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 including the intellectual, affective and social meld.

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The Classroom Environment

1. How does one create an environment conducive to the studying of sacred texts? What sets this classroom apart from every other classroom?
2. What documents do you hand out to students or parents at the beginning of the year that reflect the school’s mission statement, the department’s mission statement and your philosophy and values about teaching and learning?
3. How does the year begin and how does that set a tone for what is to follow?
4. How does the day (period) begin? How does it end? Create a ritual.
5. What do you find on the walls of the classroom that contribute to the classroom culture?
6. How do you teach students to become responsible for their own learning?
7. What is the role of hevruta in your classroom?
8. How willing are you as a teacher to try new things even if they fail?
9. How invested are you in the students’ lives beyond the classroom?
10. How does Hebrew singing or current events in Israel affect the classroom environment?

Milken Middle School Torah Teaching Protocol

a. Take out required materials, kipah, homework
b. Pass around tzedakah box
c. Prompt (picture, quote, essential question, anecdote, mystery object related to theme of text study etc), then respond in writing to the prompt (questions, comments, opinions, stories)
d. Dedications led by student who solicits individual students voluntarily to dedicate their learning Torah using the formula: “I dedicate my study of the traditions of the Jewish people to …my grandmother’s visit, to health of my mother, to my brother’s team winning soccer title etc”. Students respond to their colleagues announcements suitably with n’seiya tova, mazal tov, refuah shlemah, baruch haba.
e. Then whole class recites by heart the Birkat HaTorah: laasok bdivrei Torah.
f. Lesson with Biblical verses or Rabbinic sources: read aloud verses where different students take roles of narrator and each character in the reading aloud; then brainstorm questions listing in a chart to be filled in gradually (question/verse/answers/ lessons for life); sort chevruta questions by three categories (what text says = description /what text means = pshat / what text means to me = drash)
g. Closure
h. Ongoing Learning projects: review and learn another Israeli song or verses from Megillah with trup or Pirkei Avot with a nigun / read a page of the school’s read-aloud-novel
i. Pick up and clean up
DEDICATIONS OF LEARNING

Using a standard formula and then teaching students to respond with traditional wishes of support:

1. I am studying in the tradition of the Jewish people and in honor of Shavuot. ________________
2. I am studying in the tradition of the Jewish people and in memory of my great-uncle who has a yahrzeit this week. ________________
3. I am studying in the tradition of the Jewish people and in honor of my dad who is traveling to New York for a business trip. ________________
4. I am studying in the tradition of the Jewish people and in honor of my sister’s birthday. ________________
5. I am studying in the tradition of the Jewish people and in honor of my cousin’s wedding. ________________
6. I am studying in the tradition of the Jewish people and in memory of all the people who died in the suicide bombing in Israel. ________________
7. I am studying in the tradition of the Jewish people and in honor of my brother who is having surgery tomorrow. ________________
8. I am studying in the tradition of the Jewish people and in honor of my mom who is recovering from the flu ________________
9. I am studying in the tradition of the Jewish people and in honor of the new month. ________________
10. I am studying in the tradition of the Jewish people and in memory of my friend Joanna. ________________
11. I am studying in the tradition of the Jewish people and in honor of my friend’s bat mitzvah. ________________

CLASS RESPONSES

- Congratulations
- Mazal Tov
- May his memory be a blessing
- Zikhrono/a Lvracha
- Have a good trip
- Nesiyas Tova
- Happy Birthday
- Ad Meah vEssrim
- Congratulations
- Mazal Tov
- Good Luck
- Beha-ah Tova
- Get Well Soon
- Refuah Shlemah
- Happy Holiday
- Hag Sameach
- A Good Month
- Hodesh Tov
Leah Kroll - POSTERS in Classroom about Purposes of Tanakh

Enduring Understandings

1. Tanach is a tool we can use to learn about life and how to live it.

2. Asking questions is vital to the learning process.

3. Seeing more than one side to any part of the Tanach allows more depth of knowledge.

4. The Tanach connects us to our past, but it isn’t meant to be a history book.

5. Torah teaches how to make ourselves more heavenly, closer to the divine ideal.

Essential Questions

1. Is learning Torah like learning math, science, history, etc.? Why might it be different? Why might it be similar?

2. Why are asking questions so important for learning anything? What kinds of questions will help most in learning Tanach?

3. What does the saying, “there are two sides to every story,” mean? Could there be more than two sides? Could there be only one side? How?

4. Is it dangerous or helpful to study Tanach as a history book? How might it be either?

5. Would the Jewish people be the “Jewish people” without the Torah? Why or why not?

6. What would God’s ideal world be like? Is it the same as ours?

Self-Evaluation on COOPERATION in Hevruta

Working in a group can oftentimes be challenging. Take a few moments to evaluate the work that YOU did in contributing to your group’s game. You won’t be graded on this so think honestly about how you can improve your own participation for the next time that you work on a group project. Be as specific as you can be with all of your responses.

1. What were the positive contributions that you made to your group?

2. What were the frustrations that you faced in creating your game?

3. How could you have managed your time more effectively?

4. What did you learn about yourself and how you function in a group?

5. What did you learn about others by working in a group?

6. Would you have preferred to do this project alone? Why or why not?
TANAKH introduced through Synectics Activities by Leah Kroll

Interactive game - how is studying Torah like ______________ (items found in bag). Give each student an object and ask them to compare it to Torah learning.

**Objects in the bag:**
- egg beater
- Crossword puzzle book
- watch
- Wooden spoon
- bottle of vitamins
- Photograph
- doll
- Bottle of water
- keychain
- Pack of gum
- piece of white paper
- Red pen
- Dodger calendar
- Scissors
- compact disc
- Scotch tape

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**Synectics Lesson**

*Instructional Objectives:*
By the end of this lesson, the students will be able to:
- Define Tanach and break it down into its component parts
- Articulate why study Bible?
- Express personal beliefs and opinions about Tanach in a new and creative way
- Demonstrate compromising, listening to one another, taking turns and other cooperative learning skills
- Utilize the model of synectics in order to help them see a familiar topic, Tanach, in a new, more creative light
- Use metaphors and analogies to develop a new understanding of Tanach
- Express understanding of the importance of Torah for the Jewish people by relating to a famous Talmudic fable

**Activity Two - Synectics Lesson:**

**Set Induction:**

**Warm-up/Stretching exercises (practice working with metaphors):**
Teacher:
(Direct Analogy) Think of a good friend or family member: compare that person to a fruit or vegetable.
How is school like a calendar? [there is a set schedule; it is full of activities; it is organized; it is full of information; it is busy; it is helpful]
(Personal Analogy) Pretend you are a round challah. How do you look and how do you feel? [sweet; full; delicious; pulled apart; sticky]
Body of Lesson:

1. Set Induction/Description of Present Condition:
   T: When I say "Tanach," what comes to mind? [Torah; school; Jewish; books; work; study]
   How would you explain Tanach to someone who isn't Jewish?
   [Jewish Bible; important text; guidebook; instruction book]

2. Direct Analogy:
   T: Tanach is like a(n) ______________________ because _____________________.
   [Tanach is like a seeing eye dog because it guides us through life and helps us on our way.]
   [Tanach is like a cave because it is very deep and many-layered and you have to crawl inside
   and not be afraid to lose your way in order to become wrapped inside.]
   Students share answers and students agree on one analogy with which to continue.
   Pick one: seeing eye dog

3. Personal Analogy:
   T: You are a [seeing eye dog]. How do you look? How do you feel?
   [tired; treasured; exploited; happy; busy; pressured; important]
   Students share answers and Teacher writes them on the board.

4. Compressed Conflict:
   Teacher takes the list of adjectives and students select words that contradict/ fight with
   each other in order to create pairs of "opposites."
   [treasured/exploited; tired/happy]
   Students agree on one pair of opposites. [treasured/exploited]

5. Direct Analogy based on the compressed conflict:
   T: What is something that is both this conflict [treasured and exploited]?
   [friendship; parent-child relationship]
   Students agree on one answer [parent-child relationship]

6. Reexamination of the Original Task:
   T: Write a creative paragraph on how is [Tanach like a parent-child relationship].
   [Tanach is like a parent-child relationship because we know that the Tanach is something very
   important in our lives but sometimes we ignore it and put it aside because we know it will
   always be there and don't treasure it the way we should. Similarly, children know that their
   parents are very important in their lives, but sometimes they ignore them and/or take them
   for granted and assume that they will always be there for them even if they don't show the
   proper respect and love for them. We as Jews are supposed to love and cherish the Tanach
   as a living text and a holy one. The Tanach teaches us just as our parents teach us and guide
   us in our lives.]

Closure/Evaluation:
Students share their creative paragraphs with the class and may illustrate depending on time.
B. Joel Lurie Grishaver – Being Torah – Making Meaning: How to Organize a Meaningful Lesson

**Being Torah** is the ideal of the Maggid of Mezritch who told his students not merely to learn Torah but to BE Torah. So Torah teaching is about facilitating personal ownership of the Torah. It is about making your own meaning from what one finds in investigating the text. It is about connecting what is in the text and what is in one's own life. It is about sharing these meanings.

A **Being Torah lesson** should take place in 5 or 6 steps:


(1) **Set-Induction (a.k.a. motivation).** The Being Torah process begins with SET-INDUCTION, the process of engagement. Here, questions are asked, elements of the students' own experiences are brought to the classroom and the students acquire the necessary mind-set to approach the text. Exploration is motivated. This is what you do between taking attendance and the moment active learning is underway. There are three basic strategies you can use.

   A. Starting with the **theme**, create an insight into the central idea of the story (e.g. Talk about what it is like to be a brother or a sister before starting the story of Cain and Abel).

   B. Starting with the **story**. At times, the Bible is like a soap-opera - review last week’s plot and guess what will happen this week.

   C. Starting with a **problem or puzzle**. Each text is like a mystery whose meaning and solution must be unlocked. Having students look for the word used 7 times or find the X pattern can also be a way of starting.

   [D. Leah Kroll: Start with a visual or physical prompt: Place on desk before class so students coming in have something to do to help them focus and to introduce the theme of the class

   For example:

   1. Bring Wimpel to introduce a study of birth of Yitzchak
   2. Bring Mikraot Gedolot to introduce Rashi
   3. Put riddle on the board to introduce Samson

   [E. Leah Kroll: Start with questions that create intuitive concepts and mapping of a new concept. For example: What is Tanakh teaching about?}
1. Is learning Torah like learning math, science, history, etc.? Why might it be different? Similar? OR

2. What animal is the Bible like? OR

3. What does the saying, “There are two sides to every story,” mean? Could there be more than two sides? Only one side? How? OR
4. Would the “Jewish people” be the Jewish people without the Torah? Why or why not?

**BEING TORAH SAMPLE of SET INDUCTION.** Here is a lesson Abram: Leaving Home.

Each of the twelve students has arrived carrying a suitcase, knapsack, or paper bag. Jane, the teacher begins: "I want to know everything you know about a guy named Abram." Hands are quickly raised. Information is volunteered. Jane writes each and every item on the board. Soon the board is covered with: "The first Jew." "Had camels and tents." "Smashed idols?" "Married to Sarah." etc. This listing has taken three or four minutes.

Next Jane reviews the homework assignment. Each student had been asked to bring from home, three things they would take with them if they had to leave home for ever. She has the students get ready to share their objects. The class goes through a minute of chaos and joking and then groups’ attention is quickly refocused. Jane goes around the circle. Each of the kids opens his or her bag and reveals the hidden treasures. There are lots of laughs: teddy-bears, salamis, a tape recorder. There are also lots of very poignant touches: the family candlesticks, a photo-album, a most important book, etc. This portion of the lesson runs about twenty minutes, about ten-minutes longer than had anticipated. But, because it was a warm, fun, sharing moment, she didn’t rush the activity. Instead, she just shifted her lesson plan.

The plan had been to move from the students objects to a fantasy list of what Abram and Sarai might have brought with them. Instead, Jane made a quick transition. In three sentences, Jane moves into the text. “Last week we watched Terah take the family from Ur to Haran. This week, the family is on the move again. Just like you pretended to do, they are going to have to leave home. Let’s open up the Torah and we’ll get to see him leave home and become the first Jew. Jane has just finished SET INDUCTION. Not only has the class been motivated to engage the text, but they have also been focused into the text. They are ready to begin reading the Torah with an ear to understanding why Abram went on this pilgrimage.

(2) The First Reading.
Everett Fox, the bible scholar and translator whose work. *In the Beginning,* inspired the textual base to Being Torah, teaches, "The Bible was meant to be read
out loud." While you may have students preview a text by reading it alone or in small groups, looking for a particular item or pattern, your formal lesson should begin with a collective reading of the text. You can do this lots of ways:

A. The teacher can read it dramatically. B. Students can read it sequentially. C. Parts can be given out. Almost every story has two or three parts and a narrator. D. Choral readings. E. A "Greek Chorus" can echo key words or phrases. F. Reading and pantomime, puppetry, artwork, etc. can go together. G. Read the story out loud (and don’t let students follow along). Ask them to write down the words or phrases that strike them as the most important or most powerful. H. Etc.

After this reading you will want to ask for questions/reactions/ideas, etc. It is important to leave time for the students to evolve their own sense of the text before you impose a lesson. This first reading is designed to both raise issues and identify clues. It is only the beginning of the lesson.

(3) The Close Reading. Here, students will carefully examine the way the Torah tells the story and search for the message and meanings that can be found. FINDING THE CLUES: Individually, in pairs or small clusters, students explore the text (for a second-time) and gather clues from which to work out their own solutions.

It is here that the Close-Looking should be applied This can be done in a number of ways:

A. All-class exploration. B. Small group work. C. Individual work. D. Homework. E. Combinations of the above.

This close reading should take place in two steps:

First the pattern or form should be identified. This is specific and concrete. It is answering questions like, "What is the theme-word of this story?" "How did Eve change what God said?," etc.

The second step involves looking for the meaning of these patterns. These are more abstract questions, like, "What is the Torah trying to teach us by using Abes name 7 times, Cain’s name 14 times, and the word brother 7 times?"

(4) MAKING MEANING: Analysis and Association. This phase begins when the class begins to go over the exercises. It is here that the specific patterns and clues found in the text are transformed into a meaningful
lesson. Here is, also, where your students should be encouraged to verbalize their own reactions to the story and to draw their own meanings from the story. Students need their own opportunity to decide on the solution which best meets their understanding of the text. With all of the clues amassed, students take time to write their own solution/comments. Students are not simply retracing old understandings, but making the text meaningful on their own-terms.

Then NETWORKING COMMENTS: Students now have the opportunity to share these solutions with their classmates. Saul Wachs has taught us that real Jewish learning takes place which each student values the opinions of his/her peers as well as the teacher. We "institutionalize" this process by building active listening to the comments of others into the commentary process.

(5). Evaluation.
As we have said, out of each text, we want students to draw two insights. Both of these should be reviewed and formally stated here.
   A. These are the messages, lessons, morals we learned from this story.
   B. This is what we learned about studying Torah from this story.

(6). Extension.
Thus far our study of a text has been cognitive (intellectual) and formalized. Here is the opportunity to personalize the experience. Arts, crafts, music, drama, writing, individual commentary, and the whole range of teaching tools can be used to evolve and expand the student's involvement with the characters and metaphors of the text.
C. Senior Class D'var Torah Project

At Milken HS in Los Angeles, each student in senior class prepares a Senior Sermon or Dvar Torah. One is selected to present his sermon at school-wide assembly. Already in 10-11th grade students practice giving a Dvar Torah.

See Raphael Zarum on Dvar Torah preparation in our resources for Tanakh teaching and in the Educators Guide of A Day Apart: Shabbat at Home.

This technique may also be used as a summary assignment for a Torah unit for producing a Dvar Torah requires a personal and normative response to the text.

Assignment:

☒ The D’var Torah should minimally be five minutes in length, and should not exceed seven minutes.

☒ When giving the D’var Torah there should be both a Hebrew and English reading of the text you are speaking about, and some use of commentary.

☒ The critical point is that you leave the students with a positive Jewish message on how to conduct their Jewish lives.

☒ You also want to leave them with your personal Jewish insight.
D. Beit Midrash-style Hevruta Study

Torah Quest Guide to Hevruta Study

by Reconstructionist Web Torah Quest  http://www.torahquest.org/

1. Your hevruta is your partner in studying the text.
   - The word hevruta comes from the same Hebrew root as haver/havera (friend) and havurah (friendship circle). Your hevruta is your study buddy.
   - Traditional Jewish text study is about exploring different aspects of a text and wrestling with (considering, responding to, arguing with, riffing on) both what you find in the text and what you and your hevruta have to add. In this wrestling process, you and your hevruta are creating something new with this text. If you include any other commentators in your studying (whether ancient or contemporary) they too become part of your conversation.
   - Usually, two people study together in hevruta. If necessary, you can use the same format in a group of three, but no larger.

2. Read the text aloud to each other. You'll probably want to take turns reading.

3. Read one line at a time. Before you go on to the next line, see if either of you has any ideas or questions that you might want to talk about.

4. Your job is to encounter the text together with your hevruta.

5. You and your hevruta together decide how much you read and what to focus your discussion on.

In studying the text, you and your hevruta might want to try one or more of the following ways of reading:

- As you read, write down every question you can come up with relating to what you are reading.
- Notice what you notice. What jumps out at you?
  - What is missing in the text?
  - What doesn't make sense?
  - What does the text teach?
  - What should the text teach?
- Read one line in Hebrew and then the same line in English (or read the English first and then the Hebrew).
- Have one person read it and the other(s) act it out. This is particularly useful if you're getting bored, confused or annoyed.
- Leyn it using Torah trop (if you know how).
E. The Bible Laboratory by B. Barry Levy

This article originally appeared in *Ten Da’at*, vol. 4, 1, 1989, pp. 30-32.

(abbreviated from Lookjed website)

It has long been unthinkable to teach science without laboratory facilities; in some places it is actually illegal. The laboratory, literally a "workplace", provides tangible and practical exposure to the real life situations about which the science student learns, and it offers opportunities to work and experiment with the techniques and theories that are taught - virtual impossibilities in traditional frontal settings. Language laboratory facilities became popular several decades ago for more or less the same reasons, as well as for their offering increased opportunities to individualize the learning, reviewing, and drilling processes. Even more universal use of laboratory facilities for teaching computer related skills. A typing, programming or word-processing course taught without adequate hands-on experience would be considered a farce.

The university model of science education, the availability of vast financial resources, and strong commitment to the value of laboratory-type education thus have enabled many courses to benefit from this type of arrangement. It is self-evident, however, that Jewish studies have not shared broadly in this development. A few schools have invested in some language laboratory equipment for the teaching of Hebrew; plays, performances and shows serve to teach dramatics; daily services offer opportunities for practicing synagogue skills; and socio-dramas sometimes find a place in the teaching of ethics. But we are far from the day when every *beit midrash* will be equipped with an adequate library, much less a computer hook-up to the Bar Ilan University Responsa Project. And most classes in which texts are taught, and which focus almost exclusively on the text, lack even the requisite dictionaries, atlases, and reference books. The school that proudly offers access to one reserve copy of each volume (and perhaps a photocopier) in its small and overcrowded library thereby demonstrating its superiority to many sister institutions access in which even this level of access is unavailable - should perhaps imagine the science course in which one test tube, or one microscope, or one piece of litmus paper, or one computer is made to suffice for a class of twenty-five or thirty budding scientists.

The Laboratory is a Special Place

No one can mistake a biology lab for anything else. It is decorated with scientific equipment; its walls are covered with pictures and drawings; it is stocked with specimens of all sorts; it even has a distinctive smell. A well-equipped lab intoxicates the students with the many new and challenging -and, above all else, interesting- things it thrusts upon them. One may attend biology classes in any room in the school, but, for obvious reasons, administrators often schedule as many as possible in the lab. The Bible, on the other hand, is taught wherever convenient. Who has ever seen a special Bible room that dazzles the students who merely open the door, creating an enticing environment that is exclusive and absorbing?
Let every school stake a claim on one large, well-lit classroom that will become the Bible Lab, where all Bible classes and only Bible classes will be taught; which will be decorated with Bible motifs and equipped with multiple copies of the various tools that Bible students must learn to use; and which will become the hangout for the school’s Bible aficionados. Such a facility will need the following types of resources:

1. **Furniture and Equipment:**

Regular desks and chairs may suffice, but appropriate tables for group work are recommended. A locked storage closet, secure glass cases for displays and a sizeable library, are also important.

Walls should be covered with carefully mounted charts of Biblical chronology- perhaps a timeline; lists of Biblical books, kings, and weekly Torah readings; posters depicting the evolution of the Hebrew alphabet and recreations of Biblical scenes on Israeli stamps or by well known artists (their accuracy or lack thereof must be discussed as part of the program); and reproductions of illuminated manuscripts. These should be changed throughout the year, as should the displays of quotations and sayings culled from the Bible, and bulletin board collections of relevant newspaper and magazine articles.

Adequate space must be left for maps of the ancient Near East and Israel, which should be readable from every corner of the room and mounted on rollers so they can be closed when not in use. This will save valuable space, protect the maps, and enable the teacher to test student mastery of the information contained in them.

2. **Work Centers:**

Every student must bring to the lab a copy of the Bible in a format large enough to read easily, (the three-volume Mossad HaRav Kook edition of the Bible without commentaries is recommended), as well as a copy of the specific Biblical text and commentaries used in this particular class (for Genesis and Exodus, *Torat Hayyim*, above publisher, is the most easily read edition). In addition, every work center for two students should be equipped with a complete *Mikraot Gedolot*, Biblical atlas (*The MacMillan Bible Atlas*, a translation of *Atlas Carta*, is one of the best), complete concordance (there are advantages and disadvantages to the editions of Mandelkern and Even Shoshan, but they are the best), dictionary of Biblical Hebrew, Ben David’s *Makbilot BaMikra* and a copy of both Pritchard’s *The Ancient Near East* (an anthology of ancient texts and pictures that relate to the Bible) and possibly the new Jewish Publication Society translation of the Bible. These books cannot be left unattended on the lab tables, so each set must be mounted in a portable carrying case that can be collected, checked, and locked in the supply closet in minimal time at the end of each class.

3. **Reference Works:**

In addition to the above, the lab must be equipped with a selection of the reference works, commentaries, halakhic codes, *midrashim*, histories and other books that students should learn to use in Bible classes, including (in no special order): Mishna, Babylonian Talmud; 
*Encyclopedia Mikrait*, Rabbi Baruch Halevi Epstein’s *Torah Temimah* and *Tosefet Berakha* (of
great pedagogic value if used properly); L. Ginsberg’s *Legends of the Jews*, and M. S. Segal’s *Mavo HaMikra*. At least one copy of the Jastrow Dictionary and Mazar’s picture commentary *Views of the Biblical World*, as well as subscriptions to popular journals of Biblical and archaeological interest should be available.

The laboratory library must also contain a selection of other important commentaries and *midrashim*, most in Hebrew, some in English, and a few in both languages. There is literally no limit to the volumes that can be included in this category, but it is important to choose authors and editions carefully. Among the contemporary contributions should be a set of *Da’at Mikra* and as many of Nechama Leibowitz’ publications as can be obtained, including her legendary question sheets.

The collection should also have a selection of halakhic works, including the full *Shulhan Arukh* with commentaries, Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah*, and the *Mishnah Berurah*; and a selection of books on such topics as Biblical poetry, prophecy, history, law and narrative: a copy of *Sefer HaHinukh*, perhaps one for each work center, to be used in Humash classes; and Levine’s picture book *Melekhet HaMishkan*. Also useful are copies of various Bible curricula, teacher guides for specific parts of the Bible, and quiz books of Biblical interest, together with a file of materials related to the annual Bible contests held here and in Israel.

4. Supplementary Equipment:

The lab should have audio-visual facilities— a large screen, slide and movie projectors, video equipment, tape recorders, and a supply of appropriate materials, including a library of music on Biblical themes or related to Bible texts and full samples of all cantillation systems. The equipment may be shared with other departments, but the tapes and slides should be kept in the Bible Lab.

5. Reproduction of Ancient Artifacts:

Archaeological discoveries have enriched our understanding of ancient realia in many ways, and reproduction of many ancient texts and objects can be purchased relatively inexpensively. One can talk for an entire year about the Pharaoh who enslaved the Hebrews (and his identity remains uncertain) but a study of the buildings in which he lived or the artifacts left by his people (or even and embalmed mummy) livens the story in ways that text study cannot hope to match. Purim invariably includes an explanation of the word pur, and an awareness that the actual way in which Haman cast the lots remains unclear. Show students a model of an authentic puru (actually from several centuries before the time of Esther but possibly similar to those mentioned in the story), and this aspect of the story is clarified. Similarly, one may teach about Sennacherib’s invasion of Jerusalem (recounted in Isaiah, Kings, and Chronicles) using only the Biblical texts; include the version of the story in Sennacherib’s Annals, and the story will be remembered as a highlight of the course.

The principles of archeology, so important in all attempts to reconstruct the ancient past, can be demonstrated with a sandbox, though it is not necessary to maintain one for only this purpose. In addition, at least one company sells imitations of old broken jugs and pots that students can piece together to reconstruct a model of ancient ceramic utensils, thereby
experiencing the excitement and task of the archaeologist (of course, they can make their own, too). One could run a simulated archaeological dig by mixing the fragments of several pots (including one modern flower pot), some text fragments, and other items in the sand and reconstruct them to determine what can be learned about the society that produced them.³

6. Laboratory Manuals:

In order to conduct "experiments" following the laboratory model, the teacher must have manuals for use at the different levels. On the high school level, much of Nechama Leibowitz' material is suited to this purpose, especially her question sheets and the questions that appear in her various publications; other models are also appropriate. Using a simple format of Goal, Procedure, Observations and Conclusions, one can design brief (one or two hour) lab projects that follow scientific method and introduce students to the problem-solving strategies of Biblical studies. Individual lessons in these manuals should develop themes taken from the texts and never consist of series of factual questions based on them. Rather, in formulating them, the operative principle is that one not be able to answer any question without correctly answering all previous questions in the series. Thus the end result will contain developed concepts about the Bible, not mere information extracted from it. Initial definition of the problem, followed by a careful list of procedures (prepared by the teacher, perhaps in consultation with the class) would help students learn to define their questions and develop approaches to finding the answer. It would also direct teacher and student efforts away from the all too popular spoon feeding/memorization pattern of Bible teaching and expose the field as the exciting, stimulating and enjoyable endeavor it really is.
F. Tanakh Curriculum as Constructivist Learning
by Steve Lorch, Head master of Manhattan SSDS
summarized by Noam Zion

Principles:

1. **Pre-reading activities** where students presented 5-8 phrases from Biblical story they are about to read, and then they must extrapolate and predict what it will be about. So student comes to text with a hypothesis, a prior image or scaffold against which to measure new information by a discovery method. Intuitions precede decoding.

2. **Schematic review of the whole chapter laid out in paragraphs etc** and then return to focus on subgroups of three or four verses. The approach emphasizes "Whole to Parts and Back again", thus meaning is a dialectic of part and whole as in New Criticism approach of Nehama Leibovitch. Finally one returns to verse by verse analysis.

3. **The text is presented by teacher's reading aloud with dramatic emphasis to demonstrate proper pronunciation and emphasis.**

4. **The text is never decoded for the student through translation into English.** Rather students decode or decipher using tools: footnotes/glossary / dictionary/close guide line questions / concordance to achieve pshat. However **bridging chapters** between one closely read section and the next are given in English.

5. **The art of exploratory questions:**

   A. **First Order Guideline questions (sh’ilot tochen)**
      a. Who? When Where? Answers require transposing from Biblical to modern Hebrew and back again
      b. Either/or - Is it this or that?
      c. High light in yellow all God’s statements, in blue all main character’s comments to mark out dialogue etc
      d. highlight all leitworter - milah manha. What stories are echoed for you from this word, phrase or this plot structure?
      e. **Identify the root** / shoresh
      f. identify parallel phrases or synonyms

   B. **Second Order Questions** –
      Analytical ("Mah atah choshev"):  
      a. What is missing? Why is this missing?  
      b. What do you think? Compare and contrast two stories.  
      c. Why did the character behave this way and not another? Why did the Torah express it this way rather than that way?

   Imaginative:
d. **Empathy:** Imagine you were such and such in this situation. What would you feel? What options would you have?

e.  **"What if?"** What would you think if the ending had turned out differently?

6. **Jigsaw Collaborative Research.** The principle of different groups working on different sections of the perek, and then jigsawing, so that each student teaches three others what his group learned, and learns from each of the three other students what they learned in their own groups working on their section.

7. **Parshanim Workshop.** Make up your own shelot parshaniot.
The advanced students may categorize their kushiot in terms of categories of medieval commentators:
   a. leshon yetera = superfluous language;
   b. skipping essential information
   c. incompatible grammar - male / female, plural /singular.
   d. inconsistent details when an event is described or recalled or reported. Use chart to compare phrase by phrase.

Then offer answers to your own questions and then solicit added answers from group.
Examine great classical parshanim on same questions, so you develop a common sense of a shared parshanut project with Rashi etc.

In Manhattan SSDS the questions are submitted to the principal who then groups the students' questions and puts together his own source sheet with Rabbinic sources to explore the Jewish questions asked. That is returned to the students for further analysis to see if it fits their own intuitive answers.

8. **Grammar corners** taught in tidbits as it comes up like vav hahipuch and literary form corners explains features of style analysis, particularly for shirah - matching p’sukim to the elements of biblical poetic style that they exemplify.

9. **Summing up or Closure or Post-reading activities or culminating projects** help students process their learning again. For example, a story graph (also called a mood graph) in which they trace the evolution of different characters’ emotional states from scene to scene in a narrative; and rewriting the story with one of the underlying assumptions modified. (This is in lieu of other kinds of more convergent types of summarizing activities, such as tests.)

**For Greater Enrichment:** Manhattan SSDS uses other large scale constructivist strategies which may be adapted for Jewish Studies Teaching:

**Exhibition Education:**
Once a year the class takes on large group project where individual students or chevuta take a particular aspect. Then on exhibition night the parents and students and older siblings come to hear an oral presentation of the results together with visual aids and charts. Two levels of feedback are solicited: first
warm, fuzzy supportive comments (like that was very clear, very intriguing chart etc) and second, challenging critical questions like how does your theory meet a particular objection, why did you choose not to explore such and such which seems relevant to your thesis. Then the students oral defense in response the challenging questions, as if it were a dissertation defense.

For example, exhibitions are associated with the B'nei Mitzvah program: in 6th grade the Bein Adam Lamakom project and in 8th grade the "exit exhibition" - a piece that captures their Jewish identity and traces strands of it back through formative learning experiences, and also articulates remaining challenges.

Writing Workshop and Publication (based on NY Teacher's College). Here student writes up several responses to what has been learned under several genres (fiction, nonfiction, newspaper article, essay, dialogue etc). Then choose one writing piece to refine and to publish. Submit it to jury of teachers/students and then prepare cover, picture, title etc. Present to students/parents/teachers out loud and respond to comments and questions.

For example, a publishing party in 7th grade for their Divrei Torah, is used in connection with B'nei Mitzvah.

Coverage and Depth. The Tanakh curriculum is designed to go into to depth with paradigmatic texts, not to cover the field. Hence choices must be made in disciplined fashion. One approach is to teach thematic unit (e.g., Ha'adam Mahu, or Eretz Yisrae) traced through Tanach, including Chumash (both narrative and legal sources), Navi (usually n'vi'im acharonim), and K'tuvim (usually T'hilim). At the end of each perek in the unit, kids write a paragraph inferring what the perek teaches us about the overarching theme.

POST MODERN Strategies: Some of the prereading, reading, and postreading strategies we’ve adopted are drawn from a new model of teaching reading (which I learned from Bonnie Botel-Sheppard at Penn), known as Transacting with Text. The theory is postmodernist, namely that the text is indeterminate unless readers interact with it, and through their interaction with text, they infuse it with meaning. On this theory, there are as many different texts with their own meaning and significance as there are readers.
G. Havruta Study: History, Benefits, and Enhancements
by Aliza Segal
(published as pamphlet by ATID)

Observe two people studying Torah together as haurutot, study partners. This is the lifeblood of Jewish learning, the backbone of Torah study as we know it. ...How may educators best utilize havruta time? To do so, we need to reflect upon the implicit goals and intrinsic benefits of havruta study, as well as why our institutions have adopted this structure in the first place.

Yeshivat Volozhin implemented new pedagogical techniques. One scholar's list of Lithuanian innovations includes haburot, group study in which students present material to each other in a model of independence and interdependence; close contact between the Rosh Yeshivah and the students in both academic and personal realms; and "study in pairs - with a havruta - which gradually eliminates the need for a rav in order to fully understand the talmudic text."

Cognitive Benefits

Conventional wisdom regarding the cognitive goals and benefits of learning with a partner may be expressed in the words of the Talmud: "Two scholars sharpen each other in [matters of] halakhah" (Ta'anit 7a; Shabbat 63a). Two heads are better than one. A student learns better by serving as a resource to peers, and by being guided by a peer.

There is also a general sense that the act of reading aloud, occasioned by but not limited to havruta study, aids in retention of material.

A third cognitive benefit of havruta study - and of beit midrash time in general - is the practice and application of textual skills. The adage "Give a person a fish and you have fed him for a day; teach him to fish, and you have fed him for a lifetime" applies well to Torah study. The degree that a particular institution views as a goal the "teaching of fishing," such as the acquisition of textual skills, may be expected to correlate with the amount of time that its students spend in the beit midrash.

Affective Benefits

There are also several affective benefits of the experience of learning with a havruta in a beit midrash. A few of these may be described as religious or spiritual. For example, the very process of Torah study has intrinsic worth. The sense that one is surrounded by books and can easily access them is a comforting thing. Hearing the sounds of the beit midrash impacts upon a person’s being. Thus in an institution which aspires to mold and inspire a religious personality, a beit midrash-centered program may be the optimal way to learn.

Creativity can be another positive aspect of the havruta system. Lithuanian yeshivot aimed to promote independence, critical thought, and creativity. The student needed to innovate, to contribute to the process of Torah study. Previously, when the goal had been to produce community rabbis who would take on the mantle of halakhic authority, it was crucial to cover material and to know the halakhic codes; it is for such a personality that "the books are our
However, when the goal became Torah lishmah (Torah study for its own sake), the learning process itself became far more important than the ultimate attainment of knowledge. At this point all the students needed to feel that they were indeed a part of this process, and that they and the Torah that they studied were integrally linked as part of an ongoing and developing chain.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik prescribes this creative aspect as part of a description of the Brisker method: "The Torah study of [the Brisker] school must be authentic, original, bearing the impression of the noetic creation of the thinker. The purpose of study is the conquest of content and new ideas. He must cast his novellae in his own [original] forms, impressing his own thought upon them."

It is under the influence of this and related schools of Torah learning that the havruta method became desirable, ensuring greater involvement for a broader range of students. Yeshivot for the elite had had no room for hurutot; each student needed to achieve on his own, without a stronger student supporting a weaker one. The havruta method may have begun as a means for weaker students to get help." World War I was a turning point, because it was following the war that Torah study became standard for every man in the observant community as yeshivot parted from the elitist tradition.

If the act of reading aloud has such a tremendous impact, it is unthinkable to leave the teaching to the teacher. Reading aloud accompanied by contemplating, analyzing, formulating, and discussing can only serve to enhance the experience of Torah study, as well as the student’s connection with it. It is the havruta format which, when properly implemented, can reap these benefits for maximal spiritual, emotional, and intellectual impact and growth.

**Social Benefits**

There are also practical social benefits which may result from, or may even motivate, the use of the havruta model in many of today’s yeshivot.

First, havruta learning may be described as a "discipline of order." It is difficult for students to sit and study alone for extended periods of time, and it is also unreasonable to expect them to attend classes and lectures from morning to evening. The havruta model helps students meet these demands through its peer interaction. The awareness that one’s havruta is waiting can serve as positive peer pressure to attend, to stay in the beit midrash, to stay awake, and to perform.

Second, there may be a social benefit even in the "down time" in which hurutot are not learning. This is commonly condemned as batalah, timewasting. However, before people can be taught to fish, they must first understand that it is good to eat fish, and then they must internalize that they too can learn to fish. So too, the peer interaction of hurutot may foster the personal internalization of what Torah study is all about. Sometimes this "productive batalah" is the setting for personal breakthroughs in the realms of spiritual development and commitment to halakhah, which are among the goals of yeshivot. This is certainly the case in yeshivot which cater to entry-level adult Torah study, where in fact the students may spend the majority of havruta time not directly learning the text at hand, but rather discussing its lifestyle-changing implications.
Cooperative Learning as an Educational Model

Researchers in the field of general education have studied the idea of students learning together in pairs or groups, and such a system, called cooperative learning, has been successfully implemented in many schools. In fact, in my experience teaching in the United States, the teachers were strongly encouraged to adopt any and all such methodologies. If these could be adapted to fit the havruta format, I reasoned, Torah study could be enhanced through methods established in general education.

Cooperative learning was developed by Morton Deutsch starting in 1949, and has been gaining in popularity since the 1980s. The cooperative classroom is a setting in which "students learn that they can count on their classmates to help when they need help, listen when they have something to contribute and celebrate their accomplishments. Instead of seeing the teacher as the major resource, students in cooperative classrooms come to view their peers as important and valuable sources of knowledge."

Several cooperative learning exercises exemplify the system, although the teacher is not bound to any of them. One suggested method is "KWL Columns," in which the teacher announces a topic and then the students, in small groups, fill in columns K and W "What I know about x" and "What I would like to learn about x." They mark which items in the K column have group consensus, and they discuss their entries in the W column as well. During the subsequent lessons on the topic, the students fill in their L columns, "What I have learned about x." Then they return to groups and spend a few minutes comparing each other’s L columns, and also comparing their own L columns with their K columns. In addition to stimulating student interest in the topic, the K and W columns can provide useful feedback to the teacher in terms of how to present the lessons.

Another suggested method is called "Pick Your Spot." The teacher asks a question and offers a number of opinions from which students can select. There are pre-selected spots in the room for each opinion, and the students form a group on each spot based on their choices. Students in each group try to generate as many reasons as possible to support their position. One student presents each group’s conclusions to the whole class, and all of the students are given the opportunity to switch groups and to explain which argument was the most persuasive. This structure allows students to adopt positions and discuss them with classmates who share those positions.

In addition to these content-based methods, cooperative learning uses other methods to teach social skills. These methods include the "Label Ladder," which features traits such as "use quiet voices" and "say encouraging words," and charts to identify the visual and verbal characteristics associated with skills such as "getting into our groups quickly and quietly" and "listening."

Cooperative learning lends itself to comparison with havruta learning because both are methods in which students work independently in small groups. ...I would start by comparing the structures of the two systems:

Haurutot learn in pairs; cooperative learners study in a group of two to five members.
The seder in a yeshivah is generally separate from the shiur; cooperative learning is integrated into the classroom environment.

One definition of cooperative learning is "a generic term for various small group interactive instructional procedures." Its methods share the following five characteristics:

1. Students work together on common tasks or learning activities that are best handled through group work.
2. Students work together in small groups containing two to five members.
3. Students use cooperative, pro-social behavior to accomplish their common tasks or learning activities.
4. Students are positively interdependent. Activities are structured so that students need each other to accomplish their common tasks or learning activities.
5. Students are individually accountable or responsible for their work or learning.

What, then, are the perceived benefits of cooperative learning?

1. providing a shared set of cognitive information between students,
2. motivating students to learn the material,
3. ensuring that students construct their own knowledge, 4. providing formative feedback,
5. developing social and group skills that are necessary for success outside the classroom,
6. promoting positive social interaction between different cultural and socio-economic groups.

These benefits fall into three categories: the purely social, the purely cognitive, and those which are a mixture of the two. The social skills which cooperative learning teaches: listening to others, taking turns, contributing ideas, explaining oneself clearly, encouraging others, and criticizing ideas and not people.

Let us turn now to the possible cognitive benefits of cooperative learning. There are several reasons why cooperative learning is more effective than the standard classroom's competitive approach for promoting students' cognitive growth.

The first benefit is "oral rehearsal." People more effectively refine and express their thoughts when they talk about what they are thinking. This benefit, which I discussed above in the context of Jewish tradition, is shared by cooperative learning and havruta learning, and is intrinsic to both systems.

Another cognitive advantage of cooperative learning is "time-on-task," keeping students more focused on the activity at hand than either whole class instruction or individual work can.

The third cognitive benefit of cooperative learning is the promotion of controversy. Being confronted with the ideas of others, and needing to present and explain one's own ideas to peers, can help one refine and clarify his or her thoughts and convictions. Controversy is an important factor in learning and development, but as with oral rehearsal; it is inherent in the havruta system.
The final cognitive benefit is that while whole-class discussions tend to involve the lower order thinking skills of knowledge and comprehension, cooperative learning encourages the higher order thinking skills of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The independence and creativity cultivated in the Lithuanian yeshivot is in some ways akin to the higher order thinking skills of the contemporary classroom.

The Cognitive Approach as an Educational Model

Cooperative learning is not the only educational method to foster higher order thinking skills. Championed since the 1970s, the cognitive approach views the teacher as a facilitator, enabling the students to grow and achieve. The goal is to teach skillful thinking and learning.

A model called the "three-story intellect" refers to three levels of thinking. The first level is that of input. The tasks at this stage are associated with knowledge and comprehension, and include describing, identifying, completing, listing, counting, matching, and naming. This class of thinking skills is a necessary prerequisite to but does not in itself constitute the demonstration of higher order thinking.

The second story of the three-story intellect is process. The tasks at this stage relate to analysis, and among them are comparing, contrasting, classifying, sorting, distinguishing, explaining, and inferring. Many educational encounters focus on this level, but it is still not indicative of the mental habits of people who tend to show higher levels of thinking.

The highest levels of thinking appear in activities found at the third story, output. These include evaluating, generalizing, imagining, gauging, predicting, and speculating. By asking questions and giving assignments that involve these skills, teachers can help students develop as better thinkers and learners.

A central component of the cognitive method is metacognition, or thinking about thinking. This awareness of one's own learning process begins in the planning stage, when a person maps out the steps to accomplish a task. In the next phase, monitoring, he or she focuses on both process and content of the task. Finally, when the task is completed, the person reflects consciously on it. This metacognition can help one become a better learner. For example, one can learn to recognize and overcome one's own faulty thinking. This includes thinking which is hasty, narrow, scattered, or fuzzy.

The conventional form of assessment, or evaluation, involves a teacher summarizing the students' progress to date. In contrast, the cognitive method declares that assessment should not be summative but formative, to help students understand where they are headed, rather than to reflect upon where they have been. Students should be capable of self-evaluation even years after they have left school. Accordingly, assessment may be done by each student as well as by his or her peers, in addition to the teacher.

The cognitive approach involves small group, whole group, and individual encounters with the material, and most of the learning is not teacher-centered. The methods, such as flowcharts, thought maps, and brainstorming activities, vary with the material and the setting. In
havruta learning, though, the setting is a given: the small group construct. Thus the possible impact of the cognitive approach upon the havruta system may be exemplified through the enhancement of skills which are particular to the small group, or havruta-based, educational setting.

One area for potential impact is that of time management skills, learning how best to apportion the allotted time for a task. Another is the disposition for creating strategy, the link between sitting down to learn and learning well. Related to the metacognitive focus described above, this involves pretextual learning discussion. Finally, there are skills intrinsic to the learning process whose significance is magnified in the havruta setting.
Appendix: Hevruta Project Philosophy
Developed by Maya Bernstein & Rabbi Benay Lappe
Written by Maya Bernstein

Hevruta Project
Building ethical communities and inspiring innovative leadership through
a unique and transformative Jewish approach to text study

- How do you create communities in which individuals interact ethically?
- How do you enhance individual and communal understandings of leadership, and affect the ability to mobilize group resources to affect positive change and growth within communities?
- How does this connect to Jewish text and text-study?

Below is a synopsis of the philosophy behind the workshops the Hevruta Project offers:

- It is less effective for individuals to be told to act ethically, than for them to act ethically of their own volition
- In order for individuals to naturally act ethically, they need to have certain "lightening bolts" of understanding -
  - We are all interconnected
  - Nobody has full access to the truth; we all have a limited piece of it
  - We are interdependent; I need you, and you need me
  - We particularly need those who are most different from us, and who challenge us most
- These "lightening bolts" of comprehension, which lead to ethical behavior, can be facilitated by the hevruta method of paired learning, a unique approach to text study
- This type of learning, and the behavior and state of mind that result from it, can be best facilitated by a certain type of learning environment, in which -
  - Teachers are learners, and do not have everything 'figured out'
  - Students are teachers, and are responsible for the success of their learning environment and the facilitation of its goals
  - Materials and texts are dense, complex, multi-faceted
  - The broader school environment (administration) encourages this type of learning environment

The workshops all function with this philosophy (iterated in more extensive detail below) in mind, and strive to provide educational and organizational communities with the tools to build stronger communities with innovative approaches to leadership.
Elements of Mission

I. **Purpose:** To Establish an Ethical Environment in Schools & Organizations

II. **Discernments:** The 'lightening bolts' of awareness that will organically affect the ethical behavior and awareness of interconnectedness of individuals a community

III. **Methodology:** *Hevruta*, which enables discernments

IV. **Philosophy of Pedagogy:** An approach to education that allows for *Hevruta* to enable discernments

**Purpose**

According to the philosophy of the Hevruta Project, an ethical environment is one in which each individual treats his or her self, and all others, as *Fully Human*. This term connotes a combination of different factors: humility; awareness of individual responsibility and value as well as individual limitations; a sense that we are all interconnected in a profound way (in Jewish thinking, God is in this picture of *Fully Human* - we are fully human only when we recognize that we are all created in the "image of God"); a sense that things are complex, and we cannot figure them out alone.

The hope is that if individuals in a community have this understanding of what it means to be *Fully Human*, they will interact with one another in a way that is organically ethical; once you recognize your own and others' full humanity, you will naturally talk to them in a certain way, behave towards them in a certain way, relate to them in a certain way, etc.

The question is: how do you foster that profound understanding within communities?

When ethical behavior is an outgrowth of insight, it is genuine, effective, and longer-lasting.

Rather than trying to teach ethical behavior, the Hevruta Project seeks to generate insights, which will hopefully lead to stronger ethical communities.

**Discernments**

In order for individuals in a community to treat one another as *Fully Human*, they need to experience profound understanding about themselves and others -understandings that Ian Ramsey, as defined in his work *Religious Language*, coins "discernments."

He defines a "discernment" as "an experience in which there is, in a flash, or as a result of cumulative factors, a breakthrough in understanding... something that was not known to us, even if we knew a great deal about it, suddenly becomes clear."

These 'lightening bolts' of understanding, which compose the notion of being *Fully Human*, include the following ideas:

- **The Law of Partial Truths:** I need you, and you need me. Nobody has a complete understanding of any idea. No matter how astute one is, one is always limited. We
depend on others to move towards a more complete understanding of "truth." We each hold a kernel of profound insight. There are infinite possible interactions with others that may move us closer towards understanding. It is particularly those interactions that seem to challenge us most, and that may even seem to threaten us, that have the potential to be the most illuminating.

- **Nothing is Simple**: When first confronting an issue, it can appear to be 'black or white.' This particular discernment illuminates the fact that everything, even the most glaringly simple issue, has shades of grey, which "must give us pause."
- **We Make Meaning**: Each individual has the authority to create meaning, to challenge an idea, to share a new insight. This is a tremendous responsibility, and can be quite complex in a community in which people have very different ideas. But the notion of individual value, potential, and responsibility is a critical one in building ethical environments.

**Methodology**

How do you create the lightening storm necessary for the above-mentioned discernments?

The Hevruta Project employs a unique approach to the traditional Jewish method of paired learning, *Hevruta*, as an organic trigger for these types of profound understandings of self and other. The *Hevruta* method is an encounter. It is a traditional Jewish method of study that depends upon two people grappling together with text and the essential ideas and issues the text represents. The text is a trigger for a more profound understanding of self and life. Each person is responsible for his/her partner's learning; it's a mutual endeavor.

This idea embodies the notion that:

*The Jewish approach to text and to studying text (the Hevruta method of paired learning) is a model for an approach to people, one which helps to facilitate the formation of ethical community*

Jews across denominations are still in constant dialogue with the Hebrew Bible, the Torah, and continue to see the source of their practice and religion based in this central text even though the majority of Jews are not living according to the structures and dictums of this text, and even though the majority of Jews take issue with much of the text. This reveals the following:

a. Individuals create meaning
b. Individuals have the responsibility and authority to create/discern out of text something to further the goals of the broader text and its context
c. Individuals can tell new stories *with the same text*, staying in conversation with the text, seeking and finding possibility and potential

d. Things are complex and multi-faceted

The Jewish approach to Torah, and by extension to all text study, is to say the following: even though there are parts of you that no longer apply to my life, parts that are outdated, parts that are impossible to observe because of historical reality, parts even that hurt me, that I
profoundly disagree with, you are 'in the image of God,' and I will always see value and potential in you.

When these ideas are employed with regard to text, they are organically translated into an approach towards interactions with other human beings - we stay in conversation, seeing new possibility and potential even with those people with whom we think there is no potential or possibility. We say to human beings: even though there are parts of you that seem completely 'other,' parts that I disagree with profoundly, parts even that hurt me, I relate to you as if you are in 'in the image of God,' interconnected to me, and infinitely valuable.

This approach to text and to people creates a visceral understanding of interconnectedness, awareness of complexity, and humility, all of which organically foster ethical community.

**Philosophy of Pedagogy**

In order for hevruta to achieve its purpose of triggering discernments, a certain philosophy of education is necessary, one which challenges traditional methods of thinking about schools, teachers, students, and curriculum.

Hevruta - as a methodology that leads to discernments – cannot be choreographed. An authentic environment must be fostered. The following approach to pedagogy is meant to enable teachers to use the Hevruta method and tailor it to their needs within the context of the attempt to establish an ethical learning environment.

There are four factors involved in this philosophy:

- **Teacher**
- **Student**
- **Materials**
- **School Community**

**Teacher/Student:** This approach breaks down the traditional notion of the teacher as one who has knowledge to impart, and the student as one who is unknowing and must absorb information. Instead, the teacher must be a learner, an active participant of “working things out,” and trying to make sense of whatever she is teaching. This cannot be affected; the teacher must genuinely be grappling with the material she is teaching, and make that transparent to the students. In addition, the student must be perceived by the teacher, and must perceive herself, as an active participant in this process, and as one who has the authority and responsibility to make valued contributions in the classroom. This does not mean that a teacher can never share his or her perspective, or that a teacher can never teach “fact.” It is more about a general philosophy to teaching, and a general approach to students and the classroom environment.

**Materials:** The ideal materials for use in a Hevruta environment are opaque, contradictory, multi-layered, and complex. Ideally, they should foster a “Yes, And” attitude – in which one student reads the text in one way, and another in a totally different way, and both ways are valid readings of the text.

**School Community:** In order for teachers to have the time and authority to create the kind of classroom environment described above, there must be a school philosophy that supports this kind of learning. Administrators must have the same approach to their role, and to the role of their teachers, as their teachers to do their role, and to the role of their students. Administrators too must perceive their work as “in progress,” and must make the process transparent to their faculties, including and valuing teacher contributions to that process. They also must help create the structures necessary for teachers to build classroom communities in which ethical environments emerge, and they must create school-wide structures (forums, informal programming, assemblies, etc.) that support the work happening in classrooms. There must be patience for process, and there must be time to allow the process to flourish.
APPENDIX: Using Multiple Intelligences in the Bible classroom
by Resource Library (abbreviated from Lookjed website)

'Musical Intelligence:

Remarkably, musical intelligence emerges earliest in life. People with musical intelligence have an ability to "produce and appreciate rhythm, pitch, and timbre; [they have an] appreciation of musical expressiveness." Musicians translate their environment into tune and song. They think via rhythms and melodies. Composers constantly hear "'tones in their head' - that is, he is always, somewhere near the surface of his consciousness, hearing tones, rhythms, and larger musical patterns. While many of these patterns are worth little musically,...it is the composer's lot constantly to be monitoring and reworking these patterns."

These are students who love singing, whistling, humming, tapping their feet and hands, or their pens on their desks (a quick solution - tell them to pat their pens on their clothes instead). These kids can quickly create a tune for any statement, and try your patience with their constant defenses of "but I'm just humming" when asked to stop interrupting the class. They honestly don't realize they're disrupting and driving you nuts.

I had a 6th grade student (12 year old) who insisted on laining any verse he was asked to read. The class loved it; the girls would cheer when he was finished and the boys would correct him when necessary. I noted the increase in class participation and allowed him to continue. Other kids asked to lain as well. Despite my hesitation that class control would deteriorate, I let them, since class did not become as unruly as I had predicted.

I met with Composer Stephen Horenstein, of Jerusalem Fellows, who suggested that I create my own musical project. I chose a song. Being that my musical background consists of playing the guitar and violin for a month when I was 12, I was not looking forward to this. After procrastinating for a few weeks, I sat down to give it a plunge.

Stephen gave me the following guidelines for musical practices to compose the song, which helped.

Pulse/loudness Speed Pitch*
Loud Soft Fast Slow High
H Medium
M Slow
S
Accents / emphasis Source of song or words How to teach pitch to students

Which part of the word or sound to emphasize, using these symbols:
- like in laining. In our case, the Book of Samuel is the source. Use bodily movements, musical graphs and charts, or oral instruction.

*The concept for high-medium-low for learning and distinguishing musical pitch has been clearly presented in Paul Hindersmith’s Elementary Training for Musicians. This has been proven to be an effective method for teaching beginning musicians and children.

Divide the paragraphs into lines 1-2, sung by low and medium tones, and lines 3-4, to be sung with medium and higher tones. Teach each student in the given row their part. By the end, each row of students will sing their given line.

**Mathematical/ Logical Intelligence**

A logical-mathematical student shows strength in logical and deductive reasoning. "Like a painter or poet, a mathematician is a maker of patterns; but the special characteristics of mathematical patterns are that they are more likely to be permanent because they are made with ideas." He thinks logically and clearly through reasoning and can easily interpret numerical patterns.

Solving the unsolvable excites a mathematician. He excels at experimentation, logic puzzles, calculations. Your Logical - Mathematical students will try your patience with "wait - that doesn’t make sense" and insist on ample repetitions until the explanation satisfies his step by step mental process. "How does this work?" is a frequently asked question. If this is your child, you will see proficiency in math, computers, and other strategy games.

After completing Samuel 1:7, the class reviewed each city the Ark had rested since the beginning of the book, how the residents had treated it, and what happened to them as a result. We also discussed the significance of the unrest of the Ark and how that represented Jewish life at the time.

I asked the boys to create a visual display of the treatment of the Ark in each city, something that would show me "How was the Ark treated?" Gadi, a quiet, intelligent boy, approached me and handed me a chart. He had graphed the rise and fall of the holiness of the treatment of the Ark. He had incorporated the lesson plan of the previous day, including the names of the Philistine and Jewish cities, and how each had viewed the Ark.

**Spatial Intelligence and Bodily - Kinesthetic Intelligence.**

Spatial learners think in images and pictures. In order to learn, they need something to see, draw, or build. These students perceive the "visual world accurately...perform transformations and modifications upon...initial perceptions, and [are] able to re-create aspects of one’s visual experience, even in the absence of relevant physical stimuli." This is more colloquially known as 'artistic.' Between 30-35 percent of your students are visual
learners.

Spatially intelligent students thrive on involvement in visually stimulating activities, such as painting, drawing, puzzles, mazes, collages, flow charts and map drawings. Videos, slides and artwork are also appreciated by the spatial learner. A simpler way to stimulate a spatial learner is by using graphic symbols or visual organizers in the classroom. Attribute symbols to a topic or theme studied. If you are listing three items, draw a triangle and put one item in each corner.

Bodily-Kinesthetically gifted students can skillfully move, control and coordinate themselves and other objects. "They move their bodies through space with grace, strength and ease." Approximately 15-20 percent of students are learners who benefit mostly from tactile stimulation.

This is an unusual expression of intelligence in a classroom. At first, accepting skilled use of the body as a form of intelligence is difficult. Our culture does not value physical intelligence as much as mental intelligence. Kinesthetic Intelligence is considered "less privileged than problem-solving routines carried out chiefly through the use of language [and] logic...." Gardner quotes novelist Norman Mailer, who writes that "there are languages other than words, languages of symbol and languages of nature. There are languages of the body." If you connect a good ball player or a builder to a surgeon, then it is easier to respect this form of intelligence. These forms may be connected because they are all associated with receptor control, incredible timing, and keen fluency, claims British psychologist Sir Frederic Bartlett.

These students are top ball players, skilled pencil throwers and chair balancers. They excel at dance, acting and building models. They also can be the most difficult to interest and the most disruptive, because they learn through touching and moving, which, unfortunately, are not popular activities in the Tanakh classroom. The only place to which bodily-kinesthetic students usually move is the hallway or the principal’s office.

This assignment is a combination of a few lessons in Samuel 1:1-7. The goal is to create a visual display of i) the Philistine cities which appear frequently in Samuel. ii) the perception of the different reactions of the Jews and the Philistines to the Ark, based on simple text and additional commentaries.

The base is a map of Israel, with each flagged city noting the chronological order of the travels of the Ark. Each city is given a symbol to indicate how the Ark was treated or what happened to the people there. On the side of the map are textual verses on which I based the symbols. A model of the Ark lies on the map, ready to travel.
Introduction - Preparing a D’var
Torah at the Table: A Historical Perspective
Leading a Shabbat Table Talk

A Workshop: How to Prepare a D’var Torah by Raphael Zarum

A. Analysis:
Learning to analyze text and ask your own piercing questions

B. Elucidation from Commentators:
Learning from Great Thinkers of the Generations

Appendix: Recommended Commentaries for Beginners and Beyond

C. Development: Your Personal Input –
Learning to work with your own ideas and feelings about a text

D. Public Presentation: Talking Torah with other People

Appendix: Websites for Downloadable Torah

Kavanot: Hassidic Guidelines for a Humble D’var Torah

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1 Adapted from Derech HaTova vhaYeshara edited by Shalom Yosef Klein, originally 1926 and reprinted 5761, Jerusalem pages 56, 62
Introduction –

*Through study, God’s Torah becomes yours:*

“Happy is the person…who delights in the Torah of God; in due course they are involved in creating their own Torah, day and night.”

(Psalms 1:1)

“Everyone who lengthens their stay at the table – is granted length of days.”

“The point,” says Ron Wolfson, “is that a rich life of shared song, conversation and Torah adds to the vitality and perseverance of the family.”

Conversation around the table is a distinctive form of human culture that requires cultivation, skill and energy, good listening ability and provocative question asking, an openness to multiple points of view and encouragement of participation. A Dvar Torah is ideally not merely a mini-lecture on a Biblical or Rabbinic text but an opening ambit in an engaging collective exploration of a relevant problem arising from the text but circling back to our lives and dilemmas. Sometimes we ourselves have time to prepare in advance, sometimes we ask a more knowledgeable person to prepare a few words of wisdom and other times we pull out a book with short but pointed ideas (see the bibliography below) or we print out some ideas from the web and read them aloud opening them to discussion. In short you do not need to be an expert to give a "d'var" - a thing or word of Torah. This demands far less than a lecture or graduate school thesis or even a well-built sermon. It is a way to put a Jewish issue or story “on the table” to be carved up or garnished. The process created in these five minutes are as important as the content.

A young rabbi tells me nonetheless, that congregants are often very afraid to prepare and deliver a Dvar Torah. “Who am I to deliver words of wisdom about Torah? What a laugh for me to pass myself off as rabbi?” Thus they ask the same rhetorical question as Moshe at the burning bush even though the mission is much less daunting than leading the Exodus or impressing Pharaoh with ten plagues. She recommends over and over:

1. Pick one major idea – do NOT summarize the Torah reading and do NOT apologize at length for your inadequacy. Do NOT list all the ideas you decided NOT to deal with.
2. Explain why this idea speaks to you PERSONALLY.
3. Express your hope that this idea and this text might have wider impact on our thinking and acting.

Below you will find a brief description of the Rabbinic vision of a Torah table discussion as well as an idea of leading a Shabbat talk which is not text-based. Both models have their value and should be used as one see fit.

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2 TB Berachot 54b explained in The Shabbat Seder by Ron Wolfson (Jewish Lights).
In the body of this chapter Raphael Zarum delineates the steps in preparing a D'var Torah as well as the key resources including books and websites divided by categories.

**Torah at the Table: A Historical Perspective**

Like the Greek philosophers, the Rabbis of the Mishna saw in cultured conversation around the table a distinctive mark of human excellence. The table was turned into a place not only of the body but to nourish the spirit.

"Three who ate at one table— and talked about the Torah—are as if they had eaten at God's own table [at the altar] which the prophet Ezekiel called 'the table before God.'" (Avot 3:3; Ezekiel 41:22)

For them the narratives of the Torah, which were read weekly in the synagogue in a circular cycle, formed the basic themes of the Shabbat dinner discussion. On one hand the narrative provided a **dramatic parallel world** leading from the Creation to Abraham's call to sacrifice his son to Joseph's sale into Egyptian slavery by his brothers. Then followed the story of the Exodus, of the manna represented on the Shabbat table by the two hallot and of the Ten Commandments given on Mount Sinai including prominently the observance of Shabbat. Then came the laws and the wandering in the desert and finally the last speech of Moshe before his death at age 120 as he overlooks the promised land. Each Jew who follows this weekly cycle relives the great events—ups and downs of the Jewish project in its foundational era. Each Jew finds details of the Jewish experience—family and ritual—reflected in the original models of the Torah. Ask any moderately knowledgeable Jew what his Torah reading was at his or her birth and hence what was read and about a speech was made at his or her Bnai Mitzvah. Our personal lifecycle intersects our national story. In my case, the story of Jacob struggling with the angel was my childhood Bar Mitzvah reading and I feel a special connection to that story to this day.

However the Rabbis did not wish to leave us merely with emotional; empathy with the narrative but to make it the basis for three important community building goals:

1. "Three people who eat together but do not exchange words of Torah" are condemned (Pirkei Avot), while three who study together are graced with the Divine presence even though God has abandoned the Temple. Torah is a social exchange that creates a community and invites God's presence.

2. The nature of that exchange is not like a quiet meditation nor like an informative lecture. Rather it is meant to be a lively conversation with challenging questions and repartee. Someone proposes so another may sharpen their wit. Here Jews are educated to ask questions, to weigh things rationally and to defend their own opinions with arguments.

3. The content of the D'var Torah and the Torah discussion begins by revisiting a familiar narrative or law but it goal is to add one’s own personal Hidush— an innovative perspective. That interpretation—a derasha—is best when it connects something contemporary in our lives with the ancient words from Sinai. The privilege and the
duty to invent these new perspectives and to make the Torah speak to our times is not reserved for the learned but modeled by the learned for anyone partaking of the meal to imitate.

The Mishnaic Pirkei Avot, a collection of ethical sayings, warns that the common meal at the home altar, the table, must be sanctified by the discussion of Torah, otherwise it is as if the table has become an idolatrous altar used to sacrifice to the dead. "Any three who sit together at the table but do not discuss matters of Torah, it is as if they ate pagan sacrifices to the dead. However, if they do raise spiritual matters then it is as if their table were God’s own table, as the prophet Ezekiel said: “They spoke to me, this is the table before God.” (Ezekiel 41:22)

Although the warning from Pirkei Avot may seem somewhat severe, the idea that it introduces, about the importance of Torah discussion at the table, is worthy of serious consideration. The Shabbat table is often an excellent opportunity for members of the family to study and learn about various elements of Judaism, particularly the Torah portion, together.

Below we have brought a practical essay by Raphael Zarum, a PhD in physics and a wonderful Jewish educator who shows how anyone can tackle the text and learn to make his or her own points to start a Torah discussion. The rest of us at the table are expected not merely to listen respectfully to a topic about which we may know nothing, but to be inquisitive and if necessary critical – in a constructive and sociable way. The presenter must try to keep the presentation short and clear and to include in the discussion with an open question as many others as possible. Make sure to ask for their responses, not just their congratulations.

The changing nature of the Torah of the 54 parsha/portion Torah reading cycle and the need to update the contemporary allusions found in it make producing an interesting and useful book about Parshat Hashavua /the weekly portion, somewhat difficult. Therefore we recommend you take advantage of many styles of D’var Torah talks available by web. Below we offer a few suggested sites and books to get started.

**Leading a Shabbat Table Talk**

Shabbat table conversation need not be restricted to intellectual treatments of classical texts. Just sharing personal memories and dreams goes a long way to bonding among the guests and the members of the household. **Value clarification exercises, reading short stories especially hassidic ones, raising ethical dilemmas for discussion (such as those recounted in Joseph Telushkin’s many wonderful books) or just talk about the most significant event of the last week** serve to build shalom bayit - the social peace of the household. The Rabbis describe students of Torah as sharing all aspects of their lives together not merely their formal learning. That is their definition of friendship - of chevruta. ?? These discussions also allow guests to share.

Here are a just few topics of the many that might be raised:
A. **Remembering – zecher l’masei breshit**
Ask everyone to report on something they have done in their line of work, their contribution to the world God created in six days. Then again one might describe the worst aspect of their week - the activities that become drudgery and try to understand the difference between creative and fulfilling work and degrading or disheartening work. Or focus on leisure time and recall some of the best places of recreation or the most interesting Shabbat experiences one has shared. It is best to model this idea by going first in answering the question you pose. Allow people to pass or to chime in later, so no one will feel on the spot.

B. **Oneg Shabbat Dreamshop**
Imagine the best spots for Shabbat *menucha* / rest. Is a mountain top or a seashore better? A book or a game of tennis?

C. **Getting back in touch with the Creation – zecher l’masei breshit**
Describe a beautiful aspect of nature, take out nature books.

D. **In Memory of the Liberation from Exodus.**
Discuss an event in the last week concerned with liberation (women, persecuted Jews or other minorities, national struggles for independence and so on. Perhaps propose a toast to freedom fighters or raise dilemma where debate may be required.
How to Prepare a D'var Torah by Raphael Zarum

The study of Torah is the right of every Jew:
"The Jewish people were given three crowns:
the crown of Torah, the crown of priesthood and the crown of sovereignty.
The crown of priesthood was given to Aaron and his descendants...
The crown of sovereignty was given to David and his descendants...
But the crown of Torah is for every Jew.
Whoever desires may come and claim it...it is the greatest crown of all." (Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Laws of Learning Torah 3:1)

Introduction – The Four Step Method

Torah is central to Jewish life and the weekly Shabbat Torah reading in the Synagogue provides us with a framework for studying it. Not surprisingly, the most common form of Dvar Torah is a talk based on the Parasha, the weekly Torah portion. Rabbis eloquently pronounce them in Synagogue, community leaders often begin their meetings with them, and youth movement directors give them enthusiastically at camp. However, the Shabbat Table is the natural home of the Dvar Torah on the Parasha.

There are four essential steps to giving a traditional Dvar Torah: (1) analysis of a Torah text; (2) elucidation from commentators; (3) your own personal input; and (4) a well-organized presentation. Practical guidelines for working through the four steps are given below. These guidelines can be used by educators to prepare their own Dvar Torah or to plan a workshop where the skill of Dvar Torah preparation may be taught to others.

A. Analysis: Learning to analyze text and ask your own piercing questions

Basic method:
- **Read**: Read the text once in Hebrew (if you can) and then twice in English slowly.
- **Compare alternative translations**, since every translation is really an interpretation. In particular look at classic King James version, historical New Jewish Publication Society Tanakh, and literary Everett Fox, Schocken Bible: The Five Book of Moses.
- **Outline**: Work out what the text is basically talking about.
- **Spot**: Circle key words or phrases which are unusual, interesting or repeated.
- **Ask**: Starting with the eight below, ask as many questions as you can on the text.

Eight key questions that will help you to analyze and unpack a Torah text:

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3 Adapted from: Torah for Everyone Torah L’Am by Raphael Zarum, pages 88,98, 100,101
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Info@makor.org.uk
1. **Context**: What is the context (sefer, sidra, paragraph division, place and time) of the text?

2. **Characters**: Who are the central characters and in what ways are each of them involved?

3. **Structure**: What happens, step by step, in the text?

4. **God**: How is God involved in the text?

5. **Resolution**: How does the text end: what is questioned, learned or resolved?

6. **Alternatives**: How else could this be introduced, formulated and concluded?

7. **Laws**: What laws and rituals are derived here and how do they relate to the theme of the text?

8. **Principles**: What moral and ethical principles, values and lessons can be learned here?
B. Elucidation from Commentators:
Learning from Great Thinkers of the Generations

Introduction

Ben Bag Bag said about Torah - "Turn it over, turn it over, everything is contained within it." - (Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Sages 5:26)

For Jews it has never been enough simply to read the text once and express their opinion. Learning Torah is not just a chance to discover and express your own view; it is also a chance to share your thoughts on the same text with many generations of Jews and non-Jews similarly engaged in deciphering this sophisticated text in the light of their personal experience and their knowledge. Welcome to the conversation, help those listening to your D'var Torah to hear bits and pieces of earlier D'verei Torah through your mouth. That depth will give you a solid base on which to add your own insights and sometimes to clarify your dissent from earlier views.

Basic method

- After identifying your own questions in facing the text, begin to probe into both traditional and modern commentaries. They may explain things you did not understand and they may help you notice more problems with a text you thought was simple and straightforward. Commentaries are often equally interested in simplifying the complex and in making interesting what seemed superficial.
- Don’t worry if you find parts of a commentary too difficult. Skip over the hard part and try to grasp what you can; then go back to figure out the less clear points.
- Try to compare more than one commentator thus generating a discussion and uncovering the way even simple lines open up to multiple interpretations.
- People can be commentaries too: find somebody with whom to discuss the text.

Eight questions to help you read a Torah commentary:

1. Question: What is the question that the commentator is trying to answer?
2. Logic: In each case, what are the logical steps in the commentator’s reasoning?
3. Basis: On what kind of evidence (source, grammar, logic etc.) are their arguments based?
4. Problems: Do you see any problems with the commentator’s points?
5. Lesson: What kind of overall lessons is the commentator trying to teach?
6. Usefulness: Has this commentary answered any of your questions?
7. **Comparison:** How is this commentator different than others you may have read on the same point?

8. **Evaluation:** What do you think about this commentator - the pros and cons of this reading of the text? Is the value message of the commentator relevant to your world or does it arouse your strong dissent? Remember, in dialogue with the commentators we may learn as much from those who violate our sense of the text and of the Torah's values and from those who tell us what we want to hear. A word of caution: let the critical evaluation be the last stage of your learning, so that you listen sympathetically before becoming the arbiter of truth. Be judicious after studying rather than judgmental before delving into a position far from your own.
Recommended Commentaries for Beginners and Beyond
Prepared by Tim Bernard

Classical rabbinic:
Nehama Leibovitch, *Studies in Bereshit, Shemot, Vayikra, Bamidbar, Devarim*
Yaacov Culi, *The Torah Anthology (Meam Loez)*
Arthur Green, *The Language of Truth: The Torah Commentary of Sefat Emet*
Shelomoh Yosef Zevin, *A Treasury of Chassidic Tales: On the Torah*
Hayyim Nahman Bialik and Y.H. Ravitzky, *Book of Legends / Sefer Ha-Aggadah*
Art Scroll’s Sapirstein edition, ed. Yisrael Herczeg
Metsuda *Chumash with Rashi*, ed. Avrohom Davis

Modern rabbinic and scholarly line by line:
*The JPS Torah Commentary*, ed. N. Sarna, J. Milgrom, J. Tigay, B. Levene
Richard Elliott Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah*
*Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*, ed. David L. Lieber
*The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, ed. Joseph Hertz

Modern thematic:
Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis and Exploring Exodus* - historical
Bill Moyers, *Talking about Genesis* - literary and personal
Ellen Frankel, *Five Books Of Miriam: A Woman’s Commentary on the Torah* - feminist
Peter A. Pitzele, *Our Fathers’ Wells* - personal and psychological
*The Women’s Torah Commentary*, ed. Elyse Goldstein - feminist
Mattes Weinberg, *Frameworks* - spiritual

Innovative discussion guides for home use:
Aryeh Ben David, *Around the Shabbat Table*
Harvey Fields, *A Torah Commentary for Our Times*
Bradley Shavit Artson and Miriyam Glazer, *The Bedside Torah*
Stan Beiner, *Sedra Scenes: Skits for Every Torah Portion*
Learn Torah With (yearly annuals), ed. Joel Lurie Grishaver
Sharon Halper, *B’shivtekha B’veitekha— When You Sit in Your* (Torah Aura Productions)
*My Weekly Sidrah Melanie Berman & Joel Lurie Grishaver* (Torah Aura Productions)
*A Day in the Life of a Verse*, (Torah Aura Productions)
*Parsha Cards - A Game*, (Torah Aura Productions)
Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Torah Toons* (Torah Aura Productions)
Joel Lurie Grishaver, *I Can Learn Torah* (Torah Aura Productions)
Jane Golub and Joel Lurie Grishaver, *Zot ha-Torah* (Torah Aura Productions)
Sorel Goldberg and Barbara Binder Kadden, *Teaching Torah* (ARE)
Barbara Binder Kadden and Bruce Kadden, *Teaching Mitzvot* (ARE)
C. Development: Your Personal Input –

Learning to work with your own ideas and feelings about a text

Method

- See what ideas you yourself can learn and deduce from the text.
- Think how it might relate directly to you and your life.

Five questions to ask yourself when engaging with texts:

1. Interest: What most interests me about this text?
2. Feeling: What do I personally feel about the theme of this text?
3. Tradition: How do I make sense of the traditional commentary on this text?
4. Relevance: How does this text relate to me, my life, and the world today?
5. Living: How does this text inform and deepen Jewish practices?

A Life of Torah by Raphael Zarum

Year after year we read through the Torah again and again. On every circuit it means something different. The laws of honoring parents may be more important in our younger years. Our understanding and feeling for relationships grows as we do and in time we re-analyze all those family quarrels in the book of Bereshit (Genesis) with a knowing smile. In developing a career, the just and moral issues in the Torah mean more to us and as our need for spirituality grows, the holiness associated with the Mishkan (Tabernacle) makes much more of an impression. Different aspects of the festivals catch our attention each time we read about them, just as celebrating them each year is never the same. At times the words of Moshe to our stubborn ancestors appear harsh and at other times we feel that they are filled with care, concern and love. Our reading of these texts is heavily influenced by what is going on in our personal lives. I think this was always intended. As we change we see more sides to these classic stories and they help us see ourselves in a new light. In old age some of the richest and deepest thoughts of the Torah begin to truly touch us. The process takes a lifetime.
D. Public Presentation: Talking Torah with other People

Method
Share what you have learned by giving a Torah talk to other people in which you:
• help them to understand the text (Step A),
• use commentators to explain it (Step B) more clearly,
• and personalize it (Step C) for you and for them.

A basic seven-stage recipe for talking Torah:
(Remember: Choosing what to include and leave out is an essential part of structuring.)

1. Give the Background
   • Introduce your talk by putting the Torah text in context.
   • This means describing what’s just happened in the story, or who the main characters are or why you have chosen this piece of text. Basically whatever is useful/suitable.

2. Read the Torah
   • Read some or all of the Torah text you are talking about.
   • Whether you read out in English or Hebrew, hearing the Torah source is vital.
   • Always translate Hebrew.
   • Outline what you have chosen to focus on.

3. Ask your questions
   • Give details of what is unclear and ask your questions on the text.
   • Suggest what some of the possible options might be to answer your questions.
   • Be a little playful.

4. Explain some commentaries
   • Explain some answers you have found in the commentaries to your questions.
   • Say how satisfactory or conclusive you find them.
   • Make sure you understand a commentary before you criticize it.

5. Give your input
   • Introduce your thoughts on the issue.
   • Make sure you give adequate support to your arguments.
   • Talk about some of the personal relevance the text may have for you.
   • Maybe give a contemporary example of what you mean.

6. Interrelate everything
   • Show how some of the different points you have made might be linked together.
   • Suggest an underlying understanding of the text.

7. Wrap it up
   • Summarize your words by briefly reiterating what you have said.
   • Often people end a Torah talk with a more general message about Judaism and life.
   • Know your last line.
A few suggestions about speaking in public

Voice
Start your presentation loudly and clearly to catch the attention of your audience. Voice patterns are very important and differences in pitch and volume are essential. Don't speak in a monotone voice - it is exceptionally boring. However, do not alter your pitch volume to dramatically as your presentation with lose rhythm and impact. Use pauses when you want to stress a certain point. Always speak clearly and pronounce your words properly. Always address your words to those at the back of the room so that everyone can hear you.

Eyes
Eye contact is a very important part of public speaking. Your eyes convey expression, feeling and mood. You can attract people's attention and involve them in your presentation. Try always to look through the audience (not over them), and single out individuals to attract their attention. When looking at your notes, try not to nod your head up and down all the time - maintain as much eye contact as possible.

Face
Your face can convey much more about the mood of your presentation than your voice alone. Your mouth and eyebrows are the most effective at showing expression and so you should use them in putting across your ideas. Be serious, but try to smile a few times. Enjoy yourself!

Hands
Outstretched hands with palms down create a feeling of calm and tranquility. The same outstretched hands with palms up, invite participation and involvement. Pointing with an index finger will stress a critically important idea or statement. Using your hands to express your ideas helps the audience to visualize the point you are trying to make.

Arms and legs
Be aware of your audience folding their arms or legs - it may be a signal that someone has turned you off. If this happens, try to involve them using eye contact. Make sure you don't fold your own arms and legs yourself - people might think the same of you!

Notes
Try to write the notes for your presentation on little note cards, using one side only. You should know your presentation well, but it is not necessary to memorize it. Just try to be able to say one or two sentences without looking down. Ideally your presentation should be between eight and ten minutes long. The outline of your presentation should be mentioned within the first few sentences, so that people know what to expect. The middle should contain the bulk of your information. End clearly, with a closing comment of significance.

Body
Your feet should be firmly nailed to the floor and should stop your body from swaying from side to side. If you are nervous, place your hands firmly on the table or lectern and roll slightly on the balls of your feet. Never play with your hands or any object, as this will
Teaching Torah as Entertainment

In the days of the Mishna and Talmud, Torah lectures on Shabbat afternoon attracted broad audiences including men and women. The teacher was use techniques reminiscent of popular entertainment of their era to reinforce the content of the learning. Many the stories and Greek and Aramaic proverbs used to flavor the delivery have been preserved in collections of Midrash, rabbinic notes left from such public teaching. As you prepare your D’var Torah keep the following definitions of entertainment in mind.

- **Aristotle**: “It is the mark of an educated mind to entertain a thought without accepting it.”
- **Collins English Dictionary**: entertain: 1. to provide amusement for a person or audience; 2. to show hospitality to guests; 3. to hold in the mind (from old French, from entre-mutually + tenir to hold).
- **Elseworlds, DC Comics**: “In Elseworlds, heroes are taken from their usual settings and put into strange times and places - some that have existed, or might have existed, and others that can’t, couldn’t, or exist. The result is stories that make characters who are as familiar as yesterday seem as fresh as tomorrow.”
- **The White Album, The Beatles**: “With every mistake we must surely be learning...”
General Tips for facilitating Group Text Study

1. People introductions
Spend a few minutes getting to know your group. Gently find out their knowledge, skills and interest level. This information is very useful when you begin to study with them.

2. Text introductions
Tell them why you are studying these texts. Give a very brief background to: author, date, context etc. (see, for example, the glossary on page 47).

3. Learning a text
Many approaches exist. Some suggestions:
(a) Try to include as many people as possible, interest is normally proportional to participation.
(b) Don’t push someone too hard, but don’t underestimate ability either.
(c) Don’t read everything yourself.
(d) Recognize the value of some Hebrew reading for its own sake i.e. even if people don’t understand what they are reading.
(e) ‘Work’ a text: Invite questions that deconstruct the text. Ask one or two key questions that will unpack it.
(f) Value silences: Don’t be afraid of waiting for answers to questions you have asked. Give them thinking time. Don’t keep butting in when people are expressing their thoughts and ideas on the text.
(g) Listen carefully to comments and show you have understood them.
(h) Structure your time: Don’t spend too long on one line or phrase. Then again, don’t rush.
(i) Try and establish a flow of ideas that come out of the text. You should have scribbled notes
Each Jew adds to the Enigmas of the Torah

By Moshe Cordevero, Safed 16th century

[It is the human being alone, not even angels, who is] able to add enigmas to the Torah or reveal any secret of its secrets...It is the human alone whose soul becomes a bucket to draw the secrets of the Torah from its source...This is the reason why each of the six hundred thousand souls of the people of Israel [who stood at Sinai], each of them, had an inheritance in the Torah."

First Listen to the Torah in your Heart

By Reb Baruch of Medzibez, grandson of the Bal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidism

(Boztina di-Nehora, pp.109 translated in Moshe Idel, Absorbing Perfections, p. 425)

The principle is that everyone has first to hear in his heart...and afterwards to study what the heart is hearing. [That is the meaning of the verse describing the revelation of Torah at Mount Sinai: "All the people saw the voices..." (Exodus 20:15)]. They have seen what had been heard, namely they have seen in the Torah what they heard in their heart...This is the meaning of Torah that is studied for its own sake, to illumine in the Torah what he has heard in his heart...If he did so, then the Torah will illumine in his soul. This is the meaning of [the Rabbinic dictum:] "The Holy One, and the Torah and Israel are one."

Notein HaTorah - Ongoing Revelation and Innovation

Reb Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir (Or ha-Meir, folio 216d):
The reason for [the present tense formulation of] the blessing of the Torah: Notein HaTorah - "God gives the Torah" is to show that the Holy One is still revealing the Torah as God did then, in antiquity, at the holy assembly, at Mount Sinai.

Reb Yehuda Arieh Leib of Gur (Sefat Emet, III, folio 85d):
God has "given the Torah to the children of Israel" and, in addition, God has really "implanted within us" / Nata b'tocheinu the power of the Torah, so that humans will be able to innovate words of Torah ...

Revealing the Secret of the D'var Torah - The Old Man and the Ravishing Maiden

Zohar 2:99a-b,105b, 114a

The old man said, "Companions, not for this alone did I begin the word.

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4 Derishot, p.70 translated in Moshe Idel, Absorbing Perfections, p. 425

5 translated in Moshe Idel, Absorbing Perfections, p. 426

6 Translated by Daniel Matt, The Essential Kabbalah, pp. 141-143, and reprinted by permission of the author.
An old man like me doesn’t rattle with just a single word.
Human beings are so confused in their minds.
They do not see the way of truth in Torah.
She calls out to them every day, in love,
but they do not want to turn their heads.
She removes a word from her sheath,
is seen for a moment, then quickly hides away,
but she does so only for those who know her intimately.

"A parable.
To what can this be compared?
To a beloved, ravishing maiden, hidden deep within her palace.
She has one lover, unknown to anyone, hidden too.
Out of love for her, this lover passes by her gate constantly,
lifting his eyes to every side.
Knowing that her lover hovers about her gate constantly,
what does she do?
She opens a little window in her hidden palace,
revealing her face to her lover,
then swiftly withdraws, concealing herself.
No one near him sees or reflects, only the lover,
and his heart and his soul and everything within him
flow out to her.
He knows that out of love for him
she revealed herself for that one moment
to awaken love in him.

"So it is with a word of Torah:
she reveals herself to no one but her lover.
Torah knows that one who is wise of heart
hovers about her gate every day.
What does she do?
She reveals her face to him from the palace
and beckons him with a hint,
then swiftly withdraws to her hiding place.
No one there knows or reflects—
he alone does,
and his heart and his soul and everything within him
flows out to her.
This is why Torah reveals and conceals herself.
With love she approaches her lover
to arouse love with him.

"Come and see the way of Torah.

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At first, when she begins to reveal herself to a human, she beckons him with a hint. If he perceives, good; if not, she sends him a message, calling him simple. Torah says to her messenger: 'Tell that simple one to come closer, so I can talk with him.' He approaches. She begins to speak with him from behind a curtain she has drawn, words he can follow, until he reflects a little at a time. This is derasha. Then she converses with him through a veil, words riddled with allegory. This is haggadah.

"Once he has grown accustomed to her, she reveals herself face to face and tells him all her hidden secrets, all the hidden ways, since primordial days secreted in her heart. "Now he is a complete human being, husband of Torah, master of the house. All her secrets she has revealed to him, withholding nothing, concealing nothing.

"She says to him, 'Do you see that word, that hint with which I beckoned you at first? So many secrets there! This one and that one!' "Now he sees that nothing should be added to those words and nothing taken away. Now the peshat of the verse, just like it is. Not even a single letter should be added or deleted.

"Human beings should become aware, pursuing Torah to become her lovers."

The old man was silent for a moment. companions were amazed: they did not know if it was day or night, if they were really there or not.
Torah's 48 Ways

There is no better introduction to the study of Jewish texts, than a Jewish text about study! In Sayings of the Fathers (6:6), we learn about the greatness of Torah study and how to achieve it. Find a moment to read this text (which is reproduced here) and try to make sense of each of the forty eight ways. Ask yourself which ones most relate to the way you learn and which others you would like to improve.

"Torah is even greater than the priesthood or royalty; for royalty is acquired along with thirty privileges and the priesthood is acquired with twenty-four gifts, but the Torah is acquired by the means of forty-eight qualities, which are:

(1) study, (2) attentive listening, (3) articulate speech, (4) intuitive understanding, (5) awe, (6) reverence, (7) modesty, (8) joy, (9) purity, (10) apprenticeship with the sages, (11) closeness with colleagues, (12) sharp discussion with students, (13) deliberation, (14) Bible and Mishnah study, (15) moderation in business activity, (16) moderation in sexual activity, (17) moderation in pleasure, (18) not sleeping too much, (19) not talking too much, (20) not laughing too much, (21) patience, (22) a kindly heart, (23) faith in the Sages teachings, (24) acceptance of suffering, (25) recognizing your place, (26) being happy with what you have, (27) restraining into your words, (28) claiming no credit for yourself, (29) being loved, (30) loving God, (31) loving all living creatures, (32) loving righteousness, (33) loving straightness, (34) loving rebuke, (35) keeping away from honors, (36) not being arrogant about your learning, (37) not enjoying halachic decision-making, (38) sharing the load with others, (39) judging them favorably, (40) guiding them to truth, (41) guiding them to peace, (42) being calm in your study, (43) asking and answering questions, listening and (only) then adding to discussions, (44) learning in order to teach, (45) learning in order to practice, (46) making your teacher wiser, (47) being thoughtful about what you have learnt, (48) quoting in the name of the one who said it...
Appendix: Websites for Downloadable Torah

prepared by Tim Bernard

Forward Jewish cultural newspaper has weekly “The Portion”
See www.forward.com

http://uahc.org/torah/
Torat Hayim / Living Torah: commentary from the Reform Movement

also, Family Shabbat Table Talk at
http://uahc.org/shabbat/hashavua.shtml

http://learn.jtsa.edu/topics/parashah/
Parashat Hashavuah: by Rabbi Dr. Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York

http://www.uscj.org.il/haftarah/
Haftarah Commentary by Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein, of the USCJ's "Conservative Yeshiva" in Jerusalem

http://www.ou.org/torah/ti/
Torah Insights: by rabbis from the Orthodox Union

also, many more Orthodox commentaries can be accessed via
http://www.ou.org/torah/

http://www.jrf.org/recondt/
Reconstructionist Divrei Torah: from the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

http://www.jafi.org.il/education/torani/nehama/
Gilyonot: torah commentaries from the late Nechama Leibowitz of Jerusalem

http://www.hir.org/torah/rabbi/
Shabbat Forshpeis: from Rabbi Avi Weiss of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (liberal, modern Orthodox seminary)

http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/
Shabbat Shalom: from Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin, founder of the Ohr Torah Stone Institutions, in Efrat

http://www.shalomctr.org/index.cfm/action/contents/section/parsha.html
Parshat Hashavuah: by Rabbi Dr. Arthur Waskow, director of the Shalom Center, Philadelphia

http://www.torahaura.com/Bible/hereat_/hereat_.html
Learn Torah With: eclectic mix of teachers, distributed by Torah Aura Productions in Los Angeles

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/
From the Chasidic Masters: Chabad-Lubavitch's hasidic Torah commentaries (several other commentaries are also on this site)

http://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Eparasha/
Parashat Hashavuah: from the faculty of Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan
http://www.tanach.org
Tanach Study Center: by Rabbi Menachem Leibtag of Yeshivat Har Etzion in Gush Etzion and Midreshet Lindenbaum in Jerusalem headed by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

http://www.tashma.org/archive.html
Pluralist commentary: Jerusalem-based educators of different perspectives discussing the Torah portion

http://www.kabbalaonline.org
A variety of kabbalistic and hasidic commentaries, organised by Ascent, a Chabad-Lubavitch organization in Tzfat

http://www.myjewishlearning.com
Commentaries and "Text Studies", some provided by organizations from across the community. The site is run in partnership with Hebrew College in Newton, MA.

http://www.clal.org/update_torah.html
The pluralistic National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership gives both Torah and Haftarah commentaries from its faculty and associates

http://www.anseh.org/parsha.htm
Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles gives a page for each Torah portion comprised of a summary of the portion and summaries of a range of contemporary Orthodox sources

http://www.kolel.org/pages/parsha/torah.shtml
http://www.kolel.org/torahstory/dvar_home.html
Kollel is an adult study Lehrhaus for a rich varied liberal Judaism which is located in Toronto
| The Ideal Hevruta: Indepth and Independent Collaborative Inquiry  
| What is deep inquiry? How do we know if we’re doing it? | By Evan Wolkenstein |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sending a team-mate representative to ask a question</td>
<td>Student who gets help reports to group/chevruta not only the answer, but also the logic behind it, the context – maybe only gives a clue to allow group/chevruta to think through the problem.</td>
<td>Student who reports back to group gives the “answer” but does not care about team’s comprehension and understanding – OR – team only wants representative’s answer, but not explanation, clarification, and deep understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for help</td>
<td>Students gave an honest crack at solving the problem themselves before asking for help</td>
<td>Students immediately go for help when the text or assignment is challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving complete answers I</td>
<td>Answers are expressed completely, in full sentences. If students challenge question, they express objection or challenge clearly and with explanation… and only in situations of absolute need.</td>
<td>Phrases. Incomplete thoughts. Students dismiss question without justification, explanation, and/or when unnecessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving complete answers II</td>
<td>Answers cover entire question and all parts of the question.</td>
<td>Answers only cover part of question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving complete answers III</td>
<td>Answer goes beyond the surface: includes theories, supposition, inference, conclusion. Language is precise.</td>
<td>Answer is superficial and uses only very basic language “bad” “good” “mad” “happy” etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving complete answers II</td>
<td>Answers look at problem from multiple perspectives and solutions.</td>
<td>Answers are very limited and only consider one possible solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading/Decoding</td>
<td>Group/Chevruta not only reads the section, but also notes kushiot, clarifies confusions that are not essential to the text, and is proactive about their own clarity.</td>
<td>Chevruta “reads” text but doesn’t care whether they understand it. Chevruta makes no effort to come to understanding when blocked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress</td>
<td>Students chit chat only 10-20% of the time…! The rest is about making progress. When students run into trouble, they try, then ask other student, then ask teacher or move on.</td>
<td>Students get swamped with chit-chat or “give up” when text or assignment becomes challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distraction</td>
<td>Students stay focused on work and help other students to stay focused by not interfering in their work except for honest and productive questions.</td>
<td>Students pull down and distract other groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conflict is not always a problem or tragedy – it can be a way of thinking, indeed a way of life and even fun. Welcome to Conflict – the Game. In this version one always is playing against a partner, but you switch sides, often, and in effect play against yourself. Even if you lose, you win. The stakes in this game are getting it right with the "it" being deep understanding. But if you get "it" wrong, then the booby prize is literally willed ignorance. In a nutshell (a good term, for this sport can drive you nutty!), I have described the process of Chavruta learning. In this paired study you are tied up to a chaver – literally a friend, more literally the one you are bound to. The cord that ties you together is the text studied. The best text for this is the Talmud which itself is a repository of the transcripts of some 2000 years of fierce debate over every moral and spiritual issue, large and small. The original is in Aramaic, an old variant of Hebrew. (Some pretty good English versions are around). The first goal is to translate the text together (and even the translations need translation!). The second goal is to make sense of the argument, question and answer. The former is relatively benign, the latter begins to generate some warmth in the discussion. But the third task, which is to make the argument that is being offered, to offer a logical explanation of why that argument is right, can generate white-hot heat. For your chavruta turns from partner to foe, as he attempts to break the argument – to show why it is actually wrong or even nonsensical. This process can go on (in time) and up (in intensity). Then all of a sudden you discover mid-fight that your chavruta is actually correct – you then tell him why and how he is more right than he knows. Invariably he also turns and rejects his own line of reasoning and agrees with your first position. The great switcheroo has been effected! Given the dialectics of the Talmudic page and the 1500-year accumulation of commentaries, codes and scholarship – the logical possibilities boggle the mind. And more – as "iron sharpens iron so does one Talmudic student sharpen the other." And all this is done out loud. We are not a quiet library – the heir of monasteries where only the squeak of the quill against the parchment was allowed., lest one be distracted and make a mistake in copying. No, in chavruta there are dramatic proclamations and urgent cries. Even the silence seems loud – when one’s dismay at a crazed bit of reasoning demands that retort. But mostly there is laughter. For the argumentation is exciting, unpredictable and engaging. Henri Bergson, the French philosopher and one-time Jew, defined funny as being convinced that something is one way and then discovering that it is actually the opposite: we think our friend is walking on terra firma (solid ground), but one banana peel later he is flying in the air and we laugh. Well, the Talmudic chavruta is constantly funny, as we slip on our own argument, fly into thin air and try to land on our feet. And the notion of the very inverse has been the style of Jewish discourse – and Jewish stand-up comedy – ever since! The arena of play is the chavruta table, laden with books, within a room of book-lined walls and many other such tables. In our modest Beit Midrash (Study Hall, but
literally the Home of Searching), you can have some 50 to 60 pairs duking it out at the same time. A chavruta at one table, overhearing an argument at another, where she has gone to urgently fetch a book from the shelf, can feel free to join another debate, and put her two cents in. A quiet Beit Midrash reeks of the death of the mind and meaning. Our Beit Midrash, in contrast, rocks. Certain character attributes are developed in the chavruta game. One must be bold and set forth one’s understanding, but humble in hearing the weaknesses of your position. The desire for truth is paramount – it alone measures all. Mutual trust is crucial – you need to be ready to sound foolish in front of your chavruta. This leads to empathy – to hear the heart that beats behind the mind that thinks. I can’t help believing that humility, truthfulness, trustworthiness and to feel for the other – are more than a game. They are qualities that can lead to the resolution of conflicts that tear us apart. "One enters the Beit Midrash as combatants, one can only leave as loving friends."

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