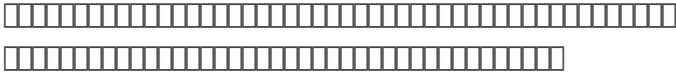


Chapter 66



Translation

The rivers and the sea reign over a hundred valleys
by their gift of lying low.

Therefore they reign over a hundred valleys.

So when the Sage would rise above the people,
he speaks in words that place him beneath them.

When he would lead the people,
he sets his own person behind them.

Therefore he dwells above, and the people feel no burden;
he stands in front, and no one is harmed.
Therefore all under Heaven gladly lifts him up and never tires of it.

Because he does not contend,
no one under Heaven can contend with him.

Word Notes

- 𠄎 — "**to grow weary of**": To resent, to find tiresome, to lose patience with.

Chapter Explanation

The reason the **rivers and the sea** can be the king to whom the hundred valleys pay homage is that they are **good at occupying the lowest position** — and so all the valley streams converge upon them. For this reason, when the **Sage wishes to rise above others**, he first uses **humble and deferential words**, placing himself below them. When he wishes to **go before others**, he first **places his own person behind** them. Therefore, when he **dwells above others**, the people do not feel burdened by his weight. When he **stands before others**, the people do not envy or resent him. For this reason, all under Heaven **gladly lifts him up** and never grows weary. Because **he does not contend**, no one under Heaven is able to contend with him.

Discourse

The way of humility and non-contention has already been discussed repeatedly in earlier chapters. That this chapter once again explains it at length is because most people in this world compete to be strong and strive to prevail, and none are willing to lower themselves before others. That is why the point is set forth again and again in careful detail, further explaining that only by not contending for the top can one dwell at the top, and only by not contending for the lead can one take the lead.

But this too is simply a natural principle. It is not that one harbors the deliberate intention of dwelling above others while making a show of yielding — resorting to scheming techniques and political artifice.

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