



Qabalah

Qabalah (which translates as receptivity) is ancient Hebraic mysticism (the more traditional orthodox form of these teachings spell it with a 'K', *Kabbalah*). These teachings include many Hermetic teachings from ancient Egypt, including alchemy. The above Tree of Life diagram illustrates a surprising amount of this complex system. The circles in the diagram, called *sephiroth*, represent our basic human faculties or potentialities, while the 22 paths connecting them (each represented by a unique Hebrew letter) are the keys to awaken these potentials. Basically, traveling up in the diagram is traveling inward to expanded and deeper states of consciousness. Human personality is represented by the lower four sephiroth, while the higher sephiroth represent human potentials and levels of adeptship beyond the human personality, beyond the ego. The Tarot keys seen on the paths are visual representations of the symbolism inherent in the Hebrew letters. The richness of the Qabalistic tradition rivals that of the Vajrayana tradition of Tibet. There are many parallels between these systems, which both often employ quite involved and elaborate visualizations combined with chanting in their meditation practices.

The first of the higher states of human potential to be realized is represented by the yellow sephiroth in the center of the tree, called Tipherith (Beauty). Practitioners of yoga recognize this at the heart chakra, and the awakening of this human potential opens the wellspring of compassion. In Mahayana Buddhism, awakening this center is essential to walk the path of the Bodhisattva, the path of compassion. The heart must fully open before any of the higher states of human potential can unfold.

The above Tree of Life glyph is dynamic, and its dynamics are the dynamics of psychological and spiritual evolution. A central axiom of Qabalah is that all movement is initiated at the highest level of cosmic consciousness, represented by the "Crown"

sephiroth at the top of the tree, Kether. Actually, even Kether arises from the void behind the tree, which is not really void but full of infinite potentiality. This void that is full of light is called *Ein Sof Aur* in Hebrew, "limitless light". Buddhists and Advaita Vedantists call this Sunyata, which I like to translate as "The Shimmering Void". All movement in the universe is the result of desire, and at the root of all desires is the desire for unity with God. The Tree of Life models the resulting dynamics of evolution.

The Qabalistic vision of the evolution of our consciousness is likened to the peeling of an onion, the onion of our desires. For what we thought was our desire, inevitably turns out to be not quite as we had hoped. The universe, through our life experiences, refines our conception of what we want. As one layer of the onion of desire is peeled away, yet another level is revealed. Finally we'll all arrive at the source of all desire, which is not different from the mystic's desire for union with the Beloved. The spiritual path is referred to in Qabalah as the *Path of Return*. We aren't going somewhere far away, but somewhere very close. Right where we are in fact! The Garden of Eden is right here, right now, for those with eyes to see. In Qabalah, the physical universe isn't something to look down upon as "unspiritual". Rather, this physical universe is the very fruit of the Tree of Life. To fully awaken to our true nature is to fully appreciate and properly revere this heaven on earth, here and now.

The concept of sin in Qabalah (as in Buddhism) is that of simply missing the mark. Gradually, with practice, we hit the mark with greater ease and predictability. Hitting the mark is simply acting with great wisdom and compassion, or in Buddhist terminology, acting like a Bodhisattva. The pain of missing the mark makes one increasingly vigilant and more careful in the future.

The Tree of Life is far from the only Qabalistic glyph or meditation device. Qabalah is quite rich in symbolism, and in psychological insight. A study of Qabalah requires a keen intellect, and will in fact exhaust even the sharpest of minds. In a book linked to below, *Thursday Night Tarot*, Jason Lotterhand mentioned that this exhausting of the intellect is purposeful, and similar to the koan practice of Zen. The point is to exhaust the intellect, so it finally settles down and finally allows you to be receptive (remember, *qabalah* means receptivity). I had been puzzled by this, as I pursued studies of both Zen and Qabalah in the 1970's. Reading Jason's comments on this helped me to finally see that both paths really did have the same goal!

Further reading on Qabalah

[Wikipedia's entry on Hermetic Qabalah](#)

One of my teachers - Joseph Nolen's website: <http://www.josephnolen.com/hello.html>

A Western Mystery School: [The Builders of the Adytum](#)

Books on Qabalah

Paul Foster Case:

[The Tarot: A key to the Wisdom of the Ages](#)

[The Book of Tokens](#)

[The True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order](#)

Ann Davies:

[Inspirational Thoughts on the Tarot](#)

Jason Lotterhand

[The Thursday Night Tarot: Weekly Talks on the Wisdom of the Major Arcana](#)

Qabalah Videos

I had great difficulty locating a really good video on this topic. Traditionally these teachings have been kept secret (due to persecutions).

At the Joseph Nolen link above you can find some interesting audio recordings.

The Builders of the Adytum has excellent reading material and audio recordings available (see the above link), but most of it they only make available to their members.

[The Tree of Life](#)

I did find a multi-part series on traditional Kabbalah: [Kabbalah Revealed Pt. 1](#)
(Warning, this is very traditional, very Hebraic !)