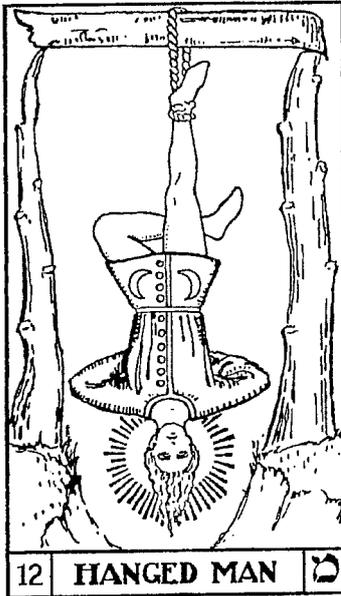


INTRODUCTION TO TAROT

Lesson Seven

KEY 12. THE HANGED MAN



The law of Reversal is mentioned frequently in Ageless Wisdom and is represented by innumerable symbols. Key 12 is the most important emblem in Tarot. The application of this Law of Reversal is one of the great secrets of occultism. The essential meaning of the law may be stated as follows:

To reverse the conditions of misery, disease and failure, and substitute for them their opposites of health, happiness and success, it is necessary to think, speak and act in ways which are the reverse of those in which most persons think, speak and act.

One ancient statement of the Law of Reversal is given at the beginning of THE DHAMMAPADA, an important summary of Buddha's doctrine:

“All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.

“All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.

“Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love. This is an old rule.”

Yet it is not enough to say, “If you want to be happy and successful, you must learn to reverse your thinking.” What we require is a **practical method** which will actually effect the necessary reversal.

Right use of Key 12 is such a method. Just looking at this picture will do wonders in the way of reversing our ordinary habits of thought and speech; but to get the full suggestive power of the picture into operation, it is well to have some knowledge of its meaning and correspondences. When these are understood, they form a bridge which carries the suggestions of the design more easily into our subconsciousness. There they set going trains of mental activity which will make habitual a mental attitude that does actually change our thought, our

speech and our action into the reverse of that which is the underlying cause of the misery and bondage we want to overcome.

The letter Mem ♁ printed on this Key is the equivalent of the English "M". Its name means **seas, or water.**

Water is the first mirror, but it reflects everything upside down. It reverses the images cast upon it. This fact led the inventors of Tarot to connect the symbolism of Key 12 with the letter Mem.

The occult water is not the fluid we draw from kitchen taps. It is called water because it is **like** that element. It is spread over a vast expanse, like a great sea. It moves in waves. It flows in currents and forms itself into whirlpools, or vortices. It also takes form in drops, or corpuscles.

In short, the occult water is the Astral Fluid, the electromagnetic energy which is the substance of all things. It is called the seed of minerals because every mineral is composed of atoms and every atom contains a certain number of corpuscles, or drops, of this primary substance.

This apparently abstract idea has immediate use. Many practical marvels of recent invention have been made possible by the development of the conception of the electrical constitution of matter.

But what difference does this make to an ordinary human being? Only a few of us have any talent for invention. Only a few are equipped to undertake the difficult labor of a research physicist or chemist. Yet we are all interested in getting more out of life. Will this doctrine help us to do so? Will it enable us to make better progress, to enjoy better health, to live freer lives?

Let's see. One thing which makes mental and occult practice difficult is the supposition that what we have to do demands the exertion of an intangible mental power against the inertia of a very tangible physical reality. This "matter" surrounding us is so dense, so resistant, so hard to move, that most persons cannot believe that mere thinking has any power over it.

A practical occultist is not deceived by surface appearances. He knows that physical things have neither the solidity nor the inertia his senses report. He understands that the densest kinds of physical substance, as well as the lightest gases, are forms built up from tiny, widely separated "drops" of the cosmic "water".

Thus, when he begins to attack the practical problem of changing conditions by changing his thinking, he does not face the difficulty which besets a person who believes what his senses report concerning things in his environment. Practical occultists know there is no essential difference between the energy which takes form as thought and that which takes form as a diamond or a piece of metal.

Thus the occult teaching about water enables us to effect a reversal of our mental attitude toward the conditions of our environment. By means of this reversal we free our minds from that subjection to appearances which prevents most persons from using thought-power to change conditions for the better.

The Tarot reading of 12 indicates the outpouring of the powers of subconsciousness (2) through the fixation of self-consciousness in acts of attention (1). This is precisely what the Hanged Man typifies. When concentration is prolonged, the direct experience of the superconscious state of being results. This is perfect union of the personal with the universal consciousness. It is attained by practices which quiet the mind and suspend the formation of chains of ideas.

By paraphrasing the title of Key 12 as "The Suspended Man", it becomes evident that this Key refers to such practice. The inventors of Tarot knew the relationship between the nouns **man** and **mind**. So they chose a title which hints at the idea of the suspension of personal activities. This suspension is achieved by concentration and leads to the release of marvelous powers which give an adept perfect control over his mind, his body, and the conditions of his environment.

He who has this experience reverses his attitude toward life. He feels himself to be a vehicle or instrument for the manifestation of the limitless power of the cosmic Life-Breath. Gone forever is the delusion that personality is, or can be, separate from the sum-total of universal activity.

When Jesus said, "Of myself I can do nothing," he expressed this realization. The words are no confession of weakness. They simply tell the truth that even the least of personal actions is a particular manifestation of universal laws and forces. Instead of lessening the importance of personality, this realization adds to that importance. It shows that the true value of personality is to be found in the fact that a person is an agency whereby the limitless power of the One Life may be brought to bear in controlling the conditions in this field of relative existence.

In the symbolism of Key 12, the gallows is in the form of a Hebrew letter Tav, ט. This letter has been mentioned elsewhere in our lessons as being the letter corresponding to Key 21, The World. This Key symbolizes the real world which is hidden from the ignorant by their delusions.

He who succeeds in reversing his conception of personality realizes that the real world is, so to say, the body of God. He knows himself to be a member of that body. He knows there is nothing anywhere in the real world which is inimical to man, or opposed to man's welfare. He depends utterly on the perfectly adequate support given by that real world to all his personal activities and interests. The logic of the average human being, who bases his reasoning on superficial appearances is just the opposite to the logic of an adept, who **knows** inner realities.

The average human being is dominated by his imagination and his images are false. What he actually does when he supposes himself to be reasoning is nothing but rationalization. The more he "reasons", the worse becomes his situation for he is a victim of delusion.

An adept, on the contrary, has learned to determine what mental images shall occupy his field of attention. He selects them with care and sees to it that they are true images. This enables him to imagine creatively and thus he arrives at a true vision of man's place in the cosmic order. An adept succeeds in controlling himself and his world because he has a rational grasp of the meaning of his personality.

The glory round the Hanged Man's head refers to the illumination which comes as a result of suspending the activity of personal consciousness. This glory is the same as the sun in Keys 0 and 6.

The Hanged Man's hair is white to show that he is one with the Hermit and the Emperor. But his face is that of a youth. Thus he combines the two aspects which the Life-power presents to us. The Life-power is the Eternal Youth and it is also the Ancient of Days. One of its names is GOD. The other is MAN. He who knows this by direct experience is the wise man who says, "I am doing nothing," even in the midst of the most absorbing activities of terrestrial existence.

By using Key 12 as a focus for concentration, you will discover for yourself far more than we have written here. More than this, you will begin to weave the strands of a consciousness which will eventually establish you in the understanding Key 12 symbolizes.

When the pictorial suggestions of this design begin to take effect, they will initiate a series of changes in your mind and body. As a consequence of these changes, you will adopt the mental attitude of utter dependence on the **One Life. From this mental attitude health and well-being follow automatically.** It serves to correct all negative states of mind. Thus it eradicates the causes of failure and fixes one firmly in the realization that the essence of human personality is identical with the Limitless Life which creates and sustains the whole universe.

KEY 13. DEATH



One main contrast distinguishes Ageless Wisdom from ordinary human philosophies. At best, the speculations of ordinary human reason on the questions of survival and immortality give us no more than hopes based on analogy. At their worst, they lead to the hopeless conviction that this world and its conditions are all we can ever know. Ageless Wisdom offers us a practical method for overcoming death. This is a method based on human experience. Human beings like ourselves have practiced it successfully in times past. Men and women now living have triumphed over death.

(Scientific psychic research has, in the opinion of most experts, established the case for survival beyond reasonable doubt. The following text, however, does not deal with the survival of consciousness and memory after physical dissolution, but with the actual control by occult methods of such dissolution. *Ed.*)

For such persons the grave has no terrors, death no sting of loss or separation. Theirs is not a hope. It is a certainty, and they say we may share their knowledge.

In order to practice this method, we are not called upon to invite doubts of our sanity by declaring, "There is no death." On the contrary, to find the release we seek we must face resolutely the fact that **bodies** do die. Denial of fact is folly. Ignoring it is no use. Understanding what this hard fact really means is needful and we never can understand anything we try to deny.

Airplanes were not invented by denying the fact that objects heavier than air fall to the ground. Everything in a plane is heavier than air, but we do not deny the force of gravity in order to fly. We admit all the facts, and then we recognize, in certain combinations of other facts, a means to overcome the force of gravity.

We face an undeniable fact when we come into the presence of death. Equally undeniable is the fact that a multitude of unimpeachable witnesses testify to their knowledge that death may be overcome just as we overcome gravity—that is, by calling into operation certain other facts, certain other laws and forces, which are always at hand ready for use.

Part of the life-equipment of every human being is an immortal something which was not born with the body, something which will never die. More than this, **the immortal something**

within us is what brings about the dissolution of our physical bodies. Our essential immortal nature is the actual cause of the fact of physical death. When we face the fact of death, and learn its meaning, we shall find out how to overcome it, how to erase it completely from our consciousness and our experience.

This is more than a promise of certainty that we shall survive the death of the body. It is more than a mere hope of resurrection. It is more than a change of consciousness. The knowledge of those who are consciously immortal totally annuls death. Those who become perfect in this knowledge, here on earth, need have no experience of physical dissolution. They are released from what seems to be the "common lot". They are able to maintain the existence of their physical bodies in perfect health and vigor over a period of time limited only by their own deliberate choice.

Key 13 declares this doctrine of Ageless Wisdom symbolically. It does more. It conveys to subconsciousness, through the sense of sight, stimuli which will call forth from our inner mind the knowledge which will enable us to overcome death.

The letter Nun נ printed on this Key means, as a verb, "to sprout, to grow". As a noun, its meaning is "fish". This is also the proper name Nun given in the Old Testament to the father of Joshua.

Now, when the Old Testament says Joshua (liberation) was the son of Nun (fish), it is hinting that the liberating power of truth or reality is a consequence of the power of growth represented by Nun.

In the human body, this power of growth is the cause of the multiplication of cells and of the development of structure. It is also the fundamental principle of reproduction. In Hebrew Wisdom, therefore, the letter Nun is associated with Scorpio, the sign of the zodiac which presides over reproduction.

As the eighth sign of the zodiac, Scorpio has fundamental rulership over the eighth house of the horoscope, the house of death and inheritance. **Our most precious heritage is the power which manifests itself in the fact of death.** For . . . until such time as each individual will have progressed spiritually to that state where he will have learned through direct perception the true nature of his life in its relationship to the One Life, death is a necessity. Otherwise, like a defective phonograph record, the needle of his life would remain forever in the same groove. Endless repetition would replace progress. Most of us need to be forcibly removed by death from the rut of our false perceptions . . . and again and again so removed until our spiritual knowledge and wisdom assures our progress to perfection.

The true nature of this death power is indicated by the number 13. This is the number in Hebrew, of two words. One means **unity**. The other means **love**. The **One Power** whence all things proceed, the **Love Power** which is the cause of all attractions and affinities, is also the **Death Power** which brings about the dissolution of physical bodies. There are not two

antagonistic powers, one making for life, the other for death. There is only **One Power** having opposite forms of manifestation.

At first glance, the central figure of Key 13 is the conventional representation of the "Grim Reaper". To the initiated eye, however, the skeleton is a reminder that the bony structure of the body is the foundation of all our muscular activities without which no action would be possible.

What is shown here, then, is a picture of the basis of all our personal activities. As a symbol, therefore, the skeleton stands for that which is the basis of all function, the foundation of all growth and development.

This something is the **One Power** specialized in the reproductive functions of the body. It is the **Seed-power**. Hence a conventionalized picture of a seed is placed in the upper left-hand corner of the picture.

The same power is represented by the skeleton. All growth and development are based on endless permutations of form. In the absolute sense there is no change for the No-Thing remains eternally Itself throughout the whole series of appearances. Yet, in the relative sense, this pageant of transformation is actual, and it necessitates the dissolution of outworn forms.

Look closely and you will see that the skeleton is curiously distorted. There are two twists in the spinal column. One is just above the pelvis and serves to mark the location of the Mars center in the body. The other is at the neck where the Venus center has its place. Were this skeleton clothed with flesh, its body would be twisted in a way no contortionist could duplicate. This anatomical impossibility indicates the central secret of the thirteenth Key.

We have to learn to give a certain twist to the energy manifested physically through the Mars center. This is the center in the nervous system which controls the reproductive activities of the body. We must learn to turn this energy in another direction, the reverse of what it usually takes.

The Mars force is present in the body during one's entire lifetime. Unless it be deliberately turned in the right direction, we cannot overcome death.

This new direction is given to the Mars force by means of the activity of its complement, the force which is specialized by the Venus center in the throat. Briefly, this is effected by a change in our mental imagery. The knowledge of this fact sheds a little more light on the meaning of Key 13.

The impetus of this rising current of nerve force results in a change of consciousness, accompanied by the manifestation of occult powers which are latent in most human personalities.

Among these is the power of recollecting the experiences of human personality when it is functioning in the astral body and other higher vehicles. All persons "travel" more or less in these higher vehicles when their physical bodies are asleep. We say "more or less", because such "journeys" are by no means of nightly occurrence; and we put the words "travel" and "journeys" in quotation marks because there are good reasons for believing that what seems, during such experiences, to be movement from place to place, is actually simply an extension of consciousness.

Just as soon as one begins to have conscious waking recollection of such experiences, he is freed from the delusion that his personality depends on having a physical body for its existence as a self-conscious, thinking entity.

The higher powers which unfold after this initial awakening are represented in Key 13 by the hands and feet which the skeleton reaps. His scythe has a handle shaped like a letter "T", to show that this occult work calls into play the power coiled in the Saturn center at the base of the spine.

HIGHLIGHTS tells you that the Imaginative Intelligence is the special quality of consciousness associated with Nun and Key 13. This Key is intended to awaken that particular type of consciousness. It will help you begin to imagine yourself as being free from the bondage of physical and temporal existence. It will aid in setting in motion the subtle inner activities which impel the force from the Mars center to move up instead of down. It will do what is needed in this direction without any weird concentration exercises intended to arouse the activity of body centers.

Study this lesson until you grasp the real import of death. Then picture yourself as being what you really are, free from bondage to the physical body. Eventually you will begin to receive the confirmations we have outlined briefly in this lesson.

Note the word "Introduction" in the heading of this lesson and series of lessons. Future courses and lessons which are directly ahead of you will add much expansion and detail to these introductory teachings.