

INTRODUCTION TO TAROT

Lesson Eight

KEY 14. TEMPERANCE



Verification is the basic meaning of Key 14. This picture represents the process whereby we prove the accuracy of the principles and laws laid down in Ageless Wisdom. It shows us how we may confirm our beliefs and theories. It indicates the method whereby we may establish the truth of what we are taught.

Truth is established by trial. In order to know, we must do. Fluency in the use of the language of Ageless Wisdom is no guarantee that we are competent to perform the Great Work. We must subject our theories to the laboratory tests of day to day experience.

The Hebrew letter on Key 14 is Samekh **ס**, and its Chaldean form is the third of the three serpentine letters in the alphabet. It represents a snake with its tail in its mouth, and thus it is a symbol of completion and eternity.

As a verb, the letter-name Samekh means “to prop, to bear up, to uphold, to sustain, to establish”. The original form of the letter was a picture of a tent peg. Thus it really signifies, in relation to a tent, what a foundation means to a house. It gives stability and firmness to our house of life.

The number of Key 14 is significant to every student of Hebrew Wisdom, because 14 is the numerical value of the noun **זָהָב**, zawhab, gold. This is the gold of enlightenment, the philosophical gold which represents perfect, verified truth.

The title, Temperance, combines the ideas we have been considering. Understand it in its now obsolete sense, which is “the act of tempering or mingling; modification; combination”. Thus “Temperance” really means regulation and the measured proportion of constituent parts.

The Great Work is just this. It combines and harmonizes all the various elements which enter into the constitution of human personality, blending them together in one whole.

In Key 14, the central figure is the great archangel Michael, angel of the sun and angel of the element of fire. The solar disk on his forehead establishes his identity. So does his glowing

hair surrounded by rays. He corresponds also to the great angel described in the tenth chapter of Revelation. THE AMERICAN BIBLE translates thus:

“Then I saw another mighty angel descend from heaven. He was clothed in a cloud, and a rainbow encircled his head. His face was like the sun, his legs were like pillars of fire, and he had a little scroll open in his hand. He set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and he uttered a great shout like the roar of a lion; and when he shouted, the seven thunders raised their voices.”

Notice the connection between the solar angel and the seven thunders which uttered things the seer was forbidden to write. The thunderbolt is the special emblem of Jupiter, and Jupiter rules the sign Sagittarius to which Key 14 corresponds. Sagittarius is the Archer and the Hebrew name for this sign is also the name for the rainbow.

The only difference between the angel in Revelation and this one is that the angel in Key 14 has a vase and a torch instead of a little scroll. Yet the meaning is really the same. The little scroll is the scroll of the law, which the High Priestess holds. When that scroll is unrolled, the Law is made manifest, or put into operation. In Key 14, the operation of the Law is shown by what the angel does.

The Divine Name יהוה, Jehovah, on his breast identifies the angel with the **One Reality**. Commonly we think of angels as being different from the One Life of which they are messengers; but in truth, they are aspects of that One Life. **That which was, is, and is to come**, יהוה, is the Reality which presents itself to us under all guises.

The seven-pointed star under the Great Name refers to the Seven Spirits of God. These are seven phases of the One Conscious Energy.

The vase, from which water is poured, represents the Astral Fluid. Like the water in the vases shown in Key 17, it comes from the pool below the angel in which his right foot rests. The water has the same meaning as elsewhere throughout the Keys of Tarot. It falls in a triple stream to show that, although this cosmic substance is usually associated with subconsciousness, its activities really include conscious and superconscious operations also, which are all combined in the Great Work.

The stream of water falls on a lion, symbol of the sign Leo. His color, however, should be darker than the lion in Key 10 because he not only represents the sign Leo and the element of fire, but also the “roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”, which is one of the Biblical symbols of the devil. This suggests to subconsciousness that the Angel is tempering the undeveloped aspects of personality in order to transmute ignorance.

The stream of water falling on the lion also indicates the modification of the animal nature by the powers of human consciousness. Again, it suggests the blending of opposite elements, water and fire.

The torch in the angel's left hand represents the consumption of physical forms by the fiery action of the Life-power. From it fall five flames, each shaped like a letter Yod. They refer to the fivefold differentiation of the Life-Breath into ether, fire, water, air and earth.

Since Scorpio is a watery sign, the flames falling on an eagle indicate the blending of opposites and the equilibrium which results. The eagle is a symbol for water as well as for Scorpio. It is, moreover, the bird of Jupiter, ruling planet of Sagittarius.

In the background, at the end of the path, is a crown suspended in air. It represents the first of the ten Qabalistic Sephiroth, Kether, the Crown. It is a symbol of the culmination of the Great Work which is the perfect self-knowledge indicated by the statement, "I and the Father are in perfect union." The twin mountain-peaks on either side of the crown stand for two other Sephiroth, Wisdom and Understanding.

The pool and the earth represent, respectively, consciousness and physical form. The angel stands on both to show that the Great Work is a psycho-chemical operation wherein transformations of mental states bring about corresponding changes in the bodily organism.

The central idea of this Key is that we may verify for ourselves the teaching of Ageless Wisdom that man is destined to complete the cosmic manifestation of the Life-power through his personal activities. In so doing, man changes his body so that his brain can register consciousness of identity with the Primal Will of which all activities are expressions.

This Key sums up the occult doctrine as to what occurs in such transformation. By using it as a focus for concentrated attention, we are enabled to keep steadily in mind what is the real meaning of daily experience. Then we will come to know that occult doctrine is true. Practice of the mental states evoked by Key 14 is the "practice of the presence of God", or the "knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel".

KEY 15. THE DEVIL



The principle of contrast, running through Tarot, is obvious in comparing Keys 14 and 15. The angel of Temperance is an angel of light. Key 15 shows an angel of darkness.

Of all the Keys of Tarot, Key 15 is one of the most important. It is a symbolic veil for the greatest practical secret of occultism. It both conceals and reveals the secret of the powers ascribed by tradition to Moses, David and Solomon. This is the same secret Pythagoras learned in Egyptian temple schools. It is the Great Arcanum of alchemy and magic. To know it is to be able to make the Philosophers' Stone and the Elixir of Life.

Yet those who know it **cannot** tell. For the essential point is beyond the power of words to express. If you already know it, you will be able to decide whether or not the writer of this lesson knows it also. If you are ready to learn it, this lesson will plant a seed in your mind which seed will grow eventually into

positive knowledge.

This knowledge is interiorly received and perceived. The meaning dawns on us. When this occurs, there is no doubt, no guesswork, no uncertainty. One knows, and knows that he knows.

The first clue is that the letter-name אֵי, Ayin, means not only “eye” and “fountain”, but also “outward appearance”. Thus we know Key 15 is a picture of the way things look rather than a picture of the way they really are. Yet we must bear in mind also the fact that every Key of Tarot is a picture of humanity itself, a symbol for some aspect of the **One Self** which is manifest in the innumerable personalities constituting the human race. Becoming aware of the undeveloped aspects of personality is the first step towards overcoming our “devilish” responses to life experience.

The very word “devil” is from a Greek noun which means “slanderer”. This may help you to understand what Key 15 really means. It stands for everything or anything that gives man a bad opinion of the worth and value of his nature.

What does just this? What else but the appearances constituting human environment when superficially interpreted. Yet, if we know what they are, what they spring from, and what is their purpose in the cosmic order, we shall understand how to deal with them.

The Bible gives another hint to the same effect when it tells us the serpent who tempted Eve was created on a day when the Lord looked at all He had made and pronounced it "very good." If we think long and deeply on the problem of creation, we shall see that the Lord had no material other than His own substance. Then it may dawn upon us that it is the **appearances** which deceive us and are the immediate causes of our fears, and of our poor opinion of human nature.

In brief, then, Key 15 represents the One Power as it **appears** to those who are content to take its appearances at face value. When we look at the world surrounding us, we see a composite of seemingly incongruous elements mixed in hopeless confusion. Of this confusion the impossible mixture of male and female, human and animal, bird and beast, which is the central figure of Key 15, is a perfect example. Nothing like it actually exists, yet everything in it is some aspect of reality.

Even the sign of the zodiac which is attributed to the letter Ayin has connection with the Devil. For the ancient Egyptians called this sign Typhon, and their Typhon was the origin of much that came to be incorporated into later notions of His Satanic Majesty. Symbolic representations of Capricorn include: 1. A monster having the head and body of a goat and the tail of a fish; 2. a crocodile with the head of an elephant; 3. a donkey; 4. the mysterious creature represented in Job and in Revelation as Leviathan and the Old Serpent.

As a feminine sign, Capricorn is related to the mother-power which, after the growth brought about through temptation and trial, brings forth the Savior, the Redeemed One.

This establishes a link with another occult meaning of Ayin given in a table in HIGHLIGHTS which says this letter represents the Renewing Intelligence. A Qabalistic commentary on this declares that by means of the Renewing Intelligence God renews all that is begun afresh in the creation of the world. Here the Wisdom of Israel gives us a hint that there is a relationship, even an identity, between the power which tempts and destroys and that which renews and saves.

The perception of this identity by occultists has made necessary the careful veiling of esoteric doctrines, even when these doctrines are communicable. In this supposedly enlightened age, and in this supposedly free country, there are many localities where it would be dangerous to make a plain statement of some things written in this lesson.

Perhaps what has been written by Eliphas Levi will come as near as anything can to putting you on the track of the true meaning of this Tarot Key. He says, "Satan, as a superior personality and power, has no existence. The devil is the Great Magic Agent employed for evil purposes by a perverse will." To this we may add that the perversity of that will is due to ignorance.

In the Tarot Key, the Devil is androgyne, having one male and one female breast. From the pentagram to the extremity of his right-hand horn, there are ten divisions, and on the other

horn there are twelve. These represent the twenty-two forces corresponding to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and to the Tarot Keys.

The inverted pentagram is a symbol of evil magic. It represents the inversion of the powers of normal humanity. When man misunderstands himself, and in his thinking inverts his true position, the outcome of his error is the hideous image of the Adversary.

The Devil has the ears of an ass because the donkey is one of the symbols of Capricorn. His face is that of a goat, though it has also a human look. This part of the symbolism refers to the sexual manifestation of the Life-power, now termed libido by analytical psychology.

The Devil's gross, hairy body suggests the element of earth. In the colored versions of this Key it is painted a brown, earthen tint. Its massive proportions suggest the ponderous powers of the physical plane.

His wings are bat's wings— wings of darkness inasmuch as bats fly at night. They symbolize the occult agencies whereby the forces of the physical plane, and the powers of instinctive energy, are transported from place to place, or transmuted from one form to another.

The eagle's wings and talons refer to the sign Scorpio and therefore to the ideas which are represented by the letter Nun. To a symbolist, the eagle's talons suggest the element of water and this reminds us that one of the astrological emblems for Capricorn is half goat, half fish.

The symbol of Mercury on the Devil's belly refers to the control exerted by self-consciousness over the force symbolized by the demon. The upper part of the Mercury symbol is yellow and the cross is red. Thus the whole symbol represents a combination of powers belonging to Mercury with those of Mars, the planet exalted in Capricorn. This suggests to subconsciousness that by becoming **aware** of the limitations of superficial appearance we can transform our actions and mental emotional states, thus bringing Light into the dark areas of our lives.

On the uplifted right hand of the Devil is the astrological symbol for Saturn. This hand makes a gesture which is as much as to say, "There is nothing hidden. What you see is all there is." This is the primary falsehood that enslaves ignorant believers in superficial appearances and leads to all sorts of disastrous results.

The inverted torch in the Devil's left hand is similar to the torch in the angel's hand in Key 14. It burns smokily and gives little light. It is a symbol for the inverted use of the Mars force.

The figures chained to a half-cube, symbol of half-knowledge of the physical plane, are human but bestialized. They represent what happens to human consciousness when it is dominated by false knowledge.

At the beginning of this section we said that the Great Secret cannot be told. Thus what we write in concluding this lesson must be developed by each of our readers as he progresses in understanding.

There is no devil if one means an evil, malicious, independent principle of personality **opposed** to God and man. **There is a devil** if by this term you understand the universal power of materialization which seems to enclose the Limitless Light within the boundaries of three-dimensional existence. This is the power which **apparently** subdivides the **One life** into many separate lives.

Yet this same power is what redeems, renews, enlightens, and finally liberates us. When we understand what it really is, and know what we ourselves really are, the Adversary is overcome. The name of the Adversary is **Legion**, or **Multiplicity**. The consciousness which overcomes it is the realization of **Unity**.

How may this realization be developed? By the exercise of the power called Mercury. By attention, by observation, by forming correct interpretations and right plans. Then the very power which held us in chains becomes the force which sets us free and the opponent who frames the problems that now are puzzling us becomes the Master of the Game . . . the one who helps us find the solutions and play with skill.