

THE QABBALAH

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The Qabbalah as defined by the Secret Doctrine, is the esoteric or mystic doctrine concerning God and the Universe, asserted to have come down as a revelation to the elect from a remote past and preserved by a privileged few.

The Qabbalah is a system well known by Western occultists primarily for its glyph, the tree of life. This will be discussed later along with Qabbalistic cosmogony.

Firstly we will look at the origins of the system as far as it is possible. Many would like to trace the Qabbalah back to Egypt through Chaldea. This is no doubt true but it must be remembered that such a system evolved over thousands of years and was an expression of a many faceted wisdom teaching used by the ancients.

What we have today is a distillation of this wisdom which the dark years of early Christianity have well nigh destroyed.

Today the Qabbalah is accredited to the Jewish tradition and is said to have been given by God to Moses (an echo perhaps of Moses' initiation into the Egyptian mysteries). Moses is said to have ascended Mount Sinai three times, remaining forty days with God each time. He was given successively the three parts of Hebrew theology all of which are concealed in the first four books of the Pentateuch (this being the first five books of the Old Testament which are accorded to Moses). These parts are:

1. The Law was taught to all children of Israel.
2. The Soul of the Law (Mishna or Talmud) was taught to the rabbins and teachers.
3. The Soul of the Soul of the Law or Qabbalah was taught only to the highest initiates.

The three main scriptures containing Qabbalistic doctrines are:

1. The Sepher Yetzriah (or book of Formation) said to be written by Abraham, but probably by the Rabbi Ahiba in AD 120.
2. The Sepher of Zohar (or book of Splendour) probably written by Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai a disciple of Rabbi Ahiba about AD 161.
3. The Apocolypse of St John the Divine.

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The Sepher Yetzirah is the main work from which the tree of Life or Otz Chiim was derived.

In looking at the origins, the impression is one of extreme vagueness. Nevertheless, it is well to recall that doctrines are used as the authoritative basis for many Western groups, particularly the magical orders of the turn of the century, like the Golden Dawn. Its symbolism is also used widely in Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism.

The scope of the Qabbalah is vast indeed. Its advocates recognise.

1. The Natural Qabbalah used to investigate the world's mysteries.
2. The Analogical Qabbalah used to investigate the relationship between the micro and macro cosmos.
3. The Contemplative Qabbalah used to develop abstract thinking processes.
4. The Astrological Qabbalah used to investigate planetary correspondences.
5. The Magical Qabbalah used to gain control of matter.

In dealing with the Qabbalah, a sophisticated cosmogony is encountered. God, the unknowable is seen under three aspects as Ain, Ain Soph and Ain Soph Aur. These are known as the ~~ways~~ of negative existence, in other words the unformed, which nevertheless contain a degree of differentiation in order that something can come from such a state. Therefore Ain is the realm of pure spirit, completely without bounds, which gradually condenses, if such a paradox can be envisaged, into Ain Soph, the limitless and boundless; and then into Soph Aur, the limitless light. This is analagous to the teachings concerning God as a Trinity.

From the veils of negative existence, arises a point known as the first crown from which develops the Tree of Life itself. The first crown is one of a series of ten known as the Sephiroth or Saphiris of the tree. They are thought of as reflecting the powers of God in a tenfold way like globes which are filled in turn with the essence of God, yet at the same time colouring it in differing ways.

This then is the tree of life or Otz Chiim as it is popularly seen.