

LESSON 11

BINAH - UNDERSTANDING

'The third Path (Binah) is the sanctifying Intelligence and is the foundation of Primordial Wisdom, which is called the Creator of Faith, and its roots are AMN, and it is the Parent of Faith, from which doth Faith emanate.'

The above statement, from the Sepher Yetzirah, tells us that the Intelligence of Binah is still in the state of holiness because it is still an unmanifested point before it is expressed in Chesed. It is the Primordial Wisdom because it is the first order of development now that a definite polarity has been established on the Tree. The title 'Creator of Faith' has many hidden meanings to it. Faith is not only devotion and belief, but is when one follows a chosen path in life. As such we have the creation of a following of the idea expressed by both Binah and Chokmah, now that their influence is ready to cross the Abyss into manifestation. AMN means 'faithful' and is a title of Kether, hence the reference to its roots which merely further expresses the idea of faith, which is considered the ideal truth of the universe.

Binah is the essence of female polarity and is the direct opposite of Chokmah. Its English meaning is Understanding, which is intended to show the receptive quality of its nature. Some have associated the idea of form to Binah, but it must be

remembered that Binah is the opposite in polarity to Chokmah and as such form is not yet developed - only polarity. This is formed from the pent up passive energy expelled from Chokmah. The key word to describe this Sephira is "Feminine" and is associated to the great mother principle of nature. Its entire concept is one of acceptance to any force that comes to it.

One of the titles of Binah is Shekinah, which is described in Hebrew texts as the feminine side of God's nature (as opposed to the martial powers of Jehovah who destroyed armies) and derives from the Hebrew word Schachan - "to reside". Scholem reported 'to lead Shekinah back to God and unite her with him is the true purpose of the Torah'. This is purely Kabbalistic in concept and means that to unite Binah and Chokmah one then forms Kether, the Godhead.

In the terminology of Jungian psychology the Anima is applied to Binah. Joan Corrie, author of 'A B C of Jung's Psychology' says: 'The Anima is in contact with the objects of inner reality - the images of the Collective Unconscious - as the Persona is in contact with the objects of External reality. The Anima is an archetypal figure that might also be described as the precipitate of mans age long impressions of a woman - not his conscious reasoned ideas, but the unconscious inherited mould into which she is cast'.

The Neshamah is the part of the Kabbalistic Soul associated to Binah. Leiningen considers that the Neshamah, as the third

part of the soul can be designated by the word Spirit, in the New Testament concept the passive sensitivity in it relating to the external nature is no longer present. Activity dominates receptivity and the spirit lives off its own life's existence for the Spiritual world, with which it maintains a constant relation. However, like Ruach, the Neshamah with its own concept of ideal nature has no more need of more than absolute, general or divine emanations, for its nature is real and calls for some relationship with the reality of the material world which exists below it.

The virtue of Binah is said to be Silence while its vice is Avarice. As opposites these are very unsatisfactory, as a correct opposite to Avarice would be more like Unselfishness. This slightly disjointed association between the sins and the virtues of the Sephiroth is because both these associations are taken from completely different contexts. An example of this is that the virtues of the Sephiroth are taken from the Ten Pythagorean Virtues. Dion Fortune used part of a planet's influence to describe the attribute of Binah while Gareth Knight related it to occult secrecy, yet both these concepts could apply equally to any other planet or Sephiroth. In its correct context, relating to its Greek origins, Silence stands for the virtue of the individual who knows not to push himself forward until others might have their say and thus have a chance to develop.

The Magical Weapon of the Outer Robe of Concealment in simple terms is the vagina for it is the gateway to the uterus.

Its relationship to Binah is a primal one in symbolism showing the female opening which conceals the inner passages. This in turn relates back to the concept of fertilisation taken back to its base roots. The Outer Robe is in fact the passive state and can be likened to the circumference of the circle while the centre is receptive to the penetrating masculine force.

The Magical Experience of Binah is said to be one of Sorrow. By association it can be shown that within the feminine archetype of the Mother her functions are to give birth and watch her children through life. Though motherhood is linked to other Sephiroth when applied to Binah it gains a special significance, but here it is the parting aspect we are concerned with. There are many analogies we can associate here such as the mourning of Isis, the suffering of the blessed virgin at the cross, etc. For in nature motherhood gives birth then separation occurs which shows the sorrows of the self as applied to development.

Two titles given to Binah are of particular interest, the first is Ama - the dark sterile mother, and Aima - the bright fertile mother. The former is derived from the Hebrew root AM meaning "Mother, origin, source, family measure and matrix". This in turn was derived from the Arabic which (whether as a noun or a verb) has much the same meaning. Aima is taken from AI which means the essence of fixation of the Will. Aima was originally Be Aima, which in the esoteric sense, shows the mother impregnated with the son. The Zohar says: 'In His place He is not manifested, neither is He known, when He is associated with

the mother, Be-AMA then is He made known (otherwise symbolised) in the mother, BAIMA'. This concept is more easily grasped in terms of polarity, for in descent on the Tree Binah is impregnated with the sperm from Chokmah - AIMA. In terms of AMA the sterile Mother, she has yet to merge with Chokmah for the reunification of the Anima and Animus.

The influence of Atziluth on Binah is YHVH ELOHIM which stands for 'Lord my God'. The Sephira of Binah, according to the Zohar, is BN IH which is Ben Yah, Son of IH which is an amalgamation of Chokmah and Binah. In this instance the son redeems the mother through regression. This takes the essence back to the womb, the matrix, mother of us all, from which all things come and go. For here Binah is the Great Mother, Gaea. The thing to remember is here Binah absorbs and revitalises all who come to her but not without complete change.

The Briatic world of Binah is governed by the Archangel Tzaphkiel (which means contemplation of God) and indicates that nothing escapes Tzaphkiel's scrutiny, this meaning is further strengthened by the application of Gematria to Tzaphkiel = 311 which means to extend, view attentively and make equal. All these are of course differing aspects of Tzaphkiel's nature. As the Watcher, Tzaphkiel uses the Briatic influence to observe and record. He is in effect a balancer or equaliser for these energies by presenting both sides for consideration. It is his job to present the total case, not to decide the outcome. In simple terms the Briatic influence of Binah is to make visible or

bring into manifestation so that other forces of this Sephira can act upon them.

In Binah the Yetziratic influence is through the angelic Choir called the Aralim, which when translated is "The Valiant Ones", and is sometimes called "the Order of Thrones". The Aralim utilise the principle of Heroics relating to the defence of the throne of Binah. Binah is a Sephira of new life and formation for those that come through the Abyss. The Aralim patrol the boundaries of their world and hold back the dark forces of the Abyss that try to escape into the higher realms, as well as rescuing the souls that make it through the Abyss on their upward journey. The Aralim are protectors of the womb, the place of growth, it is their duty to allow growth to eventuate so that the evolutionary should continue its journey back to its source.

The World of Assiah brings the planetary influences of Saturn into Binah. When applying planets to Sephiroth like Binah it is extremely important to utilise their esoteric meanings as well as the mundane. The astrological influence of Saturn is that of a teacher who brings the student through to reach maturity and takes on the father image. One of the earlier archetype images showed the apparently evil aspect of Saturn as a giant who devoured his own children, which typified the self destructive forces that can be unleashed by this planet. Now Saturn in one instance is the concept of analytical and rational thought. The dark aspect of Saturn however is a deep undercurrent that often

surfaces and hence a certain fearful association is given to this planet. With discipline on the positive side and fearfulness on the negative, Saturn is indeed a planet of vast changes.

The Qlipothic element associated to Binah are the Satorial and are known as the Concealers or the Destroyers, whose form and appearance are as gigantic black veiled heads with horns and hideous eyes, they are followed by evil centaurs which are called the Seiriel because of their hairiness. Interference is a good word to describe the Qlipothic influence of this Sephira on human kind. The energy here reaches out and tries to interfere as much as possible with the development of man on the evolutionary scale. The Satorial try to keep man in Assiah by making him appear dull, stupid and a slave to his senses so that he cannot reason that there is a godhead in Kether in the upper Tree that he must aspire to. The Satorial prevent any form of education that exists in a systematic format. In short, they try to prevent the esoteric orders from establishing themselves. Also, the Satorial give energy and direction to those who establish the esoteric schools that constantly adore and bring forth the energy of the adverse Tree.

The first set of Tarot symbolism attributed to Binah is the 4 threes which show realisation of action owing to the Prince being produced, the central symbol of each card. It shows action, definitely commenced for good or evil. The second set of tarot symbolism associated to this Sephira are the four Queens, who are depicted as seated on Thrones representing the forces of

He of the divine name in each suit; the mother and the bringer forth of Material Forces; a force which develops and realises that of the King; a force steady and unshaken but not rapid, though enduring. It is therefore symbolised by a figure seated upon a throne but also clothed in armour.

Nephthys is one of the Egyptian godforms associated to Binah. She is the sister of Isis and a personification of the barren aunt which is shown by her love for Horus. The mother instinct and rebirth principle are polarised in the myths of Nephthys and the Scorpions. In relation to this, her nephew Horus was bitten by a Scorpion and killed. The lamentations of sorrow and grief of Isis and the love for her nephew moved Nephthys to contact the Goddess of Scorpions who in turn urged her to pray to Ra for help. On hearing her prayers Ra, stopped his celestial boat and sent down Thoth, who brought Horus back to life. Hence the concept of both rebirth and sorrow associated in one myth. Isis is of course another association here and her grief is epitomised by the grieving mother concept. Nephthys, through her actions brings in another association to Binah, that of compassion.

The Christian concept of the blessed Virgin Mary is one association to Binah as are the Roman Gods and Goddesses. Juno is one such example, wife of Jupiter, King of the Gods. Because of this Juno took the titles of Queen of Heaven and 'The Ox eyed Mother'. Her specialities were the protection of women and marriages. Hecate is another such example and was one of the

mighty Titans. She was the daughter of Perseus and Asteria and taught the esoteric arts of sorcery and witchcraft and was the goddess of the Underworld. Binah is also Cybele, mother of the olympic gods and wife of Cronus and became the supreme mother diety. Demeter is another Greek diety (who protected marriages) that can also be associated to Binah, as can Hera (daughter of Rhea and Cronus and sister to Zeus).

The precious stone of Binah is the Sapphire, which was originally worn by royalty as a protective talisman and was generally set in bracelets and necklaces. The oral tradition of this stone is traced back to Moses, whom it is said received the word of god enscribed on tablets of Sapphire. In later years the Ecclesiastical aspects of this stone became evident when it was worn by high officials of the Church. The stone in fact was used (in ring form) as a symbol of 'Mother Church'. Also legend has it that it can be used as an antidote against poison. Albert Magnus cites the Sapphire as being able to remove all impurities from the body. The Sapphire as a curing gem worked more on eye diseases, boils and tumours than any other afflicted illness. The method utilised was simply one of just rubbing the stone over the troublesome area.

The plants of Binah are many but generally speaking the Cypress and the Opium Poppy are two of particular interest. Cypress means 'Death or Mourning' while the Opium Poppy governs dreams. Just about any narcotic plant though can be associated to Binah. A further list of some of these is as follows:

Agrimony, Amaranth, Asafortida, Beech, Belladonna, Birch, Bloodroot, Cinquefoil, Comfrey, Copal, Dragons Wort, Elder, Fern, Flaxseed, Goutwort, Hemlock, Hemp (Indian), Horse Tail, Mandrake, Monkshood, Mugwort, Mullein, Mushroom, Nightshade, Onion, Parsnip, Patchouli, Plantain, Poplar, Rue, St. Johns Wort, Solomons Seal, Tansey, Tobacco, Vervain and Wintergreen.

Liquid Silver is the mineral drug of Binah and is associated to renewed energy 'like a child', a state synonymous with the rebirth principle - both physically and psychologically. Silver, as a drug, helps the digestive tract and the nervous system. Like all drugs, Silver must be given in moderate doses or poison will set in (causing such things as sensitivity to light. Applied externally the Silver drug can remove skin encrustations and also works as an equilibrium restorer, helping those who daydream too much. For those individuals who are affected by the Lunar influence which is sometimes called Moon sickness, Silver can remove the adverse affects by stabilising both mental and emotional health during the crucial period of Full Moon.

A vegetable drug associated with Binah is Belladonna. It is composed of Hyoscyamine, Aropine, Scopolamine, Belladonna along with other ingredients. The effects of this drug in herbal terms are Narcotic, Nervine, Diuretic, Sedative, Mydriatic, Febrifuge and Tonic. The drug has a bitter taste, is odourless and is obtained from the root of the plant. The name Belladonna is derived from the Greek which roughly translated means to be inflexible. A herbal tincture can be made from the leaf to help

get rid of ulcers, though it is stressed that the drug is dangerous and must be administered carefully.

Myrrh as a perfume was extremely important in ancient times and its uses are said to have originated in Ethiopia. Its sacred value was for anointing the dead at funeral ceremonies. In the biblical sense Myrrh was one of the gifts brought to the infant Jesus by the three wise men. Myrrh was known to be used in Egypt around 2000 B.C. though it is speculated that this was a perfume of Atlantis. The magical effects of its aroma on the body of the anointed was to keep the auric residue in empathy with the planet Saturn, the planet of death, so that the transition would go over smoothly. This prevents an elemental from trying to take over the dead body. Another perfume of Binah is Civet which was used to overcome impotence. This is obtained from the pouch (near the sexual organs) of a member of the cat family. The Civet secretions used by this animal is one of territorial markings. In commercial use it must be aged to attain its full odour.

The Triangle is the geometric figure of Binah and epitomises the threefold nature of the universe. The three lines are from three polarised vibrations, positive, negative and neutral which is the central influence between the two and produces the stabilising effect. The actual direction of the triangles apex though is extremely important, for if the apex is placed facing any of the four cardinal points the entire meaning of the triangle is altered. For example if the apex is pointing South the triangle takes on a feminine outlook - a passive nature, while if pointing

to the North it is exactly the opposite. Facing East the Apex indicates the direction of renewal and growth, while if the Apex is pointing to the West it indicates darkness and the completion of a full cycle. The Chinese use the triangle as a symbol of life while the Christian concept equates it with the mysteries of the Blessed Trinity. The Greeks used it as the letter Delta, the entrance to life.

The Vishuddha chakra center (at the Throat) is associated to Binah. Its colouring has been described as a smokey purple and its geometric symbol is a downward pointing triangle in a circle within 16 petals. On each petal a vowel is written which in turn relates to a specific diety. Within the triangle of Vishuddha there is also an elephant which is a symbol of the strength of this centre. The spiritual influence of Vishuddha is speech (sound or vibration). This chakra can free man of his destiny or karmic ties by shifting the entire life forces to the spiritual. Meditation on this chakra will release the cosmic knowledge of past, present and future. On the physical level once the correct vibration of this centre is attained one can be free from the diseases of the body, because the negative influences (of the spiritual which cause these diseases) are understood and held in check. The gland this chakra covers is the Thyroid.

The Egyptian concept of the Anima Mundi (Soul of the World) was the 'Ba'. The Anima Mundi is also one association of Binah but its Egyptian counterpart is of particular interest. Because the Ba represented such a vast association a multitude of dieties

were associated to it. Nevertheless the principle of Anima Mundi (as it is called today) is deeply manifested in Ba. While the World Body was Osiris the World Soul was the force that manifested behind it. The Platonic concept of Ba was called Anima Media Natura. In Kabbalistic concepts the Ba is Adam Kadmon while to the Christian it is the Cosmic Christ.

The Alchemical application to Binah is Salt. This is the divine essence of material substance which is laid bare through the process of decay. Some have called this the process of Understanding - through suffering. The relationship of salt to the material is through the earth element, the feminine fixed process. It is also important to note there is a strong Luna affinity as well. Salt in alchemical terms is part of the first matter, which is the stabilising factor in the unification of the two principles of Sulphur and Mercury.

The Rosicrucian grade associated to Binah is called Magister Templi - Master of the Temple - and is signified by the numbers 8=3. The signification of this grade is reflected in the title, especially the term Master which means that one has in fact mastered the technical matters of the Second Order which is the structural confines of the Rosicrucian philosophy. The Third Order is one that in fact transcends structures and is the plane where masters meet. It is the function of one who attains this level to guide and change the Second Order within the scale of the evolutionary process.

ASSOCIATIONS

TITLE:	BINAH, UNDERSTANDING
TITLE IN MICROCOSM:	RIGHT SIDE OF THE FACE
KABBALISTIC SOUL:	NESHAMAH
ATZILUTH NAME:	YHVH ELOHIM
BRIATIC NAME:	TZAPHKIEL
YETZIRATIC NAME:	ARALIM
ASSIAH - PLANET NAME:	SATURN
QLIPPOTH:	THE SATORIAL
HINDU CONCEPT:	VISHUDDHA CHAKRA
EGYPTIAN DIETY:	NEPHTHYS, ISIS
GREEK DIETY:	DEMETER
ROMAN DIETY:	JUNO
GEMSTONE:	SAPPHIRE
MAGICAL WEAPON:	THE OUTER ROBE OF CONCEALMENT
MAGICAL EXPERIENCE:	SORROW
AROMATIC:	MYRRH & CIVET
VEGETABLE DRUG:	BELLADONNA
MINERAL DRUG:	LIQUID SILVER
ALCHEMICAL ASSOCIATION:	SALT
PLANT:	CYPRESS & OPIUM POPPY
ANIMAL:	WOMAN
TAROT ASSOCIATION:	THE QUEENS, THE 4 THREES
VICE:	AVARICE
VIRTUE:	SILENCE
GEOMETRIC ASSOCIATION:	TRIANGLE
ROSICRUCIAN GRADE:	MAGISTER TEMPLI