

Hexagram 20 – Contemplation



Contemplation.

The pause between not doing harm and responding in ways of sacredness.

Coming into the sacred presence.

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

Ideogram image: vision and a waterbird, an aerial view. **Ideogram meanings:** contemplate, oversee, observe from a distance; look at carefully; an observatory; intelligence, clairvoyance; divination.

This hexagram marks the 8th month in the Chinese calendar (September-October). The month ends with the beginning of winter, midway between the fall equinox and winter solstice. During this month of the year, those on a sacred path traditionally contemplate what we have learned and how we have ripened in sacredness during the present ending cycle.

In ancient China, living as part of the annual seasonal cycle reflected deep wisdom. Life comes into being, rises, and then passes away into nonbeing. Being emerges out of nonbeing and returns to it. Out of the emptiness of winter, life returns out of nonbeing and blossoms into spring, flourishes in summer, fades in autumn, and then dies back into the nonbeing of winter. Life lives this eternal cycle of creation and destruction, its sacred path persisting through the end and the beginning of the next cycle as a seed. The seed holds within it the growth of the past cycle and the sacred potential of new growth that unfolds in the new cycle.

Having a sacred path brings into focus our knowing our lives as a journey through mystery. We know not from whence we came or where we go. While the ways of sacredness offer us rules of the road, they do not tell us where we are on the sacred path.¹ What we take as the purpose of our lives gives us a direction, We move in that direction by how we respond to each experience. If we experience a myriad of isolated objects, we become another object and lose the mystery. We struggle to have others perceive us as the most important object. When we experience the mystery, we know we tread on holy ground and know our abject dependence upon the sacred. We cling to the ways of sacredness to reunite with the sacred by furthering life on Earth, the sacred purpose of life.

During the autumn of the year, we harvest how we have grown by contemplating our experiences of sacredness. This contemplation concentrates our growth on the path into the seed that survives the mystery of the end of being and returns from nonbeing into the new growth of spring, the time when we open to new ways to ground sacred knowing into living sacredness.

The ways of sacredness evoke questions for us to contemplate how we have grown and moved our sacredness within the present sacred cycle. The practice helps orientate us on the sacred path so that

¹ **Ways of the sacred and sacredness:** We live within the reality caused by the sacred, a reality marked by the sacred ways: interdependence, change, equality, and sacredness. The ways of sacredness guide us to living sacredness to further life on Earth, the sacred purpose of all life: awakening to sacred knowing; wisdom of living sacredness; harmonious and respectful interactions; devotion to the sacred; humble submission to sacred ways and direction; responding to the suffering of others; restoring and preserving a balanced life; manifesting the sacred purpose to further life on Earth.

during the rest of winter, we can prepare ourselves for new growth and another step on our sacred journey.

Write your response to each of the contemplations. Upon answering each questions, ask the sacred through the I Ching to respond to your written response and then contemplate the sacred response.

- How has sacred knowing affected knowing our ignorance?
- How do we experience our sacredness and that of others?
- How have we adapted to the circumstances of our lives?
- How do we experience the sacred?
- What have we experienced in humbly submitting ourselves to the sacred?
- What challenges us in responding to the needs of others and the moment?
- What do we balance?
- What have we sacrificed to live sacredness and further life on Earth?

Making an annual effort to contemplate our sacred path gives us the opportunity to discern how we have changed our ways and views to align more closely with the ways of sacredness. Moving toward the sacred encourages us to persevere and opens us to a level of honesty about ourselves we may never have experienced before. (How could we possible deceive the sacred?) We renew our yearning to further life on Earth.

Line 1: The line, at the beginning of its sacred path, has an ignorant and shallow view of life. However, if a sage became aware it has such a view, it would feel shame and know it had strayed from the path. On the spiritual path we view our relationships and experiences within a dynamic, interdependent and interconnected whole.

Line 2: People within harmful cultures have a self-centered and limited view of 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 contemplates its sacred path to discern whether it has furthered life on Earth and parted from how it harms life on Earth. It learns what to move towards and from what to withdraw to further prepare itself to benefit others and the Earth.

Line 4: The line contemplates how it lives sacredness and honors how it has benefited from receiving sacred guidance.

Line 5: The line contemplates its sacred path by discerning its beneficial influence upon others and how it has furthered life on Earth. Those who live their sacredness cause others and the Earth no harm.

Line 6: Even though the line fully lives sacredness to further life on Earth, the line humbly persists in contemplating its sacred path, not to exceed living sacredness but to discern whether it has remained true to the sacred ways.