Biblical Mediation
Conflicting Interpretations of the Bible as Conflicting Narratives in Society

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Teaching the Bible in Translation: Final Paper

This report will examine the approach of R. Daniel Roth in teaching Tanakh. R. Roth teaches advanced and intermediate-level *Humash* class at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, focusing on the books of *Bereshit* and *Shemot*. His pedagogical methodology is self-consciously founded upon well-developed hermeneutic and theological positions, and as such represents a fertile locus for analysis.
The paper will be divided into two different, albeit over-lapping sections:
1) An overview of R. Roth's methodology for teaching *Humash*
2) An analysis of the hermeneutic assumptions, as well as the theological motivations and implications which underlie and drive this methodology

By engaging in this analysis, I hope to demonstrate the central (and, I believe, positive) roles theological, philosophical, and hermeneutic assumptions play in the development of R. Roth's classroom ethos and content.

I.   Methodology and Goals

  R. Roth generally divides his goals for a year-long class into three categories:

Knowledge
It is crucial for R. Roth that, when studying *Humash* with him, the student becomes familiar with the book (e.g. *Bereshit*) as a whole, in what he labels *"bekiut"* style. This means that the student is quite familiar with every major story in the work, though her depth of familiarity will vary from section to section, depending on how much time was ultimately apportioned to each one. Thus, when teaching *Bereshit*, R. Roth insists that the curriculum cover the entire book, not stopping (as sometimes occurs in similar courses) at chapter 14. [Ironically, he points out, Christian biblical studies tend to focus up till near this point in *Bereshit*, as the portayl of the pre-Abrahamic world lends itself to more universal implications].

Skills
1) Intermediate level students at Pardes have already acquired the skill of decoding Hebrew texts. The next steps are translation and what R. Roth calls "learning to read ambiguities." That is, a basic feature of the class' methodology is learning to identify not only what is said, but just as importantly what is *not* said. Students are expected to make running lists, noting each and every ambiguity in the text, be they grammatical (who does the term "*e'hav*" in *Shemot* 2:11 refer to—Egyptians or Israelites?), motivational (why did Yocheved put Mosheh into the Nile?), moral (was Mosheh justified in striking the Egyptian task-master in ibid. 2:12?), or otherwise.

2) After this close reading of the biblical text, students are taught how to read ancient (e.g. pseudo-Philo, Jublilees), midrashic, and medieval commentators on the text, identifying not only what they say, but why they say it (e.g. why does Rashi identify the midwives in *Shemot* 1 as Yocheved and Miriam?). Given the existence of alternate manuscripts and textual versions of the commentaries, the same question might well be asked of two versions of a given comment (what motivates the reading of "*e'hav* as Egyptians" in some versions of Ibn Ezra's commentary to *Shemot* 2:11, and what motivates the alternative text of "e'hav as Israelites" in other versions?).

3) The final skill-set acquired in the course is the ability to synthesize all the various data—facts and ambiguities inherent in the text, commentators' responses to/ interpretations of the text, etc…-- and to use them to identify a larger conceptual question regarding the text. For example, it is R. Roth's contention that much of the individual ambiguities and comments on *Shemot* 1 can be understood to be addressing a central conceptual question: Why did Yocheved put Mosheh into the Nile? Different interpretations of her motivations will in turn lead commentators to fill in the textual ambiguities differently.

Thus, the class proceeds from a microscopic perspective, collecting facts, ambiguities, and interpretations, to a macroscopic perspective involving broader questions and a synthesis of individual, local issues.

C) *Relevance*

The final goal of R. Roth's class is to address, deeply and meaningfully, questions of relevance. Does the student agree with Yocheved's decision to birth Mosheh to begin with (assuming it was an intentional decision on her part)? Is it moral to give birth to a child at risk (for example, a fetus who has been identified as having a fatal genetic disease)? Would the student have done the same as Yocheved? These questions can be addressed in a variety of means (e.g. a poem, a painting, an essay), but it is indeed an inherent and fundamental contention of the methodology that the text can and needs to be made relevant to the students' lives, that students "get into the minds of the (biblical) actors." This point will be returned to below.

R. Roth frames the steps of his methodology as the first, second, and third dimensions of textual study, respectively:

1st dimension: Historical Survey

How have readers of this text throughout history interpreted it? The historically thorough facet of this dimension is again critical, as R. Roth notes, at any given time one issue might be the dominant focus of interpretation, while other issues were largely ignored. Thus, in order to develop a more refined sense of the text, the chronological scope of investigation must be widened. Hence the inclusion of extra-rabbinic sources, such as Philo and Josephus, as well as modern Biblical scholarship, into the curriculum.

2nd dimension: Conceptual possibilities:

Which interpretive options present themselves when confronting the text? What are the possible readings of the textual data available?
As opposed to the historical orientation of the first dimension, this one has an a-historic, synchronic focus.

3rd dimension: Existential Ramifications:

What does the experience of engaging with the texts in the previous two dimensions offer me on the existential level? How can it affect my life, decision-making, conflict resolution capabilities, all for the better? How does this learning help make me a better person?

Interestingly, R. Roth sees the influence of the all three of the respective academic institutions with which he has been associated, in the different components of his methodology. On the one hand, his *diachronic*, historical and philological analysis of the biblical text and the history of its interpretation is informed by his studies as a student in the Talmud department of Hebrew University. On the other hand, his *synchronic* analysis of the conceptual interpretive possibilities bears a striking resemblance to the method of Talmud study employed at his *alma matter*, Yeshivat Har Etzion. The "brisker method" (a version of which is taught at the yeshiva) focuses on identifying and formulating various possibilities (*hakirot*) in understanding talmudic legal concepts. Specific rules, positions, and texts are viewed as evidence for and/or implications (*nafka minot*) of the larger, primary conceptual understandings. To a certain extent, R. Roth employs the same methodology in his analysis of the biblical text; textual ambiguities, highlighted by the commentators' interpretations of those ambiguities, function as the implications/indicators (*nafka minot*) of the larger conceptual issue at hand (the *hakira*). Finally, R. Roth attributes his attention to questions of relevancy and meaning of the text to the Pardes environment, where many come (and are encouraged) to ask questions of the text and tradition such as "Why learn this text? In what sense is it personally and/or communally meaningful?"

Authenticity and Relevance: Partners or Competitors?

Michael Rosenak writes:[1]

> *"As educators we wish to present Judaism as a "language" which has particular cultural assumptions through which one can communicate and relate to ideas, situations, and other people. What would be a Jewish language, grounded in the sources of Judaism, which we could convey to pupils who are largely outsiders to Judaism? How could we teach this foreign cultural idiom without sacrificing its particular meanings and contexts for the sake of comprehensibility? How can we be both authentic and relevant?"*

To R. Roth, this *prima facie* distinction between authenticity, on the one hand, and relevance on the other, would seem somewhat illusory; on the contrary, he is an ardent opponent of theories which posit an almost chiasmic bifurcation between the goals of textual understanding and relevance. Some believe, he observes, that "people read for either relevance or understanding of the text," as if the two were distinct modes of analysis, with the twain never to meet. Yet his reaction to this claim is a passionate "No."

> *"When you read in a deep way, you realize that there's a deep, larger conceptually and more relevant question."*

Relevance, in his view, is not divorced from close textual reading, from the particular language of the Jewish tradition of which Rosenak speaks. Rather, A allows for B; through careful

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[1] Michael Rosenak, "A Conceptual Guide to Teaching Jewish Values", pg. 35.

study, one sees the universal in the particular, the current in the ancient, and appreciates the role of the particular stories, interpretive traditions, etc… in illuminating our contemporary conflicts. The fictional 'Ms. R' in Rosenak's piece describes authenticity as "being yourself, choosing your values, not living in the past, solving real problems, speaking about and to matters of genuine concern." This definition of the 'authentic' sounds much like a standard definition of the 'relevant,' and it seems clear that to R. Roth, these goals can all be reached by working specifically in and through, rather than around, close textual study in the original "language" (in the formal linguistic and broader cultural senses of the latter term). Thus, he demonstrates the type of faith described by Greenberg:[2]

> *"Religionists ought to have enough faith in the worth of biblical teaching to allow that if it be presented honestly and sympathetically it will work by its own authority—today it can have no other—on the soul of the student."*

The Text in This Classroom

The theoretical framework in which R. Roth's pedagogical approach functions is built of specific conceptions of a) what it means to "understand" a text, and b) in what way a text (in this case, the *Humash*) may be relevant to its readers.

A. Understanding the Text

To R. Roth, the goal of understanding the "text" (e.g. Chapter 2 of *Shemot*) is, at least in the context of his classroom, heavily an effort at understanding the ambiguities embedded therein, and the interpretive possibilities developed by the commentators. Thus, he notes, the primary text of his classroom is ultimately not the Bible itself, but rather its commentators; or, put differently, the language which forms the framework of the literature of the class includes *parshanim* in addition to *Humash*. One wonders if this too is not the result of his yeshiva training, in its focus on the wide range of conceptual options presented by the talmudic commentators rather than only on the text of the Talmud itself. Either way, he identifies with the focus of interpretation over text as articulated by Kugel who, after briefly depicting the history of study of the biblical text itself, comments:[3]

> *"When people study the Bible nowadays in schools and universities, it is often the "new knowledge" that is highlighted…. All this is extremely interesting. But it is really only half the story of the Hebrew Bible. The other half has to do with what happened to these texts once they were written down. For even before the Bible had attained its final form, its stories, songs, and prophecies had begun to be interpreted."*

In this vein, R. Roth identifies a pedagogic assumption and concurrent meta-mission of his, to wit, the deconstruction of the notion of *pshat*. To his mind, the assumption that there is a base-

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[2]Moshe Greenberg, On Teaching the Bible in Religious Schools," pg. 79.

[3]James Kugel, The Bible As It Was (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: 1997), pg. XIII

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level meaning to the text, and the corollary assumption that any interpretation which diverges from that meaning is a different form of interpretation (e.g. midrashic), is simply false.

The goal of a "locate the *pshat*" type of analysis, as he describes it, is to eliminate as many variant interpretations of a text as possible, pointing out their flaws and inadequacies, in an attempt to come as close as possible to the one, correct, *pshat* reading. (This does not mean that this approach disparages midrashic readings as an independent hermeneutic mode. This disparagement is only present when the midrashic wolf disguises himself in the wool of the pashtan sheep.) In this view, there is indeed *a* pshat reading of the text, and its doors can only be opened by shutting those of the inferior, would-be-pshat reads.

R. Roth whole-heartedly disagrees with such an approach:

"We (the readers) don't have any way to close the possibilities and come up with the pshat—that's a fundamentalist reading."

The text itself is vague, gray, contradictory. This, in his opinion, is reflective of that which the biblical text portrays, namely, our world (or, perhaps more precisely, worlds):

"The world is contradictory. It's not because there is no truth—it's because there are many truths."

In this regard, he cites Boyarin:

"I will claim that midrash is true reading of the meaning of the biblical text, a reading which is sensitive to literary values, echoes, contradictions, intertextuality in all the senses within the Bible. Midrash is a reading of the "plain sense of things," but only if we recognize that the plain sense grows and changes throughout history and that this is the Bible's underlying meaning. However, I will also accept the characterization of midrash as the product of a disturbed exegetical sense, but only if we recognize that all exegetical senses are disturbed, including most certainly our own. All interpretation is filtered through consciousness, tradition, ideology, and the intertext, and the opposition between subject and object, so characteristic of the romantic ideology, must be deconstructed."[4]

Indeed, training students to embrace a "fundamentalist" reading of the text, i.e. one which posits the existence of one "real" read, is indicative of an "anti-complexity education," one which teaches its students that the world is essentially cleanly-cut and divided between the true and the false. It is obvious that to R. Roth, such an approach is morally unacceptable, in that it is both false and dangerous. His teaching bears much resemblance to the sensibility described by Rothchild[5]:

"If the reader has learned from the foregoing that a simplistic approach to the

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4 Daniel Boyarin, "Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash," Indiana Univ. Press 1990. p. 18-19. The quote and citation were provided to me by R. Roth.

5 Fritz A. Rothschild: "Truth and Metaphor in the Bible: An Essay on Interpretation" Pg. 342

problems of exegesis leads to reductio ad absurdum*, he will be in a position to see the efforts of commentators from Philo to the Zohar not as attempts to evade the true understanding of the Torah, but as attempts to take the text seriously and to read it in the light of the best methods at their disposal."*

At the same time, he is aware that his pluralistic, what might be termed post-modern, reading of the text might be equated with a relativistic ethical stance which claims that since there is no one truth (or, at least, that humans cannot identify it), there can be no criteria for moral evaluation. In that case, there can be no conversation, no common language with which to negotiate our way through internal or external conflicts.

In counter to this charge, R. Roth responds,

"Post-modernism can create stam (mere) relativity. But to employ this (i.e. his method) is to help conflict resolution by knowing there are different truths."

By framing various positions as true, even if they are contradictory, he emphasizes that instead of a relativistic obliteration of the notion of obligation and responsibility, he means to create a heightened sense of these values; for instead of a reader/citizen/person being obligated to just one worldly truth, he/she is now obligated to them all, to see their truth, their "reading," and to incorporate it into one's own decision making. As indicated above, this methodology is especially applicable to conflict-resolution, a field which is a personal and academic passion of his.

"Every text has a conflict," he stresses. "That's what makes it interesting." By examining a *Mikra'ot Gedolot* or *Torat Hayyim*, the reader (or student) is alerted to the facts (or givens) of a conflict. For example, she knows that Mosheh saw an Egyptian taskmaster striking an Israelite and that Mosheh proceeded to strike down the Egyptian, burying him in the sand, etc… Next, she sees how the commentators interpret Mosheh's action differently, some approving and some disapproving. She thus sees how different people can see the same text, the same facts, and read them differently, creating their own story around them yet remaining scrupulously loyal to the text. By appreciating the perspective of each interpreter, she *ipso-facto* receives training in conflict resolution, much of which is the art of learning to see the interpretation of events from the perspective of the other.

Say, for example, a woman is late to a dinner with her husband—that is the given. The husband interprets this fact and creates a narrative to explain it, for example, his wife is cheating on him. The wife, on the other hand, explains that her car broke down on the way to the restaurant. By becoming alerted to the facts, on the one hand, and the ambiguities on the other, the reader can appreciate the interpretative scheme of the husband and those of the wife, and (as a third party) help to resolve the conflict. In the process, the reader himself becomes trained in seeing multiple perspectives, so that when he finds himself as an actor in a conflict (and not merely an observer) he will more readily see the perspective of his interlocutor, and thus more readily resolve the conflict:

"In addition to your story and the other person's story, every difficult conversation includes an invisible Third Story. The Third Story is the one keen observer would tell, someone with no stake in you particular problem…. One of the most helpful tools a mediator has is the ability to identify the invisible Third Story. This means describing the problem between the parties in a way

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that rings true for both sides simultaneously. It's easy to describe the problem so that only one of the disputants would agree with it- in fact, that's what each of us does when we begin inside our own story. The trick is being able to get two people with different stories to sign on to the same description of what is going on."[6]

It is in this sense, in R. Roth's view, that "Torah sages increase peace in the world." By learning to open up possibilities of meaning in the world, instead of closing them, the student of Torah may indeed be a force for peace and co-existence, despite the inevitable frictions of social life. Ultimately, R. Roth works to develop himself into a walking "*Mikra'ot Gedolot—holding all the different commentators and perspectives within myself.*" He thereby preserves what Carmy calls "the exigency of the text… the ardor of confrontation" which characterizes the "raison de etre of learning," without resorting to an absolutist conception of truth.

Tradition and Change: Texts and Truth in the Method

Jonathan Cohen articulates the manner in which theories developed in the field of philosophical hermeneutics "harbor insights of serious import for the conceptualization of education." An awareness of such theories can help one isolate a priori beliefs about learners and texts which profoundly affect education, touching everything from syllabi to daily lesson plans. Studying these theories allows a teacher to ask, for example,

> *"1. Is the purpose of the educational process to allow for the reproduction of textual content for a new generation of students called upon to absorb a received tradition, or does the educational process, by its very nature, lead to a transformation of both texts and learners? 2. After Marx and Freud, can we still regard classical texts as addressing us in good faith?...Perhaps it is the task of education to liberate today's students from the influence of the distortions and false representations of reality enfolded in traditional texts?"* [7]

Cohen's pointed questions help clarify R. Roth's positions. I believe that R. Roth would stand in decisive support of the latter option in question 1, although students can of course only transform texts and themselves after "receiving" the textual content of the tradition, i.e. appreciating the words, concerns, and subtext of the bible and its interpreters. As for question 2, R. Roth might opine that since the interpretive community, to use Fish's term, creates a multiplicity of textual meanings, each in some sense true, it is possible to use texts in good faith.

A major question in the field of hermeneutics is, what is the truth of the text, and how do we access it? With regard to the particularistic discussion of the Jewish tradition, Barry Holtz asks:[8]

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    [6] Stone, Patton, Heen, "Difficult Conversations" Penguin. Harvard Negotiation Project. 1999. p. 150. The quote and citation were provided to me by R. Roth.

    [7] Jonathan Cohen, "Heremeneutical Options for the Teraching of Canonical Texts: Freud, Fromm, Strauss, and Buber Read the Bible," in Coutryatd I (1999-2000), pg. 38.

    [8] Barry Holtz, "Teaching Torah as Truth: An Exploration of Pedagogic Goals," in Educational Deliberations (ed. Nisan and Shremer: 2005), pg. 144-145.

"What does it mean to be concerned with "truth?" What does it mean to teach Torah as a repository of truth. How can such a view influence goals for teaching the Bible… We need to take the text's claims of truth very seriously indeed… In what way can a text like the Bible teach truth?"

The benefit of R. Roth's method is that it treats the issue of truth seriously and directly, although neatly avoiding the fundamentalist trap of monistic meanings in the text. Indeed, the "text's claims of truth" are to be taken seriously—so much so that it cannot possibly be presenting a claim to a single truth. For, in R. Roth's epistemological framework, a claim to single truth is inherently false.

At this point, it is worthwhile addressing the question of which interpreters and texts are used by R. Roth in the context of his course and which are left out. At Pardes, there is a palpable sense that students and faculty at Pardes, in their quest for meaning, look to engage with "authentic" Jewish tradition. Somewhat more subtly, it seems that for some (most?) of these people, as for members of many if not all communities, one (at least initial) means of evaluating authenticity is by noting who is cited as a valid, authoritative player in the classroom and (just as, if not more important) who is not.

R Roth's response?

"Anyone who would be accepted at Pardes is welcome in this class."

Essentially, that means that any commentator self-identifying as Jewish (with the possible exception, in the case of Pardes, of a Jew for Jesus…) can be studied in his class. This is not merely a pragmatic ploy, designed to appeal to the cultural sensibilities of his student-constituents. R. Roth approaches his pedagogy as a religious act of Talmud Torah, and in the context of Pardes, he believes it inappropriate to focus extensively on, say, Christian or Muslim biblical exegesis (this is especially so regarding the church fathers, as he finds their readings to be heavily christologized). (This form of) Talmud Torah, for him, is an internal Jewish enterprise, an analysis of the history of Jewish interpretation. However, he is quick to note, this theological hesitation is bolstered by the conviction that almost all conceptual possibilities in understanding the biblical text may be found within the collective corpus of historical Jewish *parshanut*; and in cases where ignoring the interpretation of Christians would leave the student ignorant of either such a conceptual option, or of a major historical usage of the text (he references the Binding of Isaac narrative as an example of the latter category), he will indeed invite those "outside" voices into his syllabus. His distinction between Jewish and Christian interpretations is not, therefore, ontological (e.g. "Only Jews have Torah, and only Jewish interpreters can discover true meanings in the text"), but rather a combination of a nuanced particularistic-faith orientation, on the one hand, and a deep respect for the scope of Jewish interpretation, on the other. Of course, the third (and, I wonder, crucial?) factor in this narrowing of his syllabus is that of time. Given the relatively short duration of the academic school year, and the fact that his intermediate level classes cover ground less quickly than more advanced ones, he (like all other teachers) must engage in a sort of triage, ascertaining the critical 'cases' (i.e. texts), and demoting others to the realm of secondary, albeit significant, material.

Summary

R. Roth's methodology is thus, in the end, an example of a religiously inspired, philosophically sophisticated, and textually rigorous approach to teaching *Humash*. He clearly categorizes his pedagogical goals in a tripartite attempt to impart knowledge, skills, and relevant, applicable teaching to his students. His hermeneutic and theological assumptions complement each other, and indeed are manifestations of fundamental understandings of truth and the process of interpretation. In an ideal situation, students in his class learn to see life through the text and the text through life, bridging the divide between the intellectual and moral-political spheres. It thus represents a potent expression of the potential relevance of the Bible and its interpretation to Jewish citizens of a post-modern world.

Postscript: A Personal Theological Evaluation

I myself second R. Roth's contention that multiple truths are inherent in cultures, on the one hand, and in his implicit condemnation of relativism on the other. Furthermore, I believe it to be an authentically Jewish perspective, as demonstrated in the following text:

If one will (should?) say, 'Since Beit Shammai renders impure and Beit Hillel renders pure, this one forbids and this one permits, why do I learn Torah??'
For this the verse states (superfluously) 'words, the words, these are the words;' All the words were given from a single Shepard; a single God created them, one Provider gave them: the Lord of all deeds, Blessed be He. They said, so too should you make for yourself many rooms, and enter into it the words of Beit Shammai and the words of Beit Hillel, the words of the impurifiers and the words of the purifiers. [Tosefta Sotah]

תוספתא מסכת סוטה (ליברמן) פרק ז הלכה יב
שמא יאמר אדם בדעתו:
"הואיל ובית שמיי מטמין ובית הלל מטהרין,
איש פל' אוסר ואיש פלוני מתיר,
למה אני למד תורה?"
מעתה ת"ל 'דברים', 'הדברים', 'אלה הדברים':
כל הדברים נתנו מרועה אחד,
אל אחד בראן,
פרנס אחד נתנן,
רבון כל המעשים ברוך הוא אמרו.
אף אתה עשה לבך חדרי חדרים והכניס בה דברי בית שמיי ודברי בית הלל דברי המטמאין ודברי המטהרין

In my reading of this text, the goal of Torah study is initially thought to be the progressive closing of interpretive/ legal doors. However, the text claims, the actual goal is to develop "many rooms" in which one can hold various truths and positions. The goal is a maximalist, not a minimalist, appreciation of pshat.

I find this theme articulated in the following text as well:

For three years Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel argued, these claiming "the law is like our position" and the others claiming the same. A heavenly voice issued forth and proclaimed "These and these are the words of the Living God, and the law is like Beit Hillel." [TB Eruvin 13b]

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The Talmud comments:

Why did Beit Hillel merit to have the law decided like their opinion? Because they were pleasant and patient, and taught their own opinions and those of Beit Shammai; and more, they would teach the views of Beit Shammai first.

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תלמוד בבלי מסכת עירובין דף יג עמוד ב

אמר רבי אבא אמר שמואל:

שלש שנים נחלקו בית שמאי ובית הלל, הללו אומרים הלכה כמותנו והללו אומרים הלכה כמותנו.

יצאה בת קול ואמרה: "אלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים הן, והלכה כבית הלל."

וכי מאחר ש'אלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים', מפני מה זכו בית הלל לקבוע הלכה כמותן?

מפני שנוחין ועלובין היו, ושונין דבריהן ודברי בית שמאי.

ולא עוד אלא שמקדימין דברי בית שמאי לדבריהן.

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I do not believe the "heavenly voice" ruled like Beit Hillel merely because the latter were kind and polite in giving voice to Beit Shammai first. Rather, I believe the text points to a fundamental distinction between the respective analytic methodologies of the schools. Beit Hillel, unlike Beit Shammai, discussed the opinion of the other school first in order to counter their *a priori* bias towards their own position and against opposing ones (what we would today call their confirmation bias). By giving first voice to the other, Beit Hillel allowed themselves to hear the other side in its fullest integrity, to give it the best "read" possible, and to therefore incorporate whatever truths it expressed into their own position. Thus, ruling like Beit Hillel essentially means "ruling like position A when it incorporates and is nuanced by, though clearly not in agreement with, position B."

This theory firmly diverges from a more epistemologically and morally monistic one, i.e. one which would posit that there is ultimately one dominant value to which all others must yield. I believe rabbinic tradition, on the contrary, posits a system of multiple values, constantly challenging and supporting each other. As Walter Wurzburger puts it:[9]

> *"Most modern systems of ethics, such as utilitarianism, intuitionism, and Kantian formalism, rely on a single property from which specific norms are deduced. Jewish Covenantal Ethics is pluralistic and reverses the process. Its points of departure are a variety of specific norms such as prohibitions against murder, perjury, robbery, or fraud. General ethical principles are secondary. They are derived from extrapolation from these norms… As Stuart Hampshire has shown, our actual moral experience cannot be fitted into the straitjacket of ethical monism."*

As such, I would support R. Roth's hermeneutic methodology on moral-education grounds, irrespective of the ultimate truth of his claims regarding how midrashists conceived of their own project or if texts do have, at root, one base meaning.

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[9]Walter Wurzburger, Ethics of Responsibility. I do not access to the page citation at hand.

[Postscript B (D.R.)]

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תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת סנהדרין פרק ד דף כב טור א /ה"ב

דיני ממונות מטין[10] כו' אמר רבי ינאי: אילו ניתנה התורה חתוכה לא היתה לרגל עמידה.

מה טעם? "וידבר יי' אל משה"

אמר לפניו: "רבונו של עולם הודיעיני היאך היא ההלכה?"

אמר לו: "'אחרי רבים להטות': רבו המזכין- זכו, רבו המחייבין- חייבו.

כדי שתהא התורה נדרשת מ"ט פנים טמא ומ"ט פנים טהור."

מניין? ודגל"ו[11].

וכן הוא אומר "אמרות יי' אמרות טהורות כסף צרוף בעליל לארץ מזקק שבעתים[12]"

ואומר "מישרים אהבוך[13]"

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Maria Plaza. *Laughter and Derision in Petronius' Satyrica: A Literary Study.* **Almqvist and Wiksell International Stockholm/ Sweden. 2000 p. 142**

"Rather than seeing the shifts in interpretation in the linear progression of the text, I would suggest that the opposite interpretations of reality made by the *Shcolastici* guests and the freedman respectively are *potentially present at the same time, irrespective of who is talking.* In the above analysis, I have outlined the clash of these interpretations, but although they clash, they never meet or listen to each other… Both sides see the other's position as an inverted version of truth, and those readers who side with either position tend to repeat that opinion. The text presents these two mutually exclusive positions with perfect detachment, giving each side considerable strengths and weaknesses, and presenting signals which may be formed into either picture. If one lets go of the wish to obtain a single meaning from the text, the coexistence of incompatible signals will be seen to have a function of relativisation: it questions the very possibility of an absolute conception of the world, showing the relativity of evaluative systems by simultaneously suggesting mutually exclusive interpretations of the same picture."

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[10] **משנה מסכת סנהדרין פרק ד משנה א**

אחד דיני ממונות ואחד דיני נפשות בדרישה ובחקירה שנאמ' (ויקרא כ"ד) משפט אחד יהיה לכם מה בין דיני ממונות לדיני נפשות דיני ממונות בשלשה ודיני נפשות בעשרים ושלשה דיני ממונות פותחין בין לזכות בין לחובה ודיני נפשות פותחין לזכות ואין פותחין לחובה **דיני ממונות מטין על פי אחד בין לזכות בין לחובה** ודיני נפשות מטין על פי אחד לזכות ועל פי שנים לחובה

[11] **שיר השירים פרק ב** (ד) הביאני אל בית היין ודגלו עלי אהבה:

[12] **תהלים פרק יב** (ז) אמרות יקוק אמרות טהרות כסף צרוף בעליל לארץ מזקק שבעתים:

[13] **שיר השירים פרק א** (ד) משכני אחריך נרוצה הביאני המלך חדריו נגילה ונשמחה בך נזכירה דדיך מיין מישרים אהבוך: ס

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