

Lec. 224 Pg. 1.

Beloved Companion:

GEBURAH, THE FIFTH SEPHIRAH.

TITLE: Geburah, Strength, Severity.

MAGICAL IMAGE: A mighty warrior in his chariot.

SITUATION ON THE TREE: In the centre of the Pillar of Severity.

YETZIRATIC TEXT: The Fifth Path is called the Radical Intelligence because it resembles Unity, uniting itself to Binah, Understanding, which emanates from the primordial depths of Chokmah, Wisdom.

TITLES GIVEN TO GEBURAH: Din: Justice. Pachad: Fear.

GOD-NAME: Elohim Gebor.

ARCHANGEL: Khamael.

ORDER OF ANGELS: Seraphim; fiery serpents.

MUNDANE CHAKRA: Madim: Mars.

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE: Vision of Power.

VIRTUE: Energy: Courage.

VICE: Cruelty: Destruction.

CORRESPONDENCE IN THE MICROCOSM: The right arm.

SYMBOLS: The Pentagon: The five-petalled Tudor Rose: The Sword: The Spear: The Scourge: The Chain.

TAROT CARDS: The four fives.

- FIVE OF WANDS: Strife.
- FIVE OF CUPS: Loss in pleasure.
- FIVE OF SWORDS: Defeat.
- FIVE OF PENTACLES: Earthly trouble.

One of the least understood things in Christian philosophy is the problem of evil; and one of the things least adequately dealt with in the Christian ethic is the problem of force, or severity, as contrasted with mercy and mildness. Consequently Geburah, the Fifth Sephirah, which has for additional titles Din: Justice, and Pachad: Fear, is one of the least understood of all the Sephiroth, and is consequently one of the most important. Were it not that the Qabalistic doctrine explicitly lays it down that all the Ten Sephiroth are holy, there are many who would be inclined to look upon Geburah as the evil aspect of the Tree of Life. Indeed, the planet Mars, whose sphere is the mundane chakra of Geburah, is

called in astrology an infortune.

Those however, who are instructed beyond the crude pretty-pretty of a wish-fulfilling philosophy, know that Geburah is by no means the Enemy or Adversary described in Scripture, but the king in his chariot going forth to war, whose strong right arm protects his people with the sword of righteousness and ensures that justice shall be done. Chesed, the king on his throne, the father of his people in times of peace, may win our love, but it is Geburah, the king in his chariot going forth to war, who commands our respect. Sufficient justice has not been done to the part played by the sentiment of respect in the emotion of love. We have a kind of love for the person who can put the fear of God into us, should occasion arise, which is of quite a different quality, is far more steadfast and permanent, and, curiously enough, far more emotionally satisfying, than the love with which no tinge of awe is mingled. It is Geburah that supplies the element of awe, of the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, and of a general wholesome respect which helps us to keep to the straight and narrow way and calls forth our better nature because we know our sins will find us out.

This is a factor to which the Christian ethic, as popularly understood, does not give sufficient weight; and because the general tone of Christian society is biassed against the holy Fifth Sephirah, it will be necessary to consider its place in relation to the Tree, and the part it plays in both spiritual and social life in considerable detail; for it is ill-understood, and this absence of understanding of the Geburah-factor is the cause of many of our difficulties in modern life.

Geburah holds the central position on the Pillar of Severity; it therefore represents the katabolic, or down-breaking aspect of force. Katabolism, be it remembered, is that aspect of metabolism, or the life-process, which is concerned with the release of force in activity. It has been said that good is that which is constructive, which builds up, and evil is that which is destructive, which breaks down. How false this philosophy is we see when we try to classify a cancer and a disinfectant according to its principles. In the deeper, more philosophical teaching of the Mysteries we recognize that good and evil are not things in themselves, but conditions. Evil is simply misplaced force; misplaced in time, if it is out of date, or so far ahead of its day as to be impracticable. Misplaced in space if it turns up in the wrong place, like the burning coal on the hearth-rug or the bath water through the drawing-room ceiling. Misplaced in proportion, if an excess of love makes us silly and sentimental; or a lack of love makes us cruel and destructive. It is in such things as these that evil lies, not in a personal Devil who acts as Adversary.

Geburah the Destroyer, the Lord of Fear and Severity, is therefore as necessary to the equilibrium of the Tree as Chesed, the Lord of Love, and Netzach, the Lady of Beauty. Geburah is the Celestial Surgeon, He is the Knight in shining armour, the dragon-slayer; beautiful as a bridegroom in his strength to the maiden in distress; though no doubt the dragon might have preferred a little more love.

The initiations of the Infortunes, Saturn, Mars, and the deceptive Yesod, are just as necessary to the evolution and balanced development of the soul as are the Mysteries of the Crucifixion assigned to Tiphareth. It is the one-sidedness of Christianity which is its bane, and is responsible for so much that is unsound and pathological in

both our national and our private lives. But equally, we must not forget that Christianity came as a corrective to a pagan world that was sick unto death with its own toxins. We need what Christianity has to give; but also, unfortunately, we cannot do without that which it lacks. Let us now consider the astringent, corrective influence of Geburah.

Dynamic energy is as necessary to the welfare of society as meekness, charity, and patience. We must never forget that the eliminatory diet, which will restore health in disease, will produce disease in health. We must never exalt the qualities which are necessary to compensate an overplus of force into ends in themselves and the means of salvation. Too much charity is the handiwork of a fool; too much patience the hall-mark of a coward. What we need is a just and wise balance which makes for health, happiness, and sanity all round, and the frank realisation that sacrifices are necessary to obtain it. You cannot eat your cake and have it in the Cosmic sphere any better than anywhere else.

Geburah is the sacrificial priest of the Mysteries. Now sacrifice does not mean giving up something that is dear to you because a jealous God will brook no rival interests in His devotees and is flattered by your pain. It means the deliberate and open-eyed choice of a greater good in preference to a lesser good, as the athlete prefers the fatigue of exercise to the ease of the sloth that puts him out of condition. Coal burned in a furnace is sacrificed to the god of steam power. Sacrifice is really the transmutation of force; the latent energy in the coal offered up on the sacrificial altar of the furnace is transmuted into the dynamic energy of steam by means of the appropriate machinery.

There is both psychological and cosmic machinery available in connection with every act of sacrifice which converts it into spiritual energy; and this spiritual energy can be applied to other mechanisms and re-appear on the planes of form as an entirely different type of force to that as which it started.

For instance, a man sacrifices his emotions to his career; or a woman sacrifices her career to her emotions. If the cut is clean, and there is no repining, an immense amount of psychic energy is released for use in the chosen channel. But if the lesser desire is merely inhibited and denied expression and not really laid upon the altar of sacrifice as a deliberate free-will offering, the unfortunate victim has made the worst of both worlds. It is here that we need Geburah to come like the priest that takes the sacrifice from our hands, even if it be our first-born, and offers it up to God with the quick, clean, merciful stroke. For Geburah, in the microcosm, which is the soul of man, is the courage and resolution that frees us from the taint of self-pity.

How badly do we need the Spartan virtues of Geburah in this age of sentimentality and the neuroses. How many break-downs would be saved if this Celestial Surgeon were permitted to make the clean cut that has a chance to heal, and so avoid the deadly compromise and irresolution that is like an open wound and so often goes septic.

And again, if there be no strong hand at the service of good in the world, evil would multiply. Though it is not well to quench smoking flax when the flax is making an effort; it is equally evil to put up with the smouldering when what it really wants is the use of the poker and bellows. There is a place where patience becomes weak-

ness and wastes the time of better men, and when mercy becomes folly and exposes the innocent to danger. The policy of non-resistance of evil can only be pursued satisfactorily in a well-policed society; it has never been tried with success under frontier conditions. For nature, red in tooth and claw, wears the colour of Geburah; whereas the compensatory civilisation is of Chesed, Mercy, which modifies the unrestricted force and mutual destructiveness of all that is in the Geburah phase of its development. But equally we must remember that civilisation rests upon Nature as a building rests upon its foundations, wherein is concealed the sanitation so necessary to health.

Whenever there is anything that has outlived its usefulness, Geburah must wield the pruning-knife; wherever there is selfishness, it must find itself impaled on the spear-point of Geburah; wherever there is violence against the weak, or the merciless use of strength, it is the sword of Geburah, not the orb of Chesed that is the most effectual counteractant; wherever there is sloth and dishonesty, Geburah's sacred scourge is needed; and where there is a removal of the landmarks set for our neighbor's protection, it is the chain of Geburah that must restrain.

These things are as necessary to the health of society and of the individual as brotherly love, and a good deal rarer, used medicinally and not vengefully, in our sentimental age. Someone has got to cry 'halt' to the aggressor, and 'move on' to those who are blocking the way, and that someone is functioning as a priest in the sphere of the holy Fifth Sephirah.

In the Bonds of the Eternal Brotherhood.