

47



KÙN

BURDENED

Burdened.

To be burdened is blessed.

It is auspicious for a big man to persevere,
he will come to no harm.

Words spoken against him will not be believed.

The hexagram shows someone who is burdened and restricted by exhausting difficulties, but who is strong enough to work his way through them to great success. The texts of the lines tell the story of a high official who is burdened with heavy responsibilities and restricted by the failings of his ruler. In the end, he gets free.

Lines

first line/6 — — His thighs belabored with sticks,
He is cast into prison's dark valley.
For three years he is not seen.

This bottom line of the trigram Kǎn ䷜ Pit represents the bottom of a pit. In ancient times, pits in the ground were sometimes used as prison cells.¹

line two/9 — Burdened with food and drink.
The red apron of high office is awarded to him.
He should offer sacrifice.
It is inauspicious for him to march to war.
No harm.

When his ruler grants him high position, however burdensome, he should accept it and thank the spirits for it with a sacrifice. He should

not engage in conflict, particularly with his ruler. Line two is the place of the subject or subordinate.

line three/6 — — Weighed down by boulders,
He leans for support on thorns.
He enters his palace,
But his wife is not there.
Misfortune.

Those on whom he depends for relief from his distress fail him. "Wife" can sometimes refer to one's ruler. See XIǎO XÙ (9) SMALL IS TAMED, note 4. Line three is the place of adversity.

line four/9 — He moves slowly,
Bogged down in a bronze carriage.
But his difficulties will have an end.

Line four is the place of the officer, whose powerful and wealthy ruler (the "bronze carriage") retards his advance.

line five/9 — In distress.
The red apron of high office is a burden to him.
Slowly, he gets free.
He should offer sacrifice.

He frees himself from an oppressive ruler. This is an active line (—) in the place associated with the ruler. The sacrifice he offers to the spirits may either be to ask them for their help in getting free or to thank them for it.

top line/6 — — Held by tangled vines and in distress.
He will not regret moving.
It is auspicious to march forth to war.

He is strong enough to break free. The top line of a hexagram is above that of the ruler and often has to do with conflict between a subject and his ruler.

STRUCTURE ䷳ 兌 Duì Stand Straight (break free)
䷳ 坎 Kǎn Pit (adversity)

At first he is in adversity (lower trigram ䷳), weighed down by the two solid lines four and five (—), but then he stands up and breaks free (upper trigram ䷳).

SEQUENCE The protagonist of the last hexagram SHĒNG (46) **RISING** rose to high position in a ruler's service. Now his high position becomes a burden to him, probably because his ruler's failings prevent him from accomplishing all that he is capable of. This well describes the Zhou people's view of their own rise to eminence under Shang and subsequent dissatisfaction with the last Shang king.

Note

1. "prison" (first line) — One ancient theory has it that King Wen wrote the *Changes* during a two-year stay in prison. He was supposedly put there by the Shang king for expressing (by a sigh) criticism of the king's conduct and was released only after partaking of a stew made from his own eldest son. Zhou power grew quickly after this and another son led the uprising that overthrew Shang.