

## On the Treasure Tower



I HAVE read your letter with great care. I have also received your offering to the treasure tower of one thousand coins, polished rice, and other articles. This I have respectfully reported to the Gohonzon and to the Lotus Sutra. Please rest assured.

In your letter you ask, “What is signified by the Thus Come One Many Treasures and his treasure tower, which appeared from beneath the earth?” The teaching on the treasure tower is of great importance. In the eighth volume of his *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*, the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai explains the appearance of the treasure tower. He states that it has two distinct functions: to lend credence to the preceding chapters and to pave the way for the revelation to come. Thus the treasure tower appeared in order to verify the theoretical teaching and to introduce the essential teaching. To put it another way, the closed tower symbolizes the theoretical teaching, and the open tower, the essential teaching. The open tower reveals the two elements of reality and wisdom.<sup>1</sup> This is extremely complex, however, so I will not go into further detail now.

In essence, the appearance of the treasure tower indicates that on hearing the Lotus Sutra the three groups of voice-hearers perceived for the first time the treasure tower within their

own lives. Now Nichiren’s disciples and lay supporters are also doing this. In the Latter Day of the Law, no treasure tower exists other than the figures of the men and women who embrace the Lotus Sutra. It follows, therefore, that whether eminent or humble, high or low, those who chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo are themselves the treasure tower, and, likewise, are themselves the Thus Come One Many Treasures. No treasure tower exists other than Myoho-rence-kyo. The daimoku of the Lotus Sutra is the treasure tower, and the treasure tower is Nam-myohorenge-kyo.

At present the entire body of the Honorable Abutsu is composed of the five elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space. These five elements are also the five characters of the daimoku. Abutsu-bo is therefore the treasure tower itself, and the treasure tower is Abutsu-bo himself. No other knowledge is purposeful. It is the treasure tower adorned with the seven kinds of treasures—hearing the correct teaching, believing it, keeping the precepts, engaging in meditation, practicing assiduously, renouncing one’s attachments, and reflecting on oneself. You may think you offered gifts to the treasure tower of the Thus Come One Many Treasures, but that is not so. You offered them to yourself. You, yourself,

are a Thus Come One who is originally enlightened and endowed with the three bodies. You should chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo with this conviction. Then the place where you chant daimoku will become the dwelling place of the treasure tower. The sutra reads, "If there is any place where the Lotus Sutra is preached, then my treasure tower will come forth and appear in that spot."<sup>2</sup> Faith like yours is so extremely rare that I will inscribe the treasure tower especially for you. You must never transfer it to anyone but your son. You must never show it to others unless they have steadfast faith. This is the reason for my advent in this world.

Abutsu-bo, you deserve to be called a leader of this northern province. Could it be that Bodhisattva Pure

Practices has been reborn into this world as Abutsu-bo and visited me? How wonderful! How marvelous! I do not understand how it is that you have such faith. I will leave it to Bodhisattva Superior Practices when he appears, as he has the power to know these things. I am not saying all this without good reason. You and your wife should worship this treasure tower privately. I will explain more later.

With my deep respect,  
Nichiren

The thirteenth day of the third month in the ninth year of Bun'ei (1272), cyclical sign *mizunoe-saru*

To the Honorable Abutsu-bo



## Background

Nichiren Daishonin sent this letter in the third month of 1272 to his disciple Abutsu-bo Nittoku. One story has it that Abutsu-bo was a samurai who had accompanied the Retired Emperor Juntoku to Sado when he was exiled there as a result of the Jokyu Disturbance of 1221. It is more likely, however, that he was a native of Sado Island. In either case, he was a longtime resident of the island. He went to Tsukahara to debate with the Daishonin and was converted to the Daishonin's teaching. He and his wife became loyal supporters of the Daishonin and brought him food and other necessities for much of the time he was on the island. After the Daishonin took up

residence at Mount Minobu, Abutsu-bo made at least three visits there, despite his advanced age. He died in 1279 at the age of ninety-one.

The treasure tower described in the Lotus Sutra is of awesome proportions, and its meaning puzzled Abutsu-bo. In this letter the Daishonin gives his aged disciple a striking glimpse into the reality of life. The ceremony depicted in the Lotus Sutra is not a historical event during which a colossal jewel-encrusted stupa actually emerged from the ground. Rather, the appearance of the treasure tower symbolizes a ceremony of life; it is a metaphor for the emergence from deep within the human being of the highest state of life.

## Notes

1. Reference is to the ultimate reality of Buddhahood innate in life and the wisdom to perceive that reality. These are represented, respectively, by the Buddhas Many

Treasures and Shakyamuni seated together within the open treasure tower.

2. A rephrasing of a passage in chapter 11 of the Lotus Sutra.

