



JIǎN

STUMBLING

Stumbling.
 It is favorable to retreat,
 It is not favorable to advance.
 It is favorable to go to see someone big.
 Staying as one is will bring good fortune.

If one goes forward, one will stumble. It is better to seek the help of someone stronger and either to stay where one is or draw back.¹

Lines

first line/6 — — Going forward, he stumbles,
 Drawing back, he is praised.

Rather than trying to advance, he should retreat into a subordinate position, where a superior will grant him honors. He is passive (— —) in a low position (the hexagram's lowest line).

line two/6 — — The servant of a king faces many difficulties,
 But not on his own behalf.

Because it is for someone else's sake that he faces difficulties, he may advance to meet them and need not retreat. Line two is the place of the subject or servant.

line three/9 ——— Going forward, he stumbles,
 So he turns around and comes back.

He avoids trouble by retreating from it. Passing from the lower to the upper trigram is considered dangerous. Line three is usually

inauspicious. Escape is possible in this case because this solid middle line of a Kǎn ䷜ Pit (danger) trigram represents safety in the midst of danger.

line four/6 — — Going forward, he stumbles,
Drawing back is the same.

There is no escape. This is the bottom line of one Kǎn ䷜ Pit (danger) trigram and the top line of another. The broken lines of the trigram represent the bottom of a pit. There is danger both ahead and behind.

line five/9 ——— Just when he most stumbles,
Friends come to his aid.

Line five usually represents the height of good fortune in a hexagram. Moreover, in this case, as the solid middle line of a Kǎn ䷜ Pit (danger) trigram, it stands for safety in the midst of danger. “Friends” can also be read “a friend.”

top line/6 — — Going forward, he stumbles,
So he draws back to someone great.
Auspicious.
It is favorable to go to see someone big.

He retreats from this dangerously high position and subordinates himself to someone greater than himself. The passive line (— —) suggests withdrawal.

STRUCTURE ䷜ 坎 Kǎn Pit (danger, difficulties)
䷎ 艮 Gēn Keep Still (stopped)

Stopped (lower trigram ䷎) by difficulties (upper trigram ䷜), he keeps still (lower trigram ䷎).

SEQUENCE Now on his own after having left his ruler in the last hexagram KUÍ (38) ESTRANGEMENT, the protagonist runs into difficulties and stumbles. To overcome them, he must withdraw and seek the help of someone greater than himself.

Note

1. “retreat . . . advance” (opening text) — The words translated “retreat” and “advance” are literally “southwest” and “northeast,” respectively. The homeland of the Zhou people who are the protagonists of the *Changes* was in the southwest. The Shang Dynasty

capital of China was to the northeast. For the Zhou, to go northeast was to advance and to go southwest was to retreat. See also KŪN (2) ACQUIESCENCE and XIÈ (40) GETTING FREE.