

## 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.

