too often, is bruised, hurt and repressed from its past experiences at the hands of parents and teachers, themselves haunted by their own unhappy childhood experiences. This is the cause of tensions that in many cases initiate problems in meditation. In many ways, it is the most destructive of all the elements of the ego, for it may be used to project onto our neighbour all those faults that we fear to recognise in ourselves.

The most common problem with the superego is the guilt complex. In this situation there is an inner tension between an element of the superego that contains all the energies left by an over critical and moralising parent or other adult during childhood, and a repressed sub-personality in which are embedded all the childhood fears and lack of self esteem.

In normal healthy consciousness, we can be helped to recognise these elements of ourselves for what they are, and through meditation we can reconcile them to the central core of our personality.

The energies within this shell seem to have a life of their own and take the form of role playing sub-personalities. In the Upanishads, these are the sweet and bitter fruits of the Tree. They are in many cases the residues of the petulant child within us that is the antithesis of the natural child. They populate our subconscious and inhibit our true self-expression. Some of them emerge partially into our field of consciousness and it is possible by reflective meditation to recognise them. Those others that are buried deeper in the subconscious demand a deeper state of meditation.

At the core of the ego-complex is the fully conscious core of personality that has the potential for growth. Any therapeutic process that uses guided meditation will develop in this core the ability to bring into consciousness the content of the shell and recognise the role playing sub-personalities for what they are. Having done so, it can discover the potential positive qualities underlying their negative behaviour patterns and energies, transmute them, and above all redeem the shadow. Then with the guidance of the archetypal guardian that oversees the Self, it can integrate itself and become strong and simple.

Some of these sub-personalities may, at first, cause us great embarrassment, for we see in ourselves characteristics of which we may be heartily ashamed. Others may be recognised as false glammers, but, in each case, they need to be acknowledged and accepted as parts of our selves before any step on the path of integration can take place. In guided meditation, these are brought into the light of consciousness so that they may be recognised and redeemed, for every negative

quality has the potential for being converted into a positive and redemptive energy. Destructive tensions are created not only by the role playing sub-personalities individually, but also by virtue of the fact that in the weak Ego complex, they are in conflict amongst themselves.

The Magician Sub-Personality

It must be recognised that there is a potential element of the 'magician' in all of us amongst the role-playing sub-personalities that populate and confuse our Ego complex. It is characterised by love of ritual and ceremonial, a desire to heal others and - let us be truthful - the urge to influence them 'for their own benefit' irrespective of their Karmic needs. It is generally balanced by the other elements of compassion amongst our sub-personalities and thus kept relatively harmless.

However there are others of an utterly different stamp. In his Father Brown stories, G K Chesterton puts into the mouth of his eponymous hero the following words of wisdom:

“Real mystics don't hide mysteries, they reveal them. They set things up in broad daylight - and when you have seen it, it is still a mystery. But the mystagogues hide a thing in darkness and secrecy, and when you find it, it is a platitude”.

The ‘Siddhis’ or psychic powers that well up from out of the occult or hidden aspects of the psyche are the product of the Intuitive side of our minds as distinct from the intellectual. Modern humanity has become over reliant on the intellect, and has to a large extent lost its intuitive faculties. These powers are perfectly natural gifts that can be developed in the service of Man like any other talents, but all of them can be perverted to egocentric ends. They often come quite unexpectedly and completely unsought. They may be experienced as a blessing or a curse depending upon the recipient's ability to control or veil them. Quite often they are experienced unexpectedly by those who have devoted themselves to spiritual development in the seclusion of monastic orders or as hermits. The genuine masters of Yoga and Kabbalah remind us that even when these ‘powers’ come unsought, they are liable to deflect us from true spiritual progress and turn out to be sterile paths. Scriptural accounts describe them as temptations to pride. When they are deliberately pursued and developed as being something intensely desirable, they can result in spiritual retrogression.

Healing, for example, becomes unholy when the magician, in the guise of the healer, uses their gift to obtain a psychic domination over their patient. Physical cures may well be effected because the magician is particularly able to channel and focus energies. But there can be no true healing - that is making spiritually and psychically whole, for either the magician or the patient, for instead of being **person** drawing out **person's** inherent ability to unfold, they become **individual** manipulating and thus merely curing **individual** of a symptom, At best there is a mere mutual satisfaction of the ego.

There is another problem. With the best will in the world, there is a temptation to manifest healing magic in such a way that one is judging for oneself what is best for the patient without taking account of their spiritual needs and the possibility that their problem is of Karmic origin that needs to be worked through by themselves without interference. What seems to be Holy is rendered Unholy without the healer realising their mistake.

Many writers talk about “Black” and “White” magic and magicians, but in reality few are pure black or white. Most have a mixture of motivation between pure compassion and pure greed for power. So there are many shades of grey in magic. Throughout history, there have been charismatic

(but unholy) magicians, who have adopted the mantle of Gurus, whether they pose as Kabbalist Rabbis, Indian Swamis, or Priests of obscure religious organisations, and have set out to establish personality cults. They behave more like salesmen than the mystics that they pretend to be, in professing to offer hidden wisdom - at a cost, thus attracting the vulnerable, persuading them to suspend their rational and critical faculties, encouraging superstitious beliefs in the efficacy of 'holy water', charms, adornments and rituals; worst of all by inducing them to acquiesce in surrendering their individuality. Their techniques of recruitment include promises of: power without responsibility; secret knowledge without study, wonderful psychic experiences rather than the still quiet voice within, instant enlightenment without the hard slog of spiritual growth. They flatter and manipulate, persuading their followers that they are the elite, the elect or the saved, that they are the guardians of the great 'secret'. Pouring scorn on healthy inhibitions and on the value of reason, they are the complete antithesis of the genuine guru who seeks their student's growth into independence.

If the 'magician' that is, potentially, in all of us becomes dominant in a charismatic personality that is on a 'power trip', and if this takes control of the ego, a monster is produced that can do great harm before Providence steps in to call a halt. This is what happens in the extreme case where an unscrupulous 'magician' sets up events, in which powerful energies are released, so that they may feed on them and inflate their self. In so doing the magician has no regard for the Karmic needs of the people that they are influencing. Power, and personal power at that, is the objective, and compassion has no place in the work. One of their favourite techniques is to encourage rhythmic group chanting, and in some cases even orgiastic forms of meditation in their followers while standing back from personal participation. In doing so, they get them to produce the energies for their personal needs. Just as prayer can release creative energies into the universe, so can evil energies, thoughts and deeds produce destructive energy vortices that radiate from their originator. These energies resonate with a vulnerable sub-personality to inflate it and take possession. Innocent people as well as foolish ones may thus be infested with demonic energies that feed on them and, if not checked, may destroy them. Their plight calls for compassion and expert help so that they may be healed.

The tragedy facing such magicians is that, once they set out to manipulate, they become incapable of entering into a genuine 'I & Thou' relationship, neither with their fellow beings nor with the Holy.

6. THE OCCULT TEMPTATION

The World of the 'Occult'

The things that are hidden belong to the Lord your God. The things that are revealed belong to you and your children for ever that you may do all the words of this Torah.

Deuteronomy 29.28

The word 'Occult' means hidden, and it is very clear from the above quotation that these things were hidden, not because they were in themselves evil, as so many suppose, but rather because they were too holy for man to profane. The Bible was to be a guide for action rather than for speculation.

The authentic mystic is quite clear in his attitude to the 'occult' and it is beautifully expressed in the well loved prayer of the 18th century Chassidic Rabbi Levi Yitcha of Berditchev, a leading disciple of the Baal Shem Tov:

"Master of the Universe

I do not beg of you to reveal the secret of your ways

That would be too much for me – I could not bear it

But show me one thing. Show it to me ever more clearly and more deeply

Show me what this, which is happening to me here and now, means to me. What it demands of me. What it is that You, Lord of the World are telling me by way of it.

Oh! It is not why I suffer that I want to know, but only whether I suffer for your sake".

Nevertheless, amongst those who are mystically inclined, there has always a certain longing for an experiential intimacy with God, and this has driven some to endeavour to 'tear through the veils'. In its more sinister manifestations, the motive behind dabbling with the 'occult' has, in too many cases, not been a longing to 'know God' so much as a desire to 'conjure a god', for possessing power, or esoteric knowledge. And this has been the cause of the madness that destroys the trespasser.

Lessons from the past

"Now it came to pass ... that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God ... the word of the Lord came to Exzekiel the priest ... and the hand of the lord was upon him.

And I looked and, behold, a great cloud, with a fire flashing up, so that a brightness was around about it ... And out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures ... and everyone of them had four wings ... and when they stood, they let down their wings.

And above the firmament that was over their heads, was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness of a man upon it above."

Ezekiel – Chapter 1

There is an ancient Jewish legend (related in the Talmud - Chag. 14b) which tells how in the second century CE, four Rabbis undertook an inner psychic journey of a highly esoteric nature. It was a spiritual exercise in what was known as Merkavah mysticism and in the words of the Talmud: "They ascended into Paradise". Of the four: Rabbi Ben Zoma lost his reason, Rabbi Elisha Ben Abuyah lost his faith, Rabbi Ben Azzai lost his life, and only the great, wise and saintly Rabbi Akiva Ben Joseph, returned enlightened.

Merkavah mysticism is based upon the strange arcane vision of the prophet Ezekiel. The Biblical account in the first chapter of the book of Ezekiel concerning the four creatures and the wheels is interpreted by the scholars and mystics to be an ecstatic vision of the throne of God, also referred to as a chariot. However, over the centuries it became heavily overlaid with Gnostic thought and interpretation. The Ascent of the Merkavah was a mystical (or possibly magical) exercise in which an attempt was made at entering a very high altered state of consciousness. The objective was to enter the supernal dimensions, achieve a state of ecstasy and behold the throne/chariot of God.

It is of value to speculate on the reasons for the differing fates of the four Rabbis.

It has to be remembered that although we are enjoined to develop our spirituality to the highest possible level, at that point we must stop and remember the Divine purpose in creation, which is to be fully of and in this world.

Rabbi Akiva journeyed into the paradise of spirituality and returned unscathed because his holiness and learning was such that he knew that those moments when we retreat from the world are for no other reason than to refuel and enrich the soul, and that they can only be temporary. He entered paradise with the intention of returning. It is interesting to compare this with the wise Chinese teaching that the final stage of true meditation is to '*ride the bull into the market place*'.

But what of the other three rabbis?

The Nature of Mysticism

Mystical endeavour within religious tradition falls into three discrete categories, each of which has its virtues and each of which has its dangers. These may be described as ecstasy, theosophy and magic

Ecstasy

In some branches of Religious endeavour, and in oriental disciplines such as, for example, Raja Yoga, it is the state of consciousness where one has lost oneself in total mystical union with God. In some cases, it is the supreme objective of religious endeavour. But the danger is that it may be mistaken for, and used as, a philosophy that regards the mundane world as no more than a world of appearances or even illusion, which the oriental mystic calls 'Maya', and which is to be rejected in favour of a 'Real world' that is purely spiritual.

Rabbi Ben Azzai yearned so greatly to become fully at one with God that his soul could no longer function in this world, and he was unable to return. Maybe the drive into spirituality, away from people and material interests, can become an ego trip, and the rejection of material concerns can be no more than an escape from the real task of man, which is to face, heal and hallow the forces of the market place by bringing something of the Holy into the world. He appears then as the ecstatic who wanted to behold the face of God. But it is clearly stated in the story of Moses' encounter with God in Exodus 33.18-23

And Moses said: "Show me, I pray You, Your glory". And God said "You cannot see My face for Man shall not see Me and live. But while My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by. And then I will take away My hand and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen".

And so Rabbi Ben Azzai could no longer live.

Theosophy

This is the speculative aspect of mysticism in which an attempt is made to understand and describe the inner workings of creation. It is the foundation of the doctrine known as Gnosis. This reached its zenith in the Gnosticism of the Greek and allied cultures two thousand years ago and which has had a revival in present times in what is known as 'New Age Religion'.

So here we see the problem of Rabbi Elisha ben Abuyah who lost his faith and became a sceptic? In his case, perhaps he tried to enter paradise, not for love of God as did Rabbi Ben Azzai and Rabbi Akiva, but merely in a spirit of intellectual curiosity.

Magic

The magical impulse takes a variety of forms, too many to describe. Here the definition is limited to – 'causing changes in consciousness in accordance with the will'. As such it is in itself neither holy nor profane. What makes it good or evil is the response of the practitioner to the demand for integrity:

At its best, Magic may be witnessed in:

the ordained minister of religion who, through his sensitive use of traditional liturgy and ceremonials during public worship, transforms the consciousness of those of the congregation who are able to respond.

the healer, who brings a new wholeness to their patient.

the hypnotherapist, who helps their patients free themselves of their phobias.

the psychotherapist who, in guided meditation, enables their client to gain a new awareness of the content and potential of their mind.

In all of these, power is completely transcended by love and compassion.

However, there is a potential element of 'the magician' in all of us amongst our role-playing sub-personalities. It is characterised by love of ritual and ceremonial, a desire to heal others and - let us be truthful - the urge to manipulate them 'for their own benefit'. It is generally balanced by other elements amongst our sub-personalities and thus kept relatively harmless.

The black magician may pose as a 'guru' and use their charisma to gather a crowd of devoted disciples around them on whose energies (and cash) they may feed, and whom they can make dependent on them in order to satisfy their various appetites (including sexual ones).

They flatter and manipulate, telling their followers that they are the elite, the elect or the saved, that they are the guardians of the great 'secret'. They may pour scorn on healthy inhibitions and on the value of reason. They are the complete antithesis of the genuine guru who seeks their student's growth so that they may grow into independence.

Far more dangerous are those who infringe the third of the Ten Commandments:

“You shall not invoke the name of the Lord your God for evil; for the Lord will not hold guiltless one who invokes his name for evil”.

This commandment was specifically directed against two evils: the swearing of false oaths with intent to deceive, and the perverted use of the Holy Name for purposes of conjuration or magic. Unfortunately there are many who are doing the latter by setting up religious cults of dubious morality, or by offering courses of ‘spiritual education’. The recent scandals concerning certain American television evangelists, and an Indian Guru who was deported from America because of the corruption that he was generating, are cases in point. It must be remembered that an archetype remains an archetype even when the one who conjures it and uses it calls it by the Name of the Holy.

Here we see the fate of Rabbi Ben Zoma who became demented and lost his reason. Maybe we witness the instance of a man whose integrity and motives were suspect? It would seem possible that he had yielded to the magical temptation and was making the ascent with the intention of learning the secrets of heaven. This would imply that he was endeavouring to seek power over the spiritual world in order to manipulate it for his own ends so as to obtain supernatural powers on earth. In his case, the experience destroyed his reason because Providence could not tolerate his motives.

Lessons for today

The story of the four rabbis is more than just an ancient legend or a homiletical tale. It has direct relevance to present day problems regarding certain cult phenomena that pose a perennial threat to authentic spirituality.

Cults of Ecstasy

The Pentecostalist movements - speaking in tongues, and the Toronto blessing cult - swooning into unconsciousness, are extreme manifestations of an ecstatic revivalism. This periodically afflicts the more extremely evangelical churches. These movements are dangerous in that they involve opening the participants uncritically to possession by the forces of the Unconscious without testing whether they are malevolent or benevolent. The techniques of contrived excitement produce a state of pathological hysteria in the members of the congregation. In these states, reason and discernment are suspended with individuals passing into trance states resembling possession.

Cults of Psychic Development

There are a number of organisations that offer to teach their clients how to develop their psychic powers. Typical of these was the movement founded by Gurdjieff, which has many successors and imitators. It is of historic interest that a number of his disciples eventually lost their reason and committed suicide.

One client that was referred to me, in a case of ‘hearing demonic voices’, acknowledged that his terrifying experiences of psychic attack were a direct consequence of participating in such a course with the ulterior motive of improving his gambling chances.

These are the spiritual heirs of Rabbi ben Zoma.

The Psychedelic Drug Culture

Chapter 9 explains the function of the chakras. It refers to their normal and essential filtering action in which they protect us from the forces of the unconscious. There are certain occasions where, under strict discipline, this filtering action is superseded temporarily, and they become controlled gateways to the supernal realms. This would have been the case in the journey of Rabbi Akiva. The essential part of the termination of any disciplined expansion of awareness is, as explained in Chapter 9, the closing of the chakras so that they resume their normal filtering function.

Drugs are a synthetic way of expanding the consciousness without the control of an authentic spiritual discipline. The drugs of the nineteenth century, such as opium, were a way of escaping the horrors of a poverty stricken world and living in a dream land. The drugs of the 1930's, such as the Mescaline used by Aldous Huxley, were a way of replicating mystical experience and trying to achieve an oceanic experience of the Universe. Indeed, some writers and artists claimed that it fostered their creativity. The drugs of the 1960's, such as LSD, were used in a very similar manner, but they were marked by an increasing number of very frightening experiences amongst their users, a variety of the experience of Rabbi ben Zoma.

The drugs of the present day are very much more subtle and in a way even more potentially dangerous. One reason given for taking the drug called Ecstasy is said to be that it gives one a mystical feeling of loving everyone. The physical dangers of death through water imbalance have been highlighted in the press, and have been largely ignored as statistically the risk is low. The psychological effects also have been examined and many cases of induced manic depression and paranoid schizophrenia reported. The spiritual danger has not been addressed, but is very real.

The author Colin Dexter, in one of his Inspector Morse stories, postulates a fictional drug that is sold at raves and that causes a number of suicides. In the story, it is discovered that in every case the after-effect of the drug was acute depression, and that it stemmed from a feeling that having had the sublime experience of heaven, the thought of having to endure a mundane existence was unbearable. The drug was fictional, but the chemists are on their way to making it a possible reality. If they succeed in their perverse endeavours, and no doubt they will, their clients would be, in a strange way, the heirs of Rabbi ben Azzai, who could no longer bear to live.

7. MAGIC & SPIRITUALITY

Theurgy

The Hebrew Prophets, from Moses onwards, were concerned primarily, not with the magic of the surrounding people, but with human justice and compassion, the rule of Holy law, with freedom of choice and with ethical responsibility. They had to fight against the ritual use of magic to conjure up forces through pronouncing names of the gods.

The third of the Ten Commandments:

‘You shall not invoke the name of YHVH your God for evil, For the Lord does not hold one guiltless who does so’.

was probably more to do with the prohibition of magic than with the swearing of false oaths.

Magic, which made an ‘-ism’ of the occult (the **hidden** aspects of God’s creation as distinct from the **revealed**) was, in its primitive usage, a system of speculative belief, operative ritual and practice akin to the worship and sacramental aspects of religion. In its present day usage (as shown in the introduction) one of its various definitions is ‘Causing changes in accordance with the will’. Sometimes this is referred to as Theurgy. The latter is defined in the dictionary (quoting Longman's Modern English which is more helpful than the Oxford English), as:

“The power possessed by a human being to secure or prevent divine intervention in nature or human affairs, eg in a miracle, especially the magical power which certain Neo-Platonists believed might be acquired by long training, self purification and esoteric learning and practices”.

There are many examples of the psychic abilities that lie dormant in most of us but that many develop and others could develop if they put their intuitions to it. These included in the past such gifts as that of healing by the channelling of energies referred to in the Bible and also in the post-Biblical period amongst mystical sects such as the Essenes and Therapeutae, the holy miracle workers amongst the Galilean Chassidim, contemporary with Jesus. These included many who practised healing both by hand and at a distance, and also a few who were said to have been able to bring rain in times of drought.

Whilst these abilities may accompany authentic spirituality, their presence in a person is no certain guarantee of the latter, nor even of a responsible ethical personality. Often a person with genuine gifts is tempted to abuse them. Sometimes they bring in their wake the temptation to play the magician, fuelling the growth of egocentricity in the process, and to manipulate the consciousness of vulnerable people. Moreover, this may cause the gifts to atrophy, or possibly they are withdrawn by Providence, but the person compensates for their loss by developing their charisma and giving the impression of having the gifts and of possessing secret knowledge.

Magic and Spirituality have never become divorced completely from each other. Even the dividing line between Magic and Meditation has become somewhat blurred at times. There is an element of magic in guided meditation, as will be shown later where I define it for modern times. In the past, it was made particularly evident in the spiritual exercises of Rabbi Abulafia who introduced a very powerful (and potentially dangerous) form of meditation at the end of the 13th century. One of his techniques was to take the number equivalents of the letters that constituted Hebrew words and practice permutations and combinations of them to make up new words. In

doing this, its practitioners could work themselves into states of ecstasy. It is discussed in depth in that section of Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's book "Meditation and Kabbalah" which deals with Abulafia's work.

Magic and Miracle

A question that often is raised is: where lies the boundary between Magic and Miracle. There is always the possibility that incidents of both may be the stuff of legend rather than of historical fact. Nevertheless, one should consider a legitimate distinction that Miracle is the Magic of change caused by the will of God rather than that of Man. There are times when a Human Being is given the responsibility of being the agent in the miracle. When such a person, generally recognised as a Prophet, surrenders their Ego, the event is manifested as Miracle, but when the Prophet allows their Ego to intervene, the Miracle becomes Magic and the Prophet is eventually punished. This is exemplified in a startling manner in the following passage from the book of Exodus in the Bible:

"The Lord spoke to Moses and said, "Take the staff, and then with Aaron your brother assemble all the community and, in front of them all, speak to the rock and it will yield water. You shall bring forth for them water from the rock, for them and their livestock to drink."

Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he had commanded him. Then he and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock, and said to them, "Listen to me, you rebels. Shall we bring forth water for you from this rock?" Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed forth in abundance, and they all drank, men and beasts.

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not lead this assembly into the land which I promised to give them".

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has written in his "Thought for the week: - Chukat - for June 23rd 2007", a stimulating commentary and explanation of why Moses, with all his greatness, should have been punished in this manner. (Note: Visit the website www.chief rabbi.org and click on Torah thoughts).

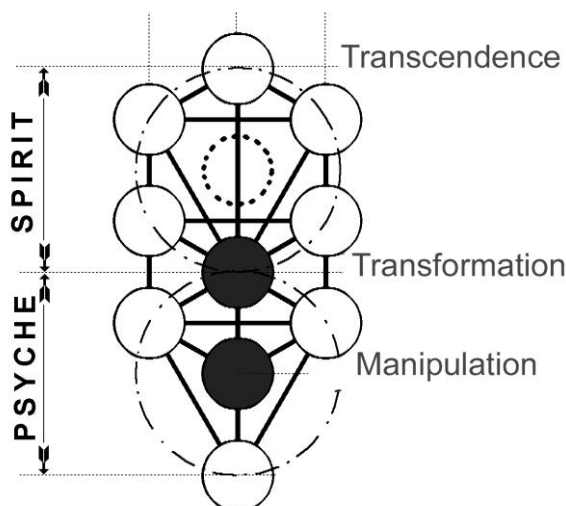
Another example, on the border line between magic and miracle, appeared in the concept of the Golem, a creature made from clay and given a primitive life but without the gift of speech. Of course this may be legend rather than historical fact. It first appeared in Talmudic times and again in the 13th century amongst the German Chassidim. It was next mentioned in the 16th century, when Rabbi Elijah of Chelm was said to have created one in the form of a man, using instructions from the Sefer Yetzirah to inscribe the Name of God on its forehead, which gave it life but without the power of speech. When it got out of hand, the Rabbi tore the name from the forehead and it crumbled to dust. The legend was made most famous when it was associated with the saintly Rabbi Yehudah Loew of Prague (known as the MaHaRaL). It tells how, at a time of great danger to the community, he was commanded by God in a dream message to make the semblance of a man out of clay, to invoke the name of God to breathe life into it, and to use its magical powers to protect the community against false accusations and pogroms.

The Holy and the Unholy in Magic

In recounting the legend of "the Golem of the Ghetto of Prague", the writer Gustav Meyrink made the profound observation:

Everything that seemed holy becomes wrong, and everything that seemed unholy becomes right, when the lights in us are changed.

It is well worth reflecting on these words, for they contain the essential clue to our relationship with Magic, both its Holy and unholy or mundane aspects, for the most important point to understand for all that is to follow is the exploration of the distinction between the unholy (or perhaps one should say mundane) and the Holy in Magic – that is: the essential difference between Magic as manipulation, where the consciousness of the magician is centered within the Psyche upon the Ego, versus Magic as transformation, where it is centered on the Higher Self, and finally Magic as personal transcendence where it is centered on the Crown of the Spirit. These levels are illustrated in the diagram.



At the first and lowest level, Unholy (mundane) magic is essentially manipulative. It might be defined as :

That manipulation of consciousness imposed by another, with the intention of imposing the will of the magician upon the one who seeks their help.

The danger here is that the Magician may be centred on an inflated Ego and at the level of their psyche they may be driven by a role-playing personality within their ego-complex that wishes to dominate those who seek their help and to maintain their dependence. This is examined further in Chapter 6.

At the second level, Holy Magic is essentially transformative. It might be defined as:

That change in level of consciousness that transcends the limitations of the Ego, with its memories, drives, desires and sensory perceptions that confine it to the mundane world, enabling it to re-centre itself in the Higher Self, with its ability to become open to the omniscient World of the Super conscious.

In this case the magician would be centred on their Higher Self under the influence of their Guardian Angel and be concerned to assist those who seek their help and not to dominate them nor use them for their own ends. (It is interesting to note one of the attributes of the true 'Guru' in the Indian spiritual tradition is that they help their student to find their true Self and to set themselves free from dependence on their guru so that they may fulfil their own destiny).

At the third and highest level, the Magician has ascended to the level of the true prophet, patriarch or mystic who walks or stands in the Presence of the Holy One as did Abraham, Moses and Elijah.

8. THE MAGIC OF ESP AND HEALING

Extra Sensory Perception

Many people have encountered that expansion of consciousness whereby we know information or experience phenomena that cannot be explained in terms of the 'natural' sciences.

These include:

Clairvoyance - manifested variously as:

the visual perception of the aura or formative force field surrounding not only other human beings, but also animal and vegetable forms of life or even inanimate objects.

the knowledge of events from the past, present or future.

Clairaudience - the ability to hear 'the still small voice within' manifested as instructions and advice from spiritual sources.

Clairtactility – manifested variously as:

the ability to feel the aura (the formative force field that surrounds and moulds the physical body) and to transmit healing energy to defects in it in order to promote healing.

The ability to experience and use the dowsing phenomenon.

In all of these, the greatest challenge to our world view is in understanding how it is possible to have knowledge of events out of our normal space and present time, particularly of those in the future.

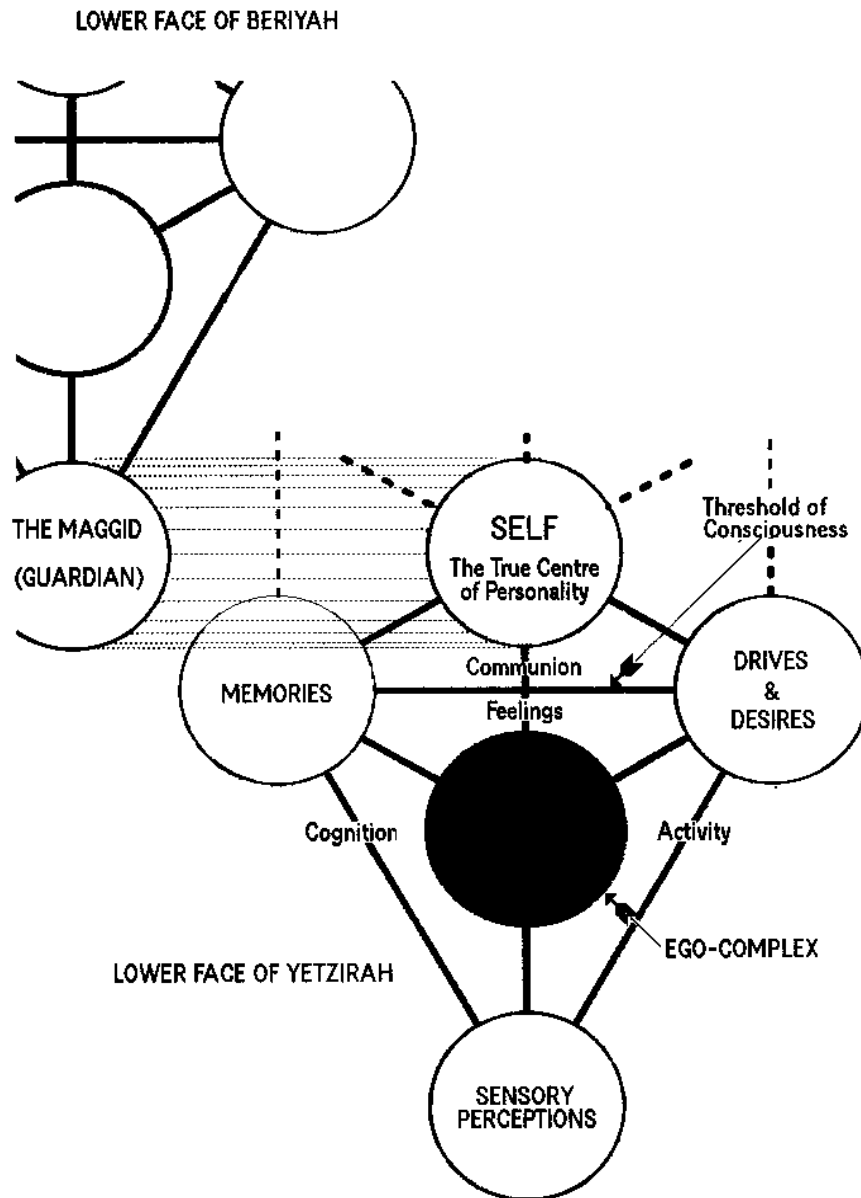
The Beriatric World as a Heavenly Computer Data Base

In Chapter 2, the Name of the Holy One, YHVH, is translated as a verb that embodies past, present and future all at once – the dimension of Eternity that transcends that of Time. This transcendence of time extends down into the Beriatric World described in Chapter 4 and which can be accessible to the Yetziratic World of Human consciousness when it is in the Bicameral mode of expanded consciousness.

This is shown on the following page as an extract from Jacob's Ladder.

Our mundane mode of consciousness is limited to: our Ego-complex and the information which it obtains from our drives and desires, our memories and our sensory perceptions. When we re-centre our consciousness in the Self, the true centre of personality, we cross the threshold of consciousness and are open to the Guidance of the Maggid, our Guardian or inner counsellor.

This may happen during meditation, including guided meditation, or when putting all our awareness into the hands as when dowsing or healing, or it may happen quite spontaneously, because our Maggid (in its role of Guardian Angel) regards it as a matter of urgency.



In a similar manner, the Hindu scriptures tell us:

There is a bridge between Time and Eternity, and that bridge is the Atman – the Spirit in Man.

The Chandogya Upanishad

I would suggest, tentatively, that the Guardian offers us the gateway to what might be termed a 'heavenly computer data base' - that which Indian philosophy referred to as the Akashic record - a universal filing system - a cosmic or [collective consciousness](#). This has been referred to by different

names including the cosmic mind, the universal mind, the [collective unconscious](#), or the [collective subconscious](#). This would then be what makes [clairvoyance](#) and psychic perception possible.

Similarly, [Carl Gustav Jung](#) postulated his concept of the collective unconscious. He believed that the events recorded therein can be ascertained or read in certain states of consciousness. Such states of consciousness can be induced by advanced stages of meditation, in dream, fever and - unreliably and potentially dangerously - through the use of certain psychedelic drugs. So not only mystics but ordinary people can and do obtain access to this 'heavenly computer data base' in the World of Beriah in certain psychic states.

Some people are more open to ESP than others. Many people have the ability but are prevented from exercising them through the materialistic attitudes of their peers or parental figures. Others are blocked by accepting uncritically the attitudes of fanatically doctrinaire clerics who regard all evidence of extra sensory perception and ability as 'witchcraft' and thus 'work of the devil'.

I have personally heard the 'still small voice' of guidance and warning on two crucial occasions in my life and have benefited by taking it seriously and acted on its instruction to get my way back in order.

I have experienced the ability to feel (though not see) the aura of others in distress and apply healing through the transfer of energies to the suffering person.

Whilst I have never had the clairvoyant faculty personally, I have had the experience of another person joining me in listening to Allegri's Miserere and their seeing the change in my aura on hearing the soloist's singing the high A, a note that always affects me strongly. Also one or two other experiences of that nature.

However it happens, we have to remember the admonition of Martin Buber:

He who knows the breath of the spirit, trespasses if he desires to gain power over the spirit or to ascertain its nature, but he also offends who fails to give thanks.

We also have to remember that, if spirituality is to have any meaning, walking in the Presence of the Holy must mean that any gifts that may be bestowed upon us must be directed towards compassion for our fellow creatures rather than personal aggrandisement. The biggest danger is that of PRIDE.

Dowsing and Healing

The dowsing phenomenon is traditionally associated with water divining using hazel sticks or metal angle rods. However it may also be achieved with a pendulum for checking the compatibility of foods for consumption or the appropriate remedies for a patient.

One of the strangest experiences that I have had with pendulums was when I was at a meeting of the Wrekin Trust about 40 years ago at which a maker of pendulums had a stall. I already had a couple of pendulums so I looked at them out of interest rather than with any intention of purchasing another one. Rather to my surprise, it was as though one particular pendulum called out to me and asked me to purchase it. I picked it up and asked the vendor what was particular about that specific pendulum. She replied initially that they were all the same. But then she looked again, noted the colour of the thread by which it was hanging, and corrected herself by saying "All the others are diagnostic pendulums, but that one was blessed in our sanctuary and is a healing pendulum".

I purchased it and took it home and for a very long time wondered how it was to be used. Then

one day I found that I knew. I held out both hands in the traditional healing manner but holding the cord of the pendulum between thumb and index finger of the right hand. Working over each Chakra of my 'patient' in turn, I lifted my hands to a point where the pendulum rotated most strongly and then, as the pendulum dictated, moved them around and lowered them slowly to keep the rotation steady until finally it stopped, very close to the body. In effect, the pendulum was guiding my hands to the right position.

I do not know from where one can get such a pendulum nowadays and because I am not expert in the practice, I only use the technique for the benefit of members of my family and very close friends. I am sure that if the reader put themselves in the right frame of mind, they might know how to be able to prepare a pendulum specifically for healing for their own use.

9. THE MAGIC OF MEDITATION

Why Do We Meditate?

Before a child is born, a light is held behind its head with which it can see from one end of the World to the other, and they teach it the whole of the Torah. But at the moment of birth an angel touches it on the lips, and it forgets all. So all of life is spent remembering what we once knew.

(Based on Talmud - Niddah 30b)

It is said that sometimes the angel does not quite do its work completely and the soul is haunted throughout its life in the body by a faint memory of something that transcends its normal experience of the world - something for which it hungers without any real certainty of what it really is. Maybe there is some truth within this legend, and maybe these are the souls who are driven to meditate in order to recover that haunting memory.

Inherent in the human heart is the feeling that there is a spiritual dimension which transcends our material nature. Often this is accompanied by the urge to experience something of its essence. The higher religious disciplines and philosophies direct this urge into creative channels by maintaining the fine balance between spirituality and discernment that is essential for harmony, or what the Buddhists would call the middle way.

What are the aims of meditation?

Meditation may be defined in a number of ways, each appropriate to its purpose and the specific needs of a particular type of person:

As thinking in a controlled manner. The mind thus becomes concentrated instead of diffuse.

As a way of reflection: - Meditation is to learning as digestion is to food, the way to get life out of it and to absorb its essence. Reading gives us information and suggests ideas, but it is in meditation that we form our judgments.

Rabbi Louis Finkelstein

As using the fine detail of daily activity as a means of focusing the attention of the mind.

As a way of immersing the mind in the precise flow of movement of the body. This is observed in Chassidic and Sufi dance and in Hatha Yoga.

As a healing of the fragmented personality so that it may function more joyfully and efficiently, and with greater awareness of the nature of the universe in which it has its being. This way, of integration, is often in the form of a guided meditation. It is studied in the penultimate paragraph of this chapter

As a preparation for prayer, and as a way of making prayer more meaningful.

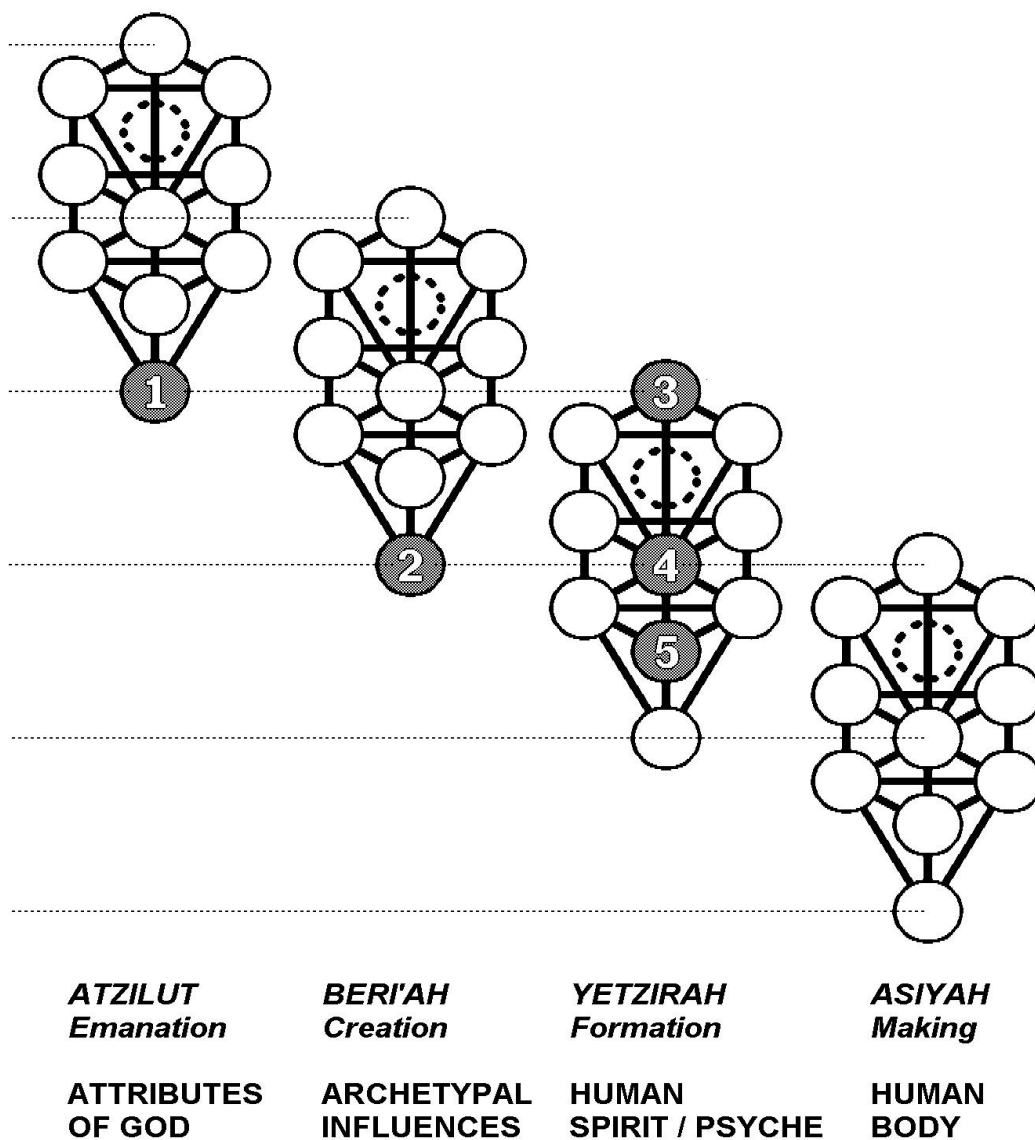
As a means of entering the interior silence of total emptiness as described in Chapter 12

Many have heard that meditation is one of the routes to spiritual growth, but too often this is accompanied by a misunderstanding - that the fruits of meditation will be an ecstatic and spectacular expansion of consciousness. This is what attracts some people to those psychic development cults that promise so much and so deceptively. In reality, meditation is a long hard slog

with little to show for it except a gradual maturing of the personality and an ability to control the mind and emotions. Through it we can become more human, but not super-human; more wise, but not omniscient; more compassionate, but not more powerful. A good meditation ends with a profound inner silence and a feeling of great peace, of being at home with and in love with the universe and its Creator. It does not end with a sensational cosmic fireworks display.

Thus the magic of expanded consciousness is made Holy.

Relationships In Meditation,



The study of Jacob's Ladder shows that there are three major steps to consider in Meditation. It can be the product of a relationship between the Ego and the Self, between the Self and the Guardian, or between the Crown and the presence of the Holy. Each is valid, but while the first and second are available to anyone who is willing to undertake the necessary discipline, the third is only possible in the case of the true Prophet or Mystic. Taking these in turn:

The first step on the spiritual path is that where:

the unredeemed ego - ⑤
becomes aware of the potentiality of the transformed Self - ④.

The second step is where:

the transformed Self, as meditator - ④,
encounters the Guardian angel - ② within Guided Meditation.

The third and highest step, which is open only to the most spiritually advanced, is that of:

the fully realised mystic or prophet - ③
standing in the Presence of the Holy - ①.

This is an "I and Thou" encounter in which personal identity is retained. It is found in the Biblical experience of the prophetic style of relationship between the Holy One and such outstanding men as Abraham and Moses.

Brain Waves during Meditation

Attentiveness implies concentration of the senses on a single target. This may be a physical object, an image held in the mind, or an idea.

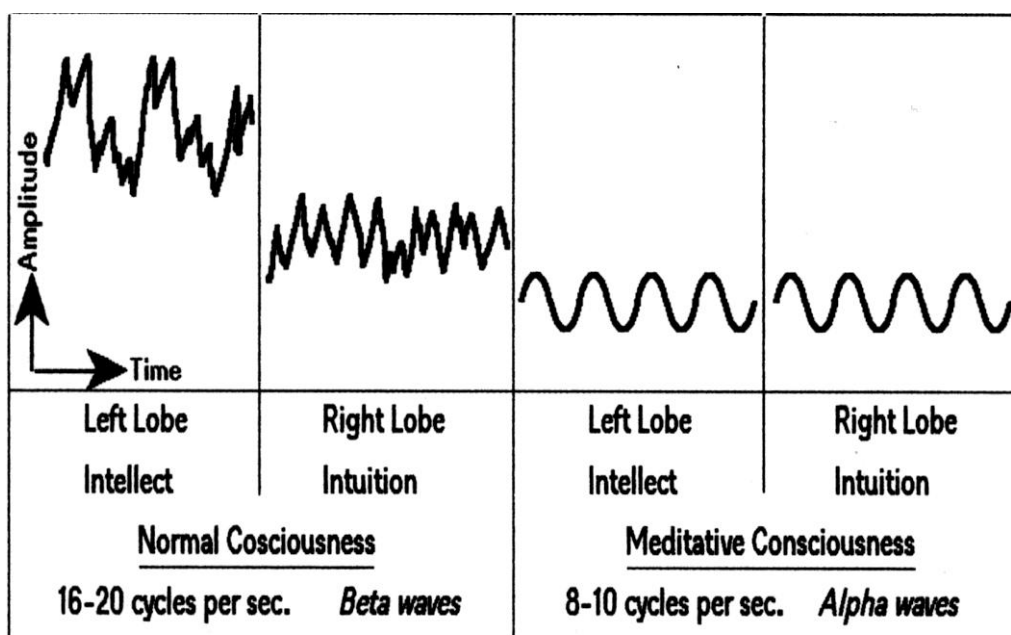
In meditation and meditative prayer it implies directed consciousness. It can also mean: clearing the mind of extraneous thought and concentrating totally on the action in hand. Thus it becomes a device for total relaxation of the mind

The mind (the non-corporeal generator of consciousness) is a very complex aspect of our being. Most of the time it seems to behave as though it were a debating society, with many 'voices within' (our role playing sub-personalities) competing for attention and often seeming to tear us apart.

The complexity of the mind is mirrored in the complexity of the brain (the transmitter of consciousness), which is divided into two hemispherical lobes, each with its individual function, as shown in the appendix.

The impulses obtained from electrodes attached to the temples are shown in the illustration as a trace of amplitude against time. It will be noted that during normal consciousness there is a large difference in behaviour between the left (intellectual) lobe and the right (intuitive) lobe.

In those relaxed meditative states where one crosses the threshold of individual consciousness, the brain rhythms slow down, the amplitudes in the two lobes become identical and reduced. This state is known as Alpha rhythm. The effect is not only relaxing but also spiritually healing, as it brings into balance the two sides of our nature:- Masculine and Feminine -Intellectual and Intuitive. The non-sleeping, non-thinking alertness has a profound normalising effect on the blood pressure, pulse rate and other bodily functions with consequential benefits to the nervous system.



ELECTRICAL ACTIVITY IN THE BRAIN

There are times when one needs to mentally relax into the alpha wave state of consciousness. In this state one is totally alert, not sleeping or lethargic, not thinking but completely receptive; listening rather than uttering. It is so difficult to achieve this for even a brief moment without the invasion of 'the voices within', that we need a technique that we can use to focus all our attention. One very popular and well known technique is to use a rhythmic process such as a Mantra coupled with simple Pranayama (Yoga style breath discipline) to act as the mental focus. There is no precise English translation of the word Mantra, but this Indian expression has passed into common usage through the popularity of Oriental disciplines such as Yoga and Transcendental Meditation. It is derived from the Sanskrit root words: 'Man meaning "Mind" and 'Tra' meaning 'To free', and denotes the continuing repetition of a word, generally of two syllables. This is examined further in chapter 10.

Guided Meditation

In this form of meditation, where the meditator is guided by a therapist in a Transpersonal Psychology session, the relationship is, in a sense, magical as the therapist is seeking to expand their client's consciousness in order to draw its centre from the Ego to the Self. The purpose of this is to enable the client to become an observer ④ of their psychic structure ⑤ and then to encounter the Guardian ② and listen to their counsel.

There is a great difference between this mode of approach and that of the hypnotherapist who expands their client's consciousness to be susceptible to their suggestions. In the former, the therapist does no more than enable their client to re-centre themselves to listen to a spiritual voice. In the latter, the therapist imposes their own opinion on the client while in a suggestible state. In this respect the latter is more essentially playing the magician than the former, where the magic is that of facilitation rather than imposition.

Transpersonal Psychology takes various forms. The most relevant for guided meditation is that known as PsychoSynthesis – the creation of Dr Roberto Assagioli, as described in the following two paragraphs.

The Power of the Meditative Story

***There is a bridge between Time and Eternity
and that bridge is the Atman - the Spirit in Man***

(from the Hindu classic - the Chandogya Upanishad)

Time is one dimension of reality, the phenomenal dimension, and the events of time are known as History, which is the drama of the outer life of Man in the conscious world of events, and of relationship with the things of the outer fabric of creation.

Eternity is another dimension of reality, the archetypal dimension, and the events of eternity are known as Myth, which is the unconscious, or rather pre-conscious, drama of the inner life of Man, both in the secret world of the psyche and its relationship with the inner fabric of creation, and with the Divine ground of Being.

The use of the myth, has been explored by a number of therapists, Notable amongst these is Dr Roberto Assagioli, with his system of Psychosynthesis. In it he uses the technique of the guided day-dream or guided meditation, and this demonstrates how a therapist, standing firmly in his own religious tradition, can universalise the principles of its myth and use them to help another person, whatever his faith, find healing from within.

Psychosynthesis and Dr Roberto Assagioli

The outer aspect of a healthy human body gives a sense of beauty deriving from the harmony of its proportions which respond to definite geometrical laws. This means that the body has been built according to a definite pattern by a higher creative Mind. The same directive and creative intelligence appears to regulate - giving clear evidence of a purposeful plan, aiming at the manifestation, preservation, and increase of life. Such a plan reveals the action of an intelligent and loving Being, whom we call God. This is in full agreement with the teachings of Jewish tradition, according to which man's figure, the microprosopus, is built in close analogy with the Macroprosopus, the Great Cosmic Being, the Ancient of Days.

*(Roberto Assagioli. Quoted by Lily Montagu in her anthology of Jewish thought
- God Revealed)*

Dr Roberto Assagioli achieved world wide fame as founder of the art of Psychosynthesis - a very powerful form of spiritual or transpersonal psychology for human integration and growth. Not so well known is the fact that he was also the founder and spiritual mentor of the Liberal Jewish community in the Italian city of Florence, and contributed to the conferences of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. His Jewish writings demonstrated that his secular thoughts in creating Psychosynthesis were profoundly influenced by Kabbalist concepts when he looked deep into the inner structure and complexes of the ego mind.

The use of Guided day Dreams

There are many references in the Bible to the significance of dreams and their interpretation. Anthropologists have described how important they are in the life of tribal communities. Jungian

and Freudian psychologists have demonstrated the therapeutic value of natural dreams by asking their clients to record them immediately after they occur, and then analysing them during consultation. All these use the abilities of the human sub-conscious to express its problems in dreams.

Psychosynthesis, however, gave the dream a new therapeutic potential that is both diagnostic and integrative in its nature. The guided day-dream stands between meditation and normal dreaming in that it is structured by turning it from a passive phenomenon into an active one. It uses relaxation to enable the brain to enter the Alpha state, and meditative techniques to bring the dreaming condition under the control of the core of individual consciousness, so that the dreamer can report on the content while it is developing. The dream can be guided by a counsellor or, after gaining experience, by the person meditating.

Unlike transcendental forms of meditation (eg: the mantra meditation described in the next chapter), where the ego is completely surrendered and consciousness re-centred in the Self, the meditation used in Psychosynthesis is an active dialogue between the two elements of personality. It is designed, not to surrender the ego but to integrate it and strengthen it by making it the willing disciple of the Maggid through the Self. Thus it is possible to centre the personality on the Self so that it is no longer egocentric. Moreover the answers to problems are not mediated by the interpretations of an outsider (as in Psycho-analysis) but are drawn from the higher wisdom within that is one's own true essence.

The Psyche and the Formative Body

We are accustomed to thinking of the physical nature of Man in terms of a body; but in reality there are a number of bodies interpenetrating each other and supporting each other's functions. At the grossest level there is the skeletal body - of which the fossilised remains are all that survives many years after death. Then there is the muscular body, responsible for all movement and powering various functions; the digestive and eliminative body; the circulatory and respiratory bodies and the organic body.

But after we have considered all these, we become aware of two other bodies more subtle in their nature. The first of these is the chemical body: the endocrine system whose hormones influence our metabolism, moods, mental energy levels, immunising response to disease and our response to stress conditions. The second is the electro-chemical body: the nervous system whose sensory components serve as gatherers of information about the internal and external world, transmitters of consciousness and triggers of activity throughout the structure of the body. All these bodies are accessible to study by physiologists.

There is, however, one more body, even more subtle in its nature, that must be considered. This is the formative body. Its reality has been scientifically demonstrated through Kirlian photography and it is probably a manifestation of an electro-magnetic phenomenon. Pre-scientific thinking that relied on intuition for its concepts, and metaphors for its expressions, called it the aura or etheric counterpart, and those in whom extra-sensory-perception is well developed describe this aura as a shimmering coloured cloud of luminescence around the gross physical body, with striations of pattern concentrated in certain areas.

This formative body moulds its more solid counterpart by providing the life force, energies and patterns that maintain cell metabolism and govern growth and healing. Just as the physical body requires food and oxygen for its functioning, so does the formative body require Prana (the name given in Yoga science to the life force gathered in by the breath) for its well being.

This formative body serves as the interface between the mind and the gross physical body and is the means by which body and mind are inter-related. When it is temporarily ruptured, the phenomena of out of body or near death experiences occur. It is, of course, permanently ruptured at death. When it stretches, disorientation is experienced. Hence the importance of grounding and chakra closing exercises at the end of any meditative or healing work.

Yoga physiologists describe both the energy field and the organising patterns of the formative body's structure in detail. They give the name "Chakras" to the latter. Many of the attributes ascribed to these are metaphorical rather than actual, and have no relevance to human physiology, but there remain two vitally important functions that must be mentioned.

They give structure to the subtle energies of the formative body and are essential for the self-healing processes of the gross physical body. Yoga physiologists correlate the seven principle chakras with specific nerve plexi and endocrine organs (the producers of hormones), and suggest that they take an active part in the normalisation of their functions in order to ensure physical and emotional health. This underlies the rationale of the Yoga asanas.

The Chakras also have a filtering function which controls the influence of the forces of the unconscious upon the mind. They are metaphorical gateways that can be open or closed into filtering mode. In the closed state of normal consciousness, they protect the mind against invasion, so that we may not be subjected to stress-making psychic noise. It is quite possible that it is failure of the Chakras to act in this manner that causes psychic derangements such as schizophrenia. In meditation they may become partially and spontaneously open to give a heightened awareness of the super-conscious. Normally they close of their own accord at the end of meditation and during the return to normal consciousness, when they revert to their normal filtering function. However, in the case of the psychically sensitive and, thus vulnerable, person, this may not spontaneously occur. To avoid even a minor sensation of feeling disoriented or strange, or the danger of an euphoric "high", it is wise to perform a symbolic exercise to assist in closing the chakras

Kundalini - a metaphor for latent energy

Our human wholeness calls for the elimination of those complexes or psychic knots which plague most of us, which block the free flow and expression of the vital force through our physical and psychic being, and which hamper our spiritual growth to maturity. The systematic discipline of Yoga may be regarded as the science and technology of consciousness. As science, it is the study of the evolution of consciousness in the human race. As technology, it is the means for promoting the growth of consciousness within the individual.

The evolution of consciousness in the human race is inextricably linked with the development of language and with its limitations. As language evolves, it becomes capable of expressing abstract concepts in a manner denied to the primitive mind, and finds its expression ultimately in writing. Language uses metaphors to give an insight into mystery. Even though the mystery in itself cannot be grasped by the mind, the metaphor provides a focus by which the energies that are created by thought can find therapeutic expression.

In the Indian esoteric tradition, the concept of Kundalini is a metaphor that both conceals and reveals the mystery of that evolutionary life force which is the archetypal drive underlying human and personal growth. In the individual, it is regarded as lying dormant in the formative force field. The word means "coiled" but it may more accurately be translated as "latent energy" in that it is a potential that can be released into dynamic actuality. Hindu symbolism, which loves to portray the

archetypal forces of the unconscious in animal form, represents Kundalini as though it were a coiled and sleeping serpent at the base of the spine which, upon being awakened, straightens itself as it strikes up the spinal column.

Traditionally, the latent Kundalini is portrayed as having three and a half coils. The coiled mainspring of a clock when fully wound has latent energy. If this is released under control in a slow and steady manner by an escapement mechanism, the clock will perform its duty of recording the time. But if the escapement mechanism failed, the coiled spring would straighten out with a sudden release of energy that might destroy the clock. So it is with the Kundalini. As evolutionary life force, it manifests in its own way and in its own time, as and when we are ready for it. We have our Guardians who drive us when we are ready to be driven or when we need to be prodded into growth. But if we are tempted to force for ourselves the pace of Kundalini by the magical exercises that are taught by some schools of psychic development which lack integrity, the forces released can shatter the personality and do untold damage to the health: physical, mental and spiritual.

The significance of Kundalini in human spiritual development can best be understood by taking an analogy from nature. If we look at the growth of a butterfly, we see four distinct stages:

First the egg. This is pure potential - latent energy awaiting development.

Second the caterpillar. This corresponds to the infant and adolescent stages of growth.

Third the chrysalis, where the caterpillar spins itself a shell and within it breaks down its original structure.

Fourth and final stage, the butterfly, fully formed and matured, that emerges from out of the chrysalis and takes wing in all its beauty.

In the human being, the transition from spiritual adolescence to spiritual maturity is rarely as peaceful and free from trauma as in the butterfly. The counterpart of the chrysalis stage of the butterfly in the human being is the spiritual crisis in which the old psychic structure centred around the ego is broken down and re-centred around the Self. This is Kundalini working in its own time and in its own way under the direction of our inner guardians, placing us under those tensions that will initiate growth and bring us to maturity.

It is opportune to remember that the Chinese pictogram (letter symbol) for crisis is composed from two constituent symbols - danger and opportunity. Danger is the possibility of breakdown. Opportunity is the potential for converting breakdown into breakthrough, and also of recognising the real possibility that there is a guiding hand and a meaning behind the growing pains. This is where creative introspection, as a therapeutic form of meditation, is so important as a means for getting events into perspective.

Aligning Body and Mind

In normal consciousness the psyche is, to a considerable extent, influenced by the physical body and it is the task of the formative field to maintain the alignment of the two.

However, in some forms of meditation, in very deep relaxation, and also in advanced Hatha-Yoga and Pranayama exercises, the relationship between the gross physical body, the formative body and the psychic structure, is modified from that which is found normally.

The grounding effect of the gross physical body is reduced because the formative body allows a partial separation from the psyche to take place. The Chakras may partially and spontaneously open to become gateways and to give a heightened awareness of the super-conscious. By this means, the intuitive faculties are allowed to operate, and psychic gifts may be manifested.

Normally they close of their own accord at the end of meditation, but it is wise, if not essential, to perform a symbolic “closing the Chakras” exercise so that they may not remain in the open state.

Inevitably, one's reaction to meditation depends largely on the way one is constituted. The reason for different reactions to the same meditation lies in the fact that some people, by their nature, experience a much greater degree of separation of physical body and psychic structure than others.

For example, in deep relaxation, one person may experience himself as quiescent with the faintest feeling of contact with the floor, while another may be conscious of floating up to the ceiling and looking down on their own body from above. If the student does not know about the possibility of this occurring, it can come as a shock; and the return to the body may seem violent, with a subsequent feeling of extreme disorientation and distress. This will inevitably be thought of as a bad experience.

However this phenomenon of the consciousness disassociating itself from the body is no more than a spontaneous example of what some occultists seek to perform in what they call astral travel. It is not often encountered, but that does not mean that the possibility may be ignored. Nor however is it one for which one should strive, for if we are tempted to force for ourselves the pace of Kundalini, the forces released can shatter the personality and do untold damage to the health: physical, mental and spiritual.

There are people who have a natural psychic sensitivity and can express their abilities in various constructive ways. This is where the chakras change their function from filtering to open gateway in such a way that they continue to protect the person at all times from the uncontrolled intrusion of malevolent forces of the unconscious while they are using their gifts. On the other hand, there are others, who have the same sensitivity, but who cannot control it. They have difficulty, and possibly even acute distress, because their chakras do not always return to their filtering function when they should. To them, their psychic sensitivity is a curse and not a gift.

Psychic sensitivity and psychic gifts are not in themselves spiritual, although they can be spiritualised, as indeed can any of the human faculties. However these same psychic gifts can also be used to inflate the magician in us and separate us from the Holy.

Kundalini and Hatha Yoga

Most teachers in the West present Hatha Yoga as a therapeutic tool and/or as a form of meditation that calls for concentration on the movement of the body and the use of it as a focus for attention. In the East it is used very often in a completely different manner, namely as a means for accelerating the arousal of the Kundalini force. To the Westerner who, in general, does not take naturally to occult practices, and who has a radically different cultural and spiritual background, this can be very risky and can lead to psychic disturbance.

In particular, there is danger for those people who have an excessive natural psychic sensitivity, but who are not aware of it, nor able to control it. If they move on from normal gentle Hatha Yoga, which they find very beneficial and enjoyable, to a so called advanced Yoga that demands very powerful postures and breathing techniques they may be over-stimulated. Some of these techniques could be potential dynamite to a psychologically sensitive person with inadequate natural psychic protection.

For example, an unusual case that was referred to me differed from those that had previously come to my attention in that neither Hatha Yoga, meditation nor occult dabbling, was specifically the cause of trauma. The student had been enjoying Hatha Yoga for several years, but that changed after moving

after moving on to an “advanced” class. After working there for a few months, some of the classical symptoms of psychic trauma, (inexplicable feelings of fear, a frightening paralysis during relaxation, loss of appetite leading to severe loss of weight, agoraphobia and hallucinating hostile voices) began to manifest.

The student's own teacher did not have the necessary background of knowledge to explain the reasons for my client's trauma and was unable to help.

During our conversation, it became clear that at the back of my client's mind was the continuing desperate need to understand what had happened so that she could put the experience into some context that would make it intelligible, and enable her to understand the trauma in greater depth. It became very apparent that her problem was caused by the interaction of very powerful Hatha Yoga and pranayama techniques with a psychically vulnerable personality. In particular, her teacher had encouraged her to practice a very prolonged alternate nostril breathing technique. The result of this interaction had been a completely uncontrolled manifestation of Kundalini.

Closing the Chakras

At the end of any period of extended meditation, one should always remake one's connections to the world of mundane reality by a grounding or closing exercise. This is necessary to ensure that there is no feeling of residual disorientation. The teacher or therapist should explain to the client or the members of the class the nature of the relationship between body and mind, and should warn them about the slight possibility of disassociation from the body during relaxation, of feeling strange after meditation, or even of a euphoric feeling of being “on a high”. They should explain the reasons for the grounding technique that should always be used as a safeguard at the conclusion of any relaxation or meditation session where the client or students have been guided into an altered state of consciousness.

It has been demonstrated that a symbolic or ritual closing exercise has a profound effect on stabilising the energies released in meditation and avoids any sensation of disorientation afterwards.

There are various possible symbols that one can use at the end of the meditation, when one has started to regain consciousness of one's physical body and one's surroundings. In each case, the routine must be performed, in turn, over the area of the body associated with each Chakra starting from the top. Some examples out of the many possible are as follows:

Imagine oneself drawing with one's finger a circle and cross of light.

Visualise the bolt of a door being shot home into its keep.

Visualise a fully open (coloured) flower closing into a tight little bud.

In the class situation, the teacher would give this as an instruction: Taking the last one of the three examples above:

Visualise an open flower gently closing in turn over each of the energy centres that act as interfaces between mind and body:

Over the crown of the head a violet flower

Over the forehead an indigo flower

Over the throat a blue flower

Over the heart a green flower

Over the solar plexus

a yellow flower

Over the sacral plexus

an orange flower

Over the groin

a red flower

It only remains to check that there is no residual feeling of disorientation amongst any of the participants. A powerful earthing movement such as stamping the feet may be useful in such a case.

In exceptional circumstances, where there remains some disorientation, the teacher should ask the meditator to lie flat on the back and talk through the visualisation as before but at the same time should accompany the words by a corresponding rotation of the flat palm of the right hand, very slowly and deliberately, about 10 - 15 inches above the corresponding point on top of the meditator's body. Finally, the teacher should check that the meditator is now completely re-orientated and, if not, should repeat the process. For personal protection, the teacher should then rinse their forearms and hands under running water.

10. MANTRA MEDITATION

The Letters of the Hebrew Alphabet

The Hebrew alphabet originated in a stone cut method of writing which meant that the letters were driven by hammer and chisel from right to left rather than by being drawn with quill or pen from left to right. Although the latter tools have now been used for more than two millennia, it is still drawn from right to left.

The letters are unlike the alphabets of the West on several, even more important, counts. They are not merely representations of phonetics, for each letter has a symbolic meaning and they also serve as numbers. There are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Twenty are consonants and the other two are silent but are regarded as preparations for speech. In printed books, the vowels are shown as little dots or bars either above or below the consonants. However they are not included in the Torah scrolls that are used in worship.

The symbolic meaning referred to above is exemplified by the first letter - Aleph, shown here, which is one of those two that are not merely silent letters, but are regarded as the preparation for speech. It is also one of the three “Mother letters” (see page 58) and literally means “Ox”. As a number it stands for 1, but it also signifies the unity and infinity of God. It is composed of an upper pointer, a lower pointer and a transforming diagonal. It is the letter of personal integration. Each letter can be made an object for meditation, and this theme is demonstrated by Rabbi Laibl Wolf in his “Practical Kabbalah”



Meditation on the letters

There are several meditative techniques that are based on the letters: In each case they are used in the practice of **Kavvanah** which implies concentration of the senses on a single target. This may be a physical object, an image held in the mind, a symbol, a mantra or an abstract idea. The word is from a root meaning to direct. Normally it is translated as concentration or devotion, but in meditation and meditative prayer it implies directed consciousness. It can also mean: clearing the mind of extraneous thought and concentrating totally on the action in hand.

The methods include:

Firstly, for modern men and women, meditation can be a way of immersing the mind in the precise flow of movement of the body. In the Kabbalah tradition, this is the practice of the Ophanim, in which the postures (similar to those of Hatha Yoga) each represent one of the Hebrew letters.

The second way is the practice of using the letters as Mantras. It should be noted that there appear to be references to mantra in the Bible. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan mentions that the word **Hagah** denotes the continual repetition of a word or sound like the cooing of a dove or the growling of a lion and that if the mantra has spiritual power in its own right, it not only clears the mind of mundane thought, but also puts the meditator into a special spiritual space.

The use of Mantra in meditation

Breathing effectively unites body, mind and spirit, for each is nourished by the breath according to its needs and according to the mastery of its techniques by the practitioner.

Breathing is one of the features that distinguish organic life from inorganic matter. The consciousness of breathing distinguishes homo sapiens from the animal, whilst the addition of mantra pranayama to the combination of breathing and consciousness distinguishes the homo spiritus, that we seek to become, from homo sapiens.

In Yoga, there are two distinct aspects of breathing. The one is physiological respiration which is concerned with the most efficient way of satisfying the cardio-vascular needs of the gross physical body and the development of energy in the thorax through the use of bandhas (locks). The other is pranayama which is the mechanism through which homo sapiens starts his journey to becoming homo spiritus. This latter is manifested firstly in the mental aspect that is concerned with control and direction of the life force through visualisation techniques to direct healing energies into the formative body; and secondly in the spiritual aspect, which uses the discipline of Mantra. Concentration upon the sacred syllables accompanying the sound of the breath is used to hold the mind at that precise balance between 'not-thinking' and 'not-sleeping' that is a prelude to meditation and to the deep prayer of communion with the transcendent.

The Breath of Life

The first mention of spiritual breath is contained in Genesis Chapter 2: verse 7, with the words:

“Then the Lord God formed Man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and Man became a living Soul”.

and this is reflected in a prayer from the Sabbath morning service of the prayer book used nowadays in the Synagogue.

“The Spirit that You did breathe into me came pure from You. You created it and formed it, and so long as the Breath of Life is within me, I shall extol Your Holy Name”

This phrase: 'The Breath of Life' appears in Hebrew as: “**Nishmat Kol Chai**”, and it is helpful to analyse each word in detail:

Nishmat is the construct form of **Neshamah**, which can mean either soul or breath, and therefore can be translated as “the breath of” or “the soul of”.

Kol means “all” or “every.”

Chai can be an adjective meaning “living”, but is used in the present context as a noun meaning “living being” or “living creature”. It is closely related to the word **Chayyim** which means **Life**.

The implication is clear that the concept of a **Life Force** is inherent in the Hebrew as well as in the **Prana** of oriental disciplines. [In passing, it is of interest to note that the other oriental concept of **Chi** (or **Qi**), sounding so similar to Chai, which is used in Acupuncture and Chinese medicine, also implies **Life Force**.]

The Blessing

Another valuable insight is in the use of the word **B:RaChaH** (which means the recitation of a blessing).

There are two words containing the letters **B R Ch H**, The only difference is in the vowel points used under **R (Resh)** which appear only in books but are not written on the scrolls used in the Synagogue. They are:

B:rachah

Blessing

ברכה

B:rechah

Pool of water

ברכה

They are not necessarily connected, but the pool of water might also suggest the idea of a well-spring or stream. This suggests that, with a little bit of poetic licence, one might visualise this benediction as a pouring down of holy energy and also use the potent imagery of flowing water as a cleansing agent. One might go further and meditate on the imagery of blessing as being a healing or hallowing energy flowing down upon one from a source on high. This fits well into a centring meditation.

In a similar manner, one might translate the words of a blessing – BRCh ATAH – not as “Blessed are You” but as “O! You who are the source of all blessing”.

The Shema As A Mantra



Ayin



Mem



Shin

The declaration of Faith known as the **Shema**, which commences – ‘Hear O Israel, **YHVH** is our God, **YHVH** is One’, is the primary declaration of faith in the Hebrew liturgy. Its first word - **Shema** – is usually translated as ‘Hear’, but is better translated as ‘Hearken’ (a more truly active process). It has a very long history of use as a mantra.

There are three letters in the word **Shema**: **SHIN** which has a 'Sh . . .' sound, **MEM** which has a 'Mmm . . .' sound and **AYIN** which is treated as though it were silent, and is a preparation for a vowel sound. In Hebrew, the vowels do not have letter equivalents.

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan points out, in his seminal book on “Jewish meditation”, that the **SHIN** has

the sound that, of all the letters in the alphabet, is closest to that of white noise. On an oscilloscope it would appear as a totally unstructured jumble. Fittingly, it is symbolic of chaos.

The **MEM** has the sound of a hum. It is a pure harmonic note that, on the oscilloscope, would appear as a perfect wavy line. It is thus symbolic of harmony. Rabbi Kaplan mentions that the early mystical text book, the **Sefer Yetzirah**, translates the still small voice (*I Kings 19:12*) as a fine humming sound, and adds that the 'Mmm . . .' sound was associated with prophecy. It is interesting that in the oriental mantra **AUM**, the 'Mmng . . .' sound [obtained whilst breathing out and using the vocal chords, whilst simultaneously closing the lips (humming) and touching the middle of the top of the tongue to the roof of the mouth (singing)] is widely used in meditation to promote tranquillity.

If, in the sitting or kneeling position, one breathes in using the glottis to slow down the breath, one hears the sound of **SHIN**. Then, if after a brief pause, one breathes out and with lips initially closed one makes a humming sound at the pitch that seems right, one produces **MEM**. Finally, near the end of the outbreath, one opens one's lips to make **AYIN**. This is repeated for a period of up to 20 minutes while visualising the letters as **Yantras**. The spiritual significance will be apparent.

Mantra using the “Mother letters”



Mem

Aleph

Shin

Aleph

Rabbi Kaplan mentions another practice in which one alternates the sound of **SHIN** and **MEM** on the outbreath. These two letters are referred to as Mother Letters. The third Mother Letter is **ALEPH**, which is the sound of the silent inbreath. So, the sequence in the exercise is as follows:

Inbreath silent **ALEPH** - Outbreath **Sh** . . . Inbreath silent **ALEPH** - Outbreath **Mmng** . . . - Repeated continuously whilst visualising each of the letters in turn.

11. THE MAGIC OF CREATION

If we open the Hebrew Bible and study Genesis Chapter 1: verse 3, we read:

“And God said: “Let there be Light”, and there was light”.

And in the Sepher ha Zohar (the sacred book of the Kabbalists) we read:

***“With the appearance of the light, the Universe expanded.
With its concealment, all individual existence came into being
This is the mystery of the act of creation.
One who understands will understand”.***

There are aspects of Kabbalah that have close parallels with scientific thought. The astronomers' concept of the “Big Bang”, that is now generally accepted, evolved during the last century out of the increasingly clear evidence of the “Expanding Universe”. It describes how, at one particular moment, all the potential matter and energy of the Universe was compacted into one infinitely dense point that was timeless, and occupied no space. This is what scientists called the ‘Singularity’. In that instant, known as Creation, both space and time were born and the ‘Singularity’ transformed its non-dimensional form into a multiplicity of dimensions to create the energy and matter of our Universe. The question “What was before this event?” is meaningless, for Creation marked the beginning of time (as well as space), a dimension that came into existence only with the metamorphosis of the ‘Singularity’.

The Kabbalist book ‘Sepher ha Zohar’ puts it:

***Beyond that point, nothing is known
So it is called Beginning***

Rabbi Isaac of Acco, in the 13th century, pointed out that the seven days of creation were not days as we understand them, but “Divine Days”. According to his calculation, the Universe was created 15,340,500,000 years ago. (See page 186 of Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan’s seminal work on the Sefer Yetzirah for a detailed analysis). It is amazing that this should be within the ballpark of the modern scientific estimates of approximately 13.7 - 15 billion years.

There is an extended version of this theory that also fits the evidence of the ‘expanding universe’. This suggests that the expansion will eventually end and will be followed by a contraction that will finally terminate in the ‘Big Crunch’ where all the space, time, energy and matter of the Universe will be concentrated into an infinitely small ‘Black Hole’. This will become the new ‘Singularity’ that will give birth to the next act of Creation. Both the Hindu Scriptures and the Kabbalah contain quotations that suggest a similar conclusion – an eternally continuing Creation and Destruction of Universes. The reader who wishes to explore further is recommended to Chapter 10 of Richard Friedman’s book – The Hidden Face of God, published by Harper and Collins ISBN 0-06-0622-58.

It is interesting to compare the first verse of Genesis with the theories of Einstein and the observations of astronomers such as Hoyle? The English translations of the text – **Be:reshit B:ra Elohim** - generally read:

“In the Beginning, God created”

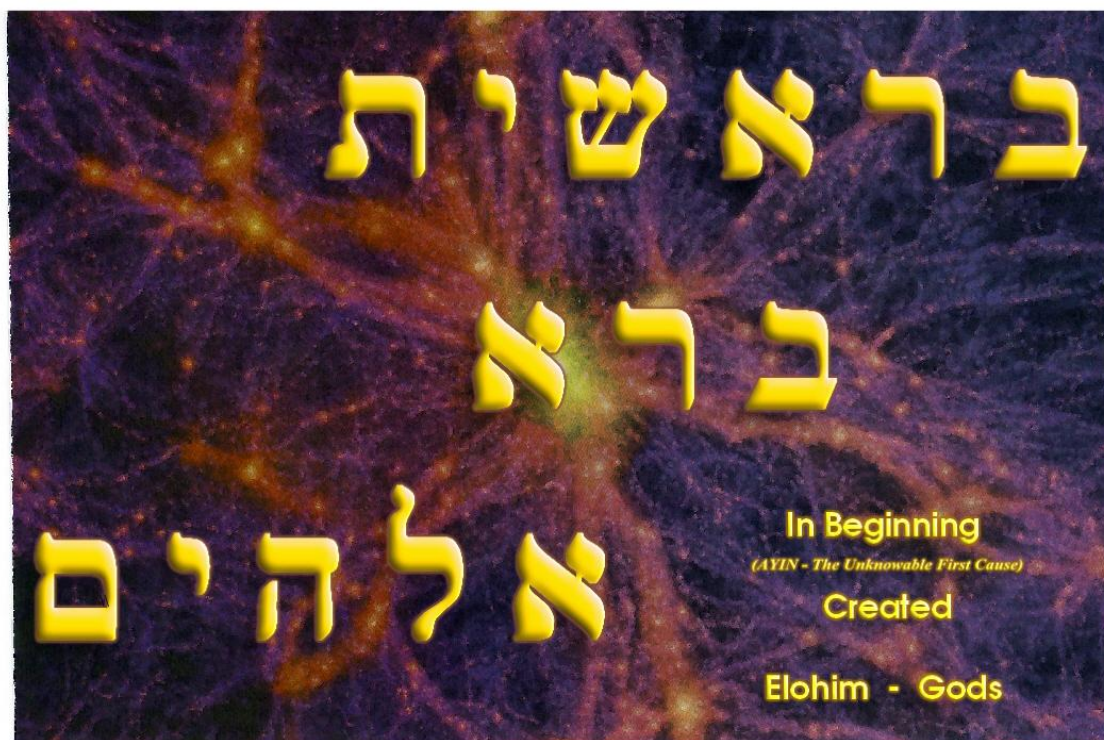
However the Hebrew original, - **B:reshit B:rah Elohim** – if translated accurately word by word, reads

***“In Beginning created Elohim*”**

that, to the Kabbalists, makes Elohim the object of creation and not, as interpreted in the usual translation, the subject. The subject is inferred. We shall return to this in the paragraph after the next one.

The Hebrew word for ‘God’ is **El**. The word ‘**Elohim**’ is its plural form. **El** is never used alone but always with a pronoun or an adjective following it, for example: ‘**Elohenu**’ – our God, or ‘**El Rachamim**’ – ‘Compassionate God’. It must be understood that the use of the word **Elohim** does not mean that the Hebrews worshipped Gods as such, or that **El** was the name of God, but rather that the **Elohim** were the attributes of God manifested in the Universe as the archetypal forces and forms of the Tree of Life.

What then was the subject? The three words have been interpreted according to the mystical tradition and led the Kabbalists to suggest that the subject is the hidden and utterly unknowable Nothingness of **AYiN**, and that the real meaning is:



“In Beginning, the Unknowable and utterly Transcendental One created those emanations from itself that were the archetypes of the Universe”.

The mystical texts of the Zohar enlarge upon this:

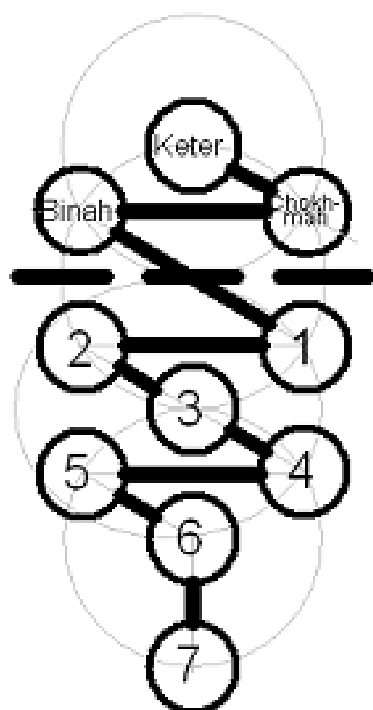
When the most concealed of all concealments [Keter] sought to be revealed, He made first a single point [Chokmah], and this arose to become thought. He sketched within it all the designs, engraved in it all the openings. He engraved within the concealed holy lamp a singular hidden pattern – Holy of Holies; a

deep structure [Binah] emerging from thought. And it was called Mi [Who?], origin of the building [the seven lower Sephirot]. Existent and non-existent, deep and hidden, called by no other name than Mi.

Sepher ha Zohar 1:2a

Keter (the Crown), which is the first emanation from the transcendent one, gives rise to **Chokmah** (Wisdom) that is the energy of thought in creation. This in turn gives rise to **Binah** (Understanding) that is the structure of the **Elohim**. These three are the initiating **Sephirot**, and they give rise to the remaining seven **Sephirot** that, in the creation legend of the Bible, are the seven days of the week, that tell the story of Creation.

The ‘Lightning Flash’ (rather like the Kundalini symbolism of Yoga) by means of which each **Sephirah** gave rise to the next, is shown in the figure.



This interpretation evolved still further within the Kabbalist tradition over many centuries. It reached its culmination in the concepts expounded by Rabbi Yitzchak Luria of Safed in the 16th century. This postulated a contraction (known as ‘**Tzimtzum**’) of the primordial energy.

Translating this into modern terminology, **Tzimtzum** might be explained as follows:

“At the beginning, there was no time, no space, no eternity and no infinity. There was only the absolute nothingness of undifferentiated being that the Kabbalists called AYiN

And within this void, the brooding superconsciousness of AYiN stirred and gave rise to Eyn Sof - without end - the dimension of God's infinite being, and to Eyn Sof Aur - limitless light - the dimension of God's eternity. There was no universe - only the potential for creation. And the creative urge

arose in the Consciousness of God and there was a contraction - Tzimtzum - of the Infinity and Eternity of God into itself in order to make room for the universe. From out of that contraction the act of creation was manifest as the 'Big Bang' in which Eternity gave birth to Time, and Infinity gave birth to Space, the universe came into existence and the Holy One manifested HIS/HER Presence in it”.

Unlike material science, which denies any connection between Thought and the other dimensions of Time, Space, Matter and Energy, the spiritual sciences, including Kabbalah, Sufism and Yoga, equate the five and regard thought as the primary element. Thus AYIN is not only the unconscious and primary thought within the absolute nothingness of undifferentiated being, but also the origin of the ‘Singularity’ revealed by the astronomers. For thought, as a manifestation of consciousness, is the primary source of energy.

However, God is not only “**AYiN**”, the Absolute Nothing or emptiness manifested as the Primordial Superconsciousness underlying the Universe, but also is that which, manifested through the **Elohim**, enters and becomes involved in the life of Humankind, through the attributes of Loving Mercy, Discerning Judgement and Compassion. The last point of contact on the Tree of Life that God makes with Mankind (and which overshadows the **Keter** of the tree of **Yetzirah**

which is the Crown in the human spirit) is the **Shekinah** – the Holy Indwelling that is God's Presence in the Universe and in the life of Humankind.

The phrase referred to earlier:

“And God said: “Let there be Light”, and there was light”.

is echoed in the Christian Bible, in the ‘Gospel according to John’, that starts with the phrase:

“In the beginning was the Word”

When we reflect upon these two verses, we realise the tremendous creative power of sound and of the healing power of a mantra.

12- THE MAGIC OF KNOWING GOD

Believing and Knowing

There is a distinction between believing in God and knowing God. The former is an intellectual assent based on the acceptance of the model put forward by one's tradition and community. It may be coupled with an intuitive understanding of the symbols mediated to us in meditation.

Knowing lies much deeper even than the intuitive assent to Belief. It is achieved, without reference to models, through that deepest of all forms of meditation in which one enters the interior silence of total emptiness and Nothingness - AYiN.

Experience and Tradition

In one of the holiest of Jewish prayers – the Amidah - that has been regarded as a prayer for meditation, appears the phrase:

“Eloheinu v' Eloheh Avotenu” – Our God and the God of our fathers

Seeking the inner meaning of this phrase one discovers that:

- Eloheynu - Our God - is not only utterly transcendent, but through an act of love is also manifested to each of us uniquely as the God of personal relationship. We are also reminded that, during worship, we are opening our individual selves to the God of the whole community.

- V' Elohey Avoteynu - (&) God of our fathers - tells us that our search for God is in the context of our traditions, and that these go back to our earliest ancestors.

In these two phrases we are reminded of the way that spirituality and religion balance each other.

- Our God refers to the personal spiritual experience that is the driving force which inspires and motivates us.

- God of our fathers refers to the religious heritage that is the stabilising and containing form conveying the wisdom of generations of teachers, mystics and philosophers.

Without the discernment of the latter to balance it, the former would lead to a dangerous exuberance and spiritual conceit. Without the adventurous spirit of the former to balance it, the latter would lead to sterility of thought and to fundamentalism.

The great founder of modern Chassidism, Israel ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov, in a commentary on this phrase, taught:

“Why do we say: 'Our God and God of our fathers'?

There are two sorts of people who believe in God. The one believes because his faith has been handed down to him by his fathers; and his faith is strong. The other has arrived at faith by dint of searching thought. And this is the difference between the two:

The first has the advantage that his faith cannot be shaken, no matter how many objections are raised to it, for his faith is firm because it has been taken over from his fathers. But there is a flaw in it: it is a commandment given by man, and it has been learned without thought or reasoning.

The advantage of the second man is that he has reached faith through his own power, through much searching and thinking. But his faith too has a flaw; it is easy to shake it by offering contrary evidence.

But he who combines both kinds of faith is invulnerable. That is why we say: 'Our God', because of our searching, and 'the God of our fathers', because of our traditions."

Meditation on AYIN

The concept of AYiN was introduced in the previous chapter - on the Magic of Creation.

To KNOW God as distinct from BELIEVING in God entails becoming as AYiN – Nothingness – in which all thought ceases. It is found amongst the true mystics of all faiths where it is known by a multitude of names such as (in the Orient) Samahdi, Satori etc. it is an experience (or non-experience as it might more accurately be called) that is incommunicable. It is not so much an expansion of consciousness as a total contraction of consciousness that can only be compared with the AYiN that was the Nothingness of God at the moment of Creation. It is that point where the mystic knows AYiN God by becoming, for a moment, AYiN God. It is the one experience that is common to the mystics of all Religions, and where all Mystics meet in mutual understanding.

AYiN can mean Nothingness or Emptiness, and as such stands seemingly in opposition to YESH which is Everythingness. However, as the mystics tell us, God is in both, and both are in God.

As Rabbi Arthur Green puts it in his book "Your word is fire"

"In all change and growth, the mysterious AYiN is present. There is an ungraspable instant in the midst of all transformation when that which is about to be transformed is no longer that which it had been until that moment, but has not yet emerged as its transformed self. That moment belongs to the AYiN of God. The height of contemplative prayer and meditation is seen as such a transforming moment, but one that is marked by awareness. The worshipper is no longer himself for he is fully absorbed in that moment in the Nothingness of the Holy. In that moment of absorption, it is no longer the worshipper who speaks but rather the Holy Presence who speaks through him. In that return to the Source, the human being has reached his highest state, becoming nothing but the passive instrument for the Divine Word."

It is the one experience that is common to the mystics of all Religions, and where all Mystics meet in mutual understanding.

Unlike material science, which denies any connection between thought and the other four dimensions, spiritual sciences, such as Kabbalah in Judaism, equate the five and regard thought as the primary element. Thus AYiN is not only the unconscious and primary thought within the absolute nothingness of undifferentiated being, but also the origin of the 'Singularity' revealed by the astronomers, for thought, as a manifestation of consciousness, is the primary form of energy.

It is a strange paradox that sometimes, in human experience, God is manifested as primordial energy, sometimes as entity, and at others as the very process of becoming. One wonders if, for example, when one speaks of God's love, does one mean that God is the foundation of love, or that God is an entity that loves, or that God is the very nature of the evolving process that is found in a loving relationship? In many ways, the last of these might make the most sense.

I am Nothing

There is a humorous tale about two clerics reciting a chant in preparation for the service, repeating continuously as a mantra – I am Nothing, I am Nothing The unsophisticated and humble cleaner overhears them, is overwhelmed by the thought and spontaneously joins in. On hearing him, the senior cleric turns to the other and self righteously proclaims “ Who does he think he is, to say he is 'Nothing'?”

If the tale is related specifically as a conversation between a Rabbi and his cantor, it develops a special psychological twist,

for the Hebrew word for 'I' is spelt

'A N i Y' (Aleph Nun Yad)



and that for 'Nothing' is spelt

'A Y i N' (Aleph Yad Nun).



noting that the letter Nun is written in its Final form

The Hebrew letters have more than just phonetic significance. There is a magic to them in the way that they can be manipulated so that two words with the same letters can be associated with each other. Here 'I' and 'Nothing' have precisely the same letters.

The truly humble cleaner was uttering the mantra, with no thought about his 'I' and totally aware of his personal 'Nothingness' into which he could sink unselfconsciously so that the Nothingness of the Holy One could pervade him.

On the other hand the Rabbi was so full of 'I' and of the thought that he could know God without losing his egocentricity, that the Holy one was completely evading him.

So if we are truly to know God, we have to contract our ANiY – Ego to the point that it disappears and becomes AYiN – Nothing.

Breathing in ANiY and breathing out AYiN (reading from right to left) as a mantra, as we lose our egocentricity in the meditation, it becomes:

}ya yna

}ya yna

}ya yna

}ya yna

}ya yna

}ya yna

etc

}ya yna

}ya yna

However, the culmination of the mystic quest in Judaism, (as distinct from that of the Vedic faiths), lies not in the experience of AYiN – Pure Nothingness which, however timeless, must only be momentary, but in the return to the World of YESH in which the memory of the awareness of AYiN is maintained and treasured.

The Chinese meditative experience, similarly, has as its final stage the symbol of “Riding the bull back into the market place” which describes the Jewish attitude well.

This was the experience of Rabbi Akiva ben Joseph (described in the chapter on The Occult Temptation) in contradistinction to the experience of Rabbi Ben Azzai.

13. THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

The Meaning of Abracadabra

There is a Holy Magic that is altogether different from what has previously been discussed. It is this that must now be considered in depth. One of the most valuable examples of this comes from examining the true significance of the phrase **ABRA K'A DaBRA**. Most people will have heard it often enough from stage magicians when they use it as an incantation to accompany their illusions. It is almost certain that neither they nor their audience have the slightest idea of what it means, and both dismiss it as a nonsense word.

Rabbi Joshua Trachtenburg's book "Jewish Magic and Superstition – a study in folk religion", contained a chapter entitled "Abracadabra". In it he pointed out

"certain words come to assume occult virtues by reason of their descent from the potent charms of ancient times. Often the original meaning gets lost, but because of their very unintelligibility, they are regarded as highly potent."

Disappointingly, he never mentioned the origins of Abracadabra. The Oxford English dictionary merely defines it as: 'A mystical word engraved as a charm – Latin from Greek'. This is totally incorrect.

It was whilst reading Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's introduction to his commentaries on the Sefer Yetzirah, I came across his translation of ABRA K'A DABRA. This started the train of reflective meditation that led to a detailed study of the whole field of magic from the Jewish point of view.

Previously, I had supposed that Abra K'a Dabra was just a bit of 'hocus pocus'. However, my researches through the literature on the subject yielded some surprising information both on Abra K'a Dabra and on Hocus Pocus. Not only did it support Rabbi Kaplan's translation (See below) as one of several alternatives but it also gave some interesting and relevant information about the word 'hocus pocus' itself.

The word Abracadabra is now commonly used as an incantation by stage magicians. In ancient times, however, it was taken much more seriously as an incantation to be used as a cure for fevers and inflammations. The first known mention was in the 2nd century A.D. in a poem called "De Medicina Praecepta" by Serenus Sammonicus, physician to the Roman emperor Caracalla, who prescribed that the sufferer from the disease wear an amulet containing the word written in the form of an inverted cone: This, he explained, diminishes the hold of the spirit of the disease over the patient. Other Roman emperors, including Geta and Alexander Severus, were followers of the medical teachings of Serenus Sammonicus and are likely to have used the incantation as well.

ABRACADABRA
ABRACADABR
ABRACADAB
ABRACADA
ABRACAD
ABRACA
ABRAC
ABRA
ABR
AB
A

There have been various theories about the source of the word including:

"I create as I speak" - A possible source is Aramaic: avra kedabra which means "Creating as speaking" which is thought to be in reference to God creating the universe (in some belief systems, ex nihilo), by speaking (see

also Fiat Lux). An alternative spelling is avda K'Davarah. One may also view it as "I transgress as I speak".

The curse and the pestilence - There is the view that Abracadabra derives from the Hebrew, ha-brachah, meaning "the blessing" (used in this sense as a euphemism for "the curse") and dabra, an Aramaic form of the Hebrew word dever, meaning "pestilence." They point to a similar kabbalistic cure for blindness, in which the name of Shabriri, the demon of blindness, is similarly diminished. Other scholars are skeptical of this origin and claim that the idea of diminishing the power of demons was common throughout the ancient world, and that Abracadabra was simply the name of one such demon.

Other phrases that have been suggested as possible origins – Abra K'a Dabra may have been from:

- a corruption of the Hebrew avar k'davar which means roughly "it will be according to what is spoken;"
- abrakha adabra - Hebrew for "I shall bless, I shall speak."
- abreq ad Habra - Arabic meaning "hurl your thunderbolt even unto death."
- Disappear like this word - Some have argued that the term may come from the Aramaic abhadda kedhabhra, meaning 'disappear like this word'. Rather than being used as a curse, the Aramaic phrase is believed to have been used as a means of treating illness.

Hocus Pocus is a generic term used by magicians, usually the magic words spoken when bringing about some sort of change. It was once a common term for a magician, juggler or other similar entertainer.

The origins of the term remain obscure. Some believe it originates from a parody of the Roman Catholic eucharist, after speculation in 1694 by the English prelate John Tillotson. 'In all probability those common juggling words of hocus pocus are nothing else but a corruption of hoc est corpus, by way of ridiculous imitation of the priests of the Church of Rome in their trick of Transubstantiation.'

Others believe that it is an appeal to the Norse folklore magician Ochus Bochus. The Welsh hovea pwca (a "goblin's trick", or hoax) could also be the source. Or it may simply be imitation Latin with no meaning, made up to impress people (in UK English its most prevalent modern meaning is "contrived nonsense", as in, "It was all a load of hocus pocus").

"I will speak of one man... that went about in King James his time... who called himself, The Kings Majesties most excellent Hocus Pocus, and so was he called, because that at the playing of every Trick, he used to say, Hocus pocus, tontus talontus, vade celeriter jubeo, a dark composure of words, to blinde the eyes of the beholders, to make his Trick pass the more currently without discovery, because when the eye and the ear of the beholder are both earnestly busied, the Trick is not so easily discovered, nor the Imposture discerned."

Thomas Ady, A Candle in the Dark, 1656

Another phrase from the Bible, possibly misunderstood by Romans who thought of Christianity as a cannibalistic cult (as described by Tacitus), might be from the holy ritual: "hoc est poculum" - "this is the cup", a phrase from the Last Supper, used in Roman Catholic rituals.

Craig Conley, a scholar of magic, writes that the magic words used by conjurers may originate from "pseudo-Latin phrases, nonsense syllables, or esoteric terms from religious antiquity," but that what they have in common is **"language as an instrument of creation."**

Rabbi Kaplan's explanation

As Rabbi Kaplan explained, its origin is Aramaic, the vernacular spoken by the Jewish people two millennia ago that is used in much of Jewish mystical writings. This is a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew (the latter, in those days, was reserved for use as the language of prayer) and uses the identical script. The phrase was written:



It should be noted that Aramaic and Hebrew scripts are written from right to left, as they were originally engraved on stone with a chisel, and not drawn with a pen or brush.

The Hebrew root:

is seen in both the first and last word.

B:RA (ב ר א) - Create

The accurate translation of the Aramaic phrase **Abra K'a Dabra** is:

"I will create as I speak"

The Primary Words

There are two potential ways that govern our relationships with both God and Man. They are, as Martin Buber pointed out in his seminal book - "I and Thou" - those found in the two primary words of 'I and Thou' and of 'I and It' which define two uses of the word I. The I of the first is that spoken from the Heart centre of the Self, while the I of the second is that spoken from the untransformed Ego

It must be made clear that the word Thou is not used in any archaic sense, but rather to describe the specific other, whether human or Divine, who is addressed from the Self and encountered in a very specific and authentic relationship.

We can utter one of the primary words to God and we can utter the same one to man, for our relationship with the Holy One sets the mould also for all human relationships.

God is a Thou to encounter and not a That to contemplate, for the way that the Holy manifests in the dimension of human history is seen as the Eternal Thou whose presence hallows every truly human relationship where Self encounters Self and gives meaning to every truly human commitment where the Self plunges into the whirlpool of life.

In uttering the I of the authentic primary word I/Thou, we centre ourselves in our Self, and we enter into a relationship that recognises the other as a being created like ourselves in the image of God (the Eternal Thou), with potential for spiritual growth in their own way and time, and to be met with empathy and compassion. It is from this centre also that we encounter the Holy and enter into authentic meditation. In this respect, it has a profound psychological significance, for the I and Thou relationship can be directed inwardly to the relationship between ego and Self and is the foundation of Transpersonal Psychology.

But when we utter the I of the primary word I/It, we centre ourselves on the ego in a relationship that reduces the other to no more than a thing to be manipulated, controlled, or possessed, and that sees the other as an instrument or reflection of our own personal desires - where a spurious love is no more than a projection of selfish wants rather than a commitment of one Self to another Self.

And if from that centre we address God, we reduce the idea of the Holy to no more than an archetype to be conjured or used for personal profit. It is there that the temptations of magic become unholy and lead both oneself and the other to destruction.

The Three Pillars of Speech

We human beings, created in the Image of God, cannot create from nothing. Like the sculptor who 'creates' his masterpiece by taking a stone and transforming it with his chisels; so do we perform the Holy Magic of 'Abracadabra', not by uttering the magic word itself but simply, and in the greatest compassion, choosing with care and charity those creative words that have the power to transform rather than destroy.

Ideally, speech should follow breath. Breathing in, we should choose our words and only then, breathing out, should we utter them.

Just as we use speech to praise the Holy, so should we use it to praise our fellow beings, for the holiest magic of all is to encourage another person to become what they potentially are, to say that right word at that right moment that may mark a turning point in another person's life, that may lift a person from despair to creative growth in the process of true healing of the spirit.

We can choose on which of the pillars of the Tree of Life, we shall take our stance.

We may stand on the pillar of Justice and, going to extremes, be over judgemental in our speech: If we denigrate a vulnerable person when they have made a mistake or shown immaturity in a situation, we can destroy them. Indeed the Rabbis taught that to make a person blush is little less evil than murdering them.

On the other hand, we may stand on the pillar of Mercy and, going to extremes, be either lazy or over merciful in our speech: If we gloss over or ignore the errors of those we encounter, we are ineffective and have failed to offer them real help.

If however, we stand on the pillar of Harmony and show true creative compassion, then, by choosing our words, we may show them how to understand their negative quality, not just to come to terms with it, but also to transform it into a positive energy that they, in turn, may use to help

others.

The spiritual goal of Kabbalah is not the oriental concept of '**Samahdi**' or its Jewish equivalent '**Yichud**' - the ecstasy of union with the Divine, that lifts the spiritual life out of the mundane into the heavenly spheres. It is the reverse, '**Tikkun Olam**' - the healing of a fractured world, which takes spirituality down from the heavens into the market place and enjoins its practise in everyday practical terms. It is one in which anyone and everyone can take part.

Whilst we, individually, cannot change the World all together at once, we can, as individuals, recognise that it is in our power to light a candle in someone else's life. As the Rabbis of old advised: ***'our task in life is to take one day at a time, help one person at a time, perform one act of kindness at a time'***. They taught:

'A single life is like a Universe.

Save a life and you save a world.

Change a life and you begin to change the world"

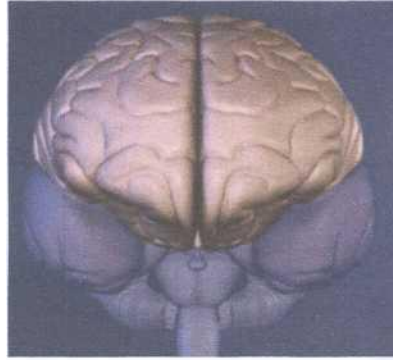
I would like to suggest that the obligation laid upon us to choose our words carefully, so as to make positive transformations, and not to cause distress, is, in human terms, the true spiritual significance of this mysterious word:

Abra K'a Dabra.

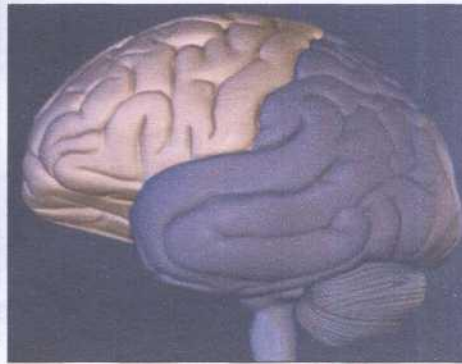
אברהם בן דאברא

APPENDIX - THE HUMAN BRAIN AND CONSCIOUSNESS

The brain of a human being has two hemispherical lobes (chambers) which function in complementary but different ways:



The lobes from above



The lobes from the side

The left lobe is the transmitter of consciousness for the 'intellectual mind'. It is logical and analytical in its character, splitting things into their components. It allows us to take things apart to see how they work. It is essentially rational, often scientific, in its approach.

The right lobe controls the left side of the body and performs the same function for the 'intuitive mind'. It is holistic and integrative in its character as contrasted with the intellectual left lobe. A famous neuroscientist called it the seat of creativity and of the soul. It helps us to put things together to see what they mean. It is essentially spiritual and synthesising in its approach. It is good at recognising patterns, at personal relationships and plays a big part in emotional intelligence. It is poetic and musical, understanding the true meaning of Myth - the psychological drama that illustrates the archetypal forces of the Unconscious. Unfortunately, Myth has, too often, been misrepresented as 'Falsehood'. However, in its spiritual meaning 'Myth' is a symbolic story or legend, used in Scripture to present a moral or wisdom teaching, but told in the form of language usually used to describe historical events. The correct understanding of Myth is important, for it stems from the archetypal consciousness of Mankind and responds to its deepest spiritual needs and aspirations.

Julian Jaynes, was a research psychologist at Princeton University. He speculated (In his seminal book, 'The origins of consciousness in the breakdown of the bicameral mind') that, until about 3,500 to 4,000 years ago, the two sides of Man's brain functioned in a somewhat different manner to that of modern 'civilised' Man. He suggested that man was conscious in a different way from that which we understand as consciousness today. Strictly speaking, the word 'bicameral' refers to a political system that has two legislative chambers. But this does describe, by analogy, how the constitution of the mind of primitive Man operates. The right lobe of the brain served in pre-historic times to receive the commands of the archetypal forces of the racial or collective unconscious. In effect it operated as 'the residence of the gods'. Instructions were transmitted from there to the left lobe, which accepted them as commands for action, and obeyed them automatically without any form of intellectual assessment.

The theory is also important in understanding modern phenomena involving modification of control of their mode of consciousness: in those who have a strong psychic sensitivity to 'extra sensory perception', in people when in deep meditation and in those with a propensity to mediumship. It may be also relevant to understanding the involuntary mental processes of those who suffer from schizophrenia when it is coupled with strong religious delusions or hallucinations.

However, in the present context, it is particularly relevant to understanding the nature of human spiritual development; and the remarkable change in psychological processes between 4000 and 2000 years ago. Jaynes showed how, concurrent with the development of writing, Man developed his critical and intellectual facilities. This is illustrated in the development of the Hebrew scriptures and the difference between the early illiterate prophets and the later literary giants like Isaiah. It is also illustrated in the Greek experience where the intuitive Delphic oracle gave way to the intellectual and dialectical teachings of Socrates and Aristotle.

Ancient Hebrew is unlike most languages in two respects, firstly in being written without vowels and secondly being written from right to left. It has been suggested that alphabets, which include vowels, tend to be written from left to right, whilst those that do not include vowels tend to be written from right to left. One reason often advanced for the direction of Hebrew writing is that in its distant origins it was set in stone. This meant that the letters were engraved with mallet and chisel, and thus were driven rather than drawn, as they would have been if they were written with a quill pen or brush. However, another reason has been put forward suggesting that the two phenomena (the absence of vowels, and direction) are related because of the fundamental nature of the Human brain and its consciousness.

It should be noted that the names of the Hebrew letters are somewhat similar to those of the Greek alphabet: Aleph - Alpha, Bet - Beta, etc. The main difference was that Greek has letters for vowel sounds. It is interesting to note that early Greek writing was from right to left, like Hebrew. Then it became 'snake wise', i.e.: it would change direction at the end of each line. Finally, by the 5th century BC, it became written from left to right like other alphabets with vowel symbols.

When we read something written in an alphabet like English that contains vowels, each word can stand on its own. So we can use our linear sequential left hemisphere of the brain that directs rightward movement to understand it from the individual words. But in a language without vowel symbols like ancient Hebrew, the individual words cannot be understood in isolation and we can only comprehend them in the context of a sentence using the integrative and holistic right hemisphere of the brain that naturally controls leftward movement in the body. Even without the driving movement of stone cutting, it is natural for this type of brain to write from right to left.

About 1200 years ago, the Rabbinic group known as the Massoretes, devised vowel signs in order to resolve ambiguities in the un-vocalised text. They took the form not of letters but of dots and dashes below or above, and occasionally in the middle, of the letters as, for example, as shown below, which is how Hebrew is written nowadays with the exception of the scrolls of the Torah which are copied in the original vowel-less style



SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Major trends in Jewish mysticism. By Professor Gershon Scholem
Published by Schocken books

God is a verb By Rabbi David Cooper
Published by Riverhead books – New York

EHYEH – A Kabbalah for tomorrow By Rabbi Arthur Green
Published by Jewish Lights

Kabbalah and psychology By Zev ben Shimon Halevy (Warren Kenton)
Published by Gateway books – Bath

Meditation and Kabbalah By Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan
Published by Weiser

Magic of the ordinary - Recovering the Shamanic in Judaism
By Rabbi Gershon Winkler
Published by North Atlantic books

Notes

TIKKUN OLAM

THE HOLY MAGIC OF HEALING AND TRANSFORMATION

Tikkun Olam is the concept of Man's task of healing this fractured World and has come also to mean the healing of Man's fractured Psyche. It was the inspiration of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria of Safed in the 16th century – one of the greatest Kabbalist teachers of all time.

The therapeutic practice of Psycho-synthesis, a very important branch of Transpersonal Psychology, owed much to Roberto Assagioli's understanding of Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition. This practice made it possible to understand the sub-personalities that inhabit the sub-conscious of all of us and the underlying philosophy is examined in depth.

This book focuses on one of these sub-personalities - the 'Magician' and the fact that sometimes it expands into full consciousness, becoming dominant in the personality and influencing those with whom it comes into contact. There is nothing specifically good or evil about the magician and this book is intended to demonstrate how its endeavours can be harnessed in the service of the Holy or to its detriment.

An appreciation of the Philosophy and Psychology underlying Kabbalah and Magic helps us to understand the true nature and potential of Mankind and, though of less importance, those events that defy conventional reasoning and rationalisation; for "There are more things in Heaven and Earth than are within our Philosophy" to quote William Shakespeare.

Man is innately a Religious being, but as Rudolph Otto pointed out in his seminal work: "The idea of the Holy", Religion is Morality tinged with Emotion.

Morality, that is the call for ethical conduct, is that which constitutes the intellectual, rational, scientific and philosophical element – the recipe and the revealed Law for living at peace with God, oneself and humanity.

Emotion is the feeling of exaltation, the thrill of awe and reverence, the sense of the awful, the mysterious, or to use Otto's word – the Numinous. This is the super-rational and intuitive aspect of religion which lives on in the hidden aspects of the human psyche - and in Magic. It embodies the Legend that illuminates the Law.

True Religion must accommodate both if it is not to become sterile and puritanical on the one hand or wildly superstitious on the other.

The higher Religions of today grew out of the primeval emotion that was magical in its nature. Yet this primeval Magic still lurks under the surface, and if it is tamed and rendered Holy, it becomes a sturdy foundation. Untamed it becomes a vehicle for Psychosis.