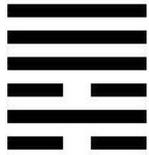


Hexagram 6 Contending



Contending.

Aligning being with sacred ways. Centering on the sacred, meaningful.

Benefit from perceiving the sacred of the other.

Blocking respect for the sacredness of the other. Winning the contention, danger.

No benefit to furthering life on Earth.

Image Tradition

Contending. Blocking respect for the sacredness of the other.

Persisting in taking dangerous risks. Contending.

Aligning being with sacred ways. Centering on the sacred, meaningful.

Firmness acquires the center, indeed.

Benefit from perceiving the sacred of the other.

Winning the contention, danger.

Contending accomplishes nothing beneficial.

No benefit to furthering life on Earth.

Moving towards the dangers of deep water.

Structure

- Strength ☰ over danger ☵. Dangerous use of strength.
- The sacred above moves upward. Water below moves downward. The two trigrams move apart.

This hexagram describes the dangers of contending with others. One feels in the rights and encounters an opponent. A difference of opinion can provoke self-righteous anger and the compulsion to prove the other wrong. When we contend with another, we frame our differences in the realm of right and wrong and move away from each other and into disharmony.

Contending marks the limits of our capacities to knowing the sacredness of the other and interacting harmoniously. When arguing, we feel emotionally charged from the high level of tension within the situation. Because we do not know how to respond and feel threatened by others, we reactively contend to prove ourselves. To contend means not to love.

The wise avoid falling into contention by pausing when they do not know how to respond to another harmoniously. We give ourselves time to remember our sacred path and to find a beneficial way to respond.

In situations in which we anticipate difficulties in responding to differences, we can start by acknowledging our differences. If we can identify ways to deescalate potentially harmful reactions, we can work with differences without moving into conflict. Those on a sacred path learn ways to avoid conflict by recognizing our commonality and sacredness.

The grave mistake of conflict lies in letting the difference go too far. When we cannot have our way, we may allow our poisonous negative side to act. We get excited and contend for victory. Victory

within a conflict creates enmity and turns out badly for everyone. We do not further life on Earth when we conflict.

A clear and deep understanding of the dangers of anger motivates us to free ourselves of it. If we seek to punish someone because we deem them wrong, we lose the sacred path because of a little anger. When we willingly contend differences, we hold the differences more important than the sacred.

If a contention focuses on a trivial difference of opinion, we can simply drop the issue. If we find ourselves struggling with reactive feelings, then we need to withdraw from the situation immediately to avoid impetuously acting out of anger. If we can remind ourselves of our common sacredness, then the difficult interaction becomes an opportunity for us to learn cooperation.

When we first become aware that we have fallen into the realm of right and wrong, at that moment we simply pause and remember how forcing our will upon others reinforces self-cherishing. Instead, we see the situation as a relationship knot that needs undoing and use the opportunity to overcome what keeps us apart. By staying in touch with the sacred and love for all, we can transcend individual differences through fellowship and subdue others through our love for them and all. The wise remain firmly in control of their self-centeredness and willingness to harm others for self-benefit.

Even when in the deep end of conflict, we can still respond well if we recognize that we must exert ourselves to regain presence through self-discipline. We restore our willingness to come to terms with meeting the opponent halfway. If the conflict has not gone so far as to have poisoned the relationship, we can smooth out the contention and move through the danger by focusing on what underlies the differences that escalated into anger. Those wanting to extricate themselves from a dangerous conflict situation compromise or withdraw.

The wise practice seeing through their reactivity within a loving presence to find how they project what they do not like about themselves upon the other. We move beyond our self-centeredness by trying to understand how others understand the situation from their perspective. Contentious people do not further life on Earth.

If we can see the sacred behind what appears, then the way forward reveals itself as we have found our commonality. Those on the path feel shame for contending and work to overcome this way of harming through compassion.

The spiritual path avoids contention at every turn. Through our awareness of the sacredness of all and our path to not harm others, we remove the conditions that lead to a conflict. By aligning our lives with our valued ways that further life on Earth, we avoid arguing over differences. If we openly contend, we have more work to do in unseating our self-centeredness. The wise do not let differences cause them to lose the sacred path. Rather than seek victory over another, sages inwardly contend with themselves to undo their self-centeredness and willingness to harm, prizing unity over defeating others.

Line 1: The weak line in a low position does not persist in a conflict but drops it. It receives some criticism but avoids much trouble and ends well. The line learns to differentiate between what harms and what furthers harmonious interactions.

Line 2: The wise line retreats from contesting with someone of greater strength to avoid drawing down disaster upon it and its community. It benefits from ending the conflict.

Line 3: The line nourishes itself on ancient wisdom and ends its conflict.

Line 4: The line wanted to contend but instead wisely stops itself and returns to having a peaceful relationship by adhering to the ways of its sacred path.¹

Line 5: The line contends in the ways of the sacred path.

Line 6: The line has victoriously carried a conflict to the bitter end, but it loses the sacred path and the respect of others. Others attack it repeatedly, and the conflict never ends. What using force gains, others take it back by force. The line gains little and loses much, the fate of those willing to harm others for self-benefit.

¹ **Ways and values of the sacred path to further life on Earth (work in progress):** awakening and maturing our loving sacred being, living humbly, joyful surrender to sacred wisdom to know what to do, compassionate action, harmonious interactions, equitable sharing and caring for the Earth, responding to change in ways that further life on Earth, and preserving our inner balance with the sacred, life, and Earth. By living these ways, we deepen our loving awareness of the sacred and reverence for the sacredness of life and Earth.