

TANAKH TEACHING

Interpreting Torah in Multiple Contexts and Disciplines A Handbook of Strategies, Approaches, Tactics and Troubleshooting for Text Study

Edited by Noam Zion and Steve Israel

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Chapter One – Introduction and Outline

"One of the great findings of modern philosophers and students of literature is that meaning is never inherent solely in the words of a text. Rather, **meaning derives from an interaction between text and reader, or speaker and listener**; that is to say, the meaning of a text always depends on the set of **assumptions about the text** that a particular reader/listener carries with him or her." (James Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, p. 134)¹

Interpretation involves placing a text into its context as defined by a discipline whether that discipline is a university school of scientific study (political or intellectual history, literature, religion or anthropology) or a social practice (the study of *parshat hashavua* in the style of *Mikraot Gedolot* or Hassidic *darshanut* or the writing of feminist midrash). The form of study suggests certain kinds of questions and discourages others. What is to be explained, what is meaningful and what is true is presupposed by the approach we bring to the text. The discipline sets "the rules of the game" defining what claims and what evidence are acceptable or off the all and irrelevant. In our multi-contextual or multi-disciplinary approach our students are encouraged to bring different lenses to their dialogue with the Torah or better, to join different groups of intergenerational conversations in which Torah speaks to and with its interpreters.

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¹ Everyone is aware of the role that assumptions sometimes play in the understanding of ordinary speech... Even something as simple as the two word greeting "Good morning" sometimes means quite different things—for example (1) "Hello," or (2) "Why are you just getting up now? I've been up for hours," or (3) "I beg your pardon, I don't believe we've ever met" depending not so much on the tone of voice (though that can help) as the precise circumstances or **context** in which these two words are uttered.

Meaning number 1, for example, will probably be automatically understood if the speaker of "Good morning" is an office secretary answering the telephone; number 2 might be inferred if these words are being spoken to someone in a bathrobe by a disgruntled spouse who has just returned from dropping the children off at school; number 3 might be understood if the words are spoken by a stranger at, say, some business breakfast. It is not the words alone that carry the meaning, but the situation in which they are spoken, a particular context that creates expectations on the part of the listener. (James Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, p. 134-135)

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The text is a window into the past and the past is a window into the text, and the historical perspectives makes us aware of changing associations of words and the sociology, archeology, geography, economics and politics behind the text. The historical method teaches us to suspend prejudices and to strive towards objectivity as we bridge the historical gap between the text of the past and the presumptions of the present. The Torah is not only an historical document but itself an attempt to write a history - an ideological history reflecting the authors' interests and worldviews.

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The Torah is an aesthetic literary creation whose form is as important as its content. Meaning is conveyed in the form, the message is mediated through the medium, the part is interpreted within its whole. The text being studied is part of a broader text – its context is a literary one, a sentence, a paragraph, a chapter, a saga, a book, a canon of books like the Torah, Neviim and Ketuvim, the Hebrew Bible etc. Uncovering the inner structure, the warp and woof of the text-ured text, and connecting it to its external literary context, to its genre mates etc is a literary question. However there are many literary approaches such as structuralism /reader-response/and existential personalization.

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The Laconic Style of the Bible and the Greeks: Erich Auerbach

**To Study and to Teach: The Methodology of Nechama Leibowitz
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Biblical Style: Point of View summarized from Walter Hertzberg

The Power of a Word - A Poet's Perspective by Hayim Nahman Bialik

Nine Literary Techniques by Aron Freidenreich

Five Literary Patterns by Joel Lurie Grishaver

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Literary Features of Tanakh Narratives from Yairah Amit

History versus Storytelling, Myth versus Trial by Harold Fisch

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Advice to the Teacher from David Hartman:

If it is not meaningful to you, don't teach it.

Jewish teaching is not communicating mere knowledge or technique but sharing your religious passion, your moral integrity, your personal search with your students.

Share your integrity, your yearnings, and your doubts and let your student meet you in the classroom.

Chapter Six- Text and Thematic Context: The Big Ideas Approach

The Torah is a book of ideas, of thought, hence its views can best be compared with treatments of the same theme in other sources of thought. Themes in Genesis include, for example, the origin of violence, sibling rivalry, barrenness, but also the polemics against pagan creation stories which are a necessary background context for understanding the ideas promoted by the Tanakh's creation story.

#1 - Background for the Teacher: Barrenness in the Tanakh.

#2 - Introducing Genesis 4: Three Themes - Heschel's Big Questions

#3 - The Problem of Evil - The Question of Job

Chapter Seven- Text and the Communal Context of its Interpreters: PSHAT.

Torah text is the focus of a multi-vocal intergenerational conversation of those who treat it as a valued, divine canon. Joining the practice or discipline of commentating, arguing and seeking its best PSHAT these commentators stretch from Rashi and *Mikraot Gedolot* to modern university scholars like the JPS commentary. *Parshat HaShavuah* is often the social occasion for such PSHAT analysis. Studying Torah does not begin and end with the original. The interpreters are not valuable only in so far as they uncover the historical message but rather the interpretations have their own intrinsic value as Nehama Leibovitz has taught a generation of Torah students.

Introduction to Pshat

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There is a rich oral context of Biblical storytelling which preceded and postdated the crystallization of the Biblical texts. Each time the story was retold it was flexibly adapted and various simultaneous versions coexisted. The versions reflected different solutions to the historical, ideological and literary issues of the stories.

Torah has already within it internal midrash – that is, intentional reinterpretations that seeks to expand or reinterpret or even to rewrite or to extrapolate from the Torah. For example, Megillat Esther extrapolates from the Saul and Agag story and allows Mordechai Saul's descendant to do a tikkun in which Agag's descendant will be killed and his spoils will not be appropriated.

Even after the Biblical canon was completed textually there were rewrites at the level of the Book of Jubilees that retells in Biblical style the whole of Genesis with many deep differences reflecting among things a different calendar or retellings by Philo and Josephus.

The Rabbis invented their own form of rewriting called midrash which integrates literary creation of new texts with the style of commentary which quotes the Biblical text before filling in gaps and offering alternative readings and adding embellishments freely.

In the modern period creative literary midrash whether as free form commentary or as full scale retelling has been revived first by Christians (for example, the Dutch school of art focused on Hebrew Bible and Handel's Biblical oratorios etc) and chiefly in the 20th century by Jews in Bibliodrama or art or poetry or movies or novels. These creative responses to the Torah are themselves forms of interpretation, of gap filling, that emerge from the dialogue of the text and the contemporary context of its reader/re-writer's need for personal meaning.

Chapter Eight- Oral Tradition and Classical Midrash.

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by Noam Zion and Steve Israel

2 Experiential Approach:
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MARSHALLING OUR EXPERIENCE ON BIRTH ORDER:
FIRST BORN - PLAGUE OR PRIVILEGE?

#3 A GALLERY OF MIDRASHIC STYLES
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#4 Searching for Meaning in Midrash: WHAT IS MIDRASH?
By Michael Katz and Gershon Schwartz
The Hammer on Rock Model of Midrash: IS THERE STILL MIDRASH TODAY?

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Rabbinic Midrash as Commentary and Story
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The Poetics of the Exegetical Narrative in Rabbinic Midrash

Bibliography on MIDRASH - CLASSICAL AND MODERN

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#1 - Film as Midrash

East of Eden - a novel by John Steinbeck and a movie by Elia Kazan starring Jimmy Dean

The Prince of Egypt - film by Spielberg

David and Batsheba starring Gregory Peck and Susan Hayward (1951)

#2 - Art as Parshanut: A Systematic Analysis of Art as Commentary Sample - David and Avigail

#3 - Novels and Bible:

Political Midrash by Stefan Heym on David and Batsheva

#4 - Contemporary Poetry and Song as Midrash

"Adam Raised a Cain" by "The King" Bruce Springsteen

"Hide and Seek" by Dan Pagis on Avram - The Man of Faith and Doubt

"David's Wives" by Yehuda Amichai

#5 - Handmade Midrash by Jo Milgrom

Chapter Ten - Text and Context: Normative Canon and Ideological Revisionism

Torah means instruction, law, and much of it seeks to convey ethical, national, theological messages, not merely to commemorate historical event or engage in literary representation. Neither fact nor art sum up the normative goals of the Torah. Thus Torah must also be interpreted as an educational tract to engender values, behaviors, attitudes in its listeners who share its identity. The ordering of the text as well as its tone and chosen content persuade its readers to take a particular value stance.

However as a site for ideological constructs given authority by its community of readers, as holy Bible, as sacred scriptures, the Torah is also a **field of contested interpretation** through deconstruction and reconstruction.

Harold Bloom, the radical literary theorist, argues that revisionism is the thrust of all great re-readings of the tradition whether as commentary or as the adding of new literary creations in a tradition. Using the Freudian model of the Oedipal conflict all writers or interpreters must make room for themselves in a tradition by shunting aside the father figure of authority. However the father figure was a great creator who contributed mightily to shaping the sons of that tradition who now need to rebel against him to assert themselves. Susan Handelman argues that *Tanur shel Akhnai* offers a solution to this Oedipal conflict without slaying the father or the son. The father God wants the sons to out-argue him and defeat him for even if the content is new and disagrees with the God, the form of creation, the commentary explicating God's word, shows respect for the traditional continuity at the same time that it makes room for innovation (Hazal say the father scholars left room for the sons to fence off their own space – *lhitgader bi*).

#1 - Genesis 2 and Feminist Revisionism:

Phyllis Tribble on the Question: Is the story of building woman from the rib of man (Genesis 2) chauvinistic?

**#2- David's Fifty-First Psalm of Repentance and Batsheva's Reply
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#3 - Placing Megillat Ruth in the Canon: Order as Interpretation

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

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

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Introduction – The Torah is a normative text, often viewed as a sacred source of ethical values, theological/scientific beliefs and true descriptions. Its students are asked to hear its authoritative claim and move toward beliefs, normative actions and emotional identification with the Torah. However the student belongs to communities with values that may not fit with the text under scrutiny. Here is a characterization of "problematic" texts analogous to "problematic" students who have attitudinal problems to school norms. The "problem" does not inhere IN the student or IN the text but in the misfit between the two. **These normative problems arise out of a misfit between a text and the context of beliefs, values, and "facts" that the student/community feels or expects from the Torah.**

A. Tactics for Teaching Problematic Texts- to confront or to preempt or to avoid challenging texts of the Torah that undermine one's sense of authentic fidelity to our community, our people, God and the Torah.

Theological-Educational Issues with the Historical Critical Approach to Tanakh

WHO DONE IT? WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

by Joel Lurie Grishaver

Theologically and Ethically Problematic Texts

Writing a Sermon: Developing a Moral Message:

Taking a Tip from the Chassidim

B. The Pedagogical Challenge of Difficult Texts by Barry Holtz

C. Between Angels and Mere Mortals:

Nechama Leibowitz's Approach to the Study of Biblical Characters by Howard Deitcher

D. Rabbinic Midrashic Strategies

**Case study: Redeeming David's Reputation from the Batsheva Affair
by Steve Israel and Noam Zion**

Chapter Thirteen:

Building a Classroom Environment for Talmud Torah

Shaping a Classroom Social Experience can transform the learning of Tanakh into a sacred act, into a hevruta study of a Beit Midrash, into a scholar's laboratory, into an exhibition hall or into a covenantal / contractual mini-community. The social context helps students step into a role, in fact into a calling that directs them to give deepest respect to the text and its details. It also implies a set of rules that, as we have emphasized, are part and parcel of a disciplined study of Torah. The intellectual and affective and the social meld.

- A. Tanakh as Sacred/Blessed Investigation and Search for Meaning -Leah Kroll's Middle School Torah Teaching Protocol**
- B. Joel Lurie Grishaver - *Being Torah* - Making Meaning: How to Organize a Meaningful Lesson**
- C. Senior Class D'var Torah Project**
- D. Beit Midrash style Hevruta Study**
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Chapter One - Introduction

INTRODUCTION to Handbook - What is the question which we will be answering? How might one use this teacher resource?

When teachers approach teaching a particular Biblical text, they must clarify several practical questions. In the curricular planning rubric of Joseph Schwab, one must give an account to the **subject matter or discipline**, in this case Tanakh or Torah; to the **students** as individuals and as a class whose ethical, intellectual, emotional, social and Jewish identity growth are important; to the **teacher** in us who has a passion for Tanakh and education based on her/his beliefs as well as a desire to expand the range of skills and experience; and finally to the **community** and the school who sent the teacher to transmit cultural-religious values and to help integrate the student into existing institutions of the Jewish community. This handbook cannot help the teacher clarify the fit with the community and school but it will seek to answer the other three questions or at least to open the conversation.

Subject matter and scholarly discipline defines the critical thinking that the teacher wishes to develop in the study of Torah in its contexts. A particular field of study is the what/matter and particular disciplinary method is the how/form. When confronting a Torah text, the teacher and student must know what the rules of the game are in interpretation. It is not legitimate just to free associate but is it appropriate to bring a contemporary painting of Adam and Eve to compare to the text? Is this a legitimate form of commentary whether it is good example of commentary or a bad one? Are midrashim part of the discipline of Tanakh or are they subjective sermons reflecting a different mentality - not a recognized part of Tanakh as a discipline? Are Rashi and Ramban part of the Tanakh subject-matter as an ongoing cultural practice of interpretation or would we read their commentaries only in so far as they illumine the original historical and grammatical meaning of the text? Is the Tanakh chiefly a historical text from the Ancient Near East revealing the period it addresses or is it a literary text with the status of a classic that is best unpacked using literary tools? Maybe Tanakh is canonized in our tradition and taught in our schools because it teaches values of Divine origin or at least perennial significance, so value questions may and must be asked - what does the Torah teach us? Is the Tanakh part of a creative tradition of both ongoing interpretation and further midrashic creation, so that we want to study it and to add to it in the mode of the creative artist?

Part I of the Handbook will offer four grand approaches to the discipline of Tanakh into which we are inducting our students as co-investigators. We might say that the TEXT must be situated within a CONTEXT in order to be interpreted. But which CONTEXT is primary? The teacher can reflect on his/her understanding of that cannon and what should be the primary emphasis:

A. TEXT and the CONTEXT of the untutored student.

In the first encounter with the text student still bring much **baggage** to their reading. What are those associations? When the student brainstorms questions that arise from this initial meeting with the text - what are they? What pre-judgments would you like the student to leave at the door to a disciplinary study of the Tanakh?

Since students often need a translation - how do we neutralize the heavy handed guidance of the translator in order to open up the student to more nuanced and open reading? Since teachers often pose the questions, how do we choose what the focus should be if at all?

B. TEXT and HISTORICAL CONTEXT means we must know the grammar of Biblical Hebrew, the meaning of the words in that era, the parsing of verse, the best historic version of the text. Ancient Near Eastern background may be very helpful as well as extensive *realia* and information gathered from other part so the Tanakh from the same period. Modern connotations must be rigorously filtered out to open us to the message of a different era or if you will, what God is saying, not what we humans are projecting onto the text, the original truth. Diachronic questions of how the text has grown over time are important and how it was transmitted and sometimes corrupted or reedited to fit different interests than those of the original text. The Torah text is a **window** into the ancient era from which it came.

C. TEXT and LITERARY CONTEXT

The Torah can also be seen as a literary work even if the author is the Divine author. The Torah is a classic that speaks beyond its historical generation though it may be rooted in the typical literary forms of its era. A synchronic approach disregards the historical question of when these words were written and whether the text has been emended and reedited. The text is not a window to the historical period but an object of study for its own sake. What we explore is not the background of the text but its foreground, the literary world it creates with the power of words - disregarding whatever really happened. (We are speaking here chiefly of a literary approach - like reader response or New Criticism).

Here we use tools of character development, plot structure, beginnings and endings, word choice or diction etc to allow the student to develop critical skills for asking and answering questions about what the Tanakh is saying or expressing. The genre of the text and the limits of the unit are essential questions.

D. TEXT and the CONTEXT of its Community of Learners/Commentators. Here the discipline is not history or literature but the social practice of conducting critical, thoughtful conversation with others interpreting the same text over thousands of years. Torah is not closed book of a bygone era but a cultural practice of ongoing interpretation that makes whatever our fellow Tanakh students have said valuable as well as what students today in our class say. Generally we are speaking here of pursuit of the pshat - the original message and meaning - whether as defined in the medieval era or the modern period, but we focus on the conversants as much as on what the object they were interpreting.

E. TEXT and the CONTEXT of its Midrashic Writers/Rewriters who are searching for Relevant Meaning. Here too Tanakh is not just a book but a book-in-context-of -being read - a community of interpreters. However the midrashic interpreter is also a writer/artist creating new "texts" (midrashic stories, movie scripts, sculptures etc) that are related to the original text (intertextuality). These creative responses to the Torah are implicitly interpretations that struggle with textual difficulties as do the pshat commentators . They too invite critical study for there are better and worse artistic interpretations. However they are judged not only by their solution of textual lacuna and their aesthetic beauty but also by the relevant truths that emerge from this dialogue between the creators and the original Tanakh. Just as students may and should join the community of pshat interpreters by adding their own voice of parshanut, so too they can join the creators of midrash - after closely interrogating the Tanakh text.

APPENDICES:

Hermeneutic Lenses: What we presuppose to unpack in a Biblical passage by Burt Visotsky

"PRINCESS DI DELIVERS TWO-HEADED MONSTER"
(from *Reading the Book*, p. 5ff)

Where do we learn the strategies for the battle of bringing the Book alive? And how do we know that we've found the right teacher, the appropriate community, a useful reading strategy? For not all texts are read alike. A recipe is not read the same way that poetry is scanned, even if the line breaks look similar. And the Bible is not the Odyssey, even though both are called, divine and are frightfully long.

Every act of reading is a journey for which we carry baggage. Put another way, we read through **ever-changing lenses, each lens more or less appropriate to the text we read.** This baggage or these lenses are a *hermeneutic*, a means for searching out the meaning of the text before our eyes. Each community carries its own hermeneutic principles about given texts, so that the members of that community know how to read and evaluate those texts.

An example is in order here to illustrate my point, for it will also illuminate how various communities approach Scripture. Picture yourself at the checkout line of the supermarket. As you once again test your patience threshold, you are variously entertained by the tabloid headlines. How do they get away with it? you wonder. My sample headline, which I'm making up just for this occasion: **PRINCESS DI DELIVERS TWO-HEADED MONSTER.** This is accompanied by a picture of the princess which reminds us why she remains one of the most photographed women in the world.

You do not rush to read the article inside, nor do you immediately buy the tabloid to learn what woe has befallen Princess Di. Perhaps, if the line moves slowly enough, you might peek inside to learn what nonsense is behind the bizarre headline. How do you know to react this way? What hermeneutic principle do you bring to tabloid headlines which makes you doubt the veracity of the sensationalism? What keeps you from credulously repeating with a straight face that Diana had a freak child? It is the community of people who stand on supermarket lines fighting boredom which writes the unwritten rules, **the Oral Torah of tabloid headline reading.** You just know that the headline is misleading, meant to get you to buy the paper, just as you know enough not to pay the fifty or seventy-five cents it might cost you to get the whole scoop on our two-headed monster. You might also realize that somewhere on the supermarket lines, there are people whose communal hermeneutic allows this headline to be genuine news. They buy the tabloid; for them it's gospel.

Picture another fictional group of readers, this time on a commuter railroad during the early-morning rush hour. You peek at the New York Times over someone's shoulder and read on the book page the following small heading: **"Princess Diana Submits Autobiography to Publisher."** The subheading goes on: "Diana, Princess of Wales, has delivered a 1,866-page manuscript autobiography consisting of but two chapters. They are provocatively titled 'Lady in Waiting' and 'Princess, In Waiting.' "

This latter example, also invented for my point, tells the same story as the tabloid headline: PRINCESS DI DELIVERS TWOHEADED MONSTER. Now, with certain literary clues, we can decipher the tabloid. "Delivers" that means submits a manuscript. "Two-Headed"-that means two chapters. "Monster" -that means 1,866 pages. The hermeneutic of railroad commuters reading the Times allows us to read this seriously as a news item. It is true. It is "fit to print." In the publishing industry, such an item might be considered Torah. It all depends on where, with whom and how we read. Thanks to Princess Di we can see how the Word is delivered in different ways to different communities of readers with very different. **The wrong hermeneutic for a text yields the wrong result.** The correct interpretation with the correct circumstance gets us closer to the desired facts.

What are the "facts" of my made-up example of Princess Di's book? What questions should be asked? Is the manuscript really that long? Are there only two chapters? Did William Novak really fly to London to ghostwrite this book, too? Will there be photographs? When will the book come out? Or perhaps we should be inquiring about another set of "facts" entirely: Who fathered the monster? Is it humanoid? How did the royal siblings and the Queen react to this delivery? Reading the news is hard work. Learning the facts is a frustrating exercise. Knowing how to value those facts and with whom one may share them more frustrating still. While we're being frustrated, let us remember one more fact about Princess Di's two-headed monster. We can interpret the headlines all we like, but they exist only on the pages of this book. I made them up to illustrate my point. These particular facts are not history, but didactic narrative, created to make a point.

Reading the "facts" of a Book over two thousand years old can be more frustrating still. Even in English translation the Bible seems a foreign tongue. Just as it was for St. Jerome, the style may seem "rude and repellent." How are we to take these stories? Who do we read them with? With whom can we discuss them? How do we approach the Book? Is it to be read as tabloid news, or with all the solemnity of the Times? What may we make of its facts? Is it history? Story? What is the point it tries to teach?

Different communities will answer these questions in different ways. Various hermeneutics are employed, even within the same generation, to decipher the meaning of the scriptural text. To a large extent, this is true of reading every text. As the case of Princess Di illustrates, differing hermeneutics dictate not only how the headlines are read and interpreted, but how they are written. In the case of the Bible this is especially so, for by definition (at least within religious communities) the biblical canon is different from any other text. **Imbued with the Word of God, the Bible demands a special kind of hermeneutic.** True, many of the principles of interpretation are the same as those we use when reading headlines, recipes or poetry. But many ancient interpreters presumed that the Holy Scriptures needed to be read by other rules as well.

Sometimes the biblical text was read as **normal human discourse**. Sometimes it was read as an **elaborate code** which needed decipherment. Sometimes each word of Scripture was given its own valence, **atomized** from the rest of the text and analyzed for meanings not apparent if read in context. Sometimes the text was wholly **allegorized**, so that each word was taken to mean another thing entirely. Sometimes the text was **typologized**, so that each word of the Old Testament was taken to refer to the events reported in the New Testament. All in all, over the ages, many different communities adopted many different methods for wrenching meaning out of the biblical text.

To us today these methods seem anachronistic, even violent. They violate what we see as the plain meaning of the scriptural text. We differentiate clearly between the plain meaning (the one we all agree upon) and the other, earlier community's fanciful or forced interpretation. **But what is plain to one community may be fanciful to another. What we all agree upon, others may dispute. In short, there is no one common reading of Scripture that everyone can agree - and there never has been.**

Finding the Key to the Locked Door

St. Jerome writes (in a commentary on the New Testament Epistle to the Ephesians), "In the divine Scriptures every word, syllable, accent and point is packed with meaning."

The saint is a sort of spiritual herbalist who culls from the sacred Scripture every jot and every common letter, discovers the value of what is written and its use, and finds there is nothing in the Scripture superfluous.

For the Rabbis and Church Fathers, then, **reading the Book was an adventure, a journey to a grand palace with many great and awesome halls, banquet rooms and chambers, as well as many passages and locked doors.** The adventure lay in learning the secrets of the palace, unlocking all the doors and perhaps catching a glimpse of the King in all God's splendor. As Origen put it, crediting his Jewish Hebrew teacher with whom he often discussed the meaning of biblical passages:

That great scholar used to say that inspired Scripture taken as a whole was . . . like many **locked-up rooms** in one house. Before each room he supposed a key to be placed, but not the one belonging to it; and that the keys were so dispersed all round the rooms. . . . It would be a troublesome piece of work to discover the keys to suit the rooms they were meant for. It was, he said, just so with the understanding of the Scriptures. . . . The only way to begin to understand them was by means of other passages.

Orientations for Teaching Tanakh by Barry Holtz

(*Textual Knowledge*, p. 34ff)

With Editor's Insertions in brackets

What are the appropriate orientations for Bible teaching? [What do mean when we say we are teaching Torah with a commitment to its own authenticity? Who are our significant others who are the authorities for that understanding of the essence of Torah? Into which community of students of Torah do we wish to initiate our students? University scholars? In what department and which school? Weekly students of *parshat hashavua* in synagogues? Religious Jews who make Torah the guide of their spiritual-ethical-behavioral world? Spiritual seekers?

Shall we call this "Torah" - TaNaKH or Mikra or Bible or Humash or Holy Scriptures or Ancient Hebrew literature, Biblia?]

[Who are our authoritative experts in Tanakh who set the standards for teaching Tanakh?

Teachers in synagogue setting may look to rabbis giving Divrei Torah.

Teachers trained in the Bible departments of the university are most likely to seek] such orientations rooted in the approaches to the study of Bible evidenced in the university, and the contemporary academic landscape is dotted with various methods of biblical scholarship, each of which might serve as a starting point for a pedagogy of Bible. In the words of one scholar:

"As recently as two decades ago, there was a consensus among scholars about using a fairly limited number of critical methods for the study of Bible, but today the spectrum of methods employed has enlarged dramatically. . . . How these different methods of biblical inquiry are to be related logically and procedurally has become a major intellectual challenge "

1. The [Historical] Contextual Orientation:

[**Bible is history** for the most part and it teaches us of what happened in that ancient era which may or may not be relevant to our world just as any study of history we hope to find relevance but we first seek to uncover the uniqueness of that age in its own terms]. This approach aims at the meaning of the biblical texts *within its own times*, as best as we can determine it. It views the **Bible as a record of an ancient civilization**, and it hopes to make that world intelligible to students of today. This is the mode of Bible study that has most characterized the **modern university**, at least until quite recently. This

orientation to teaching Bible has also been very influential in the secular school system in Israel, though much less so in the Diaspora. Building links to the ancient Land of Israel through the study of Bible (especially in the physical presence of the land itself) has been a primary goal of the public school in Israel.

It should be noted that the contextual approach includes a variety of dimensions, including the use of various tools that help locate the Bible in its historical setting. These might include **source criticism** (looking at the strands of tradition that come together to form the biblical text as we know it, that is, the "documentary hypothesis"), **form criticism** (looking at all the formal patterns within and among texts), **comparative linguistics** (understanding the language of the Bible through looking at other languages that are linguistically related), and **archaeology**, among others.

[The historical approach seeks to develop a critical student using a **scientific method**. Skepticism is an important and positive stance and one seeks to sort true and false claims. Philology is an essential skill. The decoding, translation, grammar and analysis are essential to create an independent researcher.]

2. **[The Identity Approach to Family and National History:** The Bible is our family saga (genealogies and stories going back to Abraham and Sarah) and then a national saga (the birth of our nation and its liberation, its settlement of its own land, and the rise and later fall from statehood). It teaches collective identity just as American history does in America. It teaches about a past that generates leadership with vision for the collective future in the national homeland. Hebrew language and Israeli topography are essentials of this identity and this continuation in modern Zionism is not beyond the purview of this orientation to TaNaKh. This teaching is patriotic but it may also include deep criticism of failed models of nation building that led to corruption and then exile. Text study is less important than knowing and identifying with the stories. Oral Bible tales that paraphrase the Tanakh may be adequate. After all the Torah was originally an **oral** tradition like Homer, not one studied analytically as a text as the rabbis did and scholars do.

]

3. **The Literary Criticism Orientation:**

[Bible is literature, at least most of it, whether poetry or narrative prose, so literary methods are the key to understanding it, not history and not dogma.

Literature is often a **search for wisdom** through aesthetics. It is *Eitz HaDaat* about human nature, about political power and about Divine providence and it often educates toward moral sensitivity. Its truths are not didactic but uncovered in the intricacies of its artistic form and its considered descriptions of life's course as a source of life wisdom. "Biblia" is literally a collection of books and the Hebrew biblia are the collection of Jewish writings, the Jewish encyclopaedia of all knowledge transmitted from generation to generation in the ancient world. That knowledge may be viewed as literary or historical but it is preserved because it will help live life of wisdom. Eitz Haim is the Torah. Most of the book(s) is Sifrut Hochma, Wisdom Literature whether as narrative or as poetic Proverbs and Kohelet. See below Barry Holtz on "Bible as Truth"]

This approach aims at literary readings of biblical texts, using the tools of modern criticism. There is a wide range of approaches possible within this domain, but most pay careful attention to the **style, language, characters, themes, and forms** of the biblical text. Such approaches are far more commonly used with **biblical narratives and poetry** than legal, prophetic, or wisdom-literature sections of the Bible.

[The Bible is studied as a **classic** like Shakespeare].

The Reader-Response Orientation:

This in some ways is a **subset of the literary approach**, but it differs significantly enough for me to separate it out here. What characterizes this style of teaching is that it focuses on the experience of the reader in encountering the text - **what happens to the reader and how the text itself is structured to affect the reader** are the concern here. Once again, this approach is far more commonly used with biblical narratives and poetry than legal, prophetic, or wisdom-literature sections of the Bible. Note that "personalization" also focuses very strongly on the reader's experience of the text.

4. Parshanut. [The Bible as an ongoing intergenerational

conversation of commentary within an interpretative community

The synagogue study of parshat hashavua is a living model of what we wish our students to learn how to do. The process is more important than any particular interpretation or any particular method since parshanim of many approaches can still enter into dialogue with us. See below Barry Holtz on Michael Oakeshott's notion of education as Initiation into a Conversation.]

In this traditional mode of teaching the Bible, the teacher is concerned with the way that various classical interpreters (Rashi, Nahmanides, Rashbam, etc.) understand the text. The goal, in general, is for students to become knowledgeable about these views: **Nehama Leibowitz** took this approach a step further and popularized the focus on seeing the **contrasts among the interpreters** and trying to determine what underlies these contrasting views.

5. [Moral Education] Orientation:

["Torah" is teaching, it is directing us, it is the ethical will of our ancestors to lead us to a good life.] This approach aims at discerning the "message" (or messages) that specific biblical texts offer *for our own lives*. This approach may depend on the **classical commentators**, or it may offer independent analysis that would lead us to these lessons for today. A close reading of the biblical text itself is often irrelevant to the method, since the goal is **to see the lesson behind the text**, and for that a close concentration of the text itself may be unnecessary.

Moral education may be **Moralistic-Didactic** and then it seeks to present very clear univocal messages e.g. do no lie, welcome guests. Then Avraham becomes an ethical superhero to be emulated. Then laws are issued with clear moral directive e.g do not murder.]

The Bible then leads to an Action Orientation. Traditionally, this was the approach that saw the purpose of Bible study as **leading to observing the mitzvot**. In contemporary times, this approach has also led to a sophisticated orientation toward "**character education**."

[But Biblical moral education may also teach **ethical dilemmas** in the style of Lawrence Kohlberg. Or it may use **literary techniques** to show how crime does not pay, how Jacob's deception leads to be Jacob being deceived - measure of measure. Literature is a very sophisticated tool for ethical sensitization. For example, we learn about sibling rivalry with which we must struggle to maintain family peace.]

6. The Personalization Orientation:

[Broader than ethics and less directive than didactics] this approach also aims at the contemporary meaning of the biblical text but tends to do so in a less didactic and directive fashion than the approach above. These meanings may be characterized as psychologically oriented, politically oriented, or spiritually oriented. In all cases, the goal is to see the relationship between text and the life of today. [Here the Torah does not teach us an objective universal message,

but we derive from the Torah personalized lessons as pluralist, individualist and fluid as human life].

7. The Ideational Orientation:

This approach essentially views the Bible as a kind of "**philosophical**" text in which are embedded certain key moral and theological ideas. The teacher is asking the question, What are **the "big ideas"** and values of the Bible? At times, such an approach can blend with the contextual approach, in that the key ideas of the Bible may be the ideas of its particular historical period. But in general, the approach is interested much more in **the enduring and relevant ideas** of the Bible throughout the ages (such as "human beings are created in the image of God") and how these ideas may be important for people today.

8.[Bible is Jewish cultural literacy. There is basic knowledge to be transmitted. See below Barry Holtz on Education as Transmission. Here we learn how to derive informational knowledge from the text that is useful for Jewish life.] Understanding the "facts," the characters' names, the plot details of stories, the nature of the laws, and the plain meaning of the words is important. [Coverage is essential]. Sometimes, it includes **memorizing** sections of the text or learning to sing the verses according to traditional cantillation notes. Such an approach represents, at its best, the vast comprehensive knowledge that students once were able to attain. At its worst, it can be mind-numbing and tedious.

[But it may also have sophisticated aspect of critical study of the text, grammar etc. This gives skills for further reading and cultural literacy as a skill, not just a body of knowledge]

BIBLE Education as Transmission versus Bible Education as Conversation by Barry Holtz (p.39ff)

As a Jewish educator, I am neatly caught between the Scylla of Michael Oakehott's education as initiation into a conversation and the Charybdis of education as transmission.

(1) I know that the Jewish tradition encompasses a package: of ideas, competencies, attitudes virtues, and proscribed behaviors. I have inherited that package from my ancestors, and insofar as I am able to hand it over to others, particularly to younger generations, I will have succeeded as an educator. And yet on the other hand, I also know that the transmission of culture is only part of our task as Jewish educators.

(2) But the word "transmission" is too passive, too unengaged. As educators, we are also involved in the enterprise of new creation, of active "conversation," as Oakeshott would have it. True, we want to nurture students who will receive an inheritance of narratives and laws, but we also want to encourage them to enter that conversation actively, to create new tales, new readings of the law, new interpretations, new ways of understanding the old.... It is a **"conversation" that goes back to the beginning of time.** ...It is the basic encounter with the meaning and significance of human experience itself.

As civilised human beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an inquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a conversation, begun in the primeval forests and extended and made more articulate in the course of centuries. It is a **conversation** which goes on both in public and within each of ourselves. Of course there is argument and inquiry and information, but wherever these are profitable they are to be recognized as passages in this conversation, and perhaps they are not the most captivating of the passages. . . . **Conversation is not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit**, a contest where a winner gets a prize, nor is it an activity of exegesis; it is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure.... **Education, properly speaking, is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation** in which we learn to recognize the voices, to distinguish the proper occasions of utterance, and in which we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to conversation. And it is this conversation which, in the end, gives place and character to every human activity and utterance.

It is worthwhile to remember that lurking behind all that we do as teachers is a kind of enemy, a shadow that darkens every teacher's class: namely, **the specter of time**. Better yet, the time we do not have: so many texts, so little time. Therefore, the choices we make matter; we do not have world enough and time; we have our students only briefly no matter what the educational context, and, it goes without saying, we are confronted by the fact that though time is short, the Jewish tradition is very big. Thus, any particular focus that we choose in our teaching needs to be well thought out and clearly expressive of the ultimate aims that matter most to us in our work.

This conflict, essentially a struggle between worthy, but competing, educational aims, is similar to that described by **Philip Jackson** as two "traditions" of "distinguishably different ways of thinking about education and of translating that thought into practice." Jackson calls these (1) the "**mimetic**" tradition and (2) the "**transformative**" tradition.

(1) In one - the mimetic-teaching is seen as the "transmission of actual and procedural knowledge from one person to another." Such knowledge is clearly known - possessed might be a better word - by the teacher in advance of the teaching situation. "It is," in Jackson's words, "**knowledge `presented' to a learner, rather than `discovered' by him or her.**" Since the knowledge passed on is clear and well-defined in advance, the teacher can evaluate the success of the teaching in a fairly accurate fashion "on the basis of comparison with the teacher's own knowledge or with some other model as found in a textbook or some other instructional materials."

(2) The **transformative tradition**, on the other hand, is aimed at bringing about "a transformation of one kind or another in the person being taught." Transformative education is usually seen as "more deeply integrated and ingrained within the psychological makeup of the student than the accomplishments of mimetic education.

Why Study Torah?

Justification for the Teacher and the Student

by Barry Holtz

What kinds of Justifications could be suggested for approaches to teaching Bible? ... What is a larger goal - a sense of one's ultimate purpose in teaching this entire subject matter.

A. The Bible Is Interesting

One educational justification for teaching the Bible cuts across a number of our orientations, namely, the Bible is an interesting text. Beyond absence of boredom, of course, studying the Bible is **a demanding intellectual activity**. It is that very fact, **Israel Scheffler** shows, that leads to the powerful emotional dimension of such pursuits. For Scheffler, the "cognitive" and "affective" are inseparable. Thus, Scheffler speaks about emotions that can occur during a scientific inquiry such as **"the joy of verification" and "the feeling of surprise"** - arguing that intellectually challenging experiences can be emotionally rewarding, demanding work of studying the Bible offers these same powerful emotional rewards, too: the student is involved in the pleasure of learning a difficult thing. Joseph Schwab's memorable description of the "eros" of educational endeavors is particularly apt:

Not only the means, however, but also the ends of liberal education involve the Eros. For the end includes not only knowledge gained but knowledge desired and knowledge sought. The outcome of a successful liberal curriculum is actively intelligent people. They like good pictures, good books, good music, good movies. They find pleasure in planning their active lives and carrying out the planned action. They hanker to make, to create, whether the object is knowledge mastered, art appreciated or actions patterned and directed. In short, a curriculum is not complete which does not move the Eros, as well as the mind of the young, from where it is to where it might better be.

The Bible is interesting in other ways as well. Studying the Bible allows people to enter into the world of the past; more than that, into the world of their own people's past. In that sense, we might say, **the study of the Bible is the study of one's family tree.**

B. The Bible Is Our Obligation

The justification from the point of view of "interest" is essentially "hedonistic" argument. We study because it is pleasurable to do so. Wanting to inculcate in students the pleasure of learning is a power; and admirable goal.

But throughout Jewish history, the study of Bible has always had a different kind of justification as well: **the study of Torah as a religious obligation.**

Study is a commandment that observant Jews must fulfill and is therefore deeply embedded in the cultural norms of the community. Moreover, that obligation is closely linked to another traditional concept - *Torah lishma*, the study of Torah "for its own sake." Biblical study, then, is obviously a "worth-while" activity because it has the potential to imbue the student with "a cognitive content that spills over and transforms his view of other things in life."

C. The Bible as Truth

To say that studying the Bible is, like other great academic pursuits, potentially **transformative** of the student's life is to suggest that it inhabits a particular and very special universe, a place where the primary concern is nothing less than the pursuit of truth. As Peters puts it:

Being concerned about truth has another type of worth. It can be regarded as having a worth which is independent of its benefit. Indeed, the state of mind of one who is determined to find out what is true . . . can be regarded as an ultimate value which provides one of the criteria of benefit.... Someone who values truth in this way may find the constant effort to free his mind from prejudice and error painful; he may sometimes find it wearisome and boring; but it matters to him supremely, even if he falls short of the ideal which he accepts.

What does it mean to be concerned with "truth"?

I will now turn to various approaches to this knotty issue.

1- A Dialogic Approach to Truth.

For the contemporary philosopher **Hans-Georg Gadamer**, the essential goal in confronting a text (or any work of art) from the past is ...to listen carefully, respectfully, to works of the past, to take those texts seriously without rushing to judgment. That is, we need to take the truth claims of the text very seriously indeed. **[We need to treat the text as a *Thou* and enter into a dialogue.** The text is a person making a claim on us to whom we owe a response but not agreement.]

[We should not relate to the text as an *I* - as an object subject to laws that subsume its uniqueness under general rules like the laws of politics or the laws of literature. But it is not enough to seek an insider's view of the text as an "*I*" - as a subjective writer]. Hans Gadamer rejects approach of the German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and the attempt [of the historical school of Droysen and the philosophy of Dilthey] to do what Gadamer views as essentially an impossible task: to "reveal the true meaning of a work of art and guard against misunderstanding and anachronistic interpretation" by reproducing "the writer's original process of production" and the historical context in which he she lived. Instead of truth, the interpreter in the Schleiermacher mode is interested in "**reconstruct [ing] the original intentions of writers . . . and the circumstances of their lives.**"

[In both treating the text as an *I* and as an *I* the researcher assumes there is an **objective method** by which we neutralize our own prejudices, our own truth, our own modern perspective. We achieve the true understanding. But Gadamer denies that we can step out of our skin. We must make our own presumptions and perspectives explicit, to foreground our biases and then expose them to be verified or corrected by our dialogue with the text as Thou which may contradict our assumptions. We must open ourselves and our sense of truth to learn something from the otherness of the text as a different person worthy of respect.]

[Dialogue is a] hermeneutic work is based on a polarity of familiarity and strangeness. . The true locus of hermeneutics is this **in-between.** ...

The Bible may speak to the student in ways that are person revelatory, psychologically meaningful, or spiritually profound. Consider Martin Buber's comments about what "the man of today" must do in reading the Bible:

He must face the Book with a new attitude as something new. He must yield to it, withhold nothing of his being, and let whatever will occur between himself and it. He does not know which of its sayings and images will overwhelm him and mold him, from where the spirit will ferment and enter into him, to incorporate itself anew in his body. **But he holds himself open.**

2. A Narrative Approach to Truth

How can fiction teach truth? [Isn't fiction the opposite of truth, of reality?]

We dwell on narrative not only because some of the most enduring and memorable elements of the Bible are its narratives but also because narrative itself has such a deep hold on the human species. **We live through narratives; they define us as individuals and as parts of a larger society.** Thus, reading and teaching biblical narratives help us and our students make sense of their lives as human beings, as part of a culture. "Why is it," asks Mark Johnson, "that **we turn to literary texts for our moral education?** Why do we learn more from narratives than from academic moral philosophy about what it is to be human, about the contingencies of life, about the kinds of lives we most want to lead and about what is involved in trying to lead such lives?"

"The key to the answer," he says, "is that **our lives ultimately have a narrative structure** [emphasis added]. It is in sustained narrative, therefore, that we come closest to observing and participating in the reality of life as it is actually experienced and lived." Placing narrative at the heart of the curriculum of biblical studies, then, is no whim...

As **Alasdair MacIntyre** memorably put it:

[M]an is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal. He is not essentially, but becomes through his history, a teller of stories that aspire to truth. But the key question for men is not about their own authorship; I can only answer the question "What am I to do?" if I can answer the prior question "Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?" We enter human society, that is, with one or more imputed characters . . . and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed. It is through hearing stories about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, wolves that suckled twin boys . . . that children learn or mislearn both what a child and what a parent is, what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are. Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words. Hence there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources

3- An Introspective Approach to Truth

In the Bible we learn new things, to be sure, but more important, **we learn to see familiar things in a new way and rediscover truths that we had known before and forgotten.** ..Proust's comments about the act of reading are equally true about the experience of teaching and learning:

In reality, every reader is while he is reading, the reader of his own self. The writer's work is merely a kind of optical instrument which he offers to the reader to enable him to discern what, without this book, he would perhaps never have experienced in himself. **And the recognition by the reader in his own self of what the book says is the proof of its veracity.**

The Bible offers teachers these potential rewards, these goals of finding "truth," as they explore the biblical text.

Appendix: Protocol of a Conversation among Shalom Hartman Scholars about Tanakh Teaching

November 18 and January 12, 2005, summarized by Noam Zion

Principles and Approaches:

- 1- **Tanakh is speaking in a dialogue, not necessarily a polemic, with the world cultures in which it is embedded.** Hence Yisrael Knoll stresses the importance of myth and the Ancient Near Eastern background. Jonathan Cohen stresses that this is not merely a question of historical accuracy but an educational message about Judaism as a culture in dialogue with the world, not isolated from it nor necessarily opposed to it. Menahem Fisch adds that this teaches us that no one can understand themselves without seeing themselves in a larger context. Noam Zion adds that to be authentic to ourselves and our tradition we do not have to deny any dependence on the other; learning from the other is not necessarily artificially imitative and hence insincere, a betrayal of the true self. Alick Isaacs notes that this approach to the integrated understanding of Judaism within the cultures around it is part of the new turn in Jewish historiography.
- 2- **Both a historical source approach and a holistically literary approach have value.** So methodologically, Yisrael Knoll calls for both Gunkel and Westermann as well as Cassuto and Sarna. The Tanakh is a *Divine Symphony*, so the historical sources critical method is important in this teaching context not for only the investigation of the historical era or the formation of the text only but for identifying the **multi-voiced worldviews** preserved in tension by the editor of the Torah. Unlike the sects of Qumran, the Tanakh editors valued variety, even contradiction not only in narrative or theology but even in law. The Tanakh is multi voiced both because each text is polyphonic and because different schools and books reflect different points of view which editor left in as positive view of the divine symphony. Then the canonization of Tanakh with multiple voices provided a basis for ongoing learning that produces more pluralist interpretations and for an institution - the beit midrash, whose social praxis is *limud Torah*. Hence students should also invited to join the interpretation process where their unique individual take is what makes them part of the community of learners, rather than their agreement to what they have in common
- 3- Menahem Fisch adds that **the contradictions and difficulties of interpreting the text should be valued in themselves.** They show that the text comes from a different world, that text is pluralist, that the text invites a struggle to make sense. Knolls' *Divine Symphony* captures the spirit of the multi-voiced *mahloket*.
- 4- **Multiple layers of later *parshanut* should be taught: medieval and modern, so the Divine Symphony is diachronic as well as synchronic.** Menahem Fisch praises the architecture of *Mikraot Gedolot* which reflects the ideal of pluralism and debate. The medieval parshanim are not merely involved in pursuit of historical *pshat*. Rather they have **well-articulated religious philosophies that engage the text religiously and even abandon the usual understanding of *pshat*.** They wrestle with the text out of religious involvement with its meaning. Our approach should not be Protestant, focused exclusively on recovering the original historical context as sole criterion for textual truth. Donniel Hartman often defines Talmud Torah as the **conversation**, the process,

that unites Jews in conversation around a classical text, not by their commonly held beliefs, practices, ethnicity or seed

Yisrael notes that there are four cultural worlds represented in *Mikraot Gedolot*: (1) Rashi and Hazal (2) Rashbam and Ibn Ezra (historical pshat that is liberated from Rabbinic tradition) (3) Ramban's mystical views as well as literary pshat levels and (4) Ramban's philosophic reinterpretations.

Menahem suggests these worldviews be taught by collating several comments from same commentator, not merely remaining with each verse.

Noam wonders whether modern religious philosophical interpreters of the Tanakh like Soloveitchik, Buber, Hartman might be even more accessible to student since they are explicitly theological, they speak a more contemporary religious language and their religious presuppositions are not hidden as are those who claim to be doing *pshat* of the text.

Noam describes the teachers' challenge which is to reveal these depths and creative disagreements of interpretations and uncover the engaged ideologies of the interpreters within a very limited time frame of teaching hours. The goal of sophisticated polyphony requires concentration on parade examples, so the student can absorb multiple levels of sophistication. Yet Alick disagrees: texts should be taught without a thematic focus so as to let the pluralism of debate grow from within.

- 5- **Tanakh as a Source for Theology more than History.** Yisrael emphasizes that Tanakh is less a source for history reconstructed and more for a **theological conversation**, so the study of Torah is a study of understandings of God that reflect the Divine as multifaceted and even contradictory. Moshe Greenberg has written that the role of Tanakh teacher in high school is to be teacher of mahshevet yisrael showing these perennial worldview issues.
- 6- **Tanakh is normative text in an existential sense.** Jonny Cohen believes in educational power of the Buberian approach to Torah requires an openness to enter into dialogue with the Torah which makes a normative and identity claim on us (Heschel's *God in Search of Man*). So we must help our students bring their whole existential selves to this encounter and this search for meaning. Hence we must reject two stereotypes - that Torah has one official view, orthodoxy, and that Torah as an ancient document is distant and irrelevant. Rather we must bring ourselves to the text, face our alienation from the text in value and in form, and then gradually go beyond alienation to reinterpretation. As Ravidowitch says: **interpretation is the result of two necessary poles - distance, alienation and loyalty, otherwise we would need to interpret or not care to interpret and bridge the gap.** Practically speaking, a warm supportive framework is necessary for this process to work itself through. Themes must be chosen to bridge that gap of relevance.
- 7- **Tanakh is a theological-political book about trials and errors and retrials to embody divine vision in human society.** David Hartman in *A Living Covenant* speaks of Tanakh as the record of a maturing relationship between God and Israel as people. It is brit where the ideal seeks to be realized in the

particularities of the real, so realization must be in community and in a state with the power to survive as well as the power to abuse and become corrupt. The Jew is Yisra-el = God wrestling, so the struggle over one's relation to God in Sodom, akeda etc is essential theme. The religious dimension is central.

- 8- Torah is also founding myth of the Jewish common identity as a nation, a **national autobiography in narrative**, saga form, with both *brit goral* and *brit yeud*.. Joining the people is joining its of discovery and fulfillment, an individual tied to a people's destiny tied to God's autobiography. Therefore the Tanakh, as Ilana Pardes suggests, is a construction of collective memory embodied in text and rites. The polyphony of this autobiographical narrative is both synchronic and diachronic. Jews have never agreed on only one version of their collective memories. The method of studying an autobiography designed to include the reader in its genealogy includes empathy and imagination ala *vhigadta lvincha, kilu yatzata mei-eretz mizraim*, not only analytic tools. The individual learner should be encouraged to read him/herself into the story midrashically to make it connect to one's own story

The Genre and Purpose of Biblical Narrative

א. בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

Genesis 1:1. In the beginning of God's creation of the heavens and the earth.

RASHI

In the beginning: Said Rabbi Isaac: It was not necessary to begin the Torah except from "This month is to you," (Exod. 12:2) which is the first commandment that the Israelites were commanded, (for the main purpose of the Torah is its commandments, and although several commandments are found in Genesis, e.g., circumcision and the prohibition of eating the thigh sinew, they could have been included together with the other commandments). Now for what reason did He commence with "In the beginning?" Because of [the verse] "The strength of His works He related to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations" (Ps. 111:6). For if the nations of the world should say to Israel, "You are robbers, for you conquered by force the lands of the seven nations [of Canaan]," they will reply, "The entire earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it (this we learn from the story of the Creation) and gave it to whomever He deemed proper. When He wished, He gave it to them, and when He wished, He took it away from them and gave it to us."

בראשית: אמר רבי יצחק לא היה צריך להתחיל [את] התורה אלא (שמות יב ב) מהחודש הזה לכם, שהיא מצוה ראשונה שנצטוו [בה] ישראל, ומה טעם פתח בבראשית, משום (תהלים קיא ו) כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו לתת להם נחלת גוים, שאם יאמרו אומות העולם לישראל לסטים אתם, שכבשתם ארצות שבעה גוים, הם אומרים להם כל הארץ של הקב"ה היא, הוא בראה ונתנה לאשר ישר בעיניו, ברצונו נתנה להם וברצונו נטלה מהם ונתנה לנו:

RAMBAN

בראשית ברא אלוהים -

אמר רבי יצחק לא היה צריך להתחיל התורה אלא מהחודש הזה לכם שהיא מצוה ראשונה שנצטוו בה ישראל, ומה טעם פתח בבראשית משום כוח מעשיו הגיד לעמו, שאם יאמרו אומות העולם לסטים אתם שכבשתם לכם ארצות שבעה גוים, הם אומרים להם, כל הארץ של הקב"ה היא, ונתנה לאשר ישר בעיניו, וברצונו נתנה להם, וברצונו נטלה מהם ונתנה לנו. וזו אגדה בלשון שכתבה רבנו שלמה בפירושו. ויש לשאול בה, כי צורך גדול הוא להתחיל התורה בבראשית ברא אלוהים, כי הוא שורש האמונה, ושאינו מאמין בזה וחושב שהעולם קדמון, הוא כופר בעיקר ואין לו תורה כלל.

והתשובה, מפני שמעשה בראשית סוד עמוק אינו מובן מן המקראות, ולא יודע על בוריו אלא מפי הקבלה עד משה רבנו מפי הגבורה, ויודעו חייבין להסתיר אותו, לכך אמר רבי יצחק שאין להתחלת התורה צורך בבראשית ברא, והספור במה שנברא ביום ראשון ומה נעשה ביום שני ושאר הימים, והאריכות ביצירת אדם וחווה, וחטאם ועונשם, וספור גן עדן וגרוש אדם ממנו, כי כל זה לא יובן בינה שלימה מן הכתובים, וכל שכן ספור דור המבול והפלגה, שאין הצורך בהם גדול, ויספיק לאנשי התורה בלעדי הכתובים האלה, ויאמינו בכלל בנזכר להם בעשרת הדברות (שמות כ"א): כי ששת ימים עשה ה' את השמים ואת הארץ את הים ואת כל אשר בהם וינח ביום השביעי, ותישאר הידיעה ליחידים שבהם הלכה למשה מסיני עם התורה שבעל פה:

ונתן רבי יצחק טעם לזה, כי התחילה התורה בבראשית ברא אלוהים וספור כל עניין היצירה עד בריאת אדם, ושהמשילו במעשה ידיו וכל שת תחת רגליו, וגן עדן שהוא מבחר המקומות הנבראים בעולם הזה נעשה מכון לשבתו, עד שגירש אותו חטאו משם, ואנשי דור המבול בחטאם גורשו מן העולם כולו, והצדיק בהם לבדו נמלט הוא ובניו, וזרעם חטאם גרם להם להפיצם במקומות ולזרותם בארצות, ותפשו להם המקומות למשפחותם בגוייהם כפי שנזדמן להם:

אם כן ראוי הוא, כאשר יוסיף הגוי לחטוא, שיאבד ממקומו ויבוא גוי אחר לרשת את ארצו, כי כן הוא משפט האלוהים בארץ מעולם, וכל שכן עם המסופר בכתוב כי כנען מקולל ונמכר לעבד עולם (להלן ט"ז), ואינו ראוי שיירש מבחר מקומות היישוב, אבל יירשנה עבדי ה' זרע אהבו, כעניין שכתוב (תהלים קה מד): ויתן להם ארצות גויים ועמל לאומים יירשו בעבור ישמרו חוקיו ותורותיו ינצורו. כלומר, שגירש משם מורדיו, והשכין בו עובדיו, שידעו כי בעבודתו ינחלנה, ואם יחטאו לו תקיא אותם הארץ, כאשר קאה את הגוי אשר לפניו:

ואשר יבאר הפירוש שכתבתי, לשונם בבראשית רבה (א ג): שאמרוה שם בלשון הזה: רבי יהושע דסכנין בשם רבי לוי פתח, כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו (תהלים קיא ו), מה טעם גילה להם הקב"ה לישראל מה שנברא ביום ראשון ומה שנברא ביום שני, מפני ז' אומות שלא יהיו מונין את ישראל ואומרים להם הלא אומה של בזיזות אתם, וישראל משיבין להם, ואתם הלא בזוזה היא בידכם, הלא כפתורים היוצאים מכפתור השמידום וישבו תחתם (דברים ב כג), העולם ומלואו של הקב"ה הוא, כשרצה נתנו לכם, כשרצה נטלו מכם ונתנו לנו, הדא הוא דכתיב (תהלים קיא ו): לתת להם נחלת גויים כוח מעשיו הגיד לעמו, בשביל לתת להם נחלת גויים הגיד להם את בראשית:

וכבר בא להם ממקום אחר עוד העניין שהזכרתי בתעלומות מעשה בראשית, אמרו רבותינו ז"ל: כוח מעשיו הגיד לעמו, להגיד כוח מעשה בראשית לבשר ודם אי אפשר, לפיכך סתם לך הכתוב בראשית ברא אלוהים

Philo –On the Order and Purpose of the Torah

(47) These writings of Moses may be divided into several parts; one of historical and another occupied with **commands and prohibitions**. ..The **historical** part may be subdivided into the account of the **creation** of the world, and the genealogical part. The **genealogical** part may be divided into the accounts, punishment of the wicked, and of the honors bestowed on the just; we must also explain on what account he began his history with these particulars and placed the commandments and prohibitions in the second part. (48) for he was not like any ordinary compiler of history, studying to leave behind of ancient transactions as **memorials** for future ages for the mere sake of **affording pleasure without any advantage**; but he traced back the most ancient events from the beginning of the world commencing with the creation of the universe in order to make known two most necessary principles:

First, that the same being was the father and **creator** of the world and likewise the **lawgiver** of truth; and secondly, that the man who adhered to these laws, and clung closely to a connection with and **obedience to nature**, would live corresponding to the arrangement of the universe with a perfect harmony and union, between his words and his actions and between his actions and his words.

(49) Now of all other lawgivers, some the moment that they have promulgated positive commandments as to what it is right to do and what it is right not to do, proceed to appoint punishments who transgress those laws; but others appear to have proceeded on a better plan, having first built and established their city in accordance with reason, have then adapted to this city which they have built, that constitution which they have considered the best adapted and most akin to it, and have confirmed this constitution by the giving of laws. (50) But Moses, thinking the first of the two courses above mentioned to be **tyrannical and, despotic, as indeed it is, namely, that of laying positive commands on persons as if they were not free men but slaves...**

(51) For both in his commandments and also in his prohibitions **he suggests and recommends rather than commands, endeavoring with many prefaces and perorations to suggest ...desiring to allure men to virtue than to drive them to it.** ...Looking upon the foundation and beginning of a city made with hands,....looking at the beauty of his whole legislative system, ... he has related it to the creation of that great metropolis, the world, thinking his laws the most fruitful image and likeness of the constitution of the whole world.

... (53) Those who have rejected virtue, and have chosen crafty wickedness, and all others kinds of vice, not through compulsion, but of their own spontaneous free will, looking upon that which is the greatest of all evils as the greatest possible advantage, he looks upon as **enemies not of mankind only, but of the entire heaven and world**, and says that they are awaiting, not any ordinary punishments, but new and extraordinary ones, which that constant assessor of God, justice. Who detests wickedness invents and afflicts terribly upon them, **turning against them the most powerful elements of the universe**, water and fire, so that at appointed times some are destroyed by deluges, others are burnt with fire, and perish in that manner.” (*On the Life of Moses*, II)

What is the Genre of the Torah or Tanakh?

- 1- **Book of Laws of Humankind (Gen. 9:1-7)**
- 2- **Book of Laws for Israel and their etiology – Covenant (Ex. 12; Exodus 20)**
- 3- **Book of Moral Advice**
- 4- **Book of Popular Dogma,**
- 5- **Book of Theology and Philosophy**
- 6- **Book of Philosophical Anthropology**
- 7- **Book of Cosmology (Science)**
- 8- **Polemic – Theological against Paganism (Yehezkel Kaufmann)**
- 9- **Polemic – Political against Pagan Anti-Israel Political Propaganda (Rashi, Rabbenu Yitzhak)**
- 10- **Book of Rituals and Prayers**
- 11- **Book of History.** See below for types of history writing that might apply:

What does it mean to use a historical approach to the study of the Tanakh?

The text is a window into the past and the past is a window into the text, and the historical perspectives makes us aware of changing associations of words and the sociology, archeology, geography, economics and politics behind the text. The historical method teaches us to suspend prejudices and to strive towards objectivity as we bridge the historical gap between the text of the past and the presumptions of the present. The Torah is not only an historical document but itself an attempt to write a history - an ideological history reflecting the authors' interests and worldviews.

History is a multifaceted discipline using different techniques and focusing on different aspects – social history, political history, intellectual history, nationalist history etc. The Tanakah can be approached historically in many different ways:

- 1- **National-origins History.** The Tanakh is always bidding its readers to remember the unique foundational events of the past that shaped our identity as a people. Remember the day you went out of Egypt. Remember the manna and place a sample in a jar preserved in the Mishkan. Here **history is a foundational saga of national origins**. This is the style of national history writing typical of the 19th and 20th century and it is the rationale for studying American history in America and Israeli history including Joshua to Kings in Israel. Nietzsche calls this "monumental history" because it seeks to honor the past as glorious. Young people are initiated into their own national identity through a dramatic story of its birth. For the Jews, the national autobiography is also the biography of God and the tale of the foundational legal document that created Israel as people at Sinai, that defined its institutions and that recognized God as its sovereign.
- 2- **Family Saga** a. genealogies (Gen. 4, 5, 10, Exodus 6, Numbers 1-4, Chronicles I 1-4, Matthew 1) b. places of journey (Numbers 33) c. family album (X-rated)
- 3- **Didactic History of Human Error.** Uniquely Biblical history is often filled with **self-criticism since the Jewish survival depends on learning from our mistakes** that led Israel into exile. Heroes are subject to criticism, so history is told with a didactic purpose (What does the Torah teach us for the future, not only what happened in the past to make us whom we are). We learn the past not necessarily to cherish it but to make sure it never happens again. For example, Judges 19 on national life without a king leads to moral anarchy of rape at Givah.
- 4- **Heilsgeschichte, Sacred Tale of God's Redemptive Acts: Prophetic or Messianic History.** Many Biblical stories are about the fulfillment of Divine promise or punishment that

works itself in unexpected and yet expected ways over time. For example, God predicts in Genesis 15 that Abraham's descendants will go into exile and be enslaved but will eventually emerge with great wealth. For example, **typological history** where *massei avot siman l'banim*, where events in life of ancestors predict events in the life of the descendant, such as Abraham's descent to Egypt and the plagues on house of Pharaoh. Sacred history is contained in a nutshell in **liturgical credo** (Gen. 26:1-10 and First Fruits Confession according to Gerhard Van Rad)

- 5- **Political history.** Modern historians often regard the books about the dynasties of David and Saul as **the first political history** describing a natural concatenation of causal events without decisive Divine miraculous intervention. Character development, political interest, institutional growth and political-religious idealism are all involved. Overlaid on the Joshua to Kings history is the strong editorial hand of a **historiographer** seeking to explain and the destruction of the First temple and exile as a moral and natural result of the political leadership and the people's violation of it founding covenant.

- 6- **ANE Cultural-History.** Contemporary historians use our newly rediscovered Ancient Near Eastern context (19th-20th century discoveries) to **illuminate the Biblical contexts of institutions, laws and language** (for example the wife-sister relations in Nuzi). Rashi and Rambam did the same in their era, though with less reliable and less plentiful data. The use of various **documents from the ancient near east** world enhances our understanding of the Tanakh. The assumption here is that the Tanakh is a product of the world in which the stories are set or at least God sought to speak a language that the people would have understood. Without these documents the full significance of places, language and events might be lost to us. (For example, the "covenant of the pieces" (Brit haBetarim), Jacob and Rachel's stealing of the family household gods from Lavan and the passing of Sarai as Avram's sister, all become more understandable when seen against the background of parallel documents discovered in ancient cities such as Mari or Nuzi. In addition, we can learn a great deal about the land and society of Canaan into which Israel would make its entrance in the Tanakh from the study of the Egyptian Amarna texts. We can learn about the Canaanite belief system from a close examination of the documents found at Ugarit in Syria. We can see pictures of the Philistines in archaeological finds in Egypt and we can learn much about their way of life from excavations in Israel.)

- 7- **The Bible as a historical source for reconstructing Ancient Israelite history.** The Bible itself may serve as a **window** to the external historic world in which it was written. Some view that window as naively **transparent**, then the study of the Bible historically teaches us ancient Israelite history. We may therefore study Bible not for its own sake, not for its religious or literary value, but for the picture of what happened. Students must be taught objective investigative tools for the text must be treated as evidence, to be sifted critically. Teaching critical perspectives is part of the adolescent growth of thinking. Realizing that there is a **historical gap** between the world of the past and of present allows us to discover new values, not merely reiterate the perennial ones. Some documents or artifacts challenge the text by offering alternative explanations for phenomena talked about in the Tanakh. (For example, the ziggurats of Babylon make sense out of the tower of Babel and we find a parallel flood story in the ancient Epic of Gilgamesh. Also some schools of archaeology have challenged the conquest stories of the Book of Joshua from their digs in Jericho or the Ai. More radical are those archaeologists who disclaim the whole of the early Biblical picture up to at least the middle of the first Temple period).

- 8- **Ideological History.** The Bible may be a window but it is a **tinted window** presenting the world outside in an ideologically self-conscious manner. (For example describing the Canaanites as despicable gang homosexual rapists along with Ham as Canaan's ancestor who peeked at his father's nakedness – Gen. 9:18-26). Rabbi Yitzhak is quoted by Rashi on Gen. 1:1 as viewing the Torah as a propaganda tract defending Israel's right to its land as a gift of

God, not accusing Israel of theft of other people's land). For example, the curse of Eve who is to be ruled by her husband (Gen. 3) apparently justifies the division of power between genders, though that is not the only view in the Bible.

History writing understood as a construction that serves political and religious interests of the authors and the readers inevitably presents different pictures that are not merely objective. Contemporary historians and archeologists construct their own history which are sometimes corroborative and sometimes at odds with the Biblical ones. Here it would be wise not to judge the Bible's truth by the latest school of archeological hypothesis but to compare and contrast reconstructions of the past – Biblical and contemporary readings for each view has its own ideological agenda. For example, some deniers of the historicity of the Bible are anti-Zionist and some who insist on its authenticity are pro-Zionist. Being self-critical, being aware of our own perspectives, which are almost impossible to shed, can produce a more sophisticated understanding.

Modern historiographical theories use the Bible not only to illuminate history but to write a history of the Biblical text as a human rather than a Divine work, a multivalent set of texts by different people and eras and institutions rather than a single harmonious word of the constituent God. They see different parts of the Bible as products of different human groups and strata in society, often very much at odds with the picture that the Tanakh presents about itself. (for example, the claim is raised that not all the Psalms are Davidic, nor did Solomon necessarily write the three books that are presented by the tradition as his). The Documentary Hypothesis sees the Torah itself as a multi-layered human text, written by different groups in different circumstances and brought together into its final (present) form by one or a series of 'redactors' or editors, with no reference to revelation. Related to this last set of issues are the internal contradictions in the text itself. (For example, there are variant stories of David's appearance in the Saul saga - as a musician or as a challenger of Goliath- or the identity of the slayer of Goliath himself - by David or by Elchanan?). Other contradictions raise larger historical questions such as the clear contradictions between the conquest traditions presented in the book of Joshua and the details of the early chapters of the book of Judges. Yet others are essentially historiographical rather than historical, such as the alternate parallel version of Israelite history told in the Book of Chronicles as compared with the other historical accounts in books like Samuel or Kings.

**TANAKH NARRATIVE:
AN EDUCATOR'S BIBLIOGRAPHY
edited by Noam Zion and Marla Frankel**

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B.D.B.

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Tzvi Adar, *Hasipur Hamikra-i, Sochnut*

Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, Almond or *Ha-Itzuv Ha-Omanuti shel Ha-Sipuur BaMikra*

Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, Almond

Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, Schocken

Jason P. Rosenblatt and Joseph C. Sitterson, Jr., “*Not In Heaven*”, Indiana

Regina Schwartz, *The Book and the Text: Bible and Literary Theory*, Blackwell

James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry, Parallelism and Its History*, Yale

Teaching Techniques:

Peter Pitzele – *Scriptural Windows* on bibliodrama

Haya Bar-Natan - *Hamikra V'ani* on experiential exploration of Tanakh for school teachers

Jo Milgrom – *Handmade Midrash*

Joel Grishaver “70 Faces of Torah: A How-to Guide to Torah Study” (handout) - Torah Aura

Joel Grishaver, "Beyond Bible Tales: Toward Teaching Text"

[1-repetition 2- twice told tales 3- conventions 4-leading words 5- motivation]

Audrey Friedman Marcus, "Listening Skills, Lecture, and Discussion," and Carol Ingall, "Cooperative or Collaborative Learning" (Hevruta) and Joyce Klein, "Drama in the Classroom" and Peninah Schramm, "Storytelling: Role and Technique" and Audrey Friedman Marcus, "Values Clarification" and "Creative Writing" in *The New Jewish Teachers Handbook* edited by Audrey Friedman Marcus etc, ARE publishers
Jon Saphier and Robert Gower, "Models of Teaching" in *The Skillful Teacher*

[1- Advanced organizer 2- Concept attainment 3- Inductive thinking 4- Inquiry training 5- Synectics
6- Nondirective teaching 7-Group investigation

Seymour Rossel, *Managing the Jewish Classroom* – Torah Aura

ART

Great Women of the Bible in Art and Literature

Rembrandt in the Old Testament

Rembrandt's Holland – Israel Museum

Gustav Dore

Jakob Steinhardt - Woodcuts

Saul Raskin –*Genesis*

Abel Pann – *The Five Books of Torah*

Sipurei Reshit – edited by Tanya Zion

Women in the Bible Drawings edited by Haber

jewishhistory.com Bryna Levi comments on Rembrandt on the Bible

Biblical Art collected by Joshua Levisohn- downloads from web

Biblical art collected by Jo Milgrom - slides

Biblical art collected by Noam Zion - scans

MIDRASH – CLASSICAL AND MODERN

James Kugel – *The Bible as it Was* collects story by story the midrash of Apocrypha, Hellenist Judaism, Christianity and Hazal

Josephus – *Jewish Antiquities* and Philo retell the Biblical stories in a lively way reflecting rhetorical and political values of the Greco-Roman period

Michael Katz and Gershon Schwarcz – *Searching for Meaning in Midrash* with excellent introduction

See *Jewish Readers Bible* – edited by Adele Berlin and Marc Brettler in appendix under

H.N.Bialik and Ravnitsky — *Sefer Ha-aggdah: The Book of Legends*

Yishai Chassidah – *The Encyclopaedia of Biblical Personalities* collects obscure midrash and traditional commentaries by character

Shai Agnon, *Atem Reitem* – Midrash on Sinai

Robert Curzon – *Modern Biblical Poetry*

Yehuda Amichai – *Open, Closed, Open*

Naomi Hyman – *Biblical Women in the Midrash: a Sourcebook*

Ellen Frankel - *Five Books of Miriam* as imagined conversation of women of various eras discussing feminist aspects of Torah –

Vanessa Ochs - *Sarah Laughed*

Elie Wiesel - *Messengers of God*

Adin Steinsaltz – *Biblical Images*

Meir Shalev – *Tanakh Achshav*

About Midrash:

Noam Zion – *Cain and Abel Curriculum* in Hebrew collects key articles on Midrash from Yosef Heinemann, Isaac Heinemann, A.A. Halevi

Yona Frankel – Israel Open University Course on Midrash

Simi Peters - *Learning to Read Midrash*

Joshua Levenson, *The Twice Told tale* (Hebrew)

FEMINIST

Alice Bach editor - *Women in the Hebrew Bible*
Alice Bach - *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in the Biblical Narrative*
Tikva Frymer Kensky – *Reading the Women of the Bible*
Phyllis Tribble – *Texts of Terror and God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*
Tamar Ashkenasy – *Eve's Journey* from Bible to Rabbinics to Modern Hebrew Literature on Biblical women
Ellen Frankel - *Five Books of Miriam* as imagined conversation of women of various eras discussing feminist aspects of Torah –
Cheryl Exum – *Plotted, Shot and Painted*
Cheryl Exum - *Fragmented Women*
Diana Fewell and David Gunn – *Gender, Power and Promise*

BOOK BY BOOK AND STORY BY STORY

BRESHIT

Nahum Sarna – *Understanding Genesis and JPS Genesis*
Nehama Leibovitz –
Bill Moyers, editor – *Genesis and Talking about Genesis*
Meir Sternberg – *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*
Peter Pitzele – *Our Fathers' Wells*
Yehuda Amichai – *Open, Closed, Open*
Aviva Zornberg– *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire*
Leon Kass - *The Beginning of Wisdom*
Korot Breshit – Ruth Ravitsky, editor
Sipurei Reshit – edited by Tanya Zion and Noam Zion (Yediot Aharonot)
Devora Steinmetz – *From Father to Son*
Naomi Hyman – *Biblical Women in the Midrash: a Sourcebook*
Ellen Frankel - *Five Books of Miriam* as imagined conversation of women of various eras discussing feminist aspects of Torah –
Vanessa Ochs - *Sarah Laughed*
Elie Wiesel - *Messengers of God*
Adin Steinsaltz – *Biblical Images*
Leslie Brisman, *The Voice of Jacob*, On the Composition of Genesis, Indiana Press
Tzvi Adar, *Sefer B'resheet, Mavo La-olam Hamikra-i*, Cherikover
Uriel Simon, *Bakesh Shalom vRodfeh* on Abraham, Hagar, Ishmael, Joseph

Adam and Eve and Creation

Noam Zion – *Zugiyut: The Art of Living Together* –Gen. 1-3 (TICHON on WORD document) (also available in Hebrew)
J.B. Soloveitchik – *The Lonely man of Faith* and *On the Family??*
Jon Levenson – *Creation and Persistence of Evil*
Phyllis Tribble – *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*
The Truman Show movie on Tree of Knowledge
Barry Holtz – *Back to the Sources* , essay on the Garden of Eden by Joel Rosenberg

Cain and Abel

Noam Zion and Steve Israel – *Cain and Abel: The Origins of Human Violence* (TICHON on WORD document) (also in Hebrew)
John Steinbeck book and movie with James Dean – *East of Eden*
Noam Zion – Art of Cain and Abel
Cohen, *The Drunkenness of Noah*,

Avraham, Sarah and Hagar

Noam Zion and Steve Israel – The First Jew: Abraham (Gen. 12 and 18) (TICHON on WORD document)
Noam Zion and Steve Israel – *The Troubling Triangle: Sarah, Hagar and Avraham* (TICHON on WORD document) (also in Hebrew)
Noam Zion – *Feminist Conversation (Modern Mikraot Gedolot) on Sarah, Hagar and Avraham Beginning Anew* edited Gail Twersky and Judith Kates
Noam Zion and Steve Israel – *The First Jew: A Journey begun with a Fateful Choice* (Gen. 12 and 18) *Avraham, Avi HaMaaminin* edited by Avi Ravitsky
Phylis Tribble – *Texts of Terror*
David Hartman, *A Living Covenant* (chapter one comparing Abraham and Noah and the covenant)

Akeda

Beginning Anew edited Gail Twersky and Judith Kates
Jon Levenson – *The Sacrifice of the Beloved Son*
Shalom Spiegel – *The Last Trial* on midrashic treatment of Akeda in medieval Crusaders Soren Kierkegaard – *On Fear and Trembling*
Phyllis Tribble – Essay on “Sarah’s Sacrifice”

Esav/Yaacov and Leah/Rachel

Noam Zion – *Sisters: Leah and Rachel – Biblical Rivalry and Midrashic Reconciliation*
Noam Zion – *Jacob: Wrestling with God* – anthology of articles
Leah Frankel – "Esav v Yaacov Baparshanut"
Jan Fokkelman – *Narrative Art in Genesis*
Moshe Greenberg, *Biblical Prose Prayer*, U of Calif. Press
Noam Zion – *The Jew and the Multi-faced Other – Part One – READER on The Other as Brother – Sibling Rivalry of Esav and Jacob as a prototype of Religious, National and Political Conflict* (TICHON)
Noam Zion – *READER in Breshit on Divine Destiny and Family Violence* (Esav and Jacob) (HEBREW SHI)

Joseph

Aaron Wildavsky – *Assimilation versus Separation: Joseph the Administrator*
Thomas Mann – *Joseph and his Brothers*
Andrew Lloyd Weber – *Joseph and Technicolor Dreamcoat*
Noam Zion – *MiYeiush L’Hitosheshut: Kriyah BaSippur shel Joseph*

EXODUS- NUMBERS – Biography of Moshe and his people

Nehama Leibovitz – Studies in Shemot, Vayikra, Bemidbar
Moshe Greenberg – *Understanding Exodus*
Nahum Sarna – *Exploring Exodus and Exodus JPS*

Brevard Childs, *The Book Of Exodus - A Critical Commentary* (OTL)
Aviva Zornberg - *Particulars of Rapture*
Aaron Wildavsky – *Political Leader as Nursing Father*
Jacob Milgrom – *Numbers JPS*
Ilana Pardes – *Biography of Ancient Israel*
Moshe Greenberg, *Biblical Prose Prayer*, U of Calif. Press

Noam Zion – *Young Moshe and the Women Heroines in his Life*
Noam Zion – *Biographia shel Manhig Tzair* (Exodus 1-4)
Noam Zion – *Aseret HaMakkot*
Noam Zion – *Sefer Ha Telunot* (Numbers 11-12)
Noam Zion – *HaMeraglim* (Numbers 13-14)
Noam Zion – *Mered Korach* (Numbers 16-17)
Noam Zion – *Kanaut shel Pinchas* (Numbers 25)
Noam Zion – *Moto shel Moshe* (Deuteronomy 3 and 34)

Movies: *The Prince of Egypt* and the *Ten Commandments*

DEUTERONOMY

Jeffrey Tigay – *Deuteronomy JPS*
Moshe Weinfeld – *The Deuteronomistic School*
Nehama Leibowitz- *Studies in Dvarim*
Robert Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist*, Indiana U
Yochanan Muffs, *Love and Joy*

JUDGES

Meir Sternberg – *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*
Mieke Bal – *Death and Dissymmetry in Book of Judges*
Phyllis Tribble – *Texts of Terror*
Alice Bach editor - *Women in the Hebrew Bible*
Tikva Frymer Kensky – *Reading the Women of the Bible*
Cheryl Exum - *Fragmented Women*
Edward Greenstein – “The Riddle of Samson” *essay*
Gale A. Yee, *Judges and Method*, Fortress Press
Yair Zakovitz – *Chayei Shimshon*
David Fishlov – *Mahlafot Shimshon* – on contemporary treatments of Samson

SHMUEL AND KINGS

Yehuda Kil – *Shmuel* – Daat Mikrah
Moshe Garsiel – *Samuel: A Literary Study*
Robert Polzin – *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*
Robert Polzin - *David and the Deuteronomist*
Walter Brueggemann – *The Truth of David* –
Atlas Carta – maps and summary of the battles

Uriel Simon – *Literary Approach to the Early Prophets* (especially I Samuel 1 and 3 and II Samuel 12 and Elijah) and *Bakesh Shalom vRodfehu* on I Sam 14 and 25
Yair Zakovitz, “gavo al gavo” on II Kg 5
Joel Rosenberg – *King and Kin*

Jan Fokkelman – *Succession Narratives in Samuel and Kings*
 Phyllis Tribble – *Texts of Terror*
 Cheryl Exum – *Plotted, Shot and Painted and Fragmented Women*
 Meir Sternberg – *Poetics of Biblical Narrative* on David and Bat Sheva
 Steve Israel – *Sovereignty: Rewriting David* (TICHON)
 Alice Bach editor - *Women in the Hebrew Bible*
 Tikva Frymer Kensky – *Reading the Women of the Bible*
 Phyllis Tribble – *Texts of Terror*
 David Clines and Tamara Eskenazi – *Telling Queen Michal's Story*
 Yair Zakovitz – *MeiRoeh L'Mashiach: David*
 Yair Zakovitz - essay on Kerem Navot I Kings 21 from Weiss – *Mikrah Kfshuto*
 Yigal Ariel – set on Neviim Rishonim
 Peter D. Miscall, *I Samuel, a Literary Reading*, Indiana U
 Moshe Greenberg, *Al Hamikra v'al Ha-yahadut* on disobedience of Yoav

Art of Shmuel, Shaul and David - scanned and available from Noam Zion

Yehuda Amichai – *Open, Closed, Open* on King David
Crimes and Misdemeanors – Woody Allen parallel to David and Batsheva
 TNT Bible Movies

LATER CLASSICAL PROPHETS

Daat Mikrah
 Alexander Rofe, *Sippurei Haneviim*
 AJ Heschel – *The Prophets*
 Martin Buber – *The Prophetic Faith*
 Shalom Paul - *Amos* – Mikra L'Yisrael –
 Moshe Weinfeld – *ishiyuto shel yirmiyahu* from *iyunim bsefer yirmiyahu*
 Yochanan Muffs – *Persona of God*
 B Oppenheimer – *Nevuah*
 Alexander Rofe, *The Prophetic Stories*, Magnes
 Tzvi Adar, *Yirmiyahu Hanavi*

MEGILLOT AND JONAH

Gabi Cohen – *Hameish Megillot* - Daat Mikrah –

Eicha – Adele Berlin and Alan Mintz from *Hurban*
Kohelet – Robert Gordis; T.A.Perry – *Dialogues with Kohelet*; Harold Fisch – *Poetry with Purpose*

Esther – *The Dawn* – Yoram Hazoni;
 Adele Berlin – Esther (JPS)
 Michael Fox – *Character and Ideology in Esther*:
 Yair Zakovitz – Mikrah L'Yisrael;
 Noam Zion and Steve Israel – *Crazy Jews, Crazy World* (TICHON on WORD document):
 Elias Bickerman – *Four Strange Books of the Bible*
Berit Olam - Esther

Jonah – Uriel Simon – JPS; Leah Frankel “V'Rachamav al kol Maasav” in ???; Devorah Steinmetz on Jonah in *Beginning Anew* edited Gail Twersky and Judith Kates; Elias Bickerman – *Four Strange Books of the Bible*; Jonathan Magonet - *Form and Meaning in the Book of Jonah*; Phyllis Tribble – *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*; Jack Sasson - *Jonah*

Ruth – *Reading Ruth* by Judith Kates and Gail Twersky;
 Yair Zakovitz – *Ruth* in Mikrah L'Yisrael;

Phyllis Tribble – *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*
Curriculum – *Herut B'Megillat Ruth – Mikra vOmanut* – TALI
Megillat Ruth: In the Face of An Exceptional Human Being by Noam Zion (TICHON – word document)

Song of Songs –

Yair Zakovitz, *Shir Hashirim*, Mikra Lyisrael
Marcia Falk, *Song of Songs*, translation and commentary

PSALMS –

Nahum Sarna – *Songs of the Heart - On the Book of Psalms*
Robert Alter – *The Art of Biblical Poetry*
Walter Brueggemann – *The Message of the Psalms*
Herbert J. Levine, *Sing Unto God*, Indiana
Uriel Simon, *4 Gishot L'sefer T'hilim*, Bar Ilan
Harold Fisch – *Poetry with Purpose*

JOB

Stephen Mitchell – translation
Archibald MacLeish – *J.B.* play
Samuel Terrien – *Iconography of Job through the Centuries: Artists as Biblical Interpreters*
Nahum Glatzer, editor– *Dimensions of Job* (The Book of Job and its Interpreters)
Robert Gordis – *The Book of God and Man*
Jon Levenson – *Creation and Persistence of Evil*
Donniel Hartman, Noam Zion, Steve Israel – *The Problem of Evil* (TICHON on WORD document)
Harold Fisch – *Poetry with Purpose*
Leah Mazor – *Iyov – BaMikra, BaHagut, BaOmanut*
Moshe Greenberg, “Job” in Alter and Kermode, editors of *The Literary Guide to the Bible*

Noam Zion Tanakh publications for educators

Sipurei Reshit – edited by Tanya Zion and Noam Zion (Yediot Aharonot) - modern mirkarot gedolot on then themes/stories in Genesis (with poetry, art, contemporary commentary, some pedagogic suggestions)
Noam Zion – *Zugiyut: The Art of Living Together* –Gen. 1-3 (also in Hebrew)
Noam Zion and Steve Israel – *Cain and Abel: The Origins of Human Violence* (also in Hebrew)
Noam Zion and Steve Israel – *The First Jew: A Journey begun with a Fateful Choice* (Gen. 12 and 18)
Noam Zion and Steve Israel – *The Troubling Triangle: Sarah, Hagar and Avraham* (also in Hebrew)
Noam Zion – *Jacob: Wrestling with God* – anthology of articles
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Noam Zion – *Sisters: Leah and Rachel – Biblical Rivalry and Midrashic Reconciliation*
Noam Zion – *MiYeiush L'Hitosheshut: Kriyah BaSippur shel Joseph*

Noam Zion – *Young Moshe and the Women Heroines in his Life* (also in Hebrew)
Noam Zion – *Biographia shel Manhig Tzair* (Exodus 1-4)
Noam Zion – *Aseret HaMakkot*
Noam Zion – *Sefer Ha Telunot* (Numbers 11-12)
Noam Zion – *HaMeraglim* (Numbers13-14)
Noam Zion – *Mered Korach* (Numbers 16-17)
Noam Zion – *Kanaut shel Pinchas* (Numbers 25)
Noam Zion – *Moto shel Moshe* (Deuteronomy 3 and 34)
Noam Zion and Steve Israel – *Megillat Esther and Purim: Crazy Jews, Crazy World*
Noam Zion - *Megillat Ruth: In the Presence of An Exceptional Human Being*
Noam Zion – *Kriyat Shema*

Web Appendix

Mishnah and Kehati in English:

<http://www.moreshet.net/oldsite/mishna/archiveshabbat.htm>

Gemarah in English (probably Soncino)

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/talmud.htm>

All sorts of Jewish texts and books online...

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/index.htm>

<http://www.bible.org/netbible/>

Tools: Go & Study

Torah study is a lot like playing a musical instrument. There are some basic skills you need to know, it's good to have a teacher, and a study partner, but after that, the real secret is Practice! Luckily, our tradition has a built-in mechanism for weekly and yearly review. Many find Shabbat a conducive time to open the weekly Parashah. Here are some tools to help in that study.

(I've put an asterisk beside must-have/highly recommended volumes)

Bibliography:

Bible Translations

New JPS Translation of the Torah, Philadelphia, 1985

Anchor Bible Series: Genesis, E.A. Speiser. Doubleday and Company, New York, 1964.

*The Five Books of Moses. Everett Fox. Schocken Books, New York, 1990.

Reference Tools

B.D.B. Bible Dictionary

Learning Torah. Joel Grishaver. UAHC, New York, 1990

*"Bible" by Joel Rosenberg, in Back to the Sources. Barry Holtz

Concordance

Encyclopedia Judaica: articles on Bible, and a variety of other topics.

Midrash

The Midrash (or Midrash Rabbah). Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (ed. and tr.). Soncino Press, London, 1977.

Legends of the Jews. L. Ginzburg

Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation. Menahem Kasher. American Biblical Encyclopedia Society. New York

Rabbinic Commentaries

Mikraot G'dolot

Pentateuch with Rashi's Commentary. Dr. A. M. Silverman (ed.) Jerusalem, 1929

Ramban Commentary on the Torah. Rabbi Dr. Chavel (tr.) Shilo, New York, 1971

Sforno Commentary on the Torah. Rabbi R. Pelcovitz (tr.) ArtScroll Mesorah, Brooklyn, 1987

Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Pentateuch. H. N. Strickman & A. M. Silver. Menorah Pub. New York, 1988

Modern Commentaries

*The Torah, A Modern Commentary. W. Gunther Plaut (ed.) UAHC, New York, 1981

Studies in Genesis (Exodus,...) N. Leibowitz, WZO, Jerusalem, 1976

*A Torah Commentary for our Times. Harvey Fields (ed.) UAHC, New York, 1990

Understanding Genesis. Nahum Sarna, Schocken Books, New York, 1966

Exploring Exodus. Nahum Sarna, Schocken Books, New York, 1986

The JPS Torah Commentary. N. Sarna (ed.) JPS, 1991

List of Methods

Joel Rosenberg, *Back to the Sources*, edited by Barry Holtz
and Aron Freidenreich, Nine Literary approaches

Joel Grishaver, "Beyond Bible Tales: Toward Teaching Text" in *The New Jewish Teachers Handbook* edited by Audrey Marcus etc, ARE publishers

1-repetition 2- twice told tales 3- conventions 4-leading words 5- motivation

Joel Grishaver – *Learning Torah* on literary analysis techniques

Joel Grishaver "70 Faces of Torah: A How-to Guide to Torah Study" (handout)

Joel Grishaver, "Beyond Bible Tales: Toward Teaching Text" [1-repetition 2- twice told tales 3- conventions 4-leading words 5- motivation] in *The New Jewish Teachers Handbook* edited by Audrey Friedman Marcus etc, ARE publishers

Literary Methods

Joel Grishaver – *Learning Torah* on literary analysis techniques

Joel Grishaver "70 Faces of Torah: A How-to Guide to Torah Study" (handout)

Joel Grishaver, "Beyond Bible Tales: Toward Teaching Text" [1-repetition 2- twice told tales 3- conventions 4-leading words 5- motivation]

Aron Freidenreich – *Nine Literary Approaches* – copyrighted by author – reproduce with his permission only

Robert Alter – *The Art of Biblical Narrative*

Barry Holtz – *Back to the Sources*, essay on Bible and the Garden of Eden by Joel Rosenberg

Barry Holtz – *Textual Knowledge: Strategies for Teaching Biblical Narrative*

Meir Sternberg – *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*

Alter and Kermode, *Literary Guide to the Bible*, Harvard

Michael Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah*, Indiana

J.P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative*, A Literary Guide, Westminster John Knox Press

Tzvi Adar, *Hasipur Hamikra-i, Sochnut*

Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, Almond or *Ha-Itzuv Ha-Omanuti shel Ha-Sipuur BaMikra*

Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, Almond

Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, Schocken

Jason P. Rosenblatt and Joseph C. Sitterson, Jr., "*Not In Heaven*", Indiana

Regina Schwartz, *The Book and the Text: Bible and Literary Theory*, Blackwell

James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, Parallelism and Its History, Yale