

Chapter 1

Background

FROM TENTS TO TEMPLES TO RABBINICAL SECTS

The universal mystical spirituality of the children of Abraham is a robust, precious, and little known heritage upon which the fabric of the Judaic, Christian, Islamic, and perhaps even the Tantric religions are woven. In this book, that heritage is called the Mystical Qabalah.¹ Within the context of Rabbinical Judaism, this mystical tradition has come to be known as the Jewish Kabalah, and in Islam, as Sufism (Arabic *tasawwuf*). The Christian Cabala emerged from the mystical side of Christianity, which developed as a parallel tradition to Pauline dogma as it diverged and became estranged from its Judaic roots. The Christian Cabala evolved as a way to harmonize Jewish kabbalistic doctrines with Christian theology. The precise usage of the word *Qabalah* to denote the ideas and practices of the esoteric teachings and the secrets of the **Torah** emerged from the circle of Yitza'aq the Blind (1200CE), and was used in the same context by Eleazar of Worms (beginning of the thirteenth century).²

The word *Qabalah* (קבלה) lit. receiving, also “welcoming of God”) alludes to a dynamic state of direct communication and mystical union of the individual soul with the Divine. In that sense, it is synonymous with the Sanskrit word *Yoga* (lit. union with or absorption in the Divine). The rich spiritual potential of the Mystical Qabalah has long been obscured and overshadowed by the preponderant visibility of the Magical or Practical Qabalah, whose disciples pursue power as a tool of their own will. The wonderful possibilities for deep spiritual awakening, intensified devotion, and selfless service to the Divine Will offered by the Mystical Qabalah have also been made difficult to access by the strict *halachic* barriers and obfuscating intellectual hurdles erected by Rabbinical Jewish Kabbalists.

The formal prohibition against the study and practice of the Qabalah was lifted in 1540 CE through the efforts of the medieval Jewish Kabbalist Abraham Azulai. The prohibition had been instituted largely in reaction to the disastrous consequences of the false Messiah Shimeon Bar Kochba, who led a revolt in 135 CE that resulted in a short-lived independent Jewish state.³ Over a century after Azulai, a sense of fear and taboo regarding the Qabalah arose strongly once again among the rabbinate in reaction to the troubling popularity of the apostate Sabbatai Zevi. Zevi was ascribed messianic stature by his “prophet” Nathan of Gaza, and embraced as such by several million followers spread across the Middle East. The phenomenon of Zevi was further compounded by the widespread hermetic adulteration of Jewish qabalistic teachings by European occultists, and a growing tendency among Christian Cabalists to attempt to establish that the true hidden meaning of the Qabalah supports the efficacy of Christian dogma.

The widespread anti-qabalistic sentiment promulgated by both the rabbinical and Pauline orthodox authority has been accompanied by a considerable amount of misinformation and fear mongering. Even those rabbis and Talmudic scholars who do not regard the Mystical Qabalah as evil and malicious echo the injunctions that it should only be studied by married Jewish men over the age of forty who have studied the *Torah* and *Talmud* for many years. In all fairness, it should be noted that there are a substantial number of Chasidim and other religious Jews who embrace and encourage the study and practice of the Jewish Kabbalah without distinction of age or gender. However, they represent a very small minority, and firmly regard the Qabalah as the exclusive property of Orthodox Judaism. The overall result is that the vast majority of contemporary Jews, most of whom are not orthodox, have little knowledge of their own immensely rich mystical tradition.

The lingering barriers and attitudes of exclusivity regarding the study of the Jewish Kabbalah serve to perpetuate a long standing sexist and elitist mindset that discourages individuals from pursuing direct mystical experience outside the context of orthodox religious observance as established by the Pharisees subsequent to the Diaspora.⁴ These attitudes also serve to

solidify the position of orthodox rabbis as intermediaries and authorities in the dispensation of the Jewish religion. The authority of the Pharisees evolved from the growing prominence of the academies of Jewish learning that started to appear in the late fifth century BCE under the tolerant regime of the Persians, after hundreds of years of Assyrian and Babylonian repression. The word *Pharisee* comes from the word *parush*, meaning ‘one separated’ i.e. one who withdraws himself out of motives for piety. Among the Jews thus separated, there arose not only differences in social customs, but also in doctrinal views—and specifically, an oral tradition. This oral tradition not only outlined a rigorous routine of lifestyle and conduct, but also created special learning and knowledge that was the exclusive domain of the members of the sect. In this way, a community of such learned men developed. Their special knowledge drew an excess of reverential regard from the masses of people who were not privy to it, for which Master Yeshuvah (Jesus) and later Master Muhammad chastised them. The masses hence became the laity outside of this elite community of Pharisees.

The intense and complicated levitical focus of the rabbinical sect developed from the codes of behavior and traditions institutionalized by the priesthood (*kohanim*) of the centralized Temples in Jerusalem. The strict codes reflected the extraordinary level of levitical purity that had to be maintained to enact the high level rituals performed in the First Temple, which housed the Ark of the Covenant. Within that context, the priests needed to be like angels who attend the Throne of the Lord **יְהוָה**. The *kohanic* codes had a significant impact on the development of the Pharisaic rabbinate centuries later. They were redacted much later in the *Talmud Yerushalmi* and *Talmud Babli*, which contain voluminous commentary garnered from over four centuries of rabbinical dialectic.

The *Talmud* is composed of the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara*. The *Mishnah* is a collection of scriptural exegesis attributed to various heralded Palestinian rabbis, many of whom were associated with rabbinical academies from the fifth through second centuries BCE. The tractates of the *Mishnah* were edited and codified circa 220 CE, and form the core of the *Talmud*. The bulk of the *Talmud*, called the *Gemara* (lit. completion), is a

collection of discussions among later Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis regarding passages and topics in the *Mishnah*. The *Gemara* of Jerusalem was formally compiled circa 430 CE, and the *Gemara* of Babylon circa 530 CE. The *Talmud Yerushalmi* is composed of three volumes and the *Talmud Babli* has sixty-four volumes, reflecting the relative complexity of the environments and cultural milieus in which they developed.

The Pharisaic rabbinate emerged as the dominant sect in Judaism, occupying the seat of its orthodox authority. It peaked with the virtual political and economic control of the Temple of Jerusalem by the Sadducees and Pharisees in the Hasmonean period, after the liberation of Jerusalem by the Maccabees. The many warnings and stern admonitions pronounced by a succession of Hebrew prophets went unheeded. When Master Yeshuvah came, he berated the widespread corruption and abuse of power among the Sadducees and Pharisees, and struck out against the moneychangers within the Temple (which had become the biggest bank in the Middle East). The dominance of the Pharisaic rabbinical sect solidified even further in the Diaspora after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Except for the Karaite and Sabbataian movements, this dominance has remained largely unchallenged to this day, though cracks in the wall are starting to appear.

Few Jews give much thought to the idea that the religion of their desert Hebrew forebears might have been radically different in practice than Rabbinical Judaism. The word “rabbi” is not to be found in the Hebrew *Torah* and only finds limited usage in the entire *Tanakh* (*Torah*, *Prophets*, and *Writings*), where it is used to denote tribal leaders and other authorities.⁵ Master Yeshuvah told his disciples not to take the title “rabbi,” and taught that the Lord יהוה is the only true Rabbi.⁶ The anthropological and linguistic elements that shaped the nomadic Israelite tribes are topics of much conjecture and dialogue among Ancient Near Eastern scholars from a variety of disciplines. The first book of the *Torah* (called *Torah B’reshith*) says that Abraham came from “Ur of the Chaldees.” What were the history, ethnic composition, and cultural and religious milieus from which Abraham came? How was his faith influenced by the cosmologies of the Sumerians, Egyptians, and Canaanites? Was

the original Hebrew alphabet developed before Abraham's time as a way to alphabetically represent Sumerian cuneiform glyphs? Or, did it originate in the mystical manual on the Hebrew letters ascribed to him, called the *Sefer Yetzirah* (**Book of Formation**)? As the vehicle for a fresh expression of the universal mystical spirituality promoted directly in the face of widespread idol worship, how did Abraham and the Israelite tribes practice their religion?

The life of the early Israelites would have had much in common with all nomadic tribes who dwelled in tents under the starry skies of the desert savannas of Canaan and the Sinai Peninsula. Such tribes were largely extended families who tended their flocks and engaged in the labors necessary to feed and clothe themselves. It is likely that the religious observances of the Hebrews would have involved quintessential spiritual practices dating from antiquity and found in all monotheistic religions. These practices include: ablution, prostration, invocation of Divine Names, devotional singing, prayer offerings, ritual use of sacraments and sacred regard for the elements, community-building rituals based on the mystical significance of rites of passage and seasons of nature, and the special treatment of guests. In the *Torah*, there are numerous accounts of holy figures ascending to and worshipping at power spots on special mountains. There are also several accounts of the ritual use of a stone *lingam*, over which was poured a libation of oil or perhaps milk. Numerous passages in the *Torah* also poignantly allude to the experiential transformation of individual consciousness in Divine Union, and the presence and importance of mystics and awakened souls throughout the history of the Hebrews and Jews.

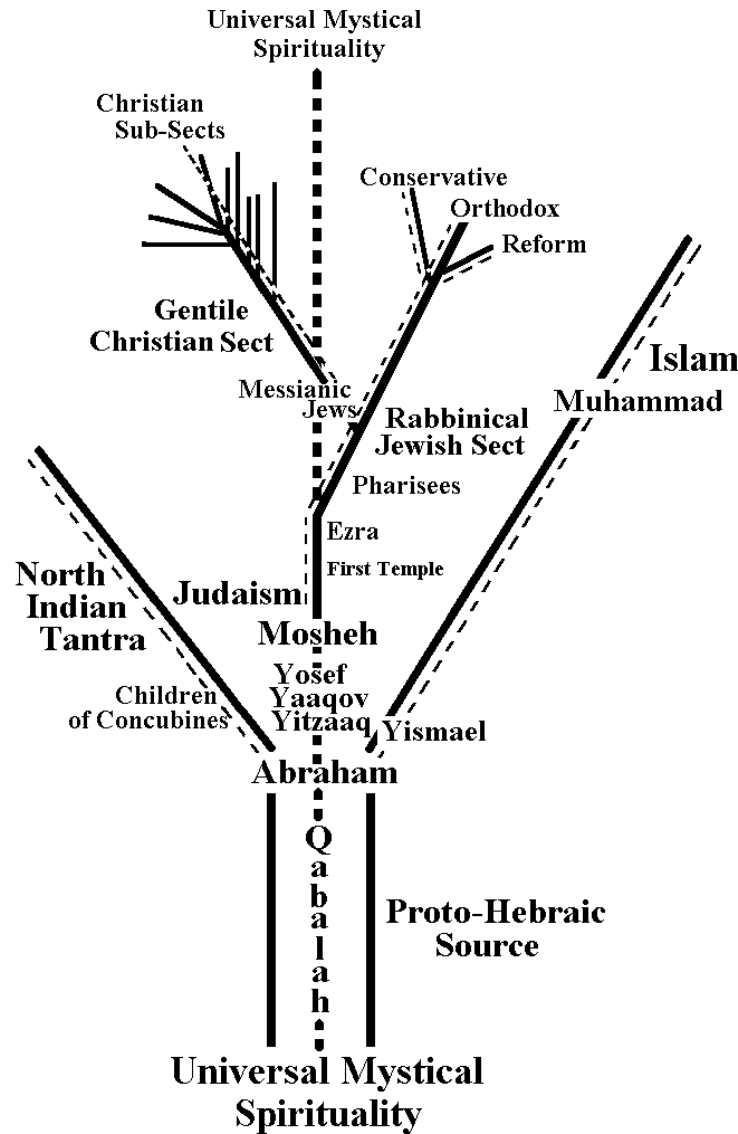
The monotheism of Master Abraham did not simply mean that there was only one God, but rather that *the Divine Source alone exists*. Hence, the mystical focus of the early Hebrews would have centered upon the universality and pervasiveness of the Divine Source within all beings on all planes of existence. Group ritual would have underscored and celebrated this relationship. There were no synagogues and no rabbis: there were tents and there were revered elders. There was not yet an ever-more complicated code of behavior used as a fence to stave

off the adulteration and dilution of their culture and traditions. The biggest impact on their routines of life would have come from dramatic changes in weather patterns, extraordinary natural disasters such as drought and earthquakes (the Sinai Peninsula is situated among massive tectonic faults), and violent dynastic changes in the city-states around which they wandered and dwelled. Perhaps conditions in Ur in Southern Iraq warranted that Abraham leave and migrate along the ancient silk route into Syria. The idea of “Jewish Renewal” i.e. the return to the roots of Judaism has recently come into vogue. But a real return to the roots of Judaism would be a return to the religion of the ancient desert Hebrews.

WHAT IS THE MYSTICAL QABALAH OF THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM?

The Mystical Qabalah of the children of Abraham reflects an ancient mystical transmission that preceded and supersedes any of the individual religious vessels through which it has been filtered and colored. Orthodox Jews sometimes refer to this transmission as the “Noachic Kabbalah,” linking it in name to Noah who survived the Great Flood. Outside the rigid myopia of compartmentalized religious dogma, the Hebrew, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and perhaps even the Tantric traditions, can be seen as branches of a single tree. These branches all share a common trunk and roots: the universal mystical spirituality of the absolute unity of the Divine, and the primacy of love, surrender, and discrimination as the means for spiritual awakening from dualistic sleep. Each of the branches is built around variations of the same totality archetype anchored in the same negatively existent substratum. Yet, the religious teachings of the different branches have somehow evolved so that the variations have become mutually exclusive. While the Mystical Qabalah stands as the very foundation of the Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic religious dispensations, few contemporary rabbis, priests, or imams study its ideas or engage in its practices within the context of their respective faiths.

FIGURE 1.1 Tree of the Children of Abraham



The ideas and practices of the Mystical Qabalah find their counterparts (albeit differently clothed) in virtually every other mystical tradition, all of which present their own unique version of the same universal teachings. Like every other mystical tradition, the Mystical Qabalah presents a worldview that is ultimately rooted in a negatively existent Mysterious Unknown about which Nothing can be said, a “One without a second.”⁷

And, like every other mystical tradition, the Mystical Qabalah contains three seemingly contradictory operative perspectives that correspond to three levels of awareness. Vedantic philosophy calls these three levels of awareness dualistic (*dvaita*), qualified non-dualistic (*vasishtadvaita*), and unqualified non-dualistic (*advaita*).⁸

Within the context of the Mystical Qabalah, the dualistic level of awareness sees the Lord יהוה and His/Her Creation (i.e. matter and spirit) as separate. It is also called the “Fall of Adam.” This is the vantage of the normal waking state of most humans. An aspirant with this perspective would generally have a predominant mood toward their Chosen Ideal, regarding themselves as a servant to their Divine Master, or as a child to their Divine Father or Mother, etc. The qualified non-dual level in the Qabalah regards the Creation as a Great Unity in the Name יהוה rooted in the negatively existent substratum. From this perspective, the Mysterious Unknown (called *Ayn* lit. “Nothing” in the Qabalah), which is Itself eternally devoid of attributes, exists in divine sport as always possessed of all attributes. In this respect, Sufism distinguishes between the Divine Essence (*fana*) and the Divine Attributes (*fala*), and Mystical Christianity between the Father and the Son. In Hindu mystical scriptures, this is called *Swagatabheda*—literally “a difference within Itself.” This “difference” is said to spontaneously arise as a sort of whim of the Divine to know Itself.

In the Mystical Qabalah, the “difference within Itself” is alluded to by a doctrine that distinguishes the Mysterious Unknown (*Ayn*) as having two aspects described as “Faces.” One is called “Vast Face,” denoting a station of infinite consciousness devoid of differentiation and manifest activity. The other is called “Small Face,” denoting a station of finite consciousness encompassing all differentiated, manifest activity. Small Face is also the immense I-ness of the Divine Personality endowed with all possible attributes. When this I-ness is turned outward to the Creation in the Lower Worlds, it is stationed in the consciousness that “I am All.” When this I-ness is turned inward and centered in the Upper Worlds, it has the exclusive awareness that “I am Nothing (*Ayn*).” In this sense, Vast Face can be thought of as a Cosmic Mind in which an infinite number of Small Face waves

of ideas can arise from and return to Nowhere like a dream, and in which all Name and Form emanate, manifest, and dissolve. In the Qabalah, the Lord יהוה is the immense I-ness that knows Itself as Pure Being in the unmanifest supernal realm, and pervades everything from *Elohim* down to the lowest creature in the lower worlds of manifestation. This supreme, unifying I-ness is worshipped in Christianity as *Christos*, in Islam as *Allah*, and in the Tantras as the Divine Mother *Kali*. It is worshipped in Hinduism as *Ishvara*, in Tibetan Buddhism as *Vajradhara* or *Avalokiteshvara*, in Taoism as the Divine Mother *Kwan Yin*, and in the Polynesian *Kahuna* tradition as the Goddess *Pele*.⁹ An individual with this level of awareness directly perceives the innate identity of themselves and all beings with that One Indwelling Spirit. The perspective of unqualified non-dualism in the Qabalah is that the *Ayn* alone exists and all separate existence is illusory, that a manifest Creation on all its levels has no basis in Reality, and that all the shells of embodied existence are empty.¹⁰

It cannot be underscored strongly enough that these three distinctions exist only within the finite human intellect. They are not mutually exclusive doctrines, but represent a gradation in consciousness. All aspirants will be attracted to one of these perspectives according to their natural spiritual constitution and stage of development. One who embraces the awareness of a simple devotee i.e. who worships the Name and Form of his/her Chosen Ideal as separate from themselves, would not be attracted to and may even strongly reject a non-dual perspective that denies such separation or any real existence to Name and Form. Conversely, one who has the innate sense that the Root Reality has two aspects, one without attributes and the other an intelligent, unified source of all attributes, would not find any sensibility in either a purely dualistic or a purely non-dual perspective. In practice, we find that the vast majority of aspirants in these latter days resonate with the first two categories. Few souls have the concentration, discrimination, discipline, and force of will to pursue a purely non-dual path.

Among Qabalists, as with aspirants in all other mystical traditions, we find that the apparently disparate distinctions described above give rise to philosophical arguments and irresolvable debates. All of these viewpoints are valid within the context of their own yogic practices, and we should not judge or condemn anyone for adhering to any one of them over the others. Any one of these perspectives taken to their ultimate end will arrive at the same experience of Pure Being that transcends all such distinctions.

The Mystical Qabalah summarily involves the ascension of the Central Column of the Tree of Life to progressively unite with the consciousness of Small and Vast Face, and to pierce the profound spiritual mysteries alluded to in the *Torah* and other primary sources. Many religious students of the Qabalah confuse the intentions of the Mystical Qabalah with the necessity to cultivate a high degree of levitical purity and righteousness required to ascend the Column of the Right on the Tree of Life, which is called the “Way of the Angels of *Elohim*.” Such levitical purity is not required to the ascend of the Central Column of the Tree, and the rigid rabbinical restrictions regarding the study of the Qabalah only within the context of orthodox *halachic* observance are not necessarily relevant to the purely yogic intentions of the Mystical Qabalah. The distinctions and terms regarding the different paths up the Tree will be explained in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Among the primary written works of the Mystical Qabalah of the children of Abraham, few remain that are entirely faithful to their original versions. Many of them are replete with corruptions, and have taken on additions and commentary often undifferentiated from the original texts. Despite extensive evidence brought forth by linguistic experts to the contrary, most orthodox and fundamentalist adherents in each of the respective branches of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam regard their respective scriptures as completely intact and unviolated reproductions of the originals. Many English translations of the scriptures are flawed by dogmatic distinctions and/or a low level of understanding. Many of the commentaries on the primary texts, and much of the secondary material available, are built

upon expositions of earlier writers who possessed little direct mystical experience of what they wrote.

In rejecting the orthodox prohibitions regarding the study and practice of the Mystical Qabalah, it would be reasonable and balanced to point out that there is some inherent danger in the *overzealous* pursuit of qabalistic disciplines. Many of the problems arise when aspirants are misled by unqualified teachers, have pre-existing mental imbalances, or when aspirants engage in activities related to the side columns of the Tree of Life. Problems can also manifest when individuals underestimate the power of the root mantra and do too much too soon. On the other hand, relatively few problems have been seen in individuals who have the guidance of a qualified mentor and engage in a slow and steady progression through the purely yogic disciplines associated with the Mystical Qabalah.

MYSTICAL QABALAH AND PRACTICAL/HERMETIC KABBALAH

The Qabalah is traditionally traced back to Adam and Eve. It has been maintained in its purest forms by unbroken lineages of known and mostly unknown masters, saints, and prophets over thousands of years. The practices of the Mystical Qabalah, passed down from teacher to student, generally involve a variety of yogic disciplines that are rooted in scriptural revelations and primary texts. The highest intentions and experiences of the Mystical Qabalah correlate with those of all other mystical traditions. At the same time, and without contradiction, each mystical tradition has its own unique totality archetypes, scriptures, Messiahs and great souls, and styles of observances.

The disciplines of the Mystical Qabalah are distinct from those practiced by magicians, wizards, and sorcerers who seek to acquire creative and/or destructive power, depending on what paths they traverse on the Tree of Life. The occult disciplines of wizards and magicians are often called the Practical, Hermetic, or Magical Qabalah. Practical Qabalah has its ancient roots in the “Thirteen Enochian Keys” of Enoch son of Qain, along with a highly eclectic admixture of material taken from Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and other non-Hebrew sources. It is important

not to confuse Enoch son of Qain with Enoch son of Yared. The former Enoch was the grandson of Adam and the son after whom Qain was said to name a city.¹¹ Enoch son of Yared was the great, great, great, great grandson of Adam, and the one who “walked with *Elohim*” and was transformed into *Metatron* (מטטרון).¹² The “Thirteen Enochian Keys” of Enoch son of Qain are reflected in such works as **The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage**, the **Greater and Lesser Keys of Solomon**, and medieval grimoires such as the **Armadel**, **Goetia/Lemegeton**, etc.¹³ The primary text of the Mystical Qabalah that appears to occupy a central place of importance in the Hermetic Qabalah is the *Sefer Yetzirah* (**Book of Formation**). However, from what is written in many of the books of Hermetic Qabalah, it is apparent that the structure of the Tree of Life, nature of the Inner Court, and function of the letter-gates as explicated by the *Sefer Yetzirah* are widely misunderstood.

The two most prominent contemporary schools of Practical or Hermetic Qabalah are the Golden Dawn and the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.), which still exist and continue to attract followers today. The Golden Dawn was founded in the late nineteenth century in the heyday of the Victorian Period. The document reputed to be at the foundation of the Golden Dawn system was the **Cypher Manuscript** attributed to Fraulein Sprengel. The **Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage** was also an important document for the Golden Dawn and a significant influence on the controversial Aleister Crowley, who broke with the Golden Dawn and formed the Order Templis Orientis. The O.T.O. was founded primarily upon works of sexual mysteries and Masonic Charters, and incorporated the Abramelin material at a later date. Until very recently, almost all books in English on the subject of the Qabalah, regardless of their title or professed subject, could be traced to members of these orders or to orders that evolved from them. While these two orders (and their respective leading lights—MacGregor Mathers and Aleister Crowley) gained the most notoriety and “product packaging” among recent Practical Qabalists, more powerful Magical Qabalists do exist, and have existed unknown to the world at large.

MYSTICAL QABALAH AND RABBINICAL JEWISH KABBALAH

Only a very small percentage of all Jews study their own mystical tradition. The vast majority of people who do study the Jewish Kabbalah are mainstream orthodox and Chasidic Jews of European descent. It is but a footnote for most conservative and reform Jews, though there is a resurgence of interest among those in the Jewish Renewal Movement. The vast majority of the written works of Jewish Kabbalah originated or “reemerged” within the last 800 years. Rabbinical Jews spend many years studying the voluminous Babylonian *Talmud* in order to learn and carefully adhere to the detailed *halachic* interpretations of how to fulfill the 613 “*mitzvot*,” or righteous deeds, prescribed in the extant version of the Ezra *Torah*. They generally regard the current version of the *Torah* to be the exact original, faithful in every detail to the one penned by Master Mosheh. Hence, they consider every word and every line to be irrefutably “delivered by the hand of God.”

Like all traditional religions that center primarily upon a conventional, dualistic understanding of scriptures, the principal intention of the majority of religious Jews is to cultivate purity and righteousness for the redemption of their souls and to “secure a place in heaven in the company of the righteous.” From a qabalistic perspective, this would correspond to ascending the Tree via the Column of the Right “Way of the Angels of *Elohim*”) to become like angels and gain access to the lower heavens. While many contemporary religious students of the Jewish Kabbalah make pretense to mystical aspirations, it has become more of an intellectual exercise than the active pursuit of mystical awakening for most of them. The small minority who do aspire to mystical awakening are an eclectic group. They range from mainstream orthodox Jews to the sect of Chasidus founded by Israel ben Eliezer (1698-1760), known as the *Baal Shem Tov* (“Master of the Good Name”), and Nachman of Breslav.¹⁴ The bulk of the mainstream orthodox Jewish Kabbalists focus primarily on the *Sefer HaZohar* (**Book of Splendor**) and the *Etz HaChayyim* (**Tree of Life**). They engage in practices of spiritual refinement (*avodah*) and meditation (*devekut*, “cleaving to God”) gleaned from the writings left by

Abraham Abulafia, Azriel of Gerona (disciple of Yitza'aq the Blind), Chayyim Vital (recorder of the teachings of Yitza'aq Luria), Dov Baer (Mezheritsker Maggid and successor to Israel ben Eliezer), Nachman of Breslav, and others. These practices include a variety of visualization techniques, breathing exercises, movements coordinated with the permutation and combination of Hebrew letters, mantric intonation of sacred phrases, meditative prayer, and chanting devotional songs.

A central contemplative practice among the Lubavitcher Chasidim who study the Jewish Kabbalah is called *Hitbonenuth*. *Hitbonenuth* is a practice involving intense directed thought within the context of proper intention (*kavanah*). The process of *Hitbonenuth* and how it differs from passive thought-meditation is described in detail in a Hebrew manuscript roughly 200 years old, titled *Ma'amorim Ketzarim*, written by the first Lubavitcher Rebbe Schneur Zalman of Liadi.¹⁵ *Hitbonenuth*, as described by Rabbi Zalman, “requires intense mental exertion to increase one's awareness of the open, simple and revealed meaning of an idea, to scrutinize and elaborate on a concept's many details, facets and ramifications, and not to allow the mind to contract and settle on one point alone.”

Rabbinical Jews often feel that any qabalistic practice outside the context of religious Jewish observance is not legitimately connected with the mystical tradition of the children of Abraham. They generally regard such Qabalah as either hybrid variants adulterated by admixtures of ideas from other mystical traditions, or as the purview of occultists and the Practical Qabalah. This is not surprising. The orthodoxy in all organized religions has historically viewed the study and practice of mystical ideas as a threat to their authority. At the same time, in order to cull new members from older, often indigenous populations, they have on numerous occasions absorbed and assimilated mystical ideas and holy observances that posed no serious threat, and with which the newcomers could identify and feel comfortable. To see a clear example of this, consider how many of the so-called “pagan” traditions (ignorantly labeled as satanic witchcraft by fundamentalists) were assimilated into orthodox Western Christianity.¹⁶

The rabbinate responded in a similar manner to diffuse the powerful influence and popularity of the Karaite movement, which originated in Persia. “The Karaites arose in reaction to and as a revolt against Rabbinical Judaism in the eighth century CE, and were not fully put down until the fifteenth century CE. From its earliest beginning, it (the Karaite revolt) spread throughout the Jewish Diaspora into every stratum of society. ‘Karaism’ derives from the Hebrew word *karah* (lit. to read) i.e. to read the **Torah** without the intervention of rabbis. They rejected the **Talmud** as a conspiracy of the rabbis to separate ordinary people from the simplicity of the **Torah**. For them, the **Torah** was the sole source of religious laws. Karaites created different oral laws to deal with modern life. Many Talmudic dietary laws were abolished and the use of *tefillin* (phylacteries) was abandoned. In response to the threat that the Karaites posed to their authority, the Jewish rabbis were able to prevent a final schism in Judaism by co-opting many acceptable Karaite ideas and reforming abuses. Gradually, the Karaite revolt dissipated and ceased after almost 700 years.”¹⁷ It is also relevant to note that the Karaites attacked the provocative anthropomorphism of the qabalistic doctrines.

While few contemporary Jews know anything about the Karaites, the impetus for their revolt is similar to conditions in modern Judaism. Many Jews today feel ambivalent about and tenuously connected to Rabbinical Judaism. Many orthodox Jews regard the Conservative and Reform branches of Judaism as “heretical sects,” declaring them to be Jews only in the biological sense. In recent decades, an extraordinary number of people born and raised by Jewish parents have set out to explore the ideas and practices of other mystical traditions, as if in search of traces of their own. We hear the colloquialisms “HindJews” and “Jewdhists,” reflecting the many Jews who have passionately embraced the Hindu and Buddhist mystical traditions. Some Jews, who seriously studied and engaged in the meditation practices of other mystical traditions, have recently come back to Judaism only to discover or see in a new light their own Mystical Qabalah. This has been one of the major factors involved in the Jewish Renewal Movement.

As a final note, anything that runs counter to an ingrained sense of religious identity can be perceived as a threat to that identity. Those with an orthodox or fundamentalist viewpoint may therefore feel uncomfortable with or disturbed by the universal perspective of this book, perhaps dismissing it outright as New Age synthesis or ashram spirituality. Each of the religious vessels through which the universal mystical spirituality has been filtered and uniquely clothed is a precious asset to be respected and afforded its “place at the table.” At the same time, none of them should assume that they have been assigned an exclusive licensing agreement or that only their watch tells the correct time.

MYSTICAL QABALAH, MYSTICAL CHRISTIANITY, AND THE CHRISTIAN CABALA

Mystical Christianity is an outgrowth of the same universal spirituality found in the Hebrew tradition as the Mystical Qabalah. Christianity began as a sect of Judaism that sprang from the messianic advent of Master Yeshuvah, who was born a Jew and lived in a Jewish culture. All of his apostles and early disciples were also Jews. Master Yeshuvah, as with every appearance of Messiah, brought a fresh transmission of universal mystical spirituality clothed in the context of the historical setting, cultural milieu, environment, language, characteristic worldview, and prevailing body of discourse among the people to whom it was being delivered. The mainstream of Jews at the time Master Yeshuvah appeared had been expecting a savior of the Jewish people who would deliver them from Roman oppression through an apocalyptic process. This contrasted with the Jewish mystical community, which had been anticipating a messianic advent with the spiritual mission of reuniting Israel with their Lord יהוה, and a returning to the true religion of the children of Abraham. Master Yeshuvah himself clearly asserted that he had not come as an innovator to replace the tradition with a new teaching, but as a reformer who had come to fulfill the *Torah* and the prophets, and to renew the ancient faith that had faded into decay.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law (i.e. *Torah*) or the prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.”¹⁸

But what began as a small Jewish sect centered around a Jewish Messiah and understood in contemporary Jewish terms, not Greek or Roman, came to be transformed into a major religion composed almost exclusively of Gentiles. In the process of this transformation, the legacy of the Jewish heritage upon which Christianity was founded was largely modified and assimilated into the Greek language and Hellenistic worldview. As the new religion of Christianity emerged estranged from its Jewish roots, it developed in accordance with Roman political organization and social conventions. When Christians later “brought civilization” to the indigenous tribes of Western Europe, they adapted Christian theology to the languages and cultures of those tribes, and absorbed many of their conventions and observances as a means to facilitate and expedite their conversion. The resultant version of Western Christianity thereby evolved into a historical phenomenon significantly different than Near Eastern Christianity, and even farther removed from its Judaic roots.

Today, a growing body of scholars is questioning many aspects of Christianity that have been popularly held for a long time. A picture is emerging that shows that the history, theology, and practice of Christianity have been directly effected and shaped by dominant factions, resulting in the marginalization and suppression of the mystical element as being in opposition to accepted doctrine. As soon as Paul entered the picture, a dichotomy arose among the early Christian devotees between those coming from a traditional Jewish background and the growing group of Gentile Christians. In this regard, it is interesting to consider the letter written by Master Yeshuvah’s brother James, the leader of the Jerusalem Church, as an indicator of the opposition that emerged to some of Paul’s central teachings.¹⁹

The diversity of perspectives of the early followers of Master Yeshuvah was later replaced by the monolithic homogeneity imposed by emperors to make Christianity a uniform religion throughout their empires. As the Pauline Gentile faction grew in numbers and power, and the Catholic Church of Rome assumed orthodox authority over Christianity, it absorbed and codified Mystical Christianity in much the same way that Rabbinical Judaism assimilated and obscured the Mystical Qabalah. The essential Jewishness of early Christianity was virtually wiped out by the massive revisionism of the Pauline Gentiles. We will have to wait for further windfall discoveries of source documents to be able to establish a clear picture of what happened during the earliest stages of Christianity after the departure of Master Yeshuvah.

Like the Hebrew Qabalah, Mystical Christianity has remained alive through lineages of accomplished souls who ascended its paths and passed on its teachings and practices. A new generation of Christians is seeking to revisit the mystical origins of Christianity. This interest has been fueled by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the recovery of an almost intact copy of the long-lost **Gospel of Thomas** at Nag Hammadi,²⁰ and a growing interest in the enigmatic **Revelation of John** spurred by the advent of a new millennium. Many Christians are also finding new meaning and inspiration in the testimonials left by Christian saints and mystics of their experiences on the Path. These documents, along with new interpretations of the teachings of Master Yeshuvah in the *Peshitta*, are reinforcing the understanding that the mystical element flourished in the early church, and that the entire history of Christianity is replete with mystics.

Many of the ideas and practices of the Mystical Qabalah are reflected in those of Mystical Christianity. The mysteries of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion have long been compared with the mystical significance of *Pesach* (Passover). The sacraments of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist have their roots in the sacramental use of bread and wine that goes back to the earliest Hebrews and beyond. Ablution with water, lighting of candles, prostration, rituals that celebrate the mystical significance of the rites of passage, and rituals associated with

changes of season, planting and harvesting are other fundamental elements Christianity shares in common with its Hebrew, Judaic, and Islamic cousins. A more in-depth look at the core ideas of Mystical Christianity within the context of the universal Mystical Qabalah will appear later in the book when the *Peshitta* and the **Revelation of John** are discussed in more detail.

Starting in the late fifteenth century CE, a movement arose among some Jewish converts to Christianity in Spain to ascribe a distinctly Christian context to the hidden meanings of qabalistic doctrines. This movement gained momentum from speculation among Florentine Platonists that the Qabalah contained a lost revelation that explains the secrets of the Catholic faith. This cross-pollination led to the emergence of a distinctly Christian Cabala founded by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). Pico's writings, and subsequently those of John Reuchlin (1455-1522), caused a sensation in Christian intellectual circles and ignited an interest in this previously unknown esoteric Jewish tradition that spread across Italy, Germany, and France. In the sixteenth century CE, the appearance of qabalistic texts in Latin translation enhanced attempts to draw further parallels between esoteric Jewish doctrines and Christianity. Guillaume Postel translated and published the *Zohar* and *Sefer Yetzirah* into Latin even before they were published in Hebrew. Latin texts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were influential in standardizing "Cabala" as the spelling commonly associated with the Christian perspective to qabalistic doctrines.²¹

In the seventeenth century CE, the center of Christian Cabala moved to England and Germany, where its status was boosted by the theosophical writings of Jacob Boehme and the landmark qabalistic compendium of Christian Knorr von Rosenroth.²² Von Rosenroth and Athanasius Kirchner extrapolated the qabalistic allusion of *Adam Kadmon* to be a reference to Jesus as the primordial man in Christian theology. In the final phase in the development of the Christian Cabala in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it became permeated with alchemical symbolism and conjoined with the emerging doctrines of theosophy. This in turn greatly influenced the development of Freemasonry.

MYSTICAL QABALAH AND THE MYSTICAL TRADITION OF ISLAM

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam is a primary branch stemming from the religion of the children of Abraham. Like Master Abraham, the Prophet Mohammed was faced with the task of leading his people away from the worship of idols and back to the universal mystical spirituality of a divine singularity. If you remove the clouds of dogmatic theocracy that now often overshadow the depth and beauty of that transmission, Islam probably more closely resembles in some ways the original Hebrew religion than does Rabbinical Judaism. The mystical tradition (Ar. *tasawwuf*) at the core of Islam is called Sufism by Westerners, and those who walk its path are called Sufis, dervishes, and faqirs. The appellation “Sufi” is thought by some to have been derived from the word *suf* (Heb. and Ar. pure wool), reflecting the rough patchwork wool robes worn by the early Sufi ascetics to reflect the quality of spiritual poverty (*faqira*). In their literature, the Sufis have a variety of other names and eloquent titles by which they refer to themselves, such as “Possessors of the Kernel” and “Community of the Bench.” The tradition itself is also given a variety of prominent epitaphs, such as *Haqiqah* (“Way of Truth”), reflecting the goal of union with the singularity of the Divine Essence. As it is written:

“The highest Truth is that I ALONE AM.”²³

“Everywhere you look, there is the Face of *Allah*.”²⁴

Several centuries after the birth of Islam, a number of informal private Sufi teaching circles in Iraq and Persia grew in numbers and organized into orders (*tariqa*). Soon thereafter, dozens of other orders, most of which evolved as sub-branches of the initial ones, arose throughout the Middle East, Central Asia, India, East Africa, and Spain. Sufi influence continued to expand with the spread of Islam throughout the world. The various orders trace their lineages to, and are generally named after, extraordinary Sufi masters who lived at different times and came from different locales. The Naqshbandi take the name of their order from Khaja Bahaudin Naqshband of Central Asia (1318-1389), the Qadiri from Abdul Qadir of Gilan (1077-1166), the Chishtiya from Abu Ishak Chishti of Syria, etc.²⁵ All genuine

orders have a record of their chain of spiritual transmission (*silsilah*) passed down from one spiritual preceptor, called a *shaykh* in Arabic and a *pir* in Persian, to another. All of the *silsilah* trace back to the original *silsilah* of the Prophet Mohammed through Abu Bakr or the fourth Kalif Ali. Some of the chains of initiation are still anchored in living masters who transmit the genuine *b'rakha* (blessing of spiritual potency) of mystical gnosis to their aspirants (*mureed*). Others have become “a name without a reality.” Congregations of Sufis convene with their *shaykhs* in specially designated halls (Persian, *khanqah*; Arabic, *zawiya*; Turkish, *tekke*). Sufis are, with a few notable exceptions, devout Muslims. Yet, Sufism is generally eschewed and viewed with suspicion by the Sunnite and Shiite Islamic orthodox authorities. Like the vast majority of mainstream Muslims, Sufis generally do not participate in or endorse the extreme agenda of radical ultra-orthodox fundamentalists.

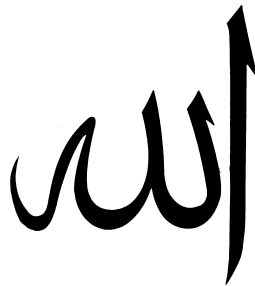
In addition to the *Qur'an*, the Sufis have a rich and prolific mystical literature filled with sublime mystical allusions and brilliant allegories. Like the Chasidim, teaching stories and sayings are important vehicles for the transmission of Sufi teachings. The *Mathnavi* of Jalal ad Din ar-Rumi (d.1273) is often called the “*Qur'an* of Persia,” which opens with the story of the reed that has become separated from its reed bed.²⁶ The Sufis are also known for the exquisite spiritual love poetry of Hafiz, Kabir, Ra'bia, and others.²⁷ The **Conference of the Birds** (*Mantiq at-Ta'ir*) by Farid ad-Din 'Attar, **Yusuf and Zulaika** by Jami, and the **Rose Garden** (*Galistan*) by Sa'adi are masterful works of mystical allegory.²⁸ All Sufis use the symbol of the rose as an allusion to contemplative practice.²⁹ Sufism has also been enriched by numerous mystical commentaries, such as the **Niche for Lights** (*Mishkat al Anwar*) by Al Ghazzali (d.1111), and the recorded teachings of Sufi masters such as Rumi, Ibn 'Arabi, al-Suhrawardi, Ibn 'Ata Allah, Al Bayazid Al Bistami, Al Junaid of Bagdad, Abdul Qadir al Jilani, Al Hallaj and others.³⁰ Western alchemy was derived in great measure from the writings of a number of Sufis concerning the mystical analogy of the purification and transformation of metals into the stone of unity, known as the “Philosopher’s Stone.”³¹

The mystical worldview of Sufism, as delineated in the *Qur'an*, is basically identical to the qabalistic worldview rooted in the *Torah*. As with the Qabalah, someone new to the study of Sufism will find a plethora of specialized and abstract terminology used to describe its mystical worldview. The challenge is further exacerbated by the fact that there are equivalent words for Sufi terminology in Persian, Arabic, and Turkish. The Sufis have their own version of the Tree of Life, names for the four worlds, terms for the various bodies or shells, and terms for states (*hal*) and stations of consciousness (*maqam*) that correspond closely to those in the Mystical Qabalah. The name for the Divine Presence dwelling among embodied souls in the worlds of matter, for instance, is called *Shekhinah* in the Qabalah and *Sakinat* in Sufism. It is also used in the *Qur'an* (*Surah* 2:249) in the same context as it is found in *Torah Shmoth* 24:22, when referring to the Divine Presence residing between the Kerubim over the Ark of the Covenant. The doctrines identified earlier as dualism, qualified non-dualism, and pure non-dualism are differentiated in Sufism as three phases on the Path, known as *makhafah* (way of fear), *machabah* (way of love), and *ma'rifah* (way of knowledge). The activity in these three phases can be correlated respectively with the yogic practices associated with *karma yoga* (way of purification through selfless service), *bhakti yoga* (way of devotion), and *jnana yoga* (way of direct knowledge of the Divine Source). The mystical teachings, literature, and history of the Sufi orders are subjects of extraordinary breadth far beyond the range of this book, and have been documented in critical detail by other authors.³²

Like Mystical Qabalists, Sufis have a wide range of spiritual practices. They are known to vary their teachings and the practices they prescribe according to circumstances. They maintain the view that it is the alchemy between the teacher and those being taught that produces a teaching that is appropriate for the particular time, place, and people involved. Sufis have their own lists of Divine Names or Attributes, which they recite as a regular component of their spiritual practices. One list is composed of ninety-nine Names, and another one of a thousand and one. Many of the Names in the *Sefer HaShmoth* (**Book of**

the Names) are also found in the *Qur'an*. In the same way that the Name יהוה is a central element in the meditation and ancillary practices of many Qabalists, most Sufi meditation practices center upon the Name *Allah*, the principal Divine Name in the *Qur'an* (see Figure 1.2). The Name *Allah* is found in the *Sefer HaShmoth* (Book of the Names) as *Aleh* (אלה lit. these), with one Lamed ל instead of two. The addition of the second Lamed ל extends the Name into Asiyah (qabalistic World of Activity).

FIGURE 1.2 Name *Allah*



The silent and oral recitation (*dikhr*) of the “Affirmation of Unity” (*La Illaha Il Allah*), which is the root mantra at the foundation of Islam, is a core practice of all Sufis. The various orders can often be distinguished by the way that they do this. Moses Maimomades, the oft-cited author of **The Guide for the Perplexed**, regarded the Affirmation of Unity of the *Qur'an* as essentially equal to the Affirmation of Unity of the *Torah*, “*Shem Ayin Yisrael יהוה Elohenu יהוה EchaD.*” Maimomades made this declaration actually believing this to be the case, and not just because the alternative was death. Sufis are also known for movement practices, called dervishes, which vary from order to order.³³ These dervishes usually involve some combination of movement, breath, and repetition of Divine Names. The Jewish Kabbalist Abraham Abulafia may very well have adopted some of the head movements he employed with letter visualization practices from the Sufis who were his contemporaries in Spain.³⁴

HEBREW QABALAH AND NORTH INDIAN TANTRA

Some Qabalists believe that the Semitic mystical tradition reached well beyond the geographical boundaries of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. Archeological evidence has shown that the trade routes between the Tigris-Euphrates and the Indus Valleys were actively traversed as early as 10,000 BCE.³⁵ When the Indian Buddhists went to China, they were made privy by its rulers to old Chinese texts that described voyages of large junks from the South China Seas to India (at a time when the Saraswati River still ran all the way to the sea), to the Sinai Peninsula, down the western African coast, and beyond. In ancient times, traders were largely the principal conduits for transmitting a variety of information among diverse cultures, including mystical information. It is highly likely that such information traveled to and from the Indus Valley and the Sinai Peninsula along such ancient merchant routes. The arm of historical certainty as yet does not reach very far back in human history, but more and more information is coming to light that confirms worldwide sea travel by ancient Chinese, Mediterranean, and Indonesian cultures long before the relatively recent “discoveries” made by Western Europeans.

In the *Lech Lecha* section of *Torah B’reshith* (the **Book of Genesis**, named “*B’reshith*” after its first word **בראשית**), several generations of Abraham’s children by Keturah and a number of his concubines are listed. Abraham divided up the branches of his family, “giving them gifts” and sending those children by his concubines “east to the east country.”³⁶ One interpretation of this passage holds that “east country” refers to an area in Syria or Jordan. Another theory postulates that these children of Abraham emigrated east to India over long established sea or overland trade routes, where they established the monotheistic religion of *Shiva/Shakti* long before the invasion of the Aryans down from the Persian steppes. The sea route could have gone through the Gulf of Aqaba, down the Red Sea, through the Gulf of Aden along the coast of Yemen and Oman, across the Arabian Sea to the mouth of the Indus River, and up into the Indus Valley. In India, this religion is called *Tantra*, and is often referred to in the West as “*the Tantras*.” When the Aryans invaded Northern India in the fourteenth

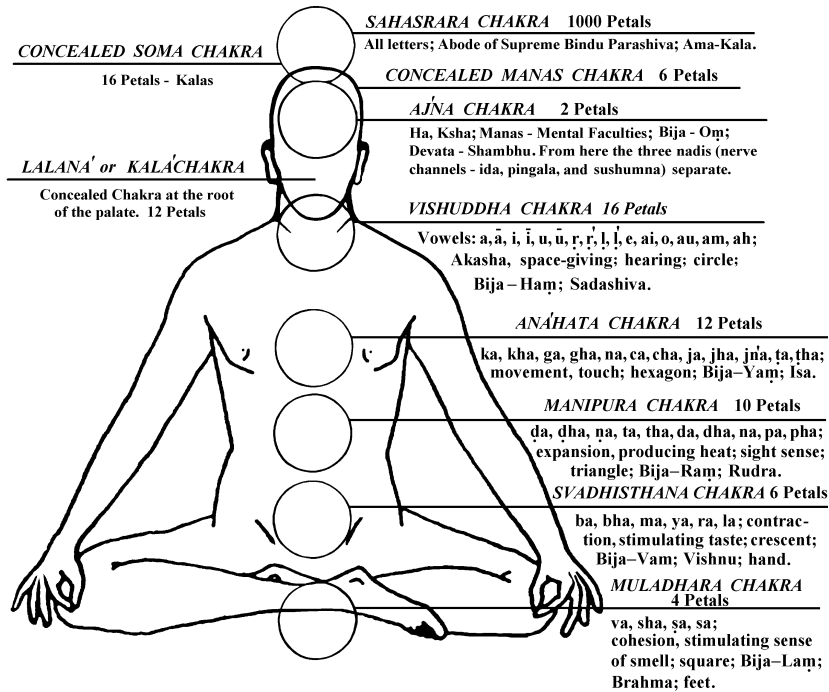
century BCE, they encountered a dark-skinned people inhabiting the Sandya Hills above the Indus Valley, for whom the Tantric traditions and rituals of *Shiva/Shakti* were centuries old.

The Tantric tradition is one of the most poorly understood and misrepresented of the world's mystical traditions. The written books of the Tantras (called *Tantra Shastra*), such as the *Mahanirvana Tantra* and the *Satchakracidrupini*, are distinct from the Vedic/Upanishadic literature of the *Sanatana Dharma*.³⁷ Many of the primary names of the Divine in the Tantras, such as *Shiva* and *Kali*, are also found in the Hebrew *Torah*. The map of the Sefiroth (lit. Spheres) in the Tree of Life (*etz ha-chayyim*) and the map of the *Chakras* (lit. Wheels) of the Tantras have much in common. The *Kundalini* spoken of in the Tantras and the *Shekhinah* of the Qabalah appear to have the same function. The *Kundalini* is described as a coiled snake asleep at the base of the Chakric Tree. On page 12 of the **Introduction to Tantra Shastra**, Sir John Woodroffe says:

“*Kundalini* means ‘coiled.’ Hence, *Kundalini*, whose form is that of a coiled serpent, means ‘that which is coiled.’ She is the luminous vital energy (*Jivashakti*) which manifests as *prana* [ed. same as *qi* in Chinese, and *ruach* in Hebrew]. She sleeps in the *Muladhara Chakra* [Sefirah Kingdom], and has three and a half coils corresponding in number with the three and half *bindus* (knots). When, after closing the ears, the sound of Her hissing is not heard, then death approaches.”³⁸

Both the Chakric Tree (see Figure 1.3) and the qabalistic Tree of Life (see Figure 3.5 on page 89) have three structural channels. The central channel on the Chakric Tree is called the “*Shushumna*.” The central channel on the qabalistic Tree is denoted as the “Central Column.” The side channels on the Chakric Tree are called the “*Ida*” and the “*Pingala*,” and on the qabalistic Tree, the “Columns of the Right and the Left.” The side channels play a much more prominent role in the Qabalah than they do in the Tantras.

FIGURE 1.3 Chakra System



Information obtained from Sir John Woodroffe's annotated translations of *Sat Chakra Nirupana* and *Paduka-Panchaka*, published as *The Serpent Power*, Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1981, 12th Edition.

The *Kundalini*, as *Chitshakti* (the energy of consciousness), awakens and ascends the Chakric Tree, opening the Chakric lotuses along the *Sushumna* on Her way to unite with Her Husband *Shiva* in the *Ajna Chakra* at the forehead. The ascent by the *Kundalini* is also called the *Satchakrabheda*, the "Piercing of the Six Centers." In the *Chintamanistava*, attributed to the incarnate sage Sri Shankaracharya, it says:

"This family woman (*Kundalini*), entering the royal road (*Shushumna*, Central Column of the Tree), taking rest at intervals in the secret places (*Chakras*, *Sefiroth*), embraces the Supreme Spouse (in the *Ajna Chakra*, forehead center) and makes the nectar to flow (in the *Sahasrara Chakra*, Sefirah Crown/Above)."³⁹

The ascent of the Tree of Life by the *Shekhinah* is called *Shabat* (שַׁבָּת, Sabbath). The *Shekhinah* is said to be in exile in the Lower Worlds. On the Sabbath, She ascends via the *Sefiroth*

(Spheres) of the Central Column of the Tree of Life and unites with Her Husband Lord יהוה in the Upper Worlds. This is echoed in the song of Rabbi Yitza'aq Luria, commonly found in Hebrew prayer books:

*“Lekah Dodee Likraht Calah Penay Shabat
neQabalah.”*

(“Come my Beloved to meet the Bride, Face of Sabbath to receive.”)⁴⁰

The meditation practices employed by both Mystical Qabalists and Tantrikas involve a coordinated use of *mantra* and *yantra*. *Mantra* are sequences of Divine Names having great intrinsic power to transform consciousness, and *yantra* are visualizations that correlate directly and specifically to the *mantra*. Anthropomorphic descriptions of the Lord יהוה are usually allusions to mysteries and to states and stations of consciousness. Such anthropomorphic allusions are likewise profuse in the Tantras. The Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist Tantric traditions are particularly noted for their explicit sexual allusions to mystical states. Similar allusions are found in the *Idra Zuta Qadusha* (Lesser Holy Assembly) and other qabalistic literature. Also, some Qabalists engage in potent yogic sexual practices similar to those performed by the Virabhava Tantrikas and Chinese Taoist alchemists.⁴¹ Unfortunately, the sexual disciplines (which are just one component of the Tantric tradition overall) are poorly understood, dangerous, and have long suffered from corruption and exploitation. While there is a plethora of material to compare between the Qabalah and the North Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Tantra, it is well beyond the scope of this book.

MYSTICAL QABALAH, PHYSICS, AND ASTROPHYSICS

A number of elements in the qabalistic teachings regarding the “Work of the Chariot” (*ma’aseh merkabah*) and the “Work of the Creation” (*ma’aseh b’reshith*) provide rich opportunities for comparison with the ideas and models of modern physics and astrophysics. For instance, it has been particularly popular in some recent books to compare the Lurianic doctrine of the

expansion of light in the envacuuous, circular Contraction (*Tzimtzum*) to the modern astrophysical model of the Big Bang. In the Big Bang model, this universe originated in a quantum fluctuation that generated an immense explosion of tremendous mass (10^{58} , or in the more technical parlance, $10E58$ grams) contained in an infinitesimally small space ($10E-33$ cm). As the universe expanded and cooled, clouds of plasma accumulated through which gravity waves passed and ignited thermonuclear fires that generated suns. The suns eventually consume a critical amount of mass through the process of nuclear fission, whereby they either burn out or assume new forms. The universe continues to expand in a four-dimensional space-time continuum until it reaches a point where it starts to contract and return to its original condition. The expansion of the “Everlasting Arms” that connect the six Directional Sefiroth to one another around the periphery of the double pyramid Tree of Life delineated in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, and the movement of the *Chayot* in the Chariot of the **Book of Ezekiel** allude to the same idea. In the Hindu holy books known as the *Vedas*, we find another analogy to modern cosmology in the comparison of the Creator to a spider that weaves a web and then retrieves it back into its body.

The mentor in the Work of the Chariot Trust speculated further on the correlation between *Torah B’reshith* 1:1-4 and modern scientific cosmology. His exegesis is presented in Appendix B. It is based upon a different breakdown of the letter sequence of the first line of *Torah B’reshith*. This breakdown includes an alternative rendering of the first word of the *Torah* as “*Bara-shith*” i.e. “IT created Six,” reflecting the six symmetry breaks of modern quantum physics.⁴² Some other authors have also speculated on the correlation between qabalistic formulations and the components of particle physics.⁴³

Another core idea in modern cosmology that finds its counterpart in qabalistic doctrine is that time is relative and subject to compression and expansion. The first chapter of *Torah B’reshith* describes the “Seven Days of Creation.” In *Zohar B’reshith*, it says that the entire cycle of Creation is contained in the first verse of *Torah B’reshith*. In this light, it can then be said that the Hebrew calendar of seven thousand years spans the entire life of this universe in matter, which is currently estimated

to be twenty billion years. The implication of this idea is that the sequence of events in *Torah B'reshith*, all of which are assumed to occur in one plane of existence, actually manifest as a nonlinear space-time sequence occurring in more than one plane. Time-space is exponentially expansive in each successive plane of existence. Perhaps the reader has had the experience of an elaborate dream that seemed to span a long period of time, maybe years, only to wake up and find out that it actually occurred in a manner of minutes. Consider also the oft-told story of a person seeing their entire life “pass before their eyes” in a near-death episode.

From the perspective of a multi-plane, time-space sequence of events, one could conceive of the Great Flood described in the parable of Noah in *Torah B'reshith* as an allusion to a great solar cycle spanning approximately six billion years in matter. During that cycle, the Sun consumes its mass and eventually expands into a Red Giant, enveloping the planets that it had created, including the Earth. Then, the Sun (known as *Elohim* in Hebrew and *Brahma* in Sanskrit) contracts its mass, reconstitutes its core, and spins off a new planetary system in which life is created and evolves. Within the qabalistic worldview, the forty days that Noah is said to have spent in the Ark occurs two planes removed in the World of B'riyah (Creation). The genetic information regarding Noah and his wife and all fauna and flora thereby existed in a formless state, as vibrational signatures in the World of B'riyah (Creation). This information then reemerged with the regeneration of life on the planetary mass in the World of Asiyah (Activity in Matter). This extraordinary idea is also found in ancient Sanskrit texts in the account of the incarnation of *Vishnu* as *Matsya* the Fish, where the Flood is called *Pralaya* (“Dark Night of *Brahma*”).

