

☳ 復 #24 – Return/*Fulfillment*

RETURN. Fulfillment. Go out and enter without haste. Companions come, and there is no blame. Back and forth goes the way. On the seventh day comes return. It furthers one to have somewhere to go.

復：亨。出入无疾，朋來无咎。反復其道，七日來復。利有攸往。

“**Judgment Treatise**”: *RETURN [brings] fulfillment: the firm returns.* Movement and acting with acceptance, thus “*Go out and enter without haste.*” “*Companions come, and there is no blame. Back and forth goes the way. On the seventh day comes return*”: this is the course of heaven. “*It furthers one to have somewhere to go*”: the firm is growing. In Return one sees the mind of heaven and earth.

象曰：復亨。剛反，動而以順行，是以出入无疾，朋來无咎。反復其道，七日來復，天行也。利有攸往，剛長也。復其見天地之心乎？

“**Image**”: Thunder within the earth: the image of RETURN. Thus the kings of antiquity closed the barriers on the solstice day. Merchant and travelers did not go about, and the lords did not inspect the localities.

象曰：雷在地中，復。先王以至日閉關，商旅不行，后不省方。

“Without haste” [in the Judgment] means something like the word “permeate” in #19 Approach where it says “the firm permeates and grows.” The development of yang is gradual, not abrupt. “Companions come” means that once a single yang is born, the other yangs will be born. Yang is the companion of yang; yin is not its own kind.

“On the seventh day will come the return”—traditionally there have been three interpretations of this. The first says that in the *gua-qi* [“hexagram-energy”] cycle, #61 Faith is the sixth day, and seven degrees after that comes Return. The second says that passing through the six positions of #2 Kun and arriving at [the First Yang of] Return makes seven days. The third says that from #43 Encounter in the Fifth Month, when one yin has just been born, to Return in the Eleventh Month is seven [steps or] “days.” The *Original Meaning of Zhu Xi* opts for the Encounter-to-Return theory.

Li Zisi says #24 Return is about the growth of yang. It speaks in terms of the sun [i.e. “in seven days there will be a return”], looking to the prospect of yang’s early arrival. Hexagram #19 is about the ebbing of yang. It speaks in terms of the moon [“in the Eighth Month comes misfortune”], and looks to the prospect of yang ebbing slowly.

“In Return one sees the mind of heaven and earth”—here the ‘Treatise’-author develops the original meaning in a unique and marvelous way. Here the implication of “mind” is closely tied to what the ‘Image’ says: “on the solstice day the barriers are closed.” Basically, the Judgment’s meaning focuses on the return of the single yang; the ‘Treatise’-author explains this by the workings of heaven and earth, and the growth tendencies of yang. At the winter solstice, thunder passes its peak of activity and returns to stillness in the ground. Quiescence is the underlying basis of these workings. Therefore, where other hexagrams speak of “the conditions of heaven and earth” [in the ‘Judgment Treatise’], this hexagram alone speaks of “the mind of heaven and earth.” The special meaning is quite clear. Wang Fusi’s explanation is uniquely on the mark: “Returning means going back to the root, and that is the original mind of heaven and earth. Any and every movement comes to rest in stillness: stillness is not counter to movement. Speech comes to rest in silence: silence is not counter to speech. Thus even though heaven and earth in their greatness abound with a myriad things, even though storm fronts bring thunder, and no end of changes unfold, at the root of it all is quiescence. Thus movement comes to rest in the earth, and that is when the mind of heaven and earth is evident. If this were done with a mentality of making something happen, the foreign element [of such an intention] would not manage to co-exist underground with its other.”

Tiao Gongwu wrote, “From #23 Splitting Away to Return, the direction is inward. From Return to #43 Encounter, the direction is outward. Approach (#19) and Peace (#11) are the companions of Return. Because it pertains to the inner trigram, the word “come” is used. The idea of recurrence is the opposite of the [irreversible] change we see in #23

Splitting Away. Splitting Away is turned upside down to make Return. Thus the ‘Treatise’ of Return says “its way is recurrence.” First Yin of Splitting Away rises to become Top Yin of Return; Top Yang descends to become First Yang. The numbers of lines One and Six add up to be seven—thus “on the seventh day it comes returning.” Both of the above sentences are conceived in relation to Splitting Away; they need not refer to any other hexagram. Splitting Away says “not furthering to have somewhere to go, for lesser persons are growing.” Return says, “it furthers to have somewhere to go, for the firm is growing.” Splitting Away says “The superior man pays heed to the empty and the full, to ebb and flow, for this is the way of heaven.” Return says “It’s way is recurrence; on the seventh day comes return, for this is the way of heaven.” The two hexagrams speak contrastingly of the Way’s renewal and ruin, both of which are mandated by heaven. Yet the *Yi*’s concern always lies in giving counsel to the superior man.

The winter equinox marks the return of yang; the summer equinox marks the return of yin.* Thus Return happens in a state of quiescent stillness. The former kings were men who took heaven’s workings as their pattern. When movement returns it is still; when action returns, it stops. When events return, then the times are undisturbed.

First Yang: Return from a short distance. [This is] not just [a matter of] remorse. Great good fortune./ **‘Image’:** *Return from a short distance, by cultivation of the self.*

初九：不遠復，无祇悔，元吉。/象曰：不遠之復，以修身也。

Yang Jianzhong writes, “Any [stray] notion that arises veers away from it; discontinuing [the notional stream] is a return. Discontinuing means there is no more arising. This is called ‘returning not from afar.’ Return lies at the beginning where notions arise. When a notion arises, be aware of it; being noticed, its boundaries will dissolve, like vapor dissolving irrecoverably into space. The human mind is good in itself, prescient in itself, illumined in itself. Responses cross each other like a myriad images in a mirror. The mirror does not move, and the images are lined up in perfect order. The slightest arising of a [stray] notion veers away. At the slightest veering, be aware of it; being noticed, its boundaries dissolve as before. This is called ‘returning not from afar.’”

Return has its inception in regret, but there can be regret without return. If one can return before going too far, it is no mere matter of easing regret: it is a path of sublime good fortune. The word 祇 *zhi* (“but/ mere”) is also used in #29.5 The Abysmal: “gets only to a certain level.” In both cases, it means something like 但 *dan*.

Second Yin: Delight in return. Good fortune. / **‘Image’:** Delight in return—being humble toward the benevolent one.

六二：休復，吉。/象曰：休復之吉，以下仁也。

休 *xiu* is read here like the *xiu* in 休休有榮 *xiuxiu-yourong* (“well-favored and flourishing”). Yin often takes exception to yang, but Line Two is yielding, accepting, centered, and correct. Seeing the single yang’s return, it feels elated and glad to be next to yang. This is the way to good fortune. “The benevolent” refers to the yang that has not come from afar. Joining with those below is integral to benevolence. Confucius’ disciple Yan Hui succeeded at it. Zengzi got close to the idea of it, but could not devote himself to it. Still, in his studies he advanced to benevolence. “Delight of return” refers to one who humbles himself before the benevolent. As Wen Zhongqi wrote, “in learning, nothing works better than getting close to the right person.”

Third Yin: Repeated return. Trouble. No blame./ **‘Image’:** The trouble of *repeated return*—by all rights there should be no blame.

六三：頻復厲，无咎。/象曰：頻復之厲，義無咎也。

Line Three is at the extreme of *zhen* and it [marks a stage that] will soon leave the inner trigram. This gives it an image of trouble. Yet it has not left the inside, and it shares a trigram with Line One; thus it gives an image of return. Being at the interface of upper and lower realms, it frequently returns and frequently misses. This is like the expression “the moon comes and the sun goes.”

Fourth Yin: Proceed in the center, returning independently./ **'Image':** *Proceed in the center, returning independently*—in order to follow the Way.

六四：中行獨復。/ 象曰：中行獨復，以從道也。

Line Four is in the middle of the five yins and is “proceeding” in the center. It resonates below with One, and in this manner it proceeds. This means it proceeds in a central path and returns in its own way. That is, it alone among the crowd of yins has a dawning realization that does not come from the outside, hence “follow the way.” Yongxiu says, “Among the 24 Friends of Jingu there was a Liu Kun; among the Eight Masters of Baguan there was a Liu Qichu.” Weren’t these men who went in the center and returned in their own way? I would not say these two fellows followed the Way but at least they were not bogged down in factionalism.

Line Two of #11 Peace and Line Five of #43 Guai also says “proceeding in the center”: this comes from being central in the upper and lower trigrams. Lines Three and Four of #12 Increase both say “proceeding in the center”: Three and Four are both in the middle of the hexagram. This line says “proceeding in the center,” because Four is central among the five *yins*. For this we see that the *Yi* is not nailed down to formulaic rules.

Fifth Yin: Substantive return. No regret./ **'Image':** *Substantive return, no regret*—keeping centered to evaluate oneself.

六五：敦復，无悔。/ 象曰：敦復無悔，中以自考也。

Line One is the presiding line of Return. Line Five is distant from One and has no resonance with it. Its way of following the one below can only be by attachment to Four. “Substantive” implies an idea of imparting substance or adding resources. The meaning is similar to “substantive approach” [in #19].

Top Yang: Lost returning. Misfortune. Disaster and dwindling. If armies are set marching in this way, in the end there will be a great defeat; misfortune for the ruler of the country. For ten years it will not be possible to go forth./ **'Image':** The misfortune of *lost returning*—going against the ruler’s way.

上六：迷復，凶，有災眚。用行師，終有大敗，以其國君，凶。至于十年，不克征。/ 象曰：迷復之凶，反君道也。

Yu Fan wrote, “It is to be expected that *kun* will get lost. This yin, yielding line occupies the top of the *kun* trigram. This is what is described [in the ‘Judgment Treatise’ of #27] as ‘going first it gets lost;’ Thus this line is ‘lost returning’ rather than ‘getting lost and not returning,’ because it seeks to return but loses its leader and root.” The more it seeks the further off it gets. But we are told that at the end of ten years, there will be a day when return is possible. Otherwise the way of yang, which is everywhere between heaven and earth, would lapse into oblivion. What sense would there be in that?”

My *Xuexi Ji* [Record of Learning] says, “Splitting Away splits gradually, but Return returns in an instant. Each hexagram stands in some sort of contrast to another, but in Return this is especially evident: just when the crowd of yins have advanced to yang’s vanishing point, as bleak autumn gives away to deep winter, when cold has taken its toll and no one sees the prospect of return—that is when Return happens. The popular view on Return is that it is ‘the sprouting of yang.’ This betrays ignorance of what Return is. If it depended on sprouting and gradual development, why would it be called Return? Why do you think the text has sentences like the following? ‘Inward and outward without haste; companions will come, no blame; its way is recurrence; in seven days it will come returning.’ ‘The firm returns; movement to the point of acceptance.’ ‘The former kings on solstice day closed the barriers; merchants and travelers did not go about; the lords did not inspect the localities.’ In all these it is clear that return happens instantly. This is not a matter of sprouting and slow growth. Bringing it back to human concerns, the unwholesome actions that wear away at the good, as Splitting wears away at yang, can perhaps be called gradual. As for the flash of insight that lets you master yourself and return to propriety—this is like the sudden return of yang. That being so, to lose one’s way gradually is a human error, but that which returns in an instant is the heart-mind. Thus Splitting is a mistake of heaven and earth, but what returns is the mind of heaven and earth. Don’t people see? The lone yang separated from yin is not just something for the sage to honor in his conceptual framework. It is the rightful nature of heaven and earth. This is where I differ from traditional explanation.”