

Shalom

(original in German)

Before going into details, I would like to make some preliminary remarks. One of the characteristics of the B.O.T.A study is to learn a system of correspondences or analogies, so that a specific symbol becomes the focal point of a set or range of symbols, thus attaining high significance, but at the same time enabling us to the finest differentiation. Each Tarot key and its correspondences teach us something about the real nature of the human being and of the Universal Spirit, as well as their relationship. The correspondences refer to the four elements, to the planets, to the twelve signs of the zodiac, to colours and to sounds. A special correspondence is that each Hebrew Letter represents a number at the same time. So the letters and the phrases also represent a number. This number is characteristic in the sense that words and phrases adding up to the same number show a close relationship, which is worth looking at and pondering about. And a last initial remark, there are two main models for the interaction of the Tarot keys, one is their arrangement as paths of the Tree of Life and the other is their arrangement on a cube: the centre, the principal axis, the faces and edges.

The topic for our triennial European meeting is health, in Hebrew Shalom, consisting of three letters Shin, Lamed, and Mem. Their meaning according to the dictionary is: to be ready, to be completed, to be finished, to be intact, and to be undamaged. Let us have a closer look at these three letters. Gesenius offers in his *Concise Dictionary about the Old Testament* the following meanings:

Undamaged, sound,

Complete, completed, as for instance of a building or a period of time,

Maintaining the peace, to maintain friendly relations with somebody,

To rehabilitate, to complete, to reimburse, to replace,

To fulfil a vow, to give thanks, to reward,

In the vocalization as Shalem it also means a sacrifice of peace or a sacrifice of alliance for special occasions.

In the vocalization as Shalom, habitually spelled with Vav, besides the meanings already mentioned, we also have: salvation, happiness, friendly or peaceful relation, to promote or cause peace.

Let us have a closer look at the letters according to the common methods, already known to some.

1. Shin

The numeric value of this letter is 300 and the value of the name Shin spelled fully is 360. 360 degrees form a full circle. This correspondence is strengthened by the number of the associated

Tarot Key 20. 20 is the number of the letter Kaph, attributed to Tarot Key 10, the Wheel of Fortune. The cycle of manifestation symbolized by the wheel is now complete and leads us to the understanding or insight that behind any manifestation there is the Primal Will to Good, that the ways of Heaven are above our ways “For as the heavens are higher than the earth” (Isaiah 55:9), but that it is our destiny to recognize the true relation that exists between our experiences, including the negative ones. The understanding of the wheel becomes our own experience. We see the truth and we live it. Key number 20 stands for the sixth stage of spiritual development or unfolding, the last step of the awareness still on the personal level, shortly before the union with the cosmic awareness. It stands for a state in which there remains an awareness of the everlasting presence of the Spirit and during which we ascend into a fourth dimension so to speak. Like in Key 20, where three figures raise upright from the three-dimensional coffins, our awareness raises into a new dimension. We experience the eternity of the Spirit, conscious immortality, when the Spirit is understood as the everlasting foundation of all manifestations and all awareness.

Shin is the third of the Mother Letters of the Hebrew alphabet and it is assigned to the element fire. The Hebrew alphabet knows three categories of letters:

- twelve single letters, associated to the twelve edges of the cube and the twelve zodiac signs.
- seven double letters, with two ways of pronunciation, (at least originally) still recognizable for example in the letter Beth with be and ve, which because of this two-dimensionality are assigned to the six faces and the center of the cube, as well as to the seven planets.
- and finally the Mother letters, which being considered three-dimensional are assigned to the coordinate lines or main axes of the cube as well as to the elements fire, water, and air.

Shin represents the axis of the energy and of the activity within the cube. It leads in the north to key 16, the tower, the explosive discharge of energy, and in the south to Key 19, the Sun, the regenerative force, whose children we are.

The letter Shin  stands for the fire and indeed resembles three flame tongues. Because of this connection to the “Fire of the Spirit”, the letter Shin is also called the “Holy Letter”. Its numeric value of 300 is identical to the numeric value of Ruach Elohim, “Life-Breath of the Divine Ones” or “Holy Spirit”. In many traditions and scriptures fire is a symbol for the presence of God or the “Divine voice issued from the Fire”.

The name Shin stands for tooth or even poisonous fang of a snake. This special poison is a remedy which allows the old human being to die so that a new one can be born. Also the access to the “Occult Might” requires this new human being. Besides, the action of chewing with the teeth initiates the dissolution of the form as hitherto and leads to the process of assimilation. Assimilation means absorption by a higher status and stands here for the fact that in our process of evolution it has to do less with the attainment of consciousness but with the assimilation of our awareness by and into a higher order of knowledge. The all-consuming fire of the “One Spirit” dissolves any consciousness of a separate identity and liberates us, so to say, into the fourth dimension beyond space and time.

“Shh...! is an admonition to keep silent. So the letter Shin also stands for the fourth of the occult counsels “to will, to know, to dare, to be silent”.

2. Lamed

Equilibrium is the basis for the Great Work. This occult precept stands behind all meanings of key 11. Related polar powers are brought into equilibrium. In doing so, equilibrium –according to its nature– can only be attained for a short period of time, because the movement of the “Life Energy” pushes toward further development. Otherwise there would be standstill and death, that is: no life. In order to bring about equilibrium we often have to create a counterweight first. When we understand the basic principle of a difficult situation we can, –according to the principle of polarity– concentrate on the positive aspects of this principle of which at first we had encountered the negative variation. Then we will succeed more easily to get out of the negative situation and to find a new equilibrium.

Key 11, “Justice” shows a seated female figure with a balance and a sword. The application of justice does not only require consideration and balance but also the use of the sword of distinctiveness and the drawing of clear lines of division without which no justice can be dispensed. In our own life the sword shall liberate us from futilities, attachments, prejudice, resentfulness, and rancour as well as from regret, which doesn’t lead us anywhere. The female figure stands for the creative power of imagination, as shown in Key 3. Imaginative strength grows from observation, skilled imagination, and practical capability. Both pillars, which are known to us from Key 2 of the High Priestess, are united here in the throne of justice, because she knows how to handle polarity, counterweight, and equilibrium. The grey color of the throne and the pedestal show that she acts on the basis of wisdom.

Lamed means “ox goad” and stands for control over an animal or for guidance or incitation. The same letters form the word Lemed, education, doctrine, culture, and knowledge. Not only is meant here the acquisition of manifold knowledge, but a knowledge that serves for our conduct of life to be determined by both “Higher Guidance” and also by “Inspiration”. The functions of the human personality as represented by this key 11 and by the letter Lamed serve the vital force to guide our actions.

The 32 paths of wisdom associate Key 11 with faith. Faith is an attitude of the soul. It is a basic trust in the benevolence of life. Thus faith guides us through the darkness and gives us the insurance that we are on the right track. We ought to have gained security about our knowledge and our insights to be able to remain unshaken in the hours of discouragement and despair. Faith has to be based upon knowledge. Faith also shows in our oaths. We learn that an oath given out of one’s own free will, forms a bond with the Order and the Inner school, and that it is the foundation of fidelity. Faith is also indispensable to uphold the conviction in the human ability for perfection and gradual refinement. Someone says: “Faith is the intuition of love looking for truth.” And from Plato we know that faith can see with the eyes of the spirit. Not only is our life a path into the unknown, but so is also the Great Work. To begin walking this path, we need faith into the goal and confidence into the principles according to which we work. And we need confidence into ourselves, which among other things we can draw from the achievements of the masters who went this way before us.

Already small actions or changes in our way of thinking and feeling can have effects. They may lead us out of the vicious circle of the negative and enable us little by little to enter a brighter world. As they say: "Hatred ends with Love."

3. Mem

The letter Mem is connected to the key 12. It shows a man suspended downwards with his head down. Nevertheless the youthful face is combined with the white hair of the emperor and the Hermit and points to the timelessness of the figure. The face is located underneath the surface of the ground, he sees through the surface of things and observes how the laws act, working behind delusive appearances. In consequence he doesn't act upon illusions, so that his judging and acting isn't based upon such misleading illusions, but upon the sight of the truth.

This Key stands for the law of reversal, renunciation of all materialism, from adhesion to external appearances. Especially it stands for a halt of our habitual being. The calming of thought, its suspension which interrupts the continuous creation of chains of thought, as done usually by meditation, does not lead to a control of our spirit, but to a complete change in our experience, our roll within the world. We recognize our being dependent upon the universal life force; recognize that our consciousness is part of the eternal, universal consciousness, but that also our will is part of the divine will. Only error and illusion keep us away from the right view and attitude. The enlightenment about this fact is indicated by the glory around the head of the man. The Book of Tokens says: "For when the surface of those waters is disturbed by no slightest ripple of thought, then shall the glory of my Self, which is the true Self, be mirrored unto thee." The man is suspended upon wooden beams, which form the letter Tav. Tav is also called the Administrative Intelligence. What is meant here is that the exterior stillness doesn't stand for somebody who retracts himself in a selfish way from the world and gives in to his dreams. Here the suspension of all activity stands for the adept becoming one with the principle that holds up all manifestations and that he takes part in the cosmic administration, its burden, but also in the joy of the dance of life.

Mem is one of the three mother letters of the Hebrew language and signifies Water. Water mirrors and thus turns things around. Water represents the third aspect of being, next to the fiery energy and to consciousness, and stands for its substance aspect. It flows into forms and retracts again dissolving the form. Identical to water it moves in waves, forms currents and whirls. Patanjali calls it chitta, the Thought Substance.

Mem as a mother letter is attributed to one of the three coordinate lines or principal axis of the cube. It connects the centre of the Eastern plane, which stands for Key 3, The Empress, with the centre of the Western Plane, Key 10, the Wheel of Fortune. The water of Mem is the current of the substance, which on the one hand flows from the spiritual origins, for which the East and Key 3 stand. On the other hand this current of the substance enters into the manifestation, symbolized by the West and Key 10. We experience this as a system of events connected to each other, thus forming the mechanism of the cosmos.

4. The connection of Fire and Water - SheM

When we connect the fire Shin and the water Mem, we obtain a word, SheM, which means Name. It is used as a short description for the name of God IHVH and his developments. It is also

described as “Shem ha-mephorash”, in reality the explicit or full name, later also as the unpronounceable or lost name. According to tradition this name had to be pronounced in a certain way to deploy its effect. The vocalization of the name had to be permuted in a certain way. According to the old book Bahir, the vowels indeed are in the consonants like the soul in the human body – and it is only with this soul, which has been drawn down via the sacrifice through the upper channels, that the letters can fulfill their work.

The invocation of the name of God produces a connection with the original source of the being. It is an essential means to reach unification with the eternal and it’s Shekhinah.

5. Shalom

In a Jewish encyclopaedia we find: “It is impossible to condense “Shalom,” as the vital arrangement of the world within the political, judicial, cultural, social and creative context, into a single term of modern languages. Its many aspects which express in its broadest sense: safe wellbeing, luck, tranquillity, and safety –are very close to what in the Old Israel was understood as the embodiment of benediction.

Shalom is a greeting and a wish, used since the oldest times for the wellbeing of the other. Shalom is the consequence of the confidence in IHVH: “and the work of Justice shall be Shalom and the effect of Justice, quietness and assurance forever.” (Isaiah.32, 17)

The way we handle the elements described in Shin, Lamed and Mem plays a key role in reaching or maintaining the Shalom status in our life. One part is to hear God’s voice out of the silence, issued from the fire, which transforms us. Another central aspect is the search for equilibrium and to have confidence in us and in our path. A third aspect consists in walking new ways. We frequently hinder our own development because we cling to ideas whose harmful nature has been proven.

The path of return is a path to unity. We can walk such a path day after day in our daily life. To this effect I would like to refer to the legend about Henoch, esteemed by Cabalists. Henoch is only briefly mentioned in Gen.5:24, but has led to extensive literature and, among others things, to the imagination that he has accompanied the Humans as a High teacher of wisdom.

To the question by which merits Henoch has achieved to be raised to being an angel of the highest level, a teacher answered: “He has achieved it because Henoch was a shoemaker, who sewed shoes. And for each hole, which he pierced with the awl into the leather, he blessed the name of God from all his heart and with untainted intention, and by doing so, has drawn the blessing onto the emanated Metatron. And never has he forgotten to bless, not for a single hole. So he always did, out of pure love, until he was not there any longer because God had taken him away, and in such a way was it bestowed upon him to be named Metatron and his station is very high.”

Rabbi Mosche Cordovero has commentated it as: “By means of his activities on earth the human causes that the Merkavah, the Throne Carriage of God, that is to say the Sefirot, becomes One. And it was the same with Metatron. It is said, that he reached such a high station, because he was a sewer of shoes and that he had invoked a blessing in favor of the superior Sefiroth at each hole he had pierced with the awl. Because he united Malkhuth, which is called shoe, with

Tiphereth by way of all the channels of Tiphereth, which are suggested by all the holes pierced into the leather.”

The Chassidic teachers have continued this way. So said the Baal Shem Tov: “All that thy hand finds to do, do it with thy strength (Ecclesiastes 9:10).” Henoah caused with each seam a unification of the Holy, blessed be he, with his Shekhinah...and by doing so he connects the material doings of the lower world by way of thought... with the superior, the spiritual world. And by doing so he fulfilled the commandment: “In all thy ways acknowledge him (Proverbs 3:6).” Human actions have to be accompanied by a certain way of thought and by a certain intention, to be conceived as a Religious Service. What does this way of thought consist of? It is the recognizing thought of the knowledge of the Divine presence. This knowledge annuls the separation of things and lets them be recognized as being filled by the divine. Consequently the determining key lies within us, it is our recognition, our behavior, our intention, that allows us or not to walk the way of Unity.

During this meeting, we will try to walk this way of Unity together and to discuss and to live ways and methods. May the Peace of this Unity spread its blessing wings upon this meeting and may we feel well in the garden of Shalom.

Shalom.

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