

# *The Paths of Wisdom and Gates of Understanding*

## *(The 32 Paths of the Sepher Yetzirah)*

(From "The Holy Kabbalah" by A. E. Waite)

*I have added additional text to Waite's Article to help in understanding the different paths. All my additions were written in this Dark Green Color; remove the dark green colored text and it will be return to the original content. – Charley Higgins.*

In the Latin collection of *Pistorius* the *marrow* of philosophical *Kabbalism* is presented in the form of certain *terse propositions* or *dogmas*, according to one of which the ways of eternity are *thirty-two-- Viæ æternitatis sunt triginta duo*. These are the *Paths* of the *SEIPHER YETZIRAH*, namely, the *ten SEPHIROTH* and the [*twenty-two*] *letters* of the *Hebrew alphabet*. The doctrine concerning them is a *dependency* of this fundamental treatise, but of much more *recent date*, and without even an imputed authorship. It *tabulates* the special *graces* and *illuminations* which may be communicated to man from above by means of these channels, and is not unimportant, because it shows that *Kabbalism*, even on its most *speculative* and *formal* side, had a *practical* application to the human mind, and was not a *purely arbitrary* system. It is outside the province of this work to offer *translations* to the student, but as in the present instance it could be *difficult* to summarize the tabulation more *briefly*, I shall give it in *extenso*, premising only that it has been translated more than once into *English*, and is indeed available in a number of European languages.

1. The *first* path [*KETER* or *Crown*] is called the *Admirable Intelligence* [*Mystical Intelligence*], the *Supreme Crown*. It is the *light* which imparts *understanding* of the *beginning* which is without *beginning*, and this also is the *First Splendor*. No *created being* can *attain* to its *essence*.
2. The *second* path [*CHOCHMAH* or *Wisdom*] is called the *Illuminating Intelligence*. It is the *Crown* of *Creation* and the *splendor* of the *Supreme Unity*, to which it is most in *proximity*. It is *exalted* above every *head* and is distinguished by *Kabbalists* as the *Second Splendor*.
3. The *third* path [*BINAH* or *Understanding*] is called the *Sanctifying Intelligence* and is the foundation of *Primordial Wisdom*, termed the *Creation* of *Faith*. Its roots are *AMeN*. It is the *mother* of *Faith*, which indeed emanates *therefrom*.

4. The *fourth* path [**CHESED**--*Mercy, Exuberance* or *Generosity*] is called the *Arresting* or *Receiving Intelligence* because it arises like a *boundary* to receive the *emanations* of the higher *intelligences* which are sent down to it. Herefrom all *spiritual virtues* emanate by the way of *subtlety*, which itself emanates from the *Supreme Crown*. (It contains all the *holy powers*, and from it emanate all the *spiritual virtues* with the most exalted *essences*; they emanate one from the other by the power of the *primordial emanation* of **KETER**.--Wescott)
5. The *fifth* path [**GEBURAH**--*Justice, Limitation* or *Severity*] is called the *Radical Intelligence*, because it is more akin than any other to the *Supreme Unity* and emanates from the depths of the *Primordial Wisdom* (the *primordial* depths of *Chochmah*).
6. The *sixth* path [**TIPHERETH** or *Beauty*] is called the *Intelligence of Mediating Influence* (or of *Separated Emanation*), because the *flux* of the *emanations* is *multiplied* therein. It *communicates* this *affluence* to those *blessed* men who are *united* with it.
7. The *seventh* path [**NETZACH**--*Victory* or *Eternity*] is called the *Hidden Intelligence*, because it pours out a brilliant *splendor* on all *intellectual virtues* which are beheld with the *eyes* of the *spirit* and by the *ecstasy* of *faith*.
8. The *eighth* path [**HOD**--*Glory* or *Reverberation*] is called the *Perfect* and *Absolute Intelligence*. The preparation of *principles* emanates *therefrom*. The *roots* to which it *adheres* are in the depths of the *Sphere Magnificence*, from the very *substance* of which it *emanates*. (It is the *means* of the *Primordial*.)
9. The *ninth* path [**YESOD** or *Foundation*] is called the *Purified Intelligence*. It *purifies* the *numerations*, prevents and stays the *fracture* of their *images* (or *proves* and *corrects* the *designing* of their *representations*), for it *establishes* their *unity*, to *preserve* them from *destruction* and *division* by their *union* with *itself*. (It *disposes* their *unity* with which they are *combined* without *diminution* or *division*.)
10. The *tenth* path [**MALCHUTH** or *Kingdom*] is called the *Resplendent Intelligence*, because it is *exalted* above every *head* and has its seat in **BINAH**: it *enlightens* the *fire* of all *lights* and emanates the power of the *principle* of *forms*. (It causes a supply of *influence* to emanate from the *Prince* of *Countenances*.) [**Note**: In *Kabbalah*, the *Prince* of *Countenances* is **Metatron**, the exalted *angel* who serves as the *divine scribe*; mediator of *God's light*, and representative of the *divine presence* before *creation*.]

11. The *eleventh* path **Aleph**, (*Keter* → *Chokmah*), is called the *Fiery Intelligence*. It is the *veil* placed before the *dispositions* and *order* of the *superior* and *inferior* causes. Whosoever possesses this *path* is in the *enjoyment* of *great dignity*; to *possess* it is to be *face to face* with the *Cause* of *Causes*. (It is the *essence* of that *curtain* which is placed *close* to the order of the *disposition*, and this is a special *dignity* given to it that it may be able to stand before the *face* of the *Cause* of *Causes*.)
12. The *twelfth* path **Beth**, (*Keter* → *Binah*), is called the *Intelligence* of *Light* (or *Transparency*), because it is the image of *magnificence*. It is said to be the *source* of vision in those who behold *apparitions*.
13. The *thirteenth* path **Gimel**, (*Keter* → *Tiphereth*), is called the *Inductive Intelligence* of *Unity*. It is the *substance* of *glory*, and it *manifests truth* to every spirit. (It is the *consummation* of the *truth* of *individual spiritual* things.)
14. The *fourteenth* path **Daleth**, (*Chokmah* → *Binah*), is called the *Illuminating Intelligence* (or *Luminous Intelligence*). It is the *institutor* of *arcane*, the *foundation* of *holiness*.
15. The *fifteenth* path **Heh**, (*Chokmah* → *Tiphereth*), is called the *Constituting Intelligence*, because it *constitutes creation* in the *darkness* of the *world*. (or--It *constitutes* the *substance* of *creations* in pure *darkness*.) According to the philosophers, it is *itself* that *darkness* mentioned by *Scripture* (*Job xxxviii. 9*), *cloud* and the *envelope* thereof.
16. The *sixteenth* path **Vav**, (*Chokmah* → *Chesed*), is called the *Triumphant* and *Eternal Intelligence*, the *delight* of *glory*, the *paradise* of *pleasure prepared* for the *just*.
17. The *seventeenth* path **Zayin**, (*Binah* → *Tiphereth*), is called the *Disposing Intelligence*. It *disposes* the *devout* to *perseverance* and thus *prepares* them to *receive* the *Holy Spirit*. (It is the path of *Life* and *Death*.)
18. The *eighteenth* path **Cheth**, (*Binah* → *Geburah*), is called the *Intelligence* or *House* of *Influence*, (by the *greatness* of whose *abundance* the *influx* of *good* things upon *created beings* is *increased*) and thence are *drawn* the *arcane* and the *concealed meanings* which *repose* in the *shadow* thereof.
19. The *nineteenth* path **Teth**, (*Chesed* → *Geburah*), is called the *Intelligence* of the *Secret* or of all *spiritual activities*. The *fullness* which it *receives* *derives* from the *highest benediction* and the *supreme glory*.

20. The *twentieth* path **Yod**, (*Chesed* → *Tiphereth*), is called the *Intelligence of Will*. It *prepares* all *created beings*, each *individually*, for the *demonstration* of the *existence* of the *primordial glory*.
21. The *twenty-first* path **Kaph**, (*Chesed* → *Netzach*), is called the *Rewarding Intelligence* (or the *Conciliating Intelligence* or the *Intelligence of Desire*) of those who *seek*. It *receives* the *divine influence*, and it *influences* by its *benediction* all *existing things*.
22. The *twenty-second* path **Lamed**, (*Geburah* → *Tiphereth*), is called the *Faithful Intelligence*, because *spiritual virtues* are *deposited* and *augment* therein, until they *pass* to *those* who  *dwell* under the *shadow* thereof. (By it *spiritual virtues* are *increased*, and all *dwellers* on *earth* are merely under its *shadow*.--Westcott)
23. The *twenty-third* path **Men**, (*Geburah* → *Hod*), is called the *Stable Intelligence*. It is the *source* of *consistency* in all the *numerations*.
24. The *twenty-fourth* path **Nun**, (*Tiphereth* → *Hod*), is called the *Imaginative Intelligence*. It is the ground of *similarity* in the *likeness* of *beings* who are *created* to its *agreement*, after its *aspects*.
25. The *twenty-fifth* path **Samekh**, (*Tiphereth* → *Yesod*), is called the *Intelligence of Temptation* or *Trial*, because it is the *first temptation* by which *God tests* the *devout*.
26. The *twenty-sixth* path **Ayin**, (*Tiphereth* → *Hod*), is called the *Renewing Intelligence*, for thereby *God--blessed be He!--reneweth all* which is *capable* of *renovation* in the *creation* of the *world* (or *all* the *changeable* things which are *renewed* by a new *cycle* of *world creation*).
27. The *twenty-seventh* path **Peh**, (*Netzach* → *Hod*), is called the *Natural Intelligence*, whereby the *nature* of *everything* found in the *orb* of the *sun* is *completed* and *perfected*.
28. The *twenty-eighth* path **Tzaddi**, (*Netzach* → *Yesod*), is called the *Active Intelligence*, for thence is *created* the *spirit* of every *creature* of the *supreme orb*, and the *activity*, that is to say, the *motion*, to which they are *subject*.
29. The *twenty-ninth* path **Qoph**, (*Hod* → *Yesod*), is called the *Corporeal Intelligence*; it *informs every body* which is *incorporated* under *all orbs* and it is the *growth* thereof.

30. The *thirtieth* path **Resh**, (*Netzach* → *Malkuth*), is called the *Collective Intelligence*, for thence *astrologers*, by the *judgment* of the *stars* and the *heavenly signs derive* their *speculations* and the *perfection* of their *science* according to the *motions* of the *stars*.

31. The *thirty-first* path **Shin**, (*Hod* → *Malkuth*), is called the *Perpetual Intelligence*. Why is it so called? Because it *rules* the *movement* of the *sun* and the *moon* according to their *constitution* and *causes* each to *gravitate* in its *respective orb*.

According to *Eliphas Levi*, this *verse* contains the *secret* of the *Great Work* of *Alchemy*. The reason assigned is that *path thirty-one* corresponds to the Hebrew letter **SHIN** (Sh), which represents the *magic lamp*, or the *light* between the *horns* of *Baphomet*. "It is the *Kabbalistic sign* of *God* or the *Astral Light*, with its *two poles* and *equilibrated center*" The *sun* mentioned in the paragraph represents *gold*, the *moon silver*, and the *planets correspond* to the other metals.-*LA CLEF DES GRAND MYSTÈRES*, p. 234. It is needless to say that the **SEPHER YETZIRAH** and its developments have nothing to do with *Alchemy*. As regards the *Great Work* and *Levi's pretended discovery* of its *secret*, see my *annotated translation* of his *TRANSCENDENTAL MAGIC*, pp. 345 - 347.

32. The *thirty-second* path **Tau**, (*Yesod* → *Malkuth*) is called the *Assisting Intelligence*, because it *directs* all the operation of the *seven planets*, with their *divisions*, and *concur* therein.

The comparatively *modern* accent of this *tabulation* will occur to the *reader*, but its *quotation* was *necessary* to *exhibit* the *intellectual profit* believed to follow from the study of *Kabbalism*, and still more that it was in the *last resource* the *understanding* of *man methodized*, embracing, as such, the *entire circle* attributed to *human knowledge*. After what manner the *Paths* correspond to their various *affirmed offices*, how they *communicate* the *powers* and *graces* which abide therein, and for what reason they bear their *distinctive titles* must remain *open questions*. The *thesis* concerning them constitutes a body of *dogma*, and is to be taken or left *as such*. The *Paths* are those of the *Tree* and its **SEPHIROTH**.