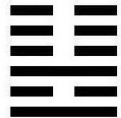


Hexagram 36 Eclipse of the Spirit



Light of awareness hidden.

Benefit from difficult yet virtuous effort.

Structure:

- Earth ☷ above fire ☲. Light hidden within the Earth.
- The top line hides and damages the light of the other lines.

A Chinese myth tells the story about a three-legged crow living on the sun. The sun darkens as the crow eats it. The heroic Yi the Archer kills the crow and rescues the sun. When the crow dies, the sun's light returns.

Selfishness and ill-will eclipse the spirit, wounding our capacities to bring forth what benefits all and increasing our willingness to harm others for self-benefit. Once selfishness and hostility gain control, people oppress others, the world, and Earth.¹ This separation of being and spirit disturbs our lives and causes suffering.

Our separation from others, the Earth, and the spirit causes our dissatisfaction with whatever arises in experience. We feel incomplete and threatened. This harmful way of living takes root in a culture whenever oppressors become organized around a common willingness to harm others for self-benefit and then ignore the suffering they cause. The longer this way of life persists, the more entrenched it becomes within the culture. Thus, we cannot imagine that we can transform such an oppressive society easily.

When destructive and selfish forces within the world eclipse the ways of the spirit, the wise do not let unfavorable circumstances sweep them along nor let their resolve to waver. The wise retreat, firm in their principles and devotion to the spirit while remaining outwardly agreeable and adaptable. With this attitude, we can overcome even the greatest adversaries by turning away from worldly concerns and toward the sacred within everyone and each moment. Sages know the danger of the spirit's eclipse. To not withdraw from such harmful conditions would create even greater difficulties as the harsh conditions would degrade our resolve.

Even if the powers of selfishness and hostility of the time make it impossible to achieve the wanted outcomes within our lifetime, we should not count that as a failure. The wise willingly prepare the conditions to restore balance and harmony so that future generations may benefit. In this adverse time, we can advance what benefits all in small ways and shape the conditions necessary to care for the Earth and all life.

When oppression tyrannizes the world, the wise cannot openly contest it, but they must not abandon their principles. The human spirit rises above tragedy. We must not yield to those

¹ For the words balance, complicity, cosmos, exceptionalism, harmony, interbeing, virtue, ways of the spirit, world, and worldly concerns, please visit the [Glossary](#), which provides a brief definition of their meaning as used in this commentary.

willing to destroy the Earth and life for profit nor allow them to defeat us. The spiritual path, though jeopardized, always continues.

Line 1: The eclipse of the spirit begins, making it impossible for the wise to beneficially influence the world. In such times, the line would experience harm if it tried to soar above all obstacles. Instead, it retreats to evade danger. Because others do not understand the situation and the coming dangers, they view the withdrawing sage with criticism, yet the sage acts properly.

Line 2: The eclipse of the spirit has deepened. Those willing to harm for self-benefit impede the retreat of the wise, but the wise know how to manage difficult situations and protect from corruption the ways of the spirit.

Line 3: The line, the peak of clarity, confronts and overcomes the peak of ignorance (top line): self-cherishing and hostility for others. The virtuous line escapes from its complicity with oppression.

Line 4: The line penetrates its dangerous beliefs and complicity with what harms and recaptures mastery of its being; thus, it emerges from the eclipse of oppression and restores its balance and harmony.

Line 5: Because the virtuous line stands so near those most extreme in selfishness and ignorance, it hides its aim to benefit all so to inwardly preserve the ways of the spirit. When the wise cannot leave their duty in time of darkness to escape danger, they act cautiously in their dealings with the world.

Line 6: This line causes the eclipse of the spirit. Those who at first dominated and used force to wound the Earth and all life perish as great wrong-doing must at the very moment when it has wholly consumed the good, the energy to which it owed its duration.

The line transgresses the rule of duty of leaders to not harm those led. In this way, the line prepares its own downfall. Intelligence sees far, but when used for self-cherishing and hostility, it will eventually plunge into darkness.