

# INTRODUCTION TO TAROT

## Lesson Nine

### KEY 16. THE TOWER



The last seven Keys of Tarot, beginning with Key 15, illustrate seven steps in the spiritual unfoldment of man. The first stage is that of fear, ignorance and misery. It is the state of mind and affairs experienced by the greater number of human beings.

Ageless Wisdom understands this stage to be necessary. Unhappy as are those persons who have not advanced beyond it, they are by no means victims of blind laws which do not take human life into account. Nor are they forgotten children of an absentee Deity, too careless to provide for their welfare. Least of all are they suffering from malignant hindrances devised by a personal Devil. Their state is the necessary consequence of the nature of the creative process. For creation is by evolution and progressive development. To mean anything, it must mean going from less development to more, from relative limitation and restriction to an ever greater measure of freedom. This process of man's progressive liberation is divided by Ageless

Wisdom into seven stages, corresponding to the last seven Keys of Tarot.

The second stage is represented by Key 16. Its design is based on the esoteric meaning of the letter Peh **פ**, the Hebrew equivalent of "P".

Compare Key 16 with Key 10. You will see that the character for Peh is the same as the letter Kaph **כ**, with something added which looks like a tongue in an open mouth. This is just what Peh stands for—the open mouth of man as the organ of speech.

The mouth, which enables us to **express** our thoughts in speech, is in contrast to the eye (Ayin, Key 15) which is the organ that enables us to **receive** impressions from the various appearances constituting our environment. Furthermore, Peh, being a Kaph with a tongue, stands for the articulate expression of the scientific comprehension which is symbolized by the Wheel of Fortune.

The number 16, again, leads to the same general conclusion. For it is not only 6 (the Lovers, typifying discrimination) expressed by means of self-consciousness (1, the Magician), but also the reduction of 16 is 7, the number of the Tarot Key which corresponds to the letter to which Qabalists attribute the function of speech.

HIGHLIGHTS says the letter Peh corresponds to Mars, the planet ruling the brain (Aries) and the reproductive process (Scorpio). Mars, moreover, is exalted in Capricorn, corresponding to Key 15.

“Mars” is the astrological name of the force which gives tonicity to our muscles. It is the force which is sent from the brain, like an electric charge, along the paths of the motor nerves. These tiny electric shocks sent out from the brain set off the activity of the muscles somewhat as a spark from a battery sets off the explosion of a charge of powder.

Thus the Magician, representing Mercury and self-consciousness, wears a red robe, the color of which indicates the Mars force. The conscious mind uses the brain-battery to set off the explosions of muscular activity.

We are able to control ourselves and our circumstances because we can translate mental perception into words. Basically, we think in pictures. Hence Key 4, the Emperor, is associated with the sense of sight. Until we can say what we see, however, and until what we say is in agreement with things as they really are, instead of being merely the expression of opinions based on superficial acceptance of appearances, we cannot plan our actions intelligently nor secure the co-operation of other persons.

All control of thought is word-control, because every definite ideal can be put into words. (Here it must be remembered that the various terminologies of arts and sciences, including those of higher mathematics, are actually forms of language just as certainly as ordinary forms of speech.) Thus, when we say that health, happiness and success come through right thinking, we mean that these desirable conditions are made manifest by right use of language. Conversely, the conditions of sickness, misery and failure follow wrong use of words. Our house of life is built of words and we must be wise in the selection and arrangement of our materials.

Key 16, therefore, is full of symbols which relate to language. As soon as they are pointed out, they become obvious.

Count the courses of masonry in the tower. There are exactly twenty-two. Then count the Yods which hang in the air on either side of the building. Twenty-two again. Every letter of the Hebrew alphabet is developed from the letter Yod. Hence the twenty-two Yods are symbols of the powers represented by the Hebrew letters and by the Tarot Keys.

These Yods hang in the air because one principle of Ageless Wisdom is this: **the forces of life which enter into thought are also the forces which take form in all physical things. These forces have themselves no physical basis. On the contrary, they are self-supporting and the foundation of everything else.**

Consequently, ten of the Yods are on one side of the tower where they form a pattern, like the Qabalistic Tree of Life, which is a diagram of the ten basic aspects of the Life-power intelligible to man. They represent also the three elements, fire, air and water (of which the fourth element, earth, is merely a synthesis) combined with the seven active principles corresponding to the astrological planets.

On the other side of the tower are twelve Yods. They correspond to the letters of the alphabet which represent the twelve signs of the zodiac and the twelve basic types of human personality. These letters, moreover, are so grouped that they make the outline of a figure 8 with a dot in the center of each loop. Remember that the value of the letter Cheth, to which is attributed the function of speech, is also 8. We cannot develop the meaning here. We simply bring it to your attention in order to show you how carefully every detail of the esoteric Tarot was designed.

The twenty-two courses of masonry in the tower symbolize wrong use of words. It is as if the builders of the tower, seeking to make themselves secure from attack, had, instead, imprisoned themselves.

The tower is built of bricks as was the Tower of Babel to which it alludes. The Bible says of those who built the Tower of Babel that they had bricks instead of stone. This indicates a substitution of clay for stone, and clay in the Bible is the same as the “dust of the ground” from which Adam was formed.

This indicates that the tower is a structure representing human speech when that speech is the product of unenlightened self-consciousness. In the Bible allegory, as in Tarot, Adam represents that in us which gives names to things. The substitution of brick for stone is a reference to the fact that almost everywhere in the Bible “stone” symbolizes conscious union with Reality.

Again, in Hebrew, the word for “brick” is spelt exactly the same as the Hebrew noun for “moon”. The root-meaning is “whiteness” and refers to the fact that both Egyptian and Babylonian bricks were made of white clay. Thus to substitute brick for stone is to substitute what may well be called “moonshine” for true consciousness of our identity with the Parent Source of all existence.

This moonshine is more poisonous than any product of bootleg stills. It is the false knowledge resulting from the race-mind's memory record of man's imperfect appraisal of himself and his circumstances.

Another name for it is common sense—that is, what most people think and say. It is always in opposition to science. It is always an enemy of progress. It is the “rule of thumb” consciousness of those who take appearances at face value. It is expressed in popular proverbs, in superstitions, and in much of what passes for theology.

No two persons who believe in common sense ever agree as to what it is. "Common sense ought to tell you," we hear. What does it mean? What else but this: "If only you were the superior person I am, you would agree with me." To build your house of life with the bricks of common sense is to be afflicted with the curse of Babel. Common sense is only a confusion of tongues. There can be no unity of opinion among persons whose interpretations of experience are based on looking **at** things, instead of **into** them.

The fundamental error of common sense is the notion that every human being is a separate entity possessed of powers of his own. This is a philosophy of isolation. Hence the tower in Key 16 stands on a lonely peak.

The lightning-flash of Key 16 comes from a solar disk to indicate that the Life-power is a source of illumination. This flash of true perception knocks off the usurper's crown of fancied, spurious superiority.

The crown represents also the false notion that there is any such will. The only free will is the Primal Will. The power of that Will flows through us but does not originate in personality. We have the **use** of this free Will, just as we have the use of the radiant energy which is its physical expression.

The lightning-flash starts a fire which will ultimately destroy the tower. In the second stage of unfoldment comes a sudden flash of perception which upsets all our opinions and seems to destroy the very foundations of our personal existence. We shall see later that this apparent catastrophe is followed by another stage of unfoldment in which there is nothing of the terror depicted here.

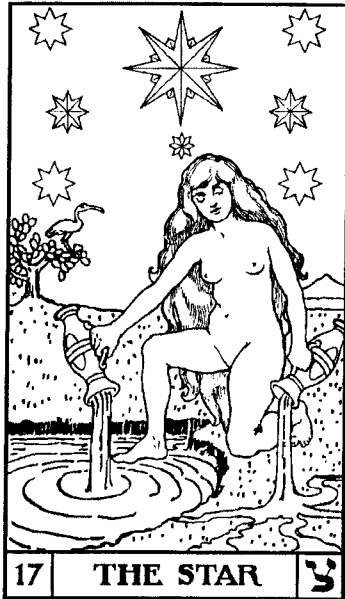
Notice that the falling figures are fully clothed in contrast to the nude figures of Key 6. For one of the results of the sudden illumination pictured here is that both aspects of personal consciousness undergo a reversal of opinion. Self-consciousness and subconsciousness always disguise themselves from each other until awakening comes. They are always more or less at cross purposes.

Use this Key as a means to overcome your superstitions. Use it to free your mind from being enslaved by common sense.

Use it also whenever you are confronted by what seems to be a problem. You have a problem because you are ignorant. You are ignorant because, hitherto, you have accepted some appearance at face value. You are in trouble because your words express faulty observation and poor reasoning.

That Key 16 will help you overcome this misuse of language, you need not **believe**. Just **try** it. You will be delighted at the way your subconsciousness responds.

## KEY 17. THE STAR



The third stage of spiritual unfoldment is the stage of **revelation**, symbolized by Key 17. With this Key, also, we come to the Tarot doctrine of meditation.

Now, if it be true that none of us does anything of or by himself, it must be true that when we meditate something is done **through** us rather than **by** us. THE BOOK OF TOKENS says the balance between the universal success-process and the fundamental nature of things is preserved by the Life-power's ceaseless meditation on its own nature. When a human being really meditates, he participates in this continual meditation of the Life-power.

At the time we received the text of the BOOK OF TOKENS, we received from the same Source the following instruction:

“One of the profoundest doctrines of Sacred Science is the doctrine that the Universe owes its existence to the Creator's perpetual self-recognition. Nature is thus the result of Spirit's meditation upon the powers of its own being. The universe is **thought** into existence and is maintained in existence by thought. Upon this foundation rests the whole structure of practical occultism and from this doctrine you may understand the importance of meditation.

“Whenever aspirants really meditate they are sharing in the exercise of the divine power that creates everything. Thus one of the tests whereby a student may know whether or not he has really succeeded in meditation is this: Let him find out whether or not what he has been doing takes form in the production of something better than he had before he began to meditate.

“To the Self-contemplation of Spirit, the universe appears as it really is. The correct application of Tarot shows us Reality—not surface appearances. The Divine Mother is always unveiled before her Lord. To man, except in those rare moments when he participates in the Divine meditation, She is at best the veiled Isis, and at worst the demon of the fifteenth Key.”

Among the Hebrew letters, meditation is represented by Tzaddi **ז**, the fish-hook. This is the letter of the zodiacal sign Aquarius, the Water-bearer. Consequently the symbols of Key 17 include an obvious reference to this sign.

The Hebrew name for Aquarius is associated by number with the circulation of blood. Blood is truly the “water-bearer” in the human body. The occult meaning here has to do with the fact

that the organic state in which meditation becomes possible is really a chemical state of the blood. The blood is the true "Astral Fluid" of the occultists because all the elements entering into its composition are specialized forms of the radiant energy which comes to us from the stars. This cosmic radiant energy is sent out from the various suns, or fixed stars, throughout the universe.

In Key 17, these innumerable sources of energy are pictured as a single great star over the woman's head. This star is also a symbol of that which alchemists call the Quintessence, the fifth, or last and highest power in any natural body.

The star has eight principal rays which is a geometrical correspondence to the eight spokes of the Wheel of Fortune. It corresponds also to the ten symbols of Spirit on the dress of the Fool.

The seven lesser stars correspond to what alchemists termed "their metals". These are the same as the seven chakras of the yogis. They are also the "interior stars" of esoteric astrology. They are eight-pointed to indicate their correspondence to the great star.

The two stars on either side of the great star, distinguished from the others by their interior rays, are symbols of the Sun and Moon. The whole arrangement is as follows:

MARS	VENUS
SUN	MOON
MERCURY	
SATURN	JUPITER

The tree represents the human organism and particularly the brain and nervous system. The bird on the tree is an ibis, a fishing bird, whose beak has the same meaning as the letter Tzaddi. Because the Egyptians associated the ibis with Hermes, this bird corresponds to what Tarot represents elsewhere as the Magician.

The woman is the same as the Empress and as the woman in Key 8. Note that the reduction of 17 is 8. This same woman will appear again as the World-dancer in the last Key of Tarot.

The old astrologers said Aquarius was ruled by Saturn and this attribution was current when Tarot was invented. Thus we know that the principal figure of Key 17 is the same Saturn pictured in Key 21 as a dancer. Yet this same figure is also the Empress, or Venus. There is an occult sympathy between Saturn and Venus which is indicated again and again throughout the texts of Ageless Wisdom.

The woman also represents truth and in meditation truth about nature is shown to us without disguise. Hence the woman is nude.

The weight of her body rests on her left knee and is supported by earth representing the facts of physical existence. She maintains her balance with her right leg and her right foot rests on the surface of the pool. This indicates that in meditation something occurs which gives solidity and supporting power to the ordinarily unstable mind-stuff symbolized by water. Alchemists refer to meditation when they speak of "fixation of the volatile".

The two vases stand for the two personal modes of consciousness, self-consciousness and subconsciousness. The ellipses on their sides symbolize the zero-sign which stands for Spirit, the No-Thing.

From the vase in the woman's right hand falls a stream which sets up a wave-motion in the pool. This represents the activity of subconsciousness brought about by meditation. From the other vase, a stream falls on land and divides into five parts to represent the perfection of the five senses resulting from the practice of meditation.

The mountain is the same as that shown in Key 6 and 8. It represents the perfection of the Great Work which is control of the inorganic forms of the Life-power's activity. In alchemy this is called the "mineral work". It is the final achievement of occult practice.

The contrast between the scene of terror in Key 16 and this peaceful picture needs no emphasis. Yet one should remember that nature unveils herself to us in meditation **after the storm and stress of awakening.**

Unless we have been shocked into wakefulness by some crisis in our lives, we never enter into this third stage of unfoldment. So long as we remain isolated in the fancied security of our tower of personal isolation, we are still in the dark.

Use this Key in connection with Key 5. By so doing you will be able to draw from within the right answer to every problem. Always remember that you must not only have a problem, but must also admit to yourself that its presence is invariably an indication of your ignorance. Bait the hook of meditation with intense desire for light on your problem of the present moment. Be specific. Don't sit in the silence with your mind open to anything that may come.

A fisherman varies his bait according to what fish he wants to catch. If you use Key 17 as a means to help you meditate, you will find that it aids you to get light on the problem of today and that tomorrow it will do the same.