

Finding Yourself in the Tree of Life

By Allison Gilbert, LMFT ©2016

At the end of this article are photos of the Tree of Life and the cards that I made for each sefirah arranged in the diagram of the Tree. I also included front and back of specific cards for you to enjoy.

The Tree of Life is a map of consciousness as well as the blueprint for the entire world. Each of the sefirot (plural for sefirah) are the soul powers and character traits within the human being and the way that we bring godliness into form. It is called the blueprint for the universe in that it is a diagram of how G-d created and continually recreates the universe at every moment. It is through these sefirah and the essence of each that we get a glimpse of the aspects of G-d in manifestation.

In this article, I will go through each sefirah briefly to tell you what they mean. And then take you through the entire tree with the example of the development of a little boy. My hope is to give a simplified way for you to understand what your own process would look like within each of the sefirot. I also hope you'll be able to understand your own personality and how you might be naturally strong in one sefirah over another.

My only forewarning is to tell you that the ideas that I will present about the Inner Parent and Inner Child are my own and I have not as of yet discovered this idea within the Kabbalah that I have learned. It's my own understanding.

My suggestion is to print out the last few pages of this article so that you can follow along when I describe the Tree.

Keter

Keter at the top of the Tree is associated with Spirit. It is the spiritual level of consciousness where we connect with G-d. This is our soul which illuminates the body. The rest of the sefirot then, can be associated with the body. Keter translates, "crown" and is located above the head. Within Keter is the desire and pleasure of G-d. It's the will and desire for us to exist and the pleasure that our spirit gets from our being in the world and what we do in this world. I like to call this the Nurturing Inner Parent or the Spiritual Inner Parent. I see Chesed and Gevurah as inner parents as well but they are more like the parents that we grew up with. Keter on the other hand, is our spiritual resource and it is unlimited – it is where miracles come from.

The next 3 sefirot are associated with the mental level of consciousness. The right side of the chart is the right brain and the left is the left brain. It's as if a person steps into this diagram facing away from you and you see only the back side.

Chochmah

This is where spiritual consciousness/G-d consciousness first comes into the body – through the mind. So Chochmah is where the spiritual impulse comes into the brain and is still undefined. It's like that insight that you have that you haven't really incorporated or figured out or owned yet. It's just a spark at this point.

Binah

Binah takes the insight from Chochmah and brings it down into categories to help define it. Binah is translated, "understanding". It helps us to understand the details of this new insight. It's like the scientific mind trying to figure something out. How big is it? Is it good? Bad? Etc. (Yes, Kabbalah had left & right brain differentiated for thousands of years and what is so "new" now in the science of the brain has been around for a very long time!)



Daat

Daat is translated as knowledge. It can be associated with Eitz haDaat which is the tree of good and evil that Adam and Eve ate from. It takes the insight and understanding of Chochmah and Binah and then makes it into a plan that you can use to actualize something. Daat says, “Ok, I understand all of this” and then that knowledge will be brought into the “middos” – the emotions and character traits. So the rest of the sefirot are called the emotions, all 7 of them, and these are the sefirot that we examine daily for 7 weeks between Passover and Shavuout during the Sefirat haOmer - “Counting of the Omer”.

Chesed

The first middah or emotion is Chesed, lovingkindness, which is the character trait involving being loving and giving and wanting to do for others, it reaches out to others. I think it’s like the kind of parent or inner parent voice that is accepting and giving. This is the parental figure that has no boundaries and is very loving, and unconditional but can turn into a martyr or doormat.

Gevurah

Gevurah is the other side of the coin. It’s like the parent who is more restrictive, teaching discipline and wanting to instill fear. It can become too angry and punitive and anxious but it comes from wanting to protect. What happens is that when any one of these sefirot goes out of balance and is relied on more than the other, it goes “wonky”. We spend most of our time in either Chesed or Gevurah within our own personality but sometimes don’t realize when a situation calls for us to use one side instead of the other because we are just more identified with one or the other.

Tiferet

I associate Tiferet with the Inner Child and as the Tree is associated with the human body, Tiferet is our heart center. Our Inner Child can suffer from being parented too much by either Chesed or Gevurah without a balance. In fact, the energy of Tiferet is the answer to balance the two. Tiferet is translated as Beauty and is associated with empathy. It helps to bring empathy to Chesed when we remember our own feelings and the needs of others before we give. And it brings empathy to Gevurah thereby helping us to resolve anger.

Netzach

Netzach is translated, Perseverance. I see it as the energy of success and accomplishment. It’s associated with doing, ambition, determination to achieve something, make something happen.

Hod

Hod on the other side is translated as Glory. It’s the desire to simply bask in the gloriousness of the universe. It can be associated with meditating, surrender, allowing things to be as they are and accepting things as they are. It allows us to step back and let others be leaders – the energy of supporting the leader. When we are coming from Hod, we are just in gratitude for how things are.

Yesod

The balance between Netzach and Hod is Yesod which is really the foundation of all of the sefirot above it in the Tree. This is because everything comes together in our relationships. Yesod is about connecting with others, intimacy and relationship to self and to G-d as well as to the other. If we are too ego-driven and running all over people (netzach), then our relationships can suffer. Or if we are too much in Hod and not really showing up, that can be detrimental to our relationships as well.

Malchut

Malchut is translated as Kingship/Sovereignty. What’s interesting is that Keter is the crown while Malchut is where we are the king within our own world. Like in Yesod, everything comes together in Malchut. It’s the sefirah of behavior or action and communication. Every other sefirah has been internal up until now and Malchut takes it all and puts it out into the world. It’s the sefirah of manifestation.

Now I will give an example of how this works in real life.



Chochmah, Binah & Daat

Let's say you're a little toddler and you are playing and all of a sudden your mom picks you up and yells at you saying, "what are you doing? You could get killed!! Never go into the street! Be careful of the cars! They can kill you." Then she whacks you on the behind. And you are like, "what? What's a car?" Now, this is when you get that insight of Chochmah, "a car can kill you". Still, until this insight goes into Binah, you don't really understand. Then in Binah you learn more about cars - a car goes fast, they are big, they are shiny, Daddy has a Toyota car, oh that's a car but not a truck." Then you take all that and in Daat you say, "I'm afraid of cars, they can hurt me. I will never go into the street".

Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferet

Later though, you get a car as a toy and you learn about race cars (binah again) and really start to like playing with them. So now, every birthday party you go to, you want to give a racecar as a present. Everybody gets a racecar for their birthday because you love them! (Chesed) But then you are told that not everyone likes a race car and so you get mad at those people and don't want to give them any gift at all! (Gevurah) This is when your mom tells you that girls like dolls and you begin to understand that you can give a doll instead - you learn that everyone is different and has a different desire. You have just built some empathy (Tiferet).

Netzach, Hod, Yesod

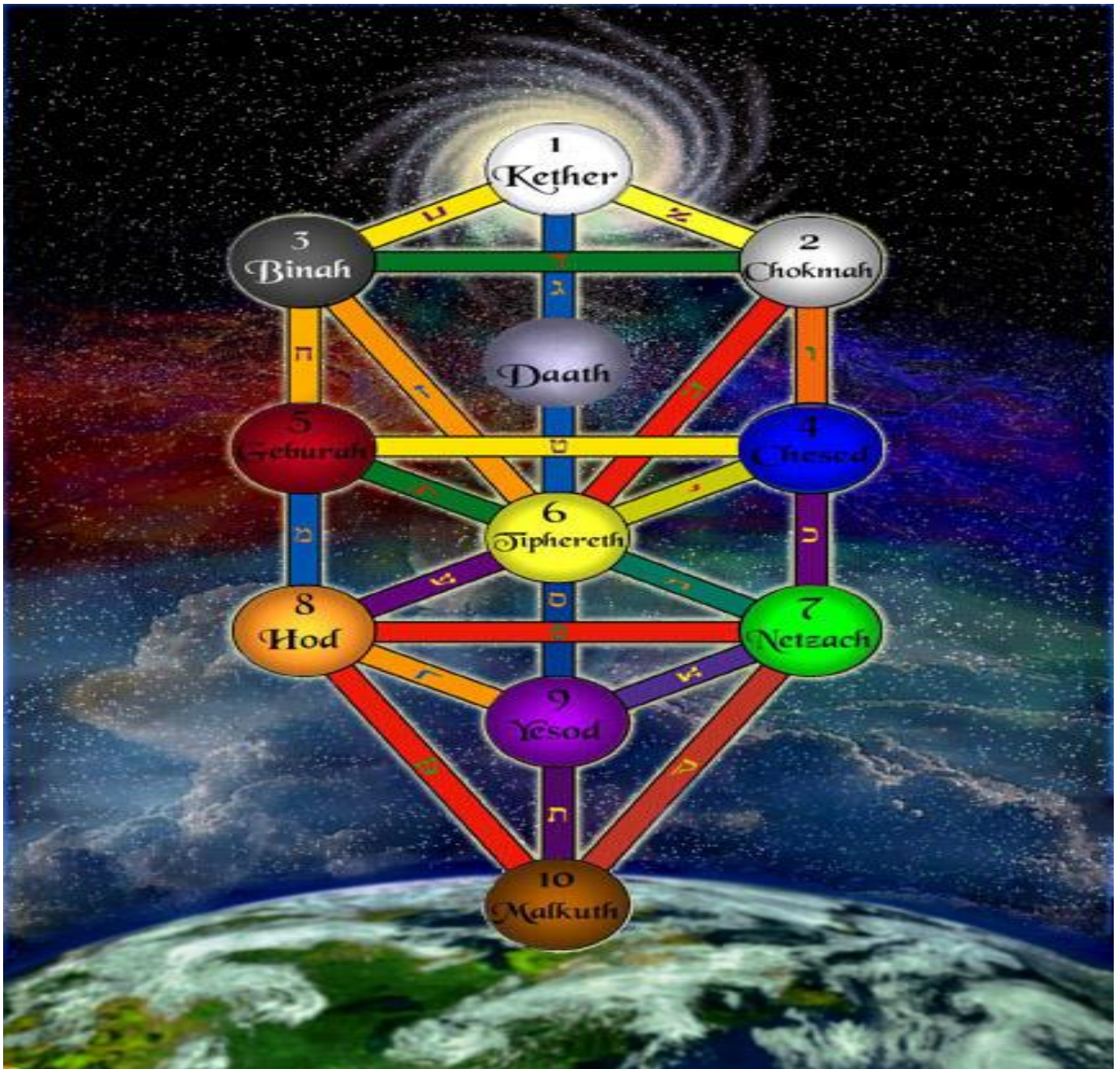
But you really like cars so you decide you will grow up and do whatever it takes to have a big, beautiful car like Daddy has. (Netzach) And you can't wait to grow up because your parents don't want you to get a car until you are at least 18. So you bide your time, surrendering to your parent's will and decide to be ok with not having a car right away. (Hod) You are ok with your bike and having your parents drive you around while you save up your money. This is how you stay in balance with yourself and your own desires vs. others' which is Yesod – building solid, trusting relationships. So you say to your parents, what if I save this much money and you pitch in half of what it costs? It's a give and take, negotiating and coming to agreement with others where no one loses and everyone wins. You aren't running ahead (netzach) without considering others and you aren't just doing nothing. (Hod)

Malchut & Keter

All that I have explained above, previously, has been an internal process. In Malchut, on the other hand, you take action on your dreams in life. It's where you get the job, start saving and talk to your parents in a healthy rather than demanding way. This is where the dreams of Keter, the hopes and will and pleasure for you and your accomplishments in life come to fruition. You keep your desires and dreams alive and then make things happen in the world in a healthy, balanced and ethical way.

When we are in balance and behaving in a healthy way in the world, we are using our spiritual resource, Keter. So when the Inner Child is being supported by the Spiritual Inner Parent, the desire for things to go in a certain way is supported. There's desire, support, love, and an intense need for you to be in this world and to fulfill your purpose. You can use that Inner Spiritual resource to help balance the internal character traits. When you do that, you are acting from the guidance of the Spiritual Inner Parent, Keter, and are doing all the "right" things in this world, fulfilling your purpose and gathering all of your resources from the abundance of All That Is. The Support is there for you to Be and to Become.





GEVURAH Strength

Our Inner strength comes from the soul power of Gevurah. It allows us to balance out Chesed by being able to say, No in addition to Yes. We can thrive from being disciplined, strategic & cautious.

Anger, criticism & judgement about right & wrong comes from this sefirah. It is how we withdraw, stay contained and protect ourselves by watching out for what could go wrong. Still, being too critical can sabotage us and destroy our relationships.

Use your Gevurah to help you set boundaries with others. Remember that your anger is a signal that boundaries have been crossed. Become disciplined with how you express yourself in difficult situations.

CHESED Lovingkindness

We are told that G-d created the world with Loving-kindness, otherwise it could not exist. Think about everything you have, everything the world has, including food, air, beauty & shelter have been provided. It is said that when moshiach comes, even the bark on a tree will be edible and healing.

The corollary is the commandment to love your fellow as yourself. Hillel said, What is hateful to you, don't do to your fellow. That is the entire Torah all the rest is commentary. Now go and learn.

Look for the spark of G-d in another person. Love unconditionally and cultivate desiring the best for everyone. Know that we are all connected. Giving to others returns many blessings right back to you.

HOD Glory

Hod comes from the word acknowledgement. With this soul power we have the ability to acknowledge our Creator behind the incredible and amazing creation. We become humble before All.

Everyone has their unique purpose in existence. And that path is between them and G-d. With this soul power we are able to surrender to G-d's will for us and for others. Everything seems just right.

Learn to see G-d's hand in everything and you will never need to push your agenda on anyone. You will be grateful for what IS. The word for Jews contains Hod - Yehudim - the servants of HaShem.

YESOD Foundation

All of the Internal Soul Powers reach their apex in Yesod, which is the foundation of all of them. It receives everything that is happening on an internal level, mentally and emotionally and then packages it to be used in the world of our relationships.

Are we kind, forceful, loving, angry, withholding, compassionate, surrendered, etc.? Yesod digests this and gives it over to be played out and actualized.

Your relationships are the place where you do your work of building Geulah. Rabbi Akivah taught: the word for man is Ish, and the word for woman, Isha. The word for G-d can be found there YH. But if you take the yud, y, out of I(y)sh and take the hey, h, out of Isha(h), what's left is the word for fire: aish.

EITZ CHAYIM

Tree of Life



The Tree of Life is the diagram of G-d's creation. The 10 Sefirot are also the Soul Powers of the human being - aspects of four states of consciousness: spiritual, mental, emotional and behavioral.

A healthy personality has each of the Soul Powers in balance with all of the rest. As we become fully conscious, we can direct our soul powers in ways that influence the world around us for the better.

When you are feeling stuck, notice which one of the 10 sefirot is being activated. Ask yourself if you are overly utilizing only one of the sefirot at the expense of the others. Refine your character traits by becoming whole and strengthening your weaknesses.

