**Ten of Wands in The Tarot of Fire**

 

In April 2011 the apartment building I lived in burned down. In true tarot fashion, the cards became part of my healing process. The Tarot of Fire had been released. I decided that healing fire with fire was just too hot not to do so I ordered the deck. I was filled with the hope of healing and the curiosity of a tarot lover. And so it was finally opened. Alas, as wondrous as I found the images and the concept to be, I was not ready to deal with the deck. The fire was not yet two months behind me and I was not even back in my body. So the deck was put on my altar and has lived there till tonight.

My life continued to be filled with more stress and more heart breaking events, so the deck that I had hoped would help me heal was not touched. Just recently, some space has opened for me to finally take the time I need to deal with all of the ‘events’ that have taken, little by little, just the smallest pieces of my spirit. I have begun the journey to retrieve my lost soul and to find some way back to being present and grounded in my life to move forward. So tonight I opened that box again and began to get to know the deck that I invited into my life to help me become whole and undo some of the harms I have experienced.

Immediately, the cards reminded me of the Haindle deck in their beauty and foreign feel to one who was weaned on the Rider-Waite deck. I decided to make a pile of the cards that struck me the most. The first one to do so was the 10 of Wands.

Unlike many decks, these Minor Arcana cards do not have the corresponding images of the suits for the number on the card but are notated on the top of each card. This deck is about depicting the story behind the meaning of each card as it is its own entity.

There was such a difference between what my brain was used to seeing with the 10 of Wands and what this picture was that I was stunned yet tickled at the same time. There was no visual similarity to be found. It was time to do some sleuthing. The way to deconstruct an image is to look at the elements separately and then put them back together and see how they relate; but first I wanted to look at the picture as a whole and get a general impression.

It is dark, somber, anticipatory, dramatic, ominous, dialectical, religious, elevated. There is a feeling of passivity and action, intent and observation, death and transmutation but clearly in the guise of religious ritual. The animals were placed on the altars, presumably by these two very different characters with, seemingly, different life orientations. There is purpose and some closure to this scene also. Sacrifice is an ending but also a commencement of sorts as well. Cleansing for a new start sort of thing? And that stylized lightning bolt! Is that the spirit of the animal being pulled from the body and forming a ghostly specter? The lightning strikes and then retreats, it accepts the gift and leaves the wrapping. We cannot see the figures faces, the eyes that show one’s soul. We only see the back. What is being hidden from us that we must discover by some other means? We face the scene along with them which in some sense brings us into the energy along with these enigmatic folk.

The tenth sefirot(energy center) on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life is called Malchut. Malchut is the lowest and closest in direction to our earthly plane on the tree. Malchut’s world is Assiyah-the lowest of the five spiritual worlds. We are on Malchut.

Each tarot card has a place on the tree which corresponds to its number, in the case of the Minor Arcana and corresponding qualities regarding the placement of the Court Cards and Major Arcana. This adds a level of complexity toward understanding them depending on their tree placement. Each suit is ascribed to one of the spiritual worlds that surround the Tree as well.

The Suit of Wands lives in the highest spiritual world which is Aztilut. Think of that world as the world of the archetype for a quick and easy simplification. So how comfortable could it be to have so much Wand energy, the suit of inspiration, closeness to intuitive beingness, fire of spirit, faith, creativity and sexuality stuffed into the mundane everyday earthly plane. And yes, the Earth is divine; but for our purposes here we are referring to the earth as a plane of consciousness in relation to our mere mortal path of enlightenment in our own little heads and souls. How can our little containers contain all that, and how can Wand energy find a place here without wanting to run for the hills or clouds in this case?

It is not the natural inclination of fire to remain staid and contained. Fire wants to rise and spread and sear and travel. I would know, remember what got me to this deck to begin with. When you hear the sizzle and see the flames lick above your head, you know fire has a power that does not like to be questioned.

Ten is also the number of completion. The end of road, or rather our quaking fingers that grasp for meaning. But 10 is also the Hebrew letter Yud which depicts the energy of the highest spiritual realm, Aztilut, and the highest sefirot,Keter-as opposed to Malchut, on the Tree of Life. In the RW deck the wands have new growth on them. These little green leaves are meant to represent Keter. So, it would seem that card is also about a new starting off point. Ten is also the first number to be comprised to two numbers. This has a potential for joining and for splitting.

So the figure in the WR is struggling to keep hold of the Wands that look as if they are in imminent danger of flying away. Is your inspiration, creativity, spirit or sexuality so overwhelming that you cannot contain it. Is it too big for you to apprehend, or are you not apprehending it at all so that you cannot even see what it is front of you? Inspiration, the fire of intuition and spirit is not enough when you are on Malchut. You need to give it earthly form and do something with it or you are in danger of becoming a disheveled, disorganized you know what. And that is a heavy load to bear.

Now the other way to look at this is to view this very tired looking figure of making too much of a big deal about carrying these ‘sticks’. Why the drama of such a struggling pose when, truth be told, the wands are not even touching the ground? This figure is holding them aloft, so what is all the drama about? You are done; you are number 10; just get on with it already. Whatever task, whatever path you are set to do, just do it. You clearly have the strength for it because you are lifting a bunch of tree limbs off the ground and still managing to move forward despite all the spiritual leafery growing from those twigs you have bundled! You are managing not to fly into the air and land somewhere else, Oz perhaps? But they do reach the same conclusion-there is something left for you to deal with. You can move forward in glorious manner or stay mired in energy that you are not using correctly.

How can I possibly apply this meaning to ***that*** card? And should I even assume that the creator of the Tarot of Fire even ascribed the same meaning? Well, I do not know that, but I am going to make a grand presumption and assume this is partly case. This way I will have something to chomp on that perhaps I can walk away with. Please excuse the mixed metaphor but these to cards side by side are mixing me up!

Okay, here it goes. She sighs, picks up the card and whines, “Speak to me!” Nothing, bupkus. There is both Malchut/Assiya, the figures on the ground looking up at the altar and the altar with the animals which is on a higher level, Atzilut. Or is the mountain between the altars Atzilut and the altars the right and left columns of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life respectively. Or should I just stop with the Kabbalah stuff for a bit as not all Tarot people deal with it.

The sacrifices are being performed in the natural setting, not the expected structured and religious fashion that the figures clothing would express. This is also an image of progress and process, at least potentially, because there is a natural ‘staircase’. Three steps: the figures, the altars and the mountain. What are you being asked to step up to? Yourself and higher nature and a more clarified way of being?

The lightening from above is the equivalent of the blooming tree branch wands of the RW deck. Might the animals be an illustration of the dichotomy and tension between Atzilut/Keter and Assiya/Malchut?(there I go again). The animal that seems to be accepted as a sacrifice belongs to the religious looking figure as they are in line with each other. The other figure looks like a warrior type although there is a vague religious feeling to the dress as well, but I cannot see it clearly as the print on the card is quite dark.

What is being sacrificed here, or is the sacrifice less about theology but rather some sort of contest between the two. Which will be accepted, who will win? Will you be consumed by the fire or will you partner with it, tame it from afar so to speak. Will you carry the ashes of the sacrifice as a balm to your spirit and path or will you continue to be weighed down to a thing that wants to fly to be transmuted by the fire. I, myself would not want to carry around a rather large dead thing, or is that poor creature even dead? Were they dead when they were placed on their respective alters. I do not see any blood. These two characters are really leaving a lot up to the ‘powers that be’. They have come to the end of the road for now and whatever happens on this altar will then determine the next spate of movement. Take a moment to stand in expectation and wait. There is a mountain even higher in the background that is yet to scale perhaps?

But now comes the ‘real’ question. How would I interpret the card in a reading? Gulp, swallow, yikes!

The first to come to mind was an issue of faith. This is a chance for you to take a leap of faith across the abyss and perhaps let Spirit support you. You have a choice to stay where you are or let go of what has been holding you back. Offer it up and let the fire of the 10 of Wands illuminate your path. This can be applied to creativity, sexuality and the rest of what issues the Wands address. Basically, this is a chance to find your true path. There is a lot of energy here. Will you work with it or be out of balance and overwhelmed by it?

Well, that is kind of what the ‘traditional’ meaning says. Now it is time to open the little pamphlet that came with the deck and see what really is going on here. This is my moment of truth to see if I have those Tarot chops. This is what it said:

“Ten: the lightning bolt points to the true God of Mount Carmel. The divine sign. Challenge one’s own ideals in order not to stray from the trodden path.”

Wahooo! I was not a total fool, although I was a bit of The Fool in this exercise! But isn’t this what it is all about?