

The Sephirothic Archangels

A Treatise on the Holy Qabalah

By

Dean Scott Walsh

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Introduction

Each of the spheres of The Tree of Life are associated with a specific Archangel. These angelic associations represent the ruling power of the sphere in the realm of Briah. The archangels are considered to be the messengers of God, and as the highest manifestation of the sephiroth below the abyss they are symbols of the highest attainment of each sphere which can be intellectualLy understood or visualized. They are the purest manifestations of divinity which can exist in the plural universe, and are therefore the focus of some of the most powerful and illuminating mysticism and magick of qabalah. On the way of return they represent the ultimate goals of the human personality. Here is a brief introduction to each of the 10 sephirothic archangels, based largely on an analysis of their Hebrew names:

Metatron (MTTRVN)

The name of Metatron is translated as 'Visiting the Throne', but he is also known as the scribe of God. The first letTer, mem, is water, showing that his nature begins from a state of pure passivity and reflection. he is nothing other than that which he perceives. His name is writ in water. The two teth letters which follow show us the higher purpose of gnosis, and the ever curious and questioning serpent who they represent. He is the ultimate goal of knowledge. Resh, the head, is a fiery solar letter, and the seat of intellectual consciousness in humanity. This is the eternal hunger for and expansion of knowledge. Everything is trasmutated to this singlar purpose. This flows into vau, the nail, where the volatility implied by the resh is fixed in place. Stillness is emphasised - all that he perceives does not affect him - he is immutable and eternal. The final nun is a fish, which lives in water, returning us to the beginning. he exists only within his own nature, which is both singular and circular

Ratzel (RTzYAL)

The name Ratzel is translated as the Will of God, as is appropriate for the sphere of Chokmah, for which he is the ruling power below God.

The first letter of Resh, meaning the head and being the solar letter and representative of fire, shows the centre of consciousness, expansive and outward looking. The second letter, Tzaddi - the fish hook - indicates a drawing up and raising of something into consciousness. The third letter, Yod, means hand, and is indicative of creative, controlling and directive power. Here we see consciousness focussed on its own power, seeing and realizing the consequences of its actions. The third letter, aleph, is translated as ox, and the main association is of ploughing and cultivating fields. This is the all embracing realization that the world in which we live is the sum of our actions over time, that we have the power to work towards a specific end, and , indeed, that a specific outcome is inherent in our choice of action. The final letter Lamed, the ox-goad, represents the responsibility engendered by what has come before. It shows the severity of judgment upon the self when the consequences of one's actions are held firmly in mind. One comes to the will of God not through obedience or blind belief, but through being painfully aware of the consequences of willing otherwise

Tzaphqiel (TzPQYAL)

Tzaphqiel is known as the Watchtower of God.

Having the first letter tzaddi, the fish hook, shows that this archangel has her origins in the raising up of some idea or thing external to herself. Being followed by peh, the mouth, suggests the formulation and expression of a concept or idea. The 3rd letter qoph, representing the back of the ahead, is associated with the subconscious mind and with the archetypes, and with Plato's 'Ideas', which are the perfect forms which provide the templates for all material forms. Yod, the hand, shows creative and orchestrating power. Aleph, the ox, shows cultivations and the development of things over time, whilst the final letter lamed is a whip, or ox-goad, and reveals the rules which govern the pervious aleph.

The formulation and expression of the ideals of the divine archetypes creates and controls the manifestation and the development of the changing forms of the material world. This is the power of the understanding which, like the name of the watchtower, may seem passive, but which actually creates the fundamental patterns which regulate the manifestation of reality.

Tzadkiel (TzDQYAL)

Tzadkiel, the archangel of Chesed, is known as The Righteousness of God. The first letter, Tzaddi the fish hook, shows that it is the nature of Tzadkiel to catch and draw up into consciousness something external to herself. The second letter, dalet, is a door; she has made herself a conduit through which some power may flow. The third letter is Qoph, the back of the head; it represents the transpersonal forms of the archetypes or ideals. This shows the direct manifestation or expression of transpersonal will. The individual is transparent, with no personal or selfish will. Love for the sake of love, justice for the sake of justice, and so on for all the archetypes - this is what it means to be righteous.

The final 3 letters are common to many of the archangels, and also the lower angels of Yetzirah. They are Yod, the hand, which shows the action of the principles outlined above to direct the course of events, or create a new impetus. Aleph, the ox, shows the cultivation of the earth, and indicates that Tzadkiel is active in the development of the world, and the ox-goad or lash of lamed, the final letter, shows that the archangel is a marshalling and guiding force over this development.

Kamael (KMAL)

Kamael, who is known both as the desired of God and the treasure of God, is one of the more difficult archangels to explain adequately.

The first letter, Kaph, is the palm of the hand. The image is of a cupped hand held out to receive something, or of the fingers of the hand curled around to hold something. The second letter, mem, represents water, which again emphasises the essentially passive nature of Kamael. Remembering that the origins of Kabbalah are with a primarily desert people, the receiving of water takes on a special significance. This fits with the idea of Kamael as the 'Desired of God'. The image conjured is that of a person in need, who is suffering, and who turns to God to pray for consolation and help; this also fits with the severity of the sphere of Geburah, for which Kamael is the archangel.

I see a person in the midst of the trials and tribulations of life, who ceases to challenge the injustices of his situation, becoming passive and accepting, trusting in God to provide. By doing so he opens himself to receive the Treasure of God.

The final two letters, aleph the ox and lamed the ox goad or whip shows the living waters nourishing the earth to leave it fertile for cultivation, and the discipline of focussing on cultivating the fruits of life without falling into anger and recrimination for difficult or unjust situations.

Raphael (RPAL)

Raphael is known as the Deliverance of God, and is the archangel of Tipareth. He is also known as the healer.

The first letter, Resh, meaning head, is known as the solar letter. It shows the centre and seat of consciousness in the individual. The second letter, Peh, represents a mouth, showing the free and unmediated expression of the self.

Archangel Raphael thus reveals an existence where the true self is able to express itself in the world without fear, judgement or connivance. One is minded of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, unconcerned by their nakedness. This is the nature of deliverance.

The suffix AL, aleph and lamed, show this free expression acting upon the world outside of the self, so that the outer is a reflection of the inner.

Haniel (HNYAL)

The Name of the archangel Haniel means 'Look to God' or 'He who looks towards God'. The first letter is heh, which is a window, suggesting that the nature of Haniel is revelatory. The second letter is aleph, the ox, which brings to mind the cultivation of fields. We therefore see a window upon the cultivation and growth of the earth. The third letter is nun, which is a fish; according to Crowley in 777 the fish is a symbol of death and rebirth, a theory born out by the use of the fish symbol to represent Christianity.

I see the growth of a forest over many years, all of its creatures flourishing and dying in their turn, all of them serving the purpose of the whole and the growth of the ecosystem. There is a broadening of vision from the human perspective. The fourth letter Yod is a guiding hand, invisible but everywhere present; even the darkness and the wolf are its children. Below the earth the same seed germinates many times. All living beings are its oxen, cultivating the earth under its discipline. Everything is the fulfilment of the will of everything else. There is such sweet sorrow here. The will is everywhere victorious, even when it does not know this itself.

Michael (MYKAL)

The archangel Michael is 'He Who is Like to God'. His character is both the easiest and most difficult to explain. He is the laws of physics which govern nature.

The first letter is mem, which is water. His origin is passive and reflective. The second letter, Yod, is a hand and is also known as a seed or sperm. It is the condensation of the active principle. I see Him holding a great mirror before the creation of the world. Every soul chooses its own name, and by it he receives the power of governance over it. I am reminded of the sum-over-histories interpretation of quantum physics. Only Him who says I Am That Which I Am is above him.

I see him listening to a cacophony and hearing a symphony, as he writes the Book of the Law.

Gabriel (GBRYAL)

The archangel Gabriel is known as the Strength of God.

The first letter, gimel, is a camel crossing the desert. It is a beast of burden in an arid place. The second letter is Beth, which is a house, and as Crowley states: "it is the dwelling place of man in the world of duality and illusion"

I see the Greek God Atlas, who carries the weight of the world on his shoulders. There is nothing to sustain him but his own strength. He speaks to me:

"It has been said amongst men that with great power comes great responsibility. But I tell you this: with great responsibility comes great power"

A person who acts in the interests of others does so with the strength not only of his will, but also of theirs.

I am watching the birth of the solar system. A great weight of mass collapses upon itself, and through the huge pressure involved it begins to burn; mass is converted to energy; a star is born.

The third letter is Resh, the head; solar and fiery it is the seat of human intellect.

Through compassion a person takes on the suffering of others. This alone is a torment. One must also be able to know what to do about it. Knowledge compels action in the transition to Yod, the hand. Aleph, the ox, and lamed, the ox-goad, show man as steward of the world, tending it like a diligent farmer or gardener.

The name of Gabriel is the formula of the sheep and the shepherd, the king and his subjects, and from this comes his role as the inspiration of prophets.

Sandalphon (SNDLPVN)

Sandalphon is translated as 'the Dew is Poured Forth'. His name is another of those which is difficult to analyse. The first letter, Samekh, is a supporting column, a prop or a pillow. It is something upon which something else rests. The second letter is Nun, which is a fish, and is representative of death and decay. Death is a support. Daleth means door, and is the symbol of Venus, thus giving it a sexual connotation. The association between death and sex is born out by biological history as they came about at the same time - pre-sexual organisms have a theoretically indefinite lifespan. Lamed is an ox-goad or lash. It is a symbol of severity, but also of guidance and authority. In combination with the letter peh, or mouth, it suggests a voice of authority or guiding principle. Vav is the nail, and here represents fixity and permanence. The second nun is the other half of the formula of death and rebirth. The appearance of the same letter twice emphasises its importance.

Taken as a whole Sandalphon shows that permanence can only be attained through perpetual equilibrium rather than stagnation and stillness. The human body is constantly replacing cells, creating itself entirely anew every few years, but yet apparently staying the same. Death is the support through which authority is established for the expression of the permanence of life through rebirth.

Sandalphon sees with the eyes of a child, filled with wonder at God's creation.