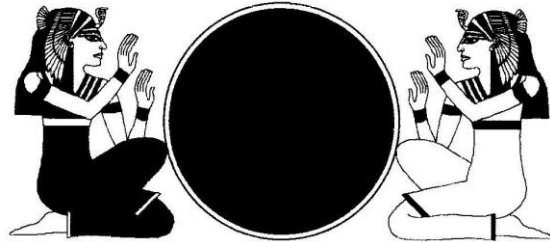


Temple of the Dark Moon



Ceremonial Magick and the Qabalah

By Frances Billinghamurst © 2005

“Long hast thou dwelt in Darkness, Quit the Night and Seek the Day”.¹

The mystical Qabalah is an ancient mystery tradition with unclear origins. The word comes from the Hebrew, meaning "tradition", and its root word, *gibel*, means "to receive", referring to the ancient custom of handing down esoteric knowledge orally.

The Qabalah encompasses an entire body of ancient Hebrew mystical principles, which are the foundation and focus of the Western Mystery Tradition, or ceremonial magick. Mysticism, by its very nature, cannot be communicated directly, and therefore is expressed through symbolism and metaphor. The Qabalah draws upon the practitioner's awareness of the transcendence of eternal Deity, revealing the hidden mysteries of the Divine and the connection with human life.

Israel Regardie stated that the Qabalah is a “ ... trustworthy guide leading to a comprehension of the Universe and one’s own self”. Dion Fortune described it as the "yoga of the West", revealing the nature of certain physical and psychological phenomena. Within ceremonial magick it is believed that once such phenomena is understood, the practitioner is then able to use the principles of magick to exercise control over various circumstances in their own life.

At the heart of the Qabalah is the glyph known as the "Tree of Life" - a symbolic representation of the Universe. While there are many perspectives as to how this glyph is viewed, such as being a gigantic filing cabinet, most ceremonial based traditions deal with the philosophy and cosmology of the Qabalah, as well as pragmatic applications.

¹ From the Golden Dawn Neophyte Ritual

The Tree of Life is made up of 10 spheres (called sephiroth) where each sephira (singular) represents a level of consciousness. Each level has its own gifts and unique benefits, controlling physiological functions, stimulating artistic energies, and more. Therefore, knowledge and understanding of the Tree of Life encompasses many levels.

In essence, the Tree of Life depicts how the Universe was formed, which starts with "nothingness", some primal point from which we all came and to which we will return. From this, the Universe underwent nine various stages of manifestation, compacting, condensing and challenging the Divine energy, to manifest in the tenth stage (Malkuth) which encompasses all matter and life upon Earth. The process of this manifestation into material being is known as the "Path of the Flaming Sword".

For some people, brief encounters with the Qabalah may led to misconstrued ideas that it is a purely patriarchal philosophy, however this is incorrect. Many of the God names used actually have feminine qualities, albeit often forgotten over the course of time. For example, "Elohim" is a word formed from the feminine noun, "Eloah" and the masculine plural "Im", resulting in a word that simply means "Gods". Another reason why some Pagans choose to stay away from the Qabalah is the use of Christianised terms. What should be kept in mind however, as mentioned at the beginning of this article, is that the Qabalah is an ancient Hebrew tradition that while adopted by the Judiac religion, stills holds many valuable benefits for the magickal practitioner today. Those who have attended the presentations I have done on ritual techniques found within ceremonial magick no doubt can vouch for this.

It is important to remember that ceremonial magick is a completely different system to say that of Wicca and Craft, although in some traditions, such as Alexandrian Wicca, knowledge of ceremonial magick is incorporated. Despite the controversy that still surrounds Alex Sanders, the founder of this tradition, some 17 years after his death, what seems to be overlooked is the fact that he was a ceremonial magickian before he became a Wiccan. In the later part of his life, Alex incorporated other forms of magick, including Angelic and planetary into his Wiccan practices. This may be the reason while blending ceremonial magick with Wicca comes naturally to me.

While ceremonial magick is not for everyone, it holds a number of valuable techniques which can be and have been adopted into whatever spiritual path you are following - one in particular being the understanding of our place in the Universe. Today, despite its ancient origins, the Qabalah is considered as a vibrant, living and dynamic philosophy that includes ideas of the origin of the entire cosmos, the eternal mind of the Divine, and spiritual development of humankind.

References:

- “*The Secrets of a Golden Dawn Temple*” by Chic and Sandra Cicero
- “*The Golden Dawn*” by Israel Regardie
- “*Circles of Power*” by John Michael Greer

About the Author:

Frances has been a student of metaphysics and the occult for most of her life, with her formal training having commenced in 1993. She has been initiated into the Alexandrian Wicca tradition, with interests also in ceremonial magick, the Qabalah and traditional Wytchcraft.

After founding the Temple of the Dark Moon in 1999, Frances spent some six years as secretary for the Pagan Alliance Inc (SA) where she worked closely with both the Police and Attorney General with respect to changes in legislation. She has led rituals with Chief Druid, Philip Carr-Gomm, and occult philosophy Ramsay Dukes, as well as presented lectures at various national and international events.

Frances regularly writes for *Insight*, Australia's number one spiritual lifestyle magazine, with her articles also appearing in over 10 separate publications, including *Spellcraft*, *The Cauldron*, *Circle* and the Llewellyn's *Witch's Calendar*. She has further essays in a number of anthologies including *The Faerie Queens*, *Unto Herself: A Devotional Anthology for Independent Goddesses*, and *Memento Mori*.

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