

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

**Lesson 12**

The work of this course has involved, in a certain sense, a passage down the Tree of Life — not merely in terms of the symbols and reading covered, but in certain elements of underlying structure as well. Ideas which emerged in the first unit of the course, and were stated in their simplest form in the second, have returned at greater and greater levels of complexity in the following lessons.

With this unit, both the symbolic and the structural passages down the Tree come within reach of the realm of ordinary experience. The Sephiroth to be studied in these four lessons — Netzach, Hod, Yesod, and Malkuth, the quaternary that forms the lowest section of the Tree of Life — form the world in which everyday life takes place, and their equivalents in the microcosm of human consciousness — the emotions, the intellect, the range of subtle perceptions often called “intuition,” and the five physical senses, respectively — provide most of the tools with which human beings make their way through that world.

It may not be immediately obvious why this should be so. It may be less obvious still why the human functions that correspond to the higher Sephiroth do not play an equal role.

A careful examination of what actually goes on in your awareness, though, will reveal an interesting point. The higher functions, whether those of the upper levels of the ruach (memory, will, imagination) or those of the neshamah, chiah or yechidah, usually appear — when they appear at all — in the guise of one of the lower four functions. Memory may take the form of a sensory image, will of an emotional drive, creative imagination of an idea or an intuitive sense of “rightness”; any of the higher aspects may take the form of any of the lower ones, but they rarely if ever appear in their own guise.

That the higher functions have their own forms, distinct from the appearances mentioned here, is a matter not only of Qabalistic theory but of personal experience for many people. The memory that reaches out beyond a single image or idea to grasp the essence of some past time; the burst of will that overrides all inner and outer obstacles; the imagination that draws together a myriad fragments of experience in an instant to make a single meaningful unity — these are things that happen to many human beings now and again.

It is this “now and again,” of course, that is the sticking point. These experiences are rarely common, and even more rarely repeatable at will. They represent occasional flickers of a level of functioning that, most of the time, is out of reach. It’s worth noting, too, that their equivalents in the lower functions — ordinary memory, will, and so on — are notoriously unreliable.

One useful model for this feature of human experience is the image of a barrier, definite but permeable, separating the four lower from the six higher Sephiroth. In the Qabalah, this barrier is called the Veil of the Sanctuary. There is a great deal of theoretical material in Qabalistic writings concerning the

origins, nature, and purpose of this Veil, but at this point these are less significant than the fact of the Veil itself — and of the possibility of its opening.

For the Veil can be parted, deliberately, in a transformation of awareness carried out by way of the technical processes of meditation and magic. This is one way of describing the primary work of the magician in the Western esoteric tradition.

The parting of the Veil has as its first object the attainment of the phase of consciousness symbolized by Tiphareth. This is not only the closest of the higher Sephiroth to the Veil, but the natural center of the ruach, the conscious self, as well. In this sense the opening of the Veil of the Sanctuary can also be seen as an act of recentering, in which consciousness enters into a place of balance and the rest of the self comes into proper alignment around it.

This recentering is a radical transformation, with radical effects. It does not, on the other hand, bring about perfection. Nor is it the end of the process of transmutation. Quite the contrary: the purpose of this primary work is to open up possibilities, not close them off for good.

### Symbolism of Netzach

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

The Divine Name: YHVH TzBAVTh (pronounced Ye-ho-wah Tza-ba-oth);

The Archangel: Haniel, "Grace of God";

The Order of Angels: Tarshishim, "Shining Ones";

The Astrological Correspondence: Nogah, the planet Venus;

The Tarot Correspondence: the four Sevens 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 Netzach on your Tree of Life diagram. Once this is done, the rest of Netzach should be colored green.

### Reading

For this lesson, your reading from The Mystical Qabalah will be Chapter XXII, "Netzach". This chapter contains, along with material on the traditional symbolism of the seventh Sephirah, a discussion of one of the esoteric approaches to love and sexuality.

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 this paragraph and include it with the test for this lesson.

In addition, please review Chapter XVI, "Chokmah, the Second Sephirah," and Chapter XVIII, "Chesed,

the Fourth Sephirah.” This material, along with that on Netzach, offers a framework for understanding the symbolism and meaning of the Pillar of Mercy. What connections do you see between these Spheres?

## Exercises

### Self-Perception Exercise: Emotions

The four lowest Sephiroth of the Tree of Life, as you’ve learned, are associated with four common functions of ordinary human awareness: Netzach with the emotions, Hod with the intellect, Yesod with the ill-defined set of perceptions usually lumped together as “intuition,” and Malkuth with the ordinary physical senses. Under normal conditions, these four functions make up most of what goes on in the human mind. The exercises of the Western esoteric tradition do not count as “normal conditions,” of course, and one of the results of working with these exercises is the emergence of other functions within the awareness. All the same, these four common functions remain, and need to be explored and understood.

The following exercise is intended to help you carry out some part of this work of exploration. In a certain sense, it is a follow-on to the self-perception exercise introduced in Lesson 8. It involves, however, a more specific focus and a different approach.

For the next two weeks, then, your task is to become aware of your emotional state on as close to a moment-by-moment basis as you can. Try to do this not for specified periods, but generally, throughout your ordinary activities. When you do your daily review at the end of each day, you should be able to recall not only what you did but how you felt, what your mood was. As you go about your daily affairs, pay attention to your emotional reactions to events, as well as to those feelings which may not seem to have any connection to what happens.

In this exercise, what is needed is not the intense focus of, for instance, meditation, but rather a background awareness that will not interfere with your ordinary activities. This kind of background awareness is itself a magical technique of some importance, and worth developing; some students find it comes easily, others have more trouble acquiring the knack. Work on it for the next two weeks, and keep notes on the results in your magical record.

### Tarot: Beginning Divination

For many people, the Tarot deck is first and foremost a method of divination

### 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 Sevens 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.

### 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 these workings, pay particular attention to any emotional effects you may notice from the ritual. Does it have any effect on your mood? If so, is the effect consistent, or does it seem to vary from day to day? Keep notes on this in your magical record.

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 upon going to bed.

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

Fifth, to do the Tarot storytelling exercise four times during the time you spend on this lesson.

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 on the four Sevens of the Tarot deck.
- D. Briefly describe your experiences with the self-perception exercise from this lesson.
- E. Copy out your account of one performance of the Tarot storytelling exercise.
- 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.

**COMPANIONS OF THE STONE**  
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**Lesson 13**

One aspect of the Western esoteric tradition — and, in fact, of traditional Western modes of spirituality in general — which has come in for a great deal of criticism in recent years is its allegedly negative attitude toward the physical, material universe. To critics of this stripe, spiritual teachings which allot any more value to the nonphysical than to the world of matter are “negative” and “world-hating”, if not simply neurotic attempts to flee from the real world into a desert of arid intellectualisms.

A certain amount of this criticism is simple partisan propaganda. Followers of several religious and philosophical viewpoints in the Western world — scientific materialism, for one; various neo-Pagan revivals, for another; several branches of liberal Christianity, for a third — have found the charge of “world-hating” a useful cudgel with which to belabor their doctrinal opponents.

Another part of the criticism, by contrast, is probably merited. It’s hard to argue against the claim that those groups which, for example, practiced castration as a means to ritual purity, or who held that the physical universe is the creation of the Devil and humanity’s one hope is to die out and get free of its worldly prison, were going overboard. On the other hand, such groups make up only a small portion of the history of alternative spirituality in the West.

Perhaps the largest part of this common criticism, though, is based on simple misunderstanding. It is true, certainly, that in the Western esoteric tradition one ancient description of the goal of the work is the departure or disentangling of the soul from the realm of matter. It is, however, quite untrue that this implies a contempt for the material world — and equally untrue that the removal of the soul is equivalent to the removal of the entire self.

The key to the whole matter is the idea that the human self exists on all the levels of being. Each phase or aspect of the self, from yechidah to guph, has its proper equivalent along the spectrum of existence.

The problem arises because, as presently constituted, most human beings are partly out of phase with the universe around them. The ruach, the collection of powers we might think of as our “ordinary personality,” is designed to work on the levels of concrete and (to some extent) abstract consciousness. Instead, most of the time, it functions — awkwardly — as if it existed on the plane of physical matter.

What does this mean in concrete terms? The ruach has the function of perception; it encounters things by perceiving them. However, it can only perceive things of its own level.

Take a moment, now, to look around the room in which you’re sitting. Are you perceiving the room itself, the furniture, the paint on the walls? No. You are perceiving a mental image of the room, reflected onto the level of concrete consciousness. That image comes to you by way of a Rube Goldberg apparatus made up of bouncing photons, eye pigments, electrochemical nerve reactions, and compli-

cated processes in the brain and mind, and — as any physicist can tell you — it has next to nothing in common with the actual structure of matter in space-time around you.

It's certainly true that this mental image is a good enough fit to allow you to get through everyday life. Problems start arising, though, because the image is confused with the material reality behind it. Even on a physical level, what is true from one perspective may not be true from another. Worse, the ruach becomes so used to the apparent solidities of its surroundings that it begins to treat things of its own level — memories, perceptions, beliefs — as though they were as solid as bricks, and to relate astral and physical perceptions in a whole series of confused and irrational ways.

It's worth noting, as well, that the entanglement of the ruach with the physical plane is not, itself, a conscious matter. It happens automatically, as the background to the ruach's conscious thought and feeling.

The problem, then, is not with the material world, but with the current structure of human consciousness. Nor is it necessary to flee from the world of matter — only to reorient the conscious mind so that it experiences its perceptions as perceptions rather than as solid things.

This process is the same one discussed in the last lesson as the parting of the Veil of the Sanctuary, seen from a slightly different perspective. A glance at the Tree of Life will show the connection. Those Sephiroth which are below the Veil — those, in other words, which can symbolize the aspects of ordinary human consciousness — are precisely those which link up directly to Malkuth, the Sephirah of material existence. Those Sephiroth which do not have a direct link to Malkuth remain hidden, or at best function through one or more of those that do.

And this, again, is the situation which the Western esoteric tradition seeks to transcend.

### Symbolism of Hod

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

The Divine Name: ALHIM TzBAVTh (pronounced Ell-oh-heem Tza-ba-oth);

The Archangel: Raphael, "Healing of God";

The Order of Angels: Beni Elohim, "Sons of Elohim";

The Astrological Correspondence: Kokab, the planet Mercury;

The Tarot Correspondence: the four Eights 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 Hod on your Tree of Life diagram. Once this is done, the rest of Hod should be colored orange.

### Reading

For this lesson, your reading from The Mystical Qabalah will be Chapter XXIII, “Hod.” This chapter concentrates on the symbolism of the Eighth Sephirah, but also discusses some of the theoretical groundings of practical magic.

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 these paragraphs and include them with the test for this lesson.

In addition, please review Chapter XVII, “Binah, the Third Sephirah,” and Chapter XIX, “Geburah, the Fifth Sephirah.” The symbolism and traditional lore of the three Sephiroth of the Pillar of Severity will have a significant amount to teach about that Pillar’s nature and function. What connections do you see in the material in these chapters?

## Exercises

### Self-Perception Exercise: Intellect

The self-perception exercise introduced in the last lesson had two principal purposes. The first was to encourage you to become more aware of your usual moods and emotional fluctuations; the second was to begin the process of teaching a particular way of directing the awareness, a kind of “background noticing” that continues through the ordinary activities of life. Both purposes are part of the broader intention of showing some of the uses of introspection and self-knowledge in the Western esoteric tradition.

For this lesson, the same exercise will be aimed at a different target: the intellect, the reasoning (and often verbal) mind in which information is processed and thinking takes place.

For many people, particularly in our current culture, this is a much harder target than the emotions because of its sheer speed: any five-minute period may see five dozen thoughts on as many different subjects. An attempt to write down one day’s thoughts would take rather more than one day to carry out! For the sake of sanity — as well as for other reasons — the background awareness you are striving to develop will have a slightly different aim. Instead of trying to keep track of the subjects of thought, notice its quality — its quickness or slowness, its general tone (critical, enthusiastic, bored, wandering), and its exactness or vagueness. Does it repeat itself, or wander from subject to subject? Does it tend to take any one tone habitually? Be aware of these things, and of how they change over time.

As with last lesson’s exercise, work at developing this background awareness of thinking for the next two weeks, trying to keep it going on a moment-to-moment basis throughout your waking hours. Keep track of your level of success in your magical record.

### Tarot: Beginning Divination

The Tarot storytelling exercise

### 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 Eights 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.

### 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 these workings, seek maximum clarity and preciseness in the visualizations and physical movements alike. Pay attention to the effects this may have on the experience of the exercise.

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

First, to perform the meditation every day.

Second, to perform the Middle Pillar exercise every day.

Third, to perform the daily review every day upon going to bed.

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

Fifth, to do the Tarot patterning exercise at least four times.

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 on the Eights of the Tarot deck.
- D. Briefly describe your experiences with the self-perception exercise in this lesson.
- E. Copy out an account of one working of the Tarot patterning exercise.
- F. Copy out the paragraphs you wrote to summarize ideas from the assigned reading for this lesson.

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