



# IN THE CONTINUUM

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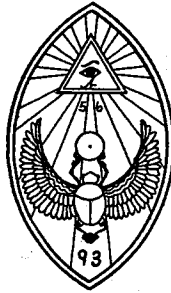
Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.  
Love is the law, love under will.

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The College of Thelema  
Founded in Service to  
the A.:A.:.

# COLLEGE of THELEMA



P.O. Box 415  
Oroville, CA.  
95965  
Sept. 1976

Founded in Service  
to the A.:A.:

Cari Fratres et Sorores,

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

This is the last issue of IN THE CONTINUUM and I think a short accounting of whence I came is in order. This story of my life will be someday produced in more detailed form as I am in the process of writing it now. But for those who would like a short accounting of events, this is what I have to offer.

I was born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada on June 18, 1917 and subsequent work with my horoscope and rectification done by one who could do this, reveals that it was about 2:20 in the morning.

Our family moved to California when I was only about four years of age, - maybe a little younger, as my father had lost a political bid for mayor of Edmonton and had gone deeply into debt for this. My childhood years were unaware of the difficulties of my parents so I passed a very happy childhood.

After graduation from High School I had a year of work in a Junior College and then another year of work to fit me to be a stenographer.

When I at last had a job with a bank, I was so restless that I took night classes at the same Junior College. There I was in a drama class conducted by Regina Kahl. The upshot of this class was that I met Wilfred Smith and Jane Wolfe and attended the Gnostic Catholic Mass written by Crowley for the Ordo Templi Orientis. This attendance was to last for several years. I married and my husband ran away and I was left with children. With the first child, I was invited to live in the only Profess House then existing on Winona Blvd. in Hollywood. I accepted as I wanted to bring up my child by myself. There was no money for this job but I had a roof over my head and food and medical help for me and the baby.

I was absolutely bewildered by the material set before me which had to do with Thelema. This was so new to my soul that it took about 30 years of the Probationary period of the A.:A.: to get some sort of idea about what was involved in Thelema. I joined the O.T.O. in August of 1939 and on June 6, of 1940, I became a Probationer of the A.:A.: under Jane Wolfe, who had studied with Crowley in Cefalu and elsewhere.

My husband returned from his first runaway and we had a second baby and then in due time there was a third and again, he was not in the mood to be a father. Again his departure was more prolonged and it was up to me to bring up my three children by myself.

Those years, I had to consider their welfare and could not do practices which might alienate them from their peers, for children talk of everything. So instead I studied and then when my son went to first grade, I went to college. I was tired of being on the edge of starvation and wanted a better life for all of us.

During those years, the friendship and help of Jane was very precious to me and for quite a few years she came to see us every Saturday afternoon. After six years of college, I graduated with honors and an M.A. from the University of California in Los Angeles.

After I had my teaching credential for Art, I taught in a Northern California High School for 20 years. About three years after the start of my job, Jane died and left all of her papers and books to me. Also, during those years, I had made the acquaintance and good friendship of Karl Germer. Our friendship had started by correspondence when I was in college. It was during those early college years, on July 1, 1952, that the first appearance of the Holy Guardian Angel was experienced by me. Karl often said this was due to my purity of aspiration.. Since he was already an 8<sup>o</sup> = 3<sup>o</sup> of A.:A.: as acknowledged by Crowley, I think he knew what he was talking about when he wrote that I must be a 5<sup>o</sup> = 6<sup>o</sup> of A.:A.: This was a great surprise to me, but in many years afterward, I had the guidance of the H.G.A. when it was essential.

While working as an art teacher, I married a second time but after six years, that marriage was also a failure and so it ended.

But during those years, I studied many things and also Karl and I wrote many letters. I met Marcelo Motta and wrote to him but his letters betrayed his extreme unbalance and dictatorial attitude and I did not put up with them for very long.

Karl died and left all of Crowley's literary remains in the care of his wife, Sascha. But she was not very sane and could not place the materials in any place suited to their importance. She was robbed of some of the most important documents about 1967 and accused my child Stella of taking them. Since this was such an outright fabrication, I resolved to find who the culprits might be. The story of this is printed in IN THE CONTINUUM, Vol. II, No. 2.

The upshot of my enquiries was that Grady McMurtry and I began a correspondence and I invited him to come to California as he was working in Washington, D.C. He came out when I paid for every bit of his trip and for the moving van and then supported him for quite a few years. I also made and paid for any O.T.O. equipment needed as he was not about to be bothered with such things.

Grady had been given letters of authorization by Crowley to take charge of the O.T.O. in case of emergency when Grady had met Crowley as a young Lieutenant in the American forces during World War II. Crowley knew that Karl was already an old man and might not appoint a successor for the welfare of the O.T.O. He was right, as later events were to prove. What we started in 1969, as we were both long standing members of the O.T.O. was then fully sanctioned and legal. But though Grady was intelligent when he met Crowley at about the age of 22, he had managed to ruin this intelligence by the use of alcohol. He displayed all the difficulties and faults of the alcoholic person and so after six years, when my money ran out and I was about to retire from teaching, I moved him out of the house.

In those early years of the establishment of the O.T.O. on a secure footing, I began the memorization of three of the Holy Books, LIBER AL, LIBER LXV, and LIBER VII. My technique was to read a full chapter of one of these books every night, which took only about 5 or 10 minutes, before falling asleep. When several months had passed, the chapter was memorized in its entirety and I went on to the next chapter. Karl Germer had told me that is what he did, and I was inspired by his example.

I also performed the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram twice daily and Resh at the appropriate times. Added to this was work on the Middle Pillar as described by Regardie. This was essential in order to combat the difficulties Grady was causing. These were considerable but shall not be described here. They shall be dealt with in the longer version of my life which I am writing.

I retired from teaching and Grady and I parted in 1975 and I was now free and had enough time to go back and pick up the work in the A.:A.: which had not been done. When I first started my affiliation with the A.:A.:, I had no set of THE EQUINOX. I had a small paper 1938 version of LIBER AL, but as to LIBERS VII and LIBER LXV, a person had to rely upon Jane's typewritten copies of these books if they also, had no basic books. These were slow in coming, of course, for Jane was older and could not do a great deal of typing. I had borrowed one of the volumes of THE EQUINOX from Jane very early to copy out a description of the Tarot cards, for these appealed to me a great deal. But I had no pack of cards, not even of any older version or of the Pamela Coleman Smith and Waite version. But before too long THE BOOK OF THOTH was published and I was able to buy a copy.

I also had started a notebook on Astrology when the children were very small and did what I could with books from the local library. I owned only one book on Astrology which a friend had given me and that was all for many years. Whenever Karl was able to publish one of the Crowley books, he gave me a copy free as we were certainly impoverished.

One can imagine my sense of bewilderment at not having any of the appropriate reference works or instructions. I had to figure out what to do by myself. I can still remember this bewilderment and lack of guidance and knowledge and this strong memory led me to start the College of Thelema in 1973 or at about that time. I was born to be a teacher and by that time I had many more books, thanks to Jane and Karl and had begun to put the loose ends of knowledge into some sort of order. The result of my years of study of occult authors and of Crowley were now available to me so that I could assist others on the path of Thelema. I started IN THE CONTINUUM in 1973 thinking it could be of some use to those who were taking their first steps.

I might mention that I had also begun the study of psychology in my teen years and have kept up this interest all my life.

Also lacking were the instructions in LIBER 185 and I did not know about them until Israel Regardie published them in GEMS FROM THE EQUINOX. I also had no access to LIBER 13 which also gave instructions for each Grade level of the A.:A.:. It has been the policy of this branch of the A.:A.: to conduct the studies as Crowley wrote them. Never would we issue a document for an acquired grade unless the student had really gone through the work.

But now from the year 1975 and on, I had a great deal of time to fill in the blanks and so took up the practices and studies for about four or five hours of every day, with time out only for any necessary O.T.O. work or for family visits.

But I needed a person with similar goals and interests to monitor my progress and confirm if I had done the work as thoroughly as possible. It was with great good fortune that James Eshelman was taking an O.T.O. grade when I was visiting a fine O.T.O. person in Southern California. Jim immediately found an interest in what I was doing and opted to travel to my home in Dublin in Northern California for instructions and conferences. He was visiting only for about the third time when I knew he was to be my successor. In the many years that followed we helped each other to do the mandated A.:A.: work and here was the person to monitor what I was working on and to give me encouragement and also advice. I did the same for him, of course. In our work, I had the assistance of the H.G.A. when needed.

The College of Thelema grew and Jim put the A.:A.: on a clear footing as to instructions and work. We were both interested that our students should be able to do the work and should also be able to turn out to be balanced individuals with clear aspirations for the development of their more spiritual selves.

After a few years of work, Jim decided there should be more ritual in the studies of the aspirants to the A.:A.:, that is, the student phase which we were teaching in the College of Thelema. Students needed to experience more ceremonial magick in order to be more balanced persons. To this end, he crafted the work of The Temple of Thelema and included in this work all that had been required in the first course of the College of Thelema.

Our basic idea was that each person should "know thyself" as has been the credo for centuries in occult work and in many more disciplines as well. As Crowley remarked in THE EQUINOX, that the Probationary period of the A.:A.: could assist the fit and eliminate the unfit. Today we do not have enough Neophytes in this Order to do such a job so that either the College of Thelema or the Temple of Thelema must do this in a previous fashion so that any Neophytes may not be overburdened. It seems that there is a good deal of glamour about the A.:A.: and some persons think that if they are a part of this system, all their troubles will cease and they will become adepts and so on and on. They then have to face some debilitating character traits in themselves or some karma not yet worked out or for many other reasons, in this student phase of C.O.T. and T.O.T. Of course a great many who are unfit find that this work is not for them and those who do go on to complete the work become shining examples of what hard work can do for a person.

With the publication of these volumes of IN THE CONTINUUM, I have tried to make the study of Thelema more understandable and accessible to the public at large and also to students. I wish to thank those who have written in about their appreciation of the contents of I.T.C. for it is often the case that a teacher does not know how or if a person has been affected by the teaching. Those who speak up have been a great encouragement to me and now that I am pushing eighty, I am winding this up, for I like neat endings to various of my projects. When I go to the other side, I will know that I did what I could for Thelema. I also know that I am but the tool of my Holy Guardian Angel and I have tried to do the work He set out for me as well as I could. May each of you attain to this wonderful experience of the H.G.A.

Phyllis Seckler (Soror Meral)

## REINCARNATION

As a phoenix arises from fire and ashes  
So the end of life burns up in consuming flames  
Until all that is left are the flashes  
Of memory's accumulations laying claims

To all that went before in soul's growth.  
Memories which can never be shaken  
Out of the whole fabric of soul's cloth:  
Memories until the soul demands to slaken

Thirst for life, for love at the fount of light.  
So from life to life we end in heaven's fire  
Doomed to struggle onward as best we might;  
Our feet are not prisoned ever in earth's mire.

But respite comes upon us, though we forget  
The rest and sweetness of death while on earth.  
It is no use for ignorance to fret  
About a new life, death means rebirth.

Ah, those we love, again we meet  
Beyond the grave and in new lives too.  
What use to mourn when in time we greet  
Each other and live our lives anew.

But beware to hate for heaven's law  
Decrees that karmic debts be paid.  
And if a soul succumbs to such a flaw  
Then many lives may pass before the error fades.

So now my loves, I depart upon my ways  
And as the phoenix I will arise again  
Out of the ashes of my numerous days  
And we will dance to karmic strains.

We will learn to aspire always to the highest  
Of aristocratic life, of refinement and love.  
We will create again as does the artist  
Whether of poesy, of painting, of music, until above

We see our stars gleaming in heaven's dance:  
We who are single sparks of fire in heaven's space.  
Oh, set your sights on high, attain more than a glance  
Of starlight bliss, of soul's greatest grace.

Meral  
July 14, 1996





Meral



# THE LEGACY OF JANE WOLFE

For nigh unto a quarter of a century, *In the Continuum* has served as the expressive organ not only of the College of Thelema, but also of the Jane Wolfe lineage of A.:A.:. The College of Thelema was itself "Founded in Service to the A.:A.:." — as has been stated in every issue of this periodical, from its inauguration in 1973 through the present.

But, despite the exposition of Jane's life lovingly told by Soror Meral over some 30 issues of *I.T.C.*, one still occasionally encounters misstatements about Jane, her work, and the A.:A.: legacy she left behind.

Most of these misstatements seem to arise out of ignorance of the facts. Much of this ignorance is due to the persistent modesty of Soror Meral who, despite being quite willing to tell Jane's story, has been highly reticent to tell much of her own tale. She has, however, agreed not to interfere with some of the facts being told by another, and has agreed to publish the account in this final issue of *In the Continuum*, provided all of the facts are true.

The purpose of this present article is to give a brief accounting of the true facts.

Jane Wolfe was admitted as an A.:A.: Probationer on June 11, 1921, during her residence at the Abbey of Thelema in Cefalu. Her admitting Superior was Aleister Crowley. As is customary in the A.:A.:, two copies of the Probationer oath were prepared, one to be retained by the Probationer, and one to be retained by the Order. The original of the copy Crowley retained is presently in a major university library collection. The original of Jane's own signed and sealed copy, long held and preserved by Soror Meral, is presently in my own possession.

At her admittance, she took the aspiration name Estai. Years later, she rearticulated her aspiration in the words, "I will become the creative Force of the Universe," which became expressed in the new motto, *Fiat Yod*.

On June 3, 1940, Soror Estai admitted Phyllis Seckler as a Probationer. The original Probationer oath, signed by both of them, is presently in my possession. Phyllis took the aspiration name Tenax Propositi. As is known to most of the Thelemic world, she later took the name Meral (מֵהָרָאֵל).

It is occasionally stated — incorrectly — that Soror Estai never moved beyond the Probationer Grade. It is true that Jane long felt this to be true. Then, in April, 1940, she wrote to Crowley acknowledging that she was only a Probationer, and inquiring whether there was a way that she might nonetheless admit Phyllis to the Order. Crowley wrote back to Jane soon thereafter, indicating that she had, in fact, been a Neophyte for years, and should go ahead. Soror Meral was, therefore, admitted to the A.:A.: not only by a qualified Neophyte, but with the explicit authorization of Crowley himself.

There are other, less direct indications of Jane's advancement to Neophyte. For example, she regularly received from Crowley the Word of the Equinox, which is not dis-

seminated below the  $1^{\circ}=10^{\square}$  Grade. Indeed, for a time she was the only initiate on the West Coast who received the Word.

Beyond this point, Jane's own personal Grade progress in A.:A.: is vague. She personally felt that she did not get past the  $2^{\circ}=9^{\square}$  Grade of Zelator; and her continuing work, much of which has been discussed in this present publication, is very characteristic of the Task of the Zelator. On the other hand, she had accomplished most of the chief tasks of the Zelator Grade in 1921 during her stay in Cefalu. Based on a study of her subsequent record, she would appear to have completed the Zelator work and to have solidly begun that of the  $3^{\circ}=8^{\square}$  Grade. That, however, is somewhat speculative. All that really matters to the present discussion is that, in June of 1940, she was at least a Neophyte,  $1^{\circ}=10^{\square}$ .

At this point, another person becomes relevant to our story. He is Karl Germer, Frater Saturnus. Germer's place in the history of O.T.O., of A.:A.:, and of Thelema in general is established in the public record. He attained the  $5^{\circ}=6^{\square}$  (Adeptus Minor) Grade in 1927, and was recognized by Crowley as a Magister Templi,  $8^{\circ}=3^{\square}$ , by 1938.

Germer was appointed to be Crowley's direct administrative successor in several areas. It is well documented that Crowley appointed Germer to be his "caliph" (literally, "successor") as head of O.T.O., and also to succeed Crowley as head of the lesser known Order of Thelemites (not to be confused with the still-lesser known Order of Thelema). There is no record that he, or anyone else, was appointed as head of the A.:A.: However, he was a Master of the Temple,  $8^{\circ}=3^{\square}$ .

Frater Saturnus is significant in the present thesis because of the role he played in witnessing and confirming the advancement of Soror Meral in the A.:A.: Grades.

On the morning of July 1, 1952, Phyllis Seckler attained to the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, that attainment, or consequence, which marks the Adeptus Minor Grade,  $5^{\circ}=6^{\square}$ , of the A.:A.:, the full initiate of the Sephirah Tiphereth. (Technically it marks the senior  $5^{\circ}=6^{\square}$ , or "Adeptus Minor *Within*.") She shared her results with Karl Germer. Many letters survive of their subsequent correspondence of the subject.

One of the earliest of these is Karl's letter to Phyllis dated July 7, 1952 (following her letter to him of July 1), in which he answered one of her queries thus: "Dear child: your questions go to the bottom of one of the deepest problems that have puzzled and tortured all initiated men and women from time immemorial... I suppose it is the conflict with being human with a body of flesh, and the fact that **you have risen to or above Tiphereth** [*emphasis added*] where the voice of the Secret Guide is gradually taking over and begins to speak to your soul." He followed this with wise and loving counsel on how to adjust to her newly awakened state.

Even before this time, Karl felt Phyllis had reached the Tiphereth level. In a letter to Jane Wolfe, dated June 24, 1952 — exactly one week before Phyllis' full experience of the K&C of the HGA — he wrote: "I find Phyllis's statement [about a certain matter] a definite message, to be heeded, as I have been doing, or trying to, all along. You know

that I have a high regard for P.'s attainment. I'm sure she has gone through  $5^{\circ}=6^{\circ}$  some time ago. I'm sure she is under guidance."

Although willing to talk of this Angelic experience to someone of Karl's stature, and occasionally to discuss some aspects of it with intimates, Phyllis remained quiet about this for many decades. She continued with the first stage of her life's work, teaching school and raising her children. Nearly two decades passed before she agreed to accept an A.:A.: Probationer. In the early 1970's she founded the College of Thelema as a teaching vehicle, to prepare individuals, so far as they are able, to undertake the deeper work of the A.:A.:.

Even in 1979, when I first visited her home in Dublin, California and was myself admitted to Probation, she was firm in focusing on the reality of the Work and not its labels. When I asked her (enthusiastic young upstart that I was and, some would say, still am) what Grade she held, I had my first direct experience of her natal Mercury-Mars conjunction: "All you need to know, young man," she rapier-quick retorted, "is that I'm a Neophyte!" And, truth be told, that **is** all I needed to know at the time!

Methinks that Soror Meral has answered others over the years with comparable humility. Her reasons are clear — they are a hallmark of a true Adept — but they have not always left an accurate record of the facts.

What matters most is that she was admitted to the A.:A.: in 1940, by one who was qualified to do so; that by the magnitude of her devotion and the depth of her heart, she attained to the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel in 1952, and was acknowledged in this by one who was qualified to do so (being admitted, thereby, to the Order R.:C.:); and that she, in turn, has admitted numerous others to the system by which she first found her own way to the Light. I am lucky enough to be one of those, and luckier still to know many of the others, as friends and companions.

Some have fallen away. Some have persevered. And, of those, some have attained. The legacy continues, passed from generation to generation in an uninterrupted chain.

Jane Wolfe's final legacy was, foremost, to be one link in that unbroken chain; and none of us can ever hope for a more noble calling. Even the completion of the Great Work for ourselves is of small consequence compared to the Greater Work of completing it for all humanity — indeed, for all life — through passing along, to each successive generation, that which we have received.

To speak more fully of Jane and the inheritance she left behind, I must add that she was the only Scarlet Woman in the whole of Crowley's life (except for Rose, who shared in the birth of *The Book of the Law*) who bore viable progeny to the Beast, and that through a single daughter whom we have come to know and love as Soror Meral — and whom we thank, in this final issue of *In the Continuum*, for 24 years (and counting!) of unremitting giving through this periodical and through her teaching.

JAMES A. ESHELMAN

## THE LOVER<sup>1</sup>

BABALON! Thou inmost Fire,  
Scarlet consuming Flame-Song of my Soul,  
Strong lover to thy pyre's desire,  
Call me and claim me and control!  
I pray Thee sate thine appetite,  
Devour me in thy womb of Night.

I.N.R.I. — renewed by Fire,  
The Phoenix slain and born at dawn.  
Each life-pulse doth thy Love inspire;  
Into thy cup my life is drawn.  
I pray Thee sate thine appetite,  
Devour me in thy womb of Night.

Erect, I open to Thy will,  
O Lady in whose clutch I nestle<sup>2</sup>;  
Now let this Sacrament distill  
The Wine within thy sacred vessel.  
I pray Thee sate thine appetite,  
Devour me in thy womb of Night.

— *James A. Eshelman*  
June 10, 1996 E.V.

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1. With gratitude to Lola Wide-awake, the Key of Delights, who lives in the House of Sorrow.  
2. Or "wrestle." It depends upon the occasion.

## SOME REMARKS ON DEATH

There is a certain sense of shyness and reticence about events connected with the Holy Guardian Angel, but one event I have often described to students and others. This was the memory of my last death.

It is not certain in what year this occurred or exactly how it happened, but it was a sort of vision while in a waking state. I remembered clearly that I was dying in a sort of garret, as I could see the roof beams above me which supported a peaked roof. I was suffering terribly from some sort of illness in the abdominal area. My bed was not very clean as there had been no one to aid or help me for quite some time. Also, it was but a single type of bed, the covers crumpled, dirty and wrinkled. The pain became so unbearable that I could stand it no longer when there appeared at my left side a beautiful angel and I then left my body and went to Him. The love he had for me was greater than any love that could ever be on this earth. I can scarcely explain its purity and intensity as I think no human has ever expressed such a love. Even now, these words are but a poor shadow of the experience. Human language can scarcely explain the instances of contact with the H.G.A. As I thought later about this event, I was certain that I had been an artist in that particular incarnation and a poor one at that, and that was why I was dying in a garret.

Strangely enough, when I was in my teens, I was extremely interested in art and remarked to my mother that I wanted to be an artist even if I had to die in a garret for it. Sometimes little events like this are clues to who we are. Much later in life several persons suggested that I go to New York and my reply always had been that I would not do so, for I wouldn't want to be caught dead in such a city. This is probably another clue as to the location of my last death. There have been hundreds of unknown and unsung artists in history and I was one of them, barely making a living with some sort of copy work or designs for various businesses, probably just before the end of the nineteenth century.

But this wonderful and loving experience of the Holy Guardian Angel has left me with no fear of death and often I remark about going over to the other side, to the horror of family, friends and acquaintances. Too many people have been programmed to fear death in our society. It has become an obsession so terrible, that doctors try every method known to forestall the inevitable. There are organ transplants and machines to keep a person alive, even if in a vegetative state and even if the person is brain dead. Sometimes trying to prolong life leads to suffering greater than any torture device of the middle ages or at other times.

Sometimes even the law will not allow death when a person suffers extremely from some disease. The fear of death has led to a poverty of approach to this matter. Everything that lives has a moment when it lives no longer. That is, the existence is not on this earth but elsewhere. In the case of mankind, since we are so constituted that we cannot remember what it was like on the other side, a great many imaginings are used to explain this lack of memory. In various cultures, a heaven of some sort is dreamed of, and its particulars are different all over the world and follow the beliefs of the local religions.

It is of great profit to the student of such matters to learn how various cultures view the advent and experience of death. In our scientific age, there are some remarkable events which have taken place which give another view of death. Our modern techniques of medicine have brought back some persons from the brink of death after a few moments of the experience. There seems to be a general type of experience for those who died due to accident or illness and which all have told to those who are now exploring just what happens in this other state. Each person coming back from a momentary death describes a long area of darkness and then at the end is a Being of Light. Since it is known by this Being or Angel just what is to happen, that is, the person is to return to earth, there is a discussion of the task to be accomplished in this life just momentarily left. The person comes back with an idea of the Task, the Will, and if rightly oriented, then tries to fulfill the instructions. Naturally, this often causes a change in direction but also a greater joy and sense of fulfillment in the life events.

Every person in the world has a special task and this task is different for everyone. Too many have no idea of the task or finite will and so they lead a life of despair and part of this despair is the fear of death, of change, of anything new. One could ask if the momentary death due to accident or illness was not a device of the Angel to set one's feet on the correct path?

Since every person must die in due time, what can they say to themselves about the work done to aid mankind? What can they say to the final Being of Light about their progress in life, has it been debilitating or has it been leading to a high spiritual end? Has the work done in life been to the greater glory of the love between the Angel and the human? Now is the time to ask this question of oneself. Now is the time to experience love in all its forms in order to understand and return the intensity and purity of the love of the Holy Guardian Angel for one's little self in a human body.

And now I will finish this small essay by a few quotes and also by listing a book or two on the subjects of death and reincarnation.



Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early  
Childhood. by William Wordsworth

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy,  
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.  
Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;  
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,  
And no unworthy aim  
The homely Nurse doth all she can  
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,  
Forget the glories he hath known,  
And that imperial palace whence he came.

LIBER AL VEL LEGIS, Cap. I, v. 58

"I give unimaginable joys on earth: certainty, not faith,  
while in life, upon death; peace unutterable, rest, ecstasy,  
nor do I demand aught in sacrifice."

Books of interest;

Martin, Eva, editor . "Reincarnation, The Ring of Return."  
Moody, Raymond A. Jr. M.D. "Life After Life."

There are a great many other books too numerous to list,  
which mention reincarnation and still many more books on the  
subjects of death and reincarnation still being written.

## INVOCATION OF HERMES

from *Orpheus*, by Aleister Crowley

O Light in Light! O flashing wings of fire!  
The swiftest of the moments of the sea  
Is unto thee  
Even as some slow-foot Eternity  
With limbs that drag and wheels that tire.  
O subtle-minded flame of amber gyre,  
It seems a spark of gold  
Grown purple, and behold!  
A flame of gray!  
Then the dark night-wings glow  
With iridescent indigo,  
Shot with some violet ray;  
And all the vision flames across the horizon  
The millionth of no time — and when we say:  
Hail! — Thou art gone!

The moon is dark beside thy crown; the Sun  
Seems a pale image of thy body bare;  
And for thine hair  
Flash comets lustrous with the dewfall rare  
Of tears of that most memorable One,  
The radiant Queen, the veiled Paphian.  
The wings of light divine  
Beneath thy body shine;  
The invisible  
Rayed with some tangible flame,  
Seeking to formulate a name,  
A citadel;  
And the winged heels are fiery with enormous speed,  
One spurning heaven; the other trampling hell;  
And thou — recede!

O Hermes! Messenger of inmost thought!  
Descend! Abide! Swift coursing in my veins  
Shoot dazzling pains,  
The Word of Selfhood integrate of Nought,  
The Ineffable Amen! the Wonder wrought.  
Bring death if life exceed!  
Bid thy pale Hermit bleed,  
Yet Life exude;  
And Wisdom and the Word of Him  
Drench the mute mind grown dim  
With quietude!  
Fix the sharp lightnings in my night! My spirit free!  
Mix with my breath and life and name thy mood  
And self of Thee.

ספר יצירה  
SEPHER YETZIRAH  
*The Book of Formations*

translated and annotated by  
James A. Eshelman



## FOREWORD

*Sepher Yetzirah*, "The Book of Formation," is the oldest existing Qabalistic text known to us. It is the key to the *Zohar*, which it precedes.

It is also the key to the most important attributions of the Tarot, that pictorial codification of the initiated wisdom of the Hermetic Qabalistic tradition. Not only a long-standing teaching within the Western mystery schools, but also abundant internal evidence, supports the oral tradition that the Greater Arcana of the Tarot were intentionally designed to conform to the technical attributions of the 22 Hebrew letters as detailed in *Sepher Yetzirah*. The most important of these attributions and correspondences are summarized in an Appendix to the present monograph.

## II

How old is *Sepher Yetzirah*? Nobody *exactly* knows. On the one extreme, claims of antediluvian origins cannot be supported. On the other extreme, insistence on a fairly modern origin is not supported by the facts. To compound the question, it is evident that this small book grew over the centuries, some parts of it existing long before some of its later appendages.

What we do know is the following:

A work called the *Sepher Yetzirah* is mentioned by writers as early as the 1st century C.E., with a history that would have taken it back to at least a century before. The book is also mentioned in the Talmud, which was written down between 3rd century and very early 5th century; the *Sepher Yetzirah* was extant, therefore, from an earlier date than this. However, there is no certainty that this early work was the same document which we today know as *Sepher Yetzirah*.

As early as the 5th or 6th century C.E., the text itself was quoted in other works. What is then quoted is recognizable as part of the present manuscript.

The earliest surviving commentaries on the *Sepher Yetzirah* date from the 10th century C.E. or a little earlier. Commentaries to three somewhat different versions of the *Sepher Yetzirah* appeared in 931 (on the Saadia Version), 946 (on the Long Version), and 956 C.E. (on the Short Version). The oldest surviving manuscripts date from almost immediately thereafter. Of the four main variant versions of the *Sepher Yetzirah*, the oldest manuscript of the Long Version (now in the Vatican Library) dates from the 10th or 11th century; that of the Saadia Version, from the 11th century; and that of the Short Version, from the 13th century. However, earlier copies than these certainly existed, as indicated by the mid-10th century commentaries.

The so-called Gra-Ari Version came much later. It was edited down from numerous variant manuscript versions in the mid-16th century by Rabbi Moshe Cordevero, and later refined further by Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, called the Ari. The resultant "Ari Version" was edited further by Rabbi Eliahu (called the Gra) in the 18th century, and was thereafter known as the Gra-Ari, or simply the Gra, Version.

The oldest extant printed copy of the work is the Mantua edition of 1562. This was primarily an edition of the so-called Short Version of the *Sepher Yetzirah*, although the Long Version was included as an appendix.

### III

The four main versions of *Sepher Yetzirah* have more similarities than differences, although the Saadia Version differs from the others the most — enormously in places, especially with regard to the arrangement of text material. It also excludes altogether much of the attributive text which is of the greatest interest to us. The other three are fairly similar, with the Short Version and the Long Version being the most similar (except that the latter is, well, *longer*), and the Gra-Ari Version strongly resembling the Long Version (but with numerous changes of attributions to the letters).

If popularity were the issue, the Short Version and the Gra-Ari Version would clearly rise above the others. The Short Version is probably the most often published of them all, whether in ancient or modern times. On the other hand, the Gra Version was the synthetic creation of Hebrew Qabalists from the 16th to 18th centuries, who were particularly careful to bring its technical details into conformity with certain particulars of the *Zohar*.

It was thus the Gra Version that the late Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan used in his superb *Sepher Yetzirah: The Book of Creation in Theory & Practice*. This popular work is one of the finest practical texts on the traditional Hebraic Qabalah that can be found, and deserves every serious student's attention.

However, those Qabalistic teachings which evolved into the Hermetic Tradition of Europe, the real foundation of the whole Western Mystery Tradition from Medieval times forward, broke away from the Hebrew Qabalah long ago — in fact, many centuries before the synthetic production of the Ari Version of *Sepher Yetzirah*. There is no reason to presume that the subsequent Hebraic Tradition was any more true to the older teachings than were non-Hebraic repositories of the same teachings. So far as there is any significant practical difference between the Gra-Ari version and the Short Version of *Sepher Yetzirah*, it is in the attributions by which the 22 Hebrew letters are characterized; and the Hermetic Tradition, so far back as it can be traced, has supported the very attributions which are given in the Short Version, not the later one of the Ari.

### IV

We first began working on this present edition many years ago, with a far less grand vision of where it would lead. Long ago, our primary exposure to the *Sepher Yetzirah* involved the 1887 English translation by William Wynn Westcott (who went on, later that same year, to become one of the founders of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn). The brief article on the *Sepher Yetzirah* written by Westcott during this same period, and included in H.P. Blavatsky's *Theosophical Glossary*, summarized the work as follows:

**Sepher Yetzirah (Heb.).** "The Book of Formation". A very ancient Kabbalistic work ascribed to the patriarch Abraham. It illustrates the creation of the universe by analogy with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, distributed into a triad, a heptad, and a dodecad, corresponding with the three mother letters, A, M, S, the seven planets, and the twelve signs of the Zodiac. It is written in the Neo-Hebraic of the *Mishnah*.

Westcott's translation was based on a number of Hebrew codices cross-compared with three leading Latin manuscripts. The net effect most closely resembled a variation of the Short Version, with certain additional segments inserted (from the later editions) and marked as supplemental. For many decades, Westcott's translation was the most generally available, and also the most important to any who follow in the mystical and magical footsteps of the Golden Dawn tradition.

Our initial gripe concerning Westcott's translation was small yet pointed: When the text referred to "God," he did not always say **which** "God" the Hebrew texts intended. Being a budding student of the Qabalah at the time, we wanted to know exactly what the original Hebrew was for the various technical titles of Deity, including those Westcott did not see fit to give.

Therefore, we were first and most excitedly attracted to Rabbi Kaplan's edition, when it first appeared in 1990, because he included the complete Hebrew text of one version of the work — the Gra-Ari Version. (However, through many hours of frustration, we were to discover numerous typographical errors in his published Hebrew text, and some errors which were clearly no more than the publisher's incorrect paste-up of the Hebrew on the page. This is unfortunate, and required a certain amount of time to catch and correct.)

We were quickly able to answer our original questions about the God-Names and, along the way, came to regard Rabbi Kaplan's work highly. And to our students in the College of Thelema and Temple of Thelema we would have heartily recommended his volume as **the** definitive translation were it not for one consideration: By his reliance on the Gra Version, favored by later Hebrew Qabalists, Kaplan was seriously at odds with the Hermetic Qabalistic tradition with respect to certain basic attributions of the Hebrew letters.

Permit us, at this point, to make something clear: There is no more **historical** evidence that the Hermetic attributions are the correct ones than there is that the Hebraic ones are correct. The matter simply cannot be answered by historical examination. Our statements earlier were intended to point out, quite vividly, that the fact that a particular Qabalistic tradition is Hebraic speaks neither for its authenticity nor for its historicity. The *Sepher Yetzirah* version preferred by Kaplan and his rabbinical colleagues of the past was **produced by committee action more than half a millennium after the *Sepher Yetzirah* is KNOWN to have existed.** The particular literal attributions of which we speak do not, mostly, appear in the Saadia version one way or the other; and those that appear in the Long Version are mostly (but not entirely) in agreement with the Short Version. Only in a place or two does the Long Version agree with the Gra Version. If we were to rely primarily on the **available** historical record, and reasonable conclusions based thereon, we would have to conclude that the attributions of the 22 letters as listed in the Short Version are very likely the correct ones.

But we need not come to so final a conclusion. We need not even question the Medieval Hebrew approach within its own context. Ultimately, we need only assert that the initiated Hermetic Qabalistic tradition, <sup>1</sup>of which the Temple of Thelema is a recipient, employs a set of attributions which are those of the Short Version of the *Sepher Yetzirah*, and which frame a self-contained system of tremendous efficacy. We need not apologize for employing what has been proven, on many interlocking levels, to work.

For this present edition, we have, therefore, relied primarily on the Gra-Ari Hebrew version published by Kaplan — the best and most complete Hebrew text of *Sepher Yetzirah* available to us — and have altered the attributions in certain passages to conform to those given in the Short Version. When this has been done, it has always been indicated in the endnotes. The Hebrew text has been entirely retranslated into English. Its similarity to Kaplan's translation is primarily due to

the fact that he was a very literal translator who took few liberties with his text, and we have followed his example.

Chapter 4, verses 8 through 14 are among those that were added by unknown parties late in *Sepher Yetzirah's* history. They summarize attributions of the seven Double Letters, and differ widely from edition to edition. (The same is true for verses 7 through 10 of Chapter 5, with respect to the twelve Simple Letters.) Following a long-standing Qabalistic Tradition, we have also included these verses, substituting our own preferred attributions (those that have been handed down through the esoteric Hermetic tradition) in place of those of the late Hebrew scholars. The difference between our doing it and their doing it is — that we are telling our readers what we are doing!

## V

With these few explanations, I offer and dedicate this annotated translation of *Sepher Yetzirah* to those who seek to know that they may serve.

James A. Eshelman  
Los Angeles, California  
January 29, 1996 E.V.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE SEPHIROTH & CREATION<sup>1</sup>

1. In 32 mystical<sup>2</sup> Paths of Wisdom<sup>3</sup> inscribed<sup>4</sup> Yah<sup>5</sup>, IHVH Tzabaoth<sup>6</sup>, the God of Israel<sup>7</sup>, the Living God<sup>8</sup> and King of the Universe<sup>9</sup>, El Shaddai<sup>10</sup>, the merciful and gracious, the high and exalted, Dwelling in Eternity, whose Name is Holy — exalted and holy is He<sup>11</sup>. And He created His universe with three forms of expression<sup>12</sup> — Letters, Numbers, and Sounds.

2. Ten ineffable Sephiroth<sup>13</sup> and Twenty-two Foundation Letters<sup>14</sup> — Three Mothers, Seven Doubles, and Twelve Simples.

3. Ten ineffable Sephiroth, in the number of the ten fingers, five complementing<sup>15</sup> five, and a single covenant in the midst, by word<sup>16</sup> of the tongue, and by the circumcision<sup>17</sup> of the genitals<sup>18</sup>.

4. Ten ineffable Sephiroth — ten and not nine, ten and not eleven. Understand in Wisdom, and be wise in Understanding. Examine with them, and probe from them. Make each thing stand on its own essence<sup>19</sup>. Restore the Creator<sup>20</sup> to His foundation<sup>21</sup>.

5. Ten ineffable Sephiroth: Theirs is a tenfold measure, without end. An abyss of beginning, an abyss of ending; an abyss of good, an abyss of evil; an abyss above, an abyss below; an abyss to the east, an abyss to the west; an abyss to the north, an abyss to the south.<sup>22</sup> The only Lord, God the Faithful King,<sup>23</sup> rules all these from His holy dwelling, throughout Eternity.

6. Ten ineffable Sephiroth: Their mystical image is like the lightning flash. Their fulfillment<sup>24</sup> is boundless. His Word is in them “running<sup>25</sup> and returning.”<sup>26</sup> They rush to His declaration like the whirlwind. They bow themselves before His Throne<sup>27</sup>.

7. Ten ineffable Sephiroth, whose end is inherent in their origin, and their origin in their end, like a flame within a burning coal. For the Lord (אדון) is solitary, He has no second; before One, what do you count?

8. Ten ineffable Sephiroth. Seal your mouth against speech, and your heart<sup>28</sup> against thought; and if your mind escapes from you, come back to the place. It is written, therefore, “The *Chayoth* running and returning” (*Ezekiel* I). Concerning this, a covenant was made.<sup>29</sup>

9. Ten ineffable Sephiroth. One: the Spirit (or Breath) of the Living God (רוח אלהים חיים), blessed and blessed be His Name, the Living God of the Æons (אל חי העולמים). Voice and Breath and Speech,<sup>30</sup> this is the Holy Spirit (רוח הקדוש).

10. Two: Air from Spirit.<sup>31</sup> With it He engraved and carved out<sup>32</sup> 22 Foundation Letters — Three Mothers, Seven Doubles, and Twelve Simples. And the One Spirit (רוח) is of them.

11. Three: Water from Air. With it He engraved and carved out 22 letters from the formless and void<sup>33</sup>, the mire and clay. He engraved them like a type of garden; He carved them out like a type of wall; He covered them like a type of ceiling.<sup>34</sup>

12. Four: Fire from Water. With it He engraved and carved out a Throne of Glory, Seraphim, Ophanim, and Chayoth ha-Qadesh,<sup>35</sup> and ministering angels. From these three He founded His dwelling, as it is written, “Who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers of flaming fire.”<sup>36</sup>

13. He selected three letters from among the Simples<sup>37</sup> — in the mystery of the Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem, and Shin — and set them into His Great Name, and with them He sealed the six directions.

Five<sup>38</sup>: He looked above, and sealed the Height with **הה**.

Six: He looked below, and sealed the Depth with **יה**.

Seven: He looked forward, and sealed the East with **הי**<sup>39</sup>.

Eight: He looked backward, and sealed the West with **הי**<sup>40</sup>.

Nine: He looked to the right, and sealed the South with **יה**<sup>41</sup>.

Ten: He looked to the left, and sealed the North with **יה**.

14. These are the ten Ineffable Sephiroth: the Spirit of the Living God, Air from Spirit, Water from Air, Fire from Water; and Above, Below, East, West, South, North.<sup>42</sup>

## CHAPTER 2

### THE TWENTY-TWO FOUNDATION LETTERS

1. Twenty-two Foundation Letters: Three Mothers, Seven Doubles, and Twelve Simples. The Three Mothers are Aleph, Mem, and Shin: Their foundation is a scale pan<sup>1</sup> of merit, a scale pan of liability, and the tongue<sup>2</sup> of decree standing between these. The Three Mothers are Aleph, Mem, and Shin. Mem is silent, Shin hisses, and Aleph is the breath of Spirit (**אור רוח**) reconciling between them.

2. Twenty-two Foundation Letters: He engraved them, carved them out, refined<sup>3</sup> them, weighed them, and transformed them. He produced from them all that is formed and all that is ready to be formed.

3. Twenty-two Foundation Letters: He engraved them by voice and carved them out with breath. He placed them in the mouth in five places: Aleph, Cheth, Heh, A'ayin in the throat; Gimel, Kaph, Yod, Qoph in the palate; Daleth, Teth, Lamed, Nun, Tav in the tongue; Zayin, Samekh, Shin, Resh, Tzaddi in the teeth; and Vav, Mem, Peh in the lips.<sup>4</sup>

4. Twenty-two Foundation Letters: He placed them in a circle<sup>5</sup> like a wall with 231<sup>6</sup> gates. The circle rotates forward and back. A sign for this thing: There is nothing good higher than Delight (**ענג**)<sup>7</sup>, and nothing evil lower than Plague (**גל**)<sup>8,9</sup>.

5. How? He refined, weighed, and transformed them each: Aleph with all, and all with Aleph; Beth with all, and all with Beth. They repeat cyclically and exist in 231 gates. Thus, all that is formed and all that is spoken emanates from the One Name.

6. He formed substance<sup>10</sup> from the Formless<sup>11</sup>. He made the No-Thing (**אין**) into Something (**יש**). He hewed vast pillars<sup>12</sup> out of intangible air. This is a sign, Aleph with all, and all with Aleph. He witnesses, transforms, and makes all that is formed and all that is spoken, One Name. A sign for this is: 22 things in a single body (**גוף**).

## CHAPTER 3

### THE THREE MOTHER LETTERS

1. Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem, Shin: Their foundation is a scale pan of merit, a scale pan of liability, and a tongue of decree standing between these.<sup>1</sup>

2. Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem, Shin: A secret great and mystical, veiled and sealed by six rings.<sup>2</sup> From them emanated Air, Water, and Fire; and from them spring the Fathers; and from the Fathers, descendants.

3. Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem, Shin: He engraved them, carved them out, refined them, weighed them, and transformed them. And He produced with them: Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem, Shin, in the universe; Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem, Shin, in the year; Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem, Shin, in the soul (נפש), male and female.<sup>3</sup>

4. Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem, Shin, in the Universe are Air, Water, Fire. Heaven<sup>4</sup> was created from Fire, and earth from Water; and the air, from Spirit (רוח)<sup>5</sup>, reconciles between them.<sup>6</sup>

5. Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem, Shin, are the hot, the cold, and the temperate<sup>7</sup> in the year. From Fire is created the hot; from Water is created the cold; and from Breath is created the temperate state, reconciling between them.

6. Three Mothers, Aleph, Mem, Shin, in the soul, male and female, are the head, the belly, and the chest. From Fire was created the head; from Water, the belly; and from the Breath, the chest, reconciling between them.<sup>8</sup>

7. He made the letter Aleph king over Breath, and He bound unto it a Crown; and He combined one with the other. He formed with them Air in the universe, the temperate in the year, and the chest in the soul: the male by ש נ א and the female by א ש נ.<sup>9</sup>

8. He made the letter Mem king over Water, and He bound unto it a Crown, and He combined one with the other. He formed with them the earth in the universe, cold in the year, and the belly in the soul: the male by ש נ מ and the female by מ ש נ.

9. He made the letter Shin king over Fire, and He bound unto it a Crown; and He combined one with the other. He formed with them heaven in the universe, heat in the year, and the head in the soul: the male by א נ ש and the female by נ א ש.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE SEVEN DOUBLE LETTERS

1. Seven Double Letters: Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Peh, Resh, Tav. They [each] give two expressions: ב, ג, ד, ה, פ, ק, ר, ט. A form soft and hard, strong and weak.

2. Seven Double Letters: Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Peh, Resh, Tav. Their foundation is Life (חיים), Peace (שלום), Wisdom (חכמה), Wealth (עושר), Grace (חן), Seed (זרע), and Dominion (ממשלה).

3. Seven Double Letters: Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Peh, Resh, Tav, in speech and in transposition. The opposite of Life (חיים) is Death (מוות). The opposite of Peace (שלום) is War (מלחמה). The opposite of Wisdom (חכמה) is Folly (אולת). The opposite of Wealth (עושר) is

Poverty (עוני). The opposite of Grace (חן) is Ugliness (כיעור). The opposite of Seed (זרע) is Sterility (שוממה)<sup>1</sup>. The opposite of Dominion (ממשלה) is Slavery (עבדות).<sup>2</sup>

4. Seven Double Letters: Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Peh, Resh, Tav. Above and Below, East and West, North and South, and the Palace of Holiness (היכל הקודש) in the center and supporting all things.<sup>3</sup>

5. Seven Double Letters: Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Peh, Resh, Tav. Seven and not six, seven and not eight. Examine with them, enquire with them, and make a thing stand on its own essence; and [thereby] restore the Creator to His foundation.

6. Seven Double Foundation Letters: Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Peh, Resh, Tav. He engraved them, carved them out, refined them, weighed them, and transformed them; and with them He formed seven planets<sup>4</sup> in the universe, seven days in the year, [and] seven gates into the soul, male and female.

7. Seven planets in the universe: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun<sup>5</sup>, Venus, Mercury, Moon. Seven days in the year: the seven days of the week. Seven gates into the soul, male and female: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and the mouth.

*[Verses 8-14 below do not exist in the earliest versions of the Sepher Yetzirah. They are later additions, which more carefully specify the various attributions introduced in the immediately preceding verses. They do not agree, from version to version, concerning these attributions, most of which are transparently wrong. The attributions given below are conformed to the present text, and to the usages of the Temple of Thelema.]*

8. He made the letter Beth king over Life, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Mercury in the universe, Wednesday in the year, and the mouth in the soul, male and female.

9. He made the letter Gimel king over Peace, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them the Moon in the universe, Monday in the year, and the left eye in the soul, male and female.

10. He made the letter Daleth king over Wisdom, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Venus in the universe, Friday in the year, and the left nostril in the soul, male and female.

11. He made the letter Kaph king over Wealth, and He bound to it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Jupiter in the universe, Thursday in the year, and the left ear in the soul, male and female.

12. He made the letter Peh king over Grace, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Mars in the universe, Tuesday in the year, and the right nostril in the soul, male and female.

13. He made the letter Resh king over Seed, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them the Sun in the universe, Sunday in the year, and the right eye in the soul, male and female.

14. He made the letter Tav king over Dominion, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Saturn in the universe, the Sabbath in the year, and the right ear in the soul, male and female.

15. Seven Double Letters: Beth, Gimel, Daleth, Kaph, Peh, Resh, Tav. By them were engraved seven worlds, seven heavens, seven earths, seven seas, seven rivers, seven desert wildernesses, seven days, seven weeks, seven years, seven sabbaticals, seven jubilees, and the Holy Temple. Therefore, let sevens be beloved under all the heavens.

16. Two stones can build two houses; three stones can build six houses; four stones can build 24 houses; five stones can build 120 houses; six stones can build 720 houses; seven stones can build 5,040 houses. And beyond this, go on and calculate what the mouth cannot speak and the ear cannot hear.<sup>6</sup>

## CHAPTER 5 THE TWELVE SIMPLE LETTERS

1. Twelve Simple Letters: Heh, Vav, Zayin, Cheth, Teth, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samekh, A'ayin, Tzaddi, Qoph.<sup>1</sup> Their foundation is Sight (רִאיוֹן), Hearing (שְׁמִיעוּת), Smell (רִיחַ), Speech (שִׁיחָה), Taste (לַעֲיטָה)<sup>2</sup>, Coitus (חֲשִׁמִּישׁ)<sup>3</sup>, Action (מַעֲשֶׂה)<sup>4</sup>, Motion (הַלּוֹךְ), Wrath (רוּגִז), Laughter (שִׁחּוּק), Thought or Meditation (הִרְהוּר), Sleep (שִׁנָּה).

2. Twelve Simple Letters: Heh, Vav, Zayin, Cheth, Teth, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samekh, A'ayin, Tzaddi, Qoph. Their foundation is twelve diagonal boundaries: the boundary North-East, the boundary South-East, the boundary East-Above, the boundary East-Below, the boundary North-Above, the boundary North-Below, the boundary North-West, the boundary South-West, the boundary West-Above, the boundary West-Below, the boundary South-Above, the boundary South-Below.<sup>5</sup> These extend infinitely, throughout Eternity; and they are the boundaries of the universe.

3. Twelve Simple Letters: Heh, Vav, Zayin, Cheth, Teth, Yod, Lamed, Nun, Samekh, A'ayin, Tzaddi, Qoph. Their foundation is He engraved them, carved them out, refined them, weighed them, and transformed them; and with them He formed twelve zodiacal constellations<sup>6</sup> in the universe, twelve months in the year, and twelve drivers<sup>7</sup> in the soul, male and female.

4. Twelve zodiacal constellations in the universe: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces.

5. Twelve months in the year: Nissan (נִיסָן), Iyar (אייר), Sivan (סִיוֵן), Tamuz (תַּמוּז), Av (אב), Elul (אֱלוּל), Tishri (תִּשְׁרִי), Kheshvan (חֶשְׁוֵן), Kislev (כִּסְלֵו), Tevet (טֵבֵת), Shevat (שֵׁבֵת), Adar (אֲדָר).

6. Twelve drivers in the soul, male and female:<sup>8</sup> two hands, two feet, two kidneys, the gall bladder<sup>9</sup>, the intestines<sup>10</sup>, the liver, the gizzard (קוֹרֶקֶבֶן)<sup>11</sup>, the stomach (קֶבֶה)<sup>12</sup>, the spleen.

*[The remainder of this chapter does not appear in the earliest versions of the Sepher Yetzirah. Please consult the corresponding note to verse IV:8. Please note that the "drivers of the soul" have been attributed in this section purely according to the sequence in which they appeared in the text of the previous verse, verse V:6. Otherwise, the attributions given below are conformed to the usages of the Temple of Thelema. Attributions of Tzaddi and Heh have been interchanged where appropriate.]*

7. He made the letter Heh king over sight, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Aquarius in the universe, Shevat in the year, and the *qivah* in the soul, male and female. He made the letter Vav king over hearing, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Taurus in the universe, Iyar in the year, and the left hand in the soul, male and female. He made the letter Zayin king over smell, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Gemini in the universe, Sivan in the year, and the right foot in the soul, male and female.

8. He made the letter Cheth king over speech, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Cancer in the universe, Tamuz in the year, and the left foot in the soul, male and female. He made the letter Teth king over taste, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Leo in the universe, Av in the year, and the right kidney in the soul, male and female. He made the letter Yod king over coition, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Virgo in the universe, Elul in the year, and the left kidney in the soul, male and female.

9. He made the letter Lamed king over action (*karma*), and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Libra in the universe, Tishri in the year, and the gall bladder in the soul, male and female. He made the letter Nun king over motion, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Scorpio in the universe, Kheshvan in the year, and the intestines in the soul, male and female. He made the letter Samekh king over wrath, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Sagittarius in the universe, Kislev in the year, and the liver in the soul, male and female.

10. He made the letter A'ayin king over laughter, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Capricorn in the universe, Tevet in the year, and the *qorqeban* in the soul, male and female. He made the letter Tzaddi king over thought or meditation, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Aries in the universe, Nissan in the year, and the right hand in the soul, male and female. He made the letter Qoph king over sleep, and He bound unto it a crown; and He combined one with the other, and formed with them Pisces in the universe, Adar in the year, and the spleen in the soul, male and female.

He created them like a plain. He arranged them like a wall. He organized them as for war.<sup>13</sup>

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

1. These are Three Mothers: Aleph, Mem, Shin. And from them emanated Three Fathers, and they are Air, Water, and Fire; and from the Fathers, [emanated] generations. Three Fathers and their generations, and seven planets and their hosts, and twelve diagonal boundaries. Evidence of this statement: faithful witnesses in the universe, the year, and the soul; and the Law of the Twelve, the Seven, and the Three governs<sup>1</sup> in the Celestial Dragon (חל"ל)<sup>2</sup>, in cyclicity (גלגל)<sup>3</sup>, and in the heart.

2. Three Mothers: Aleph, Mem, Shin: Air, Water, Fire. Fire is above, and Water below, and the Breath of Spirit (א"ר רוח) reconciles between them. A mark of this is that the Fire is the bearer

of the Water. Mem is silent, Shin hisses, Aleph is the Breath of Spirit that reconciles between them.

3. The Celestial Dragon (ח'ל) in the universe is like a king upon his throne. The cyclicity (ג'לג'ל) in the year is like a king out in the provinces<sup>4</sup>. The heart in the soul is like a king in warfare.

4. "Also, Elohim made the one opposite the other."<sup>5</sup> Good (ט'וב) opposite evil (ר'ע); evil opposite good. Good from good; evil from evil. The good defines<sup>6</sup> the evil, and the evil defines the good. Good is the preserve of those who are good, and evil is the preserve of those who are evil.

5. The Three: Each stands alone; one defending, one accusing<sup>7</sup>, and one deciding between them. The Seven: Three against<sup>8</sup> three, and one law deciding between them. The Twelve stand in war: Three are friends, three are enemies, three are of life, and three are of death.<sup>9</sup> The three friends are the heart and the ears; the three enemies are the liver, the gall bladder, and the tongue; the three that are of life are the two nostrils and the spleen; the three that are of death are the two [lower] openings and the mouth;<sup>10</sup> and God the Faithful King (א'ל מ'לך נ'אמן) rules all these from His holy dwelling throughout Eternity.<sup>11</sup> The One atop the Three, the Three atop the Seven, the Seven atop the Twelve, and all united,<sup>12</sup> one in the other.<sup>13</sup>

6. These are the 22 letters with which wrote Eheieh (א'הי'ה), Yah (י'ה), IHVH Elohim (א'לה'ים), IHVH (י'הו'ה), IHVH Tzabaoth (י'הו'ה צ'ב'או'ת), Elohim Tzabaoth (א'לה'ים צ'ב'או'ת), El Shaddai (א'ל ש'ד'י), IHVH Adonai (י'הו'ה א'דו'ני).<sup>14</sup> He produced from them three forms<sup>15</sup> of expression; He created from them His whole universe; He created with them all that is formed; and He formed with them all that is ready to be formed.<sup>16</sup>

7. When Abraham our father had looked, seen, understood, and inquired, and had engraved and carved out, he was successful in his power of creation<sup>17</sup>, as it is written: "and the souls that they created in Haran."<sup>18</sup> At once was revealed<sup>19</sup> [to him] the Most High Lord of All (ע'ל'י'י א'רו'ן ה'כ'ל), blessed be His Name forever; and He placed him within His bosom and He kissed him upon his head and He called him "Abraham my beloved"<sup>20</sup> and made a covenant<sup>21</sup> with him and his seed forever, as it is written, "And he believed in God (י'הו'ה), and He counted it unto him for righteousness."<sup>22</sup> And he made unto him a covenant between the ten fingers of his hands (and this is the covenant of the tongue) and between the ten toes of his feet (and this is the covenant of the genitals).<sup>23</sup> And He bound the 22 letters of the Law (ח'ו'ר'ה) unto his tongue and revealed unto him His Mystery (ס'ו'ר). He attracted<sup>24</sup> them in Water, he enflamed them in Fire, he vibrated<sup>25</sup> them in Air, he ignited them<sup>26</sup> within the Seven<sup>27</sup>, he drove them in the twelve zodiacal constellations.

# NOTES

## Ch. 1: THE SEPHIROTH & CREATION

1. Chapter titles are provided by the present editor, and are not in the original.
2. They are פלירות, *i.e.* mysterious, mystical, wondrous, and occult.
3. The 32 Paths are Paths of *Wisdom*, *i.e.*, of Chokmah. Thus, the first Name invoked is Yah, the Atziluthic aspect of Chokmah. (Similarly, the legendary *Sepher Ratziel* — Book of Ratziel, the Archangel, or Briatic aspect, of Chokmah — is traditionally the source from which the greatest Qabalists of history have derived their *Wisdom*.) The Qabalistic teachings are Wisdom Teachings in a very real sense, especially in the present Æon of Horus; for they are instructions in the operations of magick and of the True Will, or “Divine Word” (Greek *Logos*), attributed to Chokmah. Despite its antiquity, this present document contains a doctrine of the greatest import to the formula of Thelema.
4. חקק, *chaqqaq*, more literally means “engraved,” but clearly refers to the earliest forms of writing. Alternate meaningful translations are “carved” and “wrote.” The interpretation “inscribed” was selected in this one place to connect its doctrine with the remainder of the book and verse, and to imply parallels between the Hebrew Yah, the Egyptian Thoth (who invented writing), and the Magus of the Tarot. Hereafter, we have translated it as “engraved.”
5. יה, *Yah*, “the Lord,” the Divine Name of Chokmah.
6. יהוה צבאות, the Divine Name of Netzach.
7. אלהי ישראל, *Elohi Israel*. *Elohi* means, “Gods” or “God” or “My God.”
8. אלהים חיים, *Elohim Chayim*, “Living Elohim” or “Elohim of the Living” or “Elohim of Life” or “the Living God.” This is a Divine Name attributable to Yesod.
9. מלך עולם, *Melek Olam*. This designation corresponds to Malkuth.
10. אל שרי, *El Shaddai*, “Almighty God,” a Divine Name attributed to Yesod.
11. הוא, which, by itself, is often employed as a Divine Name attributed to Kether.
12. ספרים, *sepharim*, is literally “books.” “Letter” is ספר, *sepher*; “Number” is ספר, *sephar*; and “Sounds” is סיפור, *sippur*, lit. “telling.”
13. ספירות בלימה, *sephiroth belimah*, is translated “ineffable Sephiroth” throughout this edition, in keeping with Westcott’s choice which is familiar, poetic, and accurate. A more literal translation would



be “the Sephiroth from nothing.” *Sephirah* literally means “counting,” and the Sephiroth are, therefore, the numbers.

14. This interesting phrase, אֲחֻזָּתוֹת יסוד, *otioth yesod*, should not be lightly overlooked. It equates the operation of the 22 letters, as discussed in the present work, with ideas related to Yesod. It must be remembered that this *Sepher Yetzirah* is itself a **foundation** work of Qabalah, and that it pertains specifically to the *Yetziratic* manifestations which correspond to, and are closely harmonized with, the domain of the Sephirah Yesod and the creative act.
15. כִּנְגַד means, “in front of,” “in sight of,” etc. It is given here with a preposition, viz., כִּנְגַד, the meaning of which does not easily translate into English. Most literally, it is “over against;” but in Rabbinical writings it is often used to speak of things which are like one another, or corresponding, or a matched set, etc. All of these should be incorporated into the Qabalist’s understanding of this passage. The fingers of the left hand correspond to five feminine Sephiroth, and those of the right hand to five masculine Sephiroth; hence the particular relationship of the five and the five.
16. מִלָּה, *milah*, means both “circumcision” and “word.” This last phrase is thus an intended pun, whereby the “single covenant” is expressed both by the word (or circumcision) of the tongue, and by the circumcision (or word) of the genitals.
17. One who has the power of speech is said to have “circumcised lips” — cf. *Exodus* 6:12. The same intent seems implied here. The covenant of the “word (circumcision) of the tongue” is the power of utterance, especially of words of power, or the use of the 22 letters of creation. The analogy to the second *milah* is obvious.
18. The Hebrew מְעוּר is modestly translated *pudenda* by Gesenius. Its root, עוּר, means “to be naked.” Although *pudenda* is most often used in English for the external aspect of the female genitals, it may mean the genitals of either sex — an interesting discovery in itself, since orthodoxy only relates the power of the sacrament of circumcision (בְּרִית, *bris*) to the male. The present phrase, “circumcision of the genitals” (מִלָּה הַמְעוּר) = 406 = חוּ, *Tav*) may also be read as, “the utterance of the (male or female) genitals.”
19. The central doctrine of Thelema.
20. יוֹצֵר, *yotzer*, “former,” from the same root as *yetzirah*, “formation.” Thus, the “former” is the Creative power on the Yetziratic plane in particular. This verse is a precise instruction in meditation and practical magick. (Westcott rigorously translated this passage, “replace Him who formed it.”)
21. The word מַכּוֹן, *makhon*, meaning, “place, foundation, basis,” is also used scripturally to refer to “that place where God sits.” מַכּוֹן is related in meaning to *Yesod*, “foundation.” This is also its usual translation in *Psalms* 89:14 and 9:12. We have employed the same translation here to preserve a relationship between these present ideas and those usually associated with Yesod and the World of Yetzirah.
22. In some popular mystery traditions, the “lodge” of the mysteries is declared to extend “from east to west, from north to south, and from the depths to the heights.” The origin of this traditional formula is clearly here in the *Sepher Yetzirah*.

*Amen*, a title of Kether, underscoring the absolute unity, or singularity, of deity intended by the word *Yekhid*. The first two words, אֲדֹנָי יְחִיד, “the only Lord,” enumerates to 93.

24. חִלּוּת, *taklit* (=860 = *Ruach Elohim* [ח =600]), means “completion” or “ultimate,” the fulfillment of a thing in its perfection. This is the consequence of a creature performing its True Will. The root of *taklit* is כָּלָה, *kalah*, a Qabalistic term for the Bride, identical with מַלְכָּה, *Malkah*, the Queen of the Kingdom (*Malkuth*). As a simple word, *kalah* means “complete” or “finished,” a worthy commentary on the completed creation in the sphere of Malkuth.
25. רָצָה, *ratzah*. The root is רָצָה, which means both “to run” and “to will.” *Ratzah*, translated here as “running” to retain a literary reference in *Ezekiel*, appears to have the meaning of the Fifth Power of the Sphinx, which is *Ire*, “To Go.”
26. *Ezekiel* 1:14, “And the *Chayoth* running and returning, like the appearance of lightning.” The *Chayoth* are the Angels (or Yetziratic aspect) of Kether. Among other correspondences, they are representative of the Four Elements, or four letters of the Name יְהוָה, going forth from a common Source.
27. All of these images refer to the Vision of Ezekiel. “Throne” implies the World of Briah, the creative plane higher than the visionary or imaginative plane of Yetzirah with which this book is working. All images are Yetziratic; therefore, all images, even of these sublime realities, are only reflections, gathered about the base of the “throne,” or Briah. The word for “His throne” in the present verse is כִּסֵּא, from כָּסָא, usually interpreted “throne,” but literally meaning, “that which is under a canopy,” referring here to the canopy of the heavens. Important clues to understanding this verse are found in the gematria of these words: כָּסָא = 81, the square of 9, and one of the chief numbers of Yesod, the sphere of the Moon, corresponding uniquely to the plane of images; and כִּסֵּא = 87, the value of לְבָנָה, *Levanah*, the Moon itself.
28. לֵב, *laib*, which means “heart, mind, soul,” etc.; *i.e.*, the inner life of a person. Ancient texts in many languages regularly speak of the heart as the seat of mind. This accords with the psychosopic attribution of *Ruach* (with its many facets of inner human consciousness) to Tiphareth, the heart.
29. Some reputable scholarship holds that the original small text of the *Sepher Yetzirah* ended at this point, and that all else was a later accretion.
30. קוֹל וְרוּחַ וּדְבוּר, *Qol ve-ruach ve-deboor*. This may be read more mystically as, “The Voice, the Spirit, and the Word.” The simpler translation used here is, however, a more direct key to most meditative and magical formulae.
31. רוּחַ מְרוּחַ. The same word is used in both places. A more literal reading might be, “breath from breath.” However, it will be seen that the next few verses closely match esoteric Eastern views of the coming into being of creation through the successive manifestations of the *tattwas*. The *tattwas* are said to continually pour into manifestation in the sequence Akasha, Vayu, Tejas, Apas, and Prithivi — Spirit, Air, Fire, Water, and Earth — and that these are attributed sequentially to the five lowest of the seven chakras. In the pattern that follows, Water and Fire are reversed, which shows an apparent technical discrepancy between the Eastern and Western systems.
32. חָקַק, *chaqq*, “engraved.” See verse I:1. חָצַב, *chatzav*, “carved, quarried, mined.” The phrase חָצַב חָקַק, which appears in several places throughout this work, enumerates to 314, a number of great importance in the Hebrew Qabalah; for it is the value of שְׁדַי, *Shaddai*, the Divine Name usually

translated “the Almighty,” but of such antiquity that its real meaning is surely lost. (It did, however, likely spring from the root שׁדׁ, *q. v.*) It is a Name especially attributed to Yesod and the Moon. Also, 314 is the value of שׁטׁה, *shittah*, “acacia,” the wood from which was made the Ark of the Covenant; and of the phrase הוּא כֹהֵן לֵאלֹהֵי עֲלִיּוֹן, *Hu kohen la-Ale Elion*, “He was priest of the Most High God” (*Gen.* 14:18). Subject all of these qabalistic elements to meditation. Do not miss the individual meanings of the three letters of שׁדׁ, especially as *Spiritual Fire, Love, and Will*. Then take the product of these meditations into your understanding of the phrase, “He engraved and carved,” each time it appears in this text of the *Sepher Yetzirah*.

33. חוהו ובהו, *tohu ve-bohu*. The same phrase is used in *Genesis* I, where creation is made from the “formless and void.”
34. Implicitly beneath, about, and above. Compare this, for example, to the doctrines surrounding Nephesh, Ruach, and Neshamah, respectively — as well as other cognate doctrines.
35. שרפים ואופנים וחיות חקדוש. Respectively, these are the angelic choirs attributed to Binah, Chokmah, and Kether in the World of Briah, the World of Thrones. These Briatic expressions therefore are the “Throne of Glory” (כסא הכבוד).
36. *Psalms* 104:4.
37. These are Yod, Heh, and Vav, the Trigrammaton יׁהוּ, and the first three letters of the Tetragrammaton, יׁהוה. The full four-fold Name completes the manifestation of Creation into the fourth plane, that of Assiah or Action; but the present work is only addressing the level of Yetzirah, Formation, and therefore only employs the Trigram for its emanation.
38. The attributions of the permutations of Trigrammaton to the six directions varies from manuscript to manuscript. Those given here are from the “Short Version” of the *Sepher Yetzirah*, and has been employed by most commentators over the centuries. It accords perfectly with permutations as given in unpublished documents in the private archives of the Temple of Thelema, written by a Qabalistic initiate and scholar who spent his entire life in the exploration of the *Sepher Yetzirah*.  
For comparison: The Long Version of the *Sepher Yetzirah* gives the sequence: יהוה ייה ייה יהוה יהוה. The Gra Version gives: יהוה יהוה יהוה יהוה יהוה יהוה.
39. “To be.”
40. “Be thou”; imperative. It may also be read, *ve-Yah*, “and Yah.”
41. “Be”; future tense.
42. These verses 9-14 appear to be a description of the ten Sephiroth in their formation. From their enumeration, one would be led to believe that they are described beginning with Sephirah 1, Kether, and continuing through Sephirah 10, Malkuth. However, that interpretation leaves several serious symbolism problems; and it is the opinion of the present translator that the sequence is, in fact, exactly the opposite, from Malkuth to Kether.

## Ch. 2: THE TWENTY-TWO FOUNDATION LETTERS

1. כף, *kaph*, which also means “hand.”
2. לשון, *lashon*, means the human tongue, or the “tongue” (pointer) of a balance.
3. צרף, *tzaraph*, means “purify, refine, test, burn.” It is the process by which quarried materials are refined, and pure substances are extracted. This takes on a further significance when we recall that חצב, “carved,” also means “quarried.” (צרף with different pointings is *tzeraph*, and is sometimes translated “combine” or “permute.”)
4. Respectively, the guttural, palatal, lingual, dental, and labial classification of sounds. These groupings open to extraordinary insights when placed under the becom lamp of meditation. Attention is also directed to words which express the entire course of sound, from guttural to labial, much like the Sanskrit Pranava, *aum*. Aleph begins deep in the throat; Mem, like the other labials, plays off the lips as the outermost expression of speech. In between must lie a translation mechanism, generally of a palatal or lingual. One such word is אדם, *Adam*. Another is *atma*, where there is a final return to the deep, nearly silent guttural.
5. גלגל, *galgal*. Literally, “turning.” Functionally this word may be translated as “circle,” “sphere,” “wheel,” or “cycle,” all of which have meaning in the present context. However, the phrase that follows, referring to a “wall,” determines the interpretation we have selected here. The 22 letters are written in a circle. Compare this to the Rosicrucian *Rota* (“wheel”) or *Taro*, which is also a circle of the 22 Hebrew letters.
6. *The 231 Gates of Wisdom* may be contrasted with *The 50 Gates of Understanding*. Note that 231 is the sum of the first 21 numbers, therefore showing the number of combinations of 22 elements, two at a time. A. A. A. *Liber 231*, which is *Liber Arcanorum*, is numbered partly in commemoration of this idea. The 231 Gates are, simply, the series of pairs of Hebrew letters, taken sequentially as described in the text.
7. ענג, *oneg*. The word is used in *Isaiah* 58:14 to refer to an intimate relationship with God.
8. נגע, *nega'a*. Derived from *oneg* by the rotation of its letters (*temurah*). Such a “plague” symbolizes alienation from the direct intimate relationship with God indicated by ענג, much in the way that the word “disaster” — literally *dis-aster* — means that one is “out of synch” with the stars!
9. The hint here given is far more sophisticated than appears at first; for ענג and נגע enumerate to 123, which is precisely the same sort of *temurah* of 231 as ענג is of נגע. The hint is more visible in Arabic numerals than Hebrew, but is sufficiently visible even in the latter by the technical method called *Ayiq Bekar*.
10. ממש, *mamas*, from משש, “to touch.” Therefore, this is not a description of mere abstraction formation, but of the creation of something that can be touched. However, a much older manuscript of the *Sepher Yetzirah*, instead of ממש, says אמש (Aleph, Mem, Shin, the Three Mothers) — which sheds a much different light on the remainder of the verse!

11. חֹהוּ, *tohu*; cf. I:9.

12. Cf. *Proverbs* 9:1, "Wisdom has built its house; it has hewn out its seven pillars," presumably referring to the pylons of the seven Double Letters.

### Ch. 3: THE THREE MOTHER LETTERS

1. Cf. verse II:1. Because the word for "scale pan" is *kaph*, Westcott gives the interesting alternative translation, "on the one hand the guilty, on the other hand the purified."
2. Cf. *Esther* 8:8, טִבְעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ, etc.
3. That is, through space (Nuit), time (Hadit), and experience (Ra-Hoor-Khuit) — beingness at each intersection of space and time.
4. שָׁמַיִם, *shamaim*. The word has within it the letter Shin, corresponding to fire; the word שֵׁם, *shem*, "name," referring to THE Name, יְהוָה; and מַיִם, *mayim*, "water." The commentators have shown that this word is subject to even more extensive Qabalistic analysis.
5. *Ruach*, which may mean "air," "breath," "spirit." Each occurrence of the word "breath" in the remainder of this chapter is the word *ruach* in the Hebrew original. Note that if a subtle pun is perceived between שָׁמַיִם and הַמַּיִם, then this verse depicts Water emerging from Fire, Earth from Water, and Air from Spirit, which is the exact sequence of emanation of the elements (*tattwas*), and correspondingly of the chakras, in the Hindu system.
6. Fire, "Heaven," corresponds to *Neshamah* or superconsciousness. Water, "Earth," corresponds to *Nephesh* (translated throughout this edition as "soul") or subconsciousness. Air corresponds to *Ruach* (the very word used here for air), or ego-consciousness.

This chapter is the origin of the formula on which the Temple of Thelema Equinox ceremony is based. It takes little effort to recognize which officer is heaven, and which earth; which is Fire, and which Water; and, in each case, which officer, attributed to Air the mediator, is the reconciler between them.

7. This translation of חֹרֵם, קוֹר, and רוּיָה as "hot," "cold," and "temperate," respectively, has long-standing rabbinical acceptance — notwithstanding the fact that the words mean something altogether different. Students both of the Eastern doctrine of the three Gunas, and of the European alchemical tradition, will find much in these words to describe the natures and interrelationships of Rajas-Sulphur, Tamas-Salt, and Sattva-Mercury, respectively. חֹרֵם literally means "black," and refers to that which is scorched or burned. קוֹר has reference to water, for it means "to dig," as for a well, or "to cause to flow forth;" and, derivatively, to dig under or undermine a thing. In modern Hebrew, the same word means a spider's web, or similar thread. רוּיָה, aside from this passage in this book, is always translated "abundance," and is Biblically employed in reference to the more temperate and abundant seasons of spring and autumn, poised between the extremes of summer and winter. (On examination, the Second Point of the Temple of Thelma Artisan Ritual will prove to be a striking dramatization of this passage.)

8. There is an important correlation here between “head, chest, and belly,” and the Three Grades of “Hermit, Lover, and Man of Earth,” with various cross-correspondences to the Tree of Life, etc. These should be worked out by the individual student.
9. “Man,” אִישׁ, *ish*, is created by אָמַשׁ; while “woman,” אִשָּׁה, *ishah*, is created by אָשָׁם. Notice that Mem, which was said in v. 4 to correspond to Earth (in contrast to Heaven) and in v. 6 to correspond to the belly (and thus, psychospiritually, to the *Nephesh* within which operates the desires and procreative energies) is converted, in man, to a Yod, and, in woman, to a Heh. It is primarily in the lowest and most material expressions that man and woman are differentiated.

## Ch. 4: THE SEVEN DOUBLE LETTERS

1. Literally, זָרַע, means not only “seed” or “semen,” but also “the growing season.” In contrast, שְׁמָמָה means “desolation, the desert,” *i.e.* the parched, infertile product of the Sun in its extreme. “Sterility” is a figurative and contextual translation of שְׁמָמָה.
2. According to the attributions received and employed by the Temple of Thelema, to Beth is attributed Life & Death; to Gimel, Peace & War; to Daleth, Wisdom & Folly; to Kaph, Riches & Poverty; to Peh, Grace & Indignation; to Resh, Fertility & Sterility; and to Tav, Power & Slavery. These represent the exact order of the “foundation” attributions of v. 2 in most editions of the *Sepher Yetzirah*, particularly the Short Version. The Long Version gives exactly the same sequence except for the (perhaps inadvertent) transposition of “Seed” and “Grace.”

For comparison, the Gra version gives the order: Wisdom, Wealth, Seed, Life, Dominion, Peace, and Grace. The Saadia Version does not give these attributions at all.

3. All major versions of the *Sepher Yetzirah* which give these directional attributions give them in exactly the same sequence. This includes both the Short and Gra Versions.
4. כּוֹכָבִים, lit. “stars.”
5. The word used is חֲמָה, not שִׁמְשׁוּ.

6.  $2! = 1 \times 2 = 2$   
 $3! = 1 \times 2 \times 3 = 6$   
 $4! = 1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 = 24$   
 $5! = 1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 = 120$   
 $6! = 1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 = 720$   
 $7! = 1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 = 5,040$   
 $8! = 1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \times 6 \times 7 \times 8 = 40,320$

If each of 5,040 combinations of seven letters were pronounced, at an average of one combination every 5 seconds, all of the possible combinations would be uttered in seven hours. With considerable mental and physical training, this is at least possible. However, in contrast, if eight letters were used, the task would require (at the same rate) 56 nonstop hours — over two days, uninterrupted. This is very likely beyond any human capacity. It is, literally, “what the mouth cannot speak and the ear cannot hear.” Please note that the few seconds allowed in this example might well be sufficient time to recite the one-to-seven-letter combinations but, even then, would allow no realistic time for meditating on each of them!

## Ch. 5: THE TWELVE SIMPLE LETTERS

1. The following attributions are given differently in various editions of the *Sepher Yetzirah*, and are listed here in the same sequence that they appear in the Short Version.
2. לַעִיטָה literally means “digestion,” but is here uniformly rendered “taste” by rabbinical scholars. This fact is mentioned only because, in the Hermetic alchemical application of the Qabalah and the zodiac, the chemical process of Digestion is attributed to Leo, to which לַעִיטָה is also attributed.
3. Case softened this to “touch,” which is useful in generalizing the doctrine, although it loses the exact emphasis of the attribution. Westcott rendered it as, “sexual love.”
4. מַעֲשֶׂה, which means “work” or “action,” is synonymous with the Indian word *karma* which has the same literal meaning.
5. These directions are given in various sequences in divergent editions of the *Sepher Yetzirah*. We have given them here in the same sequence as they appeared in the Short Version. Within the perspective of the revelation in *Liber Legis*, Cap. I, v. 51, many of the correspondences of Heh and Tzaddi should be interchanged.
6. מוֹלֹחַ is properly translated “zodiacal constellations,” as here. However, it is worth noting that the word originally meant “lodging places” or “inns,” and only later developed the particular meaning given here. It would, therefore, also be appropriate to translate this word as “houses,” after the fashion of the early Greek and Latin astrologers.
7. מְנַהִיג, in modern Hebrew, means “leader, director;” but the word comes from a simpler one, מְנַהֵג, “driving,” as of a chariot. This translation is employed here both because it appears best to convey the real flavor of the original meaning, and because of its vivid expression of the meaning of Atu VII, The Chariot. The contemporary technical use, in computer science, of the word “driver” is also appropriate to understand here, and very fruitful for meditation, if it is regarded in a way consistent with the foregoing remarks.
8. The following list varies from manuscript to manuscript of the *Sepher Yetzirah*. These particular attributions have not been given any particular significance by most Hermetic Qabalists in this century.
9. מֶרֶה literally means “bitterness,” *i.e.* “gall.” It comes from the root מָרַר, “to flow, to drop,” which is also the origin of the word מֵר, *myrrh*. From these basic meanings it came to be the name of the gall bladder.
10. דֶּקִין is not the normal word for “intestines” (מַעֵי), but translators have generally agreed on the meaning. The singular, דֶּק, is an adjective meaning “thin, narrow, fine, slim.”
11. *Qorqeban* קוֹרְקֵבָן (more commonly, קִרְקֵבָן) usually means “gizzard (of a bird).” Kaplan remarked that, in the Talmud and Midrash, this word is “occasionally if rarely used to denote a human organ, usually identified with the ‘grinding of food.’” We have employed the literal meaning for the simple reason that the organs itemized in this verse are not of the human body, but rather of the “soul,” *i.e.*, the *nephesh*.

Certainly one reason physical organs are employed throughout this book to represent organs of the *nephesh* is to express the close relationship of the autonomic nervous system (a dense aspect of the psyche) to the physical organism (*guph*). That is, the primary intent of these verses seems to be to communicate that physical organs are, in fact, also organs employed by the soul; and, more deeply, that the soul itself has its own analogous organs. The fact that two organs in the present list are distinctly nonhuman strongly implies that they do not really refer to any human physical organism, *per se*, but rather to something more subtle. If the twelve organs here listed are attributed to the zodiacal constellations in sequence (as is intended with most other attribution passages of this book), then the two nonhuman organs, *qorqeban* and *qivah*, would correspond to Capricorn and Aquarius, the two constellations ruled by the planet Saturn. In this there may be a significance.

12. *Qivah* קִיבָּה is best translated "stomach," if a part the human organism is meant. However, the word is rarely applied to the human organism. *Qivah* primarily means the stomach of a nonhuman animal, particular a part of the digestive mechanism of ruminants. Furthermore, as indicated in the immediately preceeding note, *qivah* may imply something entirely different, something that bears no more than an analogous relationship to any human physical organ.
13. These three sentences may refer, respectively, to the zodiacal constellations, the months (or cycle of New Moons), and the drivers of the soul; or they may refer, collectively and sequentially, to the Simple Letters (and the corresponding zodiacal constellations) *per se*.

## Ch. 6: CONCLUSION

1. פָּקֵד more commonly means "commands, marshals, sets in order." The word "governs" was selected for its expressiveness in this context, especially in juxtaposition to the word קָן (translated "law") earlier in the same sentence.
2. *Theli*, תְּלִי, is the name of a great dragon in the Qabalah. It is with fair certainty identified as the constellation Draco which circumambulates the ecliptical north pole; and, though it is polar rather than ecliptical, it may generally be taken as a symbol of the entire turning of the heavens, and thus of the Sphere of the Zodiac. The name is mentioned in *Liber LXV*, Cap. III, v. 4; and in vv. 17-18 of that same chapter it is related, albeit on a lower octave, to "the Infinite Circle of Emerald that encloseth the Universe" that "hast no time Past, no time To Come. Verily Thou art not."
3. Cf. verse VI:3. This present passage also should be compared to verse II:4 and its note.
4. מְדִינָה means "province," "state," or other territory. The meaning here is, "a king out and about in his kingdom." The root of מְדִינָה is דִּין, the title of Geburah meaning "justice," from an identical root meaning, "to rule, regulate, or judge."
5. *Ecclesiastes* 7:14. In the King James Version it is translated, "God also hath set the one over against the other."
6. All of the more primitive forms of מִבְחֵן, or בְּחִין, deal with tests, trials, proof, etc. In the present instance we have adopted Kaplan's translation, "defines" — a derived meaning — as the most expressive of the Qabalistic teachings on this matter.



7. חִיב may mean either “convicting” or merely “accusing.” The contrast between זכּה and חִיב could be either the polarity between acquittal and conviction, or between defending and accusing; but the final one, the “deciding” one (Aleph), “tips the scales” in favor of the latter translation since it implies that, in זכּה and חִיב alone, the decision has not been rendered.
8. מוּל is translated “against” to retain the ambiguity of the word, as meaning both “opposed to” and “over against.”
9. Possibly these four sets refer to the four seasons of the year, composed of three months each.
10. There is an important doctrine hidden in this phrase, which is far different than its surface meaning might suggest.
11. The last phrase is an exact replication of the end of verse I:5, q. v.
12. אֲדוּקִים literally means “the pious, the zealous, the orthodox” yet translators have rendered it “bound” “connected,” etc. The root appears to be דקק, which represents several variations of the idea “to separate.” The *adoqim* (the orthodox or pious) are therefore those who are not separated out, *i.e.*, they are the pure root stock from which all others have separated themselves. The meaning in the present passage, then, is not only that the One, the Three, the Seven, and the Twelve are united, but that they **have never been separated** from that One Thing which they all are.
13. Westcott’s translation, “One above Three, Three above Seven, and Seven above Twelve; and all are connected the one with the other,” is a phrase well engrained within the Hermetic qabalistic and magical tradition in this century. It is of such familiarity and value, sealed by long-term sacramental usage, that we would have very much preferred to have employed it directly as our translation. Unfortunately, while the word על may mean either “on” or “above,” the longer phrase employed here, על גבי, definitely means “on,” in the sense of “up on top the back of.”
14. If יהוה, the traditional Divine Name attributed to Tiphareth, is here taken as subsuming the whole middle triad of the Tree of Life, then this is exactly the list of the Atziluthic powers ruling the ten Sephiroth.
15. סְפִירִים. See verse I:1. These three *sepharim* are thus Letters, Numbers, and Sounds.
16. Cf. verse II:2.
17. בְּרִיָּאָה, *briah*, the name of the World of Creation; the second of the four qabalistic Worlds, immediately above or behind Yetzirah. This passage takes on a further meaning if this phrase is understood as meaning, “he was succesful in his Briatic Power,” as the direct result of perfectly completing his Yetziratic operation. Furthermore, the word here translated “power” is יָד, *yahd*.
18. וְאֵלֶּם נִפְשׁוֹתָם בְּחֶרֶן, from *Genesis* 12:5. “They” that created were Abram and Sarai.
19. The word is נִגְלָה, which means “apparent, clear, revealed.” It has, however, a technical meaning, as referring to the Written and Oral Law.
20. From *Isaiah* 41:8, where Jacob is referred to as “the seed (זרע) of Abraham my beloved.”

21. כרַח בְּרִית. The first word merely means “a cutting,” etc.; but when joined with the second word, *bris*, it is clear which covenant is intended. One may rightly wonder if this is the origin of the modern phrase, “to cut a deal;” and, as it is said, *such* a deal it is, too!
22. וְהָאֵמֶן בִּיהִרָה וַיַּחֲשֹׁבָה לוֹ צִדְקָה, from *Genesis* 15:6.
23. בְּרִית הַמִּילָה. Cf. I:3 and the notes thereto.
24. מִשָּׁךְ means, “to pull, draw, attract,” etc. This phrase is, therefore, usually rendered, “He drew them in water,” perhaps a little ambiguous in English. We have selected the present translation to emphasize the attractive, magnetic quality generally attributed to the element of Water.
25. רָעַשׁ means “to tremble, quake, make noise.”
26. בָּעַר means “to blaze, burn, kindle, ignite.” The word choice here was necessarily different from the translation, earlier in the sentence, of דָּלַק, which we translated “enflamed” with respect to fire.
27. The reference, on the surface, is to the seven planets; but initiates will immediately recognize the allusion to an interior Heptad.

# APPENDIX

## ATTRIBUTIONS OF THE HEBREW LETTERS According to the *Sepher Yetzirah* & the Initiated Tradition

### MOTHER LETTERS (Elements)

א Aleph	Air	Air	Temperate	Chest (Ruach)	0. Fool
מ Mem	Water	Earth	Cold	Belly (Nephesh)	12. Hanged Man
ש Shin	Fire	Heaven	Hot	Head (Neshamah)	20. Æon

### DOUBLE LETTERS (Planets)

ב Beth	Mercury	Life & Death	Above Mouth	1 Magus
ג Gimel	The Moon	Peace & War	Below Left eye	2. Priestess
ד Daleth	Venus	Wisdom & Folly	East Left nostril	3. Empress
כ Kaph	Jupiter	Wealth & Poverty	West Left ear	10. Fortune
פ Peh	Mars	Grace & Ugliness	North Right nostril	16. Tower
ר Resh	The Sun	Seed & Sterility	South Right eye	19. Sun
ת Tav	Saturn	Dominion & Slavery	Center Right ear	21. Universe

### SIMPLE LETTERS (Zodiacal Constellations)

ה Heh	Aquarius	Sight	South-Above	17. Star
ו Vav	Taurus	Hearing	South-East	5. Hierophant
ז Zayin	Gemini	Smell	East-Above	6. Lovers
ח Cheth	Cancer	Speech	East-Below	7. Chariot
ט Teth	Leo	Taste	North-Above	11. Lust
י Yod	Virgo	Coitus	North-Below	9. Hermit
ל Lamed	Libra	Action	North-West	8. Adjustment
נ Nun	Scorpio	Motion	South-West	13. Death
ס Samekh	Sagittarius	Wrath	West-Above	14. Art
ע A'ayin	Capricorn	Laughter	West-Below	15. Devil
צ Tzaddi	Aries	Thought or Meditation	North-East	4. Emperor
ק Qoph	Pisces	Sleep	South-Below	18. Moon

## DEPARTURE

Weep you now? But she has gone  
Down the mist of years.

Mourn not her parting, for the sun  
Has dried all her tears.

See the aura of radiance around her  
Wrapping her with her dreams.

See, her dreams have at last found her,  
She is not what she seems.

Look well and see around her shining,  
Faith, Hope and Trust, her dreams:

Winging beside her the Spirit of Giving  
Protects her with its beams.

Weep you now for lack of her?  
For her love that was fair?

Weep not now in back of her  
For she has wandered there.

Weep you then that her spirit was so frail?  
Ah, she has her life now in another world.

A world where her giving does not fail,  
Where love's rose petals lie all unfurled.

Weep you for her? An, but look,  
There is a woman in her place.

The child has taken all she brought.  
The woman hides her face.

Meral  
May 22, 1949

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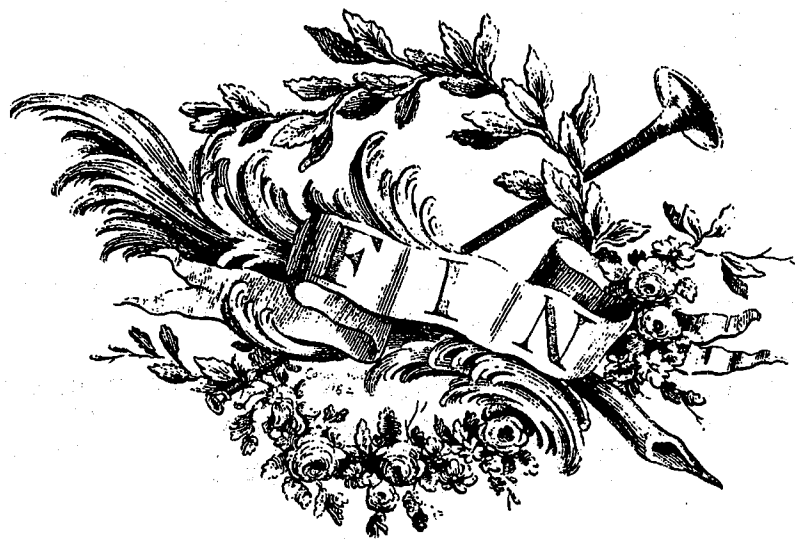
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— Liber LXV, Cap. III, v. 60

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