

# THE SERPENTINE PATHS AND THE TWO CROSSINGS

## *Addendum to the Anatomy of the Pillars: The Decussation, the Posterior Oblique Sling, and the Double Crossing of Fire and Water*

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### Abstract

This addendum completes the anatomy of the two diagonal paths, Fire and Water, by establishing that each is a serpentine path crossing the body's midline twice, in two sections, with a distinct anatomical correlate for each crossing. The upper section runs from the inner ear to the contralateral shoulder; the lower section from that shoulder to the contralateral hip. Both crossings are expressions of the body's contralateral architecture, at two levels. The upper crossing is the neural decussation: the inner ear serves as the physical analogue of its ipsilateral hemisphere, so the crossing from inner ear to contralateral shoulder is the hemisphere's contralateral governance made into a felt line. The lower crossing is the posterior oblique sling — the gluteus maximus of one hip coupled through the thoracolumbar fascia to the latissimus dorsi of the opposite shoulder, the myofascial cross-brace of locomotion. Read this way, the Fire path runs Chokmah (left inner ear) to Geburah (right shoulder) to Netzach (left hip), a left-right-left weave; the Water path runs Binah (right inner ear) to Chesed (left shoulder) to Hod (right hip), a right-left-right weave. The same three Sephiroth assigned in the earlier account are retained, but understood now as double crossings rather than single ones, which is why the tradition names these paths serpentine — they wind across the central axis twice, as the two serpents of the caduceus wind across its staff. The addendum closes by stating the relation of these crossing paths to the lateral vestibulospinal tract that holds the vertical pillars: the ipsilateral postural hold and the contralateral crossings stand in union and opposition, the still vertical staff and the winding serpents, in the dynamic the body lives as gait.

*Keywords: Fire and Water Paths · Serpentine Crossing · Decussation · Posterior Oblique Sling · Inner Ear as Hemisphere Analogue · Lateral Vestibulospinal Tract · The Caduceus · The Anatomy of the Pillars · Catharturgy*

## I. The Paths Are Serpentine: Two Crossings, Not One

The earlier treatment of the pillar architecture assigned the two diagonal paths, Fire and Water, their three Sephiroth each — Fire to Chokmah, Geburah, and Netzach; Water to Binah, Chesed,

and Hod — and described their crossing of the body's midline. This addendum refines that account in one decisive respect: each path crosses the midline not once but twice, in two distinct sections, and each crossing has its own anatomical correlate. The path is serpentine — it winds across the central axis, crosses back, and so weaves rather than merely passing from one side to the other. This is why the tradition, in the caduceus and in the winding-channel imagery of the cross-traditional accounts, has always figured these paths as serpents: a serpent does not cross once and lie still on the far side; it winds, crossing and recrossing the line it travels along.

The two sections are these. The upper section runs from the inner ear to the contralateral shoulder. The lower section runs from that shoulder to the contralateral hip. Because each section crosses the midline, a path that begins at an inner ear on one side arrives at the shoulder on the other side, and then at the hip back on the original side — a left-right-left or right-left-right weave. The three Sephiroth of each path are unchanged from the earlier account; what changes is that the line connecting them is now understood as two crossings in series, each grounded in a different system of the body's contralateral architecture. The earlier single-crossing description was not wrong but partial: it named the shoulder-rank crossing and left the lower reach to the contralateral hip unstated. The full path includes both.

A serpent does not cross once and lie still; it winds, crossing and recrossing. The Fire and Water paths are serpentine in exactly this sense: each crosses the body's midline twice — inner ear to contralateral shoulder, then shoulder to contralateral hip — a left-right-left or right-left-right weave. The same three Sephiroth as before, but understood now as a double crossing.

## **II. The Upper Crossing: The Decussation and the Inner Ear**

The upper section, from the inner ear to the contralateral shoulder, is the neural crossing — the decussation. Its grounding rests on a specific point about the inner ear's place in the anatomy of the Tree: the inner ear functions as the physical analogue of its ipsilateral hemisphere. The vestibular apparatus of the inner ear is the body's organ of the head's orientation, intimately bound to the hemisphere on its own side, and in the Tree's anatomy it stands as that hemisphere's bodily representative — Chokmah at the left inner ear standing for the left hemisphere, Binah at the right inner ear for the right. Because the inner ear is the ipsilateral hemisphere's analogue, the crossing from the inner ear to the contralateral shoulder is nothing other than the decussation itself: the hemisphere's governance of the opposite side of the body, the great neural crossing of the corticospinal and related descending systems, expressed as the felt line from the head's organ of orientation to the opposite shoulder.

This is why the upper crossing references the decussation even though it begins at the ear rather than in the cortex: the ear is where the hemisphere is met in the body, so the ear-to-contralateral-shoulder line is the hemisphere-to-contralateral-body crossing brought down into felt anatomy. Chokmah, the left inner ear and the analogue of the left hemisphere, crosses to Geburah, the right shoulder — the left hemisphere's contralateral executive governance, the decussation made into a path. Binah, the right inner ear and analogue of the right hemisphere, crosses to Chesed, the left shoulder. The upper crossing of each serpentine path is the decussation, and the inner ear is its

origin precisely because the inner ear is the ipsilateral hemisphere's physical stand-in.

### **III. The Lower Crossing: The Posterior Oblique Sling**

The lower section, from the shoulder to the contralateral hip, is the myofascial crossing — the posterior oblique sling. This is a well-established movement subsystem of the body: the gluteus maximus of one hip is coupled, across the midline, to the latissimus dorsi of the opposite shoulder, joined through the thoracolumbar fascia at the sacrum, so that the contralateral gluteus and latissimus contract together during gait and the axial rotation of the trunk. It is the body's diagonal cross-brace for locomotion — the system that transfers force between the upper and lower body across the midline and stabilises the sacroiliac joint at the center. Its fibers run diagonally across the back, shoulder to opposite hip, and it is precisely this diagonal that the lower section of each serpentine path traces.

So the lower crossing of the Fire path is Geburah, the right shoulder, to Netzach, the left hip — the posterior oblique sling on that diagonal, the right latissimus coupled to the left gluteus. The lower crossing of the Water path is Chesed, the left shoulder, to Hod, the right hip — the sling on the opposite diagonal. Where the upper crossing is neural (the decussation, the hemisphere's contralateral governance), the lower crossing is myofascial (the sling, the locomotor cross-brace), but both are the body's one principle of contralaterality expressed at two levels: the midline crossed once high and neurally, once low and myofascially. The serpentine path is the felt line that traverses both — down from the inner ear across to the opposite shoulder by the decussation, then across again to the opposite hip by the sling.

Two crossings, both the body's contralaterality at two levels: the upper neural — the decussation, the inner ear as the ipsilateral hemisphere's analogue crossing to the contralateral shoulder; the lower myofascial — the posterior oblique sling, gluteus to contralateral latissimus across the thoracolumbar fascia. The midline crossed once high and neurally, once low and myofascially.

### **IV. The Two Paths in Full**

Stated in full, the two serpentine paths are as follows. The Fire path begins at Chokmah, the left inner ear and analogue of the left hemisphere; crosses by the decussation to Geburah, the right shoulder; and crosses again by the posterior oblique sling to Netzach, the left hip — a left-right-left weave across the midline. The Water path begins at Binah, the right inner ear and analogue of the right hemisphere; crosses by the decussation to Chesed, the left shoulder; and crosses again by the sling to Hod, the right hip — a right-left-right weave. The three Sephiroth of each path are exactly those assigned in the earlier account; the refinement is that the connecting line is a double crossing, decussation above and sling below, and that the path therefore weaves across the central axis rather than crossing it once.

This vindicates the serpent imagery completely and at the level of anatomy. The two paths are the two serpents of the caduceus, and they are serpentine because the body's contralateral

architecture genuinely crosses the midline twice on the way from the head's organ of orientation to the opposite hip — once by the neural decussation, once by the myofascial sling. The winding is not a decorative figure laid over a straight path; it is the actual double crossing of the body's two contralateral systems, traced as one continuous line. Fire and Water wind down the body, each crossing and recrossing, the two serpents of the staff.

## **V. The Crossings and the Pillars: Union and Opposition**

The serpentine crossing paths stand in a definite relation to the vertical pillars, and naming it completes the architecture. The two outer pillars are held by the lateral vestibulospinal tract, which descends ipsilaterally — same side throughout — to maintain the body's upright postural axis; each pillar is a single vertical line down one side, the body's vertical hold. The two crossing paths, by contrast, are contralateral throughout — the decussation and the sling, each a crossing of the midline. So the body has two architectures at once: the ipsilateral vertical hold of the pillars, and the contralateral crossing of the paths. These stand in union and in opposition. They oppose as the vertical opposes the diagonal, the holding-still opposes the crossing-over, the ipsilateral opposes the contralateral. They unite in the single act of balanced movement: gait itself is the lived alternation of the two, the postural axis held by the vestibulospinal system on each side while the oblique slings and the crossed neural governance carry the diagonal transfer of force from one side to the other with every step.

This is the anatomical truth beneath the caduceus image. The central staff and the two outer pillars are the vertical, ipsilateral hold — the body standing and balanced. The two serpents are the crossing paths — the contralateral systems, neural above and myofascial below, that carry movement across the midline. The serpents wind around the staff because the body's crossing systems wind around its vertical axis; the staff is still and the serpents move, and the whole — standing and moving, holding and crossing, the vertical hold in union and opposition with the winding crossings — is the body in balanced motion, which is the caduceus inhabited. The pillars are the lateral vestibulospinal tract; the paths are the decussation and the posterior oblique sling; and their union and opposition is the gait by which the upright body moves through the world.

Two architectures at once: the ipsilateral vertical hold of the pillars (the vestibulospinal tract) and the contralateral crossing of the paths (the decussation above, the sling below). They oppose as vertical opposes diagonal, holding opposes crossing; they unite in gait, the lived alternation of the postural hold and the cross-brace. The staff is still and the serpents move — the caduceus is the body in balanced motion.

## **References**

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