

29



KǎN

## PITS

**Pits.**

If there is faithfulness in his heart,  
he will be blessed.

Along the road, he will rise.

He falls into one of many dangerous pitfalls that surround him and cannot get out by his own efforts. Only devoted allegiance to a ruler will bring him the help he needs. It will also bring him a chance to rise in the world.

### *Lines*

first line/6 — — He falls into a pit.  
Misfortune.

This bottom line of the hexagram represents the bottom of a pit. In the trigram Kǎn ䷜ Pit, the two broken lines are pits and the solid line is safe solid ground.

line two/9 ——— Surrounded by dangerous pits,  
He seeks only small gain.

This solid second line is safe solid ground among the pits.

line three/6 — — He comes to a place of pits,  
Pits dangerous and deep.  
He falls into a pit.  
He must do nothing.

He cannot get out unaided and must not try.

line four/6 — — A goblet of wine, a bowl of grain,  
and extra jars of each  
Are passed in by a rope  
through the pit's opening.  
In the end, he comes to no harm.

He is succored in adversity. Line four sometimes brings relief from the difficulties encountered in line three. Pits were sometimes used as prison cells and that may be the situation here. The prisoner's friends or his captor may be passing food in to him.<sup>1</sup>

line five/9 — — Before the pit is filled,  
The mound of earth falls level.  
He comes to no harm.

It is as if he is being buried alive in a pit, but the mound of earth being used to fill it is exhausted before the pit is completely filled and he escapes harm. In general terms, this means that his difficulties will have an end. Line five is the place of the ruler and of success. The middle line of the trigram Kǎn 坎 Pit stands for safety in the midst of danger.

top line/6 — — He is tied with ropes and cords  
And put in the date thicket prison.  
He will not get out for three years.  
Misfortune.

Prisons and law courts in ancient China are said to have been surrounded by thorny date trees, an ancient equivalent of barbed wire. The top line of a hexagram often involves conflict with a superior.

STRUCTURE 坎 Kǎn Pit (danger, difficulties)  
坎 Kǎn Pit

Surrounded by dangerous pitfalls.

SEQUENCE The protagonists of the last two hexagrams went too far, but were able to avoid disaster by their own actions. In YÍ (27) BULGING CHEEKS, this was done by pausing to assimilate gains already made. In DÀ GUÒ (28) BIG GETS BY, it was done by boldly forging ahead. Here in PITS, one cannot avoid misfortune nor escape it by one's own strength, but must accept both the misfortune and then help in getting out of it.

*Note*

1. line four — This line and the hexagram in general may allude to the imprisonment of the eventual King Wen of Zhou by the Shang king Dixin. King Wen was accused of treason against Shang and spent two years in prison. After he was released, Zhou power increased rapidly. See Introduction, page 11.