

# INTRODUCTION TO TAROT

## Lesson Three

### KEY 4. THE EMPEROR



Probably the earliest houses had but one aperture in the wall, which opening was both door and window. Later came the idea of having a special opening to admit light and air and to permit observation of persons approaching. Thus the letter Heh ה, whose name means “window”, follows logically after Daleth, the door.

There is also a logical reason for putting the Emperor after the Empress. A man cannot be master of his household until his mate has had children. Actual fatherhood is a consequence of what the mother brings into the world.

The generation of mental images at the level of self-consciousness (Empress), is a necessary forerunner to reason (Emperor). Until we have something to regulate, we cannot set our mental house in order. All meanings of the number 4 are related to order because 4 corresponds to the square.

Regulation and supervision are implied by everything in Key 4. Supervision is **overseeing**. Thus the function of sight is attributed to Heh and the Emperor.

The martial aspect of the Emperor is obvious. Here is a man of war clad in armor. He sits on a cube like the High Priestess, but the stone bears a ram's head, and this, with the same design on his shoulder and the symbol at the top of his helmet, relates to the astrological correspondence to Aries, first sign of the zodiac, which is represented in the Hebrew alphabet by the letter Heh. (Aries rules the head and the function of sight).

Among our senses sight is chief. By it we regulate our lives and our world. The quality of our vision determines the course of our progress toward liberation.

Unless we imagine, we do not really see. So true is this that even physical vision requires more than correct optical functioning of the eyes and their brain-centers. Occasionally a man born blind receives his sight, but after this occurs he must spend some months in learning to see. For him there is no difference in appearance between a globe and a circle. Persons walking toward him seem to grow as they approach. Until imagination based on other senses

enables him to supplement what his eyes report, he has no true vision of the world on which his eyes have opened.

We have all passed through this experience, but because we learned these lessons in infancy we have forgotten that we had to **learn** to see just as surely as we had to learn to walk. The mind is the true seer. The eyes are only its tools, and all tools need skillful handling.

In Hebrew, the letter Heh serves the same purpose as the English definite article **the**. Hence this letter stands for the mental activity whereby we single out particular things and distinguish them from others more or less like them.

Thus **classification** is one basic meaning of Key 4. The Emperor represents this ordering process of our minds whereby we control the conditions of our environment.

Such control is not the imposition of our fancies on the world. We **never** force nature into obeying us. On the contrary, she serves us at a price. We must see things as they are. Definition must square with fact. Reasoning must be a development of accurate observation. Then imagination will be true and vision will be precipitated into our environment as actual physical things and conditions.

They who gave us Tarot, and they who now compose that Inner School which has kept alive the wisdom behind Tarot, see truly and reason correctly. Their vision of what the earth may be when man unfolds a better understanding of himself and of his environment, is recorded in these Keys. One of the most valuable results of Tarot study is that by it man's consciousness is enriched and transformed so that he learns to see the true world which lies hidden behind the veils of superficial appearances.

Liberation, remember, is indefinitely progressive. If we may accept the words of those who are believed by many to be Masters of the Wisdom, even they have their problems. To us they may seem almost as demigods, but their simple language makes it perfectly clear that they have no such illusions about themselves or their attainments.

Where they differ principally from many of us is in their vision of man and their vision of nature. They know what **is** in man having found it in themselves. They understand that nature is always **for** man, never **against** him. So they do easily what most of us have not yet dreamed of doing, yet nothing they have accomplished is really beyond our powers.

Not one of them is beguiled by the fancy that everything would be all right if only the world were ordered in accordance with some system—political, economic, or technological. Provide the best arrangement of things you can and entrust it to the management of men and women who have no vision. It will fail.

Does this mean we have no faith in any system? Does it mean, to be specific, that the increasingly difficult endeavor to preserve the institutions our forefathers gave their all to

establish less than two hundred years ago, is, after all, a meaningless struggle? Far from it. Just the contrary. Every seer and prophet of whom we have any record looked forward to what was begun by the Declaration of Independence, confirmed by the Constitution, and set forth in the heraldry of the United States of America.

No, what we are trying to make clear now is that to have true vision is to be free, even though the greater part of mankind suffers the pains consequent to ignorance. Free from most of the disabilities which burden the rank and file of humanity. Free from want, disease, and fear. Free from death itself. No **system** confers this freedom. It comes from our **inner** consciousness, not from outside.

Key 4, like all the Tarot keys, speaks to you in picture language. We all know this language even though our surface consciousness may not be aware of this fact. This Key, again like all the Keys, brings you a mighty Truth, a great and comforting message. It tells you that **now** and not at some future time, you are the master of all your circumstances and environmental conditions.

No matter what appearances to the contrary there may be, the truth is that your personal world, just as it presents itself to you at this very moment, is the world you have made for yourself. You may not like it, but you made it. Because you made it, you are able to remold it as Omar said, "nearer to the heart's desire."

The same Omar knew, and said, that they who remold worlds must begin by shattering them to bits. Key 4 will help you to do this and here is one of the lessons to be learned from the strong Mars quality pictured by this image of the Emperor.

True vision and right definition destroy before they build. Thus Eliphas Levi taught that he who knows how to direct the currents of the Great Magical Agent (pictured by the Fool) "can reduce the world to a chaos and transform its face."

The false world of an ignorant man's tortured fancy does not actually exist. It has no more reality than any other nightmare. Yet we have all experienced bad dreams and know how dreadfully acute may be their fancied terrors. Use Key 4 to wake you from the dream that you are a slave to circumstance . . . to free you from the delusion that anything you have thought, or said, or done in days gone by can rob you of your heritage of freedom. This picture of a monarch ruling all his kingdom is a true portrait of your own real Self. Let it bring to the surface of your mind the knowledge of who and what you really are.

## KEY 5. THE HIEROPHANT



The number 5 sits in the middle of the row of numerals from 1 to 9. Occupying this middle place, it suggests intervention, mediation, and similar ideas. A mediator serves as a link between two opposing groups. In Tarot, Key 5 is such a link between four pairs of pictures—1 and 9, 2 and 8, 3 and 7, and 4 and 6. In later courses you will learn more about this.

The letter Vav ך, printed on Key 5, has the same suggestions. Its name means “nail” or “hook”. Thus it indicates: 1. What joins together the parts of a whole, as nails unite the parts of a house; 2. What serves to suspend a hanging object, as a hook supports a picture. The grammatical use of Vav in Hebrew is based on the meanings of the name of the letter. Vav serves the same purpose as the English conjunction “and”. It links together a series of nouns and serves also as the hook, or support, from which hang the dependent clauses of a sentence.

The function associated with Vav is Hearing. This refers primarily to ordinary physical sensation because hearing is truly the principal link between one human mind and another. In these days we hear through our eyes, one might say, because the Western world uses symbols for sounds in all its printed texts. This is not so in China and Japan. Hence in lands dominated by Chinese picture-writing the written word is far more potent than the spoken.

Physical hearing, however, is not the only meaning of Vav. This letter stands for a more important function. This is the interior hearing whereby we may know the Voice of the true Self pictured here by the Hierophant.

In our B.O.T.A. texts, we always use a capital “V” when writing of this Voice. It must be distinguished from the “voices” which come from other minds or from discarnate entities on the astral plane. We are far from discounting the value of interior communication with other entities whether they be incarnate or discarnate. Yet none of these “voices”, however wise may be their counsel, is the Voice.

As one has written, this is a Voice which speaks where there is none to speak. It is the Voice of the **One Self** and the knowledge and wisdom it imparts have no tinge of human fallibility. Thus the type of consciousness to which Key 5 corresponds, as the table on page 48 of HIGHLIGHTS tells you, is named “The Triumphant and Eternal Intelligence”.

Triumphant, because its counsel always helps us overcome some obstacle, or avoid some danger, or transform some seemingly adverse circumstance into friendly cooperation with our efforts. Eternal, because this counsel is based always on eternal principles. Never is it merely a thing of the moment.

Simply to open our inner ears is not enough. There are enemies as well as friends of man on the astral plane. Mischief-makers, also, who delight in perplexing and confusing those who listen to their voices. Yet they always betray themselves by certain characteristics.

First of all, they flatter. Subtly and in just the ways to which one is most susceptible. They flatter by “revealing” mysteries which, they say, are hidden from the rest of the world. One of their commonest forms of deception is to make supposed revelations of the details of former incarnations.

For those of grosser wits, they say, “Once you were Cleopatra,” or Napoleon, or some other prominent figure in history. To others, though they do not resort to such open flattery, they find the way to domination by revelations of supposed incarnations, not particularly striking in themselves, yet seeming to render plausible the idea that one’s present shortcomings are a natural outcome of former lives, and therefore to be condoned.

The purpose of such supposed revelations is to establish the hearer’s confidence in those who give the communications. Their sources of information are tremendous. It is not generally known that only the limitations of physical embodiment conceal our past experiences from others. They who live on the astral plane, and use the astral senses, can read our lives from the cradle onward.

Names, dates, even our private thoughts and feelings, are engraved on what is pictured in Tarot as the scroll of the High Priestess—and this record is an open book to many inhabitants of the astral plane. Thus the accuracy of any spirit’s revelation of your past is by no means a guarantee of his good faith, nor of his ability to guide you in the present toward a successful future. Some such entities are well-meaning and beneficent, but a man does not become a Master simply by shedding his physical envelope. Lots of well-meaning persons here give very bad advice, and they keep on giving it when they pass to the “other side”.

Whenever you hear a voice demanding that you shall obey its orders, stop your ears. The Voice **never** demands, **never** flatters, **never** says anything to increase your sense of self-importance. Furthermore, every principle it announces may be checked by reason. Sometimes the revelations of the Voice go beyond reason and beyond ordinary experience. Yet in no single instance do they run counter to reason and they meet the tests of investigation.

The general meaning of Key 5, then, is summed up in the word **intuition**, in the sense of “inside tuition”, or “interior teaching”. In the symbols of this Key we find all we need to know in order to distinguish genuine intuitions from baseless feelings which echo our own emotional states and give form to our ignorance.

It is logical for Key 5 to follow Key 4. Genuine intuition is not a substitute for reason. It is a logical **consequence** of good reasoning. It does not teach the lazy-minded. Whenever a person tells you he does not need to study because intuition tells him everything he needs to know, he is usually a liar. Certainly he deceives himself. The Inner Teacher wastes no time in fruitless endeavors to instruct the incompetents who will not take the trouble to observe, to remember, to imagine, and to reason.

Thus the ministers kneeling before their teacher wear garments which are embroidered with the same flowers that appear in the garden of the Magician. They represent personal acquisitions of knowledge (lilies) and personal development and cultivation of desires (roses).

There are echoes in the symbolism, also, of what is portrayed in the picture of the High Priestess. Like her, the Hierophant sits between two pillars in a temple. Like her, he has a lunar symbol prominently displayed. Even the ornaments on the back of his throne have some resemblance to her crown, though they are intended primarily to represent the zodiacal sign Taurus.

Actually, the Emperor and the Hierophant are the same. The difference between them is in their spheres of operation. In Key 4, all the emphasis is on the objective, external world from which man gathers experience. In Key 5, the emphasis is on the inner realm whence man gains his wisdom and his knowledge of the significance of what goes on round him. These are often called **two** worlds. Actually they are just the outside and the inside of **one** world. The one is not more real, nor more true, than the other. More than this, either realm, taken by itself, is incomplete, and, to that extent, is really false.

They are in error who suppose the world outside, reported to us through our senses, is the only **real** world. Not less mistaken are they who deny reality to the objective universe and fly from it into the inner realms. The outer world is devoid of meaning apart from the inner one. The wisdom of the inner world is Dead Sea fruit unless it be put to use and service in the realm outside.

Besides looking at the Hierophant, then, and calling up his image whenever you are confronted by a problem to which you can find no solution after you have done all you can in the way of observing, remembering, imagining and reasoning, practice the **listening** attitude of mind. The Voice never speaks loud and you will fail to hear it until you have learned to silence the clamor of your own thinking, most of which is merely talking to yourself.

Just take your problem to the One Teacher and listen to what He may have to say. This does not mean that you will, necessarily, hear an audible voice, especially in the beginning of your practice. Later on, if you persist, you will really **hear** the Voice, and, having had the experience once, you will never mistake the Voice for the "voices".

The fundamental practice is to be still when you wish the counsel of the Voice. Stop racking your brains when a seemingly insoluble problem confronts you. The harder you try, the less likely are you to hear the answer. For in Key 5 there is a strong element of what is pictured by the High Priestess and the same need for quiet calmness.

The reason behind this is that every great principle, every eternal truth, is already part of the wisdom of your true Self. Intuition is really a sort of recollection. It **brings up** treasures of wisdom buried deep in the race subconsciousness. More than this, it brings **down new treasures from the superconsciousness above the personal level of self-conscious awareness. Always the price of these revelations is silence. You cannot listen if you are talking to yourself.**