

Kabbalah for Life by Will Parfitt

2 extracts

from Chapter 8 • ANGELS, DEMONS, SEXUALITY AND SHEKHINAH

“Behold, the human has become as one of us, and now may put forth a hand, and take of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live for ever.” Book of Genesis (adapted from Chapter 3 Verse 22)

Kabbalistic magic has been described as the mysticism or yoga of the West. Whilst there are similarities, and the ultimate aim of complete self-realisation is the same, the major distinction is that Kabbalah focuses on coming to earth rather than transcending it. Kabbalah stresses that the world just as it is, although it may sometimes appear impure or valueless, is our most precious tool for transformation. You do not have to go somewhere else to attain self-realisation; instead you can uncover its abiding presence in the apparently mundane. Magic, in the Kabbalistic sense, is found within one’s life as it is, in both its heights and its depths.

The philosophy of Kabbalistic magic says that the two most important powers in the human psyche are will and imagination, both properly tempered by the greatest cosmic force, love. Imagination is what we use to create the world in which we live, and will is the force by which we create it. In bringing these two forces together, a Kabbalist may affect events both in their immediate surroundings and beyond. Whilst some Kabbalists, especially those of a mystical nature, sometimes deride Kabbalistic magic as being too involved with the use of power, all methods for transforming oneself and the world, whether considered spiritual, mystical or mundane, that change your inner reality and outer behaviour, may be considered valid approaches to self-realization.

A medieval treatise called ‘The Magic of Abra Melin the Mage’ is based around the notion that to have ‘knowledge and conversation of your guardian angel’ (which will be explored further later in the chapter), the equivalent to ‘illumination’, it is essential to first go into your depths, to face ‘the demons of darkness’, and bring them under your control. From a Kabbalistic perspective, we come to understand and experience that the light of Kether can be found shining in the darkest places and, when found, its light, brighter for being experienced in the darkness, may illuminate us.

The simplest definition of magic is that it is a way of making happen what you want to happen, using imagination (the intervention of spiritual beings) and will (the occult controlling principle.) In his book ‘The Tree of Life’, Israel Regardie, accomplished magician and authority on ceremonial magic, says that through imagination ‘we are capable of being united to the gods, of transcending the mundane order, and of participating in eternal life. Through this principle, therefore, we are able to liberate ourselves from fate.’ Regardie goes on to reflect that ‘it is a great mistake to consider imagination to be the same as fantasy and daydreaming. Imagination is the image-making faculty, an image creating power which when developed may prove of the utmost importance as assisting the soul in its forward journey.’ What distinguishes magical imagination from daydreaming is that the imagination is being directed by the will. In ‘The Secret Doctrine’, Helena Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society, writes of imagination that it is ‘the mysterious power of thought which enables it to produce external, perceptible, phenomenal results by its own inherent energy,’ this energy is the will in action. Indeed, the act of will is a natural process, the very spark of life itself, and every choice or decision we make is an act of will.

The definition of magic most widely used in esoteric books is from Aleister Crowley who defines it as ‘the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with

your will', which is another description of making happen what you want to happen. Of course to make magic work can be a complex task. To make happen what you want to happen, many different circumstances and conditions need to be taken into account. If what you want is, for instance, a bar of chocolate, you have to decide on the degree and kind of force to use; the shop is only a short distance away so you may decide upon walking as the kind of force, forward at approximately four miles per hour as the degree. You have to exert this force in the correct manner and through the correct medium – it would be no use walking in the wrong direction and up the garden path. This decided upon, you only have to apply your force to the correct spirit or agent – the shopkeeper – using a magical link, in this case money, and you have succeeded in your magic as you now have a chocolate bar to eat. In this example, the spirit you have involved in your magic is a shopkeeper, the best kind of 'spirit' to invoke when you want to purchase something. You might not know exactly what they are or why they exist at all, but you can experience the presence of 'spirits.' Despite there being many different ideas and opinions about what the spirit world is, or whether it even really exists or not, the shared experience of magicians and shamans of all persuasions is that alongside our everyday reality there is a realm (or realms) of spirits populated by innumerable different types of entities. These range from the powerful to the weak, from the bright to the dim-witted, from benevolent through cheeky to downright malicious.

A Kabbalistic magician's power to communicate with a spirit, in either their world or ours, depends upon knowing the names, strengths, weaknesses, and correspondences to the spirit in question. This knowledge enables you to call or dismiss spirits, and compel them to perform tasks for you. Thus in the example of summoning up a shopkeeper to acquire a bar of chocolate, your knowledge that a shopkeeper spirit will exchange a bar of chocolate for money enables you to communicate with the spirit and make your magic work. Learning the most appropriate means to communicate with a spirit is equally valid on the spirit plane as in our mundane realm, perhaps more so

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Magic is generally more oriented towards using the will rather than not and thus concentrates on developing our ability to choose. Some Eastern approaches to self-realisation suggest that it is better to simply accept things as they are and surrender to the unfolding nature of life. A Kabbalist will certainly choose to do just that at times, to let things be, wait and see what unfolds. The point is, however, that the magician has a choice in the matter, whether to act or not, and that is what defines magic as the ability to choose. The nineteenth century Kabbalist, Eliphas Levi, defining magic as 'the traditional science concerning the secrets of nature transmitted to us from the magicians of the past' is affirming that magic is a tradition, a science, natural and transmittable. Indeed, there is nothing unnatural about magic, as making happen what you want to happen is a basic human desire. The real point of magic for a Kabbalist is to be able to shift your attention (or consciousness) beyond your everyday and ego-led limitations, to discover ways to make the right things happen for you, then to put this into practice. However strong your will may be, unless a link is made between the force of your will and the proposed object or condition to be changed, all attempts to make the required change will fail. However much you want to catch a fish, and even if the fish may want to be caught, unless there is a rod and line you can both go on wishing (and fishing!) forever without success.

The magical link may be classified into three main groups depending upon whether it involves (a) one plane and one person, (b) one plane and two or more persons, or (c) two planes. Group (a) involves changes brought about by a person to him- or her-self. The instrument of the link already exists, therefore, in that all which happens is inside the magician. The necessary condition to make the link work is to inflame or elevate your will to the proper pitch so that your intent is put into action. Of course the magic must still be in line with the greater nature of which we are all part. However strong your will may be, in the case of organic disease for

instance, your apparatus may be damaged beyond the art of nature to repair. It may be necessary in such a case to assist the internal 'spirits' through the 'purification' of medicine, the 'banishing' of diet, or some other extraneous means.

Group (b) includes all magical operations where the aim is to make happen what you want to happen upon objects or characters outside of your own inner control. The inner energy or will to make this happen still needs to be inflamed but now has to be externally expressed and imposed. For instance, should you wish to overthrow the leader of a nation, you might initially use words, as in speeches arousing feelings of discontent with the current leader. If all else failed, you might make the link by hiring the necessary assassin! But, of course (apart from all moral considerations) an assassin would not be suitable to deal with, say, your opponents in a local by-election. The strength of the agent used for the link has to be just right; too much force can be as useless as too little.

The third group of magical links that involve two planes require a high degree of initiation and mystical understanding for, as Crowley put it; "we see ... that we can never affect anything outside ourselves save only as it is also within us. Whatever I do to another, I also do to myself." For someone with the reputation of being a 'black magician' these words, perhaps surprisingly, convey a true understanding of the ethics by which a Kabbalistic magician will live. Kabbalistic magicians sometimes use grimoires and spells to make their magic work, again acts that may sometimes be associated with magic of a less ethical nature than we we suggesting here, so it makes sense to check out what we mean by these words first. Grimoire is the name some magicians give to their book of spells. In the Disney movie 'Fantasia', the big old dusty tome that the sorcerer's apprentice opens to find a spell to use for cleaning is a Grimoire. The fact that the spell takes the apprentice over and he loses control of the operation is a good warning about not using magical spells until you feel really able to deal with the consequences. As a Grimoire is the place that a magician puts spells into, we could compare it to the 'grammar' of which 'spelling' is a part.

To create spells, a magician may use special magical tools which have a deeper inner purpose and significance than is sometimes apparent and which are intended to remind the magician of the deeper purpose of the work. For instance, sometimes a magician hangs a lamp above the altar to represent the light of pure soul, and to act as a reminder not to be too confident or clever, that some things are always unknown and beyond the understanding of even a magician. This lamp may be on the physical plane or in the imagination of the magician. A modern magician may also, for instance, use a clock or watch as a reminder of the passage of time, and as a timely reminder of the impermanence of all things.

So a Grimoire is somewhere for a Kabbalistic magician to put their spells. The use of such spells depends on what the Kabbalist wants, how much they want it, and what they're willing to put into getting it. If you spell it correctly, what you want to make happen and the methods for achieving this will become clearer to you. Finding the right spelling of things isn't so easy, though. The spelling of 'things' for instance isn't what you see in the printed letters 't-h-i-n-g-s' but what the word conjures up in your awareness. A dog is most definitely not what you see in the letters 'd-o-g' and, more than that, may represent many different connections and associations for different people (and of course different associations for the same person.)

Good magical practice is to make a spell, set the magic in motion, and then let it go and not worry whether the spell has worked or not. In other words, the best way to make a spell work is to forget all about it. The spell will only work, though, if you concentrate your intent strongly enough before you forget it. The notion is that by consciously forgetting your spell, it will be more active in the unconscious and therefore stir up enough energy to make it happen. This does work, the only issue being that you cannot control when the spell will actually come into operation. Of

course this is also not a problem because it means you have to trust to nature, which is always the best magic.

Carlos Castaneda suggests that the best way to activate your intent is to speak it out loud. This is true, the only problem being that you must have stored enough personal power to be able to voice your spell clearly enough. You collect personal power every time you act from your centre of intent (paradoxically, whether the specific intent comes to fruition or not.) This suggests, therefore, that the old saying 'practice makes perfect' is magically correct. It is worth remembering that spells work best when the magician is not attached to the desired outcome, a somewhat strange and yet basic paradox at the heart of magic.

From Chapter 7: Kabbalistic Healing

The Path of the Nose and Mouth

The 14th path connects Chockmah to Binah. Before continuing, consider what you understand about Chockmah and Binah.

The 14th Path is known as the illuminating path. Illuminating is the action from the verb to illuminate. Some extracts from the Oxford English Dictionary may help you understand what is meant by illumination:

1. To light up, give light to
2. To give light to, or remove blindness from (the eyes), esp. fig. in religious sense.
3. To shed spiritual light upon; to enlighten spiritually
4. To enlighten intellectually; to give understanding to.
5. To throw light upon ; to make luminous or clear; to elucidate
6. To make resplendent or illustrious; to shed a lustre upon
7. To decorate profusely with lights, as a sign of festivity or in honour of some person or some event

As the 14th path is so important in healing work, consider first how this path connects the first and second worlds (and does not figure in the third world of Yetzirah at all.) Of course for the first and second worlds of Atziluth and Briah, we remain in the transpersonal realms of the Supernal Triad. You can regard this path as the binding force of the universe, the bridge between spiritual Will and spiritual Love.

Daleth, the letter of this path, is the second double letter (Gimel is the first), and corresponds to the number 4. Note that there are four tastes (sweet, bitter, sour, salt). As well as being the Hebrew word for door, Daleth can also mean a gate or lid, specifically one that can be lifted up in order to reveal or deliver something. It is also sometimes described as the door into and out of the womb. Daleth is ascribed to the tarot card The Empress, also known as the daughter of the mighty ones. The Zohar describes Daleth as meaning impoverishment, a necessary stage in the preparation of oneself to 'make tikkun', that is to repair the fragmentation in your life. Considering that the traditional vision associated with the 14th path is the vision of fundamental holiness, I think it is becoming clear how important this path is for healing work, so now we are ready to deepen our understanding of the major physical correspondences to this path.

On the Tree of Life, both the internal and external structures of the nose and mouth are attributed to the 14th path, which also corresponds with the Empress tarot card and the letter Daleth. The 14th path is considered to be a primary path for healing so we will next study it in more depth, firstly considering its attribution to the nose and mouth.

The primary concern of both the nose and mouth are the act of breathing. Many (even most!) systems of spiritual development attest to the importance of learning to breathe properly, or in a particular way. Often at the beginning of exercises, particularly in groups, I make a joke, telling the participants not to try breathing in any special yogic way but just allowing their own breath to enter and exit the body easily at its own rate. The hidden joke in this is that this is the most esoteric way to breathe, and, interestingly, it is the most difficult.

Spend a few minutes now just breathing, letting the air enter your body, fill your lungs, then pass out again easily, without effort. As you do so, pay particular attention to any holding patterns that you become aware of in your body. Now place a hand on your belly and breathe in a way that causes your belly to expand and push your hand away; then as you breathe out, feel your belly contract and at the end of the breath use your hand to just lightly push your belly in (and, as it were, the remainder of the air out). Then as you breathe in again feel your belly expand and push your hand outwards. Continue breathing like this for a few minutes.

Now place your hand on your chest and do the same, feeling your in and out breath alternately push your hand away and fall under the (light!) pressure of your hand. Do you habitually breathe from your chest or belly? Don't judge one better than the other, but notice which is your habitual pattern. Whether you usually breathe from your belly or chest, consider the other (i.e. if you tend to chest breathe, then consider your belly and vice versa). What might you be holding onto in this part of your body?

Apart from breathing, the nose and mouth are also concerned with the senses of smell and taste. It is said that a dog has somewhere in the order of 30 times stronger an olfactory sense than humans, and some (rather surprising) creatures, for instance a moth, have 30 times greater olfactory sense than a dog. Salmon are said to find their way from the depths of the ocean back to a distant river, to their original spawning ground, through their sense of smell! Smell and taste are chemical senses, receptors in the nose and tongue responding to chemical stimuli. It is interesting to note that smells entering the right nostril and tastes affecting the right side of the tongue pass to the parietal lobe of the opposite, left side of the cerebrum, and vice versa. This tells us something of the functioning of the 14th path in the Yetziratic and Assiatic worlds.

Another function of the mouth is for eating. Many of our psychological functions have a parallel with eating (and eating disorders are not just common, they are pretty well universal, to some degree or another, with all human beings.) He has bitten off more than he can chew; she finds that hard to swallow; the idea of doing that stuck in my throat; chew on that for a while; come on, spit it out ... these and other similar well known phrases apparently originate from eating analogies but are used to describe psychic functioning.

The Mass of the Holy Ghost, or the sacramental supper, takes place on the 14th Path. On an esoteric level, this Mass involves the balancing of male and female energies and the acceptance within oneself of a deep sense of their ultimate Unity. Some Kabbalists take this on a literal level and consider the Mass to involve the imbibing of commingled male and female essences. To smell, taste, and ingest this elixir is said to confer magical powers and be the true meaning of the stone of the wise or elixir of life. The particular charge of the elixir is varied through the particular state of the emanations involved, for both the male and female. In Tantra, kalas is the name of the female emanations (or vaginal juices). Kala is a Sanskrit word meaning star and also perfume. At different times of the month (the cycle of existence) the kalas vary (after menopause as well as before.) This is true also for male scent and bodily fluids. The perfect elixir is said to be sweet smelling like the finest honey, and is the closest human equivalent to the emanations that pour from one sphere to the next on the Tree of Life in the creative process. This has particular

relevance to the 14th Path which, joining as it does Chockmah and Binah, can be considered the primary holding force of the universe. Whether we take such practices as literal or symbolic, the essential message concerns treating our breathing, smelling, and tasting, indeed all our sensory experiences, as being of the deepest spiritual nature. We are being asked to literally come to our senses and find ourselves!