

## Awakening

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We now come to the second stage of spiritual unfoldment, which is the awakening from the dream of sense – the nightmare of Bondage. The first stage, as was brought out in the last lesson, is the realization of bondage, and the first intimation that it is, after all, but a dream, an illusion.

Key 16 is, obviously, a picture of destruction. But it is important to notice that the source of the destructive power is the sun, and that the power comes forth as a flash of lightning. This is obvious symbolism of the flash of super-consciousness that constitutes the first awakening. It is the first moment of clear vision, after which no person is ever the same again. It is like the hatching of a chick from an egg. Once the shell is broken, the chick can never return to the egg. It has definitely entered upon a new phase of existence, and a new and fuller life is opened before it. So is it with man. At that moment of illumination he receives an initiation, and then he belongs to a new order of things.

The Book of Tokens, in the meditation on the letter Peh (pronounced “pay”) which is assigned to Key 16, says; “Verily destruction is the Foundation of existence, and the tearing-down thou seest is but the assembling of material for a greater structure.” A little observation will convince you that destruction is the foundation of existence. Our entire lives are spent in creating, and then in destroying that which we have created. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, the automobiles we ride in, all are in a process of destruction from the very first moment we put them into use. In the very act of destruction itself lies all of the utility that can be extracted from them.

In the sense of spiritual unfoldment, awakening is distinctly a destructive process. All of the customary wrong thinking and wrong acting must go. The false sense of personal will, of self-action, must be destroyed. This is not a comfortable process. When a man is forced to recognize that his most cherished beliefs are false, the consequent readjustment is not easy. But this destruction is essentially a gathering of materials for a far grander structure.

The first chapter of the Gospel of St. John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by It; and without It was not anything made that was made. In It was life, and the life was the light of men.” This passage refers to the power which we have studied before in these lessons, and which we have learned was not only the force utilized in reproduction, integration, creation, but also the force that manifests as the opposites of those functions. Hence the Book of Tokens, in the meditation on Peh, (which means literally “the mouth as an organ of speech”) states: “I am the Mouth, whence issueth the Breath of Life; I am the all-devouring one, where unto all things return.”

It is this power that is active in the disintegration of the old forms of personal consciousness, the rending of the veil that hides the truth from mortal eyes. The teaching that this breaking down of form is fundamental in the process of the Life Power’s self-manifestation is very important. The practical occultist has to learn that he cannot hope to reach any goal he may have set for himself without first breaking up the conditions in which he finds himself when he formulates his desire. In occultism, as in everything else, we cannot have our cake and eat it too. Before we can find release from the limitations that bind us, we must learn how to break them up.

The time to begin this process of breaking up the old limiting forms is NOW, not some time in the future. You have already made a good start. You are aware of your limitations. You are making an effort to transcend them, as is witnessed by the fact that you have made the effort to follow this instruction thus far. As you proceed in it, other practical methods of combating these limitations will be given you and things of splendor will unfold within you. Your first step is to apply the principles which Tarot represents in your daily life to build the Keys into the very structure of your being.

Right discrimination is the first step. The application of the principle represented by Key 16 to the circumstances of your daily life requires concentration. Superficial observation will not suffice. You must give attention to the meaning of your thoughts, desires, and actions. You must apply the principle of limitation to overcome limitation. This is shown by the number of this Key, 16.

The man who has learned to concentrate rarely places himself in embarrassing positions through rash and inconsidered action. He usually thinks before he acts, and then acts wisely. The planet Mars is represented by Key 16 and Mars is the planet of war and rash action in exoteric astrology. But it is also the planet of the driving force behind all successful activity. Thus we see that the way the Mars force manifests in us depends entirely upon whether we control it and make use of its driving power, or whether we allow it to control us, thus inducing foolish and rash activity. This power is desire-force.

Control of desire is not repression of desire. No man without powerful desires and emotions can ever attain the higher phases of consciousness. Furthermore the Mars force can never be successfully repressed, for it will always burst loose, and when it does it is terrifically destructive. Books on psychoanalysis and abnormal psychology are full of horrible examples of the perversions and human wrecks caused by desire repression. The channels of expression of desire are, however, perfectly controllable. The force that makes a man desire to steal is the same as that which makes him desire to endow a hospital. Key 1, The Magician, contains the secret of proper control of the Mars force. Formulate your desires, using intelligent discrimination, and then bring them into manifestation by concentration. Make your mental images of the desired results sharp and clear, so that sub-consciousness receives definite suggestions with which to work. The activity of the dynamic Mars force will make your dreams come true.

Some very old versions of the 16th Key are named "The House of God." Others are called "The Fire of Heaven." Still others bear the title "The Lightning-Struck Tower," of which that on our present version is a short form.

There is a tradition that it refers to the fall of the Tower of Babel, at which human speech is said to have become confusion of tongues. Thus it is related to speech and to the letter Peh. The old bible-story indicates that it is a mistaken use of language to try to reach heaven with a structure of words. The correct use of language is to control the forces of nature by making words the tools of organized thought. When we try to use words to define the super-sensuous states which are beyond words, confusion is the inevitable result.

The lightning flash comes from a solar disc, to show that the active force at work in the picture is, in spite of the seeming destruction wrought by it, a phase of the working of the one Life Power.

The form of the lightning flash is noteworthy. It is so drawn that it represents the complete expression of the ten aspects of the Life Power that are mentioned in the Pattern on the Trestle Board. This symbolism is borrowed from a fairly well known diagram which represents the ten aspects of the Life Force in the form of a lightning flash.

In relation to the second stage of spiritual unfoldment, the lightning represents the sudden illumination or flash of inspiration that comes to us when we have faced our particular problem boldly, and have concentrated the full force of our attention upon it. Notice that the end of the flash is in the form an arrow head, which is a symbol of the letter Beth, attributed to Key 1.

The Tower itself is built of bricks, laid in twenty-two courses. Thus it represents a structure of human speech, or thought, of which the components are the letters of the alphabet, which are twenty-two Hebrew. The tower represents a structure of error and ignorance, which is at the same time a House of God. Nothing is more true than the fact that these physical personalities of ours, even though they are the Temples of God, are also structures that incorporate our false notions. The ugliness and inadequacy of our bodies, their want of grace and comeliness, are the results of false ideas and the outcome of our false words. The lighting flash of true perception always makes itself felt in the physical body, because there must be a period of physical readjustment before we can pass on to higher stages of development.

The crown which is knocked off from the tower is a symbol of will-power, because the Hebrew word Kether, meaning crown, is always anonymous with "Will." This is a false crown, however, and its nature is made plain by the four letters "M" with which is ornamented. In Hebrew M is Mem, and the numerical value of Mem multiplied by four is the same as that of the word Cain. Cain, the first murderer, is the personification of the false idea of will-power, the idea that every person has a will of his own, separate from the will-power of other persons, and separate, also from the Cosmic Will.

Right knowledge begins with a flash of perception which makes us realize that no detail of our personal experience can be separated from the total expression of the Life Power's activity. However brief this realization may be, it overthrows the notion of separate personal will, and also disrupts our mental structures based upon the thought that we are living life in perpetual antagonism to the universe and to the lives of our neighbors. This is the error that is behind every murder, and this is the error which is overthrown by even the briefest perception of the basic unity of all that exists.

The falling figures represent the two modes of personal consciousness to which we give the names of conscious and subconscious minds. The flash of inspiration represented by this key upsets all of our former notions of personal consciousness, and reverses our old ways of thinking. In this picture the figures are clothed, to indicate that their true natures are concealed.

Twenty-two Yods are shown, suspended in the Air. Ten are on one side of the tower, so disposed that they form the Cabalistic diagram of the Tree of Life. These on the other side are also symmetrically arranged. These letters really stand for the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, because every letter is said to be some aspect of the letter Yod. Thus these letters represent the sum-total of cosmic forces, and they also represent the elements of consciousness which enter into the makeup of a human personality.

They are shown hanging, as it were, in space, in order to present symbolically the idea that none of these forces has a physical foundation. This idea is just the reverse of that suggested by the rocky, isolated peak upon which the tower is erected. The average person thinks of his life as having a physical basis, that it is sustained by food, air, water, and the various physical forces in his environment. Ageless Wisdom says just the opposite. It explicitly declares that the One Life Power is the basis of all manifestation whatsoever, physical or otherwise. It by no means denies the importance, much less the actual existence, of the physical plane. But it does declare that the physical world is the manifestation, or expression, of the powers of spiritual life. In other words it says that instead of life being supported by the conditions of the physical plane, these conditions are supported by life.

Thus, while it is undoubtedly true that certain definite physical conditions must obtain in order that certain functions of human personality may be exercised here on earth, it is not true that those conditions are the causes or the support of those functions. On the contrary, the cause is the Life Power itself, and it is the Life Power which manifests in the physical conditions in question. The latter are the effects, rather than the causes, of manifestation.

Devote yourself this week to a study of your desires. Most of us are beset with a veritable riot of miscellaneous desires, most of them unimportant, weak and temporal. The enlightened man is a man of comparatively few desires, but they are deep, powerful, and one-pointed. Such a man shoots straight for his mark, allowing nothing to turn him aside from his purpose. His thoughts dwell upon it, his activity is directed to its attainment.

Select your most important desires. Do not allow less important ones to interfere with them. Such small desires dissipate energy that should be utilized in important things. The reason most people never get anywhere is because of just such unconcentrated dissipation of desire-force. Better one thing well done than a dozen half-done or done badly.

This is an exceedingly difficult exercise. It may look easy on paper, but it might easily take a lifetime of effort before the desire-nature is brought under control. So don't make the mistake of slighting this lesson. Don't let it drop at the end of this week either. Practice it constantly. You are lost in occultism unless you can control your desires, because the time will come when you will have to prove such control. Remember that desire is symbolized by the lion. Unless you have learned to control him, he will eventually destroy you. So begin the practice today.