

Labyrinth Walking Meditation Transcript

The purpose of walking a labyrinth is not to figure out where you are going, but rather to attune yourself to the journey, as you twist and turn along the path.

In her prayer book, “Beloved of the Soul,” Sara Evian provides us with insights on the sefirot, the words you will encounter inscribed in the stones on your walk. *Sefirot* can be understood, from the Kabbalistic tradition, as divine emanations of G-d or attributes that we share with G-d. Sara’s poetic interpretation of each *sefirah* will be offered as you reach each one—you may pause this meditation if you want to contemplate each step or each *sefirah*, for a longer time.

The first *sefirah* that we will encounter, is *gevurah*.

Gevurah, translated here as strength, acts as a balance to loving kindness, or *chesed*, just a few steps away, by helping us recognize and decipher how to focus our acts of loving kindness in our lives. *Gevurah* can also be understood as discipline, restraint or concealment. *Gevurah* is connected to justice, and it is where we find our inner strength.

Just a few steps away is *Da’at*, which is translated as knowledge and it literally means, “to know.” *Da’at* is connected to the idea of attachment and absorption, *Da’at* allows us to feel that which is now understood. Sara Evian teaches that *Da’at* is viewed as the bridge between the mind and the heart. This bridge enables our heart to feel what the mind is thinking. Intellect and emotions are transformed into action.

And in this circuit, you now encounter *Chesed*, loving kindness, a flow of energy that connects us to each other. With *chesed*, we give and express kindness unconditionally, without judgement.

Walking a labyrinth is a spiritual practice infused with lessons for our lives. You may know where this path ends, or perhaps you have never walked this path before—how you walk through life is just as important as where you end up. We start new adventures all the time, a new job or a new relationship, we think we know where our lives are headed—and then something changes, and we end up somewhere different. Soon, you will arrive at *chochmah*.

Chochma, is an inspiration or spark that inspires wisdom. Sara teaches that *Chochma* can be read, as *koach* ma, the “power of what” or the “potential of what is.” *Chochma* is the first flash of intuitive knowledge, the potential of our creativity.

In just a few steps, you encounter *Bina*, meaning understanding or comprehension-*Binah* receives the spark of wisdom from *chochma*, and gives it life. Bina grounds and settles wisdom into the mind, balancing the sparks of insight from *chochma*, and creating focused and articulate thoughts leading to greater understanding.

You are walking within a tree of life, with the divine sefirot inscribed within the branches and leaves. As you take each step, take a breath in and out, feel your feet on each stone, and ground yourself in the place you are standing.

As you walk, stop and look around-your view of your surroundings will change with each step. Our perspective in our surroundings, on our lives and the people we hold dear is transformed by every journey we take and by every moment of our lives that passes by.

Receive each *sefirah* as a gift, contemplate how they balance each other out, how their energies work together to create one human body. The sefirot form a tree of life, the energies of each *sefirah* flow together to create one stable being.

You will soon arrive at Keter, the crown of our tree, sitting on the top, as the head of the sefirot. Keter connects the different dimensions of reality that the sefirot represent. Keter connects us to a higher purpose, that which is beyond our understanding but that purpose that motivates us in life. Keter gives our soul it's inspiration to express itself.

Continue walking along the path-feel the stones beneath your shoes, feel grounded while you move ahead. Soon you will reach *malchut*.

Malchut, is translated as a kingdom, majesty or sovereignty. In our context, *malcut* is an empty vessel, just as royalty exist to serve their communities, *malcut* exists to receive all the other sefirot. When we enter a space ready to receive, rather than ready to offer and give, we make space for others, in this case the other sefirot, to become themselves. Take a few steps ahead...you will reach *netzach*.

Netzach, Victory or endurance propels us forward, helping us move in the direction that we need to go. Often, being able to take just one step, and then another, requires confidence and perseverance. *Netzach* gives us the courage and energy needed to take risks and to have faith in our decisions.

We move through each *sefirot* as we move through life-in joy and in grief, in hope and in anguish, we feel overwhelmed or fully encompassed by our emotions, and then we take our next step, because we cannot be here, in this moment of time forever. You are approaching the final three *sefirot* on this path.

Hod, working in partnership with *netzach*, offers us splendor and meaningful acceptance of what is rather than what could be. Hod provides us with gratitude, an opportunity for introspection and invites humility into our lives.

And in just a few steps you will encounter *tiferet*.

Tiferet, is the beauty that can be found when opposites are joined and harmony between diverse elements is achieved. *Tiferet* draws out the inner unity of our multifaceted world, while allowing each unique dimension to be. In our lives *tiferet* is found when we offer deep compassion and empathy to those in need.

As you approach the final *sefirah*, you find yourself at the end, or the middle or the beginning of your journey...*Yesod* welcomes us in...

Yesod, is our foundation. A tree without firm, strong roots, cannot stand tall. *Yesod* is connected to truth which allows us to live our lives with dignity and it provides us with the capacity for inner peace and calm. *Yesod* is placed directly above *malcut*, channeling all of the sefirot together, their energies combined into the center of our tree.

What do you hold dear in your core, the center of who you are? May the sefirot that you just encountered and the journey you walked, continue to inspire you when you leave this path. You are welcome to follow your footsteps out of the labyrinth now, or take your own journey off the path. This labyrinth and this meditation are here for you, whenever you want to encounter it again.

*This is a transcript of the recorded walking meditation prepared and read by Rabbi Amy B. Cohen for the Labyrinth on the Dell Jewish Community Campus. No part of this transcript or the recording may be reproduced or used without express written permission by Shalom Austin.