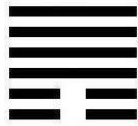


Hexagram 33 – Retreat



Retreat.

Sacred knowing.

Benefit from overcoming what harms in small ways.

Structure: The two bottom weak lines show the harmful forces advancing toward the retreating strong lines.

Ideogram: walk and swine. **Meanings of Ideogram:** retreat, retiring, withdrawing; run away, flee; conceal yourself, become obscure; secluded, nonsocial.

Calendar: The hexagram marks the 6th month of the traditional Chinese calendar (July-August) when the forces of winter already show their influences in the days growing noticeably shorter. The light retreats beyond the reach of the approaching darkness. In the same way, life retreats from harmful conditions to survive until conditions improve, and life can flourish again.

The hexagram describes a situation in which harmful ways or views grow stronger and threaten to overpower living sacredness. The danger exceeds our capacities to overcome it. By yielding to the sacred, we know when to withdraw from harmful conditions while we still have the capacities to respond to experience in the ways of sacredness.

Distancing ourselves from a great danger is a move within a movement that overcomes danger. The movement began with a threatening danger first gaining a foothold within our being (hexagram 44) and ends with us parting from and emptying ourselves of it (hexagrams 23 and 2). Life naturally disentangles itself and voluntarily withdraws from what harms to avoid being overwhelmed by it. The movement of retreat gives us time and space to prepare parting from what harms in the ways of sacredness.

We recognize the time has come to withdraw from an advancing harmful way or view when experience doubt or friction with others. The loss of good feelings for others or our situation warns us that the danger already exceeds our capacities to respond in the ways of sacredness. Withdrawal from an overpowering willingness to harm for self-benefit depends upon us having a greater will to preserve living our sacredness to further life on Earth.

The wise do not consider distancing themselves from what harms as the forced flight of the weak but rather the voluntary and strategic withdrawal of the strong. They know when to retreat to avoid being drawn into a futile struggle. By retreating, they do not exhaust their strength by resisting what they cannot overcome.

In withdrawing from what harms, we still resist harmful ways and views in small ways within our capacities to do so. Such resistance may even bring the advancing danger to a standstill (hexagram 12) if in retreating we have worked on further strengthening our willpower to overcome what harms and to live sacredness.

Each time we pause before we act upon an urge to impose our will upon others or the moment, we have retreated from a situation beyond our capacities to respond in the ways of sacredness.

When we distance ourselves from the harmful ways and views of a culture, we have retreated from a situation over which we have little influence. Not retreating would keep us entangled in harmful ways and views. Withdrawing from what harms gives us the opportunity to discern the roots of what harms and seek sacred knowing how to overcome it.

We gently retreat from danger without acting upon our urge to harm for self-benefit. Instead, we turn inward toward the sacred as our refuge. We do not force anything nor advance great matters but perseveringly follow the ways of sacredness and prepare for the return of the time when we have the strength and the knowing of how to respond to the needs of the moment in the ways of sacredness. When retreating from harmful forces, we hold fast to our sacredness and learn how to move through the danger.

Line 1: The weak line at the beginning has the most exposure to advancing destructive forces. The line survives by not acting to avoid entangling itself in what harms through its actions.

Line 2: The weak line holds on so tightly to the ways of sacredness that it succeeds in escaping from the advancing danger.

Line 3: Complicity with the harmful ways of the advancing danger entangles the line, which compromises its capacities to retreat from the danger.

Line 4: When the situation calls for retreat from what harms, the wise agreeably do so. The self-centered lack the strength to resist indulging in their self-cherishing and hostility for others, which endangers them even more.

Line 5: The sage recognizes when the right time for retreat from a dangerous 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 willingly does what it must do to persevere in living its sacredness to further life on Earth.

Line 6: The retreating line has fully distanced itself from what harms and now clearly sees what it must do to restore and preserve its harmony with the Earth Interbeing to further life on Earth. It carries out its decision without difficulty.