

Hexagram 20 – Observing



Observing.

Hand-washing and-also not worshipping.

Possessing conformity like a presence.

Image Tradition

The great: observing located above.

Yielding and-also penetrating understanding.

The center's correctness uses overseeing consequences.

Observing. Hand-washing and-also not worshipping.

Possessing conformity like a presence.

Observing what harms and-also what transforms indeed.

Observing the sacred way.

And-also the four seasons not straying.

The wise person uses sacred ways to set-up teaching.

All life submits to the sacred ways.

Structure: Penetrating understanding ☵ above, receptive and yielding ☵ below

The structure of the hexagram suggests an ancient Chinese watch tower, from which one has a wide view of the countryside. Also, a watch tower on a mountain stands out as a landmark that people see from a distance. The hexagram's ideogram images vision and a waterbird, an aerial view. Vision has both the meaning of seeing and being seen.

Time: September – October, the 8th month in the Chinese calendar, the time of the autumn equinox. The light-giving power retreats as the dark power advances.

The hexagram depicts an ancient Chinese sacrificial ritual, which opened with the emperor washing his hands and then invoking the spirits of his ancestors by pouring a drink for them. Upon completion of these ritual acts, he made the sacrifice. The time between invoking the spirits and making the sacrifice held the ceremony's most sacred moments of deep inner contemplation. If the emperor manifested sincere piety, those who observed the ceremony felt awe.

In a similar way, those on the sacred path of the Earth Interbeing offer their furthering life on Earth as a sacrifice. The sacrifice can have many forms, such as changing ourselves to reduce our willingness to harm other beings and the Earth, compassionately caring for other beings to relieve their sufferings and then working to change the conditions that caused the suffering, or supporting and nurturing others on the sacred path.

Before we can offer ourselves to further life on Earth, we have prepared ourselves by firmly establishing our sacred path to further life on Earth. We persistently move ever more deeply into removing our self-centered attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that separate us from the sacred and the Earth Interbeing.

Our ability to know what to do increases the more we distance ourselves from the self-centeredness and wrong views of Western culture. We may identify a way that we believe will further life on Earth, for which we have the capacities and the motivation to do. Yet, we also know that having distanced ourselves from the harmful Western ways does not mean we have freed ourselves from them.

Thus, before committing ourselves to work on what we believe will further life on Earth, we contemplate our intended sacrifice to discern whether what we intend aligns with the sacred values that further life on Earth and then asking the I Ching for its guidance. Pausing to contemplate our intentions before asking the I Ching gives us the opportunity to see the connections between our values and the intended action. If the I Ching's guidance contradicts what we want to do, we submit to the sacred. We must have great honesty with ourselves in such moments rather than dismiss the teaching and forge ambitiously ahead.

Knowing what to do depends upon an unobstructed openness to the sacred. Looking deeply into how we bring to life the values within our actions transforms our intentions into a sacred knowing. Once we know our intention conforms with the values to further life on Earth, then we act upon our intentions and become the offering. We become the means for the sacred to move through us and for others to observe and learn how to live as a sacred Earth Interbeing.

Line 1: The line has an immature, shallow view of life. Those on the spiritual path comprehend their relationships and situations within a dynamic, interconnected whole.

Line 2: People commonly have a self-centered, limited outlook on the world. They relate everything to themselves and cannot understand what moves others. Such a self-centered way of viewing others and life brings humiliation and harm.

Line 3: The line decides whether to advance or withdraw by discerning how its choices would affect its purpose to further life on Earth.

Line 4: The line contemplates its situation to discern how it can best further life on Earth in ways that align with the sacred values. The line accepts responsibility for this work as an honor.

Line 5: The line contemplates the consequences of its actions by observing how others and the Earth have benefited from them. If need be, the line corrects how it acts to improve matching its intentions with the outcomes of its actions.

Line 6: The line has freed itself from viewing life from a self-centered point of view, It now views life as a sacred Earth interbeing and knows how to further life on Earth.