

Hexagram 33 – Retreat



Retreat.

The sacred way.

Benefit from managing small affairs in wholesome ways.

Image Tradition

Retreat in the ways of wholeness of Earth Interbeing.¹

The strong withdraw together,

Mutual care that moves in harmony with the needs of the time.

Benefit from managing small affairs in wholesome ways.

Accumulating wisdom and enduring.

Retreat timely and righteous.

Structure:

- Heaven ☰ rises above the unmoving mountain ☶.
- Lower trigram keeps still, hampering the retreat. The upper trigram has strong movement, retreating freely and unhampered.
- The two bottom weak lines show the harmful forces advancing toward the retreating strong lines.

The hexagram marks the 6th month of the Chinese calendar (July-August), when the approach of winter already shows its influence with the days growing noticeably shorter. The light retreats beyond the reach of the approaching darkness until it can return and illuminate all. Life retreats from what harms to survive until conditions improve, and it can flourish again.

The wise respond to an advancing overwhelming danger by retreating from it with others of like mind. The sage knows the great harm that organized greed and violence can inflict on life and withdraws from danger to preserve its clarity and the ways of the sacred Earth Interbeing.

Retreating from overpowering dangers avoids the futility of resisting what lies beyond our capacities to change. The wise do not consider such a retreat the forced flight of the weak but the voluntary and strategic withdrawal of the strong. In this way, they do not exhaust their

¹ **The Ways of the Sacred Earth Interbeing:** We worship the sacred through our care for Creation. We interbe with the Wholeness of the Earth Interbeing, interacting with all through equality, respect, and care so that life continues and thrives on Earth. We know the sacred ways for Creation to continue and thrive and to overcome what keeps us apart. We know and respond to the mutual neediness of life in ways that further the harmony of Earth Interbeing. We know and care for our place as the ground upon which we preserve the balance of Earth Interbeing by reciprocating for what we take through our stewardship of the Earth Interbeing. We live within interbeing's moral boundaries and Earth limits and learn from our life lessons how to overcome what keeps us apart. We live as unique beings in the ways of the Earth Interbeing to preserve Creation's harmony and balance and to overcome what keeps us apart. We respond to whatever we experience in the ways of the Earth Interbeing and hold ourselves accountable for our actions. (2/23/25)

strength by resisting what they cannot overcome. They know when to retreat to avoid being drawn into a futile struggle.

Understanding the means of a constructive retreat requires discernment. The wise do not just abandon the field to an advancing destructive force. By showing their strength in small acts of resistance, they slow down the harmful advance and may even bring it to a standstill.

During such times, the wise mutually care for each other and the Earth Interbeing. They do not force anything nor advance great matters but perseveringly follow the ways of wholeness and prepare for when conditions allow them to advance the ways of wholeness again in the world.

The wisdom of retreating applies to the inner path as well. Sages recognize the moment when self-cherishing and hostile feelings for others begin to stir within them. They gently withdraw from these situations without acting upon their feelings and turn inward toward the sacred ways of wholeness. A timely constructive inward retreat succeeds in preserving our spiritual path and strengthens our capacities for wholeness.

Line 1: The weak line at the beginning has the most exposure to advancing destructive forces. The line does not act to avoid drawing attention to itself.

Line 2: The weak line holds on so tightly to the principles of wholeness that it succeeds in escaping from what would harm it.

Line 3: Complicity with what harms entangles the line, which hampers its retreat from the advancing harmful forces. The line does not have the capacity to further the Earth Interbeing.

Line 4: When the situation calls for retreat from what harms, the wise gracefully do so. The unwise lack the strength to resist indulging their self-cherishing and hostility for others, which obstructs distancing themselves from their complicity in what harms.

Line 5: The sage recognizes the right time for retreat from a situation has come and carries out the retreat in a friendly manner. Irrelevant considerations do not lead the line astray because it has made a firm decision. With an unwavering will, the line perseveres in what it must do.

Line 6: The retreating line clearly sees what it must do to restore and preserve the balance and harmony of Earth Interbeing and carries out its decision without difficulty.