

Sufi Principles of Meditation



Lecture 3: Stations

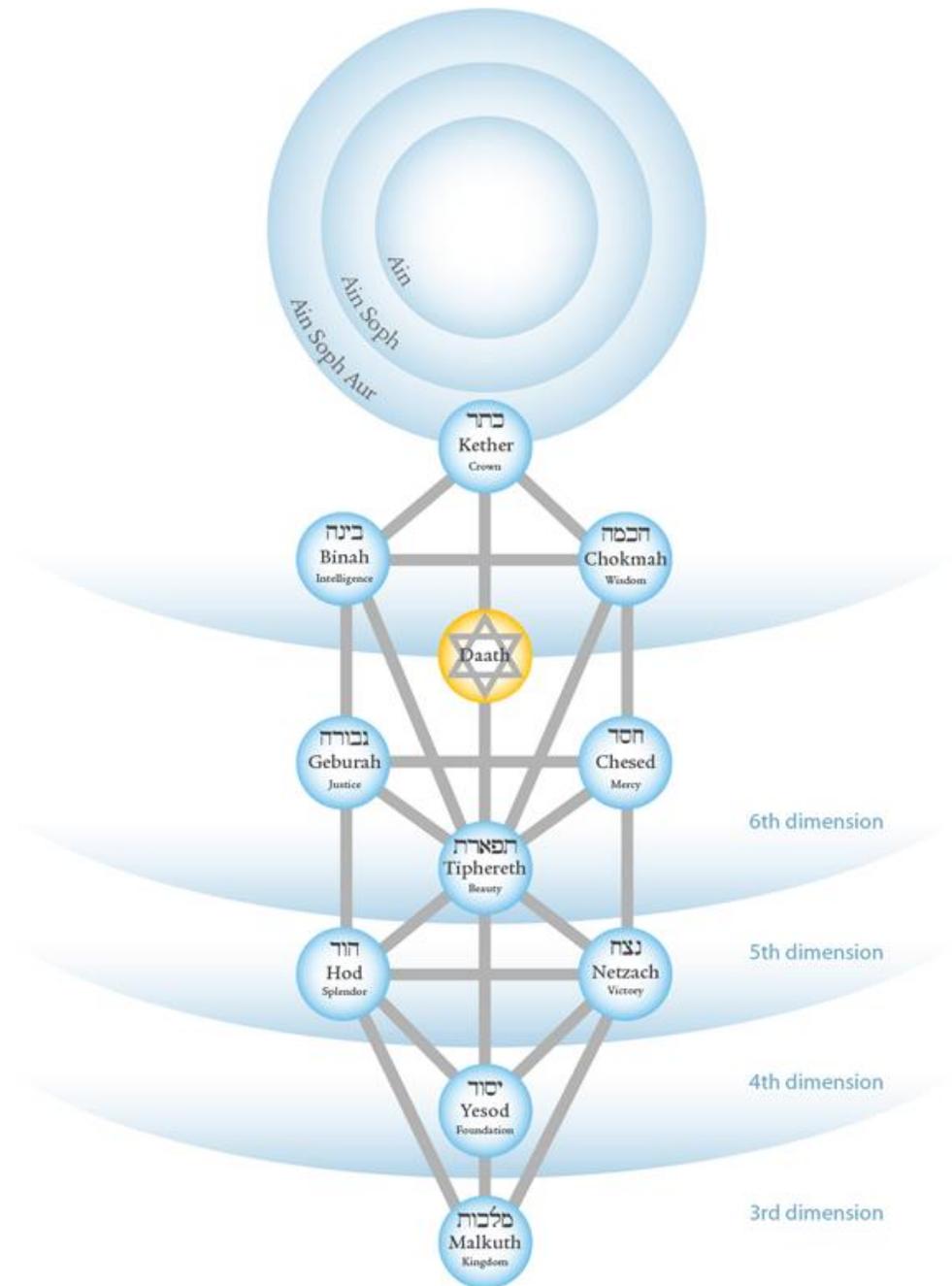
"I stood with the pious and I didn't find any progress with them. I stood with the warriors in the cause and I didn't find a single step of progress with them. Then I said, 'O Allah, what is the way to You?' and Allah said, 'Leave yourself and come.'" —Bayazid Bastami



chicago gnosis

Wherever the delusion of your selfhood appears – there’s hell. Wherever “you” aren’t – that’s heaven.

–Abū Sa’īd in Ibn Munawwar: Asrār at-tawḥīd, ed. Shafī’ī-Kadkanī, 299



Station (Definition)

A station consists of certain forms of behavior actualized by the servant through his struggles. He gains access to these through some kind of voluntary effort and makes them a reality through a sort of striving and the endurance of constraints upon his nature. Everyone's station is the place that he occupies in this way and with the discipline of which he concerns himself. The necessary condition involved is that no one may proceed from one station to another without fulfilling the requirements of the first station. For instance, he who has no contentment cannot properly possess trust. He who has no trust cannot properly possess the quality of surrender. Likewise he who has not turned to God cannot properly know penitence. He who has no vigilance over the morality of his actions cannot properly know renunciation.

–*Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism* by Al-Qushayri

Raising One's Station or Level of Being

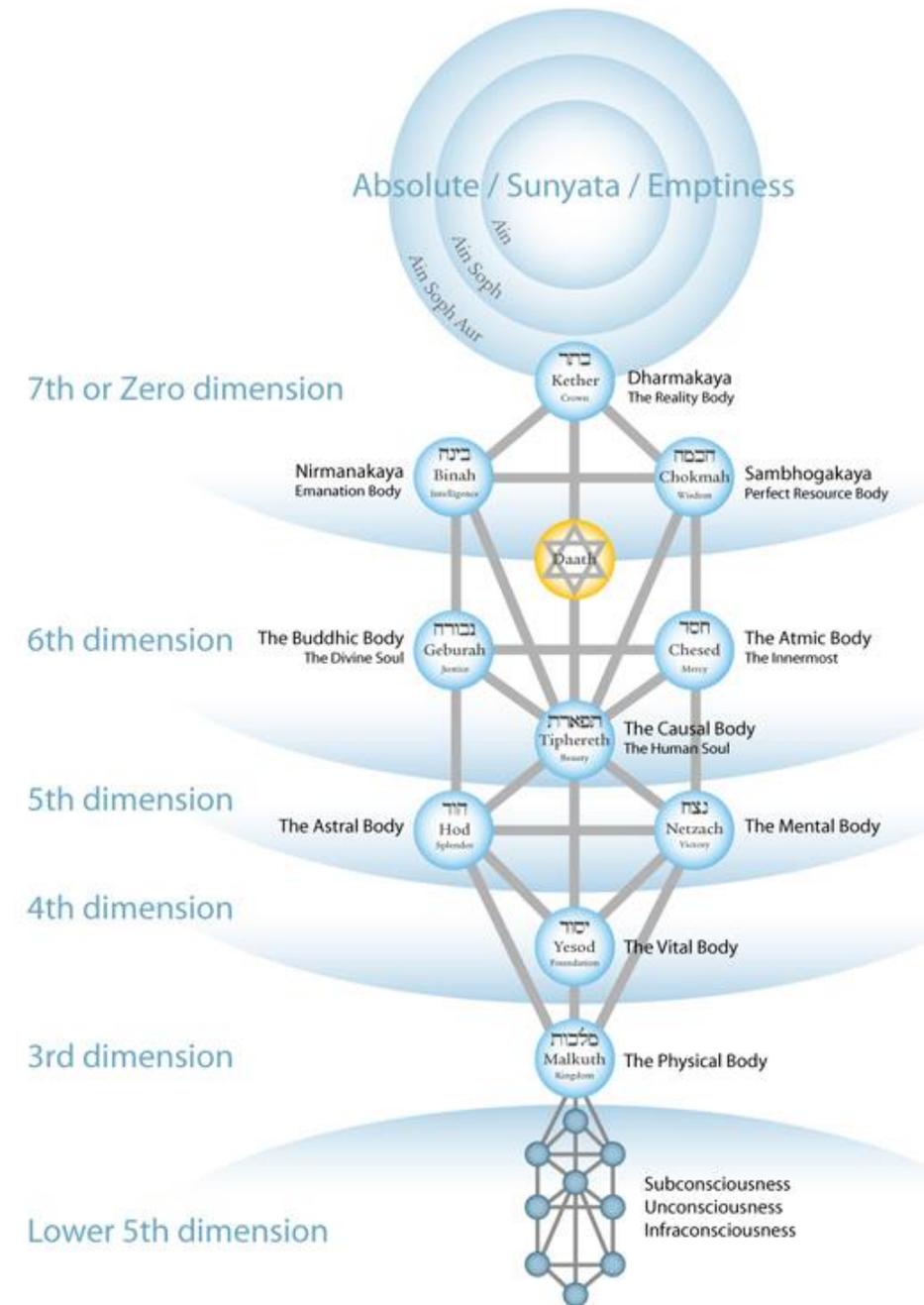
The station, place of stay, is the act of staying (*iqamah*), just as the word *madkhal*, entry, has the sense of the act of entering (*idkhal*) and the word *makhraj*, exit, has the sense of the act of leaving (*ikhraj*). If his affair is to be firmly constructed upon a sound basis, no one may remain in a given station unless there is evidence that it is the act of God Most High [and not his own act] that causes him to stay in that station.

—*Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism* by Al-Qushayri

Stations / Initiations (*Maqamat*)

It has been confirmed that Khidr, peace be with him, said: 'There are one thousand stations (*maqām*) between the servant of God and his Lord (*mawlā*). And a similar saying has been mentioned from Dhu-I-Nun al-Misri, Abu Yazid al-Bastāmi, al-Junayd, and Abu Bakr al-Kattāni—may God be pleased with them all. Dhu-I-Nun al-Misri said: 'There are a thousand worlds' [between the servant of God and his Lord], Abu Yazid and al-Junayd—may God bless their innermost selves, said: one thousand palaces,' and Abu Bakr al-Kattāni said: 'a thousand stations.' God the Most High, says, *'Is the person who follows the good pleasure of God like the person who brings to himself the wrath of God, whose dwelling is Hell?—A woeful refuge!* (3:162) [Certainly] *they are in varying degrees (darajāt) in the sight of God,*' (3:163) and those 'ascending degrees' mentioned in this Qur'anic verse are one thousand stations.

—*Stations of the Sufi Path*, Abdullah Ansari of Herat



Way Stations and Abiding Stations

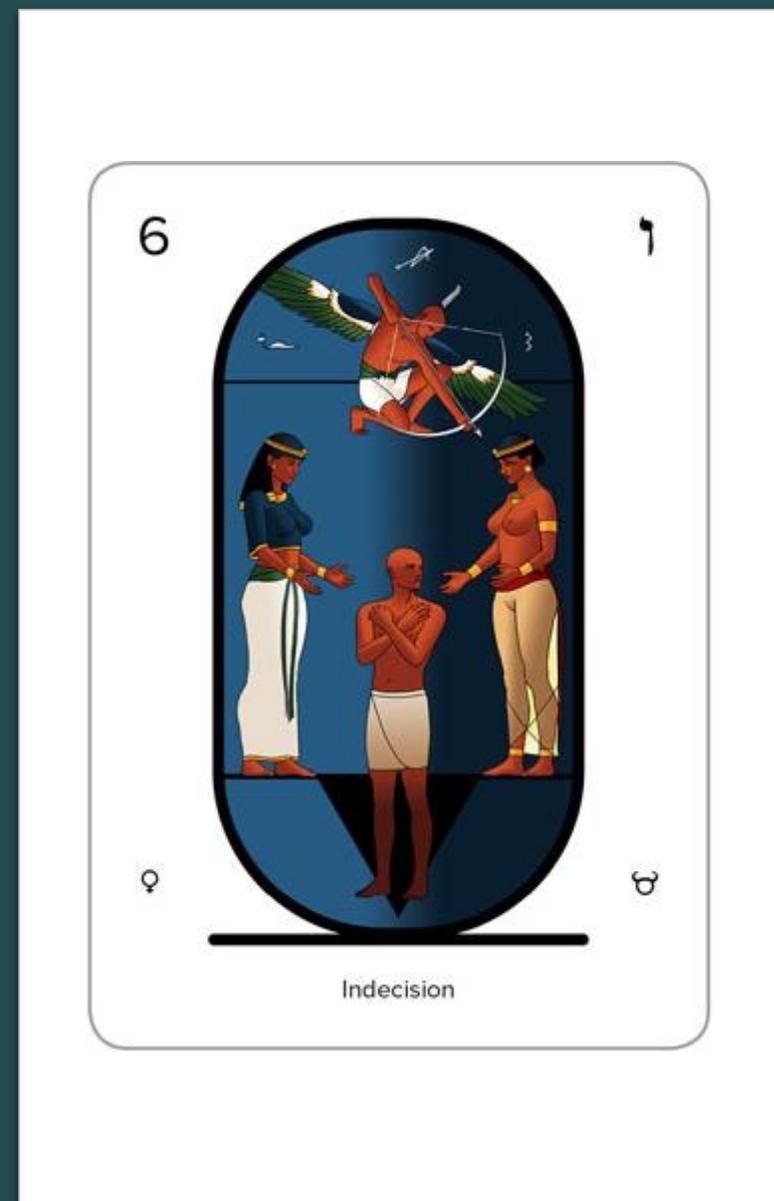
And those one thousand stations are 'stopping places' which are traveled by those who are journeying toward God (*Haqq*) until the servant, having passed [and is helped to pass] through those ascending degrees stage by stage, is honored to be received into the proximity (*qurb*) of God. Or the servant himself passes through one stopping place after another until he reaches the final stopping place, which for him is the field of proximity to God. The proximity he leaves behind is only 'a way-station,' while that [proximity] where he remains is the [abiding spiritual] 'station'—like those stations of the angels in the heavens. [As] God, the Most High, says, '*And there is none among us but he has a known station, (37:164) (and in His saying) They seek a way of access to their Lord, which of them (might be) closest...*' (17:57). So each of these thousand stations is a way-station for the spiritual traveler (*ravanda'*), but a station (*maqām*) for the discoverer.

—*Stations of the Sufi Path*, Abdullah Ansari of Herat

Six Conditions for Initiation

In those thousand stations, there is no escape from six things, even for the blink of an eye. These six things [conditions] are: respecting the divine command, fearing God's tricks and ruse, seeking God's forgiveness, actively respecting the *sunna* (the Prophetic Tradition), living in friendship and kindness, and being compassionate toward all creation.

–Abdullah Ansari of Herat,
Stations of the Sufi Path,



Spiritual Acts and Remembrance of God

I heard Abu Ali al-Daqqaq say, "When al-Wasiti entered Nishapur, he asked the companions of Abu Uthman [al-Hiri], 'What did your shaykh use to order you to do?' They replied, 'He used to order us to realize the necessity of acts of obedience and to see clearly how we fell short in them.' Al-Wasiti exclaimed, 'He ordered you to sheer fire-worship! Why did he not command you to be absent from these acts in the vision of their Originator and Further?'" Al-Wasiti only intended to safeguard these people against complacency, not to turn aside into realms of negligence or to authorize infringement of a single one of the usages of religion.

—*Al-Risalah: Principles of Sufism* by Al-Qushayri