

32



HÉNG

# CONSTANCY

Constancy.  
Constancy is blessed.  
Averts harm.  
It is favorable to remain as one is.  
It is favorable to go forward.

He must not attempt to change his status, but should remain a humble subject. As long as he does, he will have good fortune, whether he stays where he is or follows his ruler on a journey.

## *Lines*

first line/6 — — Constant in the depths.  
Inauspicious.  
Not favorable.

Although the hexagram as a whole advises one to remain in a low position, this position is too low.

line two/9 ——— Regrets will pass.

Line two is the place of the subject or subordinate. At first he regrets being in such a comparatively low position, but the benefits of his constancy will chase regret away.

line three/9 ——— He does not keep to his station.  
He makes an offering of sauces.  
Keeping on will bring trouble.

Line three, the top line of the lower trigram, often describes the misfortunes of someone who attempts to rise too high. Instead of making the simple meat offering proper to someone of his station, he adds sauces to it, which only someone of a higher rank should do. See Pǐ (12) BLOCKED, lines two and three.<sup>1, 2</sup>

line four/9 ——— He hunts and gets nothing.

Any attempt at gain will fail. Line four is the first line of the upper trigram. He succeeds in entering the higher position represented by the upper trigram, but this leads to no real gain.<sup>3</sup>

line five/6 — — He keeps to his station.  
Auspicious for a wife,  
Inauspicious for a husband.

Line five is the place of the ruler. To remain in a subordinate position is fine for a wife (subject), but for a husband (ruler) it is a poor prospect.<sup>1, 4</sup>

top line/6 — — Under constant attack.  
Misfortune.

This top line is too high. In it, he is exposed to attack.

STRUCTURE ䷏ 震 Zhèn Thunderbolt (rush forward)  
䷋ 巽 Xùn Kneel in Submission

One kneels in submission (lower trigram ䷋) to someone in a higher position and is carried forward (upper trigram ䷏).

SEQUENCE The last hexagram Gǎn (31) MOVEMENT showed a subject who began to move after having been just a passive vassal of his lord. This inverse hexagram CONSTANCY shows that his relationship toward his ruler remains constant.

## Notes

1. “station” (lines three and five) — The word 德 *dé* is usually translated: “virtue.” Here, however, it refers to one’s status in society. In Sòng (6) GRIEVANCE, line three, the words 舊德 *jiù dé* “old virtue” mean “patrimony,” the land and title inherited by a member of the nobility.

2. “He makes an offering of sauces.” (line three) — This is traditionally interpreted: “He will be disgraced.” Both interpretations are reasonable, but I think the former is more likely correct.

3. "He hunts and gets nothing." (line four) — Compare with line four of XÙN (57) KNEEL IN SUBMISSION: "He makes a great catch on the hunt."

4. "wife . . . husband" (line five) — For a discussion of the symbolism here, see XIǎO XÙ (9) SMALL IS TAMED, note 4.