

52. *Mountain*

Stopping at the back, one does not have a body;  
walking in the garden, one does not see a person.  
No fault.

## EXPLANATION

*Mountain* represents stopping, stillness. In the body of the hexagram, one yang rests on top of two yins: The yang is above, the yin is below; yang governs yin and yin obeys yang, so the celestial is not damaged by the mundane. Inwardly still and outwardly still, one stops inside and also stops outside. Because one stillness pervades inside and outside, it is called *mountain*.

This hexagram represents nurturing energy by quietude, discerning the good and holding fast to it. It follows on the previous hexagram *the cauldron*. In *the cauldron*, one follows an initiatory process to produce illumination. Illumination comes from following the procedure; illumination, reaching everywhere without becoming defective anywhere, refines the great elixir. But if you want to refine the great elixir, you cannot do so unless you discern the good and hold fast to it, staying in the proper place.

Staying in the proper place does not mean empty inaction; the path has both action and stillness, and both action and stillness must stay in the proper place. In the qualities of the hexagram, the inner stopping means stillness staying in the proper place, and the outer stopping means action staying in the proper place. By stillness you develop the abode of rest; by action you test the abode of rest. By the former stopping you reach the

latter stopping, by the latter stopping you master the former stopping; action and stillness both end up in a single stillness.

Stillness upon stillness, it is like the one stopping on the back of the other. Therefore the text says "stopping at the back." Stopping on the back of stopping is acting from stillness, testing stillness with action, so action and stillness are one continuum. Then stillness does not become empty quietism, and action does not become unbridled indulgence. Action is none other than stillness, stillness none other than action. Stillness is of course still; action too is still. Inside and outside are one stillness, staying in the proper place without shifting, therefore "one does not have a body; walking in the garden, one does not see a person."

Not having a body means there is no self; walking in the garden, not seeing a person means there are no others. Ordinary people discriminate between self and others, inside and outside, because they have consciousness. When there is consciousness, there is self; when there is self, there are others. When there are self and others, one doesn't know where to stop. If one can stop at the back, then the consciousness of self and others sublimates. When there is no consciousness of self and others, then the human mentality leaves and the mind of Tao arrives.

There is only one truth; act and rest according to truth. In repose you preserve correctness: Stillness is accomplished by realizing truth, not by the body; resting in the proper place, inwardly you are unaware of having a body. In action, you act correctly, acting on the truth, not in obedience to other people; stopping in the proper place, outwardly you do not mind other people. With no self or others, having been able to stop inside, you can also stop outside. Active or still according to the time, inwardly and outwardly in communion with the Tao—both action and stillness come forth from mindlessness. Through this one principle all faults can be eliminated.

If learners can apply their efforts to this double stilling, stopping in the proper place without wavering, then they will finish all tasks by this one attainment. Why worry that the gold elixir won't form or the great Tao will not be realized?

- **First yin:** Stopping at the feet, there is no fault. It is beneficial to be always upright.

#### EXPLANATION

Being humble and not daring to act arbitrarily is like stopping the feet. Stopping the feet, not proceeding in any improper way, since the first thought is genuine, one can then be without fault. However, those who are yielding often lack autonomy, and may lack firmness in stopping. So it is beneficial to be always upright, persisting in the Path; only then can one be faultless from start to finish. This is the stopping in which one maintains correctness always.



- **2 yin:** Stopping at the calves doesn't help out the following. The heart is unhappy.

## EXPLANATION

Yielding, infirm, with stopping unstable, things get a bit further; this is like stopping at the calves. The calves do not move by themselves; they follow the feet—when you stop things at the calves, it is because there is no one with firm understanding to help out. Therefore the heart is unhappy; one cannot but stop. This is the stopping of the weak making forced effort.

- **3 yang:** Stopping at the waist breaks the backbone; danger inflames the heart.

## EXPLANATION

Being strong without flexibility, impulsive and unrestrained, is like the backbone at the waist; if you only know how to go forward and not how to withdraw, that will surely destroy your strength—stopping only when there is a limit is like breaking the backbone. Above a broken backbone, the danger lies in inflaming the heart to crave victory and desire quick success. This is the stopping of the strong making forced effort.

- **4 yin:** Stopping at the body, there is no blame.

## EXPLANATION

Remaining upright in spite of weakness, not changing one's direction in activity, is like stopping at the body. If one can stop at the body, take care of oneself and not foist responsibility off on others, then one will be remote from enmity, and therefore be without blame. This is the stopping of governing oneself in weakness.

- **5 yin:** Stopping at the jaws, one's words are orderly. Regret vanishes.

## EXPLANATION

Weak yet balanced, stopping inside and also stopping outside, is like stopping at the jaws. The jaws move when the mouth opens: Stopping at the jaws, the mouth does not open at random, so speech does not come forth at random; if one speaks, one's words are orderly. One may speak so as to benefit the human mind in worldly affairs, or one may speak concerning the essence and life of body and mind; even if one cannot carry it out oneself, inducing people to goodness is also something that builds up virtue. Even if there was regret before, the regret can disappear. This is the stopping in which one helps people in spite of weakness.

- ***Top yang:*** Careful stopping brings good fortune.

**EXPLANATION**

At the top of double stopping, able to stop inside, one can also stop outside; inside and outside one stillness, this is called careful stopping. When stopping is most thorough, strength and weakness are entirely sublimated, one's essence is stabilized and feelings forgotten; resting in the realm of ultimate good and not moving from there, without birth or death, one is like a lofty mountain, everlasting as sky and earth. This is stopping in which one completes the beginning and consummates the end.

So the path of stopping in the proper place requires that doing and non-doing, action and stillness, be as one, and yin and yang merge and sublimates. The final achievement comes only when you rest in the realm of ultimate good without evil. If you do not reach the realm of ultimate good without evil, this cannot be called complete fortune. So those who practice the Tao should know where to stop.

52. *Mountains*

mountain above,  
mountain below

**Joining mountains. Thus do superior people think without leaving their place.**

Mountains symbolize stability. With *mountain* 山 above and below, one mountain joins another, and so on, so that a thousand mountains, ten thousand mountains, present a single image of stability.

What superior people see in this is that the inherent goodness in people is the "place" wherein people are human, where they should remain all their lives and never leave for a moment; therefore they emulate the image of joining mountains, and think without leaving their place.

In both social and spiritual life, investigating truth and distinguishing right from wrong, people cannot dispense with thought; but if the thought is right, then they are in their place, while if the thought is wrong they are out of place. It is important that all thoughts stop in their proper place, and do not lose their original reality.

If practitioners of the Tao are able to think in their place, the mind of Tao is ever-present and the human mentality is forever quiescent; no external objects can influence them, so there is no harm to thought.

Do-nothing quietists may say they forget about things and forget about their own bodies, not thinking at all; but this has nothing to do with the Tao of nature and life of body and mind, and is also one form of being out of place.

Being in place means being immutable, stabilized in the right way. Thought that is properly stabilized encompasses all reason and responds to all things. Though one thing all day, never being out of place, it is as though there were no thought. Indeed, when you know the One, all tasks are done; if you do not know the One, then thought is out of place. How many students in the world know the One?