

GUIDE TO

# The Shekinah Sanctuary

Meditation, healing and blessings

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# The Shekinah Sanctuary

## MEDITATION, HEALING AND BLESSINGS

### A SPIRITUAL INVITATION

*Come draw me out, the world has need of me.*

— Message received by Anne M. Hill

**Welcome to a joyous and delightful opportunity I would love to share with you!**

### THE SHEKINAH SANCTUARY

In my home here in Wales, I have a quiet room dedicated to meditation and prayer, focussed on mystical feminine energy, which in kabbalah is called ‘The Shekinah’. This is the English transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning ‘dwelling’ or ‘settling’. I invite you to discover the beauty and grace that can unfold in your life when you open your heart to The Shekinah.

*One day she will be with us  
in all her glory  
A flash of pure gold  
merging with deep azure  
will herald her coming  
She will carry in her hand  
a perfect crystal  
She will be accompanied by  
the quiet ones in silent attendance.*

— From *The Lady in the Mountain*, Ann M. Hill

### The Cloud

In the Shekinah Sanctuary a small wooden statue of a mother and child sits on a box painted with clouds. The Shekinah is not a person, but the statue represents the loving,

compassionate, every present power of the Divine as a mothering energy. The Cloud box is used to receive and store healing requests and you can send in your own requests, and tune in to weekly healing sessions. But first, you might like to know more about The Shekinah, and see if working in this way calls to you.

## WHO – OR WHAT – IS THE SHEKINAH?

### THE DIVINE PRESENCE

The Shekinah is the dwelling or settling of the divine presence of God. This word is not found in the Bible, but in later rabbinic literature, and in the kabbalah. The concept of The Shekinah as the Divine Feminine is the most beautiful innovation of classical kabbalah and distinguishes mystical Jewish understanding from rabbinical scholarship and thought, which depended (and invariably still does) on a traditional masculine concept of the Divine. We must always remind ourselves that Divinity is essentially neutral, being neither masculine nor feminine, but containing both potentials.

At this time in history women are pressing for more recognition of the significant role they play in human society, especially as mothers – the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world. So it is natural to focus on placing limitations on masculine power in the work place, in politics and economics. But the most significant area where we (both men and women) can help redress the balance is in our spiritual focus. The Shekinah is not a person. ‘She’ is not a goddess. But we can create icons, set up a sacred table, collect mystical songs and prayers, all designed to make us feel more connected to the expression of beauty and compassion that we associate with the feminine.

### **Compassion, peace, tranquility**

*Shekinah* is derived from a Hebrew verb. The root word *škn* is often used to refer to birds’ nests and can also mean ‘neighbour’. These other meanings show how The Shekinah is about closeness and the intertwining of more than one presence – the bird in its nest, with its eggs, is protective; our neighbours are close to us and we need to be kind and compassionate, even if they are strangers. In Arabic, *sakīnah* signifies the ‘presence or peace of God’. A modern translator of the Qur’an, N.J.Dawood, says ‘tranquility’ is the English word for *sakīnah*. I am establishing a tranquil environment in my home-grown Sanctuary.

Many people think of Judaism as a masculine or patriarchal spiritual practice, but in Jewish mysticism, the feminine energy of The Shekinah calls us to accept the compassion and spiritual grace that surrounds us in the visible, material Creation. From a personal – female – perspective, I find meditating in a space dedicated to The Shekinah brings me to a place of immense compassion, with a feeling of security as well as joy.

### **The Shekinah is present in the Sanctuary**

The Hebrew word *mishkan* is derived from the same root as *shekinah*, and this word is used in the Bible, in the sense of a dwelling-place. During the Exodus, The Shekinah appears as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, hanging over the Tabernacle, which was a portable tent used by the Israelites as their sacred space while they were in the desert. The prophets made numerous references to visions of the presence of God, particularly in the context of the Tabernacle or Temple, which have traditionally been attributed to the presence of The Shekinah. Often, a throne is seen, surrounded by clouds of smoke and flames. Jeremiah refers to *Thy throne of glory, on high from the beginning, Thy place of our sanctuary* (Jeremiah 17:12).

### **The Shekinah as Bride and as Mother**

In my book, *Working with Archangels*, I have placed The Shekinah as ‘The Bride’, beside Metatron at the top of the Tree of Life. Classical kabbalah usually puts her at the foot of the Tree, which is where you will see Auriel on my version of the map.

My own vision of Auriel was of a feminine Archangel carrying the Divine Child. My understanding is that The Shekinah ‘descends’ from the highest, abstract dimension of heaven and manifests the created universe. She is both The Bride to the masculine archetype of Divinity and Mother to Creation. In my experience, Auriel is the Archangel for the Moon so it feels comfortable to me to link The Shekinah healing cycles in with the phases of the Moon, placing new healing requests in The Cloud healing box at each New Moon. I think of it like this:

- ☀ New Moon – We take the opportunity for focussed meditation and ‘plant’ new visions, new requests for healing to...
- ☀ Archangel Auriel – Gateway to Moon energy and as mother to all earthbound creatures, receives and elevates our prayer to...

- ☀ The Shekinah – In her capacity as cosmic mother absorbs our prayers and transforms us for our highest good. Miracles *can* happen... not every time, but whatever unfolds is according to our perfection. We put faith in the miraculous and what we need can come to meet us. We put faith in the miraculous and we are never disappointed if we don't get the result we think we.

## IMAGES AND ICONS

We can never capture the deepest essence of spiritual energy in human art, pictures, sculptures, words or music. But that has never prevented human beings trying! An 'icon', a 'window into heaven', is usually a visual reminder of a world, or a spiritual being outside our own dimension. The Byzantine and Russian Orthodox churches created stunning icons, paintings coated liberally with gold leaf, or mosaics that use golden chunks. The gold represented spiritual Light. When you enter an Orthodox church you can be uplifted by the gold, illuminated by candles, and by the rich colours on painted statues, or pouring through glass windows. During the Protestant Reformation period (1517-1648) the Puritans complained that Christians were worshipping idols – forbidden in biblical texts. Throughout Europe the Puritans went into churches and whitewashed the walls. They beheaded statues and smashed stained glass windows. In England they collected beautiful illuminated manuscripts and made made bonfires. This was the Christian equivalent of the Taliban smashing ancient monuments in Afghanistan in the late 1990s. The Taliban's war on art was inspired by the Koran which forbids the portrayal of living things. Socialists who don't believe in the transcendent have also criticised the wealth associated with the treasures of these decorative churches. In the opinion of Karl Marx (1818-1883), the poor are seduced by the magical promise of a world beyond this one, yet in this life the Church gives them little or nothing when they are starving. He summed this idea up by saying, 'Religion is the opium of the people.' But a spiritually-minded person knows that the icon, statue or other image is an image that can remind us of what we want to connect with, it represents the quality we hope to emulate. When I meditate in my Sanctuary, in the presence of an image that reminds me of The Shekinah, I automatically step into a new conceptual space, even before I start my chanting, breathing or inward reciting of the zera.

The simple wooden statue in my Shekinah Sanctuary has no gold decorations, although the huge angelic figure standing behind her is very shiny! This statue was a

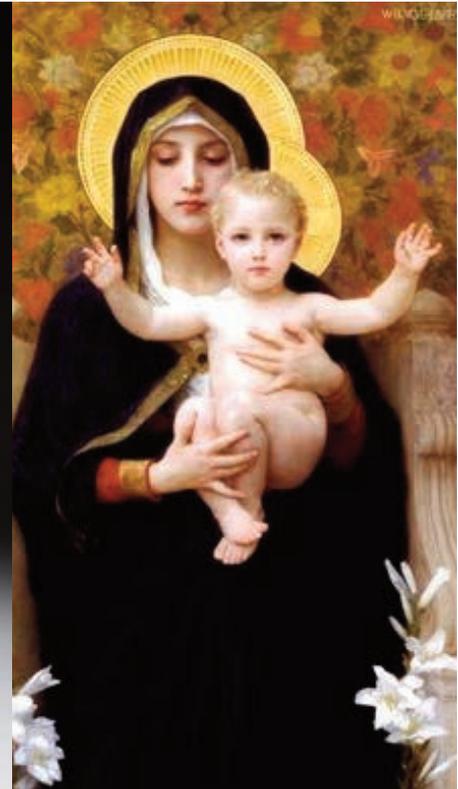
gift from my uncle, my mother's twin brother. He was not a religious man, but for many years he treasured this beautifully carved figure, which he found in a skip close to Hornsey Art College in North London. Perhaps, he thought, it was a discard from a sculpting class. I believe it was special to him because he had lost his own mother when he was only five years old. Her name was Theoline and my mother adapted her name for me, as her first daughter. I was surprised to receive the statue on my fiftieth birthday. My uncle had once said he would leave it to me in his will and he was not a great one for present giving, so I was quite stunned. I suspect he knew I would not only treasure it but would use it for a spiritual purpose. I find this statue a very special reminder of the Divine Feminine as portrayed in many religious traditions – as a feminine goddess, as Isis, as Mary. So I feel she is very suitable as a centre piece for my altar in the Shekinah Sanctuary.



**Figure 1:** The baby Krishna with his mother, Devaki.



**Figure 2:** The baby Horus with his mother, Isis.



**Figure 3:** The baby Jesus with his mother, Mary.

### Queen of Light

The Shekinah is sometimes described as a daughter of the Divine, a Queen of Light, as the Bride of the Sabbath. The Zohar tells us to:

*...prepare a comfortable seat with several cushions and embroidered covers, from all that is found in the house, like one who prepares a canopy for a bride.*

The Shekinah Sanctuary in my home is being furnished with paintings of angels, beautiful curtains, embroidered or hand-painted altar cloths and silk wall hangings.

The Zohar says The Shekinah has no light of her own. In that respect she is like the Moon, acting as a mirror for all the nuances of colours, the rays of light and the shadows they create. She is like the great mother of the world, the foundation stone:

*When the Holy One created the world, He threw down a precious stone from beneath His throne of glory and it sank into the deep... One edge of the stone became lodged in the deeps and the other in the realms above. There was another edge, a single point – The Shekinah – which is in the middle of the world and the world expanded from there, to the right and to the left, and upon all sides, and it is sustained from this central point.*

— *The Account of Creation in The Zohar*

From this stone, the world receives its flow of blessings. In Hebrew, the everflow of Divine blessings is called *shefa*. Everyone who prays and meditates contributes to the flow of blessings which is distributed throughout the world.

The Talmud, in contrast, tells us The Shekinah's light is 65,000 times as bright as the Sun, but is hidden from us by a cherub at the top of the Tree of Life, where she veiled herself after Adam and Eve were banished from Eden. But she still sustains humanity, desiring only that we will reveal her radiance to the world through our own beautiful actions.

The Tree of Life is based on a symmetrical pattern in which the top and bottom are reflections of each other: you cannot have a Crown without a Kingdom, or vice versa. This is why so many paradoxes surround The Shekinah: she is both at the top of the Tree of Life and hidden, yet present at the foot of the Tree. She is described as shadowy, yet radiating splendour and light much greater than the Sun. In kabbalistic tradition, when humanity has sorted out its problems and recognised its own divinity, then we will live in peace and The Shekinah will reside in glory at the foot of the Tree of Life. Meanwhile, Auriel is her representative in the Kingdom.

## THE DIVINE FEMININE IN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

The closest we find to The Shekinah in Christianity is the concept of the Holy Ghost, but this indwelling Spirit is often understood to be part of a masculine Trinity. Christians can meet the feminine Divine through Mary, Mother of God, and through Mary Magdalene, but they were both human women and are often depicted as subservient to Christ himself. When we approach the Divine Presence directly through the feminine image of The Shekinah as the indwelling Divine, we expand our mystical understanding of the power of the Divine in the material world. The Shekinah is not separate from, or lower than, an initiating masculine impulse, but is equal and potent. She grounds and sustains grace, beauty and delight as a counterpoint to abstract creative intelligence.

## MODERN EXPERIENCES OF THE SHEKINAH

### MY VISION

When I first asked to meet The Shekinah, many years ago, I found myself before a door made of crystals. The facets were like mirrors and I could see many reflections of my own face. As I watched, the multitude of Theolyns gradually melted into a single image of a face that was like mine, but not quite – I had the impression I was being shown a deeper layer of my own being and I remembered how, as a teenager, I had often looked into a mirror, gazing into my own eyes, wondering if I could discover something about my own Soul. Then, I inwardly heard the words from St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians:

*For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then I shall know even as also I am known...*

— 1 Corinthians 13:12

These words seemed to be coming from part of my own mind, as though the mirror image had prompted them. I felt I was still only in touch with the surface; I wanted to go through the mirror and touch the invisible world on the other side, where I thought The Shekinah must be dwelling. Part of me was pushing against a barrier of reflections.

Suddenly I was able to let go of my intellect and my desire to push against the boundary, and I found myself surrounded by an energy that wrapped me up in loving softness. Everything became dark and I heard a woman's voice saying...

*The Source of all Life is Love, which is stronger than Death... set me as a seal upon thine heart.*

I saw a face in the shadows and caught a glimpse of a mysterious smile. I thought perhaps the face was the same one I had seen in the mirror. Later, I realised that the words spoken by the mysterious woman also had a biblical connection; they are similar to a verse in *The Song of Solomon*, which begins:

*Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death...*

— *Song of Solomon* 8.6.

## THE LADY IN THE MOUNTAIN

The poem quoted at the top of this guide is from *The Lady of the Mountain*, by Anne Hill, a member of a Welsh meditation group called The Order of Sancta Sophia. While meditating at an evening service in Pennal Church, Anne heard the words:

*Ask, ask who is The Lady of the Mountain... the fire... the ancient wisdom.*

She talked to the rector, Geraint ap Iowerth, about her experience. He had been thinking of disbanding the meditation group, but the message that came through Anne prompted a new flowering. A small space over the rectory garage was converted into a chapel dedicated to Hagia Sofia – the Holy Wisdom. Back in the 1980s, Anne started to develop an inner relationship with a feminine presence who calls herself ‘The Lady’, who on one occasion commanded her:

*Come draw me out, the world has need of me.*

It was this command that prompted her to share her poems and meditations in her self-published book, *The Lady in the Mountain*. In one of her poems, ‘The Lady’ says that she is everywhere:

*in the clamouring sounds of the city,  
in the silence of the lake,  
in the breaking of ocean waves...*

*in every living creature,  
in every tree, every plant, every flower.*

These words, and many of the messages in the meditations, as well as the idea that The Lady would carry a 'perfect crystal', makes me think that this feminine presence is The Shekinah. It seems to me that the feminine aspect of Divine Power will inevitably have different names according to different cultures. Sophia (or Sofia) is a Greek name used in the Christian tradition, especially in the Orthodox Church. In Hinduism, the feminine face of the masculine god Shiva is called The Shakti.

Wherever we live, whatever our personal spiritual heritage, 'The Lady' can speak to us, using a language or images that we can understand. The message 'the world has need of me' seems to be a very powerful indication of our collective need to bring the feminine back into Western culture, so long dominated by left-brained thinking and the masculine urge towards achievement and conquest.

# What you can do

## OPENING YOUR HEART TO THE SHEKINAH

The Shekinah is always present for all of us. Making conscious contact with her is a powerful experience that can change the way you understand life. When people first meet their Radiant Being they realise they will never be alone again. But who supports your Radiant Being? Yes, it is The Shekinah. Your Radiant Being is a personal guide, wise mentor and supporter, but The Shekinah goes beyond the personal. Like Metatron, she has been called the Liberating Angel, because she demonstrates that our sense of separation and aloneness is an illusion. We live in a land of shadow play in which it is difficult to see the Divine at work, but when we work with The Shekinah during quiet retreat and prayer, we access the timeless, hidden place where she resides and we can feel gathered back into her comfort and strength.

Before meeting The Shekinah, ask yourself:

- ☀ Can I see the beauty of the Divine in all creation?
- ☀ Can I love all living creatures and people, whatever their qualities and behaviour?
- ☀ Can I accept all events as part of my process towards understanding and deeper love?

These are deep challenges. We are trained from birth to view the world as divided into good and evil. Meeting The Shekinah is like dipping into an ancient well whose source is the boundless ocean of Divine Love where there are no divisions, and we need to be willing to surrender our preconceptions and our social programming before she can fill us with her love.

## BRINGING THE SHEKINAH INTO YOUR LIFE

- ☀ Create an 'icon' – a window into heaven. You could make this as a collage, cutting paper from magazines or wrapping papers, or saved foil sweet wrappers. The Shekinah doesn't need a human face, but she is a queen, so include a crown. Hers could be dark blue, studded with silver stars, but you should create whatever seems right to you. If you ask, she will guide you.

- ☀ Book yourself a retreat – one where there is a very simple timetable. Commit to taking regular retreats during the year.
- ☀ Read the mystical poetry of Rumi, the 13th-century Persian poet, or *The Song of Solomon*.
- ☀ Listen to calming classical or other relaxing music that helps you transcend your everyday thoughts, allowing you to experience the sense of being supported by Divine Love.
- ☀ Spend time watching the world. What is the view from your window? Allow yourself to see its glory, whether it includes cars and buses and busy people, or trees and plants. Give yourself plenty of time for this ‘open eyed meditation’, so you can start seeing the world through new eyes. It may take some practice, but eventually you will have a breakthrough – an experience of being connected to everything. And then your heart will overflow with love.
- ☀ The Shekinah is the source of all blessings. Ask her to watch over you when you sleep. Acknowledge her presence in the world every morning as soon as you rise.

## CREATE YOUR OWN SANCTUARY

You can create a space for yourself. Even if you do not own enough physical space to dedicate a room to setting up a permanent Sanctuary, you can collect together treasures for an altar table that you can put up in a quiet corner when you meditate. Get a small folding table if you haven't room for a permanent one. Find a sturdy box to store your sacred treasures in – you could include a beautifully decorated prayer book, pictures of angels, two special candle sticks or night light holders, and a beautiful cloth. The box itself could be decorated with words and pictures that make it feel sacred for you. Each time you work with The Shekinah you can open your box with a prayer, or a small ritual. Beauty, compassion, peace, tranquillity, grace, serenity – these are the qualities we are looking to bring into our lives every day. Perhaps you can find time for working with The Shekinah at least once a week.

## MEETING THE SHEKINAH

Preparations for meeting The Shekinah in your meditation can be very simple indeed. Make sure you will not be interrupted for, say half an hour. Do anything you can to make your room feel like a sacred space. Incense if you wish – rose and jasmine are good for The Shekinah. Candles – two would be traditional. Set up your icon with one candle on either side. Wrap yourself in something special – perhaps a shawl or a fine soft blanket, preferably one you can drape over your head to give you the feeling of being cloaked or hidden.

Recite the invocation I have set out on the next page. Allow a few quiet moments at the end, waiting to see if you receive a gift.

At the end of your quiet time with the Shekinah, blow out your candles while sending light to someone who may need healing and reassurance.

Shekinah, Queen of Light, Queen of Heaven, I come to your door asking to be reconnected to the source of all life. I know I am a child of the Divine and your eternal presence carries and sustains me. All those challenges in my life that are painful and difficult are shadows, reflecting what I need to know in order to grow. Guide me towards wholeness so I can step through the shadows and stand in your Light.

Dearly beloved Shekinah, shift the narrow thoughts in my mind that block my ability to experience your Love. Untie the knots in my heart that inhibit my ability to give Love. Open the windows of my soul and allow the sunshine of Divine Love to fill my whole being and liberate me from the illusion of separation. If you have a symbolic gift for me to help me on my way, I am willing to receive it into my life.

## Join my Sanctuary sessions

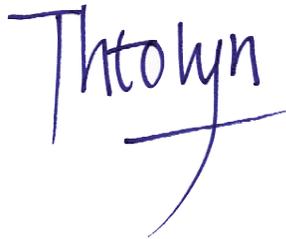
Most of my personal meditation sessions take place in the Sanctuary. My usual pattern is to meditate there twice daily, once before breakfast and once before an early supper.

Each week I dedicate an hour's session for requesting and sending Shefa Healing. If you would like to tune in, I will be delighted – you are not obliged to let me know. I also take healing requests – [click here](#) to find out more.

I do hope you will join in and share with like-minded friends.

[theolyn.com](http://theolyn.com)

Keep shining

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Theolyn". The letters are connected and fluid, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

