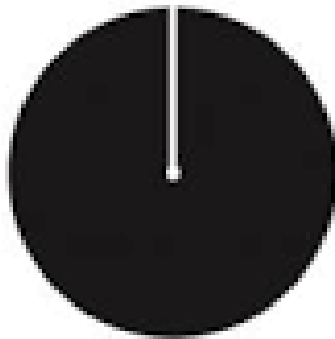


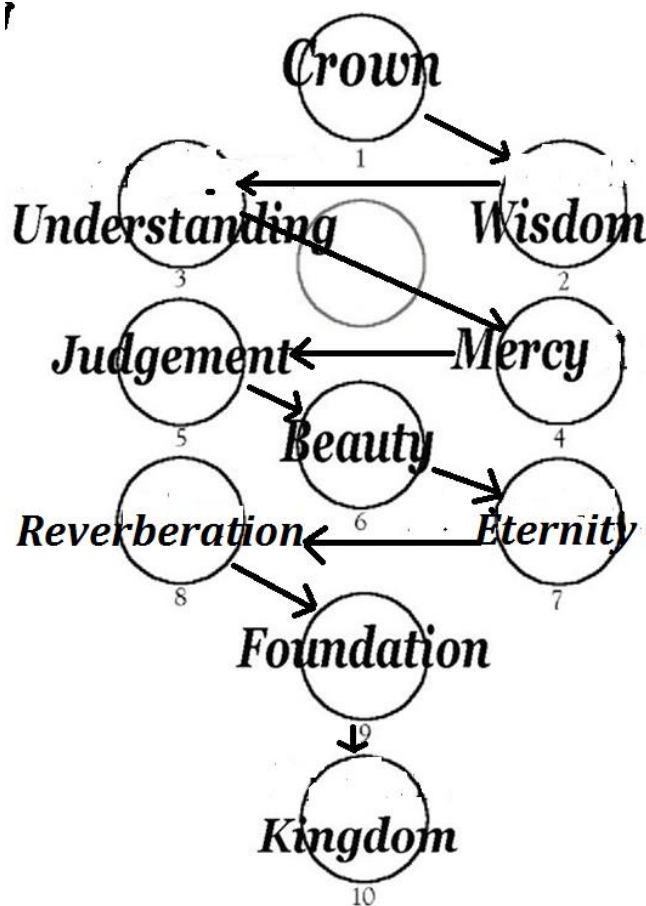
The Tree of Life; the ten Sefirot

In the beginning there was 'no thing', i.e. 'nothing' that our minds can possibly comprehend. It is the source of all things, the ground of all being, but we shall call it 'God' for short.

Kabbalah says that 'God wished to behold God', so It set out to recreate Itself. But It was Everywhere, so It had to withdraw a part of Itself and make a void in which to create. Into this void God sent a 'lightning strike'.



This lightning strike of creation descended into the void in 10 principles, or sefirot (singular = sefirah):



These are some of the English translations given to the Hebrew names.

The first principle to emerge is Keter, the Crown, also known as the Root. It is supreme attainment, unique essence, singularity, and source. From Keter emerges Chokmah, Wisdom, also known as Revelation. It is expansive and creative, outgoing, transformative, generative, 'masculine', active, and giving.

But this immediately needs balancing, and so the next sefirah emerges: Binah, Understanding, also known as Reason. It is containment, organisation, pattern, structure, 'feminine', passive, and receiving.

And so we have the first 'triad' of principles.

Then the lightning strike crosses a veil, an abyss, often represented by the non-sefirah of Da'at or Knowledge, which is also known as a door or portal. Anyone seeking the three highest sefirot must cross this abyss.

After the abyss the next principle or sefirah emerges: Hesed or Mercy, also known as Compassion. It is a driving force, an affirmation, the energy that gets any impulse through 'Da'at' into a higher world.

This again needs balancing, and so emerges Gevurah, Judgement, also known as Justice. It is reduction, a pulling back, a marshalling, a disciplining and taking stock.

The lightning strike descends again to a central place, Tiferet, Beauty, also known as Truth. It is balance, centred-ness, stability, focus, light, connectedness to all the other sefirot, a place of drawing-in and directing out, and of effortless flow.

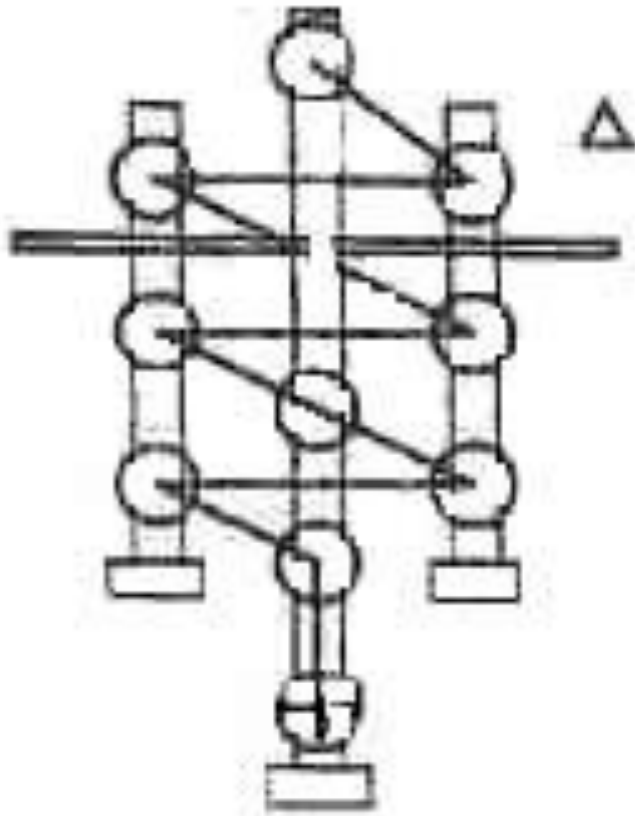
And so the second triad is complete.

The lightning strike continues down and Netzach, Eternity also known as Victory or Dominion emerges. It is the principle of endlessly repeating cycles.

To balance Netzach, Hod or Reverberation emerges next, also known as Splendour. It is the principle of differing wavelengths, frequencies and vibrations.

Again the lightning strike returns to a central place: Yesod, Foundation, also known as 'Image'. In the lower triad of Netzach, Hod and Yesod it reflects Tiferet like the Moon reflects the Sun.

The lightning strike finally comes to rest in Malkuth, the Kingdom, also known as Fulfillment. All the sefirot manifest within this last sefirah, which is the culmination, fruition, the final destination.



The lightning strike is often represented across three pillars.

The right hand pillar is the Pillar of Force.

The left hand pillar is the Pillar of Form.

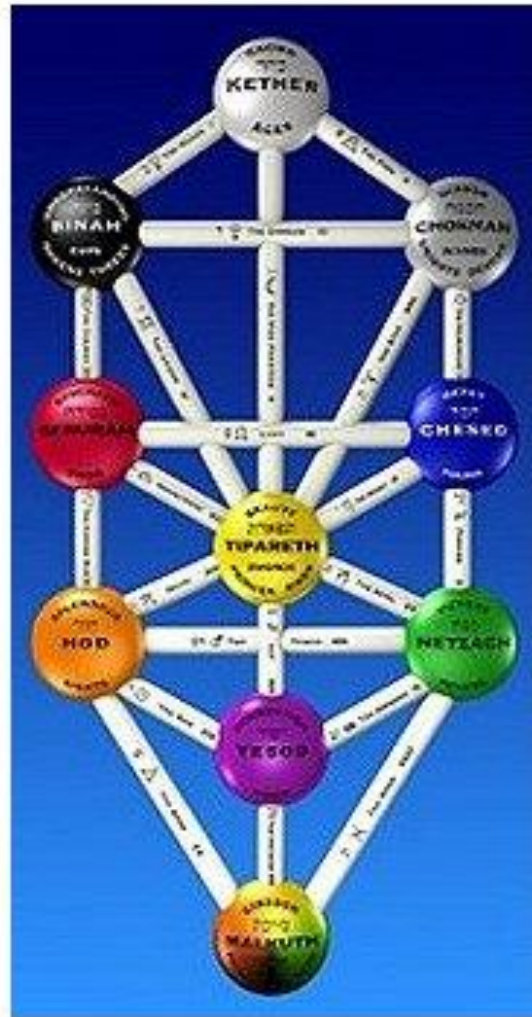
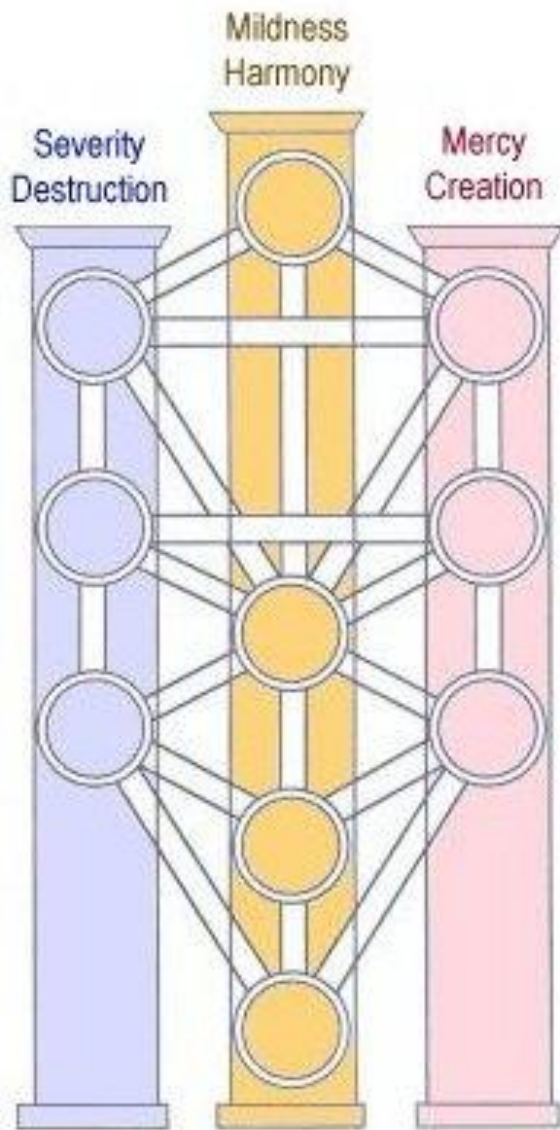
The central pillar is the pillar of Balance, Consciousness, Will and Grace.

A kabbalist aims to move up that central column calling on the qualities of the pillars of force and form as they ascend, keeping them balanced.

Too much of the right hand pillar, and creation spreads out into chaos, disintegration and nothingness. Too much of the left hand pillar and creation disappears up its own fundament, cramped and dark and stuck.

The next diagram is the Three Pillars again, with other names for them, but it also shows the Kabbalistic 'Tree of Life'. This shows the

22 paths between the 10 sefirot. (Each pathway has a Tarot card associated with it, and one of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. These are the basis for a lot of 'qabalistic' magic.)



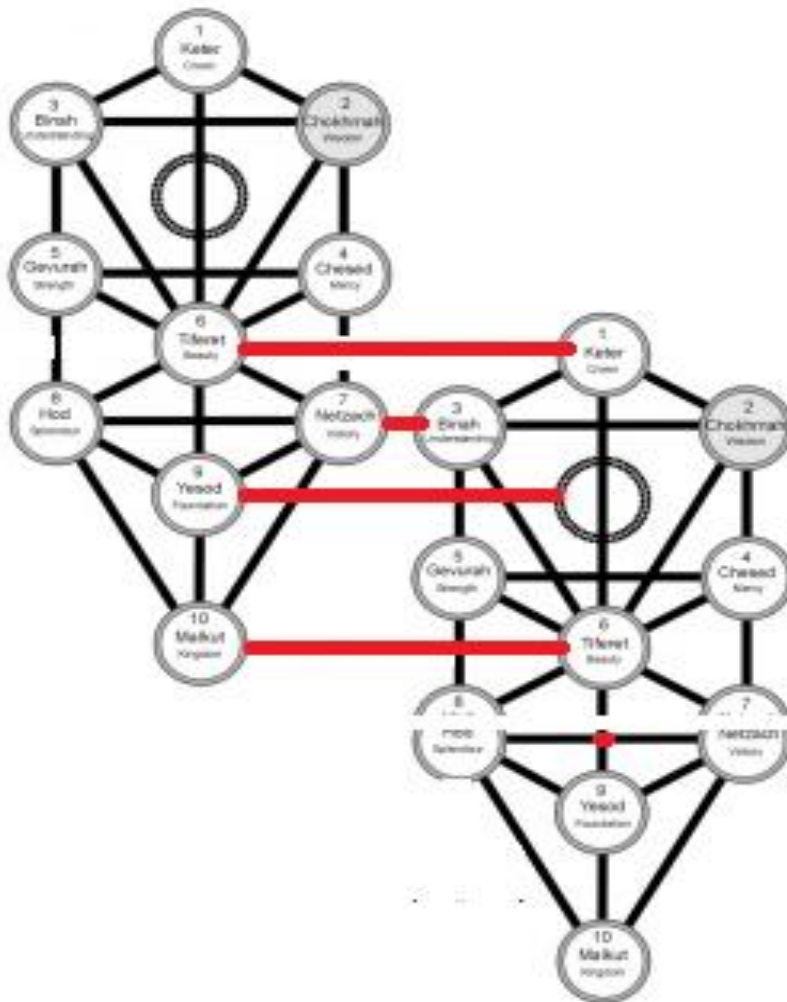
BUT...

This lightning strike, this Tree of Life' of 10 principles and 22 pathways, was created three more times.

The first 10 sefirot created the Divine world, and the Divine part of humans.

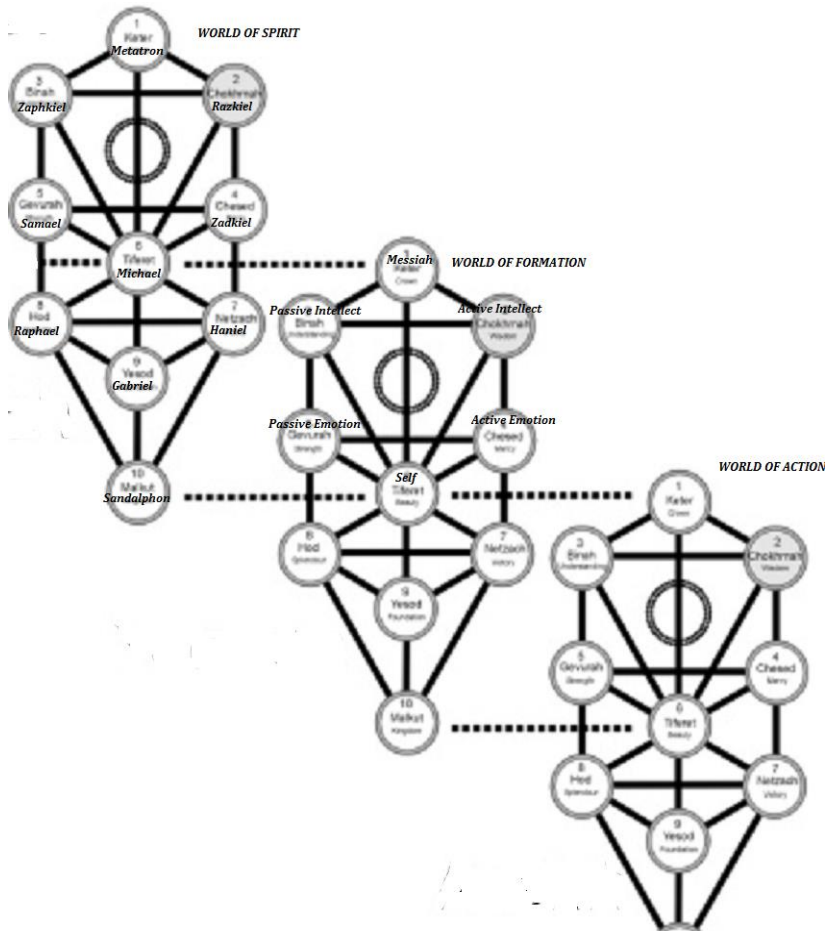
From behind the centrepiece of the Divine Tree, level with Tiferet/Beauty, emerges a new Keter/Crown – the Crown of the spiritual world, and that also unfolds downwards into the void in parallel with the Divine world.

In the next diagram you can see which sefirot of the spiritual world are level with various sefirot in the Divine World.



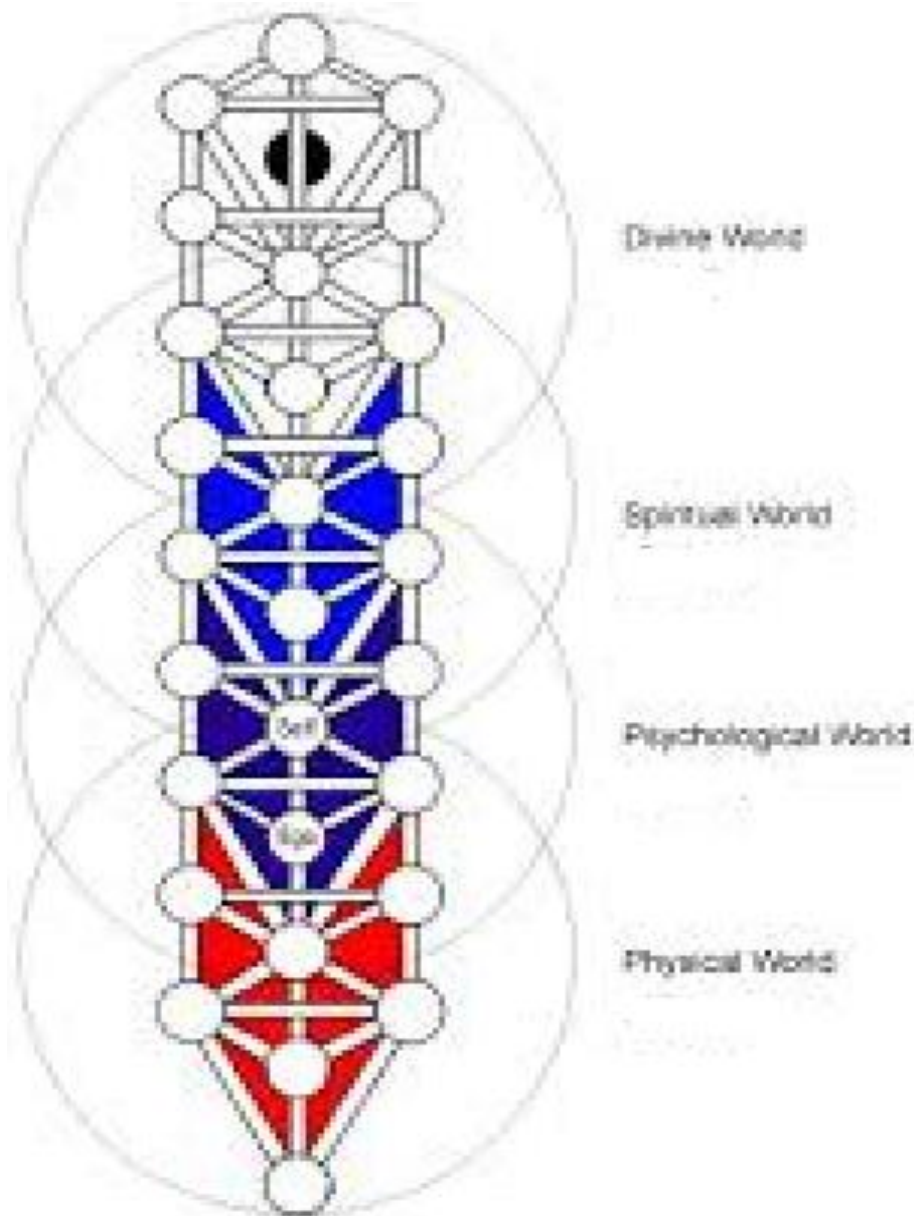
Colin Low 2009

This process is repeated from the spiritual world to form the world of mind, also known as the astral world, and again from the astral world to create the physical world:



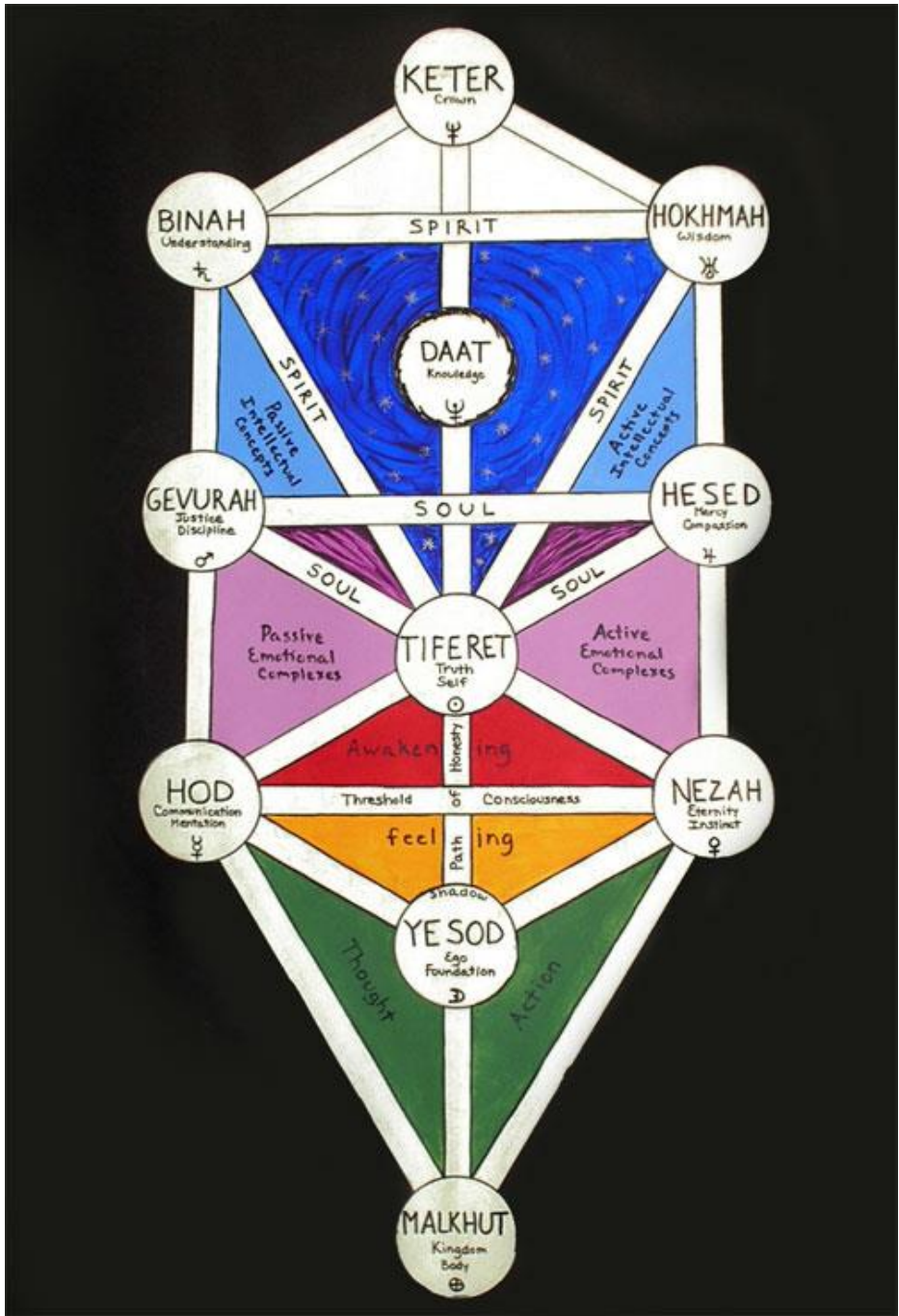
When you put them all together, you have the diagram known in Kabbalah as 'Jacob's Ladder' (see next page.)

In each of the four worlds the ten principles function in slightly different ways.



In this stage of our development as humans it is the world of mind which it is the most useful for us to study in our quest to become all that God intends for us.

In the diagram of the Tree of Life as in the psychological/psychic/astral world, below, the middle pillar represents levels of consciousness.



That middle pillar represents our levels of consciousness, remember. The lowest sefirah on it, Malkhut, is our anchor into and awareness of the physical world and our physical body. The next sefirah up, Yesod, is our ego. These comprises the various personalities we develop to cope with the world. They *mask* our true

self, our *essential* self, which is represented by the next sefirah up that central column: Tefiret.

The ego is a good servant but a terrible master. Unfortunately, most people let their egos run their lives, usually with unsatisfactory consequences.

In the world of the psyche, Hod represents thinking, processing and interpreting information, analysing, rationalisation, academic endeavour, communication; and passive bio-psychological processes.

Netzach represents emotional motivation, sexual and romantic love, excitement, sensuality, art in all its forms, self-expression, desire, appreciation of beauty and art, instinct, impulse; the driving force behind all vital functions and active bio-psychological functions.

So our ego sits in the middle of our body, thoughts and emotions, and each affects all the others. But note also the pathway down from Tiferet, our true self, both directly, and through our thoughts and emotions.

Our goal, as kabbalists, is to open up ourselves more and more to the influence of our true self, thereby moving from the bottom part of the mind associated with the physical world to the upper part of the mind associated with the spiritual world.

Continuing to move up the tree, you see that your soul is 'bounded' by Tiferet, Gevurah and Hesed.

Tiferet, in the world of psyche, represents the higher self, the true Self, the place of consciousness from which you can direct and co-ordinate the various parts of your personality, true individuality, self-awareness, and self-determination.

Gevurah represents fair discrimination, protection, discipline, taming, tough love; and passive emotion.

Hesed represents creativity, kindness, joy, generosity, hospitality, invigoration, lack of constraints, prolific regeneration; and active emotion.

Your soul is your centre of moral judgement and moral courage. It draws on Gevurah and Hesed to make the most appropriate decisions about right and wrong.

If you make it through the veil/abyss, you have become a different quality of human being. In the world of psyche Binah is the application of good sense, self-discipline, responsibility; and passive intellect. Hockmah is inspiration, lateral thinking, the 'third eye', clairvoyance; and active intellect. Those who encompass and 'embody' all ten sefirot, including Keter, have reached the place of the Messiah or 'Anointed One'. From our study of the four worlds you will see that the Keter of the world of psyche overlaps with Tiferet of the world of spirit and the Malkuth of the Divine world. This tells you much about this person's role in the universe. They are the connection between all three lower worlds and the Divine ("the way, the truth and the light"). There is always an 'Anointed One' in existence. This being is the one perfect human incarnation of any moment in time.

What the Work of the Kabbalist Involves:

From the beginning, try to stay mindful for as long as possible each day: note when your ego is in control, and when your true self is.

When you feel a strong emotion or powerful thought, take a split second to try to **respond** from your true self, rather than **react** from your ego.

Keep the last seven of the 10 commandments (the first 3 follow later):

Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. Take regular and scheduled time out from everyday mundane life to make contact with the higher worlds.

Honour thy father and mother. Balance both force and form, masculine and feminine. Remember your true heritage and what you essentially are – a Divine spark.

Do not murder.

Do not adulterate. Do not bring together things which do not belong together (e.g. do not feed your dog cream cakes, do not worship at anything other than the altar of the Divine).

Do not steal.

Do not bear false witness. (e.g. Do not propagate 'fake news').

Do not covet your neighbours' goods. In fact, do the opposite and spend time everyday being grateful for everything you do have, including being a part of this great cosmic adventure.

Most importantly, don't forget what one Messiah said when asked what we should do 'to be saved'. Love one another. Karen Armstrong has suggested that at least once a day, when out in public, we should try to identify one person who seems as different from us as possible, and practise mentally sending them good wishes and feelings of compassion.

In these ways our level of consciousness begins to move up that central pillar, and more and more of the upper astral and spiritual worlds are available to us.

As an aid to being successful in the work described above, many people find regular meditation useful. Others find prayer helpful. I myself find the Lord's Prayer extremely helpful. Every time I say it, I find something new and inspiring.