

Bondage

As you read this chapter, banish all theological considerations. By “Spirit”, we mean the Life-Power. A glance at your dictionary will show you that “spirit” is derived from the Latin “Spiritus”, whose root-meaning is “breath”. Closely akin to the Latin noun are the Greek “Pneuma”, the Hebrew “Ruach” and the Sanskrit “Prana”. Each of these nouns signifies both “breath” and “life”. Each has been used by philosophers to designate the vital principle of plants, animals, and men; and philosophers have always attributed a mental quality to this principle.

The Hebrew term is self-defined by the Qabalistic meanings of its letters. To this I have called your attention in an earlier lesson of this series. Here are some additional details. “Ruach” is a word of three letters, which we interpret thus:

R: Resh, the “head”. The location of the brain, which transforms energy derived from light, water, air and food into the various mental states. Thus “head” is a symbol for thought, and the letter R which begins, “Ruach” is a plain indication that by this term the Hebrew sages meant a power in which Consciousness is the primary and controlling element.

To Resh, Qabalists attribute “Fruitfulness and Sterility”. “Fruitfulness” signifies the projection of the Life Power into Name and Form, the involution of Spirit, the concrete manifestation of the Infinite and Eternal Energy in finite and temporal things and creatures. “Sterility” means the withdrawal of the Life Power from the concrete and the evolution of Spirit, its return from the world of Name and Form back to the Nameless and Formless Unity we call Limitless Light. Resh is therefore a sign for two movements of the Life Power: (1) descent or Out-going, whereby the Limitless Light apparently divides its unity into many-ness; (2) ascent, or in-going, which ends the appearance of many-ness. These opposite and complementary activities of the Life-Power are spoken of in Hindu philosophy as “Out-Breathing”, the cause of existence, and “In-Breathing”, the cause of the return from existence to subsistence. The Eastern sages declare that the Out-Breathing and the In-Breathing are primarily

expressions of universal Consciousness. In the Qabalah, the same thing is implied by the attribution of “Fruitfulness and Sterility” to a letter whose name means “head”.

Vau: the “nail”. The letter name is VV, having a numerical value of 12, a number which is used again and again to symbolize agency, means, or instrumentality. The 12 tribes of Israel were the instruments of the work of Moses. Through 12 apostles Jesus transmitted his doctrine to the world. In astrology, 12 signs differentiate the vibrations of the celestial light-centers. In “Revelation” we read of a city called the “bride” (a technical Qabalistic term applied to Mulkuth, the Kingdom), which is not only a perfect cube, so that it is bounded by 12 lines, but which has also 12 foundations and 12 gates, associated in the text with the 12 apostles and the 12 tribes. This Bride whose number is 12 is plainly a symbol of the purified subjective consciousness, or Prakriti, which is the means or agency through which the Life-Power realizes and perfects its work.

Qabalists attribute “Hearing” to Vau. This links up with Hindu philosophy, because hearing is the sensation produced by sound-vibration, and sound-vibration is what Hindus call “Akasha”, the primal substance of which all things are made. It is the same as the Quintessence of the alchemists. Akasha is described as “the mixing bowl” of the elements, or as an ocean of substance in which the other elements are like waves. In the manifestation of the Tattvas, between the projection of the Life-Power as Vayu or Air and its expression as Tejas or Fire, the Akasha intervenes, and so between Fire and Water, and between Water and Earth. Thus the Akasha is the connecting link between all modes of the Life-Power’s self-expression, and the “nail” (Vau is therefore its true symbol).

Sound vibration is the agency whereby all things are integrated and disintegrated. By it the Life-Power involves itself in the apparent fruitfulness of the Many, and by it the same primal Energy evolves, or returns, to the apparent sterility of the ineffable One.

Ch: the “fence”. The noun “fence” signifies circumscription and limitation. It also implies the setting-apart of a field for the purpose of cultivation. In the Tarot the letter-name, Ch I Th, is represented by the Chariot, the Hermit and the World. The symbolism of the Chariot tells us that the Life-Power manifests Itself through a vehicle, called Matter, which is not a

thing, but is merely a generalization of the human mind, a term invented to enable us to speak of the sum-total of our experience of name and form, each separate experience in that sum-total being a modification of what the Hindus call Prakriti, which we have previously identified with the universal subjective mode of consciousness. The Hermit reminds us that the descent of the Limitless Light into Name and Form in no way binds the One Source of all existence, which remains ever alone and free, as we learn from the Bhagavad-Gita, where Krishna says: ‘I will establish the universe with a part of myself, and remain separate.’ The final card of the series of major trumps develops in symbols the logical consequence of the doctrine that the Life-Power works through a perfectly responsive vehicle, by which it is in no way bound. The Life Power cannot fail, and that it may succeed, the outcome of its descent into the appearances of Name and Form must be a gradual perfecting of those very appearances until they become what has been called “the unspotted mirror of the glory of the Limitless Light.”

By “spiritual unfoldment” therefore, I mean the release of latent potencies of this Ruach. These are now bound up, or involved, in the particular limitations of Name and Form which constitute your personality at its present state of evolution. Hence I have been 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 manifested abilities. Vague impressions will take form as definite Mental images. This will come about, not through acquisition, but through expression. At this very moment, you are fully equipped. You have the seed-forms of 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 have. Then, when you have found your treasure, you have to practice until you can use it with skill and wisdom.

In the Tarot, the seven stages of unfoldment are symbolized by seven groups of major trumps. Each consisting of three cards, thus:

Tableau of the Tarot

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 cards in the upper row symbolize seven dominant mental states or principles. Those in the second row typify intermediary activities or agencies. Those in the bottom row represent 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 of the major trumps. 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 through all your lives. When you lay out the cards, and take time to look at them carefully, you will begin to notice that they are arranged symmetrically. You will see numerical and symbolic correspondences that no superficial student will ever discover. You will be doing just what the Magician does in the first Key. You concentrate objective attention on your work-tools. You make yourself a channel through which the Limitless Light may flow into your subjective field, there to formulate itself into feelings and ideas which will presently rise into the plane of objective perception.

The Life-Power in you knows all about the Tarot. It knows why the first pack of these cards was made. It knows just what every symbol means. It knows exactly what has influenced the various modifications of the older symbols which have resulted in the production of the pack you own. It knows everything Mr. Waite, or anybody else knows about the Tarot. Comply with the mental law whereby the Life-Power communicates its knowledge to its personal centers, and you may express whatever part of its understanding of the Tarot you may happen to need in order to ripen properly. When you take this tableau of the major trumps, and fix your attention upon it, assuming deliberately the mental attitude symbolized by the magician, you are obeying the mental law I just mentioned. DON'T FORGET TO HAVE PENCIL AND PAPER HANDY, SO THAT YOU CAN TAKE NOTES.

In this lesson we shall study the first stage of unfoldment, symbolized by Group A. Here the conditions and phenomena are represented by the 15th Key, the Devil. The agency or law which is at once the immediate cause of those conditions, and the means employed in order to pass from this state to the next, is shown in the picture of Strength, the 8th Key. The dominant principle at this stage of unfoldment is the Magician, who represents the primary cause of the conditions shown in the 15th Key, and the principle that must be applied in order to escape from the bondage of the first stage.

Place the three cards in Group A before you on a table. Put the Magician at the top, Strength in the middle, and the Devil at the bottom. Read again the Qabalistic interpretations of Beth, Teth and Ayin. Read also the explanations of the symbolism of 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 personal message. Prepare for it, and have pencil and paper at hand so that you can record it.

Bear in mind the fact that the conditions and phenomena of the first stage of unfoldment, depicted by the symbolism of the 15th Key, are consequences of the principle typified by the Magician, operating through the law represented by Strength. The ignorance, the fear, the bondage and inversion of the 15th trump are not contrary to cosmic law. They are phases of the way the Life-Power works, inevitable regrettable consequences of its descent into this plane of Name and Form. They are phases of the "Death" which is attributed by Qabalists to the double letter Beth (Magician). St Paul 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 represents.

It is a state of imperfect expression of objective consciousness, the principle represented by the Magician. Objective consciousness finds expression in the life of the senses. It is the consciousness that classifies and arranges sense-experience. It is the consciousness that reasons in due time, the consciousness that "builds a house" of theory or generalization, from the observation of many particulars. When the observation of particulars is 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 objective consciousness as being true, than they are received without any reservation whatsoever by the subjective mind. The latter is constantly and uncritically amenable to suggestion, and our objective interpretations of experience are the most potent of all suggestions.

The subjective mind is at all times the mistress of all the functions of the bodies of man. It determines the structure of the finer vehicles, as well as that of the physical body. The patterns it works by are the generalizations of the objective mind, the objective mind's interpretations of sense-experience. Thus, when the patterns are wrong, the operation of the law symbolized by Strength produces the condition typified by the Devil. Our bondage is due to the fact that the collective consciousness of the millions 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 is not ours alone. Much of it 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 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 any causal power whatever to these appearances 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 "Truth about the Self" 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 induction result in false generalizations that are the cause of bondage. Profound observation leads to accurate generalizations that become the suggestions that work through the law symbolized by Strength to effect our liberation.

Here again we are helped by race-memory. For this includes a record of all correct interpretations of sense-experience as well as the record of the false interpretations; and once we start on the right course, the cells embodying these records of truth will be stimulated to increased activity.

This is what all the wise books in 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 man who has learned how to watch.

The wise invariably recommend the reading of sacred books as a preparation for unfolding the latent powers of Spirit. What I wish you to observe in this connection is that such reading is an exercise of the Objective mind. These books are part of the memory of nature, a physical, materialized expression of that memory, to be sure, but just as much a part of it as the “Akashic records” we hear so much about. These books contain the generalizations from experience that we all need to 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 self-expression. This is the doctrine implied in the symbolism of the Magician, and from the time you are able to accept that doctrine, from that time it begins to act as a suggestion to the subjective mind. Eventually it will liberate you from every form of bondage.

Mere acceptance of the doctrine, however is not enough. You have to practice holding the mental attitude it implies. 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, you need to say the ten affirmations that we use. Say them with your whole consciousness, not with the lips only. Observe faithfully the times just mentioned, and remember that at noon and at six o'clock you are joining with the other aspirants in generating a thought-current which formulates the truth about man's real place in the cosmic order — a thought-current which will help and heal many a person whom you have never seen.

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

The mistake that 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 influences, 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 subjective mind will accept the suggestion, and it will exercise its control over all your vital functions to make “your” personality play the part of a “bond-slave of circumstance.’ An extreme instance of this is what happens in the ordinary hypnotic demonstration. The hypnotist tells the subject, ‘You are a dog,’ and he tries his best to act like a dog.

Reverse the suggestion and you reverse its consequences. Watch your mental processes and you will see that your personal expression of the universal, objective mode of consciousness is at all times absolutely the controlling principle. The subjective mind cannot help carrying out the instructions formulated by the objective. See yourself as the Magician. Realize that your objective mind 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 the instrument of that Limitless Life-Power, which works through you to manifest a particular demonstration of its power to produce beautiful results.

Practice, I 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 by objective consciousness into the fertile soil of the objective mind. An error is always a half-truth. You don’t have to get rid of 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 teaching that you are to overcome evil with good.

In this lesson I can only give you hints, to point out the way your mind must follow to arrive at the special understanding of the first stage of spiritual unfoldment which the Life-Power is now ready to impart to you. Complete the work by looking at the Tarot Keys, as explained earlier in this lesson, and listening for the instruction of the Inner Voice. Watch and listen!

This is the beginning of the Way to Freedom.

This is Truth about the Self

0. All the Power that ever was or will be is here now.
1. I am a center of expression for the Primal Will-to-Good which eternally creates and sustains the Universe.
2. Through me its unfailing Wisdom takes form in thought and word.
3. Filled with Understanding of its perfect law, I am guided moment by moment, along the path of liberation.
4. From the exhaustless riches of its Limitless Substance, I draw all things needful, both spiritual and material.
5. I recognize the manifestation of undeviating Justice in all the circumstances of my life.
6. In all things great and small, I see the Beauty of the Divine expression.
7. Living from that Will, supported by its unfailing Wisdom and Understanding, mine is the Victorious Life.
8. I look forward with confidence to the perfect realization of the Eternal Splendor of the Limitless Light.
9. In thought and word and deed I rest my life from day to day upon the sure Foundation of Eternal Being.
10. The Kingdom of Spirit is embodied in my flesh.