

## Acknowledging Various Offerings



**Y**OU have sent me various offerings and I have presented them to the Lotus Sutra.

The benefit to be gained from supporting one's mother or father surpasses that to be gained from supporting all the people in Japan. For killing all the people in Japan one would fall into the seven great hells.<sup>1</sup> But one who kills one's mother or father will fall into the eighth hell, which is known as the hell of incessant suffering.

But the person who kills his parents and sheds the blood of Shakyamuni Buddha will never fall into the hell of incessant suffering for the offense of killing his parents. Rather he will fall into the hell of incessant suffering for the offense of shedding the blood of the Buddha.

Furthermore, one who performs the ten evil acts and the five cardinal sins, and causes all the Buddhas in the ten directions and three existences to bleed, and who becomes an enemy of the Lotus Sutra, will never fall into the Avīchi hell for the offenses of the ten evil acts, the five cardinal sins, or for that of causing the Buddhas of the ten directions to bleed. Only for the great offense of disbelief in the Lotus Sutra will he fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

Again, let us suppose that there are two persons. One daily performs the

ten evil acts and five cardinal sins, and monthly slanders the Buddhas of the ten directions. Another never, on any day, commits the ten evil acts or five cardinal sins; nor does he ever, in any month, slander the Buddhas of the ten directions. Although the degree of good and evil between these two is vastly different, both will fall without fail into the hell of incessant suffering should they turn against so much as a single character or a single brushstroke of the Lotus Sutra.

The fishermen and hunters in our present society kill fish and deer daily, and the warriors of the Minamoto and Taira clans fight battles yearly. But as long as they avoid killing their parents, they cannot possibly fall into the hell of incessant suffering. And if the opportunity arises in the future, there may even be some among them who will believe in the Lotus Sutra and become Buddhas.

In our world today, it appears that the chief priest of the Tendai school, the supervisors of Tō-ji temple, Omuro, and the seven major temples, and True Word teachers such as the chief official of Onjō-ji temple, as well as the followers of the Zen school, Nembutsu believers, and followers of the Precepts school, outwardly believe in and recite the Lotus Sutra. But when one delves into what their bases are, one finds that

they are disciples of the Great Teacher Kōbō, the Great Teacher Jikaku, the Great Teacher Chishō, Shan-tao, and Hōnen.

When the source is muddied, the river will be impure. When the heavens are clouded over, the earth will be dark. When one's parents commit treason, oneself, one's spouse, and one's offspring will be ruined. When a mountain crumbles, the grasses and trees fall. This is the way of all phenomena, and in the same way all good people, such as the priests and nuns of the sixty-six provinces of Japan, will surely fall into the hell of incessant suffering.

Thus in society at present, rather than the evil people, it is the good ones who will fall into hell. Rather than the good people, it is the priests and nuns, and rather than the priests and nuns, it is those among them who observe the precepts and possess outstanding wisdom who will fall into the Avīchi hell.

Not even one person in Japan today understands this teaching. Only Nichiren understands it. And if I knew it and nevertheless failed to speak out, I would fall into the hell of incessant suffering and could never hope to be released.

If knowing of a traitor one failed to report the person to the ruler of the country, one would be guilty of wrongdoing. When I speak up, my enemies lash at me like the rain and rush at me like the wind. I am treated as if I am the traitor, or as if I am a pirate or a mountain bandit. In any case, it is hard to bear.

I am like, for instance, Bodhisattva Never Disparaging at the end of [the Middle Day of] the Law of the Buddha Awesome Sound King, or like the monk Realization of Virtue at the end of [the Middle Day of] the Law of

the Buddha Joy Increasing. I am like T'ien-t'ai or Dengyō. And my enemies exceed those of such men. Though such men were hated by many people, still their countries' rulers never persecuted them. As you can see, I am detested even more by the ruler than by many people, and he shows even greater enmity toward me than if I were the enemy of his mother and father.

Could your having taken pity on and made offerings to such a strange person be because you were my parent in a past existence, or could it be due to karma from a past lifetime? It is certainly no ordinary thing. Moreover, it is when the rain pours, the wind rages, and people try to hold one back that one's resolve comes to the fore. This is also true in your case. Even in ordinary circumstances, at the border between Suruga and Kai, the mountains are high, the rivers deep, boulders lie everywhere, and the path is narrow. How much truer is this now, when it has been pouring for three months straight. The rivers have been rising for ninety days, landslides have occurred, paths are blocked, and no one can come or go. Just when our food supplies had run out and I thought my time had come, you presented this assortment of items, satisfied the hunger of the Lotus Sutra, and even saved the life of Shakyamuni Buddha. You can only guess at your good fortune. I will write you again in greater detail.

With my deep respect,  
Nichiren

The seventh day of the seventh  
month

My reply to you



## Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter on the seventh day of the seventh month in 1278 to Nanjō Heishichirō, who is thought to have been a relative of Nanjō Tokimitsu. After thanking Heishichirō for the various offerings he had sent, the Daishonin explains that going against the Lotus Sutra leads to the hell of incessant suffering and that it is actually the eminent priests of the

various schools who have turned against the Lotus. But having spoken up about this matter, he has been persecuted as if he were a traitor. The Daishonin praises Heishichirō for sending offerings to such a person in spite of the perilous way to Minobu, and concludes that there is no imagining the greatness of the benefit he will receive as a result.

## Note

1. The first seven of the eight great hells, or eight hot hells. *See* eight hot hells in Glossary.