

The Eight Winds



I HAD been anxious about you because I had not heard from you in so long. I was overjoyed to receive your messenger, who arrived with your various offerings. I am going to bestow the Gohonzon on you for your protection.

About the problem of your transfer to another estate: I have studied your lord's letter to you and your letter to me, and compared them. I anticipated this problem even before your letter arrived. Since your lord regards this as a matter of the utmost importance, I surmise that other retainers have spoken ill of you to him, saying: "He shows a lack of respect for you in his unwillingness to move to a new estate. There are many selfish people, but he is more selfish than most. We would advise you to show him no further kindness for the time being." You must beware and act cautiously.

As vassals, you, your parents, and your close relatives are deeply indebted to your lord. Moreover, he showed you great clemency by taking no action against your clan when I incurred the wrath of the government and the entire nation hated me. Many of my disciples had their land seized by the government and were then disowned or driven from their lords' estates. Even if he never shows you the slightest further consideration, you should not hold a grudge against your lord. It is

too much to expect another favor from him, just because you are reluctant to move to a new estate.

Worthy persons deserve to be called so because they are not carried away by the eight winds: prosperity, decline, disgrace, honor, praise, censure, suffering, and pleasure. They are neither elated by prosperity nor grieved by decline. The heavenly gods will surely protect one who is unbending before the eight winds. But if you nurse an unreasonable grudge against your lord, they will not protect you, not for all your prayers.

When one goes to court, one may win one's case, but then again one may lose, when satisfaction could have been obtained outside of court. I considered how the night watchmen¹ might win their case. I felt great pity for them; they were deeply troubled, and their houses and lands had been confiscated just because they were Nichiren's followers. I said that I would pray for them, provided they did not go to court. They agreed and promised not to go. So when I heard they had submitted petitions and were embroiled in lawsuits, I was concerned that it would not go their way; so far no results have been forthcoming.

Daigaku and Uemon no Tayu² had their prayers answered because they followed my advice. Hakiri³ seems to believe my teachings, but he ignored my

suggestions about his lawsuit, and so I have been concerned about its progress. Some good seems to have come of it, perhaps because I warned him that he would lose unless he followed my advice. But because he did not listen to the extent I had hoped, the outcome has been less fruitful than he expected.

If lay believers and their teacher pray with differing minds, their prayers will be as futile as trying to kindle a fire on water. Even if they pray with one mind, their prayers will go unanswered if they have long made the error of attacking greater teachings with lesser ones. Eventually, both lay believers and their teacher will be ruined.

Myoun was the fiftieth chief priest of the Tendai school. He was punished by the retired emperor⁴ in the fifth month of the second year of Angen (1176) and ordered into exile in the province of Izu. En route, however, he was rescued at Otsu by his priests from Mount Hiei. He reassumed his position as chief priest, but in the eleventh month of the second year of Juei (1183), he was captured by [Minamoto no] Yoshinaka⁵ and beheaded. I am not saying that being exiled or beheaded is in itself an indication of fault. Even sages and worthies undergo such things.

When civil war broke out between Yoritomo of the Minamoto clan and Kiyomori of the Taira clan, more than twenty of Kiyomori's clansmen signed a pledge and affixed their seals. They vowed: "We will look to Mount Hiei as our clan temple. We will revere the three thousand monks as our own parents. The sorrows of the mountain temple will be our sorrows, and the joys of the mountain temple, our joys." They donated all the twenty-four districts of Omi Province to the temple. Then the chief priest [Myoun] and his disciples employed all the rites of the True Word teachings in their prayers to vanquish the enemy and even ordered

their armed priests to shoot arrows at the Minamoto soldiers. Yoshinaka [of the Minamoto clan] and one of his retainers, Higuchi, however, accompanied by a mere five or six men, climbed Mount Hiei and burst into the main hall. They dragged Myoun from the platform where he was praying for victory, bound him with a rope, rolled him down the west slope of the mountain like a big stone, and beheaded him. Nevertheless, the people of Japan do not shun the True Word teachings, nor have they ever delved into this matter.

During the fifth, sixth, and seventh months of the third year of Jokyu (1221), the cyclical sign *kanoto-mi*, the imperial court and the barbarian warriors engaged in combat.⁶ At that time Mount Hiei, To-ji, the seven major temples of Nara, Onjo-ji, and the other temples each performed all the most esoteric rites of the True Word school in their prayers to the Sun Goddess, Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, the Mountain King,⁷ and other deities. Forty-one of the most renowned priests, including the General Administrator of Priests Jien, a former chief priest of the Tendai school, and the administrators of priests of To-ji, of Omuro,⁸ and of the Joju-in hall of Onjo-ji temple, prayed repeatedly for [Hojo] Yoshitoki's defeat.

The prelate of Omuro also began a ceremony to overpower the enemies in Shishin-den Palace on the eighth day of the sixth month. He proclaimed that the imperial court would be victorious within seven days. But on the seventh day—the fourteenth day of the sixth month—the battle ended in defeat, and the prelate died of extreme grief because his beloved page, Setaka,⁹ had been beheaded. Yet despite all this, no one ever wondered what was wrong with the True Word doctrines. The ceremonies that incorporated all the True Word doctrines—the first conducted by Myoun and the second

by Jien—resulted in the complete collapse of royal rule in Japan. Now, for the third time, a special religious ceremony is being held to ward off the Mongol invasion. The present regime will surely suffer the same fate. This is a confidential matter; you should keep it strictly to yourself.

As for your own problem, I advise you not to go to court. Neither harbor

a grudge against your lord, nor leave his service. Stay on in Kamakura. Go to attend on your lord less frequently than before; wait upon him only from time to time. Then you can expect that your wish will be fulfilled. Never conduct yourself in a shameful manner. Be unmoved by greed, by the desire for fame, or by anger.



Background

This is one of the many letters Nichiren Daishonin wrote to Shijo Kingo, his loyal disciple in Kamakura. Because of Kingo's devotion to the Daishonin's teachings, he was ordered in 1276 to move from his estate near Kamakura to the distant province of Echigo. The letter is not dated, but it is known to have been written in the third year of Kenji (1277).

The concept of the "eight winds" is described in works such as *The Treatise on the Stage of Buddhahood Sutra*. They advise people not to be swayed by their attachment to prosperity, honor, praise, or pleasure (the four favorable winds), or by their aversion to decline, disgrace,

censure, or suffering (the four adverse winds).

The Daishonin cautions Kingo to remain in the good graces of his lord, reminding him that Lord Ema refrained from harassing him during the Daishonin's exile to Sado, when the government was persecuting the Daishonin and his followers. Then the Daishonin tells Kingo that only by putting faith first and controlling his feelings of resentment against his lord can he expect to find a way out of this impasse. He also says that courts of law and other expedients are secondary to faith and that, if Kingo is to win, he must proceed exactly as the Daishonin teaches.

Notes

1. The night watchmen are thought to have been Shijo Kingo's escorts, who lived in his residence. Their estates had been confiscated because of their belief in the Daishonin's teachings.

2. Daigaku is Hiki Daigaku Saburo Yoshimoto (1202–1286), a Confucian scholar who is said to have converted to the Daishonin's teaching on reading a draft of *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land*. Uemon no Tayu is another name for Ikegami Munenaka, the elder son of an official in the Kamakura government. He is thought to have become the Daishonin's disciple around 1256.

3. Hakiri Sanenaga (1222–1297), the

steward of the Minobu area in Kai Province. He had been converted by Nikko Shonin, but opposed him after the Daishonin's passing.

4. When the warrior-priests of Enryaku-ji temple made forcible demands on the imperial court, the Retired Emperor Goshirakawa was angered and had the temple's chief priest Myoun exiled to Izu.

5. Yoshinaka (1154–1184) was a cousin of Yoritomo, the head of the Minamoto clan, who assisted the latter in his revolt against the Taira.

6. A reference to the Jokyu Disturbance, an attempt by the Retired Emperor Go-toba to overthrow the military Kamakura shog-

gunate. The victory of the shogunate clearly established the power of the Hojo regency.

7. The Mountain King refers to Hie Shrine, which is located at the foot of Mount Hiei, and to the main god of the shrine, who was revered as the guardian deity of Mount Hiei and of the Tendai school.

8. Another name for Ninna-ji temple of

the True Word school in Kyoto. The prelate of Omuro, who appears in the next sentence, refers to Prince Dojo, the second son of the Retired Emperor Gotoba, who had entered the priesthood at Ninna-ji.

9. Setaka (d. 1221) was the sixth son of Sasaki Hirotsuna, the constable of Omi, who rallied to the imperial cause during the Jokyu Disturbance.