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## **" Interpreting multiple moving lines**

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### **The *most* frequently asked question**

I'm revisiting this topic because it is probably the most frequently asked question about I Ching divination. Before long, everyone consulting the I Ching receives an answer with 3 moving lines... or even 5 or 6... and wonders how to make any sense of this overload of (apparently mutually contradictory) information. If you ask what would be the outcome of a course of action, and one moving line in your answer reads 'good fortune' while another says 'misfortune', what are you to do?

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### **How to bypass the problem altogether**

There are methods of consulting the I Ching that can only ever give you a single moving line. By some margin the simplest way to do this is given in the Sorrells' book, 'The I Ching Made Easy'.

1. Take six coins - five identical, one different.
2. Shake up all the coins together and cast them all at once.
3. Push the coins into a column arrangement - the one nearest you at the bottom, etc.
4. This column represents your hexagram: each head is a broken/yin line, each tail is a solid/yang line. The single different coin represents the moving line.

The Sorrells in practice simplify things even further by reading only the first hexagram and the moving line, ignoring the second hexagram.

Personally this is not my favourite approach - anything that limits the I Ching to less than its natural 'vocabulary' seems bound to reduce its power to communicate. However, it's certainly better than allowing multiple lines to put you off altogether - and the many examples given in the book show clearly enough that this method does work.

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### **An I Ching reading: How to approach answers with multiple moving lines?**

It seemed a good idea to ask the I Ching for advice on this - and **not** to use the one-line-only method!

**Answer: Hexagram 58, Communicating Joy, changing to Hexagram 8, Seeking Union.**

(Note: this article will be a lot easier to read if you have your own I Ching open

alongside you!)

The I Ching has very obligingly given us a reading here with three moving lines, so we can use it to try out different methods, and see which makes most sense.

First, a lightning tour of the answer as I would normally read it:

### **Communicating Joy**

The oracle's answers are a joyous communication, and the first thing is to respond with joy. (And not with 'argh, how am I meant to make sense of this?!') Be responsive, use both inner dialogue and conversation with friends, and persist. Interact with the reading, question it and listen to it. Don't sit obstinately alone with it (Hexagram 52, the opposite); don't expect it to be hidden when all is in the open (contrasting hexagram 57). Take joy in the reading and you will forget that multiple moving lines are supposed to be hard work!

Chinuajin's many excellent readings in the Friends' Area show a sensible approach to multiple lines: look especially at the primary hexagram's nuclear hexagram. In this case that is #37, People in the Home, which might lead to emphasis on order and stability, finding each line its place in a secure structure.

### **Seeking Union**

This is a picture of the individual querent (person asking the question): looking for something they can unite with, something that will give them a clear lead. Also this shows a good way to respond: returning to the source of the oracle consultation, in other words looking again at yourself and your question. This hexagram can also mean that asking again is acceptable, perhaps once you have clarified your question. However, it's vital not to 'sit on the fence' for too long, but to make a choice and act on it. The unifying message here is that the responsibility for finding the right answer is your own. If you attain the full potential of Seeking Union, you can respond with delight, joining with whatever naturally attracts you.

### **The three moving lines**

Line 1: 'Harmonious communication. Good fortune.'

There is inner harmony at this first meeting with the oracle: this is an unbiased, spontaneous response. Here is the ideal querent: someone without bias or attachment to any particular answer, independent of mind and naturally at one with the I Ching.

Line 2: 'Sincere, confident communication. Good fortune. Regrets vanish.'

The ideal querent is still at work! S/he has approached the oracle with perfect sincerity, and accepts its answer with complete trust. S/he is centred and at one with the moment, and enjoys open communication with the spirit.

Line 4: 'Bargaining communication, not yet at peace. Limiting affliction, there is rejoicing.'

'Bargaining' is what merchants do: they calculate, haggle and barter. Anyone who has tried to weigh up the input of several apparently contradictory lines will recognise this description. 'Not yet at peace' echoes Hexagram 8 - 'not at peace, coming from all sides': the image of the querent's many concerns which seek a single, clear lead from the reading. With multiple moving lines, such a lead is not immediately forthcoming!

'Limiting' also means finding protection against something; 'affliction' also means pressure and haste. To overcome this unproductive tendency to haggle with the oracle and get the 'reward' of a positive understanding, you need to set limits to your own anxiety.

Lines 1 and 2 obviously work well together. Be open, spontaneous, sincere and trusting, and the answer is given to you. But line 4 shows a quite different (and, if I'm honest, rather more familiar) scenario. What should we be doing - trusting, or haggling and limiting?

## **Three sources of information for understanding all the lines together**

### **Line position and sequence**

Understanding that the lines come in a specific order is tremendously helpful. The sequence of the lines in a hexagram is from bottom (line 1) to top (line 6), and so the events they describe, or advice they offer, can also be read in that sequence. If you combine this with an understanding of the basic role of each line position, even apparently contradictory advice can make a lot of sense. Naturally, once you have reached line 4, the moment of putting ideas into practice, the advice will have changed from that at line 1, when you were just beginning to form the ideas.

In this reading, line 1 is at the beginning, an initial and personal response. It's yang in a yang position, by nature strong and secure. Line 2 is very close to this, but also inwardly centred, and entering into communication with the oracle. Line 4 has crossed over into the upper trigram, where decisions have to be made and things have to be put into practice. It's yang at a yin position, less secure and with more demands on it, and has to decide what to follow. Someone in this position needs to create limits and rules in addition to simple trust.

### **The steps of change**

Formed by changing each moving line in isolation, the steps of change are like miniature relating hexagrams for each line. They show the context for the change in the line, and also the kind of response that draws forth the line's advice.

So in this case:

Line 1 points to 47, Oppression: someone self-contained to the point of isolation, learning independence.

Line 2 points to 17, Following: someone who is in the moment, naturally following the signs.

Line 4 points to 60, Limitation: finding the right limits to set on the conversation with the oracle without stifling it; seeking out a common language. This sounds to me like the methods of limiting the moving lines.

### **The patterns of change**

These are formed by replacing each changing line with a yang, each stable with a yin to find the outer pattern; the inner pattern is the opposite of this.

The inner pattern of change is Hexagram 53: we experience the reading as a gradual, step by step movement towards union and fulfilment, one that can't be hurried. But as an outward experience, and when we look to the reading for advice on how to act in the outer world, things change in the pattern of Hexagram 54. We're plunged into something we can't control or direct. Multiple lines will not be shaped to fit our preconceptions or our particular needs, however urgent. The Image section (Ta Hsiang) in both these hexagrams could also be relevant!

So in conclusion, I would read these lines as alternatives - different people (or the same person at different times) needing to take a different approach. If you find yourself haggling, and can't reach a decision on the basis of the first two lines, you need to look for ways to limit your anxiety.

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## **Three methods to limit the number of moving lines**

### **Master Yin's rules**

Alfred Huang, in his Complete I Ching, has a set of rules for reducing multiple moving lines to just

one:

- 2 moving lines, one yin, one yang: consult the yin one.
- 2 moving lines of the same kind: consult the lower one.
- 3 moving lines: consult the middle one
- 4 moving lines: consult the upper of the two unmoving lines
- 5 moving lines: consult the one unmoving line
- 6 moving lines: just consult the Judgement of the relating hexagram (except in hexagrams 1 and 2, when there is a special text for all six lines moving)

That reduces this reading to just line 2 - arguably the essence of the reading, but it seems a shame to miss the recognition and insight of line 4.

### **Chu Hsi's rules**

At the discussion page on this subject at the I Ching Community, you'll find a reposting of Chu Hsi's rules (originally from Felix). These rules are similar to Huang's - they give the same result for this reading - but not identical:

- 1 line changes: read that line
- 2 lines change: uppermost is most important
- 3 change: middle most important, with uppermost possibly confirming (but if they are contradictory stick with the middle one)
- 4 change: go over to the second hexagram and take the lowermost of the two lines that have not changed from the first hexagram
- 5 change: in the second hexagram take the line that hasn't come from a change in the first hexagram
- 6 change: then the first hexagram's situation is entirely past or on the brink of change, the second hexagram is more important. Take the judgement
- If no lines change you can read the ruling line, if there are two ruling lines then take the uppermost.

### **The Nanjing rules**

The earliest recorded I Ching divinations are in the Zuo Commentary, and they never consult more than one line. Sometimes they choose a line text to consult, sometimes a Judgement. In the 1920s, a group of scholars reconstructed a method that would account for the ancient diviners' choices. Here is its application to this reading:

1. Add all 6 line numbers (moving yang=9; stable yin=8; stable yang=7; moving yin=6):  
 $9+9+8+9+7+8=50$
2. Subtract the result from 55:
3.  $55-50=5$
4. Use this remainder to count up to the relevant line - line 5.
5. This line being unchanging, when there are exactly 3 changing lines, the hexagram statements from both first and second hexagrams form the oracle, and the line texts aren't referred to at all.

(I don't have space here for a complete account of this rather elaborate method. You can find a detailed explanation of all the rules of this method and their rationale, along with translations of all the divinations from which they were deduced, in Richard Rutt's Zhouyi.

**[My Sven Christensen's *note* ( *Se: Nanjing reglerne i slutningen af dette dokument* )]**

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## A whole new perspective

Gary Bastoky wrote to me about a method he learned from a friend:

'My question is, do you have a recommended method of consulting multiple changing lines? My friend has a very different approach than any I've ever read about, and it seems to make sense -- more sense than even Huang's suggestions. He creates a new hexagram for each changing line, and only the lowest line that is changing in that particular sequence is consulted, in EACH new hexagram -- basically a progression of time and thus events.'

He gives this example:

45 with changing lines in the first, fifth, and sixth place.  
Change Hexagram 45, line 1: get hexagram 17.  
Read Hexagram 17, line 5, and change it: get Hexagram 51.  
Read Hexagram 51, line 6, and change it: get Hexagram 21.

Gary again:

"What this means is that the first line in #45 is the first in a series of events or processes that may or may not be a catalyst which causes the event or process that occur in line 5 of #17, and so on. In this example, line 5 in #17 is the only ruling line in the group and is therefore the most important or the biggest catalyst that finally results in #21 (Biting Through).'

For our reading on moving lines, Gary's method works like this:

58, change line 1, giving  
47, change line 2, giving  
45, change line 4, giving  
Hexagram 8

The second and fourth lines of Hexagram 58 don't feature at all.

In this case you begin with harmony and spontaneity (58,1)...

...but find yourself stymied and oppressed amid plenty (47,2). Opportunity is on the way, though, and you encourage this by making offerings, showing sincerity and trust, rather than setting out to introduce an order of your own creation.

...Perhaps as a result of accomplishing this, you attain 'great good fortune' (45,4)

...and can achieve the naturally right choice of Hexagram 8. (Or else, if you are unsure, you consult again!)

The idea behind this method is quite different from my usual reading. The lines are definitely expected to represent a process, rather than, say, mutual relationships or alternative positions to take within the landscape of the primary hexagram. If the subject of your enquiry can be considered as a step-by-step process, this seems to be a method to experiment with! I won't be changing over to this method any time soon, but I have to admit that in this case it has produced a narrative that makes a

lot of sense. ♡♡

[From: <http://www.onlineclarity.co.uk/learn/consult/mml.php> ]

Nanjingreglerne: [HER](#)

Wei Tat on the subject: Divination,

<http://svenrus.dk/an-exposition-of-the-i-ching-or-book-of-changes-by-wei-tat.pdf>

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