

# The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 7.6

## The Tree of Life

The Mystical Bridge

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# Chapter 7.6

## The Tree of Life



## The Mystical Bridge

- The tree of life is the systemic diagram that underlies and links together the Qabalah and the tarot. The tree of life forms a basis for the western mystical (magical) tradition.

## The Tree of Life

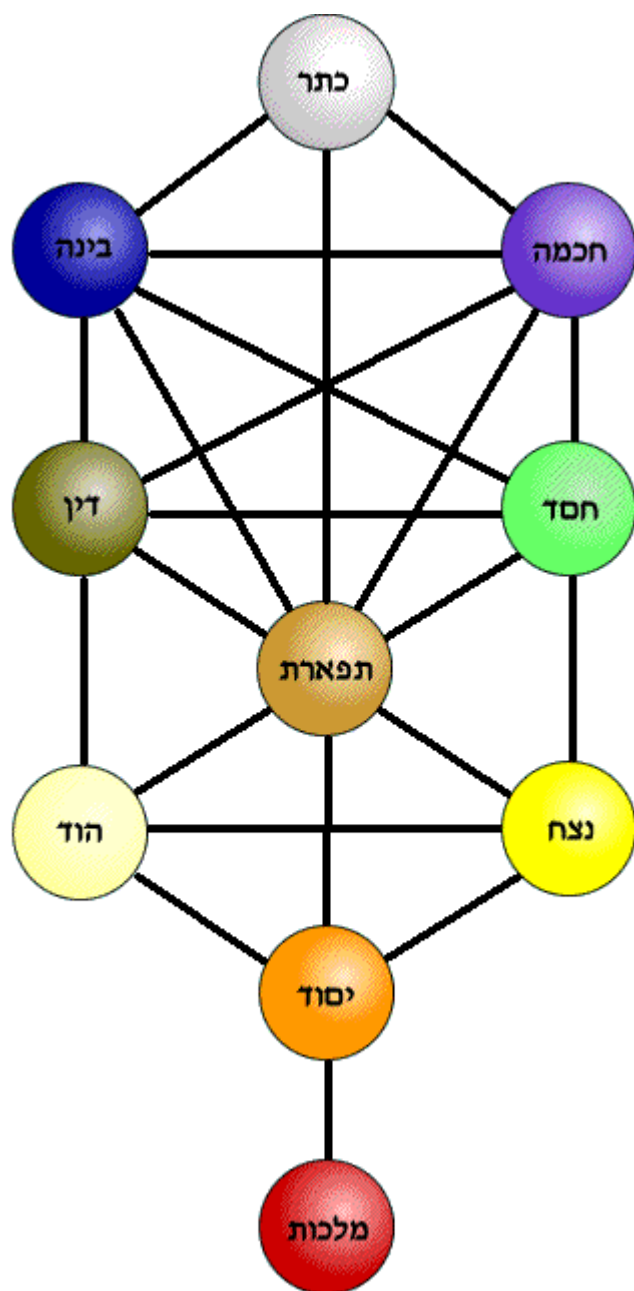
The Tree of Life is based on the Hebrew Qabalah and is closely related to the tarot. The Tree is a map of consciousness describing thirty-two paths of wisdom. The first ten paths are represented by the ten spheres. The next twenty-two paths are described by the twenty-two interconnections between the spheres. These twenty-two paths correspond both to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and to the twenty-two major arcana of the tarot. Together, the thirty-two paths represent a map of creation and manifestation and the relationship of the human being to God.

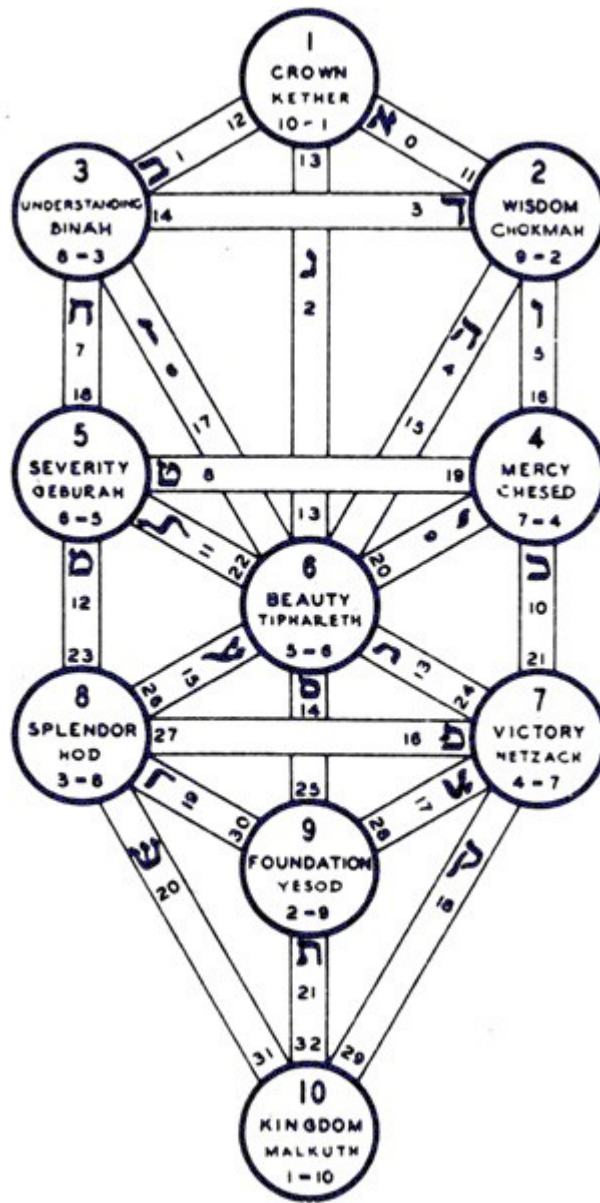
In one sense the Tree of Life is the connection between the Qabalah and the tarot. In another sense, the Qabalah is more fundamental and gives birth to both the Tree of Life and the tarot. What matters is that the underlying teachings and principles, represented by the Tree of Life, and applied through various Qabalistic (magical) practices, provide considerable knowledge of God, creation, and relationships between man and the divine. What matters even more is that studying the Tree of Life, understanding what it represents, and applying its principles, leads to growth in consciousness.

There are many and varied Tree of Life diagrams or representations, each reflecting the understanding of the author or artist. Some diagrams are more complete than others. Some show correlations to the tarot. Some show relationships to astrology. Some show correlations to the seven rays. It is important to work with a representation that is consistent with the intended approach and depth.

In a proper study of the Tree of Life, it is the Tree of Life which speaks to the student, through correlations and relationships. The occult knowledge or understanding that the student brings to bear provides a framework either for interpretation or realization (which is different from interpretation). The key in any such endeavor is to be open to the underlying truth. Thus what we know can be a formidable barrier to the insights available.

Here are two representations of the Tree of Life.





## Section 7.61



### The Qabalah

- The Qabalah is an ancient, medieval, and modern system of Jewish theosophy, mysticism, and magic that forms a basis for the western occult and mystical traditions.

## The Qabalah

The Qabalah (Cabala) (Kabbalah) is the mystical and occult dimension of Judaism and provides the underlying basis of western mysticism and occultism. Kabbalah is a Hebrew word meaning to receive or to reveal, and it is through the study of the Qabalah and through its practices that one is purified and enlightened.

The basic teachings of the Qabalah are contained in a relatively modern book known as the *Zohar*, written in the 1200's. And there are many, many documented interpretations. There are, however, only two basic approaches to the Qabalah, one being the orthodox approach, steeped in conventional Judaism, the other being the western magical approach, steeped in various occult traditions and derived to some extent from the Qabalah.

The basic teachings of the Qabalah are not fundamentally different from the mystical tradition of any of the world's great religions, but the Qabalistic system is nonetheless a quite powerful and symbolic key to the mysteries of life, beginning with the nature of God and creation, looking deep within the human being and finding God (communion), and ending with human evolution in consciousness. In the orthodox approach, the emphasis is upon purification and a continuing process of revelation. In the less orthodox approach, the emphasis is upon understanding the mysteries, purification and training leading to qualification, and the application of Qabalistic (magical) principles for good.

The Qabalah explains not only the nature of God but also the nature of man, and how the inner life of one leads to the inner life of the other. Qabalists utilize magic words from the scriptures, for understanding, for healing, and for warding against evil. But for the most part, Qabalistic practice is about personal spiritual development and self-realization. It is closely coupled to the map of consciousness represented by the Tree of Life. This map or diagram symbolizes the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom of the Qabalah.

The problem of the Qabalah and the Tree of Life is the problem of the inner, deeper, more esoteric teachings within every major faith, which is two-fold,

namely that most people cannot apprehend the inner, deeper, more esoteric teachings and that those who presume to understand without really understanding simply add to the confusion surrounding the teachings.

Consequently, those who truly study the Qabalah and embrace its teachings and principles, like esotericists of all faiths, tend not to share their insights with those who simply cannot understand. Within Judaism, Qabalists are a distinct minority. Within the western mystical-occult tradition, however, Qabalists are a distinct majority, though many are more profane than genuine.

In some sense the mystery teachings of the Qabalah are the gift of Judaism to Christianity and to Islam. The deeper aspects of both Christian mysticism and Islamic mysticism have strong links to the Qabalah. The Tree of Life may not be embraced directly by non-Qabalists, but the teachings derived from the Qabalah persist. On the other hand, the Tree of Life is only a representation and the Qabalah is only a system of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Truth is greater and deeper and more profound than any representation or system. But every representation and every system has at least some basis in truth. Thus while the Qabalah is profound, it is not the only valid system.



## Section 7.62



### The Tarot

- Like astrology, tarot can be used as an instrument of interpretation regarding personality-level conditioning. But it also a potent symbolic and procedural system embodying some degree of metaphysical philosophy.

## The Tarot 1

The tarot is a particular symbolic and procedural system embodying some degree of metaphysical philosophy, utilizing a combination of particular and various symbolisms, through the medium of a (tarot) deck of cards and their various relationships one to another and through the medium of utilizing those cards according to particular and various methods.

The higher purpose of the tarot is to provide a convenient and portable mechanism for the embodiment and representation of the ancient wisdom (esoteric philosophy) that can be utilized effectively as a point of focus for occult work. Since the basis of the tarot is natural symbolism, it can easily convey its content and quality to (and be effectively utilized by) any trained spiritual student (of any system), while safeguarding that content and quality from any person ill-prepared and unfamiliar with the natural, underlying basis of all occult systems. There is no lower purpose of the tarot, although it is often (and necessarily poorly) utilized by the unqualified and pseudo-qualified for (presumed) fortune-telling and other (relatively foolish) personality-centered operations.

The tarot design can vary a great deal from deck to deck, although those decks that are designed properly, according to the natural, underlying system, are sufficiently similar in the important aspects. The embodied quality and depth (breadth) of content can also vary a great deal from deck to deck, according to the qualifications (knowledge, understanding, wisdom) of the designer. A highly qualified designer will generally produce a highly qualified tarot design (high deck). A poorly qualified designer will generally produce a poorly qualified design (low deck). Consequently, the usefulness and utility of a deck is limited by both the quality of the design (embodied knowledge, understanding, and wisdom) and the quality of the operator (reader) (user) [capacity of the operator for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom].

A high deck is only really useful to a highly qualified reader. Anyone less qualified will simply be unable to discern the embodied quality and content. A moderate deck is only useful to moderately and highly qualified readers,

although for the highly qualified reader a moderate deck cannot convey the higher aspects of the teaching. A low deck is not really useful to anyone, although the unqualified readers generally do not discern the relative (real) quality of the deck being utilized, being able to judge only on the basis of (superficial) appearance. In other words, the key to effective utilization of a tarot deck lies in the resonance (potential) that exists between the deck and the reader. A low deck has low potential, even for the enlightened reader. A high deck has a range of potential, depending on the potential of the reader. One can only extract what has been embodied and only to the extent that one already possesses the embodied knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (and only to the extent that one is properly attuned to or aligned with one's own higher nature). The intellect is not an effective operator.

The tarot is properly utilized (1) as a focus for (unspecified) occult work (service) (white magic), (2) as a point of focus for evoking knowledge, understanding, and wisdom that is not otherwise readily available to the waking-consciousness (but which has been otherwise personally realized), and (3) as a self-psychological tool. The tarot is improperly utilized for any personality-centered, self-centered, or selfish purposes, or for any mundane or personal interests (e.g., fortune-telling). The tarot is merely a point of focus, and can be used or mis-used according to the reader's intention.

† Commentary No. 896

## The Tarot 2

The (proper) tarot deck consists of 78 cards in three parts. The first part consists of 21 numbered cards. The second part consists of card number zero. And the third part consists of 56 cards in four suits (signs) (elements) (seasons) (principles) (cardinal points) of 14 cards each. The first two parts constitute the major arcana, while the third part constitutes the minor arcana.

The cards of the major arcana are known by various names, each of which constitutes an entire symbolic sub-system and is related to every other according to the various embodiments. The following are among the various names. Card I is the Magician. Card II is the High Priestess. Card III is the Empress. Card IV is the Emperor. Card V is the Chariot. Card VI is the

Lovers. Card VII is the Hierophant. Card VIII is Strength. Card IX is the Hermit. Card X is the Wheel of Chance. Card XI is Justice. Card XII is the Hanged Man. Card XIII is Death. Card XIV is Temperance. Card XV is the Devil. Card XVI is the Tower. Card XVII is the Star. Card XVIII is the Moon. Card XIX is the Sun. Card XX is Judgment. Card XXI is World. Card XXII (Zero) is the Fool. The first suit of the minor arcana is called clubs or sceptres and represents the first principle (fire). The second suit is called hearts or cups and represents the second principle (water). The third suit is called spades or swords and represents the third principle (air). And the fourth suit is called diamonds or pentacles or disks and represents the fourth principle (earth). The popular deck of "playing cards" is a derivative of the minor arcana.

The symbolism (properly) embodied in the tarot is multi-dimensional, with numerous symbolic threads (consistencies) running throughout the various cards and in various directions. Since the tarot does, in its higher sense, rely on an intuitive (non-egoistic and non-rational) appreciation of the "deck" and its manifestation (application), one can only really learn the tarot by actually utilizing a (high) deck. Once a person has a suitable feel for the tarot, then one can study the various writings on the tarot, but ever relying on the intuition for that sense of appropriateness (for what rings true and for what rings not so true) [for much of what is written concerning the tarot is without much meaning to the spiritual student]. One can ill afford to approach the tarot in a strictly rational manner, for much will be missed thereby, and one can ill afford to approach the tarot with unbridled or untempered imagination, for much that is false will be gained thereby, thereby deceiving the student and distracting the student from what is true. The only truly effective means of embracing the tarot is intuitively, without recourse to psychic (astral) (emotional) abilities and without recourse to rational (intellectual) abilities.

The tarot is both a definite system and a means by which any (proper) system may be embodied. The tarot is both a systemic doctrine and a system of methods. The tarot is a book of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom that can be read in any number of different directions (ways). The tarot is both definite and indefinite. The mind must therefore be tempered and qualified by the intuition to effectively interpret the higher impressions without prejudice. One must be able to embrace both abstract and concrete concepts. One must be able to discern the sense of things (patterns) as well as to discriminate vital

distinctions. Above all, to achieve any real understanding of these things, one must be both open-minded and impersonal.

In a sense, and in the final analysis, the real intention of the tarot is to conveniently evoke within the consciousness of a reincarnated student all that he or she had previously learned of the esoteric philosophy.



## Section 7.63



### Related Material

- Loosely related to the Tree of Life are divination and quaternaries.

## Divination

Divination is the art, practice, or process of foreseeing future events or discovering otherwise hidden knowledge, by interpretation of omens and through intuitive perception. There are a number of fallacies associated with divination which effectively distract many who are attracted to the lesser mysteries without proper qualification.

The first fallacy is that the future can be foreseen with any accuracy or consistency. Even the most talented who view the future field can only effectively generalize the future tendencies or patterns, because the future consists of a vast number of dynamic karmic threads, ever changing as new inputs are added and old ones fulfilled, and since all causes and consequences are interactive (interdependent) with all other causes and consequences, the resulting complexity (the chaos of wisdom) is at best probabilistic and generalized (bias is another problem altogether). Very few consequences are stable enough to be accurately predicted, and therefore all perception of the future field must (properly) be considered suspect (i.e., biased by the process of perception, probabilistic and generalized at best).

The second fallacy is that there is any real significance to predicting the future. Very few are properly trained and qualified to properly perceive the future field, and they are employed mainly to perceive the long view (the evolutionary plan) in general terms, working to link the current momentum to the intended, generalized, evolutionary objective. Those who are properly trained and qualified are not concerned with (the illusion of) particulars and do not make predictions. Predictions of future events (however relatively accurately) serve no real purpose, particularly for those upon the spiritual path. What matters is the quality of consciousness embraced in the present and the proper expression of that quality of consciousness. Knowing some particular impending future event affords no greater opportunity to evade or change the consequences, for all is governed by karma and evasion is not possible nor can consequences be changed without merit. One can only progress or evolve through learning and understanding (the incorporation of wisdom).

A third fallacy is that the purpose of divination has anything at all to do with foretelling the future. Divination is properly a process of developing and refining the intuition as an instrument of perception and assimilation of experience and the realization of wisdom. Divination is properly a process of evoking the intuition in the recognition and evaluation of cause and effect relationships. Divination is properly a process of developing the faculties of discernment, discretion, and discrimination in the framework of the spiritual intuition (buddhi). Therefore one should not confuse the exercise with the objective. The tools and instruments resorted to (i.e., astrology, the tarot, etc.) are merely catalysts for evocation of faculties and not particularly significant in themselves. Of course the truly talented (properly trained and qualified intuitive) needs no resort to outer tools or instruments.

A fourth fallacy is that divination is or can be a science. Divination is an art, necessarily and properly subjective and qualitative, a science only in the sense of being (possibly) a structured (objective) approach to (trigger) the evocation of subjective and qualitative processes. If viewed as a science or as an end in itself, divination remains an entertaining diversion and without significance. But viewed as a symbolic and artistic process, divination has a considerable potential for intuitive realization, provided that the student avoids the various associated glammers and illusions (distractions).

† Commentary No. 1414

## Quaternaries

A quaternary is a member of a group fourth in order or (more commonly) a set (quaternion) (tetrad) comprising four (generally equal but not generally identical) units or members. In this sense (of a four-fold set) the quaternary is a natural bridge (energy-link) between the more natural trinity (tertiary) (triplicity) (three major rays) and the astrological framework which has a basis of twelve.

The quaternary also has significance by virtue of the role (qualification, correlation) of the fourth ray and offers the energies of harmony through contrast and relationship through balance. In a trinity properly there are three members and three relationships and a whole, while in a quaternary there are

four members and two primary relationships (pairs of opposites) and four secondary relationships and a whole. The trinity is relatively more simple and stable while the quaternary is relatively more complex and dynamic. And yet relationships exist between trinities and quaternaries (significantly) and between quaternaries and pentads (significantly less so).

One natural quaternary is that of the four directions (north, south, east, and west) and various associated symbologies. Another is that of the four seasons (spring, summer, autumn, winter). Yet another is that of the four elements (air, water, fire, earth) and their astrological implications. Indeed, it is the interaction of the trinity (cardinal, fixed, mutable) and the quaternary (air, water, fire, earth) that forms the (three times four equals) twelve signs of the zodiac (the astrological background) as well as the twelve houses (that background in its more dynamic sense). And of course the four seasons correlate directly with the annual astrological cycle. There are also the four (symbolic) horsemen of the apocalypse (war, famine, pestilence, and death). And the four (normal) dimensions of space-time (length, breadth, depth, duration). And four suits of the Tarot (wands, cups, swords, disks) (hearts, spades, diamonds, clubs). There are also four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude). And many other quaternaries (significantly so or otherwise). All sets of four which are mutually correlative in some sense or another.

A number of religious symbols embrace or derive (from) the quaternary, including the Christian cross, the (ancient) (more dynamic) swastika, and the tetragrammaton (Yahweh). Some crosses are symmetrical in one dimension (only), while others are symmetrical in two dimensions. There is relatively more balance in symmetry, but more "urging" with less symmetry, provided the whole (symbol) (set of relationships) is coherent. The cross is an open quaternary (symbolic framework), while a square or rectangle (or other tetrahedron) is a closed quaternary (symbolic framework). Thus the energy relationships of a cross are quite different from those of a square.

Tetravalent members are properly equal but not equivalent. Each conveys or embraces its own energy and symbolism. But the relationships that exist between set members also convey (generally deeper) insights. One should properly first study the nature of the four set members individually, then the nature of the four as a whole, then the nature of relationships of each to the

whole, and finally the nature of relationships of each member one to another. There is greater meaning (and insight) in context. And a proper quaternary has considerable (proper) context (albeit not as much as a trinity (there is greater depth in simplicity than in complexity)).



