

# TAROT INTERPRETATION

## Lesson One

With this lesson, the first in the Tarot Interpretation series, you are entering upon a new semester in the curriculum of this Mystery School which is leading you along the Path of Return. You are now ready to receive more intensive training in the use of Tarot. Persevere in the practice of the techniques as given in this course, and you will experience the **spirit** of Tarot as an ever more potent aid towards living the truly spiritual life.

Literally, “SPIRIT” means **Life-Breath**. The Latin *spiritus* has the same meaning. So has the Greek *pneuma*, translated “spirit” in the English version of the New Testament. The same English term is what Sanskrit renders by *prana*. In translations of the Old Testament, “spirit” represents the noun רוּחַ, *ruach*.

Some meanings of *ruach* are explained in our course on Tarot Fundamentals. Let us review what we 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.

R, the first letter, means **head**. The head is the location of the brain which transforms radiant energy into various mental states. The force so transformed comes from the sun. This physical center of our solar system is associated in the Hebrew alphabet with Resh (ר or R), corresponding to Key 19, the Sun.

Radiant energy is a physical force but is also essentially **conscious**. The brain is an organ whereby this essential consciousness is released and put to work in the field of personality.

The sun in the sky is a dynamo or battery in which the universal Life-Breath is concentrated and from which that Life-Breath radiates into our solar system. The physical activities and properties of solar radiation are the outer vesture for something far more powerful. This something is consciousness. Consciousness is the dominant power in the universe, the chief authority, ruling all things. Consciousness is the **head** (Resh) of all creation. Thus in the word *ruach* (רוּחַ), the initial letter, ר, is a symbol for the Master Consciousness, the FATHER.

Vav (ו or V), the second letter of *ruach*, means “nail.” In Hebrew, the letter Vav is used for the conjunction “and,” so that ו is the Hebrew grammatical sign of conjunction. Again, Vav is said to be the alphabetical symbol for the sign Taurus which governs the ears, tongue, lower jaw, and throat of man.

Neck and throat join head to body. Hearing is a link between mind and mind. This union is established by words. Words are sounds formulated by movements of the tongue, the lower jaw, and vibration in the throat. Thus the letter Vav refers 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 waves. Akasha is the link between fire and water, between water and air, between air and earth. It is the connecting medium, uniting the various forms of cosmic activity. This means that sound-vibration connects all the appearances of the one energy and is the basic substance from which those appearances are built up.

Thus the letter ו in וָוֶחַ, *ruach*, represents sound, as the means for expressing consciousness. In this connection study Key 5 of Tarot. The letter Vav stands for the WORD, or LOGOS, the Builder of the universe, identified in the New Testament with the SON, who is also the Mediator.

In Qabalah the letter Vav stands for the sixth Sephirah, Tiphareth, Beauty. Tiphareth is named "Son," and is the seat for the special aspect of consciousness termed "Intelligence of Mediating Influence," which unites the Crown above to the Foundation and Kingdom below. Thus Tiphareth is the Son and the Mediator. Furthermore, Tiphareth is also named *Melek*, the King, which implies that this Sephirah is the "Anointed One," or Christos.

Cheth, ח, the third letter of וָוֶחַ *ruach*, means "fence" or "field." It signifies circumscription and limitation. It implies the setting apart of a chosen area for the purpose of cultivation.

To the letter Cheth the sign Cancer is attributed. It governs the chest and the mammary glands. The bones of the chest protect vital organs and the mammary glands give nourishment to babies. Thus Cancer is associated with the ideas of feeding and protection.

By its name, then, and by its attributions to Cancer, the letter Cheth suggests that the powers of man located within the protective fence of the chest are those which have to be cultivated, or developed in form and quality. Since Cancer is ruled by the Moon, a symbol of subconsciousness, the letter Cheth hints that the powers in question belong to the subconscious field of manifestation, as they actually do. Hence the letter Cheth, through its connection with organic functions below the neck, concerned chiefly with maintaining and preserving life, corresponds to the aspect of the Life-power which Qabalists call the BRIDE.

The word ruach, then, calls attention to the fact that the dominant powers for the expression of the potential forces of the universal radiance are located in the head of man. Next, it intimates that the coordinating and connective functions of this energy are made manifest in human personality through the ears and throat, which contain organs enabling man to make sound patterns, or words, whereby he may express states of consciousness emanating from the head.

The last letter of **ruach** designates functions in the trunk of the body. These compose the various activities of a field of operation wherein mental states originating in the head may be cultivated and improved, through action, which is shaped by thought (unuttered speech) and articulate words.

Since the letter Resh represents the sun, it corresponds to alchemical gold. Because Vav is the conjunction “and,” it may be so read. And since Cheth represents Cancer, ruled by the moon, it symbolizes also the alchemical Luna, or silver. Thus we may read ח ו ך either as “sun and moon,” or as “gold and silver.”

The gold of the alchemist, or his “sun,” is a current of energy in the human body. Yogis call it **Surya** (“sun”). It is a hot, electric current, represented in esoteric diagrams of the yogis by the color red.

The alchemical silver, or moon, corresponds to another current of **prana** named **Rayi**. This is the cool, magnetic, lunar current. Yogis represent it by white, just as European heraldry represents the moon and silver by the same color.

In Western alchemy we find the Red Work of the sun, and the White Work of the moon. They are operations having to do with the direction of the solar and lunar currents of the Life-Breath.

Read the preceding paragraphs carefully and digest their meaning. Then you will not think of Spirit as being a 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. Everything we know is an appearance of the One Spirit. It is the reality veiled by the various forms we see.

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 is therefore the occult speech of Spirit (Ch).

Spirit is what Hindus mean by **prana**. It is what the Bible means whenever it uses the word **ruach** in the Old Testament, or **pneuma** in the New; but the follies of theologians have buried this meaning in the rubbish of misinterpretation.

Spirit is no vague, supernatural power. It is a definite natural energy which appears in the world as the various objects we perceive by means of our senses. These words you are reading are Spirit. So is the paper on which they are printed 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 speak of “unfoldment” rather than of “attainment.”

As you pass through the seven stages of unfoldment, 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. **What is in you will come out.** Be sure you understand this at the outset.

At this very moment you are fully equipped. You have the seed-forms for all you need in order to express perfectly the special tendencies of the life-power 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 learn to use it wisely.

In Tarot, the seven stages of spiritual unfoldment are represented by seven vertical lines in the Tarot tableau given in Tarot Fundamentals. We reproduce it here, omitting the Fool, because Key 0 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 seven 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 in your endeavors to arrive at a better expression of the perfect understanding which guides you, moment by moment, along the Way of Liberation.

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 mathematical symmetry expressed by this arrangement. Key 11 is the pivot, so to say, of the whole layout.

Examine the tableau carefully, and you will discover numerical and symbolical correspondences which no superficial reader of these lessons will ever notice. You will be doing what the Magician does in Key 1. You will concentrate the Life-force, through an act

of attention, on your working tools. You will 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 then rise 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 the persons 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 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 portion 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 it attention, assuming deliberately the mental attitude of the Magician, you are obeying this law. Be sure to have your occult diary at hand so that you can make notes.

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

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 the three Keys. This will prepare you to receive from the Life-power a special message about the first stage of spiritual 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 in 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 the descent into the plane of Name and Form. They are aspects of that "death" which Qabalists attribute to the letter Beth. St. Paul identified death with a state of consciousness when he wrote, "To be carnally minded is death." This state of being carnally minded is precisely what the Devil symbolizes.

It is a state of imperfect expression of self-consciousness, the principle corresponding to 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 and generalization from the observation of many particulars. When the observation of particulars is hasty and superficial, generalizations are made from insufficient evidence. The result is always some limitation of the powers of man.

When the generalizations are accepted at the self-conscious level as being true, they are adopted without reservation by subconsciousness, and the latter works out their logical conclusions by deduction. Subconsciousness is always amenable to suggestion. It has no power of criticism. Hence our **personal interpretations of experience are potent suggestions**.

Subconsciousness, being mistress of all the functions of our bodies, 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 based on the latter's interpretations of sensation. When the patterns are wrong, the working of the law symbolized by Key 8 produces the conditions 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 personal misinterpretations, are the chains which bind us. The essence of this bondage, which has innumerable variations, is just the carnal-mindedness of which St. Paul speaks.

It is the attribution of supremacy to the “flesh,” the supposition that physical conditions determine human lives. One may have the highest ideals and live a life of chaste austerity, yet be “carnally minded.” For the “world,” the “flesh” and the “devil” are but different names for these appearances of Name and Form which surround us. To attribute to these appearances any causal power whatever is to be carnally minded, is to be a worshipper of the devil, even though one go to church seven days a week.

The cure for this disease is a better application of the very thing which causes it. It is the employment of the “life” aspect of the phase of consciousness attributed to the letter Beth. Superficial observation and hasty generalization lead to errors which are the cause of bondage. Profound observation and accurate inductive reasoning lead to correct generalization which works **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 records of all correct interpretations of sense experience as well as records of the false interpretations. It is like a library full of books, some written by fools and some by

sages. If we have 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 reading their books. Once we start on the right course, the body cells which hold this record of past wise interpretations of experience are awakened into activity, and we begin to find our minds picking up these long forgotten bits of wisdom.

This is why all wise books recommend concentration as the first step toward liberation. The Magician symbolizes perfect concentration. The Key does more than this. It actually helps you concentrate. It increases your power to make your mind one-pointed. Nature conceals nothing from him who has learned to watch. The veil hiding truth is our own ignorance.

As a preparation for unfolding the latent powers of Spirit, the wise recommend the reading of sacred books. Such reading is an exercise of the powers of self-consciousness. The books are part of the memory of Nature. They are a physical, materialized expression of that memory, but they are as much a part of it as are the Akashic Records.

Books of this kind contain generalizations from experience which have been accumulated during many millenniums of human history. This is why Dr. Link, in his RETURN TO RELIGION, says he was forced by the results of his study and practice of strictly scientific psychology to advise his clients to familiarize themselves with the teachings of the Bible.

The heart of the instruction to be found in sacred books is the doctrine that the Life-power is a limitless Unity which uses personal centers as vehicles for its self-expression. This doctrine is what is implied in the symbolism of the Magician. When you accept it, it begins to act as a suggestion to subconsciousness. Eventually it will liberate you from every form of bondage.

Mere acceptance, however, is not enough. You have to practice the mental attitude which is implied by it. You must 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 repeat it carelessly like a parrot.

Observe faithfully the times mentioned, and remember that at noon and at six o'clock you are joining all your Fellow Builders in generating a thought current which expresses truth concerning man's place in the cosmic order. By this you may help and heal many a person you have never seen.

These statements help to dispel the false notion of separateness. They help destroy 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 they overcome the illusion that humanity is the slave of a blind necessity rooted in the animal nature.

The mistake which enslaves us consists in getting cause and effect inverted in our consciousness. Causes are never external. Outer conditions do not change your inner life no matter how much you may seem to be affected by stellar influences, or by anything else in your environment. All these things modify your vehicles, your physical and etheric bodies; but these bodies are as much part of your environment as are houses and trees, or tables and chairs.

So long, however, as you impute to these externals a power they do not really possess, subconsciousness will accept the suggestion and will exercise its control over your vital functions in ways which will make your personality play the part of a slave to circumstance.

An extreme instance of this is what occurs in a hypnotic demonstration. The hypnotist tells the 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 present expression of the universal self-consciousness is at all times the controlling principle. Subconsciousness always obeys 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 being 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 for the Limitless Life-power which works through you to manifest a particular demonstration of its ability to produce beautiful results.

Practice, and keep on practicing. You have race-memories to overcome. You have 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, and then sent down into the field 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 which is in them and complete your realization of it. By so doing you will be acting in harmony with the true inner meaning of the doctrine that evil is to be overcome by good.

In this lesson we can give you only a general outline of the procedure. It will point the way your mind must follow in order to arrive at the special understanding of the first stage of your spiritual unfoldment.

This understanding the Life-power is now ready to give 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.



It is only the beginning, however, and while you are at this stage of development, you will most likely feel yourself to be very much in the dark. Do not let this discourage you. Every one of the wise, kindly souls who has gone this way before you has shared this initial uncertainty, even bewilderment. To them, as to you, the early stages of the Great Work have been fraught with problems and perplexities. Yet by precisely the kind of practice we have explained in this lesson, they have won through to liberation. You can, and will, do the same.