

# HEXAGRAM 36

## MING I (pronounced MING YEE) DARKENING OF THE LIGHT. INJURY



*Component trigrams:*

*Below: LI, fire, brilliance, beauty.*

*Above: K'UN, earth, female, passive, etc.*

**TEXT** Darkening of the Light. Righteous persistence in the face of difficulty brings reward.

**COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT** Entering into the earth, the light is extinguished.<sup>1</sup> A man who clothed his inner being with refinement and intelligence and who displayed gentleness and willing acceptance in his outward conduct, the better to meet adversity—such as King Wên! Determination to win advantage from difficulty involves concealing brilliance (of mind and character). A man who, despite the troubles locked within his heart, unfalteringly fixed his will upon righteousness—such was Prince Chi!<sup>2</sup>

**SYMBOL** This hexagram symbolizes light hidden within the earth.<sup>3</sup> In governing the people, the Superior Man, though taking care to conceal (his light), nevertheless shines.

### *The Lines*

**9 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE** Failure of the light during his progress

through the sky caused him to lower his wings. When busy with affairs, the Superior Man may go without food for three days on end, so intent is he on reaching his goal; but his lord will have something to say about this.<sup>4</sup> **COMMENTARY** It is the duty of the Superior Man to go without food for three days if his activities require this of him.<sup>5</sup>

**6 FOR THE SECOND PLACE** Though injured in the left thigh, he made use of a horse in relieving distress—good fortune! **COMMENTARY** This good fortune results from compliance with laws and regulations.<sup>5</sup>

**9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE** Wounded while on a military expedition in the south, he still managed to capture the rebel leader. Persistence amounting to madness should be avoided.<sup>6</sup> **COMMENTARY** His willingness to undertake the expedition in the south symbolizes determination to achieve great results.

**6 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE** It is as though he had penetrated someone's left side and perceived a darkened heart (as clearly as if that heart had been abstracted) from its dwelling-place.<sup>7</sup> **COMMENTARY** This is a way of saying that he saw clearly into the other's heart.

**6 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE** Prince Chi suffered injury, but his persistence along a righteous course was rewarded. **COMMENTARY** Prince Chi's persistence was rewarded in the sense that his was a light which can never be extinguished.

**6 FOR THE TOP PLACE** Nothing to lighten the darkness! Having once climbed to heaven, he later descended into the earth.<sup>8</sup> **COMMENTARY** That he had once climbed to heaven means that, at one time, he illumined the four quarters of the empire; his descent into the earth means that he transgressed divine law.

**NOTES** (1) As when the sun goes down. (2) The implication is that we should seek to emulate these ancient heroes by steadfastness in the face of immeasurable difficulties. (3) The relative positions of the two component hexagrams suggest light hidden in the earth. (4) This sort of conduct is much admired by the Chinese. We are reminded of the Emperor Yü who, when in the previous reign he was charged with the duty of flood control, often passed the door of his old home without so much as stopping to greet his family. Confucius himself is said to have gone for several days without food. The implica-

tion is that, when we are working for the public good, we must put aside all selfish considerations. It does not matter if our superiors or other people criticize what they consider to be our madness in so doing. (5) The implication would seem to be that, when charged with emergency duties, we must persist in carrying them out at all costs. (6) Though his intentions were good and though he happened to succeed in this case, he was nevertheless behaving with excessive zeal amounting almost to madness. The idea is that, while it is a most excellent thing to fight against adversity, we should not go so far as to endanger our lives unnecessarily. (7) The Chinese text for this line is so far from clear as to suggest that it is corrupt. My interpretation must be regarded as no more than an intelligent guess. The actual text runs something like this: 'Into left side, obtain light-darkened heart—or heart of light-darkening—outside the gates and courtyards (of home).' Fortunately, the commentary on this line explains the general meaning, so the matter is not of great importance. (8) If we have once risen to great heights, it is doubly shameful to sink low.