

HEXAGRAM 37 CHIA JÊN THE FAMILY¹



Component trigrams:

Below: LI, fire, brilliance, beauty.

Above: SUN, wind, wood, bland, mild.

TEXT The Family. Women's persistence brings reward.²

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT Women's appropriate place is within; men's, without. When men and women keep to their proper places they act in accord with heaven's great norm.³ Among the members of a family are the dignified master and mistress whom we term Father and Mother. When Father, mother, sons, elder and younger brothers all act in a manner suited to their various positions within the family, when husbands play their proper role and wives are truly wifely, the way of that family runs straight.⁴ It is by the proper regulation of each family that the whole world is stabilized.

SYMBOL This hexagram symbolizes wind rising from fire.⁵ The Superior Man's speech is full of substance and he behaves with constancy.

The Lines

9 FOR THE BOTTOM PLACE The family dwelling stands within an enclosure—regret vanishes. **COMMENTARY** The first part of this passage symbolizes determination which has never swerved.

6 FOR THE SECOND PLACE (This is a time when) nothing can be brought to completion; however, within the household, righteous persistence brings good fortune.⁶ **COMMENTARY** Namely, good fortune arising from compliance and gentleness.

9 FOR THE THIRD PLACE When members of the family speak sharply (to one another), the (mutual) regret and the serious situation which follow may lead to good fortune; but, if the women and children take to tittering, misfortune is assured.⁷ **COMMENTARY** Because sharp words do not cause much harm, but the tittering of women and children leads to the destruction of good order within the family.

6 FOR THE FOURTH PLACE A well-to-do household—great good fortune! **COMMENTARY** This good fortune is indicated by the position of the line which symbolizes cheerful acceptance.

9 FOR THE FIFTH PLACE The King draws near to his 'family' (i.e. the nation)—no cause for worry; good fortune! **COMMENTARY** This means that the ruler and his people meet together with love in their hearts.⁸

9 FOR THE TOP PLACE His sincerity (and/or confidence) is such as to make him appear awe-inspiring—good fortune in the end! **COMMENTARY** He will enjoy good fortune because he subjects himself (frequently) to self-examination.

NOTES (1) The arrangement of this hexagram suggests a harmonious family, in the Chinese traditional sense, for the women (Yin lines) are all within, surrounded by their menfolk (Yang lines), some of whom stand guarding the family from those without. (2) Women who receive this hexagram in response to their enquiries may take it as a fortunate omen; not so men, unless they also receive a moving line which promises good fortune; otherwise, for them, the omen is rather negative. (3) Modern people, especially Americans, may be inclined to scorn this piece of wisdom; yet, if they think in Chinese terms, that is by putting family happiness above individual happiness (or its pursuit), they may appreciate it. It is certain that the family discord and broken marriages are rarer in those ages and those parts of the world where family harmony is cherished above most

else. (4) The classical Chinese notion of behaviour proper to parents, children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives was not a one-sided one; for the senior in each pair, though he enjoyed certain privileges over juniors or his womenfolk, was expected to be punctilious about fulfilling his obligations to them. (5) A reference to the component trigrams. (6) This omen is unfavourable, except as regards household matters. (7) An occasional scolding may not do much harm, but constant mockery of parents or husband will cause irreparable damage to family accord. The former, if followed by regret and by the threat of an unwanted quarrel or separation, may bring people to their senses and make them mutually more considerate than hitherto. (8) This may be interpreted to mean that we enjoy the affection of our superiors or bestow affection on our juniors and those in our charge.