

# A motherhood knot

## a *Triticum vulgare* study

by Michal Yakir (Tr. Assisted by Raphael Neu)

Plants are the source of nature's ability to evolve and develop. Observing nature, we learn that development is inherent to the essence of the plant kingdom. Continuously growing and ever evolving, plants adapt to nature and create it at the same time. In this article Michal presents her research and practice with the Plant Table, starting with an illustrative case.



**T**his is a study case of a 40-year-old woman psychologist (M) married with two children, complaining of severe allergies and chronic fatigue. Following delivery five years ago, she reported depression, absence of sexual desire and lack of sense of purpose.

She is taking *Aureus* (anti-histamine) for her allergies and 550 mg of *Eltroxin* per week for her thyroid. In the past I had prescribed her *Olea oleum* in various potencies. It helped her with the allergies for about two years but it then stopped working, at which point I saw her again.

### 28.9.10

Patient: *Allergies returned three weeks ago after two years of having rare episodes. Nowadays the nose is wet and drips clear discharge all the time, but it's not blocked... I have constant sense of something dripping and an itch in my throat... I need to constantly swallow. I sneeze a lot. Worse in the morning, better in fresh air.*

MY: Can you tell me what happened three weeks ago?

*Three weeks ago, my young daughter started going to nursery... I found it so hard, it was terrible! Separations have always been a big issue for me, and when it comes to my children it's especially difficult. It was difficult for my daughter as well; she cried, she did not eat... I don't know what my part is in all this. I am constantly thinking whether this is a part of her adjustment to nursery. Maybe*

*nursery is not the right place for her? I am torn... Is it as difficult for her as it is for me? Every day I leave her at the nursery and then sit at home all day crying. It feels like a void in my stomach, a giant hole, like when you don't eat. There is a void in the stomach – and the throat is flooded with water.*

She breastfed her children till they were two years old, though it exhausted her tremendously.

Can you tell me about your mother?

*As a child I felt frustrated - I could not connect with my mother, as if we never converged. There were many attempts... We never found a common ground as we were so different. She was very dominant, and we always had plenty of her friends at our house; she would never find the time to talk with me. Everything we talked about was revealed to others. The house was always full of noise and friends, nothing was quiet and intimate.*

*She always overlooked me; I am a middle child and she was close to my sister so I was closer to my father. This is the way it is till this very day. Later on I simply detached myself from them all.*

*I am depressed nowadays: I feel suffocated, there is no air, there is kind of*

*terror [crying], like a gut feeling of emptiness, a hole, a pain of nothingness, like when you don't eat, an empty hole, a void in the stomach, and the throat is flooded with water... [That is the second time she uses this imagery]. This is scary, confusing and unsettling. It feels like I am not held. It floods and exhausts me.*

Can you elaborate more about the feeling of "not being held"?

*Everything falls apart, and there is a great fear of what might happen... This feeling overcomes you, floods you. Feels like you will disappear, you are melting into the universe, you are not yourself anymore. The hardest part is the attempt to keep it all together.*

*It feels like a baby who doesn't understand what's going on. The worst fear is of having responsibility: how can I be the one that picks up and holds my baby? I cry more than she does. I don't know who has more knowledge, me or my baby?*

Tell me about responsibility.

*Many times I feel that I don't take sufficient responsibility over things... because I don't know what I want, I only know what others want. I find it difficult to feel my own*

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desires. Since having children, my own boundaries are blurred... The world floods me, it demands things of me and I can't digest it all. I cannot cope with this multitasking world: waiting calls on the phone, the children, this and that, I want peace and quiet...

It reminds me that as my parents never got along, I always had to be the mediator, so I had to be attentive to them. It felt that if I am not attentive enough - mom will fall apart, the family will fall apart, and then I will be left to cry alone, and I also will fall apart. [Notice the undercurrent feelings, that only she can hold the family.]

What would be the opposite of that feeling with your child?

The opposite would be a sense of self. An ability to control, to hold, to orient, to lead, to wish.

When asked about food craving we found out that she doesn't know which food she craves. In the past, she used to crave bread and chocolate. She was a skinny girl who didn't like to eat, at present she eats a lot as food is considered a compensation but she stays thin. She emphasises that she needs to and likes smelling her food.

When did your thyroid problem start?

At the age of 22, I had a rather difficult time at university due to the competitive atmosphere at the psychology department. It was a competitive rather than a supportive place. [This sentence is important, as it describes her feelings in any given situation - she yearns for a kind of enveloping, maternal support - even in the most unlikely places like university].

**Dreams?**

I have nightmares about my three year old daughter: we are at the airport with my husband. We leave her behind, head to the flight, and she is supposed to return home all by herself. I do not understand how she will return on her own - yet my husband goes on with great confidence. I start searching all around for her until I find her wandering at a construction site. I rush, pick her up and cry - how could we have let her go on her own? I wake up feeling scared and guilty - I am abandoning and neglecting my child.

**Discussion**

M suffers from nasal allergies suggestive of the water element that appears

**Repertorisation on RADAR (TM)**

			tritic-vg.	ars.	spong	vanil.	dulc.	bamb-a.	calc-p	podo
			11/12	7/9	7/8	6/6	5/8	5/7	5/5	5/5
1	MIND - QUIET; wants to be	53	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
2	MIND - CONFUSION of mind - identity, as to his	41	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
3	MIND - DUTY; aversion to	7	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	1
4	MIND - CORYZA; air; in open - amel	33	1	1	-	1	-	-	1	-
5	NOSE - DISCHARGE - clear	69	1	-	1	1	1	1	-	1
6	NOSE - DISCHARGE - watery - morning	7	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-
7	NOSE - ITCHING - inside	135	1	2	1	1	-	1	1	1
8	NOSE - SNEEZING - coryza - with	33	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
9	NOSE - SNEEZING - hay asthma, with	13	1	2	-	-	2	-	-	-

Prx: *Triticum vulgare* 200c – once a day, for three days.

throughout the case. The way she describes it: "The world is flooding me", and "too much water in my throat" suggests the same. An emphasised water element is frequently related to mother issues, which indeed are at the heart of her case: frustrating relationship with her mother whom she felt ignored by and caring too much for her daughters to the point of being unable to separate or function. She breastfed both her children for more than two years, until arriving at the point of exhaustion. Since she became a mother, she feels like she has completely lost herself in her motherhood. The imbalance in the maternal aspect resonates with her past craving for chocolate and bread. As a child, she mothered her mother, and as an adult she cannot assume any other but mother identity: she is so off her centre that she doesn't even know what she likes to eat.

The main themes of the case are motherhood, over-identification with the maternal role and over-responsibility for the family, hence the remedy we look for should relate to these issues.

Once the emotional aspect of a case is understood, I prefer to look at physical symptoms. Because of the relevance and important of the water element in this case, I looked up the symptom "Nose - discharge - watery - morning". Of the few remedies present in this symptom, *Triticum vulgare* is the only remedy belonging to the *Graminales* order (Grain group).

According to my Plants Table (see below), maternal and family issues are a central theme of the 4th column, particularly in the *Graminales*, e.g. mother-child bond and over-identifying with either the mother role or child role. Often we see over-responsibility within the family situation; difficulties in achieving a balance between being the giver and the receiver, supporting or being supported by the family, which lead to a conflict between being a part of a family or being an individual. Expressions frequently used by the *Graminales* are: my roots, feeling uprooted, feeling stable / unstable and water imagery.

Of all *Graminales* remedies, *Triticum vulgare*, or wheat - the basic sustenance for major part of the world's population – has the strongest affinity to nourishment (in this case: long periods of breastfeeding, period of overeating or malnourishment as a child and self-neglect resulting from a symbiotic mother/child relationship). That, in addition to *Triticum vulgare*'s known affinity to eye allergies (confirmed in our study group's clinical experience), led me to further investigate the remedy. The following symptoms were found as confirmation.

(For further explanation of the Plant Table please see below after the follow-up).

**2.11.10 FU**

In the follow-up, additional issues of *Triticum vulgare* came up.

Within two or three days the allergy was

almost gone.

A recurrent backache she forgot to mention in her intake reappeared two weeks after the remedy:

*The pain in my back came and went away during the last month, but for the first time ever I just told my husband that I am taking a day off, and I got up and left the house for a whole day. I felt I could not stay at home and rest as needed for my back. At home I am lifting my child and my back can't rest. This time though, when the situation got worse, my husband said he will take care of the baby. Not only that, for the first time he woke up when the baby cried and I could sleep at night. I have been asking that for ages. I do not know what I did differently... I also became less agitated with the children – I realised that taking care of the children exhausts me, and is the cause of my agitation toward them. There is no comparison with the way I was before.*

(Self-neglect owing to over-responsibility as a mother is a common theme in *Triticum vulgare*.)

*I'm still not definite in putting boundaries, but it's improving: I used to feel that all I need is to be with the children. When I was not with them, the distance was scaring me. Every time they experienced a growth spurt I panicked, as if I was going to lose them. I was begging my nine year old to play with me – but he wanted to play with his friends... I was feeling that if I am not a mother I have no identity; now I do not feel that way. The anxiety over separation at the nursery or seeing them play without me has lessened, therefore I can enjoy that time off. Now I see that I didn't know what to do with myself when I wasn't with them. I had a realisation that it's actually fine that my daughter is there and I am here! [this is a sign that a healthy separation is occurring]. I started doing things for myself which I hadn't done in the past: I went to the dental hygienist and started exercising. I have more time for myself and more time to do plenty of other things.*

#### **How is the relationship with your husband?**

*There is a change: my husband agreed to many suggestions I made; he agreed to attend couples therapy. I arranged an appointment and told him I did, and we simply went without him protesting even once. He began doing things that I've been asking him for years while before he would always find excuses not to do them.*

#### **Prescription: Wait.**

In the follow-ups during this year, she reported that the allergy doesn't trouble her. Every once in a while she has conflicts with the youngest child which are accompanied by a short episode of back ache – and then it passes. We repeated the remedy occasionally. Even more important were the other changes in her attitude: she is not anxious about her daughters; she stopped nursing the youngest when she was seven months old and could send her to daycare without anxiety and guilt. She is calmer and less agitated with the children. She takes care of herself: before, even if she had a back ache, she wouldn't even take a pill. The hollow feeling in the stomach is gone; she says that she feels more "in her centre". The punch line of the story was the change in her husband's attitude – his willingness to share the household burden.

The feeling that accompanied her for years that she does not know what she wants and who she is has passed and she has become an active participant in her own life.

#### **The structure and methodology of the Plant Table**

Plants are the source of nature's ability to evolve and develop. Observing nature, we learn that development is inherent to the essence of the plant kingdom. Continuously growing and ever evolving, plants adapt to nature and create it at the same time.

Plants have been the first to fashion the idea of separation in nature: unlike minerals, plants have a membrane separating them from the environment, an attitude that allows them to develop along their own evolutionary lines and pace, which is a quicker one than the minerals pace of evolution. The evolutionary changes which plants go through propel evolutionary changes for the whole biosphere, including the atmosphere, mineral and animals.

More so, plants are the foundation for the existence of life, providing oxygen, carbon and nutrition. Plants propel minerals from earth outward and from the air inward into the earth, availing it to the biosphere, allowing growth and continuation of life on earth. In this sense, the plant kingdom acts as a stirring mediator between the worlds, expressing an archetype of continuous growth and development.

In accordance with its developing nature, evolution in the plant kingdom can be compared with human psyche development,

seeing that both share the innate nature of growth and development. At times where development is halted, manifesting as a disease, the corresponding plant can be summoned. This is one more gift that the plant world offers.

The plants schema structure expresses this correspondence in a manner akin to the homeopathic understanding of the periodic table of elements. Both of the table axes are founded on evolutionary stages of botanical development. The building block of the table is not a single plant or a remedy, but a whole botanical group. Thus every square of the table contains a family of plants, and an order or at times a number of orders. The reason the plants schema doesn't present specific remedies as its building blocks is that while the mineral kingdom contains 118 elements, the plant kingdom consists of thousands of plants, which necessitated aggregating them by groups - namely families and orders.

When the table is systematised in such an order, with vectors of botanic evolution, it becomes quite easy to decipher the homeopathic sense of it, by assembling the materia medica information from all the remedies within each family "as if one remedy" and interpreting it according to its location in the table. In an astonishing order, the axes of botanical development and their correspondent remedies are found to parallel stages of human development.

In this way, each square in the table presents a convergence point of two axes: ego construction and levels of growth and development. The horizontal axis is formed by separation and individuation stages, while the vertical axis forms maturation levels. This provides physiological, emotional and mental content to each family of plants. While families of plants present the collective themes that correspond to any given location on the table, a single remedy describes only certain variations of those themes.

The Plant Table thus provides a schema that links plants' developmental stages to human developmental stages. The Table refers to the challenges and obstacles met during the developmental journey of the ego from a primary stage of union and oneness to an advanced stage of individuality, learning and absorbing the lessons of the feminine and the masculine elements.

Here is the table at a glance:

Old Age	NO REMEDIES	Arales	EMPTY COLUMN	Zingiberales Orchidales	Discorales	
Young Adult			Arcales	NO PLANTS HERE	Orchidales Juncales	Liliales
Adolescence				Graminales (grains)		
School Age						
Early Childhood						
Babyhood - basic trust						
Beginning of Life						
Before Birth						
Columns botanic names >		ALISMATIDAE	ARECIDAE		COMMELIDS	LILDAE

Monocots

<b>Human evolution stages:</b> <b>Ego formation and realization, Individuation, and consciousness formation</b>	<b>Before separation</b> No Ego Influenced Paralyzed, not present (Feminine)	<b>Here or there.</b> Borders To be small or grow (Feminine)	<b>The Hero:</b> The struggle for independence (Feminine)	<b>Nourishing.</b> Maturity in mother child or family relationship responsibility (Feminine)	<b>The Other:</b> Split, Lows and borders suppression Work, go out and do. Struggle (Masculine)	<b>The Group:</b> Strong individuality Selfishness Relationship with the world (Masculine)
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Dicots

Levels of maturity in the Columns stages*	MAGNOLIDS	HAMAMME-LIDS	CARYOPHY-LIDS	DILLENIDS	ROSIDS	ASTERIDS
<b>1st level: pre, unreadiness, before birth, before life,</b> connection to the neither world, unwillingness to be born.	Magnoliales Illiales Nympaheales	Urticales		Dileniales Theales	Rosales Myrtales	Polemoniales
<b>2nd level: Beginning of life,</b> [oral stage] secure about existence, experiencing basic stability., Acknowledging the other versus autistic isolation, suspicion, disbelief, hopelessness.	Piperales	Urticales		Saraceniales	Fabales	
<b>3rd level: Infancy</b> [anal stage], autonomy, dependence, separation, borders {skin diseases}, getting control. shame, criticism, self-doubt.	Laureals	Hamamelidales		Malavales	Geraniales Malpigiales	Gentianales
<b>4th level: Early childhood</b> - play, curiosity, inquisitiveness, pulling apart, sex, penetration. Unable to take role or set a goal.	Aristolochiales Ranunculales	Hamamelidales	Caryophylliales	Malavales	Malpigiales Violales Euphorbiales	Gentianales Scrophulariales
<b>5th level: School time</b> - latency, capability sense, preparation to life [father time], learning norms and rules, beginning of social learning. Unreadiness to learn, feeling inadequate, not fitting in. Inferiority. Not recognizing roles. No purpose.	Ranunculales	Juglandales	Caryophylliales		Sapindales Cornales Rhamnales	Scrophulariales
<b>6th level: Adolescence</b> - Body image, Adolescence themes: freedom, excitement, new ideas, search meaning fancies and planning. Dependence on group. Fear to grow up, to move to next level.		Myricales	Polygonales Plumbaginales	Primulales	Rammanales	Rubiales
<b>7th level: Early adulthood</b> - establishment of independence, of position. Breaking off dependence, developing capability to real friendship and caring to the other. > inability to intimacy, isolation.					Santanales	Lamiales
<b>8th level: Adulthood</b> - creativity and fertility. Ability to care and concern about the other, to give. Finding self-expression versus selfishness, not changing, selfishness.	Papaverales	Fagales		Ericales Cucurbitales Capprales	Celastrales Apiales	Dispacales Campanulales Asteridales
<b>9th level: Old age</b> - completion and wisdom. End of any process. Drying out, retirement, preparing for death. Inability to collect, understand and unify life impressions, leads to bitterness, hostility, dissatisfaction, life has been a waste, despair. Second childhood.	Papaverales			Capprales Salicales	Apiales	Asteridales



### The essence of the columns

**The first column (unity)** depicts an initial state of awareness to the unified feminine quality element which by its nature gives birth and initiates processes. The first column represents a unity with the infinity from which everything bursts, and is symbolised by water, the first chakra and more. Problems or lessons related to the first column can be expressed as lack of boundaries and discrimination, a weak, dependent and influenced ego, spaced out and inattentive. A state of awareness, yet inability to do. Typical remedies are: *Opium*, *Staphisagria*, *Asarum*, *Nux moschata*, *Aconite*, *Pulsatilla*.

**In the second column (here or there)** the initial separation begins, followed by a sense of smallness and weakness, as effort is put into "standing by yourself". Issues presented are related to being small or big, being in this world or remaining in the other world – or any other previous state. Here or there, indecision, should I return to the unified state or should I separate, will I create boundaries or will I have them blurred? Remedies such as *Cannabis indica*, *Urtica*, *Ficus religiosa*, *Quercus* are characteristic of this column. The struggle is still in the territory of the feminine quality.

**In the third column (the Hero)** there is a strong and intensive battle to separate from the feminine-maternal quality which before gave life and now strangles and limits. Expressed as a struggle to separate from anything that is perceived "controlling", a fight for one's individuality: "I want to do it my way". Characteristic remedies are the various cacti.

**In the fourth column (nurturing and maturity)** the maternal element is attaining maturation. After the previous column's journey in the feminine element, the individuation process reaches a stage where it necessitates gaining equanimity: an ability to nourish or be nourished, provide or take without being belittled for it. The lesson obtained is maturity of the maternal quality, an ability to give or receive yet keep your separate individual identity. Imbalance at this final maternal column would be expressed as mother/daughter issues, family issues, complications related to motherhood and elements of abandonment and dependency.

We shall often see over-responsibility for the

family, anxiety about family matters and carrying the burden of family, which sets the ground to exhaustion of personal energy, fatigue and back pains. Eating disorders will often ensue. Physically, the column issues will be expressed through the digestive system – from mouth to rectum, hormonal imbalance and the fluids in the body [for the same reason that water is related to the maternal element]. (Both the Monocots and the Dicots have a column positioned on the same 4<sup>th</sup> column, which I refer to as the 'nourishment column'. The Grains group (Poales) in the Monocots expresses those issues in its purest form; even chocolate actually contains sugar – made from grass belonging with the Poales. Typical remedies are *Saccharum*, *Triticum vulgare*, *Cypripedium*, *Thea*, *Chocolate*, *Brassica*.

*NB. The above case presents many themes related to the 4th column, starting with the water element expressions, through her lack of communication with her mother, up to her family responsibility issues and the inability to separate from her own daughter.*

**In the fifth column** the ego is already solid and constructed, but now it needs to cope with the masculine quality which creates boundaries, rules and separation, gives purpose and direction, thus enabling the individual to see what is apart from himself, to separate from what is not himself and thus realise, express and fulfill his role in the outside world, immerse itself in doing and acting. The split of the masculine from the feminine element is the strongest issue here, causing rigidity, stiffness, dryness and suppression of the feminine, emotional level. Work, duties, rules and religion, rigidity, suppression of the heart and relationships will be emphasised in cases needing 5th column remedies. Prominent remedies are *Crataegus*, *Anacardium*, *Rhus toxicodendron*, *Conium*.

**In the sixth column** one meets the world at large, stands up to it, fights with it, conquers one's place, defines one's place in it. The 6th column fits our time: an age of individuality that verges on egotism. Here the feminine and masculine not only split, but fight amongst themselves, causing imbalance that can result in infertility. Also the need to prove one's self and find one's place in society can escalate to a quarrel with the world. Physically this can be expressed as allergies or tendency to get

worms: any other thing that violates one's boundaries or is even perceived to do so. On one hand its over-sensitivity to the world's impressions; on the other hand its ambition and aggressiveness: "I will fight back". The 6th column express a battle to function within a group, yet keep one's hard-earned individuality. Prominent remedies are *Veratrum album*, *Lilium tigrinum* in the Monocots and *Belladonna*, *Stramonium*, *Coffea*, *China*, *Nux vomica*, *Ignatia*, *Mentha piperata*, *Abrotanum*, *Chamomilla* and *Arnica* in the Dicots.

### The rows

All columns are divided by levels of development - The rows (which follow E. Erickson's levels of development)<sup>1</sup> express the lesson of each column, initiating the journey at a juvenile and unprepared state, evolving to maturity and eventually growing old and ending, priming itself to begin the next step in the journey.

The columns are constructed according to Jungian developmental stages and Kabbalistic lore. The human journey toward acquiring its awareness can be paralleled to a number of developmental sequences: the developmental stages of the minerals, the progress of the history of humanity, the first six chakras and the six first days of creation. Like a gigantic fractal, the world demonstrates its patterned rules of creation in every aspect of life, all in a wondrous order.

### Conclusion

The Plant Table cannot entirely be explained in one article, and the above is only the essence, a short portrayal. An extensive description and much more information are available in my book *Wondrous Order*. Currently the book is only available in Hebrew. However, it is in final stages of translation to English so it should be available in a few months. For those interested in making first inroads to using the Plants schema, please consult my website.

### REFERENCES

- <sup>[1]</sup> Erikson E.H. (1950) *Childhood and Society*, Norton. New York/London