

## Part II: TACTICS for Teaching Torah:

### Chapter Eleven: Simulations

#### SIMULATIONS:

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#### Appendix: The Biblical Web site on Cain and Abel, Constructivism and the Hypertext by Joel Duman p.

Each of these disciplines (strategies), these structured ways of interpreting the text, can be introduced to students using educational tactics. Some tactics work with many approaches and some with only very few.

If possible one should choose a tactic appropriate to the strategy. For example, the music of *Westside Story* is thematically related to the violence of Cain and Abel, but there is no midrashic or pshat or literary or historical connection. *Joseph and his Technicolor Dreamcoat* is a midrash explicitly rewriting but also implicitly interpreting the details of the Torah text. It has no historical value. Above we have seen many examples of thematic, midrashic, pshat, historical tactics. However in this chapter we will examine **text study tactics drawn from contemporary forms of culture not continuous with the usual cultural forms of text interpretation.**

**Simulations** form a category of their own with their own rules and practices which can be applied only indirectly to the Biblical text. For example a debate, a TV sitcom, a trial, a newspaper are

well-developed ways to interpret situations but obviously do not reflect classical Biblical disciplines of text interpretation. However **simulations** call us to use external rules in a disciplined way contributing to careful thought, logical analysis and imaginative presentation. Simulations translate the Torah into these other forms. These are not only interesting ways to review the narrative but they may generate closely argued interpretations of the original text that may be evaluated by its own standards of *parshanut*.

# SIMULATIONS

## #1- Going to the Therapist with Our Family Problems

### ACTIVITY: CAIN IN PAIN

- As an individual, if you can think of cases, briefly record two instances where you intervened to help a friend who was feeling down. One instance should refer to a case where you were successful in your intervention. One case should relate a time when you were unsuccessful. Write down why you possibly succeeded in one case while failing in the second.
  - Now in pairs, review and write down a description of Cain's situation at the beginning of verse six. What is his mood? How would he look to a person coming across him without knowing what was going on?
  - You are a crisis intervention counselor working out a strategy for treating Cain. Your aim is to help him change his ways and to start reintegrating him into the human community, helping him to get over his disappointment with the recent past. You are only going to see him once. There is no time for a conventional long therapeutic treatment. This one time will have to suffice to start him on the road to recovery.
  - Write for yourself a list of 'do's' and 'don't's' of which you want to remind yourself, just prior to your first meeting with him. What strategies and tactics should you adopt which are best calculated to help him achieve your aims for him? Which strategies and tactics should you avoid?
  - Now look very carefully at God's response in verses six and seven. Assess God's tactics and strategies. How good a job does God do? Write a brief report of no more than a few sentences, praising or critiquing God's 'performance'.
  - Prepare a small scene of an interaction between a crisis intervention counselor and Cain as he appears at the beginning of verse six. Show the beginning of a brief encounter which will have the best chance of achieving your ends.
- As the educator, review and discuss some of the scenes prepared.
  - After this, discuss what the pairs wrote about their assessment of God's tactics and strategies.
  - Raise the question with the students. Are we allowed to critique God's behavior in a scene like this? Why? Why not?
  - End with the question: what are the things we have to bear in mind when trying to help someone who is hurting for whatever reason? The students can - and should, if appropriate - use the examples that they noted down at the beginning of the exercise.

## A Case Study of the Dysfunctional First Family by Edwin Friedman

*Recent archaeological discoveries have revealed a "family workup" done by one of the ministering angels about twenty years after Creation. It is translated here from the original.*

*This is a family of four: mother, father, and two sons, fairly close in age. They came in because the sons have been quarreling a great deal, and both mother and father appear quite helpless to do anything about this. Most of the focus is on the older brother, who broods a lot, is extremely sullen, and is very jealous of his far more successful younger brother.*

*The younger brother is not aware of his advantage and thus never tries to hide his success, his easygoing manner, or the rewards of his prosperity. The older seems totally unable to understand why fortune does not smile alike on him.*

*It cannot be said that the parents, both of whom are only children by the way, show any significant favoritism. Yet I am quite sure it is something in their own style of life that is contributing to the very problem they want to solve.*

*At the beginning of their marriage, both husband and wife seemed to have lived in a very blissful state, naive, it appears, about what was happening all around them. Something - we're not sure what - changed that, and things have never been the same since. The husband growls continuously about his lot and why life has to be so difficult, whereas the wife never fails to remind him of how much pain she went through to bear him sons.*

*But it is more than their discontent that seems to be seeping down, particularly to their elder son. More pernicious still may be their attitude toward their discontent.*

## **Activity: Getting in Touch with our Feelings - The Spider's Web: Avraham's Complicated Feelings of Farewell**

- Make a group list of all the feelings that could have affected Avraham in his relationships with Sarah, Ishmael and Hagar as he said goodbye to the latter two. These might include things like:
  - LOVE FOR ISHMAEL**
  - ANGER WITH ISHMAEL**
  - FEAR OF SARAH**
  - RESPECT FOR SARAH**
  - ANGER WITH HAGAR**
  - EMBARASSMENT OVER HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HAGAR**
- Choose four people to represent Avraham, Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael. Stand them in four predetermined places that are fairly near each other. Place Avraham between Sarah on the one hand and the other two.
- Prepare a number of pieces of string of equal length and put one of the list of feelings on a card attached to each piece of string so that if, for example, there are ten feelings altogether, there are ten pieces of string with a card attached to each of them.
- Now give one of the strings to one or two students and they have to color the string according to the strength of the feeling attached to the string. For example if a couple of people get RESPECT FOR SARAH they have to decide if in their opinion Avraham felt this at all at the moment of leaving. If they feel that he felt a lot of respect for Sarah they should choose a deep and rich color to express that. If they feel that he felt only a little respect for her at that moment, the color should be paler. If they feel that he would have felt no respect for her at that moment they should leave the string blank and unpainted. If they feel that he would have felt a great lack of respect for her at that moment, they should indicate this by making some "dotted lines" along the string.
- When all are ready, each person or pair should put one end of the string into Avraham's hand and the other into the hand of the other person mentioned on the note attached to the string. They should explain why they have colored the string as they have and explain how they believe that Avraham must have felt at that moment.
- When all the pieces of string have been attached, ask Avraham to explain how he feels towards the other three characters according to the pieces of string that he holds.
- Ask observers whether they agree that this is what he would have been going through.
- Finally ask the other three characters how they feel about the way that Avraham feels for them according to the strings that he holds.

## #2 - SIMULATION: Government Commission Inquiry

### ACTIVITY: VIOLENCE IN OUR OWN WORLD: THE WHAT'S, THE WHY'S AND THE WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT!

- Your city (or Jewish Federation) has decided to try and deal with the troubling problem of violence among youth in the city (or the Jewish community), which has reached troubling proportions. They have appealed to a number of representative youth frameworks and schools, including your school to be expert witnesses and to suggest ways to deal with the problem, and it has been decided that this class will be the school's representatives for the committee. The task of the class now is to research the subject and to prepare recommendations for the committee.

The central questions that the class has been asked to research and to think about are these.

- 1. What constitutes violence among youth? Is verbal abuse counted as violence? When does joshing and low level bullying constitute violence? Does light sexual harassment constitute violence? Is violence a male phenomenon? Does it exist among girls and women?
  2. Why does violence exist among youth? What are the major reasons that it appears to exist? Does it appear among all young people or only where certain restraining frameworks or educational frameworks are lacking? How important are factors like television, cinema, alcohol and drugs in stimulating violence?
  - 3. How widespread is the phenomenon of violence among youth? Does it exist in the Jewish community? In the school? Have the members of the class encountered it outside of the school? Can they document cases of violence either inside or outside the school? How widespread is it? Is it limited to certain age groups, classes, ethnic groups, locations etc.?
  - 4. What if anything should be done about it? The members of the class are asked to suggest a number of recommendations for dealing with violence among youth in the city generally (or in the Jewish community). If there is indeed violence also in the school they must bring a number of recommendations to deal with it.
- This can be a major project or it can be much more limited. Whichever you decide to do in your particular class, we suggest dividing the students into three initial groups. Each group should have one of the first three questions to examine. If you want to turn this into a large scale learning project you can include examinations of the general issue by using some of the many websites or books that deal with the issue. In addition there are numerous films that deal with the subject either within a school context or within a wider societal context. You might want to break down each group into sub groups and give each group a specific aspect of the subject to examine. Testimony should be taken from students in the class and they are free to talk to other students in different classes or even to prepare a proper research project which will include interviews with officials in the community or the city. It is possible to invite officials, youth workers or social workers and psychologists to share their perspectives with the class.
  - After the initial research has been done it should be fed back into the particular sub-group which should then prepare some kind of a report to give to the whole class.

- After this stage, the whole class can work out a strategy to be used in preparing the answer to question number four. Recommendations can include such subjects as a code of behavior inside the class and the school (if indeed it is an issue there), and a system for monitoring it, recommendations for a campaign against violence in the Jewish and general community, details of a public relation campaign etc. etc.
- Whether or not to go beyond the class exercise and indeed to prepare or mount a campaign inside the school or the community we leave here as an open question.

### #3 - HOLLYWOOD TORAH: Biblical Soap Opera by Melissa Buyer from Milken HS in Los Angeles

Pitch a new series to a TV executive. Offer three titles for the series based on life of Abe, Sarah and Hagar. Describe how you would make a modern remake to fit contemporary society. Develop a theme song.

Prepare two sketches of dialogue based on Biblical story.

"Scene it!" - Describe for the director how to cast the role (what famous actors would be most appropriate and why) and how to explain to the actors their "character breakdown" (mood, temperament, attitude, past traumas).

Family Portrait for Promos. Draw the characters in family portrait or have students pose and use digital camera to prepare portrait.

Script writing. Prepare the letter left behind by Hagar when she runs away the first time in Gen. 16.

#### **Theatrical techniques**

Andrew Sachs, head of the Directors Lab Studio describes a technique called **DROP IN** used by director Lisa Wolpe for Shakespearean actors to get deeply into an expressive line. For example, Sarah says to Abraham: "My anger is against you! Let God judge between me and you." The director stands behind the actor and whispers into his/her ear background information to evoke different emotions to be expressed when repeating a word or a whole the line each time.

She might whisper about Sarai: barren = a woman pining for a child; barren =dry land, no vegetation; barren =empty.

Let the teacher play that role as student repeats in Hebrew or English a key phrase.

**PICTORIAL EMOTIONS** is used by Andrew Sachs to evoke an emotion that is captured better by a picture than any word. For example, he finds newspaper photo of someone deeply angered which could be used to evoke in the actor Sarah's sense of anger or betrayal.

Ask students to scan magazines to cut out the picture that captures the emotions of one of the Biblical characters.



## #4 - Hollywood's Scene It?: Avraham's Journey: Scene It?

by staff of Milken High School

We have spent some time now discussing Avraham's journey, and in the process, recognized that his story would make an excellent television drama. We've noted the cast members, dissected the family dynamics, and even pondered the parallels to our own time. Now it is time to bring Avraham's life... well... to life!

For your final project you will write, cast and produce one scene from one episode of Avraham's journey. (You create the title: You can use the examples we came up with in class or create another one).

There are two major components to this project: (1) the preparation and writing of the scene, and (2) the presentation/production of your scene.

But first a little background on

### **Screen Writing... By Dorian Scott Cole**

#### **Fundamental Building Block of a Story**

If you went home and told a friend today that one of your classmates, Trudy, "Made a scene in the school cafeteria with her boyfriend," your friend would know what you meant. Trudy had an argument with him, or gave him a kiss, or something like that. Whatever happened, it was in a setting: the cafeteria. It involved some bit of drama: an argument or a kiss. It lasted about three minutes before her boyfriend left to cool off. Those are the same things that a screenplay scene are about.

The scene is the fundamental building block of the screenplay.

**DEFINITION: A scene is an unbroken piece of dramatic action that takes place in one setting.**

Scenes in modern popular movies last an average of two minutes. They can last from a few seconds to several minutes, if needed.

Scenes are like little stories. There is usually some conflict - conflict is the heart of drama. Tension builds until one character changes directions or decides to change things. Usually at least one character will change emotional states during the scene. He enters happy, leaves mad. She enters aloof, leaves touched.

#### ***So how do you get started?***

1. You must choose one moment in Avraham's journey that would be "great" material for the scene. (Genesis 12-22 ) Ask yourself the following, is the text I am choosing,

**A) Dramatic as a result of conflict?    B) Gripping as a result of conflict?**

**DEFINITION - Conflict is when one character argues with another, or when the good guy wants something and the bad guy won't let him have it, or when the bad guy wants something, and the good guy won't let him have it... you get the idea.**

Once you have your idea... you are ready to rock and roll... *here's what your project will require of you:*

**The Written Component:** (60 points) You must hand in the following:

1. You need to choose **one commentator** like Rashi to look at and formally analyze (in the way we have been doing for weeks). You will use this information in the writing of your script.
2. A paragraph describing **how you will set this story in modern times**. This should be creative, realistic, and parallel to the text. Meaning, an Avraham who works at Macy's in the Men's department doesn't have much in common with the Avraham of Canaan!
3. You must include a couple of sentences **convincing the President of the Network** (me, the teacher) **that this series is important**. Tell me why I should choose this over another project and why people will relate to the characters?
4. The **Character Breakdown** of the characters who are in your scene only! Character breakdowns do not tell me their story (Yitzhak is the son of Avraham - this, we already know). **What they do tell me is how one would act** like Yitzhak (quiet, reserved, obedient...)

In addition your character breakdowns must include the **modern day version of their character's job/role in life** (i.e. Yitzhak is a teenager at a private school for the best and brightest, while Ishmael attends public school and hangs out with the wrong crowd.)

5. The **Series Theme Song**: Choose a song that will play at the opening of your scene. Be sure to hand in the Lyrics and a paragraph describing why you chose it. (The OC producers chose: *California here we come...* I'm sure you can come up with something a little less obvious!)
6. **The Scene Script** (1-2 pages)
  - a. Write a script for a 2 minute scene. You must not sway too far from the text, you should quote from the text, but add to it as well!
  - b. One of the elements you will add to the text is Rashi's commentary. One of your characters will actually say what Rashi thinks...
  - c. **Add a character to the Scene that the text left out.**  
(For example, In the Akedah - who is missing from this scene? I might add Sarah, and have her urge Avraham to rethink this mission! In other words, Who is quiet when they shouldn't be?)
  - d. Most importantly you should interpret what the text says and make the character's come alive.  
(For example, think about what Avraham really wants to say - and say it!)
  - e. Be sure to Edit and also **CITE TEXT!**

**The Performing/Production Component: (40 points)**

You are also responsible for presenting your Scene:

1. You may produce a **video**. (Theme song included)
2. You may **act** out your Scene in class (bring music to play at the start of your scene).
3. You may use spotlights to show who is in the changing center of attention or moving people in and off the stage, or forward and back for relative significance.

In both cases I expect the following:

1. Your actors should be prepared. You don't have to memorize the lines, but I don't want people's faces buried in their scripts.
2. I want to see props, costumes and REAL evidence of REAL preparation.
3. most importantly... I expect you to have fun!

## #5 - Mock Trial: David on Trial

by Diane Lavin at Agnon Middle School - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade -

**David unit.** To begin at the end, we put David on trial for adultery and murder. There are defined roles for each student during the trial (prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, David, Bat Sheva, other witnesses, God, Natan, etc) and there are specific rules for how the trial proceeds (cause for objections, ruling on objections, order of testimony and cross examination, etc). The teacher plays no direct role in the trial itself, unless it starts to break down.

1- So the unit begins with the story of **David and Bat Sheva**, which we study in the original (primarily), and without commentary, for about a week. Then I propose that in order for David to be judged, we must know him as the complex individual that he was.

2- So we need to go back to **his early life** and see what kind of person he is, what patterns of behavior he exhibits, what values and principles he lives by, his relationships with women and with authority, etc. We study 4-5 stories (depending upon the size of the class), in small groups - with each group taking one story and then "teaching" it to the class for two consecutive days. Groups have requirements re: Hebrew verses to teach, etc., and they must give me a lesson plan for approval before they teach. They are required to assign homework before and/or during their teaching days and this homework is graded by me. Their assignments are also approved by me. Throughout the teaching of these stories, we consider potential textual evidence in support of or against David.

3- After these early stories we **review the David and Bat Sheva story**, to see it with informed eyes. Then we begin preparation for the trial.

4- **The Trial.** No one knows which role they will be assigned until one week before the trial, at which time they have that week to prepare. The outcome of the trial is the judgment of God (in consultation with Natan) and no one is to know it, including me, until it is announced. Reasons must be given for the judgment, and these are based upon a set of criteria worked out by God, Natan and me in advance of the trial.

**Assessment.** I grade students as they prepare their stories, as they teach, on how they participate when other groups teach (there is a strong difference to me between presenting and teaching, and I am not interested in presentations), as they prepare for the trial and as they participate in the trial. At the end of the unit, I give one of the toughest tests I would in good conscience offer 8<sup>th</sup> graders. They tend to sail through it.

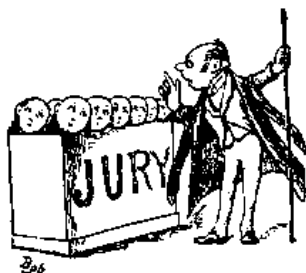
The whole unit is about 12 weeks long. It's become a highlight of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, and I have my son Josh, at the time, 14 to thank, because the original idea and much of the brainstorming was done together with him.

### Goals:

- Student investment in holding, knowing, moving through, citing, quoting and interpreting text.
- Student skill in seeing a character come out of the text and stand in front of them full blown, with personality, ambivalence, a conscience, a capacity to lie and cheat, a capacity for greatness.
- Student capacity to work with text from multiple perspectives, to use text on their feet, to "be" the text and "be" the characters.

- Student capacity to follow criteria and create a dramatic process with minimal adult intervention.
- Development of biblical Hebrew skill.
- Enjoyment of spending time with peers over a text, because they are bringing the text to life.

## Cain's MOCK TRIAL by Steve Israel



The following report appeared in the Jerusalem Post in 1988.

*CAIN WAS NOT GUILTY. It took a few thousand years to get it straight, but humanity's first (alleged) capital crime - Cain murdering his brother Abel - was finally retried. The acquittal came in a simulated trial held in Venice recently by lawyers, moral theologians, historians and anthropologists. The trial saw the defense successfully extricate the accused from the moral dictum in the Bible "Thou shalt not kill", with arguments about the psychological and sociological circumstances in which Cain slew Abel, of whom he was jealous.*

*Cain's defenders conceded that he did kill his brother but that it was unpremeditated and in the context of an economic power struggle between pastoralists and the first agriculturalists, Abel representing the former and Cain the latter. From this point of view, Cain's crime should be seen as "rightful" in terms of the "law" of the time, his lawyers maintained.*

*Defense and prosecution each called rabbis as witnesses. After an hour's deliberation, the jury pronounced Cain "not guilty" by a majority of five votes to four.*

Jerusalem Post

Cain had been put on trial and his innocence had finally been affirmed thousands of years after his guilt was first assumed and proclaimed to the world. We propose a similar exercise as our first large scale concluding exercise.

We have worked our way systematically through the whole of the Cain and story. We have examined the peshat of the task and have also examined a great deal of the central midrashic texts and a good number of commentaries, traditional and modern, theological, literary and artistic. We have emphasized time and again that rather than just learning the material, our object is to promote internalization of the issues on the part of the students, to bring them to a point where they themselves are struggling with the issues that come out of the text.

In this, our opening summary activity, we suggest integrating a lot of the issues that have come up over the study, by getting them to examine the story once again, from the beginning, in the form of a trial. The suggestion is to use the text to put Cain on trial for the murder of his brother. Tradition has always seen him as guilty, but is he really as guilty as he has always been made out to be? Maybe yes and maybe no: in this activity that will be up to the students to decide.

- There are many ways to conduct a trial like this. One thing however must be clear. If the trial is going to involve a serious examination of the issues, enough time has to be given to

the students to examine carefully the various aspects which need to be assessed. We suggest the students work in small groups and each group takes on a slightly different role.

The roles we suggest are as follows.

**THE POLICE INVESTIGATOR.** The task of this group is to investigate as closely as possible the details of the murder and to bring a recommendation regarding the precise charge that should be brought against Cain.

**THE SOCIAL WORKER.** The task of this group is to investigate the family background and to try and assess to what extent the family (i.e. the parents) bear responsibility for creating the situation which develops into murder.

**THE PSYCHOLOGIST.** The task of this group is to try and assess the state of mind of Cain at the time of his murderous act and to see whether or not he was totally responsible for his actions or whether there are other factors that need to be taken into account in recommending a particular verdict. Are there mitigating circumstances that should be taken into account when assessing Cain's guilt?

**THE SOCIOLOGIST/ANTHROPOLOGIST/HISTORIAN.** The task of this group is to examine the background behind the quarrel and to see whether it needs to be situated in a wider context of conflict between shepherds and farmers for example. Additionally they can consider the question whether or not Cain can be considered to have broken a law if no societal norms yet existed, and mankind lived in a natural lawless state.

**THE PHILOSOPHER.** The task of this group is to examine the issue whether there are other forces or people whose role needs to be examined in order to assess the guilt of Cain. Does Abel as victim play any role in the chain of events that led to his murder? And what of the role of God? Does God in any way, bear indirect responsibility for what happened?

The different tasks overlap to an extent. For instance, the role of the social worker and the psychologist overlap. It is inconceivable that the role of the parents should not be taken into account when examining the psychological health of Cain. Nevertheless, the centre of the examination by each group is different and despite overlap around the margins, our feeling is that each group is looking at the events and at the personality and experiences of Cain from a sufficiently different point of view to justify the division in this way. Each group will bring different points of view to the table, when the separate investigations have reached their conclusions.

- Each group should go back and examine the relevant parts of the text. They should use every hint in the text (and in some cases, where relevant, earlier chapters of the text of Beraishit for things like family background, parental expectations etc.) Ultimately, they will need to supplement their readings of the text with their own intuition/imagination/creativity and in so doing they will be following in the footsteps of the early midrashists and the modern literary writers both of whom have used their understanding of the text, supplementing it with their own thoughts in order to complete the incomplete scenario that the text offers us. Just like these different commentators, the students must attempt to get behind the text to get to the story that they imagine is written there. Having studied the midrashic accounts extensively throughout this

program, they should be encouraged to view their task now as participation in the midrashic tradition so deeply rooted in the Jewish culture.

- The groups should arrive at their own conclusions regarding the questions that lie within their realm, and should prepare a report which will subsequently be presented within the framework of the trial itself. At that trial, it might be desirable to have students playing the principle parts of Cain and the other family members, or alternatively it might be advisable to keep things clinical, limited to the different officials with their reports. The trial can be conducted formally with a judge and jury and with prosecutors and defending counsels or in the form of a series of discussions between the members of the different teams. It might or might not include some small group work where each of the positions is represented within each of the small groups or it might be that it should be conducted as a group of delegations sitting round a "table" in a United Nations type arrangement.
- There are many possible variations here and the specific technique should be left up to each educator and teaching framework. What is important is to make sure that the group of students understands its task to be one of milking the text for all that it can provide and that the whole text is completely covered in this fashion. If the participants want to use some of the insights of the midrashim and literary explorations that they have studied, so be it. This will once again help them to internalize the ideas that they have covered, but it is important to emphasize that they should not see any midrash or literary exploration as in any way authoritative. They themselves, backed by the text of the Tanakhic account are the authorities.
- In the course of discussion, the group as a whole, or the judge and jury, should arrive at a verdict regarding the guilt of Cain. If Cain is found not guilty, then the process should stop there. If Cain is found guilty, either fully or partly, then the next stage is to recommend and finally to adopt, a punishment for him. This once again can be done in a number of ways and we will not enter into the possible techniques here. It might or might not include an analysis and an assessment of the punishment appearing in the Biblical account.
- Finally, when the decisions are made and the trial itself is over, it might be suitable to conclude the process with the release of some final report or a press release prepared by the group, announcing the news to the outside world. Alternatively, it is possible to prepare a wall newspaper full of articles which include reports of the trial, interviews with the witnesses and the experts, analysis by special correspondents and the like.

This could be the basis of a parents' evening in which the articles are interspersed with dramatic and artistic renderings of the story, with midrashic and literary sources read out or acted by the students themselves, and with discussion involving the parents in which some of the issues are examined and where the students get the opportunity to show the parents what they have learned and gained from the learning process.



## **#6 - Newspaper Editor / FBI Regional Head / JPS Book Editor**

In David Harris' class on Tanakh in the Smith School in DC the teacher often transforms himself and his students into simulators of real life activities that demand they live up to higher standards of competence than normal homework could achieve.

In one class David appeared in an FBI hat (one could add a toy hand gun) and gave out to his middle school FBI investigators a series of tasks to see if Abraham should be accused of crimes attributed to him. Each investigative team took a different story (for example, arguing with God at Sodom or passing off his wife as his sister or agreeing to kill his son). They have to turn in written reports with evidence, with witness interviews, with a recommendation.

In another class for high school David played the editor of a new JPS publication of *Mikraot Gedolot* in the form of anthology. Each writer received a task to write a biography of a particular commentator, to research his style and then to write a commentary in the style of that commentator on particular chapter of Tanakh.

Many teachers use the newspaper format pioneered in a Jewish context by Yisrael Eldad's *Chronicles*. For example, the Exodus is summarized after study of the Biblical text and background history by assigning students to play the role of journalists: editorial writer, human interest, internal politics of Pharaoh's court, religion writer, letters to the editor, advertisements, photographs and maps etc.

Generally students need to study the simulation model and to develop a rubric before applying it to the Biblical materials. A festive but also a critical exhibition of their results is essential.

## #7 - International Debating: Capital Punishment - For and Against

### DEBATE SIMULATION: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT - THE DEBATE



- We suggest opening with a formal debate in the class on the question of the justice of capital punishment.
- Divide the class into two groups. One group has to prepare arguments for capital punishment in the case of first degree murder, the other has to prepare arguments against.
- Choose two speakers from each group, for and against, to debate the following motion.

THIS HOUSE BELIEVES THAT THE FAIREST PUNISHMENT FOR MURDER IS CAPITAL PUNISHMENT ON THE BASIS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF RETRIBUTIVE PUNISHMENT.

- Carry out the debate, with students questioning and commenting from the position of the group that they were in previously.
- Before the vote, tell the class that they are now out of character, and conduct a discussion with them on their real opinions regarding the issue.
- Bring Cain as a case study. Should God have punished Cain with death? Would not this have been the fairest thing to do according to the principle of retributive punishment? Now ask why God did not do this? How is it possible to justify the idea that the murderer should get a different punishment but that people who want to take revenge for the death of the victim *will* be punished with death?
- Bring any or all of the five sources brought above (two from Beraishit Rabbah, Radak, MeAm Loez (emphasizing the last part) and Hirsch. Look at the various suggestions made in these sources. Which if any are most convincing?

Do these reasons suggest that God acted in a utilitarian way or a retributive fashion when deciding on Cain's punishment?

## Debate on Capital Punishment

by David Rothberg from Baltimore Cardin Curriculum

### Organizing Principle/Activity

The unit is based around a debate. In most debates, a few kids dominate and everyone else spaces out. In this format the class is split into two teams. Each team prepares together, but each individual is responsible for handing in prep materials and in the culmination, every student debates with a partner simultaneously, so the class of the debate itself is noisy, cacophonous - sounds sort of like a Beit Midrash

Down side: no one hears/learns from others debates.

Up side: everyone participates.

As far as grades, for the debate itself, the only grade was for being "on task". Most of the grades for the unit are in the prep worksheets, and post-debate reflection worksheets.

Between the combination of method and subject matter, this was my most popular unit, and the one the kids felt most involved and passionate about.

### Materials/Texts

The unit was a combination of **current events and Jewish text**. As far as Jewish text, it's listed in the worksheets: several from chumash and I think only two mishnayot, the obvious one in Makot and Sanhedrin 4:5. It felt a bit light on text, although I have to say that the task was to extract arguments for or against capital punishment from them, and this wasn't easy. It took time, and I'd rather do a few texts well than drone on and on.

For current events, I searched the internet for what was current and/or local, and what I thought would be intriguing for the kids. There was a **case** a badly delusional man on death row in Texas that we followed; the Washington DC sniper, who was a minor; and probably some others. There are many good websites on this issue; I think they are necessary because in my opinion not all of the issues come out in the Jewish texts, or at least not clearly, and I wanted to the kids to be able to use these arguments if they chose.

Finally, I showed an excerpt from the film "**Dead Man Walking**", which was a huge hit, and dramatized some of the issues in a compelling way. Lots of kids complained that they needed to see the entire film.

### Lesson Plan

#### Goals:

#### Content:

- Become familiar with the arguments for and against Capital Punishment

#### Skills:

- Develop debating skills: identifying and formulating arguments, questions, rebuttals, etc.

#### Affect:

- Feel that Jewish tradition has important insights into this vital contemporary issue.

#### Materials needed:

1. "Dead Man Walking" Video
2. "Dead Man Walking" worksheets

**Motivation:**

- We're going to be watching an excerpt from the movie "Dead Man Walking" -and completing a worksheet about it, as a way of learning more about capital punishment and to help us gather info for the upcoming debates.
- Set up the situation in the movie:
  1. A death row inmate, named Matthew Poncelet, has been convicted of rape and double murder. He has asked a nun, named Sister Helen Prejean to help him by coming to talk with him. (The movie is based on a book written by Sister Helen. It is a true story.)
  2. She comes to see him, and during their conversation he asks her to file some legal papers for him and get him a lawyer to appeal his conviction. She agrees.
  3. Suddenly, Poncelet is given a date for his execution, about a week away. He calls Sister Helen to ask for help. He needs a lawyer for a hearing and appeals to commute the death sentence.

**Goals:***Skills:*

- Practice reading and analyzing biblical and rabbinic texts.
- Develop debating skills: identifying and formulating arguments, questions, rebuttals, etc.

**Body of Lesson:**

1. Capital Punishment in Tanakh
  - a. Bereshit 9. (15 minutes)
    - i. Pre-read (15 minutes):
      1. Setting. Why did G-d make the flood?
      2. What is "life blood"?
      3. Reckoning: word in Hebrew derash (inquiry, investigation): here, appropriate response
    - ii. Read together (30 minutes)
      1. Man in G-d's image: what does that mean?
      2. People are required to have death penalty
      3. But there is a paradox
  - b. Vayikra. Read together (15 minutes)
    - i. Class discussion (15 minutes)
    - ii. Read Commentaries and discuss

**Close: (5 minutes)**

Seen that some of the reasons we came up with also appear in Tanach, also some different. Some of same concerns that we have on this issue

**Important:** Start where scene of Sister Helen looking at some legal papers, followed by a news report. Play it until the end of the demonstration of supporters and opponents of capital punishment at the prison. Do not show the film after that scene. The clip is about a half hour, I think.

**Arguments In Favor Of and  
Opposed to the Death Penalty In תנ"ך**

	In Favor of Death Penalty	Opposed to the Death Penalty, or Limitations on the Death Penalty
בראשית ט:ה-ו		
ויקרא כ"ד:י"ז-כ"ב		
	In Favor of Death Penalty	Opposed to the Death Penalty, or Limitations on the Death Penalty
במדבר ל"ה:ל"ג-ל"ד		
דברים י"ט:י"ח-כ"א		

All in all, is the viewpoint of תנ"ך in favor of the death penalty, opposed to it, or mixed? Why? (Explain your answer in a paragraph or bullet points.)

## Capital Punishment in תנ"ך

### **Bereishit 9:5-6**

1. What arguments in favor of capital punishment are given in the passage?
2. Could anything in the passage be used to argue against capital punishment?
3. Is there any difference between verse 5 and verse 6 regarding crime and punishment?

### **Vayikra 24:17-22**

1. What arguments in favor of capital punishment are given in the passage?
2. Could anything in the passage be used to argue against capital punishment?
3. Other ancient Near Eastern law codes allowed for monetary compensation in the case of murder. Why is it not allowed in biblical law? Is one of them more primitive or advanced?
4. What impact does verse 22 have on our argument?

### **Bamidbar 35:30-35**

1. What arguments in favor of capital punishment are given in the passage?
2. Could anything in the passage be interpreted to argue against capital punishment?
3. What does verse 30 us about the process of capital criminal cases?

### **Devarim 19:18-21**

1. What arguments in favor of capital punishment are given in the passage?
2. Could anything in the passage be interpreted to argue against capital punishment?

## Capital Punishment in Jewish Tradition Debate Format

*The Resolution: According to Jewish sources,  
Capital Punishment should be an available punishment for convicted murderers.*  
You are arguing [IN FAVOR OF / OPPOSED TO] the resolution. (circle one).

The debate will be highly structured. The moderator will be starting and stopping each of the following sections with a stopwatch. If you are not done, you need to stop anyway. If you are done early, say so and sit quietly.

### **Structure**

**1A. IN FAVOR - *Opening Statement*:** State your position on the resolution; list your arguments briefly; if you have a thesis (a main idea that ties your arguments together), state it here. (2 minutes)

**1B. OPPOSED - *Opening Statement*:** State your position on the resolution; list your arguments briefly; if you have a thesis (a main idea that ties your arguments together), state it here. (2 minutes)

**2A. IN FAVOR - *Arguments and Evidence*** (5 minutes)

**2B. OPPOSED - *Rebuttals and Questions to In Favor*** (3 minutes)

**2C. IN FAVOR - *Response to Rebuttals and Questions*** (3 minutes)

**3A. OPPOSED - *Arguments and Evidence*** (5 minutes)

**3B. IN FAVOR - *Rebuttals and Questions to Opposed*** (3 minutes)

**3C. OPPOSED - *Response to Rebuttals and Questions*** (3 minutes)

**4A. IN FAVOR - *Closing Statement*** (2 minutes)

**4B. OPPOSED - *Closing Statement*** (2 minutes)

Total minutes: 30.      Total minutes with "between time": 35-40 minutes

## Capital Punishment in Jewish Tradition Debate Argument Sheet

*The Resolution: According to Jewish sources,  
Capital Punishment should be an available punishment for convicted murderers.  
You are arguing [IN FAVOR OF / OPPOSED TO] the resolution. (circle one).*

**1. Opening Statement:** State your position on the resolution; list your arguments briefly; if you have a thesis (a main idea that ties your arguments together), state it here.

**2. Your Arguments** (if you have more than 3, attach a separate sheet in this format

**Argument 1:**

<i>Your Argument:</i>
<i>Your Evidence (reference/quotation from Tanakh or Mishnah we've studied; other sources):</i>

**Argument 2:**

<i>Your Argument:</i>
<i>Your Evidence (reference/quotation from Tanakh or Mishnah we've studied; other sources):</i>

**Argument 3:**

<i>Your Argument:</i>
<i>Your Evidence (reference/quotation from Tanakh or Mishnah we've studied; other sources):</i>



**3. Arguments you expect your opponent to make**

<i>You opponent is likely to argue that...</i>	<i>How you will challenge it</i>

**4. Your closing statement (restate your position and your strongest arguments).**

**Capital Punishment in Jewish Tradition  
Debate Reflection Sheet**

*The Resolution: According to Jewish sources,  
Capital Punishment should be an available punishment for convicted murderers.  
You are arguing [IN FAVOR OF / OPPOSED TO] the resolution. (circle one).*

***Answer each of the following in a minimum of 3 sentences (or the equivalent in fully expressed bullet points).***

1. Did one seem to you to "win" the debate? If so, which side won and why? If not, why was it a tie?
2. In the heat of the debate, which single argument point (on either side) seemed strongest to you? Why?
3. Did the position you were assigned reflect your own personal views on capital punishment? If it did not, what was it like to advocate a position different from your own beliefs? If it did, what do you think it would have been like for you to advocate for the opposing view?
4. Did your beliefs change at all or become more nuanced in any way as a result of the debate? Why or why not?

## Capital Punishment: The Film - "Dead Man Walking"

*Take a few notes while you watch to film, so you'll be able to answer these questions:*

Here's the situation up the point of the excerpt we'll be watching:

- A death row inmate, named Matthew Poncelet, has been convicted of rape and double murder. He has asked a nun, named Sister Helen Prejean, to help him by coming to talk with him. (The movie is based on a book written by Sister Helen. It is a true story.)
- She comes to see him, and during their conversation he asks her to file some legal papers for him and get him a lawyer to appeal his conviction. She agrees.
- Suddenly, Poncelet is given a date for his execution, about a week away. He calls Sister Helen to ask for help. He needs a lawyer for a hearing and appeals to commute the death sentence.

### The Hearing

1. According to the lawyer defending Poncelet (the convict on death row), why do people like his client get the death penalty? Do you agree or disagree with his argument? Explain your answer.
2. Why does the defense lawyer talk about "progress" in the technology of capital punishment, describing in detail how people die from lethal injection? Do you think this is an effective strategy? Why or why not?
3. According to the prosecutor, why should Poncelet get the death penalty? Give at least two of his reasons? Do you think they are good reasons?
4. Why does the prosecutor have the jury and judges look at pictures of the victims?
5. Why are the families of the victims so upset? Why do they want the death penalty?

### The Demonstration Outside the Prison

6. What argument in favor of the death penalty from the Bible do you see on the demonstrators' signs? Is it a good use of the quotation?
7. What arguments in favor of the death penalty are made by the man interviewed?
8. Do you think Poncelet should get the death penalty? Why or why not?

*Note: There is a website based on this true story that you may want to check out:*

*<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/angel/> -- or you could find it by doing a search on *Dead Man Walking*.*

**Capital Punishment in**  
**משנה סנהדרין ד:ה Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5**

1. Review the entire mishnah. What impression are they trying to make on the witnesses? Why?
2. How does the court guard against false testimony?
3. According to the mishnah, what is the difference between monetary and capital (death penalty) cases?
4. While the mishnah does not put forward any specific arguments for or against capital punishment, there are several ideas that can be used for either position. What are they?
5. What other insights from this Mishnah can be applied to a debate on capital punishment?

## The Israelite National Health Index (INHI): Book of Judges Survey: Team Blasto Project By Evan Wolkenstein

### Instructions:

- a. Divide up the texts in your Judges Packet - one person covers BOX 12 (AVIMELECH), one covers YIFTACH, and one covers the ISH LEVI.
- b. 20 mins -- Each member of your team reads his/her own section, USING THE MULTILEVEL APPROACH TO READING in your portfolio [1. flash impression, 2. patterns and repetitions, 3. summarize sections, 4. background questions, 5. kushiot].  
Then, answer the questions on the other side of this sheet. Write the answers on the sheet if your printing is small and neat, or in your portfolio. You may ask for help from your team-mates or from Mr. Wolk if you get confused about a plot detail or language issue.
- c. 15 mins - Share your findings - begin with an explanation.
- d. 15 mins - With your team, draw a chart, with the x axis depicting the flow of time, from story to story chronologically, and the y axis showing the Israelite National Health Index (INHI). The NHI is a figure that combines a. national morale b. national safety and c. national emotional/spiritual health. Make sure to include and label important moments and events in the flow of time and cite with a verse. Note: you can combine all three of these factors into one NHI figure - no need for separate lines/bars.
- e. Homework: 1 page: (on your own) Summarize the way the INHI has been developing over time. Pretend you are a NHI consultant. What recommendations would you make to help improve the INHI for the future? Suggest a few possibilities, and include some comments about why this is so urgent.

### Questions

1. What sort of qualities (including leadership style, morals and values, intelligence) does the person who leads the action in your section demonstrate? Explain, using the text. (please show at least 2 qualities)
2. How does war, violence figure into your scene? Who fights whom? Why?
3. What is the atrocity of this scene? What happens that's disturbing or disgusting? Why does it happen?
4. What is the "stupidity" of this scene? What happens that is ridiculous?
5. What role does perception, misperception, and changing perception play in this section?
6. Is there a "take home message" from your scene? What conclusion(s) do you think the Author wants you to draw?

## Appendix: The Biblical Web site on Cain and Abel, Constructivism and the Hypertext By Joel Duman<sup>1</sup>

<http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story> (Heb.)

**Hypertext websites** reflect an information processing approach to learning that is much less directive and provides multiple points of random access. Thus each student is a more active learner in accordance with constructivist theory of knowledge and in accordance with the value of personalized self-motivated and self-directed study.

*Joel Duman with a PhD in Tanakh education using a website offers a student centered model of teaching which is much less directive than methods examined above:*

### Introduction

My major interest in teaching Bible is to **inspire my students to reexamine their values and to develop and refine their skills at analyzing texts**. My hypothesis is that each individual's intellectual and artistic/imaginative creativity can best be encouraged and developed by the process of **dealing with rich materials, with minimal guidance and maximal encouragement**. **Rather than establishing in advance "correct" means and manners of interpretation, I favor exposure of my students to basic sources, challenging them to look at these documents by themselves and asking them what they see and what it means**. My aim is to move each individual along from wherever he or she is, guide him or her to examine initial impressions and hypotheses critically and only afterwards introduce alternate ways of interpretation, which the student may then incorporate into his or her own toolkit. **My assumption is that neither I nor any other authority has the key to "correct" interpretation and that personal advance can come only from direct, unencumbered struggle with the material**. The bases of this approach are in my own encounter with the Socratic method and my experiences in the Jerusalem Experimental High School.

**A new means of providing students access to a wealth of primary texts, while allowing them to engage these texts at their own pace and according their own inclinations, is the Internet**. The present study is an attempt to determine how a variety of students may best use a Web-based electronic source book on the story of Cain and Abel.<sup>2</sup>

The setting of this study is the Hebrew University Secondary School (known commonly as "Leyada"). The basic organizational fact of learning at Leyada, and most other Israeli high schools, is that Bible, a required subject, is taught in the framework of classes of approximately 40 students and one teacher. The **State curriculum for Bible study**, in all of its formats over the years of its existence, apparently takes into account this basic fact. Despite significant changes in focus over the years, a consistent aspect of the curriculum is its **focus on subject matter and the acquisition of a stock of knowledge** regarding accepted and expert interpretation of a wide range of Biblical texts. In such a context, it would appear **unlikely that personalized grappling with the subject matter can take place**.

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<sup>1</sup> The Web site in Teaching the Cain and Abel Narrative in an Israeli high school PhD. Jewish Theological Seminary of America. The article is abbreviated by the editor, not by the author, not for publication)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story> (Heb.)

My contention is that given the variety of factors working against personally significant encounters with the Bible in Israeli schools, one must search for media that allow the teacher to personalize instruction. Such personalization must take into account the variety of intelligences, learning and thinking styles, personal interests, levels and types of motivation - in a word, the variety of learning individuals. The attempt to bring the entire student population to a particular level of expertise seems to me to be doomed from the outset to engender widespread alienation, apathy and instrumental learning which is quickly forgotten. Since the study of the Bible is the major instrument for the transmission of Jewish tradition in the Israeli State schools, it seems clear that such outcomes are unacceptable. While no single unit of study or medium can ameliorate the general tendency of Israeli students to see their studies as nothing more than a means for personal advancement, **the personalization of learning through the use of such an electronic source book may indicate a direction which can offer an opportunity for significant individual growth. Based as it is on hypertext and random access, this medium is characterized by inherent flexibility that allows the teacher to tailor and personalize its use in a variety of group and individual contexts.** It is therefore necessary to examine how best to use this new medium in the most appropriate ways, given the variety of student needs, strengths and styles.

\* \* \* \* \*

My first experience with the use of the site was with a 12<sup>th</sup> grade class at the Hebrew University High School. After teaching the subject of the story of Cain and Abel in a fairly conventional manner for two class periods, I introduced the class to the Web site and gave them over an hour to explore it in whatever way they wished, telling them only that they should look for subjects and materials that they found interesting and that their assignment would be to produce some sort of "creative" response. While they browsed, I circulated amongst them, mainly encouraging them to explore more and offering some suggestions on what to look at in accordance with their interests. We then conducted a short discussion of the some of the major foci of the site.

The projects the class submitted were remarkable. Quite a few created artwork, some of it computer-based, which they analyzed and narrated; others wrote essays on topics such as the motif of the earth in the story and the story as a Darwinist parable; one of the most gifted students composed a series of poems based on the midrashic resources in the site. Only one member of the class, a talented math and computer student, was unable to produce a "creative" response. Many of the students expressed great satisfaction with the assignment.

## Constructivism, Decontextualization and Individuation

One of the major contentions of constructivist educational theory is that **learning must be contextualized or situated**. In order for learning to have a significant impact on the learner, it must be presented in a manner **connected with the real world, with the learner's reality**. ...Traditional Jewish Bible study reads each story within the context of the Oral Tradition and religious commentary, which serve as a bridge to the living world of the learner's own religious practice. **The religious learner is socialized to see the Bible as reflecting his own world**; its characters have the same beliefs as he does and are obligated to the same commandments as he is. **Modern critical Bible study is based on a very different set of understandings. Most basically, it sees the Bible as an object of inquiry deriving from a cultural context very different from our own, the cultures of the Ancient Near East**. In order to understand the Bible, we must familiarize ourselves with the cultures of the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians and Canaanites. The Bible both shares common assumptions with this cultural world and reacts against it. Thus the basic assumption of modern Biblical criticism, which is a cornerstone of Israeli Bible teaching, is that one must recognize how foreign to our world the Bible is in order to understand it. Ancient Near Eastern culture, fascinating as it may be, is not naturally, organically part of any modern student's life. Even the local Israeli setting is so different today from the ancient Land of Israel of the Bible, that most modern students do not see themselves living in the same world. Thus, the study of Bible in Israeli secular schools suffers from the lack of any real, personal contextualization. No wonder that the *eros*, explicitly indicated as a goal of all Bible curricula, is clearly missing.

Cognizant of these difficulties, I sought to alleviate them by including in the Web site that I designed contextual materials from both traditional and critical sources, as well as from art, poetry, prose, psychology and the history of religions. **Thus the site provides multiple opportunities for contextualization of the story of Cain and Abel, both vertically (through time) and horizontally (across media and disciplines).**

The question then is: *which of these possible contexts are relevant to the lives of Israeli students today?*

The answer to this question is both collective and individual. Obviously, different students will find themselves drawn intellectually, emotionally and spiritually to different contexts. Just as obviously such personal interests can serve as the most personally relevant substrate for much study. In response to these assumptions, I have frequently suggested to students, looking for subjects to deal with in the context of Bible study, that they **start from what interests them**. Remarkably, the response is often uncomprehending: what could my own life have to do with the Bible? On the collective level, the question is: Which of the available contexts is relevant to and will most benefit the class? Who should decide?

In the end, **the actual work of contextualization, as part of the process of constructing meaning, is performed by the student/user**. In my view, the materials provided for any learning context should, therefore, contain a wide enough variety of possible contexts to respond to a range of personal inclinations. On the collective level, the context that is naturally available to students is the world of the psyche, the world of the mind and the soul, their characteristics, potentialities and tendencies. These personal characteristics are common to us and to Biblical figures — therefore the natural context is ourselves. It is, therefore, my inclination to stress the psychological and sociological aspects of the Bible, as a forum for my students to grapple with their own identities.

For example, the social, political, historical, cultural and personal contexts within which the Israeli student lives may be characterized as post-industrial, European/Mediterranean, adolescent, Jewish, and fraught with social and political tension, threat and pressure. Since the founding of the State of Israel, and even before, high school youth have faced compulsory military service after completion of their secondary studies. Today, Israel's high school students encounter violence in their daily lives,

even before entering the overtly military context of the army. This difficult reality is, aside from the concerns of all adolescents, one of the major factors in character development for adolescent Israelis. The story of Cain and Abel is the Biblical paradigm regarding conflict and violence; it is therefore particularly apt as a forum for the examination of a **major existential issue** for the Israeli student. The examination of such a classical story can enable the student to explore this highly sensitive subject from a somewhat distanced perspective. This "objectivized" stance is helpful as a temporary buffer against over-involvement, which tends to block rather than encourage new insights based on careful examination.

**But it is not the Biblical text alone that we should be examining, but the effects on Jewish and Western culture (including both the Christian and the Muslim worlds) of the Bible, reflected in changing modes of interpretation and assimilation of the Bible in the creative products of these cultures. These are the story's intellectual contexts.** While the site does not include documents connected with the psychological and sociological roots of violence, for example, such issues are more than implied in many of the resources, traditional and modern, textual and visual.

**The study of the Bible, divested of the links in later Jewish literature by which the ancient Biblical world is connected to the Jew and the Jewish people of today, deprives itself of vital context, as well as authority.** The student of today who feels unattached to the Bible through the medium of generations of Jewish scholarship and interpretation may see no particular reason to see the Bible as relevant to his or her life. Eliezer Schweid calls for increased use of post-biblical Jewish literature in the teaching of Judaic studies. This call is based on Schweid's recognition of the relevance and accessibility of Midrash in its own right and as a vital link between the student of today and the world of the Bible. That Schweid's position has been heard is indicated by the recent adoption of programs for teaching the Oral Tradition in the Middle schools.

However, the new Israeli Bible curriculum seems to be as concerned as ever with differentiating among the scientifically-based original context of the Bible, the cultures of the Ancient Near East, and the post-biblical understandings of the Bible found in Midrash and Medieval commentary. The renewed popularity of the study of Midrash, in academia, in adult learning contexts and in some school settings is apparently based on a post-modern rejection of "scientism" in favor of materials that tap into more emotional and spiritual areas.

**In my view, there is no good reason to privilege either one of these directions** to the exclusion of the other, if for no other reason than that different students are moved by different approaches. If we are trying to educate children according to a unified concept of what they should become, we should employ only those educational materials and pedagogical techniques that serve the interest of **standardization**. If, on the other hand, we are trying to educate children in a truly **pluralistic** manner, in accordance with individual inclinations, intelligences and views, we must provide a range of sources and techniques in order to meet the needs of a variety of personal goals.

Three authentic educational dilemmas emerge: 1) the use of the Bible as a means of instilling values versus the desire to maintain academic credibility and avoid indoctrination, 2) the importance of reading and analytical skills versus the importance of dealing with issues of ethical and historical significance, 3) the goal of acculturation/socialization versus the goal of supporting individual development.

We shall now turn to the subject of computer assisted learning, in an attempt to ascertain how the research on the medium itself and learning and instructional theory may help us maintain an equilibrium within these tensions and guide us regarding pedagogical issues.



## Hypertext

With the phenomenal growth of the World Wide Web, research and writing on **hypermedia/hypertext**, the electronic encoding language used in Internet sites has burgeoned. The basic characteristic of **hypertext is its capability to link nodes of information**, be they texts or any other type of medium, **by means of electronic connections activated by the user (interactivity)**. As a result of this capability, **a single document may serve as a hub** to a wide variety of materials, enabling immediate access to an entire library of resources. Thus, rather than collecting stacks of books, pictures, articles, etc., the user is able to have all relevant materials constantly and virtually available. In addition, the links between the various resources are **associative** - a particular word, icon or picture serves as the access point to another resource. The author of the primary document determines the nature of the linkage. The use of the *leitwort* or leading word in biblical literature is similar in function to hypertext links, in that each use of such a word elicits associations with other uses of the same word in same literary unit, as well as in other literary units, be they proximate or distant.

Another major characteristic of hypertext is **random access**. This means that the users or readers may peruse the document, which is composed of separate nodes of information, according to their own inclinations, **rather than following a predetermined, linear path**. In fact, this characteristic, while facilitated and encouraged by the nature of hypertext, is not a complete departure from conventional text. One may peruse a book, as well, in a non-linear manner. Such a non-linear structure is a central feature of the standard printed editions of the **Talmud**, which are similar to hypertext documents, in that multiple linked sources and references to additional linkages are found on each page.

### The Website on Cain and Abel

In 1996, the Pedagogical-Technological Center of the Amal School Network commissioned me to create a Web site on Bible, in order to demonstrate possible uses of the Internet as an adjunct to the existing State Bible curriculum. The site<sup>3</sup> contains "Biblical Narratives," dealing with the story of Cain and Abel. We conceived of "Biblical Narratives" as a collection of resources on the biblical story, from a variety of media, periods and cultures.

After collecting a range of materials for inclusion in the site, we decided to arrange these materials in two manners: **1) entire sources, clustered according to genres and 2) segments of the sources, divided according to the stages of the plot (subdivided according to genre)**. In other words, every source would be accessible in two formats. I opted for this structure on the basis of my own experience in dealing with Bible study: at times, I am interested in a comparative study of various interpretations of specific loci; in other cases, I am interested in a particular approach to the story as a whole. By affording the user access to all the sources in **two different formats**, I hoped to facilitate the two study strategies mentioned and to encourage multiple perspectives and "structured flexibility." The variety of materials included in the site was prompted by my growing sensitivity to **the legitimacy of multiple readings of the Biblical text**. While trained in the historical-critical methods of biblical interpretation, I have found myself attracted to an ever-widening gamut of interpretative materials, including some linked purely conceptually to the Biblical source. As a result, the site includes materials from the following genres and subject areas:

1. Medieval and modern exegesis<sup>4</sup>: Onkelos, Rashi, Ramban, Ibn Ezra, M.D. Cassutto
2. Midrash<sup>5</sup>: Genesis Rabba, Tanhuma (Warsaw), Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer, Josephus'
  - i. Antiquities, Avot de-Rabbi Natan, Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud

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<sup>3</sup> Otzarot Hamikra <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra> (Heb.)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/miki8007.htm>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/miki8008.htm>

3. Discourses on Textual issues (selections)<sup>6</sup>: Ch. Gilad, M.D. Cassuto, Y. Mishel,
4. N.H. Tur-Sinai
5. Modern Jewish Thought (selections)<sup>7</sup>: N. Ararat, Y. Rozensohn, Y. Kaufmann,
- a. M.D. Cassuto, S. Rosenberg
6. Christian and Muslim interpretations<sup>8</sup>: New Testament, Augustine, Koran,
7. el-Baidawi
8. Literary treatments<sup>9</sup>: D. Pagis, C. Baudelaire, G. Byron, J. Steinbeck (synopses and
9. links to external sites) and a Sumerian legend
10. Artistic interpretations<sup>10</sup>, grouped in galleries according to the stages of the plot
11. Biblical parallels<sup>11</sup>: texts on fraternal rivalry

In addition to the eight categories of sources listed above, the site includes a bibliography and synopses of the secondary sources,<sup>12</sup> an opening page that explains the structure of the site,<sup>13</sup> a survey of the major approaches to the story of Cain and Abel (theological, anthropological, literary, etc.)<sup>14</sup> and an explanatory introduction to the artwork,<sup>15</sup> containing illustrated examples of some of the trends in the iconography of the story. This introduction also includes a number of hyperlinks to literary interpretations related to the visual interpretations.

Early in my teaching career, I discovered that many of my students used commentaries, especially the series edited by A. S. Hartom, commonly referred to simply as "Cassuto,"<sup>16</sup> as if they were objectively **"correct" decipherings of the Bible**. To my mind, this uninformed use of commentary prevents the student from developing a direct relationship with the Bible itself; it also fosters an uncritical dependence on authority, which I find ideologically problematic as well as anti-educational. In response to this phenomenon, I developed a set of guidelines for interpretation. In various forms, depending on age and other circumstance, I present these guidelines to my students at the beginning of every school year.

1. Read the text repeatedly and determine what seems clear and what questions you have.
2. Try to answer your own questions by a closer look at the text for answers to these questions, using factors such as context, word pairs, parallelism, repetition, common sense, analogy, etc.
3. Look outside the particular text, using the concordance and dictionaries to examine the meaning of words.
4. Compare the text further to other biblical texts, similar in content or form. This type of comparison is available to the students who have already studied much of the Bible in earlier years.
5. Only at this point should you consult commentary, identifying the orientation of the commentator (modern, traditional, Jewish, Christian, Moslem, literary, *peshat*, *derash*, etc.) and using more than one.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/miki8017.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/miki8010.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/miki8019.htm>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/miki8042.htm>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/miki8011.htm>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/miki8018.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/miki0137.htm>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/miki0100.htm>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.amalnet.k12.il/meida/mikra/story/miki8011.htm>

<sup>16</sup> *Sifrei Hamikra, Mefurashim Perush Hadash Bezeruf Mevo 'ot*. (Heb.) Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1953 – 1957.

## The Use of the site

Each class viewed the site in one of the school computer labs during a two academic hour class. Due to limitations of equipment, almost all the students worked in pairs, according to their choosing. The students studied the site using the following set of instructions, assigned randomly:

1. Read the opening page of the site and the introductory survey. Choose two subjects which interest you for the purpose of exploring the site. What subjects did you choose? Why did you choose these subjects?
2. Find a section or sections of the Biblical story connected with the subjects you chose. Out of the materials connected with these sections, read two texts (Commentary, Midrash, Modern Thought, Linguistic Analysis, Muslim and Christian Interpretations, Literary treatments) which help you to examine your subjects. Cite and summarize the texts. How does each text contribute to your understanding of the subject? What is the innovation of the text? What is your response to this interpretation?
3. Locate and analyze two artistic renditions connected with the subjects you chose. What is the commentary made by each work of art regarding your subjects? Does the visual commentary correspond to or conflict with the written commentary?
4. Should visual commentary accord with written commentary?

Responses to these questions were to be submitted by each student in a written report. The other half of the students were told to study the site however they chose. All students were to write a report on their study of the site that was to include:

1. The citation and description of the major sources examined
2. A fuller description of the source they found most interesting and an explanation of why this source caught their interest
3. A summation of the personal significance they found in the story.