

**COMPANIONS OF THE STONE**  
**Correspondence Course in The Elements of**  
**Traditional Western Esotericism**

**Lesson 14**

In the last two lessons, we have explored some of the Western esoteric tradition's perspectives on the principal work that confronts the magician -- the parting of the Veil of the Sanctuary, the reorientation of consciousness to allow full access to the potentials of human awareness.

To have a goal is one thing; to have a functional method of achieving it can be another thing entirely. Traditional Western magic does offer a method, of course. Still, what is one to make of such a method? The pentacles and sigils, Names of God and words of power, spirits and specters and visionary experiences of the magical tradition may resemble many things -- advanced psychosis among them, some would say -- but they have very little visibly in common with the considerations we have been discussing. Does the reintegration of the self really require a knowledge of the names of archangels?

In one entirely valid sense, of course, the answer is no. It is wholly possible to pass through the Veil without the baroque apparatus of ceremonial magic and Qabalistic meditation. Other spiritual traditions, powerful and effective ones, use far simpler methods to achieve a comparable end.

From another perspective, though, this is the same as saying that it's possible to build a house with nothing but an axe. This is unquestionably true; at the same time, there are some fairly sharp limitations on the kind of house you can build with an axe, and the addition of a few other tools can both expand the range of available possibilities and simplify a great deal of the work. Add an entire carpenter's toolkit and both the possibilities and the process benefit even more -- and some of the tools in that toolkit are, in their own way, remarkably strange.

The toolkit of the Western esoteric tradition has a great many tools in it, ranging from simple to complex, from straightforward to bizarre, and (it must be admitted) from effective to largely useless. With every generation new ones have been added, old ones modified or reconditioned, and a few

thrown out -- although even these tend to get tossed back into the kit later on. Just as the tools in a carpenter's kit all derive their effectiveness from a few simple principles of physics, though, the tools in the magician's kit all make use of a small number of factors.

Most important of these are three aspects of human consciousness which we have discussed at some length already -- imagination, will, and memory. Each of the exercises of Western esotericism draws on at least one of these, and most rely on all three: imagination builds the forms; will energizes them; memory provides the context, and incorporates the effect of the practice into the structure of future acts of awareness.

These three aspects of the self also share a common place in the traditional symbolism of human consciousness: all are parts of the ruach which lie above the Veil of the Sanctuary, and all normally function only indirectly, through one of the lower aspects of the self.

This indirect and often unsteady functioning, though, points out a critical issue. Any human potential which has not been exercised or developed -- be it a muscular movement, a kind of thinking, an artistic talent, or anything else -- will tend to show itself in this way. In a sense, then, the Veil of the Sanctuary is simply the line between those faculties which most of us have developed and those which most of us have neglected. In this same sense, the practices of magic are the calisthenics or five-finger exercises of imagination, will, and memory, meant to develop these to their full potential strength.

Such an interpretation of magic may seem to offer little room for the powers and odd abilities normally associated with magical traditions. This is true, though, only if the possibilities of memory, imagination and will are measured by the yardstick of their usual development. It's worth remembering that an untrained human voice has little effect on matter, but a trained operatic singer can shatter glass from the far side of a room. Similarly unexpected effects show up as the potentials of the self are explored.

### **Yesod: Image and Interface**

The sphere of Yesod, called the Treasure House of Images, is the location of the intermediate realm that links the physical world and the inner realms. The images of Yesod can be vivid and seemingly objective -- here, the polarization of subject and object is nearly as complete as it is in Malkuth -- but they are not autonomous. They are vehicles for other energies, and

structured by other patterns. They are like emblems, or icons, in that they embody and express moods and ideas.

Any icon or emblem has a double quality: it is structured according to a set of conventions that allow it to represent ideas, and it arouses feelings that can serve as vehicles for more abstract energies. The Tarot trumps (and the pictures that are used in some decks for the minor arcana as well) are excellent examples of this, and by this point you have probably gained some direct experience with the way in which the Tarot emblems embody ideas and energies.

Attention to any image can provide access to these qualities, but those of the Yesod level, existing as they do as representations in consciousness without physical embodiments, are less polarized and thus less opaque. They serve as interfaces: that is, they are both instruments for detecting more inward, less concrete aspects of the cosmos, and also tools for affecting, or interacting with, them. To construct an inward image is to work with structure and with meaning; when it is done for a purpose, one builds intention into it. To attend to an inward image is to participate in its structure, and thus -- perhaps gradually, perhaps all at once -- enter to some extent into its life.

Thus it is that images are so often felt to have power, and why people often have an involuntary distaste for allowing their images to be "taken away" from them. Even aside from the question of photography, or earlier methods of making images, people are sensitive about their appearances, and matters of grooming and other care for one's appearance are considered important in every society and at every period in history (though the specifics vary rather widely). The power of the gaze is closely connected with the power of the image: being seen, for example, can be either a moment of vulnerability or a moment of triumphant self-assertion. To be invisible can be a kind of invulnerability -- or the ultimate in isolation and rejection.

Working with images is a great part of magic, though not the only part. The magician must learn to be sensitive to images, and able to enter into their lives and participate in the realms of being for which they serve as gates -- not involuntarily but at will. At the same time, the magician must learn the ability to turn toward or away from image-consciousness at will, and not be a passive drifter on the tides of what nineteenth century occultists and their followers called the astral light.

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### **Symbolism of Yesod**

As part of this lesson's work, you will need to learn a selection of the symbols traditionally assigned to the Ninth Sephirah. These are as follows:

The Divine Name: ShDI AL ChI (pronounced Shah-dye ell Chye, with the "ch" pronounced as in "Bach");

The Archangel: Gabriel, "Strength of God";

The Order of Angels: Kerubim, "Mighty Ones";

The Astrological Correspondence: Levanah, the Moon;

The Tarot Correspondence: the four Nines of the pack.

As before, these correspondences should be committed to memory, and the first four should also be written into the four circles of Yesod on your Tree of Life diagram. Once this is done, the rest of Yesod should be colored violet.

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### **Reading**

For this lesson, your reading from The Mystical Qabalah will be Chapter XXIV, "Yesod." This chapter covers the traditional symbolism of the Ninth Sephirah, and also brings up certain points concerning what these lessons have called the etheric level of existence.

As you read, compose a brief paragraph describing the main ideas covered in the chapter. Use your own words, or phrases and sentences taken from the text, as you wish. Write down the paragraph and include it with the test for this lesson.

In addition, please review Chapter XV, "Kether, the First Sephirah," and Chapter XX, "Tiphareth, the Sixth Sephirah." Just as in the last two lessons, your task will be to understand some part of the nature of one of the Pillars of the Tree of Life -- in this case, the Middle Pillar or Pillar of Mildness. Trace the connections between these chapters and that on Yesod, and through these try to see how these Sephiroth relate along the Tree's vertical axis.

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### **Exercises**

Self-Perception Exercise: Intuition

The exercises of the last two lessons will have given you some sense of the way that work with extended introspection can go. They will also have given you the chance to see what sort of

reactions you have to this aspect of magical practice -- and this in itself is a step in the direction of self-knowledge.

In this lesson, the same process and the same state of background awareness will be turned toward a more elusive quarry. To the Ninth Sephirah is attributed the faculty of intuition, that odd and hard-to-define mode of knowing which provides insight from "out of the blue." Hunches and inspirations, instincts and creative flashes all fall into this category of perceptions. In our present culture, this side of human awareness receives a little lip service but next to no attention; for this reason as well as others, many people have a certain amount of trouble telling intuitions apart from stray thoughts, unexplained feelings, or both. There is one touchstone for all intuitive perceptions, however -- although it may be a subtle one -- and that is the sense that the information coming through seems to come from outside the ordinary boundaries of the self.

Over the next two weeks, your task will be to watch for the presence of intuition in your life. The same kind of "background watching" practiced in earlier phases of this exercise will be your most useful tool here. In your magical record, note down not only how successful you are at maintaining the background awareness and actually noticing intuitive perceptions, but also what sort of intuitions you seem to get and how you respond to them.

Tarot:

#### Beginning Divination

The Tarot exercises in the last two lessons introduced some of the basic skills used in the Western esoteric tradition's approach to Tarot divination. The ability to balance the two aspects of that approach, the free play of imagery and the attentiveness to pattern, is something that will develop given time and regular practice.

The last five words of the above paragraph, as usual, are the most important. A student of the Tarot armed with nothing but the deck itself -- no books, no exercises, not even the little pamphlet of canned interpretations most decks contain -- can easily become a skilled diviner through the simple process of dealing out one or a few cards to represent a given situation, seeing how the situation turns out, and comparing the event with the reading. This sort of feedback process is critical to the development of any kind of skill in divination. It requires only a willingness to learn from mistakes...which, admittedly, is not always the most common of commodities.

During the next two weeks, therefore, the following simple divination exercise should be done each day. You'll notice that it makes use of neither of the processes introduced in the last two lessons; this is deliberate. Those will be brought into play later. For now, your task is to try your hand at what amounts to bare intuition. For the sake of clarity, you may wish to do this exercise either first thing in the morning or last thing before you go to bed.

1. Sit in a comfortable position with your Tarot deck in reach. Open with the usual gesture, and then take the deck out of its container, hold it in your hands, and clear your mind of thoughts.

2. When your mind is reasonably quiet, say inwardly, "What one thing do I most need to understand about the next twenty-four hours?" Then shuffle the deck at least three times, and draw out a single card.

3. This card is the answer to your question. Examine it, think about it, turn it over in your mind, seeking some sense of what the answer means. When you have some notion of this -- or when you decide you aren't going to find one -- write down the card and the meaning you've found, and close with the usual gesture.

4. Just before you do the same exercise the next day, review the card, your interpretation, and the events of the day. What connections, if any, can you find? Make a note of anything you learn in your magical record.

Some students find this an easy practice; others find it difficult and frustrating. Whichever reaction you experience, pay attention to it, and take some time to think about why it is that you've responded in this way.

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### Meditation

For this lesson's meditative work, you will be continuing with the system of meditation on symbols first introduced back in Lesson 4. For the next two weeks, therefore, the topics for your meditation will be the four Nines of the Tarot pack. As before, you'll need to come up with a single word describing the meaning of each card as you understand it. These words should be committed to memory, and will be part of the test for this lesson.

This meditation should be done each day during the two weeks you spend on this lesson. As always, a full description of your meditations should be entered in your magical record.

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### Ritual

The expanded Middle Pillar exercise, as given in Lesson 11, should be performed each day during the two weeks you spend on this lesson. During this period, work on making the imagery of the exercise as bright and intense as possible. If you have begun to become aware of something in the practice that you could describe as "energy," concentrate on that as well. What seems to strengthen or weaken this part of the experience of the practice?

To summarize, then, the work for this lesson is as follows:

First, to perform the meditation each day.

Second, to perform the Middle Pillar exercise each day.

Third, to perform the daily review each day on going to bed.

Fourth, to carry out the self-perception exercise as given above.

Fifth, to do the Tarot divination exercise each day.

Sixth, to keep a record of your work, and to prepare and send in the test for this lesson.

## Test

The following questions are intended to help us track your progress through the work of this lesson. As before, your responses should be typed or written legibly on 8 1/2" x 11" sheets of plain white paper, with your name and address written in the upper right corner of the first sheet.

A. Copy out an account of one of this lesson's meditations from your magical record.

B. Copy out an account of one working of the Middle Pillar exercise.

C. Give the four keywords you found in your meditations for the Nines of the Tarot deck.

D. Briefly describe your experiences with this month's self-perception exercise.

E. Describe the general results of the Tarot divination exercise. How have the cards seemed to fit the events of each day?

F. Copy out the paragraphs you wrote to summarize ideas from the assigned reading for this lesson.

Please mail in your responses to P.O. Box 95536, Seattle, WA 98145. "Attn: Tutorial Committee" should be written on the envelope.