

Hexagram 21 – Gnawing and Biting



Gnawing to remove the unnecessary.

Bite through the obstacles to unite.

Growing.

Benefit from knowing the consequences of obstructing union.

Structure: Wisdom of fire ☲ above, and sacred movement ☷ below. Wisdom and the sacred uniting.

The hexagram has the image of open jaws (1st and 6th lines) about to bite through what obstructs (4th line) their coming together in union. an obstruction (4th line). To unite with the sacred and the Earth Interbeing, we first remove the ways we harm others and the Earth. Then we bite through what obstructs us from union, the self-centered views of an oppressor.

By first stopping how we harm others and the Earth, we strengthen our capacities to finally bite through the wrong views of an oppress and our willingness to harm others and the Earth. Removing our harmful ways and biting through our wrong views overcome our separation from other cultures, other beings, and the Earth, allowing us to meet in understanding as an Earth Interbeing. The coming together of the Earth Interbeing occurs within the sacred. When people come together they center on the sacred.

The sacred caused limits and the natural laws of cause and effect to bound life and Earth. Wisdom discerns these limits and laws as well as the sacred consequences of transgressing them. Earth Interbeing clarifies these limits and laws and upholds the meting out of justice for ignoring them.

By knowing what harms life and the Earth and knowing the sacredness of all life and the Earth, we discern whether our intended action furthers or harms our beloveds. We know that a lack of discernment has built-in consequences and refrain from acting when confused or in a turmoil as we lack the clarity needed for wise action. We come together with the sacred.

Line 1: The line stops itself from harming others and the Earth, nipping a bad choice before it gains momentum. It learns from the humiliation of acting harmfully to act with more discernment in the future.

Line 2: The stubborn line has not learned the lesson to not harm others and the Earth. Life applies continuing and increasing punishment until the line learns the lesson.

Line 3: The weakness and passivity of the line makes it efforts to overcome its entanglement with the legacy of generational harming for self-benefit. It uncovers the poisonous wrong views that have been passed down to it through the generations. Although the line does not have the capacities to free itself from the harmful views and ways, it has at least acknowledge them, a necessary step in the right direction.

Line 4: The line tries to determine how to overcome difficult harmful views and ways, but it lacks the necessary clarity and wisdom. Fortunately, it recognizes that it must further grow its capacities to know the sacred ways before it can know what to do.¹

Line 5: The sage has the discernment to separate what harms from what furthers and the wisdom to turn toward the sacred knowing to know how to respond to a complex and difficult situation. It then acts upon its knowing of what to do in ways that further life on Earth.

Line 6: The line has caused so much harm and persistently ignored the many warnings to change its ways that release from the consequences of its behavior proves impossible. The line, deaf to wise counsel, receives a severe punishment.

Confucius says, “If good does not accumulate, it is not enough to make a name for someone. If evil does not accumulate, it is not enough to destroy someone. Therefore, inferior people think goodness in small things has no value and so neglect them. They think small sins do no harm and so do not give them up. Thus, sins accumulate until they can no longer be covered up, and their guilt becomes so great that it can be no longer wiped out.”

¹ **Ways to further life on Earth (work in progress):** honor the sacred, humbleness, humble surrender to sacred knowing, wisely responding to further life on Earth, firm discipline to avoid harming the Earth Interbeing, harmonious interactions, equitable sharing, and staying balanced with the Earth Interbeing.