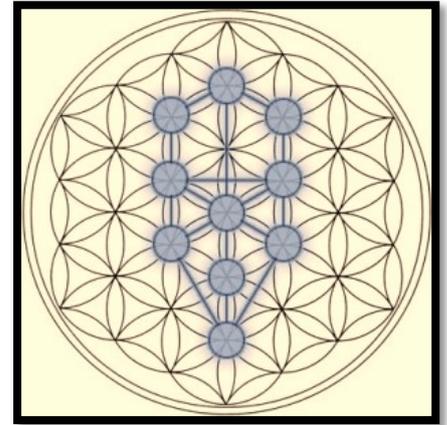


KABBALAH

The Tree of Life:

The 22 paths of The Tree of Life ("Etz Haim") in Kabbalah reflect the 22 primeval vibrations that formed the Hebrew Alphabet. Thus, sound, form and meaning are all coordinated in one cohesive whole. Each is a different manifestation of a singular profound essence. As you see in the image, the Tree seamlessly embeds within the geometrical form known as the Flower of Life, which is evident throughout living systems and represented in countless ancient cultures. *Take a moment to feel the significance of this universal recognition of coherence.*



The Paths and the Alphabet:

The 22 letters/vibrations/paths within the Tree of Life connect the Sephiroth (the spherical points of the Tree): these key vibrational patterns are "emanations" and represent the powers of the soul. Each of the 10 Sephira is defined and acts as a chain of emanation, with each unfolding and evolving the next: each Sephira relates and mediates the influence of the others. They are: Kether ("crown"), Chokmah ("wisdom"), Binah ("understanding"), Chesed ("kindness/mercy"), Geburah ("severity"), Tiphereth ("beauty/harmony"), Netzach ("victory"), Hod ("glory/spendor"), Yesod ("foundation"), Malkuth ("kingdom").

The 22 paths connecting the Sephiroth consist of:

- 3 "Mother Letters" (Aleph, Mem, Shin): These represent *Awareness*.
- 7 "Double Letters" (Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Pe. Resh, Tau): These represent *Space*.
- 12 "Simple Letters" (Hey, Vau, Zain, Cheth, Teth, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samekh, Ayin, Tzaddi, Qof): These reflect the 12 constellations of the zodiac and represent *Time*.

The Pillars:

Three vertical pillars comprise the Tree of Life. The Pillars are a diagrammatic representation of the 3 fundamental forces of life: positive/+, negative/-, and neutral/0.

- The LEFT Pillar is the pillar of SEVERITY-DESTRUCTION. This is the black feminine pillar of passivity, form, contraction, restriction, matter, and is the negative pole of the Tree. The Sephira Binah, Geburah and Hod comprise this pillar.
- The RIGHT Pillar is the pillar of MERCY-CREATION. This is the white masculine pillar of activity, force, expansion, movement, energy, and is the positive pole of the Tree. The Sephira of Chokmah, Chesed and Netzach comprise this pillar.
- The MIDDLE Pillar is the pillar of MILDNESS-HARMONY. This is the central pillar that has no charge. It is cosmic awareness, consciousness, equilibrium, stillness, and the neutral "present moment" pole of the Tree. The Sephira of Kether, Tiphereth, Yesod and Malkuth comprise this pillar. The non-Sephira Da'ath is also on this Pillar.

You are walking The Path of Ayin / A'Ain.

Ayin is the 16th path within the Tree of Life and the 16th letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. (It is also recognized as "26" when all elements of the Tree are considered, including each of the 10 foundational Sephira: this is known as "The 32 Paths of Wisdom".)

Ayin, meaning "eye" in Hebrew, is known as the letter/vibration/path of discernment.

living thing. They are the source of our most basic instincts, drives and emotions. They are the so-called 'animal energies' which, in human society, are frequently regarded as dangerous, unacceptable, sinful even, and are, therefore, subject to proscription and rules.



For Cabbalists and Hermeticists, however, these energies are the spark of the Divine within us which, if we can learn to understand and control it, will give us the power to change both ourselves and our world.

The Cabbalistic journey is just one way of learning to understand these energies. And for those who have chosen this way and who embark on the Path of The Devil, the lessons of earlier Paths must have been well mastered. Only then, will they be able to face the 'Lord of the Gates of Matter', whose energies dominate this Path, in safety, and control his powers within themselves with understanding, strength, love and temperance.

On the Traditional Tarot card, this 'Lord of the Gates of Matter' is shown as Pan Pangenitor, the All-Father, a horned, goat-legged, bat-winged figure similar to that which appears in Christian iconography as the Devil. Loosely tethered to the altar on which Pan stands are two similar but smaller and wingless creatures. Sometimes, in later Tarot packs, these creatures are human – one male and one female – but always they share some of Pan's animal attributes; and always their demeanour is unconcerned, or even happy.

The symbolism of this imagery suggests that we are the offspring of this 'Father' – that we share some of his animal nature and that we are subject to his power. But the details of the image suggests also that either we are unknowingly enslaved by him, or we know of the bonds which bind us and choose to accept them, for the looseness of the bonds shows that we can throw them off.

Pan's energies are lustful, vital, Mercurial energies. They are capricious (Capricorn is the astrological sign for this Path) and have no foresight or scruple. Allowed free reign, they have the power to transcend all limitations and cause chaos and destruction. But they are also the energies of the light-bearer, Lucifer. And without them we are sterile. This paradox was the source of Blake's interpretation of the Devil in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and it is summed up in his aphorism: "*The lust of the goat is the bounty of God*" (MMH 8c). It is expressed, too, in one Cabbalistic meditation for this Path: 'The Exalted Phallus'.

The sexual energies are, of course, one expression of these generative powers, but that is not the only way in which they are expressed. Because of the power of the sexual drive, however, many spiritual disciplines emphasize its importance, either by prohibition or, as in Tantric Yoga, by exploiting its believed connection with states of divine ecstasy. Cabbala, on the other hand, teaches neither abstinence nor excess (although both are valued) but the overall need for understanding and for equipoise.

Few of the gods associated with this Path, however, have had followers whose rituals demonstrated equipoise, even when those rituals celebrated Divine Mysteries. The excesses of the Bacchantes who worshipped Dionysus, for example, were terrifyingly depicted by Euripides in his *Bacchanals*. And followers of the ancient goat-headed god, Bahomet, whose name means 'wisdom'², were believed by the Christians to indulge in orgiastic rituals of Devil-worship and

sexual abandon. The connections between the Divine Mysteries, ritual, ecstasy, passion and excess, reflect important truths about the generative energies but they reflect, too, the human propensity for creating and enforcing dogma; for accepting its bonds; for mistaking rebellion and license for freedom; and for taking things to extremes.

The Cabbalistic journey, unlike many other spiritual disciplines, is individual and personal. Enlightenment comes through knowledge and understanding, not through the learning of dogma. But understanding of our unconscious is not obtained by conscious, rational means.

Jung wrote that *"our conscious mind is far from understanding everything, but the unconscious always keeps an eye on the 'age-old, sacred things'... and reminds us of them at a suitable opportunity"* (P&A 67). He believed that this 'suitable opportunity' came in dreams, art, stories and poetry. And for most spiritual disciplines, these have been the time-honoured methods of presenting their teachings: their stories and poetry are full of symbols and allegory, and their sacred texts record many instances of divine enlightenment transmitted through visions and dreams.

For the Cabbalist, too, enlightenment comes from visions, dreams, instinct, intuition, imagination and the brief ecstasy or madness of union with the Divine. The A'Ain, the Eye on this Path of the All-Father, is the Visionary eye of the Soul in our inner darkness, and it frequently appears in Cabbalistic, Hermetic and Alchemical iconography as the Eye of God above. It is both the upward-looking eye of the Divine Spark within us and the downward-looking eye of the Ain Soph.

In order to open the inner eye, the Cabbalistic journeyer on this Path must learn to use the energies of Hod, Sephira 8, which lies at one end of this Path, and which transmits all the Mercurial, infinite, tricky, magical, light-bearing energies of the number 8. Then, balanced by the energies of Tiphereth (6), the journeyer may learn to use their Visionary eye to discern the bonds which bind them and to set their own limits and boundaries. Hod, which is on the Pillar of Form, transmits energies which foster abstraction and language, through which (by the use of reason) we construct our own image of our world. The Vision of Hod is the Vision of Splendour; and the Virtue of Hod is honesty and truthfulness. Its Illusion, however, is the illusion of order; and its Qlippoth is rigidity."

