

# INTRODUCTION TO TAROT

## Lesson Five

### KEY 8. STRENGTH



Key 8 takes us back to nature, away from the associations of human artifice connected with Key 7. The letter attributed to this picture is  $\mathfrak{S}$ , Teth, meaning "serpent". Thus in Key 8 there is an echo of what we have seen before in Key 6 where a woman and a serpent were parts of the design.

In early manuscripts, the letter Teth looks like a snake with its head turned to the left and its tail curled up over its back. Some trace of this persists in the modern form of the letter printed above. Thus this letter and its Tarot Key are evidently related to the exceedingly complex serpent symbolism we find in so many forms throughout the literature of Ageless Wisdom.

All symbolic associations of the serpent with evil, temptation, antagonism to God or man, and the like, are to be understood as having to do with the results of man's ignorant misuse of a force which, because it has a wavy motion, and also because it is spiral, or coiling, is typified by the serpent. Yet this same force is the instrument of man's liberation whenever he understands it and uses it aright.

On this account, two principal symbols of this force—the snake and the lion—appear in the Bible as emblems of the Adversary, and also as types of the Redeemer. Exoteric theology makes the mistake of supposing the Redeemer and the Adversary are two irreconcilable antagonists. He who can read between the lines by following the many hints given in the Bible, will discover the truth that the same force which the wise employ to realize freedom from every kind of bondage is also the same force which, ill-directed, causes all human misery.

Snakes are almost universally feared and so is the power they symbolize. They are dangerous to man and often cause his death, yet it has been discovered recently that the venom of the cobra has good uses which man never suspected so long as he yielded to his natural instinct to kill snakes on sight. Similarly, the force the serpent symbolizes is extremely dangerous, and, in some instances, a deadly poison. Thus it is natural that all exoteric religions make the snake a symbol for the devil.

This is one reason the Bible puts emphasis on the danger of denying the actual existence of the devil. It warns us repeatedly against the falsity of the easy optimism which believes itself to be protected against all adversity by the silly, childish expedient of declaring that the adversary does not exist.

All talk of victory is empty unless there be a real antagonist to overcome. Even a game of bridge would be meaningless were there no opposing sides. So, when we come to deal with the manifold problems of human life, nothing can be more ridiculous than to believe we may escape danger by pretending it does not exist. We never can solve problems by refusing to face them.

Neither may we solve them by vain endeavors to **destroy** their causes. Like poisonous snakes, or poisonous weeds, the causes of evil are to be **overcome**, and to overcome an adversary is to make him an ally.

Thus the message of Key 8 is of particular importance to all lovers of freedom and justice. It tells us that the enemy, though dangerous as a deadly serpent or a roaring lion, may be transformed into a powerful ally.

In Key 6, the serpent of temptation is coiled round the tree behind Eve. In Key 8, the same force is pictured as a red lion, but now tamed by the woman who opens his mouth. That is to say, she makes him articulate, gives him speech. The idea here is that whenever we understand any seemingly adverse power, we can tame it and make it an instrument whereby we shall be able to express and realize our human aspirations.

Step by step, the progress of science brings the dumb, brute forces of nature under the control of human thought, **expressed in words**. For millenniums, lightning was only a type of swift death, and thunder was mistaken for the voice of an angry God. Today the same lightning carries the human voice in a flash to every part of the world and has endowed human speech with the universal reverberation and success which Eliphaz Levi prophesied when he wrote of what would occur when men began to master the subtle force symbolized by the letter Teth, and by the lion in Key 8.

The law is simple. It is the law that subconsciousness is always, and completely, amenable to control by suggestions originating at the level of self-consciousness. In Key 8 this is intimated by the fact that the woman wears a white robe similar to that worn by the Magician and has over her head the same horizontal figure 8 which is shown in Key 1.

All that we mean by **substance**, as applied to the basic material from which the variety of forms in our environment is built up, has been demonstrated in our physical laboratories to be "nothing but" radiant energy, fundamentally electromagnetic. This streams from our sun to provide physical energy for our entire world-system.

Out of this energy are built all the complex things surrounding us. As we now understand it, this energy is a mass of tiny particles or waves moving at terrific rates of speed.

The fundamental particles are all alike. The electrons, protons, neutrons, etc. in an atom of lead differ in no particular from those in an atom of gold. Those which enter into the composition of your body are no different from those which make up the materials of the walls of your house or the stones and cement of the sidewalks.

Every form taken by this energy in our terrestrial environment is a form of life and is therefore a form of consciousness. Exoteric science is not quite ready to admit this, but comes nearer every year. Ageless Wisdom has declared it from time immemorial. Everything is alive. Inorganic as well as organic forms are built from this "vital electricity" which certain Oriental occultists call Fohat and which Madame Blavatsky declared to be represented by the letter Teth.

Wherever there is life, there is some degree of consciousness. The consciousness latent in minerals and vegetables appears to us to be unconsciousness, but the best reports of the wise repudiate the term **unconsciousness**, and for this reason we use the word **subconsciousness** to designate levels of awareness below that of human awareness of a Self, or Ego. The law we have mentioned on page 2 says that every level of consciousness below that of human self-consciousness responds invariably and automatically to suggestions originating at the level of self-consciousness.

Put very simply, this means that the energy which takes form as everything in our environment may be controlled directly by our mental processes. Through his thought and imagination, man may impose his will upon whatever surrounds him.

He may do this indirectly by imagining various combinations of things outside his body. Yet even here it is the human mind which perceives the possibilities of such combinations after careful observation of what goes on in some field of investigation.

Machines are thought-forms materialized by human imagination. Just as a chair is the projection into physical manifestation of man's idea of sitting, so is an airplane a projection of his thought of flying. When man imagines truly, as a result of following out the steps outlined in Tarot by Keys 0 to 7, the whole of nature responds to his ideas and brings him a greater measure of freedom, a greater command of the things and forces surrounding his body.

There are men and women who have progressed beyond this indirect control of the astral light. They use various instruments for their works of power, and some of the instruments have no obvious connection with the results attained.

Tarot is one such instrument. This introduction is but the beginning of a series of steps which will lead persevering students to a point where they will be able to utilize this extraordinary device to produce specific results affecting the physical conditions of their environment . . .

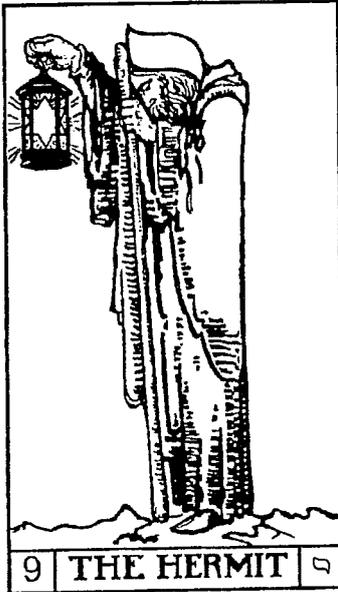
results which would seem to be utter impossibilities were we foolish enough to enumerate some of them here. Yet, because Tarot unfolds the deeper, latent powers of subconsciousness, it is one of several means whereby you may be brought to that state of skilful self-direction Eliphas Levi had in mind when, writing of the astral light, he said: "The will of intelligent beings acts directly on this light, and by means thereof, upon all nature, which is made subject to the modifications of intelligence."

Because the inner meaning of Key 8 leads to some of the most important practical secrets of occultism, we are cautious in our exposition of this picture. Yet one point we do wish to emphasize. The lion is led by a chain of roses and the roses mean just what they mean in Key 1 and 3. They are symbols of desire and this is **cultivated** desire. What is meant by the fact that in Key 8 they are woven into a chain, is that the subconscious levels of the activity of the cosmic radiant energy are to be controlled by trained, systematic, coherent use of **related** desires, expressed in clear images.

Looking at Key 8 will evoke from your inner consciousness a realization of the truth that you are now in touch with an inexhaustible and always available source of power. Simple as the picture is, it tells you the truth about your relation to all the forces which constitute your environment. It tells you that what ignorance dreads and fears as a malignant adversary is really your most potent ally.

As you use it, it will evoke the mood of courage and confidence. For beginners, this is the most important practical application of Key 8. Try it and you will find that whenever you are depressed, or a little bit frightened by some appearance in your personal world, a glimpse of this picture will raise your spirits and dispel your fears.

## KEY 9. THE HERMIT



A snake belongs to the subhuman, animal kingdom. But the letter  $\gamma$ , Yod, printed on Key 9, represents the hand of man. Thus the power we see symbolized as a lion in Key 8 is shown on a wide plain with a mountain peak in the background; but the Hermit in Key 9 stands at the summit of that same peak. He is male in contrast to the woman of Key 8. The scene is also a contrast to the sunlit landscape of Key 8, for the Hermit stands holding a lantern to light the way for travelers toiling up the path toward the height.

9, the number of this Key, has certain properties like those of 0. Multiply any number by 0, and 0 is always the result. Multiply any number by 9, and the product will be always a number having digits which add to 9. Even the shape of the figure is derived from the zero sign, and, as ordinarily written, 9 is simply a zero with a tail, usually a straight line, like the figure 1.

Thus, though his outward appearance is different, we find the Hermit on a mountain, like the Fool. The Fool, however, fixes his gaze on a height ahead of him. The Hermit looks down, as if surveying a path leading upward from the depths whence he has climbed.

Solitude, but not loneliness, is pictured by this Key. Superiority, too, because the Hermit is on a high peak and his beard, like that of the Emperor, symbolizes experience. So does the number 9, because it is the last of the series of numerals. 9 typifies completion, and completion applied to human life is the attainment of adeptship and mastery. Thus we may understand that Key 9 is the Tarot symbol of the perfected state of human consciousness.

This perfected state is that of union with the **One Self**. It is the state of identification with the **Master Power** which is meant whenever the Scriptures speak of the "Hand of God". Adepts and masters are, in very truth, "God's Hands". So are we, but we are far from being steadily aware of this truth. We are like the hands of little children, full of potentiality, but wanting in practical skill. We have the powers, but we are, as yet, deficient in training.

Yet, even in our relative inefficiency, we are God's hands. For every work of man, whether it be done in wisdom or in ignorance, is a direct transformation of power descending from the **One Self**.

This is what the rays of the Hermit's lantern signify. Every man and woman on this planet is connected with the **One Self** by a ray of the cosmic light. None of us lives or moves, but by this power. All personal action is really a response to impulses coming down to us from this "Father of Lights".

Thus the supreme conscious attainment is the realization that the **One Self** is also the **Only Self**. "Persons" seem to be separate, and think they have separate "selves". Yet he who really knows the **Self** knows there is no other. This is why Key 9, representing, among other things, the completion of human attainment, shows an old man standing alone.

The zodiacal sign attributed to Yod is Virgo, the sixth sign, and the six-pointed star in the lantern is an allusion to the number of this sign in the zodiacal series. In ancient pictorial representations, Virgo was often shown as a woman holding a distaff and a sheaf of wheat. This was an allusion to the fact that the human body is woven, so to speak, from threads spun in the small intestine, which, say the astrologers, is governed by Virgo.

It is in this region that our food (symbolized by the sheaf of wheat) is changed into the basic substance from which the blood is charged with the materials needed for the repair and functioning of our bodies. As we shall explain in greater detail, in lessons which follow this course in the B.O.T.A. curriculum, the heights of adeptship are reached as a result of minute alterations in the chemistry and structure of the physical body of man.

Outwardly, an adept looks like any other member of the human race; but his blood is different, his organs function better, and what are rudimentary structures in most human skulls are fully functioning organs in the brain of a fully liberated master of life. The place where the fundamental difference between an adept's body and that of an ordinary man is determined is in the region governed by Virgo.

This sign is ruled by Mercury, and in Tarot, Mercury is the Magician. What this means is that it is possible, by intelligent control of the body-building process, to effect great changes in the chemistry of the blood and in the functions of various physical organs. Basically, the making of such changes depends:

1. on conscious knowledge of the use of self-consciousness for the right selection of food;
2. on the use of the law pictured in Key 8 to transfer to subconsciousness the pattern of a higher and finer type of physical organism.

The most important lesson of Key 9 is summed up in the word **response**. It is the lesson we must learn, that no act of human personality is self-originated. Perhaps a play on words may help you grasp the idea. No act of personality originates in what most persons mean when they say "self". All acts of personality are truly **Self**-originated, because they have their source in the over-shadowing life of the **One Self**.

Just as the Hermit, looking down, sees those who are climbing toward him, so the **One Self enters into the lives of us all**. To ourselves we seem to be struggling upward and few of us seem to be aware of any light from above; but the **One Self** knows all its personal manifestations and works through every one to bring about that person's conscious union with the Supreme.

We have said before that no human being is a puppet. Because all our personal activity is rooted in the freedom of the One Life, this freedom enters into all that we are or do. We misinterpret and misunderstand it, but we are correct in our instinctive belief in free will. For this responsive quality in all human action does not mean response to something outside, or to something other than ourselves. It is a personal reaction to our true, innermost nature.

The Hermit on his peak stands at the center of a great circle. His horizon is wider than that of any of the travelers toiling up toward him. The paths on one side of the mountain are different from those on the opposite side, and seem to be going in opposite directions. Yet they all meet in one place. So do the various paths of human attainment differ in details, and differ also in apparent direction.

No two are precisely the same, yet all lead to the same goal. That goal is conscious identification with the one and only Self. That goal we are all destined to reach. For the power which is expressed in the life of every human being is the power of that **One Self**, and this power, the power of omnipotence itself, can never fail to perfect every least detail of its work.

Lost souls there may be if by "lost" we mean "having lost one's way". Yet sooner or later the light of the Hermit's lantern will be a beacon to bring the wanderers back to the Path; and the better we understand Ageless Wisdom, the more does it become evident that even the wanderers are never really out of contact with the Eternal Light-bearer.

Use Key 9 to remind you that your true **Self is, even now, all that your personal mind hopes and longs to be. Use it to deepen your understanding of the truth that there is never a moment when you are not under the watchful supervision of that same great "I AM".**

**Use it also to convey to your subconsciousness the deep practical lesson we have lightly touched upon in speaking of the building of a finer body. At this point in your study, you would most likely be confused by elaborate explanation of the process. Your subconsciousness, however, understands every detail of the meaning of this Tarot Key and will respond to it by beginning to build the finer body you require.**