

Hexagram 27 - Nourishing



Nourishing

Virtue, significant.

Overseeing what is sought and provided for nourishment.

Structure:

- Above ☶, a mountain, stillness. Below ☳, thunder and action.
- The lower trigram seeks nourishment for oneself. The upper trigram nourishes others.

Image: An open mouth. The lower jaw moves while the upper jaw remains immobile.

Earth nourishes us with food, air, water, land and all manner of blessings. The spiritual path nourishes a meaningful life meaning, only asking in return that we care for each other and the Earth. The hexagram offers guidance on nourishing ourselves and others.

Nourishing Ourselves

Through the spiritual path, we learn how to nourish our being to live the ways of the spirit and to reduce the harm we inflict upon other beings and the Earth. As animals, we eat other life forms to sustain our lives. We have the responsibility to acknowledge the suffering we cause by taking the lives of other beings and to find every way possible to lessen the harms we cause them and to reciprocate for what we have taken. In this way, the simple daily act of eating becomes a spiritual practice of balance and harmony. If Earth, life, and growers have to suffer to provide us with food, what we eat embodies their suffering and turns us into oppressors.

People further nourish their well-being with shelter and clothing, rest and activity, yet the self-cherishing take more than they need. People mindlessly consume Earth and life resources with no regard for the imbalances caused by persistently taking without ever giving back.

When we turn from the spirit towards the attractions of wealth, power over others, privileges, our appearance, and distractions, our resolve to care for the well-being of all life and the Earth weakens. Feeding on worldly concerns entangles us in them and warps our beliefs, attitudes and behavior.

Feeding upon media stimulates our fears and desires, and consumerism, and reinforcing our exceptionalism in being told who and what to hate or celebrate. When we allow others to manipulate and poison our views, relationships and behaviors, we turn over to them the direction of our lives. Sages immerse themselves in wisdom that encourages compassion, understanding, and resolve to care for the Earth and all life.

To know someone, we need only observe on what aspects of their being they bestow they nurture. We can examine our own spiritual path by observing how we nourish ourselves and others. The wise cultivate wisdom and act in ways that benefit all. The wise live simply and in harmony with the Earth and others, intentionally and resolutely choosing to live the ways of the spirit.

Because people find in life what they seek, the wise seek the ways of the spirit. Studying the works of accomplished sages deepens our practice. Yet we need to practice what we learn to make it our own. Just going through the motions of what we have been told to do leads nowhere.

Nourishing Others

Once sages have mastered their self-cherishing and hostility for others, they have the ability and responsibility to work with others to bring the ways of the spirit into the world. Sages nourish and uplift others on the path to extend their benefits to all. Through nurturing others, the sage comes to fully realize its true being. The more others draw from the completed sage, the more the sage has to give.

The inner path leads us through the world, but the world does not overwhelm those devoted to the ways of the spirit. If we can see through the delusionary struggles between self and other, our clarity reveals how to transform difficulties into opportunities to bring to life our devotion by caring for all and the Earth.

We live within the interconnected web of life. The moment serves as the sacred altar upon which we place our offerings. The wise carefully consider what they offer. Sages worship the sacred through how they live. In action, the sage cares for the Earth and life.

Line 1: The intelligent firm line has nourished itself on wisdom sufficient to further it on its spiritual path, yet it still feeds on worldly concerns. The wise do not seek the external but nourish themselves inwardly, like the magic tortoise who lives on breath and goes without eating.

Line 2: Normally, people provide for their own nourishment or receive nourishment from others in a proper manner from those who have the duty and privilege to provide it for them. This weak line depends upon others to nourish it from sources unrelated to it or from those that it should nourish. This unworthy behavior deviates from the line's true nature and leads to misfortune.

Line 3: The line represents the extreme of only having concern for self-benefit and rejecting the spiritual path. Those who seek nourishment that does not nourish cause their own suffering. Nothing good comes from this path.

Line 4: The line occupies a high position and strives to let its light shine forth. It seeks wisdom from below because it knows that it lacks the discernment to attain its lofty aims alone, a blameless behavior as the effort benefits all.

Line 5: Those who reject moral laws do not have a great purpose in life. Those who reside in virtue and truth yield to the spirit.

Line 6: The accomplished sage line nourishes itself and provides nourishment for others. Even in adverse conditions, it exerts itself to bring the ways of the spirit into the world.