

Hexagram 24 Return



Return.

Spiritual influence nourishing all.

The returned appears and grows without harm.

Partners come, without fault.

Turning away from what harm: returning to the spiritual path.

After the cycle of changes comes the return.

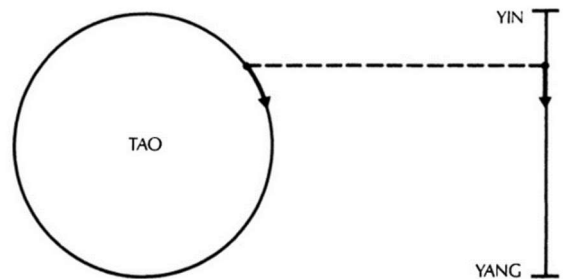
Benefit from moving in the direction of what benefits all.

Ideogram: Step and retrace a path.

Structure: Lower trigram ☵ represents movement, action. The upper trigram ☷ has the attributes of yielding, devotion, and the Earth. Action moves through devotion.

Timing: The hexagram marks the 11th month in the Chinese calendar (December – January) and the Northern winter solstice. After a time of increasing darkness comes the turning point, the return of the light. The light come forth again just when it seems the dark has completely vanquished it.

The hexagram reveals the movement of the creative principle, an eternal cyclic course through which the blessings of life comes forth again and again. We experience this fundamental law within Creation's repetitive pattern of waxing and waning, increase and decrease, emptying and filling, contraction and expansion. One extreme endlessly and naturally turns into its complement.



From *Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra

In the previous hexagram (23), the forces harming life and the Earth overcome what sustains life. Yet, like a rotted fruit falling to the Earth, the forces of light and life reemerge at winter solstice from the seed left by the previous cycle. The way of the spirit does not disappear without a trace: it leaves its seed behind that proves itself in the reappearance of the strong first line within this hexagram.

Light returns with the force of natural law, without the need for an external effort to return. This eternal cyclic course of nature occurs on its own at the appointed time. Discarding what harms and introducing what furthers the balance and harmony of life accord with the time; thus, no harm results.

Within our own practice, self-cherishing and hostility for others separate us from the spirit. Once we have gained some mastery of ourselves, our sense of the sacred returns, even if only faintly. The more we turn away from harmful feelings and beliefs, we approach ever closer to the spirit. To know the spirit opens us to loving relationships with Earth Interbeing.

Those on a spiritual path lose again and again our spiritual presence when overwhelmed by self-cherishing, hostility, and complicity with what harms others. Danger lies in acting out harmful feelings and beliefs before we recognize our loss of presence. However, if our resolve to lovingly fulfill our great purpose to care for the Earth Interbeing remains strong and keeps us from getting swept away by what harms, over time we can return to the spirit within ever shorter distances. We benefit from putting aside even slightly harmful thoughts and feelings immediately before they go too far and take root in

us. The spiritual path cultivates the practice of return and nourishes our spiritual being. Return always calls for an act of self-mastery.

Within the world, the return of the light marks the time when we can again undertake what benefits all within the world. Groups sharing the same views form, come together in full public knowledge and in harmony with the time. We can discard the old and introduce the new with no harmful results as our efforts to benefit all accord with the time. The transformation of what harms becomes easy.

Life returns as an act of devotion.

Turn away from the confusion of external things, turning back to one's inner light. There, in the depths of the soul, one sees the Divine, the One. It is indeed only germinal, no more than a beginning, a potentiality, but as such it is clearly to be distinguished from all objects. To know this One means to know oneself in relation to the cosmic forces. For this One is the ascending force of life in nature and in (life.)

Roger Wilhelm / Cary Baynes, *The I Ching* (1950.)

Line 1: We cannot avoid disturbing experiences, but the wise serenely and easily repel harmful influences as they arise, even before they disturb their presence, by responding virtuously to the situation. Thus, the wise have no cause for regret.

Line 2: The line did not immediately repel harmful influences, which now disturb its spiritual being. By retreating before it reacts, the line firmly refocuses on caring for Earth Interbeing and feelings of kindness and compassion. In this way the line restores its balance and harmony.

Line 3: The line lacks an inner instability and impetuously acts out its urges of self-cherishing and hostility for others. The situation warns us to stabilize presence so that we do not lose the spiritual path again and again. Repeated loss of presence leads to danger, but here it does not cause blame as the line repeatedly returns. If the line strengthens its resolve to gain stability, it will eventually rest its being within the spirit.

Line 4: In the midst of weak lines, the line transforms itself and solitarily adheres to the spiritual path without regret.

Line 5: The line returns honorably to the spiritual path without regret. The wise line makes a noble-hearted decision to turn inward and overcome what obstructs it from resting with the spirit and benefiting all.

Line 6: This line, blinded by self-cherishing and hostility for others, contends for victory within the world and craves power over others. Inwardly, it has cut itself off from the spirit. The line acts in ways that deny the spirit and causes only ruin for itself and others, creating conditions that lead to a long period of instability.