

Bondage

As used in these lessons, the word Spirit means the Life-Breath. It comes from the Latin *spiritus*, which has the same meaning. In the English version of The New Testament, it is used to translate the Greek *pneuma*, which has the same significance. It is also the equivalent of the Sanskrit term *prana*. In translations of the Old Testament it is employed for the Hebrew noun *ruach*, spelled רוּחַ, R V Ch.

Some of the meanings of *ruach* are explained in *Tarot Fundamentals*. Let us review what has been said there, and add to it, so that you may have a clear notion of the special sense in which the term Spirit will be used throughout these lessons.

The first letter, R, means “head.” The head is the location of the brain, which transforms radiant energy into various mental states. The radiant energy comes from the sun. You will recall that the sun is attributed to the Hebrew letter Resh, or R, which is represented in Tarot by Key 19, entitled *The Sun*. This radiant energy is a physical force, but it is also essentially a conscious energy. The brain is the organ which releases this essential consciousness and sets it to work in the field of personality. The sun, whence we derive our supply of this conscious radiant energy, is itself merely a dynamo, or battery, in which the universal Life-Breath is concentrated, and from which that Life-Breath is radiated into our solar system. The physical properties and activities of the solar radiation are but the outer vesture for something far more powerful. That something is consciousness. Consciousness is the dominant power in the universe, the chief authority, ruling all things, and therefore the head of all creation. Thus the letter R in *ruach* is a symbol of the Master Consciousness, the Father.

The second letter of *ruach*, V, means “nail.” Thus it conveys the idea of connection or linkage. In Hebrew, also, the letter Vav is used as the conjunction “and,” so that it is the Hebrew grammatical sign of connection. V is related to the sign Taurus, which governs the ears, tongue, lower jaw, and throat of man. The neck and throat are actually the link between the

head and the body. Hearing is a link between mind and mind. That link is established by words. Words are sound formulated by the tongue, movements of the lower jaw, and vibrations in the throat. Thus the letter V refers chiefly to sound-vibration. In Hindu occultism the subtle principle of hearing is called *akasha*. Akasha is said to be the fundamental substance, like a great ocean in which all forms are as waves. Akasha is the link between fire and water, between water and air, between air and earth. It is the connecting medium, therefore, linking together the various forms of activity. Sound vibration connects all the various appearances of the one cosmic energy, and is the root-substance from which all those appearances are built up. Thus the letter V in *ruach* represents sound as the means for expressing consciousness. Study Key 5, the Hierophant, in this connection. The letter V therefore stands for the WORD or LOGOS. The New Testament identifies the Word with the Son, and the Son is called the Mediator. Similarly, in Qabalah, the letter V stands for Beauty, that aspect of the Life-power which is also named the Son, and is also regarded as being the Mediating Influence between the Crown above and the Foundation and Kingdom below.

The third letter of *ruach*, Ch, means “fence.” It signifies circumscription and limitation. It also implies the setting apart of a field for the purpose of cultivation. The sign Cancer is attributed to the letter Ch. Cancer governs the chest and the mammary glands. The bones of the chest protect the vital organs, and the mammary glands give nourishment. Thus the sign Cancer is associated with the ideas of feeding and protection. Cancer, moreover, is ruled by the moon, and in Western occultism, the moon is feminine, in contrast to the masculine sun. Thus the letter Ch, both by its name, and by its attribution to Cancer, suggests that the powers of man which are located within the protective fence of the chest are those which have to be cultivated, that is, developed in form and quality. And since Cancer is ruled by the moon, a symbol of subconsciousness, here is a strong indication that the powers in question belong in the subconscious field of manifestation, as they actually do. Thus the letter Ch, through its connection with the bodily functions below the neck and throat, corresponds to that aspect of the Life-power which Qabalists call the Bride.

The word *ruach*, then, focuses our attention on the fact that the dominant centers for the expression of the universal radiance are located in the head of man. Next it intimates that the coordinating and connective functions of this energy manifest in human personality through the ears and throat, which contain the organs that enable us to formulate sound patterns, or words, which express states of consciousness emanating from the head. And the last letter of the word *ruach* designates the functions of the physical body as the field in which, through consciousness expressed in words, we may effect improvements in form and quality. Thus Qabalists assign the function of speech to this same last letter of *ruach*, although they teach that the power to shape sound into words is primarily connected with the letter Vav. The separate words are formed in the throat, but the body is the field wherein is manifested the complete expression of occult speech.

Finally, since the letter R represents the sun, it corresponds to alchemical gold. Since V is the conjunction “and,” it may be so read. Because Ch corresponds to Cancer, ruled by the moon, it stands for the alchemical moon, or silver. Thus we may read R V Ch either as “gold and silver,” or as “sun and moon.” The gold of the alchemist, or the alchemical sun, is identical with a current of energy in the human body which the yogis call *Surya*, the hot, electric current, invariably represented in their diagrams by the color red. The alchemical silver, or moon, corresponds to another current of the same energy (*prana*), which the yogis name *Rayi*, the cool, magnetic lunar current, always colored white in their diagrams. So, in Western alchemy, we have the Red Work of the sun, and the White Work of the moon. We mention this in order to make it clear to you that these lessons deal with a force that has definite, charted manifestations within the field of human personality.

If you read the preceding paragraphs carefully, and digest their meaning, you will not think of Spirit as a mere metaphysical abstraction. You will see that it has physical aspects also. Spirit is the manifesting power which brings into our range of sensation all the appearances constituting our environment, including our own physical bodies. There is nothing that we know that is not an appearance of the One Spirit. It is the reality behind all forms of manifestation. In essence Spirit is pure consciousness (R); it is that which integrates and disintegrates forms through the agency of sound

vibration (V); it accomplishes this integration and disintegration by means of words, and the whole field of manifestation in appearances, or bodies, is therefore the occult speech of the Life-power (Ch).

Just this is what we mean by Spirit. It is what Hindus mean by *prana*. It is what the Bible means whenever it speaks of Spirit, but the follies of theologians have buried this meaning in a rubbish heap of misinterpretation. Spirit is no vague, supernatural, other-worldly power. It is a definite natural energy, which appears in this world as the various objects we perceive by means of our senses. These words you are reading are Spirit. So is the paper they are written on, and the ink which makes the letters visible. Every single “material” thing is really the One Spirit expressing itself through a combination of vibrations which are within the range of human sensation.

By “spiritual unfoldment”, therefore, we mean the release of latent potencies of the *ruach*, or Life-Breath. These are now bound up or involved in the particular limitations of Name and Form which constitute your personality at its present stage of evolution. Hence we are careful to speak of “unfoldment” rather than of “attainment.”

As you pass through these seven stages, you will neither gain anything, nor will anything be added to your present equipment. Powers already present in the depths of your being will be expressed. Hidden potencies will become manifest abilities. Vague impressions will take form as definite mental images. What is in you will come out. At this very moment you are fully equipped. You have the seed-forms for all that you need in order perfectly to express the special tendencies of the Life-power which are concentrated in your personality. You don’t have to *get* anything. You have to discover what you already possess. Then, when you have found your treasure, you have to practice until you can use it with skill and wisdom.

In Tarot, the seven stages of spiritual unfoldment are represented by the seven vertical lines of the Tarot tableau, given in *Tarot Fundamentals*. We reproduce it here, for your convenience, omitting the Zero Key, because it does not belong in the sequence from 1 to 21.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21

The Keys in the upper row symbolize seven dominant mental states or principles. Those in the second horizontal row typify intermediary activities or agencies. Those in the bottom row stand for conditions or phenomena resulting from the expression of the principles of the upper row through the agencies of the second row.

Be sure to lay out this tableau. It will help you a great deal in your endeavors to arrive at a better expression of the perfect understanding which guides you moment by moment throughout your life. Some hints of the meaning of this tableau have been given in *Tarot Fundamentals*, and there should be something about it in your occult diary. You may have observed that there is a principle of mathematical symmetry expressed by this arrangement. You may have noticed that Key 11 is the pivot, so to say, of the whole layout. If you go on with this observation, you will see numerical and symbolic correspondences which no superficial reader of our lessons will ever discover. You will be doing just what the Magician does in Key 1. You concentrate the Life-force, through an act of attention, upon your working-tools. You make yourself a channel through which the Limitless Light may flow into the field of subconsciousness, there to formulate itself into feelings and ideas which will rise presently into the plane of self-conscious awareness.

The Life-power in you knows all about Tarot. It knows who painted the first Keys. It knows who the persons were who formed themselves, long ago, into a committee to prepare for the Inner School this extraordinary record of spiritual experience. It knows just what every symbol means. It knows exactly what has brought about the various modifications of design which have resulted in the production of the Keys you own. It knows everything that anybody knows concerning the meaning of Hebrew letters, numbers, and all else connected with Tarot. Comply with the mental law whereby the Life-power communicates this knowledge to its personal centers of expression, and you will bring into your field of self-conscious knowledge whatever part of the Life-power's perfect understanding of Tarot you may

need in order to 'ripen' properly. When you make this tableau of the major trumps, and give attention to it, assuming deliberately the mental attitude symbolized by the Magician, you are obeying the mental law just mentioned. *Don't forget to have your occult diary at hand, so that you can make notes.*

In this lesson you will study the first stage of unfoldment, symbolized by Group A: Keys 1, 8, 15. In this group the conditions and phenomena are represented by Key 15, the Devil. The agency or law which is at once the immediate cause of these conditions, and the means employed in order to pass from this stage to the next, is shown in Key 8, Strength. The dominant principle at this stage of unfoldment is typified by Key 1, the Magician. The Magician represents the primary cause of the conditions shown in the 15th Key. He is also the principle that must be applied in order to escape from the bondage of this first stage.

Place these three cards before you. Put the Magician at the top, Strength in the middle, and the Devil at the bottom. Read again the lessons in *Tarot Fundamentals* dealing with these three Keys. This will prepare you to receive from the Life-power a special message about the first stage of unfoldment, a message which will supplement and complete the more general considerations you will find in this lesson. Expect to receive this message. Prepare for it. Have pencil and paper at hand, ready to set it down as it comes.

Bear in mind the fact that the conditions and phenomena of the first stage of unfoldment, depicted by the symbolism of Key 15, are consequences of the principle typified by Key 1, operating through the law represented by Key 8. The ignorance, the fear, the bondage and inversion represented by the Devil are not contrary to cosmic law. They are phases of the way the Life-power works, inevitable consequences of its descent into the plane of Name and form. They are phases of that 'death' which is attributed by Qabalists to the letter Beth, corresponding to the Magician. St. Paul, you will remember, identified death with a state of consciousness when he wrote, 'To be carnally minded is death,' and this state of being carnally minded is precisely what the Devil symbolizes.

It is a state of imperfect expression of self-consciousness, the principle represented by the Magician. Self-consciousness finds its primary, but not its complete, expression in the life of the physical senses. It is the consciousness which classifies and arranges the materials of sense-experience. It is the consciousness which reasons inductively, the consciousness which 'builds a house' of theory or generalization from the observation of many particulars. When the observation of particulars is hasty, superficial, or otherwise faulty, and generalizations are made from insufficient evidence, the result is invariably some limitation of the powers of man.

For no sooner are the generalizations accepted at the self-conscious level as being true, than they are accepted without any reservation whatever by subconsciousness. Subconsciousness, as you know, is constantly and *uncritically* amenable to suggestion and our personal objective interpretations of experience are among the most potent of all forms of suggestion.

You have learned also that subconsciousness is at all times the mistress of all the functions of the bodies of man. It determines the structure of our finer vehicles as well as that of our physical bodies. The patterns it works by are generalizations of the self-conscious mind, the self-conscious mind's interpretations of its sense-experience. Thus, when the patterns are wrong, the operation of the law symbolized by Key 8 produces the condition typified by Key 15. Our bondage is due to the fact that the collective consciousness of the trillions of cells in our bodies is tinged with errors whose source must be sought in imperfect observation and inaccurate interpretation of sense-experience.

This imperfect observation and inaccurate interpretation are not ours alone. Much of the error stored in subconsciousness is the result of accumulated race-memories. These, combined with our own personal misinterpretations, are the chains that bind us. The essence of that bondage, which has innumerable variations, is just that carnal mindedness of which St. Paul speaks.

It is the attribution of supremacy to the 'flesh,' the supposition that physical conditions are the determining things in human experience. One may have very high ideals, and lead a life of chaste austerity, and yet be

‘carnally minded.’ For the ‘world,’ the ‘flesh,’ and the ‘devil’ are but different names for these appearances of Name and Form where we now find ourselves. To attribute to these appearances any causal power whatever is to be carnally minded, is to be a real devil-worshipper, even though one go to church seven days a week, and recite the Creed morning, noon and night.

The cure for this disease is a better application of the very thing that causes it. It is the application of the ‘life’ aspect of the phase of consciousness corresponding to the letter Beth. Superficial observation and hasty generalization lead to the errors which are the causes of bondage. Profound observation and accurate inductive reasoning lead to correct generalizations, which work through the law symbolized by Key 8 to effect our liberation.

Here we are helped by race-memory, where we were hindered before. For the race-memory includes a record of all correct interpretations of sense-experience, as well as a record of all the false interpretations. It is like a library full of books, some written by fools and some by sages. If we have a mental affinity for the fools, we shall be made more foolish by what they have written. If we begin to vibrate mentally to the keynote of the sages, we shall increase our wisdom by their books. Once we start on the right course, the body cells that hold this record of past wise interpretation of experience are awakened into activity, and we begin to find our minds picking up these long-forgotten bits of wisdom.

This is what all the wise books of the world are driving at when they recommend concentration as the first step to liberation. The Magician symbolizes perfect concentration. He represents the power expressed by him who is able to make his mind “one-pointed.” Nature conceals nothing from the person who has learned to watch.

The wise invariably recommend the reading of sacred books as a preparation for unfolding the latent powers of Spirit. What we wish you to observe in this connection is that such reading is an exercise of the powers of self-consciousness. These books are part of the memory of Nature. They are a physical, materialized expression of that memory, to be sure, but they are just as much a part of it as the Akashic Records we hear so much about. Books of this kind contain generalizations from experience that we all must

learn. The sum total of their teaching is the doctrine that the Life-power is a limitless Unity which uses personal centers as vehicles for its self-expression. This doctrine is implied in the symbolism of the Magician. From the time you are able to accept that doctrine, from that time it begins to act as a suggestion to subconsciousness. It will liberate you eventually from every form of bondage.

Mere acceptance of the doctrine, however, is not enough. You have to practice taking the mental attitude implied by it. You must mentally identify yourself with the Magician. Every day you must take time to remember who and what you really are.

The first thing in the morning, at noon, at six in the evening, and just before you retire, say *The Pattern on the Trestleboard*. Put your whole consciousness into every word. Do not say it carelessly, like a parrot. Observe faithfully the times mentioned, and remember that at noon and six o'clock you are joining all your Fellow Builders in generating a thought-current which formulates truth concerning man's real place in the cosmic order. This thought-current will help and heal many a person you have never seen.

These statements help to dispel the false notion of separateness, the false idea that the life of man is determined by external conditions. They restore the Creator to His throne in the heart of man, and overcome the illusion that humanity is the bond-slave of a blind necessity whose roots are in the animal nature.

The mistake which enslaves us consists in getting cause and effect inverted in our consciousness. Causes are never external. Effects are never internal. Nothing that is outside can change your inner life no matter how much you may seem to be affected by what happens, by what people say and do, by stellar influence, or by anything else in your environment. All these things modify your vehicles, your physical and etheric bodies; but those bodies are just as much part of your environment as houses and trees, or tables and chairs.

So long, however, as you impute to these externals a power they do not really possess, your subconsciousness will accept the suggestion and it will exercise its control over your vital functions so as to make your personality

play the part of a bond-slave to circumstance. An extreme instance of this is what happens in the ordinary hypnotic demonstration. The hypnotist tells his subject, 'You are a dog,' and the subject tries his best to act like a dog.

Reverse the suggestion and you reverse the consequences. Watch your mental processes and you will see that your personal expression of the universal self-consciousness is at all times absolutely the controlling principle. Subconsciousness cannot help carrying out the instructions formulated by self-consciousness. See yourself as the Magician. Realize that your self-consciousness is the architect of your house of life. Practice thinking of yourself as a center of expression for the Primal Will-to-good, to which all things and conditions are subject. Remind yourself again and again that your personality is an instrument of that limitless Life-power, which works through you to manifest a particular demonstration of its ability to produce beautiful results.

Practice, we say, and keep on practicing. You have race-memories to overcome. You have your own past errors to rectify. Yet all these will yield to persistent practice, to the constant dropping, day by day, of ideas formulated at the self-conscious level into the fertile soil of subconsciousness. An error is always a partial truth. You don't have to get rid of all your errors. What you have to do is to take the truth that is in them, and complete your realization of it. This is the true inner meaning of the doctrine that you are to overcome evil with good.

In this lesson we can give you only a general outline of the procedure. It will point out the way your mind must follow in order to arrive at that special understanding of the first stage of your spiritual unfoldment which the Life-power is now ready to impart to you. Complete the work by looking at the Tarot Keys as you have been taught in this lesson. While you look, listen for the instruction of the Inner Voice. Watch and listen! This is the beginning of the Way to Freedom.