

THE COSMIC TAROT

KEY NUMBER NINE

THE HERMIT



The 9th Card of the Sacred Tarot has been referred to in the past as the Old Man, or Wisdom, or the Monk, but today it is known as The Hermit, a wise-looking older man who is seeking the truth. He is wrapped in a cloak and holding a staff in one hand; and in the other he is holding up a lantern. He is a Wanderer, living the solitary life of a man on a spiritual pilgrimage, and at the same time he is also a beacon of light for others.

It has been said that his lantern is the light of reason and knowledge, while his cloak is the protective garment of self-realization, and his wooden staff symbolizes his connection to the earth, and the living forces of nature.

He has been associated with various wise men of the past, such as the Thrice Blessed Hermes Trismegistus, King Solomon the wise, and in more recent times to the Rosenkreuz, the founder of the Rosicrucians, whose body was found to have been discovered perfectly preserved when his tomb was opened more than a hundred years after his burial. It could also be seen that the Hermit is an older version of the entity depicted in the First Card: **The Magician.**

The Hermit is a recluse, withdrawn from the world, living in austerity and purity, and devoted to spiritual thoughts and pursuits. Often times he makes an appearance in entities' lives, when they are in need of counsel and wise advice. He can shine his light of truth and wisdom and reveal the secret nature of the universe.

If you seek the wisdom of the Hermit, or the Wise One, the Ancient One, you must be careful that you have a pure intent. Entities who seek the Wise One in order to receive gambling tips or advice on which stock to invest their earnings in would be advised that this type of information is not the type and kind that is given by the Hermit, who is a seeker of Truth with a Capital T, and Spiritual Wisdom.

The number 9 is a number of completions because it is the last of the numbers before the number 10, where the sequence reinitiates itself and begins again with the number one. The Hermit is complete in himself, and some have even said that he is absorbed in self-love, even to the point of Narcissism. If you recall, the story of Narcissus was about a young man who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool, became fixated on it, and died.

In today's world it is rare to be a hermit. There is too much noise and information, and stimulation comes from all around, in every which way. People absorb so much information now with the advent of movies and television, and the speeding up of time, that it can become very confusing for many, and some get lost in all the information, and lose their sense of self. In this day and age, it is easier than ever before to forget who, in fact, you really are.

(Ed's Note: this was of course way before the advent of the Internet or what is known as the Information Super Highway, and long before the terrorist take-over of people's minds and lives by Cell Phones... Joking.....)

If you are a Buddhist, then you are not a stranger to solitude as there are long periods of solitary retreat that are often advised by the religion. However, modern society views solitude as a punishment, a torture designed to push a person to the limits of madness. When a person commits a crime he is sent to prison. If he breaks the rules of the prison then he is removed from the common area, removed from the cell he shares with others and is put into solitary confinement. Being alone with yourself in darkness is perhaps considered the greatest punishment of all.

The monk and the hermit *choose* this lifestyle in order to explore the limits of their being. All spiritual traditions have produced hermits—the lone travelers or wanderers who spend years of continuous meditation and contemplation, but this is a path few choose to pursue, despite the clarity of mind that may come from such solitude.

The Hermit holds the lamp of truth, the Light of intelligence that shines out for others who would walk this solitary spiritual path. Inspired artistic creations often come from such periods of solitary contemplation away from the noisy smelly crazy crowds, far away from the surrealistic circus of life.

Intense isolation can bring clarity of mind, an inner vision and a sense of purpose, and this is reflected in the journey of Jesus the Christed One when he went into the desert to fast for forty days and 40 nights. In this act of austerity and self-sacrifice, he had several visions and was tempted to use his power in selfish ways, but he remained focused on Higher Truths, and attained even greater understanding of his true nature.

This is also reflected on the vast continent of India where holy men known as Saddhus often tune in to the Hindu God Shiva who lives alone on the top of a mountain and who is the Lord of Yoga. These holy men of India, these Saddhus receive boons from their god when they deny themselves the pleasures of a normal life. This can even go to the extreme point of self-mortification, such as is popularly practiced by

the Fakirs, whose arms wither from lack of use and remain locked in a stiff position, and fingernails and hair grow as long as the body is tall.

This Awareness indicates that in the western world, as life becomes more hectic, the idea of a spiritual retreat seems more and more seductive, even if only for a week or two. Spending time in a monastery or hiking out in the wilderness can help provide a breathing space from the crazy pace of modern life. There is much to be gained from such interludes, such brief withdrawals from the whirlwind forces of the world. But a brief return to calmness, wholeness and wellness of the being, is but a distant echo of the life of the Hermit.

Being alone with your own thoughts, for many, is a novel idea! Modern men and women are not familiar with so much silence or such a dramatic change in his or her routines. In fact, for individuals today, noise has become a constant. In the big city, the decibel rate is so loud, that it is a deafening maddening roar, but still most people living in the city seem unaware of this, and are somehow able to tune it out and continue functioning.

It isn't until they journey out into the wilderness to discover true silence that they become astonished by a strange sound that they keep hearing inside of their heads. This ringing in the ears is the city which they have left behind, and yet it has not yet left them, and has followed them persistently into the wilderness.

It is the collective din from all the automobiles, and the airplanes and the buses and sirens, and the rock and roll music that is played so loud that it hurts the ears, and this will continue ringing in their ears for days and sometimes weeks, until it slowly dies away as the ears begin to actually hear something that has eluded them throughout their lifetime, and that 'something' is called 'silence'. Stillness.

There was a man who many may not be familiar with, but he was a Wanderer and a seeker, and a composer of music, and he dedicated a great amount of time trying to find perfect silence, but he couldn't seem to find it. This man's name was Cage. He would go to cathedrals and appreciate the quiet, but would become distracted by the sound of the wind, or the prayers of the devotees. He would venture underground in caverns, but still hear the sound of water dripping or the occasional creature as it went scavenging for food.

This man Cage continued in his search to find total silence, and finally he was told that a new bank vault was designed to be totally sound proof. So he received permission to go inside the vault and spend time there, and the creators of this vault were very proud and convinced that he would not hear any sound at all.

However, when he came out of the vault, he told the press and the bank authorities that their vault was very well constructed, but he had definitely heard sounds. When pressed to describe these sounds he later said, that it was the sound of his own blood pumping and the hum of his own nervous system.

His quest for perfect silence had reached its end, because there was sound and activity at the very heart and mind of the individual himself.

This story, although true, is also allegorical in nature. Humans may never find absolute silence, but they can find relative quiet and stillness, and from that can evolve peace and tranquility, and a harmonious mind that is finally liberated from the prison of noise.

This Awareness indicates this is how the Buddha found enlightenment, as he sat beneath the Bodhi tree, watching the river flow past him. He became aware of the nature of time, and how it is like a river, and the nature of the depths of his own being, how it is like a living tree with many branches that is rooted to the life-giving soil, or soul.

This Awareness indicates that the hermit symbolizes the part of the self that needs to be isolated, that needs solitude, and that needs to be alone. Being alone does not necessarily mean being lonesome or lonely, but this Awareness indicates even periods of loneliness can give strength of conviction, if you can remember to breathe and remember who, in fact, you really are. You are never really alone, because you are part of Divine Intelligence and Divine Being, the All & Everything.

The Hermit is there to remind you of this fact, and he can manifest as a stranger who gives you advice, a spiritual being, an illuminated one who reminds you of the possibilities inherent in your life. Spiritual truth is often represented by a light in the darkness: the sacred flame that shines for those who are seeking it. The Hermit is a solitary seeker, absorbed in the search for self. He guards his light, but he keeps it shining outside, as if his goal could be found in the external world.

There is a famous Sufi story of Mullah Nasreddin, the great Idiot/Wiseman teacher ... He was found by one of his disciples one night on his hands and knees under a street lamp. He appeared to be looking for something. "What are you looking for?" asked the student.

"My wallet!" says Nasreddin. The student got down on all fours and began searching for the wallet with his teacher, and after an hour of this, the student became frustrated and asked the Mullah, "Are you sure that you lost it here?"

"No!" says Nasreddin, "In fact, I lost it somewhere else. But it is too dark to look there now. However, it is much lighter here by the street lamp, so I am looking here instead!"

This Awareness indicates that this amusing tale can be said to illustrate the notion that often the most difficult thing is to see what lies right before your eyes!

There of course are negative examples of how solitude can affect a person's life. A person, who is seething with anger and frustration because of events and actions perpetrated by others against him or herself, can withdraw from society only to nurse these wounds and hatreds, and come back into the world with a clearer sense of how to extract vengeance from his imagined enemies.

This Awareness indicates this is not wisdom. The entity that seeks vengeance for grievances, is not a seeker of wisdom, but is acting out of ignorance and is unaware of his or her, own true nature. Things that happen in your lives happen for a reason, even if you cannot understand it at the time.

True Wisdom is that which allows you to see and know the higher truth of things, even if only for a fleeting instant. For that brief but eternal moment you are touched by the illuminating Light of the Truth, and at that very instant, the way you see yourself and the world can change, if you allow it, and if you remain open to it.

Change is what all seekers of wisdom are looking for—a change of heart, a change of mind, a change of attitude, a change in the way one expresses oneself, a change in the way they are perceived by others, a change in the way they look at themselves. Like pieces of a puzzle, each fragment of truth that comes your way can be assembled and integrated into the bigger picture, and this can be a map, or a model, a paradigm that you can focus on and move toward in your heart, in your mind, in your being.

Like an actor, you can strip away the makeup of the character you have been playing, and remove the wig, and the clothing that made you recognizable as that character you have been portraying, and you can become someone new. You can apply new make-up, and a new wig, or you can remove all of the deceptions and face the future with an open mind and an open heart. Thus, you will become the New Being.