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RETURN

Return.

Returning will be blessed.

He goes out and comes back in again without affliction.

A friend comes

and he suffers no harm.

Forth and back on the road,

in seven days he has returned.

It is favorable to advance.

Having gone as far as he can, he retreats to his starting point. It is favorable for him to advance because he turns back when the time comes, getting home after “seven days.” The “friend” referred to is probably his ruler.¹

Lines

first line/9 —

Return from not far.

No great regrets.

Supreme good fortune.

Since he has not gone far, there is little to regret in turning back and he has no difficulty getting home again.

line two/6 — —

Fine return.

Auspicious.

He returns safe and successful from a journey. Line two is the place of the subject, who accepts a good but subordinate position and stops trying to advance.

line three/6 — — Disconsolate return.
Danger but no harm.

In the face of danger, he is forced against his will to turn back. The gap between the lower and upper trigrams is a barrier that he cannot get through.

line four/6 — — He returns alone on the road.

He must turn around and retrace his steps homeward, even if it means leaving friend(s) behind. Line four, the entry into the upper trigram, is too advanced a position for him to remain in.

line five/6 — — Forced to return.
No regrets.

His superior forces him to go back. Line five is the place of the ruler. A passive line (— —) in this position often represents a subject who passively accepts his ruler's authority.

top line/6 — — Returning, he loses his way.
Misfortune. Disaster.
If he fields an army,
he will end by suffering a great defeat
at the hands of the ruler of his nation.
Misfortune.
He cannot march forth for ten years.

This top line is associated with going too far and with conflict between subject and ruler.²

STRUCTURE ☶ ☵ Kūn Acquiescent (weak, withdraw)
☳ ☳ Zhèn Thunderbolt (rush forward)

He rushes forward (lower trigram ☳), then weakens and withdraws (upper trigram ☶). The strong first line (—) rushes forward, then weakens (☶) and sinks back.

SEQUENCE The protagonist of the last hexagram PŌ (23) DESTRUCTION went too far and was destroyed. The protagonist of RETURN turns back in time to escape harm.

Notes

1. "seven days" (opening text) — In the *Changes*, the number seven refers to one complete cycle of events. See LÍN (19) LEADERSHIP, note 2.

2. “at the hands of the ruler of his nation” (top line) — This is usually interpreted “reaching to the ruler of his nation.” The ruler is seen as sharing the defeat rather than inflicting it. Both interpretations are possible.