

Hexagram 52 Stopping



*Stopping: inner being.
Letting go of self-centeredness.
Moving into sacred being.
Not focusing on others.
Without fault.*

Image Tradition

*Stopping: stilling indeed.
When stopping in harmony with the time, stop.
When moving in harmony with the time, move.
Act or not act according to the time.
In this way one clearly discerns their sacred path.
Stopping: one stops.
Stopping within one's inner being indeed.*

*Above and below disharmonious.
Not interacting in beneficial ways.
Thus, one turns away from acting in the world.
Moving into one's inner sacred being, not focusing on others.
Without fault indeed.*

Structure: The outer ☶ and the inner trigram ☶ stop inwardly and outwardly. **Image:** Mountain, mountain range. **Ideogram:** A foot stops walking.

In the Chinese calendar, the trigram Mountain ☶ marks the beginning of winter (October – November) and the end of annual cycle of growth, the season in which life ends and begin, where death and birth pass one into the other.

The cosmology of the early Chinese people who developed the I Ching and the later Taoists shared the view that when people and societies modeled their behavior after what appeared in nature, they lived in harmony and balance with the sacred cosmos. In the winter season, all visible activities of plants cease, and plants come to rest. Thus, people rested to conserve their food supply and to renew their energies for another year of growing food.

When the season of winter darkness and cold brings the activities of nature to a standstill, life turns inward. The early Chinese believed that winter marked a boundary between life and death, the time when people turned inward to account to the sacred for the past cycle of their lives and the consequences of their actions. Through this winnowing of life during this time of judgment, the accumulated experiences and potentialities of the previous cycle of inner growth concentrate into the seeds for the next cycle of growth. The seeds that survive this accountability unfold during the coming season of renewed growth in ways that determined by the sacred.

When the wise receive this hexagram, they stop their activities and consider the flow of their lives and the consequences of their actions. If they discern that they have completed a step, a cycle of growth, of their spiritual path, they contemplate what they have learned before commencing the next step on their path. Or the hexagram may warn them to stop moving in their current direction

and to reconsider their aim. When keeping still through non-action, the wise know how to gently come to rest within the sacred. In this way, stillness does not become empty inactivity, and action does not cause regret or remorse.

The hexagram also points to the practice of meditation as the means to overcome what hinders us from following the sacred ways. We empty ourselves of our thoughts, concepts, and images we have about ourselves, others and the world we inhabit. Even deeper, we let go of pondering our faults and planning for the future. We move beyond our self-centering into an empty but fertile space, into a sacred presence. In this way we rest our minds and abide within the sacred presence. The wise contemplate their inner sacred being.

Through the attention that meditation strengthens we can process our emotional reactions before we irrationally act upon them, causing ourselves and others harm. The wise do not try change another or their circumstances to get what they want for themselves. Rather, they patiently allow the situation to unfold on its own reflects. We only have the power to change ourselves. Stopping ourselves from anxiously acting in harmful ways requires a strong attention and devotion to the sacred ways. In so doing, we stay focused on our values and what furthers life on Earth.

Actions change everything and they have consequences. Once the wise have acted, they patiently wait for the consequences of their actions to unfold. They discern whether their actions have furthered life on Earth before pivoting to the next challenge. Each step to further life on Earth involves changing ourselves, and we need to absorb and digest the consequences of these changes before we can wisely discern the next step. Each cycle of change, each step, comes out of the consequences of the last. As we change, we change our experience of the world. We need to fully settle one cycle of change before taking the next step.

Line 1: The line disciplines its compulsive urges to assert itself and act upon its preferences and prejudices. In this way, the line furthers life on Earth.

Line 2: The line wants to follow the ways of the sacred to further life on Earth but does not have sufficient inner strength to overcome its willingness to harm others for self-benefit. Although the situation saddens the line, it persists in its efforts to increase its capacities to discipline itself.

Line 3: The line tries to obtain a quiet heart by directly and forcefully bringing to a stop actions initiated by its strong urge to harm for self-benefit. The emotional and thought energies of the blocked strong urge react wildly and overwhelm us. We experience great distress and unwholesome results. Fire when smothered changes into acrid smoke that suffocates as it spreads.

Line 4: The line obtains the highest stage of rest within the spirit when it forgets its self-centeredness and willingness to harm others for self-benefit. It achieves this result within meditation by stilling its thoughts, emotions, and movements, transforming these energies into an awareness of the sacred.

Line 5: The wise remain reserved in speech and limit their speech to what they know or need to know. They center their perspective on what benefits all and thus avoid one-sided opinions.

Line 6: The line has come to rest within the sacred as it has stilled its urges and anxieties. It remains careful and earnest to the end of stopping, an image of tranquil non-action. The line has overcome what obstructed its yielding to the ways of the sacred that further life on Earth.