

Hexagram 47

Name

Confining, Oppression. The tree encircled by walls - image of entrapment and restriction, feeling imprisoned, and also of isolation, being cut off and unable to reach out to others. Also a subtle sign that growth and life is all on the inside.

Oracle

'Confined, creating success.

Constancy of a great person, good fortune.

Not a mistake.

There are words, not trusted.'

With no feedback or confirmation coming from outside, the great person needs to be constant to an inner concept/ ideal/ faith/ knowing. Hence this is a supreme test of character (Dazhuan) - whether you can stay constant when there's no progress, no encouragement, nothing but your own resources.

Being in this situation doesn't mean you did something wrong. Persisting with the constancy of a great person is not a mistake - though in this situation it might feel like one.

'Words, not trusted' - 'trust' character, *xin*, is 'person' + 'words'. So there are words, no person-words: ideas in circulation, no real person to vouch for them, or no real personal connection to make them trustworthy. In relationships this can mean a truly horrendous state of mistrust. Within an individual, not trusting one's own thoughts or reasoning about the world. But where *words* are not trusted, something deeper might be.

Image

'Lake without stream, confined.

Noble one carries out the mandate, fulfils his aspiration.'

Note 'carrying out' is used in *Shijing* to describe Wen and Wu 'carrying out' heaven's purpose.

Lake on the outside would normally suggest extroversion, communication and exchange. Here, the stream drains it inwards: nothing left for communication.

Lake and stream flow together, in the same direction. Noble one both carries out the mandate and fulfils the aspiration of his own heart: these also flow together, creating great inner momentum. If your desire flows with the mandate you are given, it can be fulfilled.

Sequence

‘Pushing upward and not reaching a high point is necessarily confining.’

46, Pushing Upward, is full of optimism: if I put the work in, if I progress step by step, naturally I’ll reach the summit. ‘No doubts.’ 47 has done the work, pushed on, and *not* reached the summit. Hence those receiving it are often not just feeling trapped and hemmed in, but also profoundly shaken by discovering that things that are meant to work, don’t. Maybe feeling betrayed not just by one person, but by the whole world not working as it should.

Pair

With 48, the Well.

Zagua: ‘The Well is wholly connected, Confinement means a mutually helpful meeting.’

So - *not* just mistrust and isolation. Perhaps the connection is made through the flow inward: connecting with one’s inner ‘great person’ (Oracle), or with the power of a mandate (Image), or actually with the ever-present underground water of the Well. If the tree within walls (Name) can’t reach outward, it will reach down and inward all the more strongly.

47 means connecting with one’s own inner resources. Maybe also the movement inward brings about connection with other people through deeper levels of common humanity? Maybe this is what happens when connection with the people in red or scarlet sashes (lines 2 and 5) is furthered by ‘offerings and oblations’ (rather than by eloquence or a great CV).

Dazhuan (Book II chapter 7)

‘Confinement defines *de*...
Exhausted yet also wholly connected...
Lessens resentment.’

This is one of the nine hexagrams singled out in the Dazhuan as an example of how those who wrote the Yi knew suffering. Hexagram 47 is the test and definition of *de* - strength of character, personal power and virtue. It also means being ‘wholly connected’, which makes sense if you think of *inner* connections rather than outer.

(See also the Pair!) And lessening resentment, because you're focussing on the inner dynamic, rather than on the outer restrictions.

Nuclear hexagram

37, People in the Home. With your knowledge of your own identity strengthened and focussed by 47 - and not dependent in any way on other people's feedback - *then* you will be well-fitted to be a part of the relationships in the Home. Going through Confinement, you're developing and learning this capacity to relate within a family unit.

Line 1

'Buttocks oppressed with a wooden stick,
Entering into a gloomy valley,
For three years, meeting no-one.'

'Oppressed with a wooden stick' - maybe tied to a post, maybe beaten with a stick.

Song 165 of the *Shijing*:

'*Ding ding* goes the woodman's axe
Ying, ying cry the birds,
Leave the gloomy valley,
Mount to the high tree.
'Ying' they cry,
Each searching its mate's voice.'

The 'gloomy valley' is the same as in 47.1 - so it's an established poetic image for being isolated from kith and kin. (Another coincidence in the woodman's axe and the wooden stick/stump.)

47 *zhi* 58: confining communication, isolated from exchange, cutting yourself off by entering into the dark valley.

Yi doesn't explicitly say the isolation is bad. Maybe depressive, solitary periods are a natural part of inner cycles?

It also doesn't say this *isn't* all self-inflicted. Nor is it inevitable: it's possible to use this line to say, in effect, 'Yes, I'm hurt, but I'm not going to shut down and stop communicating.'

As a reply to 'where's the mobile phone?' - it had fallen out of a trouser pocket and slipped down between the sofa cushion and the side of the chair.

Line 2

'Confined while drinking and feasting,
Scarlet sashes come from all directions.
Fruitful to use thank-offerings and oblations.
Setting forth to bring order: pitfall, no mistake.'

Drinking and feasting are meant to be signs of sharing and exchange. To be confined here means the great frustration of not being able to participate. (Sometimes just because one can't see the real exchange going on - this person may complain that there isn't any, fail to notice the gifts he's offered.)

47 *zhi* 45, Confined Gathering. The restrictions affect one's ability to join with others and invest oneself in the gathering. They can also be shifted and loosened by the same impulse as Gathering: the will to make offerings.

The scarlet sashes (or scarlet aprons or knee-coverings) are worn by officials come to offer you a job. It's good to respond with small offerings, gently opening up channels of communication, deepening and solemnising the experience, restoring alignment and harmony.

But with offers of new responsibility coming from all directions, how much do you really want? It's not at all rewarding to become responsible for expeditions to bring order to the borders. (Eg relationship reconciliation that means taking on responsibility for the other person's emotional state.)

Line 3

'Confined by stones,
Grasping at star thistles.
Entering into his house, does not see his wife.
Pitfall.'

Like 'grasping at straws', only a lot more painful. Entrapped, what you rely on isn't adequate; you clutch at all the wrong things. Your real support is invisible to you. (Why? Maybe she isn't there, but maybe he's just blind to her presence.)

47 *zhi* 28, Confined Great Overstepping - hence the sense of failing to find adequate support. The crunch point of confinement, the moment where it threatens you with complete collapse.

Line 4

'Coming slowly, slowly,
Confined in a bronze chariot.'

Shame.

There is completion.'

That would be a wooden chariot completely covered in bronze ornamentation. Very splendid and shining, for use in great ceremony - not very manoeuvrable or agile. Using a bronze(d) chariot says things like, 'This journey is so important it should be marked out as such with ceremonial' and 'the journey is more important than the arrival.'

You experience shame because it's so slow, or because you fail to connect with people (confined by a circle of powerful acquaintances, Wilhelm says), or because you're making big gestures that may or may not indicate real commitment. Line-analysis tradition says this line should be going to help its partner (line 1), but is slow, or maybe hesitant because it's afraid the partner will choose someone else (line 2) (Cheng Yi).

But even bronze chariots - maybe *especially* bronze chariots, once you get them moving? - arrive in the end.

47 *zhi* 29, Confined Repeating Chasms. 29: momentum, flow, 'holding fast the heart, going on brings honour.' That still happens here: you might be able to delay the flow, but it can't be stopped.

Line 5

'Nose cut, feet cut.

Oppressed by the crimson sashes.

Then moving slowly brings release.

Fruitful to use offerings and oblations.'

Nose and foot cutting: literally, criminal punishment, as brought by officials wearing crimson sashes (or knee bands, aprons, etc). Metaphorically, humiliation ('loss of face') and being deprived of your power to move independently. Ouch.

This won't be solved by direct confrontation, but you *can* release yourself by moving slowly (not fast/ aggressively enough to provoke more of a reaction), and by using offerings. Those re-align your inner state with the world (rather than you trying to change the world to fit your inner state); also they could just be conciliatory gestures.

Examples: woman is driving home alone when her car makes fearsome noises. A garage man says it probably needs new brakes. She asks Yi how serious it is: 47.5. After moving on slowly, the sound goes away - probably a pebble under the wheel rim.

Federer (world #1 tennis player) in the 2007 Wimbledon Final. A computerised system of monitoring line calls has been introduced: players can challenge calls and have them checked with the computer. Without fail, at every critical moment, the machine says his opponent's challenges are right and his are wrong. He complains volubly that the machine is 'killing him' and demands that it be turned off. It isn't, of course. Federer quiets down, and still wins.

Line 6

'Confined by trailing creepers.
Feels uneasy and unsettled.
Says 'acting - regret'.
With regret, setting forth, good fortune.'

The confinement may look substantial, but it's only trailing creepers. Someone's limited more by their own anxiety and self-doubt than by anything real. Anxious about where they are, wanting to move on, talking themselves out of it. They may say 'acting - regret', but we know that words are not trustworthy in 47. Feel the regret and do it anyway!

47 *zhi* 6, Confining Arguing. Can mean being entrapped by 6's sense of injustice - maybe feeling wrongly judged and unfairly isolated from support, all the worst emotions of both 47 and 6. Not a reliable perception, and not a good place to stay.