

Session 11 《禮記》 Liji Book of Rites III

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郢人有遺燕相國書者，夜書，火不明，因謂持燭者曰：“舉燭”而誤書“舉燭”。舉燭，非書意也。

郢（yǐng）：地名，古代楚国的都城。

謂（wèi）：说，告

诉

遺（yí）：遗留，忘记。

持（chí）：拿着。

燕（yān）：国名，古代中国春秋时期的国家的人。

燭者（zhúzhě）：拿着烛光

相（xiāng）：官职，相国。

舉燭（jǔzhú）：举起烛光。

國（guó）：国家。

誤（wù）：错误

書者（shūzhě）：写字的人。

舉燭（jǔzhú）：举起烛光。

夜（yè）：夜晚。

非（fēi）：不是。

書（shū）：写字。

書意（shūyì）：写字的意图。

火（huǒ）：火，这里指灯光。

不明（bù míng）：不明亮，昏暗。

舉燭，非書意也。燕相國受書而說之，曰：“舉燭者，尚明也；尚明也者，舉賢而任之。

舉 - 舉起，提起 jǔ - to lift; to hold up; to raise,

燭 - 燭火，燭光 zhú - a candle

非 - 不是 fēi - not

書 - 書信 shū - document; manuscript, letter

意 - 意思 yì - meaning

也 yě either,

受 - 接受，收到 shòu - to receive; to accept

而 ér and

曰 说 yuē - to speak; to say

尚明" can be translated into English as "Emphasize Clarity.

"尚" means to value, esteem, or emphasize.

"明" means clarity, brightness, or insight.

So, "尚明" conveys the idea of valuing or placing importance on clarity, insight, or understanding.

賢 贤明，有德行的人 xián 1. virtuous; worthy, 2. able; capable, 3. admirable

而 (ér)：表示转折或递进关系的连词，相当于“而且”、“却”。

任 (rèn)：授予职务，信任。

“燕相白王，王大說，國以治。治則治矣，非書意也。今世學者，多似此類。

燕 (yān) : 国名，古代中国春秋时期的国家。

相 (xiāng) : 官职，这里指相国，即燕国的相国。

白 (bái) : 表明。

國 (guó) : 国家。

以 (yǐ) : 用，凭借。

治 (zhì) : 治理，管理。

治則治矣 (zhì zé zhì yǐ) : 治理就是治理了。

非 (fēi) : 不是。

書意 (shū yì) : 写字的意图。

今世 (jīnshì) : 现今时代。

學者 (xuézhě) : 学者。

多似此類 (duō sì cǐ lèi) : 多类似这种。

从前有人从楚国的都城郢写信给燕国的相国。可是夜晚在写信的时候，光线不够明亮，就对举着蜡烛的仆人说：“举烛。”结果无意识地在信里写上了“举烛”两个字。其实，“举烛”这两个字并不是信里要说的意思。燕相收到信，看到信中“举烛”二字，很高兴，说：“‘举烛’，就是崇尚清明廉洁；要施行清明政策，则应举荐贤才担任重任。”燕相把这个意思告诉燕王，燕王很高兴，并予以施行。结果燕国治理得很好，国家虽然治理好了，却不是信的本意。现在学习的人大多和这个相似。

"窮" (qióng) in ancient Chinese texts, such as the "Shuowen Jiezi," is defined as "極也" (jí ér yě), which means reaching the extreme or utmost limit. In various contexts, it can refer to reaching the end of time, space, or a situation.

In the idiom "無窮無盡" (wú qióng wú jìn), it means boundless or limitless, emphasizing something that has no end.

For example, in the "Chu Ci" (楚辭), there's a line that says, "橫四海兮焉窮?" (Héng sì hǎi xī yān qióng?), which can be translated as "Stretching across the four seas, where does it end?"

"堪" (kān) primarily means to bear, endure, or withstand. In the context of "承擔" (chéngdān) or "承受" (chéngshòu), it implies the ability to handle or shoulder responsibilities. Here are some examples of its usage:

] The phrase "苦不堪言" (kǔ bù kān yán) means "too painful to describe" or "unbearable suffering," emphasizing the severity

Another idiom is "堪當重任" (kān dāng zhòng rèn), which means "capable of handling heavy responsibilities" or "fit for an important task."

"聖" (shèng) is a Chinese character with a profound and rich meaning. According to the "Shuowen Jiezi" (說文解字), its basic meaning is "通也" (tōng yě), which can be interpreted as "omniscient" or "all-encompassing."

In the "Shangshu" (尚書), it is mentioned, "乃聖乃神" (Nǎi shèng nǎi shén), which can be translated as "Truly sage, truly divine." This implies that a truly sage person possesses extraordinary virtues and wisdom, approaching the divine.

In "Lunyu" (論語), there is a statement, "何事於仁，必也聖乎!" (Hé shì yú rén, bì yě shèng hū), meaning "In matters of benevolence, one must be a sage!" This suggests that only a sage person can truly embody the virtue of benevolence.

"任" (rèn) has its basic meaning as bearing or undertaking responsibilities.

In the "Shijing" (詩經), specifically in the poem "Da Ya" (大雅), it is mentioned, "是任是負" (Shì rèn shì fù), which can be translated as "Is to bear, is to carry." This suggests the idea of undertaking responsibilities and burdens.

In the "Zuo Zhuan" (左傳), in the fifteenth year of Duke Xi (僖公十五年), there is a line that says, "重怒難任，背天不祥" (Zhòng nù nán rèn, bèi tiān bù xiáng), which can be translated as "Heavy anger is difficult to bear; turning away from heaven brings misfortune." Here, "任" implies bearing or enduring difficulties.

"事" (shì) has the basic meaning of "職也" (zhí yě), which translates to "office" or "duty."

In the "Shuowen Jiezi" (說文解字), it is stated that "事" refers to an official position or duty.

In another chapter of "Lunyu" titled "Zi Lu Ceng Xi Ran You Gong Xi Hua Shi Zuo" (子路曾皙冉有公西華侍坐), it mentions "宗廟之事" (Zōngmiào zhī shì), which refers to the duties related to the ancestral temple.

"讓" (ràng) is a Chinese character with multiple meanings, and its semantic component is "言" (yán), which means speech or language.

In its original sense, as described in the "Shuowen Jiezi" (說文解字), "讓" means "相責讓," which translates to blaming or reproaching one another. In the "Shi Ji" (史記), in the chapter on Xiang Yu (項羽) from the "Records of the Grand Historian," it is mentioned, "二世使人讓章邯" (Èr shì shǐ rén ràng Zhāng Hàn), where "讓" implies blaming or accusing.

Another significant meaning of "讓" is to yield or give way, particularly in a humble or modest manner. This is a borrowed meaning. In "Lunyu" (論語), in the chapter "Zi Lu Ceng Xi Ran You Gong Xi Hua Shi Zuo" (子路曾皙冉有公西華侍坐), it is mentioned, "為國以禮，其言不讓，是故哂之" (Wèi guó yǐ lǐ, qí yán bù ràng, shì gù shěn zhī), where "不讓" means not yielding or not showing humility in speech.

"後" (hòu) primarily means behind, following, or later.

In "Lunyu" (論語), in the chapter "Zi Lu Ceng Xi Ran You Gong Xi Hua Shi Zuo" (子路曾皙冉有公西華侍坐), it is mentioned, "三子者出，曾皙後" (Sān zǐ zhě chū, Zēng Xī hòu), meaning "When the three disciples went out, Zeng Xi followed behind." In this context, "後" indicates the spatial relationship of being behind.

The term can be extended to refer to being behind in terms of space, time, order, etc., contrasting with "先" (xiān) or "前" (qián), which mean in front or earlier. For example, in the "Zhan Guo Ce" (戰國策), it says, "美女充後庭" (Měinǚ chōng hòu tíng), meaning "Beautiful women filled the rear courtyard."

"成" (chéng) has the basic meaning of completion or realization.

The idiom "一事無成" (yī shì wú chéng) means "to achieve nothing" or "to accomplish nothing" in a particular endeavor.

The idiom "百煉成鋼" (bǎi liàn chéng gāng) means "tempering through a hundred trials makes steel," metaphorically emphasizing the idea that hardship and challenges contribute to strength and resilience.

"饑" (jī) in ancient Chinese refers to famine or a year of poor harvest when crops are not ripe.

The "Shuowen Jiezi" (說文解字) states, "饑，穀不熟為饑" (Jī, gǔ bù shú wéi jī), meaning "When grains are not ripe, it is called famine."

In "Mencius" (孟子), in the chapter "Liang Hui Wang Xia" (梁惠王下), it says "凶年饑歲" (Xiōng nián jī suì), meaning "In calamitous years, there is famine."

"謹" (jǐn) means to be cautious, careful, or attentive.

In the "Shuowen Jiezi" (說文解字), it is defined as "謹, 慎也" (Jǐn, shèn yě), indicating that "謹" means to be cautious or prudent.

The idiom "謹小慎微" (jǐn xiǎo shèn wēi) means "to be meticulous and cautious in every detail."