

## The Triadic Nature of the Šēfirōth

THE TEN ŠĒFİRŌTH ARE DIVIDED into triads of various types, or into two Faces, the Great Face (Macroprosopus) and the Little Face (Microprosopus). The triadic nature of the šēfirōth manifests as three heads and three divisions of archetypal man, as well as three worlds (*‘ōlāmīm*) or faces (*‘anpīn*).

The first of the three heads is itself triadic, composed of Kether, Ḥokhmāh, and Bīnāh: Kether in this context being the crown of the head; Ḥokhmāh the wisdom of the brain; and Bīnāh the understanding that comes from the heart. The main consideration in the mind of the Qabbalist was that the three highest šēfirōth should stand for the highest qualities in ’Ādām Qadmōn, hence for the head and heart combined in wisdom, which three-in-one forms the head of ’Ādām Qadmōn. *Hā-’Idrā’ Zūṭā’ Qaddīshā’* states:

78. He the Most Holy Ancient One [‘attīqā’ qaddīshā’] is found to have three heads, which are contained in the one Head.

79. And He Himself is that only highest supreme Head.  
— Mathers, p. 267

The succeeding šēfirōth likewise form into triads, pat-

tering themselves after the supernal triad. *Hā-'Idrā' Zūṭā' Qaddīshā'* continues:

80. And since He the Most Holy Ancient One is thus symbolized in the Triad, hence all the other Lights which shine are included in Triads. — Ibid.

Thus another triad issues from the upper one, composed of Ḥesed (or Gēdūlāh) and Gēbūrāh (or Dīn or Paḥad),\* the two arms, and Tif'ereh, the heart, which together form the chest of 'Ādām Qadmōn. From this middle triad, a third and lowest triad is produced, composed of Netsah and Hōd, the two limbs, with Yēsōd the generative power, together forming the Foundation of 'Ādām Qadmōn.

These three triads — the Head, the Chest, and the Foundation — pour their energies into and hence manifest through the lowest or tenth sēfirāh, Malkhūth, the Kingdom, known as the Feet or Stability of 'Ādām Qadmōn.

These heads or divisions have, each one, its presiding ruler: the first head or triad is governed by Kether; the second by Tif'ereh; and the third by Yēsōd (or Malkhūth). Connecting these three with the diagram of the concentric spheres correlating the sēfirōth with the planetary and cosmic influences, we see that Kether, ruler of the supernal triad, represents Primum Mobile, the primordial motion, the divine breath, the first quiver of manifestation; that Tif'ereh, the ruler of the second triad, stands for the sun, giver of spiritual, intellectual, and vital life; that Yēsōd, ruler

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\*Gēdūlāh is an alternate name for Ḥesed, and means greatness, might, power; Dīn and Paḥad are alternate terms for Gēbūrāh and signify judgment, and fear, awe, or justice.

of the lowest triad, represents the moon, giver of psychical and physical life; while Malkhūth, the Kingdom in which the three rulers govern, represents the foundation or elements, our earth, the vehicle and carrier of the divine, solar, and lunar forces.

These three triads parallel the three *upādhis* or bases which form the human constitution. In *Fundamentals*, Purucker writes:

Man can be considered as a being composed of three essential bases; the Sanskrit term is *upādhi*. The meaning of the word is that which “stands forth” following a model or pattern, as a canvas, so to say, upon which the light from a projecting lantern plays. It is a play of shadow and form, compared with the ultimate reality. These three bases or *upādhis* are, first, the monadic or spiritual; second, that which is supplied by the lords of light, the so-called *mānasa-dhyānis*, meaning the intellectual and intuitive side of man, the element-principle that makes man man; and the third basis or *upādhi* we can call the vital-astral-physical, if you please.

These three bases spring from three different lines of evolution, from three different and separate hierarchies of being. . . .

. . . The lowest comes from the earth, ultimately from the moon, our cosmogonic mother; the middle, the *mānasic* or intellectual-intuitional, from the sun; the monadic from the Monad of monads, the supreme flower, or acme, or rather the supreme seed of the universal hierarchy which forms our cosmical universe or universal cosmos. — p. 152

We thus see right down the *sēfirōth*al tree of lives a center pillar of divine, solar, lunar, and terrestrial power pouring

through Kether, Tif’ereth, Yēsōd, and Malkhūth, and correspondingly energizing in the human constitution nēshāmāh, rūaḥ, nefesh, and gūf.

When these three worlds are viewed as faces (*ʿanpīn* or *partsūfīn*), then Kether is called the Supernal Face; Tif’ereth is called the King (*Melekh*, Aramaic *Malkā’*) or the “Sacred King” (*Malkā’ Qaddīshā’*); Malkhūth (or Yēsōd) is the Queen, the Bride of Melekh, and is called Malkhēthā’, Maṭrōnā’, or Maṭrōnīthā’, the “Matron” or “Mother.”

This last correspondence is significant. We have mentioned that there were “prior worlds,” “ancient worlds,” which could not subsist because the Sacred Ancient had not “assumed its form,” in other words because the King and Queen, Tif’ereth and Yēsōd-Malkhūth, had not united to produce the “balance” (*mathqēlā’*) essential for the sēfirōthal tree to live. In still other words, the sun and moon had not yet united their energies to produce the earth with its hosts of living beings — a statement applicable to the genesis of worlds, the birth of humankind, and the awakening of the human soul to its spiritual possibilities.

Malkhūth in very truth is the Kingdom: the receiver and carrier of every one of the nine superior sēfirōthal powers, each of the three sēfirōth of the right and left pillars respectively contributing its individual power through the presiding ruler of the three triads or faces, so that the central pillar, formed of the rulers (Kether, the King, and Queen), focalizes the planetary influences through the three upādhis or bases — the monadic or Kether, the solar or Tif’ereth, the lunar or Yēsōd — all finding manifestation in the terrestrial or Malkhūth.

We can also consider the sēfirōth as active and passive streams of vitality divided vertically into three currents of energy: the right or masculine Pillar of Ḥesed (compassion or mercy), composed of the three sēfirōth on the right: Ḥokhmāh, Ḥesed (or Gēdūlāh), and Netsaḥ, in which the masculine, transmitting, and centrifugal energies predominate. The left or feminine stream of vitality, which complements the masculine stream, is called the Pillar of Dīn (judgment), composed of the three sēfirōth on the left: Bīnāh, Gēbūrāh or Dīn, and Hōd, in which the feminine, receiving, and centripetal energies predominate.

The third or central current of vitality, the stream of spiritual stability, is called the Center Pillar of Raḥamīm (sympathy or harmony). Composed of the four sēfirōth running from Kether vertically through Tif'ereh and Yēsōd, down to and including Malkhūth, it represents the harmonious interplay between the right and left pillars. It is the stabilizing pillar between the two opposing forces; the right and left, the transmitting and receiving, the centrifugal and centripetal pillars. In other words, in the Center Pillar the planetary energies focused in the right and left pillars of *'ēts ḥayyīm* (tree of lives) are received and stabilized in order to flow down successfully into Malkhūth for manifestation on earth. Along this central stream flow currents in unceasing rhythm from Kether the Crown through the intermediate sēfirōth down to the lowest, Malkhūth, and one's consciousness may ascend or descend along this invisible pathway. Because the sēfirōthal tree applies not only to the cosmos as a whole, but to every living being as well, this pathway is also within each one of us.

