

Hexagram 24 Return

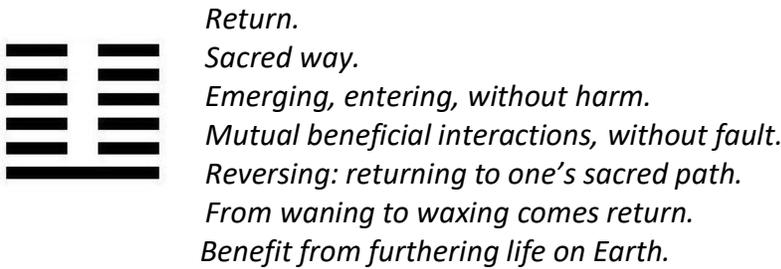


Image Tradition

*Return, Sacred way.
Strength changes to the opposite position.
Transforming and also yielding sacred movement.
That uses emerging and entering, without harm.*

*Mutual beneficial interactions, without harm.
Reversing: returning to one's sacred path.
From waning to waxing comes return.
Sacred movement indeed.*

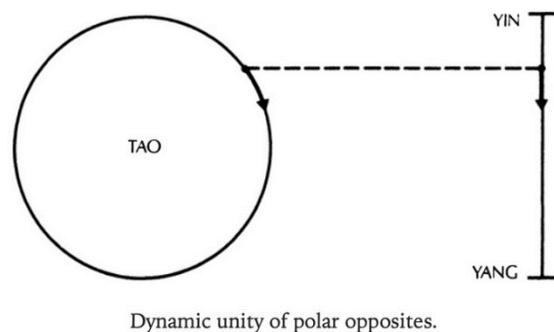
*Benefit from furthering life on Earth.
Enduring strength.
Return moves toward centering one's being on the sacred and grounding one's being in the Earth.*

Ideogram: Step and retrace a path.

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

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

The return of the light reveals the sacred movements of change that constantly transform the Earth Interbeing. Continuous and cyclic sacred movements create, nurture, ripen, and further the Earth Interbeing. We experience this sacred way as repetitive patterns of waxing and waning, increasing and decreasing, emptying and filling, contraction and expansion. One extreme endlessly and naturally turns into its complement. Through these changes and transformations, life on Earth renews.



From *Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra

In the previous hexagram (23), the forces harming life and the Earth vanquish 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 seed concentrates what we have learned in the old cycle and brings it forth into new growth, a new beginning. The enduring cyclic course of sacred change occurs on its own and at its appointed time.

Discarding what harms before the new cycle begins accords with the time so that the new cycle can emerge freer of our harmful ways. The return of the light marks the beginning of a new cycle of growth and refinement of our sacred work. Each spiral of our path deepens our knowing how to compassionately respond to experience and further life on Earth.

Pathers repeatedly lose their focus on the sacred path 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 sacred path when we become aware that we have been overcome by our willingness to harm.

Danger lies in acting out harmful feelings and beliefs before we recognize our loss of adhering to the sacred values. However, if the strength of our resolve counters and restrains our urges to act in harmful ways, we can return to where we belong, our sacred path. To avoid repeatedly getting swept away by what harms, the wise strengthen their attention to remain focused on furthering life on Earth. Return always calls for an act of honesty and self-mastery. Gradually over time, we return to our sacred path within ever briefer lapses of attention.

The wise who adhere to the ways of the sacred Earth Interbeing come to know the sacred cycles. This knowledge provides an inner structure to the spiraling, cyclical sacred path. We no longer perceive our lives as a linear series of random events but as a life with a direction and purpose. No longer do we compare our lives with others but with how we have strengthened our path from one cycle to the next.

We learn when to pour energy into our sacred work and when to rest, to pause. This hexagram clearly points to a pause and rest between the waning and the waxing, before we embark on the next cycle. 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. Our path returns as a new cycle through our devotion to the sacred and grounding ourselves within the Earth Interbeing.

Line 1: We cannot avoid reacting to disturbing experience. The wise immediately uses self-discipline to overcome harmful feelings and thoughts before they have the chance to root. Thus, we have no cause for regret.

Line 2: The line easily aligns its being with the sacred values and follows the good example of the first line.

Line 3: The line lacks an inner instability and impulsively acts out self-centered urges. The situation warns us to stabilize presence so that we do not distract ourselves from the 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 stay centered on the sacred, it will eventually rest stably within the sacred.

Line 4: Inner and outer harmful influences surround the line, tempting it to act in harmful ways. However, the line remains centered on the sacred and aligned with the sacred values.¹ It returns on a solitary path.

Line 5: Once the line has investigated its willingness to harm, it overcomes what separates it from the sacred. The wise line makes a noble-hearted decision to turn inward to center itself in the ways of the sacred Earth Interbeing.

Line 6: This line, blinded by self-cherishing and hostility for others, chooses the path of harming others, life, and the Earth for self-benefit. It 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 sacred. The harms it causes lead to a long period of instability.

¹ **Sacred Values of the Earth Interbeing (work in progress):** respect, love, and joy for the sacred unity and equality of life on Earth, patiently bearing the burdens of living on the sacred path, surrendering to the sacred to know how to compassionately respond to experience in ways that alleviate suffering and further life on Earth, humbleness, caring for the Earth Interbeing through sharing ourselves, generously giving back to life and Earth with gratitude for what we receive to live, equitable and beneficial interactions, and self-discipline to remove the ways we harm life on Earth.