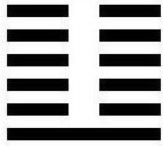


Hexagram 24 Return



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.

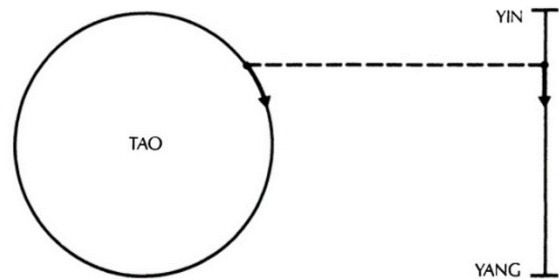
Benefit from moving in the direction of what benefits all.

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. The strong first line images the return of the light.

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 back just when it seems the dark has completely vanquished it.

The return of the light reveals the movement of Creation, a continuous 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 them. Yet, like the seed of a decayed fruit that falls to the earth and sprouts new life, the forces of light and life reemerge at winter solstice from the seed left by the previous cycle. The sacred way does not disappear without a trace: it leaves its seed behind that reappears in a new beginning.

Light returns with the force of natural law, without the need of an external effort. This enduring cyclic course of Creation 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.

Those on a spiritual path lose again and again their spiritual focus when distracted by self-cherishing and the willingness to harm for self-benefit. Just as we return to following our breath in meditation when distracted by thoughts and feelings, we return to the spiritual path when we become aware that we have been overcome by what harms. Once we have gained some mastery of ourselves, our sense of the sacred returns, even if only faintly.

Danger lies in acting out harmful feelings and beliefs before we recognize our loss of adhering to the sacred path. However, if our resolve to lovingly fulfill our great purpose to care for the Earth Interbeing remains strong, we can return to our path. To avoid repeatedly getting swept away by what harms, the wise strengthen their attention to remain focused on their duty. Return always calls for an act of

honesty and self-mastery. Gradually over time, we return to our sacred path within ever shorter lapses of attention. We benefit from putting aside even slightly harmful thoughts and feelings immediately before they go too far and take root in us.

The return of the light marks the beginning of a new cycle of growth and refinement of our sacred work. We discard the old and introduce the new with no harmful results as our efforts move with the time. The return of the light opens to transformation of what harms into what benefits all.

The wise who adhere to the ways of the sacred Earth Interbeing come to know Creations cycles. We learn the times to pour energy into our sacred work and when to rest, to pause. This hexagram clearly points to the return of the light as a start of a new cycle and a time of rest. Pausing from the efforts of our work and resting during this time serve as a sacrifice and spiritual obligation. Solstice calls us to honor the sacred, review what we have learned, and meditate upon what we intend to bring forth in the new cycle. 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.)

You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round.

Black Elk

Line 1: We cannot avoid disturbing experiences, but the wise immediately dissolve harmful thoughts and feelings when they first become aware of them. Thus, the wise have no cause for regret.

Line 2: The line did not immediately repel harmful influences, which now disturb its spiritual being. The line refocuses on its love for the sacred Earth Interbeing. In this way the line restores its balance and harmony.

Line 3: The line lacks an inner instability and impulsively acts out its harmful self-centered urges. 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 alone adheres to the spiritual path without regret.

Line 5: The wise line makes a noble-hearted decision to turn inward to center itself in the ways of the sacred Earth Interbeing. It overcomes what separates it from the sacred.

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, generating conditions that lead to a long period of instability.