Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education
EDUC 504: Bible and Israel for Early Childhood Education
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“For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Isaiah 2:3

“Turn it and turn it; everything is contained in it.” Pirkei Avot 5:25

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” Psalms 122:6

Course Overview:
This course will explore theory and practice for curricula focusing on Bible and Israel for the early childhood classroom. The course will focus on age-appropriate methods to introduce these ideas to young children. Bible topics will include selection of choice narratives with an array of supporting activities and resources, practice of adult text study coupled with child-friendly rewrites of selected verses, and creation of Torah-based curricula. Israel topics will focus on the “Israel Connection” — its philosophical base and resources for programmatic application, including our own “Images of Israel,” experiential learning and the empowerment of parents in the “Virtual Israel Trip,” and teaching Israel through children’s literature - highlighting the lives of children in Israel and the centrality of Zion in Jewish thought.

Required Texts:

JPS Hebrew - English TANAKH. Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia, PA, 1999/2001. (I highly recommend this particular English translation of the TANAKH (Complete Bible), with Masoretic Hebrew text, side by side.)
http://www.amazon.com/Hebrew-English-Tanakh-Jewish-Publication/dp/0827606974/ref=pd_sim_b_1

http://www.amazon.com/dp/0827608519/ref=rdr_ext_tmb

Additional required readings will be provided electronically online. Students are strongly encouraged to print out all of the articles and handouts provided for note-taking and future reference.

Recommended Teaching Resources:


Recommended Books:


**Walking the Bible: A Journey by Land through the Five Books of Moses** by Feiler, Bruce (Harper Perennial, 2002) (A children’s version exists as well.)

For those interested in a complete exploration of Midrash (Rabbinic Literature):


Course Requirements and Expectations (beyond required readings):

1. **Active participation in weekly online discussions.**

   Lessons generally go “live” on Thursday afternoons, with the exception of the first lesson, which will open on Monday, January 28. I suggest that you post your initial responses by Sunday or Monday evening so that you will have time to respond to each other’s postings and continue the conversation through Wednesday evening when that lesson’s discussion “closes.” I will function as a facilitator of these discussion board conversations, responding when I see fit or whenever you pose a question directly to me. My expectation is that each of you is a repository of knowledge and experience to be shared with the whole class, regardless of your previous Torah learning experience. Your active participation will increase the wealth of our collective knowledge and understanding.

2. **Students are encouraged to keep a journal of class sessions and all outside readings for their own use in the future.**

Assignments (in addition to ongoing class discussions):

1. **Selection of Bible, “re-written” for the preschool**

   Using the model to be discussed in class, you will choose a piece of biblical narrative or just part of a Biblical story if it is complex. You will study and excerpt the original text. Then you will write your own narrative for the text and list one or two concepts that are appropriate for young children. The next step will be for you to list a minimum of one preliminary activity and one open-ended question for discussion. You will also describe at least one reinforcement activity that will enhance and extend the learning.

2. **“Annotated Bibliography of Bible-Related Children’s Books/Teaching Materials”**

   Identify general and Jewish children’s literature selections that can be used in tandem with a specific Biblical narrative, such as books dealing with the theme of sibling rivalry to accompany study of the Joseph stories. Develop a fully annotated bibliography on your chosen subject – to be detailed in the course materials.

3. **My “Israel Connection”**

   Create a poster or other visual representation of your personal connection(s) to Israel to be shared online. Alternative forms of creative expression are equally welcome.

4. **Children’s Literature Review: Creating Parent Connections to “Teaching Israel to Young Children”**

   Following a format to be provided online, you will review and evaluate a secular or Jewish children’s book (or other media item) relating to the Teaching of Israel, and how it might best be shared at home and/or in class.

5. **Final Project Options**

   Select one of the curricular areas dealt with in this course.
   - In writing: Present your rationale for the introduction of a particular unit of study within an early childhood setting. Develop the unit and provide a detailed description of accompanying activities. Include a chart that maps the integration of this unit with the rest of the curriculum. Please include a complete bibliography of relevant reference books and resources that could expand teachers’ thinking on the topic. These may include stories, poems, visual and auditory media, games, etc.
Prepare an oral presentation that highlights one of the key points/area of interest in your paper and how this was actually implemented in your setting. (If prior implementation is not possible, demonstrate one planned piece in class.)

- In writing: Using the model discussed in class as a starting point, select a Biblical story and develop a curricular unit showing how you would integrate it into the general early childhood curriculum. Present your rationale for the introduction of that particular narrative within your preschool setting. Include curricular areas such as language arts, science, mathematical skills, art, music and movement. Include a chart that visually maps the integration of this unit with the rest of the curriculum. Develop the unit and provide a detailed description of accompanying activities. Please include a complete bibliography of relevant reference books and resources that could expand teachers’ thinking on the topic. These may include stories, poems, visual and auditory media, games, etc. Be sure that the activities you choose directly support the "Big Idea"/Enduring Understanding/Value that you've chosen to focus on.

Prepare an oral presentation that highlights one of the key points/area of interest in your paper. (We will discuss the technology for sharing these presentations during the course of the semester.)

- Expanded Annotated Bibliography Project: Identify general and Jewish children’s literature items that can be used in tandem with a number of different Biblical themes. Identify the particular parshiyot or stories that each title can be matched with. Develop a fully annotated bibliography for this material, to include an “Enduring Understanding” and related teaching application for each selection.

- Develop a unit of study appropriate to an early childhood setting for the teaching of Israel including a rationale for your particular school. Be sure that the activities you choose directly support the Big Ideas/Enduring Understandings/Values that you've chosen to focus on.

There will be multiple ways to share your thoughts and experiences throughout the semester:
- The discussion board will be the primary vehicle used to share your thoughts and learning with me and the other members of the class. If you have a general question that may be of interest to others in the class, you should pose it within the discussion board framework. I will generally give your fellow students an opportunity to answer questions before I jump in, generally towards the end of the week. If you direct your question specifically to me, I will be sure to respond.

- You may also communicate with me directly by e-mail or phone for any issue that is personal to you.

- In the spirit of collegial problem solving, confidentiality is a clear expectation. It is to be maintained regarding every individual/issue discussed within our learning community.

- Please note the requirement to commit to record yourself – ideally using video – a minimum of twice over the course of the semester, as designated in the course outline. (The first time will be for the presentation of your “Torah Re-Write” assignment.)

For Presentations of Final Projects:
Each of you will have the opportunity to model a discrete piece of a single lesson plan during the final two sessions of the semester, when you will have an opportunity to share part of your final project, (which will be a complete teaching unit, comprising a minimum of three complete lessons.) If you can record yourself in action all the better! In any case, the rest of us will then function as your critical colleagues, and you will receive the benefit of constructive feedback from your colleagues.

Using Schoology’s discussion board technology you will be able to present materials in print, via audio/video files, or via PowerPoint presentation with live narration, live music, storytelling or whatever suits you best.

Complete instructions will be provided in the relevant course materials.

The audio recording button is another available tool on Schoology, which gives you the option of adding your voice, so that we can hear you, whether it's to share materials that are not easily transmitted in writing, or just to give a more personal touch to a discussion or presentation.
There will be times during the semester when you will be asked to collaborate with a *Hevruta* (in pairs), or work with a small group of fellow students. You will be able to speak on the telephone, via Skype, or use email to communicate with each other during the week, using whichever modality work best for you and your partner(s).

Lastly, the use of video in capturing classroom practices to share with us, for those comfortable with the medium, is highly encouraged, whenever you deem it appropriate, in addition to the required audio/visual presentations.

**Course Outline:**

**Lesson 1: Monday, January 28 – Wednesday, February 6**

Introduction to Course and Torah Study

**Required readings and assignments for the following lesson:**

*The Bible, Book of Genesis (Bereishit)* -- Be prepared to share any surprises you found while reading, (positive or negative,) as well as a favorite narrative.


You will be asked to choose quotes that were meaningful to you from a minimum of two of the four articles listed above, which will be provided electronically on Schoology.

**Lesson 2: Thursday, February 7 – Wednesday, February 13**

Choosing and Telling Bible Stories

**Required readings for the following lesson:**

*The Bible, Book of Exodus (Shemot)*

Selection entitled ‘Time’ from “To Create a Jewish World...Some Thoughts on Jewish Education in the Early Years” by Shira Ackerman Simchovich. Jerusalem Fellows, 1995.

Optional Reading:


**Lesson 3: Thursday, February 14 – Wednesday, February 27** (taking public school February vacation and Purim into account)

A Model for Biblical Text Study

**Readings and assignment for next lesson:**


Read the text of *Genesis (Bereishit)* Chapter 24: Verses 1-67

Complete the rubric for text study form provided in class after doing a “close,” thorough, reading of the text.

**Lesson 4: Thursday, February 28 – Wednesday, March 6**

Rewriting a Biblical Text

**Readings and assignment for next lesson:**

Start to think about a selection of Bible that you’d like to teach to young children for assignment due during the week of March 14 - 20.

Share resource materials that might be appropriate for teaching any part of the story related in *Genesis* Chapter 24:1-67.
Review different children’s literary versions of Noah’s Ark after reading the biblical text. Be critical consumers! Note how closely they mirror the essence of the original story or not.

**Lesson 5: Thursday, March 7 – Wednesday, March 13**
Developing a Learning Unit Based on a Biblical Text – ‘Be a Miriam’

**Optional readings for next lesson:**
“Torah Integration” by Paula Rosen, SSDS of Greater Boston.

“Different Perspectives on the Authorship of the Torah” by Jeffrey Spitzer, “MyJewishLearning.com”

**Lesson 6: Thursday, March 14 - Wednesday, April 3** (taking Passover preparations and observances into account)
Sharing Torah Rewrite Projects (via print and audio/visual presentations)

**Lesson 7: Thursday, April 4 – Wednesday, April 10**
Annotated Bibliography Exercise
Wrap-Up of Bible Module

**Readings for first lesson of Israel module, beginning next week:**

Chapter 6, “Israel All Year,” in *Jewish Every Day* by Maxine Segal Handelman.

Chapter 7 in *The Language of Jewish Education*, by Barry Chazan.

**Lesson 8: Thursday, April 11 – Wednesday, April 24** (taking public school Spring break into account)
“Images of Israel” and “Why Israel?”

**Readings for next lesson:**


Chapter 17, “Yom Ha’Atzmaut,” in *Jewish Every Day* by Maxine Segal Handelman.

**Lesson 9: Thursday, April 25 – Wednesday, May 1**
“The Virtual Israel Trip” and “Enhancing Family Involvement”

**Lesson 10: Thursday, May 2 – Wednesday May 8**
“Israel-Related Children’s Literature Review and Stories translated from Hebrew & Other Media”

**Lesson 11: Thursday, May 9 – Friday, May 17** (taking Shavuot into account)
“Additional Israel Resources”
“Online Classroom Presentations: Utilizing Both Print and Audio/Visual Files”

**Lesson 12: Sunday, May 19 – Friday, May 24**
“Online Classroom Presentations, Continued: Utilizing Both Print and Audio/Visual Files”

Written Final Projects are due on May 24
Online course evaluation must be completed prior to receiving final grade.