

Hexagram 17 – Following



Following the spirit.

Wholeness.

Without harm.

Ideogram: Go and fall, unavoidable movement.

Structure: Movement above ☱, joy below ☵. Joyful movement.

When we faithfully follow another, we no longer worry about our direction. The wise follow others with care in the beginning to learn their direction. If not centered on the ways of caring for the sacred Earth and all life, following may lead to great harm. Conversely, dangers also lie in our eagerness to conform to the ways of others to secure a following.

When we faithfully follow the spirit, we willingly obey and gladly accept living the Ways of Wholeness.¹ Strengthening our skills to overcome the attraction of self-cherishing and hostility for others increases our awareness of the spirit, which joyfully induces us to care for the Earth and all life. The spirit loves life, and life follows the spirit.

The path of following the spirit leads us into the Earth Interbeing. We harmonize with others to restore the balance of Earth and life that people have disrupted and return to the Ways of Wholeness. Sages seek to understand the perspective of others to gain the necessary clarity for wise action and go beyond just listening to the like-minded. Sages give before they receive. When we follow the spirit, we serve life and Earth by adapting to the conditions of the situation and meeting their needs. Serving others brings us joy.

Within the world, sages avoid others following them and not the spirit. Followers of the path gladly join a common effort that fulfills a purpose they could not achieve on their own and share the joy that comes from working together on ways to benefit all. But while they cooperate with others to further wholeness, they do not immediately yield to every whim of those they serve. Sages follow the spirit, not the other, and do not let others follow them personally.

Experiencing the loving spirit within the moment opens us to harmonizing with the Earth and life. Sages experience whatever arises as a manifestation of the spirit and respond to experience in ways that demonstrates their devotion. The unity of inner awareness of the spirit and how we act in the world fulfills our spiritual path.

Line 1: The line recognizes that because it lacks understanding of the situation, it cannot proceed with its plan to resolve the dangers. Instead, the line seeks the views of others with all persuasions and opinion. Through this process, it discerns the inclusive way of wholeness and successfully moves through the challenging situation.

¹ **Ways of Wholeness:** We interbe with all our sacred Earth Interbeing relations with love, respect, and care. We know the sacred within all our interactions and open to the loving path through problems and dangers. We live within Earth limits and moral bounds to sustain the sacred balance and harmony of the Earth Interbeing. We share and reciprocate the gifts we receive from the Earth Interbeing. We become whole beings and lovingly fulfill our own responsibilities to the wholeness of Earth Interbeing, creating opportunities for others to do the same.

Line 2: The line follows the ignorant and incompetent, but it should hold to the experienced and wise. We cannot have both kinds of relationships at once; we have to choose. This holds true both for our relationships within the world and our own childish attitudes and beliefs.

Line 3: The line parts with immature beliefs and behaviors and moves toward wholeness. A certain loss naturally ensues, but the line feels content within its heart because it deepens living the ways of wholeness. The line remains firm in knowing what it truly wants and resists indulging in superficial or harmful impulses.

Line 4: The line has gained some influence and obtains a personal following. If the line grows to depend upon such followers and cannot do without them, misfortune comes. Only selflessness can see through the dangers of conforming to others. The wise follow the spirit rather than those it wants to influence. When all its actions accord with the ways of wholeness, the sage serves as a bright example for those who follow to care for the Earth and all life.

Line 5: The line joyfully fulfills its responsibility through the ways of wholeness to care for the Earth and all life. It centers on the spirit, the stable point that enables it to face all change.

Line 6: The line devotes itself to the spirit and becomes whole.