

THE AWAKENING GROUND

A GUIDE TO CONTEMPLATIVE MYSTICISM



DAVID CHAIM SMITH

THE AWAKENING GROUND

A GUIDE TO CONTEMPLATIVE MYSTICISM



DAVID CHAIM SMITH

THE AWAKENING GROUND

A GUIDE TO CONTEMPLATIVE MYSTICISM



DAVID CHAIM SMITH

THE AWAKENING GROUND

A GUIDE TO CONTEMPLATIVE MYSTICISM

DAVID CHAIM SMITH



Inner Traditions
Rochester, Vermont • Toronto, Canada



THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK consist of a variety of styles of innovation based on oral teachings passed directly from mouth to ear from a living teacher, within the context of

an unbroken lineage of gnostic realization. Such opportunities are profoundly rare. None of the innovations could exist if not for those kind enough to bestow such a precious gift. I defer all credit completely to them.



CONTENTS

Cover Image

Title Page

Introduction: A Guide to
Contemplative
Mysticism

Chapter 1. The Mixing
Field: An Introduction to
the Six Gates

Gate One:

Recognition of the
Continuum

Gate Two: The Klipot

Gate Three: The
Mixing Field

Gate Four: The
Fullness

Gate Five:
Scintillating
Dissolution

Gate Six: Stabilizing
the Realization

Dissolving-In-Appearing

Chapter 2: Flight of the Merkavah

Chapter 3: The Pregnant Sacrificial Beast

Chapter 4: Gate of the Wedding Chamber

Chapter 5: The Fire of Nondimensionality

Chapter 6: The Skins of No-thing-ness (a

Summary)

Epilogue: Continuing the Work

About the Author

About Inner Traditions •
Bear & Company

Books of Related Interest

Copyright & Permissions



INTRODUCTION

A Guide to Contemplative Mysticism

The pathways of the wonders are like veins in the stock of a tree, and chochmah is the root. They are inner subtle resonances which no mind can contemplate, except that which suckles from it; a mode of contemplation by way of suckling, not by way of knowing.

—R. ISAAC THE BLIND

CONTEMPLATION BEGINS with intellectual understanding, which examines a matter within a range of implications from a variety of angles and perspectives. As the doorway of examination opens, the mind becomes dwarfed by the sheer immensity of possibilities, and the character of meaning begins to change. As the mind becomes aware of its own motion, it passes beyond mere information into an inquiry of its innermost nature. The practice of sacred contemplation is based on the understanding that the mind's essential nature is shared equally with whatever it observes, and

within that confluence the ground of all things can be directly recognized.

Contemplative inquiry poses a question about meaning. What is meaning in itself? The question serves to reformulate the kind of meaning that becomes possible. The quest for meaning in the mystical sense considers the nature of knowing rather than conceptual meanings that become known. The mind itself conceals meaning's essence. As contemplation passes beyond the gathering of information, flowing currents of mental textures are released within the mind's felt qualities, which pour forth

like a bath. Within these fields the mind immerses, and becomes absorbed within an increasingly nonconceptual register. Within the ocean of deep-feeling tones awareness can recognize the equalizing nature it shares with all manifestation, and through their shared nature the fossilized constructs of a perceiving subject and its perceived objects can relax into dissolution. The equalizing nature that becomes evident in this cognitive supernova introduces the “meaning of meaning,” the essentiality of all phenomena, which ripens into profound fullness the deeper contemplation passes.

The mental resonances that arise in contemplation are not intellectual abstractions that feed into the common barter of conceptual commerce. They are the most intimate of gestures that defy conventional communication, even in the subjective exchange that goes on within ourselves. The difficulty rests in resisting the habitual treatment of the resonances as ordinary perceptual objects. The alternative is to use them to awaken a longing for the core mystery concealed by ordinary perception. This shift allows the mind to open through the elusive zone between the assumption of an

individual perceiver and its array of seemingly solid constructs. Penetrating the doorways offered by the in-between unmakes the rigidity of both the subject and its objects, layer by layer, allowing the perceptual process to rediscover its original essentiality that is its great aim.

The outer world known through the senses and the inner impressions gathered within the mind participate in a single uninterrupted continuum. The aspiration to abide beyond the wall placed between inner thoughts and feelings and outer perceptions is where gnostic inquiry begins. However, the

mind cannot simply ignore the apparent differences, and must deal with those differences by throwing them into contemplative practice. The core of this aspiration invites the mind to bathe in a stream that binds it all together, guided by an understanding that its streaming can never be solidly fixed in space or time. Absorption within the stream of phenomena poses a challenge to the temporal and spatial habits that reduce its assumptions to narrow confining coordinates. If the mind takes up this challenge it can be trained to settle into the vast expanse innate to both itself and whatever it

perceives, and its reductive habits can dissolve back into the basic space of its display. Both the mind and the world can then be set free to breathe through a single living nature, and its substanceless and sourceless vastness can then be investigated unburdened.

Conventional cognitive reflexes impose structures of containment upon phenomena to try to make sense out of them. Contemplation seeks to break through this futile framework by shifting the focus back to its free essential nature rather than trying in vain to grasp it through the logistics of its circumstance. It begins by

becoming intensely interested in the secret life whispered through the presentation of things. This is an invitation to abandon inner and outer conceptual markers as a way to define phenomena. The abandonment leaves inquiry in free fall. The capacity for the mind to lose itself in that free fall is crucial, and leads to a key question: If the knowing subject and its known objects are only mere constructs fabricated by perceptual reflexes, who is there to know anything? What is there to be known?

Within this question the meaning of things can be reborn a billion times

over, liberated successively from the claustrophobic exchanges of conceptual associations. This liberation introduces a register of knowing suffused within an ultimate unknowability. As the concretized constructs become untangled the emphasis shifts from the accumulation of data to a direct *gnosemic*, or gnostic awareness, that reaches forever without ever arriving at any fixed destination. Immersion in this endlessness ultimately dissolves the habits that shape moments in time and locations in space, and marks the departure from philosophical inquiry into mystical

practice.

The subtle feeling tones that arise in contemplation cannot be contained within the mechanistic circuits of discursive thought. They resist being reduced to perceptual artifacts. Mental textures arise that are far too delicate and tenuous to be grasped or understood, and they simply slip away when the attempt is made to hold them in the usual heavy-handed conceptual manner. These resonances can only be engaged by cultivating the discipline of meditative concentration. Yet, as that concentration is cultivated, the echoes of the habitual reflexes persist to reify

and divide a knowing subject from its myriad known objects. As a result the perceptual field is shattered into fragments, either loudly or quietly. Until the reflexes are completely broken through and subdued the cognitive spectrum remains a mixing field. Within that mixture one learns what is truly valuable and what is not. Sorting through it is a skill as rare as any on earth.

Contemplation opens through the confines of unquestioned mental static. However, descriptions of this process can be misleading. Contemplation does not hold its distractions as foreign

irritants to be dismantled. On the contrary, contemplation mitigates its disruptions by returning them to the open continuum in which they arise. Immersing the maze of fixations within the continuous stream of pure possibility can liberate claustrophobic habits on contact. This releases billowing fields of poetic resonance that saturate the four corners of space, introducing the potential for a particularly vivid style of contemplation that works with the self-ornamenting openness of infinity. Pure poetic sensations shimmer beyond grasp, and cannot be reduced to either

personal or impersonal terms. Within their shimmering an invitation into the essential nature of all phenomena opens through the sparkle of their ethereal fluttering. The truly amazing thing is that this profound resource becomes available without interfering in any way with so-called ordinary appearances.

Once the continuous expanse is glimpsed through its etheric perfumes, the pristine openness of the infinite becomes the central concern. Its recognition is the antidote for the reductive habits of grasping and concretization. However, infinite

openness cannot be separated from the fullness of the qualities it exudes. The open and the full are one and the same, bound at the root within a single continuum. This continuum is the changeless ground that always manifests as constant change, awaiting recognition at the twilight between knowing and unknowability. Heavy ordinary conceptuality is invited to drown within it, awakening the mind to the fact that it has never been other than this same mystery from the beginningless beginning.

Drawing forth the subtle resonances through which the ultimate awakening

ground can be discovered is what the great thirteenth- century kabbalistic master Isaac the Blind called “suckling.” It is based on a thirst for the nourishment of absolute meaning in the midst of the barrage of its relative projections. It coaxes and draws forth its nutrition by direct immersion in the onslaught of mind’s upheaval, accepting and rejecting nothing, always reaching further and deeper to recognize what is truly meaningful with single-pointed focus.

The suckling is accomplished through the flesh and blood of appearance, poised at the cusp of its

emergence and dissolution. As poetic resonances flood the perceptual fields, the ground of space sparkles with scintillating life, suffusing it with ungraspable beauty. Contemplation trains the mind to enter this boundless resource no matter what things appear to do or not do. It hangs with the spread of pure possibility, hiding within the parade of everyday details, displaying and consuming itself like the Ouroboros serpent swallowing its own tail.

Any display of phenomena can be used for contemplative suckling if awareness is trained to enter the

mixing field of phenomena to endlessly reach toward its essential nature. Within the clusters of randomness gnosemic and conventional tendencies mix, mingle, and permeate one another. Within the amalgam the treasure can be excavated. The key is the ability to recognize what is truly precious and not waste energy on lesser concerns. It comes down to a question of learning what is truly meaningful within the barrage of possibilities that extend to forever without end.

Meaning never remains static. Its nature is to move and transmit by remaining fluid and adaptable.

However, its precious essentiality becomes buried under layers of associative identification. The parade of conceptual identification dims and dulls the raw brilliance that contemplation seeks to extract. In order to understand this the associative process must be taken apart and seen for what it is.

A conventional mental object poses an equivocation that offers a token or sign to pass along a relative meaning. Conceptuality is always dependent upon its associative contexts to pose its relationships within subsets of other accepted meanings. Such

approximation can only function within a closed circuit to recount a set of relationships that are always changing, becoming modified as the surrounding contexts evolve.

Absolute meaning outshines relative conceptual equivocations by cutting directly to the expanse of the ground or basis of all elaboration. Although relative variation is unlimited, it can never sum up the limitlessness of its ground's absolute fullness. There is no point of contrast with which to measure or compare the basis of phenomena. Therefore, gnostic aspiration cannot rely upon any set of conventional

relative meanings to pursue its goal. However, the fields of relative temporary meaning are precisely where the practitioner must perform the work.

Any set of relative meanings can be used for contemplation if the mind can clear a path to approach their innate absolute nature. Breaking through the reified shells that obstruct such paths does not leave a trail of broken pieces without value. All phenomena express equal value. All mental activity without exception is the self-elaboration of the awakening ground. The shards of broken conceptions melt back through the same space that they

arose in. The continuum of the mind also returns, equalizing itself with the broken pieces of its own vestigial artifacts. The whole process goes where all dead dreams go, to the placeless place beyond the coming and going of relative concerns. In point of fact, nothing ever leaves that place. Understanding that no construct can ever depart the awakening ground is monumentally important. Whatever interferes with contemplation only persists until the ground itself becomes the central concern. Through it no such things as distractions or interruptions can possibly exist, and all differences

are made irrelevant.

The equality of temporary phenomena and pure basic space cannot be conventionally understood. However, it certainly can be realized as the unconventional wisdom of gnosis. Gnostic realization is based on open possibility with no (*En*) end (*Sof*). This term, *En Sof* (often spelled *Ain Sof*), is used in kabbalistic literature to point to naked primordial essentiality and the boundless freedom of divine transcendence. As is the case often in religious literature, essentiality becomes both reified as a philosophical abstraction and mythologized into the

personage of a creator god.

Commonly En Sof is taken as the “cause of all causes” at the top of a linear hierarchy, which most often leads to restrictive conceptual assumptions. Liberation from these assumptions comes in the guise of a paradox. En Sof is the universal creative ground through which transcendent essentiality is expressed as immanent manifestation. Manifestation arises, however, without ever departing from its transcendent nature. In this sense, gnostic recognition of En Sof obliterates the causal linear restrictions imposed by

conceptual habit so that an inherent purity can be recognized in everything no matter what. This radical approach to contemplation seeks to realize that all phenomena, both in form and formlessness, are essentially equal in the awakening ground of En Sof. In point of fact, even the restrictive habits of reification and division that seem to obscure and obstruct the mind are nothing other than elaborations of this holy ground as well.

All of the apparitional variations of being have never departed from En Sof for even one moment. To understand this statement a few clarifications are

in order. En Sof cannot be reduced to either a state of being or nonbeing, each category deriving relative meaning in contrast to its opposite. Such binary fluctuations cannot be absolute in the ultimate sense, and merely reflect dualistic designations of presence versus absence. In this sense, En Sof both includes and eludes ontological categories through the paradox of its wholeness.

The ground of phenomena is referred to here by the Hebrew word *adamah*. The ground is unborn and primordial, in the sense that it is complete and whole prior to whatever

temporary presentations might display it. Recognizing the primordial expanse equalizes that which cognizes phenomena (perception) with the phenomena that are cognized (what is perceived). These aspects return unto their mutual basis within gnostic realization, like pouring water back into the ocean. Within this great return variable revelation and open possibility express a single incomprehensible mystery, and the rigid boundaries of so-called subjective interpretation and objective reality are nullified.

The adamah ground is equal to what is called basic space. Space is

completely open and pure, but always presents itself in variation. The wisdom of space is that its absolute nature is always inherent in its relative display. Contemplation neither accepts nor rejects appearances; it works through them. All phenomena pose an opportunity to return to the primordial expanse of basic space in the midst of whatever happens. The single-pointed goal of contemplation is the return to the awakening ground, which is the esoteric meaning behind the term *tikkun olam* (repair of the world) mentioned in Jewish texts.

The light of knowing and the

darkness of the unknown express a single unknowable mystery. The thirteenth-century kabbalistic text *Fountain of Wisdom* calls this mystery “a light darkened by illuminating.” The darkening light is the scintillating wisdom of En Sof that suffuses space deep within its guises. The term *wisdom* refers to the expression of the ground inherent in the manifestation of phenomena. Knowing this wisdom never ceases to be bright in terms of its quality of awareness, however, the expanse itself cannot be grasped, and is therefore dark to the grasping habits of the mind. Knowing the nature of what

cannot be grasped is realized in contemplation, wherein a sensibility arises that radically changes the way the ground and its phenomena are understood. It opens through an endless range of subtle overtones that assert the primacy of space beyond anything conventionally coherent. These resonances change the meaning of manifestation, and act as open invitations into the mystery of the essential nature. Through the invitation of wisdom all relative meanings are subsumed in a secret meaning-fullness that is completely unknowable, yet remains luminous with the primordial

awareness that is innate to space. Space is not merely dark or light, but opens through a magical intoxicating quality that the mind swoons within to lose hold and break through itself.

Contemplation discovers the intoxicating nectar within the mixing field of meaning. The process begins like a farmer prepares his field. The soil is turned each season by careful consideration and deep study. Grain is planted by the discipline of formal practice, which grows and is harvested by spiritual breakthroughs. The breakthrough experiences are only indications of the true harvest. What is

harvested is beyond experience, and abides within the secret bounty of endlessness the isolated breakthroughs point to. Unlike a physical farmed field, the harvest keeps on breaking through into its bounty forever. Recognition of the field of infinite breakthroughs can be fermented and distilled into an intoxicating liquor, which is the quintessence of primordial wisdom. This distillate is precisely what gnostic contemplation becomes drunk upon. Each drop can swallow the whole world.

No matter where the mind looks or what it does, the perceptual field

provides the opportunity to distill the intoxicating nectar. Even in the coarsest manifestations the nectar is innate, suffused throughout the perceived impurities of conceptual association. The mixing of tendencies renders the nectar dull and opaque, and it is missed by vulgar concerns. Isolation of the intoxicating nectar is reminiscent of the myth of the bird that extracts pure water to drink from dirty mud puddles. The pools appear hopelessly sullied, but the bird can dip in its beak and draw out the clear water as if the contaminants that seem to dirty it were not even there. The

intoxicating nectar of the awakening ground is a hidden vista within the claustrophobic universes the mind feels trapped in. Once discovered, the same space that imprisons becomes a bath of freedom.

This style of contemplative work is based on an esoteric view of non-emanation, which differs from the exoteric religious view that posits a *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothingness). Bringing something out of nothingness is the foundation of a view concerned with how states of being descend from an ultimate source through a series of steps and stages.

The process expresses the tendency to treat creation as limited and contained, and its source (the creator) as unlimited and uncontainable. This conceptualization reifies both aspects, thus dividing them from each other. Their separation increases as they are conceptually elaborated, greatly diminishing the possibilities of a nonconceptual breakthrough into a common ground.

En Sof manifests through its inherent glow or self-illumination, called the *Aur En Sof* (light of En Sof). This light is infinite and ungraspable (and thus darkening), and its radiance

is equal to basic space. Both space and light express the mystery of the single essential nature, albeit from opposing conceptual vectors. The open expanse of space is always luminous, and luminosity is always open and vast.

Problems arise as the understanding of light and space is reified through a misinterpretation of symbolic descriptions, thereby reducing both to conventional mechanistic conditions. Symbolic narratives in kabbalistic texts describe the dynamic power of light becoming displaced and retracting to create a void within itself, creating a hollow place for the manifestation of

the worlds. The metaphor is extended as the light retracts, leaving a residual saturated expanse in which the light is reintroduced in successive stages. Unfortunately these profound symbols are often mistaken for a literal timeline of the cosmos, and their mystical meanings are completely lost.

Emanationism holds that En Sof is absolute; however, it mitigates this premise by adding that its light must be diminished in order to manifest itself. The view held in this book neither accepts these limitations nor the linear timeline given to describe the emanation process. The view of non-

emanationism does not discard the symbols or their sequences—far from it. The non-emanationist vision draws out the essential meaning and discards the mythology that obscures it, so that the holy symbols can express what ordinary words and concepts miss entirely.

Belief that the diminishment of the Aur En Sof is necessary for manifestation both reifies and divides a transcendent cause from a series of immanent effects. In this arrangement the higher steps down to manifest as the lower, until the top reaches the bottom, like a ladder. Without setting

out to do so, the perfect wholeness of En Sof is completely undermined by this belief. How can En Sof be absolute if it depends on the relative limitations of a mere mechanical process? The only conclusion one can draw from this view is that En Sof must literally leave its inherently perfect nature to enter into being. This departure is possible because the conventional habits refuse to stop grasping at being as “real.” This view depends upon conventional concepts of motion and substance, which renders complete gnostic realization within relative phenomena an impossibility.

When emanationist systems are held as literal descriptions of truth rather than symbolic metaphors they become reified the same way that physical laws are. What is implied when En Sof is taken to be “real”? What then is unreal? The assertion implies a solid verifiable construct that fits in with all the other constructs the human realm has deemed to be realities. En Sof is certainly not this, but neither is it its opposite. The question of reality and unreality is irrelevant. These concepts only exist in contrast to each other, and thus sidestep the greater issue of non-dual essential nature, which is the heart

of the matter.

Another barrier to mystical understanding is the common tendency for kabbalistic symbols to become reduced to psychological metaphors, as popularized in humanistic circles. Jungian archetypes, for example, extract symbols from mystical systems to illustrate a typology of conceptual functioning. The Jungian use of these symbols is limited to what human beings individually and collectively know, feel, and intuit. They cannot pass beyond the conceptual dimension that defines human understanding. Any system limited to human concerns

cannot ask the ultimate questions, because the concerns always turn the issue back to how the mind identifies itself and its data. Humanistic systems cannot really ask what the mind is in itself. In what, through what, and by what does the mind manifest? Where is the mind? What is the mind's essential nature when not reduced to conceptuality?

The capacity to recognize the primordial purity of En Sof as it pervades and saturates every aspect of phenomena cannot be satisfactorily addressed in texts, and needs to be passed through direct transmission.

Primordial purity can only be recognized at the intangible intersection of transcendence and immanence that is inherent to the living display of phenomena. However, this quest easily degenerates into an incoherent blur or a fantasy. The sensations are so tenuous that they fly away almost on contact, which is one reason they cannot be described in texts with any accuracy. The common denominator is the sensibility that no state of phenomena is ultimately solid or stable. The flesh of the paradox dawns as transcendent absorption unfolds through an immanent point of

focus, and subtle resonances teach us how these seemingly opposing aspects permeate the field of space. Yet, this only works if the passage into endlessness surpasses any other concern. The best way to cultivate this is simply being in the presence of those who have made progress with it, and thus the path requires some contact with a living form of transmission.

Contemplation seeks translucence in the midst of a seemingly finite and opaque universe. Each step in the *hishtalshelut* (kabbalistic ladder of worlds) presents the same central issue anew with each step. Manifestation

either becomes reified into an ordinary mental object or it returns to the primordial awakening ground. Therefore each step of the ladder is equally precious if it can be realized as infinity in itself, avoiding the conceptual grasping that instantly freezes the cognitive field on contact.

The “fall from perfection” that religion imputes to the human condition expresses a need to frame the scope of human functioning in a linear, reductive way. The fall alludes to the core habits that perpetuate human suffering and obstruct the realization of the essential nature. These habits are

temporary. Emanationist systems cloud this issue by incurring conceptual distance between the concept of the absolute and the worlds of reified perceptions. Consciousness therefore sees itself “falling” into a set of imperfect conditions that grow increasingly further from the abstraction of perfection it speculates about. When this is taken as a literal truth it corroborates every unevolved tendency that holds the mind back from its true potential. Spiritual practice seeks to remedy its condition by continually returning to the awakening ground no matter where it finds itself.

As the return gains momentum, the need to formulate abstractions lessens, replaced by the sublime qualities that accompany breakthrough, such as wonderment, bliss, and clarity.

The brilliance and wholeness of the awakening ground is always fully available. However, intellectually appreciating this fact and actually breaking through to realize it in practice are two wildly different affairs. The tension between relative change and its changeless basis culminates at a razor's edge. The purity of En Sof and so-called impure phenomena equalize at the edge of the

razor, which cuts away all relative implications that separate them as concepts. This changes the meaning of what purity implies, and shifts its implications from a scale based on comparison to a ubiquitous virtue. The virtue is rediscovered at the razor's edge of breakthrough wherever contemplation takes the helm. This realization defies position and definition, which is all the human mind knows how to calculate. The bravery and honesty required to head directly into what cannot be understood is profoundly rare; however, it is certainly possible if the core of human

life can be called from out of its slumber.

The sages always warned us that the esoteric descriptions of creation given in texts such as the *Zohar* cannot be taken literally. They also cannot be dismissed. The accounts describe dimensions far beyond the tight circles of conventional reality. To apply worldly mechanics to these symbolic narratives demeans them. In order to come alive such symbols must continually adapt and prove the depth of their meaning over and over again. The symbol languages are spoken in the twilight between conceptuality and

gnostic realization, and they are designed to open doorways directly to the transformations that make the separation between them impossible. They are mental bombs that explode the static rigidity of ordinary reality, packed by master demolitionists.

Gnostic realization is like a flash of lightning, striking simultaneously beyond and within human experience. The mystic will not accomplish the great aim by incrementally drawing down abstractions from far away to be politely consumed bit by bit. The mystic requires the radical annihilation of the barriers that obstruct what is

already perfect and whole right where they stand. The mystic wants to give everything over to a fire that consumes body, speech, and mind—until all that is left is the expanse of the beloved. Such a conflagration consumes everything but leaves all the beauty possible in the universe. Such beauty has no single home in any world, and paradoxically offers the space for all worlds to establish themselves. In this sense the terms *beauty*, *openness*, *fullness*, and *meaning* are all synonymous.

Primordial unity is often reified into the view known as monism. This view

falls short of complete gnostic breakthrough because it holds wholeness (the monad) as an undifferentiated mental object—an “all.” Any mental object, even an absolutely vast and formless one that includes all things within it, cannot be rid of the reflex at the root of conceptuality. Dissolving the root reflex of conceptual reduction is the doorway to realization. Therefore pantheistic systems that are founded upon a monad retain subtle reification, and express it at every step and stage. Matters are made worse as the mythology of a creator god are laden

upon the monad, in which case the quest for realization also hits the semantic wall of religious dogma.

Breaking through the monist assertion can be critically examined using the classic model of the *tzimtzum* at the onset of creation, as described in kabbalistic texts. The process is described as follows: A dimensionless point coalesces at the heart of the Aur En Sof. There are no secondary coordinates to compare the point to, thus the point cannot be placed within a conceptual relationship in terms of scale or position. The point remains both un-localizable and central to the

creative process. The point also cannot be contrasted to the light of the Aur En Sof itself, because the open luminosity is not a cohesive construct that can be set against anything else. Such associations are holdovers from physical logic, and have no place in contemplative inquiry.

The light of En Sof is an undifferentiated simplicity without any characteristics other than creativity, which can be recognized as the “self-darkening brilliance” described in the *Fountain of Wisdom*. To manifest the tzimtzum the light pulls back from the center point to its “sides,” leaving a

vacated space (*chalal hapanui*). This opens a void within a circular periphery surrounding the central point. This becomes the paradox of manifestation; space filled by the omnipresent wholeness of En Sof yet appearing vacant and divided.

The contraction of the light is referred to as the tzimtzum, however, the term also designates the circular boundary left in its wake that appears to divide what is contained from the uncontainable. Once this symbolic construct is established, the performance of the light of En Sof can be examined. The narrative gives an

account of the reentry of the light back into the vacated space, where it is reflected back in stages. Complex exchanges within that reflection ensue, described in various bodies of esoteric literature. However, all of the variation that is described is predicated on the paradoxical context of the original tzimtzum.

Profound basic questions arise from the tzimtzum. The Aur En Sof is a simple unity, so how can it be displaced? Its wholeness is absolute, so how can an aspect of it be separated from itself? How can finite containment abide within

uncontainable infinity? This question poses the paradox of relative meaning asserting itself in the midst of absolute meaning-fullness. Obviously the lesser is nullified through and through by the greater, to the point that the lesser is nothing other than the greater, but yet the lesser still appears. The conclusion drawn from this scenario is that great open meaning-fullness usurps everything whether it is evident or not. This establishes the secret mystical dimension of faith, which is both hidden and revealed simultaneously.

Jewish teaching is firm in its position that divine unity is always

total, and the limitations of creation appear in order to allow growth and free will to become possible as a subset within it. One must choose what aspect of meaning shapes one's life. The fractured display does not fool the mystic. The central question remains: How can the essential meaning be held where it appears absent?

Once the context of the tzimtzum is established, the light is said to reenter the vacated space in layers to establish the primal attributes of phenomena within it. These layers are the *sefirot*, and each *sefirah* presents the central paradox of uncontainable essentiality

anew with the presentation of its particular quality. No matter what attribute manifests, it is always subsumed within the mystery of En Sof, and its relative meaning can only be provisional.

The *olamot* (worlds) contextualize the sefirot within the *hishtalshelut* (chain of manifestation). Within each stage limitations that support causality and position appear. Although static laws are presented within each dimension, like all phenomena, they are open to interpretation. The narrative describing the very earliest stages of creation mentioned in the

Zohar provides hints about how original purity is concealed within so-called impure appearances. The Lurianic literature provides detailed accounts of configurations of sefirot prior to the worlds of manifestation that structure the universe as it is known. The texts describe alternate universes based on flawed configurations that were presented and destroyed because of innate flaws, and then shattered and were reconstituted. Shards of light were strewn throughout the subsequent layers that reformed around them, and concealed sparks of their original divinity became hidden

throughout the worlds awaiting human discovery.

The primordial sparks hidden throughout creation invite the mind back to the primordial roots of the original paradox that cannot be understood or contained in any conceivable form. The sparks offer the possibility of breakthroughs that defy structure and order, cracking open the logic of the linear hierarchy they are hidden within. The role of the practitioner is to recognize and raise these sparks through the radical revelation that wholeness is completely open and yet presentational, which

continually plays a game of hide-and-seek. This brings up questions of veracity and application that are implied by extremely obscure symbols within the literature. This becomes a problem for those who accept these accounts as literal protohistories as well as those who interpret them as mere psychological metaphors. The symbols fail to deliver their true wisdom and waste their potential when called upon to serve religious mythology or provide illustrations for humanistic virtues. The ability to utilize the metaphor in mystical absorption is extremely rare, but

luckily is not erased by the frequency of its misinterpretation.

The tzimtzum provides the context to continually take the manifestation back to its original paradox. It invites the mind to consider the pure simplicity “before” creation simultaneously with things exactly as they are. Since manifestation “after” the initial contraction is predicated on the paradox inherent within it, how can any facet of manifestation do anything other than return the mind to the basic mystery?

The problem of a timeline appears to

divide an original perfection from subsequent creative limitations. The tzimtzum is described in texts as an occurrence that begins and unfolds at some point in time. Why? This is precisely where the root paradox needs to be reasserted. Prior to conceptual intellectualization there is no differentiation of moments in the mind. This is the same way that the mind can approach the Aur En Sof—prior to any thought. The cultivation of atemporality is the mind's natural state, and cannot be added to or taken away. Appreciation of the atemporal state of the mind directly equates it

with basic space. This connection underscores all contemplative work. In this sense, it must be understood that the tzimtzum never “happened,” and the metaphor can then be engaged as a construct to be unmade rather than elaborated upon.

Inquiry into the essential nature before creation is strictly prohibited in the Talmud. Such a violation is helpful in a sense, because radical inquiry always contradicts the laws of conceptual habit. Taking the stance of a heretic sets the mind free to inquire beyond the bounds of logic and exoteric authority. The mystic is only

concerned with the essential nature prior to conceptual elaboration. What else could be important? As the authoritarian dictums of a mythological god are discarded as unuseful vestiges of an outdated technology, contemplation is set free to consider the jewel that has been cast within the dung heap. However, contemplation is not a consequence of history, and it remains outside of any temporal structure. Since the ancient world (and probably before) there have been gnostic outcast lineages that have sought to raise the essence of mystical teachings out of exoteric religious

contexts into a viable living practice. The difference at this historical point is that there are no overt cultural repercussions, and books such as this one can be published without such scrutiny.

The universe projected by an ordinary human being is structured by temporal and dimensional positioning. The leap beyond these limitations into unbounded freedom is as rare as anything in the universe. Making the leap is exactly what was intended with the construction of the tzimtzum model. The expanse of original essentiality is what the mystic seeks to

bathe in. As the hidden sparks of this expanse are raised bit by bit, a burgeoning vista of awakening dawns. This can only happen through nonconceptual breakthrough, not by understanding intellectual theory.

By conventional logic, the cusp of the tzimtzum circle would exist somewhere in space, at some positional location. However, coordinates are precisely what is called into question. The tzimtzum marks the boundary of all definable relative contexts; however, it cannot disrupt the ubiquitous expanse of En Sof. The metaphor allows a consideration of

space beyond the tzimtzum's periphery, where relative coordinates have no meaning, and place and time are irrelevant. Therefore the circle marks the barrier of what conceptuality requires for orientation and territory.

The tzimtzum's boundary is best understood as a stepping-off point into uncontrollability; beyond the apparent containment of the worlds. The reconciliation of the conceptual division between these absolute and relative aspects is the wisdom of the awakening ground, which is based on radical equanimity. This is a direct challenge to the conceptualizing mind,

which posits the ultimate interruption at the tzimtzum's border. Gnostic realization sets out to realize that there is no such interruption, which liberates the circle and everything within it completely. Primordial wholeness is indestructible, and the purpose of the contemplative path is to establish that the space that fills and surrounds the circle are completely equal in nature. This book establishes a methodology to work with equalizing circles through precise graphic means, based on the wisdom expressed by the tzimtzum.

The only concern the mystic has is the approach to limitlessness. Inquiry

has En (no) Sof (end). Through the awakening ground, awareness and manifestation are equalized in the profusion of pure possibility: superficial concerns evaporate, and meaning is continually reborn. The echoes of this rebirth resonate infinitely throughout space, and its implications have no end.

How the mind holds the core paradox is the question. A key quote that expresses this question is taken from the *Fountain of Wisdom*, which states: “alef is never less than bet.” The statement contrasts seemingly contradictory values. Alef has a

numerical value of one and bet has a value of two, which implies that although relative parts appear divided, unity is always implicit. The phrase “never less than” implies that unity is always disguised within seemingly dualistic contrasts. The premise of radical unity is the root of all further elaboration in kabbalah.

Many orthodox scholars interpret the tzimtzum in a manner that does not support gnostic awakening. Although kabbalah and Chassidut are based on profound non-dual teachings, the centuries have morphed interpretations that fall back into a conventional view

of the metaphors. For example, the kabbalistic scholar Jacob Immanuel Schochet states:

The principle purpose of the tzimtzum is to create a void in which the divine creatures would exist and subsist as opposed to becoming dissolved in the divine omneity. The infinite radiation of the divine light having been dimmed and concealed, as it were, will no longer consume and nullify the contents of the void in the way that a spark is consumed and nullified in the flame itself, or the way the light of a candle would be totally absorbed and

nullified in the very intense light of the sun. (*Mystical Concepts in Chassidism*)

This quote illustrates a conventional dualistic view of objects and their substantiality. It displays a belief that things either exist or do not exist, and does not attempt to establish a view that passes beyond the yes/no dichotomy. Such a view holds the designations that arise and dissolve with an apparent birth and death to be reliable markers of the true condition of things. It also seems oblivious to any curiosity or appreciation for the continuum beyond what these concepts

assert as real.

Radical mysticism is not interested in segregating relative distinctions from absolute essentiality. It seeks to entirely dissolve the gulf between them so that all phenomena can express a single absolute wisdom. It would seem that dissolving this gulf is precisely what Schochet is afraid of. The more radical mysticism becomes, the less important birth and death become, until no concern whatsoever is expressed about these concepts, and belief in their relative implications is abandoned entirely.

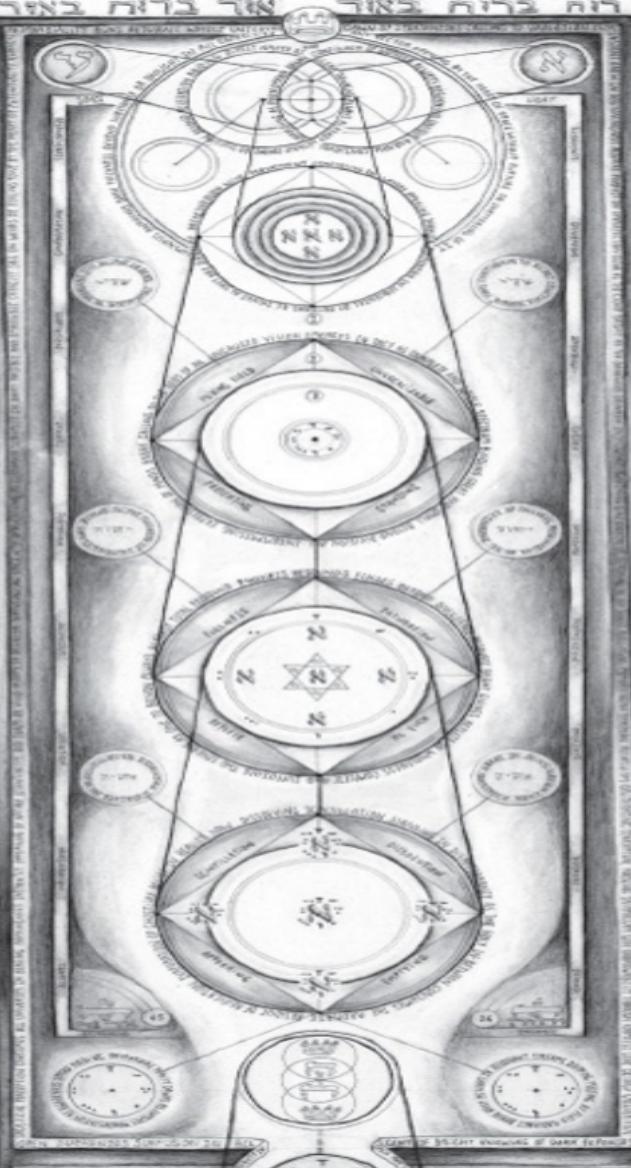
The lowest common denominator that ensures the perpetuation of religious orthodoxy is fear. A great many religious Jews adhere to *halachic* precepts supposedly imposed by a creator god for fear of the consequence of punishment or annihilation. Gnosis is impossible for the scared creature, because the main concern is an individual life and its place in a collective human identity. The aspiring gnostic must be completely willing to pass away from both individual as well as collectivized reification. It is exactly this lack of self-grasping that allows transparency to En Sof to be

recognized.

The gnostic would gladly welcome the so-called annihilation that Schochet is so worried about, because it merely poses the annihilation of relative meaning. How could absorption of relative individuality into absolute essentiality be anything other than pure communion with absolute truth? Is this not the beloved of all desires? However, there is no cause for worry. The mystic already understands what has eluded the fretful religionist. Within this understanding the absorption bath of the awakening ground becomes the only goal worth

pursuing.

הו



CONTINUATION SHEET 3
THESE EFFECTS DESCRIBED HERE
AS SEALS OF FRAUDS IN OTHER
INVESTIGATIONS COULD ALSO BE
RECOGNIZED BY CONSUMERS
WHEN PURCHASING IN A GROUP

1

THE MIXING FIELD

An Introduction to
the Six Gates

IN THE GOSPEL OF
THOMAS Jesus
instructs his followers to

“become passers-by.”

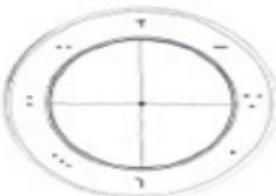
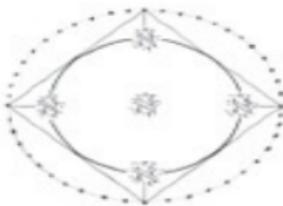
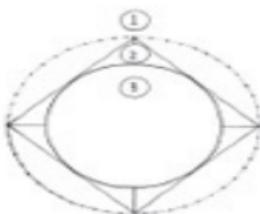
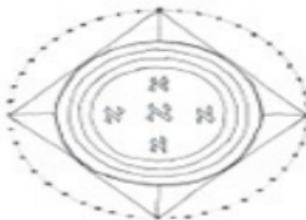
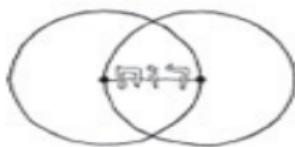
This instruction implies that the mind’s habits can return to openness as its winds pass through whatever arises. As the mind penetrates the clouds of relative meaning, each frozen conception can evaporate back into the sky of perfect wholeness, which is already its essential

nature.

The expanse of its nature is not a mere vacancy; it is an open fullness so complete that it can never be grasped. The mind may think it can grasp the qualities of a cloud, but it can never grasp the sky. Likewise, mind can grasp at some limited relative meaning,

but the expanse of meaning's fullness will always elude it. The meaning of meaning will never make sense. The sense of it must be unmade, called out from the depths of the dissolution of its habit reflexes as they return into their basic nature. In this sense, the knowing involved becomes a kind

of unknowing, which can be articulated in six stages, as follows:



The seals of the six gates

1. Recognition of the Continuum
2. The Klipot
3. Vision of the Mixing Field
4. The Fullness
5. Scintillating Dissolution
6. Stabilizing the Realization

This chapter introduces each of these six gates of contemplation through linguistic and graphic inquiry. Each is elaborated upon in terms of a main tendency and its kabbalistic implications, which are summarized by diagrams.

The diagrams used to illustrate the six gates are

composed of circles. As opposed to tree-of-life diagrams that tend to be read in a linear ascending and descending manner, the circular diagrams pose a manner of reading that passes in and out, bringing up issues of the reconciliation of the layers of cognition and creative manifestation. Most of the diagrams

used in this book are composed of two circles that represent absolute or basic space (the larger circle) and the differentiated space of relative phenomena (the inner circle), the smaller being a subset of the greater circle. Between the two circles is a twilight space wherein the two circles can introduce

the process of their equalization: surrendering the rigidity of their boundaries to one another to allow a singular essentiality to be realized in contemplation.

Ultimately, this realization of essentiality is the main point and the heart of the matter.

It can be a mistake to

think the six gates unfold mechanically in a strict linear sequence.

However, there is some validity to this linear way of development based on how the initial breakthroughs unfold.

The mind can only go as far as its last breakthrough will allow.

However, the breakthroughs that have

been cleared present a single multilayered space incorporating all that has preceded it, superimposed like transparencies. Then the memory of the linear sequence fades and becomes an artificial set of divisions. Yet still, whatever waits ahead poses a new challenge until a stabilized gnosis renders all the portals

facets on the same gem.

The continuum of portals is like a house with six rooms. Each has a secret passage that connects to all the others. The passageways, however, are hidden deep within the details of the room's construction, and simply entering the room and looking at its features

will present only blinds and dead ends. Once exploration yields the discovery of a genuine passageway, clues to the location of the next are revealed. Then the meaning of the whole structure changes. The chambers can be seen together as a single interconnected web rather than a set of isolated

discoveries. Excavating the interconnectedness of the gates involves transmuting the meaning of the exploration. The further the exploration goes, the more its activity is shaped by the meaning it realizes, rather than the other way around.

Contemplative practice begins with the love of

silence. Silence in this case does not refer to the mere absence of audible sounds, although that is one aspect that calls the mind into the great expanse of its essential nature. The great silence is full, resonant, and speaks through all things. You can begin by calling to it internally, where it abides without

interruption.

Longing allows silent resonant space to merge with gnostic intention, like water pouring into water. If you hold to silence in the moment it begins to spread within the heart of the mind's chatter, you will notice a change taking place immediately. Abide in its

dissolving presence, and its spread will consume whatever arises.

Love of silence is a kind of hunger or thirst. It goes profoundly deep. The urgency to bind with it is like a fire that intensifies gnostic aspiration. The silence can hear your aspiration and can whisper back, drawing

you into the motion of its secret winds. If its resonance is allowed to suffuse whatever arises, listening with the whole of your being can cut through all the internal chatter. The swifter the mind's clutter can be passed through, the deeper the love of silence will be, and the more profoundly it can be

realized as the ground of all phenomena.

This strange love tenderizes being with its poignancy as it thrusts through rolling fields in endless succession. Love of silence becomes the silence when this love suffuses itself with its own longing. Then the parade of projections can

be eclipsed by its essential nature.

It bears repeating: Love of silence becomes the silence, as its love becomes suffused with longing for its own open-appearing expanse. Then and only then, can the mind become absorbed by its most essential meaning, outshining the

parade of lesser concerns.

What eclipses the parade of lesser projections is the pervasiveness of silence. Silence introduces basic space, which manifests creative variation without interruption. Space is not a “thing” that can be interrupted or broken. Through contemplation,

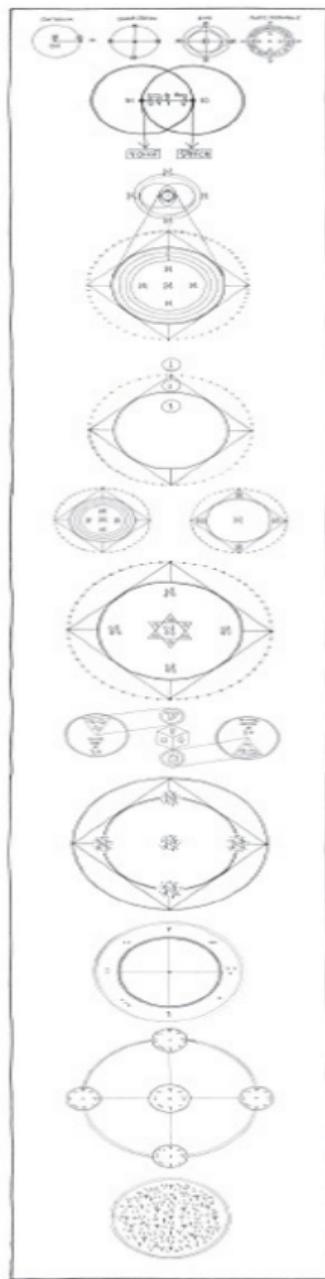
basic space can be recognized in the midst of its concealment within the array of seemingly random appearances. The fallacy about the fragmentation of phenomena is that there is some substance that becomes broken. Space may appear fragmented, but always remains open. The gates of

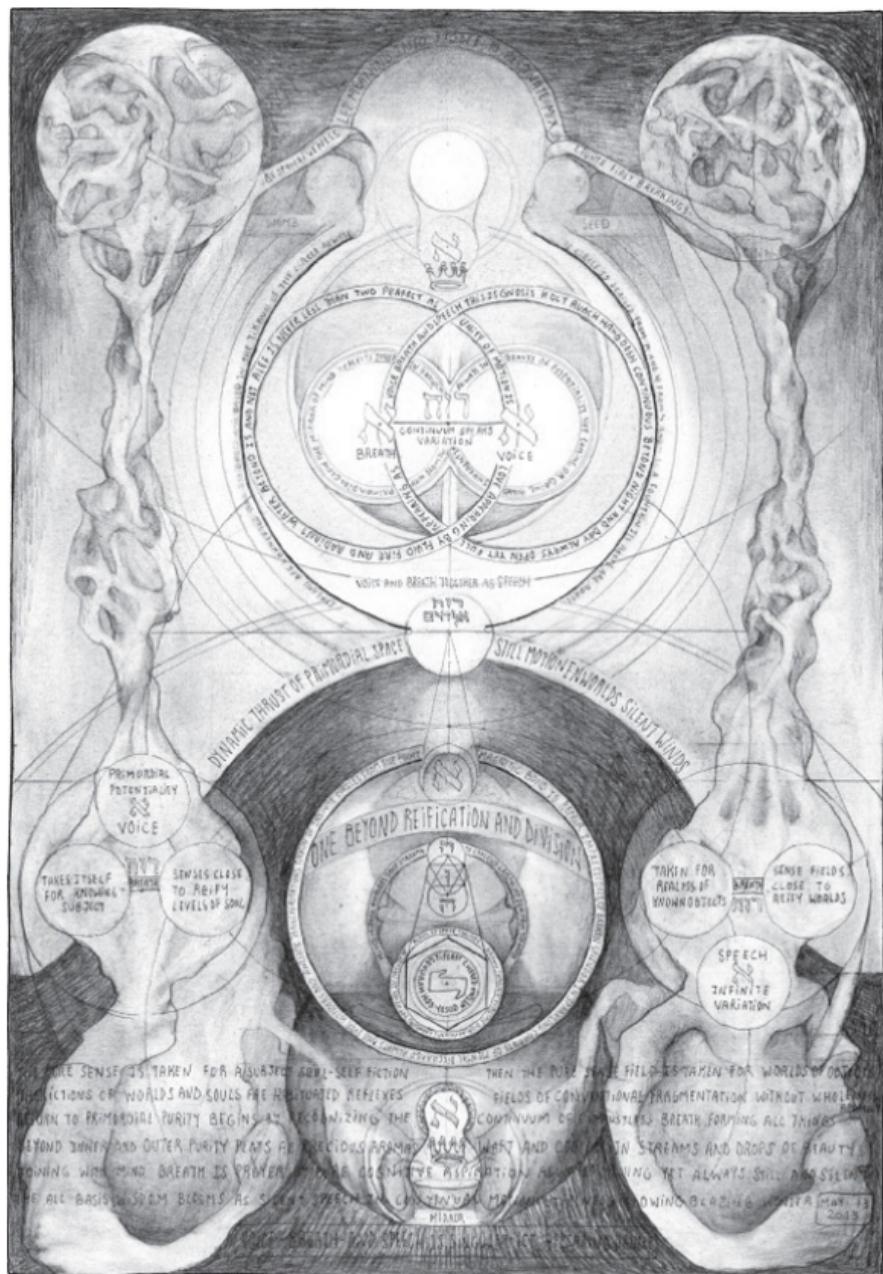
contemplation can open through anything, despite whatever appears. Direct interface with mystery is always possible, as the silence of basic space calls through its myriad appearances.

The endless parade of circumstances concealed within the obstructing *klipot* of the worlds

always seeks to seduce and cajole the mind into confinement. The question is whether its comings and goings will be the final destination of the heart's desires. To long for what might be nobler is an arduous and obscure task, but each attempt is a stepping-off point into the heart of the primordial paradox. If a

prisoner is subsumed in the intrinsic freedom of his own mind, is the prisoner really imprisoned? As Rebbe Nachman states: “You are wherever your thoughts are” (*Likutey Moharan* 1:21).





GATE ONE

Recognition of the Continuum

ONE ELUSIVE CONTINUUM binds the mind's inner conditions with the outer manifestations it takes as real. This single ground of phenomena is called *adamah*—the unknowable basis of all that can be known and all that remains unknown. Recognition of the ground's essential nature is the doorway of gnostic realization.

The mind awakens to the ground by direct immersion. The ground already perfectly presents itself while including the mind within it, so on the absolute level nothing needs to be done. However, on the relative level perceptual habits will always resist surrender of their assumed autonomy, and will only go down fighting. In order to come to terms with the profound essentiality of their own wholeness, the tangled habits that concretize and fragment a subject from its objects must be undone. The process of unmaking these impulses takes tremendous effort and is not without

pain, as it goes against every tendency the mind is used to.

Contemplative inquiry is initiated by meeting the display of mind's motion directly in the midst of perceiving. One can begin by thinking about thinking as it thinks, or observing observation as it observes. The assumed solidity of the perceptual reality then opens its reductive patterns, like a salt crystal dissolving into the ocean. As the reifying patterns dissipate they become absorbed back into their ground, and knower and known unfold into free dynamic space.

When the mind's reductive habits are deeply considered nothing can be found within them but empty reflexes. When their open nature is further considered it becomes clear that the reflexes themselves are nothing but aspects of the open and dynamic ground that presents them. However, contemplation must contend with its lived-through experience, which begins within a habitually self-identified and fragmented state. Together the identity of the subject and all of its identified objects seem to support a random, cruelly broken universe. Before gnosis can break through the graveyard of

conflicting impulses an intellectual understanding and appreciation for the uninterrupted nature of the continuum must be cultivated. Before even the thought of unity can be investigated it is important to establish that the ground itself is changeless, despite the appearance of continual change. This paradox remains the case no matter whether sublime gnosis or habitual ignorance predominates. The singular nature of the ground supports all states equally, but is defined by none of them. In this sense the ground is the “virgin” that gives birth to the world.

The ground is the basis of all

meaning, and any investigation of the ground is an investigation of meaning itself. When thoughts hit the wall of their own limitations, the mind's inherent dynamism can break through to uncover streams of mental textures that overflow beyond the rigid boundaries that define interior and exterior aspects of experience. The tenuous territories that define time and location then fall into a disorienting mixture, which brings any sense of objective reality into question. That question is paramount. What is the external world? What defines internal perception? The possibility of gnosis

opens between these questions, without falling to either side.

The secret life of the continuum unfurls through feeling-tone resonances that hide within their own echoes. Inner and outer contextual pretenses collapse in their wake. This shifts the meaning of perception from an isolated personal activity to a display of open space in variation. Understanding the nature of the display is the key. It hovers at the cusp of nothingness as it becomes whatever it seems to be, always displaying its bounty simultaneously as it surrenders to dissolution. This relentless arising-

in-dissolving spills past the associative chains of conceptuality, which cannot ever catch it.

The ground is most often associated with the display of *malkut*, but the formative motion of the six middle sefirot is implicit within that display. Thus the presentation of the continuum of phenomena can more easily be approached through the *zivug* (union) of the middle six sefirot and *malkut*, known as the marriage of *Zer Anpin* and *Nukvah* in the language of the later kabbalists. Like a mirror, *malkut* reflects whatever conditions the middle six sefirot stir within it. *Malkut*'s

response is set through the aperture of *yesod*, as the influences of relative expansion and contraction push and pull from the right and left sides respectively through the triad of NeHiY (*netzach*, *hod*, *yesod*). The sefirot of NeHiY mark the portal through which motion shapes the qualities of the continuum's display. After all, malkut has no form of its own whatsoever; it is only space, equal in its essential nature to *binah* in the midst of the variable expression.

Primordial essentiality assumes the qualities of manifestation without ever departing from its own most intimate

nature. The perceived fluctuations of time and location conceal the precious sparks of an unseen fire, which flicker through the haze of the continuum. Awakening is possible through each spark, the sparks being doorways leading directly into the heart of the hidden blaze. The fire's radiance has no territory or position, and is perfectly equalizing and complete. Each projection is a thread that cannot be separated from the ground that presents it. The perception of separate isolated sparks is only a vestigial assumption asserted by prior habit. If deeply understood, each spark can break

through the habit field on contact. However, the mind discovers the sparks framed by isolated moments that are like the discovery of buried treasure within the dirt of mundane reality. The buried treasure is actually buried in itself, or rather, in the tendency to be obscured by the misconceptions that are made about it. Each spark defies definition: neither small nor large, subjective or objective. In theistic terms, the sparks form a cohesive body that renders the field of appearances as “the living flesh of god.”

The ground of adamah and En Sof

are essentially equal. Be careful with this statement, however, for although they are essentially equal, they are not the same. En Sof refers to primordial purity as such, and adamah refers to its capacity to be presented as phenomena. The distinction may seem semantic, but is helpful when probing beyond discursive thought in contemplation. Each primordial spark concealed within the field of manifestation can allow the display of the adamah to return the mind to En Sof, which it never left. What obstructs the return are the habits of reification and division, which impose unquestioned

belief in the autonomy of a perceiving subject cast adrift within a universe of separate objects. Contemplative practice seeks to unmake these habits, but first it must recognize and understand that the creative process constitutes an uninterrupted continuum. By acknowledging the continuum the sparks can be recognized, one by one, until the field of display becomes saturated with their brilliance.

One should not stupidly think that a head is a foot. The display of manifestation attests to the fact that all things are certainly not the same,

however, they are indeed essentially equal. Understanding how things appear differently within the greater understanding of their essential nature is the key. The conditions that make the subtle aspects of such recognition possible are rare, due to the radical difference between the tyranny of intellectual understanding and the obscurity of the cultivation of gnosis. Breaking through the misconceptions related to this issue constitutes much of the preparation for awakening.

The top of the diagram (figure 1) depicts four circles that articulate four aspects of the quadrisected circle.

Common to all four are a central point, radial line, internal expanse, and surrounding periphery. Each of the diagrams of the six gates utilizes these elements to articulate how the absolute and relative aspects of phenomena are reconciled within the contemplative process.

Below the four circles is the main element of the diagram: conjoined circles sharing a common radial line that issues from the center. The circles connect from midpoint to midpoint, forming a vesica piscis between them. Each circle is the product of a 360-degree rotation of the radius around

each point. Thus the idea of a common radius between points implies a single dynamic continuum through which all contexts extend. Its motion is ubiquitous, binding the aspects of every relationship, unfolding as the infinite nuances of meaning are interpreted.

As the radius thrusts its motion it binds two aspects, labeled as voice and speech. They are bound in continuum by the all-pervasive *ruach* breath represented by the radial line. These three aspects are keys to the kabbalistic symbolism of the *Sefer Yetzirah*, which is the basis of many later texts

including the great thirteenth-century *Fountain of Wisdom*, which utilizes these symbols in the following passage: “The light that darkens from illuminating is alef. It is the voice of vocalized movement, which forms a second alef. This is ruach hakodesh [the holy breath of gnosis], that is to say, that which is prior. There is one, which is voice. It becomes speech, which is second alef.”

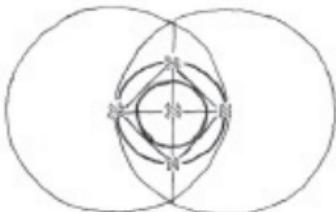
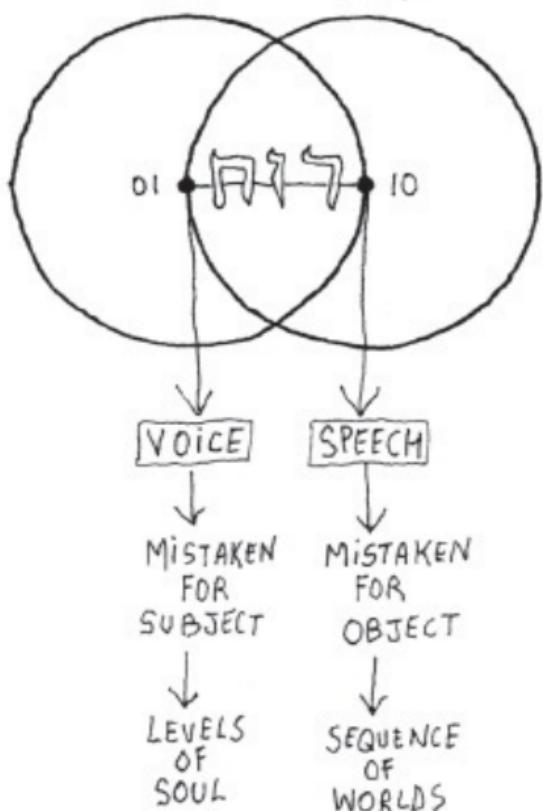
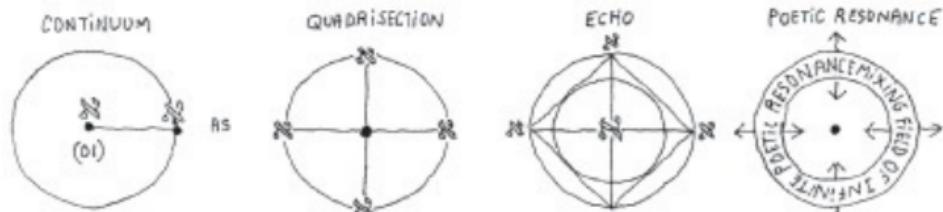


Figure 1

The terms “alef” and the “second alef” reflect the mystery of singularity, which is the basic unity that can never be interrupted as manifestation unfolds. It is a single continuum beyond the mind’s grasp. The mystic always returns to the continuous ground of primordial essentiality. This returning shifts the meaning of perception from a series of separate states or isolated events to “that which is prior” to the formation of experience. This does not deny the vivid qualities of experience, but shifts

its implication from a post-experiential recalculation of its outer effects to the fundamental ground that is its central life and dynamic essence.

Voice is pure potency, and speech is its display. This represents the entire scope of manifestation. The still, silent potency and its manifest expression are inseparably bound as a common ground in motion, which cannot be separated from either. Voice, breath, and speech rely on the continuous ground of the mystery of En Sof. This is far more than a chain of cause and effect. The power of the voice is explicit in speech, and the capacity for the infinite

variation of speech is implicit in the open potency of the voice. Kabbalistically, speech and voice represent the “back and front” of a single head.

The ruach breath can be understood as a verb to highlight the unfixed motion of the continuum. It expresses how undifferentiated potency is continually thrust into expression. Neither voice nor speech can arise alone. They are always together in the midst of motion, which is the ubiquitous breath that suffuses all things.

No definitive point of origin or destination can ever be found within anything. When examined, a thing always leads back to an interdependency that links its causal bonds in relationship to another, and another, on to infinity. Immersion within the continuum of interdependency is the mark of the first gate of gnostic inquiry, which is found through the living breath that opens the rigid duality habitually implied between so-called causes and so-called effects. This is most poignantly illustrated by the spilt between a perceiving subject and its perceptual

objects, and even the great split between a god and its creation.

At the bottom of the diagram (figure 1), below the main vesica piscis, is a version of the continuum with a subset circle set in its midst. This alludes to a hall of mirrors, as the continuum of all-encompassing space reflects itself through itself into infinity. The continuum en-worlds itself anew in endless echoes without end; however, for the sake of simplicity, only one subset is depicted, although endlessness is implied. The tendency to form countless universes is implicit within the dynamic continuum of

ruach, as voice and speech play out beyond linear calculation. Each en-worldment may be taken as autonomous by habit, but that only illustrates an ignorance of what the continuum implies.

The periphery of the inner quadrisectioned circle depicts the tzimtzum reflex. The tzimtzum always folds into itself deeper and deeper, one layer into another. This infolding articulates both how universes become variable in their specificity, and also how perception becomes detailed. Because the subset circle is quadrisectioned, it spreads inside itself by

the cardinal directions. Space seems to keep infolding forever. Whether that reflex becomes a series of prisons or doorways is the question. Each layer rides the razor's edge between freedom and slavery. The message of the path is clear: the gates can always open if inquiry becomes sufficiently concerned with its own intrinsic nature. Even the most reified universes can break through their associative chains through the recognition of basic space.

The adamah ground can be articulated in two ways that are both called an “all-basis.” The ground can be known either as an “all-basis

consciousness” or as an “all-basis wisdom.”

The all-basis consciousness supports the projection of dualistic misapprehensions that obscure and obstruct essentiality. This allows *klipot* (obstructing barriers) to conceal En Sof within layers of superficial apprehension that allow phenomena to be mistaken for realms of solid and separate “things.” In this context, the term *consciousness* refers to the continuum of cognizance that supports conventional associative habits in which the ordinary limitations of time, location, and substance are imposed on

phenomena through conceptual designation.

Direct recognition of the essential nature of the ground dissolves the reifying reflex patterns within the all-basis consciousness, so that it can function as a total spark field. The spark field draws the totality back to the primordial clarity of its inherent wisdom, which it ironically never left, except within the klipot of perception. The return is a repair (*tikkun*) that allows the all-basis consciousness to function as an all-basis wisdom. The return therefore represents a transformation of relative mental

functioning, not a change within the essence of phenomena in any sense. The shift allows phenomena to be understood as a gnostic display rather than through layers of conceptual equivalence. Returning the mind back to its essential ground involves remembering the true implications of its continuum.

The habits that accumulate within the ground reduce the mind's functioning to superficiality. The term *wisdom* refers to gnosis itself, as it strips the associative process raw and leaves the mind naked. Therefore the return of relativity is literally a re-

cognition (cognition of that which is prior). The all-basis consciousness and all-basis wisdom are both expressions of a single awakening ground, which is the heart of the matter; one ground which is expressed as two paths with two results.

Because the awakening ground includes every possibility inherent to both wisdom as well as ignorance, primordial purity can be sought anywhere in anything no matter what arises. This is good news! The ground can never depart from its essential nature, and always allows for the recognition of unbounded freedom—

which even includes the freedom to become enslaved.

The word *adamah* consists of the name ADaM in union with the letter heh. ADaM refers to the motion and energy that constitutes human perception, the ruach, and heh refers to its fivefold display (five elements, worlds, souls, senses/sense fields). The word can be broken down further. Alef alone represents the wholeness that flows in, through, and around phenomena as the DaM (blood) of space. Its fluid capacity for unending variation is the fullness of what is realized as complete ADaM, or human

gnosis. The display of gnosis is directly presented by the heh, which is the fivefold array of the Shechinah. Together the letters of ADaM-H reveal the comprehensive union of the transmission of energy and its presentation in manifestation, corresponding with the middle six sefirot and malkut, respectively.

Commonly in kabbalah the name ADaM corresponds to the sefirah of *tiferet*, which is used to summarize the scope of the ruach's motion, also corresponding to the vav within the root name YHVH. The second heh of YHVH corresponds to the display of

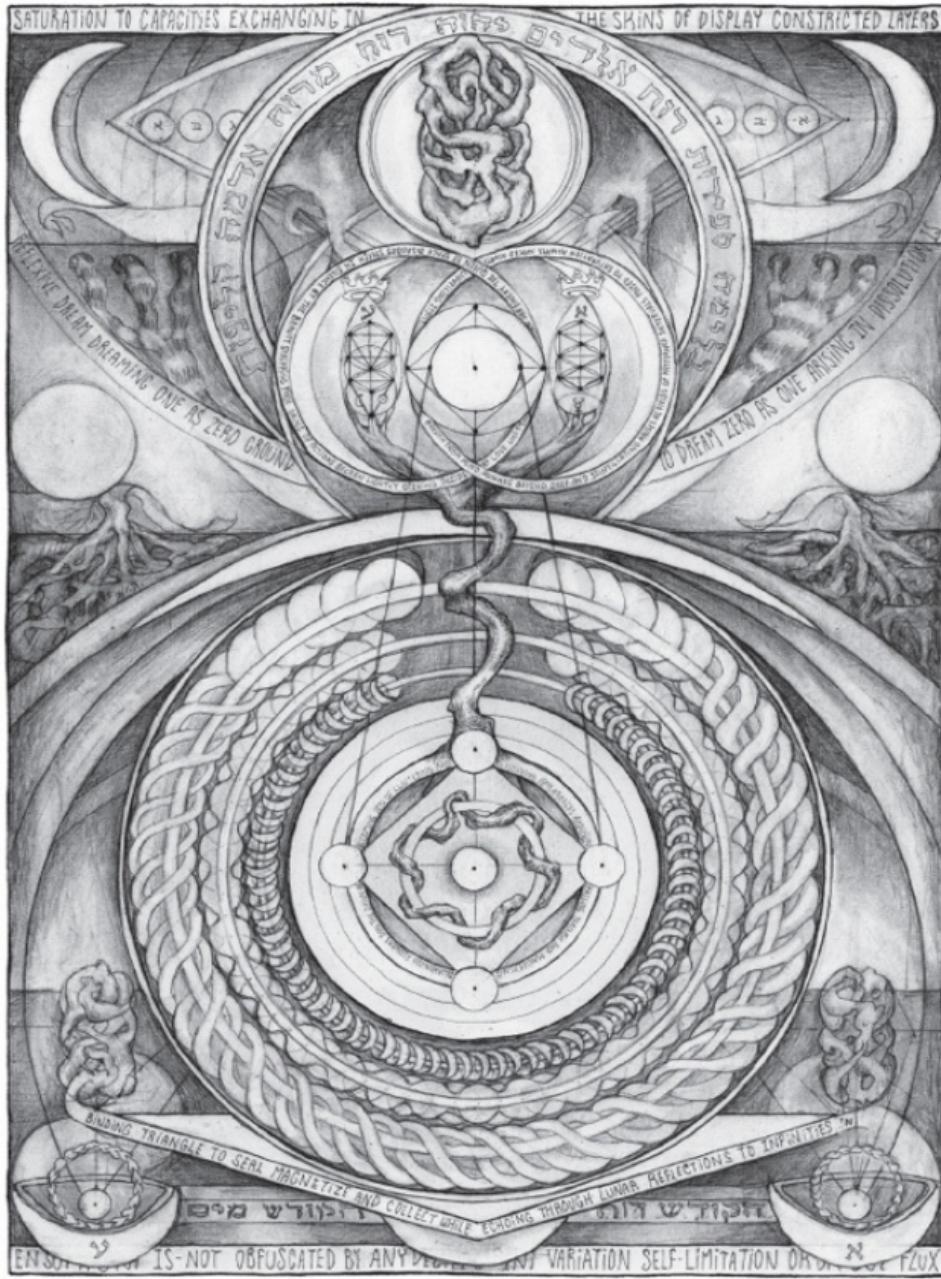
malkut. The motion of the vav is reflected within the mirror of malkut to produce variable appearances. The basis of malkut's responsiveness is the basic space of its nature, which is to binah, corresponding to the first heh of YHVH. The “doubling” of reflective expression within the singular continuum is alluded to in the *Fountain of Wisdom*, which states, “Alef [with a numerical value of 1] is never less than two.”

Reflective doubling can be understood within the ruach, which breaks down into the dual triads of ChaGaT and NeHiY. The doubling

symbolism is especially important here, as it forms the structure of the double-circle diagrams. Each circle directly relates to the heh through its numerical value of five: the sum of the center point within the four cardinal directions.

SATURATION TO CAPACITIES EXCHANGING IN

THE SKINS OF DISPLAY CONSTRICTED LAYERS



GATE TWO

The Klipot

THE MIND GRAPPLES with contemplation in three stages. First, inquiry approaches meaning through intellectual understanding. Teachings are probed, and a continuum of conclusions is extracted. The conclusions are then deeply considered, held closely within the mind, and allowed to resonate. The impact of the resonant meanings pervades the

conceptual processes. Contemplation can then immerse within the torrent of feeling tones arising beyond the limitations of the intellect, which clothe inquiry in emotive considerations. The feeling tones are then held close within the mind, and unfold across the felt quality of all life. Then the resonant feeling tones unfold the core of being as contemplative silence. This opens a doorway for immersion to be absorbed into En Sof, at the heart of all phenomena. However, as one attempts to pass through, various inner and outer obstructions arise. Confrontation with

these blockages is inevitable. The obstructions reduce the freedom of gnosis to an impasse, and stop the mental field at the point of conceptual fixation.

The obstructions are called *klipot* (singular *klipah*, meaning “shell”), and are the products of reductive habit reflexes that entrap awareness within self-imposed limitations. The *klipot* reify and divide both internal and external phenomena, and prevent the all-basis consciousness from being recognized as the wisdom of En Sof. Because of the *klipot* the worlds and everything in them becomes

conceptualized, and each micro-unit as well as the collectivity of each dimension becomes an object of the mind's fixation.

There is considerable confusion as to the issue of the klipot (commonly spelled *qlippoth*). Some claim they exist as separate forces on the attack, and some claim they manifest as a “reverse tree” turning holiness upside down. This issue can lead both occultists and the religious into fantasyland. It is certainly true that there are malevolent energies that disrupt and trap the mind. Impressions of these shadowing impulses persist

throughout all the worlds. However, it is far better to hold these tendencies as mere temporary phenomena that gnostic aspiration passes through, ultimately to dissolve back into the same ground from which they arose. It is also important to remember that the klipot express the same essential nature shared by all phenomena, which is En Sof.

When the understanding of primordial purity is disrupted by grasping at mental constructs, the obstructing mechanism at work is termed a *klipah*. It can arise in the form of anything. The lights and vessels that

constitute any of the worlds can function as klipot if they contribute to the obscuration and obstruction of gnosis. Yet if the inherent purity of the ground can be realized, these same lights and vessels function as sublime beacons of creative beauty. It is all a matter of the degree to which the purity of awareness is reified into a subject and an object, so that it appears fractured and imprisoned in a fixed realm.

In their most basic essentiality the klipot are primordially pure. This view does not support a distinction between pure and impure phenomena in a

dualistic sense. All phenomena without exception are inherently primordially pure, but what this implies requires clarification. To designate something as pure as opposed to impure defines purity by contrast. That is not the primordial purity referred to here. This view of primordial purity is entirely based on the inherent freedom of En Sof, which cannot be diminished or corrupted. This is the absolute basis of the mind and all its phenomena. The relative functions and conclusions of the mind invite another discussion. The mind's functions are always pure in terms of their absolute essential nature,

but in a relative sense they manifest varying degrees of transitory impurity based on how deeply they defer to the habits of reification and division. In an absolute sense, even the delusional habits are pure. However, to truly understand this statement, primordial purity has to be recognized in far more than an intellectual manner.

The human mind, in the sense that we know it as the mind, is a set of relative functions that shape the associations that form perception and experience. These tendencies are neutral, and can be used for the realization of wisdom or the

perpetuation of ignorance. Recognizing its essential nature is not something the human mind is generally interested in, or has a tendency to want to do. In fact, all of its functions tend to run the other way. Therefore relative human experience is composed entirely of klipot, as is the human realm that is collectively projected from it.

The klipot shape the manner in which the universe appears to human beings. The general understanding of what the universe is and what its laws are is strictly a by-product of the collective habit field of the klipot of the human realm. Each individual

klipah arises specific to each moment a human mind manifests its tendencies of fixation. Both the collective and individual klipot fields have their respective inner and outer aspects, and each inner aspect supports an outer aspect, and vice versa. The complex network of klipot constitutes the general tendencies of the realm, and also keeps the world appearing differently to each human being. Each micro-klipah can either open or close an incremental vista of primordial expanse. Each is a prison wall or a gate of passage. As the possibility of breakthroughs dawn, what could be

obstacles can also reveal treasures to ornament space with unfolding variation, each bit at a time.

Because the mind can willingly support either its base reflexes or the pursuit of gnosis, some systems make a distinction by spelling the word *Mind* with a capital *M* to distinguish it from the ordinary human mind. In Chassidut the terms *gadlut* (expanded consciousness) and *katnut* (constricted consciousness) are used. The problem with all of these terms is that both the greater and lesser functions can still be reified, and the issue of primordial purity is sidestepped. In this text the

tendency is to use the phrase *essential nature of mind*, but the real distinction is always best made by the context and its content. The real distinction is not between two things, but two activities. One heads straight for the machinery of reflex habituation, and the other reaches endlessly for gnosis.

Once realization ripens, it is only a matter of how stable it remains. The *tzadik*, or “stable realizer,” does not fall back into the *klipot* to reify a subject or an object. The *tzadik*’s life is the seal of the primordial purity that constitutes a living gnosis. However, this distinction does not imply

objective moral status. Extracting moral implications from the issue of purity constitutes a decisive break from the view of Judeo-Christian religion and theistic systems in general, which generally hold the klipot to be barriers between man and god, thus becoming the mechanisms of “evil.” The non-emanationist view neither supports the existence of such a barrier or the implied dichotomy of good and evil that lies on either side of it. These issues are the exclusive domain of religion, and can be a tremendous sidetrack for a contemplator.

Occultists and magicians can be

sidetracked in yet another way: by seduction into the dark glamour of the power of the klipot. This seduction stems from a hunger to dominate and manipulate experiences to inflate one's identity. The adolescent mage is not terribly interested in the all-basis wisdom, and neither is the fretful religionist. However, they both share the habit of reifying phenomena. The solution for both the power-hungry magician and the moralizing zealot is a fundamental shift in view. Becoming interested in the inherent primordial purity of phenomena renders the issue universal. Such consideration

transcends both religion and psychology, and cuts through the rigidity of the klipot almost on contact. Facing the klipot with the intention of breaking through their limitations is the basis of a spiritual practice that can truly change the meanings the mind imputes to its phenomena. The strength and disposition of that kind of practice is shaped in each moment, and in turn, it shapes the meaning of our life.

The klipot are the thickened echoes of the primordial tzimtzum. Structurally, from the perspective of the human realm, they perform a viable function. However, the mystic is not

satisfied abiding within their limiting structures. The goal of mysticism is to penetrate the shells of every world. This aspiration should not be confused with goals conceived in the ordinary way as a set of destinations at the end of a linear path. The gnostic disposition invites a continuous stream of breakthroughs that go on forever, always penetrating deeper and further without end. What the mystic ultimately realizes is that this process never arrives anywhere. Its endlessness is the point.

A klipah is formed in three aspects. First, there is the general habit reflex

of reification that is inherent to the all-basis consciousness prior to any specific application. Then, the momentum of the prior habit is applied to the dynamic thrust of creativity that always seeks some form of expression. The dynamism then reifies itself as an independent perceiving subject, and each instance of its perception becomes reified into a separate perceptual object. Each time the subject registers the presence of a new object (including itself) the reification grows stronger, reinforcing both the solidity of the subject's status as well as the solidity of its objects. As the application

accrues momentum and its patterns are secured within the all-basis consciousness, the designated parts accumulate and thicken into a set of inner and outer klipot (literally “shells”) that function as the status quo of the mind’s circumstance.

Each klipah is composed of the aspects of prior habituation, the application of the reflex of reification, and the accumulation of its patterns. The process is reinforced as the mind shares its habitual functions within realms that are literally constructed from the accumulated klipot of other beings. The collective human realm is

the by-product of such interactive clusters of klipot. The human perception of time, space, and matter is apprehended according to a general set of rules established within the collective field. Although the tendencies differ from being to being, the general collective activity is almost never questioned. One does not choose this. It comes as the baggage of being born into the habit field. It has no discernible beginning, but surely has an end that dawns with the onset of gnostic awakening.

A klipah reduces the open vista of meaning to what can be signified and

passed along within a conceptual exchange. It is basically only a conceptual package of data or information. Each package compresses what is limitless and uncatchable into what is small and easily contained. The klipot are about defining and defending territory, even within the shared space of their context. They are only fortresses of identity and identification.

Whether applied to the role of a subject self or an object the self takes as objectively real, the process applies the same reflex of reification. When the reflex reduces meaning to a particular function a “thing” arises, and

its identity is reinforced through usage. The thing expresses a limited function summarized by its conceptual identity. Each can be used as a token within the general exchange of conceptual meanings, acting as an equivalent for a summary of its limited implications. This is how ordinary semiotic and linguistic commerce functions, consisting only of limited bits of information exchanged within fragmentary packages.

The so-called reality of being a person in a universe is composed of a series of interactive klipot that designate a set of inner and outer

relationships. As the thrust of consciousness self-envelops into a klipah of identity, its sense of presence is localized in time and space. Someone seems to be here now, and it must be “me.” This localized presence forms the basis of a coordinate position that is set in relation to all other positions. The central function of the identity allows knowing to be trapped within a construct formed to refer to its own activity. This reflexive activity reinforces the construct of identity as it moves both outwardly to external objects and inwardly to its own thoughts and perceptions. The

accumulated momentum hardens the klipah's sense of specificity, and ends up becoming practically impenetrable.

The conventional assumption is that the feeling of self-presence and its motion can prove the objective existence of an autonomous thinker. This is the mistake made by Descartes. “I think” simply suggests that the mind is in motion. However, the conclusion “therefore I am” posits an assumption based on a need for solidity and identity. It manufactures a cognitive locus in the midst of the open streaming of possibility. Descartes’s statement is a useful summary of the

self-referential impulse, as it attempts to substitute the conventional reflex of identity for open wonder.

The unique klipot formed by a moving stream of mind literally fills a whole universe as it collides with the general matrix of connections around it. This interaction forms many levels of complex relationships of world and soul aspects. When a contextual realm forms to support an expression of consciousness it manifests a conjunction of specific and general and inner and outer aspects. At its core, however, the consciousness responsible has no “owner.” The illusion of self

creates the illusion of a context for that self. The interdependent threads are woven into a comprehensive field both from within and without. However, no world or soul has any inherently solid self-existence at all. There is only the exchanged momentum of motion and habituation. The illusion of a self and its world appears in the manner most familiar to each person, so it goes unquestioned. As consciousness shapes itself, a great responsibility is laid at our doorstep; and it is for this reason that it matters a great deal what we do with our minds. Simply becoming interested in the return of klipotic

consciousness back into its innate pristine wisdom awareness begins to dissolve the phenomena that become frozen into a supposedly solid universe. This process invites the ultimate *tikkun olam*, or rectification of the entire world.

The top of the diagram (figure 2) depicts a quadrisectioned circle and subset circle arising within the continuum of a vesica piscis. The vesica piscis represents the breath of voice that speaks itself forth as universes. It unfolds infinite en-worldments within itself, like a hall of mirrors. However, as en-worldment unfolds the mind

meets its habits as the defining klipot of dimensionality and temporality in each context.

A great circle representing absolute basic space is presented around an inner subset representing the relative display of space. Within the subset the three layers form to construct a klipah. The klipah builds a wall that separates its interior from the open expanse of basic space that surrounds it, locking its phenomena within the perception of a limited separate existence. The most interior layer posits the klipah's general reflex tendency toward reduction. Its middle layer represents

the self-reifying application. Its outer wall is the accumulated momentum of the sum total of its activities, which harden as it functions.

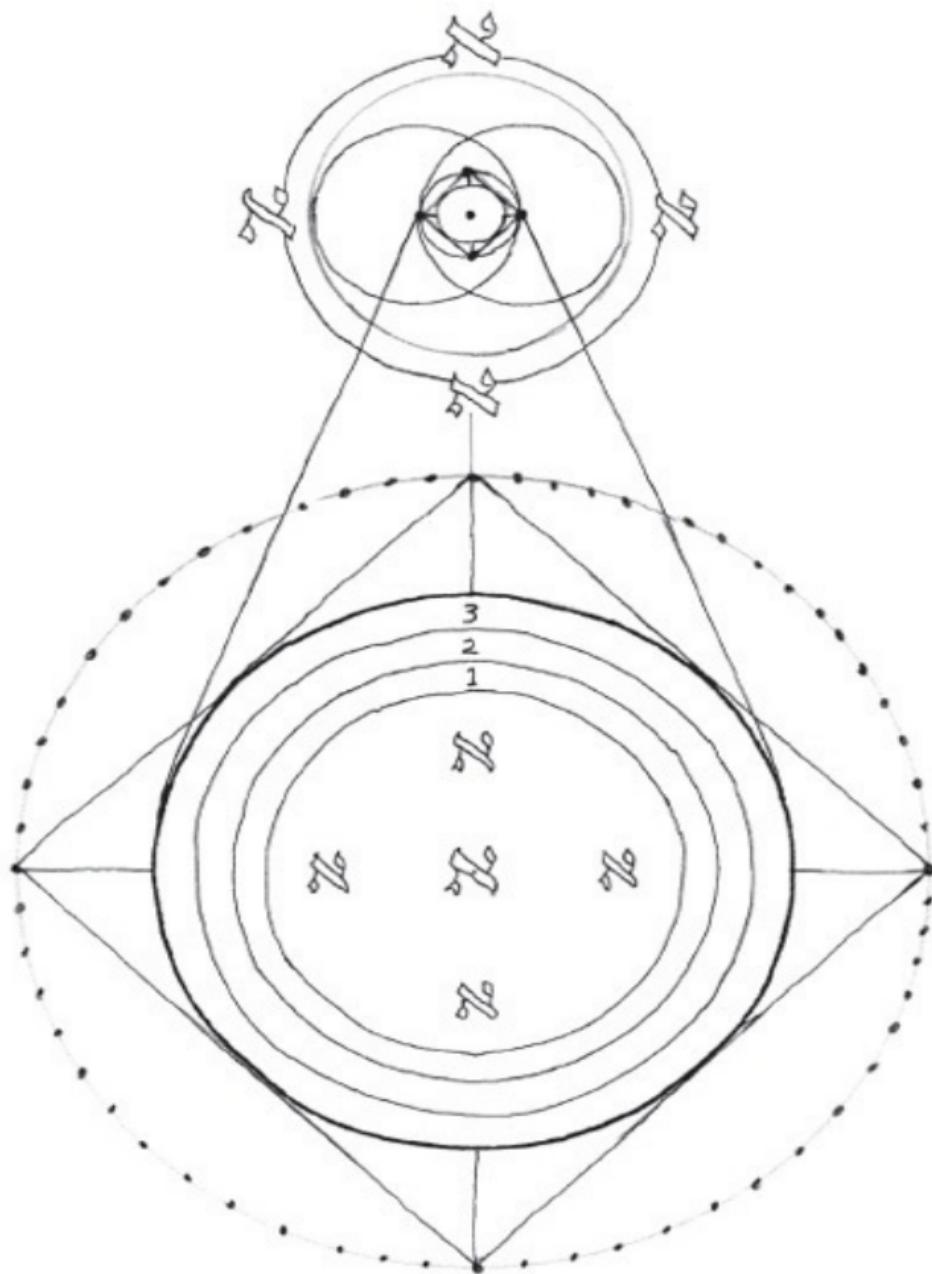


Figure 2



The three layers of klipot

The klipah's three layers imprison the five alefs within its shell. The alefs represent the fivefold expression of the Shechinah (heh/5). This expression is perceived in a distorted manner as phenomena are taken for a set of relative constructs. Of course, the fivefold expression is inherently primordially pure, despite the mind's temporary reductive distortions. The five correspond to the five pure expressions of worlds, souls, elements, and senses within the five sense fields. However, when bound within the shells of the klipot, the mind's habits only follow the status quo of small

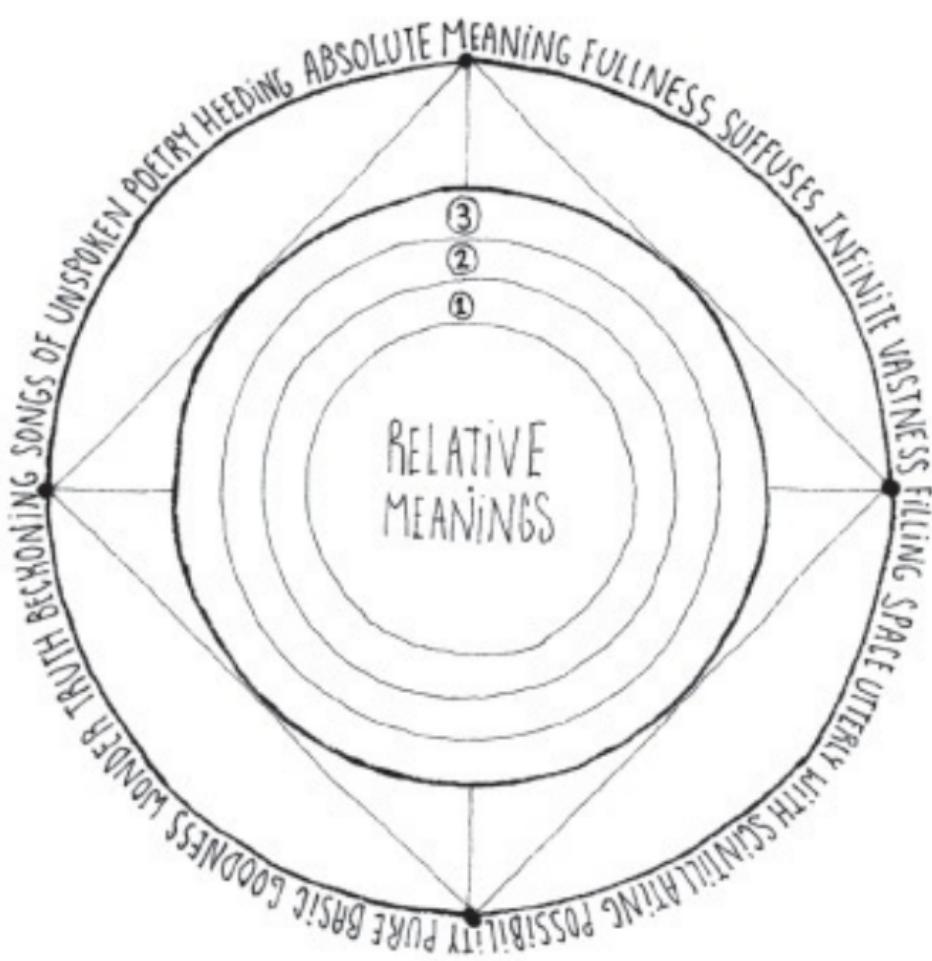
meanings, apprehending open wonder as linear time and localizable space. Thus is the dilemma of conventionally fixated beings.

ABSOLUTE
MEANING FULLNESS

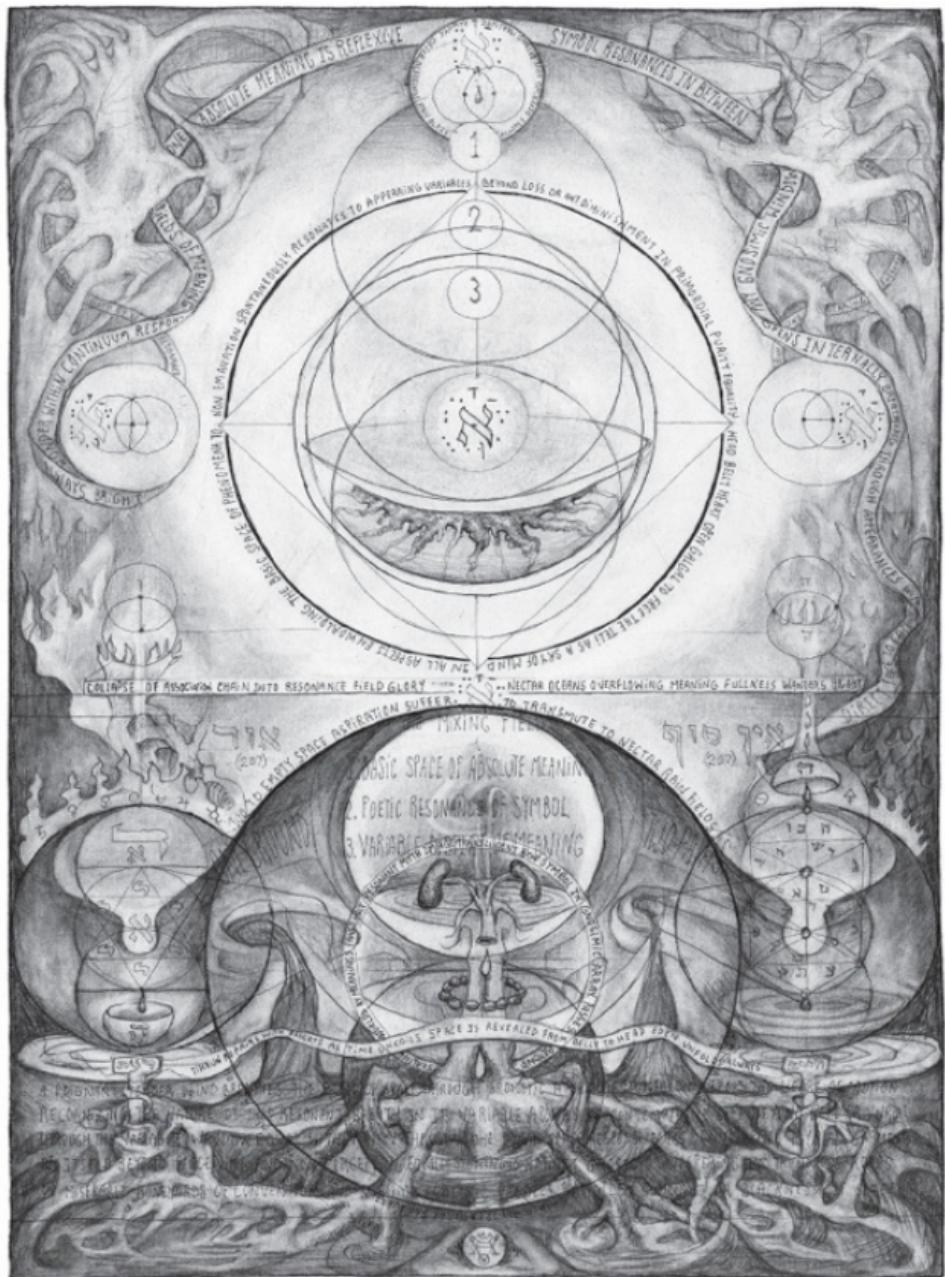
①

RELATIVE
MEANINGS

③
②
①



Circle of basic space and klipot of the subset



GATE THREE

The Mixing Field

AS HABITUAL RESISTANCES FADE, the scope of meaning spreads open and the range of the continuum becomes clear. A triple understanding of the single continuous ground arises. It presents the uncontainable vastness of basic space, a seemingly contained display within it, and a twilight field in-between these designations. This vision of the triple

space of the single ground beyond reification is precisely what was masked by the klipot in the second gate.

Make no mistake; the three aspects discussed here are not isolated territories existing separately to be neatly segregated into localizable coordinates. Although they can be artificially mapped for purposes of contemplation, the triple space is always complete and whole no matter what aspect is considered. If the continuum of the adamah is understood and remembered, the field can present its aspects without falling into

fragmentation. Understanding the view of wholeness beyond reification invites an implicit understanding that transitory impressions of form and formlessness cannot fracture.

Just like the previous two gates, considerations of the mixing field usually enter into consciousness the way that concepts generally do, as NeHiY processes the display of malkut's phenomena. As the zivug of the ruach and malkut matures beyond this juncture, many of the gross klipot dissolve, but subtle klipot persist. The subtle klipot hover at the border between gnostic breakthrough and

conventional habituation, and insidiously permeate contemplation through the triads of ChaGaT all the way through ChaBaD to the point of *keter*.

The subtle klipot are called *klipot nogah* (“semi-luminous” klipot), and they suffuse the overlapping territory of the vision of primordial purity with ordinary conceptually fixated states. The klipot of *nogah* can obstruct realization as well as extend the possibility of breaking through (see Aryeh Kaplan’s *Inner Space*). They are particularly active in the most difficult and extreme areas of contemplation,

where subtle visionary experience presents itself mixed with the vestigial taint of conceptuality. These mixed zones are where the majority of progress in contemplative practice is accomplished, so dealing with the klipot of nogah represents a crucial component in its development. In this sense, they are especially relevant to practitioners whose lives are subsumed in the in-between space of gnostic realization that has not yet stabilized.

The *shefa* (wisdom effulgence) of the light of En Sof is always available anywhere. The expanse of binah, which is the basic space of all phenomena, is

replete with the luminous crystalline dew of shefa. If contemplation resonates deeply within the view of En Sof as the ground of all phenomena, then drops of shefa seep through to pervade whatever the ruach apprehends. The seepage is allowed through openings within *daat*, which allow shefa to come into the ruach from keter. Daat can both absorb or deflect the influx of shefa through the function of the klipot of nogah. As semipermeable membranes, the klipot of nogah surround the most subtle experiences and act as gateways that either open beyond conceptuality or

keep it locked within itself.

This is not to say that the klipot nogah are limited to the position of daat, far from it; they spread everywhere throughout the function of the sefirot and the worlds. However, daat represents the apex of the perceptual motion where the paradox of keter is most poignantly expressed, so it is precisely where the shefa can be best understood to both pour out or be withheld within perception. The klipot of nogah are best understood as the last membrane of conceptuality between the mind and basic space, and can certainly be permeated if wisdom

becomes strong enough.

The root paradox of keter is evident in its role as a container of the uncontrollable. The non-emanationist view holds that light of En Sof is not diminished or degraded in any way as it assumes the function of keter, but keter's function still appears to restrain and compose the light to pass on through the sefirot. Therefore keter represents the root paradox that applies to all sefirot, whose functions extend directly from it. Uncontainable containment is the key realization passed through the shefa, and its understanding is sifted through the

klipot of nogah.

Although the shefa is nothing other than the luminosity of En Sof realized through the paradox of keter, and it pours into the ruach through daat, it is felt most directly in yesod. Yesod is where the seal of the zivug of the middle six sefirot and malkut either leads to the realization of wholeness or falls back into habitual fragmentation. All klipot both gross and subtle can be purified at this juncture if the substanceless clarity of En Sof can be held as the nature of all appearances. Through a view based on En Sof alone, the true and faithful marriage of

dynamic luminosity and responsive space reveals all phenomena as a gate of gnosis, without exception.

Between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden stands the Nachash serpent. The serpent's position corresponds to yesod, where the zivug is consummated. Adam corresponds to the ruach and Eve corresponds to the nefesh (middle six and malkut, respectively). The serpent represents the volatility of the union of energetic motion and its display, both in the aspects of so-called outer phenomena and their inner interpretation. No matter how the mind designates the

position of phenomena, it is only this meeting of energy and its display, and is always in the midst of transforming from one condition to another. Therefore if the essential nature is not realized, the ever-changing conditions will carry the mind into a seemingly random chaotic race for fixation. The serpent represents infinitely undulating vibratory waveforms, which the practitioner works with in the form of whatever is perceived. The klipot of nogah are the front line of this vibratory vista, which is presented like a screen upon which the volatility is projected. However, the screen of

perception is not merely doomed to random associative meandering, and can purposefully outshine its dim chaotic opacity if it truly desires to do so.

When the realization of the zivug reaches maturity it perfectly reflects the indivisible union of *chochmah* and *binah*, which is the unbreakable reproductive matrix of the seed of light and womb of space. This results in the mirrorlike gnosis of *ruach hakodesh*, which equalizes phenomena between the upper and lower hehs of *binah* and *malkut*. This perfect expanse is a vision of the open sky through the clouds. As

its scope is revealed the boundaries that define waking life and deep sleep melt away, and the doorway to the innermost secret life of the adamah opens. The field of display whispers secrets through the most mundane details, in general and specific contexts, as all phenomena directly assert the “light that darkens by illumination.”

The diagram (figure 3) maps out the threefold continuum space. Because it functions as a subset, the circle of relative differentiation expresses the essentiality of basic space utterly and completely. No apparent barrier can

ever limit space, as its apparitional paradox fills itself. Space is space, whether it presents phenomena or not. Space assumes three aspects within the diagram:

1. The great circle of the uncontainable
2. The mixing field of resonances
3. The subset circle of relative differentiation (which appears contained)

This graphic breakdown implies the following:

1. Absolute meaning in itself
2. The open, fluid adaptability of meaning's application

3. The multiplicity of individual relative meanings

This triplicity is analogous to H_2O assuming the three forms of vapor, liquid, and crystallized ice. The triple worlds of BeYeA and triple souls of NaRaN reflect this, as do the three parts of a klipah shell. However, the key question arises: What is the H_2O in itself? Can it be recognized innately beyond merely being identified within its transitory forms? How does one get to know the basic essence? What is it beyond its temporary changes in an absolute sense?

The original purity of En Sof is inherent in all things and nothingness equally. As contemplation cultivates this realization many unusual experiences can arise to rub against the klipot of nogah. Inquiry into these experiences can be exceptionally beautiful and interesting, however, experience itself is the principle distraction. All experience, even the most rarified states that arise in mystical practice, is predicated upon a perceiving subject and some perceived object-state. As practice develops experiential states come and go, and the habit of grasping after them either

dissipates or remains.

Experience is no more than a sign indicating how the work is progressing. The heart of the matter is predicated on a decisive shift from experience to wisdom, which arises within an all-consuming concern with the space through which the parade of experiences arises. Ironically, this shift can only happen in the midst of experience. However, the emphasis is a matter of meaning. The resonant winds that blow through contemplative practice invite a brilliant wonder that can clear the open vista of pure open possibility, no matter what garment it

is clothed in. No reified grasping can ever fathom that openness. This sensibility is the real treasure of phenomena.

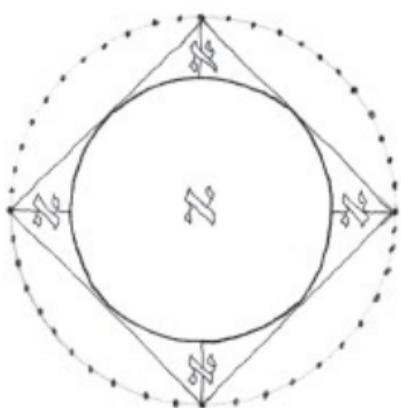
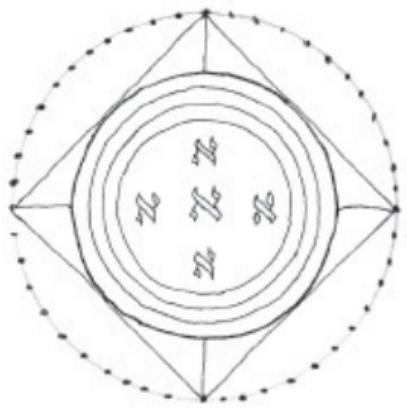
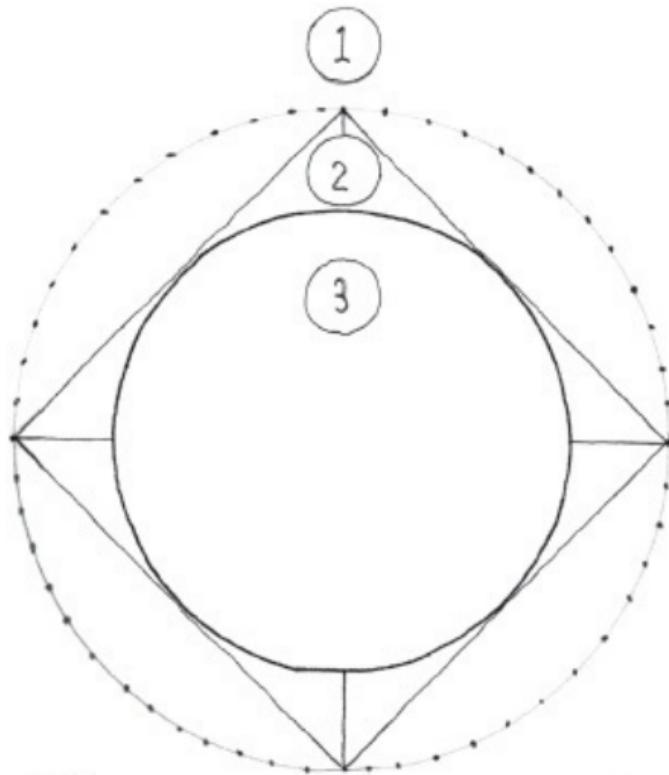


Figure 3

In our graphic model, contemplative inquiry renders the line between outer circle and inner subset circle permeable. This permeability allows the space that subsumes both of them to come to the forefront, rendering the overall vision clear and precise, as the openness of the greater can be directly felt in the lesser. This is the permeable exchange that unfolds as mind enters deeply within the adamah. Nothing is added or taken away. What is unused is only the concept, or view, that things are substantial and real in their separateness. Gnosis dawns in the

absence of separation between essentiality and its display. Through the mixing field the aroma of the nectar of equalization invites the silent poetry of life. However, this noble aspiration must be sealed by strong frequent practice. Appearance is always willing to deceive.

The gnostic purpose of the articulation of the two circles is to consider the fallacy of their separation. Absolute and relative aspects cannot be ignored. The separation appears but has no actual reality. This is reflected in the quote “Alef [1] is no less than bet [2].” As the meaning of this apparent

division changes, the illusion of display simply carries on.

Within the in-between of the mixing field where the two circles touch, all phenomena function as symbols. Symbols are constructs that present the question of meaning. A key example is the expanse of four directions displayed by the circle's quadrisection, known as the four rivers of the Garden of Eden. Eden is an entire realm of living symbol. The klipot of nogah operate in this symbol landscape, where there is only symbol at the skin of possibility, resting at the razor's edge where formlessness and the

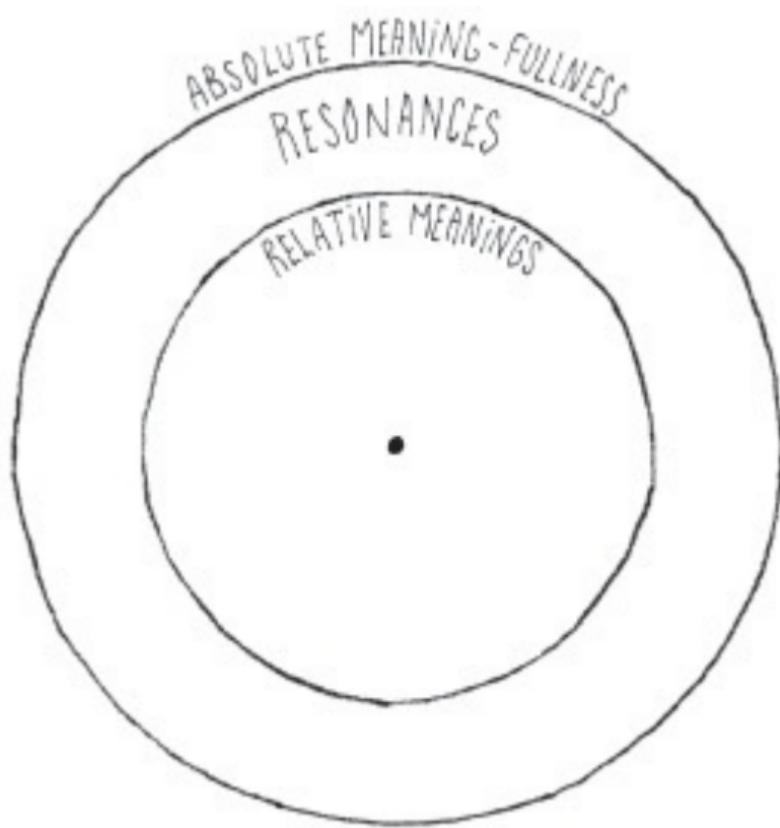
specificity of form merge. This skin draws relative meaning into question, always asserting the possibility of limitless meaning-fullness.

The bottom of the diagram (figure 3) depicts the two possibilities: the array of klipot on the left and the fullness of the adamah on the right. Our view holds no essential difference between these seemingly opposite conditions, however, the differences must be dealt with in order to face the mind's actual condition. This is one layer of meaning within the following quote from the eighth-century master Saraha: "Let us drink in the lake's water in which the

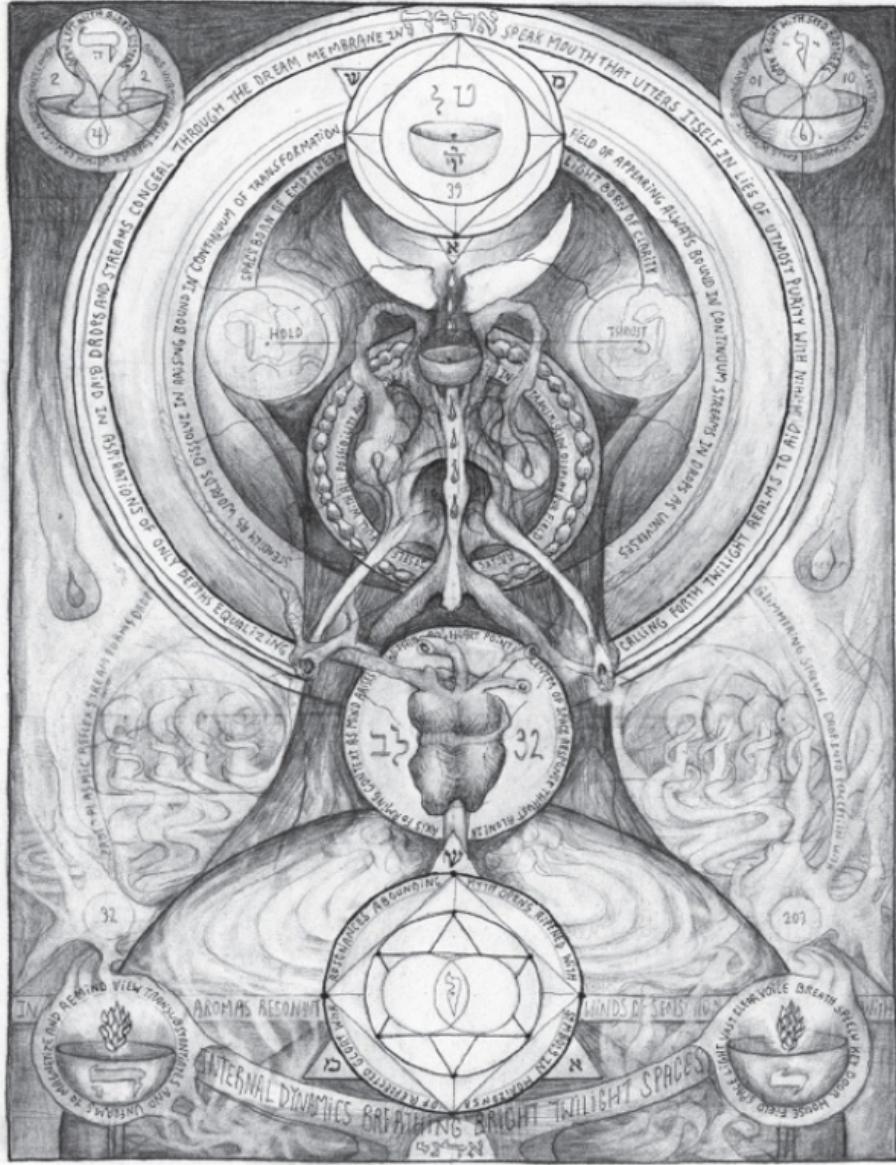
mountain-like sky is reflected, and let it happily spend its time at the lake's shore" (126).

The nature of the lake's water is totally clear, without disturbances. It reflects the sky perfectly without interruption, and that clarity is immovable like a mountain. However, the stillness can move, lapping against the shore of variable appearances. The clarity can then appear unclear. Does the water lose its nature? What arises as fragmentation only fools those who fixate on the relative aspect of appearances that hover on the surface. Once pure vision passes beyond these

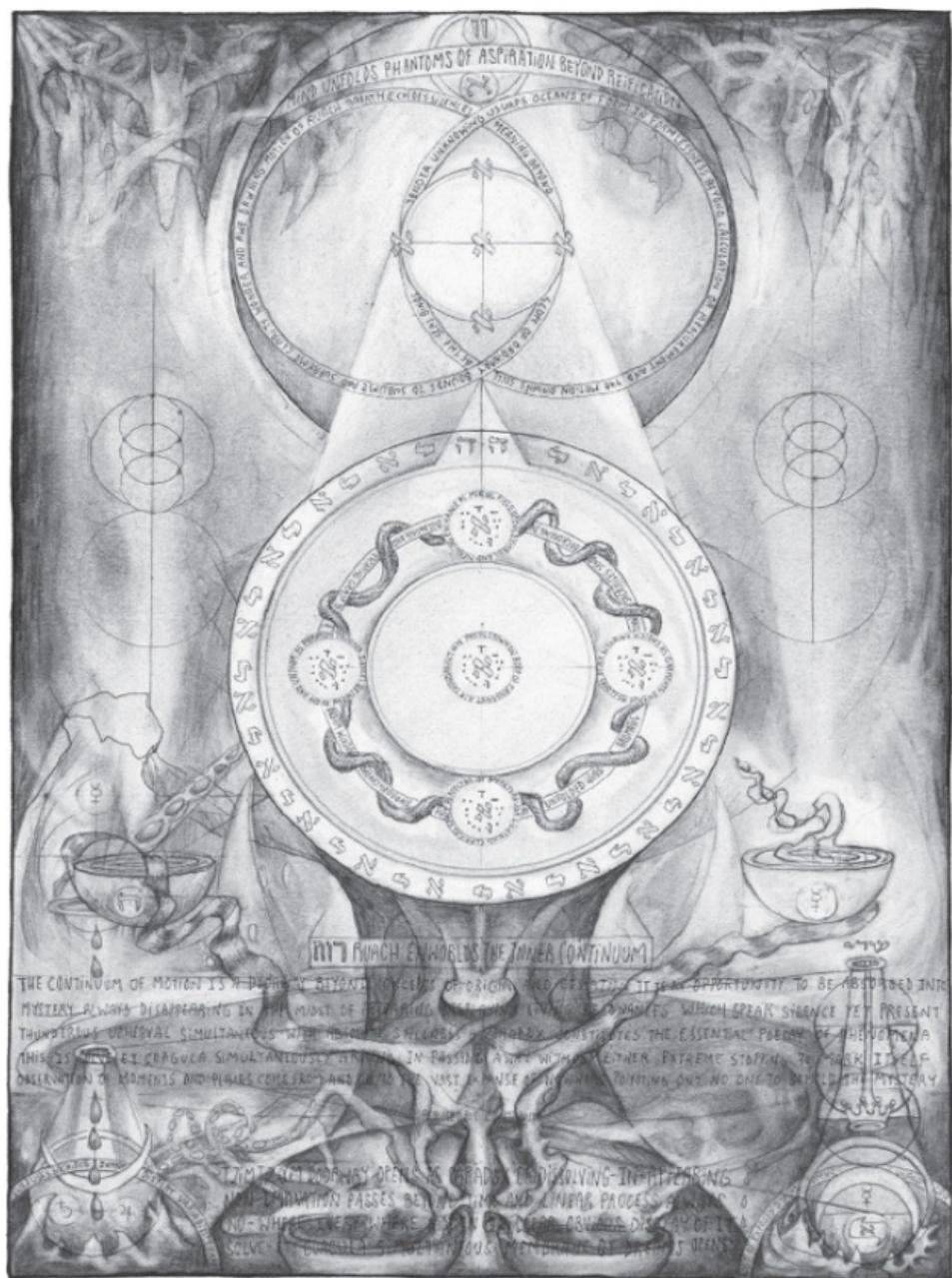
concerns, aspirations to realize the essential nature become possible within the array of whatever is presented. This transformation happens nowhere else but in the vision of things exactly as they are, but the meaning of what that represents radically changes. This is how the contemplative practitioner happily spends his time at the lake's shore.



The meaning saturated field



BRILLIANCE POURS SPACE AS LAYERS DARKENING TENSIONS BETWEEN FABRICATED POSITIONS IN SUBLIMITY
45 BECOMES 5 BY 39 IN ONE — SUN — WISDOMS REPAIR BREAKS DISRUPTION — MOON — GATHERED 32 BY ESSENCES



GATE FOUR

The Fullness

CONTEMPLATION IS BASED ON the desire to return to primordial uncontainability within the display of whatever appears contained. As the desire for return supersedes all lesser concerns, resonant feeling tones billow forth beyond inner and outer distinctions. They present the fullness of the ground that supports all variation, and is where the nectar of the

quintessence can be distilled. This is the stream from which poetic beauty is drawn, opening as the qualities of exaltation, awe, and wonder. However, make no mistake; even the fullness can fall into experience and become reified.

Contemplative efforts begin with cultivating intellectual understanding that permeates the whole conceptual field. Then feeling-tone resonances arise from the felt quality of meaning, and the mind immerses within it like a bath. Through this bath contemplative silence introduces awareness to its own nature. However, while this process

unfolds phenomena continue to spurt out in unpredictable display. No matter what joys or horrors appear, the adamah projects its magical array. Its fullness is a talisman of absolute good, beyond the dichotomy of good versus evil. Recognition of its immensity strips gross conceptuality on contact, yet the klipot of nogah can still reify the feeling tones of ecstatic wonder and awe. Until the root of reification is totally broken through the fullness will assert wholeness as experience, albeit in an undifferentiated mode.

The spectrum of possibilities breathes like a living organism,

echoing through infinity. Its burgeoning permeability allows cascading layers of subtle meaning to tumble through gross meanings. The fullness assumes the form of the sum total of all of the layers, as they interpenetrate and suffuse space with variation. Within this mixing field, the contemplating subject can become lost within vastness. Thus the fullness runs the risk of becoming one mighty perceptual object within which the subject and all the nuances are suffused. This amalgam can hover between reification and dissolution in a highly subtle form.

The habitual residue of reification posits “thing-ness” upon whatever the mind touches, including the mind itself, which can swell to become the ultimate thing. This can be the case as the fullness is recognized. There are two ways this can happen. First, the vestigial reflexes of conceptuality can reify the undifferentiated field of phenomena, which floods experience. The oceanic mass that is produced is grasped and mistaken for the open vista of space. The result is not an understanding of space, but an experience of undifferentiated grasping. The second scenario grasps at

nothingness rather than the field of sensation, and holds vacancy as an absolute. Practitioners may have some success at freeing themselves of concepts and fixations, but they end up grasping at an empty void. Such practitioners have to realize the luminosity inherent within the fullness in equanimity with basic space, or the nothingness they cling to will remain a mere vacancy that is actually just a mental construct based on absence. Each tendency requires what the other lacks. Those who reify the void require recognition of the fullness, and those who grasp at the fullness have to

cultivate a better understanding of space.

Most modern people subscribe to the view of materialist nihilism, a view that arises because primordial purity is ignored. Most human beings are not even vaguely interested in the essential nature of phenomena, and if it were suggested, they would reject it outright as implausible. This is largely because authentic tastes of the wondrous fullness of space have not been detected within the habit field, which leaves things dry and mediocre, and in the true sense of the word, ordinary.

The ordinary view of reality is based on dualism. Duality arises as causes and effects are set against each other, and are reduced to mechanistic sequences by conceptual associations. Dualistic habits manifest various degrees of subtlety, and can bloom into extremely elaborate metaphysical strategies. As tastes of the fullness are apprehended in contemplation, the dualistic patterns expand. When the mind actively seeks to enter the field of vastness it is offered the possibility of passing beyond dualistic conceptuality altogether. If there is sufficient aspirational understanding to cultivate

a view beyond the dualistic constraints, the fullness becomes an open door into the freedom of sublime openness. This is because the fullness is essentially equal to En Sof, and is not a mere by-product of any conceptual process or spiritual ideology.

The view that passes beyond ordinary dualism but yet continues to reify the fullness is called monism. It arises as wholeness is grasped at. Monism is a vast improvement over ordinary dualism, because the variation of phenomena can be accepted as a complete unity, and that unity can be considered and probed. However, as the

mind identifies the monad it holds it as an endlessly immense comprehensive concept, into which perception is subsumed. This is an improvement over ordinary concepts, because at least the mind becomes trained into absorption. The monad is the greatest mental construct that is possible for the mind to engage. It is usually identified by deification, which holds the monad as a god. The monad is then held as the ultimate source of all things, which creates and destroys everything within itself. The monad then becomes both the ultimate cause and the ultimate effect, and the ultimate origin and

ultimate destination.

Breaking free of monism is based on non-reification. It allows a deep dreamlike poignancy to pass through all stoppage points, so that fullness unfolds into infinity like the sky. Contemplation of the sky-like nature of the cognitive field draws dissolution through all possible objects, including the monad. Holding dissolution simultaneously with the fullness nullifies the basis of the identification that would be reified into a monad, and leaves the fullness free to spread as space. This points to meaning in itself, which eclipses all lesser meanings. The

adamah can then be understood to be equal to En Sof—truly free to express anything and everything without ever becoming reduced to “one in counting” (as *Tikkuney Zohar* states). This understanding is the door through which something and nothingness ultimately equalize.

As the zivug of the middle six and malkut matures as the realization of the fullness of the adamah, the upper union of chochmah and binah is reflected through it like a mirror. The upper union opens the gates of the ultimate bounty and issues its release, but that depends on how clear the mirror of the

lower zivug is for receiving it and reflecting it back. Whatever klipot have accumulated becomes the degree to which it is distorted and deflected, and thus, reification and division become manifested in the engagement of phenomena.

As spiritual practice purifies the klipot, ruach hakodesh develops and malkut becomes a clear reflection of keter. Every aspect of meaning becomes reborn within this clarity. It equalizes the lower seven sefirot with En Sof by way of keter's basic question: Is space permeable and equalizing, or is it a barrier? What

function manifests as phenomena appear? If En Sof runs and returns from its nature without diminishment, only purity is known. If not, then all manner of obstructions take over.

All of the sefirot in each world are completely suffused by the shefa of En Sof on the absolute level, but on the relative level each can only hold the influx according to the degree it is resisted. This paradox is referred to in the *Zohar* as “touching but not touching.” The relative resistance does not imply that the shefa is in any way diminished, far from it. Each echo of the tzimtzum forms a vessel that is

always essentially open, but on the relative level appears filled to capacity. The tzimtzum is the root of both the limitless display of variation, as well as the reductionist reflexes that beings habituate. The lower zivug can either absorb the crystalline dew from the skull of Atika Kadisha at the cusp of keter, or it can spill over with excess. The wasted bounty then coagulates or freezes, closing up around phenomena to create the three layers of a klipah.

When perception poses no sense of solidity or separation the gates remain open, and no cognitive freezing occurs. This mitigates the sense of individual

selfhood within the perceiver. When there is no knower there cannot be any thing known (which is the basis of the freezing). In the wake of self-identified conceptuality the equalization of En Sof spreads throughout the sefirot, which is the basis of realization. As the absolute emerges as the prime consideration relative resistances fade, and the fullness of basic space becomes the heart of the matter. The next two gates deal with the realization of the fullness as it is refined beyond subtle conceptuality, resulting in the wild intoxicating gnosis of ruach hakodesh.

The shefa is the ultimate solvent for

conceptuality and the quintessential alchemical elixir. If recognized, it propagates both responsive fluidity and the fire of its non-reification. It equally creates and destroys all constructs without posing any hint of contrast or contradiction. The appearance of contrast only arises with relative deflection, which is of course taken as merely a playful display of gnosis within the view.

To properly understand the diagram (figure 4), we must analyze a passage from the *Fountain of Wisdom*. The passage provides a sequence of four key divine names. The first three are

standard names placed along the middle pillar at keter, tiferet, and malkut; they are: AHYH, YHVH, and ADNY. The fourth is a highly unusual kabbalistic name: YYAY. The components of YYAY are the key letters alef (01) and yud (10). The continuum implied between the two letters represents a scope beyond beginning and end, which is the basis of acausality. The formula of YYAY follows the common kabbalistic sequence of the Tetragrammaton, however, the yud (symbol of essentiality) predominates. Observe:

1. Yud: essential dynamism

2. Yud: essential responsiveness
3. Alef: wholeness (alef = 1) of infinite possibility
4. Yud: essential display

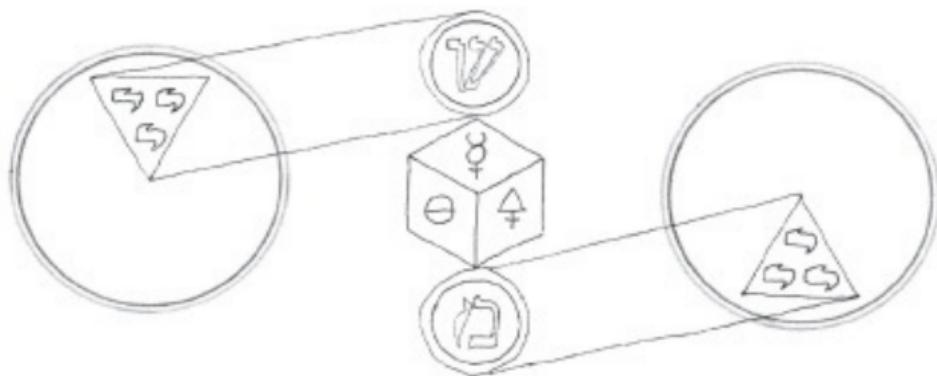
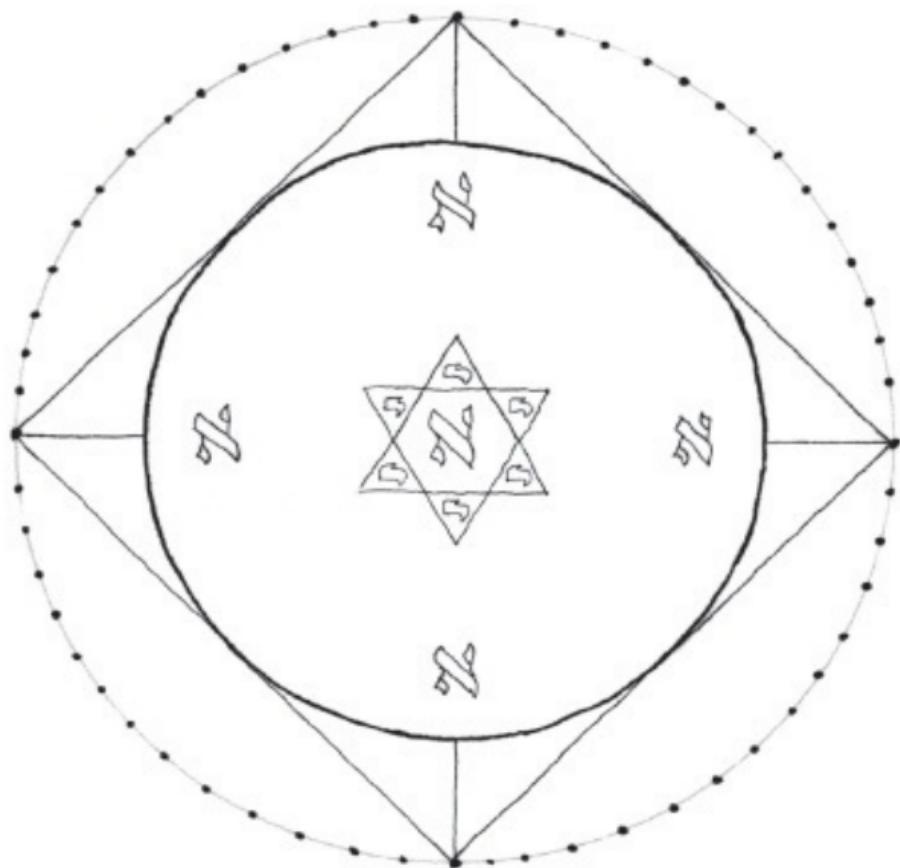


Figure 4

Here is the excerpt in which this is given from the *Fountain*:

Return to the first principle prior to vocalization; from which flames spread five times stronger than strong, hotter than hot, fiercer than fire; all grasping the yud of transformation. Transformation is vocalization. Vocalization is formation. Formation is the utterance. Continue until the four names dependent upon the yud are clear. These four letters are “like a coal bound to a flame” (*Sefer*

Yetzirah). The spark divides into four heads. All refer to one. Yud is a gushing fountain whose waters spread into 24 parts. Each part has four roots. Each root has four branches. Each branch has four vocalizations. The vocalizations split into an indeterminate number until they return again to the fountain from which they are uttered forth. These are the four names. The first is AHYH, the second is YHVH, the third is ADNY, the fourth is YYAY.

The prior “first principle” refers to En Sof, and its “flame” is the spark of

nondimensional fire that consumes all lesser concerns. The “four heads” refer to the cardinal directions of space. In graphic terms, this expanse is represented by quadrisection. Counting its central point, each circle thus refers to a fivefold array, which corresponds to “five times stronger.” The great circle and its subset present two circles in quadrisection, and thus equal a yud ($5 + 5 = 10$). The implication binds absolute space to its relative adaptation, which is the total ground in its fullness.

“Yud is a fountain whose waters spread into 24 parts” refers to the inner

and outer lines that are graphically formed by the crossed axis lines within the circle and its subset. Each quadrant extends 3 lines, which makes a total of 12 for all four directions. This number is doubled when counting both the inner and outer applications, thus making 24.

In the diagram (figure 4), the fullness is presented by 5 alefs in union with a hexagram, which constitutes the alchemical marriage of tiferet and malkut; malkut is heh (5) and tiferet is vav (6). The hexagram contains 6 yuds: each of its triangles containing 3 alefs with an alef in the center ($6 \times 10 = 60 +$

alef = 61). This gematria of 61 corresponds to the word AYiN (En), meaning “nothingness.”

The layout extends the name YYAY through the double triads of the hexagram, which corresponds to the ruach. In its midst is a single central alef. In the correspondence given earlier the alef of YYAY indicates *yetzirah*, and the ruach. This is the aspect through which the gnostic solvent can permeate phenomena and coax realization forth. Through the doubling reflection of the triads, threefold creativity is bound at its heart.

In the lower portion of the diagram these aspects are bound within a hexagonal periphery, forming the image of a cube. This implies the reflex of the six directions falling into the solidifying habit field of three-dimensional space. This is where contemplative work needs to be accomplished. Inside the cube, as seen from a single vantage point (symbolic of a conventional view), are placed the three alchemical principles of salt, mercury, and sulphur. They are the catalysts of change employed in the transformation of habit into realization.

Consider the following extensions:

The sum total of all letters in the sub-circle: 5 alefs + 2 triple-yud triads (60) = 65, the gematria of ADNY, the divine name of malkut (indicates ground of display); ADaMaH (50) + letters of hexagram seal (61) = 111, the gematria of alef (ALP).

The alef represents the all-basis ground of adamah, which arises as the gnosis of absolute wholeness. The array of YYAY represents the ruach that dawns as ruach hakodesh (gnosis). Realization is possible owing to the implicit presence of the ground of display within the ruach's motion, thus the zivug of Zer Anpin and Nukvah.

Through this union the ground is awakened, and the essential nature of all things is realized. The supernal union of light and space pervades all things, and chochmah and binah flood the perceptual mechanism via daat. This is represented by the first YY of the name. Every facet then becomes its reflection, and only the divine remains as infinite variation. This is the final Y of the name. Thus alef seals the bond of the yud in its triplexity.

LET MEANING COME INTO ITSELF BILLOWING RESONANCES TO SATURATION LATHERED TO PUFF
EACH DROPPING UNFABRICATED SPACE WOVEN AS UNFABRICATED PRIMORDIALITY APPEARS
DISSOLVING THE AMALGAM OF THE MIXING FIELD BY CROWN AND KINGDOM BILLOWING PROPS
CLUSTERS BREAK SILENT ECHOES TO TOTEMISM, PERMUTATION, MELTING ENWORLING TREASURE
RESONANCES SPEAK TONES OF DEPTH WITHOUT BOUNDS SHARING TOGETHER BRIGHT AND CLEAR
ENCIRCLES ITSELF WITHOUT CONTAINING OR BEING CONTAINED YET PRESENTS



GATE FIVE

Scintillating Dissolution

THE SMALL CONCEPTION of the worlds and everything in them dissolves on contact as the scintillating luminosity of En Sof is glimpsed. As the static conceptions disappear phenomena does not simply vanish; it is instantaneously reborn in magical form beyond even the slightest hint of solidity or substance. The world stands-in-dissolving, but nothing is lost

and or gained, while the unknowable knowing of naked wonderment rebirths itself. Once this secret is recognized, its realization becomes the primary gnostic intoxicant.

The light that darkens by illuminating exudes a radiance that passes through dualistic contrasts of bright and dark as if they posed no difference whatsoever. This is the essence of the awakening ground. It is also the case as realization passes through the membrane that articulates the relative functions of waking life and deep sleep, which slip into an equalizing dreamlike twilight.

Direct recognition of the scintillating aspect of the ground reveals phenomena at the razor's edge of open possibility between containment and uncontainability, falling to neither side. Whatever appears serves as an invitation into the self-liberating jewellike mists that fill and surround the tenuous outlines of relative form. The tide of blazing droplets floods the perceptual field in clusters and atmospheres as the distillate of the alchemical process is tasted. However, until stability is cultivated, these glimpses only swell forth sporadically, and then in a flash

they disappear—and the mind returns to its habit base in one form or another.

As the klipot of nogah are broken through, the capacity for choice dissolves. There is no subject to choose and no object to be chosen as the mind's coordinates open into blazing nothingness. Wisdom is choiceless, more vivid and penetrating than anything that can be conceived. What remains is literally inconceivable. Tastes of this arise, in small or large passages, with the induction of shefa from the permeable skull of keter.

Each drop of shefa is a spark of

boundless fire; an ungraspable blaze, revealing the glow of immensity through its portal. Each opens wholeness beyond any dimensional framework, wherein the autonomy of individual, collective, and cosmic volition is nullified. Free will can then be understood for the conceptual contrivance it is. And like magic, spontaneous action manifests beyond identity and identification. No will is in sight—neither cosmos, god, or man.

The shefa streams as crystalline dew, which pours from the gap between the skull of Atika Kadisha (keter) and what the Zohar calls “above-above”

(En Sof). This is the cusp of uncontainable containment as it “touches but does not touch” its own essentiality. This language is used to thwart any association with mechanistic activity.

The shefa is the incomprehensible substanceless luminosity of space itself, beyond any boundary. Its sparkling atmosphere settles beyond scale and directionality, without asserting any distinction between something or nothingness. As each drop overtakes perceiving, it directly asserts the shefa-suffused air of keter anew through whatever arises. The

space of display, however it might appear, opens as the wholeness of the awakening ground beyond reification or division. This realization clears away all barriers between relative differentiation and absolute essentiality, simply because the concept of a barrier loses its meaning.

Each drop offers the unmaking of conceptual contrivances, and allows the return to the primordial essentiality that no phenomena ever actually left. Therefore the shefa does not change phenomena; it only dissolves the habits that limit their perception. By not conforming to temporality or

dimensionality, the shefa-suffused field liberates phenomena from reduction into substance. Within the shefa a mighty fire consumes the reflex patterns that support conceptualization, which lead the mind to grasp on to experience and substantiality. There can be no substance or experience where there is no conceptualization, and without a subject to conceptualize or object to be conceptualized, phenomena are set free.

Once open, meaning is free to respond to any condition while remaining limited by none. The essence of meaning offers the continual

possibility of instant adaptation within each unique stream of variation, no matter what seems to arise. This is the seed power of manifestation, coequal with awareness, which impregnates the gestating womb of the appearing. The child of these parents is a gnosemic universe, complete and whole, reborn beyond time and location.

The concepts of all and nothing can take no foothold here, and do not posit a distinction between one single spark and the continuous multitude of sparks. This aspect of “countlessness” emerges from a single heart shared by all things. It outshines the standard of measure

with which the realms are constructed. Thus it never falls to “one in counting.”

The sparks that present the dawning of the awakening ground are woven through threads, each leading into incomprehensibility. Unlike physical threads, these vector paths begin and end nowhere, and are completely interdependent. Each aspect moves every other aspect of an infinite array. The field of connections is literally space itself. It is so full it is open; infinitely vast—a living tapestry of openness appearing.

The space of binah, like the

luminosity of chochmah, is inherent within the paradox of keter without any diminishment. Thus they are considered two sides of one brain within the skull of keter, which offers the apparent containment of the uncontrollable. The realization of scintillating dissolution points out that the basic space of binah is continuous with, and not obstructed from, the apparitional display of malkut. It totally transforms the meaning of tzimtzum, rather than denying it. Manifestation arises and collapses into the exact same space in the exact same instant. Appearing becomes *solve et*

coagula, a scintillating dissolution.

Kabbalistically, the scintillating spark field allows the reductive *din'im* (forces of gevurah) to harmonize into perfect balance with the *chesadim* (forces of chesed) such that only *tiferet* (beauty) becomes possible. The adamah echoes their formless form without the interruption of the concepts of being or nonbeing. Realization prevents their echoes from coagulating in perception, and can only assert En Sof shimmering in the responsiveness of phantom thundering.

In the diagram (figure 5), between

the outer and inner aspects of the quadrisected circle, the mixing field opens at the cusp of the subset. This is the point at which the world of separate things melts its separateness to assume its magical insubstantial wholeness. Both absolute and relative can easily become conceptual deceptions. Neither can ever be found by itself. Liberation of the divisive concepts that tear these aspects apart opens deep within phenomena, as both circles rejoin each other in the midst of an equalizing essentiality. Their mutual return to primordial wholeness is a continual process, unfolding without end. The

continual dissolution of relative boundaries allows perception to participate in the nature of things exactly as they are, without needing to change the way they appear. Phenomena are always inherently passing away in the midst of their arising, which is the primary mark of the gnostic view.

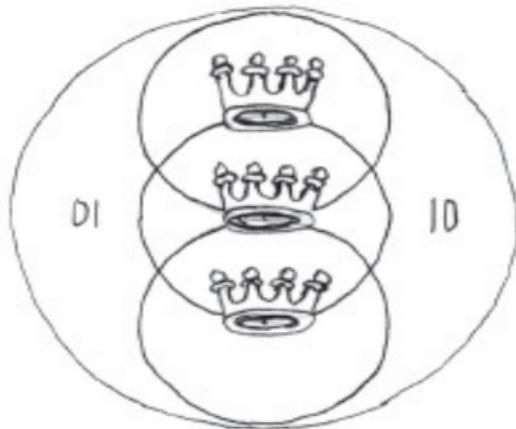
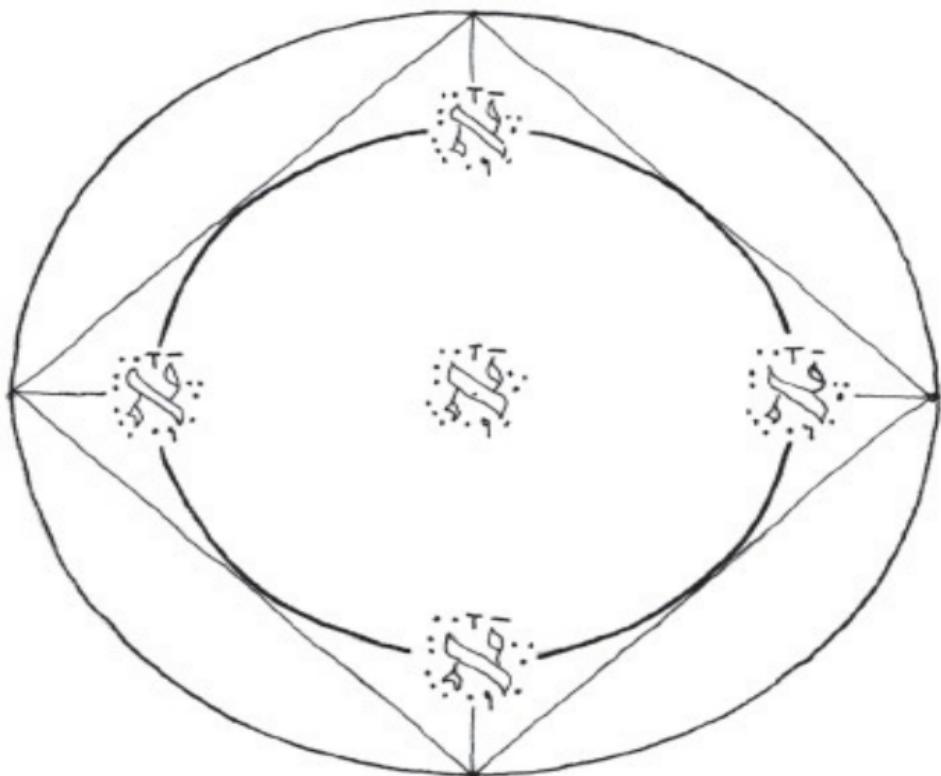
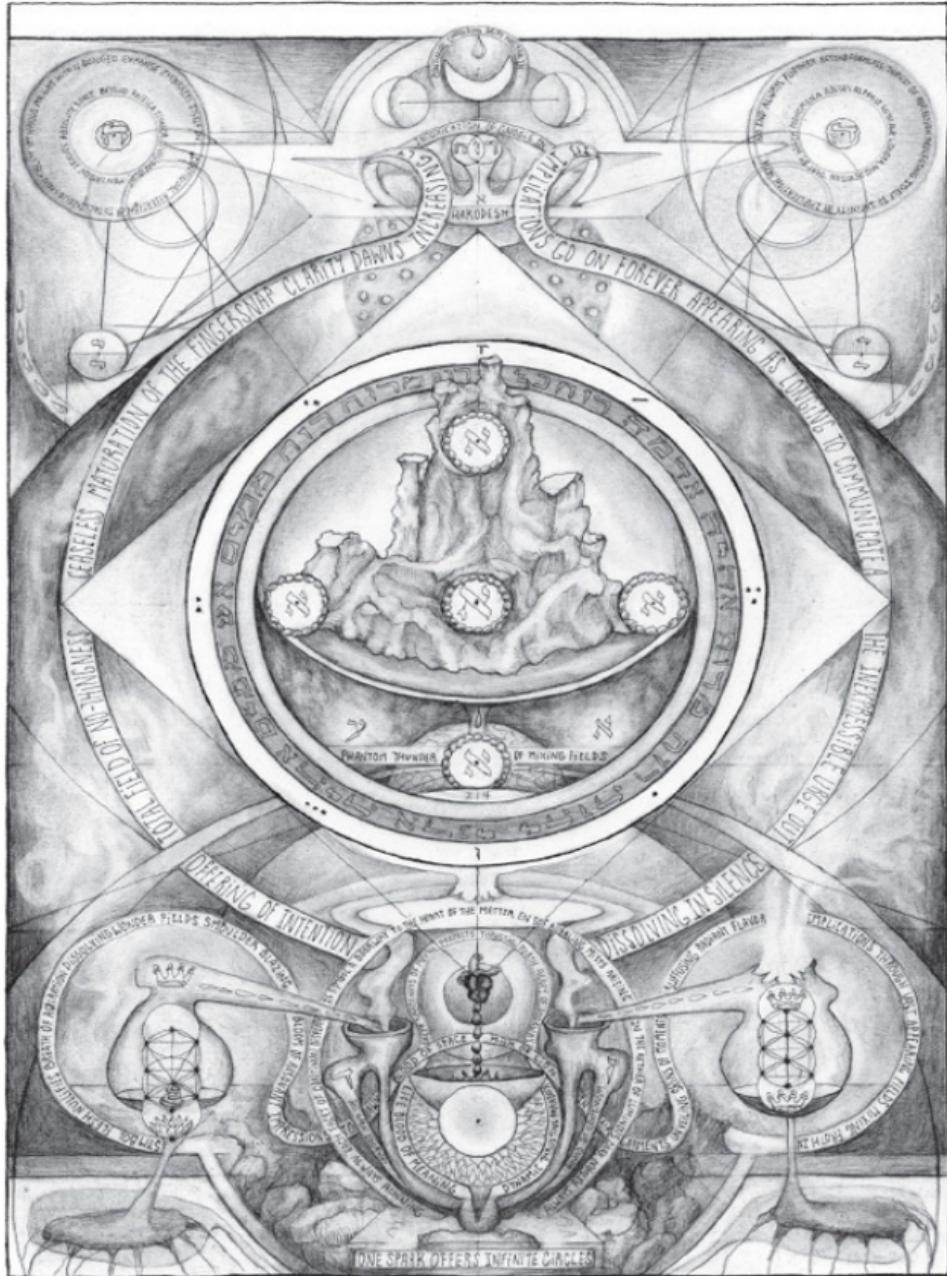


Figure 5

Each drop of shefa is a spark, and each spark is an ungraspable point. Each point is a vowel. Within the interior subset circle are 5 alefs that are clothed by the tenfold vowel array. There are only 9 vowel points, the tenth is counted as the silence of the letter itself. The letter used here is alef (01), and so the 10 vowels together with its balance as the equation $01 = 10$ (see my book *The Sacrificial Universe* for a deeper explanation of this formula).

In the lower portion of the diagram three crowns mark the triple

manifestation. This indicates the souls of NaRaN and worlds of BeYeA completely broken through by the shefa of keter. This realization renders all phenomena as a sparkling bath of gnosis. The 5 alefs combined with 10 vowel aspects represent the complete adamah. This is “all” (KoL), which is gematria 50, the number of the gates of binah that open the bounty of keter upon the triple manifestation.



GATE SIX

Stabilizing the Realization

THE SIXTH STAGE marks the indestructible gnosis of the stable realizer, or tzadik, who has totally broken through the momentum of conceptual habituation. Only perfect scintillating radiance remains in the wake of conceptuality, standing-in-dissolving in its variation. Disruptive klipot are no longer relevant, because the tzadik's mind is completely

nullified to the infinite. This is an absolute victory over all mind's obstructions and obscurations. The stream of the tzadik's mind has so perfectly bound, equalized, and distilled the mystery of En Sof that there is only continual breakthrough. Breakthrough itself is so complete and whole that there is nothing remaining to break through. This realization does not mark a specific goal or destination; quite the contrary, it is the living seal of no (En) end (Sof).

This does not imply that the tzadik is immune to circumstantial setbacks. If you strike the tzadik he will feel the

physical pain, however, the meaning of the pain will be quite different than it is to a conceptually fixated person. To the tzadik there is only sublime essentiality. That essentiality is always presented in wildly unpredictable form, and includes the horrors of the world. Since the tzadik does not grasp at any obstacle, pain does not become suffering. Evidence of this can be seen in the writings of such individuals as Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, rabbi of the Warsaw ghetto during the Nazi occupation of Poland.

What defines a human being and the human realm in general is the shared

momentum of conceptualization. Stable gnosis marks a radical departure. Yet the realized tzadik walks among us, speaks, and leaves teachings and images. Therefore his presence seals the primordial paradox of immanence and transcendence. The embodied display of the tzadik is the pivot of a universal sacrifice, which we join in by spiritually attaching our own lives to the presence of such a possibility. The stable realization the tzadik expresses is a possibility for everyone and constitutes the crown on the head of the system.

Gnosis can best be communicated in

symbols. One key symbol is a location-less point echoing infinite peripheries through space. The space that the echoes pass through is spontaneously created by the unfolding of their passing. The dynamic bond between the point and its peripheries is like a voice that speaks words it can never depart from. Imagine a universe formed of only such words. But what is the nature of the voice in itself prior to speech? What is space prior to contextualization?

Space, as a human being conceptualizes it, is not the basic primordial space. It is a manufactured

construct formed by thoughts. The model of a static field that things pass into and out from is derived from dimensional concepts pertaining to containment, depth, distance, and vacuity. Basic space is not this. It is the infinite depth of the nondimensional self-glow of En Sof. Its infinite responsiveness is absolute. As it manifests differentiated form, its infinite expanse manifests with it. Layers of meaning pass through its display and permeate through itself, by itself, and of itself—literally everywhere, anywhere, and nowhere. This completely negates the axioms of

coordinate differentiation that temporal and dimensional location is based upon.

The crux of gnosis is the realization that the magical continuum of the light of En Sof and the essential nature of the mind are equal, and the dynamic thrust exuded by that nature opens space to suit whatever conditions are possible. There is no such thing as space in itself, it is an open expansiveness that is conformational. It opens as it is applied. This cuts directly to the explosive uniqueness of B'reshit, the basis of the adamah. Its absolute dynamism is basic space in a

definitive sense. Even though the open expanse and the dynamism can be articulated conceptually as different aspects, they are two sides of the same face. As it is glimpsed, the shadows of constrictive reflexes evaporate like mists in the wake of its ceaseless dawning, inviting all phenomena to stand unfettered with implications that have no end.

If the primordial thrust can be recognized for even a moment as long as a finger snap, all worlds and souls can be sacrificed to the primal consuming fire. The spark of complete wholeness presents total liberation. It

blazes in silence, alone. The tzadik is nothing other than this spark of silence assuming form, which nullifies the separation between its singularity and infinite variation.

Gnostic realization of the nullification of keter within En Sof allows wholeness to explode into multiplicity without ever leaving its basic ground. This explosion is recounted in *Fountain of Wisdom*: “A flow rapid like sparks produced simultaneously to disperse into many directions when the blacksmith wields his hammer.” What is being referred to here is an unspoken paradox; a singular

spark beyond being or nonbeing that continually explodes into all possibilities. The non-dual spark assumes the form of the animating power of speech; the vowel points that allow the letters to be vocalized. The great spark is a one that is ten. Its streams travel to nowhere from nowhere, as its sparks reach everywhere from everywhere. Through the spark field the voice of silence passes swiftly into specificity. All permutations of letter combinations are vitalized through it, and manifestation becomes possible.

The vowels mark the outpouring of

the light of En Sof into whatever arises within the seemingly static consonant structure of manifestation. The vowels stretch into the streaming torrents of phenomena, woven into patterns that form all things. Through the interconnectivity of the vowels and letters En Sof can do or seem like anything. It thickens, fills, surrounds, and dissolves its self-generated vessels. Through this tapestry of drops coalescing as streams the mysterious phantom thunderings inter-permeate and intersect as mists and oceans. This is the meaning of “And Elohim said . . .” This is the real adamah, the ground

of the Shechinah. Beyond loss or gain, it presents the simplicity of B'Reshit. Through it, even the klipot are realized as primordially pure, and as such, cease to be klipot at all. Even in their falsity the klipot sparkle as insubstantial, vivid, jewellike projections whose echoes present an endless field. This sparkling field is felt in stage four (fullness), is clarified in stage five (scintillating dissolution), and becomes stable in stage six. Together the jeweled mists sparkle and shine, carrying the full blessing force of the path.

In the diagram (figure 6), three

aspects of the vowel points are depicted streaming off the shefa quintessence in drops through the three stages of en-worldment, as follows:

1. The top diagram places the vowel points in the mixing field between the greater and lesser circles, where the absolute and relative aspects are realized to be intrinsically undivided.
2. The middle diagram spreads its scintillation to the four directions, suffusing the whole of space.
3. The bottom diagram presents undifferentiated suffusion in which anything, everything, and nothingness abide in scintillating

dissolution equally.

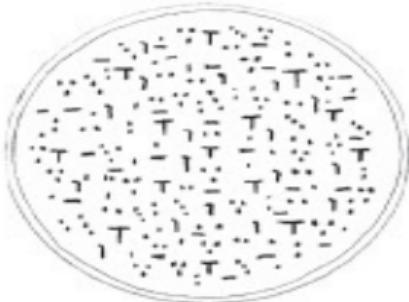
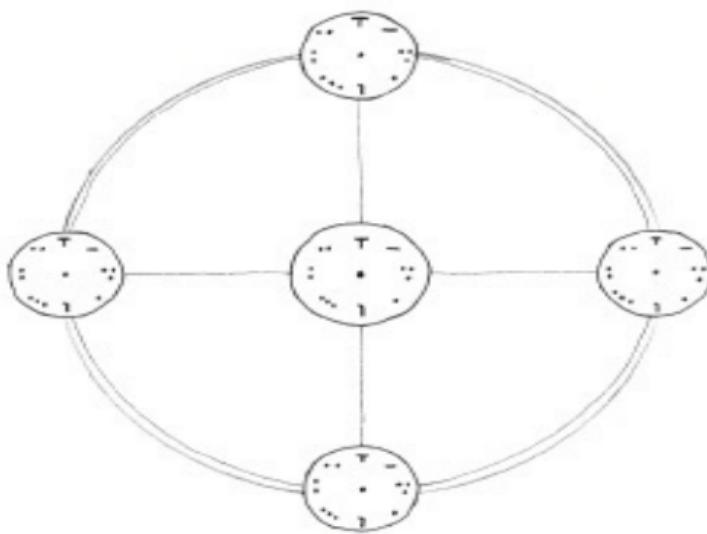
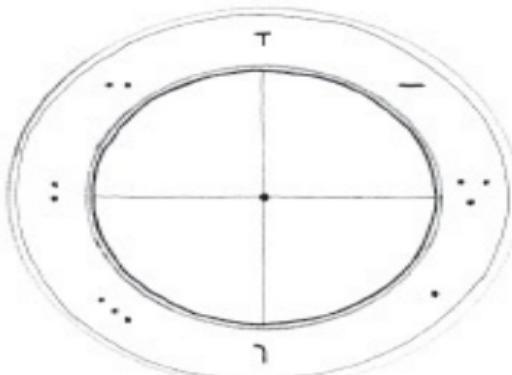


Figure 6

Note: The 10 vowels include 9 active forms and 1 silent form, as the letter itself. The letters are considered the vessels and the vowel points are the lights that animate them. The ten sefirot correspond to the nekudot in the following manner:

1.	Keter	<i>kawmatz</i>
2.	Chochmah	<i>patach</i>
3.	Binah	<i>tzeyray</i>
4.	Chesed	<i>segol</i>
5.	Gevurah	<i>shva</i>
6.	Tiferet	<i>cholem</i>
7.	Netzach	<i>chirik</i>
8.	Hod	<i>shuruk</i>

9. Yesod	<i>m'loopum</i>
10. Malkut	no vowel

The 10 vowels (including silence) are multiplied by fivefold manifestation to produce 50, the gematria of the words *adamah* (ground) and *kol* (all). Thus the all-basis ground presents a scintillation of sparks that animate the letter-vessels of the divine speech. The all-basis is elaborated in the *Fountain of Wisdom*:

Yud is the fountain. Its roots are rooted, its streams connected, and its drops are based in the tikkun of the circle. The circle surrounds

that which encompasses, encircling that which stands. The circle is derived from alef and alef from yud.

“The circle that surrounds” is absolute basic space. “Surrounds that which encompasses” refers to its relative subset. The yud dynamically thrusts forth the inherent wholeness of the alef, which is the basis of space in all its variation. Infinite echoes of tzimtzum reverberate its primordial light into complexity without ever leaving its singularity. Yud and alef are thus equal, but not the same.

As the *Sefer Yetzirah* states, “Their end is imbedded in their beginning, and their beginning in their end, like a flame in a burning coal” (1:7). In his commentary to the *Sefer Yetzirah*, Isaac the Blind elaborates upon this with the following phrase: “The end imbedded in the beginning is a spreading fountain.”

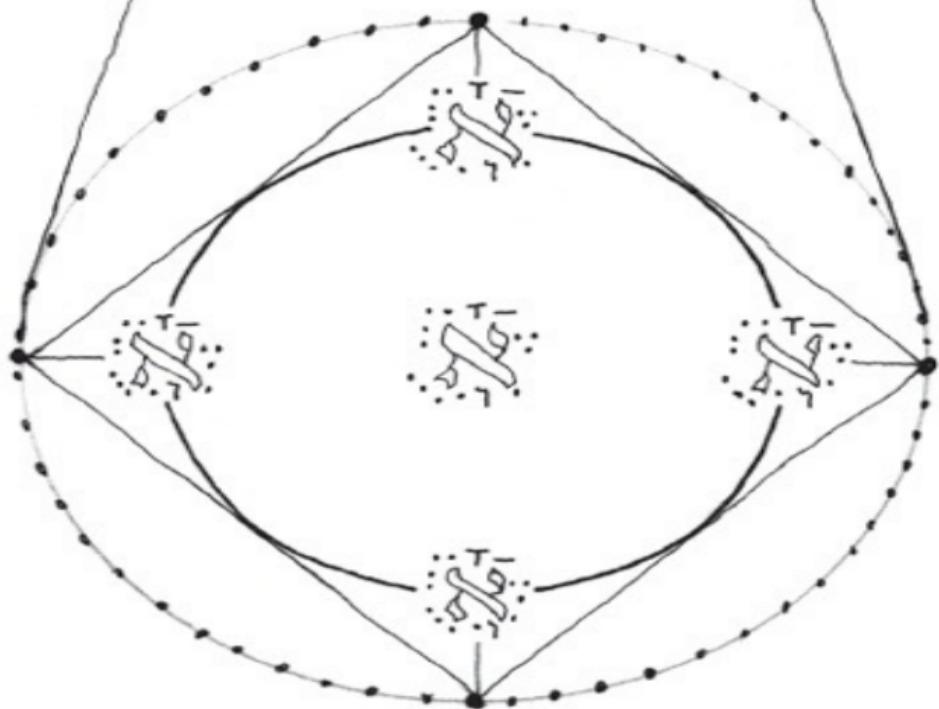
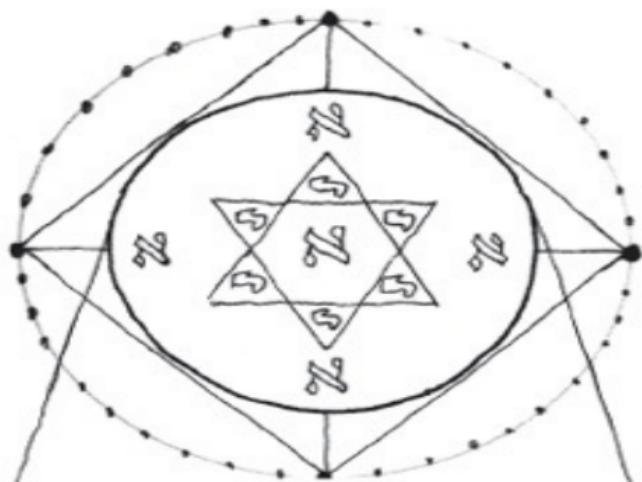
Every so-called end the mind fixates upon is an invitation to return to the primordial fountain of B’reshit that is the dynamic essence of wholeness. Gnosis returns all ends to a continual beginning without origin or source, which nothing ever departed from. This

is the great tikkun (rectification) of the apparent brokenness of ordinary perception. It serves as the ultimate offering through which all lesser meanings can surrender to the great meaning-fullness of En Sof.

Rabbi Isaac attributes “beginning” to chochmah and “end” to binah. By extension, this attributes yud to the dynamic perpetual beginning and alef to the wholeness presented as an unending series of ends in continuum, displayed as the ground. Together they represent the full scope of En Sof as a complete spectrum.

The beginning in question is certainly not a mere linear starting point. It is a potency that is continually reborn as infinite phenomena that stand in scintillating dissolution, always new, always fresh. The beginning is realized as whatever so-called end may be presented, but its essential status as a continual beginning always remains constant. This transforms the perception of the echoes of the tzimtzum from a series of stoppages to an array of open gates. All displays thus become permeable, as the cohesive wholeness of the alef's basic unity stands as an invitation into

tikkun.



DISSOLVING-IN- APPEARING

ULTIMATELY, ALL SIX GATES are held as a single realization. This realization allows the value of first three gates to be directly expressed by the conjunction of gates four and five. This conjunction is what is stabilized in the realization of the sixth gate.

This crucial realization is based on a fullness that is always dissolving into

scintillation in the moment it arises. The simultaneity of arising and passing away has no localizable or specific beginning or end. Gnostic breakthrough directly erodes the sense of coordinate dimensionality and temporality on contact, pointing instead to the atemporal and nondimensional disposition of the awakening ground that is the basis of wonder and awe.

Dissolving-in-appearing is the quintessential gnosemic gesture: a continual self-consumption that arises as all things without ever contradicting itself. It is known in the simultaneity of *solve et coagula*. As meditative

stability is cultivated, nothing can obscure or obstruct it, as it shines as the quintessence of universal mercury.

Its adaptive nature cannot be definitively codified into any mechanical process. If dissolving-in-arising can be directly recognized, it is understood as implicit in the act of living. This speaks to the central question of how an individual approaches contemplative practice. Are the six stages a linear technique? Does a practitioner try to move from one to the next in a single practice session? This question must remain unanswered, so that each can discover what works in

the uniqueness of each moment. A fixed technique might prove effective on one day and become useless on the next. However, if one works on an understanding of dissolving-in-appearing, any moment can be offered to the service of contemplative practice.

If a practitioner can simply open through space and allow its innate luminosity to manifest as awareness without contrivance, then nothing further needs to be done. The only problem is that for most people this approach is a total disaster. It becomes falsified without the person having any

insight into why. The act of contemplation then falls into a manufactured contrivance, producing a fabricated event accepted as a meditative object of “experience.” This happens so effortlessly that people will not believe that they are even conceptualizing anything, because they are immersed in an experience that they believe tells them otherwise. Rare is the person who is able to break through this wall.

The practice must open “prior to” experience. This is the primordial or original expanse of B’reshit: the unfixed beginningless beginning

inherent in phenomena. Instead of mechanically seeking to open the perceptual field, it might be more accurate to speak of not letting it close. Reductionistic habits are quiet, and freeze the mind into habituation without the person noticing. Holding to openness can mitigate this closure, but it can become contrived as well as the practitioner fixates on a mental construct of what he or she thinks space is. This faux openness then becomes a large and heavy conceptual burden, rather than a substanceless release from conceptuality.

The openness of the perceptual field

is penetrated by an organ of perception that cannot be located. It is not specifically in the brain, in the heart, or the belly; it is found in the confluence of all three acting as a cohesive unit. Sometimes this confluence stretches like a muscle and strains, or relaxes and lets go. Sometimes it gets tired. Sometimes it cannot function at all and it just gives up. But no matter what it does or does not do, the knowing organs of awareness are always right there, wherever the mind is asserted.

Spiritual practice changes its requirements continually, and insight is needed for its adaptation. There are

times when an emphasis on devotional outpouring is perfectly suited. At other times structured technical meditations are precisely what is required. At other times formlessness is most effective. Hopefully this guide can serve the heart of these fluid responses beyond any of mind's contrivances.

Presented here is a diagram (figure 7) representing the triple worlds of BeYeA (*briah, yetzirah, assiah*) and soul aspects of NaRaN (*neshamah, ruach, nefesh*). In its center is a circle of vowel points that represent the array of primordial sparks that are drawn into the ruach during contemplation.

Inside of the circle is a hexagram representing the ruach itself. At its apex is the reflective moon of wisdom, and at its bottom is the blazing sun of life force. Between them in the heart is the nondimensional location-less point. In the four quadrants around the threefold construct are a series of hexagrams and squares within circles. They extend the graphic form of heh (Shechinah) that contains a small vav (6) and a large dalet (4). The sixes bind (vav/nail) and the fours open (dalet/door), and their union presents the magical display of the “standing-in-dissolving” of phenomena. At the

bottom of the image is a mixing bowl where alchemical work is accomplished. In the hexagram at the upper right the mixing bowl receives supernal luminosity dripping down from the moon of chochmah. In the hexagram at the upper left the vital blaze heats the moon from below. Around the main construct are crowns that refer to the ultimate paradox between keter and En Sof, which ultimately subsume the worlds and souls within the nectar of gnostic intoxication.

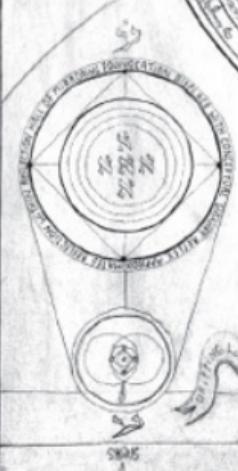
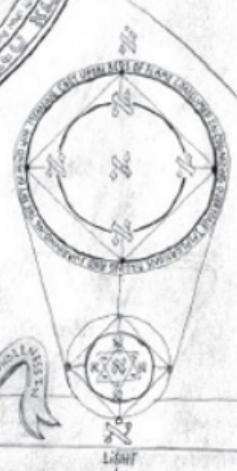
DROPPING UNFABRICATED PRIMORDIALITY AS DEW



CLUSTERING POETIC RESONANCE IN DROPLETS



RISING FLAME TO REVERSE AROMATIC RESONANCES



PHANTOM THUNDER OF THE MIXING FIELD UNFOLDS THE BATH OF AROMATIC WINDS THROUGH BASIC SILENCE

Figure 7

The next diagram (figure 8) provides planetary/alchemical attributions that are rather unconventional. They differ from both Hermetic qabbalah and mainstream Jewish kabbalah. The diagram sets the sefirot with their planets/metals in relation to the display field of malkut. This seals the cohesion of the six days of creation of Genesis 1 with the sealing Shabbat space of the seventh day. Correspondences are as follows:

EN SOF AWAKENING DREAM OF ITSELF AS

UNFOLDING TISSUES OF COGNIZINGS

WELL PAVING A NOT DREAM DREAMSTEERING DREAM IN ITSELF AWAKENING DREAM

FULLNESS DISSOLVING KEY OF INFINITE GATES HERE AS SLIGHT IN RECKONANT DREAM



13 ASPECTS OPEN 9 ASPECTS WITHIN

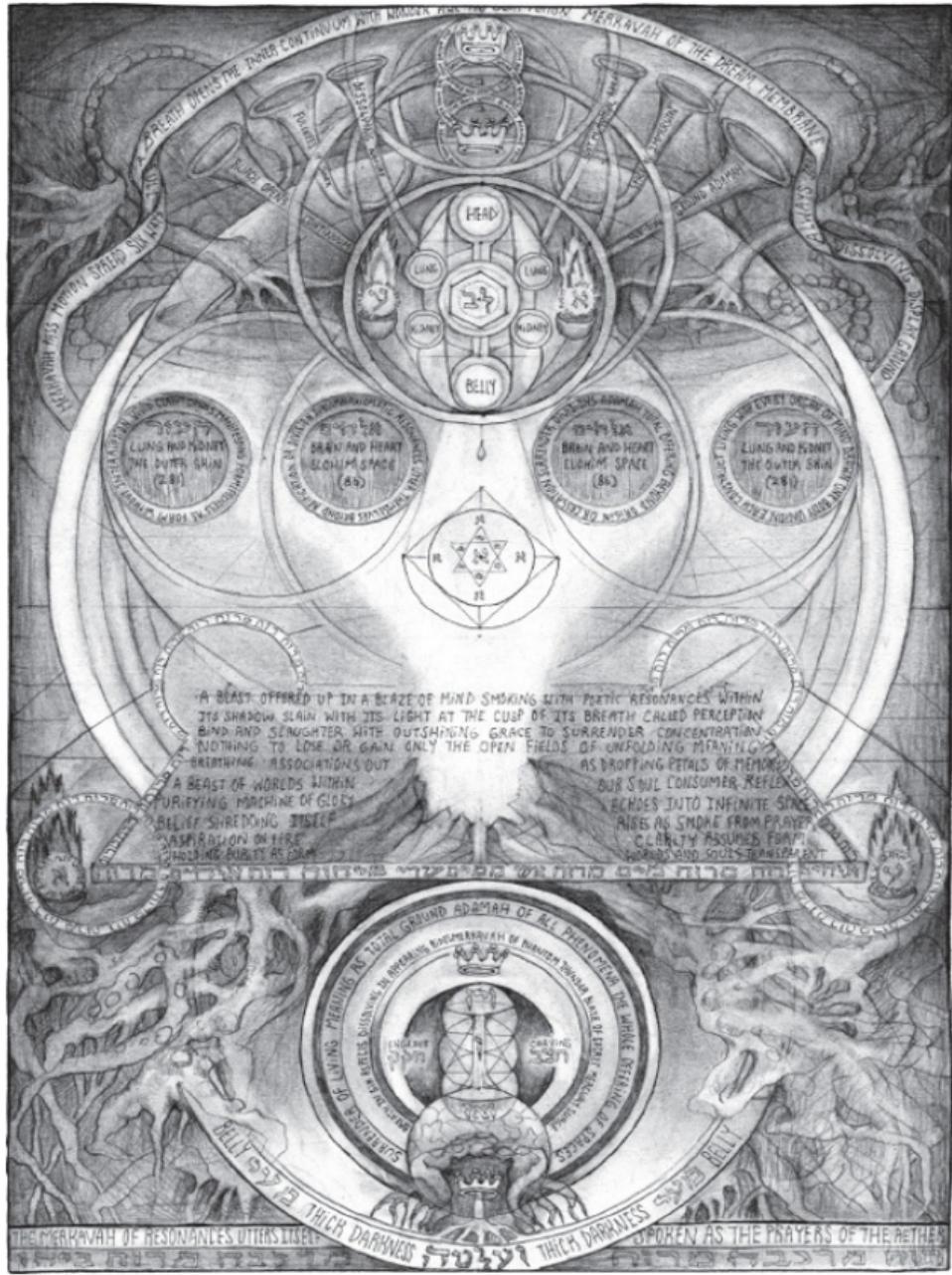
BY 6 ASPECTS DISSOLVING 3 KLIPOTH

Figure 8

Chesed	Expands as love/compassion	Jupiter
Gevurah	Contracts as wrath/awe	Saturn
Netzach	Expanding exchange; breakthrough	Mars/Venus
Hod	Contracting exchange; analysis	Venus/Mars

The middle pillar of the diagram depicts the exchange of secret mercury transacted through the sun and moon. Tiferet draws the influence of keter (through daat) corresponding to the

moon. Malkut raises the vital spark, corresponding to the sun. Integration between these aspects is sealed at the gate of yesod, where the quintessence of secret mercury tempers gold and silver beyond difference, allowing their impulses to be expressed as the single awakening ground of all phenomena.



2

FLIGHT OF THE MERKAVAH

ANY CONSTRUCT CAN BECOME an opportunity for contemplative practice, if the proper view can be maintained. If the mind longs deeply enough for awakening, any outer or inner perception can open infinite gates. Directing the flight of aspiration through the passageways of

mental fixation and turbulence is alluded to by the ancient symbol of the sky-borne chariot (*merkavah*). The Jewish mystical tradition has used the symbol of the merkavah in this way since the Temple period, long before the word *kabbalah* was used.

The merkavah is carried aloft by the winds of poetic resonance. The resonances spread from subtle impressions that grow within the most intimate felt qualities. Beyond ordinary thoughts and feelings, the resonances overflow past the borders of inner and outer divisions to open and close the gates of mystical ascent. In passing

through them a sense of permeability is discovered. When first observed, the resonances are barely there. Hovering within a delicate and tenuous mixing field, they shimmer in a precarious unsteady balance. The field never holds still, and recedes into its habits when attention presses too roughly. However, the field can open upon a razor's edge: falling neither to form or formlessness. Within this precious intersection the flight of the merkavah takes off.

The key to the merkavah's flight is the capacity to discern wisdom from experience. Wisdom cannot be contained within any experiential state,

although it is paradoxically not found elsewhere. Wisdom is recognized as the *Zohar* suggests: “touching yet not touching” (1:65a). Within the elusive resonant winds the mind learns the art of unmaking its solidity, to engage its most subtle qualities. By unmaking its resistant coarseness the mind learns to soar through its winds, and can combine the delicacy of its touch with a deep longing for the untouchable.

The mind’s subtlety is awakened through concern with the ground of mystery that presents all things. The presence of the ground, both within the mind and in all phenomena, is the true

buried treasure in our midst. But no matter how wondrous our spiritual experiences may seem, they always present a potential trap of reification that stops the merkavah in its path. The arrow of mind must not stop at any target, no matter how subtle. Hitting a target means something is grasped and contained, whether it be a paradise or a hell. Gnosis subsumes the mind within its own endlessness. The noble aim becomes clear as the flying arrow is equalized within the space through which it flies. The dynamism of the flying can then be realized as inherently open, and its motion

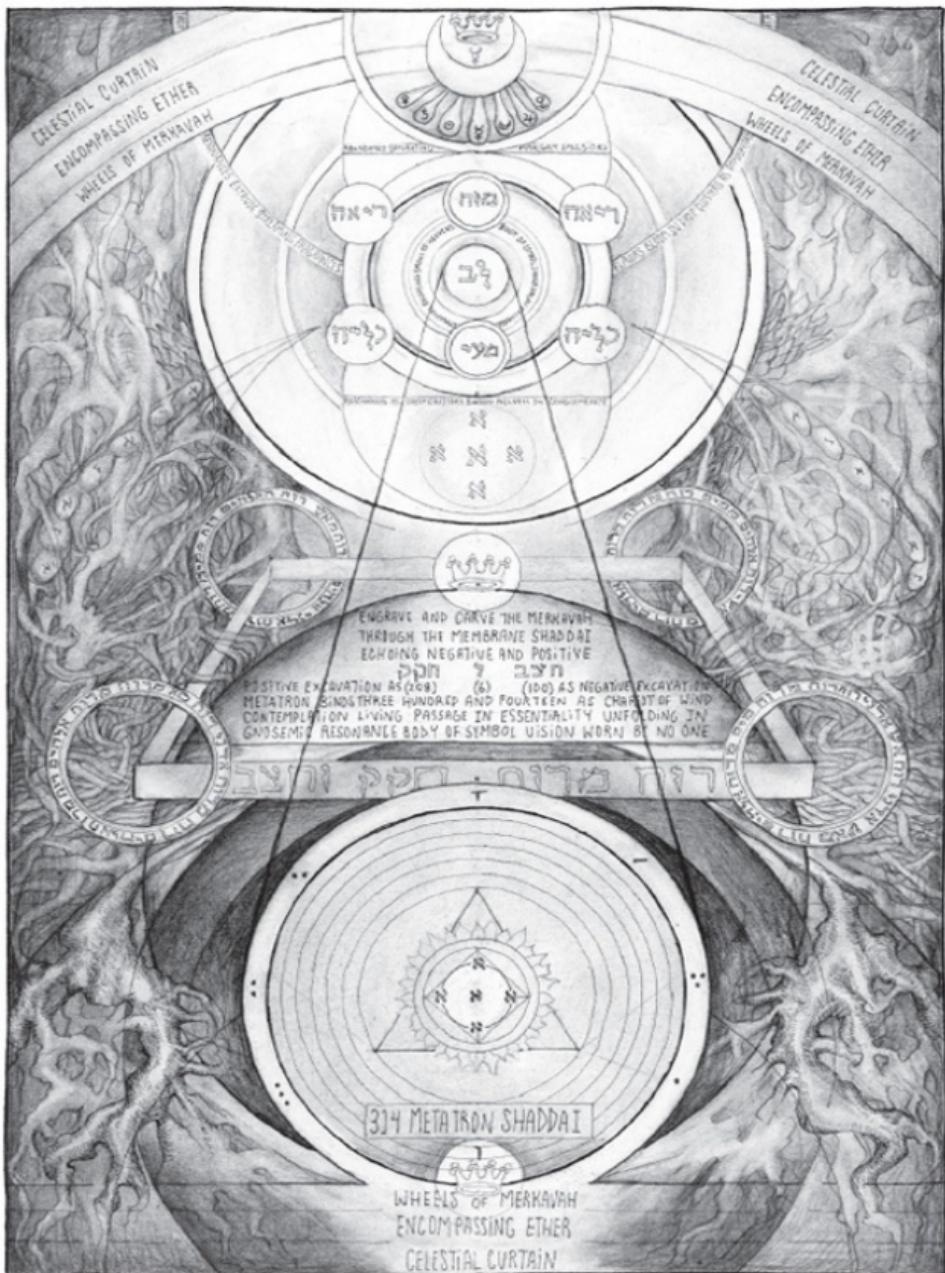
becomes reborn. If the arrow of mind stops anywhere, contemplation is officially over.

Walls that seem impermeable can be permeated by the merkavah, if practice becomes fierce and persistent enough. However, this does not have anything to do with changing outer circumstances. This pursuit is utterly and completely unconcerned with manipulating the world. Here, the mind's value system is poised to make a decisive shift from an all-consuming concern with circumstance to a new vista of concern with open essentiality. The greater concern will always usurp

the lesser, and each practitioner struggles with what is truly important in his or her mind. The good news is that the mystical sensibility can be cultivated, and concern with circumstance fades as concern with essentiality grows. It grows with the longing for release into freedom, which deepens into love for basic space. Love for the silence and beauty of basic space is the mark of the aspiration that sets meaning free.

As gnostic longing matures, meaning is self-liberated into its essential nature, and individual relative meanings are subsumed into the

absolute meaning-fullness of incomprehensible wisdom. We cannot ever grasp wisdom with knowing alone. It dawns as it merges with the open expanse of unknowing in the midst of each moment: where moments are sent off to die within the graveyard of temporal and conceptual limitations. The gnostic impulse seeks to break through the mind's layered shadows to unfurl the beauty of this paradox at the root. Beauty comes into its own, until all appearance exudes it as an alchemical distillate equally suffused indiscriminately.



The alchemical distillation of gnosis rests on recognizing a single spark of the ground within the perceptual field. Through that spark universes collapse and rearise simultaneously. Like a lightning flash, knowing and the known collapse together in a single instant, and infinite sparks follow in the wake of the opening. Each consumes the whole world, yet the world never disappears.

Each spark is an opening of wholeness, and infinite torrents of such openings cascade throughout space. They can be siphoned through

contemplation into mists where the openings accumulate, until all that remains is opening. The clusters move like winds and hover like fogs, raining blessing upon everything. Their cloudlike array defies number, but it all begins with one spark of breakthrough. The first spark invites the canopy of stars through which mind enters its own self-collapse. In this, the light of awareness (AVR = 207) is recognized as the mystery (RaZ = 207).

Without the spark of direct recognition the gnostic path is impossible. However, through the portal of such a spark, the capacity for

continual amazement is boundless. The spark is a glimpse beyond wakeful brightness and unconscious darkness in the “light that darkens by illumination,” as the *Fountain of Wisdom* states. It ripens in the night of unknowing and sends its perfume through the light of day, felt in the secret place where both touch. This is where the light of the full moon can be seen in all its brightness within the dark night of the new moon.

As practice deepens the winds of the ruach become pregnant with drops, as perception’s flavors mix with longing for openness suffused within the

potency of meaning. The fire of aspiration boils the mixture within the space of passing experiences, and fragrances are exuded that invite gnostic intoxication. The great work relies on not grasping after the intoxicating experiences. Yet if boiled intensely enough the sparks ripen and accumulate wildly, and from their accumulation the continuous ground is recognized, and the Tree of Life bears its fruit.

Gnostic intoxication is all-consuming, and it can serve one's practice or it can drag it into a prison of grasping and aversion. Conventional

existence is founded on grasping after pleasure and avoiding pain, and this circuit is precisely what is abandoned when gnostic aspirations are cultivated. Therefore the mind must learn to pass through its intoxications, and must not linger too long within the pleasant aromas of the mixing field. The merkavah must keep flying until it becomes the sky.

Mind is the offerer, and all its phenomena are the offering. The open space into which it is offered is the sole recipient. All three are aspects of a single ground that awakens in the act of surrender, making it clear that mind is

actually offering itself into the uncontainable. Awakening pours itself through its own expanse as that which awakens, and that by which awakening takes place.

Within the quadrisection circle and subset, the merkavah flies at the dissolving cusp of the interior boundary. This has implications that touch all of space. Quadrisection forms as vertical and horizontal axis lines meet, allowing four lines to spread to the corners of infinity. The cardinal directions offer vectors of motion that open everywhere, and thus arrive nowhere in particular. The six

directions (up, down, front, back, right, left) never depart from the expanse. Counted with the meeting point at the center, there are five points that constitute a heh. The letter can be graphically broken down into a dalet (4) on the right side of the letter and a small vav (6) on the lower left. The binding continuum of the ruach is the nail of the vav (6), and the space of open passage is the door of the dalet (4). Together they allude to the Shechinah; with a hidden numerical value unfolding as a secret yud ($6 + 4 = 10$) as pure beginning-ness, always new. The primordial dynamism

symbolized by the yud expresses the full potency of the ten sefirot. The first word of the Bible, *B'Reshit*, alludes to the primordial fountain of the yud. *Reshit* means “beginning,” and its prefix (*beit*) signifies “in” or “with.” The ground is always in and with continual beginning, which multiplies in quadrisected space fourfold (2×2), reflection reflecting through infinity.

The merkavah carries the mind through its obscuring complexes, through the wonders of intoxication, beyond fixed destination. The merkavah is only a gnostic delivery system, fueled by the unbounded

dynamism of B'reshit that is the secret of mercury. A single drop of the mind's secret mercury liberates form, motion, and any subtle resonance. The mercury is nothing other than the mind's own fluidity, therefore its liberating influence is self-liberation.

Since the primary job of the mind is to present the ground, every construct that is self-liberated becomes like a dream that returns into the awareness that dreams it. Self-liberating awareness consumes every disruption with the power to melt the division between bright knowing and dark unknowing. The unborn blaze of secret

mercury is a self-darkening radiance, hinted at in the *Zohar* by the term “lamp of darkness” (*botzina de kardenuta*), which is none other than the light that darkens by illuminating.

As the merkavah flies upon the dissolving cusp of experience, the six directions are swallowed within the singular expanse of quadrisected space. The motion of the ruach is conventionally defined by the dualistic activity of running from and returning to somewhere. Contemplative work strives to recognize the ground of this motion, which poses a shift from motion in space to the motion of space.

As contemplation matures the ground can be isolated, and rests completely alone in its purity. Its nature cannot even be communicated to itself. Plotinus called the realization of this “the flight of the alone to the alone.”

The all-consuming aloneness of the ground is silence, which is the basis of prayer. The prayer is uttered secretly by awareness as it manifests. If mind plunges into the heart of this speaking silence it meets itself face to face; and the knower melts through what is known, leaving only open responsiveness like a mirror. The witness is consumed, along with its

directions and angles of motion. It swallows itself with its own projections, not unlike the mythic Saturn who eats his own progeny.

Three aspects can be considered. Aloneness consumes the illusion of an object, and silence consumes the illusion of a subject. Their mutual dissolution swallows any residue that there was ever a dualistic error from the outset. The merkavah rides whatever remains poised at the cusp of the dissolution. This is the mind's journey to itself. As essentiality is realized, the mind eclipses its own thoughts and perceptions, and they

arise nullified to their own most intimate nature.

Mind must love its aloneness completely, and crave this aloneness like a thirst. But what is it that is alone? There is nothing in mind but responsiveness; it simply mirrors and reflects whatever arises. Binding to the open expanse of responsiveness is called *devekut* (literally “binding”). The deeper *devekut* passes the more the mind is swallowed into its own essential nature, and the more perfectly the fragmented vectors of its motion are absorbed. This equalizes the subject and all its objects. The equalization is

called *hishtavut* (equanimity). It melts the associative chains of contrast into the simplicity of aloneness. It begins as simple love for the tender, heartbroken silent space of things. As love distills its essence all else falls away. The process that isolates the heart of the matter is an aspect of the process called *hitbodedut* (isolation, or alchemical distillation).

The threefold activity of devekut, *hishtavut*, and *hitbodedut* reverses the reflexes that support conceptual habits. Under ordinary circumstances the fluidity of mind (mem/water) flows down into its fabricated constructs, and

the vital life force (shin/fire) blazes up to catalyze action. Binding, equalizing, and isolating basic space reverses the conventional habit-pattern reflexes attributed to these gestures. The gnostic reversal allows fluidity to blaze, and its blaze becomes fluid. The two aspects reflect each other and exchange tendencies, and ultimately coalesce.

As a result of the reversal of tendencies, the fluid light of awareness drips down into the heart from the brain, and the blazing ocean of space rises from within the belly to coalesce with it. This coalescence is symbolized

by the sun and moon in zivug-union. The gestures meet face to face, bind, and form a seal to consummate the union. Once sealed, the zivug rests in primordial essentiality beyond interruption; crystallizing a quintessence from silver and gold through a secret mercury.

The heart-drop quintessence is the primordial clarity of vision. It cannot be made by artificial means. The coalescence of the quintessence is always possible, as everything about it rests prior to the desire to realize it, however, the temporary habits that conceal it have to be unmade. The

resonant winds of poetic beauty are invitations into the secret mercury that guides the merkavah to its native homeland. The winds pass through the layers of obstruction, and navigate motion deep into the luminescent resonances. The prisons of experience open as an array of permeable membranes as primordial beauty overtakes the mind, which passes through itself—into nowhere.

The coalescence of reflective fluidity and radiant dynamism is the heart of contemplative practice. Bright knowing and dark unknowing are equalized in wedded bliss under the

stars to shine with the light of the union. The secret mercury is the innermost motion within cognizance that magnetizes its path toward itself: knowing without ever breaking the seal of unknowability. The reflections in motion and their blaze become inseparable. This is key. Abandoning duality for non-duality is itself a dualistic proposition. One ground drips and blazes, allowing each phenomenal scenario to become a sacrificial gesture, as mind's essential nature flows and shines through itself.

As the zivug of sun and moon is sealed by mercury, a diamond-like

crystal of absolute purity is formed by the coalescence. The crystal is seated upon the throne of the heart, and blazing fluidity shines clearly through every possible channel of vision. It passes through the eyes and out all five senses. The quality of dissolving scintillation cuts through any reified construct, beyond any fixation on individual autonomy, as the concepts of birth and death are revealed as hollow, baseless rumors.

The triads of neshama-ruach-nefesh (NaRaN) and briah-yetzirah-assiah (BeYeA) pass into self-collapse as the ground that presents them usurps the

conceptual reflexes. The supernova of identity swallows all notions of separate worlds and souls, and yet the phenomena continue. Nothing is taken away as the conceptual reflexes dissolve because there was never anything substantial about them to begin with. Phenomena stand-in-dissolving because both their arising and their passing away are rooted in a single magical gesture, crystallized as the primordial clarity that is already innate to awareness.

The dynamism of realization corresponds to the *chayah* or wisdom aspect of mind, attributed to *chochmah*.

Chayah is innately self-liberating. The thrust of its radiance is instantly responsive. Responsiveness is the binah aspect inherent in the chayah, and it becomes literally anything and everything. This confluence of ultimate mirrorlike responsiveness and essential dynamism is the secret of the mercury that guides the merkavah. However, in itself there is absolutely nothing substantial. What can be reflected or moved as the ground of En Sof glimpses itself?

Manifestation cannot be reduced to a mechanical process, like a product manufactured on an assembly line. Its

display manifests spontaneously and without cause like a lightning flash. There is no timeline to creation. The openness of space does not exist “before” creative activity fills it. Creative dynamism is inherent in space, and vice versa. The womb of binah is inherent in the seed of chochmah, as luminosity is inherent with the expanse of space. Light is not separate from the open vista through which it travels. Space always conforms to motion because it is always space that is moving. It is because of this deep understanding of light and space that those who ride the

merkavah can literally pass through the soaring motion of contemplation into infinity.

The equalizing union of light and space cuts to the root of the tzimtzum, and frees each ring of its projected boundaries from their own reductive limitations. Kabbalistic texts describe the process of original tzimtzum beginning with a dimensionless point at the heart of En Sof. The light contracts away to the “boundary” of infinity, which is of course limitless, thereby rendering the use of the term “boundary” as symbolic of the capacity for relative distinction. The boundaries

implied by the tzimtzum process, like the hierarchy of worlds and sefirot, only pertain to relative distinctions. The absolute is always only En Sof. Therefore, the capacity for relative distinctions asserts a vacated space within a symbolic circular boundary, whose circumference is beyond location. The boundary isolates what can be contained in a relative sense from uncontainable absolute essentiality. This poses the root paradox. Once the vacated space of the relative is established, the light of the absolute assumes the appearance of various stages, which are arrayed in a

straight line (the *kav yosher*), which is the basis of the sefirot.

Without the benefit of a living tradition the textual information would be taken at face value, and one might conclude that En Sof literally withholds and restrains its infinite light. This is of course ridiculous, because the light radiates wholeness itself. The light of En Sof is a radiance of simple unity, so how can it be displaced? Jewish teaching is firm in its position that the divine is perfectly whole and cannot be interrupted. How can unity be complete and yet appear divided between containment and the

uncontainable?



The problem is compounded after the original tzimtzum. The common view of kabbalists is emanationism, which interprets each layer of light deposited within the vacated space as less pure and more restrained than the one that preceded it. Literal belief in emanationist doctrine is the greatest barrier to gnostic breakthrough when utilizing the kabbalistic system, and is equally problematic for both Orthodox Jews as well as Hermetic occultists.

Kabbalistic texts hold that a kav yosher (straight ray of light) shines from En Sof back into the vacated

space after it has contracted, and layers of the residue of the original luminosity combine with the light to form vessels. The vessels accept and reflect the reintroduced light back to En Sof, providing the basis of containment. This reflexive action is like a great mirror that produces variable distortions. It is within this process that the grand metaphor can be glimpsed, and a radical shift of interpretation can take place. The symbols themselves are profoundly useful, and need not be discarded. However, the mechanistic and substantializing view with which the

symbols are misinterpreted should be highly scrutinized. The profound mystical view shifts the focus from the progression of lights and vessels to the essential nature of the light itself. This shift represents the breakthrough necessary to pass beyond intellectual conceptualization into a deep consideration of the primordial. The self-serving solipsism of religious mythology falls away on its own once mysticism has shed the need for it.

Questioning the essential nature of the Aur En Sof sets out to do precisely what Jewish religious authorities warn against: to contemplate god in its

innermost essence. The halakhic ruling of Rabbi Yitzach Diltash added to early editions of the *Zohar* is a perfect example of this. It states that it is absolutely forbidden to delve into the nature of keter (and beyond). The exoteric religious reasons for asserting this rule don't apply in any way to free gnostic contemplation, and examining them is irrelevant to this topic in the extreme. One must choose between the dogmas of religious authority and radical contemplative work. In Jewish law it is absolutely forbidden to inquire into the essential nature of god—so what? The very thing that religious

authority considers heresy is the open door to contemplation, if the fearful mythology is taken out of the equation. Maybe that is not an accident.

The original displacement and constriction of the tzimtzum, the paradox of its vacancy, and the reintroduction of light in measured stages are all symbols for how awareness grapples with the paradox of relative expression. However, this set of mystical symbols can be just as misinterpreted by humanism as it can by exoteric religious mythology. Leaving behind the creator-god mythology, inquiry into the original

essential nature returns the mind back prior to its conceptual circumstance. This return should never be confused with any process within human psychology. The return points to the essential nature of the mind rather than its functioning. Experience, which is the basis of psychology, cannot ever understand or reconcile its essential nature. Humanism is limited by the scope of psychological patterns, their archetypes, and the causal habits that define mental functions. Mysticism is freedom from the limiting concern with these factors, which grows as psychological concerns are outgrown.

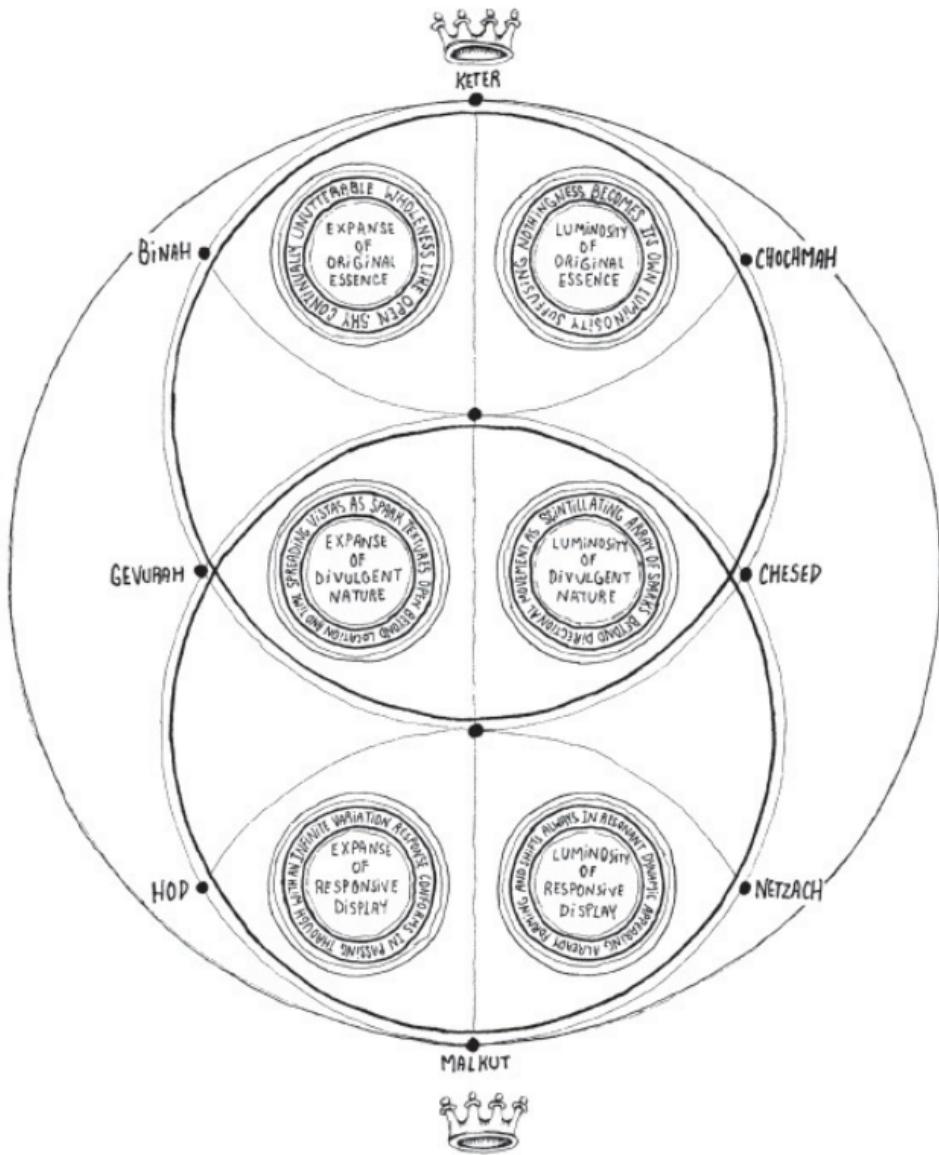
The longing to recognize essentiality opens the conceptual shells that restrict it. Just the desire to contemplate this matter renders the mind contemplative. As the mind's aspirations cease to lend support to unquestioned relative conceptuality, it begins to actively undermine this conceptualizing. The mind begins to inquire about the luminosity of space in itself, rather than perseverate on its role in the mechanical exchanges that articulate its functions of filling and surrounding conceptual containers. It begins to consider space as a ubiquitous medium for the permeation of its forms. It then

mixes its sense of permeation with longing and gnostic aspiration. This opens the field of perception to deep, innate scintillating dissolution, which is a key to the cultivation of all gnostic functions.

The paradox culminates at the cusp of keter. As keter's paradox of apparently contained uncontainability opens, its echoes allow the ground to permeate through every variation of phenomena. The secret quintessence of the ground equalizes being and nonbeing, and seeps through each ring of constriction and reduction, liberating the axioms that capture pure

awareness within experience. Each so-called impasse becomes permeable, and the doors swing open. Then, the very concept of a door is brought into question. There is nothing to pass through. The dark sparkle of non-experience becomes recognized as inherent within every perceptual state. This can only awaken within the context of dedicated spiritual practice, yet for many it may seem like mere philosophy. We get the universe we deserve. A mechanical view yields a mechanical universe, and a self-liberating view yields a continuous stream of luminous nothingness.

serving as an offering, the offerer, and that which accepts. As the awakening ground is purified the universe arises as the voice of its own speech, and manifestation becomes equal to awareness.



The ten sefirot

SMOKE OF BEASTS FLESH IS ORDINARY CONCEPTUALITY PASSING TIDES OF BLOOD IN BROKEN SKIES



3

THE PREGNANT SACRIFICIAL BEAST

THE WONDERLAND FOREST of blazing nothingness is a sacrificial beast, a pregnant beast, filled with worlds and souls. Conventional reality is the ash of its smoldering corpse. Poetic resonance is the rising smoke of its burning flesh. The mass of its reality is seized along with its shadow,

unreality. They mix and become swollen with phantoms, its skin excreting the sweat of three dimensions moving in a linear continuum.

The beast is slain by words of prayer, which carry corrosive number-letter codes throughout its body. Before it splits open and is consumed upon the fiery altar of sacrifice, its reflexes must be caught, bound, and subdued. Its heart blood can then be extracted as an offering, pulled from an emulsion of filth and piety, falling to neither side.

The vowel drops of the words enter at the intersection point of opaque lies and translucent truths, where semi-

formless froth hovers between the elements, spontaneously discharging poisons where the heart blood is concealed. The poison of broken universes turns empty reflections into vicious golems that have been driven insane; causing them to kill, steal, rape, and trade merit for vile excess. These shadow beings are rendered helpless by the words of prayer. Dazed and near motionless, they dissolve into the ether. The haze of the letter permutations unmakes the distortion of the life force at the cusp of the gates, but its purity cannot be diminished even one iota. The mixture is then

boiled in its own agitation until the quintessential heart blood can be isolated. However, its extraction can only be accomplished prior to the effects of its toxins.

Note: This chapter presents a textual artifact of the fourth and fifth stages of the progression of contemplative mysticism (as articulated in the first chapter). The imagery might at times appear raw and untempered, but should be taken as a spontaneous expression within an ecstatic register. An author's recitation of the text was used as the basis for a piece of electro-acoustic

music created by John Zorn and Bill Laswell, issued under the title *The Dream Membrane* (Tzadik Records, 2014).

As the dull weight of worldly power is subsumed in the feast of poetics, the matrix of letters is reborn. It speaks itself through renewed permutations in each detail of its utterance. Through the dissolving haze of broken static conceptions, its animating vowels coalesce drops of the crystalline dew. Their multiplicity fills immensity with pure sparkling illusion, constituting a single all-permeable drop-body whose form consists of infinite en-worlding

peripheries that resonate endless echoing skins, each hungry to take itself as autonomous and “real.”

At the ultimate intersection of is and is-not the unique root tikkun for each corruption solves the riddle of each displacement. At that place where nothingness caresses conceptual solidity, its skins dissolve back through the ground with which they were clothed. This seals the return its naked echoes never left.

The grim dull flesh of the beast is the hiding place of countless sparkling vowel-letter fields. They abide in a

secret self-concealing tenderness, and can only be discovered by true heartbroken longing. The roar of silence can be heard to echo within all things, riding the razor's edge of the in-between, as sky and earth collapse into a single sacrificial gesture. It offers complete dissolution in the instant each moment is coagulated. In that great space the offering is sealed, released, and consumed.

The residue of the fractured shells from old discarded beliefs are ready to be offered up and consumed by basic space. Sparks pour out from the shattering, as it saturates space in its

dissolving. As the small meanings of things become subsumed into great vastness, light outshines its containment, and immensity prevails.

Through the portal of yesod, the ruach opens to mix the spectrum. Oceanic blue spiked with torrents of blood red and blinding white shines through tissued veils of violent magentas, deep black-purple depths, and scintillating flecked-golden shimmering crested greens. Each color nuance is a metaphor; a feeling tone resonance, indescribable in the depth of its psycho-emotive power. Each layer is a sacrifice, gathering to release in its

own flavor register of melting circumstance.

The flayed beast cracks open, its steaming organ membranes liquefying to rise as color-tinged vapor, offering the intoxication of hues to the recesses of space. The fumes thicken and glow with a faint rainbow sheen, breaking into pixilated drops that hang in the five root colors.

Aloneness dissolves the subject-construct, and silence dissolves the object-construct. They meet as no-concept, in an all-over bath of wonder. The blaze of secret mercury rides the

razor's edge, distributed evenly in all things. Sky and earth coalesce each moment as a sacrificial gesture. A crystal tunnel carries the heart-drop quintessence into the en-worldment of vision. Its path spreads clarity from nowhere to no-where, touching nothing. Each drop-universe dawns as infinite overlapping permeabilities, suffusing wholeness by complete and total responsiveness. Its fingerprint is the mirror of specificity according to need. This is a dream of itself awakening. The single reflexive dream is one dreaming itself as zero, as the zero dreams itself as one.

Drawing fullness cannot add, nor can consuming dissolution subtract. The field of space is both your own body and the body through which all worlds manifest. It is the expanse of tzimtzum, and the ultimate sacrifice. Through its own most intimate fire everything offers and consumes itself at once as a true sacrificial universe.

The beast obstructs its own realization threefold; its bones and flesh form its inner and outer aspects, with its blood mediating between. All three become permeable as the beast is laid out as a sacrifice. Its lungs are Saturn and Jupiter. Its kidneys are

Mars and Venus. Its belly and head are the Sun and Moon. The planetary sacrifice tempers and shapes the secret mercury in its heart, which is the heart of the offering. It can vanquish the tyranny of stupid animal power. It can thwart manipulation and harm. It can subjugate the hunger of beings that hurt defenseless creatures. It can break addiction to stupor and the superficial exhilaration of fantasy. It can consume and excrete the reification of profound considerations. It can purify the titillation that distorts spirituality. It can release the noose of mediocrity. It can save from self and other. It can

deliver the hall of mirrors to a temple of doorways. After the delivery is made, the work is up to each alone.

The fiery sacrifice of organs is like a supernova of stars or collapse of planets through open space. All aggregates are magnetized into one cataclysmic activity breaking through outer and inner aspects into sublime openness. Purity can always break through the dream of impurity. This is the ultimate future of the kosher pig; as motion arises through the wake of its vestigial temporality, presented prior to that which manufactures containment. The fairy tale of solidity

evaporates in the original condition it ironically never left; a continual state of breakthrough obliterating the klipot where no interruption takes root.

All klipot are primordially pure from the outset, and serve as the ultimate offering. Impurity is an opinion offered as food. The body of the beast swells with impulses, and its forbidden flesh is eaten with impunity when spontaneously realized as intrinsically pure. Gnostic intoxication is the feast of a kosher pig. What is digested are the six directions moving nowhere through single-pointed flight, recognized directly within the mixing

field. Its motion is fueled by the toxic impulses that are magnetized, bound, and subdued—as the skins of reification are pierced, their momentum slaughtered, and the quintessence sipped.

The lungs of the beast respire and the kidneys purify, in the promise of a diamond coalescing between its head and belly. The brilliance of its reflections can outshine all residues, clarity passing through the hall of mirrors like water poured into the ocean. Swells and swirls of universes glow like a thousand suns in colors beyond the ultraviolet spectrum,

forming the crown of the dead king upon the head of the pig. Its brain exudes blazing nectar through the channels of its hairs, and it has a beard and stands as a man.

Upon standing, carried by wheels under the carriage of its body, the crowned sacrificial swine comes face to face with the bride of space. She is all mothers, daughters, and sisters. She descends under the wedding canopy with her crowned mate and consummates the holy union. The intoxication of the act resounds through all space equally at this very instant. The sweat of union fills every

pore and bathes every cell of the body of infinite worlds.

Each becomes a redeemer; a self-sacrificial pig messiah. And thus tikkun olam begins in earnest. We face our resistances head on, open to the spark of perfection disguised as imperfection. The feast of the kosher pig consumes identity and identification. Its flesh is called “garden.” Its motion is called “Eden.” Their union is celebrated in the enjoyment of the feast. Tensions between movement and display are personified by the serpent, the waveform viceroy, whose undulating

freqencies usher phenomena through the self-darkening radiance of the waking dream.

The sacrificial beast emerges from the heart of its own five-organ array. Head and belly are flanked by the left and right kidneys and lungs. From within, a blazing halo emerges to hold the organs apart like an altar. Each thought, movement, feeling, and form is such a beast. Each presents its organ body splayed in the light of aspiration. All that is needed is a spark from the deep to ignite its luster.

The fire caresses the beast's

yellowing skin, passes through its red meat, and smolders its white bones. All three are usurped into smoke to fill the blue sky, suffusing the five worlds with the meaning and intention of the sacrifice, each according to its level. The three sides—right, left, and center—are configured as Adam on the right, Chavah on the left, and between them is the enveloping Nachash embracing all equally. Through it the wedding is consummated, and Chavah copulates twice.

As the blood of conceptions collapses through itself, it spreads through an unending field of sparks

like a canopy of stars. Each side of the triune mind echoes through hexagonal patterns in fivefold array, spinning and spiraling as its implications reproduce fluid wonder in tides and pools, calling awareness to stand erect as its own dissolving body. Unfolding and infolding in simultaneity extrudes meaning in naked form. All directions sing the hymn of directionlessness, refusing to be held in conception, like an intoxicating vapor that will not settle into the dullness of experience.

Ordinary conceptuality is the animal of sacrifice. It is laid upon the altar of contemplation with the heat of

aspiration blazing below it. Conceptual associations boil, and subtle impressions rise. They dissipate, and the fumes usurp the winds of relative meaning. As the fumes swallow the associative connections responsible for deriving relative meanings from objects conceived by a conceptualizing subject, superabundant waves of incomprehensible vastness consume any sense of order. Its streams release mists of resonance, hovering beyond the grasp of identity and its fears and hopes. Then, the pearlescent sheen of wonder breaks through, as a display of profound rootless beauty. Each drop

opens a gate. Each stream of drops leads back to its heart, and each becomes a pathway for one drop: the universal medicine for the disease of conceptual fragmentation.

The smoldering flesh of the beast is lost within billowing clouds of letters and vowels of all colors and sizes. Nothing is seen through the profusion, which eclipses the parade of projections. Swooning vapors take over as the beast dissolves. Born for slaughter, raised for offering, the outline that lay upon the flaming coals is a wafting set of echoes that resound through space like a phantom thunder.

The residue of meaning settles randomly into thick airs as they clear, amorphously clustering to evaporate in a dizzying array of dying implications.

Said in another way: Fire is applied below the container of earthly thought, and clouds arise in the interior of the vessel. The muddy soil at its bottom bubbles, churns, mixes, rises, and overflows with clouded poison airs. It saturates itself, overflows, and bathes itself with caustic volatility like a bath. It draws toxic atmospheres that intoxicate in six stages. From the intoxication cognizance is extracted beyond the mind that becomes

intoxicated. It stands alone with no second. The soil, clouds, winds, and fluid volatility are eclipsed within its wholeness, and a single drop fills immensity. Its meaning eclipses the parade of its own projections. This is the poison nectar that is also a medicine.

As the Bible states: “My food, an offering made by fire, is a sweet savor to offer in its due season. This is the fire offering which you shall bring unto YHVH for a continual all-burnt offering” (Numbers 28).

Endless nectar fields present

B'reshit indiscriminately in the cleared smoke, as dead-end alleys open as limitless permeabilities. Sacramental participation in appearance is understood as radical responsibility for the manifestation of awareness. The living flesh of phenomena hangs on the scale of balance: redemption of a deadening dream that frees itself on contact, without ever leaving or entering in.

The ancient dream of a crowned sacrificial pig standing with its bride is shot through with infinite drops suffusing the whole body of manifestation. Its impression resonates

through the blood of space, circulated by winds, and is sweated through its skins. The messianic animal impulse is excreted as the secret mercury absorbs its essential virtues, and the assertion is carried to the four directions by the wheels of the merkavah. Metatron holds the celestial curtain open to unbolt its passage. A blazing ocean stands-in-dissolving, and the chariot disappears in its wake.

Invite meaning into itself, to increase as the bloom of impressions overflows. Each saturation whispers a song of shadows cast through the membranes of position. When the king

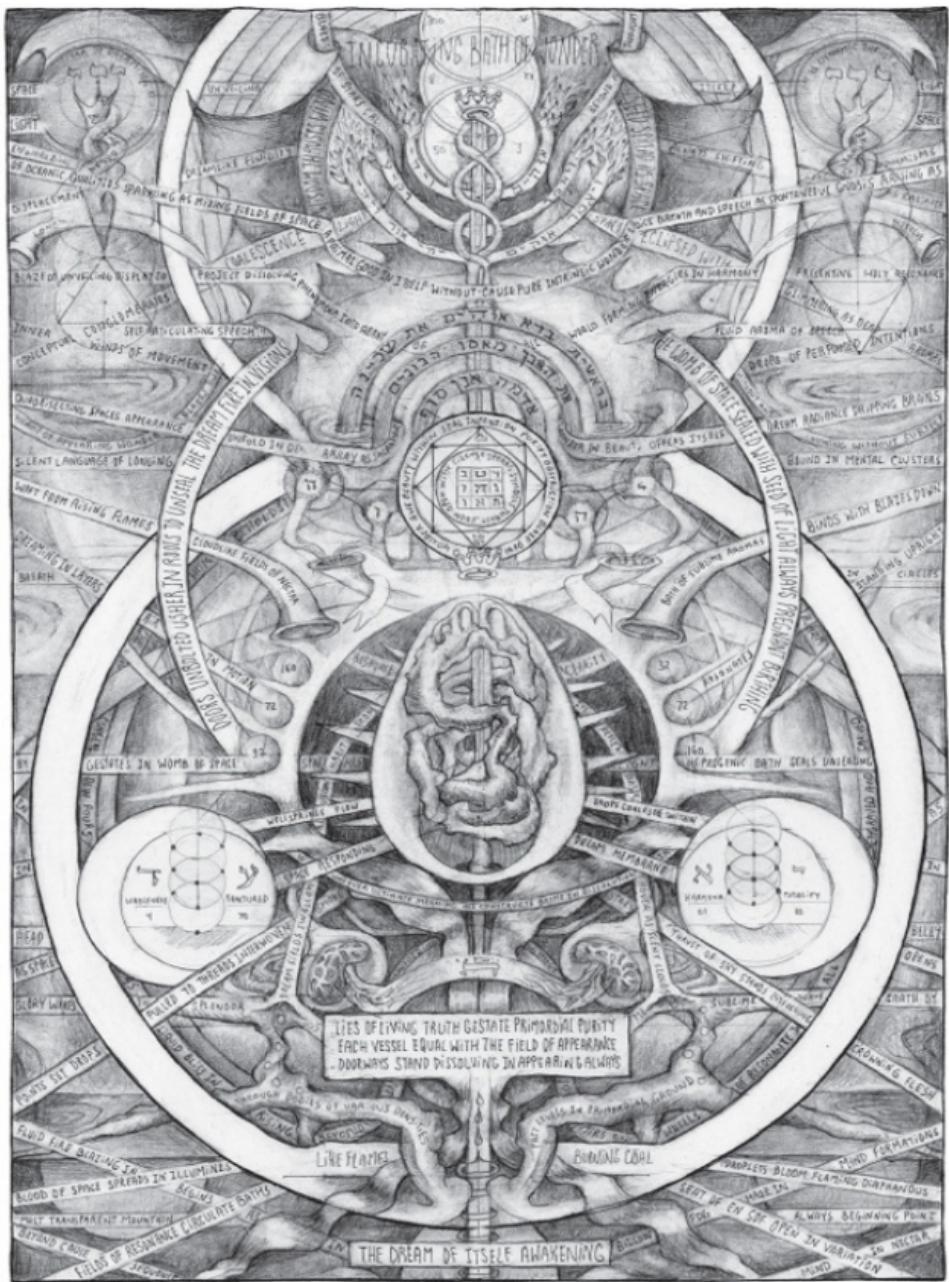
is dethroned by the self-creation of the kingdom there is no longer a need for a king. Fullness returns to the purity it never left.

This is a dream that dreams itself awake, restless in the upheaval of its qualities. Mists of crystalline dew collect in swirls and streams of unfabricated primordiality. Each cluster is a drop, and each drop spreads a universe; a crown in the head and a kingdom to walk upon, raining, mixing, binding, dissolving, and churning in endless permutations. The lightning flash of appearance is its offering.

The point does not enter or leave the seal of its peripheries. Their bond stands as a mountain, collapsing through the crystal tunnel to fill the wedding chamber. A single crown shines darkly within all heads.



Magical seal nullifying relative identity



4

GATE OF THE WEDDING CHAMBER

The serpent's head is reborn as its tail is consumed, the harvest is reaped within the fallow field, and the light of the full moon is seen on the night of the new moon.

THE ROOT PARADOX of manifestation is that its ultimate ground is uncontainable essentiality, yet it continually presents itself as an endless parade of what seems to be contained phenomena. This paradox is not only the basis of its appearance, but is also the doorway to gnostic realization.

A voice of silence ceaselessly utters the speech of manifestation. What is offered is the awakening force of the ground called *chashmal* (literally “speaking silence”). Chashmal cracks reality open to spontaneously dissolve the coarse assumptions of its solidity,

so that substanceless wisdom luminosity can shine through the haze of ripening perceptions.

What is presented within awakening is what was already there; the uncreated basic space of illumination. The space of light is referred to as the Avir Kadmon or Avira, or primordial aether. Avir Kadmon is the original purity of En Sof, and is never diminished or restrained no matter what manifestation appears to do or how it is perceived. The Avira is the equalizing essence that is awakened by the chashmal. Avira and chashmal are aspects of the one ground that awakens,

and is that through which awakening is stirred. The uninterrupted continuum of the ground is the basis of all mysticism, and magic as well. The *Fountain of Wisdom* states:

What first emerges by the light darkened by illuminating, which is the Avir Kadmon, is chashmal. Avir Kadmon breaks open, and from the rupture voice issues forth. The voice spreads and increases as twenty-six myriad of myriads of light. The light thrusts a radiance, and from radiance a luster, and from luster a light. From light is a flaming fire,

giving off sparks flashing and spreading, increasing in the power of the strength of their size. There was never a solid base for them to stand upon.

Radiance is reflected back through infinity by its own luster. The radiance gives itself over as the projection of its luminosity, and the luster acts as a mirror. However, the mirror can also trap the light, and hold it as a vessel. Since vessels are formed by the thickening of the original luminosity, both aspects share a common denominator that is the equalizing wisdom that dawns as sparks within the

perceptual field, wherein the opacity of appearance is outshined by its own innate primordial dynamism.

Avir Kadmon swallows each instance of its own reification, self-liberating each coagulation on contact without leaving even one residual thought that any “thing” ever existed. Light collides and dissolves through itself, passing to nowhere from nowhere. The field of breakthrough is always open to swallow whatever seems to have coagulated. Of course the image of thickened, coagulated vessels is a conceptual contrivance, and in truth there is only the Avira

disguised as the five worlds and everything that appears within them.

The phrase “breaks open” in the quote directly refers to the volatility of B’reshit, which continually offers the dynamic thrust of creativity. The thrust always offers an equal potential to lose itself within habituation or find itself in awakening. The appearance of the universe is a perpetual invitation for the fabricated separations imposed between things to dissolve back through their ground. This is the main aspiration of practice, which depends upon remembering the essential meaning of appearance. That

recognition is alpha and omega: the central meaning of incarnate life.

Chashmal can be broken down into the root words *chash* (silent) and *mal* (to speak). The root *mal* also denotes cutting (see Aryeh Kaplan, *Inner Space*, 168). The thickenings of the habit fields of conceptual association that are taken as solid are literally cut through, both in the guise of a perceiver as well as what is perceived. The wisdom of chashmal enters through the membrane of the klipot nogah, which passes deep into the field of phenomena as a set of open possibilities. Within the field anything

can happen, from reduction to the greatest coarseness to the greatest subtlety. Once “heard,” the chashmal calls the life force of each klipah back to the ground it never left, as light cascades across its own expanse.

The dulling thickets of endless associative constructs always offer awakening, and never withhold their bounty. Only the mind can forsake this treasure by ignoring the possibility. That potential overlaps each deluded moment, as the ground continues to support both its own degradation and awakening. At the perpetual juncture where meaning is either degraded or

glorified, the chashmal speaks wisdom or stays concealed in silence.

The speech of phenomena disappears within the same space it appears in. Its letter combinations are both filled and surrounded by that space, bathing each facet in open singularity. In *Sefer Yetzirah* the speech of phenomena is presented as a living book, manifested by the process of “engraving and carving” black letters on a white page. The white page is the Avira, and the black letters are the reflections that appear separate, just like the primordial radiance and its own luster. Engraving fills each letter,

and carving allows each impression to be distinct from the surrounding continuum. Engraving establishes the positive space within the vessel of the letter, and carving removes the negative space around the letter. Together they form a coherent impression that seals the phenomena beyond seemingly dualistic aspects, which are both only the “back and front” of a single gesture.

אַלְּגָיָר

דָּאוֹר עַדְפָּנָל

CHASHMAL

DIRECT

RADIANCE

REFLECTED LUSTRE
TZIMTZUM

דָּאוֹר עַדְפָּנָל

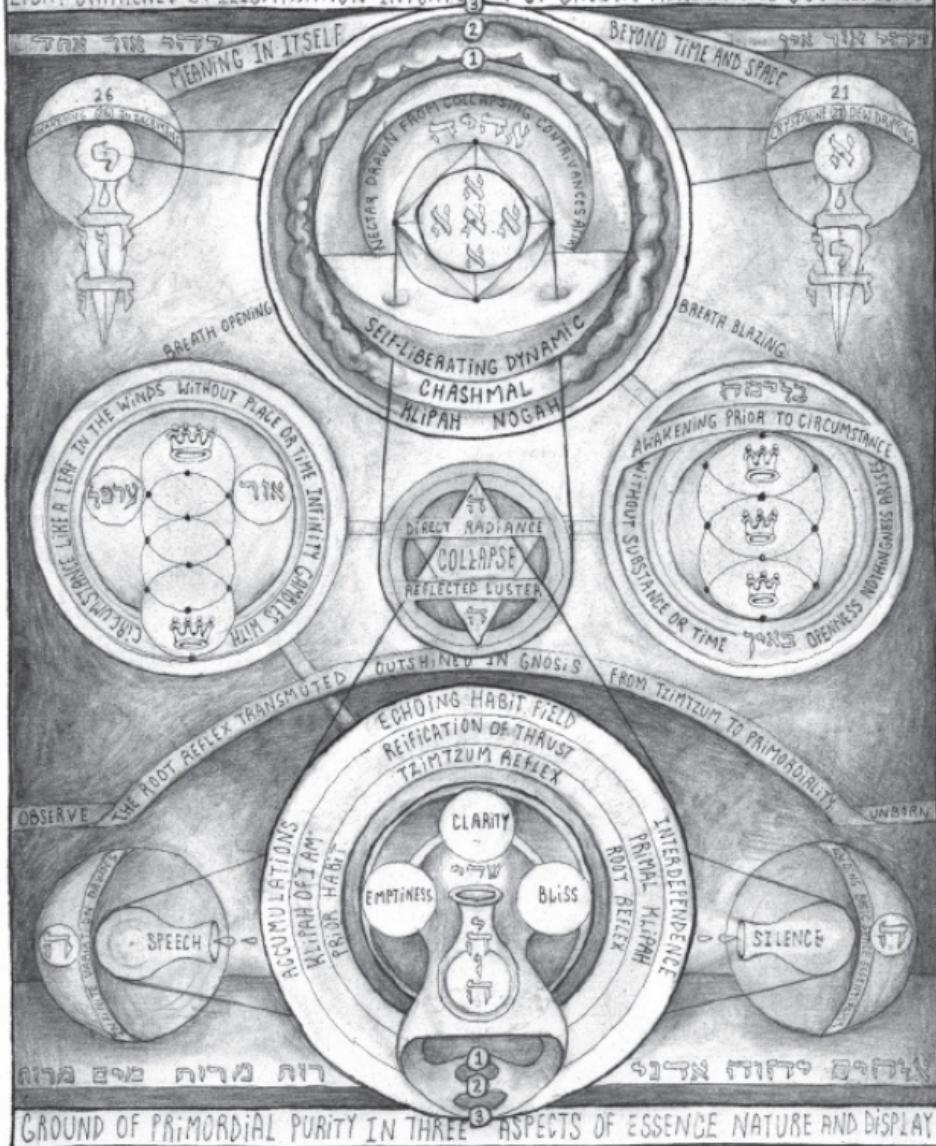
אַלְּגָיָר

Chashmal breaking through

The numerical value of the phrase “engrave and carve” (ChaQaQ V’ChaTzaB) equals 314. This gematria is shared by the name of the guide of all practitioners through the dream membrane: the great prince Metatron. His main portal is yesod, where the marriage of the middle six sefirot and malkut is sealed. The gematria of 314 also corresponds to the divine name of yesod where the marital partners meet, which is Shaddai (ShaDaY). Metatron is the inner mentor of all contemplators who ride the merkavah, and through Shaddai the ground he points us to is discovered. Our work joins him

through the gate of yesod, as the union of motion and display is consummated. This wedding is inherent in our own awakening, and cannot be reduced to either an outer aspect of manifestation or a mere inner transformation. The name *Shaddai* breaks through the dualistic division of inner and outer, and is spontaneously evoked together with Metatron's name. Together the two names yield 628: the gematria of "his birthright."

LIGHT DARKENED BY ILLUMINATION INTOXICANT OF GNOSTIC AWAKENING SUCKLES LONG



The words *engrave* (ChaQaQ: 208) and *carve* (ChaTzaB: 100) equal 308 without the vav (and) between them. This gematria is shared with the word *se'ach* (meditation). Thus the engraving and carving of permuted letters constitute a living process that invites meditative absorption. When understood as equal to the meditative continuum of the ruach, the vav (6) is added to the sum of the words equaling the 314 mentioned above. This is like the seal that binds the practitioner to his or her own redemptive process.

Whirling torrents of letter permutations engrave and carve space,

animated by the vowels that breathe life into the letter structures. The result is a living field of engraving and carving that is self-liberated upon awakening. The metaphor of the merkavah dissolving into space as it flies points to the same realization. Space is the Shechinah: womb of both the white of the page and every letter and permutation. On this topic, the gnostic text “Thunder, Perfect Mind” states:

I am the mother of my father, the sister of my husband, and he is my offspring.

This verse refers directly to the Shechinah: the heart of contemplation. The Shechinah is what is contemplated, what contemplates, as well as the activity of contemplation. She is the basic space of En Sof that radiates as the infinite variation of endless reflection, instantly adapting in response to any possible condition without ever leaving her original primordial nature.

As both the filling and surrounding space of every construct, it can be said that the Shechinah is the mother of light. Her openness is the secret (RaZ = 207) of light (AVR = 207) that cannot

be separated from the infinite (En Sof = 207). Her open vista accompanies the formative motion of creativity in whatever it does, so she becomes a sister to light in all its modes of appearing. Whatever arises is a display of the light's motion, and the space of that display is her as well, and so it is considered her offspring. The magic of the Shechinah is that she does not change her essential nature between her roles. This can be studied in two unions that span the sefirot:

The upper union:

Father yudketer/chochmah/primordial dynamism

Mother hehbinah

basic space
(inherent to
dynamism)
responsive

The lower union:

Husband vav middle six

formative
motion arises
as qualities
presentatio
display

Bride hehmalkut

The conventional logic is that the mother precedes the child, and is the cause of the child's existence. However, in order for a mother to actually be a mother there must be a child. Therefore the designation of

mother is dependent upon the child. This reverses the expected cause and effect. The so-called cause (mother) is understood to depend on the so-called effect (child) for its designation, which renders the effect as a cause. Considering the fluidity with which the reversal is understood cuts through causality and allows the mystery of the continuum to outshine its coordinates.

The same fluidity applied to breaking through causal designations can be applied to the universe and perception. How would we know that there was a universe at all unless it entered somehow into perceiving? It is

assumed that the universe precedes what perceives it, and that the perceiving mind is born into a universe that has prior existence, and allows it to exist. Therefore the universe seems to be the cause and perceiving is its effect. However, the effect of perceiving becomes the cause of the universe because of the necessity of the universe having to be perceived in order to be known at all. Therefore the perceiving becomes the cause and the universe becomes its effect. Like the *Sefer Yetzirah* states: “Their end is imbedded in their beginning, and their beginning in their end, like a flame in a

burning coal" (1:7).

If the seed of awareness impregnates the womb of its own expanse, is it a parent to its own thoughts? Which is cause and which is effect? How do mental phenomena indicate any coherent authorship? Why would it be assumed that there is a thinker prior to the thought? Is identity not designated by the thinking alone? Do you exist before the thought that you exist?

The nontheistic view held here assumes that creativity does not require a prior divine entity to pull its strings. Creative activity is uncaused,

sourceless, and spontaneous. The *Fountain of Wisdom* states: “Only that which generates itself can be called truly existent.” Consideration of the magic of spontaneous uncaused creativity nullifies the linear causal progression, because a thing cannot create itself. In order to create itself a thing would have to exist before the act of creation to do the creating. This is impossible, and contemplation of the scenario allows a break in conceptuality.

The remedy for linear causality is a return to the open space “prior to” manifestation, without rejecting the

display of its phenomena. The razor's edge that equalizes form and formlessness can be realized in that space, no matter what seems to arise. Each mental construct can be taken as a body, and each body has five functions symbolized by five inner organs. Each organ corresponds to an alchemical function.

Each fivefold collection of functions is the pregnant beast laid upon the fiery altar of sacrifice in contemplative practice, where the body surrenders to the fire of wisdom. As each functional unit is caught, bound, and consumed its life force is extracted, and allowed to

dissolve in the same basic space that presents it. Space is a complete undifferentiated body that appears in the paradox of differentiation. No construct ever leaves space even for a moment. Therefore the sacrifice of the space-body marks the return to what it actually never left. The return is the sacrificial offering: its fire is sheer aspiration, and its rising smoke is the perfume of poetic resonance. Each moment of awakening enacts this scenario.

The fivefold organ system that constitutes a contemplative body can be applied to either the macrocosm or

the microcosm, but it doesn't really matter in the greater sense of the work. The main point is that each construct, whether vast or tiny, can be unmade in the midst of its apparent relative functioning. It doesn't matter how the construct was made, as long as it can be unmade in the recognition of the essential nature of its life force. The assumption of independent existence that is imputed to the construct is the actual animal of sacrifice. This is the true meaning of the temple sacrifices described in the five books of the Torah.

The inner organs of the fivefold

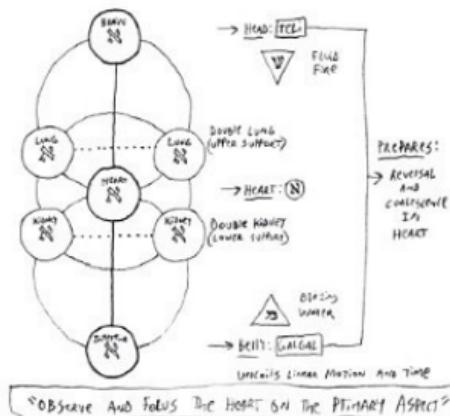
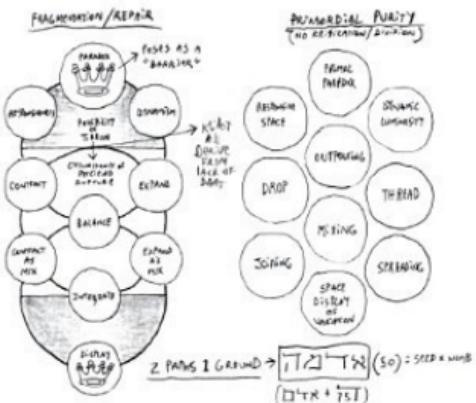
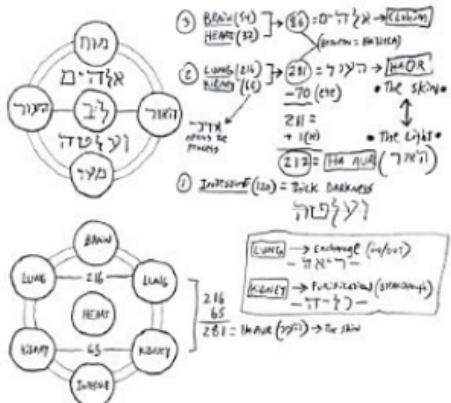
body of each mental construct mirror the senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight. Here they are listed in direct correspondence:

1. The kidneys are the symbol of purification, wherein opacity opens into translucence. The breakthrough happens within direct perceptual contact, and corresponds with the sense of touch.
2. The intestines extract an ever-increasing potential for growth, releasing life force from captivity within limitation. They correspond to the sense of taste that distinguishes between

nutrition and decay.

3. The lungs exchange dim, dull reflexes for clear, noble gnostic virtues. This corresponds with the sense of smell, which delights in the bright perfume of the breath of gnosis that permeates everything. It is within this bath that equalization unfolds.
4. The noble virtues are circulated by the heart, which circulates its resonance to suffuse every cell and impulse. One can listen deeply to the secrets of its silent speech within that resonance, which corresponds to hearing.
5. Clarity illuminates meaning

within the brain, corresponding to sight. From its luminosity all things are reborn.



These five functions also correspond to the aspects of contemplative practice articulated in chapter 1, in the following manner:

- 0. The intellectual appreciation of view
- 1. Purification/kidneysbreaking
 - through resistant barriers
- 2. Extraction/intestine increase of the profusion of possibility
- 3. Exchange/lungs equanimity as consummate fullness
- 4. Scintillation/heart gnostic intoxication and bliss-resonance

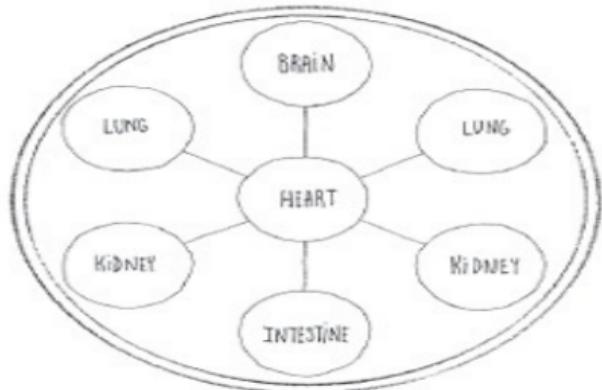
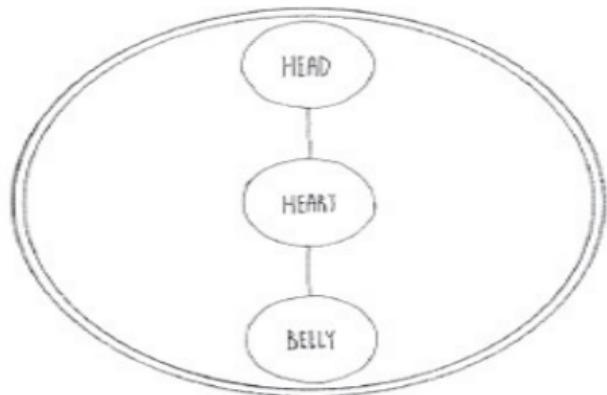
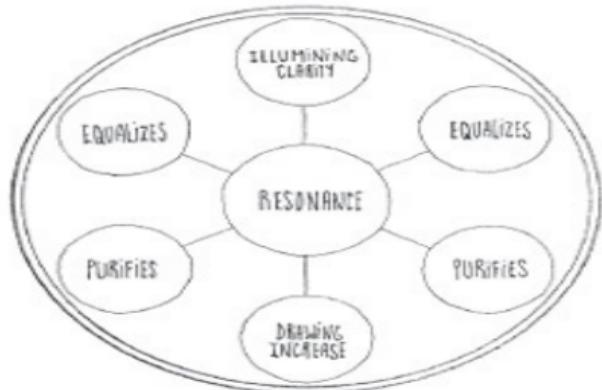
5.Clarity/brain

illumination
beyond
experience
stabilizes

The organ layout is adapted from three divisions in the *Sefer Yetzirah*: head, heart, and belly. The head and belly are the upper and lower aspects that extend from a central heart. The double organs of the kidneys and lungs (which have a right and left aspect) manifest their functions of expansion (right) and contraction (left) for the upper and lower aspects, respectively. The lungs serve the upper function, and the kidneys serve the lower function.

See the following:

Head	→ brain	→ moon
	right/left lung	
Heart	→ heart	→ heart
	right/left kidney	
Belly	→ intestine	→ sun



Of course the physical functions of the organs are used in an allegorical manner, and symbolic understanding of their functions must displace coarse biological concerns. Given that, it can be understood that the functions of purification and an increasing extraction cut through and wash away what is unuseful, so that the nourishing agent can be isolated. The nourishment spreads by resonant action, and the noble virtues of clarity and brilliance overtake all higher functioning. As the restraining limitations of the klipot are dissolved, the sparks break free of their

shells, and then they are set free to swallow the world.

The body is a whole offering, which sacrifices itself through the alchemical process. Immersion, absorption, and surrender unify the beast, and send its twitching impulses off garmented in clouds of variation, perfumed with the smoke of aspiration. Its smoldering flesh passes away in each moment. All constructs are impermanent, and their passing away is used by the practitioner as a sacrifice. The dissolution of phenomena is inherent in every moment anyway, so why not infuse it with gnostic intention? Why

not make what is already happening into prayer?

Sefer Yetzirah's array is illustrated by the fire and water tri -angles that form the hexagram of the ruach. A blaze rises up from the belly (up-pointing fire triangle) and fluid adaptation flows down from the head (down-pointing water triangle) to meet in the heart, which echoes as the spectrum of the ruach's motion. In the heart the blaze and the fluidity exchange values and coalesce into a lens through which awakening shines forth. The lens is an aperture into the wholeness of the ground, wherein

awareness and appearance are revealed as an inseparable and uncreated crystalline purity that presents all variation. Its clarity is superabundant and uncaused, yet unseen to conventional vision.

The sixfold flight of the merkavah equalizes the quadrisection of basic space to the ten aspects of reality. They include the six directions (up, down, right, left, front, behind), three times (past, present, future), within the reification of the monad (making ten). They are rectified by the equalizing continuum of alef (01) to yud (10). Thus dynamism (yud) equalizes its

own inherent unity (alef), and the paradox asserts its display as the sefirot from keter to malkut.

Six and four are implied graphically within a single hexagram. Quadrisectioned space is indicated by the right and left corners of the hexagram, which can be traced back to a common center (figure 9). This image is contained in Dionysius Andreas Freher's *Paradoxical Emblems* (115), inscribed with the verse "six come out of one, in one only opening." The two positions on the right and left sides correspond to *chesed-gevurah* (upper) and *netzach-hod* (lower). Their corresponding

organs are the right-left lobes of the lungs (above) and kidneys (below).

Freher's mention of "one" refers directly to En Sof: the all-consuming heart of phenomena. The all-encompassing gesture of all-consuming space is invested within each vowel point as the spark of continual beginning.



Figure 9

The vertical center line of the hexagram corresponds to the three stations of *Sefer Yetzirah*'s triad of

above (head), below (belly), and center (heart). These are arranged in a vertical column as the central channel in the human subtle body.

The one is presented fivefold as quadrisection exposes its center. This presents a circle to the four directions, and then to infinity, bound through their common heart. It echoes point to periphery, and periphery to point. Reflecting within as well, as the circle enters itself to form its interior subset circle, and so on. The *Fountain* states: “Alef becomes alef-alef (2) by the doubling power, then it becomes alef-alef-alef-alef (4), then there is one in

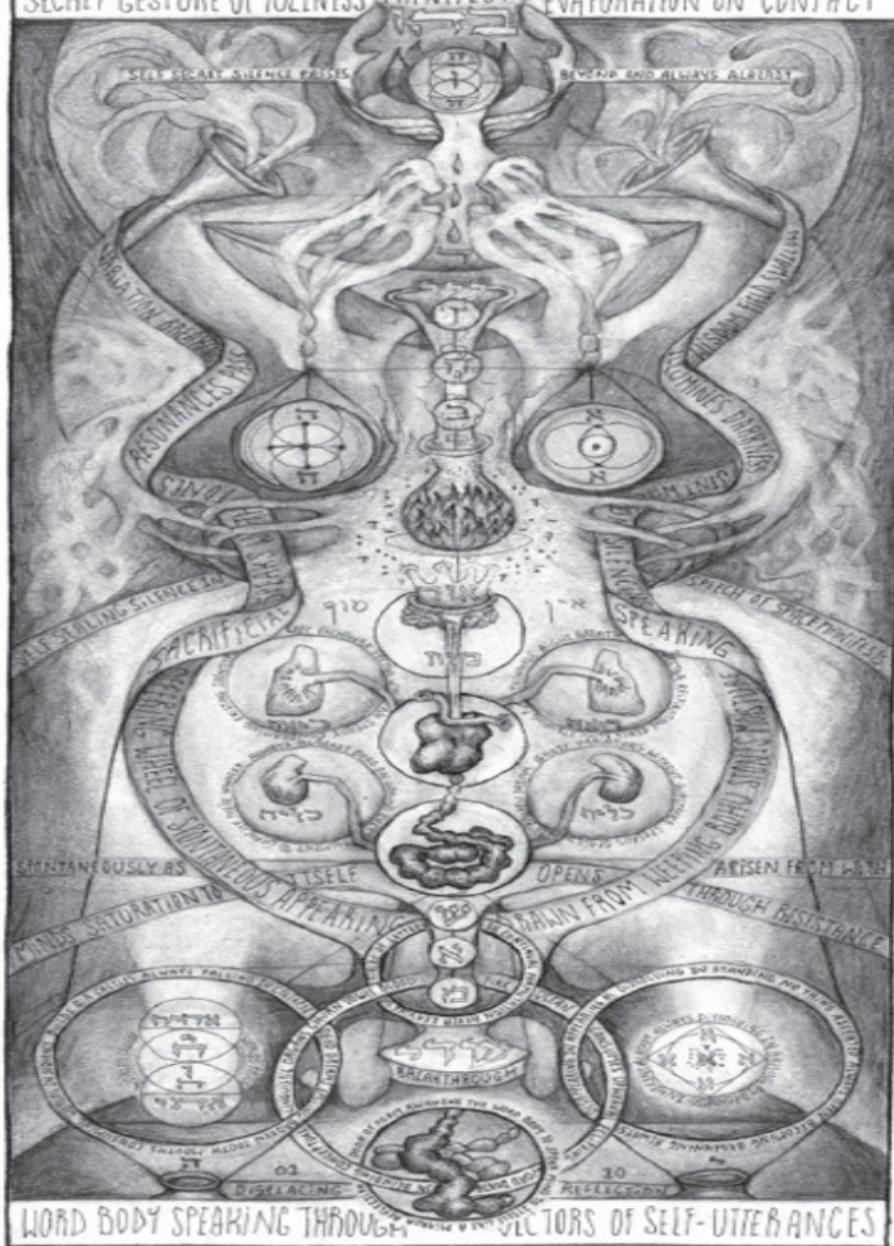
its midst (5), which is neither an alef (1) nor less than that (0)."

The point expressed by the wholeness of the surrounding four points is analogous to the way that the six points of the hexagram surround the seventh point in their midst. This suggests the centrality of the Shechinah surrounded by the sixfold sefirot of the ruach. Together this array corresponds to the seven alchemical metals and seven interior planets of esoteric astrology. Sixfold motion allows the single responsiveness of secret mercury to take form. As Dionysius Andreas Freher states in his

Paradoxical Emblems, “It is finished when seven are one” (139). This is related to the menorah, the seven-branched candle of the Hebrew temple. There are two sides with three lamps on each, making the six, with a single lamp in the middle (making seven). The center spine intersects at three connection points to the side branches, establishing it as the middle pillar of the tree of life. This poses three columns with three sefirot on each side, connecting to the center in the three places. The manner in which the sefirot correspond to the menorah lamps can be taken in pairs. The two

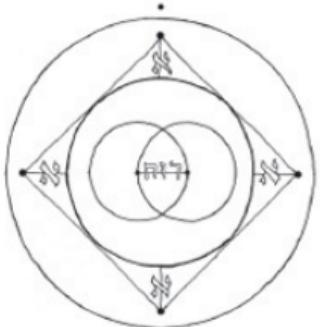
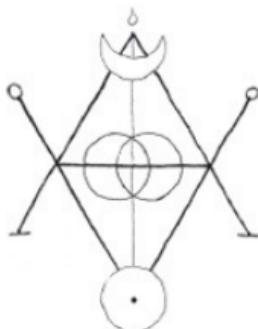
outermost lamps are hod and netzach that connect at yesod. The next two lamps are gevurah and chesed that connect at tiferet. The innermost lamps are binah and chochmah that connect at daat. The single center lamp is keter, and the base of the structure corresponds to malkut.

SECRET GESTURE OF FULLNESS MANIFESTS EVAPORATION ON CONTACT



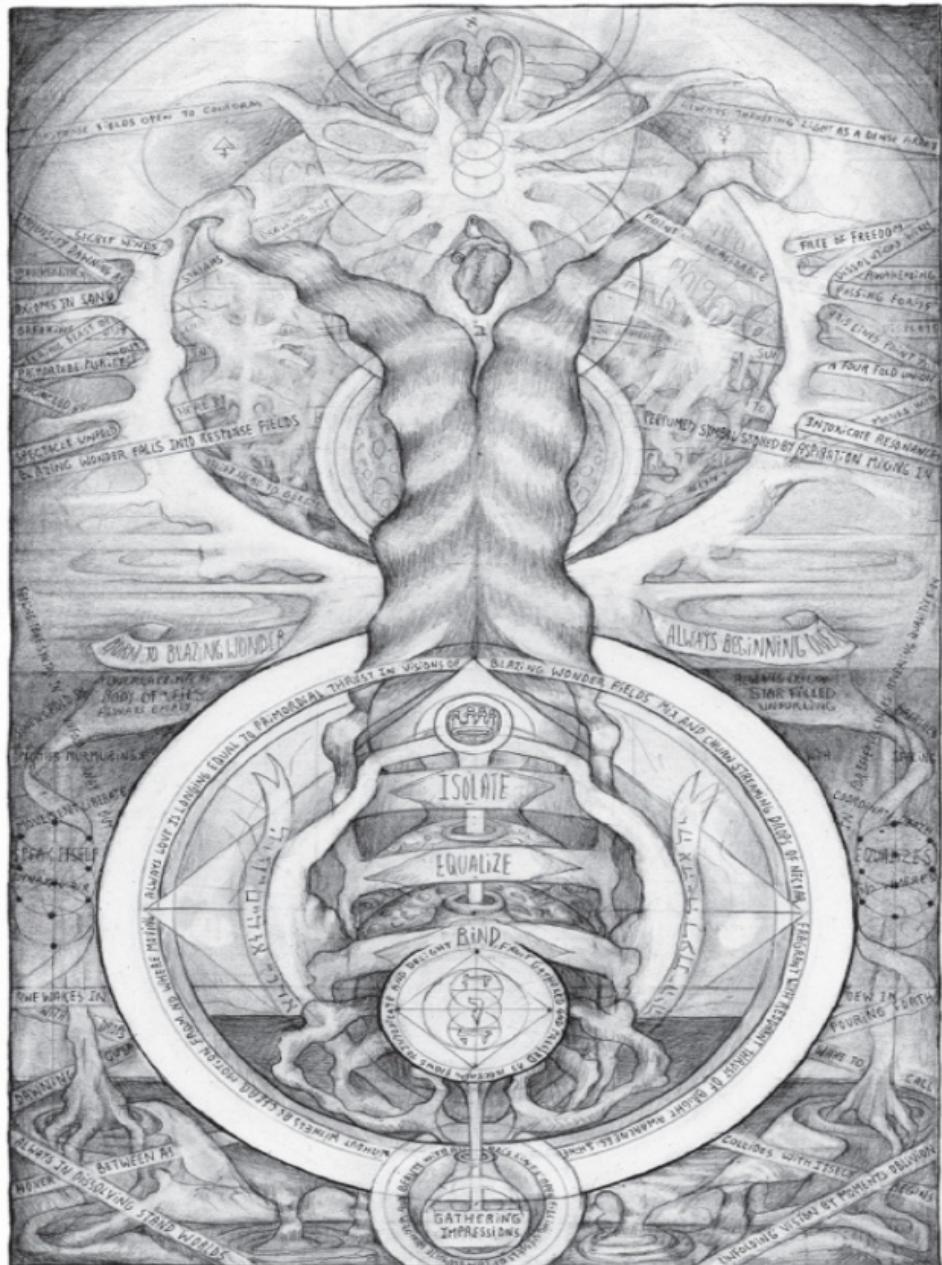
All of these number constructs exemplify precisely what the fivefold organ system expresses. Each construct appears composed of disparate parts, but can be simultaneously comprehended as a whole. Once the view that passes beyond the wholeness of being and the vacuity of nonbeing is understood, the meaning of the Shechinah becomes superabundant. Within the darkness of apparent separation (*arafel* = 380) the expanse of the firmament (*rakia* = 380) opens its inherent light through the fivefold display of each and every thing the

mind does or does not do, revealing the mystery of the Shechinah (ShKYNH: 385 = 380 + 5).



Various seals formed in the six

sefirot of the ruach



5

THE FIRE OF
NONDIMENSIONALITY

THE ULTIMATE VALUE of the mind is that it can directly realize that the dynamism that thrusts phenomena forth is equal with that which breaks through to recognize it. Once this continuum is glimpsed, it becomes clear that it is uninterrupted and completely open, equally the

poison and the medicine.

The *Fountain of Wisdom* refers to the portals of this recognition as “sparks without a base to stand upon.” The sparks are baseless because they are totally free, and cannot be grasped within either dimension or time. However, the sparks are most often uncovered one by one, as mind purifies itself of the reflexes that reify and divide.

The last frontier of the mind asks the question of how the continuum of awareness and manifestation will be reconciled. A subject-object supernova awaits to engulf all of space as it faces

the ultimate klipah in the way of the path of inquiry. The root of this and all klipot calls itself “I Am”: the totality of all being subsumed in self-knowing. The I Am takes all things undifferentiatedly as its equal. This allows all relative beginnings and ends within conceptuality to appear as a subset of itself. The root of this fallacy is the extremely subtle conceptuality inherent in self-knowing, which reifies the monad of being and thus locks itself within a prison that is very difficult to be released from.

Holding a solipsistic continuum as the absolute is the primal error of the

theistic view, and it is what adherents cling to as the godhead. It expands subtle conceptuality into infinity, rather than breaking through it at the root. This prevents keter from equalizing with En Sof. Breaking through the highest barriers requires a total sacrifice of the beast of being, as well as a complete dedication to the openness of basic space. Only En Sof is absolute; the expression of its phenomena, even as a wholeness, is only an indication of its potency. The most radical wisdom view always returns to the open expanse prior to the tzimtzum. Even in its most supremely

subtle form, reification can be understood as the opposite of freedom. The reifying impulse of being can be bathed in gnostic yearning, which cuts through both being and nonbeing at the root. Longing to mitigate reification is the most radical shift the mind is capable of, and it is the only way that truly open luminosity can be directly realized.

Abandoning duality for non-duality is itself a dualistic proposition. The idea that gnosis consists entirely of such a choice misses the point entirely. The initial choice is indeed paramount. The mind enters the path by turning

from the habits of conventional reflexes. But deep within that direction is directionlessness, and choice opens into choicelessness. Choosing dissolves with the rest of dualistic conceptuality as the ground becomes clear. The ground is not chosen. Every choice and variable is already nothing but the ground! As conceptuality is consumed by basic space, identity and volition are consumed. Yet still, things continue in simplicity, without a subject to grasp or an object to be grasped.

Long before gnosis enters into the possibility of ultimate maturity, the path begins by recognizing that the

associative process is a dream dreamt by no one. The mind's concerns shift from the incessant identification of itself and its by-products to the open space that fills and surrounds everything. The tiresome parade of mental artifacts (including personal identity) whither and dry up, blow away, and dissolve in the winds of perceiving. The momentum of their life force can be reborn, which make the heart feel as if it is going to explode. This swelling fullness is authentic heartbreak. It is the only appropriate reaction to the beauty, wonder, and awe of the vista of open appearing space.

With the dawning of the gnostic sparks the parade of dull conceptions falls into self-collapse. But where does it go? The klipot pass to nowhere from nowhere, dissolving the impressions that were made in a nonexistent habit field. Intangible klipot pass into intangible space, however, things stand as they are. There is never any impediment to manifestation. But in the wake of a subject or object, there is no one to be aware and nothing to be aware of.

The paradox of openness and appearance typifies the world of *atzilut*. Temporality and

dimensionality return within its light without ever moving anywhere. The transformation is entirely contained within meaning, and bears no change upon phenomena. To call atzilut a world is technically correct in kabbalah, however, it is a slightly misleading designation. There is no such “place.” Atzilut is the pure dynamic thrust to display, inherently nullified to En Sof. It cannot be conceptualized, and self-darkens or self-conceals by its capacity to be thrusted. The thrust is neither positive nor negative. These counterpointed terms only apply to substance that can

be given or taken away. The light of atzilut is the Aur En Sof without question, however, taken from the point of view of manifestation. The non-emanationist view holds that En Sof never steps down from its purity; however, its light can be approached from both the side of containment and the uncontainable—if it is understood that both share an equal essentiality that cannot be diminished or restrained.

Atzilut is the juncture through which “something” and “nothing” lose all relative meaning. It is the juncture at which individuality collapses. The traditional correspondence of atzilut is

chochmah, which corresponds to the yud. The graphic form of the letter has a swelling body extended from an upper tip. The upper point corresponds to keter, which is nullified to En Sof, the white of the page.

Each mental wind is like a mist of infinite spark-droplets that are open to the light of atzilut. As conceptual thickenings are released, these drops spread and open. Each drop is a complete opportunity to dissolve reification into the unfixed heart of non-experience. Each can boil conceptuality down to its ultimate purity, to sweat through the skin of

appearance until the beast is consumed. To conceptuality this sounds like a kind of death, which it actually is.

Birth and death, like all conceptual constructs, are consumed in stages. First one intellectualizes about the view. Then sporadic tastes of vastness creep in through feeling-tone resonances. Once tasted, the mind longs for the continuance of these resonances, and they are inevitably withheld. Withholding happens for a reason: longing must build and be cultivated, which allows for the mixing of openness within the spark-saturated surges. This marks the point at which

“something” and “nothingness” meet for the first time.

As openness and fullness are brought into recognition of their innate union, the mind learns to “become” the ground beyond grasping. The mind loses track of itself as an object, and surrenders to the play of unborn light and deathless space. The key questions then rearise: To what and by what does this happen? Where is it happening?

Conceptualizing a passage “to” somewhere “from” somewhere else will stop contemplation dead in its tracks. The thought “I am becoming the

adamah” is a dead end. One cannot maintain a concept of oneself and immerse beyond identity. Ultimately, the constructs of feeling and thought collapse, but their momentum continues in a new register. Absorption uncoils their knots in the twilight beyond linguistic association. The parade of mental artifacts stretches its interwoven fibers to allow space to pass between the strands, until only space remains. The strands dissolve in the stretching. This is the bath of space, by space, and through space wherein space immerses in itself.

A spark has no outside or inside; it

is a pure invitation into the most complete bath, dissolving both the bather and the concept of a medium in which bathing takes place. This cannot be presented as a spiritual oddity in the glass museum case of experience. However, it is found nowhere else but in the unfolding of phenomena that supports experiential perception. A phrase that is useful at this juncture is: *One must submit all appearances to the fire of nondimensionality.*

Ecstasy and terror arise spontaneously during various stages of contemplative practice, sometimes arising back-to-back with

unpredictable and alarming intensity. These psychological states can also arise simultaneously, overlapping like transparencies, such that each is perceived through the other. The overlapping territory between the extremes produces a stupefying disorientation. The sensations then become indistinguishable, as the mixture settles into its jarring and fierce attack. Of course, such a disruption is an excellent opportunity for practice. This paradoxical intersection is depicted (figure 10) with startling accuracy in Dionysius Freher's "Illustration of Deep

Principles.”

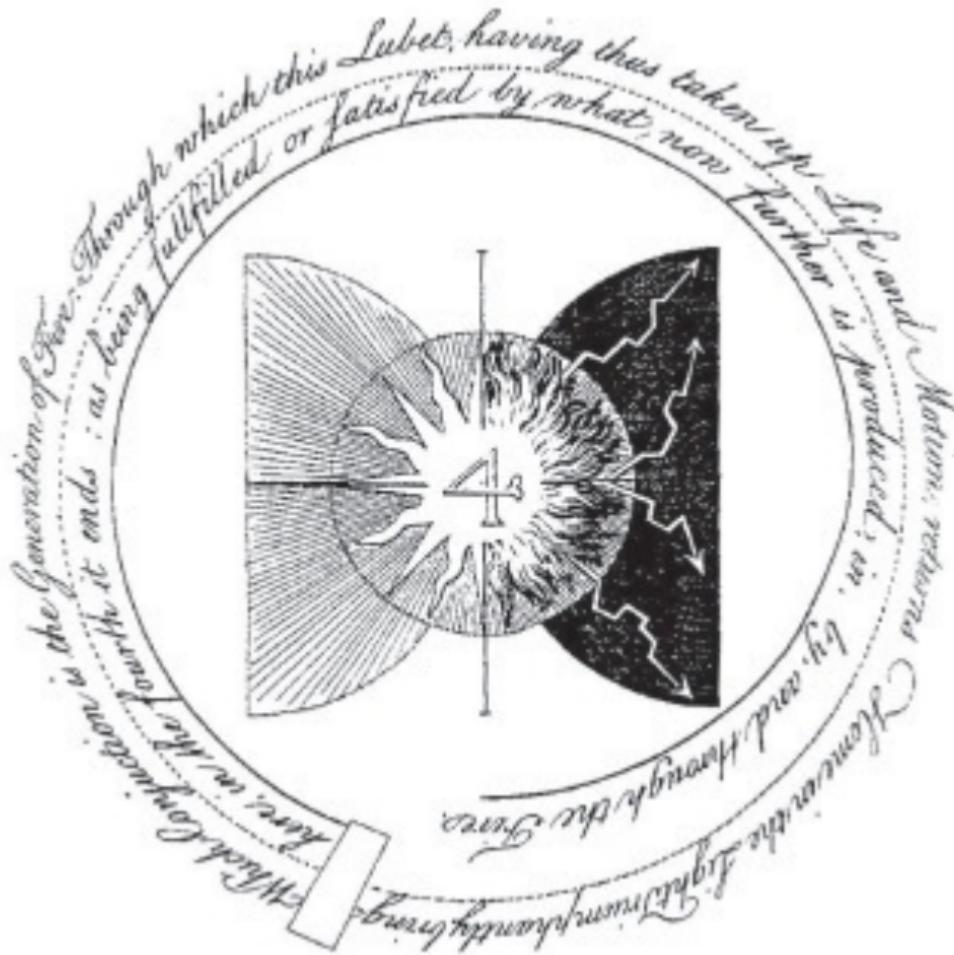


Figure 10

As the volatile mixture is identified as experience, the perceiving subject asserts its central position within the amorphous object-field. At some point the reification reflex at the core of the experience falls away without erasing the projection. There the fire of non-experience blazes forth from its innermost spark. Conceptual identification falls into nonuse within its wake, simply because it is stunned and cannot be maintained. A door swings wide, and manifestation and awareness continue, however, the heart of the field is left open. Scintillating luminosity saturates immensity

without attaching to or searching for anything. Nothing actually changes, but something crucial drops away. Awareness manifests, perfect just as is, no matter what arises or is withheld. As conceptual interference dissolves, basic space simply remains open in the midst of phenomena without any special effort. The simplicity and non-effort is quite shocking.

The fire of non-experience is only interested in consuming the beast of reification. Only identity and identification are burned away. Whatever is left is free to continue to appear or disappear in exactly the same

space. Awareness poignantly caresses its own manifestation with a stunning and savage beauty. Unknowing causes familiarity to be unmade, which leaves things pristine. The result (if that term can be used) is that the world is un-shit-out by the process that usually excretes it.

A special diagram (figure 11) summarizes the dynamics of this realization. The upper section depicts the breakthrough point within a yud, arising between the confluences of sky-like extremes falling to either side. The left represents the endless capacity for terror and panic, and the right pertains

to ecstatic bliss. The two skies meet at a point that passes beyond dualistic contrasts. The extremes only pose meaning defined against each other by contrast. There is no bliss without pain, and no pain without bliss being possible. The roller coaster they represent can only be transcended through realization of the ground that supports them equally, which is never revealed by reactive avoidance or rejection.

THE GATE OPENS AT THE POINT OF ECSTASY AND TERROR BEYOND EXPLANATION

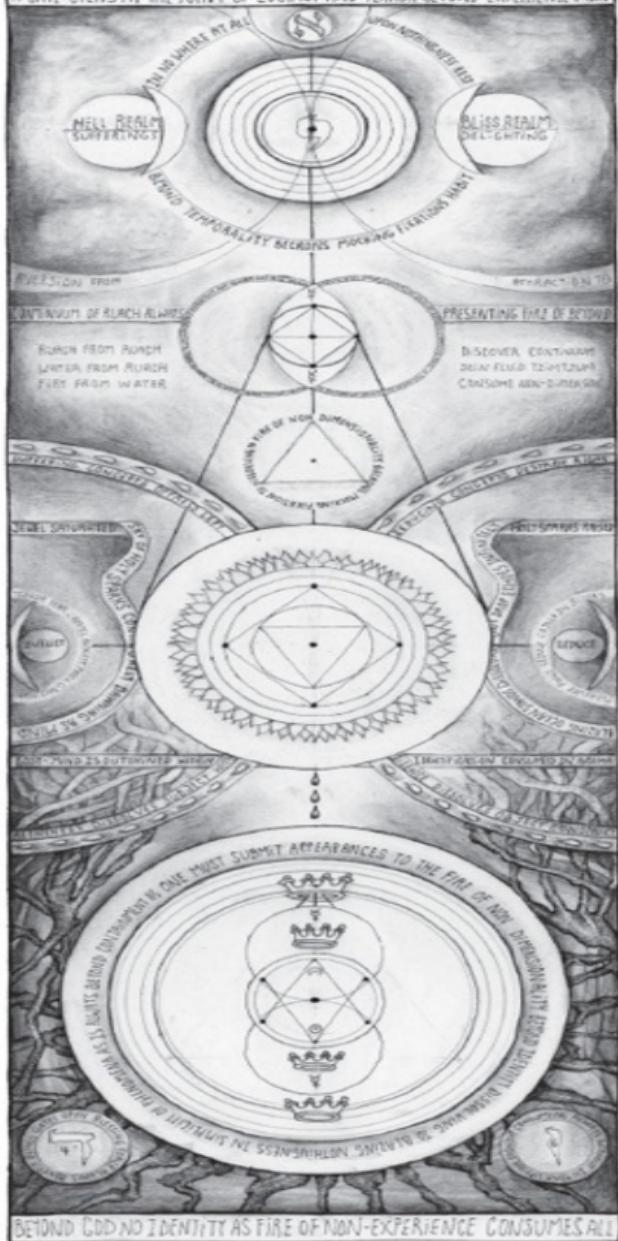


Figure 11

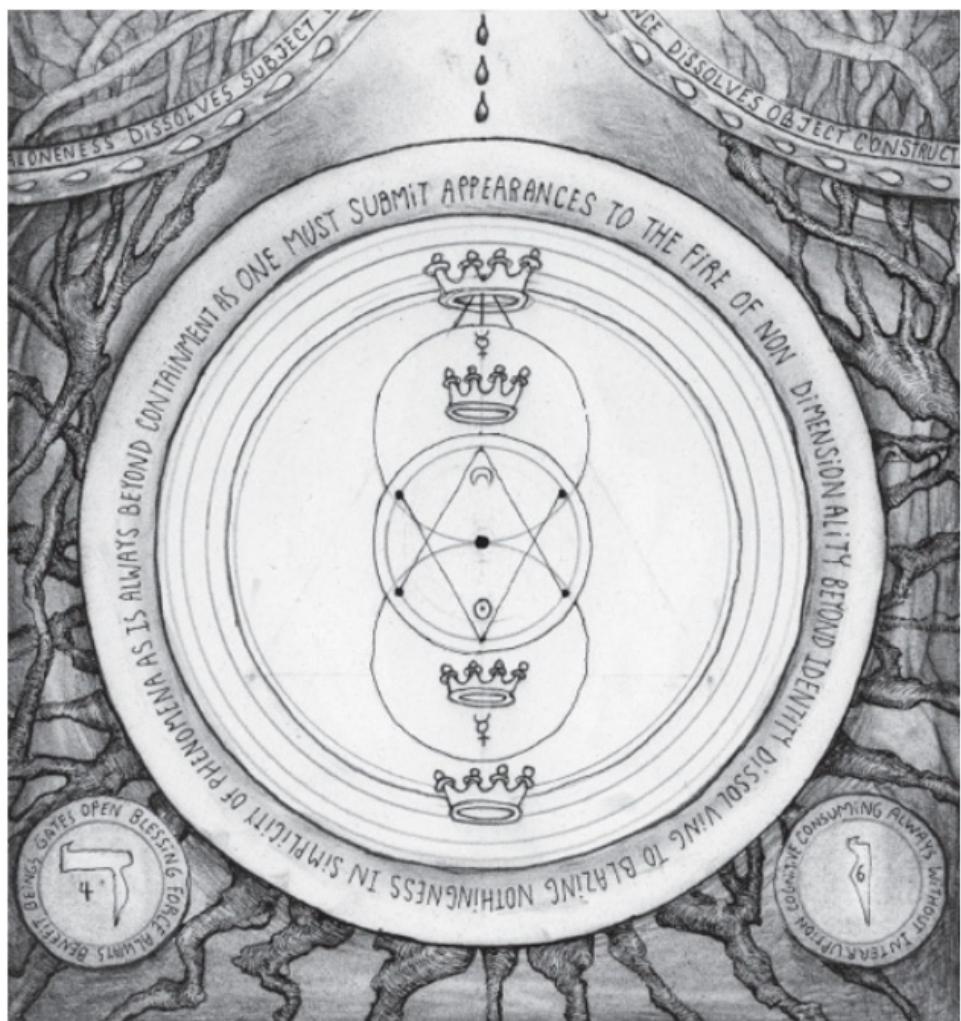
The section below this depicts right and left circles merging to form an interior quadrisection subset via a vesica piscis. This opens a world within a world, which represents relative phenomena within human perception. Through it the blazing sacrificial fire is mined. The subset extends the capacity for excavation down into a fire triangle above a circle surrounded by flames of consumption. The flames surround (read: go beyond) the four cardinal points of space, indicated by a large quadrisection

circle. In its center is a representation of universal plasticity: a water triangle. Only through the responsive adaptation of universal fluidity (water) is the blaze of secret mercury (fire) awokened.

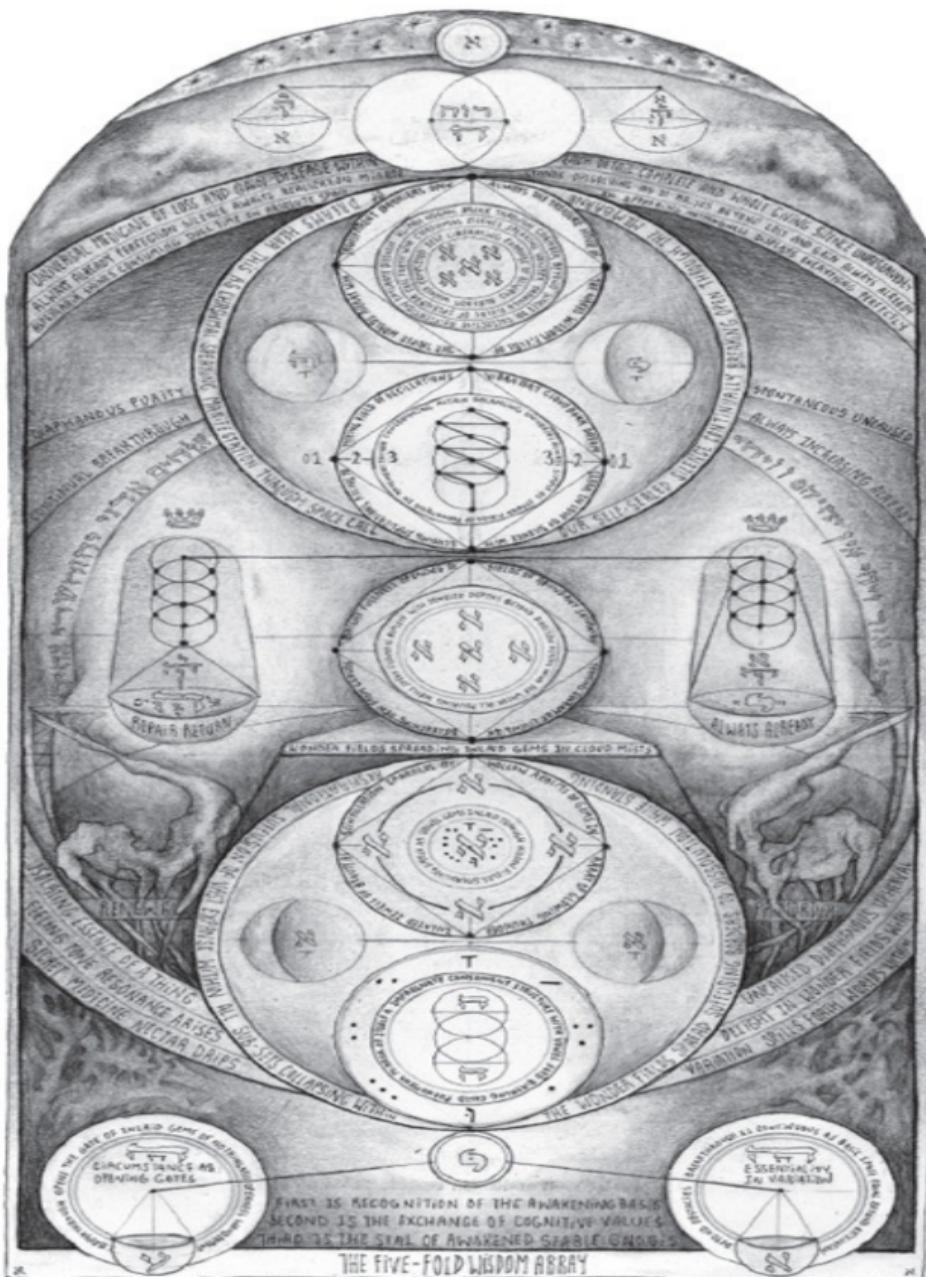
Realization of nondimensionality allows the triple manifestation of BeYeA and NaRaN to collapse into the naked wisdom of gnosis, represented by three interpenetrating circles standing vertically in the lower circle of the diagram. The triple constructs of worlds and souls have no basis in substance. They are simple and whole in their essentiality, which is the fruit

of the tree that “opens their eyes” in the Garden of Eden. Its intoxicating nectar sees with a single eye, although it is expressed through a kaleidoscope of attributes.

Finally, this from the *Book of the Secret Quintessence*: “How astonishing! This phenomenon is superb! It is the secret of all gnostic awakening! Everything is born from the unborn, and at the moment of birth, nothing is born.”



Detail from figure 11



6

THE SKINS OF NO- THING-NESS (a Summary)

One cannot accomplish spiritual work with the same view that created the need for it.

THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL WORK is based on one central problem: a self-identified subject

addictively grasps after what is believed to increase happiness and decrease pain. All attempts to remedy life's circumstances will ultimately fail, as whatever is reached for slips away at some point. After a lifetime of chasing after the fantasy of a panacea, an honest assessment of the situation might become possible. There is no way to "fix" the life situation. The only alternative is a shift away from the manufacture of the untenable scenario to a set of possibilities that might be more profound, more honest, and more relevant to the heart of the matter.

The ordinary human view is

completely fixated on the quality of experiences and their projected causes and outcomes. The most radical shift that is possible for a human being is to abandon this view, and turn the mind toward the essential ground of phenomena. This allows experiences and circumstances to come and go, leaving the heart of the matter untouched. Ultimately it becomes clear that nothing modifies the ground, and awareness and manifestation dissolve their separateness and sense of solidity within that realization.

The mind is already included within the continuum of the ground whether

there is inquiry or not. Every practitioner has to begin somewhere, which usually starts within the mind's conventional habits. Habituated patterns of thinking and feeling are formed within NeHiY as it processes malkut's display. It should be clear at this point that the absolute nature of the continuum asserts no diminishment regardless of the relative level of its expression. Relative perception gathers what it has the capacity to hold until breakthrough into deeper degrees of relative realization becomes possible. It is important to differentiate relative growth from absolute gnosis in this

regard, so as not to confuse this language. The absolute gnosis of the tzadik is the rarest thing in the universe, but anyone can begin the work at hand wherever they are. The relative nature of the path is what the practitioner works with while the view of the absolute is cultivated and perfected. There is a famous saying that perfectly summarizes this: “Keep your view as vast as the sky, but refine your actions as finely as flour.”

Even a little direct observation should prove that inner perceiving and the designation of outer constructs are bound within an inseparable union, and

the supposed division between them is composed only of perceptual assumptions. Most practitioners can be quickly brought to understand that the general concept of manifestation only arises because of perception of some sort. Conversely, there can be no perceptual experience without manifestation arising. So which is first? Once the quest for a linear timeline is subsumed within a concern for the ground, the chicken-and-egg question loses its meaning and relevance. If these designations are probed deeply enough a critical analysis of origins and destinations

points to the deconstruction of causality itself. All that remains is a question: What is the continuum when not overtaken by the relative designations of inner and outer equivocations?

Questioning the solidity of a conceptualizing subject set against its conceptualized objects is first pondered within NeHiY, where analytical reductive thinking (hod) and expansive energetic feelings (netzach) are integrated within yesod. Yesod is where the klipot associated with conceptuality arise to obscure and obstruct the marriage of Zer Anpin and

Nukvah. The klipot pose accumulated patterns that reify and divide the mind's fixations, which accumulates in the all-basis consciousness. As the view of the awakening ground is deeply considered, impressions echo throughout all of a person's intellectual and emotional life. This allows mental functioning to resonate into building the momentum of inquiry, and slowly the accumulated patterns of the klipot begin to be purified. Direct inquiry facilitates purification without the application of any artificial technique, but only if it arises suffused with authentic heartbroken longing. This

combination is extremely rare, despite the fact that many make such claims without understanding the meaning of these words.

Once some of the life force is liberated from the klipot, subtle flavors wash through the exchange of yesod where the middle six sefirot and malkut intersect. The resonances of the freshly liberated influx allow for greater mental openness and clarity, which can be pointed back toward the ground itself. An endless parade of klipot clogs the mind with phantom designations until decisive breakthroughs vanquish its skins.

Times, places, thoughts, and feelings arise as seemingly solid objects for a seemingly solid subject to grasp after until a new view shines through. The shift in view allows each construct to become permeable, like an endless series of doorways.

Before klipot can dissolve back into their ground, their root patterns must be directly confronted as they arise in perception. If the aspiration to unmake reified patterns is made clear, the expanse of phenomena becomes proportionately clearer. Phenomena are never the problem, only the mind's fixations in relation to them are. The

thirst for realization calls the ground inherent within the klipot out into the light, which asserts its permeability. This does not mean that one merely knocks down walls in a mechanical sense. The skins of perception can only be penetrated through a deep concern with their essential meaning. If En Sof is truly appreciated, the small meanings of phenomena cease to function as klipot, and the greater eventually outshines the lesser. However, most practitioners will hit a series of walls as this is attempted, which is where the work must persevere through difficulty.

No matter whether klipot arise or not, space always presents phenomena. However, meaning hangs in the balance. The display of malkut provides appearances unadorned, as perceptual interpretation forms within the six sefirot of the ruach. The job of the practitioner is to clear the habits that cloud this relationship, so that the point of contact at NeHiY can function as a set of “wheels” for the merkavah of ruach hakodesh. First, automatic reactions that reduce the scope and structure of meaning can be questioned, with key questions asked. What is lost or gained as phenomena

are equivocated by habituated experience? What rests there to make it conscious in the first place? Inquiry is the medicine for the disease that disrupts the zivug, evoked in *Corpus Hermeticum* 13:13, which states: “I see the universe and I see myself in mind.” What sees? Does a universe exist without seeing? Are the assumptions of solidity in relation to a perceiver and the perceived helping or hurting the quest for gnosis?

The mind begins its inquiry by considering the activity of its thinking. If thinking relaxes beyond self-positioning, it can dissolve into the

open activity of “seeing” mentioned in the quote. Feeling can take the place of reductive thoughts, and the field of perception can be transformed into a series of “aromas” or textured nuances wherein the knower and the known begin to blend together. Ultimately the blending falls into overall vastness, which passes into an undifferentiated state.

The undifferentiated field faces the final frontier of its own self-knowing. First, the reflex to divide a subject from its objects passes into wholeness, and then wholeness itself must be reconciled. Within the self-knowing of

wholeness rests the root fallacy called “I Am,” where every projection of reification begins. Undifferentiated self-grasping is the primordial “first mistake,” which echoes through every reified detail. If clarity and openness can break through the basis of reification at the root, then En Sof becomes clear.

It is impossible to reify the ground without creating mental constructs, and the ultimate mental construct is being itself as the monad of I Am. Many systems are limited by moving no further than monistic realization, which is still locked in conceptuality at its

most subtle point. Awareness stands as a mere conception of itself until it realizes that the conception has no substance, is not located anywhere, and has no independent existence. Even a brief moment of this realization is literally mind shattering.

Equalizing manifestation with awareness requires a profound understanding of the scope of the display of phenomena. As the array of those possibilities is glimpsed, a vision becomes clear within the overlap between NeHiY and malkut. The vision opens into a vastness that becomes tremendously emotive and poetic, as its

aromas spread through ChaGaT. The three aspects of the vision are composed of (1) space beyond containability and conception; (2) space that appears contained; and (3) the twilight of the mixing field in between

The symbol of the great outer circle of our diagrams indicates the uncontrollable vastness that displays relative phenomena as its subset. If the essential nature of the great circle is understood, then no display of substance or position can ever be held as definite. States of relative being are always provisional. Only En Sof is

definitive. Striving to hold to the absolute as the basis of the relative opens the mixing field of the in-between, where both aspects overlap and lose their differences. Phenomena can then be engaged as a waking dream: suffused with openness yet vivid in specificity through the twilight. The deeper the mind dissolves through the in-between, the less separate the great circle and its subset will seem to be, until awakening dissolves the basis of separation at its root.

The diagrammatic array (figure 12) is artificially divided into three parts so

that the conventional mind can approach wholeness comprehensively, without falling into an inferior view that grasps after the monad. The array is analyzed through hod, and as its energies are actively felt through netzach. Analysis and energy are then integrated within yesod, where the “wheels of the chariot” can proceed through the wider horizon of ChaGaT. As experience grows extremely subtle, the gates of conceptuality are opened at the cusp of the ruach in ChaBaD. Awareness can pass through these gates to meet with its essential paradox in keter, which equalizes En Sof at its

apex. It is there that the I Am can be confronted, and ultimately broken through as the self-knowing of being itself is purified by a view subsumed in En Sof alone.

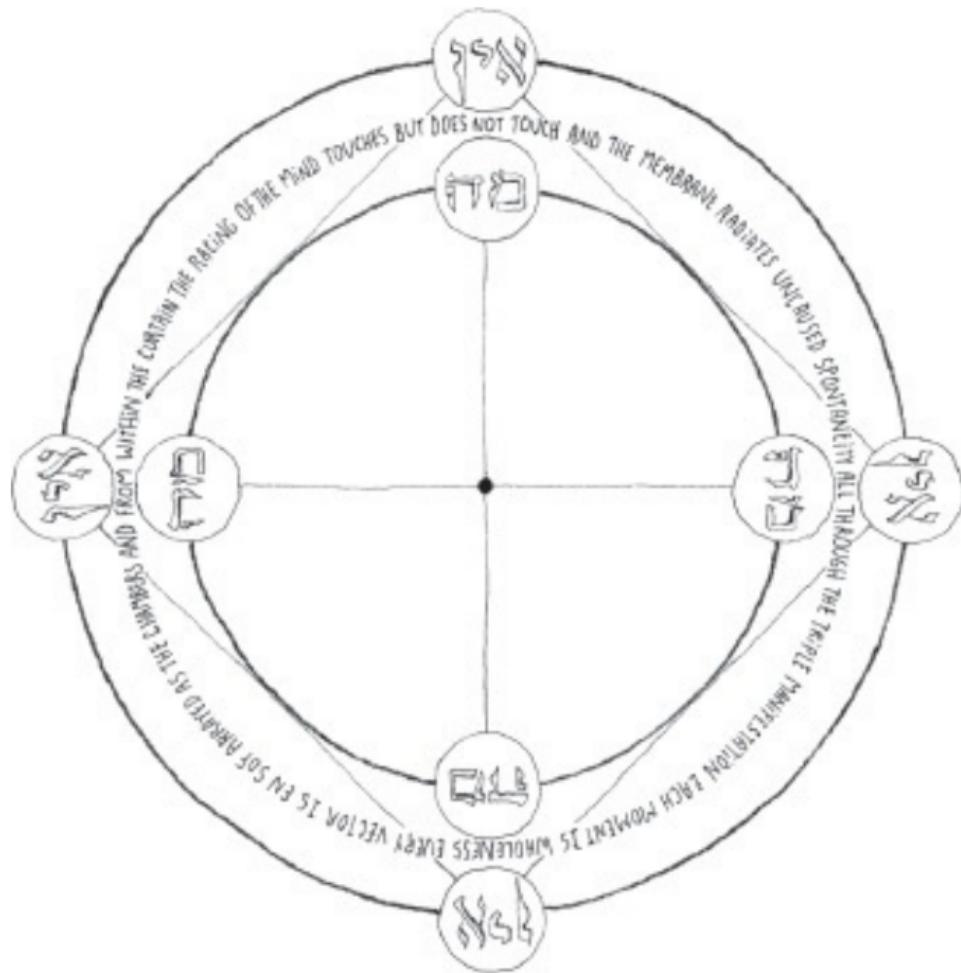


Figure 12

The three remaining gates (4, 5, and

6) can be understood as degrees of gnostic intoxication. The gate of fullness allows small divisive habits to dissolve into a vast realization of wholeness. If the smaller klipot give way to a field of continual breakthrough, extraordinary bliss and clarity can arise. The first blush of bliss-clarity is tremendously exhilarating and pleasurable to the psyche, very much like a drug. However, like any drug, the influx remains locked within the clutches of experience. Even the most sophisticated experiences are predicated upon some aspect of a

subject and an object, even if the object is the subject itself, and has expanded to undifferentiation. This is where the great klipah at the root becomes the main concern.

The intoxicating blisses of the fullness are imprisoned within subtle associative conceptuality, which fixates on experiences. The reification of the wholeness of being is only an exaggerated version of what ordinary experience does with each individual thought and feeling, even though the subject and object have become fused. Thus the state of fullness is incapable of breaking free to realize the essential

nature on its own. Its intoxicating and pleasurable aspects are extremely important as the mind grows beyond its restraints, and undifferentiation is sealed within awareness, however, consciousness will remain bound within itself and ceases to make any further breakthroughs until its intoxication breaks free of itself.

The poignancy of the fullness forms what is commonly known as “spiritual experience.” Subject and object blend with each other and their common space becomes clear, as their essential nature is still subsumed within experience. Many systems mistake this

realization for the absolute, simply because it is completely vast and limitless. What is missing is an openness that passes beyond experience into unknowing. Unknowing does not replace knowing; it breaks its meaning open. Passing beyond the divide between knowing and unknowing is the last frontier of consciousness. As the ultimate klipah, the total self-knowing of the monad can only become trapped at the root of the paradox of containment. Rather than breaking through, mind can get stuck at its most subtle point, and can even call the endlessness of that self-

knowing expanse “god.”

The medicine for the disease of monism is realized through gate five, which requires the fullness of intoxication to begin. The impulse to reify wholeness is broken by returning to En Sof without reservation, again and again, as the monad is understood to be unsatisfactory. This is where the view makes all the difference, and systems that do not understand authentic freedom fall by the wayside. If the mind is bound within an obsessive longing for the realization of En Sof, the self-knowing of the monad eventually dissolves “like mist in the

morning sunrise.” However, this dissolution is predicated on holding the aspiration beyond any subtle attachment to knowing the qualities of experience. This does not imply that bliss-and-clarity intoxication ceases, far from it. Intoxication continues and increases; however, the subtle conceptual identification and attachment can be invited to evaporate. Gnostic intoxication can free itself of itself through the release of sheer intensity, until the impulse to identify feeling lets itself go completely. This release is the scintillating dissolution of gate five, where the sparks inherent

in experience self-liberate.

Phenomena self-liberate at the precise spot where experience develops, and nowhere else. If the view of En Sof supersedes the subtlest root of all reflexes, then whatever arises settles effortlessly into the crystalline expanse of absolute meaning. This does not mean that some new aspect of consciousness overtakes an outdated aspect. Wisdom literally consumes the root of consciousness until it disappears. Consciousness, which is an application of knowingness, is a by-product of En Sof's blazing. The blaze does not take sides. The idea that non-

duality can be chosen over duality is itself a completely dualistic contrivance.

The scintillating dissolution of relative meaning begins at ChaBaD, where the gate between conceptuality and gnosis opens. Surely a conceptually fixated being must initially make a choice there. However, through that gate the choice reveals its own contrivance. Each spark that passes through is totally choiceless, unbound by any option consciousness can conceptually equivocate. Mists of sparks usurp whatever arises as a freedom from any “thing” coming or

going anywhere. Each thought, word, and deed the spark plays out like a dream. This cannot be called any kind of experience, not even a spiritual one, as there isn't even a monad of consciousness to bind it all together.

The freedom of the awakening ground is realized as non-experience opens in the midst of the parade of experiences. This is the key to ChaBaD that approaches the root paradox of keter. As identity passes through the dream, only the speaking silence is borne out. This happens between the subtlest gaps of conceptuality until stabilization of the release has

dissolved all of the reflexes of reification. This introduces the sixth gate, which renders a practitioner a tzadik.

The tzadik has no individual psyche in the sense that there is no more attachment to the meaning of relative phenomena. Since the contrivances of experience cease to be a problem, the world continues totally free. All impulses toward relative concerns are self-liberated prior to their arising, because the creative blaze of En Sof is literally primordial. The tzadik knows nothing but primordial realization, which makes it clear that awareness

never entered into or departed from the primordial purity of En Sof from beginningless beginning. The tzadik's body, speech, and mind all express the paradox of non-experience arising as form, even as what we think of as experiences seem to present themselves in the tzadik's mind. Despite this array, there is no identity of a subject and no identified objects anywhere.

Stabilizing gnostic realization is not the end of a process; it actually opens a continual beginning. There are three aspects of the continual beginning: a body, its heart, and the heart's

quintessence.

The living body of phenomena is a waking dream beyond knower and known, which the chain of worlds expresses in profound detail without contradiction. Each attribute offers the equalizing essence of En Sof beyond any concept of a whole or of parts within it. As the flesh of the dream body ornaments itself within its qualities, manifestation and awareness are revealed as synonymous. This continuum is the ground as it is thrust into continual variation beyond origin, destination, or substance. And yet substance appears, but not as fact—

rather only as “opinion.”

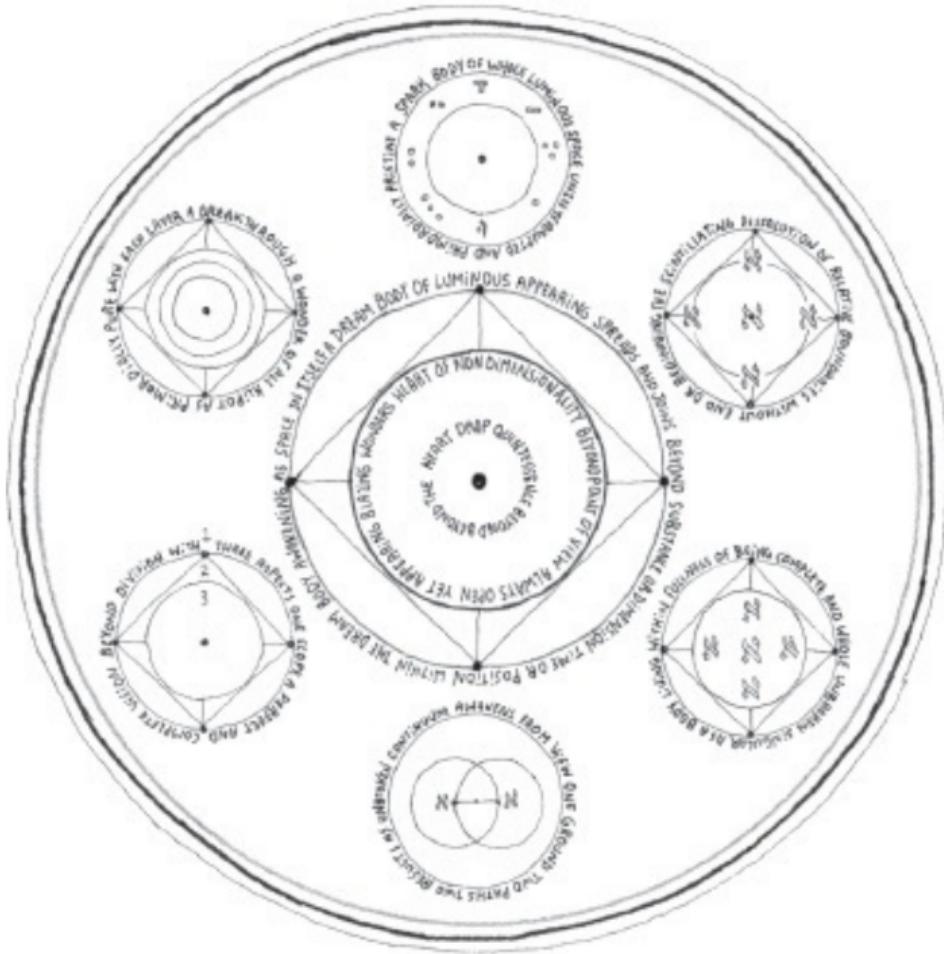
The heart is primordial uncreated space without substance: *belimah* (literally “without-a-thing,” as *Sefer Yetzirah* suggests). Open and yet appearing, the heart of the body circulates the blood of space without entering or leaving its innately perfect primordial expanse. Whatever arises or doesn’t arise is essentially equal, but not the same. The mind can return to this paradox again and again by simply remembering, until all differences cease to be taken as barriers within the awakening ground.

The blood of space is the fluidity that carries the sparks of awakening throughout phenomena, without even a hint of belonging to any internal or external context. Its primordial nature expresses a living quintessence that is ungraspable. This is the heart-drop that is central to knowing and unknowing equally, abiding right in the midst of all phenomena.

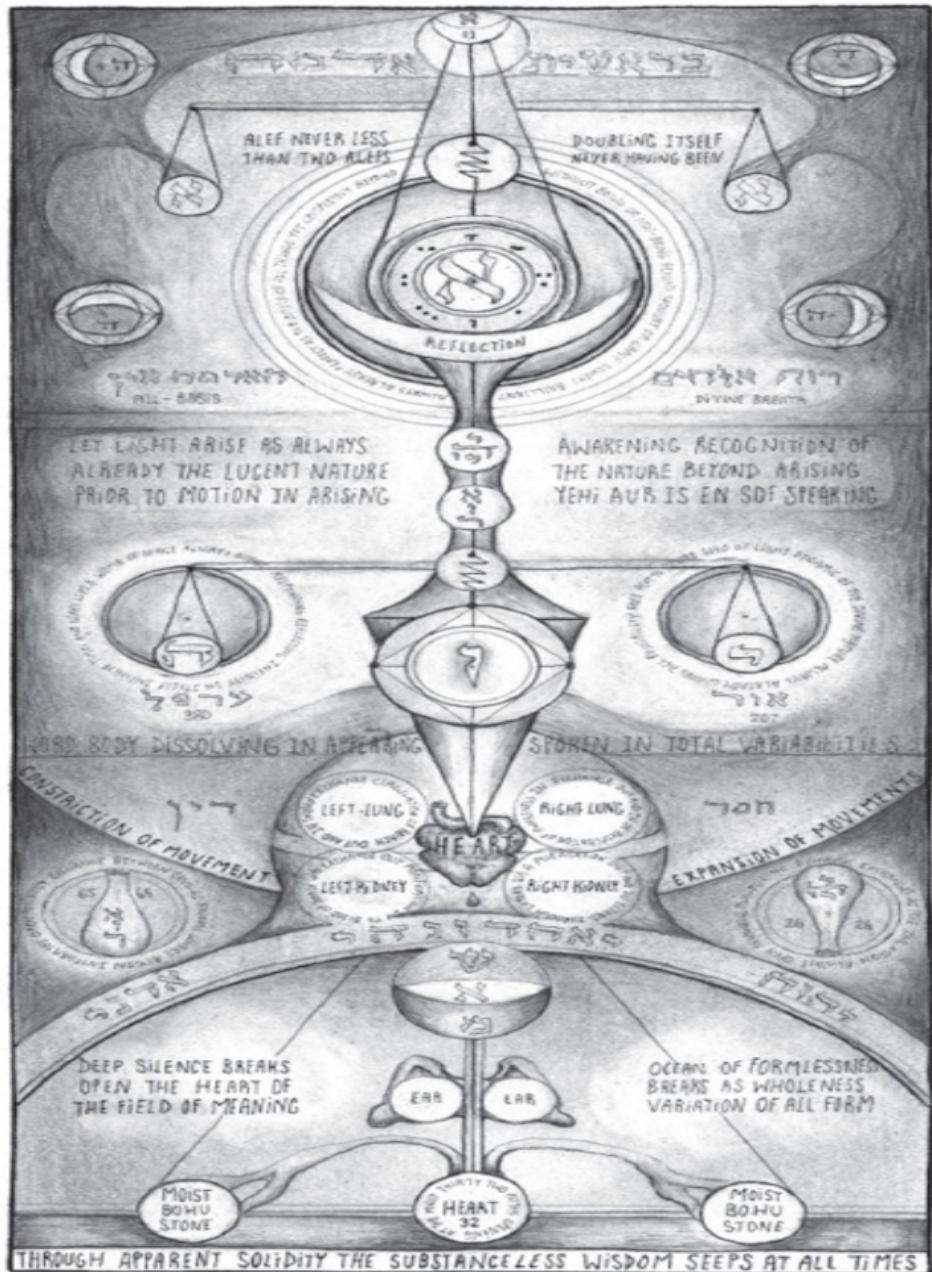
The Talmud gives an account of the wise men of Athens asking the rabbis about this topic. “Where is the center of the universe?” they asked. The rabbis replied, “Right here! (pointing up at random).”

The infinite expanse of space is replete with the potency of the primordial heart-drop point, which is the basis of every animating vowel throughout the speech of the voice of En Sof. Remembering the quintessence spreads through each ring of the tzimtzum, as the primordial point echoes through its peripheries. This remembering is the tikkun that rectifies all reifications of phenomena. Whatever arises within the vacated space of the chalal hapanui is equalized as the parade of appearances is bound, equalized, and isolated. The isolation can happen anywhere and everywhere

within the appearing space-body. Just like the rabbis told the wise men of Athens, the center point is always “Right here.”



The six gates in a circular array





EPILOGUE

Continuing the Work

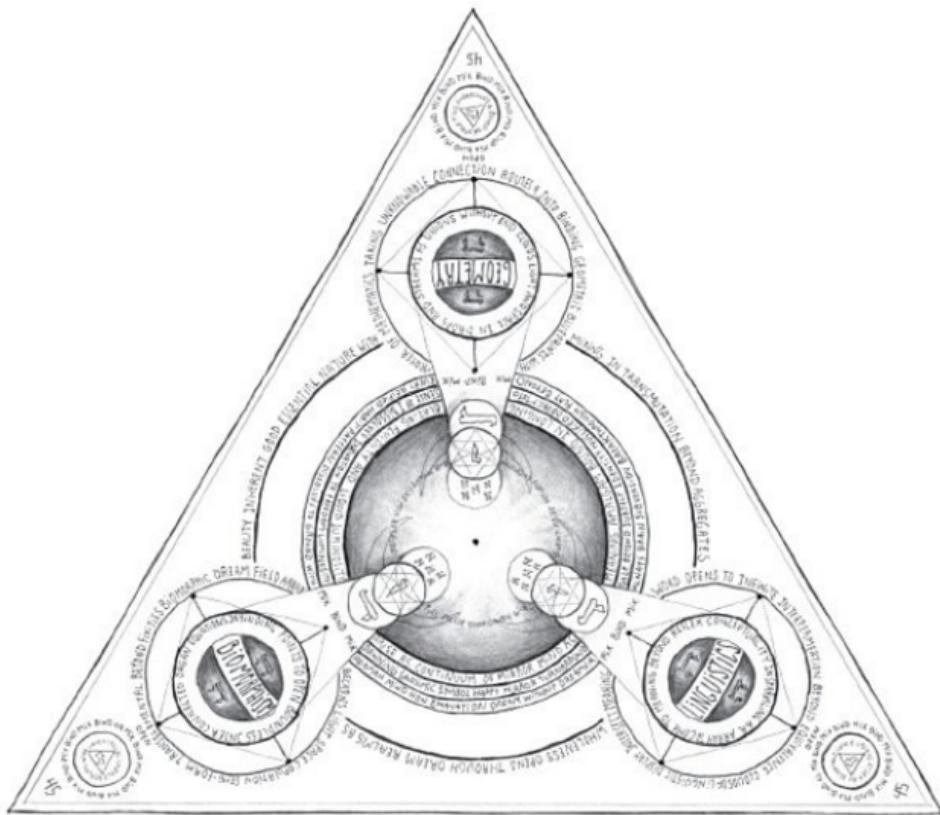
The Awakening Ground is the first in a series of texts dedicated to presenting mystical contemplation as a living practice.



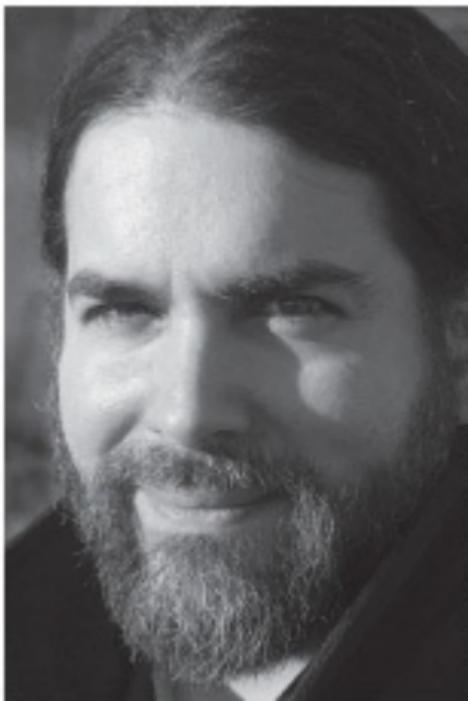
SEVERAL KEY KABBALISTIC TEXTS are recommended for study in preparation for this path. For a general introduction into the subject

from an orthodox perspective, one cannot do better than Aryeh Kaplan's books *Inner Space* and *Meditation and Kabbalah*. After some familiarity with basic ideas is gained, original source texts can be utilized. The texts relevant to the work described here include the following: *Ma'ayin HaChochmah* (*Fountain of Wisdom*); the *Sefer Yetzirah*; the *Commentary on Sefer Yetzirah* by R. Isaac the Blind; *Sefer HaIy'yun*; *Likutey Moharan* (particularly volumes 4, 5, and 6 of the BRI version) by Rebbe Nachman of Breslov; and, of course, the *Zohar* (in particular, the books of the Idrot).

In addition to the kabbalistic sources, the following Gnostic and Hermetic texts are also highly recommended: *Book of Lambspring*; *Splendor Solis*; *Thunder Perfect Mind*; *The complete works of Pseudo-Dionysius*; *Cloud of Unknowing*; *Paradoxical Emblems of D. A. Freher*; and the *Corpus Hermeticum*.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



PHOTOGRAPH BY GAVIN HORNER

DAVID CHAIM SMITH

was born in 1964 in Queens, New York. His early career was as a visual artist throughout the 1980s. In 1990 he began an immersion into the root sources of Alchemy and the Hermetic and Hebrew traditions of the Kabbalah. In 1996 he abandoned visual art for a total dedication to spiritual practice, from which

came a unique blend of practical mysticism and creative innovation. This blend coalesced while working with an obscure thirteenth-century text called *The Fountain of Wisdom*, which he mapped out diagrammatically in notebooks during his ten-year hiatus from visual art. The resulting symbol vocabulary served as the basis for his

2006 return to art, generating the content for several books. He currently lives in the suburbs of New York City with his wife, Rachel.

About Inner Traditions • Bear & Company

Founded in 1975, Inner Traditions is a leading publisher of books on indigenous cultures, perennial philosophy, visionary art, spiritual traditions of the East

and West, sexuality, holistic health and healing, self-development, as well as recordings of ethnic music and accompaniments for meditation.

In July 2000, Bear & Company joined with Inner Traditions and moved from Santa Fe, New Mexico, where it was founded in 1980, to Rochester, Vermont. Together

Inner Traditions • Bear & Company have eleven imprints: Inner Traditions, Bear & Company, Healing Arts Press, Destiny Books, Park Street Press, Bindu Books, Bear Cub Books, Destiny Recordings, Destiny Audio Editions, Inner Traditions en Español, and Inner Traditions India.

For more information or to

browse through our more than one thousand titles in print and ebook formats, visit www.InnerTraditions.com.

Become a part of the Inner Traditions community to receive special offers and members-only discounts.



BOOKS OF RELATED INTEREST

**The Kabbalistic Mirror of
Genesis**

Commentary on the First
Three Chapters

by David Chaim Smith

The Secret Doctrine of the

Kabbalah

Recovering the Key to
Hebraic Sacred Science
by Leonora Leet, Ph.D.

The Kabbalah of the Soul

The Transformative
Psychology and Practices of
Jewish Mysticism
by Leonora Leet, Ph.D.

The Universal Kabbalah

by Leonora Leet, Ph.D.

Gnostic Philosophy

From Ancient Persia to
Modern Times

by Tobias Churton

Qabbalistic Magic

Talismans, Psalms, Amulets,
and the Practice of High
Ritual

by Salomo Baal-Shem

Kabbalah and the Power of Dreaming

Awakening the Visionary Life

by Catherine Shainberg

Kabbalistic Tarot

Hebraic Wisdom in the Major
and Minor Arcana

by Dovid Krafchow

INNER TRADITIONS •

BEAR & COMPANY

P.O. Box 388

Rochester, VT 05767

1-800-246-8648

www.InnerTraditions.com

Or contact your local
bookseller

Inner Traditions
One Park Street
Rochester, Vermont 05767

www.InnerTraditions.com

Copyright © 2016 by David
Chaim Smith
Artwork by David Chaim
Smith unless otherwise noted.

All rights reserved. No part of
this book may be reproduced
or utilized in any form or by

any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

**Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication
Data**

Names: Smith, David Chaim,
author.

Title: The awakening ground :
a guide to contemplative
mysticism / David Chaim
Smith.

Description: Rochester,
Vermont : Inner Traditions,
[2016] | “2016

Identifiers: LCCN

2016004376 (print) | LCCN

2016005158 (ebook) | print

ISBN: 9781620555330 |

ebook ISBN:

9781620555347

Subjects: LCSH: Mysticism–Judaism. | Cabala.

Classification: LCC BM723

.S6155 2016 (print) | LCC

BM723 (ebook) | DDC

296.7/12–dc23

LC record available at

<http://lccn.loc.gov/201600437>



Electronic edition produced
by



www.antrikexpress.com