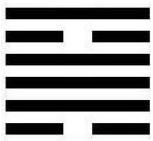


## Hexagram 50 The Vessel



*The vessel.*

*The Creative, meaningful.*

*Spiritual influence benefiting all.*

### Structure:

- Wood below ☳, and fire above ☲. Nourishing and penetration below, clarity and spirit above.
- Flame kindled by wood and wind. Wood nourishes the flame, the spirit.

Fire penetrates wood to cook food. The ancients used a ceremonial vessel to serve food and make offering to ancestors. While the Well (Hexagram 48) represents the nourishing of all people, this hexagram describes nourishing those who further the ways of the spirit.

Cooking changes things into something new. Sages cook their lives within the fire of the spirit to transform cultural conditioning, self-cherishing and hostility for others into an offering to the sacred by caring for its creation. The sage devotedly follows the spirit within and clearly manifests the spirit outwardly. The spiritual path transforms people into sages.

Presence, the awareness of the spirit within our lives, serves as the container in which the ways of the spirit<sup>1</sup> transform harmful conditioning into a sacred offering that benefits all. Through its interconnected practices, the spiritual path cooks our lives, freeing us from our willingness to harm others for self-benefit and overcoming divisiveness. The fire above depends upon a constant supply of wood below. Likewise, our awareness of the spirit and transformation of what harms perpetually renews and illumines our lives. Virtuous actions and devotion to the spirit mutually reinforce each other and connect the visible to the invisible. Our lives become the offering.

Sages hold spiritual nourishment, which they offer to those open to spiritual wisdom. With penetrating, supportive understanding and using their own lives as an example, sages teach and create opportunities for others to practice the ways of the spirit within the world.

The sage, approachable and modest in nature, finds capable partners who complement and aid it in its work. Transformative effects result from the joint efforts of leadership and sages to bring forth the new. The mutually reinforcing actions of presence and transformation of what harms leads to devoted action in the world.

The truly sacred does not manifest itself apart from life. Sages bring forth the ways of the spirit through how they live. Caring for the wholeness of Earth Interbeing venerates the spirit. This brings awakening and true understanding, and leads to great benefit for all and the Earth.

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<sup>1</sup> **Ways of the Spirit:** A loving care for all, knowing the sacred within experience, living within Earth and moral limits, and acting in ways that resist in small ways what harms and that restores and renews the well-being of the Earth Interbeing, the Great Purpose.

Life must stay alight. The sage transforms its life so that the spirit constantly illumines it, stabilizing its proper position between the spirit and the ten thousand things, the whole and the part. From that place, the wise enter the mystery of the cosmos gradually and practice their understanding within the world. The visible extends into the realm of the incomprehensible sacred to receive its true purpose and meaning and to take root in the sacred.

**Line 1:** Before using the ting, the cook turns it over to empty the vessel of unwanted remains. At the beginning of the spiritual path, the wise empty themselves of their deluded beliefs and their cultural conditioning and hold to the values of the spiritual path. Thus, they free themselves of what obstructed them from being with the spirit and obtain the wholeness they had sought.

**Line 2:** When the selfless line limits itself to what benefits all, it may experience resistance from those complicit with what harms, but it does not yield to them. One goes its own way, freeing itself of entanglements. As it remains firmly aligned with the path, it fears nothing and fulfills the purpose of life by creating what nourishes those open to the spiritual path, through which all benefit.

**Line 3:** The line regrets its isolation caused by harmful beliefs and turns inward to increase its inner clarity to possess something truly spiritual. When the time comes, the line penetrates what separates it from the spirit and becomes whole.

**Line 4:** The line represents those responsible for important affairs, which require the efforts of wise and knowledgeable people. However, the line partners with the weak first line, representing those who do not have the capacity to do such work. With this kind of help, the effort fails, like the ting overturning and spoiling the prepared offering. The line has the blame for failing to partner with the wise and ruining the good work it had prepared.

**Line 5:** The ting has handles for carrying so that the substance can be served. The centered line balances firmness with yielding, which allows it to serve others. The line opens to the sacred wisdom of the centered second line, which in turns supports the actions of this fifth line. The two lines have a complementary relationship, which preserves the line's correctness as it borrows strength from the stronger second line.

**Line 6:** The sage has completely transformed its life into spiritual nourishment for others, fulfilling the purpose of the spiritual path. Firmness and softness as are one, like jade.