Iti 83 — Five Harbingers

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Text

So It Was Said 83

The Book of the Threes

Chapter Four

Five Harbingers

This was said by the Buddha, the Perfected One: that is what I heard.

“Mendicants, when a god is due to pass away from the realm of the gods, five harbingers appear. Their flower-garlands wither; their clothes become soiled; they sweat from the armpits; their physical appearance deteriorates; and they no longer delight in their heavenly throne. When the other gods know that that godling is due to pass away, they wish them well in three ways: ‘Sir, may you go from here to a good place!

When you have gone to a good place, may you be blessed with good fortune!

When you have been blessed with good fortune, may you become well grounded!’”

When he said this, one of the mendicants said to the Buddha, “Sir, what do the gods reckon to be going to a good place?

What do they reckon to be blessed with good fortune?

What do they reckon to become well grounded?”

“It is human existence, mendicant, that the gods reckon to be going to a good place.

When a human being gains faith in the teaching and training proclaimed by the Realized One, that is what the gods reckon to be blessed with good fortune.

When that faith in the Realized One is settled, rooted, and planted deep; when it’s strong and can’t be shifted by any ascetic or brahmin or god or Māra or divinity or by anyone in the world, that is what the gods reckon to become well grounded.”

The Buddha spoke this matter. On this it is said:

“When, with the fading of life,

a god passes from the realm of the gods,

the gods utter three cries

of well-wishing:

‘Go, worthy sir, from here to a good place,

in the company of humans.

As a human being, gain supreme faith

in the true teaching.

May that faith of yours be settled,

with roots planted deep,

unfaltering all life long

in the true teaching so well proclaimed.

Having given up bad conduct

by way of body,

speech, and mind,

and whatever else is corrupt;

and having done much good,

by way of body,

speech, and mind,

limitless, free of attachments;

then, having made much worldly merit

by giving gifts,

establish other colleagues

in the true teaching, the spiritual life.’

It is due to such sympathy

that when the gods know a god

is due to pass away, they wish them well:

‘Come back, god, again and again!’”

This too is a matter that was spoken by the Blessed One: that is what I heard.