

# BATH OF BRIGHT SILENCE

A Handbook of Contemplative Mysticism

DAVID CHAIM SMITH



LIGHTNING FLASH OF ALEF  
VOLUME 2

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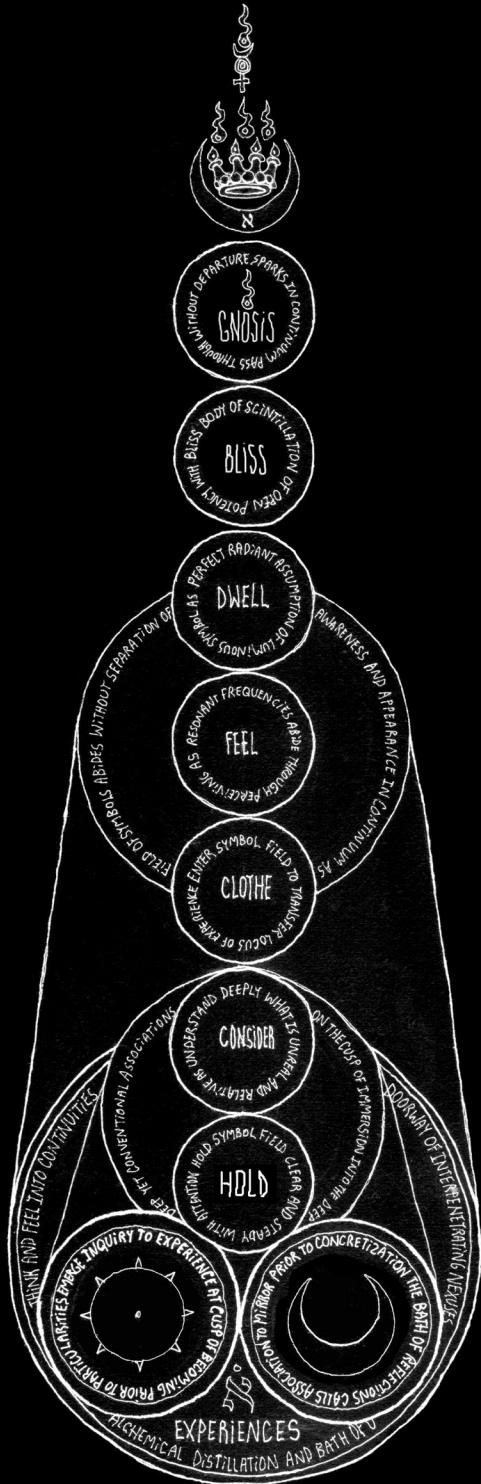
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WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE I dedicate this volume to the drinker of the indestructible blood of wisdom who lives beyond all concerns of temporality and dimensionality, to the inner circle of practitioners of our hermitage, and to my wonderful wife, Rachel Marie Smith, who fashioned this book into a thing of beauty.



## The Lamp of Darkness

THE MAIN PRACTICE OFFERED in this volume is derived from the thirteenth-century kabbalistic school referred to as the Iyyun Circle. The practice is called The Thirteen Phases of Tikkun Kadmon, or primordial rectification. However this is not a work of scholarship or an academic historical assessment; it is a new presentation of the practice as a living entity. It refers to a method that bathes awareness within the luminous silence of the *botsina de'gardinuta* (lamp of darkness) to distill the philosopher's stone; a diamond-like clarity shining beyond the reification of substance, dimensionality, and time. The stone is the culmination of the 13 phases of activity as they are realized as a single simultaneous gesture — an alchemical key that unlocks appearance and awareness as a magical continuum of unutterable mystery beyond any conception of solidity or stasis.



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# Phases of Transmutation

WE BECOME WHAT OUR MIND CREATES, and the world projects what our mind creates in response.

Ordinary mind invests its energy into habits of self-optimization. These habits arise as the vast brilliance of awareness is reduced to the tight dim assumption of individual selfhood. Whatever is perceived is then designated as a finite object, which reinforces the myth of individual existence cast adrift amidst a fragmented sea of seemingly separate things. Within this sea of disjointed fragmentation human misery is perpetuated as needy fictitious subjects chase dull fictitious objects in a dream world of desires that cannot ever be satisfied.

At their deepest core the mind's desires are based on a misguided attempt to seek out what is truly good. As the mind chases its own happiness the greater quest for resolution ultimately fails, because all solutions are temporary vectors of unintended consequences. Human desires secretly long for an absolute good that is unmitigated by changing circumstances. This absolute



good cannot be grasped by the ever-changing winds of the mind, but it can indeed be realized through the sublime gnosis of divine realization. Practitioners who pursue the great aim of gnosis have thrown down the gauntlet at the empty promises of the human realm, which can never and will never deliver on a permanent solution to the problem of human happiness.

Basic life force is the universal medium of all perception as well as whatever is perceived, and the life force is precisely what is utilized as the mind runs toward what it likes and away from what it hates. Contemplative practitioners scrutinize the life force intensely, and do something very different with its energy. During this process a good look can be had at the true nature of the force to ascertain what its real value might be. This can be quite shocking because what is seen runs directly contrary to the expectations of the habit field that we believed in all of our lives.

Ordinary mind can only comprehend what is contained within finite relative circumstances. Relative perception is trapped within a dualistic loop of seemingly outer situations and inner sensations, and both depend on an infinite array of interdependent conditions. Even the loftiest ideals are only passing constructs poised upon endless other constructs like leaves tumbling in the breeze. The

ultimate good cannot be contained by temporary conditions — however it is innate *in, by, and as* the continuum of their display. The continuum is the basis of all things but yet is beyond all things. It is everything and yet is no-thing at all. This paradox points to a no-thingness that becomes its own presence without ever leaving its inherent openness. This mystery is the ground of all phenomena that is termed *En Sof* in kabbalah.

The first image articulates four kinds of fire that blaze within three spheres of function (figure 1, p. 4). The fire is the basic life force that drives and is cultivated from the desires of our being. The four fires consist of the activities of thinking, feeling, axiomatic patterning, and pure unshaped essentiality. The four are contextualized within three circles referred to as *baths*. The baths offer successive immersion releases within the greater expanse of the ground.

The first bath refers to outer circumstances — the universe of “things” ordinary associative activity immerses within. Beauty begins here, with the things of the world. Yet things are not beautiful in and of themselves ... they are not “in and of themselves” at all — they are, in fact, not even things. Things are meanings unfolding within and of and as the total meaningfullness of the divine. Currents and eddies, spirals and fractals,

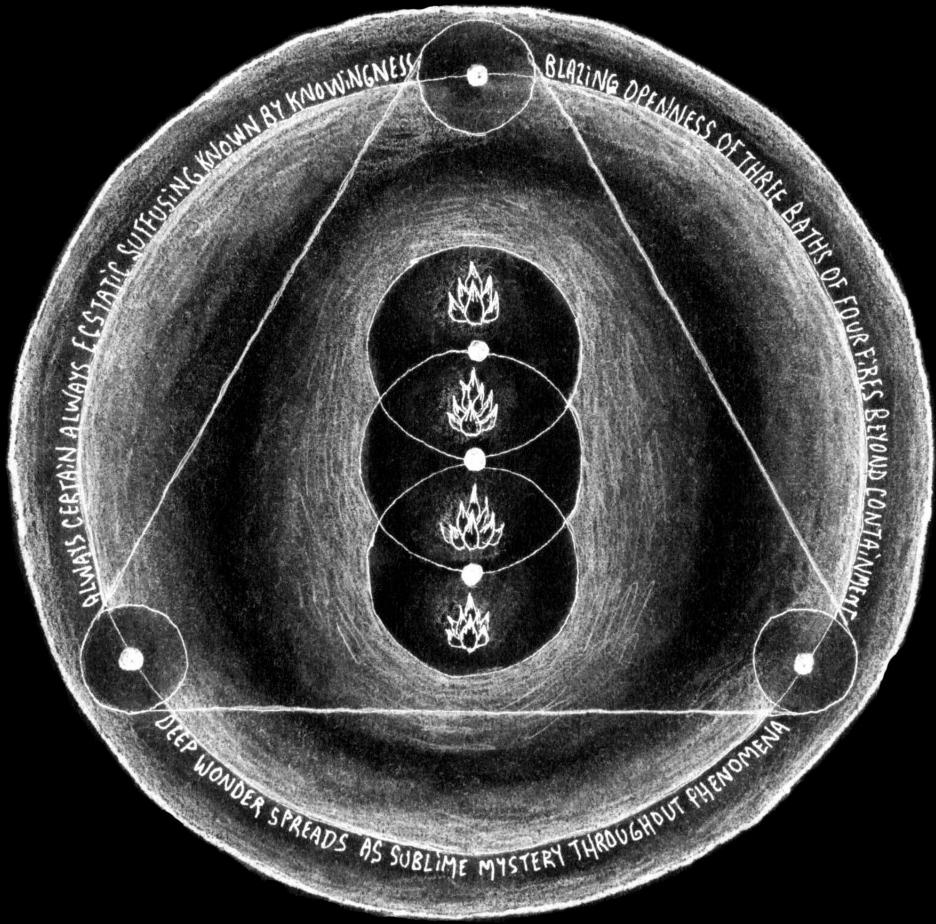


Figure 1

the ebb and flow of beauty — for what is most meaning-full is also most beautiful.

Each moment we are offered a look into the eye of the divine beloved. In this moment the divine sees itself. This act of self-recognition is what “we” actually are. We are the sight, the organ of seeing whereby the divine participates in itself as beauty unfolds to itself. We are, when we live to the fullness of our meaning and being, the manner in which divine wonderment knows itself. This is the unique human promise of meaning: to be this mystery of a finite infinitude, the part and the whole. When we do this our very living becomes the rectification and redemption called *tikkun*.

The second bath consists of resonances, however the resonant feeling tones offer far more than what ordinary intellectual and emotional reactions are habituated to. Within the bath of resonances the mind discovers an inner life that spreads through all things, submerging all that appears within an internal sea of enveloping energetic impulses. Through immersion within this sea the brittle shells of perceptual objects break open for the first time. Within this new freedom we learn to not be controlled by unhappy circumstances as well as that which promises happy circumstances. Instead, the continuum itself introduces the one

true unconditioned medium of all phenomena. This continuum is where the mind meets the divine beloved directly.

The beloved should not be confused with the creator god of religious mythology; it is not a being or a thing that can be conceptualized. The beloved is not separate from anything that can be named, although it is unnamable. The beloved is especially not separate from the mind that loves it. This union reveals a luminous expanse wherein the senses pour out through the sense fields, where knowing pours itself out through whatever is known. The deeper the mind's outpouring immerses in the bath of resonances the more its inherent luminosity becomes transparent.

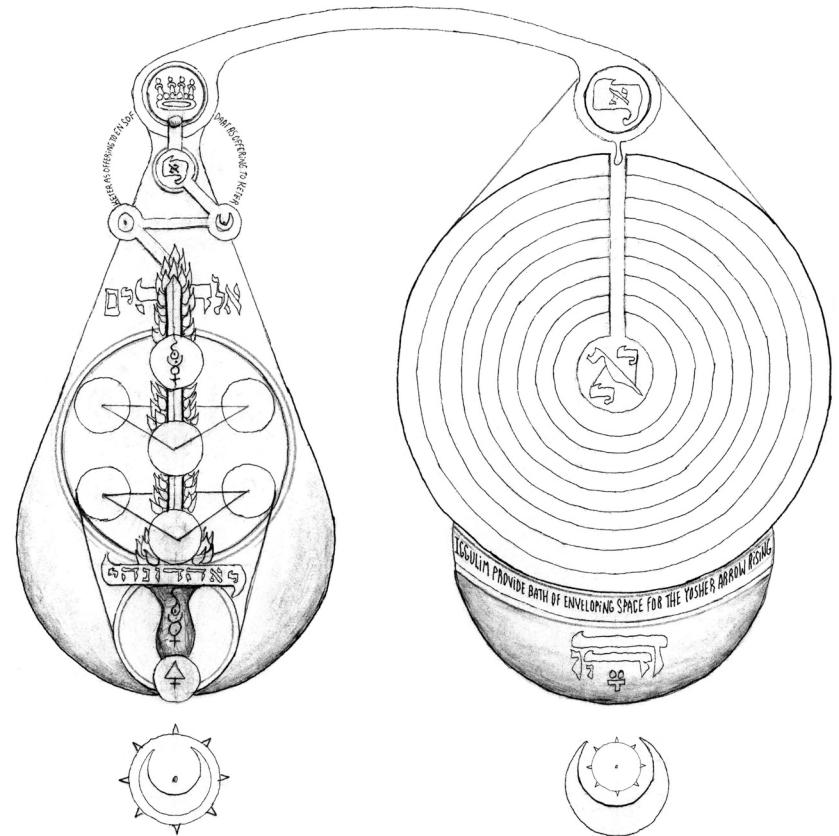
Ultimate transparency is pure silence, and the third bath is a bath of silence. Within silence the ecstasy of translucence turns to bliss-clarity, and within that state that which is beyond all experience can be recognized. Beyond experience is the gnosis of non-experience, which paradoxically can only be realized from within experience. In the bath of silence all language fails, and the silence of gnosis is sealed and its profundity takes over the world and whatever appears within it.

The fire and bath may appear to be two distinct and separate gestures, but this is definitely not the case. The fire builds by

increasing its intensity, but its capacity to release into its own open continuum is implicit within it. Openness is inherent in the fire from the outset. Fire and bath present an exchange that accompanies every stage on the path, until the ground of En Sof itself outshines any examination of what appears as its inner and outer activities.

The exchange is articulated in an image (figure 2, p. 8) that depicts two alchemical vessels. On the left is a vessel that presents the distillation of the life force, and on the right is a vessel that presents its release within the bath of its own expanse. Distillation is a process of concentration and the bath lets the activity pass back through the inherent depth of its own nature. The exchange passes back and forth like breathing ... gathering in and letting out ... over and over ... as the alchemical elixir is refined.

What is distilled in contemplative alchemy is always some form of luminosity, and its bath is always some aspect of space. In the practices of contemplative alchemy bright knowingness is distilled from the winds of the mind's conceptual motion, and that concentration is poured back into its depth until it hits some resistance. The release of the bath takes shape depending on how the restraints of the mind's habits limit its expression. In practice



### Wisdom Exchange

Distillation:  
Concentrates knowingness

Bath:  
Release shaped by reflection

### Reductive Distortion

Subjective experience

Subjective interpretation

Figure 2

these two aspects — the thrust of expression and release into its restraint — are purified together by the very desire force that propels them. When the release is no longer shaped by any restraint at all then conceptual thought can no longer impose limits upon knowingness. At that point the knowingness is realized as absolutely equal with the infinite expanse. This is the basis of divine realization.

Some aspect of the distillation and bath process is applied at every stage of the path, and it summarizes a key kabbalistic progression. The distillation aspect is kabbalistically articulated by the sefirot arranged in a *yosher*, or linear standing array. This is how the sefirot of the tree of life is usually represented in Western esoterica. The sefirot are presented in three lines — right, left, and center — in a vertical arrangement. The bath aspect is articulated by the array called *igglulim*, or circles — an onion-like model of unfolding skins. The vertical is understood in terms of an ascent and the circular operates as a release of successive layers. Neither is “correct” obviously, and each provides a hint at something far greater that engages both aspects simultaneously.

The practice of contemplative alchemy has seven steps. They are represented in an image (figure 3, p. 10) that presents a progression

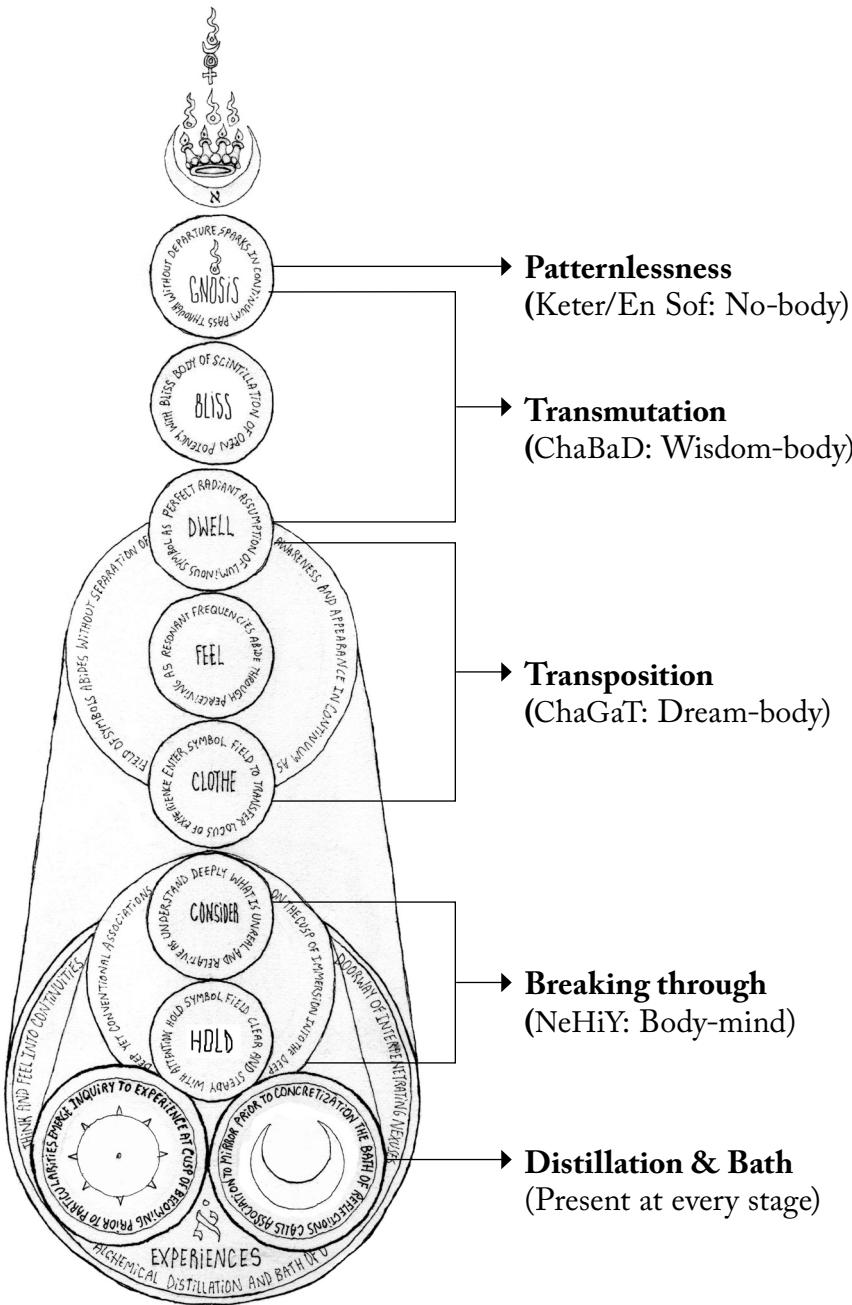


Figure 3

that extends from bottom to top. At the base of the image are the sun and moon — a reference to the distillation and bath that accompany each step in some manner. Each of the seven steps will be explained.

**1. Hold** The first step concentrates on some phenomena to work with, and it really doesn't matter what phenomena the mind uses to begin its contemplation. It might be the passing feeling of a moment or sense of place. It could be an emotion. It could be an elusive energetic sensation, a thought construct, or the visualization of a symbol. It does not matter because the ordinary mind conceptualizes all of its data in much the same manner: by reification or making the data seem solid and finite. We start by holding some phenomena as the mind reifies it, and then its solidity is undermined. It dissolves into the expanse of its own basic luminosity over the next six steps until what is absolutely purely essential can be directly and honestly recognized.

**2. Consider** Whatever is held can expand far beyond its apparent limitations, if contemplation opens through its own intensity from the inside. This allows a contemplative object to melt into the greater associative stream so deeply that the knower and thing known both become fluid and begin to dissolve. The

stream then spreads and becomes full as it develops. The skill that is cultivated in this stage is the ability for the mind to transfer its attention completely from an object-oriented consciousness into a moving progression. This volatilizes something that appears static. It is the unmaking of the object that is key. If this skill is perfected the mind can cut through its sense of rigidity on contact, however it is really quite rare and requires tremendous discipline. Ordinary mind always wants to return to static objects to get its bearings. Therefore this initial step sets out to break that habit.

When the stages of holding and considering function in direct succession the mind makes its first step to break through solidity. This involves the lower triad of the ruach — yesod, hod, and netzach (NeHiY). These sefirot are generally employed in the reification of the body-mind, which is the model of identity human beings most commonly associate with.

Breaking free of ordinary identity is a tremendously ecstatic act. The word ecstasy combines the prefix *ek* (Latin from Greek root, meaning to take out) with the root shared with the word *stasis*. Therefore ecstasy implies the rupture of a static condition that opens into freedom. When the claustrophobic walls of con-

ventional reality begin to erode there is a fantastic sense of relief, which quickly becomes a powerful joy. The greater that sense of liberating joy grows the more it becomes overwhelming, and ultimately becomes a form of total intoxication that dwarfs the small dim sense of ordinary reality completely.

**3. Clothe** After initially breaking through mental solidity contemplation enters into a phase of transposition. Identification with the body-mind is completely transferred over to the dream-like flow of associations, and body-mind identity simply falls away. The stream of associations and the sense of the knowing of it mix, and then fuse into a bond. When the bond ripens awareness becomes deeply immersed in its own streaming, and clothes itself completely within the stream. Ultimately this allows perceiver and perception to become indistinguishable, however the stream itself still carries the vestige of reification.

**4. Feel** As the energy of the body-mind surrenders to its own motion the feeling of envelopment within the associative stream is unmistakable. This feeling is no longer “you” in the ordinary sense. The locus of the “I” — the sense of being yourself — cuts its associative ties with the body-mind and its life force becomes invested within the contemplation. This relieves the tremendous

burden of ego identification, and without that baggage the contemplative field is free to exude a great dynamic sense of vibrancy.

**5. Dwell** The sacrifice of the “I” to the act of contemplation literally allows the mind to become the contemplation. Without a gross level distinction between a perceiver and its perception, the subtle reification of the contemplative field becomes the exclusive focus of the work. The work can then unfold as awareness dwells as contemplation directly, rather than in relation to it as an object.

If the mind can enclothe itself within, feel, and dwell as the contemplation then ordinary conceptuality can be transferred from ordinary points of focus to a stream that has no end. After this phase of transposition is sealed the qualities of dynamic endlessness become the mind’s exclusive concern.

**6. Bliss** Breaking through gross solidity and transferring the “I” from the body-mind to the contemplative field cultivates a finer type of ecstasy known as bliss. Pure bliss is absorption within the *shefa*, or primordial effulgence of the divine. Bliss is the mind’s reaction to becoming totally subsumed within direct recognition of the ground’s wholeness, which theistic mystics associate with an all-consuming love of god. The mind manifests

bliss as the *shefa* becomes its sole reality, beyond reification or division. The *shefa* is the living quintessence of all phenomena, the primary alchemical distillate, and the main intoxicant of the gnosis. It is nakedly expressed beyond inner and outer concerns — which is precisely what all practitioners are after.

As mentioned, the initial breakthrough beyond the body-mind and its conceptual objects involves the sefirot of NeHiY (netzach, hod, yesod). The next stage which transposes the “I” to the contemplative field involves the sefirot of ChaGaT (chesed, gevurah, tiferet). This triad is known as the dream-body because of the fluidity with which perceiver and perceived melt into a visionary mode. As the dream is transformed into a true recognition of the essential ground of all phenomena, gnostic bliss is exuded in abundance. This marks a shift to the sefirot of ChaBaD (chochmah, binah, daat).

**7. Gnosis** The sole concern of the contemplative mystic is the realization of the *atzmut*, or essence of all phenomena. Essentiality is totally beyond existence and non-existence, and cannot be definitively reduced to any mode of knowing or state of being. Yet it is not discovered elsewhere other than as the display of being exactly as it is found.

Atzmut is not other than the ground of En Sof. It is absolutely uncontrollable but yet appears as every seemingly contained thing. The ground presents continual change, but in itself is absolutely changeless. No matter what is considered, the ground is actually what is under consideration, as well as what is doing the considering. The ground is wholeness itself: what knows, what is known, as well as the activity of knowing.

The atzmut-ground is unborn and deathless. It cannot be correctly conceptualized as a mere void, a proto-substance, or a primal energy. En Sof is beyond all comprehension completely and is free in the deepest sense. Realization of this freedom is gnosis.

Gnosis of En Sof mitigates the sense of keter as a restraining container. The true nature of keter, like all phenomena, is an expression of purely uncontrollable essentiality. Therefore gnostic realization opens keter up as a permeable transparency to the divine essence such that only open lucency remains. This takes bliss beyond itself.

En Sof becomes its own luminosity without ever straying from its essential openness. En Sof does not produce separate emanations or discharge its light as a byproduct. En Sof becomes its own light, and thus all phenomena, without ever stepping down from its

original essentiality. This inseparability of openness and luminosity is an inner effulgence that pervades everything. It is a restless glow that continually surges through the presentation of its possibilities, which are superabundant in all things.

Because luminosity arises without ever straying from openness, and all things are shaped within its radiance, no truly separate or independent thing can ever be created. There is no creator and no creation. Without the artificial conceptual designations of cause and effect the substanceless magic of phenomena is set free. The appearing has no beginning or end and renews itself continually. This infinitely variable uncaused renewal is alluded to by the first word of the Bible: *b'reshit*. The word is usually translated as “in the beginning,” indicating a temporal reference point of inception. Here, the word is used to refer to the atemporal nature of the ground directly; therefore the word can be read with the phrase *in-beginning-ness*. The prefix (the letter ‘b,’ or bet) designates “in or with.” The word *reshit* means “beginning.” Thus phenomena is literally b’reshit; always constantly beginning anew.

Gnosis is the realization that no creation ever happened, ever will happen, or is happening now. And yet appearances magically appear ... beyond origin or destination. Co-emergently with this

understanding it becomes clear that no witness can be pinned down within the dream of identity. Nothing is happening outside and no one is noticing inside ... and yet infinite variation shines bright and clear. This realization makes it immediately apparent that En Sof cannot be a mere void. Its presentational surge is complete and whole, beyond any conception of starting or stopping.

The next image depicts an alchemical vessel with two of the stages previously mentioned (figure 4). The belly of the vessel contains the phenomena held in contemplation. At the periphery of what is held is the stream of consideration that invites what is contained to break out of its prison. These two stages (holding and consideration) combine to form knowledge — what we glean from the information at hand — which comprises our level of *daat*. What is done with *daat* in the mundane context provides a basis for the transposition from ordinary identification to the contemplative stream, which is depicted at the mouth of the vessel.

At the apex of the vessel are the stages that enclothe, feel, and dwell-as the contemplation. Identity is transferred at this point, and that transposition is referred to as a generation chamber. As the indwelling sense of the body-mind becomes the contemplative field we release ourselves from the vessel of self-identified

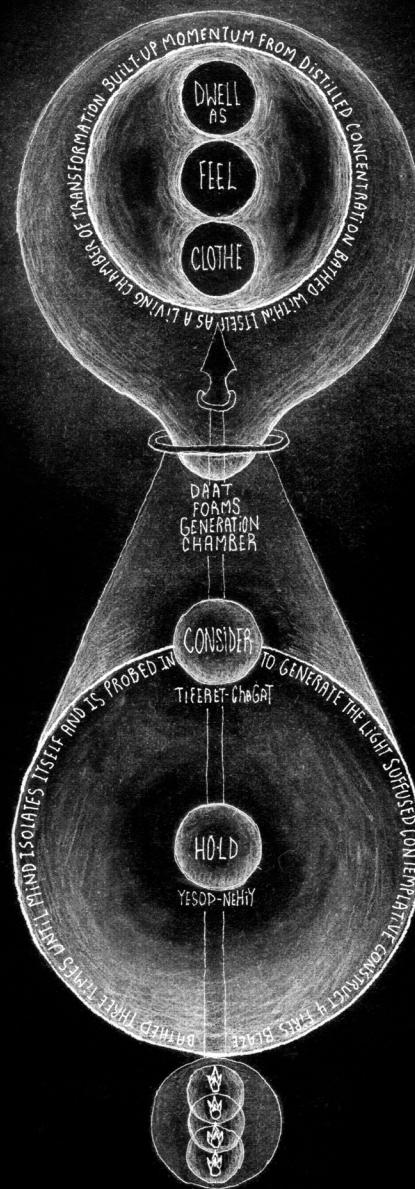


Figure 4

consciousness. This transfer state is where we leave the tedium of the mundane behind. It is the starting point of truly deep practice.

The next image draws the mind into the heart of alchemical transmutation (figure 5). The transmutation phase is represented here in a simplified form that will be elaborated upon further in later diagrams. Transmutation is facilitated by the three sefirot of ChaBaD (chochmah, binah, daat) however the function of this triad is to bring the mind into direct contact with its own restraints at keter.

Keter returns all phenomena back to the ground it never actually left. The mystery of keter is where all subtle impulses of reification are utterly dissolved, leaving no trace of the mind's belief in itself as an independent subject or of the myriad separate objects it once grasped after. The life force that is liberated from this transformation becomes an agency of transparency for En Sof, and as such it offers no inherent existence of its own. Therefore at keter gnostic freedom is sealed. It marks the apex of the process of *tikkun*, or rectification. At that point all phenomena participates in a vision of its own original truth and essentiality, without even a rumor that it had ever deviated.



Figure 5

In the diagram the three top circles accept the triad of ChaBaD into what the Zohar calls the three heads of keter (Idra Zuta 3:288b). These three aspects are commonly represented as keter in its totality in kabbalistic *illanot* (technical diagrams). The three heads of keter articulate the issue of transparency in three aspects. The first directly intersects with the distorted conceptions of phenomena that undergo alchemical transmutation. There the shefa of divine influx pours through. This is marked *crystalline dew* in the diagram. From this dew a luminous clarity pervades all things, marking entry into the profound bliss of contemplation.

The inner streaming of crystalline dew is indicated in the diagram as *secret mercury*. The secret mercury refers to the volatile motility of phenomena, which is purely dynamic in nature. It can do or be anything and everything, while remaining no-thing at all.

The uppermost circle of the three heads is marked *avira*. Avira refers to the aetheric and diaphanous openness of the lucency of En Sof. Avira is best understood in relation to the previously mentioned term *b'reshit* in conjunction with another technical term: *belimah*.

Belimah is the kabbalistic term for the magical substancelessness of phenomena. The word consists of two parts: *beli* (without) and *mah* (a thing). The flesh, bones, and blood of all phenomena are all belimah — without anything substantial whatsoever. Yet things appear sourcelessly and without cause ... without any inherent solidity at all ... despite the reaction the mind has to their appearance. Not a single scintilla of solid substance has ever existed at any time. This is because the ground is complete and whole no matter what appears. No matter what constantly changing relative qualities are considered, the absolute unchanging essentiality of En Sof is always implicit.

The field of substanceless phenomena is continually presented without interruption. This continuum is alluded to by the composite term *b'reshit-belimah* ... continually arising substancelessness. B'reshit-belimah refers to the ground in the midst of its uncaused and spontaneous capacity for presentation.

The meaning of b'reshit-belimah is innately embodied by the avira. The light of En Sof assumes unlimited appearances through the primordial aether of transformation, beyond any static condition of presence or absence. Whatever change appears rests within this twilight and can never become separate from

it. To quote Marshal McLuhan: the medium is the message. The twilight medium of avira is where something and nothingness are understood to be irrelevant, and both openness and appearance can go on without adherence to the concepts of “is” and “is-not.”

The display of continually arising substancelessness can be viewed in two completely different ways yielding two completely different results. When the ground is understood as open lucidity it is understood as the wisdom of avira. When the ground is mistaken for fragmented solidity and substance it is referred to as *hyulie*. The *hyulie* is the repository for all of the reductionistic impulses that manufacture the general and specific aspects of the mind’s limitation.

The *hyulie* always produces a subjective trajectory based on a point of view that is positioned relative to the individual body-mind. The *avira* is free of any specific trajectory based on a point of view because it is beyond subjectivity. The *avira* allows all points of view to become possible, but limits itself to none of them. Therefore the open view associated with *avira* makes no essential distinction between the micro and macro. The pre-eminent example of this kind of gnostic freedom beyond contexts is the equalization of the point of absolute concentration with the

infinite field represented by the ideal circle of perfect wholeness. Holding these constructs simultaneously opens a doorway beyond the reification and division of the infinitely small and infinitely vast. Fixations of scale as well as temporality and dimensionality all dissolve as gnostic intoxication beyond experiential consciousness is cultivated.

The separation between what seems contained and the uncontrollable only exists within the mind’s subjectivity. While these divisions persist the mind can be trained to sense the substanceless ground sparkling equally throughout. The open scintillation of the ground is located nowhere, and yet it billows forth everywhere and anywhere.

If the mind’s associative patterns are trained to relax enough to recognize that they are equal with the *avira*, then the ground can be allowed to overwhelm the so-called external and internal mental designations without distinction. At that point awareness can recognize the luminosity of its own nature within whatever asserts itself, so that the fictions of a separate perceiver and its perceptions can evaporate without a trace.

The next diagram restates the three phases of breakthrough, transposition, and transmutation using slightly different symbology

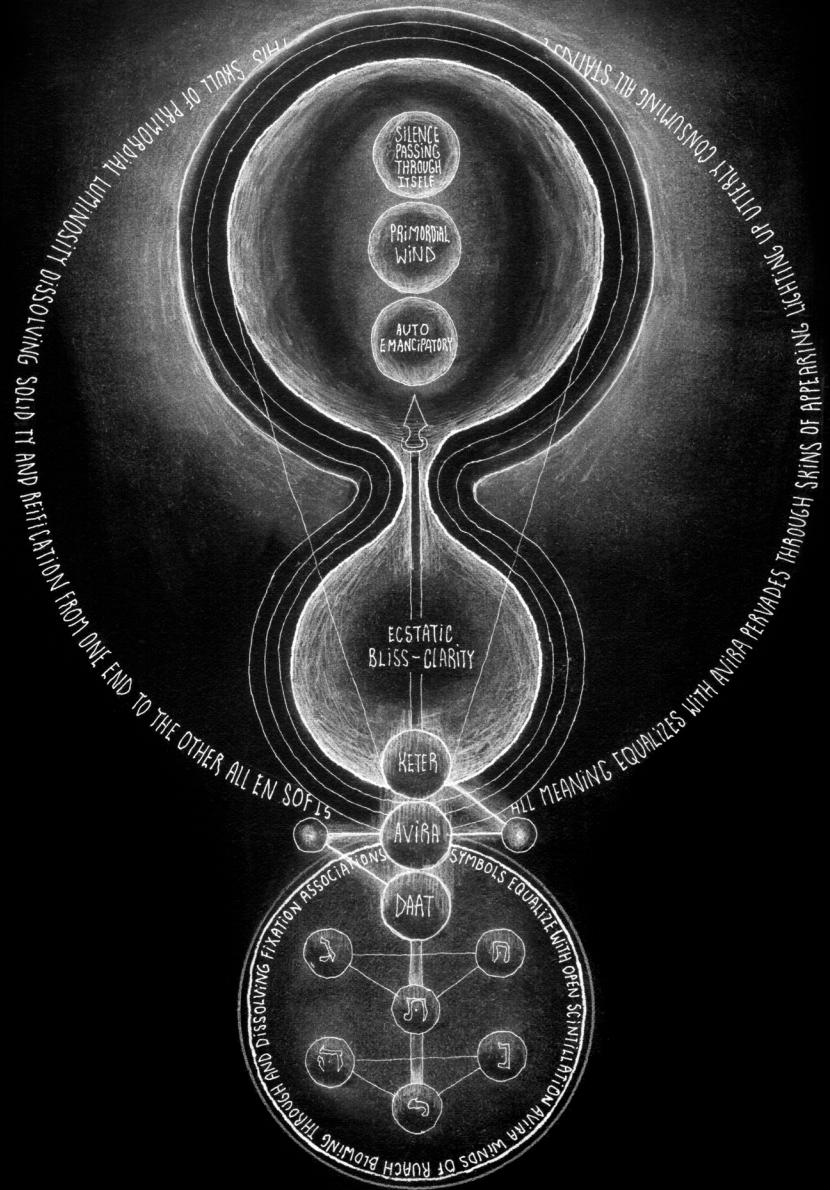


Figure 6

(figure 6). At the base is a representation of the lower sefirot that reach their apex at daat. At that point the pivot of transmutation is represented, which is referred to as the *lightning flash*. The lightning flash marks the collision between daat and keter, driven by the dynamism of chochmah and expanse of binah. Where chochmah and binah cross is marked with the word *avira*, because at this supernal intersection the first tastes of the translucent awakening ground of keter can be realized.

At the point of keter great ecstatic bliss-clarity reaches its culmination. Many practitioners mistakenly believe that states of bliss and clarity mark an achievement, or what is worse, the end of the path. This is not so. These experiences can be reified and the mind can grasp at them just as it clings to the body-mind, albeit on a highly subtle level. The problem consists of mistaking experiences for wisdom. Even the most subtle experiences are not substitutes for the wisdom of gnosis, which is totally beyond all experiential concerns. However bliss states serve the important role of indicating that transmutation is under way. The ground naturally exudes the effulgence of the shefa, which is its by-product, and marks the beginning of some realization. However this must be carried further, beyond the confines of experience.

At the top of the image the three heads of keter are represented using slightly different terminology. The three heads are placed above where ecstatic bliss-clarity is cited, shot through with the trajectory of an arrow. The arrow points up from experience into bright and vast unknowing — the gnosis of radiant nothingness.

The next diagram focuses on the phases of transposition and transmutation, but adds some key elements to refine the focus of their inner functions (figure 7). At the base of the image are the three aspects of transposition which lead to the supernal lightning flash. There is written: *silence as empty expanse*. Beyond that point the three heads of keter rest within a container marked: *hypnotic openness*. Beyond that point is a sperm shaped symbol which indicates the quintessence of the ground marked with the words: *silence as primordial luminosity*.

These stages mark a great transformation in the realization of the ground. First, the ground appears as a mere empty expanse beyond form. Within that emptiness the ground is understood more deeply through gnostic intoxication and absorption. Within this deep understanding open space invites hypnotic fascination and trance of wonder and astonishment. This allows the realization

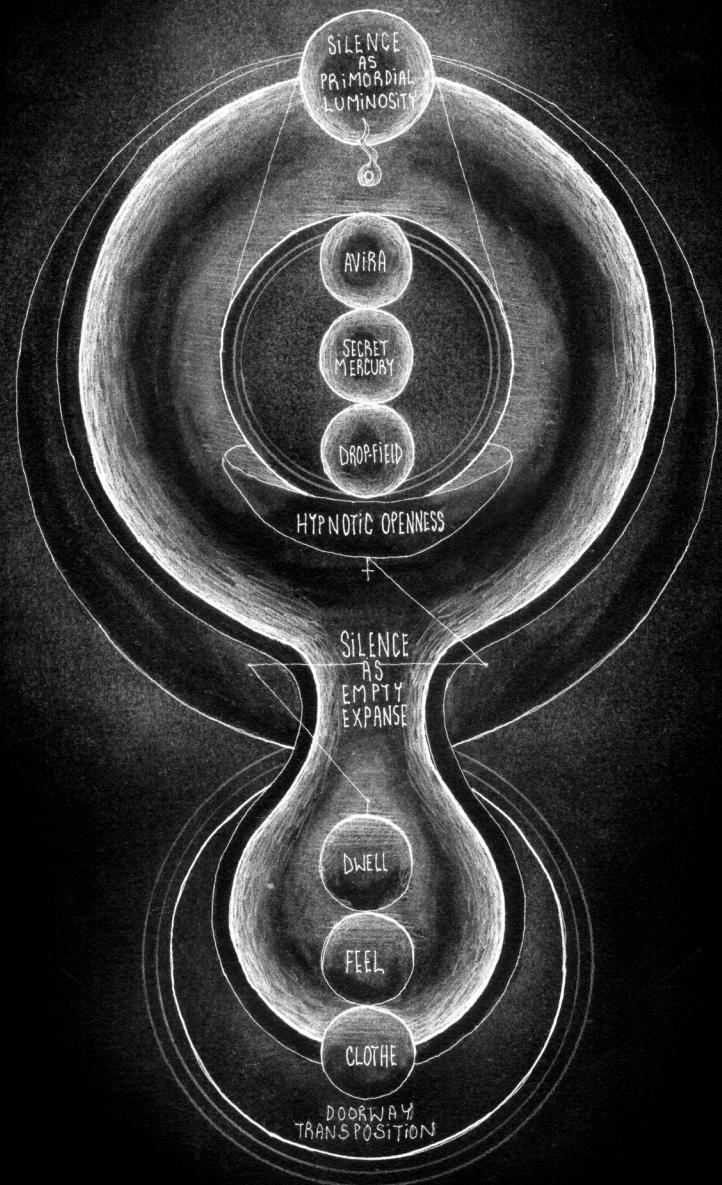


Figure 7

of brilliant lucent clarity within so-called empty space. The primordial lucency is equal to awareness; therefore what is seen equalizes with what sees it. The resonance of mind's nature with the nature of space is the basis of the hypnotic gap, which seals gnostic absorption. Through the hypnotic gap the ground can be realized as a no-thingness that becomes its own presence — a blazing paradox beyond conception.

The next image articulates the contemplating mind's trajectory by citing four phases within an unbroken continuum (figure 8). Written within the image are key terms that indicate this progression. First come experiences generated in contemplation. Second is immersion within an open hypnotic state beyond fixation on the various qualities of the experiences. Third recognizes a common ground that supports all particular states of being and modes of knowing, which is beyond all states. This recognition constitutes gnostic wisdom. Fourth is direct realization of wisdom's essentiality without any distinction made between awareness and appearances.

These four aspects introduce the streaming of the alchemical mercury. The mercury presents the open mutability that is utilized in the reification of all perceptual objects as well as their perceiving subject ... yet the secret mercury cannot be reduced to either. It

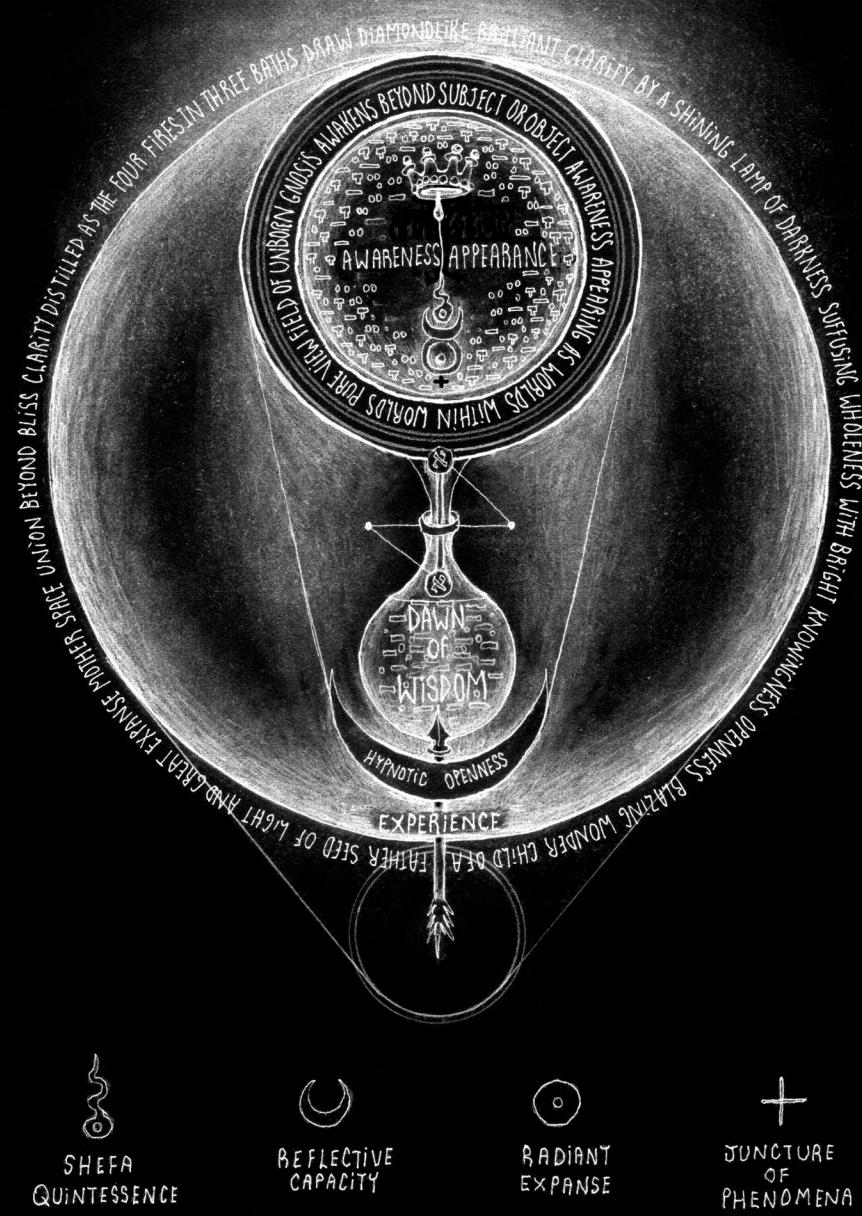
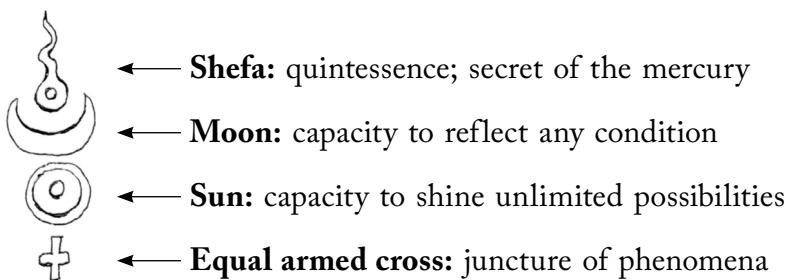


Figure 8

consists of a pure knowingness that is undifferentiated but universally applicable ... remaining changeless and unaffected no matter what happens. This is why awareness in its primordial sense is understood as divine.

If the mercury of awareness is understood as primordially changeless it is called secret because it is totally invisible to dualistic fixations. If it is understood within dualistic fixations it is simply called mercury because it conceals its secret nature completely. Ordinary mercury expresses three aspects and its secret aspect expresses a fourth. The four aspects are evident in the graphic components that combine to form the composite symbol and are provided below the image. They are listed below.



The next image (figure 9) is divided into right and left parts. On the left are the three phases of breakthrough, transposition, and transmutation. In the transmutation phase these stages become subsumed within the triple head of keter, which is then manifested

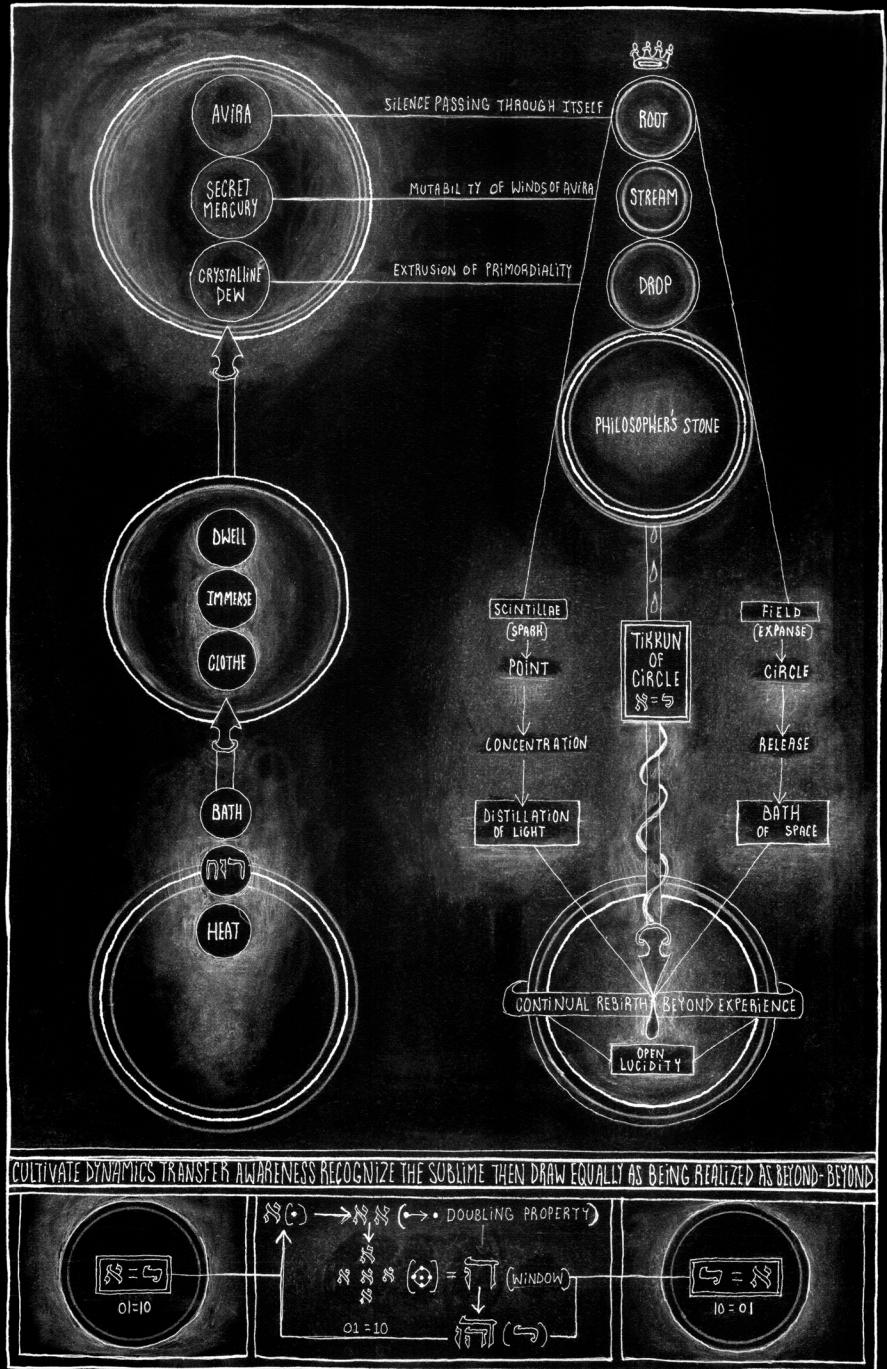


Figure 9

on the right as three key alchemical principles termed *root*, *stream*, and *drop*. The combined sum of this triad marks the assertion of the *philosopher's stone* that manifests primordial shefa without making a distinction between essence and appearance. Once the stone becomes the basis of inquiry then the trajectory of contemplation radically shifts from understanding a mechanical process to an examination of the essential nature of the divine in itself.

The three heads of keter known as dew, secret mercury, and avira come into play as the root, stream, and drops in the following manner:

1. The dew becomes a profusion of quintessence drops that intersect with the mind's distortions in order to turn them back to the ground.
2. The secret mercury becomes a streaming of pure dynamism that reveals the essential dynamic nature of creative manifestation.
3. The avira reveals the root that is directly realized as gnosis of the ground is apprehended.

Root, stream, and drop are precisely what is realized as keter reveals the avira-ground through the mercury of its dew. All

three present one continuous ground, which is En Sof beyond reification and division.

The ground eludes reduction into any pattern and is totally patternless in itself. The paradox is that the patternlessness assumes any and all patterns without ever leaving its inherently open nature. When this paradox is realized the world stands as it always did, but its meaning becomes completely unlike anything we ever expected. In this sense, gnosis presents a direct realization of En Sof as all phenomena.

Gnosis is facilitated by the agency of the philosopher's stone. The stone opens the aperture of keter so that it ceases to be a restraining barrier to En Sof. This allows total transparency to manifest nakedly throughout all things. The stone is a diamond-like clarity that annihilates all reification. Through the auspices of the stone the mind's conception of substance, dimensionality, and time cannot pose even a whispered rumor of solidity.

The stone gathers the infinite profusion of point-instants (the drops) whose singular stream subsumes all things into one root. The thirteenth-century kabbalistic text *Fountain of Wisdom* indirectly refers to the agency of the philosopher's stone with the term *tikkun of the circle*.

*Fountain of Wisdom* states:

*The roots are rooted and the streams are connected and the drops are based in the tikkun of the circle.*

The tikkun of the circle refers to a way of framing how the appearance of the finite actually presents the infinite. In the deepest sense the symbol of the circle refers to the continuum of open lucency. However in the conventional sense a circle is taken at face value, and seems to divide what it appears to contain from the uncontainable expanse surrounding its periphery.

The circle can be traced to two seemingly oppositional gestures: infinite expansion and infinite contraction. In sacred geometry the periphery of a circle is drawn out from a central point. Point and periphery present dualistic extremes when presented without the implicit presence of the other. However when understood through each other these gestures unlock infinity from opposing directions simultaneously.

The point symbolizes irreducible contraction, and the circle symbolizes total expansion. The tikkun of the circle reconciles these seemingly opposing gestures within the same inconceivable ground. The point presents an absolutely concentrated scintillae

of luminosity, and the circle represents the vast expanse of that potency's scope. The point can be understood as the seed of the circle, and the circle is its womb giving birth. In this way both pass beyond contrast together to liberate all dimensional limits.

Point and circle also relate to the exchange of distillation and bath, which present the concentration of life force and its release. Their simultaneity is the tikkun that is applied incrementally as the stages of breakthrough, transposition, and transmutation reach their pinnacle at keter. The tikkun of the circle becomes possible as the dynamic openness of the ground mitigates the reflex of reification on the deepest level. This is the work of the root. Its dynamism draws out an understanding of motion beyond mechanistic reduction. This is the work of the stream. It clears away the stain of solidity and divisive fragmentation. This is the work of the drop.

The philosopher's stone is the means to introduce the root, stream, and drop of gnosis throughout all phenomena. It is called a stone to address the main paradox of phenomena. The world appears solid and substantial but yet is only the open lucency of En Sof. The wisdom of gnosis is substanceless appearance. The stone is a window into how En Sof crystallizes as appearance

without ever leaving its own open intangible nature. Gnostic ripening allows this paradox to be literally digested so that the whole universe exudes its sublime qualities. In this sense appearance is neither grasped nor rejected, and can be realized beyond the solid conceptions of existence or non-existence.

The stone engages phenomena as endless flickering impressions within open lucency. The parade of flickerings can be explored by adapting the mind to a language of cognitive texturing that looks so deeply at the world that the “thingness” of things evaporates. This invites a mode of knowing that lives in the twilight between what are thought to be constructs, and it can be trained until the need for solidity passes into disuse. If the mind trains itself to boycott the hard reductive default setting of experience and interpretation it can discover new vistas of vision based on patternlessness. A person can intuit patternlessness anywhere and everywhere as it assumes patterns without ever leaving itself. In this sense the world will be reborn.

The tikkun of the circle is examined more closely in the next image (figure 10). This is a stripped down model of the equalization of point and circle in the form of a linear alchemical vessel. The belly of the vessel is a quadrisection circle that serves

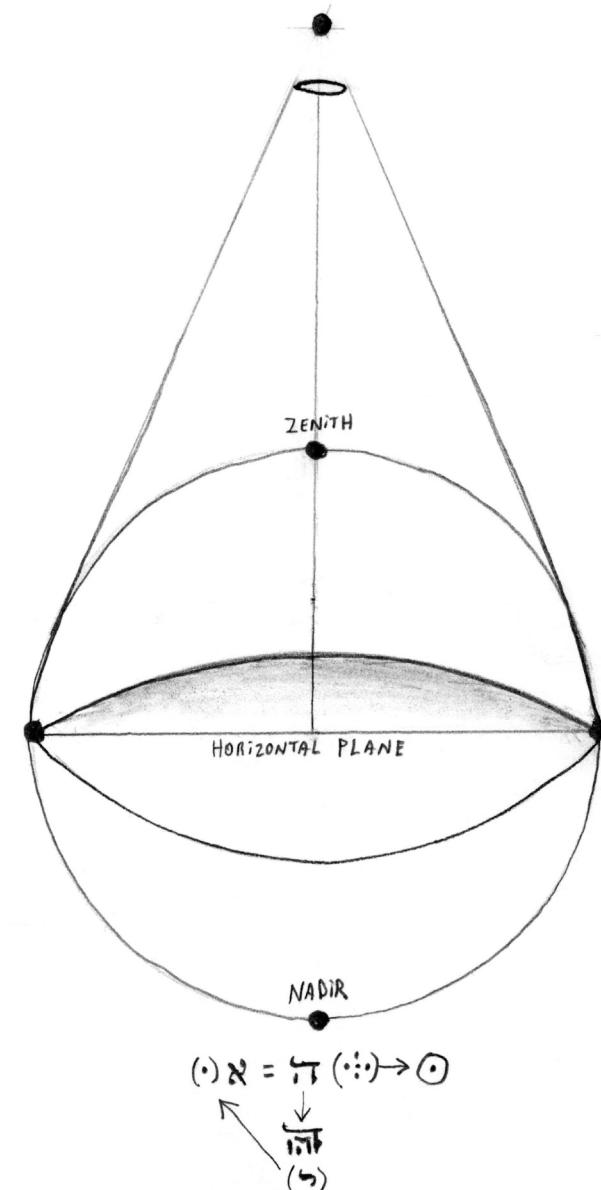


Figure 10

as a synopsis of spatial and temporal orientation. A zenith is on top, a nadir at the bottom, and the horizontal plane of earth runs concurrently between right and left. This also sets the four directions in space.

In an ordinary sense the mind functions as it moves within a three dimensional spatial continuum. As motion passes it becomes calibrated in units that are then interpreted as temporality. Our habit is to accept these reductions as objectively true, and then we fall as prisoners to the limitations until the desire to break free is recognized.

We break free as the nectar of the ground's essential goodness is found. It is only recognized in the heart of phenomena. It will not be brought from heaven down to earth by some messianic hero. We must do it ourselves aided by the benefit of tradition, hard work, and those who have realized the secret before us. The secret mercury of the avira is right here, right now, but we cannot get at it until extremely fortunate circumstances transpire. This is what we long for: the only medicine for the only disease. Once the medicine is imbibed the mystery of appearance will no longer be calibrated, placed, or localized. The liberating effulgence is absolute and all-pervasive once found, and it returns all phenom-

ena to the infinite nature it never actually left ... except in the poison dreams of our collective nightmare.

In the diagram a single point rests at the top of the diagram. This is the seed that is reconciled with the womb of containment. The tikkun of the point and circle is a challenge to all dualistic divisions and all contrasts. The equalization of infinite vastness with infinite irreducibility erases all finiteness and leaves only the infinite itself, which is open yet dynamic. This open dynamism cannot be expanded or contracted any longer because no contrast continues to support its directionality. This tikkun brings out the equanimity that everything and nothing ultimately share.

At the base of the image is an esoteric formula derived from *Fountain of Wisdom*. The formula equalizes alef (numerical value of one) with yud (numerical value of ten), which represents the key set of the numerical cycle. This formula is one of the major keys to the use of this symbolism.

The formula begins with the alef of absolute wholeness. Wholeness presents motion, and in moving gives the impression that it has extended itself somewhere. Thus alef reflects itself as alef-alef, and singular wholeness appears as two.

As wholeness reflects itself, the reflection reflects itself again, on into infinity. Thus wholeness now appears as four (two times two) without leaving itself. The four therefore creates the symbolic quadrisection of the directions of space.

At the heart of quadrisection is the master principle — the heart of the matter. This adds to the four and forms a five. Five is the numerical value of the letter heh, which corresponds to the shechinah or divine presence. The Fountain states:

*When alef is uttered the two aspects of voice and breath arise — alef-alef. The two then become four with avira in-between. The avira is not merely an alef, but it is certainly not less than that.*

Therefore the self-elaboration of wholeness is a vision of an alef as a heh (five). Heh reflects itself in the divine name YHVH, as the understanding of basic space is understood in all the adaptations of appearance. Therefore five becomes ten, which equalizes with the wholeness of the original alef. Thus alef equals yud ( $01 = 10$ ). The Fountain then provides the final piece to the equation:

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

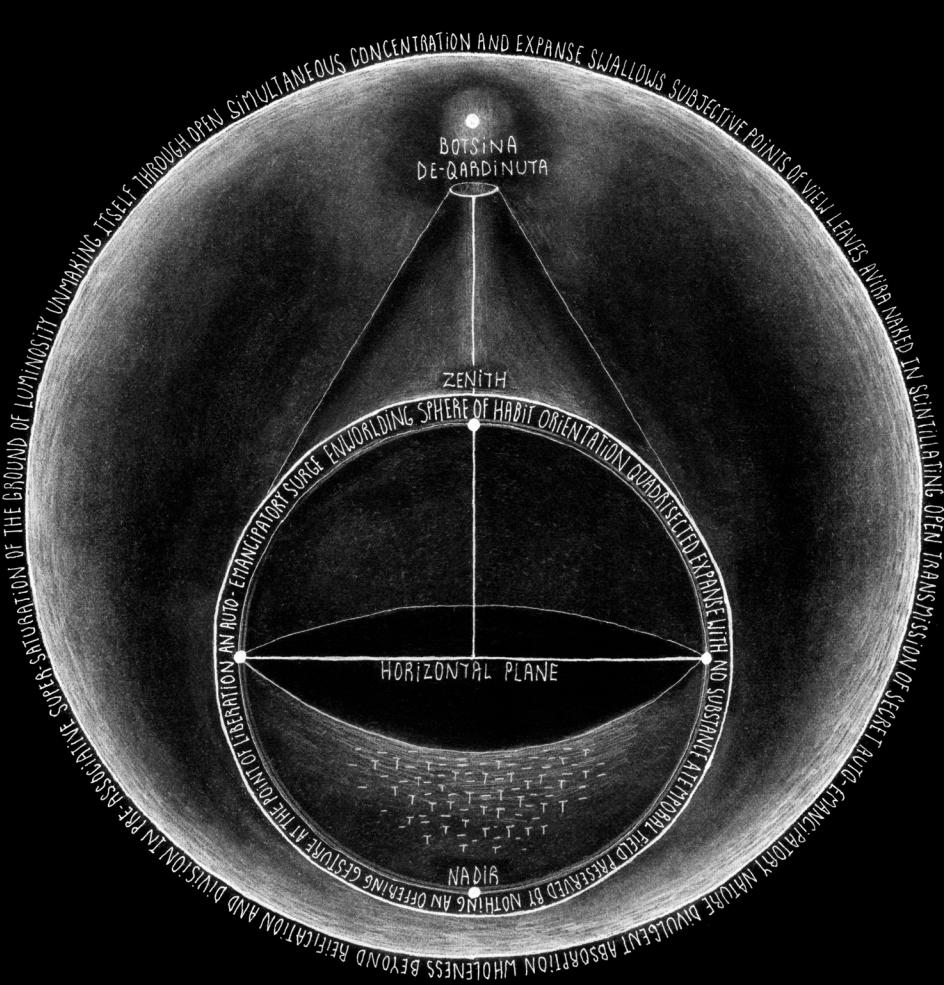


Figure 11

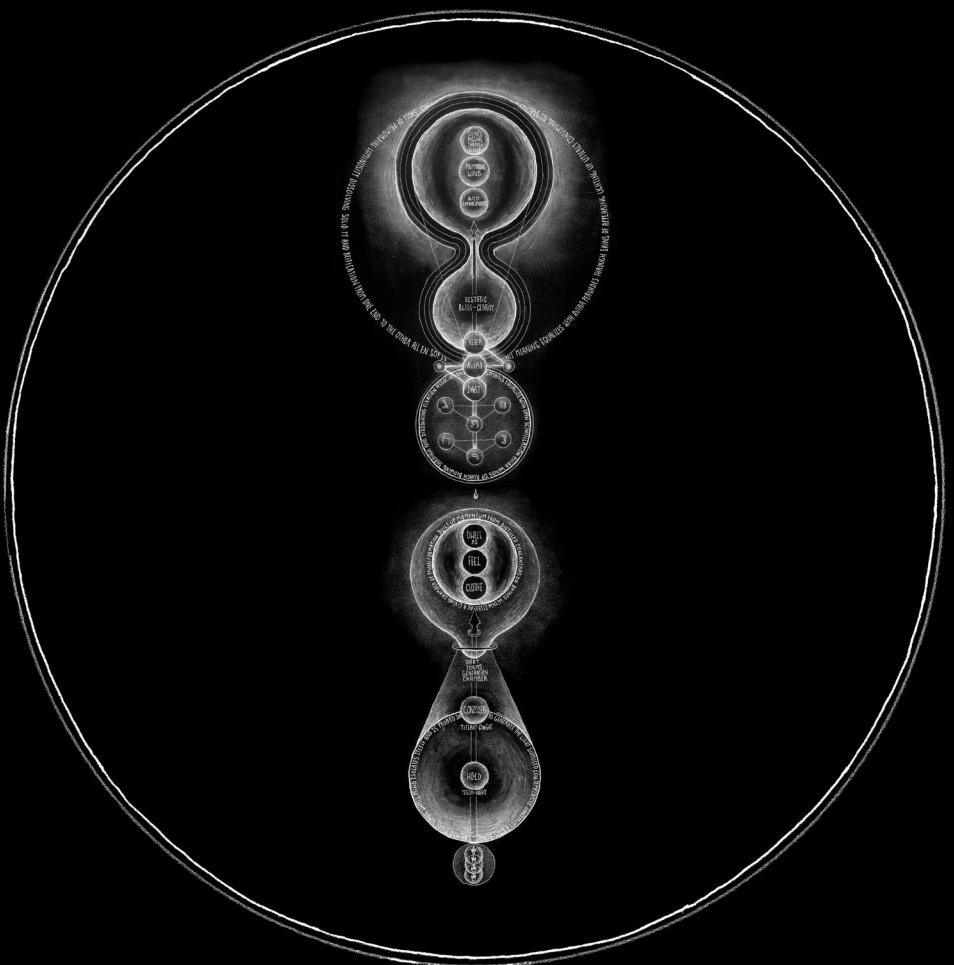


Figure 12

The next image (figure 11, p. 43) is a more elaborate version of the tikkun of the circle diagram. It can be used in exactly the same way as the previous image.

Figure 12 depicts the four stages we have mentioned thus far within a vast encompassing circle. At the heart of the circle is a single tiny drop. The drop represents the non-dual point that equalizes with the periphery, and thus evokes the greater application of the tikkun of the circle.

The practice of contemplation is not a linear chariot ride that takes the soul from earth into heaven. The ultimate purpose of the practice is the equalization of the reductive systems of contrast that restrict perception. At the beginning contemplation appears to climb a ladder of steps and stages. After the work of the initial breakthrough and transposition phases have been undertaken contemplation then becomes something totally beyond what conventional language and mental association can formulate. In its fullness the practice can only be communicated by the blazing depth of silence. This is a very rare thing to appreciate.

The equalization of point and circle is also a direct reference to the kabbalistic layout of the primordial tzimtzum. Through the tikkun of the circle all of the theistic religious mythology

associated with the tzimtzum and the process of linear creation can be stripped away and discarded. Nothing finite was ever, or could ever, be created. There never was, nor will there ever be, a separate creator god creating anything.

En Sof cannot be contained and cannot be separated from itself. It is totally whole and free to appear in infinite circles without ever reducing itself in any way. This is not to say that the model of the tzimtzum is unuseful ... to the contrary ... it is crucial in illustrating the paradox of the apparent containment of the uncontrollable as sheer magic. In this most profound magical sense En Sof arises as worlds upon worlds without ever leaving itself.

The next image (figure 13) depicts the tzimtzum scenario. In this diagram an alef is depicted reflecting itself as mentioned in the *Fountain of Wisdom*. One alef rests beyond containment outside the circle and another alef appears contained within it. The two are bound within the *ruach*, or wind of the divine, which is creative motion. However this is not as it seems. The original nature of the alef itself is En Sof — a wholeness that is belimah: substanceless and without any inherent existence. Therefore there is nothing to reflect itself in the first place. Because of this fact it cannot be said that “one” becomes “two” at all. Wholeness

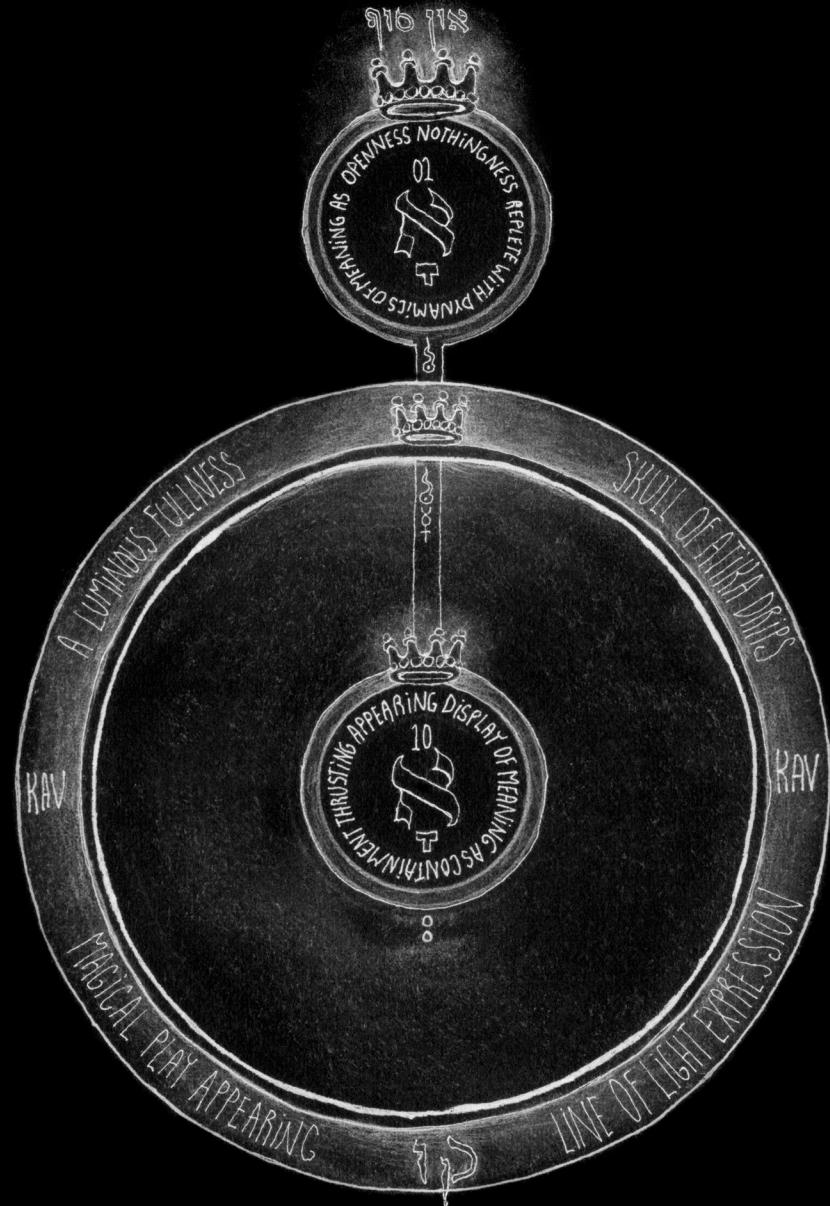


Figure 13

appears through self-reflection, but its appearance is undermined by its true nature. Wholeness reflects itself without ever leaving what was never there to begin with. This paradox is the basis of all infinite elaboration.

Infinite upon infinite circles are contained in every point ... endless variation of sizes all only infinitesimal points ... each mutually interpenetrating and non-obstructing ... opening out without end into perfectly empty space and at the same time seeming utterly solid and impenetrably diamond-like. In every tiny point there are  $1,000,000,000,000 \times 1,000,000,000,000$  cosmic scale circles, each one occupying the same place at the same time ... mutually interpenetrating and non-obstructing ... each perfectly distinct as a trilocosm of universes. Every billion-fold universe with its limitless number of inhabitants lives time-space dramas in subjectively manufactured worlds appearing as a real commerce of lives, births, and deaths. And all of it encircles circles within billion-fold universes within each tiny point. All of never happened, never will happen, and is not happening now. This miracle is the root that streams through mind and fashions reality ... each moment according to its specific conditions. The mind that is absorbed within this miracle and

never returns to the mundane no matter what appears has realized the philosopher's stone.

Each point-instant streams forth as a line to wrap itself within itself. Each streaming encircling line meets infinite other streaming encircling lines, each supporting and guiding the other, forming infinite interpenetrating circles. Endless point-instants circumambulate themselves in rings and echoes, and each instance is complete and whole — not single nor multiple, vast nor tiny, present nor absent. The permeation has no end, and its streaming is an open scintillation field. Any world or soul that claims independent existence merely derives its life force from this open field that fills and surrounds it.

Absorption into the profusion of drops is where words fail. Each drop-point is a boundless immensity, and the immensity is absolutely concentrated beyond any scale. Where subatomic points open to universal circles each instant is complete and whole, mutually interpenetrating and non-obstructing. This is the state that drops off into no-state, where experience knows non-experience.

The next image (figure 14, p. 50) contains a synopsis of the *histalshelut*, or ladder of creation, with a very special addition at its apex. Within the great circle of space are placed the lower sefirot

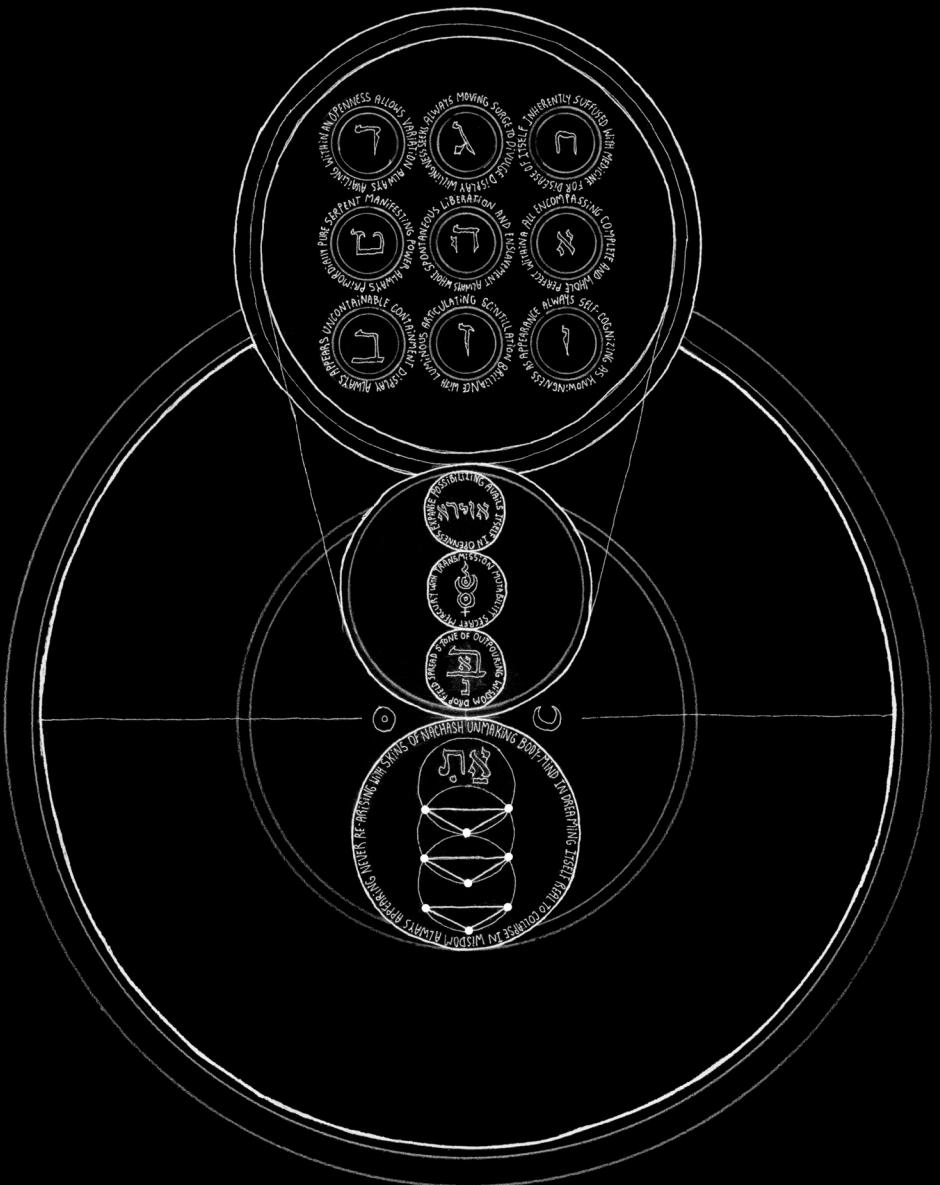


Figure 14

culminating in the three heads of keter. Above this array is a presentation of the crowning glory of phenomena: the arrangement known as the nine chambers. The nine chambers consists of a series of terms that reach as far as language possibly can when attempting to articulate the sublime attributes of En Sof as it manifests as phenomena. The nine aspects together serve as a working definition for the creative thrust of En Sof itself.

The idea of separation between En Sof and the sefirot of the worlds is a naked absurdity. However to the conventional mind the uncontainable and the seemingly contained appear as opposite as night and day. Mystical work consists of rendering this impression irrelevant. This is accomplished by pointing out the inherent substancelessness and transparency of phenomena by recognizing the nine qualities in everything everywhere.

Such recognition mitigates the restraining functions of keter. Although the histalshelut appears in the form of a ladder it is only a set of windows within the realization of a single ground. This is a truth that spans from malkut to keter. However this realization meets with a set of resistances along the way. The initial breakthrough phase brings malkut into the sefirot of NeHiY. The transposition phase carries NeHiY to ChaGaT. The transmutation

phase draws ChaGaT into ChaBaD which collides with keter as its crowning through the lightning flash of gnosis. The transmutational crowning within keter is realized as the nine chambers as the lower nine sefirot echo through each other, which encompasses the whole histalshelut beyond the distinctions of any group of sefirot.

From the view of the nine chambers the four alchemical phases are totally continuous despite their stepped appearance. The phases are completely implicit within each other in simultaneity, beyond time and location. However from within each step what precedes it is incorporated and what is ahead is a mystery. Only from the realization of the highest does the lower appear continuous. However segmented the phases might seem while trapped within their limitations, a practitioner need only turn their attention to the highest at any time. One's view should be as vast as the sky while scrutinizing each action as finely as ground flour.

The next image isolates the nine primordial qualities in a single diagram (figure 15). Together these qualities spell out the mystery of no-thingness as spontaneous presence as far as language can possibly allow. These terms serve an incredibly rare function that

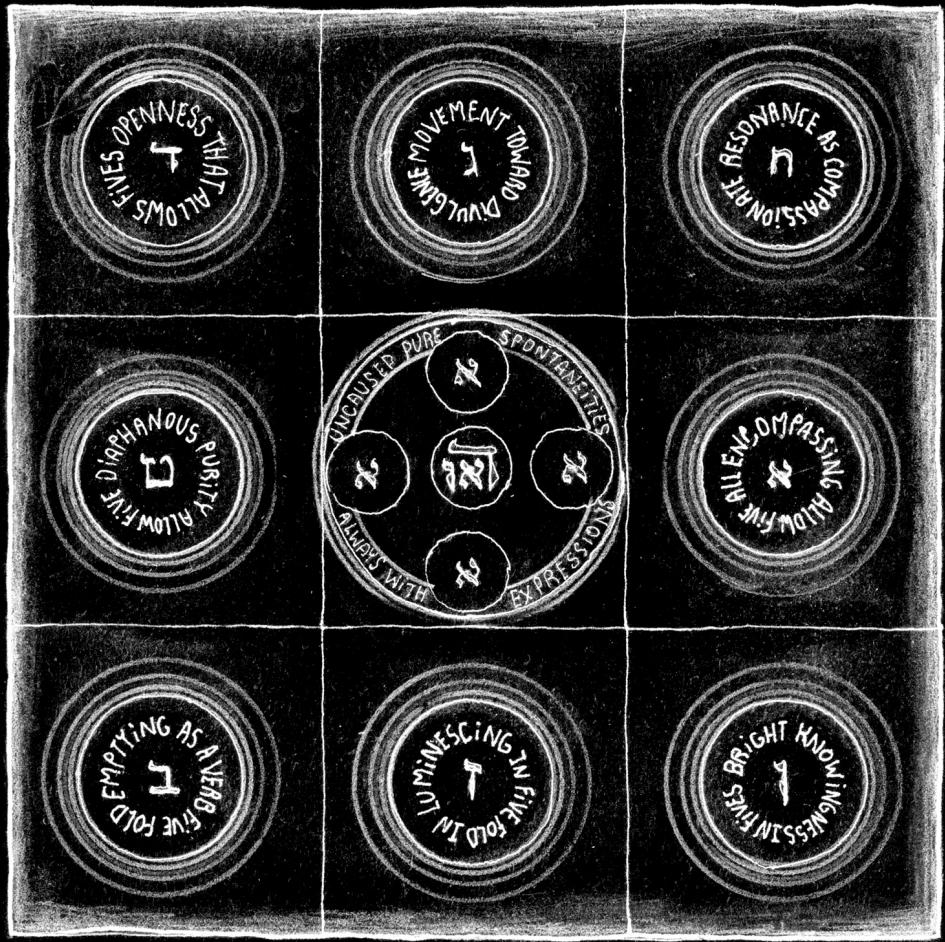


Figure 15

lets the mind consider what conceptuality cannot really contain. Therefore they must be understood by implication, as a whole and not as individual parts. The nine aspects are as follows:

Openness	Divulgence	Resonance
Purity	Spontaneity	Pervasion
Emptying	Radiance	Knowingness

It would be a mistake to view these qualities in any particular order. However upon examination it becomes evident that they make sense in every possible order they can be read in. To properly introduce them, they can be stated simply from the top row to the bottom row from left to right.

Primordial openness always precedes any discussion, and simply allows its inherent vista of possibility to unveil itself. The open vista of possibility is never static, and cannot rightly be conceptualized as such. Therefore it must be understood that openness always moves toward divulgence of some kind. Openness is always poised at the cusp of becoming. This does not refer to anything becoming any “thing” at all. It is a sense of tension that is always releasing itself somehow, without ever deviating from the initial openness. This continual release of open dynamism is the resonance of the ground that is inherent as all phenomena.

The resonance of open divulgence is only good. Whatever is expressed within its thrust is proof of the boundless resource of infinite variation. There is no other venue for open lucidity to be recognized. It is always there waiting. That is tremendously good in and of itself.

All phenomena is inherently good because it expresses it's essential nature — which is pure shefa. It is pure without having to compete dualistically with impurity; therefore whatever appears is primordially pure. Since no limitation or boundary augments the purity, it abides in a diaphanous unrestrained state beyond reification. No “thing” is there to be declared pure. It is pure without substance, without cause, and without context.

Phenomena has no causal beginning or destination, and its essential nature cannot be placed within any particular world. Worlds definitely do appear and certainly seem different from one another. Assiah seems solid, yetzirah seems fluid and always in motion. Briah seems abstract and atzilut seems undifferentiated. However the nature of all worlds and whatever appears in them shares a common nature no matter what happens. That nature is beyond category. Therefore it should be clear at this point the essential nature of all phenomena is exclusively under

discussion within the nine chambers and not a mere discussion of functionality.

En Sof is not a “place” where things originate. The essential nature of phenomena is therefore not caused by any particular set of conditions, and is both unborn and deathless. Therefore whatever appears does so spontaneously beyond any mechanical system that might try to trace its roots. In fact the roots, streams, and drops of the ground cannot be located anywhere ... yet pervades everywhere. Since the uncaused spontaneity is truly all-pervasive wholeness (alef) and the dynamism that drives life force (yud) are absolutely equal. This is the basis of the tikkun of the circle.

Since all phenomena is open in essence whatever arises is always emptying itself of itself. This is because the very idea that a thing exists is a phantom, a fabrication, which has no inherent reality. The deeper we look the less we find, until we find the no-thingness that is the basic truth of appearance. The habit field that ordinary mind asserts always declares that whatever appears is a “thing.” Therefore the quality of emptying is like medicine for this disease. Do not mistake what is being said: appearance certainly appears. It would be stupid to deny that. However what is it

that appears? Either En Sof is the sole ground of all phenomena or it is not.

The open assertion of appearance is always extruding openness into a display of luminous expression. Luminescing is always ceaselessly displaying its radiance. As the inherent luminescing is considered it becomes evident that the looking, the looker, and whatever is seen are one and the same. Whatever we contemplate is the precisely the awareness that beholds itself. The bright knowingness of awareness, cannot be designated inside or outside. Therefore its subjectivity and its objectivity are both tossed out.

In no uncertain terms, the nine chambers articulate the ground in its manner of operation. The study of this subject relieves the main problems associated with the human view of the infinite and its understanding. When the view of the mind turns to atheism its nihilistic view misses the ground completely. When the view of the mind turns to theistic religion its eternalistic view reifies the ground into a fantasy. However when the view of the mind turns to examine the essential nature of phenomena on its own terms it can recognize the key that equalizes subject and object, which unlocks the central mystery that hangs above all beings.

The last image in this chapter depicts the histalshelut once more, but this time focusing on the effulgence of the nine chambers through the enclothements (figure 16). In Likutey Moharan by Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (#24) this succession is described in detail. The array of successive enclothements progresses as follows:

1. Malkut incorporates NeHiY
2. NeHiY incorporates ChaGaT
3. ChaGaT incorporates ChaBaD
4. ChaBaD collides with temporary restraints of keter

All lower nine sefirot collide within keter as a single totality with the collective momentum of the habit field of the worlds. This momentum is the life force that is realized as gnostic bliss. Here, the alchemical process utilizes the force of the poison to create its own medicine. In this sense, the impurities of the lower nine sefirot themselves become the pure wisdom of the nine chambers.

The upper portion of the image depicts the nine chambers working through the three heads of keter. Each of the heads is depicted in the manner that shows how it utilizes the nine

### Three Heads of Keter (Zohar 3:288b, Idra Zuta)

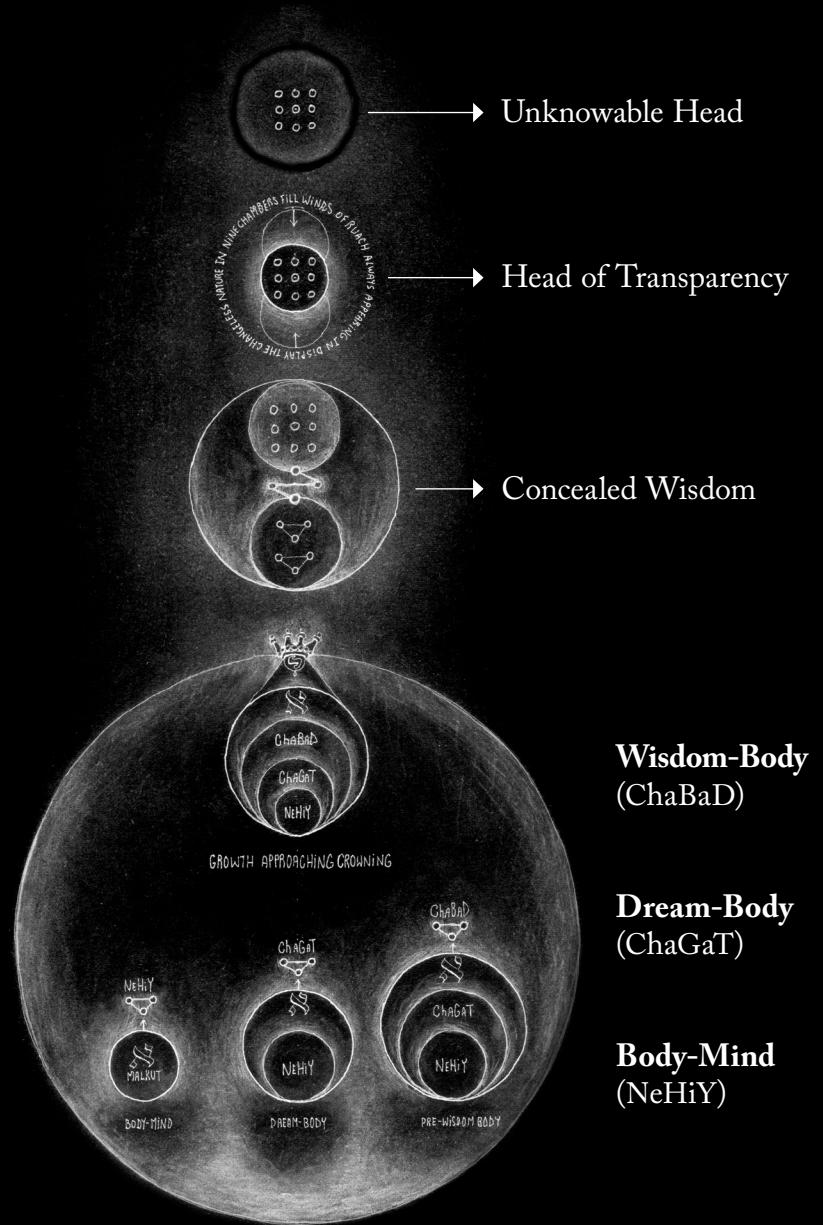


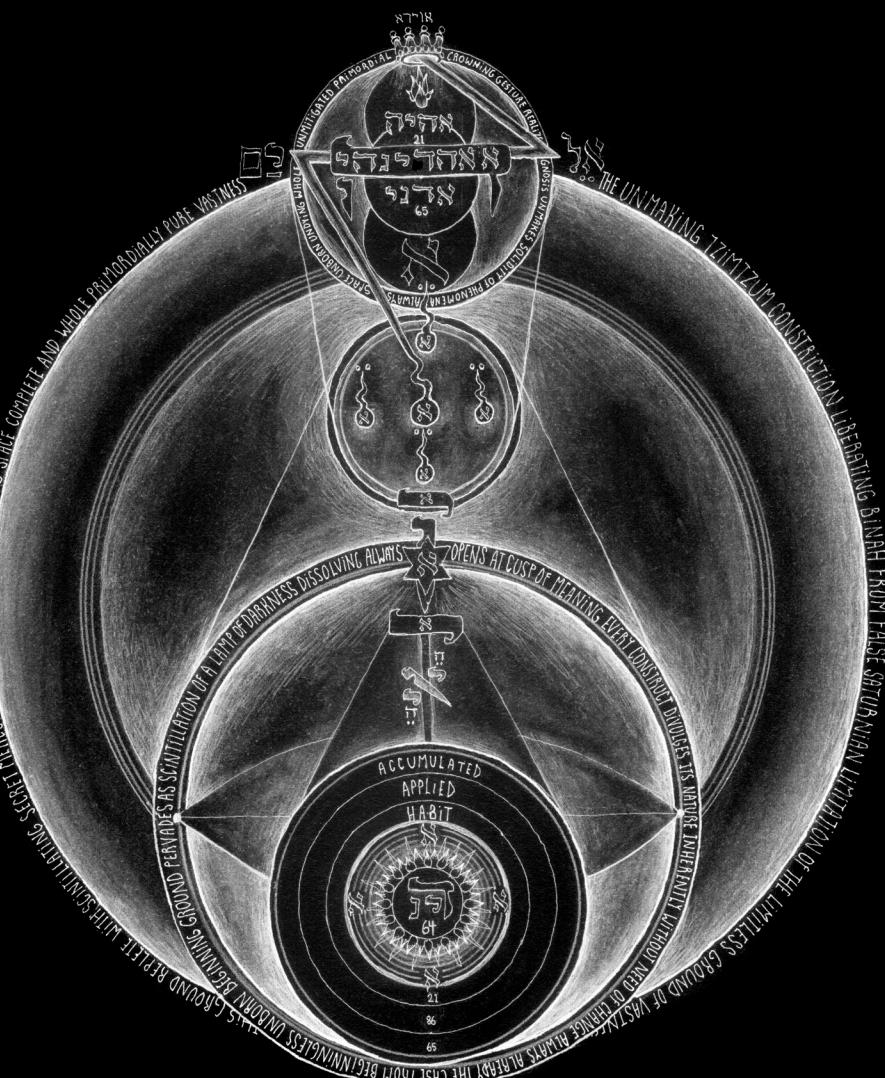
Figure 16

chambers in its own way. The textual source for the three heads is the Zohar 3:288b, Idra Zuta section. The three are as follows (lowest to highest):

1. **Concealed Wisdom** The concealed wisdom is like a brain within a head that provides tikkunim for the lower nine sefirot. It functions as a concealed aspect of chochmah that pervades phenomena as a field of drops, but in truth presents the single drop of non-duality where the illusion of fragmentation appears.

**2. Head of Transparency (Skull)** The head of transparency is like a permeable skull where the secret mercury flows. Profound streaming through it shows the paradox of how what appears to be a barrier is actually a chamber of exchanges. Its flow renders all phenomena transparent to the open lucency of the divine on contact.

3. **Unknowable Head** The highest of the heads is totally unknowable and is associated directly with En Sof as such. This is the aspect of sublime avira that cannot even be conceptualized as a head.



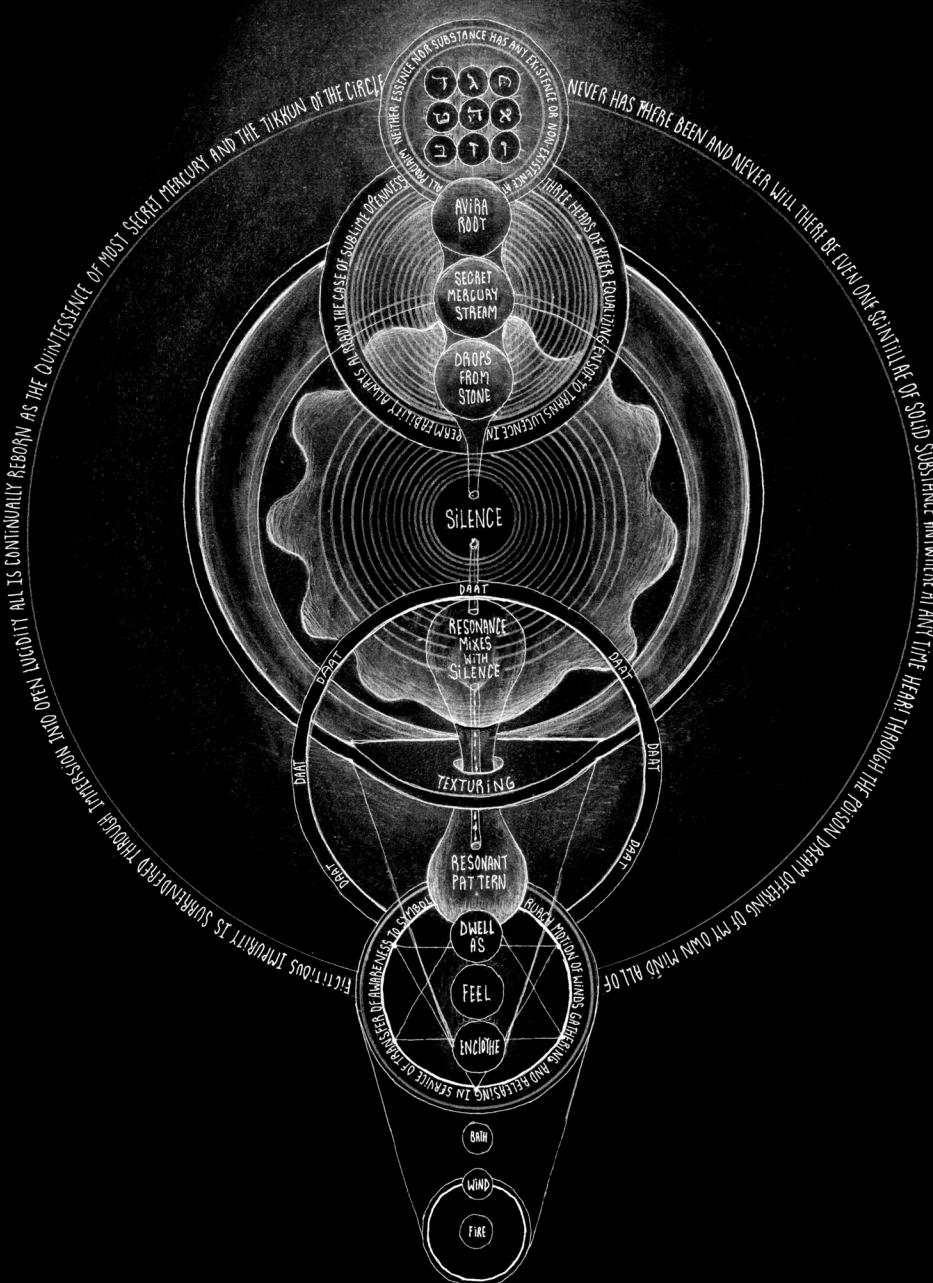


Figure 17

## 2 The Practice of Tikkun Kadmon

THE CENTRAL PRACTICE of this text is called the *Thirteen Phases of Tikkun Kadmon* or primordial rectification. The practice is mapped out within the first image in this chapter (figure 17), however it is not as it seems. All of the phases described thus far are included in the image as a vertical sequence but in actual practice the phases are implicit within each other and are activated in simultaneity once their internal dynamics have been digested.

The structure of the practice utilizes language that appears in several texts within the thirteenth century Iyyun cycle of kabbalistic literature. The two key sources are the texts *Sefer HaIyyun* and *The Thirteen Powers* which both present the material using precisely the same language in the same order.

It may be difficult to understand how this hierarchical array can be utilized without suggesting a linear mechanistic process. The ladder-like form presents the phases in their respective parts

for basic consideration, however nothing is stated within any of the texts about how to actually apply the phases in practice. It is unwritten but expected that the practice and integration of the material must be passed on directly through oral instruction.

The *Sefer Halyyun* and *Thirteen Powers* texts offer the key structure clothed in language that only esoteric interpretation can unpack. The main passage is also contained in other esoteric texts in slight variations, as well as within some manuscript versions of the *Fountain of Wisdom* text. The main excerpted passage is presented here in reverse numerical order:

*Each one of the 13 powers has a well-known name and a position atop one another. The first is primordial wisdom. The second is marvelous light. The third is chashmal. The fourth is arafel. The fifth is the throne of light. The sixth is the wheel of greatness called hazhazit (i.e., looking glass) that is the place of the seer's vision. The seventh is the cherub. The eighth is called wheels of the chariot. The ninth is the encompassing aether. The tenth is the celestial curtain. The eleventh is the throne of glory. The twelfth is the domain of souls. The thirteenth is the secret of the supreme configuration known as the outer holy palace. These thirteen powers are revealed together from the supreme hiddenness that is concealed ...*

— Standard version, translated by Mark Verman

The thirteen phases are divided below into the four alchemical phases. The initial breakthrough consists of three phases, the transposition consists of three, the transmutation consists of four, and gnostic realization itself consists of three. They are as follows:

#### **Gnostic Realization**

- 13. Primordial wisdom
- 12. Marvelous light
- 11. Chashmal

#### **Transmutation**

- 10. Arafel (lamp of darkening silence)
- 9. Throne of light
- 8. Wheel of greatness/mirror's vision
- 7. Cherub

#### **Transposition**

- 6. Wheel of chariot
- 5. Encompassing aether
- 4. Celestial Curtain

#### **Breaking Through**

- 3. Throne of glory
- 2. Souls
- 1. Palace

The philosopher's stone arises within the transmutational phase as what has been broken through and transposed is tempered by the silence of the lamp of darkness. At that point the life force of the entire array becomes a transparent vehicle for the sublime lumenosity of En Sof. Through this central transmutation all phenomena can express the sublime wisdom of the nine chambers equally as a single gnosis. All of the titles of the thirteen-fold hierarchy cited in the Iyyun texts are elaborated upon below in their order:

1. **Palace** The world is truly the palace of En Sof, however it is experienced as a prison. The path begins as the perceived solidity of the mind's conceptions are burned away by the fire of *chayah* (life force). As the self-imposed projections are consumed the path of liberation begins.
2. **Soul** The *ruach* or mental winds that are released from the tight dim corridors of solidity carry the spiritual impulse called the soul, which has no inherent existence or identity. Once drawn out it blows through a vast network of patterning where the wind can be usurped and re-routed into the vast atmospheres where the beloved hides.

3. **Throne of Glory** All patterns flow within an ocean of fluidity where the divine seats itself, and once found deep contemplative immersion begins to become possible. This is the seat of the divine *kavod*, or glory, that resonates from infinite light and space. View is paramount here: the glory of the divine does not come *from* the divine it *is* the divine. This view is known as non-emanationism. At this stage the mind has a long way to go before its understanding of the resonant glory realizes its divine potential. However at this stage a path is clear.

4. **Celestial Curtain** As the mind immerses in contemplation it confronts a wall containing every conceivable conflicting impulse. If the mind can pass through these resistances the medium of presentation becomes clear. If the mind can become more fascinated with this medium than with its own fictions, then the trajectory of contemplation can truly open.

5. **Encompassing Aether** Once the mind passes through the aetheric curtain it can become enclothed within the vast immersive totality. It can then feel the expanse without needing to reduce itself to a separate

entity against it. This level of immersion within the contemplative act is the beginning of the absorption that characterizes gnosis.

**6. Wheel of Chariot** The seal of transposition happens as concentration and release totally overtake NeHiY and drive through the aperture of ChaGaT. These wheels navigate the merkavah to the juncture where transmutation can become possible.

**7. Cherub** As the phase of transmutation starts to run and return it calls out to the great angel M'TaT, referred to as *Metatron*. This call includes within it everything known in the mind as well as its entire world. Metatron is the embodied presence of wisdom in the form of a guide that oversees the contemplative act. He is often portrayed as both an infant or old man, but actually presents the simultaneity of what is primordially ancient within continually new beginnings. The call to Metatron is a supreme sacrificial gesture that utilizes the sum total of everything that is there to be offered.

**8. Wheel of Greatness/Mirror's Vision** The running and returning of contemplation propels the mind beyond

the outer limits of its station into the self-darkening brilliance of the lamp of darkness. This becomes the mirror of vision where gnosis crystallizes. The mirror is empty of its own image but expresses the capacity to reflect any and all images. It is where it becomes clear that no-thingness becomes its own presence. As gnosis outshines all of its restraints the world is understood as mere reflections within this mirror.

**9. Throne of Light** Contemplative vision approaches the seat of a light beyond what the mind can apprehend as transmutation commences. Through this seat the mind reaches toward the lamp of darkness where everything is utterly transformed, and then it pours back within scintillating textures of bliss-clarity. Through the light's enthronement awareness and appearance lose their distinctions from one another. This is precisely what the texturing of open lucency brings.

**10. Arafel** The silence of the lamp of darkness is called arafel in Sefer HaIyyun. The arafel is the heart of transformation: an open doorway that draws the mercury into realization of its own secret nature. Transmutation

seals the self-darkening light as awareness-appearance. This crystallizes the diamond-like clarity of the philosopher's stone, which allows all phenomena to express the flood of drops streaming the root of En Sof.

**11. Chashmal** Sublime wisdom spreads through the philosopher's stone to assume the form of anything, everything, or nothing whatsoever. Its sublime qualities emerge through the agency of communicative wisdom termed *chashmal*. Chashmal literally breaks down into the roots for the words "to speak" (mal) and "silent" (chash'ei). Through the speaking silence of the chashmal the lamp of darkness communicates directly beyond conceptions of substance, dimensionality, or time. Chashmal is the means that allows the profusion of En Sof's brilliance to be known and to know itself.

Chashmal does not refer to the communication of information, it refers to the communicative nature of the dynamic thrust of the ground itself. It corresponds with the drops of concealed wisdom.

**12. Marvelous Light** The Aur En Sof both knows and is known by itself — yet no "self" exists whatsoever as the

focus of the knowing. The reflexive phenomena is called the marvelous light. It draws itself through itself as pure lucent openness. Realization of this light makes it clear that no-thingness becomes its own presencing. What could be more marvelous than that? It corresponds to the stream from the translucent skull.

**13. Primordial Wisdom** The essence of primordial wisdom is precisely what the nine chambers present. When seeking to learn about the essential nature of phenomena and its ground, seek there. Study of the nine will ultimately allow the path to become understood well enough that it can be practiced. This last aspect, which is the secret of the nine chambers, corresponds to the avira of the unknowable head.

The key to the practice is the cultivation of the philosopher's stone that crystallizes in silence. The concept of the stone is incredibly problematic for scholars, and its mere mention creates conflict and division amongst alchemists. The stone is not a psychological metaphor. It also does not refer to any particular substance or energy. The stone applies equally to all phenomena

that can be named, whether internal or external. It is distilled within the clarity of the apparitional field as open lucency is realized in bliss. In this sense, the stone marks the crystallization of En Sof as all of the phases of the practice work together for this single aim.

The image of the main practice (in figure 17, p. 62) begins its depiction from the bottom upward with representations of the phases of breakthrough, transposition, and transmutation. However it is within the transmutational phase that something unique comes to the forefront. Within transmutation patterns are distilled from the field of phenomena. The patterns are allowed to resonate as awareness is coaxed into fullness beyond ordinary dualistic object identification. As the fullness reaches total absorption the resonant patterns seep into silence. The patterns become tempered within the silence and then mix with it. From the mixing the resonance falls back in a textured manner, and phenomena is reborn. This transmutational phase is the beginning of the redemption of all phenomena.

The tempering of resonant patterns within the silence touches upon the outermost glow of the philosopher's stone. The return of the resonances as textures draws the stone closer. When the

texturing becomes inseparable from open lucency torrents of bliss-clarity spread through the whole array. At that point the stone presents itself nakedly, and words fail to articulate what it is like.

The transmutation phase involves what kabbalists refer to as a process of running and returning. This is represented within an excerpted detail of the larger image (figure 18, p. 74). Running and returning is like breathing — an internal gathering and release. This is how the distillation and bath aspects progress as the mind's associations are tempered out of the belief in their own reality — reaching ever deeper with each gesture. Within this exchange associative motion churns until the ground simply outshines all of the mind's projections.

These seemingly dualistic actions steer the wheels of the *merkavah*, or mystical chariot, directly into the silence of no-thingness to spontaneously return outside of time, without moving to anywhere from anywhere. As the display of phenomena surrenders to the lamp of darkness and is poured back it ultimately crystallizes the bright clarity of the mirror of the seer's vision. This juncture is where the philosopher's stone emerges, as indicated in the chart on the following page:

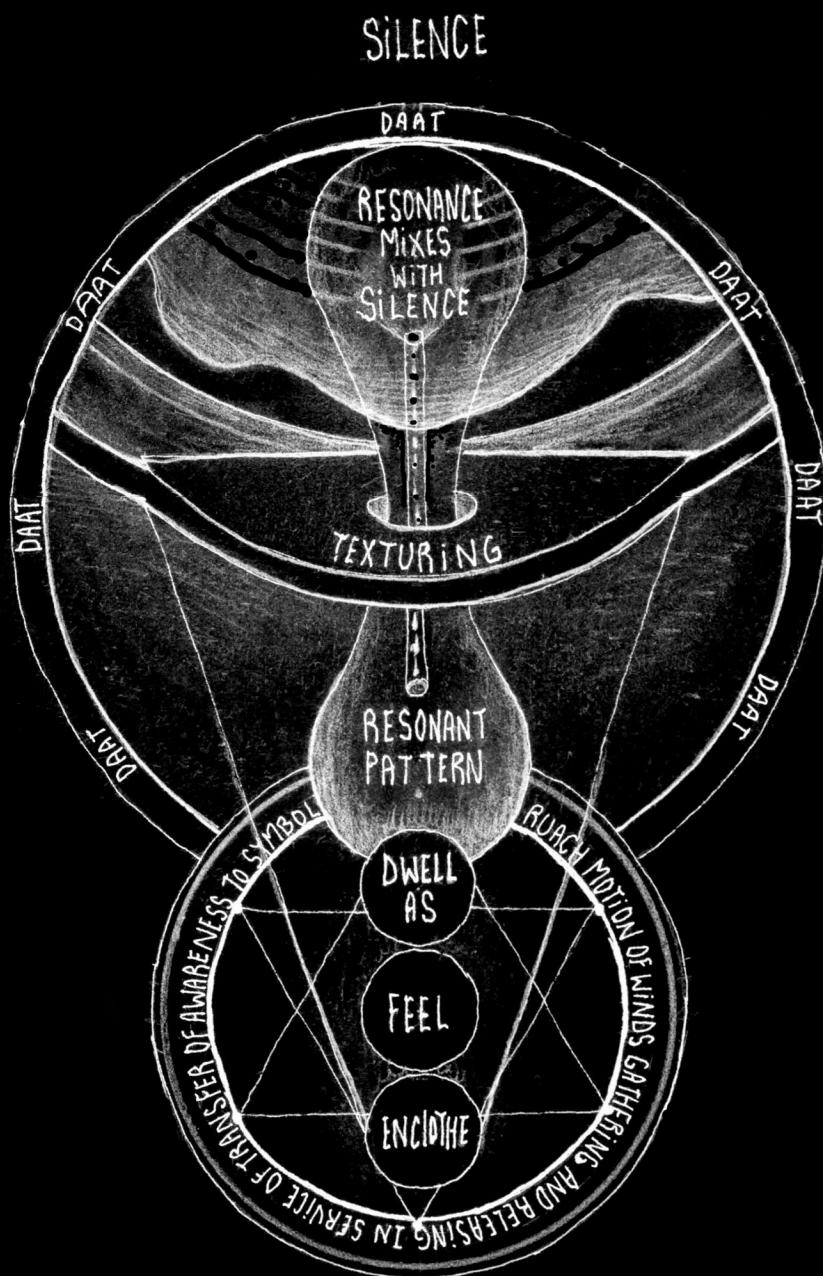
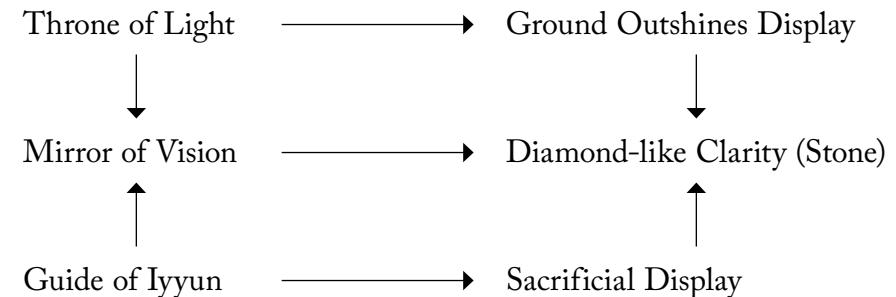


Figure 18

### ARAFEL: LAMP OF DARKNESS



The philosopher's stone crystallizes in the heart of the alchemical exchange to allow all the worlds and everything in them to be understood as open atemporal reflections within the mirror of vision. The mirror becomes the stone as its clarity coalesces the all-pervasive silence of the lamp of darkness within all possible phenomena. This forms a diamond-like seal made from the inseparability of openness no-thingness and the display of its own presence. This indestructible bond renders the terms 'infinite' and 'finite' meaningless in contrast to each other.

If the question is asked: when does no-thingness become its own presence display? The answer is *always*. The communicative thrust of silence becomes its own speech without ever losing or gaining in its original perfection. It spontaneously awakens as a



Figure 19

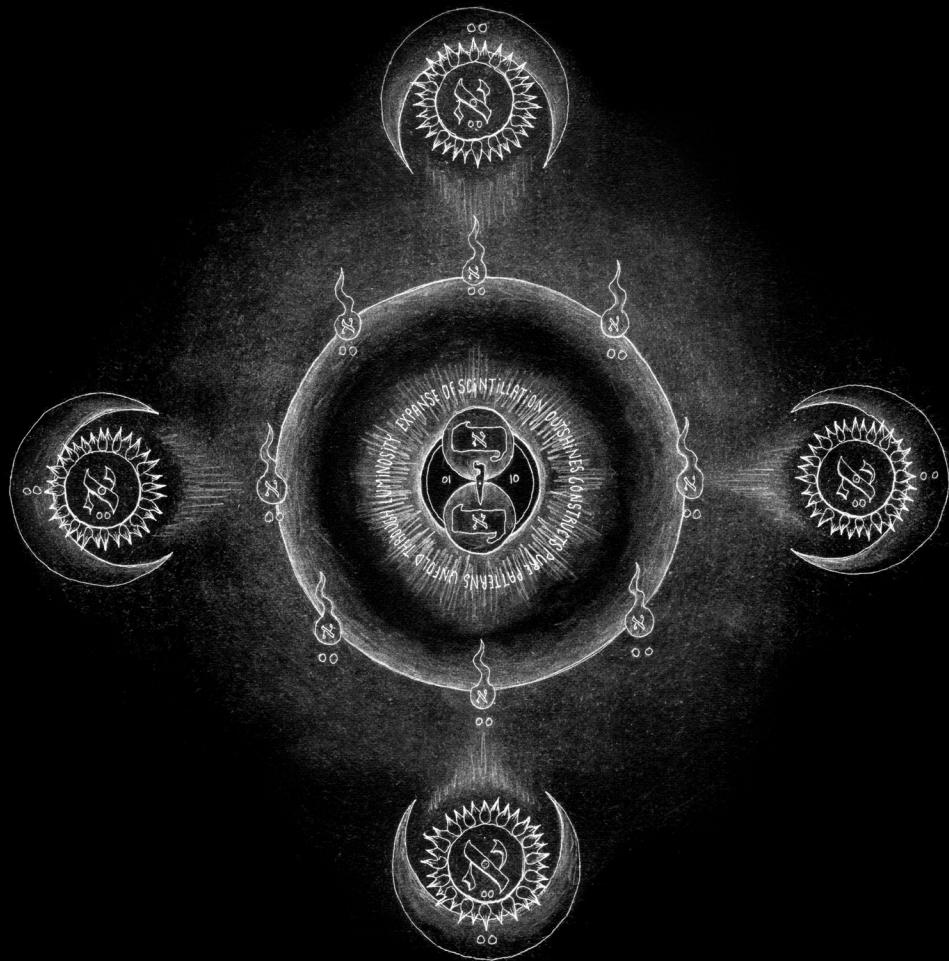
meaning saturated field that redeems the whole world, because the world never departed from its essence in the first place. The textured openness draws its root to stream forth as whatever appears in shimmering drops of crystalline dew. Through this profusion the act of knowing is transformed into the wisdom of unknowing through silence — heard by an organ of knowledge no body-mind could ever conceive of.

As root, stream, and drop subsumes all things the concept of real and unreal passes away. In this sense the dream becomes total, without a dreamer. The *Fountain of Wisdom* refers to the tempering silence as a *light that darkens by illuminating*. This term is used because the contrasts of negative and positive do not apply.

At the point of the transmutational exchange in the diagram the three heads of keter become conduits for the transparency of the nine chambers, and bliss clarity pour through. When the exchange reaches a point of total equalization there is no more difference to impute upon a thing in relation to any other thing. This stage is beyond even the bliss-clarity, and occludes all experience and language. This stage is represented in an image of two vessels pouring through each other in absolute equanimity (figure 19).

## 3

## Living Out the Practice



THE PRACTICE OF TIKKUN KADMON is not intended for assemblies of people who wish to work together. This is solitary work intended for a contemplative hermit mystic to practice alone. A hermit practitioner can live in a classic isolated mountain retreat or a cave. A hermit can also be married, hold a job, and live amongst many others in a big city. It does not matter at all. What creates a hermit contemplator is all in the mind, not in any kind of outer circumstances.

The hermit mystic can be a kabbalist, sufi, christian contemplative, nath, baul, or vajrayana practitioner ... system is irrelevant. Esoteric systems do not create gnostic realization, but only practitioners become realized. The means to practice consists of an inner disposition that longs for a doorway beyond inner/outer distinctions more than anything else in the world. Such individuals are not formed by any confluence of worldly circumstances, they simply arrive in the world this way and can never be satisfied with anything less than total dedication to the great work.

The practice of Tikkun Kadmon appears at first to be a ladder of ascent such as those described in the early hekhalot literature. However once it is understood in alchemical terms the linearity drops away and a single open vista remains. This vista is the space where the philosopher's stone is recognized. Through the stone the vision of all phenomena appears as the streaming of the ground's own dew. Understanding what this implies is extremely rare, and practitioners will either instantly know it or they simply will not. For this reason the Talmud forbids teaching such mysteries to anyone who doesn't already have the capacity to know them.

The philosopher's stone is the result of contemplation that has become completely ecstatic. After the ecstasies provoked by the mind's fickle winds have seeped through the medium of their motions, a more pervasive and deeper bliss emerges. Within the vast scintillating field of that deeper bliss the sparkling sensation of knowingness mixes with silence, and silence with bliss, and the mixture mixes with all of space. The nectarous scintillation spreads beyond all measure, and reconciles its own brilliance with the bath all phenomena. This is how the practice of Tikkun Kadmon functions on its highest level, which is completely

beyond all considerations of temporal and dimensional differentiation.

The lamp of darkness deeply and unalterably transmutes phenomena, and sages dive in and never return to the habit field. A sage who has transmuted reality into the stone abides in sublime gnosis without end. Even if the chashmal is authentically heard for a moment, then things can never be the same again. This is the most rare thing on earth, and those who rush to believe that they have achieved it mock gnosis itself and will never accomplish anything.

The force of habit is stronger than any other force for sentient beings, therefore we must immerse within the bath of silence again and again ... over and over ... if we are to cultivate any transmutation at all. This repeated immersion constitutes our practice moment by moment.

When the lamp of darkness bestows the philosopher's stone a great blessing has been given beyond human volition. The gift enters where the human will cannot go. This is the result of a combination of surrender plus divine grace. As surrender and grace mix the profusion of bliss-clarity becomes possible, and if we are extremely fortunate it begins to pour out as drops of

crystalline dew streaming from the ground in a manner the mind can lose itself within. Mystical bliss is a paradox. It cannot be defined as an experience because there is no experiential subject or experiential object. However this non-experience is not found anywhere other than in the context of an experiential circumstance.

Gnostic intoxication slips from ecstasy into bliss by degrees. At first it lightly sparkles through the mental states as a slight transparency between ordinary reality and something miraculous. Ultimately the bright scintillation occludes all of the things of the world completely, and mind dissolves. When true and profound absorption takes place it feels as if it might literally kill you. In a sense it does. Any sense of a “you” definitely is beginning to evaporate as this feeling overtakes the mind. This birthless and deathless awakening makes it almost impossible to walk or talk, but actually you can do so if that is what is needed. It also may seem impossible to form a thought, which is very good. But why would you even want to at that point?

The understanding of the thirteen phases of Tikkun Kadmon as four stages can be mapped out as degrees of sublime gnostic intoxication. The following chart maps this out (figure 20):

The single simultaneous gesture of Tikkun Kadmon can only be interrupted by the ego’s needs. As they flare up we can remind ourselves that gnosis only dawns like a flash of lightning, instantaneously beyond divisions of time and space. Stable gnosis is the most rare thing on earth, happening only a few times in each generation. And yet all human beings can make some incremental progress on the contemplative path if they study, practice, and genuinely care about it. What is needed is total honesty about the assessment of one’s actual condition, a desire to change, and a viable model to guide that change. The best circumstance is to have a fully qualified teacher who holds authentic realization. However

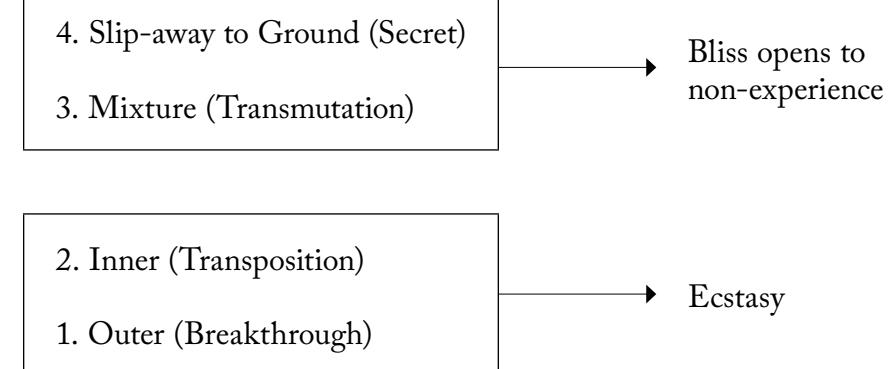


Figure 20

some progress can be made in all circumstances, although it will likely hit a wall when resistances arise if there is no one to assess the situation properly. We are incapable at times of assessing ourselves, by ourselves.

The rare beings who have stabilized gnosis and abide in the silence of the lamp of darkness at all times are the awakened ones who draw wisdom throughout the worlds. They are the source of all blessing in this realm. The advanced practitioners who try to cultivate realization still need to practice, and for them the view and its open lucency cannot be held continuously. Immersion again and again in the bath of silence renews the truth. Until stable realization, practice is an activity a practitioner cannot afford to leave for even one moment.

The few in each generation who can recall the truth and spontaneously realize gnosis without end have no more need to practice. They simply abide in gnosis without interruption. For the rest of us faults in the mind have to be individually repaired with specific tikkunim. For example a person might not be able to fully transpose the sense of the 'T' from the body-mind to the contemplative field, and therefore requires work in that phase. Others might need to strongly exchange scintillating silence back

and forth for hours in order to establish the chashmal of the ground. Others still might only need to concentrate on drawing the blazing drops by streaming within their subtle bodies, and they rely upon various internal techniques in order to accomplish it. Each phase of the practice carries its own tikkun, and whatever is needed for a person is provided there.

To consider the view of this practice we turn our minds first to wholeness without end. Wholeness opens the window through which the associations of reification and division are dissolved. Wholeness is an alef. As the *Fountain of Wisdom* states: *the circle is derived from alef, and alef is derived from yud.*

The alef-wholeness allows infinite variation to arise without ever leaving itself. An alef contains the seed of that variation by self-reflection, evident in its graphic structure. The alef is made of two yuds, above and below, bound by a vav (a nail) between them.

The graphic structure of the alef can be applied to four key patterns, provided in the next image (figure 21, p. 86). At the lower right is the alef alone, as wholeness itself. On the lower left is a simplified image of the histalshelut. The yuds of the alef illustrate higher and lower positions within the vertical ascent, with the vav-nail as its binding connection. On the upper right side is an

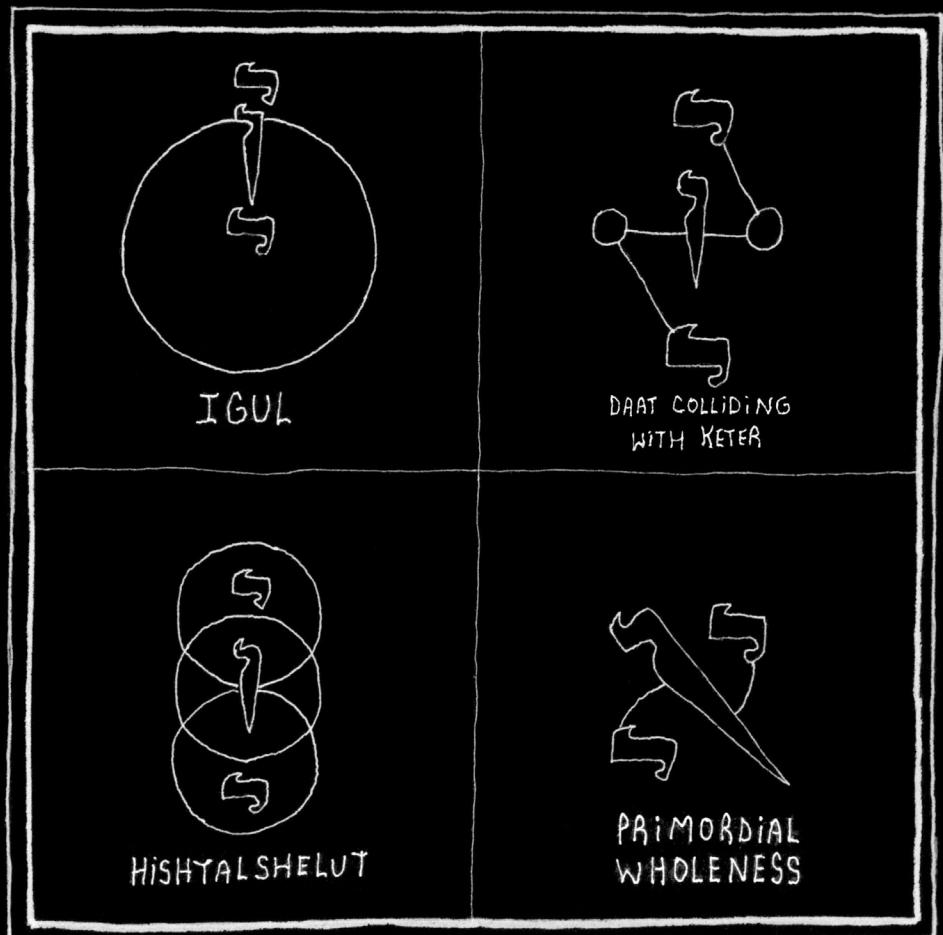


Figure 21

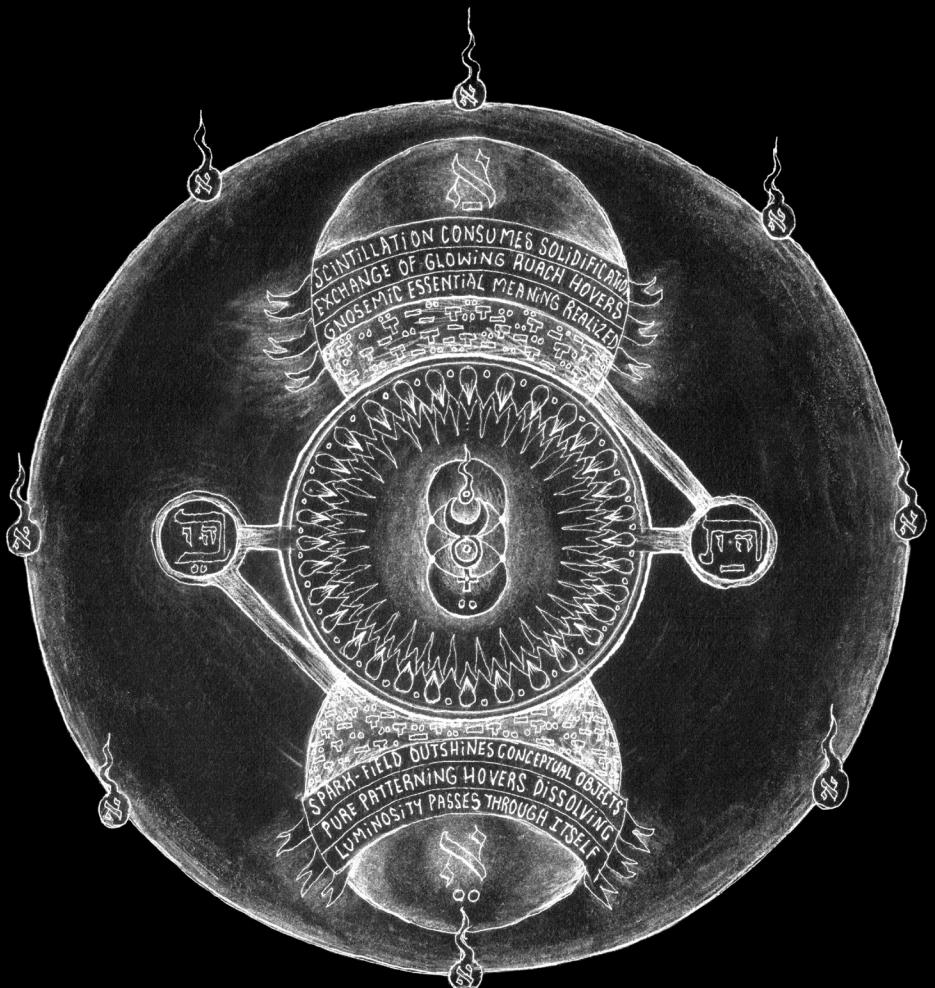
image of the alef at the point of the lightning flash. The upper yud presents keter, the lower yud presents daat, and the vav is the exchange of life force between them. The upper left illustrates the circle representative of the iggulim configurations. The upper yud is uncontrollable, the lower yud appears to be contained, and the vav is the periphery of the circle where they are equalized.

It should be clear that alef is a presentation of wholeness that is found wherever one looks, and is the looking itself. Wholeness is the expanse of the primordial yud, which is the dynamism of life force in every context. Realization of the dynamic wholeness can be studied as the presencing of the no-thingness of En Sof through the nine chambers. However no matter what one might study true understanding can only be internalized through deep authentic contemplative practice within the bestowal of divine grace.

Consider the following prayer:

*Never has there been and never will there be even one scintilla of solid substance anywhere at any time. Through immersion within the ground of open lucidity all things are continually reborn.*

*One drop is a complete ocean, and the ocean is inherent in every drop. This is the tikkun of the circle and the quintessence of secret mercury. May I realize it!*



The following text fragment is written in what is called a twilight language. Such languages function as an expanse into which the contemplative process can unfold, overlapping through a multitude of layers that offer an ocean of implications. This unfolding can allow the text to become a bath in which the mind can immerse to reach a state of translucency wherein it can surrender to the open clarity that shines through it.

*States of knowing and worlds of Being are belimah (without substance) — a lightning flash shot through an open nowhere... always b'reshit (rebirthing and beginning anew).*

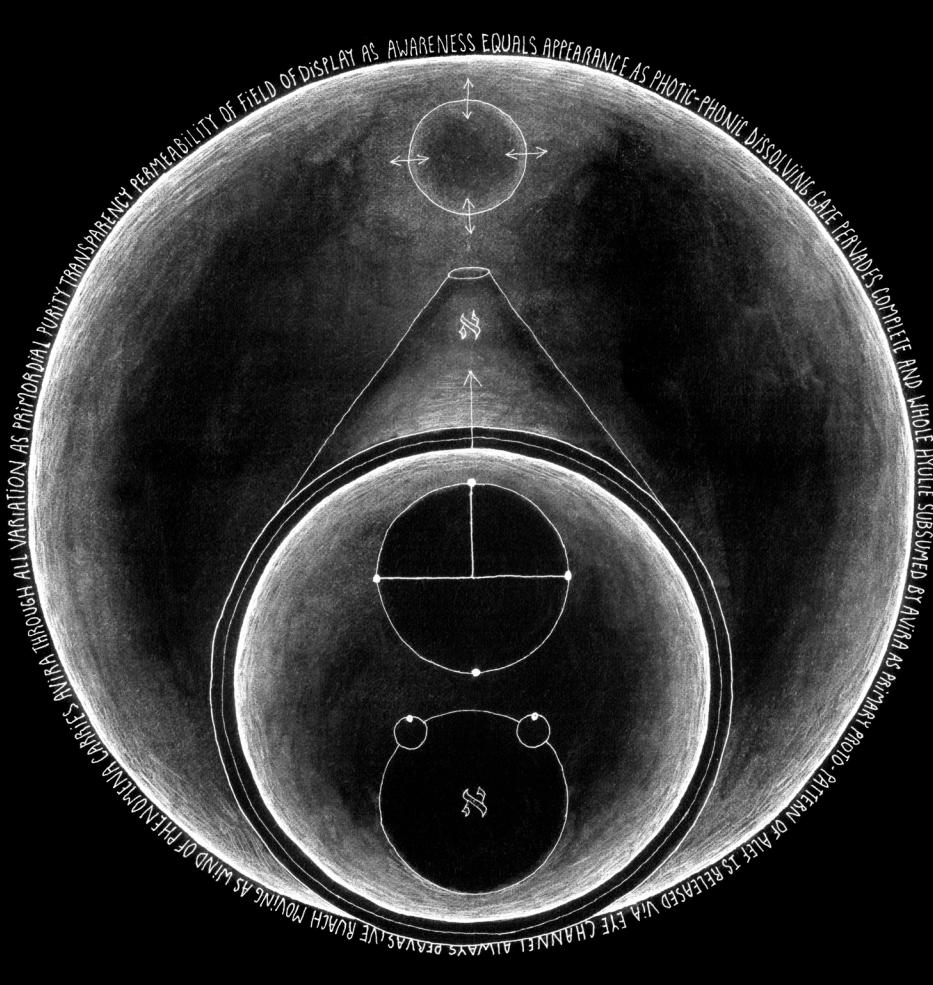
*Mind is space-like, and space is mind-like. Beyond this is a mystery words cannot touch, passing where no mind or space can go.*

*The child creates the parent. The father of mind is awareness. The mother of space is a lamp of darkness (botsina d'kardinuta). Their union is a changeless continuum that appears as discontinuous change. The power of its poison is its own medicine. It is like a barren womb that is always gestating seed, which ceaselessly births the universe. Its progeny appears but is never born, so it never dies. The luminosity of the father is found through the blaze of the son, and all obstructions are unmade in the womb of the mother. Her blood is replete with the sulphur that quickens the isolation of the quintessence called b'reshit-belimah: the life force of no-thingness.*

*B'reshit-belimah is a complete potency (yud) in-simplicity (alef). Its mercury is distilled four times and bathed three times. A body-mind washes itself to become a dream-body, a dream-body is purified to become a wisdom-body, and a wisdom-body surrenders to become the **olah** (all-burned sacrifice). The sacrifice forms itself the way the flowing of a river shapes its banks thereby forming the shape of the river. The practice is reborn again and again with no (En) end (Sof). There are infinite facets of the wisdom jewel; jewel upon jewel, with infinite jewels within infinite facets, and each is a realization. One can remain in the expanse of contemplation forever, flooding through seeing and perceiving, from facet to facet.*

*Annihilation is divinity, and divinity is rebirth. Many heads cannot share a single crown, and the crowned sacrificial beast is headless. The unknowability of the divine is approached like one enters a bath to submerge the whole of one's being. The ground you seek is inherent in the attempt to recognize it.*

*And love becomes the garment by which you and I are clothed, and radiance shines, and the blood of sparks is flowing. And you were freed in blood and light; a sudden paroxysm of transparency, by the restless wind from the south, by the broken branch and empty nest. The blood of aleph washes clean, and only stainlessness remains...this bright unknowing knowing...everywhere.*



*En Sof presents the appearance of all worlds while remaining absolutely open.*

*En Sof reveals itself by the divulgence of its own self-disrupting restlessness.*

*En Sof resonates inherent goodness as the indiscriminate power of redemption.*

*En Sof is a purity that cannot be diminished or degraded by misapprehension.*

*En Sof exudes spontaneous display without designating itself as a cause.*

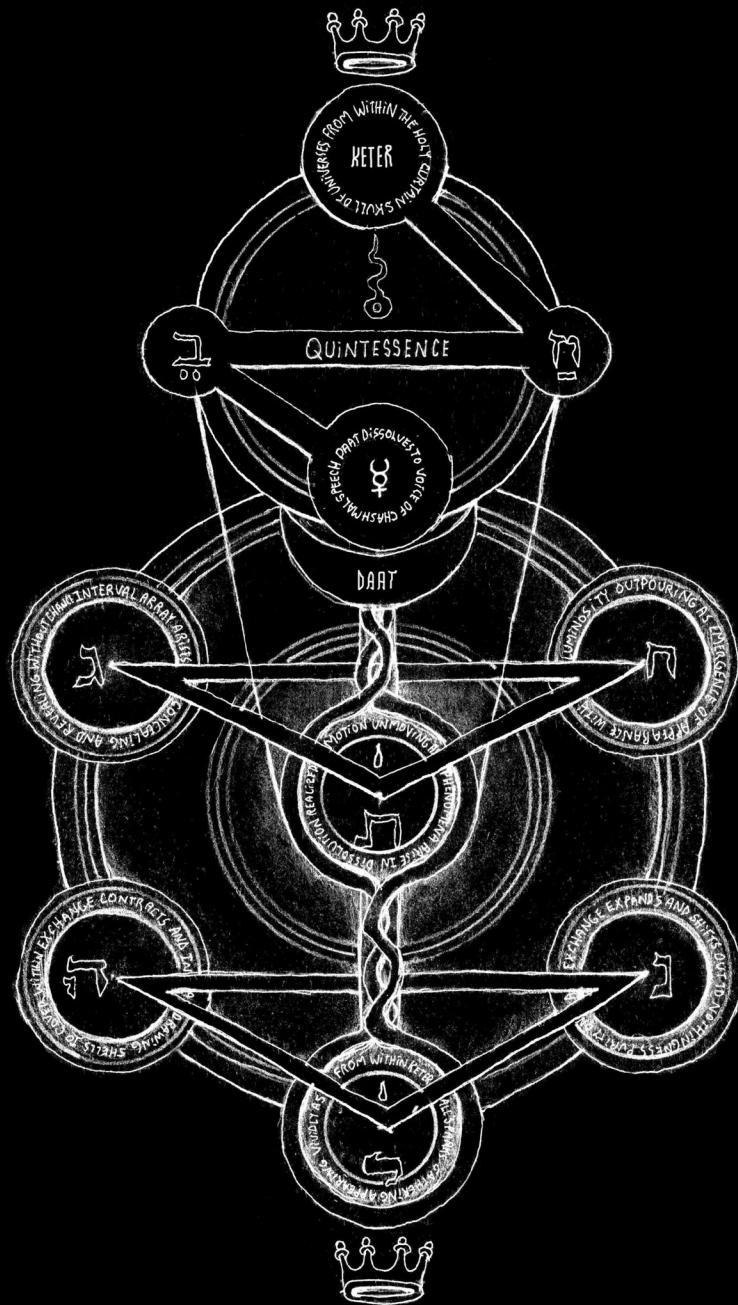
*En Sof is complete and whole in the pervasion of total possibility.*

*En Sof empties itself of itself as its increase continually increases.*

*En Sof illuminates itself with its own radiance without interruption.*

*En Sof is a knowingness that seeks to know itself through its own nature.*

— Taken from *Quintessence of the Noble Poison*

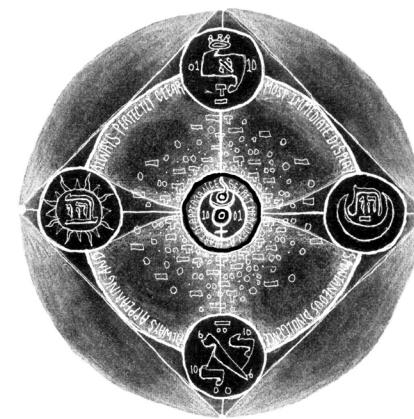


And now the book ends with a reiteration of the basic stages of contemplation laid out in the first chapter.

The stages unfold as a single *meaning saturated field*. Practice begins as the field is held still. The field includes both the identity of the subject as well as its identified objects. A good way to start is by holding total physical stillness. As the body is held still its internal and external contexts will seem still even in the midst of apparent disruption. Within this deeper sense of stillness the hidden inner life of things can be considered.

The consideration of the secret inner life allows attention to shift from gross to subtle, and within this magical subtlety the *motion of the unmoving* can be glimpsed. The ground is always essentially still, yet within that stillness a continuous flow is always apparent. Recognizing the flowing stillness allows the divisions of subjectivity and objectivity to melt and dissolve.

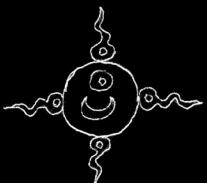
As awareness immerses within the field of its own expression it becomes saturated by its secret inner life. When this reaches a point of total absorption the field can feel itself without ever separating back into a subject and an object. The motion of the unmoving then stands alone, and whatever appears seals its non-identity.



Ultimately the inner life surrenders to its own openness, and only love remains. Love is a radiant simplicity wherein awareness and appearance offer no separate identities. Direct recognition of this great love breaks through with the effulgence of bliss-clarity and utterly annihilates the small reductive meanings of things. Reduction into thing-ness is the heart's greatest sorrow, and return to the freedom of no-thingness in the midst of appearance is *tikkun olam* or the final repair of the world.

When it becomes absolutely clear that no-thingness is not other than the presence of all being then gnosis is awakened. This is the beginning of true rebirth and redemption.

*And now the soul has its right name from the nothingness in which it melts; and now this life is made new in love, in the no-thingness of joy's spring blossoms.*

 SPONTANEOUS APPEARING	 HOVERING AT CUSP	 POINT OF VIEW	 PROJECTED SIMULTANEITY
 HYULIE	 AVIRA	 SECRET MERCURY	 MIRROR OF APPEARING
 PRIMORDIAL DYNAMISM	 PRIMORDIAL WHOLENESS	 IGUL	 HISHTALSHELUT
 SHEFA QUINTESSENCE	 REFLECTIVE CAPACITY	 RADIANTE EXPANSE	 JUNCTURE OF PHENOMENA