3 Oceans and 7 continents

The oceans of the Earth cover about 70% of its surface with land making up the rest. Unlike the land masses the oceans are all connected forming one continuous body of water that surrounds all of the continents. The continents, on the other hand do not form one large land mass but are separated from one another either by natural bodies of water, or, in recent decades by man-made waterways such as the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal.

Until quite recently, the great continuous expanse of water that surrounds the land was considered to divide into 3 oceans:

1. The Pacific Ocean, which is the biggest and covers almost 50% of the water surface of the Earth,
2. The Atlantic Ocean, and
3. The Indian Ocean.

For reasons that are not entirely based on science, some maps now add the Arctic and Southern Oceans. However, traditionally, the waters that make up the Arctic Ocean were considered part of the Atlantic and the waters that make up the Southern Ocean were considered part of the Indian Ocean. In this lecture, we will be following the more traditional division of the Earth’s waters into three great oceans.

The Earth’s land masses are divided into 7 continents. Three of these are grouped together: Europe, Asia, and Africa. North and South America are two more continents that are tied to one another, while Australia and Antarctica are not connected to any of the other continents.

Even a beginning student of Kabbalah is immediately struck by the division of the Earth’s surface into 3 and 7 oceans and continents, respectively, that we have just seen. The reason for this is that it immediately suggests a direct correspondence with the 10 sefirot, the 10 Divine emanations which constitute the most basic Kabbalistic model. Additionally, the ten sefirot themselves are grouped in many different ways, depending on the particular context, but without any doubt, the most ubiquitous and common grouping divides them into 3 and 7. At this point, let us introduce the most common chart used to depict the sefirot, noting their division into 3 and 7:
The oceans
The three sefirot wisdom, understanding, and knowledge are the sefirot that are considered to lie in what is known as “the hidden realm [that] is God’s.” In the human psyche, they manifest as the intellectual faculties of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. By “manifest,” we mean that the sefirot themselves are archetypal categories of God’s affluence, which must take some form in order to be comprehended or grasped. Similarly, we are now saying that these three sefirot also manifest as the three oceans of our planet. Before looking at the particular correspondence between the oceans and the sefirot, let us meditate on a couple of more general considerations regarding the oceans.

One world ocean
As mentioned, the oceans of our planet are all connected. Unlike the continents, which the waters divide, you can imagine that all of the waters on our planet make one large world ocean. The same is true of the three supernal sefirot, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. In Kabbalah, there is a model of seven chambers (heichalot) into which the sefirot are divided. The three higher sefirot are all within a single chamber called: the chamber of the holy of holies (היכל המקדשים), which is the highest chamber. The name of the chamber itself alludes to its containing three elements: the holy (1 element) of holies (2 elements). In other words, one of the sefirot is considered above and more holy than the other two. In general, the chamber of the holy of holies begins with understanding but it includes within it also wisdom and crown.

Whenever we speak of the sefirah of crown, which is super-conscious and therefore not directly experienced, we also imply the sefirah of knowledge, which is considered the conscious manifestation of the crown. Thus, the three supernal sefirot can denote either crown, wisdom, and understanding, or wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. We need to keep this point in mind for later. Still, one important difference differentiates these two options. When the three oceans are corresponded to crown, wisdom, and understanding, they are indeed likened to the single chamber of the holy of holies, implying that all three are one single body of water. But, when they are corresponded to wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, they reflect three
distinct bodies of water, joined as one. All three together are one state of being, one chamber. This important image reveals the manner in which the oceans are indeed divided into three but they are really only one great body of water, which is all hidden.

In Kabbalah, the realm of the intellect is also called the concealed world. One of the most common images used to describe the manner in which the intellect is concealed is indeed the oceans. Just as the waters of the oceans conceal the creatures that live in them, the intellectual realm conceals its own brand of beings. The beings that inhabit our intellectual realm are the thoughts and other powers of the intellect. They are just like the fish that swim in the oceans. In fact, one of the deepest mystical thinkers among the sages was Rav Hamnuna Saba; his name “Hamnuna” literally means “fish.” The deep mystics among the sages are referred to in the Zohar as “the fish of the sea” (שו' ים), because of their super-sensitivity to the intellectual sea-creatures that inhabit the deepest abyss of the intellect.

An even deeper insight into the oceans and their connection with the intellectual realm of the soul has to do with the fact that the intellectual parts of the soul are described as emanating introverted light, i.e., light that is reflected back inwards and does not emanate outwards. This is the nature of thought in the mind. It is not outwardly recognizable. Someone looking at me cannot tell what I am thinking. Instead, the energy of our intellect is a vector focused inward, pointing back into the mind. In contradistinction, the seven lower emotive sefirot are described as producing light that emanates outwardly, or extroverted light. This light shines out to a consciousness outside of my own. Likewise, the seven continents produce such light.

The insight that we gain from this is that the ocean is a more private place conducive for one’s interaction with oneself. But, dry land is conducive to relationships and interaction with others. In Kabbalah, an inward vector is also considered an upward vector, continually rising, with ever-increasing abstraction above one’s previous experience of reality. What this means is that the limit of our ability to plunge into the ocean’s depth represents our ability to grasp the most abstract concepts. Similarly, the outward vector related to dry land is also considered a downward vector. The greater our ability to interact with one another, the more insight we gain into the physical aspects of reality.

Uninhabitable

The seven continents, the surface of the Earth that man can potentially inhabit (even though some of the dry land is not habitable because it is desert) correspond to the seven relatively lower sefirot, which in Kabbalah constitute the emotive faculties of the heart. In Chassidut, the seven lower sefirot are also associated with man’s animal soul, while the three supernal intellectual sefirot correspond to man’s Divine soul.

One of the differences between the animal soul and the Divine soul is that the animal soul, like other animals, requires a suitable environment in order to survive. In the case of man, this means a hospitable land environment. The Divine soul, which is infinite in its nature, is not limited in this way.

Indeed, the seven continents are hospitable to our animal soul. The seven lower sefirot also correspond to the seven days of creation during which God created the earth for the express purpose that it be inhabited, as stated in the verse: “He did not
create it for chaos; He created it to be inhabited.” So the part of creation that is expressly for the purpose of human habitation is the continents. But, because of our current dependence on our animal soul for our survival, the oceans are uninhabitable and are therefore considered to be in a relatively chaotic state.

Indeed, in the Genesis account of creation, when the waters still covered the entire surface of the earth, the Torah defines this as a state of chaos: “And the earth was chaotic and a void and darkness upon the abyss and the spirit of God hovering over the waters.” The Torah uses three different words to describe this initial state of our planet, when water covered its entire surface: void, empty, and dark. All three of these are the characteristics of the abyss, the name of the primordial waters that covered the earth. Normally, these three words are explained to allude to the three sefirot: crown (which is the highest sefirah, preceding even wisdom), wisdom, and understanding, but they also correspond to the three supernal sefirot: wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.

Ocean world
Actually, that dry land rises above sea level is a miracle because according to the Torah (and science as well), it is only natural that water should cover the entire face of the earth and there should be no visible dry land. This is known from the natural order of the four archetypal elements: fire, air, water, and earth. In Torah, as was accepted for many thousands of years by all systems of thought, the elements’ natural position in relation to one another is pictured by four concentric circles. Earth is the innermost circle, next comes water, then air, and finally fire. The element of earth is completely circumscribed by the next larger circle of water. According to this order, earth is the lowest of the elements and therefore naturally should be submerged underwater. For this reason, according to the Genesis account of creation, on the third day, God had to command the waters to recede so that dry land emerge. Because of this miracle—that the land rises above the surface of the waters—one of our morning blessings praises God for this miracle that allows the world to continue to sustain revealed life.

However, this will not be the state of affairs forever. The sages explain that at the end of six millennia (corresponding to the six days of creation—one millennium for each day of creation), the waters will once more rise and submerge the surface of the land. This would of course lead to the destruction of all of our civilization.

Still, we should not understand this statement too literally. The correct way to understand this statement is as a metaphor. The waters that come to cover the earth represent knowledge. Specifically, whereas today we are not consciously aware of God’s Presence, at the end of six millennia, consciousness and awareness of God will cover the earth in a natural manner, just as the elemental water we have mentioned covers the elemental earth. According to this metaphor, all the souls that merits this level of Divine consciousness will get “wings” and for the entire (seventh) millennium (that corresponds to the Shabbat of creation) they will hover and fly in the air above the waters and the earth. The point of the metaphor is that in the future, things will return to their natural order (earth, under water, under air, under fire) and in this natural order, the souls inhabit the air that is between the fire and the waters that
cover the earth. And this is exactly the image in the second verse of the Torah where the spirit of God (the Messianic spirit) was hovering and flying over the waters. In the future all of the souls will have the Messianic spirit and do this.

Now, we will discuss the particular correspondence of the oceans with the three higher sefirot. Before we begin, let us first present the correspondence in the form of our chart from above:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding (binah)</th>
<th>Wisdom (chochmah)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Ocean</td>
<td>Pacific Ocean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge (da’at)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indian Ocean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Atlantic Ocean

The idiom used to describe the waters covering the earth, “chaotic and void” appears only three times in the entire Bible. The first time is in the second verse of Genesis. The second time this idiom appears is in a beautifully poetic verse from Isaiah: “The ka’ath and the kipod [nocturnal birds] will inherit it, the owl and the raven shall dwell in it, and He shall stretch upon it a line of chaos and stones of the void.”

Isaiah offers us an additional description of the nature of the chaos. He calls it a “line of chaos” ( bày ית). A line can refer to either a straight line or especially in terms of the rounded sphere of the Earth—a circle. In the tractate of Chagigah, the second chapter titled Ein Dorshim is the one chapter of the Talmud that is exclusively dedicated to the secrets of the Torah; it is the source of Kabbalah in the Talmud. There, the sages explain that this line of chaos is a green circular line that encompasses all of the dry land of the earth, and they explain that this refers to the one world ocean. We might think that because all of the world’s oceans are connected, this statement is not very helpful for our purposes. However, the particular part of the world ocean that was in the mind of the prophets of Israel (and of all of mankind that developed in Europe, Asia and Africa) was specifically the Atlantic. In Kabbalah, the line of chaos refers to the sefirah of understanding and to the mother principle. This is a very important reason why we see the Atlantic Ocean as corresponding to the sefirah of understanding.

The Pacific Ocean

The literal meaning of “Pacific” is “rest” or “peace.” On the one hand, the Pacific Ocean is the biggest of all the oceans, yet, for all its tremendous size, it is relatively peaceful. Peace and rest are inherent qualities the Shabbat—the day of rest and peace. In Kabbalah, the Shabbat is associated with the sefirah of wisdom and the father principle, indicating that wisdom is the most peaceful and quiet of all the sefirot. Another allusion to the quiet nature of the sefirah of wisdom is the sages’ aphorism that “wisdom is bound by silence.” The Pacific Ocean thus corresponds to the sefirah of wisdom and everything that it represents.
The Indian Ocean

Finally, we come to the Indian Ocean, which we already know must correspond to the final remaining intellectual sefirah: knowledge. In the Bible, the Indian Ocean has a great deal of significance. It is only natural to think that the most important ocean in the Bible is the Atlantic. This is because the Land of Israel borders on the Mediterranean Sea, which is an offshoot of the Atlantic Ocean. But, in the central story of the Five Books of Moses—the Exodus from Egypt—the sea that was split was the Red Sea, which is an offshoot of the Indian Ocean. In fact, the Red Sea is where the Indian Ocean seems like it is reaching up and trying to touch the Mediterranean Sea.

Reviewing our identification of the three oceans with the three intellectual sefirot—wisdom, understanding, and knowledge—we see that the correspondence follows the relative sizes of the oceans:

- The largest ocean, the Pacific, corresponds to the first intellectual sefirah, wisdom.
- The Atlantic, which is the second largest, corresponds to the second intellectual sefirah, understanding.
- The smallest of the three, the Indian Ocean, corresponds to the third intellectual sefirah, knowledge.

Now in Kabbalah, knowledge is directly connected to foundation. In the human body, knowledge corresponds to the posterior brain, which is considered the spiritual source of the reproductive seed, while foundation corresponds to the reproductive organ. Indeed, we see that on its eastern end, the Indian Ocean reaches to Australia, which among the continents corresponds to foundation. At its western edge the Indian Ocean touches Africa, which as we will see corresponds to the sefirah of might. The word for “might” in Hebrew, gevurah, stems from gever, one of the four synonyms for “man.” This particular synonym is the one used for the idiom ko‘ach gavra, which means “the power of fertility.” In addition, the span of the Indian Ocean from Australia (foundation) to Africa (might) alludes to the name Yosef (Joseph is the archetypal soul of foundation) Yitzchak (Isaac is the archetypal soul of might), the name of the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Earlier we noted that knowledge is the conscious manifestation of the sefirah of crown. This is of course reflected in the Indian Ocean. The Hebrew word for Indian is hodi, which literally means acknowledgment (this word stems from the same word that is the name of the sefirah of thanksgiving, hod), or splendor. In Hebrew, the name of each of the 22 letters is a word. The letters of each of these words make up the initials of a moral idiom. The three letters that make up the name of the fourth letter, dalet (ד), are the initials of the idiom: “Know how to give thanks” (חנוך וטור ותודה). This beautiful idiom, which represents a state of rectified acknowledgment in the psyche, connects knowledge with thanksgiving, the literal meaning of splendor. The sefirah of crown is described as manifesting the splendor of God’s sovereignty.

Another related point that needs to be explained further is that if the Indian Ocean is seen, or experienced as the sefirah of crown, then all the oceans can be considered as one large body of water. Indeed, the Indian Ocean alludes to the crown because as mentioned, this was where the parting of the Red Sea occurred. The sages describe this event as spiritually revealing the usually unattainable essence of the crown to the
Children of Israel. But, if it is counted as the sefirah of knowledge, then the three oceans have to be considered distinct bodies of water.\textsuperscript{11}

**The Panama and Suez Canals**

In modern times, man has created two great canals to connect all the oceans of the earth. The earlier of the two is the Suez Canal, which connects the cities of Port Sa’id on the Mediterranean Sea and Suez on the Red Sea. The Canal was officially opened for traffic on November 17, 1869 and is 163km long and 300m wide at its narrowest point.

The area expanded to make the Suez Canal was replete with small lakes and riverbeds, one of which according to some authorities was the Reed Sea that split for the Children of Israel when they came out of Egypt. In fact, the entire Red Sea is called the Reed Sea in the Torah. So, the original Reed Sea that split now makes part of the Suez Canal.\textsuperscript{12}

Now, the Red Sea is an offshoot of the Indian Ocean pointing north towards the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean Sea is an easterly offshoot of the Atlantic Ocean. So the Suez Canal is essentially creating a connection between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. When we translate this into Kabbalistic terminology we find that the Suez Canal connects the sefirot of knowledge (the Indian Ocean) and understanding (the Atlantic Ocean). This essential link is captured in the sages’ saying: “If there is no knowledge there is no understanding; if there is no understanding there is no knowledge.”\textsuperscript{13}

The second great canal constructed in modern times is the Panama Canal, which connects the Pacific Ocean with the Atlantic. The Panama Canal is considered one of the largest and most complex engineering projects ever undertaken.

Before the construction of the Canal the only route between the two oceans was around the tip of South America, around the infamously treacherous waters of Cape
Horn. Before the Canal, the journey from New York to San Francisco over water was about 22,500 km. With the Canal, the distance is cut to 9,500 km only. The Panama Canal is 77 km long and was officially open for traffic on August 15, 1914.

Extending our analogy, we can envision the Panama Canal as acting like a connecting bridge between the mother and father principles, between the sefirot of understanding and wisdom. The link between wisdom and understanding is considered one of the most important in Kabbalah. The Zohar describes the two as “two friends that never part.”

Northern and southern hemispheres

In order to discuss the continents we need to begin with a passage from the Zohar which sheds light on the relationship between the northern and southern hemispheres. In this particular passage, the Zohar discusses the essential nature of the elements and the four directions: north, south, east, and west. It is important to know that though the Zohar was well aware of the complexity of the Earth (as were all the sages, and most wise men of the ancient world), that it is a sphere and that the equator divides it into two hemispheres, its frame of reference is the northern hemisphere alone.

In order to orient ourselves correctly, we need to think of a person standing facing east (sunrise). To his left will be the north and to his right will be the south, and the west will be behind him. Now, as the Zohar states, normally, because the north is to the left it is identified with might, the sefirah that corresponds to the left hand. Likewise, the north will be identified with everything else that might is understood to correspond to. For instance, in terms of the four elements that we mentioned before, might corresponds to fire, so north would be associated with fire. South, which is to the right, is therefore identified with the sefirah of loving-kindness, since it corresponds to the right hand. The element corresponding to the right is water, so south is normally understood to correspond with water.

Each of the elements has a primary (essential) and secondary (accidental) quality, summarized in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>element</th>
<th>primary (essential) quality</th>
<th>secondary (accidental) quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fire</td>
<td>hot</td>
<td>dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>air</td>
<td>wet</td>
<td>hot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>cold</td>
<td>wet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earth</td>
<td>dry</td>
<td>cold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two qualities of water are cold and wet. Let us say another word about water. Most people think that water is primarily (essentially) wet and only secondarily (accidentally) cold. But Kabbalah teaches that it is the other way around: water is primarily cold and secondarily wet.

One way to see this is by noting that much of the water in the world is in a frozen state as ice—in this state, it is not wet, but it is cold. The characterization of the primary and secondary characteristics of water is not purely academic; it has legal, or halachic ramifications. For instance, in regard to a mikveh—a pool of spiritually purifying waters—the question raised is: if we heat the water up so that it is more
comfortable to immerse in, does the water still purify, or whether because it has lost its primary natural characteristic—coldness—it no longer purifies? The Alter Rebbe ruled in his time a novel ruling that even warm water purifies.

In any case, returning to the elements, according to the sages, water is cold and wet, while fire is hot and dry. Since, north corresponds to left and fire and south corresponds to right and water, it would seem that the south should be cold while the north should be hot. Throughout history, most of the people on earth have lived in the northern hemisphere, while even today only a small fraction of people live south of the equator. Now, the Zohar poses the following question: According to this correspondence, we would expect that the further north we go—relative to most of the world’s population—the hotter it should get, but in reality, we all know that this is not the case. The further north you go the colder it gets. And the opposite is also puzzling, because theoretically, the farther south you go (again relative to the vast majority of the world’s population which lives north of the equator) the cooler it should get, but clearly this is not the case because as you go south and get closer to the equator, the hotter the earth is.

The answer that the Zohar gives is (and there is a great deal of in-depth commentary on this topic17) that here we see the most important manifestation of the Kabbalistic principle called “they reversed places” (והלכו רוחות) in a geographical context. This principle exhibits the essence of what a rectified state of reality is like. It is very similar to the later notion of inter-inclusion. It means that two powers or forces have switched places. Each has left its natural vessel (in this case, its natural location on the globe) and entered into the vessel of the other. The locations where I expect to find cold and hot are reversed. The Zohar says that this is a very important phenomenon of the inhabited part of the Earth.

As mentioned above, the Zohar also knows that there is land south of the equator, but it says that this is the reason that most of mankind, from its very beginnings to date, lives in the Northern hemisphere, because only the northern hemisphere manifests this state of inter-inclusion. However, if you live in the southern hemisphere, the south is indeed cold and the north is indeed hot. In this sense, the southern hemisphere is natural. But, because it exhibits nature in its raw, still unrectified form, the southern hemisphere is considered less developed or less sophisticated than the northern hemisphere. You might say that the way that nature presents itself in the southern hemisphere is like the way an elementary school teacher presents things—everything fits exactly as it should and there are no surprises, no complexity. But, the land of the northern hemisphere, because of the inversion of the innate properties of north and south, is better suited for habitation in the sense that it is more amenable to reaching a state of mature rectification. You might say that the way that nature manifests in the northern hemisphere is the complex and multi-faceted presentation of a topic offered in an advanced graduate course.

**Continents**

This general statement about the difference between the north and south hemispheres of our planet will help us better understand how we correlate the
continents with the seven emotive sefirot. As we did with the oceans, let us first present the particular correspondence of sefirot and continents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Сфирот (Sefirot)</th>
<th>Семь континентов</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>might (gevurah)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Africa</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>loving-kindness (chesed)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Asia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>beauty (tiferet)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Europe</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>acknowledgment (hod)</strong></td>
<td><strong>South America</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>victory (netzach)</strong></td>
<td><strong>North America</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>foundation (yesod)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Australia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>kingdom (malchut)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Antarctica</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now, three of the seven continents are connected as one. The two which are absolutely connected are Europe and Asia, so much so that sometimes they are referred to as Eurasia. The third, which is tenuously connected to Asia and Europe, is Africa. Human civilization originally began on these three continents.

The point where they meet is the holy land, the Land of Israel. Just as the Suez Canal, connects knowledge (the Indian Ocean) and understanding (the Atlantic Ocean) so the Land of Israel connects the three continents that in Kabbalah correspond to the three primary emotions of the heart.

**Asia**

Let us explain why we see Asia as corresponding to loving-kindness. First, the Hebrew spelling of Asia is אסיה (pronounced: Asya) and its numerical value, 72, is exactly the numerical value of “loving-kindness” חסד! The literal meaning of Asya in Aramaic is a healer. In the Torah, the archetypal healer is the Cohen (the priest) who is the “man of loving-kindness.”

In Kabbalah there is a conceptual framework known as Shmitot. The first shmitah, which corresponds to the sefirah of loving-kindness, the first primary emotive faculty of the heart, is called the shmitah of chaos, indicating that there is indeed something chaotic about loving-kindness, relative to the other emotive faculties.

One of the connotations of loving-kindness in Kabbalah is “great kindness” רחמים. Asia is the largest of the continents both in area and in population. In fact, in respect to its population Asia is exploding. Two of the planet’s most populous countries, China and India, are in Asia. Speaking of India, it is interesting to note that the Kuzari, one of the medieval books of Jewish philosophy, when speaking about that country, notes that its inhabitants are from the previous shmitah (or epoch) called the shmitah of loving-kindness and that therefore they exhibit kindness themselves.
Asia’s population explosion can be likened to the Big Bang as a source of continual growth. Another synonymous name for the sefirah of loving-kindness is the sefirah of greatness ((sockfd), which also means “growth” (הגדה), in Hebrew. Not surprisingly, most of the emerging markets on the globe are in Asia.18

Europe corresponds to beauty and Africa to might. So if you are traveling from Asia to Africa you are going from loving-kindness to might. But, geographically, the connection between Asia and Europe is much more prominent. The same is true in Kabbalah where the connection between loving-kindness and beauty is considered to be stronger than that between loving-kindness and might. This relationship is captured in the verse: “Jacob [the archetypal soul of beauty] who redeemed Abraham [the archetypal soul of loving-kindness].” Abraham actually comes from Asia. The genes of the Jewish people begin in Asia, which is loving-kindness and then they have to descend to Egypt, which is in Africa. Africa as we said corresponds to might. Indeed, Egypt in Hebrew literally means constraint or narrow straits, the essence of the sefirah of might.

Europe
Now Europe, which is today considered to be the cradle of Western civilization (whether it be Greece or Rome) corresponds to beauty. Noah’s son who settled Europe was named Japheth, which in Hebrew literally means “beauty.” There is even a verse that relates Japheth directly to beauty: “God has made Japheth beautiful.”19

Obviously all of these correspondences carry a much deeper meaning for a person who is a serious student of Kabbalah and Chassidut. But, let us bring a few conclusions that follow from this correspondence.

First, Asia is the continent most associated with love, the inner experience or motivation of loving-kindness. This is the true motivation for Asia being the most populous of the continents, as mentioned above. It also follows that Africa is the archetypal land of fear. Indeed, the first two letters in “Africa,” “af,” (את) in Hebrew mean “anger,” the emotional attribute associated with might. Europe is the source of compassion. Interestingly, in Kabbalah (particularly in regard to the sefirah of knowledge), the color white is associated with loving-kindness, while the color black is associated with might. In terms of the continents, the origin of the white races is in Asia while the origin of the black races is in Africa.

Where all three continents are connected is in the Land of Israel. In Kabbalah, the Land of Israel is considered to correspond to the sefirah of knowledge in its capacity as the soul of all the emotive faculties. In this sense, the Land of Israel contains the essence of all three continents together. This is why we, the Jewish people, have three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are the archetypal souls of all three attributes, love, fear, and compassion.

North and South America
Now, the seven emotive powers of the soul are divided into three primary faculties, loving-kindness, might, and beauty followed by two faculties called victory and acknowledgment, and then one faculty called foundation that stands separately and another final faculty, kingdom, which also stands alone. This is exactly how the
continents are divided on the surface of the earth. Asia, Europe, and Africa go together. Then the two that form a single unit are the two Americas, North and South.

Now let us go back to use our observation about the hemispheres. In respect to Asia, Europe, and Africa, the first two are entirely in the northern hemisphere, while Africa crosses the equator and a good part of it is in the southern hemisphere. For this reason we are further motivated to identify Africa with the left axis sefirah of might. Still, within the Northern Hemisphere itself we have might in the south, while the south is, as noted, associated with the right hand side, so we would have expected to find the sefirah of loving-kindness in the south. Actually, we have here another example of role-reversal (achlu duchtaiyhu), which indicates that the part of Africa just north of the equator is capable of fostering a high level of social and intellectual maturity.

Extending this observation to North and South America we can now better understand why it is that North America which is in the northern hemisphere corresponds to victory, the sefirah that lies on the right axis of the sefirot, while South America, which is in the southern hemisphere corresponds to acknowledgment, the sefirah that lies on the left axis.20

Actually in Kabbalah the connection between victory and acknowledgment is considered to be stronger than the connection between loving-kindness, might, and beauty. In the Zohar, victory and acknowledgment are described as “two halves of a single body.”21 Central America connects North and South America together and makes them one. The physical image in Kabbalah used to describe the relationship between victory and acknowledgment, and in our case, between North and South America is either the two kidneys, or the two testicles, or the two feet as they walk together in unison. Central America therefore plays the role of synchronizing the two halves of each of these pairs.

Another image we can use in order to understand the role that Central America plays is that when considering the physiological systems of the human body, victory corresponds to the endocrine system and acknowledgment to the immune system. Extending this correspondence, we can say that North America serves as the world’s hormones and South America serves as its immune system. Modern medicine has taught us that these two systems of the body are deeply interconnected, more than any other two systems of the body. The interdependence is manifest by Central America.

Australia

The one continent that stands alone as a big island in the middle of the ocean is Australia, which corresponds in Kabbalah to the sefirah of foundation. Foundation is on the middle axis, but it tends to the left side. This fits perfectly with our identification of the southern hemisphere with the left, since Australia lies entirely in the southern hemisphere.

Antarctica

The final sefirah is kingdom. Though kingdom lies at the end of the middle axis, it is considered to tend entirely to the left. So, this fits beautifully with the identification
of kingdom with Antarctica, which again is entirely in the Earth’s southern hemisphere.

The sefirah of kingdom is described as having nothing of its own to give. This is exactly the state of Antarctica, the continent which is absolutely desolate and cannot on its own support any human habitation. It is an empty continent just as kingdom is empty before it is filled by the sefirot above it. The sefirah of kingdom corresponds to the element of earth, which we noted above is dry and cold. Antarctica too is the driest (least precipitation) and coldest of all the continents.

The sages tell us that a person must love his wife as he loves his own body. The Arizal explains that the reason for this is that because a man’s wife represents his sefirah of kingdom. Just as the moon has no light of its own, says the Arizal, so it does not even have a corporeal reality of its own. So, even the body of a man’s wife comes from her husband, according to the Arizal. Of course, physically we do not see this, because the literal example of this can only be found in the account of creation where Eve was created from a part of Adam. The Arizal extends this principle to all couples at all times. So obviously, this principle today manifests as some ethereal, inner body, that every wife receives from her husband.

Now, among the sefirot, the closest in spirit to kingdom is acknowledgment (although kingdom receives its life-force through the channel of foundation). Indeed, we see that geographically, the closest place to Antarctica is the tip of South America, in Argentina. Nonetheless, kingdom receives from foundation, which requires us to look at the relationship between Australia and Antarctica.

Let us now present the full map of the Earth’s oceans and continents as we have seen them to correspond to the sefirot:

![Map of the Earth's oceans and continents corresponding to the sefirot](image)

**The solar system and the Earth**

So now that we have identified 10 different parts of the earth’s surface, let us extend this to the entire Solar System. One of the reasons we compare these two models in this way is that it demonstrates the holographic principle of Kabbalistic models. Like the Earth’s surface, the Solar System is considered to have 10 different unique objects, one of which is the Earth. So, the correspondence between the objects of the
Our current understanding of the Solar System places the Sun in the center, with 9 orbiting planets. In 2006, Pluto lost its status as a planet because it does not fulfill some of the most recent astronomical criteria for planethood. Officially, Pluto is now considered a dwarf planet part of the Kuiper Belt (it is also sometimes called a Kuiper Belt Object, or KBO). Still, this fits nicely with an issue discussed in length in Kabbalah about whether kingdom, the 10th and final sefirah can be considered a sefirah at all, for all of the reasons mentioned above, and even more importantly, because it has a real tendency to break away and detach itself from the rest of the sefirot. Detaching kingdom consciously is considered a negative spiritual act (described metaphorically as “cutting down saplings”), but we find many times that kingdom detaches of its own accord. In any case, in a previous class we discussed the correspondence of the Sun and the planets to the sefirot, and we summarize it here with this chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
<th>Venus</th>
<th>Mercury</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>understanding (binah)</td>
<td>wisdom (chochmah)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>might (gevurah)</td>
<td>loving-kindness (chesed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>Uranus</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
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<tr>
<td>acknowledgment (hod)</td>
<td>beauty (tiferet)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neptune</td>
<td>Pluto (Kuiper Belt Objects)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>foundation (yesod)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>kingdom (malchut)</td>
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Our model of the oceans and continents began with wisdom, but as explained, because of the special relationship between knowledge and crown, the Indian Ocean can correspond to either one of these sefirot. So let us draw a composite of the two models with the Indian Ocean corresponding to crown:
Now let us project both models—the correspondence of the oceans and continents with the sefirot and the correspondence of the Sun and planets with the sefirot—onto one chart. We get the following:

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crown</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>Might</td>
<td>Loving Kindness</td>
<td>Beauty</td>
<td>Acknowledgment</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>Victory</td>
<td>King</td>
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Now, what this composite chart reveals is that when the Indian Ocean corresponds to crown, all three oceans (which then form one body of water, as above) reflect the Sun. The sun is considered today to be in a “liquid,” atomic plasma state, beautifully reflecting the novelty of the earth’s liquid water. Mercury is the fastest planet (in terms of its sun orbit, thus corresponding to the speed of the father’s (wisdom is the father principle) procreative seed. Mercury is also the name of the only metal that is a liquid at room temperature, bringing home its correspondence to the Pacific Ocean, the largest body of water. Venus has always been a feminine symbol, and in Kabbalah is associated with the mother principle.

The Earth as a whole corresponds to loving-kindness, as the verse says: “The world is built of loving-kindness.” There is another verse that says, “…To know your ways on Earth” implying that the Earth is the only place that there is knowledge of God, i.e., consciousness exists.

Mars is the planet corresponding to might, whose color is red. And it should somehow be reflected in Africa, which also corresponds to the sefirot of might. Indeed, when the Children of Israel left Egypt, Pharaoh warned them that there is a star with a bad influence rising on the horizon, which will serve a bad omen for their departure from Egypt. The sages say explicitly that this star was actually the planet
Mars. Thus, Pharaoh, the great leader of Africa had a special affinity and sensitivity to Mars.

Let us relate a very well known fact: other than the Earth there is no other planet in the Solar System that has liquid water on its surface. This is the reason that life can exist here. Water in general is the source of life in Torah. That is why both in the Torah and now in biology life is considered to begin in the waters. With regard to the animal kingdom, the fish were first created on the fifth day of creation (in the waters) and then the birds (in the air), and on the sixth day animals and then man were created (on earth).

But, now what we would like to point out is that Jupiter reflects Europe, since both correspond to beauty. The Hebrew name for Jupiter is “tzedek,” which literally means “justice.” Indeed, there is an important idiom in Hebrew mishpat tzedek, which would simply translate as “just justice.” In the Tikunei Zohar, this idiom represents the union of beauty with kingdom, the relatively masculine and feminine forms of beauty.

In the future, the moon will be a symbol for the rejuvenation of the Jewish people. The land of Israel is said to correspond to the moon as well, which is why the very first place that was conquered in the Land of Israel was Jericho whose name stems from one of the Hebrew words for “moon” (yare’ach). Jericho was considered the lock to the Land of Israel that had to be opened in order for the land to be conquered. The Land of Israel therefore goes together with Asia, which reflects the Earth in context of the Solar System as a whole. Therefore, we have that Asia’s most inner essence is the Land of Israel.

1. Deuteronomy 29:28. See in length in our article titled “The Concealed are God’s” and in What You Need to Know About Kabbalah, pp. 148-9.
2. Zohar I, 23b.
3. Though difficult to quantify, it would be interesting to check the historical correlation between our increase in abstract knowledge and sea exploration as well as between scientific discoveries relating to matter and the amount of human interaction.
4. A beautiful example was given once by Rav Adin Steinsaltz to explain the difference between the Lubavitcher Rebbe and other religious leaders. Imagine that scientists were to declare that in two weeks time the oceans would rise high enough to cover the entire surface of the earth. The world would be stricken with panic and all the religious leaders would proceed to declare that the Day of Judgment is upon us and would urge their followers to repent. But, says Rav Steinsaltz, faced with such a prospect, the Lubavitcher Rebbe would have said: “Fine. Then we have two weeks to learn how to live underwater!”

Following our analysis, it is clear that the ideal Jewish mind-set—here depicted by the unique approach of the Lubavitcher Rebbe—is that life under (or hovering over) water is not only possible, but actually the most natural Divine state of affairs. Faced with what others would consider a doomsday scenario, the Jewish soul realizes that it is an opportunity to break free from the confining limitations of the animal soul and to seek out a more (spiritually) advanced existence. From this example, it is quite clear that the man-made religions of the world, though seeking true spirituality, in the end remain confined to their mundane origins. It is only the one God-given Torah that truly seeks to free the Divine spirit in man and provides him with the motivation and the means to do so. See also the next section “Ocean world.”
5. Isaiah 45:18.
7. Isaiah 34:11. The final appearance is in Jeremiah 4:23 in an almost direct paraphrase of the first appearance in Genesis 1:2.
10. It is well known that the Native Americans were mistakenly named Indians because Columbus was trying to reach India by circumnavigating the globe. Nonetheless, this seeming mistake may have uncovered the deep essence of the Native American peoples. This also offers us deep insight into the nature of Thanksgiving as celebrated in the United States especially, which commemorates the good-will between Indians (those who know how to give thanks, as above) and the first English settlers.
11. Accordingly, it all depends on how high (or deep, as we saw earlier) your sefirah of acknowledgment reaches.
12. The parting of the Red Sea was in an east-west direction, while the Suez Canal runs from north to south, so they are orthogonal to one another.
13. Ibid. 3:17.
15. Ibid. II, 23a-24a.
16. Following the order of fire, air, water, and earth, it is easy to see that the essential quality of the former element becomes the accidental quality of the next.
17. Most importantly see the Eishel Avraham’s (Fiorda: 1701) commentary on these folios. See also the Alter Rebbe’s Lukutei Torah, Tazria 19d-20a and Mikdash Melech on these folios.
18. Regarding the link between Asia and chaos see also Haktav Vehakabalah to Genesis 4:17 (“And he built a city”).
20. For more about the axes, see What You Need to Know About Kabbalah, pp. 81ff.
22. As in the Zohar’s idiom: “She [kingdom] is in hod [acknowledgment].”
23. Stated simply scientists have now defined 3 criteria for considering an object a planet. They are:
   1. The object must be orbiting the Sun.
   2. The object must be massive enough to be a sphere by its own gravitational force—its own gravity should pull it into a shape of hydrostatic equilibrium.
   3. The object must have cleared the neighborhood of its orbit.
   Pluto fails the final criteria. By comparison, the Earth’s mass is 1.7 million times greater than the remaining mass in its orbit around the Sun, but Pluto’s is only 0.07 times that of the mass of other objects in its orbit.
   In fact, in 2005 a new Trans-Neptunian object more massive than Pluto was discovered and dubbed Eris.
24. See our website www.inner.org/???
25. Psalms 89:3.
26. Ibid. 67:3.