

Subscribers' readings
from
'Answers' I Ching newsletter 2004

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To make it easier to find a reading with hexagrams you're interested in, I've included the hexagrams in the title for each subscriber's reading. This 'traditional' format for writing hexagrams and lines is 'first hexagram, moving lines, second hexagram'. For instance, 56, 9/3,9/4, 23 means hexagram 56 changing at the third and fourth lines to hexagram 23. 9/3 means 'nine at the third place': a 'nine' is a moving yang line; a six is a moving yin line.

Career Prospects in 2004: 56, 9/3,9/4, 23

“I am from China in July, 1997, and I have worked in a biological research company in Victoria BC, Canada since Jan. 1999. I am a technician in the lab.

I was born in Nov. 14, 1956--a female.

What will happen in my career or job in 2004?

Thanks a lot,

Jie”

The I Ching answered with Hexagram 56, Travelling, changing to Hexagram 23, Stripping Away. It sounds as though you will, at the very least, have the opportunity to move on...

Primary hexagram: 56, Travelling

This describes you as a traveller: someone with a distant objective, who has stopped just for a while among strangers. It's a strong indication that you are not truly 'at home' in your present job, and shouldn't regard it as more than a 'staging post' on your journey. You're not going to bring about major changes in the way this company does things, and nor are they having a significant influence on you.

'Travelling, creating small success,
Travelling, constancy means good fortune.'

That is, your small degree of involvement with the firm you work for brings you small rewards - and this has been the only sensible strategy, as there is no place here for your larger self. But good fortune in the longer term comes from 'constancy' - which I think means not just persistence, but also continuing truth to yourself and your more remote ideals.

This may be quite a confusing feeling for you, because it is so different from how things felt when you first left China. At first, you were doing something great and important, fulfilling your destiny - now, the journey is still going on, but in small steps and without dramatic changes. It's as if you and your decisions have moved from the centre of things to the periphery. This stage actually demands every bit as much self-reliance and independence of mind as your initial move. As a traveller, you provide your own standard to judge by.

And you need to be able to use it:

'Above the mountain is fire. Travelling.
The noble one with clear-minded care
Uses punishments and does not drag out legal proceedings.'

The fire above the mountain sounds to me like the camp fire for a group of travellers. Before it burns out, they must settle any disputes, not carry their disagreements with them. The same principle applies when you are travelling

alone: you need to take your decisions, act on them (even if it hurts) and move on
- to limit how much time and energy you'll expend in the process of deciding.

Change

With the two central lines changing, you are travelling across the threshold from feeling to action - never easy! You might be spurred on by the feeling that there is more you can do - and afraid, at the same time, that such feelings may not fit well with the real world. But if you are absolutely present to all the guidance the real world offers, it may be surprising what comes to you.

Changing line 3

'Wanderer burns down the rest house.
Loses her young helper.
Constancy brings danger.'

I'm afraid this does indicate that you could lose your job - not through neglecting it, but actually through being too enthusiastic. This line describes someone who looks into things too hard, asks for too much from other people, and generally lives at a higher degree of intensity than her surroundings can sustain. Could you be trying to make more of your job than it can really offer you?

Obviously, continuing in this way is dangerous. But before you stifle your ambitions and make a last-ditch effort to fade into the background... 'danger' in the I Ching is not always something to be avoided. You might have valid reasons to test the capacity of your job and relationships to breaking point.

Changing line 4

'Traveller with a place to stay,
Gains property and an axe.
My heart is not glad.'

Here is the alternative picture, of the year you can expect if you manage not to 'burn down' your current position: greater job security, perhaps the offer of a rise in pay ('property') or status (the axe, symbol of authority). Yet this is not something you can rejoice in. Perhaps the problem is that it still doesn't feel altogether secure - or perhaps you just don't feel sufficiently connected to this firm and this job to feel happy about the assurance of staying there.

Relating hexagram: 23, Stripping Away

I think that this reading as a whole is asking you whether you have arrived in the position that really brings out your full potential. When someone asks, 'And what do you do?' you may be able to answer easily, but how much excitement and enthusiasm do you feel?

If you have the feeling that there is more you can do with your life, what will it take for that fresh potential to emerge and grow? The painful truth is that, as a

rule, the familiar and safe scenario has to be stripped away from us to create the space for new growth.

Hexagrams 23 and 24, Stripping Away and Returning, form one of the I Ching's 'out with the old, in with the new' pairs. Stripping Away is the first part of the process: losing the old and familiar. On the surface, your job is secure; underneath, the life is going out of it. Presently, the surface may also fall away - and if you're unprepared, this leaves you feeling very lost indeed.

'Stripping away.
No harvest in having a direction to go.'

This isn't necessarily about having the courage to make the break from the old job, but rather having the courage not to hang on when the break makes itself, and to allow something truer and more alive to emerge. You're not being asked to start making detailed plans for the future and fix on your 'direction to go'. Part of the lesson of Stripping Away, in my own experience, is that if you don't clear out the old completely, then what you think are new ideas will turn into repetitions of old, familiar, 'safe' patterns. So the best thing you can do with feelings of insecurity is also the hardest - just to live with them.

Yet not making plans doesn't mean being unprepared:

'Mountain resting on the earth. Stripping away.
With generosity from above, creating quiet places below.'

The harder you hold on to the old ways, the worse Stripping Away will feel. But this kind of change doesn't absolutely have to happen through pain and crisis. The 'mountain' of your current status and job security can be 'eroded' gradually and gently, creating a fertile valley below where people can be at home. You can concentrate instead on your untapped potential: a wide-open, unexplored landscape beyond the mountain.

[Jie's reply](#)

'Dear Hilary:
Yes, you are right. Our company just laid off 30 people because of financial and market problems, but I am there still. I wonder it may stay until July or longest might be for another two years if they will get the loan from local government.
Thank you very much
Jie'

A sense of losing power: 15, 6/1,6/2,6/4, 34

"Hi Hilary,

My situation that I would love to have some guidance on is as follows. I have been in an intimate relationship with M for just over one year. Before that we were close friends for about seven years.

The hardest thing about our relationship is that we are very very similar so at times it is very hard to know what is going on for who and at other times it is very tempting to project all the difficulties onto him and feel very arrogant and smug - not healthy qualities in the eye of the I Ching. I learn again and again from the I Ching not to interfere with his process and to withdraw when our communication is getting stuck etc. As a result of doing this, something that is starting to happen quite regularly with me is that the part of me that I identify as my ego keeps feeling like it is losing power which I am sure is a good thing long term, but feels very threatening and life endangering in the here and now.

What I would like for now is guidance on how I support myself to become humble and accepting in the face of what feels like such a huge and controlling ego!

Many many thanks
J"

Dear J,

I asked the I Ching on your behalf,

'What is the best way for J to respond to this sense of losing power?'

I phrased it this way in order to be as open as I could to all possible answers, without setting an 'agenda' for the oracle. In fact, the answer responds very closely to the way you originally phrased the question, in terms of humility and acceptance versus the ego. Yi answered you with Hexagram 15, Humility, changing to Hexagram 34, Great Vigour. It sets your desire to be more humble in the context and atmosphere of immensely strong willpower.

Humility and Great Vigour in this reading are not antagonistic at all: they work together. Humility is a way of relating to Great Vigour, but Great Vigour also supports and energises Humility.

Primary hexagram: 15, Humility

'Humility' may actually be a slightly misleading translation for what this hexagram is about: it doesn't mean denying your strengths and gifts or trying to hide them. Bradford Hatcher wisely calls this hexagram Authenticity: that doesn't mean self-abnegation any more than it means throwing your weight around.

You've already taken the unusual step of not projecting your fears out onto your partner and making him into a personal 'project'. Looking at this reading, I think the next step would be to acknowledge the sense of fear and threat as a perfectly acceptable, loveable part of yourself - rather than setting out to banish it, like a hero facing a monster. The most basic meaning of this hexagram is Uniting: there is only one of you.

And literally, it is about words that unite, that hold close to reality. So within your relationship, this is about truth in communication. No need to wear a mask; no need to communicate anything less than yourself.

'Authentic, creating success.
The noble one completes it.'

The noble one, the one with vision and integrity, can carry authenticity through to a successful conclusion: this is an ideal to aspire to. The authentic person will never be distracted from what she has to do, because she has no need to prove anything about herself. This is why the core of Authenticity is Release: freedom in every moment to choose your own course, with no puppet strings to be pulled or buttons to be pushed!

Time and again, I've found this hexagram comes up to remind me not to exaggerate. For instance, beware of the idea that the relationship depends on your becoming a better person. It's quite safe to take your role much more lightly; you may be amazed at how little depends on you. What if... there were no heroic battle to be fought with an ego-monster, no great sacrifices to be made? What if you didn't need to go to any extremes at all?

'In the centre of the earth there is a mountain. Humility.
The noble one reduces the many to increase the few,
She weighs things up to even out their distribution.'

The earth is low-lying, accepting, and offers no resistance; the mountain is massive, solid and distinct. And 'humility' in the Yijing is a combination of the two. The earth masses together into mountains and is eroded again to enrich the valleys: balance is created through a constant cycle between amassing a solid centre, and giving generously of yourself. It seems you can't have one without the other.

Relating hexagram: 34, Great Vigour

You're looking specifically for ways to 'support yourself to become humble and accepting' - and this second hexagram is what you are looking for. The reading isn't just about being humble about Great Vigour, but being humble with Great Vigour!

This hexagram may be the I Ching's take on aspects of yourself you're inclined to condemn. It shows a combination of strength and purpose: both sheer energy, and

also your vision of the kind of relationship you want to have, and the kind of person you want to become within it.

You mentioned that you've been learning to withdraw: that's the pattern of Hexagram 33, Retreat. (Maybe you've received that one already?) Looking at the sequence of hexagrams, Great Vigour is what all your Retreats are for. You withdraw to avoid being compromised, to ensure you don't lose any part of yourself; then comes a resurgence of strength. 'Things cannot end with retreat, therefore great vigour follows.'

'Great vigour,
Harvest in constancy.'

Power brings results when it is true will-power - based on truth to principles, in the long term ('constancy'). So this Vigour doesn't mean that you'll charge in aggressively or unthinkingly. It's not about testing your strength (which doesn't generally work well in this hexagram, especially not against immovable obstacles), but about standing your ground. 'Retreat means withdrawing; Great Vigour means standing still.'

'Thunder dwells above heaven. Great vigour.
Noble one treads no path that is without ritual.'

Another note of warning: there is nothing anarchic about true power; thunder moves on the basis of unchanging natural laws. 'Ritual' in human life is a way of ensuring that one moves with such great powers as the love between two people, not against them. So for you this might mean the ways you and M have established of handling the intensity of the relationship. Better to put more energy - more of yourself, that is - into your existing ways of communicating and being together than to experiment, or try to break the mould just for the sake of it.

Change

These three moving lines describe ways of dealing with the new environment of a more intimate, intense relationship: moving away from the feeling of being threatened with a loss of control over your own destiny, towards a sense of growing fulfilment within the relationship.

Changing line 1

'Humble, humble, the noble one
Makes use of crossing the great river.
Good fortune.'

'Crossing the great river' means taking a risk in order to continue an important journey - and in particular, making a commitment to a relationship. So I think this refers back to your 'crossing' into an intimate relationship. Great humility - or great integrity and authenticity - is what allows you to continue the journey and makes the commitment worthwhile.

I think this works because with humility, you don't bring preconceptions with you that this new territory must be organised in the same way as life back on the other side of the river. The inner strength of humility allows you to stay motivated without knowing what comes next; it means you can be yourself regardless of how M sees you. And the promise is of 'good fortune' - of easier, stronger relationships because of this.

Changing line 3

'Integrity calling out.
Constancy, good fortune.'

Even when the outer forms of your communication with M are variable, and periodically feel empty or 'stuck', your integrity can still 'call out' to him. The inner connection stays strong: an unwavering call, justifiably confident of being heard and finding a response.

Changing line 4

'Nothing that does not bring harvest,
Giving signs of authenticity.'

In the smallest things you do, you can give signs of your true colours. Without needing consciously to 'show him', your underlying authenticity and commitment will come through. Ultimately, there's no need to withdraw, or to watch for his response, or to 'defend yourself'. By staying constantly open so that the same 'signal' of your true self can keep on coming through, you create a more complete meeting and union of the two of you; the results can only be good.

"A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song."
Maya Angelou

Job Prospects: 51, 9/1, 16

"I have been going to college for a year and a half. I am a 41 year old man and, before going to college, was a truck and taxi driver here in Los Angeles California. I discovered I have a sleep disorder that keeps me from behind the wheel and that's why I'm going to college so late in life. Anyway, in May I will have a certificate as a communications technician in the electronics field and I would like to know if I am going to finally get a decent job anytime soon. That's it, my question is "Are my prospects good or bad for the near future in the job department."

thanks,
Conrad"

Hi Conrad,

I asked on your behalf,

What are Conrad's job prospects?

Yi answered with Hexagram 51, Shock, changing to Hexagram 16, Motivation. This presages continuing change, but also strong motivation on your part that keeps you travelling through it safely.

Primary hexagram: 51, Shock

'Shock' represents thunder, which the ancient Chinese understood to erupt from the earth in Spring, awakening new life as it came. But it is also connected with unseasonal thunder, and with earthquakes, representing profoundly shocking, potentially disastrous change. This does not feel in the least safe:

'Shock, creating success.

Shock comes, fear and terror.

Laughing words, shrieking and yelling.

Shock spreads fear for a hundred miles.

Someone does not lose the sacred ladle and libation.'

This picture of mass panic and hysteria recalls the profound shock of discovering you had to change jobs: it's a sense of having the ground taken from under your feet, and things you expected to stay solid falling round your ears. When you leave the relatively stable world of college, you can expect to step back into the same kind of atmosphere.

But it's important to hold in your mind that such shocks happen for a positive purpose. This hexagram comes after 49 and 50, the Revolution and the Vessel that founds the new government and way of living, 'putting away the old' and 'grasping renewal'. One way of living has been overthrown, and you have been working on founding a new one - and congratulations, by the way, on your new qualifications!

What you need now is a sense of continuity, a connection with something of yourself that stays constant through all this upheaval.

The 'someone' who does not spill a drop from the sacred ladle is your model here. He is a young priest who has inherited the responsibility for everything that is sacred: the temples, the earth, the grain, all those things that are unmoved by political or social change. The successive waves of change roar about him, but he is miraculously untouched. He's developing the power of the following hexagram - to Keep Still inwardly, not to react.

This is the challenge for you: to hold firmly to what is most important - and that is not the way you earn your living. The Shock helps to 'create success', to reopen the way to your creative spirit, because it shatters the dried-out edifices of 'what you do', renewing your connection with the essence of who you are.

(Ordinary social perceptions tend to keep building up the edifice:

'What does he do?'

'Oh, he's a driver' or 'He's a technician'

- and the conversation ends there, as if this had conveyed any real information about who someone is.)

So I would be surprised if you had the opportunity to settle into a comfortable job for life, though I'm sure you will always be able to 'create success' for yourself. I think you can confidently expect more change to come.

'Repeated thunder. Shock.

The noble one in fear and trembling sets things in order and is watchful.'

In other words, you are not wrong to be anxious and on the alert. You could use the energy this gives you to change the way you think about employment, maybe focussing more on continuously developing the skills and connections that will keep you constantly in demand.

Relating hexagram: 16, Motivation

This second hexagram represents the underlying willpower and enthusiasm that sent you back to college to learn something new, where others might just have been stunned helpless by the shock. I hope you'll forgive me if I save space in everyone's inbox by giving you a link to some notes on Hexagram 16 from a previous issue!

This motivation of yours, that will keep you going through any number of changes, needs strong foundations in self-knowledge. According to the sequence of hexagrams, Motivation arises when someone has both Great Possession (of talent, friendship and opportunity as much as material wealth) and also Integrity or Humility. Because you know the abundance of opportunities in the world, and also know your own capabilities, you can make the forces of change your own to use - not just something that 'happens to you'.

'Motivation.

Harvest in setting up feudal lords to mobilise the armies.'

I think this is advice to complete your preparations now so that you'll be ready to 'mobilise the armies' to find work as soon as you have that certificate in your hand. The ancient kings of China needed a network of feudal lords for communication, control, and their ability to raise an army. This represents the networking, research, information and forward planning you need to expand your scope and ensure success. You don't want your motivation to run ahead of your preparations - that would be like raising a mob, not an army.

Change

Finally, the moving line text that connects Shock with Motivation:

51, line 1:

'Shake comes, fear and terror.
Afterwards, laughing words, shrieking and yelling.
Good fortune'

This is very much like the text for Shock as a whole, except for the addition of 'afterwards' and 'good fortune'. So while the line re-emphasises that you can expect repeated change, not settling stolidly into a job for life, it also shows that the initial panic at change is followed by laughter. It reminds me a little of a roller-coaster ride: shrieks of fear, but also laughter, as you know that this will end well, and the upheaval isn't going to hurt you.

Retirement: 17, 9/4,9/5, 24

"I am 68 years of age and continue to work as a School Psychologist. Have wrestled with the idea of retirement and am conflicted about how I would spend my time without the every day stimulation of my position.

My question would be: What would retirement mean for my life?

Thanx,

Chuck Swenson"

Hi Chuck,

Yi answered your question with Hexagram 17, Following, changing to Hexagram 24, Returning: in essence, it is saying that retirement will let you follow your own path.

'Following.

Creating success from the source, harvest in constancy.

No mistake.'

Actually, I wrote about this hexagram just a few short issues ago, so I hope you won't mind if I give you a quotation...

"I think that 'Following' is a matter of moving smoothly and willingly with the current of events. In the old Chinese, the word probably originally showed a grave mound, a foot at a crossroads, and meat given as an offering. For me, this brings to mind the origins of feng shui as the art and science of burial sites: when strong currents flow through life's landscapes, you need to orient yourself carefully in relation to them. A sacrifice made at the crossroads, or for the journey, would be an offering for smooth flow, and a sign of willingness to follow."

...and a link to the [original article](#).

Getting older is obviously one of those un-ignorable currents, an engine of direction and purpose in life. The essential here is that retirement will free you to follow your inner guidance ('from the source') through to real, lasting achievement. You absolutely do not need to worry about stagnating or having nothing to do.

It's not as if you were without inner resources. When you retire, you move on from Enthusiasm and will-power (Hexagram 16): instead of being 'led' by the constant stimuli and motivations of work, you discover a new kind of inner drive, fluent and powerful. This has its own natural rhythms:

'At the centre of the lake is thunder. Following.

In the same way, the noble one at nightfall

Goes inside for renewal and rest.'

No need, I think, to imagine age 68 to be 'nightfall'! The point is that life moves in cycles: you don't need to be constantly on the go in order for your life to mean something. So you can safely retire, relax and get back in touch with yourself: find the 'inner thunder' that you want to express.

The relating hexagram, Returning, shows a quietly growing inner awareness of who you are and where you're going. Maybe it's this emergent 'sense of direction' that keeps bringing you back to the possibility of retirement?

'Returning, creating success.
Going out, coming in, without haste.
Partners come, not a mistake.
Turning around and returning on your path.
The seventh day comes, you return.
Harvest in having a direction to go.'

The essence of this hexagram is that you can afford to relax and trust in your own inner knowledge to lead you to the right place at the right time. Again, life moves in cycles. Retirement means a movement away from the people you have worked with; this does not mean that you are turning into some kind of hermit. When you walk your own path, people with the same goals and interest - 'partners' - will join you. And it remains quite possible that the path will lead you back towards education in some new role. As your new 'direction to go' emerges, you can expect positive results in like measure.

However, it's in the nature of Returning that you may not yet be ready to turn what you are beginning to know into specific goals and projects. This is traditionally the hexagram of winter equinox: a time when the light is beginning to return, but decidedly not yet time to start the usual business of farming and trade again:

'Thunder dwelling in the centre of the earth. Returning.
The ancient kings closed the borders at winter equinox.
Itinerant merchants did not travel,
The prince did not tour the regions.'

The kings, who knew what they were at, closed the borders over winter to quiet the 'noise' of daily activity so people could listen to and watch over the rising energy. The message for you is very similar to the advice from Following: it will do you no harm to take some time out. You don't need a line-up of new projects ready for when you retire: you'll become aware in due course of where the path leads next.

You have two changing lines in this answer, enlarging on the same message. Naturally you will be looking for projects and groups where you can invest your considerable energy and make a meaningful contribution - but it will do no harm to acknowledge this for the pivotal change it is, and to take stock of your strengths, like a farmer surveying what he has grown.

Line 4:

'Following makes a catch. Constancy, pitfall.
With truth, staying on the path with clarity,
How could this be wrong?'

What retirement brings you depends in large measure on your own approach. You can 'follow' the course of events as if life were a hunt, given meaning by what you could catch and have to show for it, to prove that you're 'going somewhere' worthwhile. You can ensure that you always have an answer ready for the question, 'What do you do?' This is an utterly natural desire, and all part of finding your feet among those wide-open days, unstructured by 'working hours'. But in the long run it is not a good idea.

It's easier to find your feet if you don't run yourself off them. Rather than hurtling from one 'must do' to the next for the sake of stimulation, better to develop a strong grasp on the here and now - to 'connect with the flow of events rather than your will', as Stephen Karcher puts it.

Line 5:

'Truth to excellence: good fortune.'

Retirement is a dramatic change - or a whole succession of dramatic changes - but there are things that stay constant. What you have already achieved, your skills, your high standards, what you do outstandingly well: this is all still with you, and can give you quiet confidence to last you through any number of changes

I also have the feeling from looking at these two lines together that Yi is trying to deflect your attention from the question of how you will fill your time, towards an awareness of all that time as a wonderful resource through which you could be led to something of genuine 'excellence'.

Chuck's reply:

"Ms. Barrett:

Please forgive me for this late response to your kind consideration of my question. My computer has been far from co-operative in our efforts to communicate.

Thank you for your sensitive readings of Hexagrams 17 and 24 in consideration of my question concerning retirement. Your reading certainly is most sensitive and insightful- gentle and compassionate, as if we were lifetime companions. Your interpretations have offered me newfound confidence and support and are a summary of all that is important to my decision.

I wish you to finally know that I have now decided to retire and that this school year will be my last year. I now know that, in retirement, I will "... follow my own path".

Your reading has inspired me to share with you my own path and how the I Ching has been a part of the tapestry of my life.

I grew up a mountain man in western Minnesota- a child of Nature's theatre of seasons. From the moment of first awareness, I became dimly aware of relentless, and sometimes cruel, dramatic changes. Life on our tiny, rural farm was a scramble for mere existence locked in a struggle with the dualities of Nature. As a reflective, hard working, Nordic lad, I wrestled to order the changes swirling about me.

Local Lutheran Pastors offered guidance for my struggle. This struggle was to be answered through a Divine Purpose: "It's God's Will". This patient, long suffering panacea left me still empty, and never dimmed my fervent quest, which by now was in high gear.

Somewhere around my twelfth year, I swore a fierce self-promise: I was "...going to leave the farm, absent myself from the terrorism of the four seasons and the ever increasing mortgage- this to discover answers to life through travel and study".

I sit now, 56 years later, with a resume full of interesting positions- all centered about the Human Condition. I have read nearly all of it, witnessed its depravity and inspiration, have spoken to everyone around it, and even considered some of it for myself.

My tale remains optimistic, but my fragile grasp on life's Dualities has sprung from an unlikely source for a Minnesota farm boy. The I Ching was eventually to become my Source while I meandered through the existential cul de sacs of life. I decided that this Book, which still survives after 3,000 years, must have something to say to me.

I cannot remember when I first stumbled upon the I Ching, somehow it suddenly appeared in my life. With my usual zeal, I poured over the literature and first purchased the Wilhelm translation, later to add Karcher and various other texts.

I then began casting hexagrams until it seemed I would run out of pennies. But truth was to remain elusive. The I Ching readings seemed to retreat into a highland mist- evasive, elusive and unformed, beyond my ken. At times, I sensed a fleeting contact, but during other times it seemed as if the I Ching was toying with me. But I persisted.

After many faithful years with the I Ching, I now sense it has indeed been speaking to me, but at a spiritual level far above my earthly consciousness. A mystic map of change had been slowly becoming a part of my unconsciousness, beyond my immediate awareness. This patient, sometimes-exasperated I Ching had always been working with me. My first reminder was to be: What is important is ineffable.

My ambivalence and sometime lack of personal courage have clouded my struggle with the I Ching. Sometimes, the I will suddenly respond to my question with a startling clarity and purity. It is at this very instant that I shrink back hoping to

deny and to avoid such a message. I have stood there many times, at the very edge of resistance and hesitation. But it is in this same Crucible that my growth has been most assured.

My Map is much frayed, tattered, and heavily creased with thousands of miles yet to be charted. But, I now sense more order and personal acceptance in my quest as I continue my lifelong struggle with the duality of Nature and Human Existence.

PERSONAL READINGS:

I offered my retirement question for your consideration and was delighted to see your response in my E mail listings.

I then decided that before I read your response, I would offer this question to the I Ching: "Ms. Barrett is about to offer me a response to my question about retirement, what should be my thoughts as I read her response?"

The answer was Hexagram 23, fixed. Karcher entitles this Hexagram: STRIPPING. Karcher speaks thus: 'This is the end of an old cycle and the preparation for the new. The old structure is dissolving so new action can emerge. That is where heaven is moving. Adapt to what is coming. Do not impose your will.'

The synchronicity of our two casts and the everlasting Mystery of the I Ching, stunned me! The I Ching, for one magical moment, had also joined our hearts, far above our earth bound existence.

I leave you now and offer my warmest personal regards, affection, and gratitude for the part you and the I Ching have played in my journey.

Charles Swenson
Vista, California

"When experience is viewed in a certain way, it presents nothing but doorways into the domain of the soul, and they are all found in the present moment."

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Advice for a job search: 28, 9/4,9/5, 46

"I've been learning Yi-Djing for six years, which I consider as a short time, so I still have problems understanding it.

I desperately need an insight in my life situation.

The background is this:

About 1,5 year ago, I've quit a 5,5 years long job, because of the dissolution of the institution. At the same time I had some health problem (an operation), which broke me psychically, so now I'm living pretty much isolated, unsure in my self and sociophobic.

Anyway, in spite of all, I'm an active new job seeker and managed to find one, which unfortunately didn't last more than 3 weeks. The problem was in my inability to work among bad people with totally unprofessional attitude and low payment.

I've tried at some other companies, passed into fewer selection, but didn't manage to get a job.

Few month ago, my father got pneumonia, then deep venous thromboses, he is total pessimist and obsessed with his health, he is in some kind of a depression, thinking that he'll never be healthy again.

My older sister has lost her job recently, she is 33, I'm 30, we are living with our parents (they are retired), (in spite of our age, in Serbia and Montenegro this is a usual situation, because of a bad economy standard).

So I think that my family is in pretty desperate situation.

I would really appreciate Your insight. I have many question in my head, such as :

1. Am I capable of doing any job because of my unsureness?
2. Will my sister and me manage to find new jobs?
3. In what direction is my family's life moving?
4. What is the solution of my family problems?

And there is more, both me and my sister are unmarried, without stable love-relations and this situation lasts for many years and I've begun to think things will never improve.

Still, I'm not a pessimist, I want to believe that something good must happen.

I just hope I wrote all relevant facts, which could help you finding the right question for me. The most important question for me at this moment is Will I manage to find a stable job soon?

I like very much Your Yi interpretation, they are clear and understandable. I'm visiting Your Clarity site regularly, and it helped me understand many things, such as meaning of some hexagram combinations, and many other things.

Best wishes, hope you'll find my letter interesting enough to do a reading for me.

Hope I'll hear from You soon.

Mirjana"

Dear Mirjana,

I asked Yi for advice for you on how to find a good job, and received Hexagram 28, Great Overstepping, changing to Hexagram 46, Pushing Upward. Pushing Upward represents what you want to do in the long term - climb on up out of trouble and into better times - and also the confident, progressive attitude you need now to pull you on towards future success. And Great Overstepping stands in the foreground of the reading to represent the current strain on you and your family, and the challenge this represents to step outside the 'norms'.

Primary hexagram: 28, Great Overstepping

To 'overstep' means both to go beyond the 'normal' limits, and also to cross over, to make a transition. I understand that you feel 'broken', that you are looking for something stable and reliable - but I think that Yi is encouraging you to understand what's happened and what's needed now in a different way.

'Great Overstepping, the ridgepole warps.
Harvest in having a direction to go.
Creating success.'

The ridgepole of the house is the single beam that sustains all the weight of roof and walls. Here, it is starting to buckle under the weight. It represents the structure of your job, your family, your self-image, everything that has kept you safe and provided for: it is under huge strain. But the extraordinary discovery of Great Overstepping is that this does not mean that you are broken. You're more like a hatchling coming out of the egg, your strength built up by years of nourishment within that secure structure. Now the shell is shattered, and your world shows every sign of falling round your ears - but in fact you are growing strongly.

So although you are reaching out for stability, what you most need to carry you through is a 'direction to go'. Stopping everything from falling down is one half of it: knowing what you don't want to happen for all those you love. But beyond that, what do you want, and where do you want to be for yourself? You don't have to stick with what is usual and familiar to you - you can step outside the boundaries of what you've always done, or indeed what your family has always done, or just what is 'normal' or 'common sense'.

This is a huge mental leap, to discover the creative energy at your core and your endless ability to generate new ideas. And this while you feel at breaking point!

'The lake submerges the tree. Great overstepping.
Noble one sets up alone without fear,
Withdraws from the time without sadness.'

You'd expect water to nourish trees, just as you'd expect big challenges and great emotional incentives to spark off your own initiative. But too much water threatens to drown the young tree altogether; having too much at stake is overwhelming. The noble one deals with this through self-confident withdrawal. If you find it hard to fit in with other people in a workplace, this is not something to be afraid of or depressed about. Being unusual does not make you wrong. So you can use this as a cue for some of the creative thinking you are so good at! Can you express yourself, and provide for yourself, outside the system? Work as an independent freelancer, maybe?

Change

These two changing lines give you some more specific advice on how to go about your job search.

Line 4

'Ridgepole at the peak. Good fortune.
If there is more: shame.'

First of all, this line is Yi's response to your worry about whether you can find work and hold onto it. You can. This line describes the ridgepole of the house holding firm, definitely not buckling under the strain. You have great resources to tap into, not least the strength of your family: take care of your connections, the ways you replenish your strength, and you will do well. The key is not to pile more weight onto yourself: don't load yourself with more issues or more responsibility than are really yours to deal with. If you have a tendency to put in all you have, to take on everything at once, then recognise this and manage it with care!

Line 5

'Withered willow sprouts flowers,
Venerable wife gets upright husband.
No blame, no praise'

This is imagery of old and new. In some ways you are 'withered' beyond your years by your experiences. But willow is the most resilient and vigorous of trees: if you cut willow branches to build with and stick them into moist ground, they will take root. You have this same vigorous, lively core. But your next opportunity to express this may not be with new roots and shoots, but only with flowers. That is, with something beautiful, but not necessarily lasting. It is like an older woman taking a

young husband: undoubtedly enjoyable, but without children, which means without provision for the long-term.

Better to grow flowers than to stay withered; better to enjoy your own vitality than to stifle your initiative by waiting for the 'right' thing to do. So when you discover the opportunity to do work you enjoy and where you can blossom, enjoy it. It's important not to idealise it - not to mistake flowers for shoots - but equally important not to demonise new opportunities just because they are not for the long term. Part of being true to yourself is cultivating your ability to change; taking on short-term projects you can really enjoy could be the first step to break through your old limits and start to create new patterns for yourself. So as you 'take inventory' of your gifts and what you have to offer the world, don't be afraid to focus on what you enjoy rather than just what you 'ought' to be doing.

Relating hexagram: 46, Pushing Upward

This second hexagram offers you the mindset and bigger picture you need to 'overstep' old limits and think outside the box. Essentially, this hexagram advises you to understand the immense strains of the present time as part of a steady climb upwards towards better things. Though having said that, you may also need to 'overstep' the conventional ideas of how people are 'meant' to push upward through their careers!

The theme of Pushing Upward is putting in the work to make steady, reliable progress. Because you have the talents and energy to invest, along with the support of your family willing you on, and because you know things can be better, you are bound to keep striving upward.

'Pushing upward, creating success from the source.
Make use of seeing great people.
No doubts.
Set forth to the south, good fortune.'

Of course you feel the tension between how you want things to be and how they are. Pushing Upward is about feeling that, knowing you can get from here to there, and getting started. 'Great people' are those who can help you - you certainly shouldn't be afraid to ask for practical help - but they are also those who inspire you, because they show you an image of your own inner 'great person'. This is the vision you can use as inspiration.

Yi specifically acknowledges that you might well have doubts about this: it is not easy to believe in progress before you see it. But you can do it - there is truly no place for doubt; you can have confidence that your effort will bring results. The 'south' is the region of action: this is a cue to get down to work with renewed conviction! The journey might take you outside familiar territory or beyond the point where you feel in control - but this is no disaster; the possibilities are greater there.

Having said that, though, there is absolutely no call to rush things or try to achieve everything at once. Pushing Upward means progress step by step - like the growth of a plant through the soil.

‘Centre of the earth gives birth to wood. Pushing upward.
In the same way, the noble one with patient character,
Builds up small things to attain the lofty and great.’

The plant pushes upward gradually, step by small step, feeling its way; the patient earth supports and nourishes its growth. You need both of these qualities: the impulse to grow, but also patience and the willingness to be gentle with yourself. Lofty and great trees do not spring up overnight - and nor should you expect yourself to leap overnight into the ideal job (or to turn into a self-confident freelancer, or whatever path you choose...). Remember the two moving lines: one says you succeed provided you don't overburden yourself; the other suggests the way forward could be through something enjoyable but temporary. Once you have chosen your 'direction to go', you'll make best progress by breaking the journey down into small, manageable steps.

Mirjana's reply:

"Thanks again for a wonderful, wonderful reading you've done for me in the last issue, it seems that both you and the Yi understood me most deeply. You've given me the right insight and advice. You've said right things and I very much appreciate it.
Best wishes,
I'm looking forward to next issue.
Mirjana"

"Unless you walk out into the unknown, the odds of making a profound difference in your life are pretty low."
Tom Peters

Career progress: 9, 9/2,9/3, 42

"Hi Clarity friends:

My question is about work.

I've worked as an English teacher for years. Right now I've starting to do translations (From Spanish to English) for some of the outsourcing needs of an editorial in Spain. So far the work is fine and I enjoy it a lot, since it's challenging and offers better income than teaching. I would like to ask I Ching about my future possibilities in this area and for suggestions on how to improve it.

I believe it's a pretty simple question, but let me know if you need any further info.

Thank you

Laura"

Where can I go from here with my translation work?

Yi answered with Hexagram 9, Small Taming, changing to Hexagram 42, Increase and Blessing. I think the second hexagram indicates the potential here and the enthusiastic attitude with which you're entering in on it. The first one, Small Taming, indicates that it will not all be smooth sailing, though I doubt you will meet any insuperable problems.

Relating hexagram: 42, Increase

To start with the big picture, and what you are looking towards: of course, you're quite right that translation work offers a far better income than teaching. Hexagram 42 indicates that you have the chance to step into a flow of blessing. The more involved and committed you are, the greater the rewards. This follows on as the 'other side of the coin' from Decrease or Offering - you don't mention what you have had to give up in order to pursue translation work, but whatever 'offerings' you've made can be rewarded here.

'Blessing, harvest in having a direction to go.
Harvest in crossing the great river.'

To get the most out of the potential in this new use for your skills, you need to 'have a direction to go' - to know the goal you're aiming for - and to be prepared to venture into new territory. When looking at the advice of this hexagram you have to bear in mind that it's describing the broader canvas, the longer term - but in the longer term, at least, you can afford to plan a long way ahead and to take risks.

'Wind and thunder. Increase.

The noble one sees improvement, and so she changes.

When there is excess, she corrects it.'

To get the full benefit of Increase, you need an improvisatory, flexible approach. It's not about setting rules or creating routines. Does this mean less job security than in teaching? Perhaps; it certainly means less predictability. So rather than having rules for yourself that you abide by regardless of circumstances, it's better to make improvements and correct mistakes whenever the opportunity arises. (Also good advice in translation work, of course...)

Primary hexagram: 9, Small Taming

This is the immediate challenge that confronts you here, and it does present difficulties. Blessing is what you are looking for, and can very probably find, but Small Taming may be all you can do with it at present. There is a 'great divide' here between the full potential available, and your own ability to get 'on top of things' and get the most out of it. It could be thoroughly frustrating for you.

To 'tame' has multiple meanings: it means to build up or accumulate, and to nurture, but also to keep something in check or restrain it. Think of your position in the translation 'industry' as like a farmer trying to work with the forces of nature - taming and nurturing at the same time. Specifically, you're the 'small' farmer, one who has just entered into whole new land of possibilities (with hexagram 8), but who faces practical difficulties as she learns how to come to grips with it. So she can expect lean times at first, enforced improvisation as she tries to get beyond the subsistence level.

'Small taming, creating success.
Dense clouds without rain
Come from our Western altars.'

The dense clouds represent stored-up potential: they are what you need in order to get to work. But do they rain? Not quite. This is the kind of frustration you can expect - I wonder whether this might not represent work opportunities that are there, but don't quite materialise. At all events, you can expect to encounter small setbacks. You can have a very clear vision of the possibilities, and yet still be frustrated in practice - inner division is just part of the experience of Small Taming. The earnings potential is definitely greater than in teaching, but judging from both hexagrams, the job security is probably less.

By the way, if you ask further questions about this as you go on, do look out for Hexagram 26, Great Taming. This is the master farmer, who has sufficient strength and experience to harness all the potential at her disposal. The difference between the two is well expressed in the trigrams, those three-line figures that interact within each hexagram. The master farmer is represented by the weight of a mountain, checking and storing up the creative power of heaven. As the 'small tamer', you only have the power of the wind at your disposal, and this calls for a different strategy altogether. You cannot stamp your identity on the circumstances or bring them under your control. What you can do is to influence things indirectly, by adapting and shaping your own skills to what the situation demands.

Small Taming is preparation for Treading - walking behind the tiger, trying to get the full benefit of its energy without being mauled. In both situations, you are dealing with forces bigger than you are, that you cannot altogether master. So instead you have to adapt. Before you go out to follow the tiger (of market forces? competition?) you need to prepare, to gather your resources and learn new skills.

'Wind moves above heaven. Small taming.
A noble one cultivates the natural pattern of *de*.'

This is about working with what you find rather than trying to change it. It's actually quite a lot like the work of translation: shaping your own expressions to fit another person's mind. And this also means working on your own *de* - your strength and character. Diplomacy, tact, and above all flexibility will be called for!

Change

I think the two changing lines are each in their own way to do with building up that *de*, that ability to make the most of the opportunities on offer, step by small step.

Line 2:

'Pulled back onto the path. Good fortune.'

This suggests that your first steps may be decided for you by circumstances - it's literally about being pulled, like an animal on a leash. But this is not a bad thing at all. Before you start fighting against the restraints, look to see whether they're not actually leading you to what you need. Maybe what gets in your way guides you to where you belong... maybe what you need will come to you so that you don't miss anything after all... maybe you can even claim this path proudly as your own...

I don't, of course, know what this path might be that you're pulled onto. Further training, maybe?

Line 3:

'The spokes come loose from the cart wheel.
Husband and wife avert their gaze.'

'Husband and wife' can point to any kind of partnership, between people or between people and circumstances. (It once even described a failure of computer programming to connect.) But the first question for you has to be, are you sure that your relationships are strong enough to carry this new weight? You need - urgently - to make sure that everyone involved is travelling willingly in the same direction - it's all too possible to get so wrapped up in your own perceptions that you fail to notice the other person's. Make sure it all fits together - make sure the vehicle is strong enough to bear the weight over this new and considerably bumpy road.

Laura's reply

"Hello Hilary :

I've just read through my reading , and it was perfect! The taming power of the small is what this kind of job is all about! So much goes into the smallest detail. For one thing, I'm not naturally good at details, and since this job forces me to pay particular attention to them, I am improving my perception and have grown more conscientious about the job itself, and I find this new awareness influences all areas of my life. Like "cleaning my closet ", so to speak.

It is a long, sometimes winding road, and frustrating and tiring at times. I continue with my teaching, so I have "sacrificed" most of my free time. I do not plan to give up teaching. I mean, translating would have to become a very stable income, which for the time being is not the case. As for my "control" over the situation, I Ching is absolutely right, as usual: I am just a tiny element in the whole picture, so I "restrict" myself, to produce the job as well as I possibly can.

And I have become very conscientious, maybe that is the greatest of blessings!

Another interesting thing that struck me in the reading, was the suggestion of accumulating skills, because I have had to avail myself with all kind of tools, like dictionaries, specialised in some cases, the translator which helps out with the typing and the body of the translation, then all kinds of regular encyclopedias, graphics, maps, and so on. I tell you a lot of improvisation was present in that I just had to "wing it". I definitely need to improve both, my English and my computer skills.

I've long come to terms with the idea, that I will never stop being a student, it has always opened doors for me, and since I am getting a bit better at details it all seems to fit in. As for my team of helpers, I can rely a lot on Suri, my husband, who unlike me, is great with details, is an avid reader of English and helps me a great deal with the writing and particularly the last edition.

Anyway, I will re-read the reading, several times as I do with the translation, to make sure I take care of all the details .

Thank you very much for putting my question forward

Love to you and your dear ones!

Laura"

What am I doing wrong? 19, no changing lines

"Hi,

First, thanks for putting together your newsletter. I really enjoy it. I hope you can add to my understanding of a recent reading.

I am 47 and recently ended a 2 year relationship. This was, needless to say, not my first "failed" relationship, so I asked "what am I doing wrong in my relationships?"

I received Hexagram 19 with no changing lines:

||:::

Well, the timing (misfortune in the 8th month) is spot on, but I don't get how to apply the rest of it to answer my question. Any ideas?

Thanks in advance!
Witch"

Dear Witch,

I can certainly offer you a few ideas - of course, you will have to decide on your own judgement which ones 'fit' your particular circumstances. But can I just say first of all that there are a whole lot of assumptions in your question...

- * that relationships are 'meant' to last a lifetime and anything else is a failure
- * that you've done something the same every time
- * and that that 'something' is wrong

So I wouldn't be altogether sure that Hexagram 19 is describing 'what you're doing wrong' - but insofar as there is a pattern to how you go about your relationships, I'm sure this reading will describe it for you.



Hexagram 19 is called Nearing, and there's nothing obviously 'wrong' with doing that! The old character shows a tall figure with a great eye bending over a group of little people (represented just by their mouths): someone approaching and looking down. In its oldest meaning, this was probably an ancestral spirit returning to watch over the people and bless them.

This idea becomes more than an anthropological curiosity when you look at how Nearing follows on from Corruption, Hexagram 18. That refers back to an ancient process of 'diagnosing' an illness or misfortune by divining which ancestor, angered by neglect, was causing the trouble. Once identified, they could be given due attention and honour; Hexagram 19 follows, I think, because the honoured ancestor is once again Nearing benevolently to offer blessings.

Translating this into modern-speak: most of us have many neglected 'ancestors' in the form of patterns inherited through the family, tightly sealed complexes of energy and habit that need to be attended to and honoured to release their power back into circulation. And since you've received Hexagram 19, it's highly likely that this is what you've already done. You can understand what draws near at hexagram 19 as a guide, a higher self - and as your own whole self, with that 'ancestral' energy integrated and strong.

So you are most unlikely to be unwittingly repeating negative family patterns: you draw near with strength. Some of this shows in how you phrased your question for Yi: no victim mentality, no 'why do I always have such bad luck?' - you're ready and willing to be the responsible one in the partnership.

This same theme is reflected in the Image:

'Above the lake is earth. Nearing.
In the same way, the noble one teaches and reflects
untiringly,
Accepts and protects the ordinary people without
limit.'



So you offer tolerance, limitless acceptance, understanding and guidance. You're altogether present for your partner, strong and responsible. How, exactly, could any of this be a problem?

Perhaps, like most things, it can be a problem in excess. With this hexagram unchanging all its qualities are emphasised - but there is no 'relating hexagram'. You're fully present, but to whom? What (or whom) are you nearing? There's an empty space there - as if all your energy were caught up in approaching and giving, with none left to shift into responding and receiving. I've known people characterised by hexagram 19 to make others feel overwhelmed: [RJ Lynn](#) says its basic meaning is to 'look down on', and that it's also the name of a siege machine.

Hexagram 19 works as a pair with Hexagram 20, Contemplation: drawing back one step from doing, in order to become more fully aware. The *Zagua* says of this pair, 'Someone reaches out, someone seeks.' Amongst other things, this is a relationship model: a balance between drawing near, and being ready to See the other person in their entirety. Receiving Hexagram 19 must be encouragement to look at those dynamics.

But I agree with you that the most obvious sign of anything 'wrong' in hexagram 19 lies in the Judgement:

'Nearing.
Creating success from the source, harvest in constancy.
Reaching an end in the eighth month means a pitfall.'

So there is overwhelming (that word again!) positive potential here, but disaster if you 'reach an end in the eighth month'. The eighth month, according to the Book of Songs, is the time for harvest. What does it mean to reach an end - a high point - with harvest?

Harvest is the high point of the year, of course: the culmination of activity, reaping the results of the year's work. Perhaps the trouble lies in forgoing - or avoiding - the winter that follows. How do you feel about the idea that relationships - and individuals - have seasons of advance and of retreat from intimacy? (That retreat - getting away from others just to preserve one's sense of self - is in hexagram 33, the opposite and complement of Hexagram 19.) The difficulty many people have with Hexagram 19 is a desire to seize and hold onto the good results they can see in front of them, not allowing the process to continue for fear they might lose it all again.

Winter in ancient China was a time for retreat: storing the harvest, and closing up your home, sealing yourself away. The fields lay empty: there was nothing to be done. Hexagram 24, Returning - the inner seed of Nearing - describes the depths of winter as a time for introspection, attending to one's own inner spark and sense of direction, not for 'business as usual'. So I wonder whether you have been taking the time to internalise the gifts of your relationships.

I hope some of this helps.

Consulting Yi about past lives. 21, 9/1,9/4,9/6, 2

For the last issue, I asked Yi what might happen if people consulted it about past lives. (This wasn't a question specifically for Lynett, or even specifically for me - just an exploration of the question as a whole.) And Yi answered with Hexagram 21, Biting Through, changing at lines 1, 4 and 6 to Hexagram 2, the Receptive.

At the time I included just a couple of paragraphs of 'first impressions' about the reading - but the reading is owed more than that, without a doubt. So since there were no readers' requests for readings this time, I've worked on this one instead - nothing like comprehensively, but in a bit more depth than before. To gather my 'impressions' of it last time around, I looked at the hexagram names and how they fitted together, my own feeling for the hexagrams as a whole, and of course the moving lines. To build on this, I've looked at the hexagram texts in more detail, and at the complete 'foursomes' of related moving lines.

Consulting Yi about past lives would mean Biting Through to the Field - to the raw stuff we're made of, or the space where all our potential can be realised. As the relating hexagram, this is what past life investigation through the oracle would be aiming for - its aspiration, and at a deep level what it is really about.

This feels like a bigger truth than latching onto any one past identity. Earth, the Receptive, is not about ideas or reasons why, but about the power to make things happen: not the seed, but the nourishment for its growth. Maybe this puts the whole quest for knowledge of past lives into perspective: perhaps it's about exploring potential and enlarging the sense of self, rather than getting to a specific name or story.

'Earth.

Creating success from the source, harvest in the constancy of a mare.

A noble one has a direction to go.

Going before: delusion. Following: gains a lord and harvest.

In the southwest, gains partners.

In the northeast, loses partners.

Peaceful constancy brings good fortune.'

The mare is gentle and easily guided, and she covers the ground 'without limit'. Past life exploration should broaden definitions of self, give the feeling that there are fewer boundaries. The noble one has a goal and purpose in life, but no preconceived ideas about how to get there. Perhaps all your 'lives' work together to the same end.

To 'go before' literally means being a pioneer, breaking new ground. It sounds like entering into life as if you were your own first incarnation. Quietly 'following', building on the work done before, brings better guidance and less confusion. (Of course, these lines could also be about the importance of accepting guidance when seeking out knowledge of past lives: the two meanings can co-exist.)

There's a balance to be attained between finding and losing partners - achieving more by working with others, and individual accountability and responsibility. This brings to mind Wyatt's point about 'past' lives being part of a single whole, like tracks on a disc: it makes just as much sense, I think, to think of all your own lives as simultaneous - and so Yi could be talking about settling down peacefully in partnership with a greater community of (small 's') selves.

Or such, at all events, would be the ideal to aspire to. But with Hexagram 21 in the foreground, it will not come easily. Biting Through is hard, determined work in the search for truth.

'Biting through, creating success.
Harvest in making use of litigation.'

When I wrote about this hexagram back in Issue 39, I said it was about getting through obstacles, 'especially through illusions of separation' - and the title character refers specifically to yarrow-stalk divination, always a sterling way of cutting through illusion.

As Stephen Karcher reminded me, Hexagram 21 is especially associated with the ritual meal that gets through the obstacles between the ancestors and the living - that is, it cuts through the illusion of separation from the past. While past lives aren't part of ancient Chinese belief that I know of, the connection is still there. Biting through the obstacles restores a functioning whole - like cutting through an insulator, completing a circuit. This is about asking Yi to help us break through whatever separates us from the bigger 'partnership of selves'.

Biting Through works towards Beauty, Hexagram 22: first you uncover the essence, then you can express it, whole and unvarnished. So Yi would make past life work into work towards a more whole self-image. Once again, this is obviously not just about getting hold of some famous name or biographical details to 'wear' like a badge. Hexagram 21 means devouring the information, taking it in and making it a living, functioning part of yourself.

Looking at those moving lines, 1, 4 and 6...

Line 1 (with 35,1, 36,6 and 22,6):

The tradition says that the first and sixth lines are suffering punishment, not applying it. Apparently, investigation into past lives often does begin in a search to make sense of present trauma. Yi's first step is to refuse to allow these explorations to be used for escapism:

'Shoes locked in the stocks, feet disappear.
No mistake.'

The oracle will lock you down by the ankles and keep you from running off after fantasies. Wherever you are now is where you are meant to be - 'not a mistake'.

More than that: this is where you find your opportunity. (This line 'bites through' to 35, Prospering: the hexagram of maximum opportunity, your chance to shine.) Perhaps because this is where you feel the full extent of what you don't have or the potentials you haven't realised. Perhaps the truth of who you are comes out more strongly not when you soar and transcend, but when you are all too earth-bound? And perhaps this identity is a very simple one, without name, and beautiful in its ability to take on the colours of the moment?

Line 4 (with 27,4, 27,3 and 22,3):

'Biting through dried, bony meat,
Gaining a bronze arrow.
Harvest in hard toil with constancy,
Good fortune.'

This line shows what could be achieved through past lives divination. With just the first and sixth lines, the message would be just 'stick to reality and stop hiding from it'; but here there is the chance to 'gain a bronze arrow'.

This is biting through to Nourishment (hexagram 27) - completing the circuit. It's an extremely strong, purposeful line. Hexagram 27 is the structure that supports nourishment, and the space for metamorphosis. Any line that connects to it suggests an opening to change your 'shape', finding a new position in the cycle of life, perhaps finding a new source of nourishment.

The intense, passionate tiger of 27,4 is making his presence felt here, bones cracking between his jaws. This is about getting more engaged in life here and now, not drifting off into denial. But the search goes right through the usual structure of things to the marrow of existence, and reaches the prize of the arrowhead.

What you have to 'eat' in your present experience is because of this arrow - and what you have next will come from how you use it. This is what you need to hold onto as you immerse yourself completely in the here and now.

Line 6 (with 51,1, 52,1, and 22,1):

'Why wear a cangue that covers your ears?
Pitfall.'

The cangue is a yoke-like punishment device - and people seem to choose to wear it, as this line implies, when there is too much that they don't want to hear. Biting through to Shock, Hexagram 51 - the very foundations are shaken, and the world is suddenly not at all what it was supposed to be. Sue suggests that belief in reincarnation can be a way not to hear that we die; Anon said that the discovery could be hard to take. It seems to me that in either of these ways, focusing divination on past lives could be used as a cangue.

The related lines suggest a better way to process the information: first by distancing yourself from it, taking it less personally, before you start looking forward again - and steadying yourself, from the ground up. And then getting your feet (once again) firmly back on the ground, discovering the practical application of what you know, step by step. No comfortable rides to enlightenment are on offer here.

"You must live in the present, launch yourself on every wave, find your eternity in each moment."

Thoreau