

# **Talmudic Discussion in Japanese: On the Possibility of Cultural Innovation**

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## **Introduction: Foreign Religious Thoughts and Japanese Culture**

The Bible is well known to the Japanese people in the modern era. However, the Bible as Jewish literature is still foreign to us. You may wonder why on this occasion, I would like to talk about how Jewish literature exerts great influence on Japanese culture, since it may sound a bit strange. But reflect on how Buddhism influentially shapes Japanese culture as a whole. Buddhism itself too was in fact a foreign ideology which has penetrated the Japanese way of life since antiquity and is now regarded as an indispensable element and core value of Japanese culture. In this vein, we can at least say that *Zen*, the most famous and still influential religious culture in Japanese history, has built the tenets of Japanese culture. Daisetsu Suzuki, a very prestigious scholar monk, wrote a book titled “*Zen and Japanese Culture*.”<sup>1</sup>

Suzuki wrote about the profound influence of Zen Buddhism on various spheres of Japanese spiritual life. In this paper I would also like to evoke the kind of role Jewish literature called the Talmud could possibly play in shaping the moral values of Japanese culture if the Japanese chose to adopt the Talmud as part of a school curriculum in the educational system of our society. Although such a possibility is very unlikely and hence imaginary, my intention is to examine the degree of difference in some basic ideas of moral values that lie between Jewish and Japanese religious culture, by assessing the extent to which Talmudic thinking could shape certain moral values to the same degree as Japanese classical thinking.

In this paper I will first examine the implications of the three classical ideas of the Japanese moral values by measuring to a varying degree the Jewish ones. Then I will go on to discuss how the Talmud as classic literature has influenced Jewish culture as a whole. Lastly I will suggest how certain ideas of religious education might influentially shape the moral values of both cultures.

## **1. Three Classical Ideas in Japanese Moral Values**

We will now examine the nature of the three classical elements of Japanese moral values in order to clarify the Jewish ones cherished by the Talmud. Most people would agree that the following

three are usually regarded as classical Japanese moral values: Firstly, harmony is to be valued, and any discord is to be strongly deprecated; secondly, the idea of the divine nation is espoused (i.e., “*Shinkoku Shiso* 神国思想”); thirdly, sin and impurity can be washed off or cleansed by water. These three values are somewhat inter-related and are often seen in the naïve ethno-centric ideas of primitive society.

The Japanese are said to highly value the idea of harmony. This clearly appears for the first time in the “*Constitution of Seventeen Articles*” of Prince Shotoku promulgated in 604 CE in which he tried to establish a social order with the king at the summit. This document stated that the ontological basis of social order was faith and reverence in the threefold Buddhist authority: Buddha, Dharma, and Monks. It also introduced the idea of the community and its legitimacy, advocating the nomination of state officers according to ability and endeavoring to establish the rule of law and individual morality. The ideal of this Constitution seems highly respectable and dignified but we cannot take it at face value as the real basis of Japanese society in those days. Reading the whole of the Constitution gives the impression that the harmony promulgated in it seems to force subjects to conform to the regime.<sup>2</sup>

The word harmony sounds benign to the ears, but we should not let our eyes be deceived by the scent of its sweetness. The idea of harmony was sometimes misused and abused in the political arena as the favorable cause of subjugating the minority to the majority. We have to distinguish between respect of harmony and mere convenient abuse of political power. More importantly, the idea of harmony must be compatible with the idea of righteousness, which also entails respect for the opinion of the minority even in ancient times.

The second element of Japanese moral values has been closely tied to the supremacy of the Japanese nationhood, which in the modern era is deeply rooted in the state religion of Shintoism. It infamously evoked a sense of national chauvinism in such an emotional way that it authorized and even helped precipitate Japanese colonialist expansion and invasion of Korea and China.

The third element is likely to be used as an apology for the lack of a sense of guilt among the Japanese. I am not sure whether a sense of shame has something largely to do with the idea of cleansing of impurity by water. I will not delve in detail here about the idea of a sense of shame that has been fostered in Japanese society. The sense of shame may have been connected in depth with a sense of guilt that fostered a sense of responsibility among the Japanese political elite in the military regime of the early modern era, which was presumably influenced by Confucianism and Zen Buddhism.

Now we will turn to the topic of Jewish moral values. As previously stated, these three elements

of Japanese moral values can be seen universally in many cultures in the world including Jewish culture. But more importantly Judaism has not striven to cultivate such values as much as other cultures have. Moreover rabbinic Judaism, on the contrary, has endeavored to minimize and even delegitimize such primitive ethno-centrism by Talmudic education. Let us now enquire into this issue.

## **2. Renovation of Talmudic Thinking that has Transformed Jewish Moral Values**

Here we contemplate how the sages of the Talmud developed their ideas concerning the above three themes. As the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament was shared with Christianity, we have to point out the characteristics of the Jewish Biblical exegesis established by the Jewish sages. It was the Talmudic sages who determined the Jewish understanding of the Bible and this has not been introduced into Japan. We Japanese are all well aware of the Christian Biblical exegesis but not yet of Jewish hermeneutics. What is the Jewish way of reading the Bible? First of all, the Bible, especially the Torah, has been the legal normative authority for ordinary Jewish life. Additionally, in the narrower sphere of Biblical hermeneutics the Jewish people have been confronted with some inconvenient and unpleasant descriptions of their ancestors in the Bible and have regarded them as moral lessons by which to live according to the divine will. Here are a few examples: Jacob's deception of his father in order to receive the blessing of the first-born; the event of the Golden Calf at the foot of Mt. Sinai and the executions by the Levites; the false report of the spies dispatched to search the Land of Canaan; the Israelites' incessant defiance of Moses' leadership in the wilderness etc. The great achievement of the sages was to face the difficulties and to encourage the people to overcome their suffering and malice in the life of the diaspora and thus to become the chosen people with total allegiance to God. Whereas the great achievement of the Hebrew Bible was to collect the unpleasant facts of the people, the greatest achievement of Judaism is its inexhaustible endeavor to learn from the very mistakes of the previous generations so as to live according to the divine revelation. Therefore, the following three elements of Jewish moral values are part of such intellectual endeavor.

### **2.1 On the Idea of Harmony**

First, with regard to the idea of harmony, the famous Aggadic tradition of Hillel and Shammai reminds us of the sophistication of Jewish society in that discussion and argument were highly recommended among the sages and even controversy among them was permitted, instead of being forced to conform to an authoritative opinion. It says, "Any controversy that is for God's sake shall

in the end be of lasting worth, but any that is not for God's sake shall not in the end be of lasting worth".<sup>3</sup>

Keeping the lesson of this tradition in mind, the sages of the supreme rank of every generation have argued with each opinion and strove to persuade the opponent with their reasoning. The Talmud recorded their discussions and controversies in such specific technical terms as *mahaloket* (מהלוקת), *massa u-mattan* (משא ומתן), *kushiya we-terutz* (קושיה ותירוץ), *rminhi* (רמיניה), etc.<sup>4</sup> It was axiomatic that the sages of the highest authority enjoyed freedom to express their opinion concerning the divine intention of the Scripture and that they permitted the same for their disciples. They did not allow any political authority to intervene and oppress their freedom. This is the critical spirit of the Jewish sages that has been fostered in the diaspora without their own political autonomy. It was indeed fortunate for Jews that they had no political power of their own and could therefore attain and cultivate their own specific moral values.

Characteristically, the Jewish people take pride in their love of debate, which can be best illustrated by the common saying that there are three opinions for every two Jews. We can find another merit in this freedom of expression. The Jewish mother is said to praise her child for asking his teacher a good question; this is even more important than getting high marks in an examination or attaining full credit for some notable achievement. This seems to be inseparably connected with the merit that values and promotes intellectual creativity. Additionally, another merit of the Jewish people that deserves attention is that they attained their emancipation from the magical worldview, which in turn gave preference to the intellectual rigor of reasoning.

## 2.2 On the Idea of the Chosen People

The Jewish idea of the chosen people has been a most problematic idea, and has been misinterpreted variously by many, consciously or unconsciously, but has nothing to do with ethnic superiority nor with this-worldly prosperity but with the profound ethical idea of responsibility. Ethnocentric ideas have been ubiquitous. Examples of the ideology of superiority can be found among the ancient Greeks or the ancient Chinese, white supremacy in the West and the divine peoplehood among the Japanese, etc., and so it can also be found among the ancient Israelites. The Hebrew Bible depicts the story of the opposition of Korah and his group in rejecting the divine authority of Moses. The Bible however denounced the attitude of Korah and his reasoning that the Israelites were all sacred and that God was within them. The rabbinic tradition mentioned above rules that Korah's claim against Moses was not considered as a "controversy for the sake of Heaven". The sages interpreted the Bible and rejected Korah's rationale because it sanctified the

people for their own sake, which is nothing less than an idolatrous way of thinking.<sup>5</sup>

The idea of the chosen people was firmly connected with the covenant of God with the Israelites, as the result of which they became His chosen people. They became the chosen people because they accepted His precept and promised to perform the divine will. If they did not perform it, they would no longer be the chosen people, but in an even worse position than any other people. However, they were confronted with the reality of being dispersed and politically deprived in spite of their privilege of being chosen by God. Faced with this difficulty, the sages attempted to answer this riddle in their biblical exegesis. One of their exegeses, based upon the problematic expression “under the mount”, *tahatit ha-har* in the original in the book of Exodus 19:17, is that their covenant is interpreted as forcefully imposed upon them by God under threat of death, not as something accepted by their own free will. It says that “This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, overturned the mountain upon them like an [inverted] cask, and said to them, ‘If ye accept the Torah, ’tis well; if not, there shall be your burial....’”.<sup>6</sup>

It was inferred that God had to make covenant with them lest the world be brought back to chaos. Whether the world would go back to chaos or would be perfected depended largely upon the decision of the Israelites. Therefore they were chosen for the completion of the world according to the divine will by fulfilling the commandments given to them.

The Jews were thus destined to fulfill the divine task of keeping the commandments to let the world be safe and firm. This is exactly the idea of the responsibility of the chosen people, which is very similar to the idea of *noblesse oblige*.

### 2.3 The Idea of Remorse and Repentance

Thirdly, we will consider the idea of remorse and repentance in Jewish moral values. The culture of remorse and repentance culminated most importantly in the ritual of the Day of Atonement. I still remember experiencing this idea for the first time when I was studying at the Hebrew University in the 1980's. I felt as if the summer in Jewish life was like a season of repentance. I used to go to a nearby Sephardi synagogue early in the morning during the forty days before the Day of Atonement and listen to the sound of the *shofar* in the darkness before sunrise. It seemed as if the whole world of the Jews was going through repentance. I learned that the *shofar* was blown at exactly when they recited the passage of the Torah representing the thirteen attributes of God, i.e. *Shlosh Esre Middot* (י"ג מדות). It says, “*Adonai, Adonai, El rahum ve-hanun, erekh appayim ve-rav hesed ve-emet...*”.<sup>7</sup>

So what is the method of repentance? The Mishnah already decreed the basic precept, and according to it, there are four methods. The first is the Temple sacrifice, which is the most important

and effective. However the Temple in Jerusalem has been in ruins for many centuries. The second is death. The third is the ritual of the Day of Atonement. And the fourth is repentance. The same idea of offering an apology through death exists in Japanese culture, and Judaism similarly seems to echo our tradition of apology. However the Day of Atonement in Judaism is of equal value to that of death. Man has no need to die for repentance. In addition, death and the Day of Atonement are not sufficient for atonement. The act of repentance is indispensable. The Mishnah says, “Death and the Day of Atonement effect atonement if there is repentance” (M. Yoma 8:8).<sup>8</sup>

Sin will be atoned for ultimately by the act of repentance and the Day of Atonement. Human life is unalterable. It should not be treated lightly. Do not say how easily sin can be atoned for by repentance only. Easy repentance is no repentance. The Mishnah describes the nonsense of such an easy act of repentance. It says, “If a man said, ‘I will sin and repent, and sin again and repent’, he will be given no chance to repent. [If he said,] ‘I will sin and the Day of Atonement will effect atonement’, then the Day of Atonement effects no atonement (M. Yoma 8:9).”<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Examination of Japanese Moral Values**

Given the significance of Talmudic thinking in the Jewish moral values examined above, we will discuss the possible reasons for the differences between Jewish and Japanese moral values, and consider ways of renovation in Japanese education of the classical religious scriptures of Buddhism, Confucianism, and even the Talmud.

We understood that Rabbinic Judaism taught the Jews responsibility regarding sin, encouraging them to attain righteousness by way of learning and practicing the divine commandments. If specific Jewish moral values can be attained by religious education based on Talmudic literature, then we Japanese might be able to find a kind of corresponding history in which a certain style of Japanese religious education emphasizing the perfection of moral and ethical excellence strived to establish sophisticated moral and ethical values of the Japanese people, which could help restrain and control their rude, arrogant and ethnocentric tendencies. There certainly was a period in our history when Buddhism and Confucianism played an indispensable role in fostering such universal moral values in the mind of the Japanese military ruling class based on their religious education. This period was that of Feudalism in the medieval and early modern period, especially the Tokugawa Shogunate period in 1603-1868. We will now consider the role of Zen Buddhism in inculcating ethical enlightenment among the military ruling class.

### 3.1 Zen Buddhism and Japanese Intellectual Tradition

Firstly, we will glance briefly at the theory of transmitting the truth from master to disciple in the tradition of Zen Buddhism. This theory was referred to most clearly in a statement by the most important Japanese Zen Master, Dogen (1200-1253). Dogen went to China to complete his study of the innermost truth of Buddhism and began to serve Chinese Zen masters at the age of 20. He visited and was enrolled in several famous Zen schools and spent about two inconclusive years. Eventually he had an opportunity of seeing the greatest master of the time named Nyojoh, whose encounter was depicted as an ineffable experience of seeing a living Buddha. He served him and was ordained at the moment when the whole truth had been transmitted from the master to him. Dogen stayed with the master Nyojoh until he passed away a few months later; he then came back to Japan to teach the true Buddhist teaching of the master and founded the Soto Zen School. When he was forty he left Kyoto, the political and cultural center of Japan to detach himself from political and social influences and temptations and founded a temple deep in the mountains to train his disciples. This temple has been preserved to this day and his Zen school and groups are flourishing. His writing on the genealogy of the evidence of the truth by transmission between Zen masters can be found at the beginning of the discourse on the Truth of the Teaching of Buddha as follows:

The great master Gautama Buddha attached the Dharma (truth, Law) to the disciple Kasho at the assembly of Mt. *Ryozen*, and through the true transmission of masters it reached the honorable great master Dharma. The master attached the Truth to the great master *Eka*. Thus transmitting simply from master to master, it reached of nature the sixth leader, the great Zen master *Daikwan*.... . In his time there were two disciples of excellence, both of whom kept the evidence of Buddha and both were the master of the world. These two schools having prevailed, five branch schools were extended.... Although these five families differed from each other, all of them kept the one and the same evidence of Buddha's Heart (*Bendo-wa by Dogen*).<sup>10</sup>

According to this statement, the notion of transmission of the whole truth may be understood as follows: The transmission of the whole truth contains something ineffable and bears a mystic quality. What is transmitted should not be knowledge of this or that matter. It can not be calculated individually. What might be contained in the master's mind should be transmitted. Because the disciple becomes a representative of the master in a moment, we can only say that the whole spirit of the master was transmitted to the disciple. This transmission is ineffable. This is a whole transmission from the master to the disciple. And because this is whole, it is a simple transmission.

Because this is simple, it should be wholly true. The whole instructions of the master and the whole devotion and allegiance of the disciple make the transmission simple and whole. But it is ineffable.

Seen from another aspect this theory of transmission is exactly the essential notion of the perfection of human virtues as the ultimate aim of Zen Buddhism. What is meant by human perfection in Zen Buddhism? It was an enlightened state of mind, objective in judgments of right and wrong and of good and evil, unbiased, recognizing the preconceptions of one's own and of others. An enlightened person is of pure reason if there be such a person. This is because Zen Buddhism or Buddhism in general has at all times and in all places attracted men.

### **3.2 Zen Buddhism and Japanese Military Class**

We now shift our focus to the consistent systematic religious education by the Tokugawa Shogunate rulers, to see how the religious values of Zen Buddhism were embodied in the culture of the ruling military class as the way to spiritual perfection. This brought forth social justice and compassion in the whole of Japanese society, preventing an outburst of political barbarism.

Strongly influenced by the Zen-Buddhism of China, especially with the rise of the military *samurai* class in Japan since the thirteenth century onward, the idea of enlightenment through Zen training had begun to profoundly influence Japanese culture in the middle ages. It should be noted that the military class accepted the tenets of Zen Buddhism as its authoritative spiritual discipline in opposition to the magical ritualism of the dominant Buddhist authorities supported by the Emperor and the noble class. This tendency was promoted more in the early modern era when the military class of the samurai took over political power and became the dominant ruling class in Japanese society. This was the period of the Tokugawa regime with the Shogun ruler at the summit in early modern Japan from 1603 to 1868.

After the one hundred years of civil wars among military landlords called *daimyo*, the Tokugawa military clan subjugated other landlords and founded the dynasty in 1603. The founder was awarded the title Shogun by the Emperor. In the past the Emperor normally endowed the military general commander with that title, but this time it meant that the title holder represented a man of supreme administrative power and thus Japan became a 'united states' perhaps for the first time in its history. From that time until 1868 the Tokugawa dynasty ruled Japan peacefully, with almost no military confrontations among feudal lords.

One of the characteristics of the Tokugawa regime was that it accepted the Chinese political philosophy of Confucianism as the principle that brings about the ideal aim of society as well as that of the individual. The ultimate aim of society was to live according to the Heavenly norms and

in order to realize that ideal, man has to endeavor to accommodate himself to the Heavenly Will by rigorous learning and thus his household will be in order, the country will be justly and peacefully ruled and consequently the whole universe will be in order under Heaven. The whole universe is totally dependent upon the quality of man; social justice and well-being could be realized to the extent that man in society accomplishes his duty according to the Heavenly Will, called *Ten-Mei*.

The idea that the ultimate aim of man is to subject himself to the Heavenly Will in the theory of Confucianism is similar to Buddhism in the sense that the elimination of egoistic desires and the annihilation of selfishness are the ideal state of human cognition. These two ideas were then so distinctly amalgamated that the ideal of ruler as a man of discipline according to Confucianism was to be realized by the systematic practice of Zen-Buddhism. Thus education in Zen Buddhism was established in the Tokugawa regime and the universal aspect of human reason was embodied in this culture. It is important to point out that this legitimate education in 'Zen Buddhist eschatology' succeeded in suppressing the outburst of persistent ethnocentric barbarism in Japanese society.

### 3.3 Four Subjects of Education in the Tokugawa Regime

The subjects of education for the Tokugawa feudal lords are best illustrated by the concept of the exhibition at the Tokugawa Art Museum in Nagoya. The museum consists of six exhibition rooms representing the most typical elements of the lord's castle. The first four rooms display the following subjects: the Sword and Armor Room, the Tea Room, the Official Confucian Chamber, and the Noh Theatre Stage.<sup>11</sup> It is surprising that a military castle contained such cultural facilities. This fact, however, implies that the life of the ruling class was governed by Zen Buddhist ideas and these four elements seem to symbolize the spirit of the ruling *samurai* class of the age. Here I will consider the significance of tea ceremony.

The tea ceremony was meant to be a special way by which to attain spiritual enlightenment in place of Zen-discipline. The spirit of the tea ceremony was firmly established upon the principle of *Cha-Zen Ichi-Mi* (茶禪一味), that is, "the tastes of Tea and Zen are one and the same". The tea master Rikyu, who founded the school of the tea ceremony, became an adviser to the military ruler of Japan at that time, recruiting many distinguished disciples among *samurai* warriors. As a result, the spirit of his tea ceremony was gradually accepted by the entire *samurai* military class.

The ultimate aim of man is, according to my understanding, to live a righteous life; to that purpose, the elimination or annihilation of egoistic desires should be attained. Only when man conceives himself as ephemeral and sinful, will he find his life invaluable and precious; he feels as if he were endowed with new life in tasting tea in the tea room that constitutes part of the universe.

Inside the tea room everybody is deprived of social status and all must live a simple and modest life in light of the Heavenly dominion; decency and modesty abound therein and man's mutual relationships with each other and other objects shed a new beam of Heavenly light. Under such circumstances, man will change himself and become a new creation.

### **3.4 Transformation of Japanese Moral Values in the Modern Nation-State.**

With the formation of a modern centralized state in the late nineteenth century, Japanese rulers adopted State Shintoism as the state religion, officially implementing the policy of separation between Shintoism and Buddhism, which in turn precipitated the annihilation of Buddhist values.

Shintoism or the Shinto religion was based on the naïve belief in the mysterious uncanny being possibly revealing in every matter. It has no universal morality or righteousness except for absolute fear and total subjection to de-facto social authorities including man. This tendency could lead to blind conventionalism or uncritical traditionalism. Thus that is how a sort of emperor worship came into being. The imperial family established its rule by military power in ancient times and holds the function of officiating rituals for the supreme deity, the Great Goddess of *Amaterasu* (Heavenly-Sunlight) who was originally an imperial family deity at the summit of the divine hierarchy. Although the *samurai* military class had endeavored to prevent the Emperor from exercising political power from the Middle Ages onward, the sacred social order of Shintoism has persisted into the modern era and took political authority in the Meiji Restoration assuming modern nationalism since 1868. The spirit of the ruling class of Japan, characterized by a sense of loyalty and duty embodied in the Confucian and Buddhist values, was then dramatically transformed into modern egoism that only seeks the pursuit of this-worldly prosperity with political barbarism, which has succeeded in confronting the threat of the Western powers.

It is true that Japan has succeeded in attaining this-worldly prosperity without falling prey to western colonialism. But it is equally true that Japan imitated the West in becoming a colonial country. If we have attained this status by denouncing the Buddhist values that we have cherished for so long, we might as well realize that it is still too high a price to pay. We should all be aware of man's ephemeral life even while we are flourishing.

The State of Israel has succeeded in building a firm and flourishing country in the modern era, and I hope that at this time of her political triumph, the Israelis will remain aware of the historical lessons to be learnt from their own people that the religious triumph of Talmudic Judaism caused by their political defeat, fostered their specifically Jewish moral values.

### **Conclusion: Towards the Revival of Classical Scriptural Education**

We have witnessed that as rabbinic Judaism has exerted great influence in shaping modest and responsible Jewish moral values in the long history of the Diaspora, so decent, modest and responsible moral values flourished in medieval and early modern Japan in which the free and vigorous activities of various Buddhist sects were permitted by the military regime. If we could recognize that Buddhism as foreign thought has been rooted into Japanese culture, I wonder if we could integrate Jewish thought and its wisdom into Japanese culture through education. In my concluding remarks I would like to consider the possibility and methodology of generating Jewish Talmudic study in terms of the revival of classical Japanese education in Buddhism. We would not be able to reestablish the educational system of the early modern Tokugawa regime; in modern secular society, we have to presuppose the separation of religion and state so that classical education would take place in the system of secular education in terms of religious studies in university curriculum. Comparative study of Buddhism and Judaism would be the best environment in which the similarity between the two could be recognized and reaffirmed. On the one hand, there are two phases in the process of Buddhist enlightenment: *Zu-ij-Yi* 随自意 (recognition in terms of Buddha) and *Zui-ta-Yi* 随他意 (recognition in terms of laity), while Judaism has two approaches in the perfection of cognition: Torah lishmah (Torah study for its own sake) and Torah lo lishmah (Torah study not for its own sake). On the other hand, the purpose of practicing Buddhist commandments is the practicing of the same in the evidence of enlightenment, which is called *Shu-Sho Ittoh* 修証一等 in technical terms, i.e. the disciplinary practice and the evidence of enlightenment are one and the same, while the purpose of practicing Jewish commandments is the practicing of the same in the evidence of the love of God, which is called *sekhar mizvah, mizvah*, i.e. the reward of a commandment is a commandment.<sup>12</sup> This is perhaps why many Jewish intellectuals have been so interested in Zen and were affiliated to Zen masters' apprenticeship. Yoel Hoffmann's biography and thoughtful works will be more properly evaluated in this context. I still hope to see a society in which people are aware of their ephemeral existence even in their flourishing lives and live decent, modest and responsible lives based upon the hermeneutics of the classical Buddhist and Jewish scriptures.

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#### **Notes**

- 1 The original title was *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture*, published by The Eastern Buddhist Society, Otani Buddhist College, Kyoto, 1938. It was then translated into Japanese with the title *Zen to Nihon-Bunka*, i.e. "Zen and Japanese Culture", published by Iwanami-Shoten in 1940, including

- the original six chapters and one additional chapter.
- 2 When I invited Professor Rachel Elijor of the Hebrew University to the University of Tokyo 15 years ago and we read together the *Constitution of Seventeen Articles* in English translation at the seminar, we came across the same impression that the idea of harmony in the Constitution seemed to force subjects conform to the regime. In addition, the ideal was not realized because the Prince's family was annihilated by the powerful Soga clan and government was taken over by its clan, which led to the Coup in 645 CE.
  - 3 The Mishnah, Pirkei Avot 5:17. H. Damby, *The Mishnah*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1938), pp.459-460. A more literal translation would be: "any dispute which is for the sake of Heaven, shall in the end be of lasting worth." *The Mishnah: A New Translation with a Commentary by Rabbi Pinhas Kehati, Seder Nezikin Vol 4*, Eliner Library, Department for Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora, (Jerusalem,1994), p.175.
  - 4 Ezra Zion Melamed, *Mabo le-Sifrut ha-Talmud*, (Kiryat Sefer, Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 49-68.
  - 5 Illuminating is the explanation by Y. Leibowitz on the difference between the holiness mentioned in the verse on *tzitzit* (Numbers 15:40-41) and the holiness in regard to Korah (Numbers 16:1). The difference between them is for him "the difference between faith in God and idolatry". Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Notes and Remarks on the Weekly Parashah*, tr. by Rabbi S. Himelstein, (Chemed Books & Co., Brooklyn, NY, 1990), p.143.
  - 6 BT Tractate Shabbat 88a, *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, Seder Moed, Tractate Shabbat*, (The Soncino Press, London, 1987).
  - 7 An Israeli radio program of the *Selihot* was broadcasted during the season in 1983, which I recorded and listened to many times with the prayer book, *Mahzor Beit Israel, Yamim Noraim, Ke-Minhag Qehilot Qodesh Spharadim*, ("Sinai" Publishing, Tel Aviv, 1977).
  - 8 H. Damby, *The Mishnah*, p.172.
  - 9 *Ibid.*
  - 10 *Nihon-Shisou-Taikai: Dogen, First Volume*, (Iwanami-Publishing Co., Tokyo, 1970), pp. 12-13.
  - 11 The homepage of this museum gives a glimpse of its concept. See [www.tokugawa-art-museum.jp/english/](http://www.tokugawa-art-museum.jp/english/).
  - 12 Comparative religious thought between Buddhism and Judaism has been one of my great concerns, the first article on which was published with the title "Scripture and the Modern Era" in *Japanese Literature and the Buddhism, Sixth Volume: Scripture*, (Iwanami Publishing Co. Tokyo in 1994). An English abstract of the comparative study "Persecution and Theodicy in the Case of Medieval Japanese Buddhism", appeared in the booklet of the international conference "Monotheism and Asia", joint program of Bar-Ilan University and the University of Tokyo, held at the University of Tokyo in August 30 and 31, 2010, sponsored by Dr. Naim Dangoor, (OBE Program for Universal Monotheism of Bar-Ilan University), pp. 101-106.