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**A DIALOGICAL APPROACH TO CRITICAL BIBLE STUDY:  
THE USE OF SCHWABIAN DELIBERATION  
TO INTEGRATE THE WORK OF BIBLE SCHOLARS  
WITH EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**

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***Abstract***

This article uses analytic tools provided by Joseph Schwab to address a “practical” problem faced by many liberal religious educational institutions: the tension between historical-critical study of the Bible and an affective connection to it. This problem is painted in broad strokes; then two contemporary Bible scholars, Jeffrey Tigay and Yair Zakovitch, are analyzed for the “principles of enquiry” used in their disciplinary orientations. This analysis is merged with a dialogical hermeneutics approach to text, using the work of Kepnes, Buber, and Gadamer. The article concludes by considering how this study might inform Bible curricula in liberal religious educational contexts.

**THE PROBLEM**

Gail Dorph’s (1993) important study of prospective Jewish educators begins with a vignette in which a young woman being interviewed for admission to a teacher education program embarrassedly admits that she believes that God wrote the Torah (Pentateuch), and finds it difficult to come to terms with critical approaches to its authorship (1–5).<sup>1</sup> The significance of this initial vignette is confirmed by the results of her research, in which she conducted in-depth interviews with fifteen prospective Jewish educators studying in Conservative Jewish institutions. None of these fifteen interviewees held the same beliefs about the Torah’s authorship as four experienced Conservative Jewish educators whom she interviewed for comparison. For all

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the prospective educators, the tension between intellectual integrity and a deep affective connection to the Bible was only soluble through the rejection of the former in favor of the latter.

This tension is not new. Zielenziger (1989) describes how, during the Melton Bible project of the 1960s, she would conduct teacher education training for those about to become Bible teachers under the auspices of the project. The project's approach, which she herself affirmed, involved, among other notions, the basic acceptance of the conclusions of historical-critical Bible study. Zielenziger observes that this position was highly problematic for many of the trainee teachers; when introducing educators to the Conservative Jewish theological position on the Bible, she felt that she "had pulled the rug from under their feet but had not as yet provided them with a substitute" (114).

This tension between the academic study of the Bible and a spiritually nourishing relationship with it is a perennial problem in liberal Bible education of all religions, not just Judaism (see, for instance, Boys 1979; Partington 1989; for a philosophical and theological defense of the place of historical-critical scholarship in education, see Alexander 1996). On the one hand, a central educational goal is that our students should have a deep, profound, and ongoing relationship with the biblical text; on the other, this tie should not come at the expense of ignorance of the critical and historical issues that are the basic stuff of the study of the Bible in universities.

## THE METHODOLOGY

In this article I address this tension by means of a curricular deliberation, using the analytic tools of Joseph Schwab to probe the disciplinary approaches of two accomplished contemporary Bible scholars: Jeffrey Tigay, of the University of Pennsylvania, and Yair Zakovitch, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. These two disciplinary approaches will become resources in the educational deliberation. Schwab (1973/1978) insists that the subject matter not be treated as a *source*, whereby the deliberative process "insists on the conformity of the curriculum to the nature of its source materials . . . the other commonplaces are ignored; the 'malleable' student is to be given the shape indicated by the material," nor, on the other hand, as a *servant*, which Schwab goes so far as to call a "perversion [which] consists of warping the scholarly materials out of their character in order to force them to serve a curricular purpose which fascinates the planners" (376–77).

Rather, in discussing educational problems, the subject matter must be “treated” so as to participate in the discussion with an educational, rather than a disciplinary, voice: not source, nor servant, but *resource*.

This treatment is what Schwab calls the “arts of eclectic”; the arts of analyzing differing theories about the same subject matter, and thus preparing theories for practical use. In the eclectic mode, one analyzes a theory carefully in an attempt to discover which aspects of the subject matter it clarifies, and which it ignores; “what a given principle of enquiry does to its subject, what emphases it induces, what perspective it takes, what it leaves clouded, obscure, or ignored” (1971/1978, 331; Schwab explains this term “principle of enquiry” in his article “What Do Scientists Do?,” and I will make use of this terminology in my analyses below). The challenge of the eclectic mode is to analyze different theories in this way, and then to teach the subject matter in such a way that the “radical pluralism” (1971/1978, 333) of theories about it can be recognized. Students will come to realize that different theories

... are not so much *equally* right and *equally* deserving of respect, as right in different ways about different kinds of answers to different questions about the subject and as deserving different respects for different insights they are able to afford us. A teacher of literature, for example, might begin to discover that [different literary theories] are not contradictories, one or both of which must be wrong, but contrarities, different facets differently viewed, each of which is *some* part of the whole. (1971/1978, 338–39)

The eclectic mode, though, is not merely an argument against the possibility of one “true” theory. Its basic purpose is to aid curricular deliberation about practical problems. Differing theories about, for example, history, may be “unpacked” and understood such that “each kind of historical work may have its peculiarly appropriate contribution to make to one group of students in one place and time, while other [theories of history] may have most value for other students” (1971/1978, 361). Thus, “eclectic operations bring into clear view the particular . . . partiality of [a given theory’s] view. . . [They] permit the serial utilization of even the conjoint utilization of two or more theories on practical problems” (1970/1978, 297).

It is hoped that the theoretical foundation of this article now can be seen clearly. I have painted in broad strokes a practical problem: the tension between intellectual integrity and a deep, affective, profound connection to the text in liberal Bible education. Turning now to the subject matter as a resource, I will act in the eclectic mode in order to understand the emphases, assumptions, and perspectives used by

two particular scholars of the discipline, and hence arrive at a position where each of these “theories” can be readied for practical use; the journey will ultimately lead to a discussion about each theory’s potential utility in creating curricular directions that might help address the tension with which I began. In other words, how can the Bible be taught critically, but, to paraphrase Zielenziger, with a substitute rug to place under students’ feet?

### THE APPROACH OF JEFFREY TIGAY

Due to space constraints, I will limit my analysis of Tigay to a brief survey, mainly since his approach, being fairly representative of the historical-critical school of biblical studies, will be more familiar to most readers (see Sinclair 2001 for a more detailed exposition).

One central element in Tigay’s orientation (for this term, see Grossman 1990) is his approach to the sources and history of the biblical text. Nearly all biblical scholars agree that there are sources behind the final form of the biblical text, but they differ widely on where to place the emphasis of study in the discipline: on the “parts,” or on the “whole” (Schwab 1960/1978). Schwab argues that such a “parts-whole” dynamic occurs in all disciplines, and seen through this dynamic, Tigay approaches the discipline of Bible studies with what Schwab calls atomic reductive principles:

Atomic reduction would embark upon an enquiry by more or less abandoning the subject of interest in favor of a study of the behavior and properties of its immediate constituents. Thus the behavior of human groups is treated as a function of their physiology; physiological knowledge is sought in terms of chemistry; and chemical phenomena are explained in terms of the masses, charges, positions, and motions of physical units. (Schwab 1960/1978, 188)

In the same way, for Tigay, the Bible is understood as a function of its constituent units: the different sources from which it was made up. For instance, in addressing the different accounts within the Torah of the mission of the scouts across the Jordan River to Israel, Tigay (1996a) writes: “Traditional exegesis generally treats the different accounts as supplementing each other, while modern scholarship assumes that they originate from separate authors or traditions” (422).

The word “while” is replaced in the rest of the discussion by increasingly stronger conjunctions used to separate the traditional explanation from the critical one: “However,” “In contrast to these

explanations,” “These explanations are unlikely,” and “This argument is forced” (423, 424, 424, and 425, respectively). Tigay prefers to understand the whole in terms of its parts: The Numbers account is influenced by priestly circles, whereas the account in Deuteronomy is taken from the JE source. The two accounts are separate; the focus of the discipline is on these separate parts.

Another example of Tigay’s use of atomic-reductive principles can be seen in one of his essays in the book also edited by him, *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*. In this essay he admiringly discusses the work of W. F. Albright:

With reference to literary evolution, Albright remarked on “the tendency of ancient Oriental scribes and compilers to add rather than to subtract,” in other words, the fact that literature tends in the course of time to become expanded by additions . . . rather than to become abridged. Albright argued that this tendency has implications for the method followed in the compilation of the Pentateuch and for scholars’ attempts to reconstruct the original sources. (Tigay 1985, 7–8)

Thus, for Tigay, the purpose of biblical studies is to penetrate *behind* the text to its pre-history, for it is there that the “meaning-unit,” in Schwab’s terms (1960/1978, 186), is found. The subject matter cannot be fully understood without breaking it down into its constituent parts and analyzing them more or less in isolation from the whole: atomic reductive principles.

It seems to me that there may be a link between Tigay’s commitment to atomic reductive principles as a normative orientation and another interesting aspect of Tigay’s orientation, namely his use of previous commentators, which at times seems to be ideologically ecumenical. On many occasions he cites interpretations by medieval Jews and modern (usually non-Jewish) scholars side by side, in the same sentence:

Saadia, in his translation, introduced a transitional אקול, “I say,” at the beginning of verse 5, just as Moffatt introduced the verse with “I say.” Commentators similarly supplied such transitional phrases as אני חמה בלבי, “I wonder in my mind” (Rashi), or, “nun fällt es ihm [i.e., the psalmist] aufs Herz” (Gunkel). (Tigay 1987, 169)

This phenomenon, ubiquitous in his work, might at first sight suggest a worldview of “seek the truth from wherever it comes.” However, on closer examination things are not quite so straightforward. Tigay’s eclecticism is by no means universal, and there are several traditions of

interpretation which are barely mentioned in his writings. In particular, the Christian religious interpretative tradition, and also modern interpretative schools of a more literary nature; most prominent of these omissions is the work on Deuteronomy of Robert Polzin, as Eslinger (1997) points out in his review of Tigay's Jewish Publication Society commentary.<sup>2</sup>

So Tigay's usage of previous traditions of interpretation does not seem to be motivated by pure eclecticism. Instead, he seems to use two sets of traditions in particular—the Rabbinic *pshat* and the historical-critical—and by frequent juxtaposition of commentators from these two traditions, implies a certain congeniality between them. I would tentatively suggest that this disciplinary choice is an indirect result of his use of atomic-reductive principles. An atomic-reductive approach to biblical studies has been seen by some (Greenberg 1983/1995, 1990/1995; Levenson 1993) as contradictory to the goals of Jewish Bible scholarship. Tigay's frequent stress on the overlap between these two schools of interpretation may be connected, implicitly if not explicitly, to an attempt to nuance, if not disagree with, this contention.

### THE APPROACH OF YAIR ZAKOVITCH

The central feature of Zakovitch's orientation is the notion that *any verse in the Bible must be read through the prism of the biblical canon as a whole*. For instance, his commentary on 2 Kings 5 begins with an analysis of the opening words of the story, "And Naaman . . . was"; his survey of all other places in the Bible where we see the form "And X [proper name] was . . ." shows that the construction always comes in the middle of a story, and never opens a new one. He concludes from this concordantial evidence:

We believe that the writer of this story indeed wanted an opening that ties the story to what was before it and makes it part of a chain. . . . The way the writer reveals to us that our story is a chain in the cycle of Elisha stories hints that the lesson we learn in this story [namely, that God, not prophets or military might, is the highest authority] should be applied to the Elisha cycle as a whole. (Zakovitch 1985, 19–20; compare also his commentary to the first words of the Book of Ruth 1990, 46)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Polzin's book *Moses and the Deuteronomist* deals with the narrative structures and ideologies of Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges through a close literary reading of the biblical text which relies heavily on Russian literary theory.

<sup>3</sup>All translations of Zakovitch's Hebrew works are my own.

This approach also functions with larger structures, as can be seen in the introduction to his commentary on Ruth; its largest subsection is entitled “Connections between the Scroll and [Other] Biblical Literature.” He begins this subsection by comparing Ruth to Genesis 19:30–38 (the story of Lot and his daughters). He first lists various close similarities between the stories, and next, certain differences between them which are brought into focus by the similarities. The result of these differences is to make the reader more sympathetic toward Ruth, to realize that Ruth has been able to transcend her genes, as it were:

The similarity between the threshing-floor scene in Ruth and the story of Lot’s daughters sets before us the greatness of Ruth the Moabite as opposed to the mother of the Moabites and her sister. What the mother of the Moabites did in an unnatural way, deceiving her father, Ruth does after being commanded by her mother-in-law, modestly, with restraint, and in a natural way, all in order to uphold and carry out the laws of Israel. (1990, 26)

Zakovitch’s oeuvre contains countless other similar examples. These examples show the key to understanding Zakovitch’s approach to the discipline: The only way to understand fully a verse from the Bible is to see it in the context of the entire canon. If Tigay’s biblical dictionary of choice would be the Brown-Driver-Briggs, Zakovitch’s would be the new Dictionary of Classical Hebrew under the editorship of David Clines.<sup>4</sup>

It has been argued that Tigay was extremely interested in the pre-history of the biblical text. One might expect that Zakovitch, who has a reputation as a “literary” scholar, would differ. Perhaps surprisingly, this is not the case: Zakovitch ventures relatively often into the pre-history of the text. Often his approach to the discipline seems very similar to Tigay’s. He searches for the original textual version (for example, Zakovitch 1992a, 54\*–55\*); he uses source analysis to argue that certain words or verses are later interpolations (1984, 399–401; 1982, 33); and he traces the literary history of texts (1980, 173). However, his main disciplinary thrust is always the reading of biblical texts through the prism of the entire canon; Zakovitch’s meaning-unit is not

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<sup>4</sup>The Brown-Driver-Briggs dictionary (the *BDB*) examines words in the context of ancient Near Eastern languages, and gives a classical breakdown of their different meanings. The Sheffield dictionary defines words only from their literary Hebrew contexts, and is thus something of a mix between a classical dictionary and a concordance.

necessarily the particular text itself under discussion; it is the way in which this text dialogues with the rest of the canon (and with some extra-canonical material). *Zakovitch's meaning-unit is the intertextuality itself*; every verse is an instantiation of this phenomenon.

Casting Zakovitch's approach in Schwabian terms, it is clear that holistic principles of enquiry are at work in Zakovitch's scholarship; the question is, are they what Schwab (1960/1978, 193–96) terms "formal" or "formal-material"? Formal-material holistic principles, while not ignoring the parts entirely, require an account of the parts only in terms of their contribution to the whole. Redaction criticism makes use of this principle of enquiry. Zakovitch's approach certainly has much in common with redaction criticism; he too is interested in how the parts function *within* the whole. But it is my sense that Zakovitch goes further, and in fact makes use of formal holistic principles; a much rarer disciplinary phenomenon, according to Schwab. Formal holistic principles treat the whole as capable of division into a *variety* of sets of parts; the subject matter therefore can be comprehended truly only by examining the pattern exhibited by the material: "The nature of the organism is sought through numerous experiments in which parts are altered and the coordinate changes in all other parts are scrutinized in order to determine the stable pattern which is reconstituted by all such sets of changes (Schwab 1960/1978, 196).

For "organism," substitute "Bible," and one will begin to understand. The nature of the Bible, according to Zakovitch's approach, is only understood after a series of different divisions into parts. A redaction critic seeks to understand why the different sources of the meeting of Saul and David were edited together in the final text: to understand the parts in terms of their relation to the whole—formal-material holistic principles. Zakovitch, on the other hand, seeks to understand not just how the sources combine with each other in the story of the meeting of Saul and David, but also how these sources dialogue with the book of Ruth, the book of Esther, the story of Jeroboam and the splitting of the kingdoms, and so on. Furthermore, this analysis then becomes a springboard for analyzing how Esther dialogues with the Joseph story, which itself dialogues with the Exodus story—and so on, almost ad infinitum. The Bible is thus capable of division into parts in a number of different ways, and it is only by understanding these *patterns* that one can understand the nature of the Bible: Zakovitch uses formal holistic principles.

Nevertheless, while formal holistic principles may be Zakovitch's *normative* principles, he also makes use of other, *instrumental* ones.



As I hinted above, through the comparison of his approach to Tigay's, Zakovitch also uses atomic reductive principles to enhance his use of formal holistic principles. Thus the similarity between Zakovitch and Tigay is due to the fact that they both use atomic reductive principles; however, for Tigay, these are normative, whereas for Zakovitch they are instrumental.

### THE SCHOLARS' HERMENEUTIC STANCES

Both Tigay and Zakovitch utilize a hermeneutic stance that is essentially Hirschian; they would both agree that "validity implies the correspondence of an interpretation to a meaning which is represented by the text," and "it is preferable to agree that the meaning of a text is the author's meaning" (Hirsch 1967, 10, 25). Several of Tigay's short articles (1970, 1973, 1982, 1987, 1995a, 1995b, 1996b, 1997) are almost exclusively focused on the desire to lay bare the original, intended meaning of the "text."

Zakovitch, similarly, wishes to find the original author's intended meaning, and frequently talks about the writer-editor's intention as a kind of crossword puzzle clue which the reader must figure out. For example, in his discussion of the three stories of the descent into Egypt of a patriarch, he writes:

The comparison between the details of the stories teaches that chapter 12 is not just the first story that we read in the Book of Genesis, but it is the earliest of the stories and that the two later stories are midrashic interpretations of it. The editor of the Book of Genesis, who included in his book the three stories, *expects that the reader of chapter 12 will understand it according to the viewpoint of chapters 20 and 26.* (Zakovitch 1998, 39, emphasis added)

Zakovitch's work contains many other examples of this approach.<sup>5</sup> He is, then, I conclude, like Tigay, a Hirschian. The idea of dialogue is extremely important to Zakovitch, but, as I will discuss in a moment, it is not a Gadamerian dialogue between the reader and the text; it is a Hirschian reading where the reader must listen attentively to the dialogue going on *within* the text (see Figure 1). However, as I will

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<sup>5</sup>For other examples, see Zakovitch (1985, 71–72) on the basic underlying message in 2 Kings chapter 5; (1995a, 61–64) on the two similar stories of David's refusal to kill Saul when he had the chance; (1990, 66) on Ruth's description as a Moabite; and countless others.

<b>Gadamer</b>	<b>Zakovitch (Hirsch)</b>
Reader	Reader
↕	↑
Dialogue	One way
↕	↑
Text	Text ←-----Dialogue-----> Text

**FIGURE 1.** The Hermeneutics of Gadamer and Zakovitch.

show, Zakovitch’s approach does lead into Gadamerian territory once one begins to hear its educational voice.

**REVISITING THE EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM WITH THE SUBJECT MATTER AS A RESOURCE**

The educational problem with which this article began can now be revisited. Now, instead of merely deliberating about the problem in a vacuum, the educational voices of Tigay and Zakovitch can be integrated into the discussion: they will be curricular *resources*.

In this part of the article I have been aided considerably by the work of Jonathan Cohen. However, it is important to note the differences between this piece of work and those done by Cohen. Cohen (1990, 1998) performed an eclectic analysis of three scholars of Jewish philosophy—Strauss, Guttman, and Wolfson. Having broken down the assumptions and premises of each scholar’s approach to Jewish philosophy as a discipline, he proceeded to extrapolate aspects of a Jewish educational philosophy from the philosophical assumptions that informed their research, plumbing the latter for their bearings upon the four commonplaces of education.

On the other hand, my analysis of Tigay and Zakovitch has not been done in order to extrapolate a particular philosophy of education from each. Rather, I have worked within the specific educational context of liberal religious streams—what Schwab would call a “practical”

framework: a situation dependent upon context, whose “solutions” will not necessarily be applicable elsewhere. Within this specific, “practical” educational context, I have analyzed these two disciplinary orientations in order to ready them for a discussion about the particular educational problem with which I began. In this discussion, I will focus on the concept of dialogical consciousness, its relevance to the educational problem, and the contributions that Tigay’s and Zakovitch’s orientations may make.

This discussion begins with the work of Steven Kepnes, one of whose central themes is the argument that *the historical-critical method is an indispensable stage in the achievement of a faith-based understanding of the Bible*. Kepnes builds this argument from aspects of the writings of both Buber and Gadamer. Buber, in a lesser-known piece entitled “Distance and Relation,” has the following insight:

... the principle of human life is not simple but twofold, being built up in a twofold movement which is of such kind that the one movement is the presupposition of the other. I propose to call the first movement “the primal setting at a distance” and the second “entering into relation.” That the first movement is the presupposition of the other is plain from the fact that *one can enter into relation only with being which has been set at a distance, more precisely, has become an independent opposite*. (Buber 1965, 60, emphasis added)

This notion that “one cannot stand in a relation to something that is not perceived as contrasted and existing for itself” (Buber 1965, 62) forms one part of the theoretical base for Kepnes’s dialogical hermeneutics. Another part comes from Gadamer’s notion of understanding as a *conversation* between horizons:

In a conversation, when we have discovered the other person’s standpoint and horizon, his ideas become intelligible without our necessarily having to agree with him; so also when someone thinks historically, he comes to understand the meaning of what has been handed down without necessarily agreeing with it or seeing himself in it. (Gadamer 1992, 303)

Understanding happens with the fusion of these two horizons, which occurs in two phases. Firstly, “every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of a tension between the text and the present” (Gadamer 1992, 306). The task of interpretation is not to ignore this tension, but to highlight it, to demonstrate that the historical horizon is indeed different from the horizon of the present. Here, argues David Tracy,

the historical-critical methodology is crucial: “There is no doubt that historico-critical [sic] methods are needed to keep interpreters from forcing these texts of alien cultures or earlier periods of one’s own culture into the horizon of present self-understanding” (Grant and Tracy 1984, 155). In other words, historical-critical methods are needed “to project a historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present” (Gadamer 1992, 306). As Kepnes (1992) puts it: “[the] historical critical method . . . establishes a distance between modern readers and the biblical text and thus ‘preserves the otherness of the text’ and allows for a true dialogue with the modern reader” (53). And “it is precisely methods of explanation like historical criticism that set a text apart from the reader’s world and allow for the distancing that is needed to develop a genuine relationship to a text” (74).

However, the hermeneutic task, according to Gadamer (1992), requires a second phase. The second phase is needed because it is a mistake to think that the historical horizon and that of the present exist separately, in isolation. In fact, the horizon of the present is constantly being formed and tested in relation to the historical horizon—we live as beings influenced by our tradition and history. Thus the present horizon immediately and continually recombines with the historical horizon: “as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously superseded” (307).

A conversation is thus created between the reader’s horizon and the text’s; a conversation in which the horizon of the reader is constantly being challenged and formed by the horizon of the text. The awareness of this interplay between past and present, and of the prejudices (in Gadamer’s sense of the term) of both past and present, leads to questions of identity:

. . . readers cannot remain in the initial state of the fantasy of presuppositionlessness [sic]. They must bring to consciousness their presuppositions and those of the cultural traditions from which they speak and interpret. The reader’s activity, the reader’s response, must include, then, a dialogue with his or her own language and culture. The question “Who is this text?” elicits the question “Who am I?” (Kepnes 1992, 73)

Putting together the work of Buber, Gadamer, Tracy, and Kepnes, then, one can see the elements of a dialogical approach to reading the Bible. The critical moment is a *sine qua non* for dialogue with the biblical text; it is a necessary first stage in the dialogical process. Only through the critical moment can one recognize the “otherness” of the text and therefore prepare to enter into a relationship with it. However,

this relationship is only consummated, as it were, when the horizon of the text *interacts* with the horizon of the reader: “Interpreting a text must involve assimilation of the text’s meaning into the personal life of the interpreter. Application should bring along with it a reorienting of the interpreter’s life and reorienting of the interpreter’s perception of the world” (Kepnes 1992, 76).

This is dialogical consciousness: when, despite (or, as one might now say, *because of*) the otherness of the text, the reader enters a genuine relationship with it and is changed by the result. Graduates of liberal religious educational programs who are able to enter into this kind of dialogical relationship with the Bible may be more able to address the tension between intellectual integrity and affective connection, for they will understand the critical distancing of the text so crucial to the worldview of liberal religious movements, but will then be able to move beyond that critical moment and develop a genuine, dialogical relationship with the text—an equally important aspect of such movements’ worldview.

It now can be seen how the educational voices of the scholars whom I have analyzed may be brought into this discussion. A dialogical approach would require a Tigay-like orientation to be a central part of the subject matter’s contribution to the educational process. Tigay’s atomic-reductive approach allows readers to see the Bible from a distance. Tigay breaks down readers’ presuppositions about the text, forcing them to see it in its historical context, and stressing both its antecedents and its contemporary influences—in other words, though he does not use the term himself, the horizon of the text. A Tigay-like orientation establishes distance between the reader and the text; preserves its otherness; sets it up as an independent opposite. It is the first step in creating a dialogical conversation with the Bible; it is the first step in allowing the reader’s identity to encounter the Bible. Of course, it is only the first step, and the dialogical hermeneutic approach requires further steps. A Tigay-like orientation is simultaneously, and paradoxically, both crucial and insufficient.

Zakovitch’s orientation might play a slightly different role in this dialogical approach to reading texts. As has been seen, he also uses historical-critical methods; thus, like Tigay, he creates a sense of otherness about the text. However, Zakovitch, as illustrated in Figure 1 above, encourages the reader to examine the conversation that has already taken place between different parts of the text; in other words, he shows readers how previous readers read the text. When readers realize that one biblical text is in conversation with another biblical

text, they are witnesses to *a textual record of the dialogical approach*. An ancient reader has read a biblical text, seen it as a distanced “other,” and entered into dialogue with it by writing another biblical text. Today, both texts are part of the same canon, but seen through a Zakovitch-like orientation, one sees the process of how the second text came into existence, and that process is a dialogical hermeneutic.

A possible effect of Zakovitch’s orientation, then, is to encourage the present reader to join in the conversation seen as beginning in the text itself. Zakovitch’s orientation might then be particularly relevant for the dialogical approach, for, while Tigay’s orientation *permits* the reader to move from the critical stage of distancing to the dialogical stage of entering a relationship with the text, Zakovitch’s orientation may actually *encourage* this move by virtue of the fact that its critical stage highlights the conversational and dialogical aspects of the biblical text itself. The Bible becomes not just a *partner* in the dialogue, but *a model for the dialogue*. Zakovitch’s orientation shows how previous readers of the early proto-biblical texts did not read with a Hirschian hermeneutic, but rather continually attempted to fuse their horizon with that of the text. It is almost a truism that one of the aims of midrash, whether inner- or post-biblical, is to make the text relevant, to re-read the text in the light of current reality. One might put this more formally, and say that midrash is the continual attempt at horizon fusion throughout history.

Zakovitch (1995b) relates to these ideas in a short paper entitled “Distancing for the sake of closeness” (as far as one can tell, this is not a direct allusion to the Buber text and there is no indication that Zakovitch had read it). While I have previously focused, for reasons of methodological clarity, on the analysis of strictly disciplinary works, it is worthwhile noting aspects of this more meta-disciplinary article. Zakovitch is particularly interested in examining how Israeli secular, critical readers can identify with a book that is so clearly religious:

Distancing from the Bible, therefore, makes it possible to feel closer to it, as one distinguishes the stones of the mosaic which make up the whole picture. A sensitivity to the Bible’s ideational richness, dialogue and struggle, proves how much we are of the same flesh [*basar mib’saram*] as the biblical writers, how much we are like them as we think, hesitate, hold one opinion and then a different one. (1995b, 14)

The similarity to Kepnes’s four-stage description of dialogical reading is striking. In particular, Zakovitch seems to agree closely with Kepnes’s (1992) understanding of how the fourth stage creates

identity: It “directs the interpreter’s attention toward the author of the book . . . as a concern with the author as the figure out of whose dialogue with other human beings and with language the work was produced. . . . The figure of the author is important to the interpreter, not as a determinant of the text’s meaning, but, rather, as a warning never to cut the written text from the spoken word and the spoken word from the human being who speaks” (75).

Seen thus, the Bible has a religious vision that exalts dialogue. The editors of the Bible made a deliberate effort to retain conflicting stories, opinions, and ideologies, and thus the Bible became a record of a series of centuries-long debates. In essence, Zakovitch argues that the concept of “These and these are the words of the living God” (*B. Erubin* 13b) goes back to the Bible, not just to the Mishnah (Shinan and Zakovitch 1986; for a discussion of this phenomenon in the Mishnah and Talmud, see Halbertal 1997).

If, then, one thinks about the problem of Bible education in liberal religious contexts through the philosophical prism of dialogical hermeneutics, one sees that Tigay’s and Zakovitch’s disciplinary approaches are each congenial in their own way to the problem. Tigay’s orientation provides the first, “distancing” step in creating a dialogical relationship with the text; and Zakovitch’s orientation both affirms the Tigayan orientation and its historical-critical moment, yet also pushes the reader to move beyond it toward a dialogical relationship with the text of the kind envisaged by Buber, Gadamer, and Kepnes.

Finally, there are certain similarities between this progression from the historical-critical to the dialogical and Kieran Egan’s four-stage progression through what he calls mythic, romantic, philosophic, and ironic understanding. “Philosophic understanding,” Egan argues, “is systematic theoretic thinking and an insistent belief that Truth can only be expressed in its terms” (Egan 1997, 105), and nineteenth-century positivism, which was the intellectual birthing stool on which historical-critical biblical studies were born, was one direction taken by it (1997, 115).<sup>6</sup> Many of the attributes of philosophic understanding can be seen in historical-critical approaches to the Bible (the search for general schemes, the lure of certainty, and even, especially in some scholarship of the early twentieth century, the “tendency to overconfidence” [1997, 127]).

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<sup>6</sup>See also Egan’s (2001) recent restatement of the need for his four-stage conception of education.

Similarly, there are congenialities between ironic understanding and the dialogical approach. “Knowledge is not discovered, Descartes-style, by sitting alone, working something out, and getting it right, but rather is constructed in dialogue and out of agreement” (Egan, 1997, 153). Ironic understanding sees “a world in which multiple perspectives, meanings, and narratives throng for our acquiescence” (Egan, 1997, 145). And just as a dialogical approach to the Bible encourages the reader to enjoy and take part in an extended conversation, rather than search for the Truth, so too the successful Ironist has “a flexible, buoyant recognition of a multivocal world” (Egan, 1997, 162).

Finally, Egan suggests that philosophic understanding without ironic understanding may be “hard, calculative, dehumanized [and] arid” (1997, 135); on the other hand, “Irony without Philosophic capacities is impotent” (1997, 157). Thus, a combination of the Ironic and the Philosophic is desirable. In the same vein, I have argued that the dialogical hermeneutic approach sees the historical-critical mode without further steps as, to say the least, undesirable; but that the historical-critical moment is, nevertheless, an essential first step that cannot be discarded.

What brief (and initial) curricular conclusions might be drawn from these analyses? I would suggest that this study has shown that a curricular combination of a Tigayan and Zakovitchian approach might be an effective one to use in liberal religious educational contexts. Such a combination would ensure that whenever a curriculum is informed by historical-critical methodology, it also will be informed by a dialogical perspective which affords a deep, profound, nourishing relationship with the text. As soon as the historical-critical approach pulls the rug away, the dialogical approach provides a substitute. For example, in learning the first three chapters of Genesis, students should be helped to see not just that the stories are separate, with different theologies and cosmologies, but also to view these two creation stories as a biblical conversation about the place of humans in the world, the relationship between man and woman, the role of God in nature; a conversation about what Rosenak (1987, 95–96), following Phenix, calls “ultimacy”; and thus a conversation to which students may add their own voices.

When students are exposed to historical-critical methods in isolation from more traditional ways of looking at the Bible, they tend to compartmentalize their studies and not integrate them into their religious outlook, as was seen from the research of Zielenziger and Dorph discussed at the beginning of this article. By creating curricula that draw on the disciplinary orientations of Tigay and Zakovitch



(either “serially” or “conjointly,” as Schwab would put it), liberal religious educational contexts might be more likely to facilitate students’ understanding of the historical-critical moment in Bible study in a way that is integrated with a nourishing, dialogical relationship with the text.

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