

The Tarot Keys for this lesson are the High Priestess, the Hermit, and the Tower. Begin your study by reviewing, in *Tarot Fundamentals*, the six lessons dealing with these three Keys. Give particular attention to the meanings of the letters Gimel, Yod and Peh.

When you have done this preparatory work, read this lesson to get a general idea of the second step in spiritual unfoldment. After this reading comes the most important part of your work. The Life-power has a special message for you, and you must not neglect this special instruction from the Teacher within. Because you cannot expect to do this in a day, you should make good use of your occult diary. Give yourself a little time each day for listening to the Inner Voice, and make note even the least impression you may receive.

Set apart a few minutes every day for this work. It makes little difference what time you select, so long as it is not too soon after a meal. The main thing is to choose a time you can keep daily, without being disturbed.

Take two or three good, deep breaths. Then formulate a question which concerns the stage of unfoldment you are studying. Expect to receive an answer. Sit quietly, and listen. You may seem actually to hear a voice. Or the answer may seem to rise in your mind simply as a thought. Possibly a symbolic vision may come. Whatever the form taken by the answer, after a few trials it will seldom occur that it does not come during this time of quiet listening.

Write it down. If you hear what seems to be an inner voice, record its message. If you see a vision, describe it as accurately as you can. If you find ideas coming to the surface of your consciousness, set these down. At first, perhaps, the response may seem to be more or less indefinite. Perhaps you may get only some slight stirring of your emotions. You will find that you have some sort of feeling about the question you have put. If so, describe that feeling as well as you can. Different temperaments react to this practice in various ways. The main point is to make your written record as accurate, and at the same time as concise, as possible.

Date every one of these records. Make note also of the place. If you are interested in astrology, this information will be very useful as a check on the way transits and progressions work in your life. Every student, whether he is interested in astrology or not, will find that there are valuable bits of knowledge to be gleaned from recalling the

circumstances attendant on receiving these special personal instructions from the Life–power.

All this may seem to involve a good deal of work. The description, however, is more formidable than the actual practice. It will take just a few minutes daily. Some days you may have no more than a sentence to write. At other times your report may fill several pages.

Be sure that the writing follows meditation, and that it is simply a record of the response that comes from within, after you have formulated a definite question. This is not automatic writing. You are not to sit passive, waiting for anything that may happen to you. You make yourself receptive to a particular kind of information.

You know that the omniscient Life–power knows all about the subject of your inquiry, and knows just how to answer your question. Your part is to provide suitable conditions for bringing that answer out into the field of your self–conscious awareness. This is all; but if you practice every day, you will find that it is more than enough, for you will soon begin to get a full measure of response, a measure heaped up and running over, whenever you employ this method for tapping the super–conscious supply of wisdom.

Two months from now, read over whatever comes to you within the next few days after you study this lesson. Then study the High Priestess, the Hermit and the Tower once more. You will discover things you do not see now, and you will be able to add to your notes. By that time you may feel that some parts of your first notes need modification or recasting. It is inevitable, as you ripen in consciousness, that you should find better and clearer ways to express the truth that is in you.

Thus, you see, there will never come a time when you cannot improve your work somewhere, nor a time when you will know all there is to know. Never will you be denied the joy of making fresh discoveries, the happiness of finding new beauties in this wisdom–teaching. The riper you become, the more you will know, and the better will you be able to express what you know.

Yet you should not begin your work with any tinge of feeling that these first steps are not important. Never permit yourself to think that the instruction you receive from the One Teacher now is not as good as that which is to come later. What you get now, just as it comes, is what is best for you at your present stage of growth. What comes later may seem better by comparison with your present expressions of the Inner Wisdom, but as Jesus said, “Ye cannot bear it now.”

The second stage of spiritual unfoldment has for its active principle the phase of universal consciousness represented by the High Priestess. This we have identified with what is variously labeled by modern psychology as “subconscious,” “subliminal,” or “subjective” mind. It has been called also “transliminal consciousness,” and there is much in favor of this term. “Transliminal” means “across the threshold,” and in

some respects this seems to be a more accurate description of the consciousness symbolized by the High Priestess. It is certainly more in accord with the Tarot symbolism. For one thing, it conveys no impression of inferiority, as do the terms “subconscious” and “subliminal.” This mode of consciousness may be identified with what Hindu philosophers call *Prakriti*, and those Wise Men of the East tell us that *Prakriti* and *Purusha* (the Witness, the Magician, self-consciousness) are co-equal and co-eternal.

Through transliminal consciousness, or subconsciousness, we can read the records of past expressions of the Life-power. Psychologists have found by experiment that subconsciousness seems to have perfect memory. Nothing that you ever experienced has been forgotten. Some experiments conducted in France by Colonel De Rochas have even succeeded in tapping subconscious memories of previous incarnations. Under hypnosis, recollection has been carried back to birth, and then, under the command to go back still farther, the subject has related the experiences of a person who lived several generations earlier, and these experiences have been verified by ancient records.

Objection has been made to such experiments on the ground that the result is tainted by the operator’s suggestion, and that consequently there is no proof that the subject recalls his own former existence. In some instances, however, the investigators have found ancient archives, in old churches and town halls, which show that at such and such a date a person such as the subject mentions actually lived, and that at the same time events occurred such as the subject seems to remember. Even if one concedes that the subject may not be reading a record of his own personal experience, the fact remains that through the transliminal consciousness he taps some reservoir of memory — perhaps the Akashic Record, or memory of nature.

Certainly we all carry with us a perfect record of all that has happened to us in this incarnation. Furthermore, by tapping this one may learn whatever he needs to know concerning previous physical expressions of the particular tendencies of the Life-power that are unfolding through his personality.

We offer no argument in favor of the doctrine of reincarnation. We refuse to be drawn into argument about it. Objections to the doctrine come always from persons who have not had a certain type of experience. We are choosing words carefully when we say that we know that the particular complex of activities now projected through the personality of the writer of these lessons is a continuation of activities which at other times and places were projected into physical existence as other personalities. We say that we know, because we remember those other personalities, with as vivid a recollection of emotional and intellectual experience as that which enables us to identify this present “Paul Foster Case” with a certain youngster of ten, whose reputation

for devilry was emphasized by the fact that his father was a pillar in the Congregational Church. Paul Case remembers that he was that boy. In exactly the same way he remembers being a Rabbi who wrote a Qabalistic commentary on Genesis. One memory is just as valid, for him, as the other. Argument cannot overthrow this testimony of inner experience.

The scroll of the High Priestess symbolizes this cosmic memory, to which we all have access. Keep in mind the fact that the two aspects of the personal expression of the Life-power (*Purusha* and *Prakriti*, self-conscious and subconscious, Magician and High Priestess) are *co-existent*. In a sense we may say that the Life-power is both. It is the superconscious unity of which these two are the poles.

The two poles are present wherever the Life-power is present, and they are present in their entirety. What seem to us to be personal manifestations of self-consciousness or subconsciousness are really expressions of the Life-power in either its self-conscious or subconscious modes. Logical necessities of the process whereby the Life-power manifests itself result in the illusion of personal separateness; but by the exercise of reason we are able to discover that separateness is an illusion, and after reason has taken us this far, we can go on and make experiments which forever free us from the *delusions* arising from that illusion. We have to remind ourselves continually that we are not separate beings, until we have established a subconscious habit of recognizing our essential identity with the Life-power.

Careful observation of nature, through practicing the objective concentration symbolized by the Magician, enables us to discover the essential unity of Being behind the veil of manifold appearances. This discovery has then to be transferred from the field of self-conscious awareness to that of subconsciousness. We make the discovery by watching closely what happens in the plane of existence that we experience through sensation. From that plane we get the facts which are utilized in the process of inductive reasoning. At this point in our unfoldment, we do not experience the unity of Being as we shall know it when we become riper. We perceive it intellectually, as a premise or hypothesis, which we then turn over to subconsciousness, and this premise is the seed that the Magician plants in his garden.

In considering the first stage of unfoldment, we saw that subconsciousness is always amenable to suggestion, and that it controls all the vital functions. It is the mistress of the body-building process. It determines cell structure. Consequently, when subconsciousness is impressed with the idea of the unity of Being, every cell of the trillions in the body is modified by that impression. The suggestion accepted by subconsciousness tinges the consciousness of all the cells.

Thus, from the moment self-consciousness impresses subconsciousness with the premise of non-separateness, the mental state of all the

cells begins to be changed. Some cells do not adapt themselves easily to this new conception of personality. They die, and are eliminated from the body. Their places are taken by new cells, new "wine-skins" to hold the "wine" of the new idea.

Thus there is brought about a gradual change in the structure of the body, until a moment arrives when there is a sufficient number of new cells to make possible a flash of personal realization of the truth. Weeks and months, perhaps years, may have passed while these imperceptible changes in cell structure were being accomplished. The person in whose body these changes are occurring has no inkling of what is going on; but all at once there comes a flash of direct perception which seems to upset his whole house of life. This sudden, catastrophic glimpse of reality is pictured by Key 16.

Sometimes this experience is so vivid that it temporarily paralyzes one or more of the person's faculties. One may be struck dumb by it. Another, like St. Paul, may be blinded. Even when the physical effects are not so marked, there is a forcible tearing apart of the structure of personal consciousness, so that the person who is passing through this experience may wonder if he is not going mad.

Sudden as this experience is, it is nevertheless but the culmination of an orderly series of mental and physical changes, just as a thunderstorm is the culmination of a gradual accumulation of electric energy. It comes to nobody who is unprepared to stand the shock. It destroys forever the delusion of separateness, just as a lightning-flash gives a traveler a momentary, but clear, picture of the road he is on, and destroys whatever false notions he may have formed of it while stumbling along in the dark. The darkness may close in the very next moment, and as time passes, some details of the vision may grow dim, but the flash of realization cannot be forgotten, and the memory of it will spur the traveler, will give him courage to pursue his journey to its end.

Therefore is the path assigned to the letter Peh called the "Exciting Intelligence," and it joins Victory to Splendor on the Tree of Life, because this experience is at once a realization that the I AM, by reason of its own nature, is already the conqueror of all limitation, and it is also a flash of intuition which gives one a glimpse of the dazzling glory of the perfect expression of the Limitless Light.

For this flash of realization is a momentary sharing of the Life-power's perfect self-knowledge. It seems to contradict everything in previous experience, because all previous experience has been colored by the sense of separateness. The consciousness of the Life-power finds expression in the words, "I am the Lord, and there is none else."

Prior to the experience we are now considering, the human consciousness is, "I am a poor mortal surrounded by millions of other mortals who are potential enemies, and by natural conditions even more

inimical.” Suddenly to realize that all this is a lie, suddenly to see that one is immortal, suddenly to perceive that all other human beings and all conditions of personal existence are working together to bring about the perfect realization of a cosmic plan which, in essence, is the outworking of the inmost reality of one’s own being, this is a reversal of personal and race consciousness which temporarily overwhelms us.

This experience is not an acquisition, not something that comes to one from outside. Neither is it a miracle. Because you are a center of expression for the self-conscious aspect of the Life-power’s activity, there comes a time in the evolution of this consciousness through your personality when the premise of the unity of Being is formulated in your conscious mind. That premise then becomes the starting point of a series of subconscious operations that build into your body new cells that can give expression to the Life-power’s self-knowledge.

This flash of inspiration, therefore, is really a participation in the Life-power’s perfect recollection of itself. For a moment one remembers who and what he really is. Thus the lightning-flash of Key 16 may be understood to be a ray of light from the Hermit’s lantern. To us, when the experience comes, it seems that we have seen something new. The light seems to come from above, and from afar. In truth, the Light-bearer is close at hand, right here with us, now and always, “closer than hands or feet.”

So much has been said of the physiological changes that precede this realization that a careless reader of these pages might suppose that we are trying to persuade you that this sudden illumination is nothing more than a physical phenomenon. That would, of course, be a grave error. It has seemed best to make the process as clear as possible, so that it will be evident that it is an orderly manifestation of cosmic law, and not a miracle.

The physiological explanation of this stage of unfoldment may be carried much further, for the occult meanings of the letter Yod, corresponding to the Hermit, provide us with some important clues. Want of space, and certain other considerations that need not be discussed here, make it seem best to do no more than give some hints. Those who are ready will be able to follow these clues to their logical conclusions.

First of all, consider the astrological attribution of the letter Yod. Note the sign of the zodiac, and the part of the body ruled by it. Note also the planetary ruler of that sign. Then, remembering that this second stage of spiritual unfoldment is experienced through a change in cell structure effected by subconsciousness, ask yourself what these astrological correspondences mean in this connection. They point out a part of the body where an important change occurs, and indicate the specific influence that governs the change itself. When you have made this knowledge your own (never forgetting that it is already la-

tent in you), you will be able to make special applications of the law of suggestion which will accelerate the transformations of cell structure described in this lesson.

Perhaps you have already passed through this stage of unfoldment. If so, then the knowledge you have just been shown how to seek will be of use to you in enabling you to progress more rapidly through subsequent states.

Don't suppose we are being willfully mysterious. Here is an opportunity for you to find something out for yourself. When you do discover it, you'll understand some of the reasons for our reticence. When you think you have the correct answer to this little problem, write it in your occult diary. You will need these notes later on.

The principle behind this is that personal effort is the price that must be paid for the discovery of certain aspects of truth. It would be a violation of a cosmic law to tell you this instead of showing you how to find out for yourself. Strangely enough, you never really *know* it unless you do find it out just this way. Nobody can tell you so that you can really comprehend it. Really, you know it already. The thing for you to do now is to get it into conscious awareness, so that from now on you may apply it to hasten your unfoldment.