

## **Tarot And The Kabbalah**

### **Lesson One**

By Gary Meister, CTM

#### **Introduction:**

Hi Folks! :o)

This month I'm starting a new course. With this course I'm aiming at a few different objectives:

1. Another easy way to read the Tarot.
2. An introduction to the Kabbalah and how Tarot is believed to correspond to it.
3. An introduction to an esoteric philosophy of creation and life as taught by many both ancient and modern mystery schools and, again, how it relates to Tarot.
4. Introducing a unique way to read the "pip cards" of the Minor Arcana which requires nearly no memorization at all and exercises your *"Intuition Muscles"*.

So—let's get started...

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## What is the Kabbalah?

Kabbalah (it is also spelled correctly as Cabala, and Qabalah) is an ancient system of mystical Jewish spiritual teachings dating back, it is thought, into human prehistory. The problem in dating it is that it was taught only verbally, "from mouth to ear", from *Master* to *student*. In fact, a name for these teachings was first mentioned by an 11th century Spanish mystic, Solomon Ibn Gabriol. He used the Hebrew letters KBLH, which could be interpreted as "*The Teachings*", or, literally, "*from mouth to ear*".

The first written text of the Kabbalah was the Sefer Yetzirah, "*The Book of Formation*". There *is no* book entitled *Kabbalah*, as that is a descriptive word for the teachings as a whole. According to modern historians, the origin of the Sefer Yetzirah is unknown, but it is believed by many to date back as far as 100 BC to 200 AD. Later—circa fourteenth century—another standard Kabbalah text, The Zohar—*The Book of Splendor*—was introduced.

Although the Kabbalah began as Jewish or Hebrew mysticism, it has since spread out and become part of other Western mystical systems. Christian mysticism adopted The Cabala and the Western magickal tradition has its Qabalah. The teachings are primarily the same; the form is changed to fit into its vehicle. What are these teachings? Along with reading the Tarot, that's what this course is about...

**The Tree Of Life:**

The Tree Of Life is a glyph illustrating the workings of the Kabbalah. It is not meant to be used as a literal picture of reality; simply a way to follow what is being taught. I introduced this glyph last time. Since then, I've updated it to work better with this course—a way to *follow along* with the lessons.

The Tree Of Life—and The Kabbalah—are meant to operate on many different levels, from the Creation of the Universe, to the creation of the smallest atom, to the creation of a product of ones imagination. It teaches that all creation follows the same steps from ideation to fruition. I'll be illustrating this as we go along from lesson to lesson.

**What Tarot Deck Should I use?**

Due to the method I'll introduce for reading the *Pip Cards*—at the end of the course—I would recommend that you procure a Tarot Deck with no pictures on the *Pips*. In this method, the pictures would simply confuse the meanings. Some examples of the decks without pictures on the *Pip Cards* are: Marseilles Tarot; Swiss 1JJ Tarot Deck; Golden Dawn Tarot Deck; Golden Dawn Magical Tarot; and others, some of them harder to find and more expensive than others.

For this course, I am using the B. O. T. A. (Builders of the Adytum) Tarot, and I would recommend this deck to you, for this course, for a few reasons:

1. It can be bought over the Internet very inexpensively.
2. The Major Arcana cards, for the most part, are very similar to the Rider Waite deck we used for the last course—so they'll be relatively familiar to you.
3. The *Pip* cards only have illustrations similar to regular playing cards, so the pictures don't get in your way in interpreting them in a reading.
4. Finally—these cards only come in an uncolored black and white form so you can color them yourself. This is a *great* way to become *really familiar* with your cards. The cards I'm using for the course are the cards (at least one deck) that *I* colored as *I* was learning Tarot.

The B. O. T. A. cards can be ordered from B. O. T. A. at <http://store.bota.org/tarotdecks.html> at a price of only \$8.50. For \$13.00, you can order the deck with the booklet, *Highlights of Tarot*, which gives brief esoteric meanings for the Majors and instructions for coloring the entire deck. Again—I recommend this.

### **More About Kabbalah:**

The Kabbalah can be as simple or as complicated as you want it to be. There are mystics

who devote their entire lives to the study of The Kabbalah. Others look at it far more on the surface, as a novelty. I fall somewhere in the middle. Its lessons can be profound, to the point of making very positive changes in ones life.

In this course—an introduction—I am following the paths downward in the Pathways of Creation, from the *Crown*—Kether—signifying the Great Creator, to the *Kingdom*—Malkuth—which signifies the material world. And, as I said before, any kind of creation, from atoms to universes. However, there is a whole other way to use the Tree of Life in reverse. This consists of climbing the Pathways upwards in a mystical quest to return to The One. If you've heard the term "path-working" this is what it refers to. I may touch on this at some later time—if I can find a way to relate it to Tarot. (As I wrote that, some ideas started swirling around up there. :o) We'll see what happens at a later time.)

Now: The paths of the Kabbalah—and the Tree of Life—I'm using here have been synthesized from many different sources,

1. years of reading in books whose titles I've long-since forgotten.
2. The Practical Kabbalah Guidebook by C. J. M. Hopking
3. Several books on the Golden Dawn, written variously by The Ciceros (Sandra Tabatha & Chic), Israel Regardie, Pat Zalewski, Steven Ashe, et al...
4. Most notably: The most exhaustive works of Dr. John Gilbert, Ph.D. of Tarot Institute, Universal Gnostic Fellowship, Gnostic News

([http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Gnostic\\_News/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Gnostic_News/)), and the Universal Seminary.

So—from these many sources I have put together what I hope will be an interesting spiritual study for you—and one which can help you progress on your spiritual and Tarot pathways.

Just to give you a head start, here are the meanings I will be using for the Major Arcana in this course. As usual, you can change them as you wish. In this course, however, I would strongly suggest that you read the material thoroughly and at least choose your key word or phrase based on the material. This can give you valuable *"memory pegs"* to hang your meanings on. So—key words and phrases:

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|-------------------|------------------------|
| 0. The Fool       | Awareness              |
| 1. The Magician   | Attention              |
| 2. High Priestess | Remember               |
| 3. The Empress    | Imagine                |
| 4. The Emperor    | Reason                 |
| 5. The Hierophant | Intuition              |
| 6. The Lovers     | Discrimination, Choice |
| 7. The Chariot    | Receptivity            |
| 8. Strength       | Courage                |
| 9. The Hermit     | Example                |

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|----------------|------------------|
| 10. The Wheel  | Cyclicality      |
| 11. Justice    | Unfailingly Just |
| 12. Hanged Man | Change Thinking  |
| 13. Death      | Change Behavior  |
| 14. Temperance | Verify           |
| 15. The Devil  | Materialism      |
| 16. The Tower  | Awakening        |
| 17. The Star   | Meditate         |
| 18. The Moon   | Deception        |
| 19. The Sun    | Expansion        |
| 20. Judgement  | Realization      |
| 21. The World  | Completion       |

See you next time. :o)

Bright Blessings ~ Gary Meister. CTM