

HEXAGRAM 40 HSIEH RELEASE



Component trigrams:

Below: K'AN, water, a pit.

Above: CHÊN, thunder, movement, to sprout or quicken.

TEXT Release. The west and south are favourable. Those with nothing to gain from going forward will win good fortune by turning back;¹ those who do have much to gain from going forward must hasten to be sure of doing well.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT This hexagram implies activity in the face of danger;² for it is activity by which danger is averted that brings release. West and south are favoured in the sense that those who go in those directions now will win the hearts of many. Returning brings good fortune and makes it possible to steer a middle course. If those with good reason to go forward hasten to their goal, they will be assured of concrete results. Heaven and earth find release in thunder and rain, whose action causes the seed pods of fruit-bearing shrubs and every kind of plant and tree to burst asunder. The timely application of this hexagram is of vast importance.

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes thunder and rain³ bringing release. The Superior Man tends to forgive wrongs and deals leniently with crimes.

The Lines

6 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE No error! **COMMENTARY** The con-

junction of yielding and firm (namely, lines one and two) implies freedom from error.

9 FOR THE SECOND PLACE With (one) yellow arrow, he killed three foxes in the field.³ Righteous persistence will bring good fortune. **COMMENTARY** The good fortune of being able to steer a middle course.

6 FOR THE THIRD PLACE (Travelling with both) luggage-bearers and a carriage,⁴ he attracted the attention of robbers. To persist would bring misfortune. **COMMENTARY** Moreover, his using both of them was shameful. If I (were to act thus and) bring robbers down on me, who (but myself) would be to blame?

9 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE A fumbled release.⁵ Put your trust in the friend(s) who will come. **COMMENTARY** A fumbled release is indicated by the unsuitable position of this line.

6 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE Only the Superior Man brings release. Good fortune! It is up to lesser men to put their trust in him.⁶ **COMMENTARY** But when the Superior Man offers them release, they take to their heels.⁷

6 FOR THE TOP PLACE The prince shot an arrow and killed a hawk perching on a high wall. Everything is favourable! **COMMENTARY** This means that he was able to liberate himself from perverse men.

NOTES (1) This is not a time to stay where we are. If we have no good reason to advance, it is best to retreat. (2) A reference to the component trigrams, which suggests that a certain amount of forceful action is required. (3) Three birds with one stone. (4) This could mean that someone bearing luggage on his back rides in a carriage. In any case, the Chinese additional commentaries explain that the passage refers to those who usurp privileges to which they are not entitled by rank or merit. (5) 'A fumbled release' is the result of my attempt to make something of three Chinese words—'release' and 'thumb' (or 'big toe') joined by a grammatical particle with various possible meanings. Whether my guess is right or not, the commentary on the line makes it clear that the omen is not a fortunate one. Happily, an awkward situation will be relieved by the arrival of a friend (or friends). (6) This could also mean 'He has confidence in lesser men'. (7) Perhaps this means that true release involves release from selfishness—a lesson which men of little merit have no desire to learn!