Yakushiji. He ordered the ordination of one hundred persons to enter the Buddhist priesthood. As a result the Empress recovered and an amnesty was proclaimed.

Spring, third month, 27th day [685]. The Emperor decreed that every household in every province should erect a family Buddhist shrine in which to place an image of Buddha along with Buddhist sutras. These shrines were to be worshipped and offerings of food were to be made to them.

Sutra of the Golden Light of the Most Excellent Kings. At this time, the Four Deva Kings and others in unison replied to the most Gracious Lord: “Fitting indeed! If there are kings who propagate and study this precious Sutra of the Golden Light, we the Four Deva Kings shall come to protect them always, and be with them at all times. Whatever calamities may befall or curses cast upon them, we the Four Deva Kings shall extinguish them. Eradicating all fears and pestilence from among them, we shall increase their longevity, and let them share in the propitious happiness of heaven. Their hearts’ desires shall be fulfilled and there shall be an outpouring of joy. We shall also make all soldiers in their countries to become strong…”

Buddha replied and said: “If a king studies this Sutra of the Golden Light and lets its knowledge spread throughout his country, there will be four kinds of benefits for his ministers and functionaries. The four are as follows: First, the ministers and functionaries will become friendly, respectful and loving toward each other. Second, they will become cherished ones in the heart of the king and will be revered by priests, brahmins, large cities and small countries alike. Third, they will respect the law, pay less attention to material wealth, and seek no worldly gains. And their good names shall be known everywhere and venerated by the people. Fourth, their lives shall be prolonged and become peaceful and joyful. These are then called the four benefits. If there is a country where this sutra is preached, priests and brahmins shall gain four kinds of victories. The four-are as follows: First, they will not be in want of clothing, food, sleeping quarters, and medicine. Second, they will all gain peace of mind, and meditate and study the sutra. Third, they will find a good place of abode by the mountains and trees. Fourth, they will all become content according to their hearts’ desires.

These are then, called the four victories. If there is a country where this sutra is taught, all the people will become happy and prosperous. There will be no more pestilence, and all the business houses will gain many riches in their business transactions, and realize the dream of happiness and prosperity. These are called various merits and benefits.”

At this point, the Four Deva Kings and a host of others asked Buddha: “Most Gracious Lord! These deep meanings contained in the sutra, if they exist, we must all know. There are thirty-seven types of laws to aid us in attaining wisdom given by the Tathāgata (he who has thus come to lead the path, another name for Buddha) which have been in existence and have not been extinguished. If this sutra is extinguished or destroyed, then the Sacred Law may also be extinguished.”

Buddha answered, saying: “Well spoken, well spoken, I therefore beseech all of you good men to have diligence in studying, upholding, meditating, and mastering every phrase, every sentence, every paragraph and every volume of this Sutra of the Golden Light. And for the sake of all sentient beings, preach and spread its teachings. If you do so, you shall have peace and joy in long nights, and acquire unlimited merits.”

In the thirteenth year of Temple [741], 24th day of the third month, the Emperor [Shōmu] decreed, saying: “We, even though lacking in virtue, have been entrusted with the responsibilities of governing the country. We have not been able to spread our beneficent rule, and day and night we are besieged with the feeling of inadequacies. Of old, enlightened kings carried on the work of former sovereigns, and brought peace to the nation and joy to the people. They eradicated calamities and brought about happiness. What was the secret behind their beneficent rule which enabled them to attain these goals? Lately, annual grain crops have not been abundant, and we have been visited by pestilence frequently. Remorse and trepidation are mixed in Our mind, and We work diligently to atone for Our sins.

“Seeking widely to benefit all sentient beings, and to gain happiness for all uniformly, We sent messengers in past years on fast horses to shrines everywhere in our country and increased their stipends. Last year We ordered that every province should erect one golden image of Buddha Skakamuni, sixteen feet in height, and write out one copy of the Daihannya-kyō.”