

## Study Guide 5

### Mastering the Virtues in the Sephiroth

Mastery of the Virtues is one of the fundamental claims of Pathworking and of Qabalah itself. There is some divergence of view in exactly how to picture the Virtues, but a knowledge of the various systems will enhance pathworking experience.

According to Pseudo-Dionysus, the Choir of Virtues was located in the heart of his second sphere, corresponding to Qabalistic 'Beriah', the World of Creation. A locus for the Virtues would therefore be the Sephirah of Geborah, associated with Formal Justice. I take this to mean that by the time we have reached Geborah by an upward trajectory, we should have accomplished the main tasks of the Virtues, leaving Chesed-Gedullah, or Glorious Mercy, as an essential gloss in their mastery.

This of course implies that the Virtues are attained consecutively in the lower Sephiroth, but also that none may enter the supernal World of Atziluth [Sarras] without such mastery. The final mastery of the Virtues is therefore the principal moral task of the Adept.

There are several systems to consider. One of the oldest and wisest is that of the Seven Virtues, including the cardinal or 'natural' Virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance; and the theological or purely 'spiritual' Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. Occult philosophers in older methodologies argued that Fortitude and Charity held pivotal positions. In modern Qabalah, 'Fortitude', including patience, perseverance and courage, is still associated with 'YESODH', from Hebrew for 'Foundation'. 'Fortitude' permits mastery of 'memories, dreams and reflections', then of 'ghosts and atavisms' (Jung, 1957). 'Divine love' or 'Charity' is exclusively associated with the Upper Sephiroth of the Middle Pillar of TOL, that is with 'TIPHARETH' and 'KETHER'. 'Principal Virtues' associated with the Lower Sephiroth have a more complex formulation, including primary manifestation as well as 'recapitulations' or reappearances.

As well as the 'Principal Virtues', there are also Seven 'Remedial Virtues' which are essential to victory over the Seven Deadly (or 'capital') Sins. The Sins dominate the Shadow Tree, and correspond with Remedial Virtues in each overlying Sephirah of the Lower Worlds of the Tree of Life. Both Principal and Remedial Virtues must be mastered in each Sephirah in order to progress upwards in the pathworking program of Mystical Qabalah. At the seventh stage, the crossing of the Abyss, a choice is offered between either 'Humility' or 'Pride', with the result that the Adept either enters 'BINAH' or falls back into the shadow sephirah of 'DA'ATH'. The 'Fall' is often subjectively mistaken for advancement.

Thirdly there are 'Scholastic Virtues' deriving from the early middle ages, which were found to be of special assistance in moving from one sphere to the next in Scrying Path-working.

Once the Abyss is crossed and the Land of Sarras is achieved, progress is experiential and aesthetic, and with no more pitfalls into the Shadow Tree to be negotiated.

---

As well as Priestesses and Magi who have achieved Mastery by entering into Sarras, there are also Necromancers using deviant methods devised by Crowley. The first follows the method outlined above, but having mastered the Inferior Virtues, at the point of the Abyss, chooses 'Pride' over 'Humility', and plunges back into 'DA'ATH'. Here an infernal parody of Sarras is experienced as a virtual reality populated by demons, the damned, and surreal half-formed entities, by which various psychic abilities may be sought. A second method of 'gross depravity' is still more debased, following the Shadow Tree, indulging and perfecting each of the Vices met in the Shadow Sephiroth, until in the Abyss its own shadow path joins with that of the first method. Either method relies on a Faustian Pact and necromancy. Mastery is then at the expense of psychic disintegration, delusorily experienced as progress beyond the Abyss.

---

*See ff. pages, showing— 2: Virtues related to each Sephirah; 3: Meaning of Mastery >>>*

**Principal, Remedial and Scholastic Virtues, and Associated Vices to be Overcome—**

1° = 10°	MALKUTH [Kingdom]	TEMPERANTIA CASTITAS [Chastity] CARITAS MIN. [Charity]	Lilith :	LUXURIA [Lust] GULA [Gluttony] AVARITIA [Greed]
2° = 9°	YESODH [Foundation]	FORTITUDINAS [Fortitude] INDUSTRIA [Diligence] VIRTUS [Valour]	Gamaliel :	ACEDIA [Sloth] TERRORES DAIMONES
3° = 8°	HOD [Glory— City of God]	JUSTITIA MINORA = ORDO IUSTUS [Justice] PRUDENTIA [Prudence]	Sammael :	TEMPTATIONEM CHAOS SUPERBIA MIN. [Vanity]
4° = 7°	NETZACH [Victory— Perfect Nature]	VICTORIA SUPER VICE CARITAS NATURAE [Nat. Love] TEMPERANTIA [Temperance]	Harab :	GULA MAJ. [Gluttony] NIMIUM [=Excess] CARNALITAS
<hr/>				
5° = 6°	TIPHARETH <sup>1</sup> [Beauty— Paradise]	CONCORDIA [Balance] SPERAVI [Hope] INDUSTRIA ET PRUDENTIA HARMONIA [Harmony]	Togarini :	ACEDIA DI LIMBO DESPERATIONIS [Despair] TENEBRIS ET MORBUS [Darkness, Disease]
6° = 5°	GEBORAH [Justice –ve Severity].	JUSTITIA SEVERA PATIENTIA [Forbearance] VIRIBUS / POTESTAS [Strength] FIDEM VERITAS [Faith, Truth]	Golab :	IRA [Anger] VIOLENTIA [Violence] REBELLION
7° = 4°	CHESED [Justice +ve Mercy]	JUSTITIA MAGNANIMITAS DOMINION / AUCTORITAS HUMANITAS [Loving-kindness]	Gog :	INVIDIA [Envy] TENTATOR SPIRITUS [Spiritual Tempter]
<hr/>				
~~~~~ [ascent]	DA'ATH [Abyssal Seph. Knowledge]	OMNISCIENTIA [Knowledge] HUMILITAS [Humility] CARITAS MAJ. [Love]	Da'ath :	SUPERBIA MAJ. [Pride] FRAUD [Fraud] INSIDIAE [Treachery]
<hr/>				
8° = 3°	BINAH [Understanding Q. of Heaven]	SAPIENTIA [Wisdom, fem.] OPHANIM [Thrones] TEMPERANTIA SUP. RATIO INTELLECTUS CONTEMPLATIO	~~~~~	~~~~~
9° = 2°	CHOKMAH [Wisdom— K. of K's.]	SAPIENTIUS [Wisdom, masc.] CHERUBIM SAPIENTIA PASSIONATA FIDES, SPES ET CARITAS [Faith, Hope, Love]	~~~~~	~~~~~
10° = 1°	KETHER <sup>1</sup> [Crown— Praesidium]  'The One'	BASILIUM [Crown of All] SERAPHIM PRIMUM MOBILE PLEROMA [Divine Presence] = ROSA CAELESTIS	~~~~~	~~~~~

<sup>1</sup> IN ABOVE NOTES, 'CARITAS MAJ.' [UNIVERSAL LOVE] IS AN ASSUMED VIRTUE FOR TIPHARETH AND KETHER

<sup>2</sup> 'Virtue' is only one of many correspondences projected onto the virtual reality of the Sephiroth in meditative contemplation; such path-working may include a myriad of other systematic or subjectively generated associations and mythologies.

It is important to understand what is meant by ‘mastery’, and even more importantly what is not meant by the term. ‘Mastery’ is knowledge and skill in a particular subject, field or activity; and connotes control or hierarchical superiority over persons or things. It does not mean that the skill is necessarily exercised; and even the knowledge may be ignored.

Moral, amoral and immoral Qabalists may all be adept masters in relation to the lower Virtues, particularly those of Temperance. Mastery by no means shows that adepts always respect the Virtues by which they have attained self-control. In an analogous situation, a bishop has generally achieved ‘mastery’ of the sacraments; but no-one these days would assume that this implied that all bishops live by them. By choice or inclination, mastery may be side-stepped or ignored, especially having served a selfish purpose. There are ‘bad’ bishops, despite liturgical mastery!

‘Mastery’ implies ‘actualising potential for control and fulfilment’ (Greene, 2012; after Maslow, 1943), that is a ‘potential for enriching life’. However, in many cases, control of a Virtue does not imply that the Virtue is incorporated into daily life, but may rather be a means to an end. Similarly, the potential for fulfilment through ‘self-actualisation’ may bluntly imply control rather than transcendental enrichment.

As a form or perspective of ‘self-actualisation’, the concept of ‘mastery’ implies the realisation or fulfilment of talents and potentialities, in this case control of one’s relationship with the Virtues. Virtue in the abstract might be considered as the ‘apex of a pyramid of individual needs’, of which others are precursors or pre-requisites, including — basic needs [physiological, including safety]; social needs [trust, belonging, love]; and self-esteem [an interactionist construct] (cf. Maslow, *op. cit.*).

Hence, in the realm of Malkuth, the Path-worker must begin to find a balance between physical, psychological, social and artistic needs, in order to finally gain control over them. Herein lies the concept of the ‘Renaissance [Wo]man’, trained in pursuits of body, mind, social skills, art and intellect. She or he will only thereby achieve control over the appetites, and approach perfection in each sphere.

An important way of viewing ‘balance’ between the parts of a human psyche—if successful reversing the process of personal decay—is as acceptance of the finite opportunities that are offered by existence in space-time. That is, there is simply not an infinite amount of time or energy to invest in every human task. In order to devote the psyche to one of them implies a suffering or poverty in the others. The ‘Adept’ or ‘Renaissance [Wo]man’ cannot permit specialisation to starve the other characteristics of being human, which would exact a revenge on any talent pursued without them. Instead, the complementary aspects must be respected and nourished sufficient to appease and venerate them.

Mastery of a Virtue does not therefore mean to become virtuous, but rather to acquire knowledge, control and power over the Virtue, as well as the potential for its attainment, and thereby for self-actualisation [redemption] or enrichment.

Finally, the Higher Self or Atman will guide the Qabalist through the middle Virtues, but the scrying journey beyond the Abyss can only be achieved with assistance of the Divine Feminine [Binah-Gaia].

---

Note. Dante’s *Il Paradiso* is a manual for scrying the Sephiroth on the Lightning Path of Virtue; the *Inferno* is a manual for scrying the Shadow Tree that parodies the TOL; whilst *Il Purgatorio* is a study of scrying to remediate those Vices in order to return to the Path of Virtue.