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3. MAJOR ARCANA CARD MEANINGS

outcome of the reading was The High Priestess, then the reading is saying, “you are in good hands and in a high quality mode of transport, you will be safe.”

ESOTERIC MEANING

The High Priestess reaches deeper than the magical imagery of the Magician. Whereas the Magician has his tools of magic and is reaching for power, the High Priestess is surrounded by Divine power and holds the knowledge of that Divine power in her hands.

She sits between the two bronze pillars of Boaz and Jachin (Yakin), the two freestanding pillars that once stood at the porch of the Temple of Solomon.¹ The pillar that stands to her right² is Boaz, which in Hebrew, in the context of Solomon’s temple, is thought to mean “proceed in Strength”³ and the pillar to her left, Jachin (Yakin) is thought to mean “He will establish.”⁴ Each word, however, had various applications and language meaning changes over the millennia. Magically, though, it makes perfect sense: if the High Priestess sits within the Tree of Life,⁵ then Gevurah (The Strength/Justice of G-D) would be to her right, while Chesed (the Kindness and covenant of G-D)⁶ would be to her left.

This dynamic is further strengthened by the word and name Boaz: in Jewish Kabbalah, words and names can convey many layered meanings, and Boaz appears as a person in the Book of Ruth. A small part of the story around Boaz tells that even though he is a prince,

¹Josephus *Antiquitates Judaicae* VIII 3:4

²The observer’s left side.

³In Hebrew Bo (בּוֹ) come or go, Az (אֶז) strength.

⁴In Hebrew Yakin (יָכִין) : Masculine; he will establish.

⁵The mundane person looks at the Tree of Life, the priest, priestess, or Hierophant sits within the Tree.

⁶*Psalms* 25:10 “all YHWH’s paths are Chesed and truth for those who keep the decrees of his covenant”

he oversees the threshing of the grain.¹ This reflects the dynamic of Strength/Justice of G-D (Gevurah): YHWH threshes his harvest. In magical practice, the right hand is the hand of your own harvest and the left hand is the hand of your path ahead/future action.

So we see the High Priestess sitting at the porch of the temple of Solomon. In parts of the ancient world, the porch of the temple was the place where judges would sit to give judgement in high profile cases,² where religious teachers would talk with students, and where philosophers would sit to debate. The High Priestess sits in that powerful position surrounded by sacred and magical imagery. In her hands she holds a Torah scroll, and she sits in the central position³ between the pillars of Strength and Mercy.

The magical reading of the High Priestess is of a power or person who is seated in balance with the Divine, who reaches into the inner worlds, who holds the sacred knowledge and law in her hands. She mediates between the inner sanctum of the temple and the people beyond the porch. It can represent the inner qualities of the soul of a person, regardless of their outer personality: the deep soul of the person flows through a life fate pattern to achieve what it needs to achieve. Sometimes the Goddess appears as an old bag lady. When the High Priestess appears in a reading, don't take things at face value: deeper, more profound powers of balance are at work.

The Seven stars to light you,
Or the Polar ray to right you.

— John Keats⁴

¹Tan., Behar, ed. Buber, viii.; Ruth R. to iii. 7

²For example in New Kingdom Egypt where the highest ranking judge was the 'Judge of the Porch.'

³The position of Tiphareth on the Tree of Life, the position of balance, the fulcrum of the scales.

⁴J. Keats (1820). "Robin Hood: To a Friend". In: *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*. London: Taylor and Hessey, pp. 133–136.