

Chapter 4

Trees of Life from the *Sefer HaShmoth* and the *Sefer Yetzirah*

ANGELIC TREE LANGUAGE OF THE *SEFER HASHMOTH*

INTRODUCTION

As described earlier, the qabalistic Tree of Life has three Columns. The Columns of the Right and Left on the Tree are in a state of dynamic polar stress. The beings who inhabit one side are in active conflict with those on the other. The Central Column, balancing the two, remains unaffected by such conflict and those who dwell there are essentially invisible to the beings on either side. Unlike the Central Column, the Columns of the Right and Left have “gatekeepers” who strictly enforce standards that must be met to progress further. In the *Sefer HaShmoth*, the Angelic Tree Language follows the listing of the Divine Names. The Angelic Tree Language is an assortment of different Working and Perfect Trees of Life. The names for the Sefiroth in the *Sefer HaShmoth* are generally the same as those given them by the *Zohar*. The variety of Working Trees reflects the different paths by which different types of magicians, wizards, saints, devotees, and yogis ascend the Tree of Life. Devotees and yogis generally make exclusive use of the Central Column. Their paths are referred to as “Central Column Working Trees.” Magicians, wizards, and saints, on the other hand, make significant use of the side columns on the Tree. The Working Trees of the magicians make exclusive use of one or other of the two side columns. The Working Trees of the Saints and Wizards involve the use of all three Columns, but ascend in opposite directions. The Perfect Trees are mystical allusions to Self-realized souls and forms of divine incarnations.

THE “WAY OF THE ANGELS OF *ELOHIM*” AND THE “WAY OF THE ANGELS OF DESTRUCTION”

The Working Trees that exclusively involve the Columns of the Right and Left are respectively called the “Way of the Angels of Elohim” and the “Way of the Angels of Destruction.” The Ways of the Angels of *Elohim* and the Angels of Destruction both involve mastering endlessly counteractive, self-enforcing rules that govern *mazal* (מזל, Fate, Sans. *karma*) and acquiring power under conditional intent. The “Way of the Angels of *Elohim*” (see Figure 4.1) is also called the “Right-Handed Path,” and those who traverse it are often referred to as “white magicians.” They engage in disciplines, routines of behavior, and rituals intended to cultivate love of the Lord יהוה, righteousness, and purity in order to pass the inspection of the gatekeepers who guard the Column of the Right on the Tree. Attachment to their righteousness, goodness, and their priestcraft keeps those who ascend the Tree via the Way of the Angels of *Elohim* in the Right Column, and generally preempts them from repositioning into the Central Column.

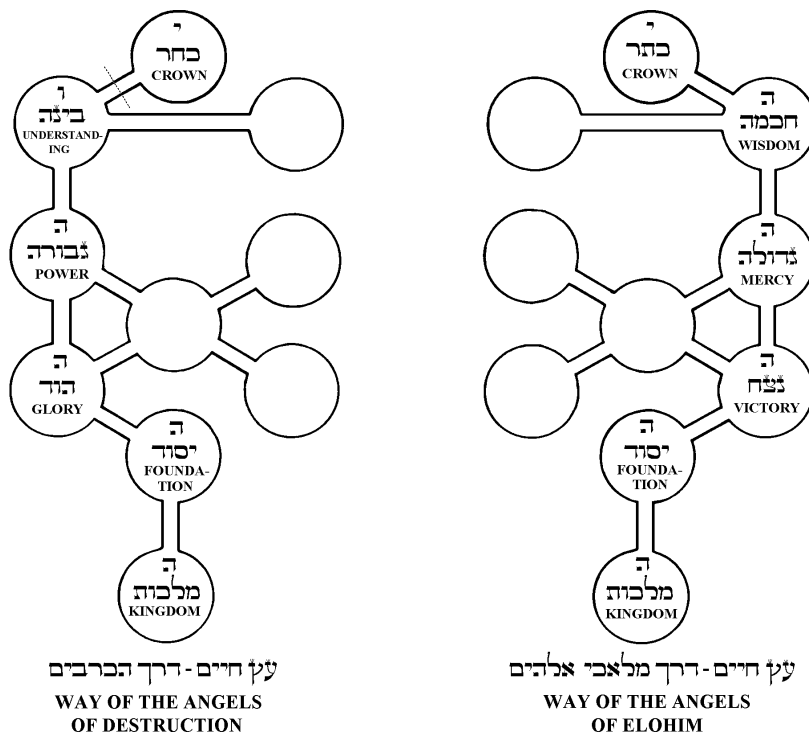
White magicians use the Name יהוה and other power names to invoke powerful angels and to manifest and use creative powers. Most orthodox religious Jews also cultivate love, righteousness, and levitical purity to be able to ascend the Column of the Right and attain virtual angelic states, mostly in the lower heavens. However, unlike white magicians, they do not generally desire or seek to wield creative or healing powers. The ascension of the Column of the Right can be very slow, as the amassment of purity and merit required to pass through the gates involves considerable time, often lifetimes.

The “Way of the Angels of Destruction” (see Figure 4.1) is also called the “Left-Handed Path,” and those who traverse it are often called “black magicians” or “sorcerers.” They engage in disciplines, routines of behavior, and rituals intended to cultivate hatred of the Lord יהוה-as-Adversary, sinfulness, and impurity in order to pass the flaming swords of the Kerubim who guard the Column of the Left. Black magicians use the Name יהוה and other Divine Names to invoke powerful demons (*Jinn*) i.e. destructive angels, and to manifest and use destructive powers. Attachment to their unrighteousness, hatred, and ritualistic

process keeps them in the Column of the Left, and preempts them from moving into the Central Column.

The black magician thinks that through rituals, talismans, and force of personal will that he/she can actually gain control over elemental spirits and the *Jinn*, and direct them to act in accord with his/her beckoning. Since demons want to feed on the valuable shells of these magicians when they break up at death, in order to get the power to incarnate physically themselves or gain access to deeper hells, they go along with the game. Hence, the *Jinn* are often quite willing to give the sorcerers low level occult powers, coveted material prizes, or apparent control over elemental spirits, which the demons see as having little value compared to the vital energy of the shells they seek to gain.

FIGURE 4.1 “Way of the Angels of Destruction” and “Way of the Angels of *Elohim*”



The Left-Handed Path is very rapid because of the intense focus of the mind in hatred for God-as-Adversary. This path can therefore yield some results in a relatively short time, but

inevitably ends in the destruction of the sorcerer because he/she cannot withstand the power channeled through their shells from the higher Sefiroth. Most do not make it past the Gate of the Tzade ז between the Sefiroth Power/Fire and Understanding/North. Very powerful black magicians, who make it up the Column of the Left without shattering their shells, are denied access to Atziluth (World of Emanation) by the action of the Gate of the Ayin י (“Gate of the Unclean Servants”) between the Sefiroth Understanding/North and Crown/Above. This gate redirects such souls into extinction via the Abyss at the invisible Sefirah Knowledge/First.

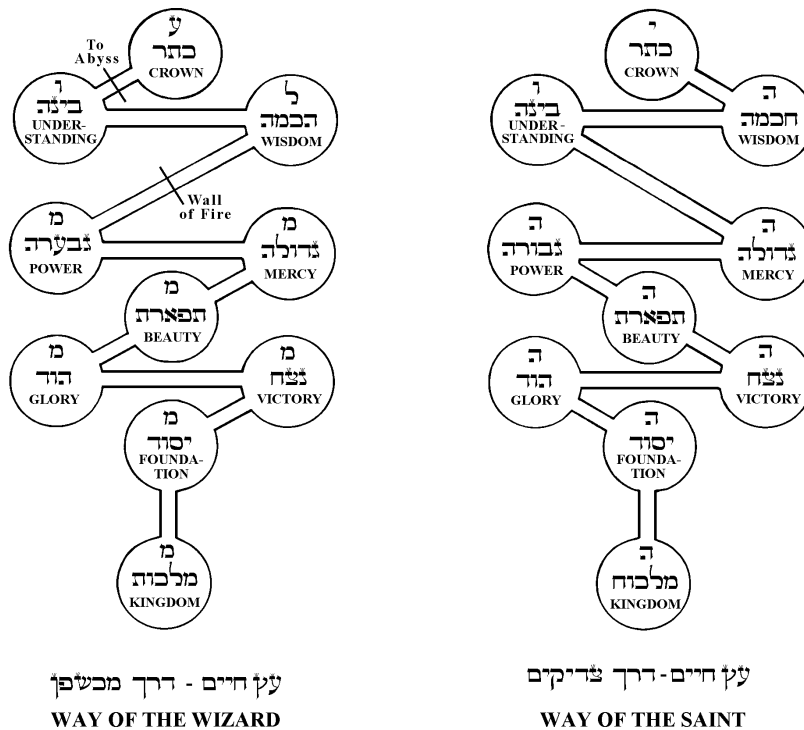
THE “WAY OF THE SAINT” AND THE “WAY OF THE WIZARD”

Like the Ways of the Angels of *Elohim* and the Angels of Destruction, the Working Trees known as the “Way of the Saint” and the “Way of the Wizard” are opposite in nature and intent. The Way of the Saint involves an arduous progression up the Tree in which all the Sefiroth of all three Columns are traversed one by one through a specific sequence of letter-gates (see Figure 4.2). In occult literature, this path is often confused with the Way of the Wizard. The wizard moves up the Tree in the identical manner as the saint, but in exactly opposite order and using different letter-gates (see Figure 4.2). The Wizard’s Path begins with ritual purification to gain access to the Column of the Right through the Gate of the Yod י. The Saint’s Path begins with trials by fire via the Gate of the Samek ס to bankrupt the ego and engender complete surrender to the Will of the Divine.

The wizard seeks to acquire power out of selfish desire for personal control, and the saint seeks to respond with righteous intent to the dictates of the Divine Will. For this reason, a wall of fire blocks the gate between the Sefiroth Power/Fire and Wisdom/East on the Way of the Wizard, obstructing progress into the three supernal Sefiroth. As with black magicians, the Gate of the Ayin י between Sefiroth Understanding/North and Crown/Above short-circuits wizards through the Abyss into the negatively existent roots, thereby preventing very powerful wizards from gaining access to Atziluth and disrupting the Creation. There is no wall of fire in the gate linking Sefiroth

Mercy/Water and Understanding/North on the Way of the Saint. On this path, the Gate of the Heh ה from Sefirah Wisdom/East gives access to Sefirah Crown/Above, so movement into the supernal Sefiroth and Atziluth is smoothly accomplished. The Tree of the Saint is keyed to the Name יהוה; the Tree of the Wizard is keyed to the Name *Olam* (עולם).

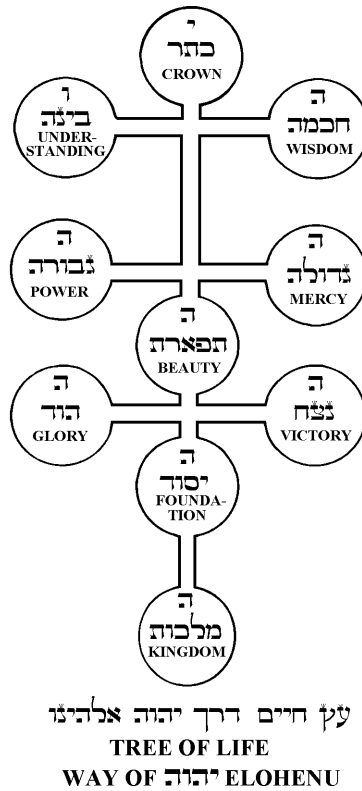
FIGURE 4.2 “Way of the Wizard” and “Way of the Saint”



CENTRAL COLUMN WORKING PATHS

In distinction to magicians, sorcerers, saints, and wizards, a Mystical Qabalist (or “clear magician”) traverses only the gates and Sefiroth of the Central Column of the Tree. A clear magician uses the Name יהוה and other Divine Names only for spiritual awakening, and for cultivating unconditional love, renunciation of the fruits of action, discrimination between the Real and the Illusory, and non-dual realization. Mystical Qabalists use Working Trees called the “Way of יהוה *Elohenu*,” the “Way of Messiah,” and the “Way of the Treasuries of *Elohim*.”

FIGURE 4.3 “Way of יהוה Elohenu”

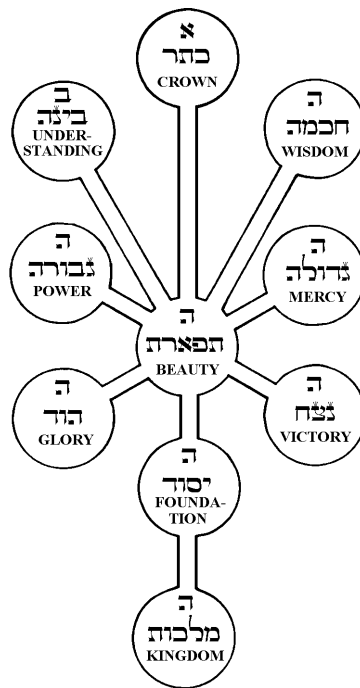


The “Way of יהוה *Elohenu*” is a rapid and smooth path up the Central Column that centers upon unconditional love for and surrendering the fruits of work in the world to one’s Chosen Ideal (see Figure 4.3). This path is empowered by remembrance (*zakhor*) of the Name of one’s Chosen Ideal, usually in the context of a root mantra. Over time, the shells are purified and the soul is able to sustain consciousness in the higher centers. The traveler on this path may stop with the awakening and sustaining of consciousness in the heart Sefirah Beauty/Last. Or, by renouncing the consciousness of the Lord as Creator/Preserver/Destroyer of the Universe, move on to the witness consciousness of Vast Face in Atziluth (Sefirah Crown/Above) and into the negatively existent roots of the Tree.

The “Way of Messiah” (see Figure 4.4) is generally one of the fastest and easiest of the Working Paths, but requires an overpowering and unconditional love for a form of Messiah or

the *Torah* (which contains all of them). In Qabalah, Messiah has four “Celestial Heads” corresponding to the Sefiroth of the Inner Court of the Tree. Similar to the Way of יהוה *Eloheinu*, the Way of Messiah is empowered by taking the name of the Chosen Messiah in meditation while visualizing an appropriate form in the heart center. When the consciousness of the traveler moves into Sefirah Beauty/Last, the entire Tree lights up and all the Sefiroth merge into one large heart Sefirah. Among others, St. Teresa of Avila is a clear example of this “One-Heart Perfect Tree.” The Tree of Messiah is unique in having the Gate of the Dalet ד, called the “Gate of Messiah,” between the Sefiroth Beauty/Last and Wisdom/East.

FIGURE 4.4 “Way of Messiah” (*Sefer HaShmoth*)



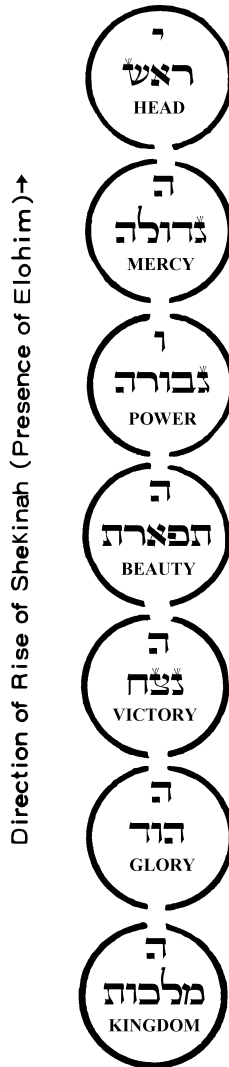
עץ חיים - דרך משיח

WAY OF MESSIAH

A third major type of Working Tree that involves the exclusive use of the Central Column is the “Way of the Treasuries of the House of *Elohim*” (see Figure 4.5), which is associated with King David. The Sefiroth on this Tree are collectively named “Treasuries.” The House of *Elohim* is the

Temple of the Lord **יהוה** On High. Hence, by this Tree, King David intended to build the Temple of the Lord **יהוה** in the hearts of all Israel. The use of the Central Column alone eliminates the distractions of the Right and Left Columns, as well as any interference from their inhabitants. The disappearance of the side columns results in various changes in the patterning and names of the Sefiroth. Among all qabalistic Trees, the Tree of the Treasuries is the one most similar to the single-column Trees of the Sufi *Latifas* and the Tantric *Chakras*.

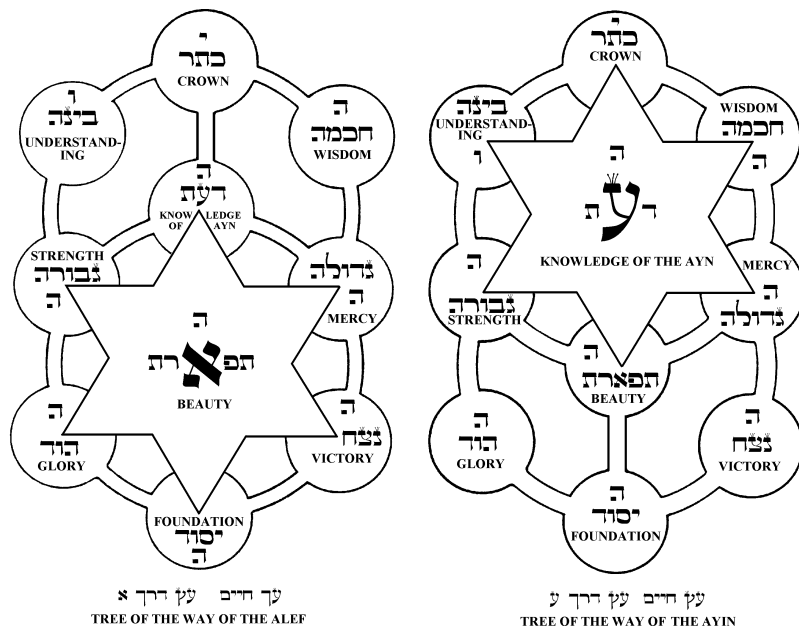
FIGURE 4.5 Tree of the Treasuries of the House of *Elohim*



TREES OF PERFECTION

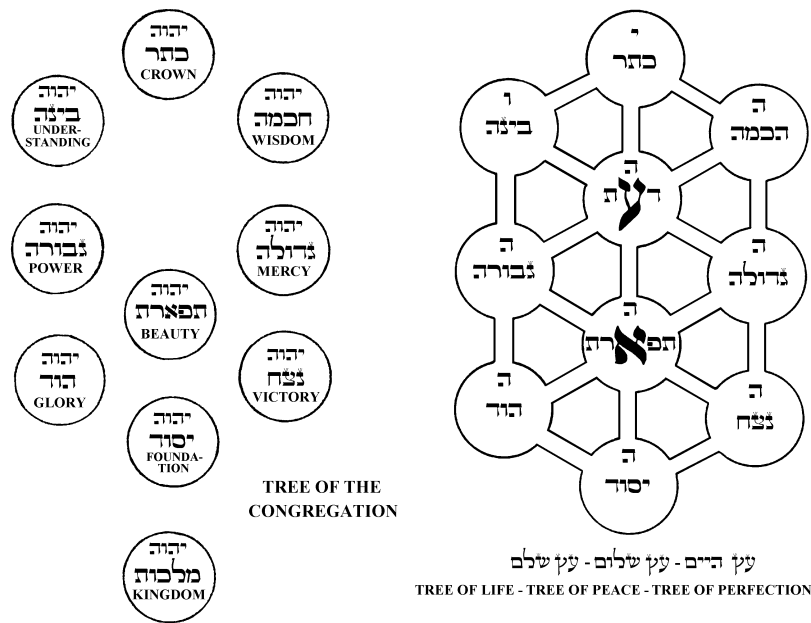
Through the will of Small Face, some return back to the Creation from the ultimate experience in the Roots of the Tree. For such souls, the Tree takes special form as “Trees of Perfection” for whom the illusion of the Fall into dualistic consciousness of Sefirah Kingdom no longer exists. Awakening in the path of devotion to Small Face (called *bhakti yoga* in India) results in the transformation of the soul into a “Tree of Perfection Way of the Alef **א** of Unity” (Figure 4.6). On this Perfect Tree, the power of consciousness (Sans. *Chitshakti*) concentrates in the heart center (Sefirah Beauty/Last). A yogi who has awakened to Vast Face consciousness via the path of concentration and discrimination between the Real and the Illusory (*raja* or *jnana yoga* in India) comes back in as a “Tree of Perfection Way of the Ayin **אײן**” (Figure 4.6). On this Perfect Tree, the power of consciousness concentrates in the throat center in the visible Sefirah Knowledge/First.

FIGURE 4.6 Trees of Perfection: Tree of the Way of the Alef and Tree of the Way of the Ayin



A few rare souls are able to stand in the gate between the two Faces. This station of consciousness is called *vijnana* in Sanskrit. It is alluded to by the “Tree of Peace and Perfection” (see Figure 4.7), wherein the power of consciousness is balanced between the throat and heart centers. The oddest Tree in the *Sefer HaShmoth* is the gateless form of the Tree of Perfection called the “Tree of the Congregation” (see Figure 4.7). The transmission of the *Sefer HaShmoth* yielded no further information on the nature of this Tree. Other primary qabalistic sources also yield Trees of Perfection, which will be presented in subsequent sections.

FIGURE 4.7 Tree of the Congregation and Tree of Peace and Perfection



TREES OF LIFE FROM THE *SEFER YETZIRAH* (BOOK OF FORMATION)

After the *Sefer HaShmoth* (Book of Names) and ancient portions of the *Torah* that pre-date Master Mosheh, the *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Formation) is the oldest book of the written Mystical Qabalah, dating to the times of and attributed to Master Abraham. The *Sefer Yetzirah* is a manual on the mystical nature

of the Hebrew alphabet recorded by Master Abraham in the original Sinatic Hebrew alphabet. The *Sefer Yetzirah* presents a number of unique forms of the Tree of Life.

The first of the six chapters of the *Sefer Yetzirah* begins:

“By thirty two wonderful paths of wisdom יה, יהיה, יהיה of Hosts, *Elohim* of Israel, Living *Elohim*, and Eternal King, *El Shadai*, Merciful and Gracious, High and Uplifted, Who inhabits Eternity, Exalted and Holy is His Name, engraved. And He created His universe by three signs: by border and letter and number.”¹

The “thirty-two paths” which comprise the Tree of Life are the ten Sefiroth (ספירות, lit. Spheres) and the twenty-two release gates interconnecting the Sefiroth. The gates are the twenty-two Hebrew letters (see Figure 3.5). The first verse above is immediately followed in the second verse with the five root phrases that serve as the “skeleton” upon which the body of the book hangs. One or another of these root phrases lead into most of the verses throughout the rest of the text.

“There are Ten Intangible Sefiroth (בלימה עשר ספירות, *Eser Sefiroth Belimah*) and Twenty-Two Letters are the Foundation (יסוד עשרים ושתיים אותיות, *Esrin Ooshtayim Autiot Yesod*): Three Mothers (שלוש אמות, *Shalosh Imote*) and Seven Double Letters (שבע כפולות, *Shevah Kuhfoolote*) and Twelve Simple Letters (עשרה פשוטות, *Esrae Puhshootote*).”²

The verses beginning with “Ten Intangible Sefiroth” generally allude to various forms of the Tree of Life, some of which are unique to this book. We mentioned earlier that the *Sefer Yetzirah* is the textual source for the six-pointed star, commonly known as the “Star of David.” The Star of David, a two-dimensional symbol composed of two interlocking triangles, is easily the most recognizable symbol of the Jewish religion. This way of viewing the star certainly presents a wealth of interpretative possibilities. The *Sefer Yetzirah* yields two forms of the six-pointed star as Trees of Perfection. The first is a flat, circular form (see Figure 4.9 on page 127). The second presents the star as two interfacing pyramids containing the ten Sefiroth

and the letter-gates (see Figure 4.10 on page 128). By way of comparison, it is interesting to note that the six-pointed star is also an ancient and important symbol in the North Indian Tantric tradition, dating back to the second millennium BCE. In the Tantric tradition, it is associated with the *Anahata Chakra* in the heart center.

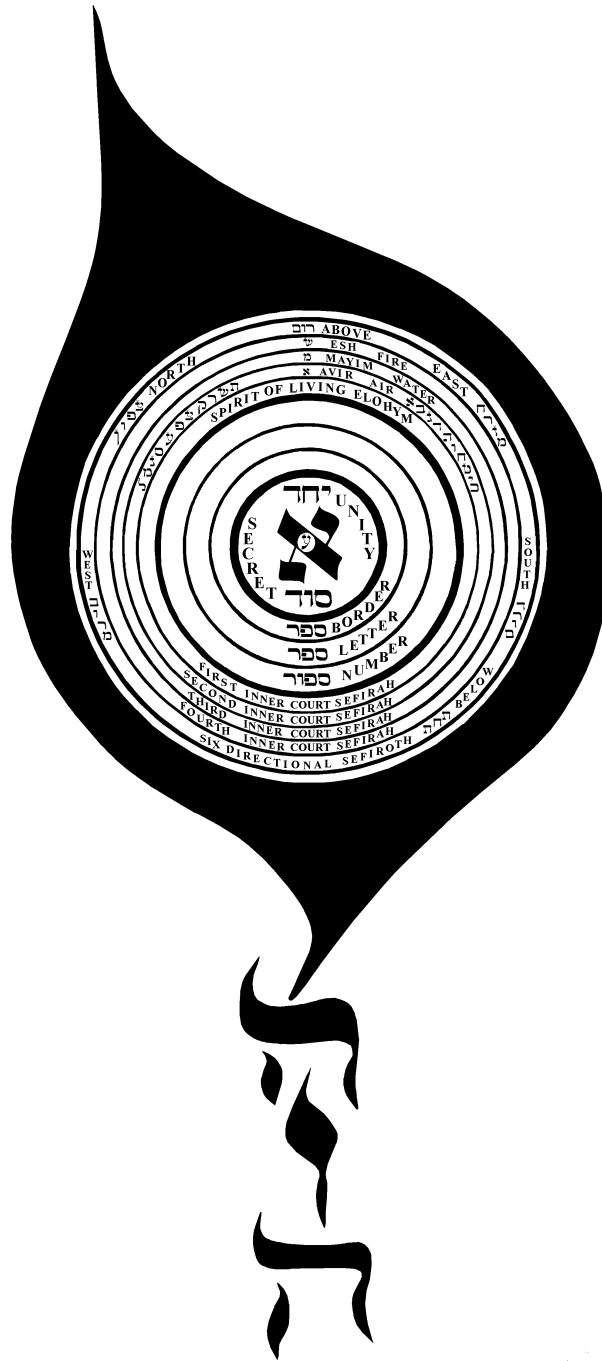
The *Sefer Yetzirah* also describes a flat, vertical version of the Tree of Perfection. As with other flat Trees, two of the “Inner Court” Sefiroth (Water/Good and Fire/Evil) are moved into the side columns, with the gates adjusted accordingly (see Figure 3.5 on page 89). The names of the Sefiroth in the *Sefer Yetzirah* are based on the elements (Spirit of Living *Elohim*, Air, Water, Fire), or alternately, on the four “Heads of Celestial Messiah” (First, Last, Good, and Evil), and the six directions (Above, Below, East, West, North, South).

The six directions are sealed through permutations of the Name יהיה. The final Heh ה of the Name יהיה is dropped due to the fact that the action is occurring in the astral World of Yetzirah.

“There are **Ten Intangible Sefiroth** whose measure is ten without end: Depth of First and Depth of Last, Depth of Good and Depth of Evil, Depth of Above and Depth of Below, Depth of East and Depth of West, Depth of North and Depth of South. Lord, Only One, *El*, Faithful King rules all of them from His Holy Dwelling Place unto Eternity.”³ (see Figure 4.8)

“These **Ten Intangible Sefiroth** are ONE - Spirit of Living *Elohim*, Air from Spirit, Water from Air, Fire from Water, Above and Below, East and West, North and South.”⁴

FIGURE 4.8 “Ten Intangible Sefiroth Whose Measure is Without End” (*Sefer Yetzirah* 1:5)



The second chapter of the book is keyed to the root phrase:: “Twenty-two letters are the foundation.” It describes the letters as the basis for everything that is formed, and presents the image of a wall bearing two hundred and thirty-one two-letter permutations (see Figure 4.12 on page 130). Some of these two-letter roots are known Hebrew “words” with literal and hidden meanings, and some are unknown.

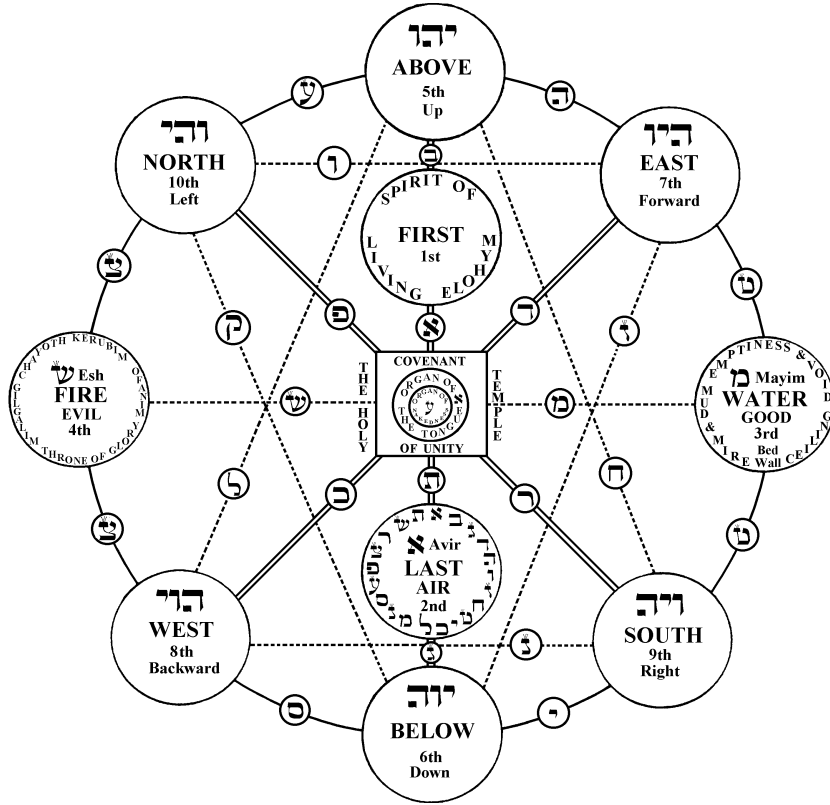
“**Twenty-Two Letters are the Foundation:** He engraved them, He hewed them out, He combined them, and He set them at opposites, and He formed through them everything that is formed and everything that is destined to be formed.”⁵

“**Twenty-Two Letters are the Foundation:** He set them in a cycle like a kind of wall with two hundred and thirty one gates... And it (the cycle) rotates forward and backward... and thus everything that is formed and everything that is spoken goes out from One Name (i.e. יהוה).”⁶

The third chapter is keyed to the root phrase: “Three Mothers Alef א Mem מ Shin ש.” The Mother Letters are the gates among the Sefiroth of the “Inner Court” of the Tree (First, Last, Water, Fire). These letters are discussed in relation to the universe—Heaven, Earth, and the space between them, the seasons of the year (hot, cold, temperate), and the body of male and female (head, belly, and the *Geviyah*). Verses in both the third and sixth chapters mention “fathers” born from the archetypal elements of the Mother Letters. From the Air (אוויר, *avir*) of Alef א comes the father “Space;” from the Water (מים, *mayim*) of Mem מ comes the father “Matter;” and from the Fire (אש, *esh*) of Shin ש comes the father “Energy” or “Motion.”

“...And from Him go out Fire and Water, dividing into male and female. **Three Mothers Alef א Mem מ Shin ש** are their foundation, and from them are born fathers, from which everything is created.”⁷

FIGURE 4.9 Ten Intangible Sefiroth “Five Opposite Five”
(Sefer Yetzirah 1:3)



Center Detail of Figure 4.9:

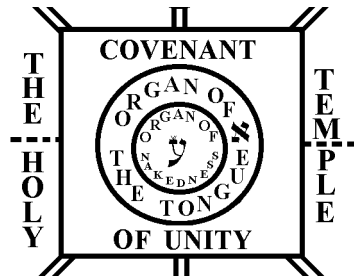
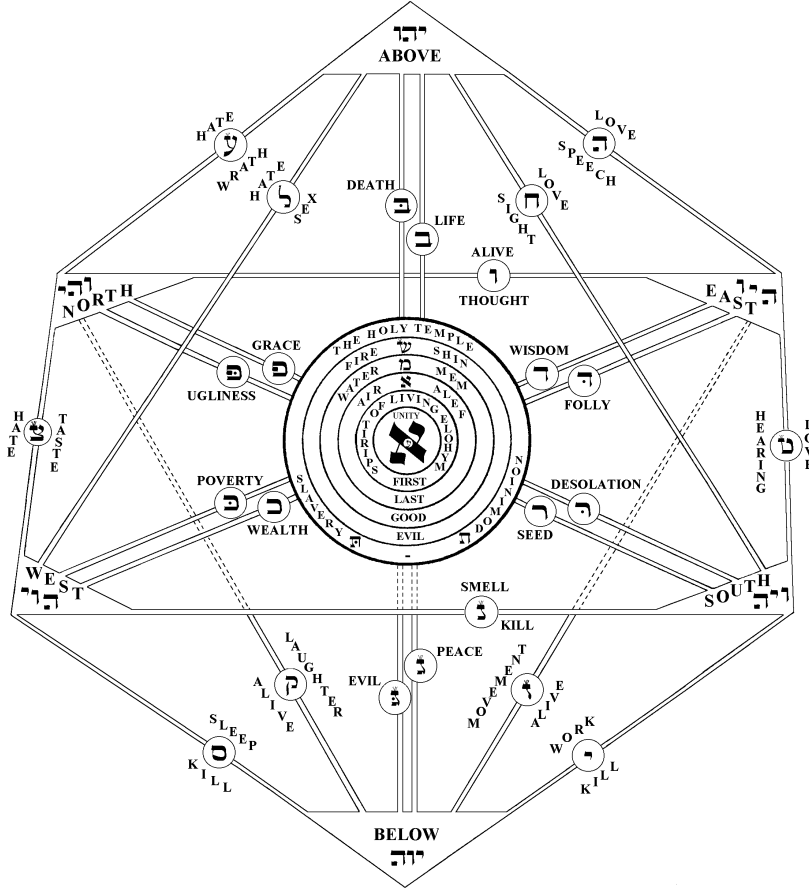


FIGURE 4.10 Double Pyramid Tree (*Sefer Yetzirah*)



Center Detail of Figure 4.10:

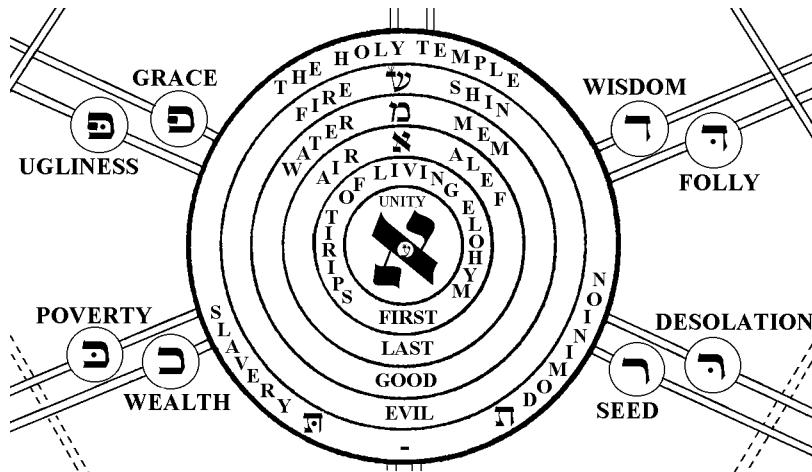
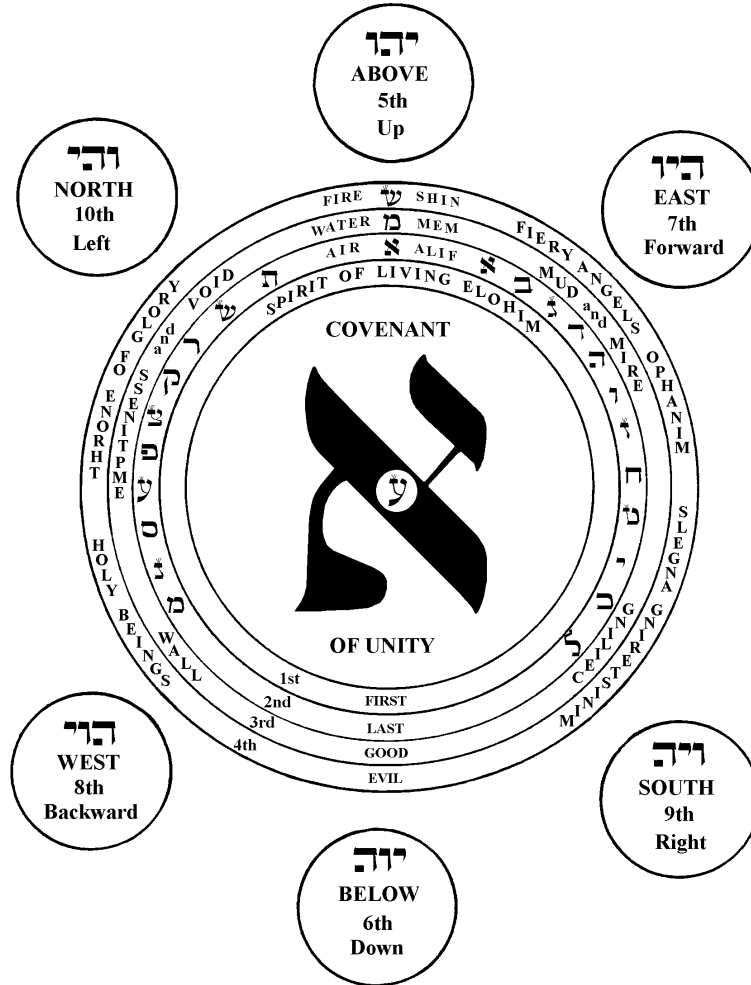


FIGURE 4.11 Inner Court Meditation (*Sefer Yetzirah*)



"ONE rules all of them from His Holy Dwelling Place unto Eternity"
Sefer Yetzirah 1:5

seven gates in the body of male and female... and through which He engraved seven universes, seven heavens, seven earths, seven seas, seven rivers, seven Sabbatical years, seven Jubilees, and the Holy Temple. Therefore He cherished the seventh ones under all the heavens.”¹⁰

The twelve Simple Letters, also called the “borders” and “everlasting arms” of the Tree, are gates that connect the Directional Sefiroth among one another. Chapter Five, Verse 2 gives an exact delineation of how the Simple Letters are assigned to the diagonal borders on the Tree. The reader will note that the way the text assigns the Simple Letters to the respective borders differs significantly from the way that Luria places them on the Tree (see Figure 5.9 on page 151), and also from the way they are assigned to the gates in virtually all books on the Hermetic Qabalah and commentaries on the Tarot. This verse also says that they (i.e. the “arms of the universe” a.k.a. the Simple Letters) “become wider for ever and ever.”

Briefly referring back to the parallels drawn in Chapter One between the Mystical Qabalah and modern cosmology, one of the continuing debates among astrophysicists regards whether or not the universe is closed i.e. will not expand forever. On the one hand, the model of a closed universe holds that there is sufficient mass in the universe so that the Big Bang expansion will gradually slow down and reverse due to the pull of gravity. In this model, all the mass of the universe involutes back into its unimaginably small and dense original condition until another quantum shift precipitates another explosion. On the other hand, there are those who contend that the supernova data on distant galaxies confirms that there is insufficient mass for the reversal to occur, and that the negative expansion energy of space is causing our universe to expand forever. It is therefore interesting to consider the implication of this verse of the *Sefer Yetzirah* within the context of this debate.

“**Twelve Simple Letters:** Heh ה Vav ו Zayin ז
Chet ח Tet ט Yod י Lamed ל Nun נ Samek ס
Ayin ע Tzade צ Qof ק. Their foundation is the
twelve borders of a diagonal: East-Above
border, East-North border, East-Below border,

South-Above border, South-East border, South-Below border, West-Above border, West-South border, West-Below border, North-Above border, North-West border, North-Below border. And they continually become wider for ever and ever, and they are the arms of the universe.”¹¹

The text then goes on to respectively designate the twelve constellations, twelve months, and twelve organs in the body of male and female as formed from the Simple Letters. For the reader’s convenience, all of the correlations given by the *Sefer Yetzirah* for the Mother, Double, and Simple Letters are given in Tables 4.1 through 4.3. The fifth chapter ends by mentioning three allusions: the “Sunset,” the “Wall,” and the “Battle.” The Sunset (Figure 4.13) includes all the information on the letters in the *Sefer Yetzirah*. The Wall (Figure 4.12 on page 130) is a tabulation of all possible two-letter permutations. The Battle (Figure 4.14) is a diagram depicting the tension between the dual aspects of the Double Letters, and between six pairs of Simple Letters. This tension plays an integral function in the Creation process. The sixth and final chapter is generally a summary.

FIGURE 4.13 “The Sunset”

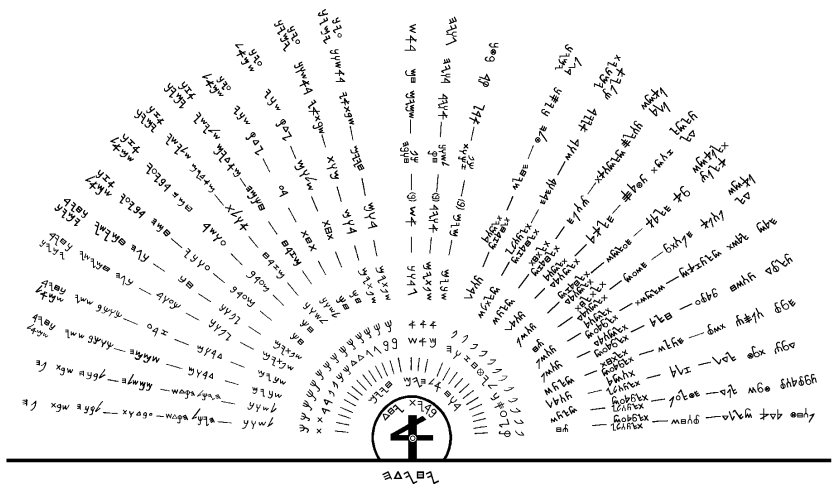
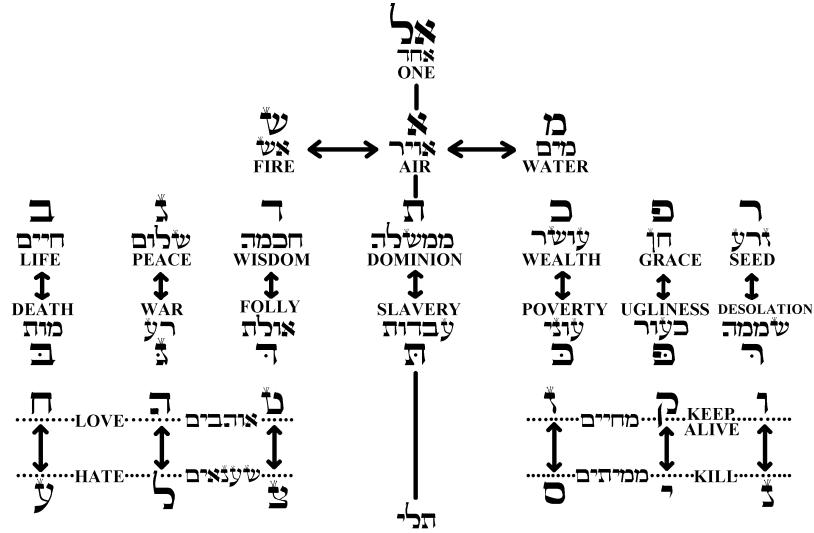


FIGURE 4.14 “The Battle”



"He set them in order like a kind of battle." Book of Formation 5:7

Tables 4.1 through 4.3 list the complete information contained in the *Sefer Yetzirah* on the twenty-two Hebrew letters. Gate assignments are given for both the 3-dimensional and flat versions of the Tree. Zoharic names for the Sefiroth are in parentheses.

TABLE 4.1 Mother Letters

Mother Letter	Tree Location 3D = 3-D Tree; Flat Tree	Father (Element)	Foundation	In the Universe	In the Year	In the Body
Alef א	3D = Inner Court; First (Realization) to Last (Beauty)	Air	Tongue of Statute	Ether	Temperate	<i>Geviyah</i>
Mem מ	3D = Inner Court; Good (Mercy) to Last (Beauty)	Water	Scale of Merit	Earth	Cold	Belly
Shin ש	3D = Inner Court; Good (Mercy) to Evil (Strength)	Fire	Scale of Guilt	Heavens	Heat	Head

TABLE 4.2 Double Letters

Double Letter	Tree Location IC=Inner Court in 3-Dtree; Flat Tree	Reigns Over	In the Universe	In the Year	In the Body
Beyt ב	IC to Above (Crown); First (Realization) to Above (Crown)	Life/ Death	Saturn	1st Day	Right Eye
Gimel ג	IC to Below (Foundation); Last (Beauty) to Below (Foundation)	Peace/ Discord	Jupiter	2nd Day	Left Eye
Dalet ד	IC to Below (Foundation); Last (Beauty) to Below (Foundation)	Wisdom/ Folly	Mars	3rd Day	Right Ear
Kaf כ	IC to West (Glory); Last (Beauty) to West (Glory)	Wealth/ Poverty	Sun	4th Day	Left Ear
Pey פ	IC to North (Understanding); First (Realization) to North (Understanding)	Grace/ Ugliness	Venus	5th Day	Right Nostril
Resh ר	IC to South (Victory); Last (Beauty) to South (Victory)	Seed/ Desolation	Mercury	6th Day	Left Nostril
Tav ת	IC = Holy Temple Last (Beauty) to Evil (Strength)	Dominion/ Slavery	Moon	7th Day	Mouth

TABLE 4.3 Simple Letters

Simple Letter	Tree Location	Reigns Over	In the Universe	In the Year	In the Body
Heh ה	East (Wisdom) to Above (Crown)	Speech	Aries	Nisan	Right Foot
Vav ו	East (Wisdom) to North (Understanding)	Thought	Taurus	Iyar	Right Kidney
Zayin ז	South (Victory) to Above (Crown)	Movement	Gemini	Sivan	Left Foot
Chet ח	South (Victory) to Above (Crown)	Sight	Cancer	Tammuz	Right Hand
Tet ט	South (Victory) to East (Wisdom)	Hearing	Leo	Av	Left Kidney
Yod י	South (Victory) to Below (Foundation)	Work	Virgo	Elul	Left Hand
Lamed ל	West (Glory) to Above (Crown)	Sexual Intercourse	Libra	Tishri	Gall
Nun נ	West (Glory) to South (Victory)	Smell	Scorpio	Cheshvan	Small Intestine
Samek ס	West (Glory) to Below (Foundation)	Sleep	Sagittarius	Kislev	Stomach
Ayin ע	North (Understanding) to Above (Crown)	Wrath	Capricorn	Tevet	Liver
Tzade צ	North (Understanding) to West (Glory)	Taste	Aquarius	Shevat	Maw
Qof ק	North (Understanding) to Below (Foundation)	Laughter	Pisces	Adar	Spleen



ELIJAH IN FLAMING CHARIOT