

Ohad Ezrahi

The BresLove Cards

Explanation of Cards for Use in Readings

Part one: Cards from the story

'The Master of Prayer'

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May all be blessed.

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Interpretation of the cards for readings

In the following material I have attempted to summarize the significance of each card for the purpose of readings. It would also be advisable to read the actual story and its commentary in order to deepen and enrich the image presented by each card.

1. The King

The King's card represents presence, stemming from an absolute bond to the profound, innermost point. The King's presence radiates and attracts reverence, a kind of reverence granted spontaneously to those possessing true, inner wisdom ("*Kavod Hahamim yinhalu*" - "The wise will be revered." Proverbs 3, 35) The King thus represents the Kabbalistic *Sefirah* (emanation) of Wisdom [*Hohmah*]). This card symbolizes the ability to 'make things happen; not through a great deal of activity, but rather through repose, much like the axis of a wheel that remains stationary, while it causes the entire wheel to rotate ("*Koach hameni'a habilti mitno'e'a*" - "The unmoved mover" in philosophic and Hasidic terms). This card also indicates leadership qualities emanating from the strength of inner equipoise and quiet confidence.

On the other hand, when the card appears in a problematic position in the reading, it may convey passivity and stagnation, where action and dynamism are actually required. This may indicate what in Hasidic terms is called "false humility" (*Anava Psula*): an abstaining from action or speech because of fear of the way it will be received, which is ultimately an expression of concealed pride, arrogance and desire for honor.

(Related cards: Card no. 11: "The Sect of Honor"; Card no. 21: "The Crown").

2. The Queen

This card symbolizes the aspect of strength in the *Sefirah* (emanation) of Understanding [*Binah*]. It symbolizes the capacity for analytical analysis, the ability to infer one thing from another and

reach understandings*. It is the ability to distinguish between the essential and the trite – “to sort the wheat from the chaff”. The Queen conveys feminine strength that is mature and developed, powerful and authoritative. In her enlightened state, bonded to the presence of the innermost point of wisdom (The King), she engenders clarity, leading to inner joy and liberation. In her darkened state, however, she conveys criticism that may even lead to cynicism and self-destruction.

(Related cards: Card no. 12 “The Sect of Murder”; Card no. 22 “Sea of Blood”; also: Story no.10, Card no. 3 “The Empress”)

3. The Baby

This card symbolizes the perfection of Intuitive knowledge [*Da'at*]. In Biblical Hebrew To *know* means to be United with, to be One with, as in “and Adam *knew* his wife Eve”. One can ‘know *something*’ and one can ‘know *about*’ something. To know something means to be a part of it, to be completely familiar with it. The opposite of knowledge is estrangement. While with intuitive knowledge there is intimacy, this is precisely what is lacking in estrangement. In order to attain intimacy, one needs to preserve purity and innocence, which are qualities manifest in the baby. Take note that the baby in the story was born “with complete wisdom”. This is an archetypal baby, the inner child of the human soul, and thus untouched by time. He is able to remain forever a baby, even through the passage of time, since he remains clean. He is unsoiled by the world’s filth, remaining always pure, honest and innocent - in the clearest of senses. As a result, he is able to connect to the inner essence of things, creating real intimacy, real oneness. Through intimacy, the boundaries of consciousness can be crossed. What seems incomprehensible from the outside, like a Zen Koan, can be cracked open by the power of intuitive knowledge, as it penetrates the veneer of estrangement. Then the quandary becomes clear, the answer, obvious.

Such intuitive knowledge is the Holy Spirit (Exodus 31:3 Rashi ad. loc.) and holiness means intimacy. The baby is direct without being aggressive. In his frank naïveté he penetrates the boundaries of estrangement and touches the inner truth – which we are so often afraid to expose. In its problematic aspect, the card of The Baby may appear in situations of over-vulnerability, over-sensitivity, a lack of defenses and innocence bordering on naïveté, as such, it may represent situations where one lacks the tools to express oneself – just as a baby is unable to express what he knows or wants.

(Related cards: Card no. 13 “The Sect of Meager Sustenance”; Card no. 23 “Golden Hair of Seven Shades”, and Card no. 24 “Sea of Milk”)

4. The Beautiful Princess

This card represents the archetypal beloved. It epitomizes one of the faces of the inner feminine (the “Anima”) - the absolute and revered embodiment of the objects of love. Her beauty is divine; it is perfect and absolute. She is the essence of supreme beauty, both internal and external without distinction. She abounds with tenderness and compassion and represents love in its

* Translator’s note: In the Hebrew there is a word play between ‘*livnot havanot*’: *livnot* (to build) and *havanot* (understandings) are linked to the same root as the word *Binah* (*b.n.*).

perfection and the *sfirah* (emanation) of Love, Grace and Kindness (*Hesed*). As far as the Princess is concerned, there is no distinction between the physical and spiritual expressions of love - they are complementary. Her presence evokes passion, but as far as she is concerned this passion cannot be purely sexual as it serves to open all the gateways that connect between libidinal impulse and creativity*. The Beautiful Princess seeks to sanctify sexuality not by negating it, but rather by enhancing it with spiritual awareness (in doing so she is assisted by the "Master of Prayer"), and by her connection to other layers of the human psyche. The Beautiful Princess has abundant love, in quality and quantity, which tends to brim over when there is no one capable of receiving the strength of her love (see "Sea of Milk"). In her love the Princesses gives space for fertility and motherhood - it is a creative love, and one that takes responsibility. The entire tide of love represented by this card is hallowed as one continuous stream, in the blessed flow of the *sfirah* of Love, Grace and Kindness [*Hesed*].

When this card appears in its problematic aspect it may signify situations where the sanctity of love and sexuality is misused, or situations where a given situation is dealt with in an inappropriate manner.

(Related cards: Card no. 14 "The Sect of Beauty, Desire and Fertility"; Card no. 24 "Sea of Milk"; also: Story no. 1, Card no. 1 "The Lost Princess").

5. The Loyal Friend

As its name suggests, the card of the Loyal Friend* conveys love of a very specific nature - love with loyalty at its core. The card represents the *sfirah* (emanation) of power [*Gevurah*] in the Kabbalistic Tree of Life [the system of the ten *sfiroth*], with emphasis on the quality of firm loyalty. The Loyal Friend is essentially the King's loyal companion, the one who will stand by him in any situation, and is capable of accepting the one whom he loves fully, not only in the easy places. This is a very significant card in another sense too: The Loyal Friend loves the King, who represents the innermost point (see card no. 1), therefore this card also represents loyalty to the innermost point. This loyalty is often irreconcilable with other obligations, such as external frameworks and social conventions. The Loyal Friend and the King loved themselves when they were together. They both loved each other and each loved himself dearly within this loyal friendship. A person will love himself when he is deeply connected to the innermost point; in all other situations there is a deep inner conflict that prevents one from really and truly loving oneself. Loyalty to life's external frameworks may require betrayal of the innermost point - when one consents to this and betrays 'one's love for the King' there is a profound sense of having 'lost out' and one is unable to love oneself.

When the card of the Loyal Friend appears in its problematic aspect in the reading, it may represent love expressed through over-attachment to an idea, person or place. Such attachment is characterized by excessive grasping and un-acceptance of the ever-changing nature of being. In

* Translator's note: in Hebrew there is a word play between 'libidinal impulse' (*'yetzer'*) and creativity (*'yetzira'*) - both coming from the same root Y.Z.R.

* Translator's note: An alternative translation of the original Hebrew phrase (*Ha'ohav Hane'eman*) could be: 'The Loyal Lover'. The word 'lover' [*Ohev*] in traditional Hebrew is used for anyone who loves, not necessarily romantically, while it can also include a romantic context.

this sense the attachment, often perceived as loyalty, actually betrays the innermost point as long as it hangs on to the past and to externalities.

(Related cards: Card no. 15 "The Sect of Joy"; Card no. 25 "Shape of Love"; Card no. 26 "Sea of Wine").

6. The Bard*

The Bard can see the good in everything. He can recognize inner, hidden beauty and expose it, bring it out into open. The Bard symbolizes the secret of the *sfirah* (emanation) of Magnificent Beauty (*Tifereth*). He has a natural flair for praising, talking straight to the heart and consoling in crises. This card teaching the possibility of revealing the veiled beauty in all things – and particularly express it in words. Using words to reveal the obscure is likened to providing a vessel through which the invisible can be manifested with greater ease. The Bard also knows how to appease problematic situations in using this same wondrous power to expose inner hidden beauty. This power enables him to soften difficult people and to see a challenge and opportunity in every crisis.

On the problematic side, however, this quality can slide into loquacity and insincerity, due to the need to praise and flatter incessantly. One of the Kabbalistic names for the *sfirah* of Magnificent Beauty [*Tifereth*] is Truth [*Emet*]. Therefore, when this card appears in a negative context, it reflects dishonesty – towards ourselves, as well as towards others. This card may therefore symbolize false beauty and hypocrisy when it appears in its negative aspect.

(Related cards: Card no. 16 "The Sect of Speech"; Card no. 26 "Sea of Wine").

7. The Wise Man

This card obviously symbolizes wisdom; but not wisdom in its higher, abstract form (as in the Kabbalistic *sfirah* (emanation) of Wisdom [*Hochma*]), but rather in its concrete form. It portrays a more practical kind of wisdom, linked to knowledge and intellectual competence. When used correctly, such wisdom helps us to cope better in this world. The card of the Wise Man therefore represents the *sfirah* of Eternity or Triumph* [*Netzah*]. Although the *sfirah* of *Netzah* is considered an extension of the *sfirah* of Wisdom [*Hohma*] in the Kabbalistic Tree-of-Life, it relates more to the practical and concrete level, rather than to the abstract, subtle level. This card represents the ability to give good advice, stemming from an understanding of the ways of the world. The wise advisor has a good grasp of the ways of world, spirit and society. He was therefore put in charge of 'The Hand' – the World Map outlining all paths leading from all places to all other places, in terms of space, time and spirit (the 'Land Cart', in Rabbi Nahman's terms). The Wise Man conveys an emotional state of positive 'knowing'. He embraces knowledge that gives him a strong orientation and a firm standing in the world.

When this card appears in its problematic aspect, it may symbolize an excess of knowledge, or a lack of the spiritual capability to stay in the state of 'not knowing'. The Wise Man in his negative aspect has firm convictions about everything, which blocks him from being open to the wonder.

* Translator's note: 'Bard' is the translation of 'melitz' suggested by Rabbi Arye Kaplan. In Hebrew 'melitz' is derived from two words: 'melitza' = phraseology, florid style, and 'manlitz' = to recommend or speak well of.

* Translator's note: Eternity [*Netzah*] and Triumph [*Nitzahon*] come from the same root in Hebrew: N.Z.H

In its problematic aspect, this card should be understood in terms of another appearance of the Wise Man in Rabbi Nahman's stories: The Wise Man in 'A Tale of the Wise Man and the Simpleton' (story no. 10). In this story, wisdom becomes a barrier for the Wise Man. The intellect cuts him off from his true self, his spiritual source, from inner purity and innocence only to become an obstacle. It becomes merely an act of outsmarting, leading to cynicism, ultimately leaving the Wise Man miserable.

(In such a situation it can be said in Kabbalistic terms that the balance between the *sfirot* of *Netzah* and *Hod* has been ruined).

Related cards: Card no. 17 "The Sect of Wisdom"; Card no. 27 "The Hand / The Land Card", also: Story no. 6. Card no. 2 "The Wise Man who seeks the King's portrait")

8. The Treasurer

This card symbolizes the ability to watch over numerous treasures (material as well as spiritual) without falling into the trap of possessiveness, arrogance and pride. The Treasurer does not base his self-worth on the fact that he controls great wealth. He knows very well that this wealth is not really his own. He knows that it belongs to the King, and that he has merely been appointed to take care of it and use it to do good deeds - to the best of his ability. We often become 'treasurers' - various treasures are placed under our care. In such situations, a trap looms: if we base our self-worth on our richness (of spirit, matter or connections) we will end up forgetting that the wealth is not really ours and we will fall into the trap of possessiveness and arrogance, which can lead us astray. We should never forget that all our wealth (whether financial, spiritual, informative, or any other) is not really our own. We have only been put in charge of it; we have been appointed to look after it by 'The King', who has entrusted it unto us. We should not make the mistake of falling into false convictions about ourselves. Rather, we should fulfill our duty with humility and responsibility, trying to make use of all the good at our disposal, in the best possible manner, for the benefit of all those involved. The card of the Treasurer represents the Kabbalistic *sfirah* (emanation) of Splendor [*Hod*], and is also linked to the figure of Aaron the priest in Kabbalistic symbolism of the ancient founders. The Treasurer knows how to accept and admit* to the truth. He does not create masks of falsehood, arrogance and illusion. As such, he belongs to the *sfirah* of *Hod*, epitomizing the special quality of being able to admit to the truth with simplicity and integrity, without outsmarting, the one who maintains the inner qualities of the *sfirah* of *Hod* (Splendor), all of which are linked to innocence and integrity, radiates a special, profound energy - a splendorous energy.

When the Treasurer's card appears in its problematic aspect, it may point to a lack of inner stability, an excessive softness to situations where one is not able to stand up for oneself due to an excessive imbalance of the qualities represented by the *sfirah* of *Hod* (Splendor). This disparity can be balanced by the qualities connected to the *sfirah* of *Netzah*, which are expressed through self-confidence and a firm sense of presence and self-validity.

(Related cards: Card no. 18 "The Sect of Wealth"; Card no. 28 "The Mountain of Treasure")

* Translator's note: In Hebrew *le'hodot* (to admit) is linked to the same root as *hod* (splendor).

9. The Hero

This card highlights several masculine qualities in their diverse aspects. On the positive side, the Hero represents the ability to embark on a journey in search of integration. He does not actually have the ability to bring about the integration himself (this is the ability of the Master of Prayer in the story), but it is the one who has a deep spiritual calling undertake such a voyage of seeking and transformation in order to find all parts of the whole and clear a place for each of them. The Hero's card contains much latent power. It is an eruptive power, a kind of power that brings about change.

One should be cautious however, that this power does not become aggression emanating from fear and a need to control. The Hero symbolizes dynamism and initiative, but he may also be withdrawn and difficult to fathom. The male sexual element is very prominent in the symbolism of the Hero - he aspires relentlessly to unite with his mate, 'The Princess', who is his feminine, balancing element. The Hero has a primal tendency to want quick, immediate results, yet he also has the rectified ability to wait. He knows how to give room and to wait for the ripening of reality - so that the desired results will be achieved in the right time and the right manner, out of a state of maturity and fullness. This is the refinement of masculine sexuality: overcoming the need to conquer, while utilizing this same power to become 'the hero who conquers his impulse'. Just like the pickling of vegetables* enables the ongoing enjoyment of seasonal vegetables long after the season is over; so too, the Hero, in his refined, rectified state, turns his instinct into a transformational power by overcoming the need for immediate results and lingering a while. This lull enables him to reach results that are more profound than those he would have achieved had he acted purely out of primal impulse.

In its problematic aspect, this card symbolizes the masculine need to conquer and achieve goals, together with an almost autistic introversion that does not allow him to share what is going on inside. On his problematic side, the Hero conveys a very linear way of handling things, a goal-oriented method that may not take all aspects into account in its single-minded push to attain the goals that have been set.

(Related cards: Card no. 19 "The Sect of Bodily Organs"; Card no. 29 "The Bow"; Card no. 32 "The Way of the Sword". Also: Story no. 1, Card no. 2 "The Viceroy").

10. The Master of Prayer

The Master of Prayer symbolizes the ability to overcome rifts. He has the ability to link each individual to the root of ones spirit and ones divinity, thus closing the rift between the soul source and its external manifestations. This one also knows how to bridge the gaps between different human beings and unite them. He has the power of persuasion and excellent verbal skills. In principle, he speaks from the heart, this being the secret of his strength. The Master of Prayer does not necessarily follow an external code of behavior; he is driven from *within*. He often plays with the rules - sometimes in keeping with accepted norms, sometimes contrary to them, but always in line with what he believes to be for the higher good: restoring divine harmony. His profound 'heavenly' connection, or his bond with the innermost point ("The King") is extremely strong. This bond enables his freedom of action in this world - through playfulness, a sense of humor and much inner clarity. He adds sanctity wherever he goes, working to harmonize and integrate all parts of the whole, which are, for now, in a state of estrangement and ruin.

When the Master of Prayer's card appears in its negative or negative aspect, one should be aware that verbal skill and the power of persuasion can become an obstacle. Insensitivity or

* Translator's note: The Hebrew word for 'conquer' (*lihboosh*) also means 'to pickle'.

manipulative tendencies may arise, which can develop into coercion and obsessive nagging ('*nudnik*'), stemming from the desire to change and 'fix' reality.

Related cards: Card no. 20 "The Sect of Worshippers" Card no. 30 "A Place outside the Settlement").

11. The Sect of Honor

The Sect of Honor symbolizes an ideology or inner drive in search of honor. This card therefore symbolizes a fundamental need for honor or respect. At times, we tend to look down up on ourselves, we do not sufficiently respect who and what we are. In such cases, this card will appear in a position symbolizing the need to find a way to restore self-respect. Real honor stems from the perceivable presence of the 'innermost point', yet at times the process of reaching such perception begins from man's simple and immediate need to know who one is and what the meaning is of ones existence in the world. Our inability to clearly see the significance of our existence or the existence of others is often translates into contempt – whether of ourselves or of others.

On the positive side, "The Sect of Honor" symbolizes the desire to acknowledge the importance of everything's existence in reality. It opposes contempt and disregard or effacement of each creation's uniqueness. Each creation has significance, and singularity – and from these stems honor.

When appearing in its problematic aspect, the card will symbolize an excessive demand for respect – alluding to imbalance, or even blindness, caused by the need to be appreciated by those around us. This need for external appreciation stems from a disconnection from the innermost point. The Sect of Honor is therefore amended when it crowns "The King", who represents the "Innermost point", as its leader. Then, reverence emanates from the innermost point and there is a decrease in the need for external respect and admiration. As our sages of blesses memory [Ha'zal](#) have already said: "Honor evades those who seek it", conversely – "Honor pursues those who evade it". Although the connection to the innermost point dispels the need for external acknowledgement and appreciation, such acknowledgement inevitably appears, precisely because perhaps we no longer need it.

(Related cards: Card no. 1 "The King"; Card no. 21 "The Crown").

12. The Sect of Murder

This card symbolizes the belief that the right way to live in this world is from a place of non-attachment. Everything in this world is doomed to destruction and our greatest illusion is that we can hold onto things forever. Whether the attachment is to property, money, places or loved ones –in every situation it's an illusion. As if this cyclic illusion leads people blindfolded into an ongoing cycle. Through these cyclic actions we try and prolong our grasp of transitory, impermanent objects and thus to ignore the truth. The truth is that "one never steps in the same river twice". Everything is in flux, everything is flowing and there's no point in trying to gives thins permanence. So typical of humankind such attempts, lead only to one thing – suffering. Members of the Sect of Murder believe in severing the shackles that bind human consciousness to what the Buddhists call, 'The Wheel of Dependent Beingness'. They aspire to liberate themselves from the greater causes governing human, leading one like a branded slave from one condition to another. Therefore in the story, the Sect of Honor chose the one who murdered their parents as King. This one symbolizes attainment complete freedom from the greater causes of The Wheel of Dependent Beingness, which leads us incessantly from condition to condition, from one incarnation of the cycle of life, to the next. One who has liberated them from this cycle has also been freed from bondage to individual biography - from bondage to all that one has become as a

result of parental, environmental and educational influence. The ideology of the Sect of Murder strongly opposes the Sect of Beauty and Worldly Dwelling: According to the Sect of Murder, members of the Sect of Beauty, who believe in the importance of passion and fertility, hang on relentlessly to the greatest illusion of all – the illusion of existence, and the reality of what ‘is’. The problem side of the Murder Sect’s ideology (as in all other ideologies) is its lack of humanity. Something in this ideology opposes (the human condition life) so full of extremes and change, so full of desire and disappointment, pain and beauty, joy and despair. This perfectionist ideology negates the complexity of life itself, thereby losing something of the unique vitality of an embodied life – in all its diverse and colorful being.

(Related cards: Card no. 2 “The Queen”; Card no. 22 “Sea of Blood”).

13. The Sect of Meager Sustenance

This card symbolizes an aspiration for purity of intuitive knowledge, an effort to live life in a way that facilitates the development of consciousness. Such a way of life requires a change in accepted norms. This card therefore represents many of today’s alternative approaches to life and living. The card signifies readiness for change and renunciation of life’s conventions in order to achieve spiritual goals, or just to feel that we really *are* ‘living life correctly’. This card has a special connection to perspectives and issues relating to correct nutrition, namely, that what we put into our bodies influences our quality of both material and spiritual life.

Like any ideology, this one also has no shortage of problems. Firstly, it expounds a kind of ‘fixed idea’. It is rigidly attached to principles and so-called ‘truths’ - what we should or should not eat, when we should meditate, what we should think, etc. There is no flexibility in ideologies; there is no life. Secondly, this card may depict a kind of alternative lifestyle reserved exclusively for the wealthy, detached from many components of real life, in all its imperfect complexity.

(Related cards: Card no. 3 “The Baby”; Card no. 24 “Sea of Milk”).

14. The Sect of Beauty, desire and World Population

The ideology behind this card advocates the strengthening of creativity and libido, perceiving the two coincide. This Sect aspires to realize the creativity latent in all people and things. They hold aesthetics and beauty in high esteem; not stark beauty, rather evocative beauty - overflowing and resplendent with life.

On the positive side, this Sect recognizes that sanctity is not restricted to an abstract, passionless world. On the contrary: sanctity penetrates to the flesh; libido is a key to a deeper knowing of the secrets of being, that our journey embodied has an invaluable purpose. This Sect can show us how to *really* experience life, how to touch the vitality inside each of us and make the most of the embodied experience - without denial, without fear.

The rectification of this Sect, also “The Sect of Desire”, should occur when prayer and awareness become part of the whole, the passion of life’s intensity. These are expressed through sexuality, instinct, and artistic creativity. When sanctity and libido merge the dividers of consciousness are erased and we see the opening of many fountainheads.

Yet in its problematic side “The Secret of Desire” represents excessive attachment to a life marked by anxiety and morbidity.

The need to be fruitful and to multiply, to create and to “be” more and more, comes from the astonishment of silence, from that quality of no-thing, from the sacred “Emptiness”, from the stable, inner point. Creativity and libido tend to use this condition to flee from a stable center,

developing into an spirit that to extinguish anxiety and astonishment from a more grounded clarity that lead to the deeper truth of existence.

(Related cards: Card no. 4 "The Beautiful Princess"; Card no. 24 "Sea of Milk").

15. The Sect of Joy

The card of the Sect of joy symbolizes the belief that happiness makes one escape from all problems. Rebbe Nahman himself interpreted the verse 'with joy thou shalt emerge' *ki besimha titsu'*, to mean explaining that joy helps us emerge from all our problems. Happiness has the strength to heal both body and spirit; and so the opposite - sadness and bitterness cause troubles and illness. And the whole process snowballs: you get caught up in a small problem, become bitter or sad, then vitality decreases and this leads to even greater and deeper problems. And so the opposite - happiness, even for no reason, attracts positive energy and this joy keeps on multiplying and creates more reasons to rejoice. Joy expands consciousness, enabling one to cope courageously with problems that seem overwhelming, and opens the heart in generosity to others.

When this card appears in its problematic aspect, it reveals the other side of the coin: constant joy may lead to a superficiality, which stems from suppression. Living an ideology based only upon joy may lead to a rash dismissal of problems. We may overlook signs that are there to challenge and lead us towards greater profundity. One should be wary of the profligacy and superficiality that may arise from joy, causing us to ignore and suppress real problems. Such 'happiness' will not only not lead to health, but may ultimately lead to illness of body and soul, triggered by repression of other feelings, of pain and grief, doubts and the diverse needs of the soul. The rectification of the Sect of Joy is therefore attained when it joins with the Loyal Friend (The *sefirah* of Valor - *Gevurah*). This loyalty enables members of the Sect of Joy to be more profound and prevents them from fleeing the more difficult places, to amusing diversions of amusement and false happiness.

(Related cards: Card no.5 "The Loyal Friend"; Card no. 25 "The Form of Love"; Card no. 26 "Sea of Wine").

16. The Sect of Speech

This Sect represents the belief that the solution to all problems is found in proper communication. Difficulties often crop up in life that seem irreconcilable due to defective communication skills. This card proposes a solution by way of developing channels of communication in non-violent ways. Proper speech can bring about immense transformation, it can completely change people's attitudes from one extreme to another. Speech can soften rigid viewpoints and uncover solutions that we did not imagine existed in reality. However, what is utmost importance - is the quality of speech, not the quantity. For communication to bring about real change and rectification, it must emanate from a genuine and internal place. 'What comes from the heart, enters the heart' said the sages of memory (*Ha"Zal*) - this is the refinement of the Sect of Speech.

On the problematic side, members of the Sect of Speech tend to chatter too much, their words may be empty of meaning. They consider the medium of communication its principal message. In it's dysfunctional state, the Sect of Speech creates and increases emptiness, silliness and absent-mindedness. The Sect of Speech is amended when it unites with the Bard; he represents the ability to discover the good in all things and the talent to expose and express it, thus bringing liberation and redemption to many.

(Related cards: Card no. 6 "The Bard").

17. The Sect of Knowledge

This card represents an intellectual ideology - the notion that study and understanding can solve the problems of the individual and society. Study and understanding can indeed change lives. Various psychological approaches claim that understanding mental processes and their causes actually has a liberating and healing effect on the psyche. The Sect of Knowledge believes in spiritual development linked to the development of the cognitive and intellectual capacities. Such development enables self-reflection and renders a better understanding of the true meaning of life and its complexities.

The problem with the Sect of Knowledge arises when knowledge and intellectual capacities are perceived as all there is, as an end unto themselves. Then the heart is forgotten, sentiment is forgotten, and Emotional Quotient may be neglected. The human being becomes a 'database', a 'thinking being', yet forgets how to also be a feeling, intuitive being; he forgets how to act on feeling. The fundamental, deep-rooted connection to the primitive sources of body and mind are no less important for psychological growth and mental health than for intellectual development. Thus when this card appears in its problematic aspect, it may indicate exaggerated importance attached to knowledge and intellect, while on abandonment of other channels of the human spirit or society, which are no less important.

Related cards: Card no. 7 "The Wiseman"; Card no. 27 "The Hand").

18. The Sect of Wealth

Sometimes we need to boost our conviction that wealth does have spiritual value!! If financial opulence is transmitted through a certain person, then such a person is able to contain this opulence - and this one bears a great responsibility in this world. A wealthy person can bring about much positive change. Sometimes we need to acknowledge the fact that we too can be rich! We need to strengthen our conviction that we too can attain financial wealth that will enable us to influence the world in a positive way. There are certain people who have great difficulty in adopting such a perspective. Weaning themselves of guilty feelings regarding money-matters is a great spiritual challenge for such people. Rebbe Nahman further explains that there are certain spiritual realizations, those of the highest form, which cannot be attained without great wealth. When the card of The Sect of Wealth appears in its positive, reinforcing aspect, we should acknowledge that money and wealth have consequence not to be scorned.

On the negative side, this card symbolizes an ideology whereby money gauges the worth of human beings- a world where one's financial situation is a major consideration when sizing someone up, or when deciding whether or not to establish a relationship with someone. According to Rabbi Nahman, this is one of the most difficult illusions to renounce. An ideology that places too much emphasis on the importance of money and its ability to create change will lead us to forget the true value of the self or of other entities in the world, and the power of simplicity.

(Related cards: Card no. 8 "The Treasurer"; Card no. 28 "Mountain of Treasure"; Card no. 32 "The Way of the Sword")

19. The Sect of Bodily Organs

This sect depicts the need to find a place in the world. We often feel that we have no place - it may be physical space that really holds us and suits our needs, social space within a group of people, or even professional space. When this card appears in the reading, it indicates the

emergence of a need to find our true place in the world, to make our mark in this life [upon this mortal coil].

The problematic side of this card signifies an inappropriate way of claiming space. Members of The Sect of Bodily Organs are not especially sensitive to their surroundings; their attempts to claim space are thus crude and brutal. The refinement of this Sect comes about when it connects with the Hero, who has undertaken the inner journey, seeking to unite all the disparate parts of being - only by undertaking such an inner journey is it possible to find our true place in this world. The Hero is the one who understands that claiming one's place in the world does not set one in opposition to others, on the contrary - only when each person finds their true place and when society will begin to function as an organic system, will one (The Hero) also find one's natural place within the entire system. One seeks to find one's place through an inner journey on 'The Way of the Sword', which is empowering. This is done by co-operation with the rest of 'the King's Men', not through conflict with others or by pushing them to the sidelines.

(Related cards: Card no. 9 "The Hero"; Card no. 32 "The Way of the Sword")

20. The Sect of Worshipers

This card represents the religious approach to reality. According to this approaches, solutions to the problems of human and the world are not in human hands - they are in the hands of God. All one can do is pray. Through prayer we engage the supreme force, the divine existence. Without prayer, human becomes confined to this world, to all its problems and limitations. Prayer releases the constraints of human boundaries, enabling the absolute to penetrate the spirit and the world of human existence. We often become so engrossed in our problems, so completely absorbed by them that ultimately the only solutions we can conceive of are derived from within the limitations of our world. This card offers an alternative: Why not pray about it? Prayer, not necessarily institutionalized prayer, rather spontaneous, individual prayer can release us from a tangle. Prayer can open doors we'd never dreamed of, and not only because we could not dream beyond the limits of our thoughts or perceptions. The suggestion of prayer is also an evocation of humility: If we recognize the confines of our world and the limited angle of our perception, it will become easier to ask for help. We will be able to turn to the divine, limitless and omnipresent, and request the divulging of new solutions. We can allow Divine Presence to intervene more clearly, more overtly, in steering the course of our world.

When the card of The Sect of Worshipers appears in its negative aspect, it may depict dependency, passivity, a sense of impotence and a lack of pragmatism, as well as conceptual dogmatism. The Sect of Worshipers symbolizes the ideology represented by institutionalized religion.

(Related cards: Card no. 10 "The Master of Prayer")

21. The Crown

The card of The Crown usually represents the need for waiting. The card will appear in the reading when processes are unfolding, at a time where one still cannot and should not point a finger to define them - when such processes are in that delicate stage of 'not quite there yet'. In Biblical Aramaic the meaning of the word 'crown' (*keter*) is 'wait!' ('Wait a while and I will show

you, as God has yet to speak' *Ktar li ze'ir va'ahaveha, ki od le'eloha milim*, Job 36,2). Waiting is a gift*. At times we need to let things ripen behind the scenes, not to expose them prematurely. 'The King' - who symbolizes the complete presence - cannot be exposed yet, as reality is not yet ripened. So we should wait. We have found the Crown; we know that the King is here, but for the time being he is hidden, obscured. This is the 'hidden part of reality'. We should therefore now concentrate on 'preparing the soil', focusing on creating the necessary conditions for the desirable things to occur.

In its problematic aspect this card may indicate immaturity in accepting the truth of reality, and not only indicate the need to wait. It may suggest being 'air headed', detachment from reality, or a lack of grounding (since the Crown is also 'all-embracing light' - *or mekif*).

(Related cards: Card no. 1 "The King"; Card no. 23 "Golden Hair")

22. Sea of Blood

While the name of this card may be alarming or frightening, the card itself is actually very different in nature. A Sea of Blood is indeed a symbol of grief, but it also symbolizes learning and growth. There are certain types of learning and growth that happen through separation: parting from loved ones, from customs, habits or from places that have special significance for us. There is certainly grief in parting, mourning and pain, but when separation is part of a learning process, there may also be a sense of clarity, maturation, growth and newfound independence. Thus the harsh side of this card symbolizes mental anguish, and sometimes even health problems, surgery, wounds etc. However, its positive aspect reminds us that even in birth there is bleeding, and there is separation from the fetal condition. The process of growth involves severance from situations and habits that no longer serve our role in the world, even if they still seem convenient as we are used to them and can easily identify with them. Even when something is shattered and we experience the grief and pain of loss, this pain may ultimately lead us closer to wholeness. To achieve this wholeness we need to extract ourselves from situations that once seemed whole, but no longer benefit us. The fruit is whole and beautiful, but in order for the seed to sprout and develop into a new tree, laden with more fruits, it first needs to decay.

(Related cards: Card no. 2 "The Queen"; Card no. 12 "The Sect of Murder").

23. Golden Hair with Seven Shades

This is a lovely card! Its name inspires a sense of nobility and mystery. In Kabbalistic terminology, this card signifies the advent of the Messiah. The child whose hair is shed is the Messiah. He is the liberator who can rebuild reality. The seven shades of the golden hair represent the ability to release and mend totality; not one, but all tones of reality. This card therefore signifies a subtle ability to penetrate into the essence of things. The difference between the cards of 'Golden Hair' and 'The Baby' is in the fact that the hair only divulges the Baby's existence; it does not represent his entire nature. The card of Golden Hair expresses fervent hope for real, significant mending - mending emanating from within, restoring vigor, beauty and dignity. When this card appears in the reading it alludes to one's ability to be revitalized,

* Translator's note: Note the similarity and wordplay in the original Hebrew text where 'waiting' is *hamtana* and 'gift' is *matana*

liberated, re-energized, even though at present it may seem unclear! This is a card of encouragement – it may also indicate that the answer to the question ‘How should I do it?’ will appear soon. One should remember that the solution already exists in reality, even if it is concealed.

When the card appears in its problematic aspect, it may symbolize false hope, addiction to promises and illusions and attachment to expectations, where a different attitude is required.

(Related cards: Card no. 3 “The Baby”; Card no. 21 “The Crown”; Card no. 24 “Sea of Milk”).

24. Sea of Milk

This card represents abundance: abundance of love, or of nourishment and enrichment, not necessarily financial abundance. It is a very pampering kind of abundance for those who dwell in it.

If the card appears in a positive place in the reading, it will epitomize a supportive situation, embracing surroundings that enable us be children again, so as to grow and develop. We often do not allow ourselves to grow, as learning calls for the shedding of protective masks in order to allow the inner child to emerge. The child can learn from a place that adults are no longer capable of learning from. A child learns directly, primarily, free of conditioning and defenses, therefore is also very vulnerable. The adult cover themselves with protective filters and masks of personal identity, stemming from the image created by ego. This hinders learning. When the Sea of Milk appears, we can feel protected, supported by maternal abundance and love. This abundance will not forsake us, it will not let us get hurt; we can drop our defenses and let the inner child emerge so as to learn again.

However, when the card appears in its problematic aspect, it reminds us that a Sea of Milk is not really something to be developed. The abundance should be distributed correctly; it should not be hoarded. If so much opulence accumulates in one place, it is a sign that something has gone wrong on the way from the given to the receiver. It is a sign that one should aspire to restore the balance.

(Related cards: Card no. 3 “The Baby”; Card no. 4 “The Beautiful Princess”; Card no. 13 “The Sect of Meager Sustenance”).

25. The Form of Love

This card epitomizes true relationship based on genuine love. The important aspect of this kind of love is that both sides love themselves within the union. Sometimes we find ourselves in relationships where a certain part of us is humiliated or repressed. We love the other, but when we examine ourselves and our place in the relationship, we discover that we do not really love ourselves. This form of love does not really value us, so it is incomplete. When there is complete love, each side knows that this love brings out the best in him or her and encourages the emergence of wholeness. ‘The Form of Love’ symbolizes a connection where each individual truly loves himself when with the other. This kind of love radiates outward. Whoever witnesses it is also filled with love, filled with desire to love and be loved in such a complete way – in a way that fills the inner self, embracing the entire spirit in love, without oppressing any part of it.

In its problematic aspect, this card may appear when a friendship or romantic relationship becomes like a closed bubble, preventing us from seeing the outside world, as we are so blinded by the caliber of this love. This is a wake up call and leave the bubble (not necessarily at the expense of the relationship).

(Related cards: Card no. 5 “The Loyal Friend”).

26. Sea of Wine

The Sea of Wine represents a substitute for the real thing. This however is not necessarily negative! Situations often crop up in life where our craving for the real thing cannot be fulfilled yet and we must find a way to rise above our desire and find a good, beneficial and comforting alternative. Sublimation is often necessary in the realm of the spirit and may even help in developing spiritual refinement. Often, due to the lack of an object of love and desire, a kind of spiritual refinement develops within us - then the object of love can remove its concrete garb and expose the deeper, more spiritual levels within us. This is accomplished precisely through such a lack of the physical dimension.

However - we should always remember that it is only a substitute. We should not become addicted to substitutes, thus losing the ability to recognize the real thing when it appears before our very eyes. There is great consolation to be found in the Sea of Wine, however when it appears in its problematic aspect we should make sure that we have not become over-attached to the substitute and forgotten the real thing. We should always remember that a substitute for the real thing might even be 'spiritual' or more abstract than the real thing, which is often earthly and material. After a period of addiction to the 'Sea of Wine' - to the transformation, the sublimation- the real thing may appear strange in its earthliness, it may seem banal and even threatening.

(Related cards: Card no. 5 "The Loyal Friend"; Card no. 6 "The Bard").

27. The Hand, The 'Land Card'

The 'Land Card' is the 'Hand' depicting a map of all worlds - in the realms of space, time and spirit. This is the card that symbolizes ultimate knowledge, the 'Supreme Teaching (*Torah*) - all there is to know about the order of things and the laws of change that manifest according to their real nature. This card may also symbolize any piece of knowledge that helps us to reach an understanding of the paths leading from one condition to another. These may be geographical paths or paths leading to psychological or spiritual reward. Sometimes there is knowledge hidden within us that should be exposed, and this card may point to it; sometimes there is a teaching waiting just around the corner for us to come and learn it. A fundamental point pertaining to the 'Land Card' is that as the knowledge deepens, it becomes even more significant that the Wise Man (the custodian of the 'Land Card') did not use the knowledge and all it symbolizes for his own gain, without the King's presence (see Card no. 1).

When this card appears in its negative aspect, it indicates that we should be cautious of becoming addicted to knowledge, for the sake of knowledge itself, of forgetting the innermost point due to excessive reverence for knowledge, especially of the esoteric kind. We should always be wary of the arrogance yielded by mastery over knowledge.

(Related cards: Card no. 7 "The Wise Man"; Card no. 17 "The Sect of Knowledge".)

28 The Mountain of Treasure

As its name suggests, this card symbolizes the immense treasures that we may find at our disposal. It does not matter whether these are spiritual, emotional or material treasures. What is certain is that treasure exists and we must know how to use it. We should always remember that the treasure is not really our own, even if it is under our care. Think carefully about how to make

the best use of each particular treasure. Sometimes our treasures are hidden, and we should remember that if we betray them, they will, in turn, betray us. It's treasures or troubles!*: If we do not deal with our treasures we will find ourselves in great trouble. Treasures are there so that we might understand how to use them - honestly, humbly and innocently. The card of The Mountain of Treasure represents vast potentiality; just like great monetary wealth can bring about change, and make things happen, so too can we find great potency in any treasure manifesting in our world. There may be endless opportunities if we'll only know how to use these treasures correctly.

In its negative aspect this card may symbolize a wrong attitude toward the treasure at our disposal. Might there not be mountains of untilled treasure amidst us, which are already beginning to rust or decay? Do we know how to act generously with respect to the treasures that we hold?

(Related cards: Card no. 8 "The Treasurer"; Card no. 18 "The Sect of Wealth").

29. The Bow

This card symbolizes the ability to stretch, to withstand tension, to aim well and then to let go - at just the right time, the right place and in the right manner. The hero's bow symbolizes the quality of masculine sexuality, in a very specific way. The bow shoots arrows just like the male sex organ discharges semen. The hero, owner of the bow, must learn to 'overcome his nature' - an art similar to that of archery. He must know how to be taut, full of energy, yet waiting, how not to be too eager to hit the target. Desire to hit the target is what destroys chance of real success. In Biblical Hebrew, the word 'hit' is one of the words used to mean 'prayer'. A 'hit' is a deep, close touch, as if the words *pagash* (met) and *naga* (touched) have joined together, melted into one and become *paga* (hit). We must learn to release the bowstring when the time is right, only then will the arrow meet its target and touch it deeply. The art of archery is the art of masculine sexuality, which is also present in the female form. It is also linked to the art of education and teaching. Words, carrying significant information, pass from teacher to student, from giver to receiver. These are the arrows, the seeds, and we need to know how and when to transfer them to the receiver in such a way that they will be accepted and absorbed - not through coercion, but as a blessing.

The Bow will appear in its negative aspect when this capacity is damaged. Then we tend to use the arrows at our disposal only to attain our goals. We sometimes use the bow to demonstrate our strength, to conquer, scattering arrows all around us - too often, and too many.

(Related cards: Card no. 9 "The Hero").

30. A Place Beyond the Settlement

This card symbolizes entry into a phase of deep inquiry about the true meaning of life. 'The Settlement' symbolizes the regular world where people live their lives, but (according to Rebbe Nahman) they are in a deep sleep ("seventy years of slumber"). Leaving the Settlement does not necessarily entail a physical journey to an isolated place. The card represents a mental leave-taking, venturing to a spiritual place that transcends the regular patterns of thought and life, to a place where life and meaning can be contemplated. Those who dwelled with the Master of Prayer beyond the Settlement concentrated purely on lucid inquiry into the essence of the

* Translator's note: Note the wordplay in the original Hebrew text: *otsarot o tsarot* (treasures or troubles)!

innermost point. Anything else, anything not connected to this search, becomes insignificant and superfluous. Life beyond the Settlement enables renewed examination of one's way of life. Things can change, a person may suddenly become 'someone else', undergo transformation. This may alarm people living within the Settlement. Life beyond the Settlement may often involve a connection with a venerable spiritual teacher, who guides any seekers through the processes of awakening. When this card appears in a problematic position in the reading, it may allude to inappropriate disconnection from this world, or even running away from it, and may also be a sign of over-attachment to a spiritual guide. This may be a sign that the time has come to return to the 'the settlement' and to work towards its rectification.

(Related cards: Card no. 10 "The Master of Prayer"; Card no. 20 "The Sect of Worshippers").

31. The Storm wind*

The storm wind creates upheaval. Things shift from place to place, capsize, change. Order is replaced with disorder, but this may be mere preparation for the emergence of a new order. The storm wind provides an opportunity to reshuffle life's cards. It may take us by surprise, forcing us into a new beginning and compelling us to undertake a journey geared to finding new order and meaning (a different kind of meaning from before the upheaval). Naturally, there is also a threatening and dangerous edge to the storm wind. It may penetrate our lives recklessly, without consideration or permission. But if we are able to accept it, not as a threat, but rather as an opportunity for change, learning and growth, then we will discover the immense potency brought by the storm wind, wherever it blows. The storm wind provides an opportunity for re-thinking, revitalization and renewal. At first, it may be frightening, as it usually catches us unawares and unprepared. It thrusts us into the process, hurls us into the most important journey of amending our lives. While chaos arises quickly, its rectification takes time and much patience and endurance is needed when walking the path.

When this card appears in its negative aspect it may symbolize situations of absent-mindedness, lack of concentration, lack of discipline and excessive dynamism, even disorderliness. One should bear in mind that the Storm Wind carries away the baby - primary innocence - to an unfamiliar place, causing the whole world to overturn.

(Related cards: Card no. 3 "The Baby").

32. The Way of the Sword

The sword is a renowned phallic symbol, often symbolizing violence and brutality. But the Hero's sword is not an ordinary sword - it is a sword that bestows mythical powers to the Hero. These mythical powers enable the Hero to fight without going to combat or even to win the battle without having to fight at all. The Way of the Sword symbolizes a way to enhance our powers. We all have a way, a path we walk that leads us to a place from which we can draw great strength, a mythical sense. The card of the Way of the Sword represents strengthening, empowerment - an ability to penetrate the depths and gain strength that goes beyond the ordinary relativity of the human world. This card may represent charisma or any kind of inner strength that manifests in us. It may signify a call to walk our path, to delve deeply inside, to

* Translator's note: In Hebrew, wind = *ruah*. The word *ruah* in Hebrew also means spirit.

penetrate places that transcend our regular journeys between work and home - places in the world or the spirit that empower us and remind us of whom we really are, what is our true value and why we have come to this world.

When The Way of the Sword appears in its negative aspect it may symbolize the misuse of power. Neglect or forsaking the ordinary, a priori world in favor of union with the soul's depths may be dangerous. Aggression and dominance may develop from such a union, or even addiction to these depths captivating energy, without awareness of the gap that always exists between the symbolic and the concrete. In the political realm, fascism, militarism and racism are frequently nourished by over-strengthening of inner forces, through deep identification with national mythology. A similar situation may occur on the personal level. Mythological empowerment of the inner forces must be well balanced with energy from 'the regular world'. If not, brutality will always arise. Therefore, one must know how to walk The Way of the Sword, as well as how and when to return. The Way of the Sword's is art closely linked to the art of fine dance, which creates just the right dynamic balance between the inner strength of the esoteric realms and the regular day-to-day world.

(Related cards: Card no. 9 "The Hero"; Card no. 18 "The Sect of Wealth"; Card no. 29 "The Bow").

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For discussion of issue relating to the cards, please visit the "Alternative Judaism" forum, run by Ohad Ezrahi on the Walla web site. This forum constitutes a general platform for discussion of issues relating to Jewish spiritual renewal.

Ohad Ezrahi, serving as the Rabbi of *Hamakom* Community & Retreat Center for the Study and experience of Jewish Wisdom, located at the Dead-Sea in the Judean Desert. He study workshops on the stories and the cards in Israel and abroad. Details regarding the next workshops can be found on the *Hamakom* website www.hamakom.org.il

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