

**BACK TO THE BASICS
THE TREASURE TOWER
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LOS ANGELES**

Many of the symbols in the Lotus Sutra serve a dual function. On the most basic level, the fantastical descriptions simply say, pay attention, this is amazing stuff. However, beneath the fabulous extravagance, there is a deeper, more specific meaning.

The treasure tower emerges from the earth at the beginning of the 11th chapter of the Lotus Sutra. From behind closed doors, the sonorous voice of Many Treasures Thus Come One declares, Shakyamuni, World Honored One, all you have expounded is the truth. Shakyamuni then explains to the confused assembly that Many Treasures, though long since dead, promised in the infinite past to appear with his funeral tower whenever and wherever the Lotus Sutra is taught. Later in the Sutra, the doors open and Shakyamuni sits beside Many Treasures.

The treasure tower is like a metaphor within a metaphor. It floats above the assembly at Eagle Peak, enormous and mysterious. It is covered in countless bells and banners and emits wondrous fragrances. Obviously this qualifies as amazing stuff. But what else does it mean?

When Nichiren Daishonin's disciple Abutsu-bo studied the Lotus Sutra, he became quite understandably perplexed by all this talk of jewels and levitating. He asked directly, "What is signified by the Thus Come One Many Treasures and his treasure tower, which appeared from beneath the earth?"

The Daishonin begins his response by mentioning that T'ien-t'ai taught that the closed and open treasure tower represents the theoretical and essential teaching, respectively. But the Daishonin knew that T'ien-t'ai's concept was a difficult one to understand. Instead of elaborating, he switched gears to a more direct explanation. The treasure tower appears, he explained, because at last Shakyamuni's disciples had begun to understand their own Buddha nature. The Treasure Tower is a metaphor for the awakening of our own Buddhahood. "No treasure tower exists," he states, "other than the figures of the men and women who embrace the Lotus Sutra." Similarly, he equates the Gohonzon to the treasure tower, saying, "Faith like yours is so extremely rare that I will inscribe the treasure tower especially for you" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 300).

Ultimately the treasure tower is not a description of Shakyamuni's supernatural colleague; rather it is Myoho-enge-kyo. When we chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, our Buddhahood emerges from the depths of our being and declares the correctness of the Lotus Sutra, just as Many Treasures had promised.