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Entering the Historical Conversation:
Torah Teachers' Reading and Teaching of Text

presented by

Renee Soloway Wohl

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Sharon Feiman Nemser
Major professor

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ENTERING THE HISTORICAL CONVERSATION:

TORAH TEACHERS' READING AND TEACHING OF TEXT

By

Renee Soloway Wohl

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Teacher Education

1999

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ABSTRACT

ENTERING THE HISTORICAL CONVERSATION:

TORAH TEACHERS' READING AND TEACHING OF TEXT

By

Renee Soloway Wohl

This is a study about the power and limitations of subject matter knowledge. It investigates how teachers who are knowledgeable and engaged readers of Torah, who view themselves as a link in the dialogue between past and present, induct adolescents into the historical conversation. This is an empirical study embedded in an historical and scholarly framework. Many of the issues that I tracked in the interviews and observations with teachers of Torah are illuminated by historical and scholarly sources. I drew upon literary reader theories to help me define what I mean by knowledgeable and engaged readers of Torah, philosophy of Jewish text analysis to develop interview and interpretive tasks, and the literature on teachers' beliefs and knowledge to conceptualize the process of reading Torah in a classroom.

The research shows that subject matter knowledge of Torah alone is necessary but not sufficient to guarantee good teaching practice or "doing Torah" in the classroom. The readers chosen were all exorbitant readers from both Jewish supplementary and day schools. They were capable of generating meaning and reflecting on the interpretive process. This is how I measured their knowledge of Torah. Yet two of these three readers were not as effective in inducting their students into the historical conversation in the lessons that I observed. This suggests that although reading and the teaching of interpretive reading may have some overlapping features, they are two distinct practices.

Each practice requires different skills and capacities. This study offers a portrait of good Torah teaching, what capacities and skills it entails including some subject specific strategies for enacting this challenging teaching practice.

To my Mom, Bela--my first teacher.

I learned to believe in myself because of her ultimate faith in me.

I learned about the power to make a difference through words

because of her kind words to others.

I learned to see the world not as it is but as we are.

After all the horrors of the Holocaust,

my Mom saw hope and optimism in the world.

These are the gifts she entrusted to me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my husband Milt and his "rolling stones." He provided steady support and love for me. He adapted his life and the family's to my learning needs. I love him deeply for encouraging me to take this intellectual journey at MSU–his arch rival.

To Sharon, my mentor and friend who guided me diligently through the process. Her feedback was overwhelming at times but always useful. She taught me to frame and reframe and reframe some more. There is no doubt that in her last (gilgul) life, she was a Talmudic scholar, probing each word for meaning as she did with me on this dissertation.

To my friends, Shelly, Annie and Susan, who listened and supported me through the process, especially through the unexpected crises. Their kindness helped me keep my balance throughout the process.

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CHAPTER 1

Entering the Conversation

Introduction

Torah teachers induct students into a culture of words that has conditioned Jews throughout their history. Classrooms are a training ground for learning to appreciate the importance of words in Judaism. Arguing, disputing and conversing about words is the historical experience of the Jewish people. This process, which is the dialogue between generations, maintains that words are keys to unlocking the deeper meanings of life.

In every generation, Torah teachers attempt to engage students in this historical dialogue. Two outstanding teachers who tried to meet this challenge were Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber, twentieth century Jewish philosophers. They created a Lehrhaus, an adult Jewish institute in Berlin in the 1920's for the purpose of "reopening the silenced dialogue between the presently living generation and classical Judaism" (Rosenzweig, 1965, p. 24). These two teachers recognized the challenge facing many modern Jews--entering a religious text with a secular orientation. Their Lehrhaus was an attempt to connect the current generation to past generations via classical Judaism or text study. The challenge of connecting Jews to this historical conversation is not new.

In many traditional Jewish communities, when a child enters the Cheder or religious school for the first time, he is greeted with a chart of letters smeared with honey. One by one, the new student licks the honey from the letters, learning an important lesson: learning is sweet, and the letters carry the words. Study is sweet because it wrests meaning from the world. This is the embedded message in this historically practiced ritual. The goal for Jewish students is to view words of Torah as the meaning of their existence. That is why there is

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such intense concentration on the transmission of tradition from one generation to the next.[1] Each generation is mandated to unlock new meaning and build on the accumulated tradition. As one contemporary Biblical scholar writes:

> The goal is to build, to expand the net of language until it takes in more and more of the world, until we snare more bits of meaning in the grillwork of our concepts. There is tearing down to be done as well as building up, but even in tearing down it is well to keep the shattered fragments on hand; one never knows when more material will be required for the new structure. (Wolpe, 1992, p.148)

This study focuses on the challenges of connecting adolescents to the historical conversation. It investigates how three teachers who are knowledgeable and engaged readers of Torah induct adolescents into the practice of reading Torah. These teachers, personal readers of Torah, are poised to reopen the "silenced dialogue" for their students. What will that dialogue look like? What happens when teachers who see themselves as part of an ongoing interpretive conversation teach Torah to adolescents? My curiosity about this question led me to undertake this study.

Readers of Torah encounter unique problems in the act of interpretation. One of the challenges that readers face in deciphering holy texts is a tension between reason and faith, individual initiative and submission to authority and commitment and creativity. Serious readers of holy texts often straddle these two dimensions of faith and reason in understanding the Torah text. In oscillating between these two poles, they often struggle to

[1] There are many ways that the Torah can be read. It has been interpreted as a work of literature, history and religious guidance. My stance of treating the Torah as a holy text grows out of my commitment to Jewish education and life. Many teachers in religious school settings in the Diaspora treat the Torah as a central religious text. Many of my comments about the nature of Torah flow from this orientation which views the text as a religious body of work.

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forge the critical and traditional stances of reading in order to open dialogue between the generations. These two poles of reason and faith express different visions of how to encounter holy texts. Each vision, based on an understanding of revelation at Sinai, highlights one dimension of the Torah reading process. Each pole captures the convictions of various communities of readers within Judaism. These convictions are embedded in a matrix of beliefs about the Torah and how to interpret it.

In this first chapter, I explain what makes Torah study unique, different from the reading of secular texts and the historical conversation. Studying Torah is a communal process that encourages readers to add their voices to an ongoing conversation. At the same time the holy status of the text challenges them with questions of faith and reason, individual initiative and submission to authority. A discussion of these issues helps to frame my dissertation study which focuses on the connection between teachers' own personal reading and beliefs about Torah and their pedagogical practices. A story from one of the teachers in the study helps to introduce the core challenge of Torah study for modern readers. This story localizes the problem of entering the historical conversation. Most of the chapter is devoted to a review of three strands of scholarship which informed my thinking as I conceptualized and carried out this research.

Torah Study as a Historical Conversation

In Hebrew, there is an expression that all beginnings are difficult. The Talmud, which is the grand compendium of interpretive law and lore on the Torah, has no beginning. The first pages begin in the middle of a conversation. Reading the Torah with commentaries is similar to eavesdropping on an ongoing conversation. Learning how to connect others to this ongoing conversation is the Torah teacher's role. This ongoing interpretive conversation

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among the commentators deals with the ultimate and mundane questions of Jewish existence. Those who have not learned the traditional process of reading and interpreting holy texts have difficulty gaining access to this conversation. Certainly there are many other forms of Jewish expression and connection but text study is the traditional approach. Many Jews remain outside of the great 2500 year-old conversation because they are unfamiliar with the process of interpreting holy texts.

Holy Status of Torah

The words of the Torah have been the vehicle for Jews to travel more deeply into their own history and personal relationship to God. How Jewish readers connect to the words of the Torah signifies how they view their role within this 2500 year-old conversation. How readers choose interpretive frameworks for understanding the Torah depends on their beliefs about the origins and purposes for studying Torah.

Pre-emancipation period. Prior to the emancipation period (late 18th century), the view of the Torah as a holy text with ultimate significance was virtually unquestioned. Authority resided exclusively in the text. Readers sought to uncover the truth within the text. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz (1980), commenting on the Torah's holiness, writes:

> Other religions have a concept of scripture as deriving from Heaven, but only Judaism seems to be based on the idea that the Torah Scripture is itself Heaven. In other words, the Torah of the Jews is the essence of divine revelation; it is not only a basis for social, political, and religious life but is in itself something of supreme value. (p.87)

With the onset of the modern period and secularization, the Torah's status as a holy guide for Jews diminished. New forms of critical interpretation influenced by archaeology,

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philology and comparative Semitic texts penetrated the old ways of listening and deciphering texts. Revelation was no longer an unchallenged historical fact.

The challenge within Jewish education has always been devising ways to connect Jews with the words of the Torah--to penetrate the endless dialogue between past and present. In pre-emancipation times, as Scheffler (1992) notes:

> The Jewish school, home, and community was one continuous entity, embodied concretely in all spheres of life. Insofar as formal Jewish schooling or study was differentiated in the earlier period, it was accorded the highest religious and metaphysical status, regarded as an intrinsic value, a form of worship, but also a practical guide in all spheres of life. Scattered in their diverse and fragile communities, Jews assuredly had no control over the world, but they had the word, and the word gave them access to the highest heavens, to which their religious life was dedicated (p. 21).

Traditionally, Torah teachers were knowledgeable and engaged readers. They always had a special role in providing ways of listening to and learning from the text. What makes this listening special is the personal and emotional connection that teachers have with the Torah. For many teachers, the Torah represents more than an intellectual challenge. The personal, often passionate, connection that Torah teachers have to text has always served as a model for students to emulate in their own learning. Michael Rosenak (1987), a Jewish educational philosopher, writes that the role of Jewish teachers is to be genuine religious personalities for their students (1987).

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The Torah from the period of the Zohar,[2] the great classic of Jewish mysticism, to modern times has been characterized in relational terms. The words of the Torah have often been represented as a love letter from God to the Jewish people. The Zohar characterized the pursuit of Torah as a kind of romance between the Jews and God. In order to build a deep spiritual connection, the words of the Torah must be turned over and over until deep meaning is extrapolated from them, "turn it round and round, interpret and reinterpret it, because all is in it" (Ethics of the Fathers, Chapter 5:25).

Emancipation period. In the early periods of Jewish education, school learning reflected the values of the home and community. With the emancipation and entry of the Jews into all walks of mainstream Western life, the harmony of the home, school and community broke down. The school no longer reflected the values of the home and community. Nor did the word or belief in revelation have the power it once had.

The stability of the words of Torah was shattered in this new era. In the past, readers of Torah claimed that the text contained truth; modern readers did not work with this uniform vision. In the modern period, no consensus existed among readers regarding the origin and authorship, purposes, significance and authority of the Torah. Readers of Torah today reflect a wide range of stances regarding their role in interpreting the text and the role of the text in their lives.

Words have always been treated as sacred keys for unlocking the deeper meaning of the universe and path to God. By piercing the multiple meanings of words, Jews are reminded of those who came before them. Reading is more than reading; it is a love affair

[2] The Zohar is considered the most famous work of Jewish mysticism or Kabbalah. The Zohar was revealed to the world by Moses De Leon, who claimed that the book contained mystical writings of the second century Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai. Almost all modern scholars believe that De Leon authored the Zohar.

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with the Torah. Only in modern times has the power granted to the words of the Torah diminished and dialogue between past and present voices foreclosed. Yet for readers with a knowledgeable and engaging disposition towards Torah, the words of Torah remain a powerful tool for unlocking meaning.

Torah Study - A Communal Process

The traditional process of studying Torah has always been a communal not an individual endeavor. In English, the term "reading" Torah is used; however this does not fully represent the process entailed in studying Torah. Reading is often considered a solitary or isolated activity. The Hebrew term, "talmud Torah" suggests study within a group. The study of Torah or "talmud Torah" is a mitzvah (commandment) from God, and as such creates a link between the doer and God.

Commonly, Jews over the ages studied Torah "Hevruta style" or in pairs. Studying in pairs offers the opportunity to grapple actively with God's words. Readers can challenge each other to explain and justify their meanings with proof texts. The images that emerge from traditional texts such as the Talmud is that of rabbis challenging and arguing with one another over the intended and implied meaning of the text. Voicing doubts was not only considered legitimate but essential to the study of Torah. After absorbing the basic material, the student was expected to pose questions to himself and others, to voice doubts and reservations. In wrestling with ideas, readers of text connected with each other and God's words. Interpretation of text involved uncovering secret meanings or unheard of explanations in tandem with others. The image of an interpretive community is very much a part of traditional Jewish study. According to the Talmud, the most important things a person needs to deal with life are a spouse and a study partner. Traditional study was always

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Joining the Historical Conversation

To become part of the historical conversation required understanding the language of the text, structure of the commentaries[3] and knowledge of the questions asked by past voices. The conversation that existed in Jewish text study was both of a temporal and spatial kind. Becoming part of the conversation is like mental time travel. Participants in the conversation engage their minds to eavesdrop on interactions about the text from other places and times. Conversants often responded to others from different eras and places as if it were a local conversation. This ongoing conversation over space and time required interpretive agility on the part of the participants and the belief that intellectual work could unlock God's secrets. Many modern Jewish readers of text are no longer adept at participating in this 2500 year-old conversation.

To become a contributor in this process suggests that the reader is knowledgeable and engaged in the process of studying Torah. The reader of Torah must have intellectual and personal capacities to decipher and interpret texts. The reader of Torah needs to become a creator to a certain degree in order to participate fully in the conversation. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz writes:

[3]Commentaries are often used in traditional Jewish learning. Rashi or Rabbi Shlomo ben Isaac who lived in France in the 11th century is a favorite companion because of his clarity and succinctness. He wrote commentaries on the Torah and Talmud often combining peshat (literal meaning) along with derash (sermonic meaning) in the same verse. Since the sixteenth century, almost no editions of the Talmud have been printed without his commentary. Other commentaries on the Torah and Talmud include Maimonides, a 12th century philosopher. His commentaries include the Mishneh Torah and Guide to the Perplexed.

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> The Torah is not a static chart of things as they are but a dynamic plan of the ever-changing world, charting the necessary course for moving toward a union with God.... One who is immersed in Torah becomes a partner of God, in the sense that man on the one hand and God on the other are participating in the planning, spinning out of the idea. (1980, pp. 88-89)

Dr. Gottlieb-Zornberg, a Biblical and English literature scholar, describes the process of joining the historical conversation as the "making" of the reader. She writes:

> Whenever the Torah speaks of the imperative "la'asot," usually translated "to fulfill, to obey" the words of the Torah, the Netziv of Volozhin, author of Ha'amek Davar, and Torah commentator consistently translates "to construct the meaning of the words of the Torah." La'asot indicates the "making," the creation of Torah in the mind of the reader. This is not passive receptivity, but expresses a post-Kantian understanding of the active processes of perception. (1995, p. 16)

To be involved in the discourse and interpretive deliberations of Torah requires the reader to "do Torah or make meaning of it." The reader needs to understand the flow between past and present. This flow has been characterized as a dialectic tension between individual initiative and communal authority in Jewish philosophical writings.

Reading and Interpreting Torah: Through a Teacher's Eyes

Nan, a teacher in this study, framed the problem of interpretive reading and the challenge that a modern reader faces in entering the historical conversation. In order to understand some of the challenges of what it takes to read and interpret a holy text, I offer Nan's story. Her words illustrate the empirical and philosophical problem of interpreting

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Nan's encounters with holy texts reveal she inhabits both communities of
What I am interested in figuring out is how her interpretive reading of
er pedagogical practice.

, a Torah teacher of twenty years, considers how the Torah was written,
brought up with the idea of the "holy redactor." The notion that human
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." This notion claims that the Torah was given or revealed to Moses at
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ins that her training and background give her two different views of how
en which have different theological origins and implications struggling

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In college, as Nan becomes more religiously observant, she learns the view that Torah was given at Mt. Sinai. Therefore nothing in it can be changed in it. This perspective ties in with her own personal theological stance; however, as a critical and active reader of text, she is troubled by certain problematic passages which indicate that some tinkering occurred within the written text. To illustrate her point, she provides the following example from the book of Genesis (12:6).

> And the Canaanite was then in the land.... If you say that the Canaanite lived in the land at that time, well you don't have a phrase like that unless the present situation is different than what it used to be. My feeling is that commentators had more flexibility in earlier times.... They were very careful not to get carried away, but once you get started, where do you stop ... so when all else fails you are left with some enigmas and resign ourselves to the fact that we're going to struggle with these questions for a long time. So I'm kind of in between.

The alteration in the text that she refers to was illustrated by Abraham Ibn Ezra, a commentator of the twelfth century. In explaining this historical discrepancy, he writes that the Canaanites were not present during Abraham's wanderings but lived in the land after the time of Moses. This detail signals a type of human intervention in the writing of the Torah text. Nan's explanation parallels that of the commentator Ibn Ezra in that some things were probably interpolated "a few words here and there." This doesn't contradict that it was divinely received, Nan insists.

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litional and modern commentators of Torah have confronted throughout

of reason and the voice of faith. The voice of reason demands a close

. It demands individual initiative and rigor when interpreting texts. The

ands submission to the Torah text as God's word. The voice of faith

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t nexus. A central challenge that many readers of Torah face is this

aith and reason. How much authority does the text or reader have in the

ss? Within the reading of the Torah, a religious document, reading is

ematic as illustrated by Nan's story. Many Jewish philosophers, from

es in the twelfth century to Joseph Soloveitchik in the twentieth century,

ne dialectic tension between individual initiative and submission to

preting a religious text, one's reasoning abilities need to be asserted yet

sion of the text often takes precedence over one's rational faculties,

traditional commentators.

nd pedagogical struggle. Nan is acutely aware of the dialectic tension that

in deciphering Torah. She is sensitive about its practical implications for

though less articulate about the pedagogical implications, she wondered

iew, "Does this tension follow me into the classroom?"

rah teacher reads and understands a holy text has repercussions in the

or not he/she is aware of the tension as Nan is. Reading and interpreting

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Teachers of literature or history may be presented with issues of authenticity and authority but only the Torah compels the teacher to consider its divinity.

The dilemma of faith versus reason has long been discussed by readers of the Torah, but the philosophical problem of how one negotiates these two poles of operation--faith and reason or divine submission and individual initiative--is also a pedagogical problem for teachers of Torah. Nan's critical, active reading often challenges her belief system regarding the origins and authorship of the Torah. Readers of Jewish texts struggle with the problem of reconciling these two dialectical poles. These competing impulses need to be addressed not only in the act of reading but in the act of teaching also.

The Study

Researchers have rarely studied how teachers and students engage in the process of interpreting Torah inside the Jewish classroom. While outstanding thinkers have examined the philosophical dimensions of holy text analysis, few have considered the practical teaching repercussions of teaching students in Jewish schools how to read and interpret Torah. In this study, I examine whether and how Torah teachers who see themselves as part of the historical conversation of Torah teach their students interpretive strategies and help them become part of this great interpretive community and historical conversation. I explore how Nan and two other Torah teachers mediate the dynamic tension between creativity and commitment in reading and teaching the Torah.

One of the great religious paradoxes in Jewish education is that in order to maintain a cultural and religious tradition, both commitment and creativity must be encouraged in the teaching of normative truths. How do teachers who are often personally aware of the struggle between commitment and creativity, authority and freedom, faith and reason "do

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Torah" in their classrooms? What happens in the translation process from reading to teaching text? How do their belief orientations and personal ways of reading Torah inform and influence their teaching of Torah?

My central research question focuses on "what is the connection between teachers' own personal reading and beliefs about Torah and their classroom pedagogy?" I expected that Torah teachers who are adept in the interpretive process would be more skilled in engaging adolescents in the interpretive process. My conjecture and research question arise from my concern about how to link new generations of readers to the historical Torah conversation.

In the past, outstanding teachers and leaders in the great Yeshivot (academies of Torah learning) of Torah were considered, to use Heschel's term, "textpeople." Their lives were unified and directed by the moral compass of the Torah. Torah teachers who were knowledgeable and engaged in the process of reading and part of this conversation often served to link new generations of readers to the ongoing conversation. In order to investigate this question in the present, I had to locate teachers who were knowledgeable and engaged readers of text, linked to the historical conversation. Therefore, I created a two-part study. First I interviewed eight teachers regarding their beliefs and their stance as readers of Torah. I focused on how Jewish teachers read the Torah personally and their beliefs about the origins, nature and authority of the Torah. Then I followed three of these teachers into the classroom in order to see how teachers induct adolescents into the great historical Torah conversation. Following the observations, I interviewed the teachers about their purposes, the interpretive reading process and the historical conversation. My analysis focuses on the relationship between the practice of reading Torah and the practice of the

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teaching interpretive reading of Torah. This study moves from the domain of teacher thinking about interpretive reading into the domain of teaching practice. I try to examine how adept readers of Torah enact the interpretive process with students in the classroom.

This is an empirical study embedded in a historical and scholarly framework. Many of the issues that I tracked in the interviews and observations with teachers of Torah are illuminated by historical and scholarly sources. Below I review three areas of scholarship which I drew on in framing and carrying out my research. I used literary reader theories to help me define what I mean by knowledgeable and engaged readers of Torah. I drew on the philosophy of Jewish text analysis to develop interview and interpretive tasks for the readers in the study. I used the literature on teachers' beliefs and knowledge to conceptualize the process of reading Torah in a classroom. I fused all three of these areas of scholarship to develop an analytic framework for understanding my data.

Three Perspectives from Scholarship

Three areas of scholarship--literary theories, the philosophy of Jewish text analysis, and studies of teacher beliefs regarding shaping subject matter knowledge and practice illuminate my research study. Reader theories focus on how readers interact and interpret texts. Text analysis in Jewish philosophy deals with how individual readers and communities interpret holy texts. Research on teachers' beliefs and their interactions with subject matter knowledge focus on the structure and representation of knowledge in the classroom. In particular, I draw on studies that have examined Torah teachers' knowledge and beliefs. The intersection among these three areas of scholarship forms the framework for this study (see Table 1-1).

Table 1-1

Framework from Scholarly L

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Reader Theories

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Torah (see Table 1-2).

Table 1-1

Framework from Scholarly Literature

READER THEORIES	How do readers interact with and interpret texts?
TEXT ANALYSIS - JEWISH PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES	How do readers and communities of readers interpret holy texts?
TEACHER BELIEFS AND SUBJECT MATTER KNOWLEDGE	How do Torah teachers' knowledge and beliefs about Torah influence their reading and teaching of Torah? How do their beliefs on revelation influence their interpretation of holy texts?

Reader Theories

In contemporary literary theory, the reader plays a prominent role. Two initiatives within literary theory--reader response theory and the aesthetics of reception--make the text/reader nexus and the process of reading their primary orientation. The aesthetics of reception, which is European in origin, developed out of phenomenological philosophy and relates to the reader's consciousness. Some of the prominent thinkers in these areas include: Wolfgang Iser, who draws on the philosopher Roman Ingarden, and Robert Jauss, who draws on the hermeneutic theories of Hans Gadamer. Reader response theory is primarily American in origin and includes works by such thinkers as Norman Holland, David Bleich, Stanley Fish and Robert Scholes. These authors provided me with theoretical constructs to use in assessing and analyzing teachers in the process of reading Torah (see Table 1-2).

Table 1-2

Reader Theories - How do R

READER RESPONS

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Holland, David Bleich, Stan

Robert Scholes:

Reading is inter-textual.

Active reading required for

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Table 1-2

Reader Theories - How do Readers Interact and Interpret Texts?

READER RESPONSE THEORY	AESTHETICS OF RECEPTION
Ideas based on the writings of Norman Holland, David Bleich, Stanley Fish and Robert Scholes: Reading is inter-textual. Active reading required for new textual interpretations. Reading is a dynamic process The text is not static. Interpretive community with shared practices, assumptions, and purposes creates new interpretations.	Ideas based on the writings of Wolfgang Iser, Robert Jauss, Hans Gadamer: Reading is a dialogue between past and present text. "The fusion of horizons" produces new text. "Spots of indeterminancy" create new text. Text is not static. New self emerges in process of transformation of text. Aesthetic pole is created by reader. Artistic pole is created by author. Reader's disposition influences aesthetic production.

Aesthetics of reception theory. Iser presents a dynamic construct for the process of reading that includes the aesthetic and artistic poles which readers navigate in understanding "spots of indeterminancy." Jauss also suggests a dynamic construct for reading which includes a dialogue between past and present meanings of the text. He labels this the "horizons of expectations." A new text emerges when a fusion between the horizons occurs.

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Iser's theory of aesthetic response is based on the phenomenological work of Ingarden. Iser shares Ingarden's view that the text represents a potential structure which is "concretized" by the reader. The "concretization" process is actualized only when the reader brings into play his/her own experiences. The literary work has two poles which Iser labels the aesthetic and artistic. The artistic pole refers to the text created by the author and the aesthetic pole refers to the text created by the reader. The literary work is not identical to the work realized by the reader. The text only takes on life when it is realized through the reader according to Iser. This convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence.

Iser explains that the convergence of text and reader can never be pinpointed and must remain virtual. It is the virtuality of the work that gives rise to the dynamic nature of the reading process. The reader sets the text in motion by relating to the patterns or structure within it, which awakens responses within himself/herself.

> The fact that the reader's role can be fulfilled in different ways, according to historical or individual circumstances, is an indication that the structure of the text allows for different ways of fulfillment. Clearly, then, the process of fulfillment is always a selective one, and any one actualization can be judged against the background of the others potentially present in the textual structure of the reader's role. Each actualization therefore represents a selective realization of the implied reader, whose own structure provides a frame of reference within which individual responses to a text can be communicated to others. This is a vital function of the concept of the implied reader. It provides a link between all the historical and

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pp. 37-81)

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individual actualizations of the text and makes them accessible to analysis. (1978, pp. 37-8)

Iser is describing the dynamic interaction that occurs between the reader and text. The actualization represents the reader's belief structure and what the reader creates from the text. The process of reading, as described by Iser, is a sort of kaleidoscope of perspectives and recollections. He states that even in the simplest of stories, there is bound to be blockage as no tale can ever be told in its entirety. It is only through omissions that a story gains its dynamism. These omissions provide the opportunity for the reader to fill in the gaps left by the text itself. These gaps have a different effect on the virtual dimension and the reader may fill them in differently. The dynamics of reading are revealed in this act. The acts of interpretation occur through the decision making.

According to Iser, the manner in which the reader experiences the text reflects his own disposition, his own beliefs about the subject matter; therefore, texts are a kind of mirror.

> Reading is not a direct internalization, because it is not a one-way process, and our concern will be to find means of describing the reading process as a dynamic interaction between text and reader. We may take as a starting point the fact that the linguistic signs and structures of the text exhaust their function in triggering developing acts of comprehension. This is tantamount to saying that these acts, though set in motion by the text, defy total control by the text itself and, indeed, it is the very lack of control that forms the basis of the creative side of reading. The reader's enjoyment begins when he himself becomes productive, when the text allows him to bring his own faculties into play. (1978, pp. 107-8)

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al situation occurs as the reader is forced to reveal aspects of himself to
lity different from his/her own. In supplying the missing links, the reader
ms of experiences different from his/her own. Through the process of
retrospection, Iser suggests meaning is assembled. The text provokes
ons and the reader in turn projects interpretive possibilities.

ead, we react to what we ourselves have produced and it is this mode of
that, in fact, enables us to experience the text as an actual event. We do not
ike an empirical object; nor do we comprehend it like a predicative fact; it
presence in our minds to our own reactions, and it is these that make us
the meaning of the text as a reality ... for the acquisition of experience is not
of adding on--it is a restructuring of what we already possess. (Iser, 1978,
132)

from old patterns of thinking leads to new interpretive possibilities. Iser
ading has the same structure as an experience. When the old and new meet,
thing new, a re-creation. Iser explains that experience is analogous to the
n of the text. It is not based on identifying two different experiences (old
on the interaction between the two.

ling process operates on different levels according to Iser. In thinking the
ther, the reader's own individuality recedes into the background and the
t become more prominent. Iser describes these two levels as the "alien me"
me." The thoughts of the text can only become an absorbing theme if our
adapt to it. This is the dialectic of reading--the need to decipher a text
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deciphering a text in which meaning emerges also produces an aspect of the reader which he/she is not directly conscious. It is through this deciphering and interpretive process that the reader formulates himself/herself. Iser refers to Ricoeur who states that comprehension has two separate stages.

> There are two distinct stages of comprehension: the stage of "meaning" ... and the stage of "significance," which represents the active taking over of the meaning by the reader--the meaning taking effect in existence. (1973, p. 151)

Meaning is assembled during the reading process but the absorption of the meaning into the reader's existence is significance. When the two operations occur, the reader constitutes himself/herself forging a new reality. Iser states that a transformation occurs to the reader when "the constitution of meaning, therefore gains its full significance when something happens to the reader." This transformation suggests that the reader is lifted out of time to experience the text. It is the constitution of meaning that enables the reader to formulate himself/herself and discover an inner world not previously conscious.[4]

Another aspect within the process of reading delineated by Iser is the unpredictability of the process or "spots of indeterminancy." The gaps or blanks within a text impel the reader to interact with it. [5]

> Whenever the reader bridges the gaps, communication begins. The gaps function as a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves. Hence the structured blanks of the text stimulate the process of ideation to be performed by the reader on terms set by the text. (1978, p. 169)

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[4] Kafka parallels this approach in his writing, "a book should serve as the ax for the frozen sea within us."
[5] Ingarden's concept "Unbestimmtheitsstellen" or places of indeterminancy is reflected in Iser's spots of indeterminancy. Ingarden notes that the blanks induce the reader to perform or concretize the text.

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(1982, p. 90)

Iser assigns considerable freedom to the reader to interpret a work. He views the reader as someone who seeks coherence through sense-making or meaning-making by reconnecting his/her own experiences to the structure of the text.

Jauss' reception theory differs from Iser's theory of aesthetic response because of its historical focus. Jauss' theory claims that the "concretization" within the reading process is a historically situated event. He speaks of the "horizons of expectations" as the historical moment of how a work was received and understood at that time. Jauss, who draws on the work of Gadamer, views the text as an endless dialogue between past and present. The present situation of the interpreter will always influence how the past is understood. Speaking of a "fusion of horizons," Jauss suggests that the reader can only make sense of the text in light of the present cultural horizon. Jauss writes:

> The reconstruction of the horizon of expectations, on the basis of which a work in the past was created and received, enables us to find the questions to which the text originally answered and thereby to discover how the reader of that day viewed and understood the work. This approach corrects the usually unrecognized values of a classical concept of art or of an interpretation that seeks to modernize, and it avoids the recourse to a general spirit of the age, which involves circular reasoning. It brings out the hermeneutic difference between past and present ways of understanding a work, points up the history of reception--providing both approaches and thereby challenges as platonizing dogma the apparently self-evident dictum of philological metaphysics that literature is timelessly present and that it has objective meaning, determined once and for all and directly open to the interpreter at any time. (1982, p. 90)

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Stanley Fish initially devel

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proach rejects readers who attempt to confer contemporary meanings onto
idering its historical value. Jauss challenges the impulse to modernize texts.
logue between past and present is essential.

esponse theory. Fish,[6] who originally developed affective stylistics, later
ocess and described it as interpretive communities. This notion suggests
eaders with shared practices and competencies. For Fish, the interpretive
he text itself determines interpretations. Fish dissolves the dichotomy
and object and focuses on the discourse conducted by communities of
ming the dilemma of where authority lies, he demonstrates that authority
the text nor the reader, but in the meanings produced by an interpretive
community whether it be religious or cultural, has its own set of
poses and goals when engaging in the interpretive process. This is how Fish
lity of interpretation among different readers who belong to the same

is that there is never a moment when one believes nothing, when
sness is innocent of any and all categories of thought, and whatever
s of thought are operative at a given moment will serve as an undoubted
How does communication ever occur if not by reference to a public and
m? Communication occurs within situations and that to be in that situation

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lly developed a theoretical position that he called "affective stylisitics." This construct
temporal, experiential process. Fish also developed the concept of "the informed reader."
fateme developed the notion of "the superreader" and Wolff of "the intended reader." For
ader signified someone who was a competent speaker of the language, in full possession of
that a mature listener brings to the task of comprehension, and has literary competence. Lit
The superreader represents one who uncovers the encoded message while the informed
self-reflective and the intended reader uncovers the historical dispositions of the reading
r was aiming. All of these constructs place the role of the reader in the foreground in the

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> is already to be in possession of a structure of assumptions, of practices understood to be relevant in relation to purposes and goals that are already in place; and it is within the assumption of these purposes and goals that any utterance is immediately heard. (1980, pp. 318-9)

Fish claims that there are understood practices and assumptions within an institution and situation that contribute to the meaning of the text. Fish (1980) asserts that the interpretive strategies used by individual readers "exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around" (p. 171).

Scholes (1989) describes the dialectic between text and reader with a metaphor of two faces and two circles--centripetal and centrifugal reading. In the first metaphor, reading has two faces. One direction is back toward the original text or context, and the other direction is forward toward the textual situation of the reader. He states:

> Reading is almost always an affair of at least two times, two places, and two consciousness that interpretation is the endlessly fascinating, difficult and important matter that it is. We see this most acutely in religious, legal, and literary reading.... Reactionary theories emphasize the face that looks back.... Radical theories emphasize the fact that looks forward insisting on the freedom and creativity of the reader along with the mutability of meanings in general. (1989, p. 7)

The metaphor of centripetal and centrifugal circles expands this one-dimensional approach. This representation suggests that in the centripetal posture, the reader yields to the text as the source of all meaning. This is a very fundamentalist approach. In the centrifugal posture, the reader stands on the perimeter and looks into the text, taking into account his

own experience and situation.

Reading is always an interpre

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own experience and situation. This approach places more responsibility upon the reader. Reading is always an interplay between these two postures whether we have an awareness of the process or not. Both of these approaches are extreme representations of the enterprise of reading and Scholes recognizes their limitations.

Scholes describes the reading process and highlights the dialectic dimension in the following passage.

> Learning to read books, or pictures or films is not just a matter of acquiring information from texts, it is a matter of learning to read and write the texts of our lives. Reading is not merely an academic experience but a way of accepting the fact that our lives are of limited duration and that whatever satisfaction we may achieve in life must come through the strength of our engagement with what is around us ... reading is not just a matter of standing safely outside texts, where their power cannot reach us. It is a matter of entering, of passing through the looking glass and seeing ourselves on the other side. (1989, pp. 19, 27)

Iser, Jauss, Fish and Scholes recognize the dynamic interaction that occurs when readers enter texts. They all view the construction of meaning as an active process initiated by the reader or by the community of readers. Jauss identifies the historical context as a significant dimension of reading, whereas Iser and Scholes point to the reader's consciousness. All of these thinkers view this inter-textual activity as a transformation for the reader. It is only through the process of active reading that the text and reader emerge. These thinkers would agree with the words of Roland Barthes that reading is, "rewriting the text of the work within the text of our lives." (1989, p. 1)

In the last section, I p
interpretive reading. In the s
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In each period I focus on the
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Talmudic literature
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"Oven of Akhnai," a tale wh
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n Jewish Philosophy

ıst section, I presented various approaches for understanding the process of ding. In the section below, I will review three periods of Jewish philosophical nexus between text and reader: the Talmudic, medieval and modern periods. focus on the central tension between faith and reason or individual initiative to authority which is inherent in interpreting holy texts (see Table 3). This central role in how individuals enter the historical conversation.

ic literature - "Oven of Aknai". Many teachers of Jewish texts who are ewish learning as adults stand on the continuum between individual initiative to authority. If teachers believe that the text is God given, then meaning is ne text, engaging the centripetal posture. If the text is considered a human n more liberties may be taken to explore and excise meaning from other l the Torah text, engaging the centrifugal posture. This logical assumption interpretation works is turned on its head in the Talmudic story called the i," a tale which involves a dispute between Talmudic scholars regarding the an oven. Rabbi Eliezer declares the oven to be ritually pure; the other sages ılly impure. After failing to convince the sages through rational arguments, ıvokes supernatural miracles to convince his colleagues that he is right. I use strate the tension between individual initiative and submission to authority.

Table 1-3

Text Analysis – Jewish Pi

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Table 1-3

Text Analysis – Jewish Philosophical Perspectives

How do readers and communities of readers interpret holy texts?

TALMUDIC LITERATURE	Oven of Aknai	"It is not in heaven." Miracles don't count. Communal responsibility for text interpretation counts. Majority rules.
MEDIEVAL LITERATURE	Maimonides	Intellectual reasoning reigns supreme. Faith and reason need to coincide. In contest between "1,001 wise men versus 1,001 prophets, wise men prevail."
MODERN LITERATURE	Soloveitchik	The dialectic tension between faith and reason is generative. It promotes intellectual dignity. The tension between homo-religious and cognitive man produces intellectual dynamism.

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On that day Rabbi Eliezer brought forward every imaginable argument, but they did not accept them. Said he to them: "If the law is as I say, let this carob tree prove it!" Thereupon the carob tree was torn a hundred cubits out of its place--others say, four hundred cubits. "No proof can be brought from a carob tree," they retorted. Again he said to them: "If the law is as I say, let the stream of water prove it!" Whereupon the stream of water flowed backward. "No proof can be brought from a stream of water," they rejoined. Again he argued: "If the law is as I say, let the walls of the schoolhouse prove it." Whereupon the walls inclined to fall. But Rabbi Joshua rebuked them, saying: "When scholars are engaged in a halakhic (legal) dispute, what have you to interfere?" Hence, they did not fall in honor of Rabbi Eliezer, and they are still standing thus inclined. Again Rabbi Eliezer invoked heaven for support and said: "If the law is as I say, let it be proved from heaven!" Whereupon a heavenly voice cried out: "Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer?" Rabbi Joshua arose and exclaimed, "It is not in heaven" (Bava Metzia 59b).

Although this rich story can be interpreted in multiple ways, it speaks directly to the role of individual initiative and the power of an interpretive community. Even with all the hints of divine miracles, the majority of rabbis chose to follow their own reasoning rather than the signs from above. This story suggests that learning or intellectual reasoning and not direct revelation mediates the word of God. The learning and decision that take precedence in this story is that of the community of learners. This interpretive community confers greater weight on the voice of reason than the voice of faith and considers people to be active in the pursuit of meaning. In the Oven of Aknai story, the cogency of a legal argument takes precedence over heavenly signs. "It is not in heaven" suggests that readers of

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l literature - Maimonides. This twelfth century philosopher uses the Oven of
proof text against prophetic authority. Maimonides did not believe that the
ne or prophetic authority could override legal argumentation or the voice of
, in terms of legal matters, the prophet is like any other man who needs to
nd reasonable arguments to defend his position. Maimonides is not
ole of authority but rather distinguishing between laws that stem from Sinai
sult from legal or halachic reasoning. Maimonides asserts that there is no
garding laws for which the authority of Sinai is claimed; however, there is a
allows for disagreement. At the time of revelation, Maimonides believes,
ns were given--the legal and the philosophic. Each tradition entailed systems
e talmudic law uses rules of hermeneutics by which people can analyze
ws. Philosophical tradition relies on two types of reasoning--demonstrative
both dependant on individual initiative.

ides presents this argument regarding the subservient role of prophetic
voice of reason in the *Mishneh Torah*.

estimony of reason which denies his prophecy is stronger than the testimony
ye which sees his miracles, for it has already been made clear to men of
at it is not proper to honor nor to worship other than the One who caused all
exist and is unique in His ultimate perfection. (p. 106)

prophetic authority can demand obedience to miracles does not convince
cording to Maimonides. Central to all of Maimonides' work is the notion

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that faith must be anchored in intellectual reasoning. He demands that all the commandments be grounded in a rational basis, otherwise it trivializes God's intentions. Promoting the notion of legal argumentation, Maimonides writes:

> Even if one-thousand Prophets who are as Elijah and Elisha would interpret any interpretation, and one-thousand and one wise men interpret the opposite of that interpretation ... we follow the position of the one-thousand and one wise men, not the position of the one thousand outstanding Prophets. (p. 116)

True religious faith, according to Maimonides, is manifest by one who trusts his reason and the rule of majority and refuses to bow to authority unknowingly. The power of the interpretive community takes precedence over the power of heavenly authority. Only in questions involving war and peace and economic policy does the prophet have the full authority to suspend Torah laws. Although the authority given to a prophet is enormous in times of war, he is powerless when rational discourse occurs between scholars.

Maimonides reasons that disagreement with the law does not indicate disloyalty to text or the power of authority but rather loyalty to intellectual initiative and the power of argumentation. Critical reflection about the law occurs when one is exposed to legal argumentation or philosophy according to Maimonides.

In his magnum opus, *The Guide to the Perplexed*, Maimonides provides a framework for understanding the relationship between authority and reason. He maintains that by engaging in philosophic disciplines that utilize one's intellectual reasoning capacities, one attains a deeper love of God. By excluding prophecy from argumentation, Maimonides weakens the security which results from obedience to traditional authority. He believes that a rational orientation to text rather than uncritical obedience to the words is an appropriate

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stance to reading text. Just as in the Oven of Aknai tale which teaches that authority is subservient to legal reasoning, Maimonides proclaims that 1,001 prophets are subservient to 1,001 wise men. For Maimonides, the *Guide* is an epistemological map for how loyal Jews can demonstrate allegiance to both their religious community of authority and faith and the universal community of intellectual assertiveness and reason.

Maimonides' task in his great works, *The Mishneh Torah* and *The Guide to the Perplexed,* is to reconcile Greek philosophy with Judaism. He demonstrates that Judaism did not demand a denial of universal truths. Reason and faith, philosophy and Judaism are compatible according to his intellectual reasoning. Maimonides claims that only when one engages in philosophical speculation but unaware of its boundaries or types of arguments that disloyalty and apostasy occur. Otherwise the universal world of reasoning and the particular world of faith are compatible as both were committed to truth according to him. Maimonides struggles with meshing Aristotle's philosophy with Jewish texts. Greek philosophy represents the community of reason, the universal community of intellectual assertiveness, while Jewish texts represent the community of faith and submission to authority. This great teacher wrestled with how to reconcile critical and traditional stances in reading texts. The theme of faith versus reason or submission to authority and intellectual

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assertiveness has also been investigated by various modern philosophers including Erich Fromm, Walter Kaufmann, Yeshayhu Leibowitz and Joseph Soloveithchik.[7]

Modern literature - Joseph Soloveitchik. For Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, a twentieth century theologian and philosopher, both dimensions of faith and reason are present when a Jew approaches the Torah text and his/her life. Soloveitchik does not deny human rationality nor minimize the ability of the human being to submit to divine will. This posture of surrender to authority is praised as a heroic dimension of spirituality especially in the Abraham saga. Yet Soloveitchik demonstrates how the interplay of both themes of submission to authority and individual assertiveness through reason lead to a mature religious life. The way that you read Torah text guides your normative behavior, according to Soloveitchik.

The spiritual hero that Soloveitchik describes in his essay "Halachic Man" is represented by great autonomous creative power. It is the individual committed to disciplined learning who is praised and nourished spiritually. This position parallels

[7] Fromm, in his writings, stresses the humanistic, non-authoritarian aspects of Judaism. He represents stories from the Jewish tradition which emphasize the intellectual powers and dignity of human beings. God's authoritarian powers are eclipsed in Fromm's humanistic world-view of Judaism. Fromm interprets Judaism as encouraging individual dignity and intellectual assertiveness. Walter Kaufmann, Biblical scholar and philosopher, is critical of Fromm as he represents only one dimension within Judaism. Kaufmann demonstrates in his works that both dimensions are present within Judaism--the authoritarian and humanistic. In analyzing the entire Abraham saga, Kaufmann notes that Abraham argues with God on certain occasions and asserts his intellectual prowess while unconditionally submitting to God's will with his son's sacrifice. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, an Israeli philosopher and scientist, does not see the humanistic or intellectually assertive dimension of Judaism. What typifies Judaism is the patriarch Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son. For him, religious maturity arises when a Jew is totally dominated by theocentric passion. For him, religion is either human centered or God centered. According to Leibowitz's world-view, intellectual initiative and reasoning needs to be sublimated to divine submission in order to truly serve God. Jews who are on the highest religious rung are capable of negating themselves, their reasoning powers and creative capacities before God. For Fromm, the polar opposite needs to occur for man to be whole and serve God. Both Fromm and Leibowitz attempt to eliminate one of the conflicting modes of operation within Judaism. For Fromm, submission to authority represents an early stage of religious practice. As man evolves, Fromm reasons so does Judaism in its elevation of human reasoning and individual dignity. For Leibowitz, the individual Jew evolves into a faithful Jew when he/she becomes theocentric in thinking and practice. To eliminate one's own initiative and submit to God's will is the true sign of faith.

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Maimonides' views regarding the ideal religious individual. In this work, Soloveitchik offers sharp contrasts between the man of faith and reason. He labels these two types--"cognitive man" and "homo-religious." The former is typified by involvement with modern science and reasoning while the latter is represented as seeking mystical union with God. "Halachic man" shares aspects of both but rises above both of them. Halachic man is capable of synthesizing both worlds and living within this dialectic. This dialectic tension helps produce generative intellectual and spiritual insights within halachic man. The impulse to bring something new into the world, according to Soloveitchik, is the hallmark of human dignity. Soloveitchik writes:

> If a man wishes to attain the rank of holiness, he must become a creator of worlds. If a man never creates, never brings into being anything new, anything original, then he cannot be holy unto his God. That passive type who is derelict in fulfilling his task of creation cannot become holy. (1983, p. 66)

According to Soloveitchik, halachic man is active intellectually and capable of creating new worlds.

> Halachic man is a spontaneous, creative type. He is not particularly submissive and retiring and is not meek when it is a matter of maintaining his own views. Neither modesty nor humility characterizes the image of halachic man. On the contrary, his most characteristic feature is strength of mind.... This autonomy of the intellect at times reaches heights unimaginable in any other religion. (1983, p. 70)

For Soloveitchik, nothing intimidates halachic man. His intellectual assertiveness frees him from the pressures of social conformity. His intellectual activism connects him to God by unlocking new meaning.

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Although Soloveitchik applauds intellectual activism, he also encourages submission. In an essay, "Majesty and Humility," he writes of two experiential moments of God. There are moments when human beings feel that they can soar above the heavens and there are moments of defeat and suffering. Soloveitchik explains that in Judaism, there is an ethic of defeat that the Western philosophical mind cannot comprehend. Defeat signifies submission and abrogation of the self. The ethic of retreat or withdrawal is rooted in the kabbalistic idea of "tzimtzum" (self-contraction).[8] Soloveitchik notes that there are moments when submission to divine authority is more heroic than individual initiative.

According to Soloveitchik, submission to authority is heroic because it indicates that individuals have been purged of arrogance and the desire to conquer all matters intellectually. Acceptance of God's will and the commandments does not signify defeat, according to Soloveitchik's dialectic. Although Abraham is defeated in the sacrifice story, he is also victorious in fulfilling God's command. Soloveitchik views submission to authority in Abraham's case as a path to further renewal and intellectual assertiveness. In his world-view, individuals advance spiritually only by advancing and retreating. It is through the assertion of one's intellectual abilities that one participates completely in the drama of Jewish life. Yet it is through submission to authority as in Abraham's case that one is totally victorious. Soloveitchik seeks to reconcile these two initiatives by providing the following description of the process:

> Man moves toward fulfillment of his destiny along a zig-zag line; progress frequently superseded by retrogression; closeness to God, by the dark night of separation. (1983, p. 87)

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[8] The idea of tzimtzum exhorts individuals to accept defeat and submission as it signals a God like behavior which leads to creativity. The path of tzimtzum says no to intellectual assertiveness and reasoning.

Soloveitchik purports that Jews oscillate between two communities--the community of faith which demands collective submission and the community of reason which demands individual initiative. According to this dialectic construct, the Jew plays two roles--a creature of God, submissive to his will and a creator along with God, assertive and active. By being a creature of God and creator, Jews are able to inhabit the two communities of faith and reason.

How dependant are teachers of Torah on the text and traditional commentaries and how much do they rely on their own reasoning abilities? What type of reading do they do personally? Do their voices of reason override the signs from above as Rabbi Joshua and the other sages proclaimed, "It is not in heaven." How do their beliefs about the origins of Torah and their role in the revelation process position them to interpret text personally and pedagogically? To what extent do the constellation of beliefs about Torah influence their teaching of Torah? Below I explore the literature on teacher beliefs and subject matter knowledge that inform this study.

Role of Beliefs in Shaping Subject Matter Knowledge and Practice

Two decades ago, Fenstermacher (1994), a philosopher of education, predicted that beliefs would become the most powerful construct in educational research. The goal of teacher education, he argued, is to help teachers transform unexamined beliefs about teaching into evidentiary beliefs. Helping teachers transform their tacit beliefs into articulated positions would guide them in assessing their own classroom practice.

The literature on teacher beliefs has taken a prominent place within the research on teaching and teacher education. At the time of Fenstermacher's prediction, attitudes and beliefs were significant constructs for understanding teachers' behaviors, not their thinking.

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Researchers studied teachers' attitudes between the 1950's and 1970's and teacher beliefs in the decades which followed (Richardson, 1996; Nespor, 1992; Pajares, 1992).

Prior beliefs and perception. Educational researchers interpret beliefs as filters for processing subject matter knowledge. The cognitive psychologists have demonstrated how prior beliefs shape new knowledge by serving as a filter for processing information (Abelson, 1979; Anderson, 1985; Nespor, 1987; Schommer, 1990).

> All human perception is influenced by the totality of this generic knowledge structure--schemata, constructs--but the structure which guides how this phenomena will be characterized is influenced by beliefs. (Anderson, 1985, p. 4)

Anderson, along with other cognitive psychologists, emphasize the importance of prior beliefs. The ways in which declarative and procedural knowledge is processed through schemata or filters is dependant upon prior beliefs. When learners attempt to find meaning in new situations, they interpret events according to already existing schemata (Anderson, 1991; Resnick, 1983).

Clark calls teachers' beliefs and preconceptions implicit theories. He writes they may not be consistent, but rather "eclectic aggregations of cause-effect propositions from many sources, rules of thumb, generalizations drawn from personal experience, beliefs, values, biases, and prejudices" (1988, p. 5). Torah teachers' beliefs about the revelation of Torah are also "eclectic aggregations" which affect their reading of the text.

Prior beliefs and practice. Bussis, Chittendam and Amarel (1976) conducted one of the earliest studies to examine the complex, interactive relationship between beliefs and practice. This large-scale interview study, conducted within the hermeneutic tradition, focused on teachers' personal constructs of curriculum and children. The

researchers asserted that a teacher's construction of curriculum and children is derived from a personal interpretation of the world. This study suggests that teachers hold implicit theories, "eclectic aggregations" or folk theories (Bruner, 1998) about children and classrooms.

Other researchers (Clandinin, 1986; Cochran Smith and Little, 1990) examined teachers' personal images and theories as part of their practical knowledge. Elbaz (1983) fits within this tradition of studying beliefs as part of a teacher's personal practical knowledge embedded within the teacher's practice. Elbaz (1983); Clandinin and Connelly (1987); and Schon (1983) in his notion of "knowledge-in-action" and Kagan (1990) do not separate beliefs from knowledge because of their embedded nature. In all of their studies, it is difficult to pinpoint where practical knowledge ends and belief begins. They consider beliefs an embedded element within a teacher's way of knowing and practicing. These researchers conclude that a teacher's knowledge is very personal and subjective and much like beliefs--therefore difficult to separate beliefs from knowledge. Nespor claims that knowledge systems are open to evaluation and criticism whereas beliefs are not. She labels educational beliefs as an "entangled domain" (1987). These domains influence other domains such as practice but are not open to the same criteria as knowledge systems.

Prior beliefs and subject matter knowledge. These cognitive theories of learning suggest that not only do beliefs form an integral component of teachers' ways of thinking, they mediate their practice as well (Clark and Peterson, 1986). Grossman, Wilson and Shulman (1989) have suggested that "teachers' beliefs about subject matter including orientation towards the subject matter contribute to the ways in which teachers think about their subject matter and the choices they make in their teaching." Much of the recent work

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regarding the acquisition of specific subject matter knowledge addresses the role of prior beliefs or orientation. Many researchers (Ball, 1991; Wilson and Shulman, 1989; Kennedy, 1990; Wilson and Wineburg, 1988; and Grossman, 1985) describe how teachers acquire their subject matter knowledge using beliefs or orientation as the backdrop. Shulman refers to subject matter knowledge as the "missing paradigm" of teacher knowledge. The focus on teacher knowledge specifically directed towards subject matter acquisition is a relatively new area of research.

Grossman (1985, 1987, 1991), demonstrates how orientation--"a basic organizing framework for knowledge about literature"--influences a teacher's pedagogical choices in the classroom. Grossman's research is especially relevant because it focuses on literary interpretation which in many ways closely parallels Torah text interpretation. In a study of two novice English teachers with distinctly different views of literature, Grossman examines their orientations and classroom representations of the subject matter. She introduces the reader to Colleen, who views explication of text as a central goal in interpreting literature, and Martha, who is guided by the idea of the personal response of the reader. Colleen's goals for teaching are filtered through an approach to literature that directs readers to become critical of text. Martha's goals for teaching, which emerge from her orientation, encourage her students to respond personally to the big ideas and themes of literature. Colleen plans for her courses with the text as central to her lessons. Her activities reflect a focus on language. Martha, however, chooses activities within her lessons to promote the student's affective responses to the text. In each class, the words of the text play a different role depending upon the teacher's orientation. Colleen treats words with great respect; for Martha, words are a springboard for promoting personal meaning among the students. This study demonstrates

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how a teacher's orientation, which includes beliefs about the nature and purpose of literature, influences his/her thinking about the subject matter and choice of teaching strategies and activities.

Other researchers investigate how orientation structures subject matter in teaching practice. Gudmundsdottir, Cary and Wilson (1985) examine the effects that undergraduate majors had on the way social studies teachers conceptualize U.S. history. The researchers report that the two anthropology majors structure the subject matter using geography and history. The political science major organizes his U.S. history course using his own major as a guide. A fourth teacher who had majored in history organizes her history course using chronological periods, trends and themes. In each case, the teachers represent social studies from his/her subject matter knowledge base whether it be political science, geography or history. Wilson and Wineburg (1988) also study four history teachers and find their subject matter knowledge and beliefs about history affect their teaching of the subject that illustrates the "entangled domain" phenomenon.

Wineburg demonstrates how the reading of historical texts by working historians and AP high school students of history is influenced by their beliefs regarding the nature of history. The act of reading is filtered through the reader's beliefs about history. Wineburg writes:

> The findings of this study are predictable but not trivial: A group of historians read a set of historical documents in more sophisticated ways than a group of high school students ... what enabled these historians to see patterns where a group of able high school seniors saw only a collection of details ... expertise rested less on bringing the right problem schema to the task and more on constructing a context-specific

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> schema tailored to the specific event ... to be able to reason thoughtfully about the accuracy of these documents, historians needed to build node by node an elaborate model of this event ... high school students know a lot of history but still have little idea of how historical knowledge is constructed. (1991, pp. 83-84)

In contrasting the right answer approach of high school students with the capacity of historians to build a model of knowledge, Wineburg demonstrates that these cognitive processes only make sense when attention is paid to the broader set of beliefs undergirding historical inquiry. He reveals in this study how reading strategies of historians shape their construction of knowledge. My working hypothesis parallels this research initiative. I maintain that reading strategies of Torah teachers will shape their knowledge of the text.

Prior beliefs and Torah. Just as certain sets of beliefs about the purpose and nature of history and literature shape the ways it is represented in a classroom, so, too, do beliefs about the nature and purpose of Torah. A teacher's beliefs about origins and authorship and authority serve as a filter for screening what ideas are personally considered and represented in the classroom. In this research study, teachers' beliefs about Torah undergird their interpretive reading of holy texts (see Table 1-4). How Torah teachers interpret the role of revelation suggests a position regarding the authority of the text and their own particular reading stance. Reading strategies of active readers of Torah influence the ways of understanding and interpreting the text personally and publicly in a classroom.

Just as teachers of English literature, math, science and history struggle to represent their subject matter authentically, Torah teachers encounter many of the same challenges. Teachers of Torah have an additional struggle because of the religious dimension of the Torah text. How readers of Torah view the act of reading itself will determine how

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ambiguities and frictions within the text are resolved. I believe that the strategies that they use personally in reading text will influence their representation of Torah in the classroom. Is the act of reading Torah viewed as an act of creativity or commitment to text, initiative or submission? How will these modes of reading influence Torah teachers in their classroom practice?

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Table 1-4

Beliefs and Subject Matter Knowledge

How do Torah teachers' knowledge and beliefs about Torah influence their reading and teaching of Torah?

BELIEFS AND PERCEPTIONS	Beliefs filter and structure perception. Interactive relationship between beliefs and knowledge. "Entangled Domain."	Abelson, (1979); Anderson,(1985,1991); Nespor, (1992); Schommer,(1990); Resnick,(1983)
BELIEFS AND PRACTICE	Teachers' personal images and constructs regarding curriculum and children are embedded in their personal practical knowledge and practice.	Bussis,Chittendam, Amarel, (1976); Clandinin, (1986); Cochran, Smith, Little, (1990); Elbaz, (1983), Schon, (1983), Bruner, (1998)
BELIEFS AND SUBJECT MATTER KNOWLEDGE	Orientation is basic organizing framework for knowledge. Beliefs and orientation contribute to subject matter knowledge.	Clark, Peterson, (1986); Wilson, Shulman, Grossman, (1989); Ball, (1993); Wineburg, (1991)
BELIEFS AND KNOWLEDGE OF TORAH	Orientations influence subject matter knowledge. Several orientations for structuring Torah include: normative, cultural and disciplinary.	Dorph, (1993);Chervin, (1994); Skhedi and Horenczyk, (1995)

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The complex nature of religious beliefs undergirding Torah inquiry is often challenging personally and pedagogically for Torah teachers. Three recent studies (Shkedi and Horenczyk, 1995; Chervin, 1994; and Dorph, 1993) conducted in the field of Jewish education demonstrate how teachers' beliefs and personal orientations influence the teaching of Torah.

These studies point to the central role that prior beliefs play in organizing knowledge about the subject matter of Torah. Just as literature and history teachers filter new knowledge and shape their subject matter according to their background, experiences, knowledge and beliefs, so, too, do Torah teachers process the text according to their disposition towards it.

Shkedi and Horenczyk (1995) conducted a study with 52 Bible teachers in Israel and the Diaspora on the role of a teacher's personal ideology vis-a-vis his/her educational deliberations in the classroom. Through extensive interviews, these researchers describe three ideological orientations towards the Biblical text: (1) the disciplinary, (2) the normative, and (3) cultural approach. In keeping with Gadamer's view (1976), these researchers maintain that there is no neutral interpretation of one's cultural tradition. Each of these teachers confront the text and shape their lessons according to one of the above orientations.

The disciplinary approach was marked by openness and skepticism. A teacher with this personal ideology stated:

> We have to educate a person to have wide perspectives, to be pluralistic, to be skeptical and not just to accept what other people tell him....We try to arouse some skepticism in order to get them to want to investigate, to go deeper, to understand. I

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> certainly see it as a mission to undermine the presumption that the Bible belongs to the religious people. (pp. 110-11)

The central belief of the normative-ideational approach is that the text suggests a set of ideas about truth and actions that are prescribed as good and desirable to follow. One of the teachers who represented this ideology said:

> You act because that's what God decreed.... The question of whether you ought to never comes up. I don't decide for God what He ought to do. That's what you do because it's what Providence commanded. (p. 112)

The cultural approach claims that the Bible belongs to the Jewish people but is a historical, cultural product that shaped the Jewish people. This approach suggests that the Torah guides our values. Teachers within this orientation expressed themselves in the following ways:

> The most important thing is to create a bond of love and affection between the non-religious child and the Bible, just as the Bible becomes part of me, and I bring a large measure of enthusiasm to my involvement with it, it should be a part of a non-religious Israeli child.... It is important to bring up points related to human problems and their application to our lives ... helping the poor and the weak ... the value of life, responsibility and mutual responsibility.... I have never taught the Book of Joshua because it represents things that are the opposite of my views, killing and dispossessing. (p. 115)

A second study in Jewish education (Chervin, 1994) examines how personal orientation influences pedagogical orientation in Torah teaching among U. S. teachers. Chervin looked intensively at six veteran Torah teachers. Through case studies, he attempts to clarify the role of beliefs or, as he labels it, personal orientation on the teachers'

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pedagogical orientation. Chervin argues that a teacher has a personal orientation towards reading the Torah text that influences his/her pedagogical orientation. He demonstrates how personal beliefs play a forceful role in the context of Torah teaching.

The study utilizes three philosophical orientations for analyzing Torah teachers in the classroom--critical teaching, indoctrination and clarification. Chervin favors critical teaching of Torah as most desirable. Critical teaching in this study is a composite of the thinking of Scheffler (1965), Chazan (1978, Snook (1972) and Noddings (1993). While all teaching may aim at the propagation of particular beliefs, the key factors for critical teaching are: evaluative criteria for judging evidence, independent scrutiny by students and rational dialogue between teachers and students. Indoctrination is a form of teaching that attempts to impose beliefs on others without their rational acceptance. The clarification approach of teaching was popularized by the "values clarification" movement in the 1960's and 1970's (Raths, Harmin, Simon, 1966). The values clarification approach does not aim to instill any one set of values. The goal within this teaching is to help students critically examine values in their lives.

Dorph's (1993) study examines the role of prior beliefs among prospective Jewish educators. She found a lack of critical orientation among people learning to become Torah teachers. Dorph examines prospective Jewish teachers' knowledge and beliefs about Torah learning and teaching. She interviewed 16 prospective Jewish educators at the Jewish Theological Seminary and the University of Judaism who were preparing to teach in Conservative Jewish settings. Through her interview analysis, she discovered that intensity and length of Jewish study did not result in more informed responses in the classroom.

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"Informed," in her claim, means an understanding of critical frameworks for assessing and applying Torah knowledge. She makes this claim exclusively through an interview study.

Dorph (1993) compares the responses of prospective educators on their beliefs about Torah with more experienced teachers. The prospective educators' reading of Torah is quite literal and most often fundamentalist. Unlike the veteran teachers, the prospective Jewish educators assume that the biblical account is scientifically and historically correct. Many of these prospective educators try to harmonize the biblical accounts they read with science. They are very limited in their reading strategies, unlike the veteran teachers who view the Torah as containing multiple interpretations. She writes:

> The tendency to read the Torah as a history book filled with consistent, factual information is still present. The tendency to harmonize the text in order to find it non-problematic is still with us. (p. 147)

Dorph recommends a reexamination of how Bible is taught to prospective teachers. In designing courses for new teachers, syntactic structures and the role of prior beliefs need to be addressed. She asserts only if prior beliefs are examined will conditions be created for conceptual change. She writes:

> Presenting alternative models is not enough to change one's beliefs. If it were, the results of this study would be different. After all, most prospective Jewish educators were familiar with literary criticism and source criticism, and yet their early ideas remain intact. (1993, p. 223)

Although different terms are used for belief including orientation and personal ideology, these studies all point to the durable power that beliefs have in structuring Torah knowledge.

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Interplay of Beliefs, Reading and Subject Matter Knowledge

The interplay of beliefs about Torah, reading stance and subject matter knowledge contribute substantially to a teacher's classroom practice. Teachers are not often aware of how their beliefs and reading stance influence their subject matter knowledge and practice. Beers (1988) argues, however, that even when epistemological issues are rarely made explicit in the classroom, they are implicitly represented in the organization and content of the curriculum and in the nature of classroom activity and discourse. By focusing on beliefs about Torah and active reading stance, I am trying to separate key contributing components in the teaching of Torah. Of course, in actual practice, beliefs and reading stance are not held separate from knowledge and representations of knowledge in the classroom. As has been stated, beliefs are an "entangled domain." Beliefs and reading stance are not partitioned off from the rest of the enterprise of teaching Torah. There are multiple factors influencing teaching practice. In this study, beliefs and reading stance of teachers are highlighted to illuminate how classroom tasks and conversations are conducted when texts are interpreted. Are multiple voices heard in the classroom? Are textual dilemmas disclosed or dismissed in the classroom? How do Torah teachers, who are part of the conversation, personally enact this conversation in the classroom? Are students inducted into this great historical conversation and encouraged to add their voices to this ongoing dialogue? Arnold Eisen (1998) writes:

> I treasure the plurality of voices emanating from Sinai, as I welcome the revival of God talk which has taken place in recent years among American Jews. Now, as ever, there is no purpose in seeking consensus in this endeavor, and no possibility of achieving it. The point remains the conversation.

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To what extent do Torah teachers open this "silenced dialogue" between generations? I will be investigating how Torah teachers read Torah personally and implement "doing Torah" in their classrooms.

Summary and Next Steps

In this chapter I have drawn on three streams of scholarly literature to offer multiple perspectives on the process of interpretation and the contours of the historical Torah conversation. I have also tried to demonstrate how the reading of Torah, a holy text, is a unique enterprise, different from the reading of secular texts via one teacher's story. Reader theories describe the dynamic interaction between reader and text. Jewish philosophy points to the dialectic tension between individual and communal reasoning and the problems of authority when studying a holy text. Cognitive psychologists and educational researchers reveal how prior beliefs filter and shape subject matter knowledge and teaching practice. These three powerful sets of ideas provide frameworks and concepts for understanding how teachers interpret texts personally as readers and pedagogically as practitioners. These ideas enriched and informed my thinking as I set about identifying teachers who were knowledgeable and engaged readers of Torah to investigate in their classrooms. The task of developing strategies for getting at teachers' beliefs about Torah and their approaches to reading the text is the focus of the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 2

Methodology – Part I

Introduction

In order to study how engaged readers of Torah connect new generations of learners, I had to locate such teachers in the community. I was interested in finding teachers who were personally linked to the historical Torah conversation and able to "do Torah" (in Hebrew "la'asot Torah") as described by the rabbinic scholar, Netziv of Volozhin, author *of HaEmek Davar* (a Torah commentary). I wanted to identify readers who understood that "to fulfill or obey" the words of Torah means "to construct the meaning of the words of Torah." This approach to Torah, suggested by this 19th century rabbinic scholar, is a unique way to understand the reader/text connection. Usually "to fulfill or obey" the words of Torah signifies behavioral responses. For the Netziv of Volozhin, to "do Torah" was more than a prescriptive behavioral directive, it was an intellectual impulse for the reader of Torah to pursue. To further interpret his words, to "do Torah" means to struggle, to wrestle, to dialogue with past voices in order to generate new meanings from the text. Walt Whitman wrote, "In the highest sense reading is an exercise, a gymnastic struggle, that the reader is to do something for himself." The Torah teacher who views reading as an exercise, a "gymnastic struggle," uses the text as a vehicle for his/her identity and may therefore be more equipped to induct students into this exercise according to my hypothesis. Basically, the great rabbis who interpreted the Torah were readers.

> Reading was a passionate and active grappling with God's living word. It held the challenge of uncovering secret meanings, unheard of explanations, matters of great

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weight and significance. An active, indeed interactive, reading was their method of approaching the sacred text called Torah and through that reading process of finding something at once new and very old. (Holtz, 1984, p. 16)

In addition to the insights of the Netziv of Volozhin and other scholars, I had a diffuse image in my mind of the qualities and skills of this type of reader. I speculated that I could figure out if readers were connected to this great historical conversation by probing their beliefs about Torah and by understanding how they read Torah. I assumed that these two strategies would help me find a select number of readers who fit my image of a learner immersed in the process of "doing Torah." Broadly, I was looking for readers who envisioned their role as a contributing voice in the historical conversation. I conjectured that readers who encountered text fully would be more likely to provide this opportunity to their students. These readers, as teachers, would be more likely to open the "silenced dialogue" between generations.

In addition to being influenced by rabbinic thinking on the reading process, I incorporated ideas from literary criticism into this evolving image of a reader able to "do Torah." I was intrigued by Iser's theories of reading, especially "spots of indeterminancy." I began to make linkages between this idea and rabbinic ideas about midrashic reading that is also an attempt to fill in the blanks or gaps within a Biblical text. Interestingly enough, many of my readers in the study used the same "fill in the blanks" terminology when articulating their own ideas about reading and interpreting Torah. Iser claims that meaning is constituted when readers become productive. This is the beginning of communication between the artistic and aesthetic text and the emergence

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of a new self. A transformation occurs to the reader when he/she becomes productive in the process of reading or a contributing voice in the dialogue between past and present.

Operating with these ideas, I began to develop instruments that would help me identify readers who saw themselves as contributing voices to the great historical conversation of Torah. These were the first two prerequisites: being themselves a contributing voice and viewing themselves as links in the conversation for finding readers to study in their teaching practice. According to my hypothesis, personal meaning precedes public meaning in teaching, thus making this personal link to the great conversation vital.

> With every story we study, we learn not only about what we are reading, but also about ourselves. In deciphering a text, we bring to the fore elements of our own being of which we may not always be conscious. We respond to our own questions and dilemmas. Reading biblical narratives can serve as vehicles of insight into our own personalities as we; as the dynamic tensions within our own families. (Holtz, p.41)

This passage echoes what Barthes and Scholes tell us, a reader needs to integrate the text of his life into the text in order for the reading process to be dynamic. My concern for finding ways for teachers to link new generations of readers to the historical Torah conversation impelled me to conduct this research.

Development of Instruments

I developed two instruments--a beliefs interview and interpretive reading task to help me select readers who fit my initial profile. These instruments gave teachers an opportunity to discuss their own personal philosophy regarding the nature of Torah and

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text interpretation. The readers' responses provided me with a composite view of their personal orientation towards reading Torah. I asked the readers about the origins, authorship, significance, purposes and interpretive frameworks used in studying the Torah text. All of these questions helped me locate them regarding their views and role in the process of revelation. Did they view the text as static or dynamic? How active a role could they play if the text was God given? The interpretive reading task which focused on the sacrifice of Isaac passage (Akedah) challenges a reader's faith and reasoning abilities. This reading task helped to identify those teachers who as readers were both intellectually and emotionally connected to Torah. Through the interview process I was able to decipher how teachers understood the issue of faith versus reason, their struggles with the text and their role in interpreting it.

Beliefs about Torah

To learn about how teachers view their role in the interpretive process I framed questions to uncover their beliefs about Torah and about the reading of holy texts. Teachers' beliefs about the nature and origins of Torah lead to certain dispositional qualities when approaching the text as a reader. The teachers' views on the origins and authorship, nature and purposes, authority and interpretive frameworks of Torah provided me with a richer view of how teachers of Torah approached the text. The interview questions directed toward teachers' beliefs were designed to uncover where these readers stood on the revelation continuum and how they approached textual challenges. The analytic framework included the following questions: Were they active or passive interpreters of text? Did they rely on intellectual reasoning or defer to past authorities? What did their struggle with the words of the text sound like?

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Beliefs interview. The interview was divided into three sections, each focusing on a core substantive issue: (1) authorship and origins, (2) nature and purposes, and (3) authority and interpretive frameworks of Torah. Some of the ideas for this interview protocol were derived from Chervin's work on personal and pedagogical orientations of Torah teachers (1994).

To get at teachers' beliefs about revelation, I asked one open-ended question about the origins of Torah and presented two structured displays featuring a range of positions and passages regarding the authorship and origins of Torah. To explore how the teachers envisioned their role in the process of revelation I directly asked them questions about the origins and authorship of Torah. These questions were designed to probe their thinking and excavate their beliefs regarding the processes by which the Torah text was created and interpreted. If, as traditional Jews believe, all Jews were at Sinai, how does that affect the way text is interpreted? Is revelation a one-time or ongoing experience for those who study text? Do they see themselves as active partners in the process of interpretation?

To what extent is the Torah the product of divine revelation versus human creativity? How important is the question of the Torah's origins to the teachers? Does the text represent a literal history of the Jewish people or a literary version of mythic events? How do they explain what happened at Sinai? Is the story of Sinai a matter of history or historiography? Did these readers envision revelation as a photograph or an impressionistic painting? Those readers who view revelation as a photograph understand it as literally true. They believe that God descended from a certain mountain at a certain time and spoke the words of Torah to Moses. Moses wrote these down and the text before us today are those exact words. Therefore, God's authority is behind every word of Torah. Those readers who

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view revelation as an impressionistic painting accept the Torah as a composite of several documents written at different times by different parts of the community. This view claims that the Torah contains manifold reflections of the cultures, ideas and institutions of its Near Eastern neighbors. The impressionistic version views Torah as a human rendering.

To analyze the readers' thinking, I coded their responses according to a "revelation continuum" with photo at one end and impressionistic painting at the other. I also developed frameworks to assess how assertive or submissive to authority these readers were, how comfortable or uneasy they were in explaining challenges in the text.

One table presented different orientations to the Torah. Dorff (1977) developed these positions from the following four questions: What method should we use to study the Bible? Where did the Bible come from? Is the Bible a special book for us because it carries the authority of God or for some other reason? Do people have the right or obligation to make changes in the text and how? The other display included passages from traditional and contemporary rabbis on the origins of Torah. These passages ranged from verbal revelation to progressive revelation. The readers' responses to these positions helped me locate their personal interpretive stance vis-à-vis the Torah text. I was able to understand how they viewed their role in interpreting a text. To learn about how the teachers envisioned their role in the process of revelation I asked them questions regarding the origins and authorship of Torah.

Below I briefly summarize the four positions developed by Dorff (1977).

"Verbal revelation" maintains that the Torah is the word of God communicated to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The authority of the Bible is God's will. Man's ability to change the

laws are limited. The meaning of the text is the meaning that traditional commentators have assigned to it. This position is generally associated with the Orthodox.

"Continuous revelation" means that God dictated his will at Sinai and at other times but human beings wrote down the records of these encounters. This position is associated with the Conservative movement and ascribes the authority of the text to God's will and the continuing covenant between God and the people of Israel. Within this position, there is a range of beliefs regarding how text meaning is made. Some believe, as the Orthodox do, that meaning comes from the traditional commentators or that rabbis representing the community have the authority to change laws as circumstances arise. The table that I presented to teachers provided three variations on continuous revelation.

The "progressive revelation" position suggests that the Torah is God's will written by human beings. As time goes on, people understand God's will better and better. Associated with the Reform movement, this orientation sees the authority of the Torah on two levels: Moral laws in the Torah come from God, ritual laws have no authority because they were designed by the rabbinic authorities for a specific historic period. In this approach, every individual must decide both which laws to follow and how to interpret them.

The last position, called "no revelation" associated with the Reconstructionist movement denies divine revelation. As in the position associated with the Reform movement, every individual decides on what meaning to assign the text and what laws to follow. The Torah is made by humans.

A second area that I probed in the beliefs interview had to do with the nature and purposes for studying Torah. In what ways is Torah similar or different from studying other texts? In what ways is the process of study different? What purposes do studying

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the Torah personally hold? These questions revealed the teacher's personal connections and reasons for studying Torah. I wanted to know how and to what extent they addressed the Torah text differently from other texts. I was especially interested in whether readers viewed the Torah as a moral guide. I assumed that readers who valued the Torah as a behavioral guide would be more inclined to value the sanctity of the words and struggle to pierce its meaning.

I also wanted to know what teachers believed about the authority of the Torah and about the interpretive frameworks to be used in uncovering its meaning. I was interested in figuring out how these readers viewed the interpretive process and whether they were active readers intellectually in the process. Some of the questions I asked were: Is it all right to criticize the Torah? Can the Torah laws be altered? How? To what extent is the Torah binding personally and communally? What sources and commentaries should be used to interpret the text? Are there authoritative commentaries of the Torah? These questions assessed the readers' intellectual assertiveness and submission towards the text and helped me unravel the role that they viewed for themselves in the interpretive process. It also provided data on their capacity to be self-reflective when analyzing a holy text since I was looking for teachers with this dispositional quality.

What I listened for in their responses was: Do they play an active or passive role in examining the text? Do they defer to past authorities or engage their own intellectual faculties in struggling with the text? In listening to teachers talk about origins of Torah, purposes for text study and authority in Torah, I tried to decipher where they thought new knowledge comes from. Did they envision their role as transformers of text or transmitters of text or somewhere in the middle? In the transformative posture, more authority resides in

the individual. In the transmitter mode, more authority resides in the text and past authority. Do they see their role in the act of reading and interpretation as a partner or a receiver of meaning? Do they view themselves as transmitters or transformers of tradition? What kind of relationship do they have with the text? Do they approach the Torah as an "it" or a "Thou"? Is reading or learning Torah an academic exercise or an experience, as Buber characterizes it. I looked for teachers who adopted a transformative posture.

Interpretive Reading Task

Scholes (1989) term "active reading" is expressed as "interactive" by Holtz (1984) when discussing Jewish texts. Holtz suggests that the rabbis of the Torah "called for a living and dynamic response:"

> The great commentaries are the record of that response, and each text in turn becomes the occasion for later commentary and interaction. The Torah remains unendingly alive because the readers of each subsequent generation saw it as such, taking the holiness of Torah seriously, and adding their own contribution to the story. (p. 17)

I was looking for "active readers" which I operationalized into three dimensions: (1) reading in slow motion, (2) awareness of reading process, and (3)meaning making. I used the teacher's interpretive reading of the Akedah passage to assess these dimensions.

The following questions helped me analyze the data: Are they careful and deliberate readers? Do they demonstrate an awareness of the reading process? Are they capable of generating meaning and connecting the text to the text of their lives?

The interpretive reading task was specifically designed to assess the teachers' stance as an adult reader. Each set of questions helped me assess how interactive the relationship

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was between teacher and text. Did the teachers respond to the Torah as a living or static document? Did they add their own contributions to the story?

I used the story of the Sacrifice of Isaac, (Akedah in Hebrew) because it tests the reader's own issues with ultimate authority. The Sacrifice of Isaac is a paradigmatic text within the Torah that tests the protagonist's faith in God. God asks Abraham to make the supreme sacrifice--slaughter his only son. This test represents a suspension of Torah morality--child sacrifice. On another level it represents man's faith in God's word and commandments. How individual readers respond to this passage suggests how they think about deep questions of belief and the Torah's ultimate origins and significance. Just as Abraham was asked to suspend his morality, the individual reader must investigate this within himself/herself. Are there times when a reader of text asserts his/her individual initiative and does not submit to authority even if the reader holds the belief that the text is divine? These are the types of issues that I observed while watching and listening to teachers struggle with these personal textual dilemmas.

Reading in slow motion. Three questions probed the teacher's capacity for reading in slow motion. The first question related to a specific word, "Nisa," in the text which has been interpreted extensively over the centuries. It appears in Genesis 22:1, "And God tested Abraham." The word "Nisa" is often translated as test, but has been interpreted on many other levels. The second question asked teachers to decipher a Midrashic text on Satan's role in this saga. A third question asked them to consider what happened to Abraham and Isaac during their three-day journey since the Torah text says nothing about this. Encountered in various Midrashic texts developed by rabbinic sources, this question gave teachers an opportunity to create their own Midrash for this apparent omission.

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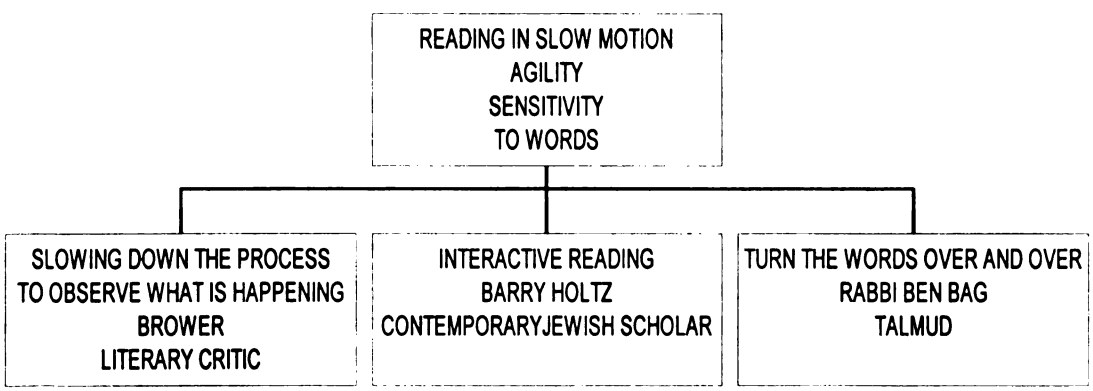
This criteria within active reading assesses how teachers conduct close readings of the text. How agile and sensitive are teachers of Torah in assigning multiple meanings to words and phrases? How carefully do these readers uncover the ambiguities and contradictions that texts present? What is the meaning of apparent repetitions, contradictions and gaps in text? How do these readers examine key words, passages and books of the Torah? Teachers were given specific words and problems to analyze. In listening to their responses, I paid careful attention to how they uncovered ambiguities and contradictions.

The notion of reading in slow motion, which I took from Brower (1962), is also the approach of the rabbinic sages. Brower talks about "slowing down the process of reading to observe what is happening in order to attend very closely to the words, their uses, and their meanings. Various Talmudic passages state that to derive the full pleasure and meaning out of the text, the words must be turned over and over until deep meaning is found (Rabbi Ben Bag) (see Table 2-1).

Table 2-1

Sources of Active Reading Criteria



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Awareness of reading process. This dimension of active reading refers to the self-reflective process that readers must engage in to be thoughtful readers. This process is not mere de-coding of symbols and signs but a vigorous exercise in understanding why certain interpretive traditions are chosen and others discarded. This aspect of reading represents the meta-cognitive posture in which the reader stands outside of himself/herself to understand why certain directions and decisions were made.

This second criteria of active reading signals a certain consciousness about interpretive frameworks and Torah text study. Do teachers demonstrate an awareness of the choices made about interpreting texts? Are they able to explain their commitments to certain traditional or modern interpretations? What type of evidence do Torah teachers provide for their choices? Do they express in their comments the complexity of reading texts? These are analytic questions that guided my understanding of the readers' responses (see Table 2-2).

To get at the readers' awareness of the reading process, I asked three types of questions. One presented several passages from medieval commentators (Ramban, Rambam and Abarbanel) regarding the sacrifice of Isaac. I asked teachers to consider what positions made sense to them and why. These commentaries discussed the purposes of Abraham's trial. Rambam describes the purpose as fear of God, Abarbanel points out the etymological root of "ness" or "trial" as meaning wonder or miracle and argues that it represents a banner or demonstration for all peoples. Ramban describes the purpose of the trial as a form of character development.

I also asked the readers to reflect on the terseness of the text and point out what specifically troubled them or gave them difficulty in understanding this challenging text. These questions were designed to assess teachers' awareness of choices they made about

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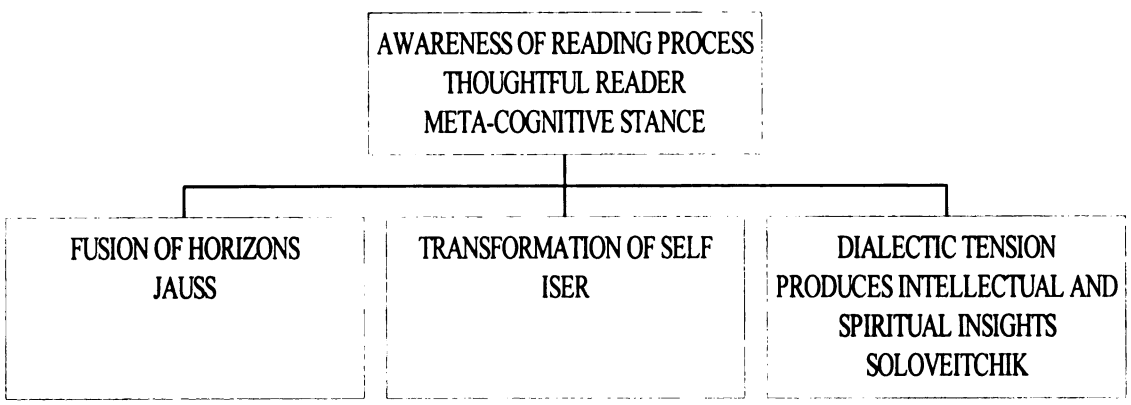

Meaning making. This dimension within active reading helped me to develop a composite picture of how the teachers connected the Torah text to their own lives. How does the text of Torah connect to the text of the teachers' lives? How does the teacher demonstrate ways in which the Torah has influenced his/her life? What is the relationship between specific passages and other parts of the Torah, Bible, Near Eastern texts? To what extent do the readers use specific methods to interpret the text?

For over 2500 years, thousands of pages of commentary have been written about the Torah because for many scholars the Torah is an unfinished work. Rabbi David Hartman writes that the Torah given at Mt. Sinai was not "a complete, finished system ... belief in the giving of the Torah at Sinai does not necessarily imply that the full truth has already been given and that our task is to only unfold what was already present." The great rabbinic

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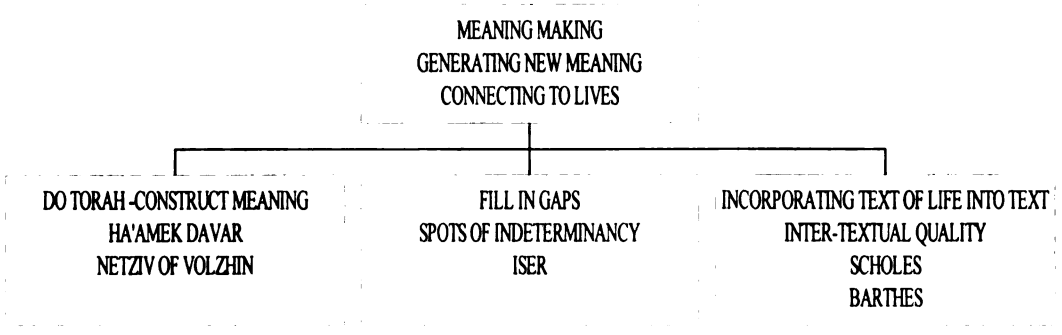
scholars connected the text of the Torah to the text of their lives. These scholars realized, as did Scholes, (1989), "that reading reminds us that every text ends with a blank page and that what we get from every text is precisely balanced by what we give" (p. 10). The quality of this inter-textual connection shades the experience of reading. Scholes argues that in order to comprehend more fully and powerfully, the reader needs to examine not only the text but their own situation "both in their particularity and historicity and in their durable and inevitable dimensions" (p. 18). The deeper the attachment to the text and the text of the reader's life, the deeper the meaning making. The activity of constructing meaning from the Torah is to comprehend more fully what is within the text of one's own life situation. Roland Barthes writes, "And no doubt that is what reading is: rewriting the text of the work within the text of our lives" (see Table 3). I asked direct questions about what the Akedah meant to the reader and what was the "big question" they thought the passage was trying to address. I listened for connections between themes in the text and their own lives. I also listened for how these readers expressed the complexity of reading texts.

Table 2-3

Sources of Active Reading Criteria



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Working with the Data

I found after having tried to organize the readers' responses on a spreadsheet and code them by questions and frequency of interpretive remarks that this was inadequate. This became a very complicated task because I had not realized how much data I had collected. I had conducted interviews with eight individuals either in their home or school. The interviews took approximately 60-90 minutes. I was overwhelmed by the task of analyzing all the data to discern which readers viewed themselves as contributing voices in the great historical conversation. The two instruments elicited rich and thick information about the readers' stance on Torah yet they all seemed to be contributors on some level. I found their stories revealing yet did not know how to proceed. It became clear as I juxtaposed the data on spreadsheets according to key questions and tried to rank the frequency of responses and code it in different ways that I had developed an instrument that was more sophisticated than the task required. Yet it provided me with illuminating insights into the teachers' beliefs and approaches to reading Torah. However, I was still fumbling to understand the differences between these eight readers. The conceptual framework that I used had many ideas about the reading process but how do I operationalize them to select readers to study in practice? I knew that I had to refine my initial thinking in order to analyze and repackage this data intelligibly.

Following each interview, I wrote impressionistic notes to myself. I transcribed all the complete interviews and read and reread the transcripts. I became very intimate with the words of my informants. I then wrote a synopsis synthesizing my thoughts during and after the interview process about their beliefs and interpretations of the passage. I noticed that there was a discrepancy between the actual interview and the

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transcript. As the interviewer I was able to visualize the speaker's expression and hear their intonation whereas the transcript was flat. These tropes helped me to decipher the transcript. In the synopsis, I tried to focus on some of the key questions--Did these readers enjoy the intellectual process? Did they dialogue with the text? Was it a living or static document for them?

One of the questions I asked myself was--How intellectually assertive were these readers with the text? This question focused on how teachers viewed the interpretive process with holy texts. From the start I was interested in the theme of individual assertion versus submission to authority. I heard many comments that led me to believe that this is a powerful idea with readers even if they don't express it in these terms.

Conceptualization of Knowledgeable and Engaged Learners

My inability to analyze the data led me to think harder about what kind of reader I was looking for. What were the qualities and skills that I had vaguely imagined? It was not the presence or absence of certain beliefs about Torah nor the frequency of interpretive remarks about text that would help me select readers who were most likely to engage students in interpretive conversations about the Torah text. I went back to the drawing board to think about the reading process and what I had learned from rabbinic texts and literary criticism and my own images of good Torah learning.

I realized that I was looking for readers who interpreted the text by wrestling and arguing with it, who were not afraid to question the text and past commentators like the reader who asked me to extend his apologies to the great commentators as he disagreed with their authoritative stance. I was interested in readers who carefully turned the words over and over as the rabbis had suggested, like the reader who deliberated over one word,

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"ness" for an extended period of time, made connections to other parts of the Bible, in order to carefully assess its meaning. I assumed that dialoguing with the text would produce more exorbitant readings. I sought readers who understood the dialectic tension between reason and faith. Several of my readers argued with Rabbi Hartman's statement that the Torah was not a finished text. Although they were active readers, they could not accept his claim that the Torah was not given in its totality at Mt. Sinai. While they may not have labeled this process, their interpretive approaches expressed the dynamic challenge in reading holy texts. I was also looking for readers who demonstrated a tentativeness rather than certainty, because I associated certainty with dogmatism. One reader was extremely knowledgeable, however he articulated interpretations as the ultimate truth. I looked for readers who were animated by the text intellectually, who took great pleasure in the interpretive process and studied the Torah beyond the classroom walls. I wanted to find readers who saw the text as a moral guide for themselves personally. This last characteristic suggested a seriousness about the pursuit of learning. Several of my readers differentiated between reading the text for pleasure and reading it as a practical guide.

Originally I had characterized the reader that I was looking for as "passionate and knowledgeable." As I clarified and refined my thinking, I developed the construct of a "knowledgeable and engaged reader of Torah." This construct had four dimensions. I realized that I was looking for teachers/readers who: (1) view Torah learning as intellectual pleasure, (2) view Torah as a moral guide, (3) are capable of generating new meaning from text, and (4) were reflective about the interpretive process. Below, I describe each one of the characteristics in this framework.

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Torah learning as intellectual pleasure. Intellectual involvement with Torah signifies a connection to the text that extends beyond the four walls of the classroom. The text animates the reader who takes pleasure in the process of discovery. The reader recognizes the sanctity and uniqueness of the text and studies it not only for teaching but also for the sake of learning and intellectual enrichment (in Hebrew, Torah L'Shema). This dispositional quality is praised extensively in the rabbinic literature.

Values Torah as moral guide. A reader who values the Torah as a moral and spiritual guide relates to the text as more than a literary or historical document. The Torah offers behavioral guidance for conducting one's life. This type of reader expresses great enthusiasm for the enterprise of studying text and is amazed at the levels of meaning for everyday life that emerge upon examination of the Torah. This type of reader views the process of learning as transformative not only in the intellectual domain but in the practical domain of living.

Capable of generating meaning. This describes a reader who can generate meaning and has the ability to engage in textual analysis. This process leads to delineating problems and questions in the text. This mode of reading the text takes place within the text, whereas the reflective mode of interpretation occurs in understanding the text beyond the text. This type of reader is transformed in the process of reading and lifted out of time to experience the text as a new self emerges. Readers who are capable of generating meaning or "doing Torah" are aware of the dialectic tension between creativity and commitment to the text.

Reflective about the interpretive process. Being reflective about the interpretive process signals a kind of awareness about different ways of approaching the text. A

reflective reader is cognizant of various frameworks and lenses for approaching text and knows why particular commentaries were chosen. The reader needs to understand how the text was interpreted historically. This capacity of understanding the historical place of the text necessitates a dialogue between past and present and an awareness of the interpretive process. The reader of Torah needs to understand his/her role in the production process. The production process is linked to the reader's awareness of the process of revelation and interpretation. Do the readers view themselves as partners in the process of revelation that has been described as continuous revelation? Do the readers view themselves as receivers of a completed God given text that has been called verbal revelation? (see Table 2-4) Consciousness about the interpretive reading process is essential, whether a partner or receiver in this process.

This new framework helped me to assess the data more carefully. For each characteristic, I asked myself a number of questions to assess how well each reader's responses fit the profile I was looking for.

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Table 2-4

Knowledgeable and Engaged Adult Learner of Torah

Characteristic	Criteria
Views Torah as Intellectual Pleasure	Do they study Torah outside of the classroom? Are they enriched personally by Torah study? Do they approach the text with enthusiasm?
Views Torah as Moral Guide	Does the Torah enhance their moral life? Do they use it as a behavioral guide? Does it have a transformative effect on their lives?
Capable of Generating New Meaning	Do they wrestle, argue and dialogue with past voices? Do they have the ability to create new meanings and add their voice to The conversation? Do they make connections to their own lives?
Reflective about Interpretive Process	What strategies and interpretive frameworks do they use in reading text? Do they have an awareness of the dialectic tension between faith and reason?

I also worked out the linkages between this new conceptual framework defining "knowledgeable and engaged readers" and important substantive issues which I had explored in the beliefs interview and interpretive reading task (see Table 2-5).

Table 2-5

Links Between Profile of Knowledgeable and Engaged Readers and Instruments

Characteristics of Knowledgeable and Engaged Learners of Torah	Criteria of Active Reading
Capable of Generating New Meanings ⇨	Reading in Slow Motion Meaning Making
Reflective about Interpretive Process Views Torah as Moral Guide ⇨	Awareness of Reading Process Meaning Making
Capable of Generating new Meaning Views Torah as Intellectual Pleasure ⇨	Meaning Making

Characteristics of Knowledgeable and Engaged Readers	Dimensions of Torah Beliefs
Capable of Generating New Meaning ⇨	Origins and Authorship
Views Torah as Intellectual Pleasure Views Torah as Moral Guide ⇨	Nature and Purposes
⇨ Reflective about Interpretive Process Capable of Generating New Meaning	Authority and Interpretive Frameworks

Identifying Initial Pool of Teacher Informants

When I began this study, I assumed that teachers who were capable of interpreting text independently as adult learners would be more inclined to engage students in the

process of deep understanding and create ultimate meaning with the Torah. They in turn would be more likely to link new generations to the ongoing Torah conversation.

In order to find teachers to study I asked local principals in five Jewish schools in the Detroit area to nominate adult learners committed to Torah study. I spoke to principals in three Reform supplementary schools,[1] one Conservative supplementary school and one Conservative day school. Principals had difficulty making recommendations since the pool of teachers who fit the criteria was limited. There were a few teachers whom they could confidently recommend as adult learners. I also asked principals to limit their nominations to teachers of adolescents. I did not stipulate educational background, gender, teaching experience and personal affiliations with Judaism. The five principals nominated eight candidates.

In order to learn about the teachers' backgrounds and current adult learning activities I administered a background survey. From this survey, I created a profile of each teacher's educational background, including their secular and Jewish studies, number of years in the field of teaching, and commitment level to Jewish education. The survey allowed me to compare this small sample with other Jewish teachers nationally (see Appendix).

The eight teachers whom I selected were atypical in their general and Jewish educational background compared with other teachers in Jewish schools. Compared to teachers in a Council on Initiatives in Jewish Education Study (Gamoran, Goldring, Robinson, Tammivaara & Goodman, 1996), they had higher levels of educational

[1] Supplementary schools are Jewish schools that meet after public school or on Sundays.

preparation.[2] Compared to this study, the eight that I had chosen appeared more rigorous in their Judaic subject matter knowledge background.

Next Steps

Now that I had located eight readers who were considered adult learners by their principals, I was eager to administer the interpretive reading task and interview them. I wanted to understand their beliefs about Torah and how they interpreted the text. I wanted to find out if these readers saw themselves as a link in the long 2500 year-old conversation. Would these readers view themselves as transmitters or as transformers of tradition? Would they grapple with the text to uncover meanings and dialogue with past commentators? Would they make connections to their own lives and contribute to the ongoing conversation? How did these readers view the challenge of interpreting holy texts? What types of personal and intellectual challenges would they address? I wondered if any of these readers' dispositional qualities and characteristics would match my profile. Would these readers be capable of "doing Torah" and conversing about the process? What types of responses would I hear about revelation and their role in the interpretive process? The interesting stories of these readers' "lived ideologies" about the processes and purposes of reading Torah are in the upcoming chapter. I refer to their stories as "lived ideologies" because they reveal the complex and often contradictory nature of beliefs that serious readers have about Torah.

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[2] I compared the results of the background with a CIJE survey that was conducted on a much larger national scale to assess these teachers. What this comparison suggested about the eight teachers in my study is hat their Judaic subject matter background appeared more rigorous as a result of their formal training. The teacher informants in my study also represented a higher level of graduate degrees, 62% or five in comparison with those sampled in the CIJE study, 29%. The CIJE study represented a larger sample of 125 teachers in day school, supplementary and pre-school settings in three communities: Atlanta, Baltimore and Milwaukee. Schools affiliating with all religious denominations were sampled in contrast to my study in which only teachers from Reform and Conservative schools were surveyed.

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CHAPTER 3

Conversations with Eight Teachers - Interpreting Holy Texts

Overview of Chapter

In this chapter, I present the findings from Part I of this study. Part I consisted of a beliefs interview and interpretive reading task which I gave to eight middle school teachers identified by their principals as serious students of Torah. The types of questions that I asked were of a deep philosophical nature touching on issues of authority and the origins of Torah. As one participant joked after I inquired about the authorship of the Torah, "This is only the hardest philosophical question and we're expected to answer it." The teachers' responses reveal the very complex nature of beliefs about Torah. Many of the participants were surprised by the depth of the questions.

The beliefs that individuals hold about Torah influence their interpretive reading stance. I was looking for readers who interpreted holy texts in dynamic and exorbitant ways. I sought adult learners who viewed themselves as participants in the interpretive process that I've called the Torah conversation.

In the process of interviewing these eight individuals, I realized how eager they were to reveal their thinking about Torah. The conversations that we had were an infrequent interlude in their professional practice. Most teachers are not given the opportunity to discuss issues regarding the origins and significance of Torah in professional settings.

The responses from these eight readers were more complex than I had anticipated. I spent between 60-90 minutes with each one of these individuals listening to their views on Torah and reading text. Their words reflected deep thought and their tone suggested great intensity. I naively assumed that I would be able to register their responses in a neat and tidy

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way. This did not occur. Their responses were often of a contradictory nature and complex to decipher. Trying to tell the story of their beliefs was challenging. I did not want to reduce the contours of their comments to simple formulations. I've tried to capture the flavor and flow of their words in this chapter by providing ample charts. I used the beliefs interview and interpretive reading task to find readers who fit the profile of knowledgeable and engaged learners of Torah (see Table 3-1) yet in the process learned much more about people's beliefs.

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Table 3-1

Finding Knowledgeable and Engaged Learners of Torah

Criteria for Knowledgeable and Engaged Learners	Beliefs Interview	Interpretive Reading Task
Views Torah as Intellectual Pleasure	Nature and Purposes of Studying Torah Is Torah enriching, pleasurable activity?	Awareness of Reading Process How do readers respond to commentaries?
Reflective about Interpretive Process	Origins and Authorship Authority and Interpretive Frameworks What role do readers play in interpretive process? What protocols are used for interpretation?	Reading in Slow Motion Do readers demonstrate sensitivity to text? Awareness of Reading Process How are problematic texts handled? How do readers respond to terseness in text?
Views Torah as Moral Guide	Nature and Purposes of Studying Torah Is Torah a practical guide for living ?	Awareness of Reading Process What is the purpose of the Akedah?
Capable of Generating Meaning	Origins and Authorship Authority and Interpretive Frameworks Do readers grapple with text and contribute new meanings?	Reading in Slow Motion Are multiple meanings generated? Meaning Making Do the readers dialogue with past commentaries?

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In describing the findings, I will present an overview of the key topics addressed by the interviewees. The beliefs interview dealt with origins and authorship, nature and purposes, authority and interpretive frameworks for studying Torah. The interpretive reading task looked at reading in slow motion, awareness of reading process and meaning making. I will then present some of the participants' responses to key questions and provide a summary analysis. The central questions that framed my analysis were:

- How did the readers grapple with text and contribute new meanings?
- How did the readers respond to problematic passages in texts?
- Did they point to a set of interpretive protocols and explain why they used them?
- How did they envision their role in the interpretive Torah conversation? Did they dialogue with past commentaries?
- Did they view Torah as a pleasurable intellectual experience, a moral guide?
- Did they express or demonstrate in their interpretive stance towards Torah a dialectic tension between faith and reason?

These analytic questions guided my understanding of the eight teachers' responses to the beliefs interviews and interpretive reading task.

Background on Participants

The teachers I interviewed came from a range of religious backgrounds. There were four men (Sam, Mark, Ira and Jerry) and four women (Nan, Aliza, Ariella and Liz). Sam, Nan and Ira identified themselves as Orthodox Jews. Mark and Aliza considered themselves Conservative Jews and Ariella, Liz and Jerry identified themselves as Reform Jews. Nan, Aliza, Liz and Ira have been in the teaching field for over twenty years. Jerry has been in the field for three years, whereas Ariella, Mark and Sam ranged in experience from ten to

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Name
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Aliza
Anella
Liz
Ira
Jerry

sixteen years. All teachers considered Jewish education their full-time profession. Aliza and Ira hold M.A. degrees, Ariella has rabbinic ordination and the others have B.A. degrees (see Table 3-2 on Background on Teacher Informants).

Table 3-2

Background on Teacher Informants

Name	Years in Field	Ed. Bkg.	Gender	Religious Affiliation	Teaching Context	Teacher's Certificate	Full-time In Jewish Education
Sam	10	B.A.	M	Orthodox	Con. Day and Supp. School	No	Yes
Nan	20	B.A.	F	Orthodox	Con. Day School	No	Yes
Mark	16	B.A.	M	Conservative	Con. Supp. School	No	Yes
Aliza	20	M.A.	F	Conservative	Con. Day School	Yes	Yes
Ariella	10	Rabbinic Ordination	F	Reform	Reform Supp. School	No	Yes
Liz	40	B.A.	F	Reform	Reform Supp. School	Yes	Yes
Ira	33	M.A.	M	Orthodox	Con. Supp. School	Yes	Yes
Jerry	3	B.A.	M	Reform	Con. Day School	Yes	Yes

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Interview on Torah Beliefs

Origins and Authorship: Overview

The intent of this set of questions was to understand how these readers of text viewed revelation and their role in the interpretive process of holy texts. I began by asking one open-ended question about the authorship of the Torah. Then I asked the teachers to position themselves on a continuum of positions regarding the process of revelation. The positions ranged from verbal to progressive revelation. I also asked the teachers to align themselves with various thinkers on the question of the origins of the Torah. All of the teachers responded to these difficult questions with a great deal of thought and authenticity. Some were more tentative in their responses, wondering aloud if their thinking made sense. The deeper issues that these individuals struggled with included: Is the Torah an evolving text? What is the reader's role in interpreting the text? What are the limits on the reader's own voice? What is perfect faith?

Who wrote the Torah? In response to the question "Who wrote the Torah?" the positions ranged from Ariella's, "It's definitely a human document inspired by God," to Sam's approach, "It was dictated by God and Moses wrote it down." Responses fell all along the continuum from verbal revelation to continuous revelation to progressive revelation. None of the respondents spoke about the Torah as a purely human document without divine inspiration, although they came from various religious backgrounds. This was somewhat surprising.

The first question provoked these readers to consider the following issue: Has the Torah evolved over time? Five out of the eight teachers believed that the document was written by man and evolved over time. Their positions coincided with the continuous and

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progressive revelation orientation devised by Elliot Dorff. All believed in some kind of divine inspiration but they were vague about this concept. One of the teachers, Mark, a Conservative educator, believed the Torah was divinely inspired and evolved over time but he was uncertain how the document was actually recorded.

Aliza, another Conservative educator, concurred. She stated, "My belief is that any records that we have now of what happened at Sinai are already interpretation." Liz, a Reform educator, expanded on the idea that the text was an evolving document. She was also very certain in her response:

> I think the Torah was definitely written by man. No question about it! It was God-inspired with a thought of a supernatural being of some sort, but definitely written by the hand of man ... we were a very primitive people, we couldn't have possibly made some of the intricate laws, some of the brilliant laws because you had to have advanced in civilization ... no question about it in my mind ... I'm not wishy washy about anything.

Ariella, also a Reform educator, said that the Torah was a human document not necessarily originating from Moses. "I don't know what God actually gave while up on Mt. Sinai. That would be a lot of stuff to give to Moses." Jerry also noted that the text has evolved, "over the course of centuries, different circumstances called forth different responses ... there are some things that are left for change."

Two of the teachers, Sam and Nan, both of Orthodox background, stated that the Torah was dictated by God to Moses. This is a traditional Jewish belief which finds a home in verbal revelation; however, Nan expressed the view that the origins of Torah were enigmatic and she struggled with two views. Sam also spoke about this tension. He noted

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that in regards to interpretation, there was a traditional orientation and a more critical one towards text. Nan explained this position in the following way:

> On the one hand, I want to give the party line that the Torah was given at Mt. Sinai and nothing can be changed in it. And I have to believe that because otherwise the whole structure of commentary falls apart ... yet it has been proven to me with codes and stuff like that, when I was in college I majored in Judaic studies, that everything was a kind of fragmentary system that some crazed editor kind of threw together. And now biblical studies has come full circle and it's a much more literary approach and a more unified approach. I feel more comfortable with that and it also ties into my own theological thinking ... but I can't escape the fact that there are certain troublesome psukim (passages) that kind of indicate that this, somebody tinkering with it. Like the phrase the Canaani was in the land ... you don't have a phrase like that unless, the present situation is different than what it used to be ... I think the parshanim (interpreters) interpolated maybe a few words here and there ... when all else fails, then we might be left with some enigmas ... so we resign ourselves to the fact that we're going to struggle with questions a long time.

Only Ira claimed to believe with a "perfect faith" that the Torah was given and unchanged since the time of Moses. None of the others could actually articulate this claim which is one of Maimonides' "Thirteen Articles of Faith." Nan and Sam were actively struggling with the idea of being "partners" or "laborers" in the process of interpretation. For them the "gymnastic struggle" of reading was labeled "mind work." Liz, Ariella and Jerry saw no boundaries on individual initiative when interpreting the text, whereas both Aliza

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and Mark agreed that individual initiative was key within boundaries. They envisioned a certain protocol for textual interpretation.

Revelation. The teachers further elaborated their positions when I asked them to identify with one of the different orientations to Revelation (see Table 3-3). The teachers had to situate themselves on the continuum and provide a rationale for their position. This also provided me with an opportunity to observe how they read and interpreted the written word.

The display on Revelation allowed the teachers to expand on their thinking about the authorship of Torah and God's authority. The five who initially stated that the Torah was written by humans aligned themselves with corresponding positions from continuous to progressive revelation. Although Aliza puzzled and tinkered over the words, "God dictated His will" in continuous revelation, she eventually came up with her own formulation which combined several positions. The spread of responses is reflected in Table 3-3.

Aliza demonstrated a very self-reflective stance toward the interpretive process while analyzing this display. She said:

> The Torah is God's will, which sounds stronger than divinely inspired, but not as strong as God dictated.... I would say the Torah is God's will written down by human beings, hence the diverse editions in the Bible.

Mark aligned himself with continuous revelation but stated it was a mysterious process which still eludes him. "God has mysterious ways and maybe we're not supposed to understand it or maybe our job is to figure it out." Mark did not have the self-reflective stance that Aliza, Sam and Nan displayed in analyzing the categories on revelation. In fact, he was somewhat self-effacing and portrayed himself as naive when it came to

deeper issues. Sam, Nan and Aliza all struggled in their responses to adequately give shape to their thinking and figure out this enigma of the Torah's origins.

Table 3-3

Beliefs Orientation – Origins and Authorship Revelation

	Verbal Revelation The Torah consists of the exact words of God given at Mt. Sinai	Continuous Revelation God dictated His will at Sinai and other times.It was written by human beings.	Continuous Revelation II Human beings wrote the Torah, but they were divinely inspired.	Continuous Revelation III The Torah is the human record of the encounter between God and the people Israel at Sinai. Some laws today are repugnant.	No Revelation Human beings wrote the Torah. No claim for the divinity of the product.	Progressive Revelation The Torah is God's will written by human beings. As time goes on we get to understand His will better.
SAM	X					
NAN	X					
LIZ						X
ARIELLA		X	X			X
MARK				X		
ALIZA		X				
JERRY						X
IRA	X					

Ariella, Liz and Jerry all concurred regarding the Torah's origins--progressive revelation. Jerry believed that "the Torah is the human record between Jews and God at

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Sinai ... interpreting the text is a very open process, it all depends upon our individual voices." This position would probably be endorsed by Liz and Ariella who expressed strong sentiments regarding the individual's role in interpreting it. These three teachers all relied completely on individual reason and initiative as key in understanding the text.

Aliza, who wrestled with the categories on revelation, would certainly agree with the need for individual reason. Yet her ideas differed from Ariella, Liz and Jerry about interpretation. Along with Sam, Nan and Ira, she maintained that there were protocols for interpretation which overrode individual initiative. This signaled the need for individual initiative within communal boundaries. These four teachers maintained that interpretation emerges through communal consensus. Although intellectually active readers, all four would defer to rabbinic authority when issues of interpretation arose. Sam, Nan and Ira all subscribed to the position of verbal revelation which proclaims that both the Oral and Written Law were the exact words of God given at Sinai. There were subtle but significant differences among these readers. Sam and Nan both saw merit in the position on continuous revelation and how Torah might have been written after Moses. Sam clarified, "There was human involvement. We're conduits but we're not contributors or editors." This is the tension that active readers of faith have with text. They struggle to reconcile the two poles of individual initiative and submission.

Diverse views on origins of Torah. When presented with the table regarding the "Diverse views on origins of Torah" (see Table 3-4), both Sam and Nan questioned the intent of Rabbi Hartman's position which they both described as ambiguous. Sam claimed:

> Torah is an ongoing process and it needs to be ongoing but I'm not sure that Rabbi Hartman is saying the source is still at Sinai ... our contributions are based on the

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core, we can't create something, add a sixth book ... we have to be creative and contribute but there are limitations.

Table 3-4

Beliefs Orientation – Origins and Authorship Diverse Views on the Origins of Torah

	Some of the ancient rabbis believed that God gave two Torahs, the Written and Oral Torah.	Rabbi Bleich: The text of Torah today is identical in every significant detail of the original scroll.	Rabbi Petuchowski: The giving of the Torah is not confined to the occasion of Sinai. The laws do not go back to that time.	Rabbi Hartman: The Torah given at Sinai was not a complete finished system, what happened at Sinai gave the community a direction.	Rabbi Maimonides: I believe with perfect faith that the whole Torah now in our possession is the same given to Moses.
SAM	X	X			X
NAN		X			
LIZ			X		
ARIELLA			X		
ALIZA				X	
MARK				X	
JERRY			X	X	
IRA	X	X			X

Nan echoed Sam's position by explaining, "We are not partners in the text--we are laborers." She went on to explain that "It is our task to unfold what was already present in the fullness of the founding.... The document is not undergoing change." Both saw their role as laborers

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tilling the words of Torah. Both believed that the seeds were part of the original text; in the tilling process, new growth emerges. Ira would subscribe to only part of this position as he believed that nothing said about the Torah is new although we're encouraged to create "hiddushim" (new insights). He stated:

> I believe in the divinity of Torah and I believe that each person also has the obligation to find "hiddush" in Torah. It means to try to find his own insights, or just realize that he's not inventing the light bulb ... there is nothing new under the sun.

These types of intellectual faith struggles as Soloveitchik, a twentieth century thinker, noted, spawn creativity and deeper analysis of the text. Sam, Nan and Aliza worked hard to make sense of the text as intellectually active readers. In their conversations, they struggled to reconcile their positions as active readers and faithful Jews.

Only Ira represented his position regarding the authorship of the Torah in a dogmatic fashion. He stated unequivocally, "Both the Written and Oral Law were written by God and anything said by the rabbis since is not new." He also commented that any Jew who could not believe, as Maimonides wrote in *The Thirteen Principles of Faith,* that "I believe with perfect faith that the whole Torah now in our possession is the same that was given to Moses our teacher" is not an authentically religious Jew. Both Nan and Mark, who believed in verbal revelation and continuous revelation, respectively stated that they wanted to believe in Maimonides' article of faith but could not. Mark said, "A part of me wants to believe Maimonides too, that it's the same that was given to Moses. It's hard for me, but there is a big chunk of me that wants to believe that." Nan said, "Maimonides, I can't reach that level. I'm not quite there." Ira was the only one who spoke with ultimate certainty regarding the origin of the text. The others were more tentative in their responses. Interestingly enough,

only Ira and Liz maintained a posture of certainty in expressing their ideas about the origins of the text. Both hail from opposite poles of the religious spectrum. For Ira, an Orthodox Jew, the Torah that was given to Moses is the Torah that Jews read today. For Liz, a Reform Jew, the Torah is an ever-evolving text.

Although Sam, Nan and Ira all subscribed to the orientation of verbal revelation, they differed on man's role in assigning meaning to the text. Ira views the rabbinic authorities as the only capable sources for generating new meaning. This suggests that only experts are capable of creating new knowledge. Sam and Nan see their role as laborers uncovering truths that are within the text. Finding "hiddushim" (insights) is a labor-intensive process that demands involvement not only on the part of experts. They suggested that there were limitations within the interpretive process but were willing to extend themselves in their critical thinking to generate new meanings. Their thinking did not diminish the role of experts as it left space for individual contributions. These two individuals wrestled with the text to maintain its integrity and their own personal integrity.

Liz, Ariella, Aliza, Sam and Nan all stated that the individual has a significant role and responsibility in interpreting the text. They all recognized, as Nan stated, that it took "mind work" to understand it. Liz and Ariella did not see boundaries on their interpretations. Individual reasoning had no limitations according to their views. What was most significant about Sam and Nan's responses were the struggles that they expressed in trying to align themselves completely with the position of verbal revelation. They were unable to align themselves completely as Ira did with this position, as there were critical voices that gnawed at their desire to fully submit to verbal revelation. Their responses represented a dialectic

tension between reason and faith, between individual initiative and submission in reading a holy text.

Nature and Purposes: Overview

This set of questions was designed to investigate whether these readers valued the Torah as a moral guide and were personally involved with it as readers. I assumed these readers would be more likely to revere the sanctity of the Torah and wrestle with these words to unlock meaning if they were committed to it as a behavioral guide.

What is your purpose in studying Torah and how is it different from secular texts? The teachers expressed an array of responses regarding the purposes for studying Torah ranging from a pleasurable activity to behavioral guide (see Table 3-5). All of these readers viewed the study of Torah as a unique enterprise, different from the study of secular texts. Even those readers who claimed that the Torah was a human document approached the text with a special sense of awe. Several teachers spoke of the power that the Torah had on the Jewish people and understood how studying it was an intellectual and emotional exercise. All of those interviewed viewed the Torah as intellectually binding. Most saw it as morally binding. Three saw it as ritually binding. For them, ritual and moral behaviors were two distinct categories. Liz, in her very assertive style, stated it was both.

Table 3-5

Beliefs Orientation – Nature and Purpose

What purposes does studying the Torah have for you personally?

ARIELLA	It's had power over our people through the ages. I struggle with it to make sense more than some of the other things that I've read. I'm trying to find something that I can hold onto in it that makes sense to me. It's a guide but not binding.
MARK	It helps me understand how I'm supposed to behave. It's a resource, a reference book.
LIZ	I find the Torah inspiring. I like to find new insights every time I read it. You could eliminate all other books except the Torah. It's the Book!
SAM	It's extremely gratifying. Everything is in it. For me it's an ongoing spiritual quest and it's practical. I'm always learning new things in Torah on all different levels.
ALIZA	I put it on a different plane than other books. The Torah is more closely connected to God. I am always looking for the moral and religious implications. When I study it, I ask does it make sense to me?
JERRY	It's a holy object. I haven't read it all. I'm not a scholar. There's no way I could do that. I'm not a Biblical scholar. I guess the purpose is to be a better person. Any other book, I pick up and read. The Torah I read with respect.
NAN	I love reading literature, American or Israeli … it's kind of mine but not in the same way that Torah is. It's in my gut. I don't recall a time that Abraham or Moses weren't in my life. Every time I come back to it, I find more and more. The antiquity of the text gives me great pleasure too. It's God's way of talking to me. Torah is a way of communicating with God but through mind work.

> Liz said, "I find the Torah very inspiring. You learn a lot. You find out a lot of things you don't know about your own people. Other texts are not "THE BOOK." This is "THE BOOK." When probed about this further, she said, "If you had to eliminate every other book as far as I'm concerned, you couldn't eliminate the Torah.... It's different from the Responsa literature ... the Torah is morally and ethically binding.

For Liz, as for others, the personal and practical insights of the story of her people were reasons for studying "THE BOOK." Liz was quite passionate about this position and described numerous courses and study circles in which she personally participated for Torah learning. When Liz spoke about the Torah and the courses that she is continuously involved in, she was very animated.

Sam also spoke of the personal pleasure and practical aspects that he gained from studying Torah. He said, "It's extremely gratifying in terms of always knowing new things in the Torah, on all different levels ... everything is in it ... it's just this ongoing spiritual quest." He also noted, as did others, that it had many practical purposes for him. Sam, like Aliza, approached the text differently from other secular works. She stated:

> I put it on a different plane a little bit ... the Torah is somehow more closely connected to God than a social studies text and I treat it differently.... I am always looking for what the moral, ethical, religious implication is going to be for me ... when I study it does it speak to me?... I feel my obligation is to understand it better, attack it differently, get at the meaning differently than one of the other Jewish texts.... I think it helps me to be a better religious Jewish person.

Mark, Jerry and Ariella all differentiated studying the Torah from other secular texts. Ariella framed it in this way:

> When I study the Torah, it's just a different mindset that here I know I'm studying this document that has been in our people's possession for all this time and it's just different. I guess maybe because of its antiquity. Just also trying to make it make sense today. I think I struggle with it to make sense more than some of the other things that I read.

Ariella viewed it as a moral guide which shaped the Jewish people over the centuries. For Jerry, studying Torah had behavioral rather than ritual implications. He said, "It helps me understand how I'm supposed to behave. Any other book you can pick up and read and do what you will with it ... but with the Torah I treat it with respect.... I mean you read a history text and it's special, but it is different." Nan compared the study of Torah to literature. She stated:

> I love reading literature, but American or Israeli literature, it's kind of mine, but not in the same way, Chumash (Five books of Moses) is in the gut.... I don't remember a time when I first heard of Avraham. I don't recall a time that Moshe hasn't been present. It is something that I keep on coming back to and finding more things.

Nan echoed the sentiments expressed by Ira, who described studying Torah as "great pleasure" and a "daily lifeline." Studying daily gave him ultimate purpose in life and provided him with a guide for daily living. All of these readers spoke of the moral benefits of studying Torah. They all viewed it as a guide for moral living. Liz, Nan, Sam and Ira spoke about the palpable pleasures of studying text and their life-long commitment to it with great enthusiasm. These four readers spoke about the joy of reading and learning. This personal involvement matched what I was looking for in my profile for knowledgeable and

engaged readers. To use the words of Ira, reading Torah was a "daily lifeline," a source of spiritual and intellectual guidance.

Authority and Interpretive Frameworks: Overview

These questions probed the readers' views on tradition and change, on their commitment to continuity and creativity. In analyzing the teachers' responses, I listened for what role personal interpretation played and the guidelines utilized. I used the following questions to analyze their responses: Did readers play an active or passive role in examining text? Were they capable of generating new meaning with the text? Were readers self-reflective in the process? Was the process of an interactive, dialogic nature? In investigating their responses, these were the questions that I used.

Is it okay to criticize the Torah? The five teachers who responded affirmatively offered a range of responses. Jerry had no reservations about criticizing the Torah, while the others offered cautionary provisos. Jerry responded:

> Sure, why not criticize the Torah, I live in America and one of the things I value is freedom of speech and thought. Maybe I'm speaking as an American in 1998 and not a Torah scholar of 1600 but if I don't agree with something, you can't tell me I have to agree with it. It's my right ... because God created me to be a thinking individual.

None of the other teachers mentioned freedom of speech as a guideline for interpreting text.

While Mark and Ariella both responded "sure" to this question, they proceeded to explain how carefully one should approach the text. Ariella stated:

> I think you need to watch how you criticize the Torah ... you still have to have the respect and understand where the tradition lies, why these words were important in

previous times, and maybe aren't important or aren't relevant today because we have a different knowledge base.

Mark's echoed some of Ariella's sentiments:

> I think you can look at it and be critical of what goes on, including God. I mean, how could God destroy communities? How could God get jealous? I think there is nothing wrong with questioning. I don't believe in blind faith, but you have to be careful.... As a Conservative Jew, I believe in tradition and change. I think there is nothing wrong with making the laws relevant, but you have to be careful because otherwise you'll be changing the laws every 10 or 20 years and that's dangerous. They have to be changed responsibly ... understanding their purposes.

Both Mark and Ariella emphasized caution when approaching the text critically.

Aliza and Nan also responded to this question very quickly, saying "Oh yeah" and "Absolutely." Aliza stated:

> To criticize the Torah does not shake my religious foundation.... I see myself as taking the responsibility to understand what the problems are ... there are plenty of questions and plenty of problems ... if the Torah is to mean something to me, then it is my obligation to figure out how to make sense of it.... I think you can question the letter of the law but not the spirit.

Nan gave specific examples when asked this question:

> I feel quite comfortable saying Yaakov (Jacob) was wrong. What's going on in his household that he sends Yosef (Joseph) after his brothers? That doesn't mean that Yaakov is a bad person. It means that he's flawed, and you know what? That makes

> me feel a lot better as a parent because I don't feel alone. So the flaws draw me closer to Yaakov, but that means that I have to criticize myself too.

Ariella also spoke about the frailties that the characters demonstrated as in cases of sibling rivalry which made her feel more connected to the text:

> The characters in our scriptures are very normal human beings, which is what I love. None of them are perfect, so we can all relate to them. So maybe they made mistakes in raising these twins. So we can all learn from criticizing them ... recognizing the frailties.

The readers reasoned that a critical stance entails responsibility towards the text. In criticizing the characters of the Torah, several readers noted how it signaled greater attention to their own frailties. Ariella, Aliza and Nan all demonstrated in these responses a very active role in dialoguing with the text. They were intellectually assertive when troubled by a passage--a quality that fit the profile of the reader that I was looking to study.

Both Sam and Liz chose to reframe the question, feeling somewhat uncomfortable with the term, "criticize." Liz said that we don't criticize the Torah, "I think it's a reinterpretation. I don't think you can really criticize a book like that. It's okay to criticize the responsa[1] but somehow the Torah doesn't seem open to that. " Yet on other occasions she strongly suggested that we are obligated to reinterpret the Torah using our individual faculties of reasoning. On this particular question she stated, "I don't choose to criticize because I don't think as an individual I could have ever written anything like this, I'm not going to criticize a person that was brilliant enough to write it, I'm going to try and take as

[1] Responsa is a body of literature based on questions and answers about Jewish law which are not recorded in the Talmud. In Hebrew, the Responsa is often referred to as She'elot ve-Teshuvot or Questions and Answers. This is an extensive body of literature which encompasses thousands of volumes.

much meat from it." Perhaps I should have asked, do you take a critical stance towards the Torah? The term "criticize" seemed troublesome for some readers who certainly were active, critical readers of text (see Table 3-6).

In response to two questions regarding one's capacity to criticize the Torah, five of the teachers answered affirmatively but with some qualifications. Two chose to reframe the question because of their discomfort with the idea of criticizing a holy text. One reader stated that he believed in a theocracy and was incapable of criticizing the Torah. Jerry and Ira were at opposing poles of the religious spectrum. Jerry believed in freedom of speech with no limitations attached, whereas Ira believed in submission to authority when approaching the Torah text. The other readers fell along this continuum of individual initiative and ultimate submission to text.

Nan, Liz and Sam expressed a similar sentiment regarding their role in interpreting the text. Nan said that it is our duty "to fill in the blanks" and Sam stated that it is our duty "to fill in the gaps." Liz also stated it was our job to extract "the meat" or essence from the text. These positions suggested that the individual's role is to respond to the text personally and use his/her own initiative in making sense out of it. In re-framing of the question, Sam stated, "It is okay to struggle with the text, not criticize it." Both he and Liz heard criticism as disrespectful but saw a distinct role for the reader of the text.

Although Ira sees a role for questioning the text, he deferred to authority:

> I believe in theocracy. If you haven't studied, not part-time like what I consider myself. If you haven't gone to a person who is an expert in halacha (law), a person who spends his whole life studying, it's like going to your untrained neighbor instead of a kidney specialist for an operation.... You go to a specialist.... I think it's a

theocracy where there is an authority. There is a Torah authority. Go to the experts....

If you believe in authority you have to submit to authority whether you like it or not.

Ira's position was the most extreme out of the group. Mark, Nan and Sam also believed that when stumped, you go to outside authorities for guidance but characterized their role very differently than Ira. All of these teachers took greater initiative in their struggles to understand the text, yet were aware of their own limitations as readers. Sam, Nan and Liz could all be described as active readers of text seeking to fill in the blanks.

This notion of filling in the gaps or blanks coincides with Iser's theme of "spots of indeterminancy." When the reader and text converge around these gaps, communication or dialogue occurs. Sam, Nan and Liz all recognized this as part of the process of reading and interpreting holy texts. This interactive, dialogic approach matched the profile of what I was looking for in readers. All of these readers wanted to transmit the authentic messages of Torah, yet all of them struggled to find a balance between tradition and change, between past voices of commentary and their own voice. They were all trying to preserve the integrity of the text and the integrity of their own voice. This theme of continuity and creativity was most clearly articulated in the words of Nan, Sam and Aliza. As Nan and Sam noted, it is our role to "fill in the gaps."

Table 3-6

Beliefs Orientation – Authority and Interpretive Frameworks

Is it okay to criticize the Torah?

Ariella, Mark, Nan, Aliza and Jerry responded with a vigorous YES. The others were opposed to criticizing the Torah.

ARIELLA	Sure, I think you need to watch how you criticize the Torah. You have to respect it and understand where the tradition lies.
MARK	Sure, I think you have to do it carefully, but there is nothing wrong with questioning the Torah. I don't believe in blind faith.
NAN	Oh, yeah when I see flaws in the characters, it draws me closer but that means I have to criticize myself too.
ALIZA	Absolutely, to criticize the Torah does not shake my religious foundation. I see myself as taking responsibility to understand the problems in the Torah.
JERRY	Sure, why not. I live in America and I value freedom of speech. It's my right, I'm a thinking individual.
SAM	Criticize, well it's okay to struggle with the text.
IRA	I believe in theocracy. If you haven't studied it like an expert . . . no I think there is a theocracy where there is an authority.
LIZ	Criticize, we don't do that. We reinterpret it. You don't criticize a book like that.

Interpretive Reading Task

The interpretive reading task posed a set of questions for each dimension of active reading: (1) reading in slow motion, (2) awareness of reading process, and (3) meaning making. Each set was designed to assess how interactive the relationship was between teacher and text. Did the teachers respond to the Torah as a living document and add their own contribution to the story? Did they see themselves in a transformative role? Did they see themselves as part of the 2500 year-old conversation?

Reading in Slow Motion

This dimension of active reading tried to assess how agile and adept the teachers were at conducting close readings of the text and discerning multiple meanings for each word, phrase and problem. I asked two questions about a specific word, "Nisa" and another about what happened to Abraham and Isaac during their three-day journey, a topic about which the Torah text is silent. The results are displayed in Tables 3-7 and 3-8.

Nisa. Four of the eight teachers were aware of the deeper theological implications of the word, "nisa," which means test. They quickly related it to God's omniscience and man's free will. They were very adept at seeing multiple interpretations of this significant word. Three of the teachers who were not fluent in Hebrew did not know how to respond to this question. They looked at the English and surmised that it meant "test" but did not make connections to other parts of the text or to the etymology of the word or any theological issue. I am not sure if it was their lack of Hebrew knowledge or inability to see multiple meanings in this word.

Table 3-7

Active Reading – Slow Motion

How do you understand the term "Nisa" in Genesis 22:1?

SAM	God proved. This is a test in life. God gives a test to someone who will achieve. Not that God had to find out something that he didn't know.
NAN	I reject the notion that God tested Abraham. I have a problem with limitations on God's knowledge.
IRA	It means test, a sign for all to see.
ALIZA	It's translated as proved. It's supposed to make the reader feel better about reading the rest of the chapter. The outcome is okay.
LIZ	I don't read Hebrew that well so I don't know.
MARK	I've always learned it as a test. I've never really thought about it.
ARIELLA	I like the commentaries that you offered. The idea of "ness" or banner for all to see is great.
JERRY	I have a minimal understanding of Hebrew.

Sam's response was typical of the first group. He spoke about "Nisa" in the following way:

> It is a test in life. Where you have a real fork in the road and you have to choose what path your life will take. I was taught and I accept it, that God would only give a test to someone who can pass it … in other words "Nisa" means "Ness" which is

wonder or sign, and that is interesting ... Not that God had to find out what he didn't know, but having to demonstrate it.

Aliza noted, "Although I don't see it as proved, that's how it's translated. It is supposed to make the reader feel better about reading the rest of the chapter knowing that the outcome is okay." Mark reflected on "nisa" in the following way, "I've always learned it to be a test, yet now I see the connection to miracle or "ness" and I never thought about that ... it's kind of neat." Nan and Ira's responses revealed an awareness of God's omniscience in this saga. They were very cognizant of the issue of free will that this word raised in the text.

Midrash. I also asked the teachers to consider what occurred during the three days that Abraham and his son Isaac journeyed up to Mount Moriah (see Table 3-8). The Torah text is silent about this but the commentators have struggled with the question in Midrash because of its glaring omission. For some of the teachers, this was a new question. Ariella stated, "I don't think I've ever studied any Midrash that talks about those three days, but that's a great question." For others, they had considered it in their studies and were very familiar with other Midrashic interpretations. Nan said, "I've often wondered about that. Did Abraham just chat with Yitzhak? Did he avoid him? Was he distancing himself from his son? What type of relationship did they have?" Aliza noted, "I know what the Midrash does with this, it tries to portray Abraham's steadfastness ... but I think the Midrash is too Abraham heavy." Some of the readers imagined a variety of conversations between the two. Some saw it as a bonding experience between father and son, others read it as a horrific silence. Sam stated, "I see it as a kind of a tense time of a strange silence.... And Abraham was probably struggling with himself the whole time, trying not to betray his struggle to Isaac after this incredible communication with God."

Two of the readers suggested that it took three days to reach the peak and remarked that they never gave much thought to it. Mark said, "I never thought of it, but I think maybe he was just a kid and it took that long, but if you're asking the question, I don't know." Ira saw the three days as a test for Abraham. "It was part of the test because you have what you can always have, bechira (choice)."

This question uncovered differences in teachers' background knowledge regarding Midrashic sources and a lack of familiarity with close reading of text. Nan, Ira, Aliza and Sam were all familiar with this type of inquiry and provided insightful comments regarding God's omniscience and man's free will. The other readers were more tentative initially in investigating this issue of text. Because of the familiarity that Nan, Ira, Sam and Aliza had with Midrashic texts, they were more agile readers and willing to delve into this question posed by the rabbis about the "three day journey." This suggested to me that they saw themselves as part of the long conversation, in dialogue with past voices of the text.

Awareness of Reading Process

This dimension of active reading assessed the teachers' self-reflective capacities for understanding the text. What strategies and interpretive frameworks did they use? How well could they articulate these strategies and their role in their historical conversation?

I asked several questions. First, I presented the teachers with several medieval passages of commentaries regarding the purpose of the Sacrifice of Isaac (Akedah) test and then asked them to choose what positions made sense and why. I asked another variation of this in the next section on meaning making and will discuss their responses in this section. I also asked them to think about the terseness of the text and why this might be so. Finally, I

asked them to consider problematic ideas of the text such as Satan's role in a particular Midrash. Some of the responses are displayed in Table 3-8.

Table 3-8

Active Reading – Slow Motion

The text tells us that Abraham and Isaac were gone for three days prior to the sacrifice. What happened on those three days?

SAM	It was a tense time. A strange silence. Abraham was probably struggling within himself not to betray the struggle to Isaac.
NAN	I've often wondered. Did he chat with his son? Did he avoid him? Was he distancing himself? What was the relationship between father and son? I guess there wasn't much communication on those three days.
IRA	It was a time for Abraham to think. Am I going to follow God's authority or not. It gave him time to integrate it, he had to prepare mentally.
ALIZA	It depends on how you want the relationship piece to iron itself out. Three days could be the father explaining to his son what it was all about and taking the time he needed to convince him or to explain it to him or help him understand it or three days of silent walking with an uncommunicative father portrays a whole different piece of the relationship.
LIZ	It gave them time to find the right sacrifice.
MARK	I never thought about that. I always learned it as three days, oh.
ARIELLA	Gosh, you want me to do Midrash! Maybe Isaac needed some convincing.
JERRY	Oh, I have no clue. How could he be with someone for three days that he's going to offer as a burnt offering.

Satan's Role

When asked about Satan's role in the Midrashic text, most of the teachers were very eager to provide an explanation (see Table 3-9). The majority of respondents were able to provide versatile responses. Three of the eight interviewees needed a little prompting to respond. Some examined the Midrash carefully, hearing echoes to other parts of the Torah. The seven who provided responses were clever in their interpretations and enjoyed the process of extrapolating meaning from this Midrash. The task for these readers was pleasurable. Again, three of the teachers, Jerry, Ariella and Mark, needed some probing to perform this task as they were unsure of their own skills with Midrash. Ira was very sure about Satan's role as an angel who watches whether people fulfill their potential or fail. He stated that "If you learn Talmud, you know that Satan is an agent of God" and not evil as most of literature characterizes him. Some of the other readers were not quite this bold in their understanding of Satan's role. Liz and Nan both understood Satan's role as the prosecuting attorney, the same role that he played in the Job story. Nan stated:

> I think the Midrash is linking the story of the Akedah with the story of Job where you have Satan. You know, a good man being tested. That's one of the things that Midrash does, link two things that deserve to be linked ... Satan is independent when everyone else is linked to God.

Mark and Sam both surmised that Satan pushed Abraham to think harder. Mark noted, "Abraham is probably like me, just naive." Sam stated when reading the Midrash, "That's incredible, maybe it's the devil's advocate position. Abraham struggles ... it's an amazing Midrash." Aliza declared, "He's the evil inclination. He's the one who wants to distract you from your mission." Ariella declared that the Satan was truly Abraham's own

conscience. She compared this to the Jacob story, "It's like when Jacob wrestles with these angels or however you want to translate it, the angel or Satan asks some good questions ... this is the conversation in his head." Only Jerry was unclear regarding the role that Satan played. He stated that he did not know that Satan was part of Jewish tradition.

Table 3-9

Active Reading – Awareness of Process

What role does Satan play in this Midrash?

The Satan accosted him and appeared to him in the guise of an old man. The latter asked him; whither goest thou? Abraham replied; to pray. Said the Satan; if a man going to pray, why the fire and knife in his hand and the wood on his shoulder? Abraham answered; peradventure we shall tarry a day or two, slaughter, cook, eat, said he. Old man! Was I not there when the Holy one blessed be He did say to thee; take thy son … notwithstanding an old man the likes of thee will go and put away a son vouchsafed him at the age of a hundred! Just for this and if he tries thee more than this, canst thou withstand it? Tomorrow He will tell thee a shedder of blood art thou for shedding his blood! Abraham replied; just for this.

SAM	He's the devil's advocate.
NAN	I think the Midrash is linking the Akedah with the story of Job. That's what Midrash does.
IRA	If you learn Talmud, you know that Satan is an agent of God, not evil. Satan watches you fulfil your potential or fail.
ALIZA	He's the evil inclination, he's the one who wants to distract you from your mission.
LIZ	He's the prosecuting attorney like in the Job story.
MARK	Satan is pushing Abraham to think harder about his decisions. Abraham is like me, naïve.
ARIELLA	Satan is truly Abraham's own conscience. It's like in the Jacob story when he wrestled with an angel. The angel or Satan ask some good questions.
JERRY	I didn't know Jews believed in Satan.

Terseness of text. Four teachers viewed the terseness of the text (see Table 3-10) as an opportunity "to fill in the gaps, holes or blanks." Sam stated, "I think that is how the structure is pre-built for human creativity, that we're meant to fill in the gaps. That I think a part of that is the proof of its divine origin. I think no person could have been so restrained ... each word is so precious that it is so terse." Aliza also noted, "The Torah wants me to fill in all the holes. It could be this way because it is such an ancient story or only the skeleton."

Table 3-10

Active Reading – Awareness of Process

Why is the Torah so terse?

SAM	I think that is how the structure is built for humans to fill in the gaps with our own creativity. That's what we're meant to do.
NAN	It forces us to be active readers. Our role is to fill in the blanks, to figure things out. It's telling us to get to work. The story has so much power, so much implied within its terseness. It's not all there, there's an air of mystery.
IRA	It's not a storybook. The Torah is an illustration of behavior that man can appreciate. Therefore, you take out a lot of the subplot and padding and setting. You go to the conflict and climax and themes without the rising action. That's my belief.
ALIZA	It could be this way because the Torah wants me to fill in all the holes. It could be this way because it is such an ancient story that we only have the skeleton left. . .the more powerful the story, the fewer the words.
LIZ	I think it forces you to use your head.
MARK	There's room to interpret, to figure things out. That's the importance of interpretation.
ARIELLA	It gets us to ask questions about the text.
JERRY	I've never thought about it. I guess it's short and to the point.

It could be this way because a lot of pieces of the Torah are this way, and truthfully in many instances, the more powerful the story, the fewer the words. Ariella explained it in the following way, "It's up to us to figure out what that point was then and what the point is now and if they are the same or different." Nan stated that the terseness of the text:

> Forces us to be active readers in this important story.... There is an air of mystery that is going to hang over this that is going to force us to look at it and fill in the blanks. The Torah is saying, if you want to understand this, get to work.

Aliza, Liz, Sam and Nan demonstrated an awareness of their role as active interpreters of text when asked to discuss various commentators. They differed in how they used past commentaries in their own reading of text. These readers paid homage to the medieval commentators when presented with passages of their work regarding the Akedah. They all took great pleasure in conversing with these past commentators. They were very active and excited about analyzing and making sense of them. Each of these readers engaged in a dynamic dialogue with the commentators in making their contribution to the text. Aliza noted, "They're heavy authoritative and I don't like any of them." Mark asked me to send his apologies to Abarbanel, Ramban and the Rambam for disagreeing with all of them. These readers demonstrated great individual initiative in interpreting the commentaries and finding meaning. They were aware of what impressed and disturbed them in each of the commentaries and how they as readers could reinterpret the text. Again, this was a quality that I was looking for in my profile of a knowledgeable and engaged reader. They were self-reflective and aware of their own role in the interpretation process vis-a-vis the commentators of Torah.

These five readers all suggested in the ways that they worked with the text that reading is a "gymnastic struggle." They took responsibility for generating meaning, connecting with past commentators and adding their voices to the conversation. These readers negotiated a personal position based on past voices and their own individual reasoning--a dynamic dialogic interaction with text.

Meaning Making

This criteria within active reading helped me to develop a composite picture of how the teachers connected the Torah text to their own lives. I asked direct questions regarding the passage's personal meaning for them, and the big question that it addressed. I listened for the themes that emerged from the text and connections to their own lives.

The readers offered two types of responses for the Sacrifice of Isaac (Akedah) passage. One type of response reflected on the troublesome quality of this story and God's role in this horror. The other response praised God in his savior role. Sam, Liz, Ira, Jerry and Ariella read it as a faith story whereas Mark, Aliza and Nan read it as a disturbingly haunting story (see Table 3-11). Nan was extremely puzzled by God's role in this story. Her response reflected the troublesome quality of the text.

> The Akedah is a story of faith in the face of the most awful. A parent and child coming together in awfulness.... It destroys the father and it destroys the son. It destroys the relationship between the two of them. They both pay a terrible price ... God is a real troublesome character in this story ... where does God's omniscience fit in? Being a faith person, I wonder what a faith person might be forced to do, and the price that you would have to pay for that. This is coming from God himself and that is more troublesome.

Nan also connected this to her own children and spoke about listening to the story with new ears after her first child was born:

> As a parent, it was a totally different experience than I had ever had before. So I can come back to the same stories as a child, as an adult, and when the time comes when I'm older, and I know that I'm going to be looking at everything differently.

Mark also saw the story through the eyes of a parent and was horrified by God's commands.

> Loving my children as I do, I can't imagine, and believing in God and loving Judaism, I can't imagine if I was in the position that I would do what Abraham did even though I believe in God. So it's hard for me to understand. It's one of those disturbing things.

Aliza was also disturbed by the story. She stated:

> Sure it tests my own faith system, but it raises a lot of questions about God too. What kind of father figure is this?... Who does this to a child?... I don't think this story can stand alone. I think it has to be seen as part of the whole patriarchal saga. This story definitely got monotheism rolling.

For Sam and Ira, the story represented the issue of faith, yet they were not as disturbed by God's command as the others. Sam stated, "Your whole life has been up for this moment.... Are you going to ultimately have the nerve to submit?" He goes on to explain that without this chapter, you couldn't have the Torah. Ira stated that he found nothing troublesome or problematic with this chapter. "Can man completely submit to authority, to divine authority?" was the essence of this chapter according to him. If you are religious, you submit according to God's will. Ariella also saw this story as a question of faith. It asks the big question of accepting authority that she stated was difficult for her. "I wish that I had

that kind of faith that was all encompassing; unfortunately, I have my questions." This was also Jerry's sentiment, who wished he could do what Abraham did and admired his actions. Jerry stated, "He had such a complete belief faith in God that he would do anything because he felt that he was doing the right thing."

Liz read the story, as did Ira and Sam, as God coming through for the Jewish people and did not find it as troublesome or problematic as a few of the others. Liz's one problematic area with the text was Abraham's disregard for his wife's feelings. "How could he do this to her?" she exclaimed aloud. This troubled her about the text but not God's command. In interacting with the text, Liz demonstrated her ability to be an exorbitant reader. She accepted God's command of Abraham but questioned his compassion regarding Sarah.

Nan, Aliza and Mark were deeply troubled by God's command and understood this passage in a very personal way. They connected it to their own family. The others represented it as an issue of ultimate faith and submission. If we were to situate these individuals on the continuum between individual initiative and submission to authority, Nan, Aliza and Mark would be placed on the pole closest to individual initiative, while all the others might situate themselves near submission to authority. All of them demonstrated in their reading of the Akedah, the ability to delve into its many layers of meaning. Nan, Aliza and Mark were very bold in their comments regarding the problems that occur when faith collides with reason.

Table 3-11

Active Reading – Meaning Making

What does the Akedah (Sacrifice of Isaac) mean to you?

SAM	It's the ultimate story of faith. Giving into God's will. Are you going to ultimately have the nerve to submit to God's command or not? Your whole life has been in preparation for this moment.
LIZ	It shows us how God really comes through for the Jewish people. I always use this when teaching about God.
IRA	I've come to terms with the Akedah story. God never gives anyone a test that they cannot achieve. Abraham preached against child sacrifice, then God commands him to do this. I'm a hypocrite says Abraham but God's authority is greater than me.
JERRY	I don't think that I would like it if my dad took me and tried to sacrifice me. I guess it's there to show that Abraham had faith.
ARIELLA	It's all about faith. Can we accept God's authority or not?
MARK	It's very disturbing. The value for me is that I don't believe in blind faith. Yet it's also showing God as merciful.
ALIZA	It's rich and deep and all that but I don't like it. It forces me to ask myself the question, do I have that kind of faith? The answer is probably no.
NAN	It's a very difficult story. Being a faith person, what a faith person might be forced to do and the price that you would have to pay for that. I think it's also a gift in a certain way.

Selecting Teachers to Study in Practice

Learning about these eight teachers' beliefs and reading stances about Torah was a complex process. It was difficult to select readers to study in practice as each respondent revealed many rich ideas about the interpretive reading process. There were external reasons and several substantive issues for eliminating certain readers. I begin with those whom I did not choose to study further. Ira was extremely doctrinaire and stated clearly that unless you could subscribe to Maimonides, "'I believe with complete faith that the Torah today is exactly the same as that given to Moses,' you could not be religious." Although a learned Jew and an agile reader of text, it was clear by his comments about Judaism as a theocracy that there were fixed meanings that only experts could assign. When asked about problems in the Akedah text, he stated that he had come to terms with it. He noted that to be religious was to be submissive to God's authority. In addition to this, he told me after the tape was off that he did not want to be videotaped teaching in class.

I did not choose Jerry because he seemed very unsure about the processes of textual analysis. Because of his limited learning, he was unclear about many of the Torah's purposes and how to approach the text. He was also unaware of how the commentaries functioned. There were many inconsistencies in his remarks because of his struggles to think through these ideas. He remarked at the end of the interview, "This is the most I've talked about Torah in my entire life." He was a new adult learner of Torah text with great love but limited knowledge of how to read in slow motion and how the interpretive process worked. He was not reflective enough about the interpretive process for this study.

I eliminated Ariella because of her discomfort in responding to many of these questions. She also spoke about "preaching" instead of teaching on numerous occasions that

suggested a mimetic rather than transformative posture towards text. She also disclosed at the end of the interview that she disliked teaching teens and would quickly give up this assignment when the opportunity arose.

Aliza would have been an excellent candidate for further study but she was planning to study in Jerusalem during the upcoming school year. Mark was eliminated not because of his responses, although he was not always aware of different interpretive frameworks, but because he is the principal of a school.

The three readers who emerged from this phase of the research were: Sam, Nan and Liz. These three readers all grappled with text to unlock its meaning. For them, reading was a "gymnastic exercise," an opportunity to fill in the gaps and dialogue with past commentators. The three readers were intellectually assertive yet very aware of the tension between continuity and creativity in reading holy texts. Even in the short interpretive reading task that I administered, they were animated while searching for connections to other parts of the text and their own lives. They were all knowledgeable and engaged adult learners of Torah--"doing Torah." These three teachers had a deep personal commitment to Torah L'Shema (learning for learning's sake), were very reflective about the interpretive process and engaged in a robust role in generating meaning from it. The three teachers, whether describing themselves as "laborers" or "partners" in the process of Torah interpretation, viewed themselves as active learners of text. They were aware that studying Torah was an interactive, dynamic process. For Liz, it's a democratic enterprise by which certain laws and ideas are amended. For Sam and Nan, individuals do not have that power to alter text. Only rabbinic authorities are entrusted with that power, yet individuals are empowered to unfold the Torah's truths through "mind work." These three individuals saw

their role as part of the long chain in the conversation about Torah. They all struggled to work in a framework of interpreting Torah where continuity and creativity could both reside.

Sam, Nan and Liz ranged in teaching experience from ten to forty years. Their personal affiliations spanned Reform to Orthodox and their school settings were in a Conservative supplementary and day school and Reform supplementary school. All of these teachers viewed Jewish education as their full-time commitment. They all had extensive backgrounds in Judaic studies and were committed adult Jewish learners. Liz is involved in public school education while the other two teach exclusively in Jewish settings and have no formal teaching or educational credentials. All teach adolescents.

What unites Nan, Sam and Liz, despite varying backgrounds and religious commitments, is their stance as adult learners. The profiles below are composite views that I constructed from the educational background surveys, interviews and interpretive reading tasks on their personal involvement with Torah, reading stance and role in interpreting holy texts.

Liz attended supplementary Jewish school at the same Temple in which she is currently teaching. She received her BA from Wayne State University and two Jewish education degrees from the adult studies division of her Reform congregation. Liz also has a K-8 teacher's certificate. She has taught at the Temple for forty years and is a lifelong learner, currently studying Kabbalah. As she noted in her interview, when a student queried why as a teacher she was still taking classes,"When you stop taking classes, you're dead."

For Liz, the Torah is a source of inspiration. She stated that all other books could be eliminated except for this one. Liz stressed the need to take individual initiative when

reading the Torah. She emphasized the importance of intelligent choice. Her model of reading text was guided by congregational practice. She noted, "Rabbis and lay-persons are part of the committee process and all give their opinions. Then the committee votes and makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees ... if you don't like the decision regarding the laws, you have a right to study up on it and be on the committee too." For her, Torah study was a democratic decision-making process. For Liz, utilizing your individual reasoning when interpreting text was key. Liz did not focus on word problems or gaps in the text as much as her counterparts. Her connection to the text represents big ideas. She used the Torah text as a springboard to discuss many personal ideas such as the role of women in Judaism or other patriarchal societies (see Table 3-12).

Nan studied in a day school up until age 13 as well as in Israel when her family was on Sabbatical. She received a BA from Brandeis University in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies. She holds no professional teaching license but views Jewish education as a full-time commitment and has been in the field twenty years.

Nan noted that personally studying the Torah brought her great pleasure. She stated, "Rereading it and noticing things that you haven't noticed before is so pleasurable." The antiquity of the text also gives her much pleasure. Nan stated that she loves reading commentary from a thousand years ago or more. "That's fantastic, I could go back, well maybe not as a woman, but theoretically I could time travel and talk Torah with Rashi (medieval commentator) and we would have something to talk about. That is really neat." She also noted that as a religious text, it is God's way of telling her something. The text for her is a form of spiritual communication unlike any other piece of literature. "Torah for me is a way of communicating with God, but through mind work."

Nan is a very agile reader of text who has the ability to do close readings as well as exorbitant readings. Because of her fluency with Hebrew and her training, she is able to examine words and passages very closely. With her more exorbitant readings, she stated, "You have to start with a basis, and then you can fly."

Nan makes it clear that we are not partners in creating Torah but active laborers in the process. Our job, she stated, "is to uncover things that we didn't know before ... but the truth is in there." This statement represents the dialectic between continuity and creativity, faith and reason in Nan's thinking which is very generative in her reading of holy texts.

Sam attended a Jewish day school for his entire life. He received his BA in English literature and Jewish studies from Yeshiva University. Sam considers Jewish education his full-time commitment and has been working in the field for ten years. He does not hold any teaching licenses.

Sam is an active Jewish learner who is engaged in weekly Talmud learning with a study partner. He is also someone who recognizes that Jews have an obligation to struggle with text and be active readers. He is a close reader who has been trained to scrutinize every word of the Torah. He stated that the Torah is structured in such a way as to encourage human creativity. "We're meant to fill in the gaps ... part of the proof of its divine origin is the fact that no person could have been so restrained in writing it."

This disposition suggested that Sam viewed himself as a meaning maker of text within boundaries. He relies on others with greater learning, insight and authority when confronted with a difficult problem. In discussing the Akedah text, he recognized that there were times when all reason is exhausted and you submit to God's will. Sam sees the text and its interpretation as holy work.

Table 3-12

Biographical Profiles of Three Knowledgeable and Engaged Adult Learners of Torah

	NAN	SAM	LIZ
VIEWS TORAH AS INTELLECTUAL PLEASURE	Studies Torah and Talmud. Rereading it and noticing things that you haven't seen before is so pleasurable.	Studies Torah and Talmud. I'm always learning new things all the time. It has so many layers of meaning.	Studies Kabbalah. When you stop taking Torah classes, you're dead.
REFLECTIVE ABOUT INTERPRETIVE PROCESS	Torah is a way for me to communicate with God, but through mind work. It forces us to be active readers. Our role is to fill in the blanks. People have been studying Torah for so long, looking at it in contradictory ways. They're all valid and I love that.	The structure of Torah is pre-built for human creativity. We're meant to fill in the gaps.	Rabbis and laypersons are part of the committee and all give their opinions. It forces you to use your head and find new insights.
CAPABLE OF GENERATING MEANING	You have to start with a basis and then you can fly. I think the Akedah is a gift, not a test. As a parent, I come to the story so differently.	The Akedah is the ultimate story of faith. Your whole life has been in preparation for this moment.	The Akedah shows us how God really comes through for the Jewish people.
VIEWS TORAH AS MORAL GUIDE	This is a religious text. God is trying to tell me something.	It's an ongoing spiritual quest and it's practical. I find it extremely gratifying and everything is in it.	You could eliminate all other books except for the Torah, it's morally binding.

These three teachers are all committed to text and learning as adults. They all demonstrated great awe for the Torah text during the interview and interpretive reading task. Their non-verbal communication also suggested their great passion for study. The tone quality of their voices when discussing Torah registered excitement. Nan, Sam and Liz, each in their own way, were committed to listening, probing and interacting with the Torah text. Nan and Sam were very competent in close reading or reading in slow motion. Liz looked to big ideas and connections to the modern world. Liz's Hebrew knowledge was limited, whereas Sam and Nan were fluent in Hebrew. Sam also stayed closer to the text, looking for connections to other parts of the text as in the exercise with "nisa." He found connections between the Abraham saga and the Purim story as I interviewed him. He was astounded and pleased by this discovery. Nan did more exorbitant readings in her own interpretations and connected to literary themes and her own life openly. She talked about how being a parent revealed new dimensions of the Abraham story for her. Still, all three were very aware of the interpretive process and discussed how their role as thinkers was significant in deciphering and making meaning of the text. Nan, Sam and Liz were readers who converged with the text, revealing aspects of their values and themselves as Jews. For these three readers, the Torah is inspirational, a moral guide for living. They were engaged in this "mind work," this "gymnastic struggle," when interpreting Torah. For these readers, interpreting Torah leads them in their spiritual quest for God.

Next Steps

Having identified three Torah teachers who were intellectually connected, reflective about the interpretive process, capable of generating meaning, and who viewed Torah as a moral guide, I was eager to see what they were like as teachers in the classroom Would they

engage students in interpretive tasks? Would they induct them into the historical Torah conversation? Would they foster an awareness of the reading process and develop tools for unlocking meaning? Would they help students draw moral guidance from the text?

I had begun this study with the belief that teachers who were passionate and knowledgeable readers would be more likely to engage students in interpretive tasks that parallel their own brand of reading and "doing Torah." Listening to Liz, Nan and Sam talk about their encounters with Torah, observing them grapple with questions of meaning, I found myself wondering about what their teaching might be like. Would students be wrestling with texts and modeling the types of reading that these three "textpeople" demonstrated in the beliefs interview and reading task? In what ways would their teaching practice draw on the powerful elements that defined their beliefs and practices as readers? In what ways would their personal ways of "doing Torah" be enacted in the classroom? These three readers who grappled and struggled with text were intellectually assertive and aware of their stance. My hypothesis suggests that readers who are "textpeople," involved in the historical conversation personally and aware of the process of reading, will be more likely to engage adolescents in interpretive reading tasks that parallel their own brand of reading, As we take a look at these three readers "doing Torah" as classroom teachers, I examine whether or not they enact a teaching practice that allows students to dynamically interact with the text as they do.

CHAPTER 4

Studying the Teaching of Interpretive Reading

In Three Torah Classrooms

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe three Torah lessons taught by the teachers whom I selected as "knowledgeable and engaged learners." The descriptions are based on transcripts produced from videotapes and field notes gathered during the second phase of this study. In observing these three teachers in their classrooms, I was expecting to learn about how engaged readers of Torah induct adolescents into the historic Torah conversation. I was anticipating classrooms where students and teachers were engaged in "doing Torah." I hoped to hear a dialogue between past and present voices and learn how teachers open this "silenced dialogue" between the generations.

I wanted to know what types of interpretive tasks teachers offered students for connecting to the text. I was looking for whether or not they would teach reading strategies to their adolescent students. I was curious to observe how these teachers provided tools for deciphering the Torah text. I paid close attention to the local conversation and the norms that teachers established in their Torah classrooms.

Below, I recreate the three lessons as I observed them. The purposes for this reconstruction are threefold. First, I want my readers to experience the lessons as I saw and heard them. I want the reader to understand what the teachers and students did and said and how the lessons were based around interpretive reading tasks. The reader needs to have an appreciation of what an interpretive reading task embedded in a Torah conversation sounds like. These descriptions of Torah classrooms are essential in order to understand subsequent analyses.

Second, I want the readers to see the teachers enacting their purposes for teaching this particular lesson and their broader goals for teaching Torah to adolescents as a basis for understanding their espoused purposes. Third, accounts of classroom practice are rare in the literature on Jewish education and these descriptions can provide a basis for conversation in the field.

I chose Nan, Liz and Sam for the classroom observation phase of the study because they personally relied upon traditional exegesis to read texts for deep comprehension. These three knowledgeable and engaged adult learners of Torah all expressed deep enjoyment when interacting with the text. They all utilized elements of active reading in their own personal reading of text to interpret it. These teachers were all engaged in "doing Torah" or constructing meaning. None were passive readers of the Torah. They were all exorbitant readers of text who took great pleasure in the interpretive process as evidenced in the reading exercise on the Sacrifice of Isaac.

Initially I planned to observe the teachers over a period of time, but I soon realized that the amount of data would be overwhelming. I observed these three teachers in the winter teaching one lesson. Although I realized that one lesson would not be sufficient to make robust conclusions about the linkages between personal reading practices and teaching practice, I viewed it as a starting point for understanding what capacities were necessary for teaching interpretive reading.

Development of Observation Framework

I designed part two of this study to observe how and to what extent these three Torah teachers enacted a teaching practice that resembled their own personal reading. I hypothesized teachers who were knowledgeable and engaged readers of text would be more

likely to engage adolescents in interpreting the Torah and connecting them to the historical conversation.

I decided that the best way to test this hypothesis would be to observe them in practice. To what extent were the teachers' personal strategies of active reading present in the classroom? Were students involved in the dynamic interaction with text that leads to pleasure and productive interpretations? Were students involved in the process of "doing Torah" and constructing meaning? Interpretive reading, as the rabbis tell us, calls for a living and dynamic response. This is the interactive process which literary critics deem as necessary for a reading to occur. The Torah remains alive when readers add their own contributions to the story.

To guide my observations I developed an observation protocol around four areas: (1) interpretive tasks, (2) reading strategies, (3) interpretive conversations, and (4) dilemmas in reading holy texts. For each area I generated a set of questions to focus my attention on salient aspects of the lesson. These areas reflect my interest in how Torah teachers handle interpretive tasks and create interpretive communities in their classrooms with adolescents.

Interpretive tasks

The first set of questions focus on how the interpretive reading tasks were handled in relation to other parts of the lesson. I was interested in finding out whether and how the Torah text and commentaries were used during the lesson. The key question was--How do teachers structure the interpretive tasks during the lesson?

Reading Strategies

Questions about reading strategies directed me to record systematically how the teacher inducted students into texts. The categories of reading in slow motion, awareness of

reading process and meaning making, used in the interview phase of this study, were adapted for the classroom observations. I was curious to see whether and how these teachers introduced or explicated such strategies to their students. My central question was--How do teachers help students identify and use strategies of active reading while interpreting the Torah?

Interpretive Conversations

Questions about interpretive conversations and communities helped me assess what kinds of opportunities the teacher created to engage students in the local Torah conversation. In what ways did the teacher encourage Torah talk? What types of norms existed in the classroom community? The key question for this investigative lens was--How do teachers build opportunities for the local Torah conversation in their classrooms?

Dilemmas of Reading Holy Texts

The rationale for this set of questions was to understand how challenges of faith and reason were handled in the classroom. I initially was very interested in understanding whether and how these teachers' own conflicts about reason and faith were enacted in the classroom. Yet I realized that one lesson would not be sufficient to examine these issues. I wondered if their classroom practice would parallel their own reading initiative when it came to dealing with complex challenges. I was curious to see if teachers encouraged students in their own speculation about philosophical issues. The central question in this inquiry was--To what extent and in what ways do teachers encourage grappling with the text and its deeper philosophical problems? (see Table 4-1)

I interviewed the teachers after the lesson, or in one case by phone the following day. I asked about their purposes for teaching this lesson and for teaching Torah in general. I also tried

to learn something about how these teachers thought about the issues I think are significant in teaching Torah such as: connecting the local conversation to the historical conversation and developing an awareness of reading strategies in text explication and handling challenging textual dilemmas. In retrospect, I realized that I did not always probe their thinking about teaching enough. Perhaps I was tentative about asking questions that the teachers might perceive as critical or perhaps I was unsure about my own direction. I taped the post-interviews which lasted about 50 minutes and transcribed them. After reviewing these transcripts, I wrote summary analyses of the teachers' accounts of lesson and their teaching.

Table 4-1

Descriptive and Analytic Framework for Part II of Study

Observational and Interview Study

Observing Knowledgeable and Engaged Adult Readers of Torah

Induct Adolescents into the Historical Torah Conversation

DIMENSIONS OF TORAH PRACTICE	DESCRIPTIVE AND ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK
The Tasks	What kinds of interpretive tasks do teachers create for students? What types of commentaries do they use? How do Torah teachers structure the interpretive tasks during the lesson?
Reading Strategies	What reading tools do Torah teachers provide students to read and decipher text? How do teachers help students identify and use strategies of active reading while interpreting Torah?
The Classroom Conversation Torah Talk Norms	How do teachers build opportunities for the local conversation? What types of Torah talk norms are created in the classroom? How do teachers create an interpretive classroom community in which students play an active role in the interpretive process?
How do Torah teachers facilitate dialogue between past and present voices? How do Torah teachers help adolescents "do Torah?"	How do Torah teachers enact the historical conversation in the classroom?

I devote the rest of this chapter to narrating the three Torah lessons that I observed. Based on the transcripts of these lessons, the narratives highlight those aspects of the lesson that I was especially focusing on: interpretive tasks, reading strategies and norms for the local Torah

conversation. Before recounting the lesson I describe the school context where each teacher works, the texts used and their stated purposes for teaching Torah.

Liz's Torah Teaching

Setting

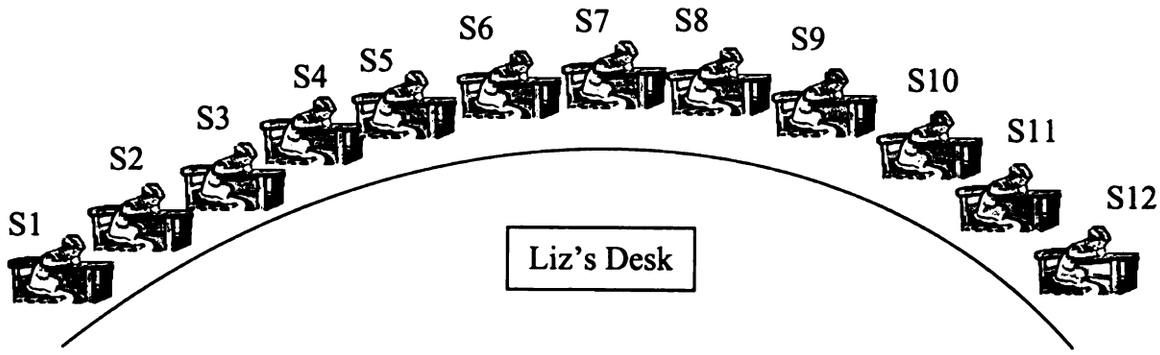
Liz teaches in the largest Reform Jewish supplementary school in the Detroit area. She teaches all Judaic subjects within the middle and high school. Students are required to take her Torah class during the seventh grade when they are preparing their Bar or Bat Mitzvah Torah portions which they are expected to read mechanically in Hebrew. In addition to this Torah class, students work with a private tutor who prepares them for this task.

The school, which houses pre K- 12, has a total population of 1600 students, including 137 in the seventh grades. Liz's seventh grade of 12 and 13 year-olds meets once a week for fifty minutes after school. The class is composed of five boys and five girls, an unusually small class, but not atypical for this grade level. Most classes range from 12-15 students. The seventh grade curriculum includes a Hebrew language class, a Judaic course which is an overview of the Bible, and a choice of two Sabbath workshops which are three hours in duration (see Table 4-2).

Table 4-2

Three Classroom Arrangements

Classroom 1



Classroom 2

				S13	S14
				S15	S16
S5	S6	S9	S10	S17	S18
S7	S8	S11	S12	S19	S20
		S1	S2	S21	S22
		S3	S4	S23	S24

Nan's Desk

Classroom 3

S1	S2	S3	S4
S5	S6	S7	S8
S9	S10	S11	S12
S13	S14		

Sam's Desk

A woman in her late fifties, Liz has taught in this school for forty years, served as a layperson on various committees and as president of the Temple. She is very proud of this legacy. Some of her students are the children of parents she taught. On the day that I observed Liz, she was dressed very casually. She wore no head covering as is the practice in this Reform Temple. She is considered an institution within the school. Liz approaches her teaching with great seriousness.

The room that she uses is shared with toddlers from the nursery school, who use the room daily. It is a brightly decorated room with several bins of toys in the corners of the room. There is one portable storage closet for her classes' books and materials. There are no signs of Torah on the bulletin boards. The seventh graders are clearly living in borrowed space.

Students sat in individual desks arranged in a horseshoe shape. There were no assigned seats. Liz's desk, which is in the front of the room, has a Tzedakah (charity) box and bin of candy. Next to her desk is a small kidney-shaped table with construction paper and glue on it. Liz's voice is very strong. When she talks, students respond. The students entered the room cheerfully 4:15 p.m. Liz interacted with the students casually. The girls parked themselves on the left side of the horseshoe and the boys on the right side. The group seemed to be familiar with one another as there was lots of chatting prior to the beginning of class. The directions for the day's lesson were written on the blackboard. The students' texts were kept in the portable closet and distributed at the start of class by one of the students.

Teacher's Purposes

Liz explained her goals for this lesson. She wanted to help students "to find their way around the Tanach [1]and feel comfortable doing so." This, she claimed, would increase a sense of security when using the text in the Temple on the Sabbath and holidays. Another goal was to increase students' confidence in reading the text. "I want them to see that this is a viable source that they can really read and understand." She was very conscious of the brief time that she had with students and wanted very much to guarantee that the time spent doing Torah would be interesting and not boring. Since the parents would only consent to religious school once a week, she felt a keen responsibility, as could be detected in her passionate tone, to provide the students with many experiences during this fifty-minute hour.

Texts

The class uses the entire Tanach or Bible in English as its text. In the lesson I observed, Liz chose two selections, one from Exodus, the second book of the Torah, and one from Deuteronomy, the fifth and final book of the Torah. The text used by the students has no commentaries. Liz chose the complete Tanach (Bible) so students could learn to navigate their way through the text, she explained to me in our post interview.

The lesson focused on core passages in the Torah. The passage in Exodus relates the experience of revelation and is the source of great debate among Jews. It contains the covenant and decalogue (ten commandments). In fact, this passage is often represented as the basis for ethical monotheism and has been interpreted extensively by rabbinic commentators and philosophers. The challenge that this passage presents is how do we understand and appreciate God's communication to the people of Israel. This raises significant questions

[1] Tanach is a Hebrew acronym for the Bible. It includes Torah or the Five Books of Moses, Neviim or Prophets and Ketuvim, or the Writings.

regarding the nature of Torah and the Jewish people's chosenness and challenge to accept God and the commandments. The passage in Deuteronomy begins with God's refusal to allow Moses into the promised land. It recapitulates events as told by Moses. These verses in Deuteronomy could be considered Moses' interpretation of his role and the people's responsibility towards God. Moses emphasizes the face-to-face encounter and the fact that the covenant was given "to us and not our fathers." In this second account of the covenant and decalogue, Moses is highlighting his role as a mediator between God and the people. Both passages have been the source of great commentary and debate. Many Midrashic texts were created to explain Moses' role and the people's role in the giving and receiving of the Torah. These rich texts form the basis of Judaism's unique contribution to the world. Below are the thirty-eight verses of the Torah text that students were supposed to compare and interpret during this fifty-minute hour.

Exodus 20:1-20

And God spoke all these words, saying:
I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath; or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love ME and keep My commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou, nor they son nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath

day, and hallowed it. Honour thy father and mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's. And all the people perceived the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voice of the horn, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses: Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people: Fear not for God is come to prove you, and that His fear, may be before you, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off; but Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. And the Lord said unto Moses: Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel: Ye yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. Ye shall not make with Me – gods of silver or gods of gold, ye shall not make unto me.

Deuteronomy 5 : 1-18

And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them: Hear O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and observe to do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The Lord spoke with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire. I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare unto you the word of the Lord, for ye were afraid because of the fire, and went not up into the mount – saying: I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before ME. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, even any manner of likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love Me and keep My commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain. Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord thy God commanded thee. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh

day is a sabbath unto the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor they man-servant, nor they maid-servant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And thou shalt remember that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day. Honour thy father and mother, as the Lord thy God commanded thee; that the days may be long, and that it may go well with thee, upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not murder. Neither shalt thou commit adultery. Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor. Neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's wife; neither shalt thou desire thou thy neighbor's house, his fief, or his man-servant or his maid-servant, his ox or his ass or any thing that is thy neighbor's.

The Lesson

Liz began the lesson abruptly by explaining the day's assignments. She provided oral and written instructions. In this fifty-minute lesson students were supposed to compare and contrast the two passages from the Torah, create a "paper Midrash"[2], explain their creation orally to their classmates and write an eleventh commandment. As Liz tried to clarify the directions for these different activities, she encountered numerous interruptions. One student walked in late with clown shoes, disturbing the class and stopping Liz midstream. Liz treated this interruption as a major offense. She argued with the student about the inappropriateness of the shoes, then waited for him to remove the shoes so that she could proceed with the directions. No sooner did she get started, then an announcement came over the PA system asking teachers to make a list for the office of students who walk to and from the Temple. Below is a partial transcript of the first few minutes of class.

[2] This idea is derivative from Jo Milgrom's work who suggests that a visual representation of the ideas can expand on the students' understanding of Biblical text.

T: The directions for this assignment are on the board. (1) Find Exodus 20:1-20 and Deuteronomy 5:1-18. (2) How are they similar? How are they different? Decalogue and Covenant. (Interruption occurs as student walks in making a scene. Argument occurs between teacher and student.) Does everyone have a Tanach? I will do this and take attendance. I want it to come out nice. (Interruption on PA system) You all have imagination. I want you to look things up in the Tanach, Exodus 20:1-20 and Deuteronomy 5:1-18. Where would you find Exodus? (Doesn't wait for a response) You would look in the second book of the Tanach and then the chapter and then the verse. Okay. Write what they are about in either chapter and then make a picture of either one with scraps of paper and glue. No scissors. Write the following vocabulary words in your Machberet (Hebrew for notebook) "covenant" and "decalogue."

As Liz explained the directions on the board, she also took attendance and got ready to pass the Tzedakah box. She began the conversation about covenant while completing these daily rituals.

T: Covenant means agreement. How many of you have a covenant with your parents about school work?

S: I do. If I get all A's, nothing below a B, I get to go to Pennsylvania to visit relatives.

T: Okay, that's one kind of agreement.

S: Every report card, they will pay me. If I get all A's all year, I get a go-kart.

T: What about behavior, does it count?

S: Oh yeah.

T: Okay, we all have kinds of agreements.

T: Brit Milah is a different kind of covenant--a circumcision, a symbol of a covenant between Abraham and God. And what did He say--"You shall be as great as the stars and numerous as the sand."

T: What's the Decalogue? (Liz does not wait for responses) "Dec" is 10, the Ten Commandments. Write it down quickly.

S: Don't steal.

S: Rules.

T: Okay, rules to live by.

T: Okay, write down what this all means and interpret them, the passages, then cut and glue.

After this short exchange regarding the vocabulary words, Liz asked students to open their texts to the first passage. Several students had trouble finding the passage. Liz told them not to share page numbers with each other as they were expected to find things in the Torah on their own according to chapter and verse. Students began reading to themselves. Approximately one minute into the reading, Liz interrupted the students to ask whose turn it was to pass the Tzedakah (charity) box. A minor disagreement occurred and one student was selected to walk around, collect and count the change while the others continued their reading. After this weekly ritual, Liz interrupted the students again to choose candy from a large canister and to recite the blessing together prior to eating. All of these interruptions distracted students from their reading. By now, the majority of students were no longer looking in their texts but conversing with each other.

Ten minutes passed and students were just beginning to locate the two passages. Although Liz told them to work individually, some were having difficulty deciphering the

words in English. They turned to their neighbors for help. Liz reminded them to work alone and move along as there was a lot to do. Some students were puzzled and did not see any differences between the two passages.

S: (After skimming the passages) They're both the same.

T: They're similar, but different. Really. Read it carefully.

S: My partner isn't here.

T: This is an individual project.

S: (walks up to teacher's desk) They say the exact same thing.

T: I've read it, it doesn't. Keep reading, what does it talk about?

S: I did.

T: Read it carefully--remember the words I gave you at the beginning of the lesson, on the board. By the time we're done, everyone will know how to use the Tanach.

S: I don't get it.

S: Neither do I.

S: The first one is about Moses.

T: It's an agreement. Right? Let's see how creative you can be on paper, interpret them, use glue. No scissors, that's right, just tear it.

S: There's no such thing as doing it wrong?

T: Right. Do you like that?

S: Yeah.

T: Sometimes you need something in life that you can't be wrong at. When you're finished, write your own 11th commandment.

Several other students claimed that the passages were similar, to which Liz responded that they were not as she read them. She directed them to read them both more carefully. When another student shouted out that he didn't get it, she sternly redirected him to the vocabulary. She told students to skim, read, and hurry along so that they could create a "nice picture" (paper Midrash).

After four minutes of reading the passages, students then moved from their desks, which were in a horseshoe shape, to one central table with paper and glue. Students sat on the floor to complete this project. Students appeared to be unclear about what the teacher meant and began to ask one another. Liz told them to provide a visual interpretation of the two passages without using scissors. She emphasized the fact that no scissors were to be used in this project. As students worked, they chatted quietly with one another. Some students finished this work quickly and returned to their desks. Liz reminded them to write an eleventh commandment. The following exchange occurred between teacher and students.

S: Thou shalt hate your sister.

T: Use good judgement. You're all smart. I want to hear some nice interpretations.

S: Are there commandments about drugs and war?

T: Anything you want, you can use your creativity.

S: I don't know the 10 commandments.

T: Don't worry about it. (looks in my direction) They're not slow, they're all gifted. All my students are gifted. Okay, write them out guys quickly and use good judgement.

Slowly, students returned from the central table to their desks to write this eleventh commandment. Liz waited patiently for all to complete their paper Midrash. The Midrash

activity took about ten minutes while the actual text reading took about four minutes. Liz then asked each student to present his/her Midrash and eleventh commandment orally.

T: Let's start with the 11th commandment and our pictures.

S: 10th or 11th.

T: 11th and let's start with Ben.

S: My commandment is that thou shalt do whatever you want. (Holds up picture) It's Mt. Sinai and the 10 commandments, broken.

T: Jennifer?

S: All should respect one another. (Holds up picture of 10 commandments, ten scraps of paper on a mountain).

S: Be nice to everyone (Holds up picture of 10 commandments on Mt. Sinai, similar to previous representation).

T: Nice job.

S: Thou shalt not hurt others or himself. God is helping Jews in exchange for following the 10 commandments.

S: Thou shalt come to school.

T: Tell me what the picture is about?

S: Can I show you up close.

T: No, just tell me.

S: Okay, the 10 commandments.

T: Next.

S: Thou shalt be able to hit siblings and get away with it (Holds up picture of 10 commandments).

S: Thou shalt be a person, not a stranger. Do you understand it, Mrs. L?

T: Yes (answers very quickly), you want people to be close to each other.

S: No, that's not it (objects defiantly). A stranger could be different things, a kidnapper (answer is difficult to decipher).... Here's my picture of Moses' eyes and broken tablets.

Liz praised all contributions either verbally or non-verbally through head nods or smiles. The students seemed to be talking to the teacher rather than each other. The one student who offered the commandment, "Thou shalt be a person and not a stranger," wondered if the teacher understood him. She immediately provided an interpretation but the student objected "No, that is not what I meant" and proceeded to explain. Liz kept going because she had a full agenda which included sharing a Midrash on why the Jews were given the Torah. Liz gave the students parts from a dramatized version of this traditional Midrash. With script in hand, students recited their parts from the Midrash. Following the reading, this short exchange occurred:

T: A Midrash is a story used to explain something in Tanach. I want you to explain it.

S1: Why didn't we do the first Midrash?

T: I didn't like it. It doesn't use pleasant tones about the Arab nation. You want an honest answer, I'll give it to you!!!

T: What is this talking about? Someone tell me.

S2: Israel and the 10 commandments.

S3: God giving the Torah.

T: Why to Israel? What is in the interpretation here?

S2: Our ancestors.

T: Who are our ancestors?

S2: Grand people from the past.

S3: He's not giving it to us because of our ancestors, it's for us and people to come.

T: Why not to our ancestors? That's a good interpretation, why for the children.

S2: They're the ones who have to hold onto it.

S3: They didn't have any faults.

T: Who is the future? Am I or are you?

S: We are (a chorus is heard).

Only three of the students participated in the discussion which Liz ended abruptly so they could talk about locating the five books in the Torah.

After this brief discussion, a student collected the books and Midrashim. The boy who entered the room with clown shoes noted that they still had several minutes left. He asked if they could read from *God's Big Toe.* This is a contemporary collection of Midrashim. Liz explained in the post interview that she enjoyed reading aloud to her students even at this age. "No one reads to adolescents" she claimed and she felt that it was a good way to share stories with them. Liz looked at her watch and told the student that there wasn't enough time, but the student insisted and read the first two lines of a Midrash aloud. The bell rang and all the students exited quickly.

Nan's Torah Teaching

Setting

Nan teaches in the Judaic Studies department of the middle school in a Conservative Jewish Day School in the Detroit area. Besides their English studies, students take Judaic studies half the day which includes Hebrew language, Bible, Mishna, holidays and history.

The school has a total population of 700 students from K-8. This is Nan's second year at the school. Her courses include any books of the Bible and Mishna. The class I observed , a seventh grade class on the book of Samuel, meets three times a week for 50-minute periods. The seventh grade of 24 students is composed of 12 and 13 year-olds who are preparing for Bar and Bat Mitzvah. Torah is a subject like history or English in which they are graded like all other subject matters. All of the students in Nan's class are of average ability. According to Nan, their Hebrew abilities are not excellent, nor are their thinking strategies. Students in the Hebrew and Torah classes are grouped according to their Hebrew language abilities from the second grade on in this Day School.

Nan is in her mid-forties and modestly dressed. She wears a head covering as is the custom of many traditional women but not a consistent practice in this school. She is upbeat and energetic. Her sense of humor is sardonic and seems to be beyond the level of most of her students. She shares this classroom with other teachers and there are no visible signs of it being a Torah classroom. There are no specially designed bulletin boards or words of Torah around the room.

The students sat in desks that were clustered in groups of four or five. There were six clusters in the classroom. It appeared that since they faced one another in their clusters, there was an emphasis on cooperative work. Yet during the lesson observed, the students did not share or address one another.

Nan's tone was very cheery. Some of the students seemed lethargic as their heads were down on the desks or their bodies were slumped in their seats. Others were preoccupied with scribbling in their notebooks. This was the period preceded lunch. The students' energy levels certainly did not match that of their teacher's. Nan approached the task of reading

Torah with great enthusiasm. Although the students were cooperative, they were not fully engaged.

Teacher's Purposes

The lesson that I observed involved an interpretive reading task that Nan described as "word choice in Biblical literature" in our post interview. The entire lesson focused on one line from the book of Samuel II. Nan did this because she believed that paying attention to words would develop a sensitivity to Biblical language. This was her rationale for focusing on one verse for the entire class period. In the post interview, Nan stated, "Today we focused on the language, the pasuk, how words were chosen to portray a certain point of view." This class represented a typical lesson for her students but not "a typical everyday lesson" according to Nan. Other types of lessons might involve a psychological investigation of a character's motivations or an overview of the storyline.

Texts

The text used in this class is the book of Samuel in Hebrew. The two books of Samuel are contained in the second section of the Bible. The Bible is divided into the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings which is referred to as Tanach, an acronym in Hebrew for Torah, Neviim and Ketuvim. The books of Samuel are part of Neviim, the prophets. There is no English in the students' texts. They are expected to read the Hebrew and translate it with the help of the teacher. There are commentaries in the text but the students do not use them. The text is written below. The students viewed only the Hebrew version of this verse.

Samuel II, 3:1

Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; and David waxed stronger and stronger but the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

The Lesson

Nan's lesson began with a short ten-minute written quiz on the previous day's lesson. The students seemed to complete the quiz effortlessly. Collecting the quizzes, she made the transition into the text by informing the students that the entire class period would be spent examining one verse from the book of Samuel. She tried to entice them by stating, "There's more here than meets the eye." At first students did not open their texts or notebooks quickly. It took several repeated directions before they opened their texts and moved to the task at hand.

Nan opened the discussion using both Hebrew and English by asking a question about the verse 3:1 in the book of Samuel. Students located the verse quickly. Her questions combined Hebrew and English. Oftentimes, she inserted Hebrew words within the predominantly English phrased question. Students had no problem following this hybridized Hebrew-English. This task of deciphering the first and second half of the verse was done completely in whole group.

T: We're going to be spending the entire hour on this. There's more here than meets the eye. Let's read the Pasuk (verse). Who would like to read it?

S: Reads the verse in Hebrew.

T: What's the first thing you know about the war? The verse informs us....

S: It's a long war.

T: How long did the war last? Was it like the 100 year war between France and England?

S: Two years?

S: Milchamah Arukah (Hebrew for a "long war" as the verse reads).

T: Yes, this is the first thing that we know from the verse.

T: Who was the war between? Who were the two parties? This you need for your notes.

Some students do not have their notebooks open.

S: Avner?

T: Is that what it says? Look at the Pasuk. Read it carefully. I want you to read it carefully and listen to what it says.

S: David (not looking at the text).

T: Is that what it says?

S: I did read that.

S: Bait Shaul and Bait David. (House of Saul and House of David)

T: Yes, when it says a word, the author has chosen it deliberately. It does not say David and Shaul. We'll get to that in a minute (writes "Bait David and Bait Shaul" on board).

S: What does that mean?

T: Good question.

S: Not house--it's all the people with them, it's their whole group.

T: It's a family, a dynasty. Define dynasty.

S: A family that rules.

S: Asks about dynasty (somewhat inaudible).

T: Ben asked an important question. How do dynasties function?

In different places, there are different rules. (Discussion ensues about English dynasties and generational ruling.) We also have dynasties in Hasidic leadership. For example, the Lubavitcher Rebbe who passed away was the son-in-law, not son of the past Rebbe.

T: What do we know about the dynasty of Saul? It's not considered a family worthy, is it? What's going on? We know that this dynasty is doomed. In Hebrew what do we know from Samuel I, there wasn't a "Bait Shaul."

S1: Why was the son punished?

T: That's an interesting question.

S1: How do they decide who is king?

T: Nuu…

S1: A war?

T: David was anointed. Eeshboshet was not. Samuel made David king.

T: Who made Eeshboshet king? Avner made him king, a single person. These are indications that they are not equal. If they used their names, it would have implied that they were equal. Eeshboshet by himself is nothing, only has power because…

S: He is Saul's son.

After this short digression Nan tried to refocus the conversation about the war. When the students couldn't come up with responses, Nan provided them.

T: What if the war was called between Avner and Joab. What would it indicate? (Waits, no responses) Maybe two individuals with business to take care of. Why weren't geographic locations chosen for this war? (waits, no responses) Does this writer like Saul or David? How does the book of Samuel begin? Ah, David is victorious. Who is the winner? Saul is dead. Who's the loser? Who does the author want? The author wants David to be king. If it's North and South, this is about who should be king, wants to smooth it over, not a geographic thing. We want David to be king for all.

During the course of the lesson, Nan engaged in these "soliloquies" when students did not respond. She asked rapid-fire questions that the students have learned are of a rhetorical nature.

Nan framed the first major interpretive task as naming a war. She introduced it by telling a story about her mother's name for the war that we commonly refer to in the North as the "Civil War."

T: Choosing a name for a war is an interesting process. My mother grew up in the South, in Atlanta. The war that took place in America between 1860-1865 was not called the Civil War. It was referred to as the War between the States. My mother had never heard of the Civil War living in the South. The naming of a war tells you a lot about yourself. How else could this war be described?

The class launched into possible names for the war in the book of Samuel.

T: Yes, what are the possibilities?

S: The war between Tov and Rah (The war between good and evil).

T: That's pretty loaded, too heavy. Everyone thinks that they're on the side of good.

S: How about Bain David and Eeshboshet (Hebrew for " between David and Eeshboshet").

T: Okay, the two kings. That makes sense.

S: Milchemet Achim (Hebrew for a "Civil War").

T: (hesitates).

S: Milchemet Bain Achim.

T: Okay, I guess there are two votes for that. I thought of a few more. (Waits a few seconds) Are you all tapped out already?

S: Revolutionary War?

T: This is a war about succession. Shaul is dead, who will be king?

S: Two cities?

T: Okay, between two capital cities, Hevron and Mahanayim. A geographical description. North and South. Judah and Israel.

S: Milchamah beshveel Melech (a war for king).

T: Okay, I'm putting that one with "Milchemet Achim-- (civil war).

T: I thought of one more. How about the war between generals, Avner and Joab. These are all legitimate possibilities. Now I have a tricky question. First, I'll tell you a joke. A mother buys two shirts for her son. The next day he puts one on and the mother asks, What's the matter, you didn't like the other one?

S: Is that the joke?

S: I don't get it.

T: She's going to make him feel guilty no matter what.

T: Whatever name we choose for the war is okay, but let's ask why it was chosen. It's worthwhile to look at the implications of the name. If we say the "War between David and Eeshboshet," what are we saying? That would imply that they are equal? In what ways are they not equal?

This entire discussion on the first half of the verse took about 30 minutes. Students were expected to generate names for the war and provide reasons why they thought the label appropriate. After several suggestions were written on the board, students were reminded to copy this in their notebooks. Relatively few students participated in the discussion. They did record the notes from the board in their notebooks. Several suggestions emerged about

possible names for the war including: names of generals, geographical sites and the purposes of the war. While students were able to provide names for the war, they could not explain why they considered the names appropriate. Nan did most of the work by analyzing their responses.

The next interpretive task focused on the results of the war as reported in the second half of this verse. Nan reminded the students to look closely and figure out what the text means. She said there was a gap between what they might expect and what they would find in the verse. The expectation was that the verse would say the house of David was victorious and yet it said--only David. Nan's questioning did not elicit any further comments or observations. Nan reminded students several times that this was not a guessing game. She pointed to the text as the source from which we work. "Words are placed in the text purposefully and we need to figure these things out as readers," she told them. The discussion of the second part of the verse took ten minutes.

The lesson ended abruptly. Nan tried to create a cliffhanger effect, as she pointed out in the post interview, by telling students, "Tomorrow we'll see how much of a nothing Eeshboshet, the leader of Saul's army, is."

Sam's Torah Teaching

Setting

Sam teaches in the Judaic Studies department in a Conservative Jewish Day School in the Detroit area. He teaches in the middle school. The school has a population of 700 students from K-8. This is Sam's third year at the school. His courses include Torah and Nach (Prophets). I observed an eighth grade Torah class that meets daily for 50 minutes during the entire school year. It is a required course for these twelve 13 and 14 year-old

students. This is a particularly small class for this grade level. All of these students have already become Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Sam described these students as of average ability. He knows these students well and has a great rapport with them, as he previously taught them in the sixth grade.

Sam is a young man in his late twenties. He wears a head covering as part of his traditional attire. All men in this school are required to teach Torah with a head covering. The room is organized in six rows of desks with a lectern in front for Sam's notes. His desk is also in the front of the room with a small statue of Rodin's "The Thinker" on it. There is a small collection of commentaries in English on his desk. The twelve students are scattered throughout the rows. When they work in pairs or groups, they move their desks towards one another. There are no visible signs of Torah on the bulletin boards. This appears to be Sam's room for the entire day.

Sam is very soft-spoken, good natured and gentle with these adolescents. He has rapport with these youngsters. There is a calmness and respect that flows through this classroom. Sam never raised his voice or repeated directions. Students were attentive and very alert. He shared in the students' pleasure of singing the trope and generating new ideas from the text. In fact, towards the end of the lesson, he even sanctioned a bit of silliness that even he participated in.

Teacher's Purposes

Sam said this was a very typical lesson. It represented the standard methods that he used and showed a typical discussion about text. The lesson that I observed revolved around several interpretive tasks which required the students to find connections between verses and chapters. It also involved an exercise in deconstructing an entire verse carefully while paying

attention to the cantillation or trope. The text discussed was Genesis 39: 6-8. The two chapters compared were 38 and 39. The entire session focused on textual interpretation.

Texts

The text used in this class is Mikraot Gedolot, the Torah text with traditional commentaries. The text is all in Hebrew and the Rashi commentary is in a special script. Although traditional commentaries appear alongside the Torah text, students only read Rashi directly. Sam explains the other commentaries to the students in English.

Genesis 39:6- 8

And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was of beautiful form and beautiful appearance. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife: Behold, my master, having me, knoweth not what is in the house, and he hath put all that he hath into my hand.

The Lesson

Sam began with a group review of the previous day's lesson by asking in Hebrew, "What is the connection between verses six and seven?" This appeared to be a familiar form of question for the group. It is one regularly used by the medieval commentator, Rashi. The class analyzed the connection, then Sam asked them to compare chapters 38 and 39 and consider what the connection was between these two chapters. This group exercise was also a review activity. Next Sam asked, "What is the connection between verses six and seven?" but directed them to work individually or in pairs (Hevruta style). He provided additional instructions for doing this task: show which words in the text make the connection between the two verses, provide the peshat (simple) and derash (symbolic) meanings and evidence for each response

along with the source of your derash and explain your thinking to your partner. Students moved quickly into pairs and into action. Sam moved around the classroom to listen to responses and provide additional probing questions when necessary. He asked them to explain their answers to one another more clearly and in complete thoughts. Following this warm-up activity, as Sam labeled it in our post interview, students were asked to read verse seven aloud in choral fashion. The remainder of the lesson, which took about thirty-five minutes, focused on verse eight.

T: Look carefully at pasuk (verse) eight and try to make sense of it. See if anything strikes you as unusual in terms of punctuation or trope. You can either do this individually or in Hevruta (pairs), write down the peshat (simple meaning) and anything that seems unusual. If there are any words you need help with, raise your hand. If there are no hands, I assume that you can translate it on your own.

S: What is "Va-ye-ma-ain" ?

T: You may recall this word elsewhere. Have you seen this word in other parts of the text? (pauses) When Jacob was presented with Joseph's "Ktonet" (shirt of colors), did his "Aveelut" (mourning) end?

S: No, he never stopped.

T: He refused? "Va-ye-ma-ain."

S: He believed Joseph was still alive.

T: Yes, that's one possibility.

T: Any other vocabulary questions? Have you written the Peshat (plain meaning)?

S: I understand all the words but can't make sense of it.

T: Okay, let's make sense of it together. Who's speaking to whom?

S: Joseph to "Ashet" (wife of) Potiphar.

T: Which words show us this? Look at the Pasuk (verse). Read it.

S: Choral reading heard. "Vayomer ashet"

In this initial reading, students were asked to read it individually, try to make sense of it and write down the peshat (simple meaning) as well as anything that struck them as unusual. Two of the students noticed the word, "he refused" or "Va-ye-ma-ain" as having an unusual trope.

Sam's first move after the students recorded some of their own remarks in their notebooks was to guide them through the verse. He asked a series of specific questions—"Who's speaking to whom?" and "What is Joseph trying to tell Potiphar's wife?" With each question, he directed the students back to the original text for evidence for their responses. This was a common pattern throughout the lesson. When several students expressed difficulty in understanding the meaning even though the words were clear, Sam slowed down the process. He told the students that they would not go on until all of them could make a meaningful sentence out of verse eight. He helped the students plod through each word until they were able to explain the meaning in their own words.

T: What's ashet?

S: Wife of?

T: Yes.

T: What is he trying to explain to her?

S: He can't agree.

T: He can't agree to her overture. Why does he think this way?

S: He's been given everything to control, how can I betray Potiphar?

T: What does betray Potiphar mean?

S: To go against.

T: Let's read it and see it as a meaningful sentence. Please read it. (Choral reading of entire verse.) Are you able to read it and make a meaningful sentence out of it? Let's look at it. He writes "Va-ye-ma-ain" on the board. What does this mean?

S: He refuses. Asks question (inaudible).

S: She asks him to have an affair and Joseph refuses.

T: Excellent. In the words of the Torah, reads verse 8 in Hebrew. Who's "Adon" (master)? Who doesn't know?

S: I don't know.

S: Joseph?

T: No, who's the "Eved" (slave)? If we have to go word by word, we will, it's important.

S: He doesn't....

S: No, he has total trust in me.

T: What does it mean? Who doesn't know? (words in Hebrew repeated) There's no inventory, only Joseph knows what Potiphar has. Potiphar, the master, has a level of trust in this servant, Joseph.

S: Is Joseph saying this because he wants to or doesn't want to with the wife?

T: Excellent question. Joseph is saying Potiphar totally trusts me, everything he has, I'm responsible for . . . let's look at the beginning of the verse. There's an unusual trope there. Many noticed something bizarre at the beginning of the verse. It's a "shalshelet." Did anyone learn it for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah? In the whole Torah, it's very rare. What's the "Shoresh?" (many hands waving)

S: Oh, oh, "shalosh" (three).

T: Did anyone ever learn the trope, "pazer" or remember it? (Sam sings it) If we put three of these together, it's a "shalshelet" and it goes like this. (Demonstrates cantillation.) This trope is extremely rare. It's not in any Haftorah. Let's do it together. Your voice is going up, up, up and down, down, down.

S: So what does this have to do with anything?

This short sequence shows how Sam guided the students in deciphering the text's plain meaning word-by-word. He directed the students to the trope on the word, "he refused." Several students wondered why they were looking at trope and asked what this had to do with anything. He was pleased with these questions and told them that they would soon see the connection. Studying the trope was a new activity for these students as could be evidenced from the students' questions. Sam taught them about the trope, sang it and asked them to sing it as well. They seemed to enjoy this experience, as did Sam. The students seemed amused that the teacher was willing to chant for them. Several other questions emerged from the students. One student asked why Andrew Lloyd Weber showed this scene differently in his play about Joseph. Sam acknowledged all of their questions through either verbal or non-verbal comments.

T: That's a great question, Yael. Let's sing it first together. All sing the trope together.

T: Okay, Yael had a good question. Why are we learning this trope, it has something to do with "Va-ye-ma-ain" which means he refuses. Have we ever learned a trope before? (choral response of "no's" heard)

S: How does it show Joseph in the play?

S: Oh, he totally runs away, totally.

T: Yes, some commentators say he was righteous, but perhaps he was conflicted about what to do with Mrs. Potiphar.

S: He's still a person.

S: Just like the Jacob and Tamar story.

T: Excellent. The Torah is giving us a "remez," a clue. He wasn't refusing so quickly, maybe let's get together. Listen. (Sings, No, no, no, no, no, in shalshelet trope) The trope is there purposely. It's in the Torah only six times. Should I say no, should I say yes? Should I say no? Even if he came to the right decision, it wasn't so easy for him.

Sam animated the word, "he refused" and its trope by singing it several times. After this discussion, he asked them to consider how the trope's placement might be a "remez" (clue) for deeper meaning. Students were told to think about this and write their own interpretation in their notebooks. Several students read their interpretations aloud and made connections to the Jacob story in earlier chapters. This connection was made because the same word, "he refused" appears in that passage. Students wondered aloud whether Joseph's conflict regarding Potiphar's wife's seduction was an internal or external battle. Students also wondered if using the trope to find meaning was considered a peshat or derash approach to text.

S: Wait, is this between him and her or inside himself?

T: It's exploring the process. He has to give the Master's wife a response, he lives in the palace. This is talking about the inner process. Write down your explanation in your "Machberet" (notebook).

S: Is that Derash?

T: A great question.

S: I think so.

T: It's borderline. It could be peshat because trope is part of verse or a derash. What can we learn from it? Why is the trope on this word? Write it down in a clear paragraph. What does the line afterwards signify?

Students write explanations and then read responses.

S: It shows him going up and down until he says no.

T: There's no line in the Torah scroll but there's an empty space that indicates he drew the line.

S: But it's not like that in the play! It's totally wrong!

T: We'll write Andrew Lloyd Weber a letter on how to improve his play.

S: If he's refusing, he wasn't refusing so quickly, then he drew a line and said no.

T: Aharona, you brought up the word "Va-ye-ma-ain" in the context of the Jacob story when he refused to be comforted. What gave Joseph the strength to refuse?

S: Maybe he saw his father.

T: Excellent, the derash says he saw the face of his father just then, he saw his father's face in his mind's eye and at that moment, it gave him the strength of character to refuse.

S: Maybe he saw his father.

Another student still wondered about Andrew Lloyd Weber's depiction of this scene in the play. She noted that in the play Joseph ran away quickly from suggestions of seduction and the text seemed to indicate differently. "Who is really right?" she wondered.

Sam seemed very pleased with the level of discussion, especially the connection that the student, Aharona, made to the Jacob saga. Her ability to see and hear echoes in the text

was highly praised and he referred to her explanation as "Aharona's Midrash." He instructed people to record this in their notebooks. He also expanded on it by informing the class that other medieval commentators wrote about this connection.

T: Let's use Aharona's Midrash. Please write it in your machberet (notebook). How did he get the strength?

S: By visualizing his father, the word "Va-ye-ma-ain" is a remez (clue) to that other passage.

T: So instead of seeing only his own hair and appearance, he sees his father.

T: According to some Midrashim, they looked alike, father and son. Now let's take a "humongo" breath and do a "shalshelet" with the word, "va-ye-ma-ain" ready, loudly. (Lots of laughter heard).

The class ended with a rousing reading of the word "he refused" in Hebrew, using the trope that they had learned earlier. The sing-song nature of this trope was evidence for them that Joseph was waffling in his decision regarding Potiphar's wife's proposal. Sam also sang the trope inserting the words "no, no, no, no, no, yes, yes, yes, no, no, no!" to emphasize the point of how powerful and purposeful trope placement was in the Torah.

T: Fabulous, he overcame the temptation.

S: He was refusing, that's why there is the shalshelet, but not so quickly, and finally he drew the line and there's a line in the Torah.

T: Ooh, I hear a moose.

Another chorus is heard of students singing the word "va-ye-ma-ain" with cantillation along with laughter.

Next Steps

Descriptions of classroom teaching are rare in the literature on Jewish education. Researchers rarely go into classrooms to see what teachers actually do and tie their claims about Torah teaching to actual observations. Although I was also interested in teachers' beliefs and conceptions, I was determined to find out how teachers who articulated their purposes of Torah so eloquently looked in practice. I knew that in order to learn about the challenges of teaching Torah, I had to look at classrooms more carefully.

When I confronted the data I had collected from the classroom observations, I realized that I had many big ideas about Torah study as a historical conversation and the process of interpretive reading. All of these universal ideas about Torah study and the process of interpretive reading did not help me as much as I thought in making sense of the data. I needed to situate these universal ideas in the particular context of reading holy texts in contemporary classrooms. I had too many ideas and too many questions, just as was the case with my interview data. As with the interview data, I realized that I needed to clarify my profile of what I was looking for, thus developing a conceptual framework with a more limited set of characteristics for a knowledgeable and engaged learner. I realized that I needed to do this for the classroom lessons as well. I needed to clarify and operationalize a framework to better understand the phenomena that I had observed in these three classrooms. Many of my initial ideas about Torah study and interpretive reading were wonderful, but I needed to focus and pare these ideas down in order to analyze the data systematically. I needed to clarify what good Torah teaching entails as I came to understand it through these observations. I stepped back from the data to develop a series of analytic questions by which to explain how teachers connect students to the historical Torah conversation. In the next

chapter I explain the questions that I developed for this conceptual framework. These analyses will help us understand how these teachers engage adolescents in the acts of "doing Torah" and what the practice of teaching interpretive reading entails.

CHAPTER 5

Analyses of the Local and Historical Conversations and the Reading Strategies that Connect These Two Worlds

Introduction

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, a Talmudic scholar, once told a student:

> Let's in all our arrogance claim that we have all the answers, that our answers exist in Torah. Our job is to lead people to the questions for which our answers are the right ones. Our job is to purify and clarify the questions ... the right questions uproot our assumptions (Kamenetz, 127).

I would like to utilize this strategy in analyzing the pedagogy of the three teachers observed in this study. Perhaps by purifying and clarifying the question which is the traditional exegetical approach to reading texts, I can "read" their classroom texts with new insights.

Clearly, my initial expectation that knowledgeable and engaged adult learners of Torah would provide a classroom environment that engages students in "doing Torah" is incomplete. In each of the classrooms observed, teachers were engaging their students in the acts of "doing Torah" or constructing meaning. Yet aspects of the process seemed to be missing. Being an adult learner of Torah is a prerequisite for teaching, but it may not be adequate for teachers whose purpose is to connect students to text. What questions do I need to ask to deepen understanding of how teachers connect students to text?

One of the central ideas in this study is the compelling notion that Torah study entails entering the historical Torah conversation. To enter the historical conversation, teachers and students unlock meaning by arguing, grappling, explaining and justifying text to one another. These dynamic interactions which open the dialogue between past and present voices is best

housed in a communal setting. The acts of "doing Torah" are best accomplished when individuals bond together to create an interpretive community. This has always been the traditional way for the dialogue to unfold.

My analytic questions about how teachers and students can enter the Torah conversation arise from this image of Torah. In this chapter I organize my analysis around three major questions:

1. What are these teachers doing to induct students into the historical conversation of Torah study?
2. What are these Torah teachers doing to foster an interpretive community?
3. How do these Torah teachers provide students with tools for reading and deciphering texts?

These are questions of purpose and practice, too (see Table 5-1). They focus attention on what classroom-based Torah study conceived as a historical conversation involves. In re-examining the teachers' lessons, I observed evidence of how teachers inducted students into this conversation from their enactment of teaching Torah and talk about the process.

In choosing teachers who were knowledgeable and engaged learners of Torah, I sought individuals who identified as conversants in this great historical dialogue. Being part of the conversation means serving as a link in the tradition. For teachers to feel part of this chain, they need to be empowered as interpreters of Torah. If they have identified with the process and understand the dynamics of interpretation, then I expected they would be disposed to teach others how to enter the conversation.

Table 5-1

Analytic Framework

What are these Torah teachers doing to induct students into the historical conversation of Torah study?
▪ Creating dialogue between past and present
▪ Students contributions to dialogue
What are these Torah teachers doing to foster an interpretive classroom community?
▪ Opportunities for interpretive conversation
▪ Norms established
How do these Torah teachers provide students with tools for reading and deciphering Torah texts?
▪ Sensitivity to words - (Reading in slow motion)
▪ Reflective stance - (Awareness of reading process)
▪ Connecting text to lives of students -(Meaning making)

Conversing about the Historical Conversation

In this section, I investigate how three teachers facilitate dialogue between the past and present in their classrooms. I consider how students interact with the text and commentaries. I also discuss how these teachers interpret and enact Torah as a historical conversation. I begin by plumbing the teachers' thinking about the purposes for Torah study.

When I asked Liz whether she tried to represent the local classroom conversation as part of a bigger historical conversation, she initially misunderstood the question. When I rephrased it, she responded, "Oh yes, we talk about this as Pilpul (detailed Talmudic discussion) ... there are various interpretations, yes we do." Unsure that she understood the intent of my question, I inquired whether she thought that her students were aware that the Jewish people had been talking about and interpreting the Torah for years. I wondered if the

students had a sense that this was not just a classroom activity. She responded, "No, I don't think so. We try to give Torah to them. They don't see it as a lifelong activity. No, maybe by the end of the year, they'll get the message."

Liz seemed to waffle about this point. When I asked whether she thought the students viewed themselves as part of the chain, she responded, "I think they do. So many go into the eighth grade, which is encouraging." Liz regarded her students' continued high school attendance in religious school as a sign of being part of the conversation.

I assessed this exchange regarding the historical conversation as confusing for Liz. Liz found the question initially unclear and then surprising. I don't think Liz ever considered this orientation for her students. Although her larger purpose was certainly for students to participate in the Temple with a degree of comfort with the Torah texts, she did not envision her classroom as an induction center into this great historical conversation.

Nan responded to the question, "How do you represent the historical Torah conversation in your classroom?" in the following way:

> In teaching Torah with commentaries, we're in dialogue with people who lived 1000 years ago. That's easy to do. I get them to read text and ask them to ask questions of the text. Before they look at Rashi, I say, Wow, Rashi asked that same question. You anticipated Rashi. Through my stories, my experiences as a student, my teachers, that also ties them in. I take every opportunity to reinforce that they're part of a chain.... You are bearers of a tradition and are here today only because of the decisions made by great grandparents. That's a powerful thing to say.... For me that is the fundamental message, maybe even the primary message.

When I queried further how she did this in her Nach (Prophets) classes, she responded:

> I tie text to lots of things. The themes are eternal--how people behave, the jealousy, ambitions, motivations--they're all the same. When things come up in the 4000 year-old connection, I grab it. They may not be aware of it, but it's embedded deeply. They may act on it but I don't know if they could articulate it. That's not there.

Nan's response suggested deep awareness regarding her mission as a Torah teacher. Her statement that "becoming part of the historical conversation is the fundamental, perhaps primary message" reveals how intensely she perceived her role as a link between the generations.

Sam intuitively understood the question regarding his classroom as part of the historical conversation and smiling, he responded, "They are still a work in progress. Identity is developed over the course of the year. I hope that over the course of the year they will come away with this." Sam's response revealed how authentic and realistic he was about the process of learning and doing Torah. Becoming part of the historical conversation is a process that takes time to nurture. Sam recognized this. Unlike Liz, who taught Torah once a week, and Nan, who met the students three times a week, Sam had a daily opportunity to develop this historical conversation with his students.

Enacting the Historical Conversation

I wanted to observe how these teachers enacted the historical conversation in their classrooms. All three teachers saw themselves as part of the conversation. I wondered how this translates into their teaching practice? In viewing the classrooms, I looked at how they created dialogue between past and present and how students contributed to this dialogue.

Liz, Nan and Sam all proclaimed lofty purposes for studying Torah. Liz stated, "I want them to see that this is a viable source that they can really read and understand." Nan dramatically

stated that she saw herself as an ambassador, bringing students closer to the land of Torah, "I want them to move there. I hope they consider Aliyah (Hebrew term for immigrating to Israel)." Sam said, "I want students to appreciate the incredible depth, layers and monumental richness within the Torah."

Although all three teachers experienced an intense responsibility to past and future generations, as can be discerned from the poetic ways that they express themselves, this purposeful orientation did not provide them with an automatic plan for teaching. Being animated by this purpose did not dissolve any of the complexities or ambiguities of how to produce this dialogue in their classrooms. Having an awareness of how the interpretive process works is a prerequisite for teaching others; however, this prerequisite alone does not enable teachers to provide the opportunities and skills for others in their own classrooms.

Dialogue Between Past and Present

In trying to understand how teachers create dialogue between past and present voices, I looked at whether and how these teachers used commentaries in their explication of text with students. Did they provide written commentaries for their students along with the Torah text? Did they orally summarize some of the ideas that commentators offered over the centuries? Did they use the questions of commentators in explaining texts and/or connect students' comments to commentators? The question is a tool in understanding text. For example, if a word is repeated or omitted, the commentator may inquire about it and this process leads to a deeper understanding of the text. I looked at how explicit the teachers made the interpretive process.

Liz. She began her teaching of Torah in a rushed manner. In describing the paper Midrash assignment, she made no mention of the word "Midrash." She treated it as a paper

and glue project. By failing to explain the task as a visual representation rather than a written or oral representation of the text, she missed the opportunity to provide a linkage to the historical process of interpreting text.

When a student asked Liz about a Midrash that they were not reading, she smiled and explained that the Midrash was unflattering towards the Arab nations. "Mrs. B. will always be direct and forthright," she told the students. This was a prideful moment for her as she winked at me. In her pre-interview, she represented herself as bold and unafraid of dealing with difficult dilemmas in the classroom. I wondered why she chose to censor the Midrash rather than allow her students to discover what it was saying. This could have been used to demonstrate how different historical interpretations are received in modern times, but instead she chose to excise it from the lesson.

Liz's lesson did not create a dialogue between past and present but only the present—rather, it focused on the present. The students did not have a sense that they were part of a larger process. The creation of paper Midrashim did not resonate with the past commentators in any way.

Nan. As Liz, Nan made no explicit reference to past voices in her lesson. Nan explained in her post-interview that she often tried to link the words of students to past commentaries in studying Torah. In this class, however, since they were studying the Prophets, she made no attempt to provide them with commentaries. This pedagogical decision diminished the historical connections that are often felt when studying the words of commentaries. The only commentary was that provided by the teacher. The students were not made aware of the commentaries in their text or of the questions that the commentators asked of the text. Even when students were not equipped to read and decipher the commentaries on

their own, understanding that the commentaries of past generations discussed the same dilemmas that they are pondering could help them perceive the links to the historical conversation. Nan did not create a sense that the local conversation transcended the classroom walls. The students were very focused on writing the right answers in their notebooks for the test, as Nan remarked in the post interview. The fusion of horizons which Jauss writes about in his discussion of the reading process did not occur in this particular lesson, although Nan articulated such a purpose. Nan stated that the fundamental and primary message was linking students to the historical conversation, yet I found little evidence of this practice in this lesson.

Sam. Compared to Liz and Nan's classroom, Sam's classroom was truly an induction center for young people to become part of the historical conversation. What I observed in his class was more than a class-bounded activity. The students were struggling and interacting with the text in a dynamic way. Their commentaries were ricocheting off the traditional commentaries. Students not only responded to the teacher's questions, but offered their own comments and questions. They were able to make connections to other parts of the text, very much in the manner that traditional exegetes do. The interpretive process in Sam's classroom was created via the modeling of the traditional approach and guided questioning. Students were given an opportunity to argue, dispute and converse with the text and commentaries through their own individual oral and written interpretations with partners, "Hevruta" style, and in the large group conversation.

Sam skillfully straddled the two worlds of commentary. He moved back and forth between what the students observed and said and the traditional commentaries on the text. He cleverly compared Andrew Lloyd Weber's representation of this story in his play with

rabbinic commentaries. Sam knew that Weber's play was very much a part of the consciousness of the students. By using this modern interpretation, students were initiated into the historical process of commentary. They were able to realize that a text can be read in multiple ways. Sam provided them with tools to build a case that would overturn Weber's reading of the Joseph saga. Jauss refers to this approach as the "history of reception." Sam demonstrated to them the role of the trope or cantillation.

Understanding how the trope functions in the text allowed the rabbinic voices to add the psychological dimensions of this saga. Sam's decision to teach about trope and how it altered the word's meaning connected students to the historical process of interpreting a text. It also provided his students with an authentic tool for probing Joseph's intentions and connecting to the historical conversation about this. By teaching this one trope, the students were inducted into the process of paying close attention to each sign and word, as the rabbinic commentators did.

Students' Contributions to Dialogue

A second way that teachers can induct students into the historic conversation is by encouraging them to contribute to the dialogue. In analyzing the observational data, I looked for instances of students clarifying a passage, a word or a commentary. I was also interested in the students' inventive approaches with the text. Did they offer interpretive comments on their own? What kinds of initiatives did students take in the classroom conversation?

Liz. The message that I and perhaps the students gleaned from Liz's classroom was that anyone could interpret Torah. The paper Midrash project was simple with few guidelines. This could have been a wonderfully, uplifting democratic message but it taught nothing about the historical process of "doing Torah." Liz thought that she was treating her

students respectfully by providing an open forum for interpretation, but she did not provide them with any linkages to how the Torah conversation was conducted over the centuries. Her focus was to make them feel accepted rather than accept a set of historical guidelines by which to interpret the Torah. Her actions reflected her message that "there were no wrong or right answers in this class." Liz seemed to demonstrate a stronger loyalty to students' creativity than to the Torah text. Only opinions mattered in the classroom conversation. The text almost seemed superfluous during the brief discussions because the students were not expected to tether any of their comments to it.

Nan. While Liz accepted all student responses, Nan did not. While Liz did not expect her students to tie their remarks to the text, Nan did. Embedded in the process of "doing Torah" in Nan's classroom was the belief that every word is significant. This belief is central to the way past voices read and interpreted Torah. Yet this process resided in Nan's actions rather than the students. Nan did not operationalize the ideas which she expressed in her interview regarding the purposes of studying Torah. She did not make the process explicit enough for the students and they did not seem sophisticated enough to articulate any strategies. The students were focused on "doing it right" rather than "doing Torah." I discerned this from Nan's frequent reminders that this information may be on a quiz and the students' eagerness to put these answers in their notebooks. Their voices were muted in this conversation.

Sam. Unlike the student voices in Liz and Nan's lessons, students in Sam's lesson were active contributors. A unique feature of Sam's teaching is his matter of fact approach to the idea of sexual seduction. Sam treated the biblical characters as human beings with frailties just like the rest of us. He set a tone for the discussion that allowed the students to

decipher all the signs within the written text and offer their own insights. Although discussing a potential adulterous relationship that may have led many teenagers to giggles, these students treated the text with the utmost respect and seriousness. They were intent on figuring out what Joseph's psychological state of mind was, just as the rabbinic authorities who preceded them. These students were grappling with the text and contributing to its meaning.

In both Liz and Nan's classroom, the students were moderately active in performing the tasks, yet they seemed to be unaware of their role in the interpretive process. No mention was made of commentaries, although Liz used a classical Midrashic text. Only in Sam's lesson did I witness a high degree of awareness regarding the role of traditional and contemporary commentators. These students were grappling with the text in an attempt to make sense of it. The task which Sam offered was an authentic challenge which past commentators had addressed. The challenge which engaged these past conversants in the historical conversation also attracted these students who were adding their voices to the historical conversation about Joseph's motives.

Both Sam and Nan recognized the importance of inducting students into the historical conversation yet they differed in their ability to enact this purpose. Liz vacillated more in her responses to this commitment. In Nan and Liz's classrooms, I did not find any evidence of a dialogue created between past and present voices. In their lessons the tasks were classroom bound. In Sam's lesson, the task impelled the students to discuss issues that transcended the boundaries of the classroom.

Creating Opportunities for Interpretive Conversations

The second analytic question--what are these Torah teachers doing to foster an interpretive community--focuses on opportunities for interpretive conversations and norms for talking about the Torah. According to the Jerusalem Talmud, there are forty-nine different ways to decipher the Torah's meanings (Sanhedrin 4:2). The Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer noted that whenever he read the Bible, he couldn't put it down. "I always find new aspects, new facts, new tensions, new information in it. I sometimes imagine that while I sleep or walk, some hidden scribe invades my house and puts new passages, new names, new events into this wonderful book" (Rosenberg, 1987, pp.7-8). What the Talmud and I. B. Singer are suggesting is that each new reading is a new interpretation. Not to interpret is impossible. The prophet Amos expresses this message in his words "dirshuni vi heyu," which mean "Seek me and live" (5:4). "Dirshuni" in this phrase means the "process of inquiry," interpretation that creates meaning leads to vitality. Derisha or Midrash is the work of continuous translation and interpretation.

To what extent, in what ways, did the Torah teachers create an environment where students were encouraged to inquire and interpret? Did they encourage students to engage in continuous translation and interpretation that lead to new meaning and life? What conditions and norms were evident in the local conversation which I observed? What type of Torah talk did I hear?

Tasks

In looking for opportunities to engage in interpretive conversations, I focused on the interpretive tasks which teachers set and the norms that governed classroom talk. I examined

how teachers introduced the tasks and explained their purposes. I considered whether or not the task promoted involvement with the text and other commentators.

Liz. In this lesson she created mixed opportunities for students to participate in a local Torah conversation. She asked students to interpret the two passages about revelation, to develop a visual interpretation of two texts, and to share their ideas with the group. All of these exercises invited interpretive activity. They potentially were excellent tasks except that time was limited and no standards created for quality interpretive work.

Liz gave vague directions for the reading and interpretive tasks. She guided the students only with several vocabulary words at the beginning of the lesson. She never explained the vocabulary terms in the context of God – man relations. Liz did not suggest any other strategies for reading or guidelines for interpreting these two hearty biblical passages. The interpretive task was unbounded and open to anything that students might offer.

Nan. As Liz did, Nan tried to invite student contributions through the interpretive task. However, Nan did not provide enough support for students to engage in this sophisticated task. In the naming of the war activity, Nan tried to create an open conversation wherein all voices could be heard. This task was intended to expand the students' thinking and reveal aspects of their selves in the process, as Nan explained in the post interview. Nan hoped the task would help to illuminate what was important to students. Since these students had very little knowledge of war, they could not draw on their own personal experiences in a generative way. Consequently, the exercise elicited little response. Even when students did volunteer ideas, Nan overruled several responses including the idea that this was a war between brothers. Finally, she accepted the idea of "civil war" when students proposed it again.

This task seemed too sophisticated for this group of students. Nan did not invite all comments in this conversation. The students had little to say when it came to generating names and reasons for their suggestions. This passivity was counterbalanced by Nan's activity in explaining so much during the lesson. Nan did not practice Deborah Meier's dictum that "teaching is listening and learning is explaining." Perhaps Nan's deep commitment to the text overrode the students' creativity. Her loyalty was primarily to the authority of the text. It seemed as though she wanted the students to view the text as she did. Thus, she spent most of the class lesson explaining rather than listening. This is evident in the disproportionate ratio of Nan's voice to students' voices in the transcript.

Nan tried to pique students' interest in the task by personalizing the conversation in sharing her mother's experience with the name of the Civil War and other family stories. While these stories may have personalized the conversation, students did not respond. Even her joke about the mother, two shirts and guilt did not register with these students. Overall, they displayed little energy and generativity. The exercise did not seem to motivate or engage the students. There was no convergence of text and reader. Nan was unable to awaken any personal responses to this verse in Samuel. Although students were given an opportunity for textual interpretation, they did not have adequate resources to bring to bear. All they could do was copy Nan's ideas in their notebooks. They were not capable of restructuring the verse into their own words.

In her post observation, Nan stated that the Bible is unlike a piece of literature in that everything is not carefully laid out for the reader.

> In the Torah it actually leaves out information, descriptions that the reader has to come up with. If the reader doesn't come up with it, there hasn't been a reading. To

> come up with multiple interpretations is how you have to read it. It's how you have to pay attention and fill in the gaps.... I think of people trying to come up with independent understandings.

Although Nan understood the purpose and process of reading Torah, she was not able to operationalize this process during this lesson. She was unable to help the students connect to the verse and come up with their own reading. Nan did not structure the task by providing small group or individualized opportunities for students to generate a reading. Students were not truly given the opportunity to "fill in the gaps" or the time to consider their own thoughts. They were shown the significance of paying attention to the words but not how to be generative on their own. The idea of contributing independent understandings of the text was not encouraged in this lesson, although this was an important notion in her thinking about conducting the local conversation about Torah.

Sam. Unlike the other two classrooms wherein students were mildly involved in interpreting the text, Sam's students were deeply engaged in examining the text. What was unique in Sam's classroom was the authentic tension in the local conversation. Through this well-structured task, Sam created opportunities for students to renew the text in their own words. Sam offered real textual problems and expected the students to figure them out as a whole group, in pairs or individually. He provided the students with a variety of ways to disclose what the text said. Students worked in "hevruta" or paired study, a traditional method to expand their understanding of text. Sam also encouraged students to write in journals and share their remarks.

Sam asked students the same questions that commentators discussed. He allowed students to ponder and probe the meaning of the text. In their Torah conversation, they were

required not only to provide their opinions, but reasons for these ideas and how they were anchored to the text. All opinions were not acceptable. There were boundaries and guidelines by which to understand the text. Sam provided clear directions for each reading task, asking students to reiterate them in their own words. He also reminded students that their questions and comments had to be anchored to the text. This was a cardinal rule of evidence in Sam's lesson.

By staying close to the text, students learned to interpret carefully. When students had difficulties making sense of the text, Sam asked students to help one another or guided them word-by-word. As he stated in this lesson when one of the students had difficulty, "Each word is very important and we will take our time until sense is made of it." Making sense of the words and their meaning was the community's task, not the individual student's problem. It became the task for all of them to help one another make sense of the verse.

Here is how Sam described the reading process in the post observation interview:

> We look for red flags, which is the term we use. Red flags are the Midrash, something is missing, something is doubled, something is different from earlier texts. They may notice changes or similarities and ask someone, a teacher, rabbi, friend and try to talk to someone else which ties them to the chain. There are so many layers, nuances, arguments, it's just constantly renewable. They're adding their commentaries and I reinforce that all the time.

Norms

When I speak of norms, I mean protocols for reading and interpreting Torah. In analyzing the classroom transcripts, I assessed the quality of the conversation and what traditional set of guidelines teachers and students relied on such as: peshat, derash, sod and

remez.. Peshat signifies simple meaning, derash is more symbolic meaning, and remez refers to clues or deeper significance in the text, while sod refers to the mysterious underlying meanings. This type of inquiry was part of the kabbalistic or mystical tradition that arose in 14th century Spain. The kabbalists described four levels of inquiry from the plain to the suggestive and homiletical to the mystical. In Hebrew: peshat (plain), remez (hint), derash (homily), and sod (secret); the letters spell pardes, or paradise. According to the mystics, one reads Torah to enter paradise, to see the Divine light.

Were these or other interpretive moves made explicit to the students? Did the teachers and students utilize these protocols in their interpretive deliberations about text? I was also interested in assessing the parameters of interpretation in the lessons.

In analyzing the observational data, I focused on the ways students connected their own ideas to the text. What types of evidence did they provide for their own interpretive responses? Did they ground their interpretations in the text? Did the teacher welcome all comments in the interpretive process? Did the protocols of reading inhibit or enhance the conversation about text?

Liz. In her lesson, she provided no guidelines for how the text could be interpreted. Liz noted in her post interview:

> Nobody is wrong unless they're way off base and being stupid. If they're using their own interpretation and intelligence, I accept it. Their interpretation is as good as mine and the rabbis. None of the rabbis agreed. I don't tell them that they're wrong. They get told they're wrong so much that in religious school I want it to be a positive experience. I want them to be right 100% of the time. It's the only chance they have.

Liz was adamant that all positions were acceptable. Just as she did not structure the task carefully or the conversation, she did not provide clear guidelines for the interpretive process.

Liz's stance toward the local conversation guided her actions. For her, acceptance of all views was an expression of pluralism. All opinions were okay even if students did not listen to one another. A "good" conversation occurred if all students were using their intelligence, according to Liz. Yet how much intelligence is needed to skim a text and create a picture that is not necessarily anchored to the text? Acceptance seemed to be Liz's overriding impulse. The desire to make the religious school experience pleasant drove her in her planning and her actions.

The conversation about the Torah unfolded as a series of discrete comments that had little connection to the text or the students in the classroom. Students were not expected to listen to one another or provide evidence for their textual comments. As long as the students produced something in the process, the authenticity of the interpretation or connection to actual text was secondary.

While Liz expressed the desire to be democratic, she sent a different message. When students struggled to find the differences in the two passages regarding revelation, she told them that she had read them and they were different. This kind of talk does not encourage independent, intelligent thinking as she claimed was one of her purposes. If she truly encouraged independent thinking and believed that all views were valid, she might have said, "Show me how they are not different." Instead, she usurped their thinking by telling them to accept her judgment. In this local Torah conversation, the students were not restructuring the text using their own personal insights. Interpretation requires revealing aspects of the self which are not present in this process. Liz's approach to the local conversation was not process-

oriented. Students were not carefully guided to find meanings. Students did not become more adept in discussing or animating the text.

Nan. Just as Liz's voice loomed loud, so did Nan's voice. All of the talk in Nan's classroom was teacher directed. All of the questions were teacher initiated, as were most of the comments and interpretations. Nan's voice dominated the conversation. Nan, a very capable reader of text, guided the students by asking very pointed questions of the text. During the lesson I observed, she asked over thirty questions, while students asked only three questions. The interactions followed a clear pattern. The teacher asked questions with certain responses in mind and the students were expected to provide the answers. Students did not build on each other's responses or initiate any form of talk except for discrete answers. The teacher-recorded correct responses on the board reminded the students that they might appear on a test or quiz.

Sam. Sam's lesson offered a stunning contrast in terms of the norms and protocols for reading. "Doing Torah" in Sam's classroom meant slowing down the process of reading texts and commentaries. Students were trying to find problems in the Joseph story as the commentators had done. One student struggled with the moment when Joseph decided to resist Potiphar's wife's advances, just as the commentators had. She made a connection to a past text through a word that was echoed there, noting that probably Joseph saw the face of his father, a sign of his conscience. Sam immediately applauded this effort, calling it "Aharona's Midrash." Sam told students to record this in their notebooks under Aharona's name. They were also told that her analysis was not different from past commentators on this topic.

By engaging in traditional processes of interpretation, Sam promoted authentic norms. He taught students to look for signs, provide reasons and textual evidence for their responses. They used peshat, (simple meaning), derash, (more symbolic meaning) and remez, (clues or deeper significance) as prompts for their own explanations. Sam used three of these four levels of inquiry, peshat, derash and remez, in this lesson. When students were unsure, Sam asked questions or redirected them back to the source. They remained anchored to the text even when they engaged in more symbolic interpretations.

Each student was actively working to figure out what the verse meant to him/her. The dominant voices in this classroom community were the students. Clearly listening and sharing were established norms in the community. Students felt safe enough to share their confusions and misunderstandings. Sam's gentle tone never belittled or discarded any comments.

In both Sam and Nan's classroom, the process of "doing Torah" meant slowing down the reading to look for signs and reasons from the text. This activity parallels traditional forms of interpretation. Nan invited the students into this interpretive conversation; she presented them with an esoteric task and did not adequately encourage them to participate. Most of the talk came from her, not the students. This was not the case in Sam's classroom where students had opportunities to discuss text challenges in a variety of formats. Sam's voice did not dominate the discussion; rather, it guided the students to be productive conversants. While Liz created wonderful interpretive tasks, she did not scaffold the work. There were no set protocols for reading. Nor did Liz probe or question students' responses. She accepted all responses and did not ask for textual evidence as Sam and Nan did.

Liz's process of "doing Torah" did not generate new meanings from the students. Although Nan was aware of traditional protocols for "doing Torah," she did not consider how the task meshed with her students' reading abilities, thus generating few responses from them. Only in Sam's lesson did I find evidence of norms that promoted interpretive conversations about Torah. He carefully structured and guided the students in interpretive reading tasks that engaged them in "doing Torah."

Developing Tools for Reading and Deciphering Torah Texts

This third analytic lens for assessing the Torah conversation in the classroom focuses on the types of reading tools that teachers offered to students. I had already conceptualized a set of criteria for active reading for the interview data. In analyzing the classroom data, I used the same categories: reading in slow, awareness of reading and meaning making. In what ways do teachers provide specific tools for turning the words over and over as the rabbinic scholars advised? I was looking for strategies that either they modeled or ways that students were instructed through exercises to pay careful attention to the nuances of words.

Sensitivity to Words

Sensitivity to words signifies agility in uncovering the ambiguities and contradictions in the text. In the post observation interview, Nan stated, "If the reader doesn't come up with it, there hasn't been a reading. To come up with multiple interpretations is how you have to read it. It's how you have to pay attention and fill in the gaps."

Filling in the gaps is one of the key characteristics of sensitivity to words. Why are certain interpretive frameworks used while others are rejected?

Liz. Instead of encouraging close reading, Liz encouraged skimming and quick reading. Students were told to read two long passages from the Torah quickly and compare them. The

lesson moved at a rapid speed. There was no time to savor words or look for gaps or recurring patterns in the verses. Liz galloped from one task to the next at a clip pace. Deciphering a text slowly was not part of the game plan nor was developing deep understanding of the passages. Liz allotted approximately four minutes for the actual reading of the text and ten minutes for the paper and glue project. She did not introduce the text or task nor convey the idea that biblical language matters. The only strategy used for reading was skimming, thereby eliminating any possibility of fostering sensitivity to language. The embedded message in this lesson was that Torah could be read or skimmed like a newspaper article. Liz covered a lot of ground but uncovered little. This lesson was a mile wide and an inch deep.

Nan. Whereas Liz did not emphasize close reading, Nan's entire lesson focused on this task. Nan's lesson presents an entirely different stance from Liz's regarding the importance of words and the value of close reading. In the follow-up interview, Nan stated, "Literature requires active reading and especially biblical literature which is very terse, it requires active reading. It requires certain types of reading that we are not accustomed to, it's a different type of reading." Nan spent most of the lesson deconstructing one verse in the Biblical text. The activity took approximately 20 minutes of the lesson. Another ten minutes were devoted to the second half of the verse. As Nan stated in her introduction to the lesson, "There's more here than meets the eye." This suggests that the text has a great deal to offer and is so powerful that it can take a great deal of time to decipher one verse. The lesson conveyed the idea that language is chosen carefully and is a powerful indicator of an author's perspective.

Nan also insisted that ideas need to be anchored to the text. She asked the students to look again and again at the text and listen to the words as they considered their claims. While

Nan advocated the rabbinic dictum, "turn it over and over," she was not successful in getting students to practice this mode of reading.

Sam. While Liz's reading strategies did not encourage sensitivity to words, Nan's approach did. Unfortunately her students were not given enough support to practice this strategy. Sam not only encouraged sensitivity to words, he implemented this practice with his students. In Sam's classroom, students were encouraged to carefully look at the words. He guided them to examine each word in order to make sense of the verses. He told them that it was important "to go word-by-word." This process of deciphering text built on the belief that each word was purposeful and deserved careful attention. The pace of the lesson was slow and deliberate. Sam directed the students back to the text when they seemed confused or unsure of meaning. He asked them to respond "in the words of the Torah." Sam posed the following questions: "Who's the slave and who's the master?" and "Who's speaking to whom and which words tell us this?" He always asked the students to provide evidence from the Torah. By examining the Torah word-by-word, students were exposed to a traditional way of unpacking a text.

Sam went a step further by asking students to look closely for unusual signs. This again signaled that not only were words significant, but each punctuation mark was of utmost importance. Looking for the unusual trope or cantillation taught the students that careful reading entailed detective work. Interpreting a text means paying attention to detail in order to generate the big ideas.

Reflective Stance

A reflective stance refers to an awareness level regarding the uses of commentaries and interpretive strategies. In analyzing these lessons, I assessed whether students' comments

demonstrated a consciousness of being part of the historical conversation or their awareness of how the commentaries functioned in their own interpretive choices.

Liz. Although Liz gave students the opportunity to express themselves freely, she did not provide any guidance as to what explicit strategies to use in the reading process. This created difficulties for many of the students. When they encountered problems in understanding the text, Liz told them to look again but did not offer any clues or suggestions to help the students navigate through the difficult texts. When several students expressed confusion in finding the differences between the two passages, Liz responded, "I've read it, there is a difference." This response seemed to send the message that students should rely on the teacher's reading, thus contradicting her earlier message from the interview that thinking independently is key. The students did not seem to know what strategies to use and they seemed very unsophisticated about the process of interpretation.

Nan. As in Liz's lesson, Nan did not make reading strategies explicit. In the post observation interview, I asked Nan whether she ever talked explicitly about strategies for reading Torah. She found the question interesting but she seemed to rely on repetition of practice to teach reading strategies.

> I don't know if I've talked to them about it. I think what I'm doing is not to articulate it, just do it. Over and over. Through repetition, they will draw conclusions. I want to walk them this far and let them take the next step. I want them to understand that there is a lot there.

In the lesson, Nan talked to and about the text like a close friend. She asked many questions to guide the students through the verse. However, the students demonstrated little awareness of how they were conducting the work of interpretive reading. There was a great

deal of guesswork, as could be heard in the students' intonation. Students did not have a clear sense of how to encounter this text.

A notion nested within this lesson was that the student had an independent role to play in deciphering the text, yet the students were very reliant upon the teacher for direction since they lacked background knowledge about the topic. The students did not generate many comments, questions or interpretations without her prompts. Although students responded to the teacher's prompts, there was not a great deal of participation. The students did not play an active role in the deciphering of the text. They were not listening to each other or building on what any student said. Students were asked to play an investigative role yet there were no signs of individual initiative except for some curiosity regarding dynasties. These students did not have an awareness of the role that they were playing in deconstructing the text. Nan had total control of the interpretive process and did not label the steps that she was taking.

Sam. In Sam's lesson I found multiple signs of the students' awareness of the interpretive process. I found evidence that students were making connections between biblical texts--a great sign of reflectivity. I also noticed in analyzing the transcript that many references were made to Weber's play. This signified an awareness that multiple interpretations were possible. Students also made explicit comments regarding traditional exegesis.

The students in Sam's class demonstrated on several occasions that they were aware of the interpretive reading process. A commonly heard refrain throughout the lesson was, "How was it done in the play?" This was a reference to Andrew Lloyd Weber's adaptation of the story in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Coat." It seemed that all the students were

familiar with this play and used it to reflect on the meaning of the words in the Torah text. In one instance, Sam noted that Weber had not done the type of reading that they were doing.

On two occasions students made connections to other passages in the Torah text. They were able to connect the word, "va-ye-ma-in" to the Jacob and Tamar saga. This demonstrated their awareness of how echoes could be heard in the Torah text when paying careful attention to the words or phrases. Once Sam pointed out the trope and its significance, students noticed a line and space in the text following Joseph's refusal to accept the advances of Potiphar's wife. Just as the rabbis suggested that this punctuation signified a break in the action, the students echoed this understanding in their own explanations.

In another instance, the students asked whether the idea of Joseph refusing the advances of Potiphar's wife was a "peshat" or "derash" like explanation. This question using exegetical language suggested that they understood the traditional exegetical methods for interpreting text.

Connecting Text to Students' Lives

This analytic lens focuses on how teachers build bridges between the text and the students' own lives. Connecting the text to students' lives underscores the ways that teachers invite personal meanings into the lesson. I was assessing the types of opportunities that teachers structured to promote this connection. How did they invite students to make these comments? I was also analyzing students' comments to understand if they registered signs of pleasure. Were students encouraged to think and interpret exorbitantly? Were there signs of this in the transcript? Was there evidence in the observational data that students were generating meanings for their own lives? When readers converge with texts, Iser tells us, that readers not only rewrite the text but themselves. Were there any signs of this?

Liz. She provided several opportunities to generate personal interpretations through the creation of a paper Midrash and eleventh commandment. In introducing the tasks, Liz explained several vocabulary words. In explaining the word "covenant," she asked students to reflect on the types of covenants that they created with their parents and siblings. When showing their paper Midrashim to the class, the majority of students either showed Mt. Sinai or the ten tablets or the breaking of the ten tablets. Their pictures seemed to represent preconceived notions of revelation. Many represented the breaking of the ten commandments, which was not even part of their reading assignment. There was no deep interpretation of these significant events. Their explanations reflected the cursory reading which they had been directed to do. The students were not invited to make connections to their lives or other parts of the Torah.

The framing of the interpretive task by the teacher did not give them the opportunity to expand their thinking about these two passages. They were told to be creative on paper and that "there was no such thing as doing it wrong." They mechanically read the two passages and reported on the key events minimally without considering the significance. The students showed no signs of being exorbitant thinkers. Being an exorbitant thinker is the beginning of the creative process. It appeared from the students' responses that if there was no wrong or right in this activity, there was no need to exert great effort in their interpretations.

Nan. In Nan's classroom, students were not graciously invited into the process of connecting the text to their own lives. Students were meekly interacting with the text. Students seemed to be mechanically involved in the process of a teacher-led activity. There were no signs of making connections or taking pleasure in the interpretive process. Students did not draw on their experiences to enrich or expand the conversation, nor were they given

the opportunity to connect their own experiences to this text. Although Nan provided an example from her mother's life, students were not explicitly asked to think hard about connections to their own lives.

According to Iser, the pleasure of reading begins when the reader becomes productive. The majority of student readers in Nan's classroom were not productive meaning makers in this lesson. Nan interacted with text with great gusto but she did not create ample conditions for the students to do the same. Because students had limited background knowledge to bring to bear, they made few connections to their own lives. From their relaxed body language and voice tone quality, students did not view themselves as "doing Torah." This process was exclusively in the hands of the teacher, Nan.

Sam. Sam provided opportunities for productive reading and promoted connections to the students' own lives. In deconstructing several verses in Sam's class, the students were able to create a meaningful sentence. Each student was asked to write his/her own meaning and explain it to the group. This exercise provided each student with the opportunity to think independently and productively about the verse. Several students wondered aloud whether Joseph's refusal was an internal or external process. They asked if his refusal was between the two parties or within himself. This type of deeper level thinking resembled the traditional exegetical approach. Sam provided the commentator's perspective that the trope on the word "refused or va-ye-ma-in" indicated Joseph's internal struggle. This was a psychological conflict, he indicated.

In our post observation interview, Sam shared with me that students realized that these issues of sexual seduction were not just tales on the "soaps." These students disclosed stories of teenagers who were troubled by certain sexual encounters and committed suicide. These types of disclosures were ways in which the students in this classroom personalized

the conversation and demonstrated how real Joseph's predicament was. The tasks which Sam set encouraged the convergence of readers with text. The students were able to connect the text to the text of their lives. The students shared their own experiences to make sense of the text. These student readers brought their own adolescent frames of reference to analyze the text. They reworked the text by interpreting the problems and restating the issues in their own words. Throughout the lesson, Sam oscillated between the text and the students, allowing them to free their thinking yet focusing them on the words of Torah.

In trying to make sense of how this process unfolded, one of the students created a Midrash that resembled a traditional one. Sam explained that traditional commentaries stated that Joseph finally refused the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife when the face of his father appeared in his mind's eye. This approach paralleled one of the student's ideas so he referred to it as "Aharona's Midrash," thus affirming her role and the potential role of all students as meaning makers and contributors to the commentary on the Torah.

Summary

I used three analytic lenses that focused on how teachers induct students into the historical conversation of Torah study, how teachers foster interpretive classroom communities and how teachers provide reading tools to students. In each of these lessons, I tried to find evidence that students were productive meaning makers in a dialogue between past and present. I also tried to assess the ways in which the teachers structured the tasks and conversations to promote interpretive reading, which leads to "doing Torah."

Liz's students were not given tools to decipher the text. Their marching orders for the tasks were vague and they delivered vague comments as a result. In Liz's defense, she did not see this weekly meeting as a forum to develop reading strategies. She hoped to foster good

feelings and a connection to the Temple. Yet by neglecting to guide the interpretive process, she trivialized the process of reading and interpreting Torah. In her desire to encourage individual initiative, she neglected to provide students with reading strategies to achieve this lofty goal. If her goal was to cultivate individual reasoning and intelligent choice as she stated in her interviews, the reading tools were missing to accomplish this in her classroom. Her students were not empowered to "do Torah" and generate meaning or connect the text to their own lives. Although one of her goals was to stave off boredom, she promoted passivity in her structuring of tasks.

Nan tried to model the process of reading a text in slow motion, yet neglected to win the attention of her students. This whole group activity did not motivate the students to generate many responses. Perhaps other formats such as small group or paired problem-solving would have lubricated this process. The students did not seem aware of how to decipher the text either because of a lack of background knowledge or deficient reading strategies. The process of reading in slow motion was extended for a period of time which did not meet the needs of these students during this lesson, thus foreclosing interpretive conversation.

Sam provided the students with authentic tasks that the commentators puzzled over that created an interpretive community in his classroom. The process of reading in his classroom was dynamic and interactive. He provided opportunities for his students to be careful contributors to the meaning of the text. Through his guidance, they were impelled to think more deeply about their personal interpretations. Sam conferred a great deal of respect on these students for their contributions to the meaning of the text. He listened carefully to their responses and guided them to generate deeper explanations.

What Sam operationalized in his classroom was a dialogue between past and present or the "fusion of horizons." He provided the students with many opportunities for restructuring the text in their own words, thus helping them see the text as theirs with which to tinker.

His classroom represented what an interpretive Torah community can look like. In his classroom I saw a generative spirit among students which reflected "doing Torah." Students were engaged in examining each word and filling in the gaps when necessary with their own ideas. They were deliberate and serious in their thinking and speech. Students did not seem to be guessing at the text, as could be heard in the other two classrooms. They realized that they had to support their answers with evidence from the text. Sam's students were productive in the process of reading. His focus, as was theirs, was on the process rather than the product. They demonstrated great pleasure in singing the trope and realizing the significance of this tiny sign. They also demonstrated great pleasure in overriding Andrew Lloyd Weber's interpretation through their own close and careful reading which indicated deep awareness of the reading process. These students were productive and exorbitant readers actively engaged in "doing Torah."

In these three lessons, I did not observe Nan and Liz "doing Torah" according to my criteria. Why? All three of these readers were productive and exorbitant readers, capable of "doing Torah." Why did these two teachers not enact the interpretive reading process as I had expected in their classrooms?

Next Steps

Next I try to find some explanations for this disjunction between reading and practice. I look at the continuities and discontinuities between teachers as readers and as practitioners.

I try to account for the discrepancies between these phenomena by proposing alternative ways to understand them. It is evident that being a knowledgeable and engaged learner of Torah is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for teaching Torah to adolescents. In the next chapter, I develop a beginning framework that incorporates subject specific categories for teaching interpretive reading of Torah.

CHAPTER 6

Reading and Teaching – Two Practices

Developing a Beginning Framework of Subject Specific Strategies for Torah Teaching

Introduction

In this chapter, I re-examine my initial assumptions about what it might take for Torah teachers to induct adolescents into the historical conversation. I reconsider the notion that teachers who are passionate and knowledgeable readers of text are more likely to engage students in the interpretive reading process by looking at some traditional Jewish and modern educational sources which lend support to this position. Then I rethink the relationship between reading and teaching Torah text. This leads me back to the three lessons which I observed. This time I analyze them through a pedagogical lens which helps me begin to consider what it takes for teachers with knowledge of the Torah and interpretive strategies, to "do Torah" in their classrooms.

A considerable body of conceptual and empirical research examines what teachers need to know, do and care about to teach. I use some of this literature to help me think about core requirements of Torah teaching. I offer a beginning framework of subject specific strategies for Torah teaching. This framework draws on different strands of the study including theories of reading and pedagogical ideas for effective teaching. This framework represents first steps in an underdeveloped field of Jewish study.

The chapter ends with a discussion of "next steps" in developing a knowledge base for Torah teaching. I suggest that Jewish education needs to look at its own historical sources for pedagogical insights while trying to incorporate relevant knowledge from teacher

education. By fusing ideas from both sources, researchers and Jewish educators can contribute to authentic pedagogy for Torah teaching.

Re-examining Initial Assumptions About the Power of Subject Matter Knowledge

I began this study with the idea that knowledgeable and engaged readers of Torah would be more likely to engage adolescents in the great historical conversation about Torah. I assumed that deep and flexible subject matter knowledge would lead to teaching effectiveness. Deep and flexible subject matter knowledge has been defined as "the ability to draw relationships within the subject as well as across disciplinary fields and to make connections to the world outside of school (McDiarmid, Ball, Anderson, p.1989)." I thought that teachers steeped in subject matter would provide students with the interpretive tools which they possessed for reading text. In retrospect, this seems like a naïve notion, especially in light of my empirical findings. Still, I am not alone in thinking that teachers "saturated with their subject matter knowledge" will be able to teach. In this section, I show how this idea not only permeates rabbinic thinking, but also has its place in teacher education.

Talmudic sources. Within Jewish tradition, the rabbinic commentators make a strong argument that knowledge leads to right action. There is an ongoing debate in talmudic literature about "learning versus doing." When the rabbis use the term "learning," they mean Torah knowledge. The rabbis debate whether learning the Torah will lead to moral actions. In this context teaching is considered a moral activity. A basic assumption in rabbinic thinking is that an ignorant person cannot be pious. Piety or morality is based on learning, not intuitive goodness.

This debate represents a deep philosophical argument. The rabbinic commentators wrestle with the idea that learning or study should be enough to yield proper action in the

world. They maintain that exposure to learning has a transformative effect on the learner. The act of learning or study invites one to be more sensitive, more assertive, more inquiring about life's details and life's meaning. The commentators argue that the act of study is a process of inquiry that promotes a more reflective stance towards the world. It is not just the substance of the text that matters, but the syntax as well. Learning how to negotiate a text helps sharpen one's thinking skills, which can guide a person through difficult life situations. The rabbis note that if learning does not lead to action, it is like "a tree without roots." In most debates, the rabbinic commentators agree that learning takes precedence over doing, thus elevating the status of study and Torah knowledge within the community.

In the past, Jewish communities conferred great status on its scholars. In contemporary, non-orthodox Jewish communities, this is no longer the case. Still, in the field of Jewish education, people often assume that Torah learning offers sufficient preparation for teaching Torah. This may reflect the rabbinic view regarding the value of learning, the premium placed on subject matter knowledge, and the expectation that knowledge leads to right actions, including teaching which is considered a moral activity.

Teachers were expected to be "textpeople," to borrow a term from Abraham Joshua Heschel, people who not only understand the Torah text thoroughly, but act on it. This helps explain my initial expectation about a convergence between reading text and teaching text. The rabbinic view that "learning" or subject matter knowledge of Torah would enable "doing" or teaching supports my initial hypothesis that knowledgeable and engaged readers would be more likely to involve students in the process of text interpretation in their classrooms. Some modern sources also assert the power of subject matter knowledge to influence teaching.

Modern sources. Dewey (1904) writes about the power of subject matter knowledge in a classic article on the relation between theory to practice. He argues that when a teacher is "saturated" in subject matter, it leads to a more thoughtful and alert stance regarding educational practice. Dewey does not argue that subject matter alone will guarantee good practice, but suggests that understanding the intellectual method within the subject matter enhances a teacher's appreciation of students' ideas and reasoning. One of the prerequisites for teaching, according to Dewey, is mastery of subject matter knowledge. Becoming a student of teaching is only possible when a teacher is immersed in subject matter knowledge. He writes:

> This is possible only where the would be teacher has become fairly saturated with his subject matter, and with his psychological and ethical philosophy of education. Only when such things have become incorporated in mental habit, have become part of the working tendencies of observation, insight, reflection, will these principles work automatically, unconsciously, and hence promptly and effectively. (p.320)

Being "saturated in subject matter" involves more than substantive knowledge. Deep subject matter knowledge includes ideas about methods since there is method in content, as Dewey explains.

> Scholastic knowledge is sometimes regarded as if it were something quite irrelevant to method ... but the body of knowledge which constitutes the subject matter ... is not a miscellaneous heap of separate scraps. Even if it be not technically termed science, it is nonetheless material which has been subjected to method--has been selected and arranged with reference to controlling intellectual principles. There is, therefore method in subject matter itself--method indeed of the highest order which the human mind has yet evolved, scientific method. This scientific method is the method of mind itself ...

> Only a teacher trained in the higher levels of intellectual method and who thus has constantly in his own mind a sense of what adequate and genuine intellectual activity means, will be likely, in deed, not in mere word, to respect the mental integrity and force of children. (pp.327-9)

Dewey acknowledges deep subject matter knowledge helps a teacher to be more sensitive and alert to students' intellectual capacities and to the powers of their ideas. Serious subject matter study offers standards for judging intellectual work and ideas about how thinking and knowing proceed. Both the rabbinic argument and Dewey suggest that subject matter can offer teachers more than content knowledge. When learning leads to doing or teaching in the rabbinic argument or subject matter to intellectual insight about how knowledge grows and how students learn in Dewey's view, subject matter is more than substantive. Exposure to deep subject matter has the potential to build an investigative or methodological approach to learning.

The ideas of rabbinic commentators and Dewey are echoed in Schwab's (1978) thinking about curriculum development. Schwab's notion of the "structure of the disciplines" parallels Dewey's ideas about "intellectual method." Dewey notes that materials are arranged and selected according to intellectual principles. Schwab's "principle" and Dewey's "intellectual method" are both ways to express the syntactic nature of subject matter knowledge which includes the canons of evidence used by the disciplinary community. Schwab (1978) defines syntactic knowledge as knowledge of how to establish warrant and determine the validity of competing truth claims in a discipline. Syntactic knowledge along with substantive knowledge help teachers conduct their work. Current efforts to conceptualize subject matter knowledge build on these ideas and highlight these components.

While I understand better why I initially placed more faith in the power of subject matter knowledge to guarantee effective teaching, I no longer assume that subject matter knowledge, passion and personal reading strategies are sufficient for good Torah teaching. All three teachers I studied espoused grand purposes for Torah study and had solid subject matter knowledge; however this did not guarantee deep interpretive reading in the classroom. I see more clearly that competence in one reading does not automatically lead to competence in teaching. To believe that transfer of training comes easily is another belief unsupported by decades of research. Re-examing the talmudic and modern "classical" sources impelled me to think harder about the relationship between reading and teaching of text. While reading and teaching have some overlapping features, requiring distinct capacities and skills and leading to different outcomes, they are fundamentally different practices.

Reading and teaching: Two practices. The practice of reading involves the reader and text. A virtual or aesthetic text is created by the reader's responses to the artistic text. The purpose of reading is to wrest meaning from the text. A productive reader is able to interact with the "spots of indeterminancy" within the text and generate new ideas. The reader seeks coherence through sense-making by connecting his/her experiences to the structure of the text. Sense-making is a process of re-structuring the text into the text of the reader's life. The reader uses various interpretive strategies which I have called "active reading" to enter the text. Scholes (1989) writes about this enterprise in the following way:

> Reading is almost always an affair of at least two times, two places, and two consciousnesses that interpretation is the endlessly fascinating, difficult and important matter that it is. (p.7)

The reading process is a dynamic enterprise that can lead to the construction of meaning, when readers enter texts with active reading tools and the image of dialoguing with the text.

The practice of teaching interpretive reading involves engaging others in the interpretation of text. Some of the same interpretive strategies may be used, but these tools must be made accessible to students. Teachers need to create learning opportunities and tasks for the interpretive process to unfold, a process that includes the teacher, students, text and many consciousnesses.

The practices of reading and teaching text depend on some of the same tools such as active reading strategies, but use them differently. Reading and teaching texts emerge from two distinct cultural practices. The uses of the tools for reading and teaching interpretive reading reflect the accumulated insights of communities (Fish, 1980) where the tools are used. The ostensible tasks of these two practices may seem similar but the activities in these two settings are bound by different understandings by the participants. These understandings about the interpretive process contribute to the quality of meaning making in each cultural domain.

The purposes of personal reading are directed toward one's own meaning making and pleasure while the purposes of teaching interpretive reading are directed toward the students' learning capacities for meaning making. The students' purposes along with their parents and school may not coincide with the teachers' purposes in the classroom, thus the culture of personal interpretive reading is not synonymous with the culture of teaching interpretive reading in a classroom. Scholes (1989) explains the different purposes for reading and teaching by focusing on the teacher's role in generating "readings."

> Our job is not to produce "readings" for our students but to give them the tools for producing their own.... Our job is not to intimidate students with our own superior textual production; it is to show them the codes upon which all textual production depends, and to encourage their own textual practice. (pp.24-25)

I conjectured that a teacher with knowledge of and about the Torah would be able to teach students the codes upon which textual production rests and invite them into the historical conversation. I assumed that a meta-cognitive knowledge of the interpretive process of Torah would lead to interpretive reading in classrooms.

In previous analyses, I constructed frameworks based largely on theories about textual interpretation. In the next section, I examine the three lessons using a pedagogical lens to understand how "readings" are produced. The Hawkins (1974) representation of teaching helps me understand the dynamic relationship among teacher, students and subject matter and the process of inducting adolescents into interpretive reading. Revisiting these three lessons helps me begin to conceptualize what capacities teachers, not readers, need to involve adolescents in the interpretive reading process. Why are some teachers who are excellent readers of holy texts more effective than others in teaching the interpretive process in the classroom? While subject matter knowledge is a given for all three teachers that I observed, it was clearly not sufficient. What insights can I glean from the observational data about what it takes to be an effective Torah teacher?

I, Thou and It - Managing the Triangle

The "I-Thou-It" framework that I am using as a lens for understanding the teaching process comes from David Hawkins, a science educator and philosopher. Hawkins (1974) frames the practice of teaching around three commonplaces: the teacher, student and subject

matter. This construct highlights critical aspects of the teaching process and offers me the opportunity to figure out what happens when the students are added to the teacher-text relationship of personal interpretive reading.

The "I – Thou – It" triangle represents the essence of teaching as a dynamic interaction among the teacher, the students and the subject matter. The ability to view one's own role in relationship to the subject matter and students is the crux of teaching. Being aware of these dimensions of teaching is only possible when teachers straddle both the world of subject matter and world of students. The act of teaching is different from other human activities because of the engagement of the subject matter by the teacher and student. Hawkins writes:

> Without a Thou, there is no I evolving, Without an It, there is no content for the context, no figure and no heat, but only an affair of mirrors confronting each other. (p.52)

In this paradigm of teaching, teacher and students are not static but ever changing as they relate to one another around the "it." Growth for the "I" and "Thou" depends on a respectful relationship with one another. I imagine this growth occurring for teachers and students of Torah when they enter into conversation about the text. When teachers and students "mind wrestle" with the text, new knowledge and heat is generated, resulting in growth for the "I" and "Thou."

Hawkins provides an electronic analogy to capture the connection among the three points of triangle. He writes:

> Think of circuits that have to be completed. Signals go out along one bundle of channels, something happens, and signals come back along another bundle of

> channels; and there's some sort of feedback involved. Children are not always able to sort out all of this feedback for themselves. The adult's function, in the child's learning, is to provide a kind of external loop, to provide a selective feedback from the child's own choice and action. The child's involvement gets some response from an adult and this in turn is made available to the child. The child is learning about himself through his joint effects on the non-human and the human world around him. (p.53)

This conceptualization highlights the dynamic and interactive nature of the enterprise among teacher, students and subject matter. The first act of teaching according to this construct is to encourage a kind of engrossment.

Then the child comes alive for the teacher as well as the teacher for the child. They have a common theme for discussion, they are involved together in the world. (p.57) Engrossment around content leads to learning for the teacher and students which develops confidence, trust and respect. Teaching, according to this model, is essentially about helping students learn to process subject matter and define themselves in the process. Examining the three lessons through the lens of the Hawkins triangle helps me notice some distinctive features of each teacher's practice and begin to figure out what this challenging work of teaching Torah entails.

Assessment of Three Lessons

I examine three aspects of the teachers' lessons. First, I consider the teachers' ability to manage the "I" "thou" and "it" dynamic in their classrooms. Were the teachers able to connect the students and the content through appropriate tasks and conversations? Did the selection of text and tasks fit with their purposes for studying Torah and learners? Second, I

look for engrossment. Were the students and teacher involved in the process of interpretation? What was the quality of their engagement? Were they "actively" engaged in conversing about text? Third, I consider the feedback factor or how responsive the teachers were to the students' understanding of the text. Were the teachers responsive to students' comments and questions? Were they able to move the conversation forward drawing on the students' comments? Did they listen to and make connections between the students' voices and past commentators of the text?

Managing the "I - thou – it" dynamic. In the lesson I observed, Liz focused on keeping the students active. She provided the students with multiple activities that involved interpretive reading tasks; however, she did not purposefully connect the task to the students' reading abilities or interests. The texts she chose on revelation were extremely difficult for this population of students.

Liz did not create extended opportunities for the students to be active contributors in the classroom conversations. She set interpretive tasks but offered little guidance in dealing with the challenges of the text. Liz moved rapidly through the interpretive tasks and students had limited opportunity to develop their thinking about text.

It seemed to me that the way Liz structured the reading task was meant to keep the students busy. Perhaps Liz assumes that activity causes learning. She wants her students to enjoy the experience of religious school and hopes that learning to feel comfortable with the text will lead to enjoyment in the Temple. Providing multiple activities may be her way to insure fun in religious school. Ironically, this activity-based lesson created the opposite effect in terms of students' engagement with the Torah text. It seemed to foster passivity. The difficulty of the texts limited the conversation.

Nan tried to keep the text alive. She also chose a difficult text about which the students had very little prior knowledge. The task seemed too sophisticated for these seventh grade students and the interpretive process did not unfold smoothly. It was unclear whether Nan realized that the students were not involved in the interpretive process. She asked multiple questions but created passivity on the part of students. Although Nan wanted students to find their own independent understanding of text, she did not structure the tasks well enough for them to generate their own reading.

Sam's teaching practice represented a dynamic interaction of teacher, students and subject matter. Sam seemed to consider each corner of the triangle. He provided reading tasks for the students to help them unearth deeper issues in the text about Joseph's motives. He developed a well-structured task and opportunities for the students to make sense out of the text. He orchestrated a connection between the voices of his students and that of the commentators through several deliberate reading tasks. Investigating the purpose of the musical notation linked the students to the commentators.

Liz's lesson seemed to emphasize the "I-Thou" axis while Nan's emphasized the "I-It" relationship. By contrast, Sam activated all points of the triangle. Both Liz and Nan did not create a dynamic interaction between students and texts. By having the students write in their journals, work "hevruta" (paired learning) style and share their explanations with their classmates, Sam created opportunities for the students to connect to the text.

Engrossment. Besides setting the tasks, Liz did little to connect the students to the text. In some ways, the task of creating a paper Midrash seemed to deflect students from the text. Overall, Liz's students did not seem engrossed. They were involved in the task but they did not achieve a deeper understanding of the texts.

Nan did help students get inside the text. When students responded inadequately to her questions, she did not alter her pedagogy but continued to ask the same kinds of questions. Nan was actively involved in the process of interpretation but her students were not.

Nan offers an interesting counterpoint to Liz. She demonstrated an overriding commitment to text. She did not deviate from her plan of examining words closely even when students showed no signs of engagement. Nan tried to anchor interpretations in the text by encouraging students to find evidence for their interpretations. Unfortunately, the tasks seemed to foreclose deep learning. In addition, Nan's rapid-fire questions discouraged involvement.

Sam built involvement around the interpretive task by engaging the students in a discovery process. He encouraged an investigative stance towards text as he guided students to pay attention to unusual signs or words. He allowed students to do the investigating and questioning. He enabled students to be sources of knowledge. Sam also cultivated a sense of connectedness to past voices. The students got very involved, trying to figure out if Joseph's struggle about Potiphar's wife's sexual overture was an internal or external one.

Feedback. When students complained about not understanding the two assigned reading passages on revelation, Liz directed them to read it again. Instead of modeling the interpretive process or asking key questions to direct their reading, she sent them back to struggle on their own. Liz encouraged her students to scan the text; she did not expect systematic analysis nor did she encourage conversation about the text. The emphasis seemed to be on getting the project done. This led to a series of discrete comments that had little connection to the text or other students' comments in the class. Liz did not build on the students' comments or weave them together around the text.

Nan tried to pique her students' interest by providing personal information about her mother's experience with the name of the Civil War and by making a joke. Both of these attempts fell flat. The students did not understand the joke or the purpose of the naming example. Instead of responding to the students' misunderstandings, Nan forged ahead with names for the war between David and Saul. She provided many of the responses when the conversation lulled.

By listening carefully to his students, Sam helped them extend their thinking about text. The students were eager to compare their classical interpretation based on commentators to Andrew Lloyd Weber's interpretation of Joseph's decision to swiftly run from these sexual overtures. Sam encouraged a responsiveness to the text by building on the students' images of the play's version. He listened intently to his students. In one interaction, a student questioned Joseph's motives. The student was confused by Joseph's comment that his master had total trust in him. The student asked, "Is Joseph saying this because he wants to or doesn't want to with the wife of his master?" Praising the student's initiative, Sam opened up an exploration of Joseph's intentions by focusing on the bizarre trope in this passage. He helped the students see new meanings by examining signs that past commentators had placed in the text. He guided a student's question back to the trope for further illumination. This purposeful act enabled the student to look for understanding and insight within the text. Sam skillfully connected the student's question to the past conversation about text. The students clearly saw the challenges that Joseph faced and frailties in his character. Sam welcomed these teens to carefully compare the story with Weber's play. "In the play," one student exclaimed, "Joseph ran away from temptation whereas in the text, there's more of a struggle. Who's right?" Sam smiled and suggested that the students write a letter to Weber.

Connecting all points of the triangle in a classroom conversation is a challenging enterprise. Many factors affect the character and quality of Torah teaching in the classroom. Often teacher's work is constrained by other factors beyond his/her control. Before looking more closely at the interpretive process of Torah in classrooms, I want to consider some of the contextual constraints that teachers face in Jewish educational settings.

Contextual Considerations

Teaching interpretive reading is very challenging. It raises many questions not only about teaching and text, but about contexts. Observing and analyzing these lessons underscores the challenges of engaging students in interpretive reading of texts. Formal Jewish education is mainly conducted in two settings--day schools that are similar to American private or parochial schools and supplementary schools that meet one to three times a week in a congregational setting. Jewish education in America is a voluntary enterprise. No one is required to participate. In fact, half of the Jewish children in the U.S. do not receive a Jewish education (Kosmin, et al, 1991, Lipset, 1994). Very often Torah teachers in Jewish schools are limited not only by their own knowledge and interpretive strategies, but by the contexts in which they teach. They are required to negotiate and make compromises in their teaching practice because of time constraints and because school, parents and students' values intrude upon their lessons.

Liz teaches in a Reform supplementary school that meets once a week. In order to understand the students in this context, we need to look at the parents' commitment to this enterprise. In our initial interview about the limited exposure parents offered their children to Jewish learning, Liz expressed frustration. She did not believe that the parents' purposes in sending their children coincided with her desire to provide the students with enriching

experiences around Jewish texts, experiences that had enriched her as a reader and a Jew. Her lesson may have represented a compromise position between the parents' values and her own. In our post interview, she told me that she approaches each lesson as self-contained because of the high absenteeism in her class.

The purposes that students bring to Jewish classrooms vary extensively. Other educational researchers have explored the purposes of schooling in their studies of high schools:

> What students and teachers mean by "taking" and "teaching" courses is determined not by subjects or levels alone, but also by the intentions of the participants. Some want to learn or teach. Others want to get through courses with as little effort as possible. Still others are wholly committed....The important point is that banging heads every day is the exception rather than the rule. Conflict is rarely the way classroom participants come to terms with one another. Most classes are relaxed and orderly, despite the presence of so many diverse individual intentions. (Powell, Farrar, Cohen, 1985, p.67)

Liz's lesson may have been an effort to accommodate the diverse intentions of her students and parents.

Because Liz's students were seventh graders and pre-Bar and Bat Mitzvah, they may have been somewhat more motivated than other adolescents to learn about Torah. As part of their responsibility, they have to give a "D'var Torah"–interpretation of their Torah passage. Most of the emphasis, however, in their Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation was primarily on mechanical and not interpretive reading in their ceremonies. Mechanical reading in day and

supplementary curricula is viewed as legitimate as it promotes synagogue prayer (Haramati, 1973).

Interpretive text reading requires ample time and support from parents and students who value this activity. As a veteran teacher, Liz is well aware of the limitations of her setting, and varied purposes for studying Torah, yet she believes that positive exposure to text will lead to continued commitment on the part of students. Liz has made tacit concessions to these families by creating an agreeable classroom environment that seems to accommodate all. Liz has a forty-year legacy to uphold in this school.

Nan teaches in a Conservative Jewish Day School. Students study both Judaic and secular subjects equally and are graded in both domains. One of the motivations for Nan's seventh grade students is good grades. She is aware that parental expectations drive these students to perform on tests. In the lesson I observed, she frequently said, "Put this in your notebook, it will be on the test." Parents have mixed purposes for sending their children to a Hebrew day school. Often they do not have strong Judaic backgrounds themselves and want their children to be skilled in Hebrew language, prayer and Jewish holiday rituals. Learning how to interpret texts would probably not be a primary value of most parents. As in Liz's school, the emphasis is on performance, such as grades, not the practice of interpretive reading.

As an Orthodox Jew teaching in a predominantly Conservative religious setting, Nan is aware of these background factors. She knows her students are preoccupied with learning how to perform for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Interpretive reading is not a skill which these students value as they prepare to perform for this ceremony. As predominantly secular teens living in America, learning how to interpret holy texts is discontinuous with their daily lives.

Although these students are probably interested in getting good grades, their purposes for learning may not mesh with Nan's goals for Torah study.

Sam teaches in the same school as Nan. Students in his classroom are in the eighth grade and past their Bar and Bat Mitzvah. The eighth grade is the highest level in the school. Having taught this same group as sixth graders, Sam has a distinct advantage in knowing these students very well and they, in turn, are familiar with his approach to teaching. Although I do not know whether these students treat Torah as any other graded subject in the school, their involvement in the lesson I observed suggests that they can be serious learners when it comes to encountering this text.

In chapter one, I spoke about the challenges that Buber and Rosenzweig tried to meet in opening the "silenced dialogue" between the generations in Berlin in the early part of the century. The three teachers I observed faced similar challenges. Their students come to their Torah studies with secular lenses and very little prior knowledge of holy texts. Thus, like all Torah teachers, these three teachers are trying to provide opportunities for students in these religious school contexts to understand the purposes of studying Torah and interpreting it as modern Jews. The love and purposes that these three teachers express for the enterprise of Torah study is not a uniform value of the parents or school in any of their contexts.

What Skills and Capacities Do Torah Teachers Need?

The analyses of these three lessons leads me to reconsider my initial belief that knowledgeable and passionate readers are more likely to engage adolescents in the interpretive reading process as incomplete. I now look to insights from the teacher education literature to understand what pedagogical skills and capacities teachers need to do this difficult work of interpreting holy texts.

Educational researchers have been working on the question of what teachers need to know, care about and be able to do for a long time. The literature contains various taxonomies, lists of domains and frameworks to describe the knowledge base for teaching. Shulman's list of what a teacher needs to know in very broad brush strokes includes content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of purposes and values. Another framework includes knowledge of subject matter, students, culture, theories about learning and teaching and pedagogy (Ball and Cohen, 1999). Use of categories and taxonomies, however, are inadequate to capture what teachers need to guide them in the practice of teaching. It is not the content of the categories alone but the capacity to draw on and use them in interaction with one another. It is this interactive and dynamic quality of teaching that Hawkins represents in his triangle and his electronic analogy.

Since Shulman identified subject matter knowledge as the "missing paradigm" in teacher education, considerable attention has been paid to this aspect of teacher's knowledge. Ironically enough, the missing paradigm for the three teachers in my study was not subject matter knowledge. Dorph (1994) argues that flexible subject matter knowledge is a cornerstone for effective teaching in Jewish schools. I argue that this is not enough.

Nan is a wonderful example of a teacher trained thoroughly in intellectual methods of Torah. Her creative dances with the text were wonderful to observe. Yet the careful method that she applied to the Torah text did not flow into her lesson. In fact, her high level of intellectual method left students behind. Both Nan and Liz were able to read the text and interpret it. Yet this is only the first step for good Torah teaching. Knowing how to think about texts for student

learners is different from interpreting texts for personal reading. Knowing how to interpret the text of the classroom includes understanding learners and framing purposes. These capacities require different kinds of knowledge.

It is not my intention to review all of the skills and capacities that teachers need to be effective. Rather, I want to focus on three critical aspects of teachers' knowledge that offer some ways to understand how Torah teachers connect the "I-Thou- and It" in the interpretive reading process. The three areas that I have chosen to investigate include: pedagogical thinking, pedagogical content knowledge and the capacity to learn in and from practice.

As Dewey suggested almost a century ago, subject matter knowledge needs to be "psychologized." Even those teachers saturated in subject matter knowledge need to transform it for purposes of teaching. The "psychologizing" entails ends/means thinking, developing appropriate instructional representations and learning in and from practice. These three areas all connect to the practice of teaching Torah. Ends/means thinking involves paying attention to local and historical purposes. It suggests the need to be cognizant of the students' conversation about the task at hand and the historical conversation of past commentators. Developing appropriate representations means generating instructional tasks that meet the learners' needs. This entails choosing appropriate Torah passages, examples and illustrations that the students can understand. The capacity to learn in and from practice means that teachers can see the particulars of their teaching context. Torah teachers often rely on outside sources of knowledge for their own teaching rather than investigating their own classrooms and grounding themselves in their own practices.

Pedagogical thinking. The capacity to think pedagogically enables teachers to map their own classroom territory. Helping teachers learn to think pedagogically and interpret the

text of their classrooms is not just a matter of providing them with a vocabulary and frameworks about teaching. It involves a different kind of intellectual work that is rooted in practice and thinking about the purposes for their pedagogical decisions in the classroom. It has been conceptualized as pedagogical reasoning by (Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann, 1985):

> Teaching means helping people learn worthwhile things. It is a moral activity that requires thought about ends, means, and their consequences. Since teaching is concerned with learning, it also requires thinking about how to build bridges between one's own understanding and that of one's students. There is a difference between going through the motions of teaching and connecting these activities to what students are learning over time.... Ends - means thinking and attention to student learning are central to pedagogical thinking. While teachers cannot directly observe learning, they can learn to detect the signs of understanding and confusion of feigned interest and genuine absorption. Thus pedagogical thinking is strategic, imaginative, and grounded in knowledge of self, children, and subject matter. (pp.1-2)

I interpret this as an elaboration of Hawkins' conceptualization of teaching. Teachers need to be grounded in "knowledge of self, children, and subject matter," yet the implication of "ends means thinking" is that teachers need to operate on multiple planes at once. They need to see the purposes of the daily activity while recognizing its greater purpose. They need to consider how to connect daily, weekly and monthly tasks to serve their broader goals.

Another key element in pedagogical thinking is the capacity to build bridges between the teachers' own understanding and that of the students. This requires "psychologizing" the subject matter, as Dewey (1904) puts it, and being aware of the students' developmental abilities

and thinking so that connections can be made between students and subject matter. This thinking tool helps teachers create opportunities and tasks, linking students to the subject matter.

Helping others learn worthwhile things relates to teachers' curricular choices which are never neutral. What materials and ideas teachers choose for their students are linked to their purposes for learning and teaching.

According to my vision of Torah teaching, the teacher needs to operate on two planes, the local and historical conversation. The local conversation takes place in the interpretive classroom community, whereas the historical conversation is composed of past voices within the Jewish interpretive community. Torah teachers who operate with both purposes in mind build bridges between students and subject matter. They choose interpretive reading tasks that will promote the local conversation and have the potential to connect students to the historical conversation. Balancing these two planes means listening to past and present voices, to subject matter and students.

An example from Liz's classroom lesson can perhaps illuminate what ends/means thinking is about. Liz chose several reading tasks for a 50-minute period. She galloped from one activity to the next in this short time period. What types of means/ends thinking was she using? Liz seemed to focus mainly on the means. She prepared activities without realizing their higher purposes or ends. Each task had potential to stimulate local conversation and connect with the historical conversation, but Liz did not allow enough time or provide enough guidance for this to happen.

Pedagogical content knowledge. Researchers who study subject matter knowledge for teaching argue that subject matter knowledge alone does not guarantee successful teaching (Shulman,Wilson, Richert, 1987; Grossman, 1987; Shulman, 1986,1987; Ball, 1996). Many

researchers have highlighted how teachers' subject matter knowledge influences their pedagogical orientations and decisions (Ball, Feiman-Nemser; and Wilson, 1988; Wilson and Wineburg, 1988). The teachers' ability to pose questions, select tasks, evaluate their students' understanding and make good curricular choices depends on how they understand and interpret their subject matter.

This domain focuses on an area of knowledge for teaching called pedagogical content knowledge. Shulman (1986) first defined pedagogical content knowledge to include:

> For the most regularly taught topics in one's subject area, the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations--in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others ... an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult; the conceptions and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning of those most frequently taught topics. (p.9)

Grossman writes, "Learning that students find certain topics or texts difficult is not the same as learning what to do about it." When Nan encountered difficulties in promoting a conversation about names for war, she did not change her instructional approach. She continued to ask questions that yielded very few responses from the students. She personally had extensive knowledge of the text, could recite a string of possible names yet she appeared to have limited instructional strategies for engaging these students.

Grossman (1990) compares three beginning secondary English teachers all of whom are well-versed in and serious students of English literature but who have no formal teacher education. These new teachers struggle to enact their visions of English literature in their

teaching practice. These teachers have been taught to organize their subject matter knowledge for their own understanding and enrichment, but not for others. They lack pedagogical content knowledge.

These conceptualizations of pedagogical content knowledge help me understand what Torah teachers need to bring to the local classroom interpretive conversation in order to induct others. In organizing the Torah text, teachers need to take into account students' understandings and misconceptions. In Nan's lesson, she emphasized the role of word choice, one of her favorite ways to organize the text. Nan did not adequately assess the students' background knowledge when utilizing this instructional strategy. Liz chose multiple midrashic texts, but did not help students get inside the texts. As Wilson (1990) has noted, "Variety may be entertaining but not necessarily educative." Neither teacher adequately understood their students' misunderstandings about text, nor developed instructional strategies that worked well in the lessons I observed.

A skillful teacher needs to "read" the classroom (Wasserman, 1999) and make adjustments according to the students' understanding. This skill enables the teacher to organize subject matter knowledge about teaching for classroom use and represent it for students. Scholes (1985) argues that wisdom is not transmitted from the text to the student but developed in the student by questioning the text. The capacity to help students question a text requires pedagogical content knowledge and skill.

Learning in and from practice. Many lists have been generated by researchers and educators to include knowledge of material, knowledge of students, culture, ideas about learning and pedagogy. Yet the claim has been made (Ball and Cohen, 1999), that even if teachers possessed all of the above skills and capacities, it would not be enough. Teachers

need to be able to learn in their own contexts of work because of its unique and particular features.

> Practice cannot be wholly equipped by some well-considered body of knowledge. Teaching occurs in particulars--particular students interacting with particular teachers over particular ideas in particular circumstances. (p.10)

This argument is a response to a challenge that philosophers and practitioners have encountered over the ages--how can theoretical knowledge be applied to practical problems. This approach makes the case for subject specific strategies. All methods do not fit each subject matter. Applying knowledge of subject matter, students and culture, principles of pedagogy and learning to practice is no exception. The ways in which teachers situate their knowledge in living contexts is a serious challenge. Becoming experienced is not the same as learning in and from practice.

The capacity to generate knowledge in and from practice is very different from the capacity to generate meaning from a text, the capacity that my teachers demonstrated. The Torah teachers in this study certainly had knowledge about children and ideas about learning, but they were not equally skilled in assessing the "mental activity" of their children. They did not interpret the responses of their students in the discussion dynamically to connect the local conversation to the historical conversation.

Teachers need to mediate the world of text and classrooms by grounding themselves in their practice and learning how to investigate their own particular classrooms. They need to generate local knowledge about their particular students and purposes. Each context requires teachers to figure out what works well and show students how to connect to texts.

The skill of reading the text of the classroom is a highly contextualized process and cannot be learned via subject matter alone (Feiman-Nemser and Remillard, 1995).

The three teachers in my study were not limited in their ability to interpret a text. They were readers who saw multiple meanings and possibilities in the text. They were not afraid of grappling or struggling with the text or hovering in the area of ambiguities. They recognized these ambiguities as the nature of Torah study. They demonstrated great agility in their personal reading practices--reading was a form of "gymnastics." They also described their role as readers as "fillings in the gaps." Yet two of the three teachers that I observed were limited in their instructional representations as teachers. They were not as skilled in connecting students and texts as they were in getting inside Torah themselves.

In the upcoming section I try to consider some of the specific pedagogical strategies teachers might need to take into their practice to engage students in the interpretive reading of Torah. I take this direction because one body of knowledge cannot serve all teachers and all disciplines. Subject matter knowledge complemented by local knowledge is more useful to teachers than generic knowledge of pedagogy, learning, students and materials. Teaching occurs in particulars. Teachers need to coordinate these different bodies of knowledge in their particular contexts, which is challenging work. It is the interaction between these bodies of knowledge that leads to a dynamic classroom. I move from universal capacities and skills such as end/means thinking and pedagogical content knowledge to particular ones for Torah teachers. I have tried to synthesize learning from teacher education and insights from Jewish education to develop a set of capacities that may be useful for teachers helping others enter the historical conversation. I have tried to adapt secular pedagogical sources for the specific contexts of Torah teaching.

Subject Specific Capacities for Torah Teachers

To teach Torah effectively, teachers need subject specific strategies, ways of working with students that respect the integrity of Torah study and acknowledge the developmental needs and interests of specific students in a particular context. I have tried to identify some of those strategies. Starting with my own vision of good Torah teaching, I draw on knowledge of the interpretive process, traditions of Torah learning, and insights from my analysis of the three Torah lessons. Hawkins' influence is present as well. I have tried to contextualize the commonplaces from Hawkins' triangle for the process of teaching interpretive reading and inducting students into the historical Torah conversation.

These categories are not meant to be static, isolated ideas. The capacities are: (1) capacity to balance local and historical conversations about Torah; (2) capacity to guide students in mastery of textual materials; and (3) capacity to create an interpretive conversation.

These capacities need to be fluid in relation to one another when enacted. This dynamic interaction is represented by the dialectic that medieval and modern Jewish commentators describe as the tension between individual initiative and submission to authority or creativity and commitment. Teachers are always oscillating between the text and the students, between past and present voices. I maintain, as do other Jewish thinkers, that this tension produces creativity and needs to be present in a classroom for authentic interpretation to occur (Soloveitchik, 1983).

The capacity to balance the local and historical conversation suggests a practitioner who has an eye on the past, present and future horizons. This suggests a teacher who understands that "doing Torah" locally involves linking students to the great historical

conversation. The capacity to guide students in the mastery of texts requires skills in understanding how students think and read, "their mental activities." It leads to modeling the process of interpretive reading and chunking it into manageable tasks so that students learn to take investigative stances into the texts as the past commentators did. This requires developing tasks for students to read in slow motion, to become aware of the interpretive processes and connect the text to the text of their lives. The capacity to create opportunities for interpretive conversations necessitates listening to students through the filter of text and building bridges between their words and the words of the text and commentators. These capacities can only be learned if teachers are willing to interpret their classrooms as they would the Torah, as a fluid, dynamic text that requires great care, diligence and reflectivity.

Balance local and historical conversations. The first category combines intentionality with flexibility in design and enactment. It represents a teacher's purposeful thinking about the learning process. This skill requires the teacher to think about the interpretive tasks, their purposes and connect them to the larger purposes of studying Torah. In what ways do these learning activities contribute to the learning of Torah? How do they enrich the students' deeper understanding of Torah? How can manageable tasks be framed? In what ways do these tasks promote student engagement with text? How should students be assisted when misunderstandings arise? In what ways do the tasks celebrate the learning of Torah?

This capacity requires teachers to understand their purposes, i.e., providing access to the historical conversation while focusing on the interests and conversations of the students before them--a form of ends/means thinking. This form of bi-focal vision (Ball, 1996) requires the teacher to have an "eye on the horizon and ear on the children." It requires a teacher to have a vision beyond the classroom to the historical discussions of the

commentators while firmly situated in the classroom setting. The Torah teacher operates within two conversations--the local and historical. The Torah teacher needs to straddle both positions and connect students with texts. Learning Torah is a process of enculturation. The teacher provides the students with a set of classroom practices around an authentic Torah question. This exposes the students to the conceptual tools that generations used before them to interpret texts and connects them to the process. The activity needs to be authentic in order to connect students to the ongoing process of "doing Torah."

Guide mastery of texts. The second category requires Torah teachers to understand the learning process of interpretive reading. The teacher needs to provide the students with explicit reading strategies such as reading in slow motion. The teacher trains the students to appreciate the patterns, nuances and gaps in the text and fill them in. Teachers need to sensitize students to various interpretive frameworks ranging from traditional to critical ones. The students need to be encouraged to connect the themes of the text to the text of their lives. In the process of reading, the teacher creates opportunities for students to explain the text and offer their own personal meanings. These learning opportunities allow the students to restructure the text within the context of their own lives.

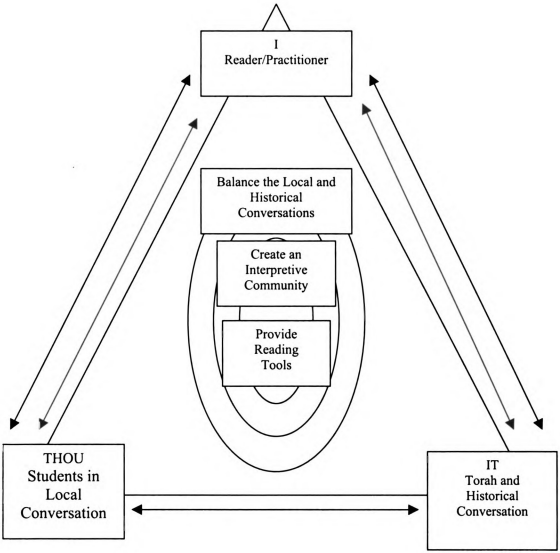
All of these capacities require the teacher to build bridges between the texts and students. Teaching reading strategies lays the infrastructure for students to connect with the text in the present and future. Students will be able to travel between past and future generations if teachers pave the paths through learning opportunities and modeling.

Create interpretive conversations. The third capacity is creating an interpretive community. This capacity to connect students from the local to historical conversation requires that teachers are part of this conversation and create opportunities for their students

to join it. It also requires the teacher to create access points, encourage students to think and talk Torah as the commentators. The classroom setting needs to support this form of Torah talk (see Table 6-1).

Table 6-1

What Capacities do Torah Teachers Need for "Doing Torah" in a Classroom?



To illustrate some of these capacities, I turn to Sam's lesson.

Balancing the local and historical conversation. Sam has two purposes for studying Torah as he noted, "excavation and enjoyment of text." He wants the students to see the many layers within the Torah text and to appreciate the experience of discovery. Sam began

his lesson with a question that echoes the words of the great medieval commentator, Rashi, "What is the connection between two verses?" As Sam reported in his post observation, he often asks this question because it encourages the students to think like the commentators and invites new responses. Sam cherishes good questions. The students' responses may or may not resemble those of past commentators. The question is key in the conversational exchange with students. By hearing this question repeatedly, students can begin to ask it themselves and provide multiple responses. This question represents intentionality and flexibility on Sam's part. It allows Sam to induct the students purposely into the Torah conversation while inviting new responses and meanings to emerge. This coincides with his purpose of excavating and enjoying the process of interpreting text. Through Rashi's quest, Sam enacts the dual purposes of building links between the local and historical conversation.

Guides mastery of texts. Sam inducts the students into the language of text study by labeling their acts of interpretation according to the commentators' approaches. He uses the words "peshat" (simple meaning), "derash" (interpretive meaning) and "remez" (clues) generously throughout the lesson. Even the students use these words when thinking about their own interpretations of text. At one point in the lesson, several students wonder whether using the trope to find meaning in the text was a "peshat" or "derash" approach. They question whether Joseph's turmoil was of an external nature as the commentators seemed to think or an internal battle in his mind. These types of questions suggest deep reading and thinking about the process of "doing Torah."

The students also recognize that in reading a text, the first act entails a "peshat" or simple meaning account. Sam has established this pattern in reading the verses of the Torah. When students begin the process of understanding a text, Sam slows down the process and

breaks each sentence down. He tells them that each word is significant and their responsibility as a class is to understand these words. He asks them repeatedly, "Are you able to make a meaningful sentence out of it?" Throughout this process, Sam demonstrates to the students the significance of finding the "peshat" or simple meaning before delving deeper into the meanings of the text. His slower pacing during this segment of the lesson fits the nature of the task.

Creates interpretive conversations. Sam creates multiple opportunities for students to engage in conversation about the Torah text. He asks them questions and suggests that they work in pairs to discuss their thinking. This traditional form of working through Jewish texts is called "hevruta" which means paired learning in which each member teases out the meaning with the help of the partner. Students also have the opportunity to write about the text in their notebooks and journals as well as explain their thinking orally. Sam's listening stance encouraged students to participate in the conversation. He responded to all of their concerns regarding the text and connected them to the commentators' responses when possible.

In another exchange during the lesson, one student, Aharona, makes the connection to the Jacob saga. She notes that the word "veyemain" is used in both the Joseph and Jacob story. This type of interpretive reading move is similar to what the commentators do. Aharona exclaims that perhaps Joseph refuses because he saw his father's face in his mind's eye just as his father refuses to be comforted because of his son's loss. Sam is thrilled to see students making these connections across the texts. Aharona demonstrates the ability to hear echoes in the Joseph and Jacob texts and an ability to make midrash or "do Torah." Sam praises this type of conversation and instructs students to record this as "Aharona's Midrash"

in their notebooks. He also tells the class that traditional commentaries found this echo intriguing and developed a similar Midrash to Aharona. The credit for this insight is conferred upon Aharona, not the traditional commentators. She has become part of the conversation. Encouraging students to record this in their notebooks is a strategy to help other students think midrashically and become part of the conversation.

Sam clears the path for conversation by listening to his students. He allows the students to find their own explanations for unexplained gaps and ambiguities in the text just as the commentators did. By inviting the students to explain the text in their own words, he creates communion between the students' and past voices.

I have tried to suggest and illustrate some of the capacities that Torah teachers need to "do Torah," to engage students in the historical Torah conversation. My vision of Torah teaching involves guiding others to generate "readings" through the interpretive process. This process of generating readings or "doing Torah" is very challenging work. I have tried to show how subject matter knowledge is not sufficient. It requires both considerable subject matter knowledge and considerable pedagogical skill.

Next Steps in Developing a Knowledge Base for Torah Teachers

Through this study, I have learned how difficult it is to examine complex ideas empirically. I also came to realize that my limited data could not support all my analytic claims about teaching Torah.

Limitations of research design. In retrospect, I see the limitations of my research design and the data I collected to conduct this analysis. I used two interviews and one classroom observation to assess how teachers who themselves are part of the historical conversation of reading Torah induct others into this process. I tried to stretch my data in

order to interpret the teachers' words and actions to better understand what specific strategies Torah teachers needed to engage in this challenging work of interpreting texts with adolescents. I also tried to build analytic frameworks by which to examine Torah teachers engaged in the interpretive reading process in the classroom.

If I were to conduct this research again, I would structure my initial set of questions differently. I would ask the readers to consider not only how they read various passages, but how they might teach them. I would also inquire about the specific challenges they encounter teaching Torah in addition to the personal challenges they face as readers. These data would help me get a better sense of the teachers' pedagogical understanding. In the follow-up interviews, I would ask the teachers to talk about their specific teaching practices that I observed in order to understand how they reason about their practice and what sources of knowledge they draw on. I would ask the teachers to explain their thinking about pedagogical decisions that connected the students to the text in their classrooms. I would also need more observational data to understand how Torah teachers select and structure interpretive tasks, and how they try to create interpretive conversations in the classroom. This expanded data set would help get inside the challenges of creating interpretive conversations in the classroom and think about the knowledge Torah teachers use and need to induct students into the historic conversation. Despite my limited data, however, I tried to learn as much as I could about what it takes to "do Torah" in a classroom, to guide adolescents in the interpretive process, and I believe this study has implications for further research and approaches to professional development in Jewish education.

Implications for further research. Teaching interpretive reading to adolescents poses many challenges. Some of the constraints are contextual in nature. The contextual challenges

of teaching text are often regularly discussed in Jewish educational literature; however, few educators have tried to conceptualize what good Torah teaching looks like and what it entails in terms of teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions. Jewish education also lacks studies of teachers at work. Very few researchers examine what Torah teaching looks like and what it takes to engage students in "doing Torah." Case studies are limited and few portraits of good Jewish teaching exist. The Jewish educational literature will remain detached from the work of teachers if images and models do not exist for how to engage students in the local and historical Torah conversation. Subject matter knowledge and passion have always been stressed in Jewish educational circles but inadequate attention is given to pedagogy.

In addition, Jewish education is overly reliant on secular gospels. Learning from secular research is one valuable source of knowledge and I can cite several examples of such borrowings that have enriched the practices of interpretive reading. One occurred in the early 1960's under the influence of Joseph Schwab and Seymour Fox who introduced the notion of "inquiry" into their pioneering curricular Bible work at the Melton Research Center (Zielenziger, 1992). Another is David Pearson's (1978) extensive research on reading comprehension, which has shifted the focus in teaching reading from decoding to reading as multifaceted comprehension.

Most often, however, ideas from secular literature are grafted onto Jewish teaching practice with little consideration for its inherent philosophy or fit. Understanding the complexities and challenges of teaching interpretive reading from inside the classroom is a prerequisite for conducting this work. Reform efforts in Jewish education rarely concern themselves with what Elmore (1996) calls "the core of educational practice."

> Much of what passes for change in U.S. schooling is not really about changing the core.... Innovations often embody vague intentions of changing the core through modifications that are weakly related, or not related at all, to the core.... However, the changes are not often explicitly connected to fundamental changes in the way knowledge is constructed, nor the division of responsibility between teacher and student, the way students and teacher interact with each other around knowledge, or any of a variety of other stable conditions in the core. (p.3)

Changing the core of Torah teaching and learning in Jewish education requires investigating the practice of interpretive reading between teachers and students. Efforts to promote generic strategies such as cooperative learning are weak attempts to reform Jewish education.

More research needs to be conducted in how to help Torah teachers think about teaching texts to their students and moving between past and present voices. As I have demonstrated, knowing how to think and talk about texts as a reader is not the same as knowing how to think and talk about texts as a teacher. Professional development opportunities are limited for Jewish teachers to learn this process. A teacher needs to organize his/her thinking about practice differently from his/her own personal reading of text. Thinking about practice requires one to detach from the work, peer inside and investigate prior knowledge, beliefs and how that impacts one's teaching. It also requires pedagogical thinking about the purposes and plans of teaching and an interpretive stance toward one's classroom as a text.

Implications for professional development. Professional development initiatives that offer new techniques and creative activities on the assumption that teachers will make the necessary adjustments do not penetrate the core practices of teaching interpretive reading.

Just as teachers of math, English and history need to generate their own knowledge from practice, so do teachers of Torah. McLaughlin writes, "Implementation is a problem of the smallest unit." Better Torah teaching requires the development of practitioners who consider their own interpretive stance towards text and the reading of classrooms. Practitioners often know a great deal but are not usually asked to articulate their understanding of the interpretive process of texts. Generating knowledge from one's own practice, the smallest unit, would require recalibrating professional development for Jewish educators. Very often, one-shot workshops with little follow-up are not related to the work of Torah teachers.

In this study, I engaged Jewish teachers in philosophical discussions regarding the authorship and authority of holy texts. Teachers rarely have opportunities to participate in these types of conversations in the context of Jewish schools. I believe that Torah teachers need to develop an explicit stance regarding these issues prior to engaging students in the process of "doing Torah" because it promotes a greater awareness of the issues that students confront in reading holy texts. This approach to professional development grows out of a particular view of teaching that recognizes the complexity of the enterprise especially in interpreting holy texts.

Contemporary Jewish education has relied primarily on secular sources to enrich its field of practice. Perhaps Jewish educators also need to look more carefully at their own practice refracted through their own past history and sources in order to develop new strategies for teaching. Jewish content can be a source for reflection on subject matter content but also on what it means to teach it. Torah teachers need to look at particular issues and challenges raised by reading holy texts in religious school contexts. Reading and interpreting holy texts is a difficult enterprise. Because Jewish texts are often cryptic, they are also rich

texts for pedagogical knowledge. Teachers need to develop subject specific strategies from their own core (Kennedy, 1991; McDiarmid, Ball, Anderson, 1989), Torah, rather than adapt from other disciplines. Torah teachers need to negotiate both the present and past world in order to bring students into the historical conversation. Strategies for bridging the world of the students with subject matter need to be considered by teachers of Torah. Traditional Jewish learning looks to past voices for inspiration. One example of this approach comes from Samuel Heilman, (1983), a sociologist who investigated the dynamic nature of Jewish study. He called the talmudic process, "the lernen process" and identified its four distinctive steps: recitation, translation, explanation and discussion. He writes:

> The first of these consists of an oral reading of the text, usually by one person who is cued or echoed by the others who are with him... Translation, the second step, became necessary when Jews no longer were fluent in the primary languages ... but it was always part of the necessary expansion of the sketchy text.... Explanation, the third move, is the effort to briefly clarify the meaning and implications of what has been recited. During explanation, "lerners" define questions and refine answers, organize a text, determining where one subject or "inyan" ends and another begins. They frame matters, detailing what the Talmud text is trying to do. Finally, they provide short glosses or footnotes to what they have just recited.... Discussion, the last move, allows for the broadest possible consideration of the text. Mirroring the give and take of the sages ... they evaluate the significance of what they have read and debate its conclusions, digress to tell stories or answer questions....The students' concerns and words merge with the issues and language of the Talmud text they

reviewed. This is the ultimate step of the process, the point at which life and lernen become one.

The learners in this model share responsibility for creating meaning with past commentators. I present this model as an illustration of how studying Jewish sources could serve as a guide for understanding the textual interpretive process.

Cloning methods from other subject matters does not always address the deeper issues that Torah teachers face. Universal approaches do not automatically help Torah teachers. The "I, Thou and It" construct may be useful for thinking about the process of teaching but in order to develop a dynamic relationship among these three commonplaces, the Torah teacher needs to address particular problems of practice endemic to religious school teaching, its contexts and the unique requirements. Generic approaches alone will not improve classroom practice and promote the form of interpretive text reading that I am advocating. Each discipline has its own distinctive logic and mode of inquiry (Resnick, 1985; Schwab, 1978).

Teaching, unlike other practices, is devoid of an audience of peers and a record of case studies. My intended reader for this research is the Jewish practitioner and teacher educator struggling with the challenges of teaching Torah. This systematic study is part of an embryonic initiative in thinking and writing about the practice of Torah teaching--a new phenomenon in Jewish educational research. In order to help teachers understand the practice of Torah teaching, I have tried to identify some of the critical factors that it takes to do this work. This study is a beginning effort to contribute to a new conversation that fuses Jewish education with teacher education.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Consent Form

I am willing to be interviewed about my Jewish background, my personal views on Torah and teaching practice. I understand that you will be videotaping and audiotaping during the classroom observations. The goal of this research is to describe your personal relationship to the Torah text and how this relationship influences your Torah teaching within the classroom. This data will be used in Renee Soloway Wohl's doctoral dissertation in teacher education at Michigan State University.

I understand that the interviews will last about an hour and will be audiotaped. There will be at least three interviews. At any time during the interview, I have the right not to answer particular questions. I also have the right to request that the tape recorder be turned off at any time, and I can withdraw from this study altogether at any time without penalty.

I understand that all of the data collected will be handled confidentially by you although selections from transcripts may be shared with your dissertation advisory committee. My identity will be protected by masking out my name and other identifiers when sharing this information.

I also understand that I may ask to see the transcripts of my own interview and teaching but not those of anyone else in this study. I am also able to see summaries of the data as well as specific quotes from the interviews.

I understand that my identity will not be revealed and that pseudonyms will be used in any written product based on the interview. I also understand that anyone familiar with this educational setting may be able to identify me despite your efforts to protect my identity.

Based on the above information and assurances, I agree to participate in this study on the nature of Torah teachers' relationship to text practice.

Name_____

Signature_____

Date_____

APPENDIX B

JEWISH EDUCATION BACKGROUND SURVEY

NAME_____EMAIL_____

SCHOOL NAME_____

WORK PHONE NUMBER_____WORK FAX_____

1. How many years in total have you been working in the field of Jewish education, including this year? _____

2. Briefly describe your teaching experience in Jewish and general education.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Do you consider Jewish education a full time commitment?

   Yes_____ No_____

4. Please list all the degrees that you have earned since high school and what your major(s) and minor(s) for each degree were.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Are you currently enrolled in any courses or study groups? Please specify.

_____

_____

_____

6. Are you currently enrolled in a degree program? Yes_____ No_____

6a. If yes, for what degree, from where, in what major(s)?

_____

7. Please list all the professional license(s) that you hold.

8. Are you currently working towards any licenses/certifications?

Yes_____ No_____

8a. If so, from where?

_____

9. What kind of Jewish school, if any, did you attend before you were thirteen? (Check all that apply)

_____One day/week supplementary school

_____Two or more days/week supplementary school

(indicate number of days)_____

_____Day school or yeshiva

_____School in Israel (Please describe program briefly on the back)

_____None

_____Other (specify) _____

10. What kind of Jewish school, if any, did you attend after you were thirteen and before college? (Check all that apply)

_____One day/week supplementary school

_____Two or more days/week supplementary school

(indicate number of days)_____

_____Day school or yeshiva

_____School in Israel (Please describe program briefly on the back)

_____Other (specify) _____

11. How proficient are you in Hebrew? (circle one response for each item)

	Fluent	Moderate	Limited	Not at All
Reading for Pronunciation	1	2	3	4
Reading for Understanding	1	2	3	4
Writing	1	2	3	4
Speaking	1	2	3	4

12. How would you describe yourself?

Orthodox_____Conservative_____Reform_____Reconstructionist_____

APPENDIX C

BELIEFS INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Origins and Authorship

1. People have many different views about how the Torah was written and I'm sure you've thought about that in your own studies. How do you think the torah was written?
2. Let's talk some more about the Torah's origins. Please take a look at these passages on different viewpoints on how the Torah should be interpreted. What passages coincide most with your thinking? Least with your thinking?
3. This is a chart on revelation that comes from Elliot Dorff's book on Conservative Judaism. Would you please look at these six positions and tell me which position you feel is most aligned with your own personal position?

Nature and Purposes

4. In what ways do you see the Torah as different from other books you have studied?
5. What purposes does studying Torah have for you personally?
6. Is it alright to criticize the Torah?
7. Can the Torah's laws be altered?
8. To what extent is the Torah binding personally and communally?

Authority and Interpretive Frameworks

9. What sources do you use to interpret the Torah?
10. How far do you go as a personal reader to make an interpretation of text?
11. What are the authoritative commentaries on the Torah for you?

APPENDIX D

VIEWS ON REVELATION

Please align yourself with one of the positions listed below

1. Verbal Revelation – The Torah consists of the exact words of God given at Mt. Sinai.
2. Continuous Revelation – God dictated His will at Sinai and other times. It was written by human beings.
3. Continuous Revelation II – Human beings wrote the Torah, but they were divinely inspired.
4. Continuous Revelation III – the Torah is the human record of the encounter between God and the people Israel at Sinai. Some laws today are repugnant.
5. No Revelation – Human beings wrote the Torah. No claim for the divinity of the product.
6. Progressive Revelation – The Torah is God's will written by human beings. As time goes on we get to understand His will better.

DIVERSE VIEWS ON THE ORIGINS OF TORAH

Please assess these views on the origins of Torah.

Which view is most compatible with your own?

1. Some of the ancient rabbis believed that God gave two Torahs, the Written and Oral Torah.
2. Rabbi Bleich: The text of Torah today is identical in every significant detail of the original scroll.
3. Rabbi Petuchowski: The giving of the Torah is not confined to the occasion of Sinai. The laws do not go back to that time.
4. Rabbi Hartman: The Torah given at Sinai was not a complete finished system, what happened at Sinai gave the community a direction.
5. Rabbi Maimonides: I believe with perfect faith that the whole Torah now in our possession is the same given to Moses.

APPENDIX E

INTERPRETIVE READING TASK INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. This task deals with the Akedah text. In what contexts have you studied the Akedah text?
2. Are there particular parts that are very problematic for you?
3. In the passage, it says that God "nisa" Abraham. What sense do you make of that?
4. What commentaries have you used to help you understand this passage?
5. Why do you think the narrative is so sparse?
6. What do you think during the three-day journey between father and son? What is your interpretation?
7. What do you think is the big question of this text?
8. Would you please look at this Midrash on Satan and tell what you think Satan's function is?
9. Kieergekaard, the philosopher, wrote about this text and stated that it represented a suspension of the ethical. What do you think?

APPENDIX F

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

I. Overview of Lesson

Does the teacher include an interpretive task during the lesson? How is it sequenced in the overall lesson? How much time is devoted to it in proportion to other tasks during the lesson?

A. What is the topic of the lesson?

B. How does the teacher introduce the topic?

C. What texts are used during the lesson?

1. Authentic Biblical texts
2. Commentaries
3. Other resource materials

D. What is the sequence of activities during the lesson?

E. Is there an interpretive task?

1. Does the task focus on authentic Biblical texts?
2. Does the task focus on traditional or modern commentaries?
3. Does the task focus on both?
4. Does the task focus on auxiliary sources?

F. How much time is devoted to the interpretive task?

II. Reading/Interpretive Task

How does the teacher who has been identified as an active reader enact this reading process in the classroom?

A. What is the interpretive task?

B. Who frames the interpretive task?

C. How are directions given for the task?

D. How do the teacher and students work on this task?

1. Large group

2. Small group

3. Individually

E. What questions does the teacher ask?

F. What questions do the students ask?

Reading in Slow Motion

Is there a systematic approach that the teacher uses to engage the students in reading in slow motion (close textual analysis)?

A. In what ways does the teacher focus students on problematic words, phrases, patterns or gaps in the text?

B. Does the teacher model this strategy?

C. Does the student have the opportunity "to read in slow motion" independently?

D. Are students encouraged to question the text or traditional commentaries?

E. Are students encouraged to accept the text or traditional commentaries?

Awareness of Reading Process

Does the teacher sensitize the students to become more self-reflective in the process of reading and interpreting texts?

A. Does the teacher make explicit comments regarding the process of reading and interpretations?

B. What issues does the teacher raise in his/her comments that lead to deeper student awareness of the process of reading?

C. Are multiple interpretations encouraged in the classroom?

1. What does the teacher do to foster multiple interpretations?
2. How are students' spontaneous comments handled?
3. Are students encouraged to weigh reasons for varying interpretations?
4. Are students encouraged to connect their evidence to text and commentaries?
5. What opportunities are created for considering multiple interpretations (verbal/written discourse, small group or independent work)?

D. Are strategies used to increase the students' awareness of how text study is linked to other times and places in Jewish history? Describe the strategies.

Meaning Making

Does the teacher help the students make connections from the Torah text to their own personal lives?

A. Does the teacher explicitly ask students to link textual ideas to their own lives? How?

B. In what ways does the teacher provide opportunities for students to make connections to their own lives?

1. Through verbal or written discourse.
2. Through small group or independent work.
3. Through homework assignments.

C. Does the teacher model the process of making connections to his/her own personal life?

III. Interpretive Communities

Does the teacher create an interpretive community in the classroom? How are multiple interpretations treated? (see reading awareness questions) How is the Torah

treated as a moral guide? (see meaning making questions) How are students inducted into the reading/interpretive process? (see reading in slow motion questions)

A. Are students given opportunities to ask questions of the text?

B. Are students encouraged to build on other students' comments? How?

C. Are traditional and modern commentaries used in the discussion process? If yes, how?

D. Does the teacher represent their text conversation as part of the larger conversation that has occurred over the last 2500 years in Jewish history? How?

IV. Dilemmas of Reading Holy Texts

How does the teacher treat dilemmas of reading Torah—a holy text—in the classroom?

A. Are the dilemmas of reading Torah introduced in the classroom by the teacher? (some examples include: role of God, authorship and origin of Torah, historical validity of Torah, role of miracles, science vs. faith, authority of commentaries)

B. How are these challenges handled by the teacher?

C. Does the teacher share his/her own personal understanding of a dilemma with the class?

D. When a student raises a dilemma of reading Torah, how is it handled?

E. Does the teacher encourage the students to speculate on their own insights into these dilemmas? If yes, how?

Follow-up Interview Protocol

A. Is this lesson typical of how students read and interpret texts and commentaries in the class?

B. If yes, in what ways is it typical?

C. If no, could you describe your typical practice for reading and interpreting texts?

D. If I came tomorrow, what might I see next in studying this text?

E. How much time is usually devoted to an interpretive task?

F. What source materials do you usually use? Could you tell me why you've chosen those materials?

G. What is your purpose in doing an interpretive task with the students?

H. What purposes do you think the students have for studying and interpreting texts? (probes: is it a moral guide, is it a grade?)

I. Are students in your class aware of strategies for reading and interpreting texts? Could you give me some examples.

J. If students raise dilemmas regarding the reading of the text, i.e., questions of authorship or its historical validity, how would you handle it?

K. Do you encourage multiple interpretations for text? How?

L. Do you encourage students to make connections to their own personal lives? How?

M. Do you ever try to represent their text conversation in class as part of the larger Jewish conversation that has lasted for over 2500 years? How?

APPENDIX G

COMPARISON OF EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUNDS

	COLLEGE DEGREE	GRAD/PROF. DEGREE	EDUCATION DEGREE	WORKED IN GENERAL ED.
CIJE SAMPLE	74%	29%	54%	51%
8 TEACHER SAMPLE	100%	62%	50%	26%

	CERTIFICATE IN JEWISH EDUCATION	DEGREE IN JEWISH STUDIES
CIJE SAMPLE	22%	17%
8 TEACHER SAMPLE	87%	72.5%

PRE-COLLEGIATE JEWISH EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND
BEFORE AGE 13

	NONE	1 DAY PER WEEK	2 DAYS OR MORE	SCHOOL IN ISRAEL OR DAY SCHOOL
CIJE SAMPLE	12%	25%	29%	33%
8TEACHER SAMPLE	0%	12.5%	37.5%	50%

AFTER AGE 13

	NONE	1 DAY PER WEEK	2 DAYS OR MORE	SCHOOL IN ISRAEL OR DAY SCHOOL
CIJE SAMPLE	32%	20%	13%	36%
8 TEACHER SAMPLE	0%	50%	12.5%	25%

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