

IS THE TORAH LOST, AND SHOULD WE FIND IT?

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**Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Master of Arts in Religious Education Degree**

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New York, New York**

**Spring 2003
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*I dedicate this thesis to my great grandmother
Minni Levi
who always encouraged
and supported me in all my endeavors.*

*I also want to thank my husband Paul
who always reminds me of my accomplishments
when I have trouble seeing them.*

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The goal of this thesis is to take a critical look at the type of learning taking place in religious schools of the Reform Movement and to determine whether our schools are adequately educating the next generation of Jews. Text study has always been the core of education within Judaism. Interestingly, our schools today do not appear to have text study at their centers. While the world has certainly changed, and our education practices must adapt along with it, I view the lack of text found in our schools to be a detriment to the students and to the Jewish community as a whole.

My research starts by taking a close look at the traditional emphasis placed upon study in Judaism. This is followed by an in-depth look at the schools of the Reform Movement today to see how and what is being taught to the students. Finally, I looked at various ways in which text can be re-incorporated into our programs. Included here will be research gathered from a test site in which text-centered programs were used and then evaluated by the student participants as well as a sample text-centered curriculum. The thesis is divided into seven chapters, plus it has introduction and conclusion sections.

The contribution of this thesis is to raise the awareness of the need to move the focus of our learning centers back to Torah. The included curricular unit offers a sample of how text can be successfully integrated into the religious school setting.

Various materials were used to gather research and engage in the topic. Books and periodicals were used, as well as original source texts. I conducted two interviews for information purposes. Finally, I completed two separate studies for this thesis, one on the curricula of Reform schools and one on a text study test-site.

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Introduction - Overview of Research

As we move forward into the 21st century, possibly one of the greatest concerns of the Jewish community is that of Jewish continuity and retention. In trying to deal with the challenges which assimilation brings into the community, many look toward the Jewish school to be the herald of a new kind of education which will "save" the Jewish community. While I am not of the opinion that Jewish education can solve the problems of continuity, I do believe that Jewish education today plays an enormous role in shaping the Jewish community of tomorrow. A new century calls for a new kind of education. In trying to determine what form this education will take, it is imperative to use the past as a guide to building the future.

Text study has always been the core of education within Judaism. Interestingly, our schools today do not appear to have text study at their centers. While the world has certainly changed, and our education practices must adapt along with it, I view the lack of text found in our schools to be a detriment to the students and to the Jewish community as a whole. Why is it that we have placed text study by the wayside and replaced it with other forms of learning?

My research will start by taking a close look at the traditional emphasis placed upon study in Judaism. Next, there will be an in-depth look at the schools of the Reform Movement today to see how and what is being taught to the students. Finally, I will look at various ways in which text can be re-incorporated into our programs. Included here will be research gathered from a test site in which text-centered programs were used and then evaluated by the student participants as well as a sample text-centered curriculum.

Before moving forward, I find it necessary to clarify the language which I will use throughout this paper. My work has focused on the importance of text study in Reform schools. When I speak of text study, I am referring to the study of the classical, sacred literature of the Jewish tradition. I am speaking of education which incorporates original source text as part of the lesson. Included here would be works such as the Tanakh, the Mishnah and the Talmuds. The term Torah study has come to be used to refer to study of all these sacred texts. Torah study includes study of the Torah scroll, תורה בקרב, and study of the Oral law, תורה שעל פה. Here it should be noted that I am not limiting the field of text study only to study of works in their original form. An English translation of a source text would be categorized as text for these purposes.

I would also like to clarify exactly what type of learning experience is implied by the term text study. In his comprehensive analysis of using the text experience,

Grishaver (1988) details the four main steps in the text study process:

Most simply put, the act of text study is that of (1) isolating the places where the text is difficult to understand, (2) clarifying the difficulty, (3) projecting and collecting possible solutions/explanations, and (4) having each learner choose the solution that "works" for him/her. (p. 6-7).

In summary, the text study process is really one of making meaning. The goal in any text study experience is to have students first understand the basic meaning of the text and then expand the possibilities by giving personal and modern meaning to the text.

Chapter 1 - What is Study?

It is important to begin by looking at the traditional concept of studying. The question is, in Judaism what does the term “study” imply? The answer here is quite simple. Study clearly refers to examination of the text, and the text specifically refers to our sacred works as mentioned above. There are countless occasions in our sources in which learning is emphasized as a central act in life. Likewise, there are many instances in which it becomes clear that this act of learning implies knowing our sacred texts.

Torah Study as Detailed in Sacred Literature

One of the most basic and clear examples of the importance of Torah study can be found in Mishnah Peah 1:1, where we read the following:

אֵלֵינוּ דְּבָרִים שְׁאֵדָם אוֹכֵל פְּרוּתֵיהֶן בְּעוֹלָם הָזֶה וְהַעֲרֹן סִימָת לוֹ לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא. כְּבוֹד אָב וָאִם, וְגִמְלוֹת חֲסִידִים, וְהַבָּאת שְׁלוֹם בֵּין אָדָם לְחֶבְרֹו וְתִלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כֶּנֶּגֶד זֵלָם.

These are the things whose fruits a man enjoys in this world while the capital is laid up for him in the world to come: honoring father and mother, deeds of loving kindness, making peace between a man and his fellow, and the study of the Torah is equal to them all.

Torah study is valued not only as that which will lead to reward in this world, but it will also lead to promise in the world to come. While there are other acts which will also lead to such reward, the study of Torah is equal to them all. This text gives us a clear picture of the important role that Torah study plays in the life of a Jew. It is the essential act which a Jew can perform.

In Kiddushin 40b of the Babylonian Talmud, one finds another description of the importance of Torah study. This is a well-known text in that it is where one finds the

long time debate concerning whether study or action is more important. This entire debate continually asks the question, what is more important, the study of Torah or the performance of mitzvot? - תלמוד גדול או מעשה גדול? The Rabbis are pointedly speaking about the act of studying Torah, and it is this that they determine, in the end, to be more important than the action of fulfilling mitzvot.

The reasoning is also interesting in that the Rabbis of the Talmud claim that the study of Torah is more important, because it leads to all else. Here we get a quintessential example of the role of Torah study as being essential to the life of the Jew. In fact, this passage teaches that Torah study is the most important way in which a Jew can occupy his time. This reiterates the message found in the Mishnah passage above.

In this passage it is apparent that the study which is so highly regarded by the Rabbis is specifically the study of Torah. Rabbi Avika ends the debate by stating, תלמוד גדול שיהתלמוד מביא לידי מעשה - the study of Torah is more important, because the study of Torah brings one to the performance of mitzvot. It should be noted that the word used here to mean Torah study is תלמוד. One could argue that תלמוד does not specifically refer to study of Torah. Meanwhile, the context of the Talmud passage tells us differently. This entire debate rests on the initial statement from the Mishnah:

כָּל שֶׁנֶּשְׁנוּ בְּמִקְרָא וּבְמִשְׁנָה וּבְדִרְדֹרָא אֶרֶץ לֹא בְּמַהֲרָה הוּא חוֹטֵא - anyone involved in the study of Scripture and Mishnah and in the practice of ethical behavior will not readily sin. In this initial statement, we see the reference to studying Torah and Mishnah. It therefore follows that the entire debate spawned by this statement also speaks about Torah study when using the term תלמוד.

Along these same lines, Leviticus Rabbah 7:3 points out that a child's education should begin with a study of the Book of Leviticus, and in Avot 5:21, one reads that Ben Tema says that by the age of five a child is ready to study Scripture, at ten is ready for Mishnah, and at fifteen for Talmud. These texts are outlining a course of study for Jewish children, and it is not insignificant that the only forms of study that are mentioned are those of sacred texts.

One more interesting example concerning study is that which is found in B. Berakot 17a. Here we are given a passage which details how women receive merit in the world. Since women are not obligated to fulfill the mitzvot, there must be some other way that they can acquire merit. The answer offered for how a woman achieves merit is:

בְּאִקְרָאֵי בְּנֵיהֶוּ לְבֵי בְּנִישָׁתָא, וּבְאִתְנַנְי גְּבֻרֵיהֶוּ בִּי רִבְנָן, וְנִטְרִין לְגַבְרֵיהֶוּ עַד דְּאָתוּ מִבֵּי רִבְנָן
By bringing their children to learn in the synagogue and their husbands to study in the schools of the Rabbis, and waiting for their husbands until they return from the schools of the Rabbis.

A woman must ensure the learning of her husband and sons, and she receives merit if she sends her family to learn Torah. The statement made that a woman should send her children to learn in the synagogue and her husband to learn with the Rabbis makes the clear implication that the passage is referring to Torah study.

Historic Role of Study

The historic role that the study of sacred texts plays is likewise important in understanding the role of Torah in our lives. The earliest example one finds involving an encounter between the people and text is in Nehemiah 8. It is in this chapter that we have the first description of the public reading of the Torah. Ezra the scribe brings the scroll

before the people, so that all people can hear it and understand-

וַיָּבִיֵא עֲזָרָא הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה לִפְנֵי הַקָּהָל מֵאִישׁ וְעַד־אִשָּׁה וְכָל מִבְּנֵי לִשְׁמָע (8:2). The narrative continues to say that "the ears of all the people were given to the scroll of the Teaching"-
אָזְנֵי כָל־הָעָם אֶל־סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה (8:3). Further, one learns that Ezra translated the Torah as he read it, so that the community would have understanding (8:8). Here we have the earliest example of Torah study. While individually the people may not be engaged in Torah study, it is apparent that the community as a whole is participating in the study of Torah.

One learns that this act of studying is important, for Ezra and the Levites tell the people that this is a day holy to God (8:9). Why is this day considered holy? It is a holy day because the people are connecting with God and re-establishing the covenant made by their ancestors. It is through this new ritual of reading and studying the Torah that the people are able to live the life that God has prescribed for them. Torah study is here established as having a central place in the lives of the Jewish people.

It also must be noted that this practice of publicly reading the Torah begun by Ezra has remained an important ritual in the Jewish religion. The Jewish community still follows the custom of reading the Torah aloud weekly, and in addition, most communities add to this reading by including an explanation of the text. What one finds on a Shabbat morning at many a Reform congregation is not so different from that which took place in the 5th century BCE with Ezra and the community of Jerusalem. In addition to the Torah Service, the liturgy also serves as a reminder of the importance of Torah study. Everyday Jews recite a rabbinic passage in the liturgy which reminds us that the

study of Torah is equal to the performance of all other mitzvot¹. From the time of Ezra until today, one can see that the reciting and understanding of the Torah has been a priority within the Jewish community.

Example after example could be offered which point to the fact that traditionally, when Judaism speaks of the importance of study, this study is understood to be the study of sacred texts². "The term 'Torah' includes not just the Bible but the Talmud, the commentaries, and all the Jewish learning through the ages. It was this study of Jewish knowledge that the sages considered the essence of learning - all else is peripheral" (Klagsbrun, 2001, p. 253). The fact that study refers to the study of Torah is an apparent point in the Jewish tradition.

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1. This liturgy is taken from the Mishnah passage cited above.
 2. Another example includes Avodah Zarah 20b which shows study to be the first in a chain that will lead away from evil things. Here again, it is clear that the study the Rabbis are speaking of is study of sacred text. Such study is prescribed as having transforming power which will result in an individual possessing the holy spirit and eternal life.

Chapter 2 - Text Study in Reform Schools Today

In such a study, a crucial question is, what do we find in our schools today? Clearly, all schools are not operating under the same curriculum, and each school has its own unique way of educating and reaching its students. Still, there are certain characteristics which seem to be found across the board in religious schools of the Reform Movement, and this is where our focus will be.

Methodology

In order to gain an accurate understanding of the curricula found in Reform religious schools, I conducted a study of fifty schools throughout the United States. Approximately seventy-five schools were randomly contacted through the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) web-site and asked to participate by supplying me with a copy of their curriculum guide and school handbook. The fifty schools included in the study are those schools which responded to my request. The study includes schools of various sizes and settings, as well as schools that are fairly new in their establishment and those that have been around for many years. By studying the guides of each of the schools, it becomes apparent that certain trends are prevalent within the Reform educational setting³.

In looking through the school guides, I was searching for specific information.

3. It should be noted that there are undoubtedly Reform schools which do not fit the mold which is to be described. These generalizations are the result of research into fifty Reform religious schools as described above. Full study can be found in Appendix A.

After an initial study of the guides, I examined each guide more closely by asking nine main questions of each of the schools⁴. My main goal was to determine whether there is an established place for Torah and text study. As a corollary to this question, I also sought to find where the focus of the curricula lie.

A Simplified Text

One finds a minimal amount of text study in our schools today, although our schools are not operating as though fully detached from the Jewish text. Only 38% of the schools surveyed use the Tanakh in the school, and of these, only 12% use it prior to seventh grade. This highlights the fact that the majority of our schools do not count the Tanakh as a valuable teaching tool for Jewish children. Further, the fact that only 12% of the schools expose their students to the Tanakh prior to seventh grade points out that many schools find the Tanakh to only be appropriate for students past a certain age.

One might immediately argue that many Reform schools do in fact teach Torah in the form of Bible stories. Every school studied noted Bible stories as a curricular focus in at least one of the younger grades (kindergarten through fourth). While we do see the presence of Torah, it is the way in which we find this text which is of interest here. The biblical material in our schools is often reprinted and offered in a more basic form, or it is used in its original form but is taken out of context. For example, 52% of the schools use either A Child's Bible by Rossel and/or An Introduction to Kings, Later Prophets and

4. Details on these questions and full results found in Appendix A. Citation material available on all schools quoted throughout paper in Appendix A as well.

Writings by Newman⁵. A Child's Bible is basically an overview of the stories of Genesis and Exodus. The stories are presented in a simplified manner, and each chapter seeks to relate the tale to the life of the student. An Introduction to Kings, Later Prophets and Writings offers a variety of tales that come out of the Prophets and Writings. In this work, we again witness the stories told in a bare, basic manner.

There is a problem when the students only confront the Bible through a textbook in which the stories have been re-worked to be more "child friendly". For example, our students learn stories such as Creation and Noah & the Flood starting at the earliest age. They may be read simple stories from the Bible when they are young, and as they get older, they begin to read the stories with more detail filled in. A simplified version of a Bible story is entirely appropriate for students in kindergarten through third grade who may not yet be ready to grapple with the text. On the other hand, by the fourth grade, these students are ready and able to begin to tackle some text in its biblical form. Grishaver (1988) explains that the first relationship with text should be through Bible stories, but the second stage of the relationship, which begins around age seven, deals with the ability to read the biblical text (p.16).

The skill of reading brings great power. While this is true on a symbolic level because it gives the reader access to a vast array of human resources, it is also profoundly true on an experiential level. Think of the transition between being read a bedtime story and then reading your parent a bedtime story. In that act, there are two implications. This first is the exhibition of competence, "look what I can do now" and the second is an act of independence. (Grishaver, 1988, p.16)

The child has moved from from being told about the Torah to actively engaging with it.

5. It should also be noted that for 32% of the schools surveyed, it was unclear (not provided in the information) as to whether one or each of these texts was used. It is quite possible that the data of 52% of schools using these works would be even higher once the information from all of the schools was secured.

In line with this, using such "child friendly" versions of the text offers students a view in which some major details are neglected⁶. Furthermore, many of these textbooks mix Torah and Midrash freely, and students do not realize the distinction between the two⁷. Although it may not be feasible to teach students the entire Torah, it is important to offer them more than just an overview and to introduce them to the vast array of material contained within. It is likely that students hear tales such as Noah's Ark, the Akedah and Joseph's Coat at various times throughout their schooling. As students get older, they can uncover new meaning in these stories. It is said that there is always something new to discover in the text. There is also something to say for learning new stories and finding meaning within them. Even the stories which aren't quite so easily made into child's tales are important for our students to confront. The building of the Golden Calf or the Mishkan are certainly worthy of students' attention. Although quite

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6. I recently confronted a prime example of this when discussing the Arab/Israeli conflict with a group of fifth grade students. In trying to help them understand the roots of the problem, I drew a family tree on the board, starting with Abraham. Underneath Abraham, I wrote both the names Isaac and Ishmael. The students looked at me with question. "Who is Ishmael?" they asked. I tried to prompt them to remember learning about Ishmael and Hagar in fourth grade when they had focused on Bible. They still stared at me blankly. When I looked through a copy of their fourth grade text, A Child's Bible by Rossel, I discovered that they never did learn about Ishmael and Hagar- this story is conveniently left out of the text. Students learning with this text are under the impression that they are learning Torah. They don't realize that their knowledge is missing key chunks of the story.
 7. An example of a work in which we see the mixing of Torah and Midrash is A Child's Introduction to Torah by Newman. The book is presented as though it is Torah, so a child learning from it would assume that all the stories contained are from the Bible. This interplay between Bible and Midrash can be problematic. A critical example is seen in the chapter of this textbook which deals with Abraham and the idols. Students using this text don't realize that this particular story is part of our Midrash. My guess is that many Jewish teens and adults would be shocked to learn that the tale of Abraham smashing the idols is not contained within the Torah. It isn't so shocking, though, that many Jews have this misconception, for the textbooks that we teach promote such misunderstandings.

different, each of these topics have much to teach about Judaism and what it means to be a Jew today.

In their secular education, our students are confronted with complex and challenging topics from a young age. Students are constantly being encouraged to reach their full potential. It is clear that our students are capable of a more in-depth study of Genesis (and many other topics) than that which most textbooks provide. "If classicists sometimes make the mistake of introducing this material (Torah text) when children are too young... they at least do their students the honor of respecting their minds" (J. Cohen, 1964, p. 100). We stifle the seriousness of Torah when we settle for passing attention and simple stories rather than active minds and engaged emotions (Eisen, 1997, p. 162). When using basic stories, we are infantilizing our students. Too much modern Jewish education talks down to the students- we are only teaching them the basics. While it is clear that our secular agenda is constantly attempting to challenge the students, it is questionable as to whether Jewish education is.

The other detriment to presenting students with simplified versions of text is that it creates an attitude that Bible stories are only meant for children. When we think of teaching Bible, we conjure images of midrashim, cute stories, and textbooks that make stories readable and understandable. This leaves us with the feeling that the Bible is for young children. If the only exposure that people have to the stories of Genesis are those that are adapted for children, then it is no shock that most people would assume that the Book of Genesis is really a book of stories meant for the younger generation. In order to make learning Torah a lifelong pursuit, Jews need to understand that the Bible is anything but a book for children.

Text in Extract

Another form in which text can be found in curricula of Reform schools is in that of extracts⁸. There are many textbooks which do seek to look at original text, yet they do so by extracting a small piece of the whole for discussion⁹. When doing so, there is always the chance that the text will not be properly interpreted. "Just as one cannot teach a chapter from a novel without knowing the substance of the novel, one cannot teach a chapter of the Bible without knowing its context" (Berson, 1990, p. 14). It is very hard for teachers to teach and for students to understand when dealing with a small piece of the whole. Furthermore, the true meaning behind many texts can only be comprehended when one is aware of that which precedes and follows it.

One may wonder how much can truly be learned from viewing only a snip of a text. In his article on study and action, Dorff (1980) describes the position of Samson Raphael Hirsch¹⁰ who maintains that students will learn nothing if they only view text in extracts (p. 184). Hirsch would go on to explain that nothing can be achieved when only looking at segments of text that have been reflected though the editor (Dorff, 1980, p.

8. It is important to distinguish here exactly what is intended by use of the word extract. Unless one was to study the Torah in its entirety, then any study of a piece of text could be considered an extract. Yet, that is not what is intended by use of the word here. By using the term extract, I am denoting the situation in which a small piece of text, usually only a verse, is used to begin a discussion of a topic or add substance to it.

9. Examples of such texts include Jewish Heroes Jewish Values by Schwartz, Making a Difference by Artson & Gevirtz, How do I Decide by Gittelsohn, Mitzvah by Neusner, The Book of Jewish Practice by Jacobs, and Basic Judaism for Young People: God by Pasachoff.

10. Samson Raphael Hirsch was a 19th century German Jew and the founder of the neo-Orthodox movement. He advocated the study of secular subjects along with a strong training in Jewish texts. As Hirsch would say, text study "stirs his (the student's) passion for the noble and good" (Dorff, 1980, p. 178).

184). This leads us back to the issue raised above concerning context. Any author can pull a segment of text to discuss a particular topic, but does the text relate in actuality, or is it just that a line happens to pertain and support the topic at hand? More importantly, is the student really learning anything about the meaning of the text by only studying a small extract? A student will never understand the breadth and nature of Jewish texts if only exposed to random verses.

Similarly, incomplete texts lead to universal themes. Rosenak (1987) expresses the problem with curricula which contain no complete texts is that

...themes are universal, and a particular tradition may illuminate and illustrate themes, but it is unlikely that the specific teaching of the tradition will be discovered unless the curriculum writers and teachers balance thematic learning with textual study. (p. 254)

The question raised here is, what goal is accomplished by introducing bits of text at various opportunities? If the goal is simply to make students aware of our sacred literature, then such extracts would fulfill such criteria. On the other hand, if the goal is to begin to develop in students an appreciation for and connection to the sacred literature of the Jewish tradition, then using extracts falls short of achievement. Although there is a degree of Torah study in our schools, it is the quality of this study which I would question.

Jewish Heroes, Jewish Values- An Example of Text Extracts

There are many current textbooks which use text extracts to enhance learning. Sometimes these extracts are so minimal that one wonders whether the text is adding to the learning. An example of this can be seen in the book Jewish Heroes, Jewish Values

by Schwartz. Chapter 10 of the book focuses on the theme of tzedakah. Underneath the chapter title is the quote “you shall not harden your heart, nor shut your hand from you brother in need....” (Deut 15:7). After this, the chapter delves into the concept of tzedakah by discussing its meaning, offering historic examples and discussing ways in which the student can take part in tzedakah. Interestingly, this initial quote is not referred to at any point in the chapter. Clearly, this quote seems relevant to the topic, as it offers a biblical example of the importance of helping those in need. Students see this quote and understand that the commandment of tzedakah is rooted in the Bible.

By taking a closer look at Deuteronomy 15, we can see that there is much more going on. In this chapter of Deuteronomy, God is instructing the Israelites concerning their obligations. We learn in this chapter that there should not be any needy among the people, for God will bless them in the land (15:4). The text goes on to state that if there is a needy person, then you are obligated to help him¹¹ (15:7). Interestingly, the text continues by stating that if “...you are mean to your needy kinsmen and give him nothing, he will cry out to God against you, and you will incur guilt” (15:9). Here we learn that one will be punished if one does not give to those in need- there is a feeling of threat in the text. On the other hand, the verse pulled and quoted in this textbook doesn’t carry with it this idea that by not fulfilling this obligation, there will be punishment. By adding this quote to the textbook, the student realizes that giving tzedakah is commanded by God, but the student does not understand the full impact of the commandment. The author of the textbook uses the quote to serve his purposes. It works as a nice introduction to the topic of tzedakah. Unfortunately, it offers students a simplified idea

11. This is the piece of text which is quoted in the textbook under discussion.

of what the obligation to give tzedakah entails.

What Publishers Have to Say About Text

Upon speaking with two major publishers of Jewish textbooks, these ideas were only further confirmed. Terry Kaye, curriculum developer for Behrman House, explains A Child's Bible by Rossel is their most popular seller¹². As already noted, A Child's Bible is a textbook which contains the major stories from the Book of Genesis in a simplified basic format. She said that most schools are purchasing this text to use with students in third or fourth grades. This tells us that many schools see a work like A Child's Bible as an excellent source for a student's first serious look at Torah. Kaye also explained that Behrman House is currently working to weave more text into their books¹³, which is a result of a demand by the people. It will be interesting to see how Behrman House seeks to fulfill this new need.

A different perspective can be seen from an interview with Joel Grishaver,¹⁴ a founder and director of Torah Aura Productions. While Behrman House is now striving to incorporate more text, using text has been a longtime goal at Torah Aura. Grishaver explained that the original goal in forming the Torah Aura company was to make texts

12. The following information gathered from interview/discussion held on October 1, 2002 with Terry Kaye.

13. Kaye explained that they are trying to use more text when addressing various topics. She said that even in books intended for the youngest students, they are trying to add at least a quote from the text. The goal at Behrman House appears to be trying to bring students into contact with more text. Yet as discussed, there are questions as to the effectiveness of offering only a small extract of text.

14. The following information gathered from interview held on February 13, 2003 with Joel Lurie Grishaver.

accessible for people, and through Torah Aura Productions to create a voice about learning and not simply a transmission of ideas. He explained that when you reduce Jewish religion to themes and facts, what are you teaching no longer even remotely resembles Judaism. With text study, you are encountering the backbone of the Jewish religion. While Behrman House promotes A Child's Bible as the textbook addressing Bible for students in third and fourth grade, Torah Aura offers Being Torah by Grishaver as an alternative. Basically, Being Torah is a real translation of Torah using language appropriate for this age group. The book seeks to preserve the open verse style and much of the language used in the original text. At its heyday, 5,000 copies of Being Torah were being sold a year. Today, Grishaver explains that the book is still successful,¹⁵ and it is reaching somewhere between 20-30% of the classrooms¹⁶.

It is apparent that these two leading publishers of Jewish textbooks have entirely different takes on Jewish education. Both companies are trying to meet the needs of the schools while also providing quality Jewish educational tools. While Behrman House does recognize the importance of text study, their works do not empower students to take part in active engagement with text. Torah Aura, on the other hand, is committed to developing ways to successfully allow students to engage in the tradition of text study. While both of these companies are successful and represented in schools throughout the country, Behrman House does have a larger reach. This points to the fact that many schools are still not ready to bring text into the community in an authentic way.

15. Grishaver explains the two main reasons for why the sales of Being Torah have dropped are that the book is printed in black and white and it is very demanding of the teacher.

16. This percentage reflects both Conservative and Reform religious schools.

Chapter 3 - What do we Find in Reform Schools Today?

If we aren't seeing text study in our schools, then what do we find? For the most part, our religious schools are focused on the two areas of Jewish identity and what I term as "the practical." In terms of identity, most of our schools are chiefly concerned with the development of a strong, positive Jewish identity in its students. Along these same lines, we find a focus on what I have termed as "the practical." What I mean by "the practical" are those things which will enable the student to live as a Jew- learning things which can be practically applied to life.

Focus on Jewish Identity

There has been a movement in our schools to make "building strong Jewish identities" a main goal of the educational program.¹⁷ This is directly linked to our current communal focus on Jewish continuity and fear that assimilation will destroy the Jewish community. Seventy-four percent of the schools studied focus on Jewish identity as a guiding principle behind the educational program. Above any concern in a specific area of curriculum, the schools want to ensure their graduates feel a connection to Judaism and to the Jewish community.

17. In the school handbook from Temple Beth Am of Framingham, MA, "developing a positive Jewish identity" is listed under the goals given for each of the grade levels. Interestingly, the guide only provides one other goal for each grade in addition to the one already stated. This enormous focus placed upon nourishing Jewish identity found in this handbook is merely an example of that which is found in many school handbooks and curriculum guides.

The school wants to build strong Jewish identities in its students, as this will likely lead to a greater guarantee of continuity. "A subject is placed in the curriculum according to its power to move children toward loyalty and identification with the group and not because of any intrinsic quality it may possess" (Ackerman, 1989, p. 77). One way in which we witness this trend is through the aim of socialization into the Jewish group. As Gamoran (1925) explains, the aim of all education is socialization¹⁸; and therefore, the aim of Jewish education is enabling the child to become part of the religious group (p. 47). In basic terms, the religious school program is organized to help students become part of the Jewish community and learn how to act within it.

Likewise, in an ethnographic study of Jewish afternoon schools, Schoem (1989) finds that the biggest expectation of parents is that the religious school develop Jewish identity and provide a Jewish group and community (p. 54). Parents send their children to religious school so that they can become part of a Jewish group and do Jewish things with Jewish people.

The distressing fact that few Jewish schools in this country have succeeded in imparting any real Jewish knowledge to their students, or in developing even the minimum of intellectual competence required of the literate Jew, has undoubtedly also contributed to the assignation of greater importance to what a person is than to what he knows. (Ackerman, 1989, p. 77)

A major goal of both the school and of parents is to ensure that the children feel part of the Jewish community. There is a greater concern that the student feel like a Jew and a member of the Jewish community than that the student know what it means to be a Jew.

18. This idea that the aim of all education is socialization would also be highly supported by Dewey (1929) who in "My Pedagogic Creed" repeatedly points to the fact that schooling is nothing if not a socialization process.

Fostering a sense of community within in a school can be done in a variety of ways¹⁹. Many schools seek to build community by holding regular worship services for the student body. Other schools see a focus on learning about and participating in school-wide tzedakah projects to be important in building community. Whichever method a school chooses to promote a feeling of community, the school inevitably will also be working toward building Jewish identity through the same process.

Similarly, there has been a concern with focusing curricula on students' wants and interests, which also affects identity development. In his study of curricula in Jewish schools, Ackerman (1989) notes that a new generation of educators have shifted the focus from a pre-determined subject matter to an active concern for the needs and interests of students (p. 88). Ackerman (1989) goes on to explain that educators today are trying to create an environment in which the student can experiment and explore while trying to define his own style of Judaism (p. 89). Schools have re-created their curricula to compliment the interests of students. As a consequence, important topics may be left

19. Different ways in which schools attempt to foster community were taken from study of religious school curricula, some of the results of which are provided in Appendix A.

behind²⁰. Likewise, Schoem (1989) found that there is little cognitive material being used in our schools today (p. 93). He also points to the trend seen in both CAJE²¹ and at HUC²² which emphasizes the affective as opposed to the cognitive (p. 90). We are witnessing a concern with doing or action as opposed to old fashioned studying.

Such a trend can also be witnessed in high school curricula. In most schools, the high school program was, at one time, a more in-depth program for the post B'nai-Mitzvah student²³. Since the 1970's, there has been a shift in which the high school program is viewed in a more informal light²⁴. School handbooks now speak of the

20. A similar trend in which subjects are geared toward student interest can be seen in the field of history. There has been an enormous change of emphasis in our schools from a more comprehensive study to a more compact view of Jewish history. In order to fully understand this shift, we must look at what is occurring in the field of history in general. In Lerner's book Why History Matters, she addresses this very question and explains why the study of history is no longer valued within our society.

People in today's world are focused on the present and future, and there is little concern for events of the past. "Members of the "TV generation"... connect more readily with the visual symbol than with the written or spoken word. They are discouraged from giving sustained and thoughtful attention to the past by being daily exposed to the mass-media way of perceiving the world" (Lerner, 1997, p. 123). We live in a fast paced society in which the focus is always on tomorrow, so people have a hard time realizing the importance of yesterday. This idea is true for the Jewish community as well. In a struggle to create new programming to ensure Jewish continuity in the future, we are neglecting the important lessons of the past. People may not seem interested in history, but we still need to bring history to them.

21. Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education.

22. Hebrew Union College.

23. The early curricula from the Commission on Jewish Education outlines a highly structured high school program. The 1959 Curriculum sees Jewish literature as an ideal topic for the high school program, and the plan assumes that much of this literature will be taught in Hebrew (p. 77). In the curricula of 1959 and 1970, topics for high school include Jewish literature, prophets, ethics and comparative religion among others.

24. Proof of this can be found in the 1977 Curriculum of the Commission on Jewish Education, where we begin to notice a shift in which the high school is viewed in a more informal light, and in which a topic such as modern Jewish problems is listed as an important area of study (p. 58).

program for tenth through twelfth grades as revolving around student choice²⁵. There has been a definite shift to provide programming for the high school community which is intended to better serve the wants and desires of this constituency. Of the schools surveyed, 64% have developed a high school program which is based on student interest and choice. Most school handbooks speak of electives that students can choose ranging a variety of topics, some being much more academic than others. One school handbook notes the following as class choices in the high school program: Jewish cooking, Jewish Web-sites, Jewish Humor, Oh God, Modern Jewish Art History and How do we Believe?²⁶ (Temple Shalom, Chevy Chase, MD). The schools are attempting to make the high school curriculum relevant to their students by offering subjects that would be of interest to the high school constituency. The shortcomings of only providing classes which are perceived to be of great interest to the students is that many important topics get ignored. We see little Torah study in high school curricula. There is a perception that the students will not be interested in studying the Torah. Meanwhile, the Torah can be the most interesting topic of all. If students are never given the chance to explore the Torah, then they will never discover the treasures within.

25. Temple Shalom of Chicago, IL is unique in that it bases its entire curriculum on student choice. Beginning in grade three and through high school, the students are given the opportunity to pick the classes that they will take. In third through seventh grades, each student is enrolled in Hebrew and one required subject, and the third class is an elective chosen by the student. The elective choices are broad in range. I find this model interesting, since this school is giving elementary aged students the chance to decide what to study. Again, we see a focus on fostering a curriculum which will fulfill the wants and interests of the students.

26. In addition, the guide states that "...at this critical point in their development of their Jewish identities, we wish to offer the opportunity to explore a broad range of Jewish topics that are of interest to them" (Temple Shalom, Chevy Chase, MD).

Focus on "The Practical"

The second area of focus which we witness in our schools today is that of "the practical". Jewish parents want to see their children as members of the Jewish community. They want to see their children participate in a grade level service, they want to see them receive blessing at their consecration ceremony, and most importantly, they want to see their children become B'nai Mitzvah. 78% of the school curriculum guides showed there to be a major focus on what I have termed as "the practical". To determine whether a school focuses on such practical skills, I looked to see how the guide speaks about the following goals for the student: ability to function and participate in the Jewish community, feeling comfortable in the synagogue, ability to celebrate the holidays and ability to observe the life cycle events.

It seems that parents today are much more concerned with the performance of ritual. In his study, Schoem (1989) found that "it was the performance of the ritual, much more than any evaluation of its context, that was of importance to the majority of the parents" (p. 53). Students need to come out of school with the ability to act like a Jew. They need to understand rituals, holiday observance, life cycle events and have a familiarity with the prayerbook.

Likewise, the main concern of parents is with their child reaching B'nai Mitzvah. It is the fulfillment of this age old tradition that has become key. Schooling focuses

much attention on preparing the students for this one day²⁷. Of course, it must be noted that only 12% of the schools appear to focus the program on reaching a goal of B'nai Mitzvah. The vast majority of schools recognize B'nai Mitzvah as a milestone, yet not the end point, of Jewish education. Meanwhile, Schoem (1989) found that most students understand the reason for being in religious school to simply be training for B'nai Mitzvah²⁸ (p. 56). This point cannot be underestimated. Many parents view their child's Jewish education as culminating with the ceremony of B'nai Mitzvah. In discussing budgetary issues of the school, a board member at one synagogue commented: "Does the congregation really want quality education? Maybe we just want kids to make it through their Bar/Bat Mitzvah" (Schoem, 1989, p. 71). While this one man's view might not be held by the majority, it is certainly an opinion held by many Jewish parents. In their study on the Jewish American family, S. Cohen & Eisen (2000) find that "[a]ffiliation of families with synagogues peaks immediately preceding Bar or Bat Mitzvah, only to decline again in the years following this widely celebrated rite of passage" (p. 45). This tells us that many Jews see the only purpose of the synagogue and the synagogue school

27. Interestingly, the school guide from Temple Emanu-El of Sarasota, NY details the entire seventh grade curriculum as being a "Bar/Bat mitzvah preparation course." It seems that in this school, like many others, the entire seventh grade year is focused on the fulfillment of Bar/Bat Mitzvah and making sure that students successfully reach this milestone. As far as this particular school goes, it would appear that no other topics are broached in the seventh grade year.

28. While Schoem (1989) found the majority of students identify religious school with B'nai Mitzvah preparation, it is also of interest to note that most of the students interviewed expressed the feeling that they weren't really learning anything of value (p. 93). Furthermore, Schoem (1989) also found that many teachers interviewed felt they weren't really accomplishing anything with the students (p. 94). What Schoem discovered in his survey may only be reflective of one specific school, or it might be reflective of what we are seeing across the movement. By placing such emphasis on the training for B'nai Mitzvah, it is no wonder that students and parents question why we teach topics that are not directly related to this ceremony.

as enabling children to become B'nai Mitzvot.

The Practicality of Prayerbook Literacy

One final note concerning the focus on the practical can be seen in the movement of Reform schools to structure the Hebrew program around prayerbook literacy. Being that there is such limited time in the religious school setting, many schools focus the Hebrew curriculum on the attainment of comfort with the liturgy. "A Jewish person must have the tools to participate in the Jewish community, including the synagogue. Reading prayers in Hebrew and understanding the basic worship service is a part of that" (Temple Emanu-El, Atlanta, GA). The goal is that students will be able to participate and feel comfortable in the worship experience. 68% of schools studied have a Hebrew track that is based on the goal of prayerbook literacy. School guides speak of wanting students to feel comfortable during worship and to have the ability to participate in worship at any congregation.

In focusing on the ability of the student to be an active service participant, the school is likely to lose any understanding the student has of Jewish liturgy. It is not uncommon for students to have little understanding of the theological, literary, and rhetorical structures of the liturgy (Wachs, 1999 p. 45). Therefore, tefillah constitutes a practice of skills or group activity. The issue here becomes understanding. Do the students have any concept of the meaning, history, and tradition behind the prayers which they are reciting? As one teacher states, "We're getting more concerned with rattling off prayers than with understanding meaning" (Schoem, 1989, p. 89). Schools that focus on

prayerbook literacy teach the student that the recitation of liturgy is more important than the comprehension of it²⁹. A student's ability to recite prayers may be more a tribute to his memory than to his knowledge.

29. We must question what the goal is when the mode of teaching is rote memorization. J. Cohen (1964) notes that many Jewish parents and teachers take pride in the student's ability to read the prayerbook with great mechanical rapidity (p. 102). With such an attitude, there appears to be no concern for understanding.

Chapter 4 - Why the Disconnection?

Maybe the most important question to ask is, why do we find such a disconnection between the texts and our schools? There are numerous reasons why our schools are shying away from true text study. As already noted, a major reason is that text study is not what people are looking for in a Jewish school. Parents are looking for the school to build identity, socialize their child into the Jewish group, and prepare their child for B'nai Mitzvah. Text study is not seen as a necessary tool in the attainment of these goals.

Most schools aren't focusing on text study because there simply isn't enough time. Time is short, and the Jewish tradition is very large. Text study is a time consuming endeavor, and most schools are limited in the time they have to educate. Rather than focus much time on the study of text, schools opt to study subjects which fit more easily into the given time frame.

Along these same lines is the fact that text study requires able teachers. A teacher of text must have already been a student of the text. Making the task even more challenging is the fact that a teacher cannot only know the specific text being taught, he/she must be well informed of the context as well. The teacher must possess extensive and complex subject-matter and pedagogic-content knowledge (Dorph, 2002, p. 108). This raises a dilemma, as research has revealed that teachers in our schools have neither the background nor the training that would indicate that they have the needed depth or

breadth of knowledge³⁰ (Dorph, 2002, p. 108). Being that the Jewish community currently faces a shortage of teachers, it makes it even harder to find teachers who are able and willing to explore text with their students.

Coupled with this is the problem of teacher orientation. An individual's beliefs will inform his/her teaching. "In Jewish education the beliefs that teachers may hold about their subject matters are often tied inextricably to the largest beliefs of their personal lives, their religious faith and behavior" (Holtz, 1999, p. 420). It is not unusual to find teachers of Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and even Orthodox leanings within the Reform supplementary school. Clearly, all these teachers will look at the text through a different set of lenses. The most basic question concerning who wrote the Torah would be answered quite differently by each of these teachers. In order for a Reform school to incorporate text study into its program, the school needs to ensure that the teachers of text be aware of Reform ideology and bring an open minded attitude to the class³¹.

Another major reason why we aren't seeing an enormous amount of text study in our schools is because many would argue that the text isn't relevant for our students. The starting point of all education must be with those things which surround the student and are relevant to the life of the student. Many students and adults find text study to be

30. Likewise, in our interview Grishaver explained that the problem with using texts in school is not that students are not capable of it, but that teachers may not be. He speaks about one of his greatest challenges as creating resources that the teachers are able to use.

31. While many schools may deter from text study due to the obstacles listed above, there is no reason to think that such barriers cannot be successfully crossed. Schools can provide teacher education classes on text to help increase the teachers' knowledge of text. Further, the school could also provide workshops on Reform ideology to help educate the teaching staff about reading the text through the lens of a Reform Jew.

boring and irrelevant. Text does have the potential to be boring, foreign, and antiquated if not taught properly. People look at texts which are thousands of years old and wonder what relevance they could serve in today's world. The obstacle here would be to make the text interesting and to bring it to life for the students. The unfortunate fact is that many Jews have no connection to the Torah. Jews need to be shown the connection that Torah can have to their lives. If Jews never encounter Torah in their schooling, then it is no wonder that they lack any connection or see any relevance in its teachings.

Subsequently, many Jews find little gain from the study of Torah. The Rabbis viewed study as its own reward. The relevance was in its importance³². Study for its own sake is not something that the American culture generally values. "Americans only see things as relevant when they can be practically applied to life³³ (N. Cohen, 2000, p. 104). Of course, there are practical reasons to study the Torah, and these will be highlighted later. Just because people don't want Torah study does not mean that our schools should not be providing it.

32. Study for its own sake is considered a great mitzvah. "Man is enjoined to study, not for the sake of being considered wise or for the sake of gaining respect from others nor for the sake of making a living, but for the sheer love and joy and study" (Gamoran, 1925, p. 111). This view is much different than that of most moderns which holds that study must have a direct, specific, and objective goal.

33. This statement harkens back to the earlier point made concerning the focus on the practical which is found in many schools. It is simply a part of the culture in which we live to center educational endeavors on that which appears practical and will further one's ability or standing in life.

Chapter 5 - Why Do We Need Text Study?

Since many of our schools are not focusing upon study of sacred texts, the question may be raised as to whether text study is really necessary in the modern world. Many reasons have been given as to why schools aren't engaged in text study. While Torah study may have been important to our ancestors, perhaps it is possible that the Jewish education needed today need not include such study. If text study is so important, then wouldn't more schools be doing it?

Torah is Crucial to Our Lives

We cannot neglect to see the crucial role that the Torah holds in our lives as Jews. In a recent lecture, Rabbi Martin Cohen³⁴ was asked what it is that the Jews have contributed to society. "Well, that's simple" he replied. "The Jews have brought Torah to the world". If Torah is our great gift to the world, then it would seem senseless for us to ignore it. As stated in the 1999 Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism, "Torah is the foundation of Jewish life" (p. 2). While most Jews might have a Bible in their house, it is questionable as to whether it has ever been opened.

Our fathers so loved this great book that they meditated on it day and night. The influence of the Book on their character and life was incalculable. Our ignorance is the result of neglect. Theoretically, we are all agreed that we ought to study the Bible, but we seldom put this theory into practice. (Melamed, 1927, p. 64)

34. Martin A. Cohen is a rabbi and noted historian. He currently serves as the Chair of Jewish History at Hebrew Union College in New York. Statement taken from lecture given at HUC-JIR NY on December 12, 2002.

The central force of Jewish education must be the study of Torah³⁵. Jewish history, tradition, and practice all begin with Torah. All Jewish life flows forth from it. "Texts are the lifeblood of the enterprise, the words we grapple with and argue with, the materials we fashion and refashion, the language we make our own"³⁶ (Holtz, 1999, p. 401). How can we provide a Jewish education which neglects the study of Torah?

There are endless reasons as to why Jewish education must include, if not revolve around, the study of sacred texts. Study of Torah is a tradition which has worked for over one thousand years³⁷. Jewish tradition has always operated under the assumption that study of Torah is essential³⁸.

It is to a book, the Book, that we owe our survival- the Book which we use, not by accident, in the very form in which it has existed for millennia: it is the only book of antiquity that is still in living use as a scroll. The learning of this book became an affair of the people, filling the bounds of Jewish life completely. Everything was really in the learning of this book.... (Rosenzweig, 1919)

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35. As one school handbook aptly states, "A habit of Torah study is essential. Torah connects us to each of the above concepts- God and prayer, ritual celebrations, the rhythm of the year, values, and peoplehood. It teaches us who we are. The stories contained within it are central to our identity. The Torah is central and a Jewish person should be devoted to study" (Temple Emanu-El, Atlanta, GA).
36. Holtz (1999) continues to note that in a religious culture as literary as the Jewish tradition, text study goes to the heart of membership in the religious world of being a Jew (p. 406). Furthermore, "the study of Torah is so central to the practice of Judaism that every moment within Judaism has evolved rules or norms for how Torah study should be conducted" (Reimer, 1997, p. 37).
37. In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Baba Mezia 85b we are told the tale of Rabbi Hiyya and his commitment to Torah and the continued study of it. Through his story, we see that Torah was not merely important, it was crucial to the Jewish people. "Rabbi Hiyya said: To make sure the Torah would not be forgotten in Israel, what did I do? I sowed flax, from the flax cords I made nets. With the nets I trapped deer, gave their meat to orphans to eat, and from their skins prepared scrolls. On the scrolls I wrote the five books of Moses. Then I went to a town that had no teachers and taught the five books to five children, and the six orders of the Mishnah to six children. I instructed them, 'until I return, teach each other the Torah and the Mishnah.' That is how I kept the Torah from being forgotten in Israel" (BT Baba Mezia 85b).
38. Likewise, in both the written and oral tradition, Torah study is ranked as far more important than either worship or prayer.

No Jewish community ever survived if it wasn't engaged in some way with Torah study, even in the broadest sense. The fact cannot be argued that our sacred texts contain a wealth of knowledge that is an essential force in the Jewish community.

The Text is Sacred

In addition, these texts are held in our tradition as sacred- they are canonized as the word of God. Traditional Jewish study found a central place because of the belief that God's will is revealed through the medium of the written revelation and the oral tradition³⁹ (Neusner, 1970, p. 35). Furthermore, "the study of Torah is only outwardly the study of a book; actually it is the study of divine thought" (Glatzer, 1974, p. 67). Much of the reason why these works are classified as sacred is because they contain divine thought. Texts that contain the word of God are worthy of honor and reverence, let alone study.

Moreover, sacred works are unlike any other literature. The Bible, Talmud, Mishnah and other Jewish works are entirely different from the Western literature with which students are familiar. Students have a unique opportunity when they study the Torah. The Torah is much more than just a narrative⁴⁰. "This corpus of literature is

39. Interestingly, Neusner (1970) goes on to state that the act of study, memorization and commenting upon sacred books assumed a central position in Judaism which is hard to find an equivalent in other traditions (p. 36). This focus on text study found in Judaism is not paralleled in other traditions. Inherent in the practice of Judaism is the idea that one has knowledge of the sacred books.

40. Steinberg (1947) discusses the many functions which the Torah serves. Included in his list are the following points about Torah: it outlines the ethics of justice & loving kindness, it is a doctrine concerning one, universal God, it promulgates a code of law, it prescribes rituals, festivals and holy days, and it ordains institutions (p. 20).

different from the non-sacred because the latter does not 'impose itself' and makes no claims on members of the religious community" (Rosenak, 1987, p. 216). When we confront the Torah, we are offered an experience that isn't available through other venues. The study of Torah is not the same as reading a novel or piece of poetry, but it is a sacred task that places us in a chain of tradition that began ages ago⁴¹. It is through engagement with Torah that students can begin to identify with their Jewish roots and heritage.

To Study is to Know, To Know is to Do

Another argument for incorporating text study into our schools is that a Jew needs to know the Torah in order to practice Judaism. So much of what we are as Jews and what it means to be a Jew is wrapped up in the pages of the Torah. The Torah informs the reader of his obligations as a Jew. The modern Jew must study in order to discover what to do⁴². Reform Judaism is built upon the principle of the autonomy of the individual. "We stand open to any position thoughtfully and conscientiously advocated in the spirit of Reform Jewish belief" (Centenary Perspective, 1976, p. 1). Each individual has the free will to determine which commandments to practice and which not to. Inherent in this belief is the idea that the individual will be aware of the commandments.

41. N. Cohen (2000) states that Torah study is a the paramount commandment since without it one cannot understand what God demands of us, and therefore it leads to ritual and ethical action (p. 5).

42. Petuchowski (1961) explains that the modern Jew in search of the commandment addressed to him must engage first in intensive study. Once the individual has studied, he must experiment with various practices to determine which contain God's commandment to him (p. 111).

Within each area of Jewish observance Reform Jews are called upon to confront claims of Jewish tradition, however differently perceived, and to exercise their individual autonomy, choosing and creating on the basis of commitment and knowledge. (Centenary Perspective, 1976, p. 2)

If Jews do not know the commandments, then they cannot possibly obey them; therefore, knowledge becomes the stimulus to action⁴³ (Dorff, 1980, p. 182). As institutions of learning, it becomes the schools' duty to teach about what is commanded of the Jews, and this must be done through an engagement with text.

The importance of Jews understanding their obligations should not be underestimated. Today, there are too many Jewish adults who feel ill-informed concerning their Judaism.

Indeed one of the particular difficulties of our own times is the widespread feeling among Jews that they lack the basic skills and simple information that was in the past expected of members of the Jewish community. (Holtz, 1999, p. 404)

It is no wonder that so many Jews feel disconnected to their heritage and that assimilation is on the rise. Jews who have never studied the Torah and lack any connection to it, essentially lack a connection to the entire Jewish religion. Studying Torah is not simply a matter of learning the "whats" and the "hows" of Judaism - "...studying is the essence of being a Jew⁴⁴" (Holtz, 1999, p. 406). There is an undeniable connection between the text and the life of a Jew.

43. Wachs (1999) would agree with this point and add that the mandate of a school is helping people make intelligent decisions (p. 19). For, "choosing involves knowing how and knowing why" (Wachs, 1999, p. 19).

44. Many agree on this point. Steinberg (1947) notes that to the Jew, the Torah is "...not only a source of what he is as a Jew and religious person, it is much of the substance as well" (p. 21). Likewise, Wachs (1999) comments that learning is the key to discovering God's will, and thus the key to a life of kedushah- spirituality (p. 15).

Torah Study and Moral Education

Torah study is indispensable in our schools in that it aids in the development of moral judgement. Dorff (1980) has delved into this topic and concludes that text serves as an essential tool in moral education⁴⁵. Using classical text study as a method for teaching morality has been used for a long time in Judaism⁴⁶. Dorff (1980) points out that one way Jewish tradition contributes to morality development is by defining what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad (p. 171). The educational implications of such text study is not only for formation of individual moral rules but to develop a general moral outlook.

Most schools currently do use Torah in some form to begin to teach about morality. When children are taught about Adam & Eve, they learn the importance of obeying orders and of respecting the world. When they hear the tale of Jacob & Esau, they get a lesson in how one should treat one another and in sibling relations. The students learn from every character with which they are confronted. Certain persona are portrayed as models of leadership and morality which can be emulated, while others are depicted as being less than exemplary.

In sum, text study contributes to moral education by informing students about the whole range of moral values, motivating them to achieve them, training their powers of moral judgement and inculcating specific moral values in the process of learning - not the least of which is the value of study itself. (Dorff, 1980, p. 184)

45. In his work, he cites many other thinkers who agree with his theory. Included among those that also espouse the view that text study is critical in the development of moral character are Samson Raphael Hirsch, Mordechai Kaplan, and Martin Buber.

46. Adding to this point, Dorff (1980) states that "...the Jews have gone further than any other cultural group in using text study as *one* method to inculcate moral values" (p. 171).

In every encounter with Torah, students confront issues of morality, and in every Bible tale there is a lesson to be learned.

The morality development which can result from text study is enormous. Every individual develops his own system of morality as he moves through life, and the formation of this system is affected by every person, situation, and experience with which the individual is confronted. A basic assumption of Judaism is that a person's unaided moral judgement is not as good as a decision based on thorough study of traditional texts, because these texts record a wealth of human experience and the will of God. Still, text study can not be viewed as the be all and end all to moral education. As Dorff (1980) states, text study does not provide a guarantee to produce a moral person- no educational method could do that (p. 188). Every school is given the opportunity to help shape the moral development of its students. There are certainly numerous venues through which this can be achieved. The Jewish community has in its possession a text which can serve as an incredible guide in moral education, so it seems only logical that we take advantage of it.

The Torah is our Connection

Finally, the study of Torah is essential in education as it offers the learner a connection not only to Judaism but to the Jewish community. Traditionally, Torah study is an activity which is to be performed by a group rather than an individual. "Without others, Torah study is weakened; without a community-- a 'container' to hold and protect the nourishment of Torah-- in which to study, one will forget all that has been learned"

(N. Cohen, 2000, p. 101). Being a part of a community that studies Torah is an important Jewish value.

Also important is the notion that when studying with others, God's presence enters the world⁴⁷. In Avot 3:2, two men are sitting and studying Torah. The passage goes on to tell us that as words of Torah pass between the two, God's presence is with them. The picture drawn is that God is present with those who study Torah. The Torah is anything but a simple text. There is meaning behind meaning, and there is always something new to uncover in its readings. Discovering meaning in the text is greatly enhanced when the study is done in a group⁴⁸. Schools, interestingly, provide the perfect setting, as the classroom offers a community of Jews able to study as a group.

47. This example taken from N. Cohen, 2000, p. 15.

48. Of course, this point is true not only of Torah study. Any study can be enhanced by working with others, as different people bring different ideas and viewpoints to the topic. What one person sees when studying any text or topic could be drastically different from what another experiences with the text. Working together, people can gain a better, more complete understanding of meaning.

Chapter 6 - Incorporating Text into our Schools

It is more than apparent that text study serves an important purpose in our lives as Jews and therefore in the educational programs of Jewish schools. As Eisen (1997) so aptly states, "...any Jewish theory of education, and certainly any theory of Jewish education, cannot but begin with Torah" (p. 156). We must now move to a discussion of how "traditional" study enters into the modern school.

Text study has the potential to be incorporated into every aspect of learning that takes place in the Jewish school. There is no reason to assume that text study should be limited to classes studying Bible. Such an assumption points to exactly the problem under which schools have been operating. They have been neglecting to see the relevance that Torah can have in every subject explored. In order to be effective, text study must be used in a way which is relevant to the students and to their lives. The goal is for students to be interested in the text and to form a connection with it. This is not likely to happen if the text is viewed as old and outdated.

Here it should be noted that while I believe Torah study to be essential to Jewish education, I would not ordain that the entire curriculum consist only of Torah study.

A curriculum cannot be built on the classics alone, because they contain only some of the answers for our lives; but the classics cannot be ignored, for they contain wisdom we can ill-afford to overlook. (J. Cohen, 1964, p. 110)

A balance must be achieved between the study of Torah and the study of various other subjects of import to a complete Jewish education.

A Case Study from Reimer

In Succeeding at Jewish Education: How one Synagogue Made it Work, Reimer⁴⁹ takes an in-depth look at the new educational program of a Boston congregation. He spends more than a year observing the school, the students, and the congregation as a whole. What he finds is a school which has implemented a model of Jewish education which is Torah centered. The school is thriving in its approach. He finds the key lies in the "distinctive Torah" which denotes this community's understanding of Torah. "What makes this Torah effective...is its ability to build a bridge for them between the truths of their lives and those of the Jewish tradition as it has been taught in the past" (p. xvi). At this congregation, students are encouraged to look into the texts of the tradition for experiences and reflections contained within (p. xvi). Such application will not be easy to attain, but each school needs to find a way for people to see Torah as relevant and contemporary.

During his time at this congregation, Reimer had the opportunity to witness many Torah study classes in session. In this school, students start learning Bible early on and by seventh grade use the actual text for study. A high point of the religious school education are these classes taught by the rabbis in seventh and eighth grade which involve in-depth text study. Here we see entire curricular years centered on the theme of Torah study.

What Reimer discovers through his observation is students intensely engaged and

49. This entire section will be making reference to Succeeding at Jewish Education: How one Synagogue Made it Work by Reimer (1997). For remainder of this section, only page number will be used to denote material taken from this work.

overtly enjoying the study of Torah text. He speaks of one class in which the students are reading from Exodus and discussing the plague of killing the firstborn. He states:

The students are delivering their statements in rapid succession and in highly excited tones.... As one speaks, the second raises her hand and the third is commenting in stage whispers on why the logic of the other's statement is faulty. (p. 105)

It is clear from their reactions that the students are interested in and being challenged by the text. He also notes that the issues raised by the students are deep (p. 103). Here we have an example of a school which has opted to use text study with its students. From what Reimer has found, the result has been an overwhelming success. Rather than finding Torah to be boring and useless, the students are questioning the text and finding meaning within it.

Zot ha-Torah - A Textbook which Studies Text

Currently, a variety of texts have been published which seek to bring text into the classroom. These texts range the gamut of topics taught, and they all use sacred text to enhance the understanding of the learner. By examining one of these works, it becomes clear as to how text can effectively be used. An example of such a work is Zot ha-Torah written by Golub and Grishaver⁵⁰. This textbook is an exploration of the mitzvot by using the weekly Torah portions to help make meaning.

Zot ha-Torah is essentially a book that seeks to teach students mitzvot. The method through which this study occurs is that of an examination of Torah to discover

50. All further mention to to Zot ha-Torah by Golub and Grishaver (1994) will simply be denoted by work title.

the basis for the mitzvot system. The main concept of the curriculum is that mitzvot have their foundation in the Torah and that a greater understanding of the mitzvot can be achieved through text analysis. The book is organized in order of the weekly Torah portions, beginning with Bereshit. Each chapter begins with an overview of the portion as well as some exercises to help the student gain comfort with the topics the particular portion addresses. The chapter continues by delving deeper into the meaning of the text. Various Rabbinic sources are offered which compliment the theme of the portion and allow the students to delve further into the meaning. After this, the mitzvah of the week is presented and tied into the portion. Exercises and discussion are used to aid in the students' understanding of the mitzvah and of its link to Torah.

Zot ha-Torah envisions students engaged in active inquiry. The work seeks to get the learners to use the material and discover meaning for themselves. The book treats learners as individuals, each making meaning for him/herself. The work responds to the needs of a variety of learners. By providing a simple introduction to the text and an overview of the key words used, it seeks to remove any intimidation the students would have when encountering the text. Zot ha-Torah also allows for development of both the student who enjoys discussion and sharing ideas and for the student who prefers to sit back and listen while absorbing the discussion.

Zot ha-Torah on the whole does not reflect any ideological stance. The material strives to show the connection between the mitzvot system, the life of a Jew and Jewish history. The work teaches mitzvot, but at no point preaches to the student to practice the mitzvot. Zot ha-Torah could easily be adapted to fit the specific needs of any community.

The role of the teacher using this material is clearly that of a guide and as a source of knowledge. The text asks the students to discover meaning. The teacher should be encouraging the thought process while allowing students to develop understanding on their own. The teacher will need to have a good deal of personal knowledge concerning the mitzvot and the Torah. As the entire Torah portion is summarized to only a few main points, the teacher needs to be familiar with the entirety of the text in order to successfully guide the students and offer them additional insight when needed.

Overall, Zot ha-Torah offers both the student and the teacher a unique opportunity in the study of mitzvot. The writers of this work were clearly trying to create a text which would promote a deeper understanding of the Torah and its connection to the life of the Jew. As the textbook moves chronologically through the Torah, it also allows the students a new path to Torah study. It is likely that most students have studied some form of Torah in order to learn the stories presented within. Zot ha-Torah approaches Torah through a new set of lenses. Torah becomes a guide to the mitzvot system, and students focus not on the stories within the Torah but the moral messages contained within. Zot ha-Torah is an excellent example of a textbook which seeks to teach through the integration of Torah. Students using this work are able to dialogue with and question the text in order to make meaning of the mitzvot system and morality in Judaism.

A Test Site Using Text Study

I recently used a test site in order to experiment with students engaging in text study. At a conclave for seventh grade students, the programming was planned to center

around Torah study. The theme of the weekend was Tikkun Olam, and the participants delved into this topic by studying the story of Noah, through the Torah portion נח. The weekend's program revolved around the premise that Noah was being placed on trial for crimes against humanity. The students were divided into prosecution, defense and jury teams to study further and prepare for the mock trial. At the conclusion of the weekend, I interviewed twenty of the forty-five conclave participants⁵¹. The results gathered offer information concerning how students respond to text study and what learning can result from using this method.

The first question asked of the students was how they had learned about Noah in the past. Not one of the students noted the Torah or Torah study as a source of learning. 40% of the students claimed to have learned about Noah from their parents. Stories were cited by 35% of the students as a source of information, and 30% claimed to have learned about Noah from their teachers. Interestingly, 20% of students named music as being a source of information about Noah⁵². Among other sources noted were art & crafts projects, Noah's Ark toys, and a Noah's Ark themed episode of *Rugrats*. Most of these students probably first encountered Noah as young children. Therefore, it is not surprising that they cite their parents, stories and teachers as the sources of their first experiences of Noah.

The students were next asked what they thought about using the Torah text in their exploration of Noah. 65% of the students said they enjoyed taking part in text

51. Interview results can be found in Appendix B. From this point on, I will not cite any information or quotes which I take from the study, as all information can be found in Appendix B.

52. The song that immediately comes to my mind is the folk song "Rise and Shine."

study, and 60% of students noted that they found the text study to be interesting. As one student stated, "It gave me a new view of the story. I had always thought two of every animal was taken, but I now know that only one of every unclean animal was taken on the ark." Many students said that they felt they gained much detail and new insight concerning the Noah story. "It was so detailed. I got details of the ark like how many cubits and all." Text study offered these students the opportunity to learn about Noah through a more mature venue than they had in the past.

While more than half of the students found text study to be an interesting way to learn, there were those students who did not enjoy the experience. 20% of the students said they did not like participating in text study, and 40% noted that they found the activity to be boring. One student noted that reading the texts was too slow and that there are more enjoyable ways in which to learn. She continued by explaining that "I don't think text study is interesting. I know it's the Torah, but we keep seeing the same things over and over." Text study is not going to be appealing to all students. This does not mean that it should be left out of the curriculum. Instead, we must find new approaches to try and reach all students.

It is possible that the reason why some of the students did not appreciate the text study was because they found the text to be too challenging. 35% of the students surveyed said they found the text study to be hard⁵³. The text contains words and language that the students are unaccustomed to. Before they could struggle with the meaning behind the text, many students had to struggle with the basic meaning of the text. Students that had trouble understanding the text, may have felt uncomfortable with

53. The other 65% of the students did feel the text study was easy.

the entire study experience.

In the use of text study in our schools, we need to give students all the tools they will need to approach the text. Students who are intimidated by the text will not become full participants, and therefore, they will not learn as much. The greater danger is that these students will be turned off from the text for life. They will always regard Torah study as a laborious task which brings on feelings of discomfort. In order to prevent this, we must make text study a non-intimidating experience in which students of all abilities can find understanding.

There are various ways to ensure that text study will not become an insurmountable challenge for the student. As biblical text was written in a time much different than our own, the teacher of text must be aware of the language and social barriers which the student must cross to understand the text. Teachers can begin text study by reviewing difficult words and concepts that the class will encounter. Further, the teacher must provide the students with a bit of context pertaining to the text. Students need to be reminded where this text fits in with other texts that have been explored, so that they can make sense of the Torah as a whole⁵⁴.

Besides this, it is crucial that teachers create an open atmosphere for text study. Students need to feel comfortable in questioning the text. They need to be told that Jews

54. I have often come across students who confuse the times and peoples of the Bible. For example, recently a student told me that Abraham and Moses must have been friends, since they were both leaders of the Jewish people. While this assumption seems to make sense, anyone familiar with the Bible knows that Moses lived many generations after Abraham; and therefore, the two could not have known each other. In teaching the Torah, we need to be sure that students realize the span of history covered in the Bible. It is essential that students come to see the evolving nature of the Jewish religion as presented. Such a point is only possible when one understands that the Bible chronicles hundreds of generations of Jews.

are supposed to question, and that new interpretations can always be read into the ancient words. Students' answers to text study should not be viewed as right or wrong, rather all comments are acceptable.

The students were also asked whether they felt using the original text was important in learning about Noah. Being that all of the students came to the conclave with prior knowledge about Noah, they may have found it unnecessary to look at the text. 75% of the students felt the original text was important in their learning. As one student stated, "Now I know exactly what happened." In addition, "it is important because there are lots of things that you might not have known. I didn't know about Noah's wives and children." It is clear that the majority of the participants realized the value in studying the original text. Many of these seventh grade students came to the weekend with very basic understandings of the Noah story. By looking at the text, they were able to view Noah's Ark no longer as a child's tale but as a story with great moral significance.

In addition to looking at the Torah text of נח, the students were also given various commentaries containing midrashim to study. The purpose was two-fold. First, these commentaries offered the students new insights about Noah. Second, it gave us the chance to introduce the students to yet another form of Jewish scholarship. When questioned, only 35% of the students had studied Torah commentary before⁵⁵. "I thought studying the midrash was good, but confusing. There are a lot of different

55. It is possible that more students had been exposed to commentary, but they didn't realize what it was they were studying. In our program, the staff purposely explained to the students that they would be using commentary and exactly what the term commentary means. Not only was it important that the students learn from the commentaries, but it was equally important that they understood they were engaging in study of Rabbinic texts.

interpretations, so I didn't know which to believe at first." Studying the commentaries is not an easy task. As expressed by this student, it is hard to find understanding when so many variant interpretations are offered. One student felt it was important to look at the midrashim because possibly the Rabbis have a better opinion than we do. It is only through exploring different viewpoints that students will gain a full understanding. The midrashim served to challenge the students and get them to think about Noah in new ways.

The final question asked of the program participants was what they thought of the overall weekend programming. The question was specifically geared toward the educational programming of the weekend. The conclave experience was new for the majority of the students. 75% of the interviewed students said they enjoyed the program. In comparing the informal learning of the weekend to classroom learning, one student expressed his thoughts that "some teachers would have just taught us by having us read a book. I found this way to be much better." Another student noted that "we'll remember what we learned even if we didn't think we were learning." Although all the students did not express positive views of the text study programming, the majority of the participants did find the experience to be new and interesting.

As a result of the survey results as well as my own personal observations⁵⁶, the text study programming on seventh grade conclave appeared to be a success. The majority of the students were interested in the text study, and they took the opportunity to expand their knowledge. As I observed, it was clear that the students were interested in what they were reading and learning. Their constant questions of the text showed that

56. My observations can be found in Appendix C.

they were engaged with it. In my observations, I heard one student exclaim, "Look what I found here in the text. It is perfect." The students were excited about discovering new information within the text.

Even though the students came to the program with knowledge of Noah, they were open to looking at the story through a new set of lenses. Their comments showed that they were intrigued by much of what they read. Many students noted that the text provided them with information which they had not known before. One student even stated, "I learned stuff I didn't know before. Kind of like in Social Studies- when we were little, we were taught that Christopher Columbus discovered America. But, we got more advanced information as we grew older." The students would have been bored by studying Noah through childish stories. Instead, they got the chance to study the topic through a much more challenging format.

In addition, my observations showed the students were not only engaged in the text, but they were taking their understanding a step farther by applying what they were learning. While discussing the importance of following God's commands, one student commented, "Yeah- (it is) just like with your parents. You might not always want to do what they tell you, but you need to listen to what they say. They know more than we do." This student was internalizing her learning. She made the connection between the parallels in God/human relations and parent/child relations.

I was also impressed to see how the students made sense of the midrashim with which they were supplied. As already stated, many students expressed that they found the midrashim to be a little confusing. Still, they took on the challenge. In planning for their prosecution, one student expressed to the group that she wanted to compare Noah to

Abraham⁵⁷. Then another group member brought up the character of Og whom he had just read a midrash about⁵⁸. An engaged discussion followed in which the students discussed the ways Og could be used to support their point and also to oppose it.

It was apparent that the students were thinking. By formatting the program around a trial, the students were given the chance to apply their learning. The program moved them through various levels of understanding. This test site experience provides just one example of how text can be interwoven within the educational program and how students can become not only engaged, but enthused, about text study.

57. She had just read the midrash discussing how Abraham had pleaded for the people in Sodom.

58. This midrash speaks of King Og who survived the flood by latching on to the outside of the ark. Noah cuts a hole in the ark, so that he can pass water and food to Og. Therefore, Og does survive the flood.

Chapter 7 - Life Cycle: A Sample Curriculum

Text analysis can be used as an effective tool in the study of any area of Judaica. Incorporating text study into a curriculum has the advantages of not only enhancing the meaning of the particular topic but also promoting understanding for the connection that the Torah has to Jewish life and to the individual Jew. Moreover, when we expose Jews to text, we allow them to connect with their rich heritage. Rather than fostering communities in which Torah is seen on a pedestal which is only approached by the clergy, Torah can become integrated into our lives and move to the center of our learning communities.

Curriculum Overview

In line with my emphasis on the need for more Torah study in our schools, I have created a unit which incorporates text study into the teaching of Jewish life cycle. The curriculum is divided into four main units:

- Birth (*Mazel Tov!* It's a baby. Now what?)
- B'nai Mitzvah (From Childhood to Adult)
- Marriage (I Have Found the Love of a Lifetime)
- Death (The Journey Comes to an End)

The enduring understanding that is woven through the entire unit is: making meaning of the Jewish life cycle through the study of text. Life Cycle is a topic which is often taught, yet the study of life cycle usually does not incorporate the use of text. Jewish text

offers insight into our life cycle events, as well as offering students a connection to their Jewish history and heritage.

The target audience of this unit are students in fifth and sixth grade. This age group was chosen for a variety of reasons. Students of this age are beginning their journey from childhood to adulthood. They are generally curious, and they strive to understand the world around them. Additionally, by this age, students are developing more sophisticated cognitive frameworks, which allows for argumentation and reasoning. This unit seeks to build students' understanding of Jewish life cycle events by exploring Torah as a key to information. In addition, it seeks to connect students to the Bible and develop a level of comfort between the students and the text.

Each topic has a student packet from which the students can work and take notes. Each topic also has a teacher's guide which offers additional activities which compliment the unit. In some cases creative activities and art projects are suggested as well. The teacher should feel free to adapt and change the unit to fit his/her own students' needs and abilities. I have chosen to present the lessons in chronological order of the life cycle, as I feel this would be best for student comprehension. Each of the four topics studied could be used over a span of many class sessions. This unit could also be used as a supplement to a life cycle curriculum already in place and incorporated at opportune times.

Included in each unit is at least one piece of text which should be studied to compliment the learning. Upon beginning the unit, students should be told that one of the ways they will be learning about life cycle is through looking at texts from the Torah. It may be necessary for the teacher to schedule a lesson on Torah and its key components.

It is likewise critical that the teacher discuss with the students the fact that studying Torah is not an easy task. It is important for students realize that text study will be a challenge. All students will move at different paces, and it is essential that no student feel uncomfortable with the text. Each teacher will need to figure out what the best way is to approach the text within his/her own classroom.

The Torah study within the unit is based on the premise that the students have become Torah detectives. Each text comes with a worksheet entitled "Being a Torah Detective." Students should be encouraged to look for clues in the text and to write down any questions that they have. It is important that students spend time with the text rather than rushing through it. The goal is for students to enter into a conversation with the text- they need to be actively engaged in text study. The teacher's job is to elicit from the students their own understanding of the text's meaning.

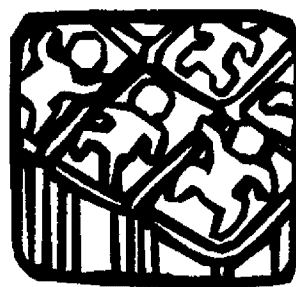
In order to effectively teach text, it is important to approach each piece of text with three main questions: What does it say?, What does it mean?, and What does it mean to me? It is critical that the students learn to distinguish between what is actually in the text and what can be read into the text. All text study should begin by looking at the basic meaning of the text. It is only after the students have successfully determined what the text says that they should move on to interpretation. It is at this point that students seek to discover what clues are found within the text and what these clues may tell us. It is also at this point that students and teachers can begin to understand the text and its meaning in light of their own lives.

I have sought to integrate a number of different teaching techniques or models into this unit. I envision that students will not only be able to understand the topic of

Jewish life cycle but will also be able to make meaning of it in their own lives. The activities planned are directed to fit the developmental needs of this age student and to reach varying needs of students. The unit allows students to explore both the Torah and Jewish life cycle in new ways and come to an understanding of the role that Torah plays in the life of a Jew.

Mazel Tov! It's a baby! Now What?

Brit Milah & Brit Bat



✧The Jewish religion has special ceremonies and rituals associated with all the milestones of life. The first of these milestones is birth. Judaism has different ceremonies to welcome a baby boy and a baby girl into the Jewish community.

✧On his eighth day of life, a baby boy has a *Brit Milah*. The Hebrew word *brit* means "covenant" and *milah* means "circumcision". So, a Jewish boy has a Covenant of Circumcision Ceremony. Jews are told to perform this *mitzvah* in the Torah.

✧In the text, we see God instructing Abraham to circumcise himself, his son, and all the males of his household. This was to be a sign of the covenant between God, Abraham, and all of Abraham's descendants.

✧If baby boys have a *Brit Milah*, then what about baby girls? The Torah only teaches about the ritual for a Jewish boy to enter the covenant. Today, there is also a ceremony, known as a *Brit Bat* or *Simchat Bat* which welcomes a Jewish girl into the covenant and the community.

Life Cycle Dictionary

Bar- son

Bat- daughter

Brit (bris) - covenant, agreement

Brit Bat or **Simchat Bat** - ceremony welcoming a daughter into the covenant

Milah - circumcision - ritual removal of the foreskin from the end of the penis

Mitzvah - commandment from God

Mohel - person who performs circumcision

Sandek - person who holds baby during circumcision

Sseudat Mitzvah - festive meal served after completing a mitzvah

✧ A covenant, or *brit*, is an agreement between God and a person, or group of people. In such an agreement, each person or group promises to do something for the other. Can you think of agreements which you have had with people? What did the agreement involve?

Let's look at some of *brits* which we can find in the Torah:

From Genesis, Chapter 9, verses 8-17



וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־נָח וְאֶל־כַּנָּן וְאֶת־שֵׁם אֱתָנָה לֵאמֹר: ט וְנֹחַ הֵנָּה מְקִים אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם וְאֶת־יֶרֶכְכֶם אֲחִירִיכֶם: י וְאֶת־כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר אִתְּכֶם בְּעוֹף בְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ אִתְּכֶם מִכָּל יִצְאֵי הַתְּבָה לְכָל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ: יא וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם וְלֹא־יִכָּרֵת כָּל־בִּשָּׁר עוֹד מִמֶּנִּי הַמִּבּוּל וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה עוֹד מִבּוּל לַשָּׁחַת הָאָרֶץ: יב וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים זֹאת אוֹת־הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי נֹתֵן בֵּינִי וּבֵינִיכֶם וּבֵין כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֲשֶׁר אִתְּכֶם לְדֹרֹת עוֹלָם: יג אֶת־קִשְׁתִּי נִתְּתִי בַעֲנַן וְהַיְתִיהָ לְאוֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵין הָאָרֶץ: יד וְהָיָה בַעֲנַן עָנָן עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְהָרָאָתָה הַקִּשְׁתִּי בַעֲנָן: טו וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר בֵּינִי וּבֵינִיכֶם וּבֵין כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכָל־בִּשָּׁר וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה עוֹד הַמַּיִם לַמִּבּוּל לַשָּׁחַת כָּל־בִּשָּׁר: טז וְהַיְתִיהָ הַקִּשְׁתִּי בַעֲנָן וְרֵאִיתִיהָ לְזִכָּר בְּרִית עוֹלָם בֵּין אֱלֹהִים וּבֵין כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכָל־בִּשָּׁר אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאָרֶץ: יז וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־נָח זֹאת אוֹת־הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר הִקְמַתִּי בֵּינִי וּבֵין כָּל־בִּשָּׁר אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

And God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "I now establish My covenant with you and your offspring to come, and with every living thing that is with you -birds, cattle, and every wild beast as well- all that have come out of the ark, every living thing on earth. I will maintain My covenant with you: never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." God further said, "This is a sign that I set for the covenant between Me and you, and every living creature with you, for all ages to come. I have set My bow in the clouds, and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. When I bring clouds over earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will remember My covenant between Me and you and every living creature among all flesh, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures, all flesh that is on earth. That," God said to Noah, "shall be the sign of the covenant that I have established between Me and all flesh that is on earth."

From Genesis, Chapter 17, verses 3 - 14

וַיִּפֹּל אַבְרָם עַל-פָּנָיו וַיְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר: דְּאֵלֵי הַנֶּחָה בְּרִיתִי אִתָּךְ וְהָיִיתָ לְאֵב הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם: ה' וְלֹא-יִשְׂרָאֵל
עוֹד אֶת-שְׁמֶךָ אַבְרָם וְהָיָה שְׁמֶךָ אַבְרָהָם כִּי אֲב-הַמּוֹן גּוֹיִם נִתְּתִיד: וְהִפְרִיתִי אֹתְךָ בְּמֵאֹד מְאֹד וְנִתְּתִיד לְגוֹיִם
וּמְלָכִים מִמֶּנִּי יֵצְאוּ: [שְׁבִיעִי] וְנִקְמַתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶךָ וּבֵין זָרְעֶךָ אַחֲרַיִךְ לְדֹרֹתָם לְבְרִית עוֹלָם לִהְיוֹת לְךָ
לְאֱלֹהִים וְלִזְרַעְךָ אַחֲרַיִךְ: ח וְנִתְּתִי לְךָ וּלְזָרְעֶךָ אַחֲרַיִךְ אֶת | אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן לְאֵחָזָת עוֹלָם וְהִנֵּיתִי
לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים: ט וְאָמַר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-אַבְרָהָם וְאָתָּה אֶת-בְּרִיתִי תִשְׁמֹר אַתָּה וְזָרְעֶךָ אַחֲרַיִךְ לְדֹרֹתָם: י וְאַתָּה
בְּרִיאִי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּ בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין זָרְעֶךָ אַחֲרַיִךְ הַמּוֹל לָכֶם כָּל-זָכָר: יא וְהִמְלַחֵם אֶת בָּשָׂר עָרְלָתְכֶם וְהָיָה
לְאוֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם: יב וְכָרְשִׁמְנֶת יָמִים יְמוֹל לָכֶם כָּל-זָכָר לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם יֶלֶד בָּיִת וּמִקְנֵת-כֶּסֶף מִכָּל בֶּרֶךְ
אֲשֶׁר לֹא מִזְרַעְךָ הוּא: יג הַמּוֹל | יְמוֹל יֶלֶד בֵּיתָךְ וּמִקְנֵת כֶּסֶף וְהָיְתָה בְּרִיתִי בִּבְשָׂרְכֶם לְבְרִית עוֹלָם: יד וְעָרַל |
זָכָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא יְמוֹל אֶת-בָּשָׂר עָרְלָתוֹ וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מֵעַמִּיהָ אֶת-בְּרִיתִי הִפֵּר:

Abram threw himself on his face, and God spoke to him further: "As for Me, this is My covenant with you: You shall be the father of a multitude of nations. And you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I make you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fertile, and make nations of you; and kings shall come forth from you. I will maintain my covenant between Me and you, and your offspring to come, as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages, to be God to you and to your offspring to come. I assign the land you travel in to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding. I will be their God.

God said further to Abraham, "As for you, you and your offspring to come throughout the ages shall keep My covenant. Such shall be the covenant between Me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep: every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and that shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. And throughout the generations, every male among you shall be circumcised at the age of eight days. As for the homeborn slave and the one bought from an outsider who is not of your offspring, they must be circumcised, homeborn, and purchased alike. Thus shall My covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting pact. And if any male who is uncircumcised fails to circumcise the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his kin; he has broken My covenant."

Being a Torah Detective.....



★What do we learn in these passages? _____

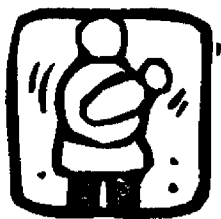
★What makes a covenant sacred? _____

★What are different marks/signs of covenants? _____

★What do we learn from the Torah about God's relationship with humans? _____

★Why is a covenant important? _____

★Questions you have about the text: _____



The Brit Milah Ceremony

The Brit Milah ceremony is quite simple. Here is the basic procedure:

- ✧The baby is carried into the room by his godparents and all guests say, "Welcome: you are blessed in your coming."
- ✧The baby is given to the *mohel*, the person who will perform the circumcision.
- ✧The baby is then placed on a pillow in the lap of the *sandek*. The *sandek* is the person who holds the baby during the circumcision. The *sandek* sits in a special chair known as the chair of Elijah the prophet.
- ✧Next, the *mohel* performs the act of circumcision. It is a quick and almost painless act.
- ✧The *mohel* recites the Kiddush, and even the baby is given a ceremonial taste of the wine. The *mohel* also announces the child's Hebrew name at this point.
- ✧Everyone celebrates and enjoys a *seudat mitzvah*, a meal celebrating the completion of a *mitzvah*.

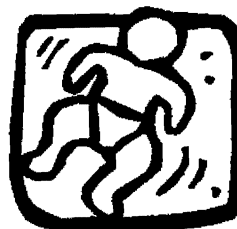
What is a *Brit Bat*?

✧The tradition of circumcision is very old. As we just learned, Abraham was the first Jew instructed by God to complete the act of circumcision. New traditions have arisen in the Jewish community to welcome a baby girl into the covenant. Such ceremonies are usually called *Brit Bat*, meaning Covenant of the Daughter, or *Simchat Bat*, which means Rejoicing of the Daughter. Welcoming ceremonies for girls have become very popular. Such ceremonies typically involve various blessings and the giving of the Hebrew name.

Your Task

Now that you have learned the basics of a *Brit Milah* ceremony, you will need to create and act out for the class a model ceremony. In your skit, you should include the following:

- a new prayer for the ceremony
- a new symbol of the covenant



Jot down some ideas....

Naming a Jewish Child

✧A person's name is very important. It would be hard to live in a world where people didn't have names. A name gives a person identity. For Jews, names are particularly important because they have meaning.

✧Jewish babies are given Hebrew names. For most people, their Hebrew name is not the name that they use everyday. The Hebrew name is reserved for Jewish rituals, such as when

you are called to the Torah or when you are married. A person's Hebrew name is how they are recognized in the Jewish community.

SHIRA

✧ In English, many people have a first, a middle and a last name. Hebrew names work differently.

ISAAC

A Hebrew name begins with a first name which is followed by either the word *bat* or *ben*. *Bat* means

Yael

"daughter of" and *ben* means "son of". The *bat* or *ben* is followed by your parents' Hebrew names.

PERETZ

✧ There are many ways in which parents choose a Hebrew name for their child. Ashkenazic Jews often name a child after a deceased relative to honor them, while Sephardic Jews often name a child after a living relative as an honor. Many parents choose biblical names, such as Abraham, Sarah, Noah or Miriam for their child. Some parents pick Hebrew names for their child that has a special meaning. For example, the name Shoshanna means "rose" and the name Barak means "thunder".

What's in Your Name?

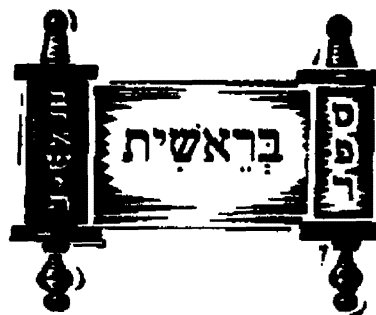
My Hebrew name is _____ ben/bat _____

It means _____

I was named after _____ because _____

My parents choose this name because _____

✧ In the Torah we learn about how many people received their names. For example, in the story of Creation, God gives Adam the task of naming all the creatures of the earth. Below you will read about how Leah chose to name some of her children. Do you



remember that Leah was one of Jacob's wives, and she was Rachel's sister? Jacob had originally wanted to marry Rachel, but her father Laban tricked Jacob, and he married Leah instead. After he married Leah, he also took Rachel as a wife. Although Leah conceived many more children than her sister, she always felt second best to Rachel, Jacob's first love. As you read, think about the names she chose and why. What do you think of her choices?

From Genesis, Chapter 29, verses 3 - 14

וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי־שְׁנוּאָהּ לֵאָה וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת־רִחְמָהּ וַיֵּרָחַל עֶקְרָהּ: לֵב וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ רְאוּבֵן כִּי אָמַרָה כִּי־רָאָה יְהוָה בְּעֵנָי כִּי עָתָה נֶאֱהַבְנִי אִישִׁי: לֵב וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי־שָׁמַע יְהוָה כִּי־שְׁנוּאָהּ אֲלַי וַיִּתֵּן־לִי גַם־אֶת־זֶה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ שִׁמְעוֹן: לֵב וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר עָתָה הִפְעַם יִלְוֶה אִישִׁי אֵלַי כִּי־יִלְדָּתִי לוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמוֹ לֵוִי: לֵב וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתֹּאמֶר הִפְעַם אוֹדָה אֶת־יְהוָה עַל־כֵּן קָרָאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה וַתַּעֲמֹד מִלְּדוֹת:

God saw that Leah was unloved and he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. Leah conceived and bore a son, and named him Reuben; for she declared, "It means: 'God has seen my affliction'; it also means: 'Now my husband will love me.'" She conceived again and bore a son, and declared, "This is because God heard that I was unloved and has given me this one also"; so she named him Simeon. Again she conceived and bore a son and declared, "This time my husband will become attached to me, for I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi. She conceived again and bore a son, and declared, "This time I will praise God." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

Being a Torah Detective.....



✧What do we learn in this passage? _____

✧What are the different names Leah gives her sons and what do they mean?

Name _____ Means _____

Name _____ Means _____

Name _____ Means _____

Name _____ Means _____

✧What do you think is most important about the names she chooses? _____

✧Do you notice anything interesting or odd about the names she picks? _____

✧Questions you have about the text: _____

How to Choose a Name

If you had to choose a name for a baby, what would it be? _____

Why would you choose this name? _____

Mazel Tov! It's a baby! Now what?

Teacher's Guide

Enduring Understanding

Making meaning of the Jewish life cycle event of birth.

Essential Questions

- What happens when a Jewish baby is born?
- What is *Brit Milah* and *Brit Bat*?
- What is the importance of Hebrew names?
- What does the Torah teach us about the Jewish life cycle event of birth?

Evidence of Understanding

A student really understands the Jewish life cycle event of birth, when he/she can:

- explain the terms *Brit Milah* and *Brit Bat* and covenant
- describe the key components of a *Brit Milah* ceremony
- show the importance of a Hebrew name
- design his/her own *Brit Milah* ceremony
- analyze Torah text to see the roots of *Brit Milah* and of Hebrew names

Learning Experiences and Instruction

- The unit begins with an overview of *Brit Milah*. You could begin the lesson by asking students to brainstorm a list of the things they already know about *Brit Milah*. Make the list on the board, and at this point, there is no need to correct the students if the information they provide is incorrect.
- The unit also opens with a Life Cycle dictionary of words that will come up in the unit and be useful for the students as a resource.
- The next topic is covenant. You can lead a class discussion about what a covenant is. Ask students about agreements that they have made in the past. What are the important components of an agreement/contract?
Creative Activity - Students create their own covenants. These covenants could be between each other, with family members, or even between the students and the teacher.

Text Study: Two pieces of text from Genesis are provided which both deal with covenants. One text is the covenant of the rainbow and the other is the covenant of circumcision. The text is followed

by "Being a Torah Detective" questions. There are many ways the text can be explored.

- You can explore the text aloud as a class. Students can then either individually or as a group answer the questions.

- You can divide students into smaller groups to explore the text

- You can divide the students into two groups, each one given one of the pieces of text to examine. Students will need to teach the other half about what they learned from their piece of text.

- After a description of the *Brit Milah* ceremony and the *Brit Bat*, the students are given a task of re-enacting a *Brit Milah*. In doing so, they should also create a new prayer for the ceremony as well as a new symbol of the covenant. You can have students perform their skit for the class or possibly for the whole grade.

Creative Activity - You could bring in pictures of the ritual objects used during a *Brit Milah* for the students to look at and discuss.

- At this point, you could add in a discussion of the wimpel. A wimpel is a piece of decorated cloth that is used to wrap the baby. Afterwards, the wimpel is used as a wrap for the Torah.

Creative Activity - You can have students decorate their own wimpels or you can make a class wimpel to give to the temple.

- In discussing names, you can discuss what a name tells us about a person. You can also talk about nicknames and what they mean. You can have students think about what they think their ideal name would be.

Creative Activity - You can bring a baby girl doll and boy doll to class and have the class determine a name for each of the dolls. The name would have to hold some kind of significance.

- You can also discuss with the students the meaning of last names or Jewish family names. Many Jewish last names have meanings that are related to the job or trade of an ancestor. You can look at the meanings behind different Jewish last names and determine the meaning behind some of the student's last names.

Text Study: A piece of text is provided in which Leah names her first four sons. Be sure to review who Leah is before diving into the text.

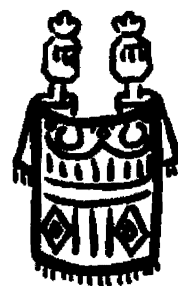
Some things to consider:

- This discussion can lead into a discussion of the tribes of Israel and the importance of the Levites.

- It is significant that in naming Judah, Leah thanks God- you can discuss why it is important to offer thanks to God upon the birth of a child.

From Childhood to Adult

Bar/Bat Mitzvah



✧At the age of 13 a young man or woman becomes an adult in the Jewish community. A young man comes *Bar Mitzvah*, or a “son of the commandment” and a young woman becomes *Bat Mitzvah* or a “daughter of the commandment”. This means that the individual is now responsible to fulfill the commandments and responsibilities expected of adult members of the community.

✧In the Jewish community, a person becoming *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is usually marked by a special ceremony in which the individual reads publically from the Torah. While most *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* ceremonies take place on Shabbat, the Torah can also be read on Mondays and Thursdays.

✧In addition to reading from the Torah, most *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvahs* also take part in leading the congregation in worship, in reading a *Haftarah* portion, which is a reading from the Prophets or Writings, and in offering a *D'var Torah*, an explanation of the Torah portion read.

✧When a Jew is called to the Torah, he/she is called by his/her Hebrew name. It is an honor to be called up to the Torah, which is called an *aliyah*. The word *aliyah* means “going up”.

Life Cycle Dictionary

Aliyah - the honor of being called up to the Torah

Bar Mitzvah- son of the commandment

Bat Mitzvah - daughter of the commandment

Haftarah - a reading from the Prophets or Writings

Tallit - prayer shawl

Trope - a special chant used for reciting the Torah and *Haftarah*

Yad - pointer used when you read from the Torah

The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* Ceremony



At any synagogue that you attend, you will see a different *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony. While there are certain components that change, here are the main events of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony:

✧The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* leads the congregation in worship.

✧The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* reads from the Torah. The reading is usually chanted using *Trope*, a special chant used when reciting Torah and *Haftarah* portions. Relatives and other important people will be called upon to have *aliyot*.

✧The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* next chants the *Haftarah* portion.

✧The *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* gives a *D'var Torah*, a speech in which the Torah portion just read is explained. Many students also add to their *D'var Torah* by thanking their family and friends that helped them reach this milestone event.

✧The ceremony is followed by a festive meal, a *Seudat Mitzvah*, where everyone celebrates.

Let's Think

What do you do with the following ritual objects at a
Bar/Bat Mitzvah?



Tallit _____

Wine cup _____

Yad _____

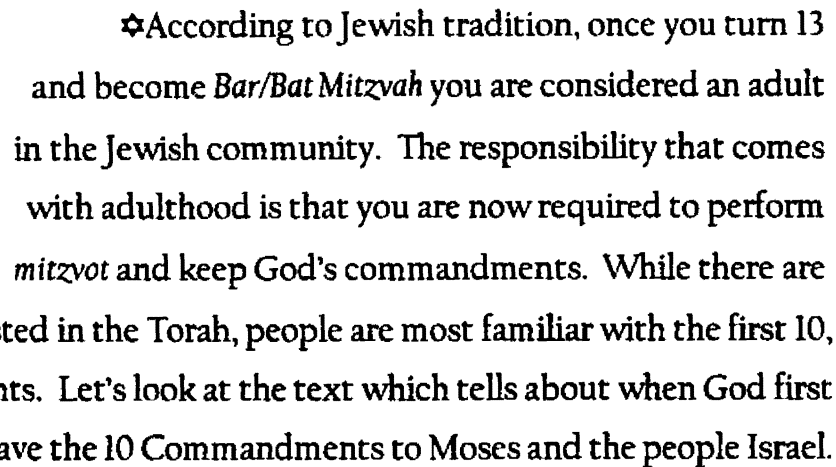
Kippah _____

Torah _____

What is *Haftarah* all about?

✧ There are many important books in Judaism besides the Torah. Two of these other books are known as the Prophets and Writings. When you become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, you will not only read from the Torah, but you will also read a portion of either the Prophets or Writings known as *Haftarah*. The reading of the *Haftarah* concludes the Torah service.

✧ Just like when reading from the Torah, reading of the *Haftarah* is chanted. Also similar to the reading of the Torah is that there are blessings which come before and after the reciting of a *Haftarah*.



וידבר אלהים את כל הדברים האלה לאמר: **ס** ב אלקי יהוה אלהיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מִבְּתֵּי עֲבָדִים: **ג** לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים על פני: **ד** לא תעשה לך פֶסֶל וְכָל תְּמוּנָה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׁמַיִם מַמְעַל וְאֲשֶׁר בָּאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת וְאֲשֶׁר בַּמַּיִם מִתַּחַת לָאָרֶץ: **ה** לא תשתחוה להם וְלֹא תַעֲבֹדֵם כִּי אֵלֵּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אַל קָטָא פֶקֶד עוֹן אֲבֹת עַל בְּנֵים עַל שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל דּוֹבְעִים לְשָׁנָיִ: ו תַּעֲשֶׂה חֶסֶד לְעַלְפִּים לְאֹהֲבֵי וּלְשֹׂמְרֵי מִצְוֹת: **ס** ז לא תשא את שם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹא כִּי לֹא תַשָּׂה יְהוָה אֶת אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׂא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ לְשׁוֹא: **פ** ח זָכוֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ: **ט** עֲשֵׂת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעֲשִׂיתָ כָּל־מְלָאכָתָה: **י** ויוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כָל־מְלָאכָה אַתָּה | וּבִנְךָ וּבִתֶּךָ עֲבָדָה וְבַמֶּנְהָל וְגַרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ: **יא** כִּי עֲשֵׂת־יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל־פִּנּוּ בָרָךְ יְהוָה אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ: **ס** **יב** כִּפְדוּ אֶת־אֲבִיבְךָ וְאֶת־אִמְּךָ לְמַעַן יֵאָרְכוּ יָמֶיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ: **ס** **יג** לֹא תִרְצַח **ס** לֹא תִנָּאֵף **ס** לֹא תִגְלֹב **ס** לֹא תַעֲנֶה בְרַעַץ עַד שִׁקְרָה: **ס** **יד** לֹא תִחַמֵּד בֵּית רֵעֶךָ **ס** לֹא־תִחַמֵּד אִשֶּׁת רֵעֶךָ וְעַבְדּוֹ וַאֲמָתוֹ וְשׁוֹרֹ וַחֲמֹרֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ:

You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earths below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, Adonai your God am an

impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not swear falsely by the name of your God, for God will not clear one who swears falsely by his name. Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of Adonai your God: you shall not do any work - you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements. For in six days God made the heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and God rested on the seventh day; therefore God blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that Adonai your God is assigning to you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

Being a Torah Detective.....



★What do we learn in this passage? _____

★List the 10 Commandments in the order they appear in the text.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

★Do you find anything interesting about the order of the 10 Commandments? _____

★What do we learn about our responsibility to observe the 10 Commandments? _____

★Questions you have about the text: _____

The Meaning of Bar/Bat Mitzvah to Me

You just read about the responsibility which will become yours once you become *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. Even though you are not yet obligated to observe the commandments, that does not mean that you should ignore them. In fact, there are probably many commandments that you already observe as an individual, in your family, or with your community.

Make a list of commandments that you already observe:

If you had to choose one new commandment to begin observing on your next birthday what would it be? _____

Why? _____

As a class, or in a small group, decide upon one commandment that your class will begin to observe for the remainder of the year (it does not need to be one of the 10 Commandments- ask your teacher for help thinking of some others).

Commandment: _____

Why did you choose this? _____

Will it be hard for your classmates to observe? _____

From Childhood to Adult

Teacher's Guide

Enduring Understanding

Making meaning of the Jewish life cycle event of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.

Essential Questions

- What is the meaning of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*?
- What does *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* mean to me?
- What is the significance of the 10 Commandments?
- What does the Torah teach us about the Jewish life cycle event of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*?

Evidence of Understanding

A student really understands the Jewish life cycle event of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, when he/she can:

- explain the terms *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*
- describe the key components of a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony
- distinguish and explain ritual objects used at a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony
- analyze Torah text to see the roots of Jewish responsibility in the 10 Commandments
- make meaning of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* in their own lives

Learning Experiences and Instruction

- The unit begins with an overview of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. You could begin the lesson by asking students what they think the terms *Bar & Bat Mitzvah* mean. It is important to see what perceptions they already have concerning this life cycle event.
- Students are provided with the Life Cycle dictionary of important words that will come up in the unit. Prior to showing them the dictionary, you could write the words on the board and ask the class

to come up with the definition of each. You can then hand out the dictionary and allow the students to see which definitions they knew correctly and which they did not.

-In discussing the term *aliyah*, you can also make the connection to the use of this word in meaning "moving to Israel", "making *aliyah*." After going over the term, you can ask the class to make connections between the two uses of the word. What is similar between having an *aliyah* and making *aliyah*? Why do you think the same term is used in both of these instances?

-In describing the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony, the unit mentions the term *trope*. You could add to this unit by providing students with a mini-lesson on *trope* and cantillation. If you are not capable of leading the lesson yourself, you can invite the cantor to class to teach students some of the basics of cantillation. Such an addition would be extremely interesting for students who are musically inclined, as well as it would give the students the chance to learn from a member of the clergy.

-In describing the ceremony, the unit also speaks about *D'var Torah*. One interesting way to add to the lesson would be to pair the students up and give each a different piece of text (probably from Genesis) which they will have to study and prepare a *D'var Torah* on. The students will then share their *D'var Torah* with the class, and this could lead to further discussion.

Creative Activity - You can give the students (either individually or in groups) a piece of text to create an artistic *D'var Torah* on. You can supply the class with a variety of materials, such as crayons, markers, clay, glue, glitter, fabric, paints and even disposable cameras. The task will be to study the given portion and then create an artistic representation of what it means to them.

-In the "Let's Think" section, students are asked to define some ritual objects related to *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. You could add to this by bringing in a variety of pictures of each of these objects. These pictures can show these ritual objects from different times in history as well as different places. This will give students a chance to learn about the variety of ways that people create and use ritual objects.

Creative Activity - After looking at pictures of these objects, you can allow students to create their own ritual object. Many of the objects listed can easily be made in the classroom. You

can buy wine glasses which can be decorated by the students. You can also buy kippot which they decorate or embroider.

-In discussing Haftarah, it may be interesting to introduce the students to the Haftarah blessings, if they don't already know them. In addition, you may want to look at a piece of text from Prophets or Writings, since it is likely that the students are unfamiliar with it. Two texts which could make for interesting discussion would be Jonah and Ruth.

Text Study: A piece of text is provided in which God first speaks the 10 Commandments to Moses.

- Before looking at the text, it may be interesting to see if the students are able to come up with the 10 Commandments on the board.

- This text could be looked at as a whole, in small groups, or even individually.

The "Being a Torah Detective" ?s will guide students to think about the meaning and order of the 10 Commandments and about what it means to be commanded. You could add to the discussion by having students re-order the 10 Commandments according to their view of importance.

Creative Activity - You could ask each student to pick one commandment which resonates with him/her. Tell students that you need to be convinced which commandment is the most important. The student then must write a creative essay, a commercial or an advertisement for why this commandment is the most important. You could also do this activity in groups and have students create campaigns for a particular commandment.

-As another way of relating *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* to the lives of the students, you can prompt them with the following questions:

- What were the best and worse *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* I have ever attended?

- What made one bad and one good?

- What do I want people to remember about my *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*?

- What values do I want to see incorporating into my own *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*?

Students could first be asked to individually answer these questions in their own notebook before discussing with the class. Using these questions, you could then lead a discussion about the importance of staying focused on the ritual and religious significance of *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* rather than getting caught up in the celebration.

I Have Found the Love of a Lifetime



Marriage

✧ In Judaism, there are many unique rituals associated with the life cycle event of marriage. In modern times, the process of marriage begins when two people fall in love and get engaged to be married. In ancient times, marriages were arranged by a *shadchan*, or matchmaker.

✧ In biblical Hebrew, there is no precise word which means marriage. Instead, the word *kiddushin* is used to refer to the wedding ceremony. The word *kiddushin* means "making holy". In Judaism, the act of marriage is a holy act, and the bride and groom bring holiness into the world through it.

✧ The process of getting married begins before the wedding ceremony. On the Shabbat preceding the wedding, the celebration begins with the *aufruf*. The *aufruf* is the special honor of the bride, "kallah", and the groom, "chatan" being called to the Torah for an *aliyah*. It is also customary for the Rabbi to bless the couple at the *aufruf*. Traditionally at the end of the Torah service, the guests throw small candies at the couple to wish them a sweet future.

Life Cycle Dictionary

Aufruf - tradition of bride & groom being called for an *aliyah* prior to their wedding

Bedeken - ceremony where the groom veils the bride

Chatan - groom

Chuppah - wedding canopy

Kallah - bride

Ketubah - marriage contract

Kiddushin - betrothal/ wedding ceremony

Shadchan - matchmaker

Sheva Brachot - seven blessings said during the wedding ceremony



The Marriage Ceremony

Here are the main characteristics of all Jewish wedding ceremonies:

✧The bride and groom are escorted to the *chuppah* by their parents.

✧The Rabbi recites the blessing over the wine and both the bride and groom take a sip.

✧The rings are exchanged. As part of the ring ceremony, the bride and groom recite these ancient words: "By this ring you are consecrated unto me according to the law of Moses and all Israel." The acceptance of the ring is the Jewish way of saying "I do".

✧The Rabbi speaks about the couple and offers them wishes and advice for their future together. Then, the Rabbi reads the *ketubah*.

✧The *Sheva Brachot*, or seven blessings, are recited by the Rabbi or Cantor, or both.

✧A second cup of wine is sipped by the bride and groom.

✧The couple is pronounced married by the Rabbi.

✧The groom smashes a glass with his foot and the guests all shout "Mazel Tov!"

What is a Ketubah?

✧The *ketubah* is a Jewish marriage contract. It is an agreement between the bride and the groom which spells out the obligations which each will have to one another. The *ketubah* has been used for more than two thousand years. A traditional *ketubah* is written in Aramaic, but today most *ketubot* are written in Hebrew and may include an English translation.

✧The *ketubah* is signed prior to the wedding ceremony. Two witnesses are required for the *ketubah* signing. Jewish law requires that the witnesses be adult, Jewish and not related by blood or marriage to the bride or groom. It is traditional for the witnesses, as well as the bride and groom, to sign the *ketubah* in Hebrew.

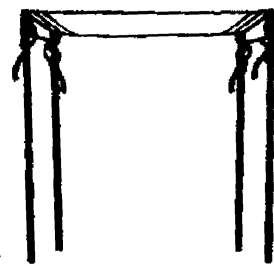
Let's Think



A *ketubah* lists the obligations which a bride and groom will have to each other in their marriage. What do you think would be important responsibilities to include?

My *ketubah* would contain the following obligations:

What is a *Chuppah*?



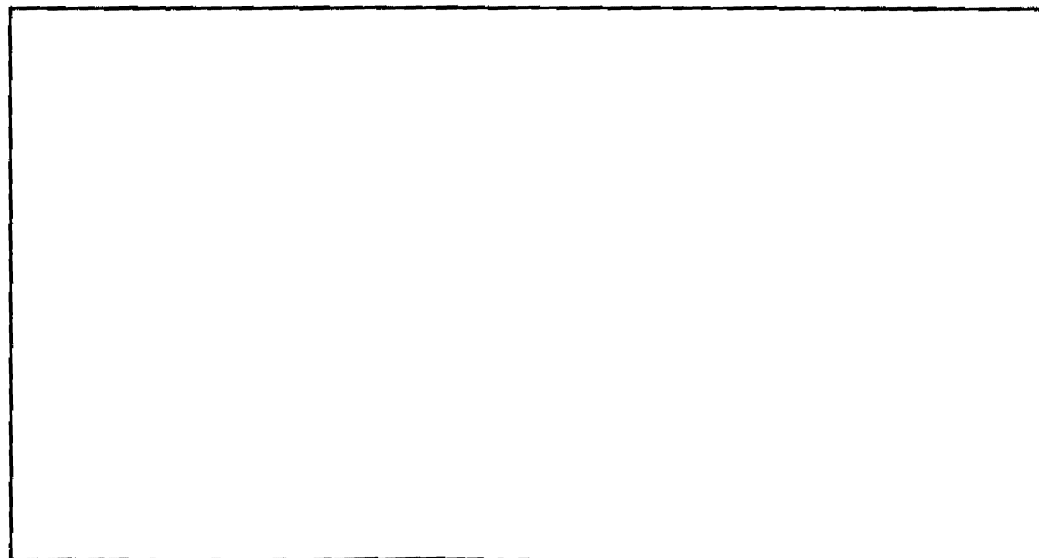
✧ A *chuppah* is the wedding canopy under which the bride and groom are united in marriage. The *chuppah* symbolizes the home that the bride and groom will create as husband and wife.

✧ The *chuppah* is basically made of four poles and a cloth covering which hangs like a small tent. Today, a *chuppah* can come in many varieties. A *chuppah* can simply be a *tallit* held up by four poles. A more elaborate *chuppah* can be made from fabric, and others are decorated with flowers.

✧ In ancient Israel, it was customary to plant a tree on the occasion of the birth of a child. When the child married, the branches from the tree were used as *chuppah* poles and the leaves of the tree decorated the canopy.

Your Turn

Design a *chuppah*. Include the canopy, inscriptions, flowers, and anything else you think is important.



✧ In the Torah we learn about many different people that get married. Two of the first marriages that we learn about are between Isaac and Rebekah and then between Jacob and Leah. Both of these instances are important in learning about marriage in the Torah.

✧ In both cases, there is a mention of the bride being veiled. Today, *bedeken* is the veiling ceremony, and its origins are from these original sources. During the *bedeken*, the groom comes to officially claim his bride. The groom then lowers the veil over the bride's face. According to one tradition, *bedeken* developed to prevent a recurrence of what happened to Jacob when he was tricked into marrying Leah. Other traditions view the *bedeken* ceremony as an act of modesty, as exhibited in the tale of Rebekah. Read the two texts below and see what you can discover about the tradition of *bedeken*.

From Genesis, Chapter 24, verses 62 - 67

וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לֵשׂוֹחַ בְּשָׂדֶה לַפְּנוֹת עָרֶב וַיֵּשָׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה גַמְלִים בָּאִים: סוּד וַתֵּשֶׂא רִבְקָה אֶת-עֵלֶיהָ וַתֵּרָא אֶת-יִצְחָק וַתִּפֹּל מֵעַל הַגָּמֶל: סוּד וַתֹּאמֶר אֵל-הַעֲבָד מִי-הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה לֵכֵן בְּשָׂדֶה לִקְרֹאֲתִנִּי וַתֹּאמֶר הַעֲבָד הוּא אֲדֹנִי וַתִּשָּׂח הַצִּעִרָה וַתִּתְכַּס: סוּ וַיְסַפֵּר הַעֲבָד לְיִצְחָק אֶת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: סוּ וַיְבָאָהּ יִצְחָק הָאֵלֶּלֶה שָׂרָה אִמּוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת-רִבְקָה וַתְּהִי לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיִּמָּחֲבֶה וַיִּתְּנָם יִצְחָק אֲחֵרֵי אִמּוֹ:

And Isaac went out walking in the field toward evening and, looking up, he saw camels approaching. Raising her eyes, Rebekah saw Isaac. She alighted from the camel and said to the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field toward us?" And the servant said, "That is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. The servant told Isaac all the things he had done. Isaac then brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he took Rebekah as his wife. Isaac loved her, and thus found comfort after his mother's death.

From Genesis, Chapter 29, verses 16 - 28

וּלְלֶבֶן שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת שֵׁם הַגְּדֹלָה לֵאָה וְשֵׁם הַקְּטָנָה רָחֵל: יוֹ וַעֲיָנִי לֵאָה רַבּוֹת וְרַחֵל קְטָנָה וַיִּפְתּוּ מִרְאָה: [שְׁלִישִׁי] יח וַיֵּאָמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶת־רַחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֶעֱבֹדָךְ שִׁבְעָ שָׁנִים בְּרַחֵל בְּתוּךְ הַקְּטָנָה: יט וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן טוֹב תַּתִּי אֹתָהּ לָךְ מִתַּתִּי אֹתָהּ לְאִישׁ אֲחֵר שָׁבָה עִמָּדִי: כ וַיַּעֲבֹד יַעֲקֹב בְּרַחֵל שִׁבְעָ שָׁנִים וַיְהִי בְעֵינָיו קַיָּמִים אֲחִיזִים בְּאֶהְבָתוֹ אֹתָהּ: כא וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־לָבָן הִבֵּה אֶת־אִשְׁתִּי כִּי מְלָאָה יָמִי וַאֲבֹאָה אֵלֶיךָ: כב וַיֹּאסֹף לָבָן אֶת־כָּל־אֲנָשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם וַיַּעַשׂ מִשְׁתֶּה: כג וַיְהִי בַעֲרֹב וַיִּשָּׂח אֶת־לֵאָה בָּתָּו וַיָּבֵא אֹתָהּ אֵלָיו וַיָּבֵא אֵלֶיךָ: כד וַיִּתֵּן לָבָן לָהּ אֶת־זִלְפָּה שִׁפְחָתוֹ לְלֵאָה בָּתָּו שִׁפְחָה: כה וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וַהֲזִיחָהּ לֵאָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־לָבָן מִה־זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ לִּי הֲלֹא בְרַחֵל עָבַדְתִּי עָמָד וְלָמָּה רָמִיתִנִּי: כו וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן לֹא־יַעֲשֶׂה בִּן בְּמִקְוָמֹנִי לְתֵת הַצְעִירָה לְפָנֵי הַבְּכִירָה: כז מִלֹּא שִׁבְעָ זֹאת וְתַתֶּנָּה לָךְ גַּם־אֶת־זֹאת בְּעִבְדָּהּ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲבֹד עִמָּדִי עוֹד שִׁבְע־שָׁנִים אַחֲרוֹת: כח וַיַּעַשׂ יַעֲקֹב לָבָן וַיְמַלֵּא שִׁבְעָ זֹאת וַיִּתֵּן־לוֹ אֶת־רַחֵל בָּתָּו לִּי לְאִשָּׁה:

Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older one was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes; Rachel was shapely and beautiful. Jacob loved Rachel; so he answered, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "Better that I give her to you than that I should give her to an outsider. Stay with me." So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is fulfilled, that I may cohabit with her." And Laban gathered all the people of the place and made a feast. When evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to him; and he cohabited with her. Laban had given his maidservant Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her maid.

When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I was in your service for Rachel! Why did you deceive me?" Laban said, "It is not practice in our place to marry off the younger before the older. Wait until the bridal week of this one is over and we will give you that one too, provided you serve me another seven years." Jacob did so; he waited out the bridal week of the one, and then he gave his daughter Rachel as wife.

Being a Torah Detective.....



✧What do we learn in these passages about marriage in biblical times? _____

✧What is interesting or odd about the way that Isaac and Rebekah become husband and wife? _____

✧Why do you think that Rebekah covers her face with a veil upon meeting Isaac? _____

✧What is different about the wedding of Jacob and Leah? _____

✧How is a veil used in the story of Jacob and Leah? _____

✧Questions you have about the text: _____

✧Now that you have read the text, why do you think that the Jewish wedding contains the *bedeken* ceremony? _____

The Sheva Brachot

✧Towards the end of the wedding ceremony, the Seven Blessings of Marriage, or *Sheva Brachot*, are recited. Although the *Sheva Brachot* are usually recited by the Rabbi or Cantor, sometimes friends of the bride and groom may be called upon to recite the blessings.

7 BLESSINGS

✧The *Sheva Brachot* are as follows:

1. Blessing over the wine
2. Blessing for God who created everything.
3. Blessing for God who created man and woman.
4. Blessing for God who created man and woman in God's image.
5. Blessing for the happiness of Jerusalem.
6. Blessing for the happiness of the bride and groom.
7. Blessing for the happiness of the couple, the community, and all Israel.

Your Turn

You have now read about the *Sheva Brachot* that are recited at a Jewish wedding. What do think of these seven blessings?

Work with a friend and create your own *Sheva Brachot* for a wedding. You can keep some of the traditional blessings and you can create new ones of your own.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Find out for Yourself



Now that you have learned all about the Jewish wedding, let's see how real life relates. Interview a parent, a relative, or a family friend about their Jewish wedding. Find out about the traditions and rituals that they had at their wedding. See if you can look through the photo album of the wedding or take a look at the *ketubah*.

When did you get married? _____

Where? _____

Who was the Rabbi and/or Cantor? _____

What kind of *ketubah* did you have? _____

Who were the witnesses? _____

Did you have an *aufbruch*? _____

What did your *chuppah* look like? _____

Where were there any other special rituals/traditions that you had at your wedding? _____

What do you remember most about the wedding ceremony? _____

What is similar or different between what you have learned about weddings and what you found out in your interview?

Same _____

Different _____

I Have Found the Love of a Lifetime

Teacher's Guide

Enduring Understanding

Making meaning of the Jewish life cycle event of marriage.

Essential Questions

- What are the basic components of a Jewish wedding?
- How do ritual objects enhance the Jewish wedding?
- What does the Torah teach us about the Jewish life cycle event of marriage?
- What makes a Jewish wedding "holy"?

Evidence of Understanding

A student really understands the Jewish life cycle event of marriage, when he/she can:

- explain the terms *ketubah*, *chuppah*, *bedeken*, and *kiddushin*
- describe the key components of a wedding ceremony
- distinguish and explain ritual objects used at a wedding ceremony
- analyze Torah text to see the roots of the ritual of *bedeken*
- relate what they have learned to a parent or family member's wedding

Learning Experiences and Instruction

- An interesting way to begin this unit is to ask students why people get married. Group the boys together and the girls together and have each group come up with a list of those things which they look for in a mate. Afterward, everyone can share.
- When going over words in the Life Cycle Dictionary, it may be useful to bring in pictures as an aid. Pictures of different types of *ketubot* or different *chuppahs* will be interesting for the students to look at. You can have them compare/contrast the different varieties.
- The intro also talks about the term *kiddushin* and the fact that marriage is a holy act. Discuss

with the class why marriage is holy. What else in life is considered holy? You can even have students write a short essay of why a marriage is considered holy in Jewish tradition.

-After discussing *ketubah*, students are asked to make a list of the obligations they would put into a modern *ketubah*.

Creative Activity - You can add to this by allowing students to actually design their own *ketubah* using the obligations they have written as well as their artistic talents.

-In learning about the *chuppah*, it may be interesting to take your class on a mini-trip to the sanctuary to take a look at the temple's *chuppah*. This could possibly be the first time students will have seen an actual *chuppah*. You can discuss with the students what they do and don't like about this particular *chuppah*.

-An interesting way of adding to the students' understanding of the wedding ceremony would be to hold a mock wedding. All of the students could be assigned different roles, and other classes and/or parents could be invited to the ceremony.

Creative Activity - Music is an important element in the Jewish wedding. Bring in various samples of Jewish wedding music from different times and places for the class to listen to. Have the class discuss which pieces they like best and why.

Text Study: Two pieces of text from Genesis are given which both deal with the ritual of *bedeken*. One text is the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah and the second is the marriage of Jacob and Leah.

-Since there are two texts, you can have different groups work on different texts and then share their findings.

-You could also look at the first text as a class and then see how the students do by looking at the second text individually (after which you would then discuss findings as a whole).

-Be sure to discuss the differences and similarities which are seen in the two texts.

-In discussing the *sheva brachot*, it would be interesting to invite the cantor to class to sing the blessings for the students. If the cantor is unavailable, you could also bring in a recording.

Creative Activity - Students are asked to create their own set of *sheva brachot*. You could add to this by asking them to create a new ritual object that would be used in the recitation of these new *sheva brachot*.

- You can also add to the discussion of *sheva brachot* by discussing the significance of the number 7. You can have students try to come up with other instances in the Torah and in Jewish tradition where the number 7 is important.

-Students are asked to interview a relative or friend about their wedding. You can add to this by asking students to give a presentation to the class about the person who they interviewed.

-You can also add to this unit by having students research wedding customs from other religions or cultures. They can compare/contrast what they find to a Jewish wedding.

The Journey Comes to an End



The Jewish Funeral

✧ As with all other life cycle events, Judaism provides a series of rituals which are related to death and to mourning customs. Such customs help Jews to say good-bye to those who have passed on and also help those still living move forward with their lives.

✧ A Jewish body is buried as soon after death as possible. The body is prepared for burial by the funeral home staff or the *chevrah kadisha*, a group from the community who donate their time to help prepare a body for burial. The body is washed in a ritual known as *tahara* and is then wrapped in a white shroud or burial garment. The deceased is then watched over until the time for the funeral has come, a custom known as *shemira*.

✧ A Jewish funeral can take place at a funeral home, at the synagogue or graveside. The coffin is very plain and made of wood.

✧ Prior to the funeral, close relatives of the deceased perform an act known as *keriah*. *Keriah* refers to the tearing of clothing or cutting of a black ribbon pinned to the clothing. This tearing represents the pain felt over the loss of a loved one. The torn clothing or ribbon is typically worn for seven days.

Life Cycle Dictionary

Chevrah Kadisha - Jewish burial society

Keriah - ritual "tearing" of clothing

Shemira - guarding of body until time of burial

Sheloshim - thirty days of mourning after a funeral

Shiva - seven day mourning period that follows a funeral

Tahara - ritual washing of body to prepare for burial

Yahrzeit - yearly anniversary of a person's death

Yizkor - prayer service to remember those who have passed away

The Jewish Funeral



The Jewish funeral is simple and dignified. Here is the basic procedure:

- ✧ Prior to the ceremony, the body is ritually washed and dressed. The body is then watched over, *shemira*, until the funeral.
- ✧ The funeral begins with the chanting of psalms and prayers, which is followed by the eulogy, a special speech about the deceased, given by the Rabbi and/or family members. The service ends with the recitation of a prayer which asks God to grant peace and protection of the person who has died.
- ✧ The coffin is then brought to the cemetery where the body is lowered into the ground. Mourners take part in the *mitzvah* of throwing some dirt into the grave to help fill it.
- ✧ Once the grave has been filled, the Kaddish is recited.
- ✧ Following the funeral, the week long period of *shiva* begins.

✧Many of our mourning customs have a long history in the Jewish tradition.

When Jacob is told that his favorite son Joseph has been killed, he mourns in a way that is similar to that which we do today. Read the story from the Torah and discover some of the origins of Jewish rituals associated with death and mourning. Remember when reading this that Joseph's brothers are angry with him since he is favored by their father, and they have just sold him away as a slave to get him out of their lives. The brothers must then tell their father Jacob that Joseph is gone forever.



From Genesis, Chapter 37, verses 29 - 35

וַיָּשָׁב רְעֹובֶן אֶל-הַבּוֹר וְהִנֵּה אִין-יוֹסֵף בְּבוֹר וַיִּקְרַע אֶת-בְּגָדָיו: ל וַיָּשָׁב אֶל-אֶחָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הִלָּד אֵלָנִי וְנָאִן אָנֹכִי אֲנִי-בָא: לֹא וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת-כְּתֹנֶת יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁחָטוּ שְׂעִיר עִזִּים וַיִּטְבְּלוּ אֶת-הַכְּתֹנֶת בַּדָּם: לֵב וַיִּשְׁלָחוּ אֶת-כְּתֹנֶת הַפָּסִים וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל-אֲבִיהֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ נָאֹת מִצָּאֵנוּ הַכֶּרֶאֱ הַכְּתֹנֶת בְּנֵךְ הוּא אִם-לֹא: לֵב וַיִּבְרָרָה וַיֹּאמֶר כְּתֹנֶת בְּנִי הִנֵּה רָעָה אֲכַלְתָּהּוּ טָרֵף טָרֵף יוֹסֵף: לֵד וַיִּקְרַע יַעֲקֹב שָׂמְלָתָיו וַיֵּשֶׁם שָׂק בְּמִתְנָיו וַיִּתְאַבֵּל עַל-בְּנֵי יָמִים רַבִּים: לֵח וַיִּקְמֹו כָל-בָּנָיו וְכָל-בָּנֵיכֶם לִנְחָמוֹ וַיִּמָּאֵן לְהִתְנַחֵם וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי-אֶרֶד אֶל-בְּנֵי אֲבִל שְׂאֵלָה וַיִּבְךְ אֹתָם אֲבִיו:

When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he rent his clothes. Returning to his brothers, he said, "The boy is gone! Now, what am I to do?" Then they took Joseph's tunic, slaughtered a kid, and dipped the tunic in blood. They had the ornamented tunic taken to their father, and they said, "We found this. Please examine it; is it your son's tunic or not?" Jacob recognized it and said, "My son's tunic! A savage beast devoured him! Joseph was torn by a beast!" Jacob rent his clothes, put on sackcloth on his loins, and observed mourning for his son many days. All his sons and daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, saying, "No, I will go down mourning my son in Sheol." Thus his father bewailed him.

Being a Torah Detective.....



✧What do we learn in this passage? _____

✧Why do the brothers act in this way, and why do they lie to their father? _____

✧List the various rituals that Jacob performs to mourn his son and think about what modern ritual it might be related to.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

✧Does anyone else mourn the loss of Joseph? Who and Why? _____

✧Questions you have about the text: _____

How Jews Mourn



✧ Once the funeral is completed, the period of *shiva*, or mourning, begins. *Shiva* is the Hebrew word for “seven”, and traditionally the mourning period is observed for seven days. During the *shiva* period, the mourners do not work or go to school. Friends visit them to offer support, and prayer services are held nightly during which the Kaddish is recited.

✧ Once the *shiva* period ends, the mourners can return to their normal lives. Still, during the first thirty day period following the funeral, or *sheloshim*, the mourners refrain from going to parties or other celebrations.

✧ The end of the mourning period is marked by the dedication of the gravestone. This ceremony is known as the unveiling.

✧ The *yahrzeit* is the anniversary of a person’s death. It is marked yearly by the recitation of the Kaddish and by the lighting of a memorial candle in the home of the mourner. During certain holidays throughout the year, Jews hold a special service known as *yizkor*. During the *yizkor* service, Jews are offered the opportunity to remember and honor those loved ones who have passed away.

Your Turn

In Judaism, there is no blessing to recite when lighting a *yahrzeit* candle. Why do you think that is? Work with a friend to create a an appropriate blessing for this ritual.

Some Facts about "Sitting Shiva"

WHAT'S "SITTING SHIVA"?

- A water bowl and towels are placed at the door, so that mourners returning from the funeral can ritually wash their hands.
- The door is left unlocked, so that visitors can easily stop by to visit and comfort the mourners.
- Mourners sit on low benches or cushions, which reminds us that we are humble before God.
- Meals are served to the mourners by their friends.
- Mourners don't watch t.v., listen to music, shave, or use make-up during the *shiva* period.
- All mirrors in the *shiva* house are covered.

Let's Think



Now that you have learned about some of the customs associated with *shiva*, brainstorm a list of things which you would stop doing if you were mourning and sitting *shiva*. For example, maybe you would not talk on the phone with friends during the *shiva* period.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Your Turn

A non-Jewish friend of yours is going to attend a Jewish funeral and then pay a *shiva* visit. Your friend has come to you for advice on what to expect. Write your friend an email with some advice. Be sure to give your friend lots of details, so they are prepared for the experience.



To: _____

From: _____

Date: _____

[illegible]



✧The Kaddish is a prayer we recite as Jews when we remember people who have passed away. Since the Kaddish is recited at funerals and in memorial to those who died, we often think of it as a prayer for mourning. Interestingly, the Kaddish is not a prayer about death, and it never once mentions death. As you read the text of the Kaddish, think about what this prayer is really about.

Mourner's Kaddish

וְתִגְדֹּל וְתִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעַלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ, וְנִמְלִיד מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית
יִשְׂרָאֵל. בְּעָגְלָא וּבְזֶמֶן קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וְלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא:
וְתִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִידָהּ הוּא לְעָלְמָא מִן כָּל
בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא, תְּשַׁבְּחָתָא וְתִתְמַתָּא, דְּאָמְרִין בְּעַלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

May God's name be made great and holy throughout the world that God created according to God's will; and may God rule God's kingdom in our lives, in our days, and in the life of all Israel, speedily and soon. And let us say: Amen.

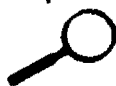
May God's great name be blessed forever and always.

May God's holy name be blessed and exalted, and honored, and glorified, and extolled, and magnified and lauded. Blessed be God, though God be above all blessings and hymns, praises and consolations which can be said in the world. And let us say: Amen.

May lots of peace descend from heaven with life for all of us, and all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

May God who makes peace in the heavens above, make peace for all of us, and all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

Being a Text Detective.....



✧What do we learn in this passage? _____

✧How many times is "life" mentioned? Why do you think this is? _____

✧What are the different ways that God is described in the Kaddish? _____

✧Why do you think we call this prayer the Mourner's Kaddish if it doesn't talk about death at all? _____

✧What seems to be the focus of this prayer? Why do you think that is? _____

✧Questions you have about the text: _____

The Journey Comes to an End

Teacher's Guide

Enduring Understanding

Making meaning of the Jewish life cycle event of death.

Essential Questions

- What are the basic components of a Jewish funeral?
- What is the ritual of *shiva* all about?
- What does the Torah teach us about mourning?
- What is the essence of the Kaddish and why is it related to the life cycle event of death?

Evidence of Understanding

A student really understands the Jewish life cycle event of death, when he/she can:

- explain the terms *shiva*, *keriah*, *sheloshim* and *yahrzeit*
- describe the key components of a Jewish funeral
- explain the meaning and custom of *shiva*
- analyze Torah text to see the roots of the ritual of *shiva*
- analyze the Kaddish to understand its meaning and use in Judaism

Learning Experiences and Instruction

-Of all the units, this one will clearly be the most difficult to approach with students. A good way to introduce the unit may be to ask students if they have had relatives or friends, or even animals that have passed away. Allow students to share a story with the class. This will hopefully allow the students to open up and become ready to approach the topic of death.

-In discussing some of the rituals associated with preparing the body, it may be interesting to further discuss the *chevrah kadisha* with students. Find out what they think of fulfilling such an obligation. You can even see if you could ask a member of a local *chevrah kadisha* to visit class and speak to the students about this ritual duty.

-In talking about the funeral, you can also talk about eulogy. You can discuss the importance of remembering those who have passed away and how the eulogy provides this opportunity.

Creative Activity - You can explain that there are many ways to remember those who have passed away aside from talking about them. You can ask each student to make an artistic eulogy for a person they know who has passed away or for Jews in general that have passed on.

-You can also mention the custom of placing a stone on the tombstone when visiting a grave.

Text Study: A piece of text from Genesis is provided in which Jacob discovers that his favorite son Joseph has died, and he mourns the loss.

-You can either look at this text as a group or allow students to work in pairs.

-Be sure to discuss the various ways in which Jacob mourns and how this relates to our modern customs of mourning.

You could also add to this by bringing in other texts that deal with death. For example, the death of Sarah could be looked at. The class could study how Abraham prepared to secure a burial place for her and why this is so important.

-When talking about *yahrzeit*, you can bring your class to the sanctuary to view the *yahrzeit* board. You can talk about the importance of remembering those who have passed. Allow the students some time to look at the different names and life spans of those remembered by the congregation.

Creative Activity - You can have your students create their own *yahrzeit* candle holders.

Buy plain shot glasses and glass markers. The students can then decorate a *yahrzeit* candle holder to be used in their home.

-In discussing the *shiva* customs that are given, you can have the class think of reasons why we Jews practice each of these customs. How do such rituals aid in the mourning process?

Text Study: A copy of the Mourner's Kaddish is provided. An interesting way to study the text is to give students different color highlighters/markers to study the text with. Ask them to highlight yellow all the times they find the word life, green for death, pink for peace, blue for God

and so on. This way when they look at the prayer, students will have a visual aid to help them see trends that run through the prayer. This will allow you to hone in on the fact that the Kaddish emphasizes life.

Creative Activity - After studying the text of the Kaddish, you can give students a wide array of materials and ask them to create a representation of what they have read. They can also be given the option to create a dance or piece of music that could accompany the prayer. You can have them work individually or in groups.

-It is also important to show the students how the entire prayer, aside from the final line, is written in Aramaic rather than Hebrew. You can recite the Kaddish as a class so students can hear the difference in the words of the Aramaic and the Hebrew.

-As you end this unit, it is important to remind students that the life cycle continues- it is in fact a cycle. Just as everyone will eventually pass on, there will always be new babies brought into the world, thus the life cycle continues. If you wanted, you could even bring in the final scene from the movie *The Lion King* for your last class. This scene shows how the cycle has come full circle and new generation has begun.

Conclusions - Moving Forward

The Jewish religion is based upon the belief in one God and the belief in the revelation received from God through Torah. The life of a Jew is inevitably defined by Torah. Torah is the essence of Judaism, and one cannot be divorced from the other. Jewish law, Jewish belief, Jewish history and Jewish peoplehood are all bound within the frame of Torah. It becomes easy for Jews of the modern world to view Torah as antiquated and irrelevant in their lives. It is easier to ignore Torah than to struggle with it. As Jews of the modern world, we must continue to find nourishment and meaning in Torah. As educators, we must help our communities build bridges to Torah and take the first steps necessary in crossing over the unfathomable waters.

At its most basic, the goal of Jewish education is to teach about the Jewish religion. It is impossible to effectively teach Judaism without simultaneously teaching Torah. The text can be used by itself or as an aid in the teaching of any topic. A successful Jewish school will produce graduates who not only know how to act like a Jew, but who understand what it means to be a Jew. In order to know what it means to be a Jew, an individual must come into contact with and become engaged in the text.

Incorporating text study into our schools is not going to be an easy or quick process. Most Reform schools have moved away from text study, and most teachers feel unable and ill-equipped to facilitate such study. The challenge will be to overcome these hurdles. Text can slowly be integrated into the curriculum. Teachers can take part in workshops and seminars in which they both learn Torah at their own level and in which

they learn techniques for the teaching of Torah. One of the biggest tasks educators will face in bringing text to the center of our learning communities is promoting the need for such engagement. Educators will need to become, first and foremost, advocates for Torah.

For, isn't this truly what Jewish learning is all about? Until recent times, Jewish study has always meant a study of our sacred texts. Our Rabbis spent most hours of the day pouring over these texts and teaching these texts to the next generation. Torah has always been the lifeblood of our communities. We need to go back to the basics, and we need to immerse ourselves in Torah.

As we look forward into the future, we often wonder what the next generation of Jews will look like. Will they light Shabbat candles? Will they observe Passover? Will they know Hebrew? The most crucial question we should be asking is, will they know Torah? We must ensure that the answer to this question is yes. Without Torah, we will slowly lose any meaning behind the lighting of Sabbath candles, any understanding for what Passover is all about and any need for the Hebrew language. Our priorities must be re-focused. Assimilation and intermarriage are not the biggest threats that the Jewish community of today faces. Our biggest threat is Jews who are illiterate in Judaism. We must make our community, once again, literate, and this can only be done by bringing Torah back to the center of our lives and the focus of our learning communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Study of Religious School Curricula

The following study has been compiled after researching fifty school curriculum guides and/or handbooks. A complete list of schools studied can be found at the end of study.

Much can be learned from each school by studying its handbook and school guide. The schools studied span the continent in terms of location and the spectrum in terms of size. All the schools studied are members of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Some of the curricular guides provided more detailed information than others. Therefore, some information could not be determined for each of the school programs.

I was looking for specific information in my search. I asked nine main questions of each of the schools. These questions were:

1. Does the school focus on Jewish Identity as a guiding principle?
2. Is there a major focus on "practical" Jewish skills?
3. Is the Tanakh used in the school?
 -and, is it used prior to the seventh grade?
4. Are either A Child's Bible or An Introduction to the Prophets and Writings used in any grade?
5. Does the school speak of teaching Torah during the fourth, fifth, or sixth grades?
6. Is the Hebrew program based on a goal of prayerbook literacy?
7. Is the main focus of the school program Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation?
8. What is the life cycle book used?
9. Is the high school program focused on student interest and choice?

If the answer to any of these questions was not provided in the guides or could not be definitively determined, then the school was marked as an *unknown* for that particular question.

1. Does the school focus on Jewish Identity as a guiding principle?

Yes	74%
No	12%
Unknown	14%

2. Is there a major focus on "practical" Jewish skills?

Yes	78%
No	12%
Unknown	10%

The answer to this question was determined by looking at how the guide speaks about goals for the student to be able to: function and participate in the Jewish community, feel comfort in the synagogue, celebrate the holidays and to observe the life cycle events.

3. Is the Tanakh used in the school?

Yes	38%
No	40%
Unknown	22%

Is it used prior to the seventh grade?

Yes	12%
No	68%
Unknown	20%

4. Are either A Child's Bible and/or An Introduction to the Prophets and Writings used in any grade?

Yes	52%
No	16%
Unknown	32%

These texts were looked for, as they each teach Bible stories in a simplified and basic manner. These texts are suggested for use in third through fifth by the publishers, Behrman House.

5. Does the school speak of teaching Torah during the fourth, fifth or sixth grades?

Yes	34%
No	66%

In answering this question, I looked at whether there is a focus on Torah beyond a study of Bible stories. The 34% of schools that are identified as teaching Torah in fourth through sixth grades deal with topics such as: the components of TaNaKh, text analysis, place of Torah in life of a Jew, study of midrash, relating text to lives of students.

6. Is the Hebrew program based on a goal of prayerbook literacy?

Yes	68%
No	22%
Unknown	10%

7. Is the main focus of the school program Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation?

Yes	12%
No	88%

8. What is the life cycle book used?

<u>Journey of a Lifetime</u> by Rachel Musleah	58%
<u>When a Jew Celebrates</u> by Harry Gersh	15%
<u>The Life Cycle Workbook</u> by Joel Lurie Grishaver	19%
<u>The Life Cycle Journey</u> by Risa & Hal Aqua	4%
<u>The Book of Jewish Life</u> by Jo David & Daniel B. Syme	4%

Only twenty-six of the fifty schools studied listed the life cycle book they use or even broach the topic of life cycle as a component of the curriculum. Therefore, the above percentages are based upon only a study of twenty-six schools.

9. Is the high school program focused on student interest and choice?

Yes	64%
No	20%
Unknown	16%

Schools Studied

Adat Chaverim Religious School. Plano, TX.

Ames Jewish Congregation Religious School. Ames, IA.

Beth Chaim Religious School. Princeton Junction, NJ.

Beth Chaverim Reform Congregation Religious School. Ashburn, VA.

Beth Sholom Religious School. Fredericksburg, VA.

B'nai Jehoshu Beth Elohim Religious School. Glenview, IL.

Brooklyn Heights Synagogue Religious School. Brooklyn, NY.

Congregation Beth Israel. Portland, OR.

Congregation Beth Shalom Religious School. Arlington, TX.

Congregation Beth Tikvah Religious School. Worthington, OH.

Congregation B'nai Israel: Barry Ira Graff School for Living Judaism. Boca Raton, FL.

Congregation B'nai Israel Religious School. Sacramento, CA.

Congregation Etz Chaim Religious School. Lombard, IL.

Congregation Or Chadash Religious School. Germantown, MD.

Congregation Rodeph Shalom. New York, NY.

Emanuel Congregation Religious School. Chicago, IL.

Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation Religious School. Indianapolis, IN.

Keneseth Israel Religious School. Elkins Park, PA.

Rodef Shalom Religious School. Pittsburgh, PA.

Shir Ami Congregation Religious School. Newtown, PA.

Temple Ahavat Shalom Religious School. Palm Harbor, FL.

Temple Beth Am Religious School. Framingham, MA.

Temple Beth David Religious School. Commack, NY.

Temple Beth El Religious School. Huntington, NY.

Temple Beth El Religious School. Madison, WI.

Temple Beth El Religious School. San Antonio, TX.

Temple Beth Emeth Religious and Hebrew School. Ann Arbor, MI.

Temple Beth Or Religious School. Raleigh, NC.

Temple Beth Shalom School. Melrose, MA.

Temple Beth Shalom Religious School. Needham, MA.

Temple Beth Shalom Sunday School. Ocala, FL.

Temple Beth Torah Religious School. Fremont, CA.

Temple Beth Torah: The David Joshua Berg Religious School. Melville, NY.

Temple B'nai Torah Beit Midrash. Bellevue, WA.

Temple Chaverim Religious School. Plainview, NY.

Temple Emanuel Religious School. Beverly Hills, CA.

Temple Emanuel Religious School. Chicago, IL.

Temple Emanuel Religious School. Gastonia, NC.

Temple Emanu-El Education Center. Oak Park, MI.

Temple Emanu-El Religious School. Atlanta, GA.

Temple Emanu-El Religious School. Sarasota, NY.

Temple Israel Religious School. Boston, MA.

Temple Israel Religious School. Dayton, OH.

Temple Shalom Religious School. Chevy Chase, MD.

Temple Shir Tikvah Religious School. Winchester, MA.

Temple Sholom Religious School. Chicago, IL.

Temple Solel Religious School. Bowie, MD.

The Community Synagogue Religious School. Port Washington, NY.

The Suburban Temple Religious School. Wantagh, NY.

United Hebrew Congregation Religious School. St Louis, MO.

Appendix B

Text Study Test Site

The following is a summarization of the results of interviews conducted with students upon completion of a text study based conclave program. This conclave took place during the weekend of November 1-3, 2002. Forty-five seventh grade students attended the conclave. The theme of the weekend was Tikkun Olam, and the programming revolved around the biblical account of Noah. In order to delve into the topic, students participated in a mock trial in which Noah was put on trial for crimes against humanity. Students were broken into three groups: prosecution, defense, and jury. Each group began their work by studying the text of Noah from the Plaut edition. Each group was also given a variety of midrash and other interpretations pertaining to this Torah portion. The students were given the task of studying text, gathering information, and preparing for the trial which took place at the conclusion of the weekend.

Twenty of the forty-five of the students were interviewed at the end of the weekend. The questions were geared to gain their feedback on the incorporation of text study into the programs of the weekend.

Questions asked of the students:

1. How have you learned about Noah in the past?
2. What did you think about using the Torah text in your exploration of Noah?
3. Did you find the task easy, hard, interesting, boring?
4. Do you think using the original text was important in learning about this topic?
5. Have you ever studied commentary or midrashim before? What did you think of the experience?
6. What did you think of the overall program?

1. How have you learned about Noah in the past?

Parents	40%
Stories	35%
Teacher/Textbooks	30%
Music	20%
Other	20% (Included here is arts & crafts projects, toys, plays and Rugrats)

****In looking in above percentages, it should be noted that many students cited more than one way in which they learned about Noah in the past.**

Comments:

-I learned from my teacher that Noah built an ark and got two of every animal and sailed for forty days and forty nights. -Joelle D.

-I first learned from a skit at the temple on Yom Kippur. -Molly G.

2. What did you think about using the Torah text in your exploration of Noah?

Liked It	65%
Didn't Like It	20%
Undecided	15%

Comments:

-It gave me a new view of the story. I had always thought two of every animal was taken, but I now know that only one of every clean animal was taken on the ark. -Julie G.

-I learned stuff I didn't know before. Kind of like in Social Studies- when we were little, we were taught that Christopher Columbus discovered America. But, we got more advanced information as we grew older. -Matt L.

-Reading the text was slow- there are much more enjoyable ways to learn. -Wendy L.

-It was so detailed. I got details of the ark like how many cubits and all. -Jon L.

3. Did you find the task easy, hard, interesting, boring?

Interesting	60%
Boring	40%

Easy	65%
Hard	35%

Comments:

-I thought it was boring because you don't want to read the text. It would be much more interesting just to discuss and hear what other people have to say. -Alex F.

-It was interesting- I never knew Noah had sons. -Jonathan C.

-I don't think text study is interesting. I know it's the Torah, but we keep seeing the same things over and over. -Wendy L.

-The text was hard because there were confusing words that we don't really use. -Katie S.

-It wasn't as interesting as the Rugrats version. -Ian P.

-Some words needed to be changed - it was too challenging. -Greg S.

-It was good because you can interpret. It wasn't really hard to read. -Jenn F.

4. Do you think using the original text was important in learning about this topic?

Yes	75%
No	15%
Undecided	10%

Comments:

-Now I know exactly what happened. -Julie G.

-It is important because there are lots of things that you might not have known. I didn't know about Noah's wives and children. -Molly G.

-It's important to study because the Torah is very important. -Ian P.

-You need it for the detail. -Katie S.

5. Have you ever studied commentary or midrashim before?

Yes	35%
No	65%

Comments:

-I thought studying the midrash was good, but confusing. There are a lot of different interpretations, so I didn't know which to believe at first. But, then I thought I should go with my own opinion. -Julie G.

-It was important because the Rabbis have a better opinion than we do- maybe they communicated with God. -Greg S.

6. What did you think of the overall program?*

Enjoyed Program	75%
Didn't Enjoy Program	25%

****The students were told that this question pertained specifically to the educational programming of the weekend.**

Comments:

-Some teachers would have just taught by having us read a book. I found this way to be much better. I liked doing interactive things. -Matt L.

-I didn't like being on the jury. I couldn't really take sides. -Katie S.

-We'll remember what we learned even if we didn't think we were learning. -Molly G.

-I thought the program was clever. I felt like we had power. I would have liked to be on the jury because then the decision would have been in my hands. -Jon L.

-I liked learning this way. Having the trial made it feel like real life. It gave us good practice for the future- you know, if we want to be lawyers and all. -Alex F.

Appendix C

My Observations of Text Study

Following observations refer to seventh grade conclave and text study program as discussed in Appendix B.

Jury Group:

Group began by sitting in a circle and reading through Plaut. They read very slowly, analyzing every line. They were reading the verse with directions for building the ark with its specifications.

Katie S: It's important that God is giving directions.

Leader: Why?

Katie S: Because its God's orders.

Ian P: You have to do what God says, just like he says it.

Leader: Does Noah have to do what God says?

Katie S: Yes

Jonathan C: No- he can do whatever he wants, but to be good, he needs to follow God.

Leader: So, to be a good person, you should follow God's commands?

Katie S: Yeah- just like with your parents. You might not always want to do what they tell you, but you need to listen to what they say. They know more than we do.

Jenn F: They are just protecting us. Like God- he is going to protect Noah from the flood.

Prosecution:

Discussing whether listening to God was the right thing to do. One student asks whether or not God said Noah could bring his whole family on the ark or just two people? Leader advises group to look into text for answers. After a few moments, one student exclaims: "I found it. It says that he should bring his whole family."

Group then moves on to look at the Fields commentary. Student begins to read aloud.

Reading says that Noah is blameless in his deeds because he walked with God.

Leader: Does the fact that Noah completed God's orders make him righteous?

Jon L: I think so.

Brian S: Me too.

Molly G: I don't. Maybe God's orders were bad. Noah should have thought before he did something. Maybe it was a test like with Abraham, and maybe Noah failed.

Jon L: Or, maybe he passed.

Leader: Well, let's stay focused. As the prosecution, we will need to prove that Noah was wrong. So, how can we use this commentary to help our case?

Beth K: We need to show that it wasn't sufficient for Noah to only save his family.

Molly G: Yeah- The commentator also brings in the story of Abraham and Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham tried to help other people and fight for them. But, Noah doesn't do anything. That's why he is on trial.

Beth K: We should definitely talk about Abraham. We should call him as a witness.

Matt M: Then, we can show that Abraham did the right thing and Noah didn't. Noah made no effort to intercede on behalf of the people.

Leader: So, now we have established that we want to show the differences between Abraham and Noah. How else will we make our case?

Jon L: I think we should also talk about this guy Og mentioned in the commentary.

Leader: What do we learn about Og?

Jon L: It says that Og was a king or something and that he held on to the boat instead of drowning. Then, Noah made a hole in the boat so that he could pass food to Og, so Og wouldn't die.

Brian S: The other team is going to use that against us. They will say Noah is good because he helped Og.

Jon L: But he didn't help him that much.

Molly G: Yeah- I mean, why didn't Noah make the hole big enough so that Og could come onto the ark? It must not have been easy hanging on the side of an ark for forty days. I want to question Og- I have lots of good ideas.

Jon L: I brought him up. I want to question him.

Leader: Ok- let's take a break to decide who we will call as witnesses. Then, we can break into smaller groups to work on the questions for each of them.

Defense:

When I entered the room, the first thing I heard was, "Look at what I found here in the text. It is perfect."

The group was reading a midrash which claims that Noah did warn the people of the flood. He planted cedars to build the ark, and when the people questioned him, he told them that a great flood was on the way.

Julie G: This proves our point that Noah wasn't at fault.

Leader: How?

Julie G: Because he did warn the people. It isn't Noah's fault if the people were too stupid or stubborn to listen.

Alyssa B: Exactly. All he could be expected to do was warn them.

Leader: So, Noah shouldn't have been expected to do more than warn them? Should he have brought them on the ark with him?

Julie G: No- they had their chance to repent.

Alyssa B: I agree. I mean, the boat was already so crowded from all the animals. The other people could have built their own boats.

Leader: What about some other people? What do you think?

Matt L: I think Noah was wrong, but I was put on the defense, so what should I say?

Leader: As lawyers, you need to defend Noah whether or not you agree that he is innocent.

Wendy L: I don't know what I think, but I think we need to focus on the fact that Noah was only doing what God told him to. God told him to build an ark, and Noah did it. God didn't say anything about saving all the other people. That's because they were evil. That's why God sent the flood in the first place.

Julie G: So, maybe we need to call God as a witness.

Greg S: Can we do that?

Leader: You can call anyone to be a witness.

Greg S: But, how will God answer?

Leader: You will have to wait until the trial to see.

Julie G: Ok- well, who else do we want to call?

Alyssa B: I think we need to call a townspeople to show how evil they were.

Matt L: They aren't just going to say they were evil. They probably thought they did nothing wrong. Plus, they are mad at Noah now, because it is his fault that they died.

Julie G: So maybe we should call on Noah's wife or something and she can say how evil the people were.

Leader: Remember that we never know how a witness will respond to our questions.

Julie G: Can they lie?

Leader: In this trial, the witnesses won't lie. But, they have studied the text too, and they will use all the information that they have gathered.