EXPLORING THE CURRICULUM NARRATIVES
OF JEWISH DAY SCHOOL BIBLE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Exploring the Curriculum Narratives of Jewish Day School Bible Teachers

Pedagogical content knowledge is the knowledge that teachers have about how to teach a given subject. It is acquired through training and experience, but is also influenced by the personal beliefs of the teacher about how students learn, and how to achieve the goals of the curriculum. The pedagogical content knowledge of text teachers (of both secular and religious literature) includes their approaches to the text, also referred to as interpretive stances, or orientations.

The intent of this research is to explore how the personal and professional knowledge and beliefs of Jewish Day School Torah teachers inform their implementation of a written curriculum as reflected in their personal accounts of their own classroom practice. This study looks at the alignment of the teachers’ implementation of the formal curriculum with the explicit goals of that curriculum.

This is a qualitative narrative inquiry based upon interviews with six Jewish day school bible teachers from three different schools. The interviews are retold in sections according to themes that developed during the coding process. Implications for understanding the pedagogical content knowledge of the teachers within each theme are then summarized.

The study uncovered many aspects of the teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge, including how they view their students, what they understand to be the purpose of teaching Torah to young children, special issues involved in teaching an ancient Hebrew text to English speaking children, and the orientations that they use in their classrooms for approaching and interpreting the text. The study confirms that the teachers each have a rich reserve of pedagogical content knowledge, that the curriculum-in use does not always include the goals of the formal curriculum, and that an effective professional development program may exert great influence upon the participants.

This study continues the discussion about the pedagogical content knowledge of Jewish bible teachers. Sections from the teachers’ narratives and parts of the analysis may be useful to facilitators who are training pre-service or in-service bible teachers.

Keywords: Torah, Bible, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Orientations to Text, Jewish Day School Teachers
Dedication

This doctoral thesis is dedicated to my parents
Lorraine and Leo Pinsky
who have nurtured and supported my education with love and trust for 63 years.

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These past six and half years of doctoral schooling, research, and writing would not have been possible without the loving support of my husband, Jonathan Greenberg. Jonathan put up with me writing research papers on vacation time, and devotedly shopped, cooked, and cleaned up many meals so that my time could be spent studying and writing. He is the best life partner I could ever have hoped for.
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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The meaning of the term “curriculum” is not always clear. Does it refer to the content of a teachers’ guide? Is it the teacher’s goals for her students? Is it what the students have learned from the assignments and activities? To clarify this ambiguity, Shkedi (2009) suggests that from the teacher’s point of view, three phases of curriculum may be discerned: The formal curriculum has been written by the professional curriculum writers. The perceived curriculum is the teacher’s understanding of the formal curriculum. The curriculum-in-use is the report by the teacher about what actually happened in the classroom. Shkedi (2009) has studied the ways in which the curriculum changes from the written pages of the teachers’ guide to the application and implementation by the classroom teacher. He found that most teachers use the textbook, rather than the teachers’ guide, as their guiding text, and may deduce a rationale that is different from the professional curriculum writers’ intent. “Thus, in practice, teachers construct a new curriculum rationale which is not necessarily congruent with the writers’ intentions” (2009, p. 836), and which Shkedi terms the personal curriculum narrative.

Shkedi (1993, 1997, 2004, 2009) found that the personal curriculum narrative is influenced by the teacher’s assumptions, values, beliefs, and perceptions. The influence of moral and spiritual values on individual teachers pedagogy was also investigated by Gudmundsdottir (1990) in her case studies of expert teachers. She found that the personal curriculum of teachers includes their orientations to the texts in their field of expertise, and that teachers’ orientations are influenced by their values.

This study seeks to explore what teachers know about the process of teaching a foundational Jewish sacred text, the Torah, to children. The personal narratives elucidate how
teachers think about the process of teaching, and give us insight into their beliefs and approaches to the text. Therefore, this research studies how the curriculum narratives of bible teachers reveal their pedagogical content knowledge, with a specific focus on the teachers’ orientations to the text.

**Justification for the Research Problem**

The intent of this research is to explore how the personal and professional knowledge and beliefs of Jewish Day School Torah teachers inform their implementation of a written curriculum as reflected in their personal curriculum narratives. A written curriculum usually suggests themes, approaches, texts, and activities to guide the teacher. The teachers’ own pedagogical content knowledge and orientations toward bible may or may not be consistent with the curriculum they are asked to use. Gudmundsdottir (1990) found that the personal curriculum of teachers often conflicts with the textbooks they use. Moreover, studies have found that teachers often default to teach in the same ways in which they were taught (Dorph, 2007), and not necessarily in the ways advised by the curriculum guide or by research on current best practices. The problem, therefore, is that the curriculum-in-use may not reflect, and could possibly even conflict with, the intentions of the formal curriculum that the school has chosen in order to meet specific goals.

This study seeks to understand the ways in which the teachers’ beliefs (in terms of orientations to culturally valued texts), as reflected in the curriculum narrative may help us understand the transformation of the formal curriculum to the curriculum-in-use. This study expands and builds upon existing research that looks at the connection between teachers’ beliefs and curriculum in its various forms: formal, perceived, and in-use. In general education, Gudmundsdottir (1990) studied the ways in which beliefs and values influence a teacher’s choice
of orientations to their subject matter. In Jewish education, Dorph and Shkedi have studied issues of teachers’ beliefs and curriculum with Bible teachers in the United States and Israel, both in pre-service training and in the classroom.

Dorph (2007) studied 60 prospective Jewish educators to discover their content knowledge and beliefs about Torah and Torah instruction. She examined their foundational beliefs and concluded, as have others, that teachers tend to teach as they were taught when they were children, regardless of new beliefs and pedagogic approaches that they have been exposed to as adults (Dorph, p. 12). Shkedi (1993, 1997, 2004, 2009) has published numerous studies about teachers’ enactment of Judaic studies curriculum in Israel and the United States. The need for research in this area is documented by the changes that Shkedi finds take place as the teacher progresses from reading the formal curriculum, understanding it (perceived curriculum), and implementing it in the classroom (curriculum-in-use). After listening to personal curriculum narratives, Shkedi analyzed all of the changes that occurred during the teaching process (from formal/written to in-use/enacted curriculum) in light of the backgrounds and beliefs of the teachers. Both Dorph and Shkedi have shown that the curriculum-in-use is often guided more by the backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs of the teachers than by the formal curriculum they have been given.

**Deficiencies in the Evidence**

Other research into issues of Jewish day school bible instruction include the 1990 study by Melitz about the learning strategies and reading theories used in the Torah classroom, and Wohl’s 1999 study of how teachers of adolescents initiate their students into the “historical conversation” of bible with commentators and interpreters of the past and present. Chervin’s
1994 study *The Transformation of Personal Orientation to Pedagogical Orientation of Torah Teachers in Jewish Schools: Six Case Studies* focuses on the inter-relationship of the different ways in which teachers’ read biblical literature (personal orientation) and the ways that they teach biblical literature. Tanchel (2006) looks at issues that are similar to Chervin’s, but develops a self-study of her own orientations and pedagogical content knowledge as both a scholar and teacher of biblical literature.

Research into the beliefs of Jewish day school teachers include Reiss-Medwed’s study (2005) of female Talmud and Rabbinics teachers and Miller’s study (2005) of the impact of a new bible curriculum upon the beliefs of four day school teachers. Aldouby-Schuck (2008) compared the ways in which life experiences and beliefs shaped the classroom practice of Roman Catholic and Conservative Jewish high school bible teachers.

In the above mentioned studies the beliefs of the teachers were determined primarily by means of biographical interviews. Additionally, in the cases of Wohl (1999) and Chervin (1994), the researcher studied a morally challenging text individually with each participant. None of the studies sought to determine the pedagogical content knowledge of bible teachers, particularly their orientations, based upon curriculum narratives.

In discussing implications for further research, Chervin (1994) questioned if there are “other dimensions of orientations beyond those identified in the study” (p. 211). In fact, the framework of orientations to teaching bible that Holtz (2003) explores in *Textual Knowledge: Teaching the Bible in Theory and in Practice* had not yet been fully articulated at the time of Chervin’s study.

Gudmundsdottir (1990) examined beliefs and values as contributing factors to teachers’ orientations towards their subject matter. She calls for further research on the pedagogical
content knowledge of experienced teachers. Orientations to text is one part of the pedagogical content knowledge of bible teachers.

In the concluding pages of her dissertation Tanchel (2006) calls for more study of the pedagogical content knowledge of Tanakh teachers:

We need to learn more about how teachers’ understandings of the general contents of biblical books, central characters, concepts and themes, as well as their knowledge of methods of interpretation . . . all inform and shape their teaching. Education scholars need to learn more about teachers’ beliefs about the nature of knowledge in biblical studies, about the different methods necessary to read and to interpret biblical texts, and about the origins of the Bible. (p. 245)

In summary, the deficiencies that this study seeks to fill are: 1) consideration of the beliefs of Jewish day school Torah teachers as reflected in their pedagogical content knowledge and orientations to sacred text, 2) further insight into teachers’ usage of a formal written curriculum, and 3) teachers’ experiences of teaching culturally valued texts in a Jewish day school as reflected by their personal curriculum narratives.

Relating the Discussion to Audiences

This study should prove useful to educators who train, supervise and provide professional development for Torah teachers. Using qualitative investigation primarily by means of interviews, I learned about the beliefs of Torah teachers and the relationship of those beliefs to how they understand and implement a formal curriculum. In other words, the study looked at what teachers think and how they teach, based on their own reporting. The information gathered may help focus pre-service training and professional development on aspects of teacher practice that might need to be revised or strengthened. Reading and discussing the case studies of other
practitioners may raise the awareness of teachers concerning their own personal beliefs and reflective practice as recommended by Bacon (1993) and Tanchel (2006). As in the study by Buehl and Fives (2009), consideration of the results of this study “may afford university teacher educators, school-based mentors, and school administrators a better understanding of how these beliefs may influence practice” (p. 404). Having access to real-life stories of teachers making meaning of a written curriculum may assist teacher educators, mentors, and supervisors to help teachers implement curriculum in ways that remain faithful to the vision of the curriculum developers, while honoring the personal beliefs of the teachers.

In summary, there is a wide ranging potential audience for this study—including teachers, teacher educators, and researchers. Professional colleagues, including both classroom teachers and educators who are training and supervising Jewish day school bible teachers, will be able to use the findings of this study to further understand how teachers make meaning of their work as reflected in personal curriculum narratives. Teacher educators can use the personal curriculum narratives of experienced teachers to help less experienced teachers use written curriculum materials effectively. Jewish day school bible teachers may become more reflective practitioners by expressing and analyzing their own personal curriculum narratives and by uncovering their own pedagogical content knowledge, particularly beliefs and personal orientations to text. Finally, the personal curriculum narratives of the teachers will be of value to researchers in the areas of teaching culturally valued texts and the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers in religious schools.

**Significance of the Research Problem**

The study gives voice to teachers by listening to and re-telling their personal stories as related in their personal curriculum narratives. Pomson (1999) has called for more opportunities
for teachers in Jewish education to tell their stories. In describing his narrative study of teachers, he states several purposes that are also realized by this study:

1) to generate narratives authored by those who live and work in Jewish schools in order that we might ask in an informed fashion whether such accounts might serve as significant sources of insight into Jewish education” (p. 430)

2) to investigate what it might mean for those who live and work in Jewish schools to engage in a process of narrative self-inquiry . . . to understand how Jewish teachers experience the process of telling their stories and recounting their lives and work” (p.430-431)

3) “to facilitate informed speculation about how narratives authored by those who work in Jewish schools might be employed by their professional colleagues” (p. 431).

Bacon (1993) also found narrative case studies useful in teacher preparation as a tool to “help teachers confront their educational philosophy and personal theology” (p. 156). A case study provides the framework for discussion and reflection about teaching practice. Teachers can “examine their own beliefs by analyzing the beliefs and actions of others” (p. 159).

This study may be seen as a unique form of practitioner enquiry that combines two of the five traditions cited by Sinclair (2011). This study includes the tradition of self-study research, “. . . in which teachers explore their own practice. . .” (p. 918), although, in this case, the researcher has facilitated the teachers’ reflections by listening, restorying, and co-creating their narratives. This study also includes the tradition of participatory research since the participants will be using the curriculum for which the researcher is the overall project director and professional development facilitator. Sinclair (2011) has studied the role of practitioner enquiry in Jewish education and believes that “practitioner enquiry is a critical endeavor that not only
unites the worlds of research and practice, abut also has the chance to improve both research and practice simultaneously” (p. 917). Finally, Levisohn and Fendrick (2013) have recently noted the need for new studies to examine the practice of Jewish text teachers, and to share their stories.

The participants to be recruited for this study are teachers who are using the same curriculum as the teachers in Miller’s study (2005)—the MaToK Bible Curriculum. The current study takes place fifteen years after Miller’s research. The MaToK Bible Curriculum was originally written for schools affiliated with the Conservative movement of Judaism, and for a number of years it was used only in those schools. In 2016, however, the curriculum is used in schools from a variety of Jewish denominations and affiliations in North America (and one school in Europe).

In the introduction and overview to her thesis, Miller (2005) reviews the circumstances that led to the development of the MaToK Bible curriculum. Results from a questionnaire sent to principals of Jewish Day Schools affiliated with the Conservative movement found that a Bible curriculum written specifically for their schools was a high priority. Teachers were creating their own materials and many of those teachers were Israelis who, although well versed in Bible, did not know or understand the ideology and theology of the Conservative movement of Judaism:

After teaching for a number of years in a Schechter school, a teacher would necessarily have cobbled together her own “curriculum.” Since it was hers, it reflected her own background, knowledge, methodologies, philosophies, and beliefs. But the teacher was working in an American Conservative day school, a setting and ideology with which she had not grown up, and with which she was often only superficially familiar. Some teachers came from Orthodox backgrounds, and some from secular backgrounds, but there were few American Conservative Jews teaching Jewish studies in the schools.
Ironically, the approach of the Conservative movement was not an ingredient, let along the major influence, in the ways students learned to study Bible. (Miller, 2005, p. 23)

Miller wanted to assess the impact of a specific new curriculum upon the beliefs and practices of the teachers. This study examines the reverse relationship: How do the teachers’ religious beliefs and personal orientations to the text inform the ways in which the formal written curriculum is enacted in practice?

The significance of this research is that it builds upon Miller’s work by examining the teachers’ religious belief and orientations to the text. By uncovering and re-storying the personal curriculum narratives of teachers, we will better understand how the current cohort of MaToK bible teachers understand, make meaning from, and implement the formal curriculum.

**Research Question**

The primary research question is: How are teachers' orientations to culturally valued texts reflected in their curriculum narratives? Specifically, in the context of this study, we can rephrase this to ask: How are the orientations of Jewish day school Bible teachers to the sacred text of Torah reflected in their curriculum narratives?

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Maxwell (2005) cautions qualitative researchers that there are risks, as well as advantages of using existing theories. The two risks are: not using the theory enough, and “relying too heavily and uncritically on it” (p. 46). The first risk may lead the researcher to overlook insights that have already been articulated. The second risk can blind the researcher to new ways of conceptualizing the study or interpreting results. On the other hand, the advantage of structuring
one’s research on existing theory is expressed by Maxwell in the form of two metaphors: the “coat closet” and the “spotlight” (p. 43). The coat closet gives the researcher a way to fit data together by showing relationships to other data as they “hang” on “coat hooks” (p. 43) near each other in the closet. The spotlight illuminates what one sees. “It draws your attention to particular events or phenomena, and sheds light on relationships that might otherwise go unnoticed or misunderstood” (p.43). This research will be illuminated by theories about the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers, with particular emphasis on orientations to a culturally valued text. “Theory is a statement about what is going on with the phenomena that you want to understand” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 42). In order to reach that understanding, the theories will serve as a scaffolding to help categorize and analyze data. The theories will not be used to judge or evaluate the participants regarding the quality or effectiveness of their pedagogical content knowledge and orientations.

The researcher interviewed the teacher-participants in order for them to examine their own beliefs about how Torah should be taught, the purpose of Torah instruction for children, and how one makes meaning from the Torah text. The teachers also reflected on their personal backgrounds as students and teachers of Torah, and on the ways in which their beliefs may have changed through different stages of their lives.

**Pedagogical content knowledge theory.** In addition to the religious beliefs and values of Jewish day school Torah teachers, examples of their specific knowledge about how to teach bible were uncovered in their personal curriculum narratives. Knowledge of the appropriate pedagogy to use for a specific discipline is called *pedagogical content knowledge*. Shulman developed his theory of pedagogical content knowledge in two seminal articles in 1986 and 1987. In his research at that time, Shulman and his colleagues were attempting to rectify an imbalance
in the research of the previous century that had focused on what teachers did in their classrooms, as opposed to what they knew about the subject matter and how to teach it. Some of their research questions for looking at how both novice and experienced teachers develop in their craft included:

When this novice teacher confronts flawed or muddled textbook chapters or befuddled students, how does he or she employ content expertise to generate new explanations, representations, or clarifications? What are the sources of analogies, metaphors, examples, demonstrations, and rephrasing’s? How does the novice teacher (or even the seasoned veteran) draw on expertise in the subject matter in the process of teaching? What pedagogical prices are paid when the teacher’s subject matter competence is itself compromised by deficiencies of prior education or ability? (Shulman, 1986, p. 8)

As Shulman and his colleagues further researched teacher knowledge, they realized that a “more coherent theoretical framework” (p. 9) was needed to “probe the complexities of teacher understanding and transmission of a content knowledge” (p. 9). New questions arose, such as:

What are the domains and categories of content knowledge in the minds of teachers? How, for example, are content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge related? In which forms are the domains and categories of knowledge represented in the minds of teachers? What are promising ways of enhancing acquisition and development of such knowledge? . . . How might we think about the knowledge that grows in the minds of teachers, with special emphasis on content? (p. 9).

Shulman then extended the category of content knowledge—the knowledge of the discipline that the teacher possesses—to the theory that a second kind of content knowledge exists, as well. Pedagogical content knowledge refers to the subject matter knowledge and how
to teach that knowledge to students. Pedagogical content knowledge refers to illustrations, demonstrations, analogies, etc., employed in the classroom as ways to represent and formulate the subject matter so that it is comprehensible to the students. The pedagogical content knowledge of teachers includes an understanding of the difficulties in learning the discipline, which may be the result of students’ preconceptions and misconceptions. This special knowledge of how to teach subject content includes the knowledge of which strategies to use when, and with which students.

Shulman’s 1987 paper addressed the issue of school reform and presented his argument that “an elaborate knowledge base for teaching” (p. 7) exists. Among the seven types of knowledge that Shulman included, pedagogical content knowledge once again appears and is defined as: “that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding” (p. 8).

Shulman presents a model of pedagogical reasoning and action (Appendix A) that is based upon research on the teaching knowledge of several dozen teachers over the course of three years. The model presents a process that begins with the teacher’s initial comprehension of the subject matter and its purposes and ends with the new comprehension resulting from the learning experience of teaching. In between the initial comprehension and the new comprehension, the teacher will transform, instruct, evaluate, and reflect upon the structures, purposes, and ideas in the subject matter.

Of particular interest to the proposed research is the work of Gudmundsdottir (1990) on Values in Pedagogical Content Knowledge. Gudmundsdottir studied four high school teachers and found that their values were an integral part of their teaching and of their pedagogical content knowledge. She concluded that moral and spiritual values do influence pedagogy.
Ball (2000) has applied the theory of pedagogical content knowledge in her studies of math education and agrees with Shulman that “Content knowledge is immensely important to teaching and its improvement” (p. 404). She argues for the need to map and measure pedagogical content knowledge for the purpose of knowing more about the components of effective teaching. Ball has further refined our understanding of pedagogical content knowledge by showing that it has three distinct parts: Knowledge of content and students (KCS), Knowledge of content and teaching (KCT), and Knowledge of content and curriculum (KCC). Grossman (2000) uses the pedagogical content knowledge theory to analyze the teaching of six high school English teachers, three of whom had formal training in schools of education, and three who did not. She shows that the two groups made different kinds of content and strategy decisions based upon their backgrounds. Since the theory has been applied to the study of science and social studies teachers as well, its application to the field of bible education is also appropriate.

This theory is well suited to a narrative qualitative study. As each teacher’s story of his or her personal curriculum narrative is told, we uncover their beliefs, values, and knowledge about the subject matter as well as personal pedagogical strategies and understandings. The categories and language used to describe the approaches to sacred text, as well as Shulman’s model of pedagogical reasoning and action was helpful to the researcher when coding and analyzing the personal curriculum narratives of the study participants. The model provides key words and categories of thinking which guided the researcher.
Positionality Statement

Positionality refers to the biases, attitudes, and experiences that are integral to the researcher as a person. We position ourselves in the world based upon our demographic characteristics as well as our personal experiences. Each individual has created a unique reality based upon his or her positionality, and from this reality flow our ideas and our understandings of the world. How can a researcher control for the biases that are inherent in positionality? Machi and McEvoy (2009) advise that the researcher, by “rationally identifying and confronting these views . . . can control personal bias, opinion, and preferred outcome, and can become open minded, skeptical, and considerate of research data” (p. 19). The researcher must reflect deeply upon her positionality before beginning her research, so that she fully understands: where she is coming from; what biases and attitudes she brings with her that might influence how she frames research questions; the ways in which she interacts with research subjects; and the interpretation of the data she collects.

The researcher should consider both her culture and the culture of her research subjects in reflecting upon positionality. She must consider the ways in which their shared or different cultures might influence her thoughts and behaviors during the research.

Demographically, there are similarities and differences between the researcher and the research participants in terms of culture, ethnicity, and age. We have a shared culture of knowing what it is like to be a Jewish day school bible educator in North America. But Briscoe (2005) cautions that “being part of the group studied does not necessarily mean that one is free from biases” (p. 37).

A significant difference is that the researcher has also been an administrator in a Jewish day school. This positions me in terms of what I am trained to look for in a classroom, to listen to
in a teacher’s narrative, and in terms of how the participants may respond to me, perhaps wanting to show their “best side” to the researcher instead of being honest about struggles and challenges that they face. Although we share the same religion, which is part of culture, we do not necessarily share the same level of observance, world view, or the way in which we understand and interpret the biblical texts. Awareness of this aspect of my positionality in relation to the research participants was necessary in order for me to remain neutral, non-judgmental, and purely descriptive.

In addition to career and setting, there are generational differences that the researcher anticipated. Teachers who were born after 1980 grew up in a culture of technology, multiculturalism, and religious pluralism that I did not experience. Their pre-service experiences, both course work and supervised teaching, were most likely different from my own pre-service training. However, those generational differences were not as pronounced, since all of the study participants were born between 1950 and 1963. I had planned to acknowledge the generational differences between myself and the participants by considering them as peers and educators co-researching with me, rather than labeling them as less experienced, younger teachers who are at a different stage of their careers than I am. The teachers were, however, all in the middle or towards the end of their career. The positionality challenge therefore, was for the researcher not to identify strongly with the teachers, who were all within 13 years of my age.

Positionality “is greatly influenced by the pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations the individual perceives and experiences” (Carlton Parsons, 2008, p. 1129) within the immediate and surrounding environments. In this regard, my positionality includes that I consider myself a senior, experienced Jewish day school educator. I have taught bible and have supervised and evaluated Jewish day school bible teachers. I am the project director and
professional development leader for the specific bible curriculum used by these teachers. These are personal attributes that could contribute to bias in research unless I confront my positionality. It is critical to step back from my own involvement with the curriculum to reduce bias. I must not judge the teachers’ perceived or personal curriculum narratives in terms of what I believe to be the intent of the formal written curriculum. In fact, this research has the potential of making me a better leader of professional development for bible teachers after I reach an understanding of how teachers interact with, interpret, and implement the formal curriculum.

In addition to cultural and demographic differences or inequalities between researchers and subjects, one must also consider the role of privilege in positionality. This refers to the researcher’s socio-economic, educational, or political position that is superior to that of the subjects. The researcher is innately “other,” and has a privileged position due to her role as an academic (Briscoe, 2005, p. 32). My background as a former day school administrator and supervisor of teachers, as well as the project director of the curriculum used by the participants, puts me in a privileged position. Briscoe (2005) raises an important question that helped me frame my intended research from a different perspective. She asks whether the researcher approaches the research subjects as objects about whom to assume a position as an expert, or “does the scholar approach a person or persons as co-participants in an effort to learn about, make sense, and teach others about their experiences?” (pp. 37-38). I attempted to neutralize my “other-ness” during the research by building relationships with the participants, and encouraging them to see themselves as co-researchers in the project. Presenting my research plan in this manner, as co-participants, to the study participants hopefully helped to shorten the distance between us, and made the invitation to participate less threatening.
Briscoe (2005) warns that “observations and consequent representations of the other by the privileged are suspect for two reasons” (p. 26). The first concern is that subjects will not behave in their ordinary day-to-day patterns when the observer/researcher is present, especially if they perceive that there is an imbalance of power. “This participant self-censorship of actions and words presents a skewed picture to the researcher” (p. 25). As a result, the interpretation of the experience by the researcher may be flawed, and may not reflect the daily reality of what usually transpires in the classroom. The second concern questions the researcher’s ability to interpret correctly “even when participants are open and the researcher is striving to view a situation without preconceptions” (p. 25). Regardless of all of the reflection and consideration of positionality, the researcher as observer still occupies the vantage point of an outsider.

I bring attitudes, perspectives and biases related to my previous experience as a Jewish day school teacher and administrator. One of my responsibilities as a researcher was to suspend judgment while collecting and interpreting data. My role was not to evaluate teachers, but rather to listen to their stories in order to understand the specific beliefs that they hold, and the ways in which those beliefs influence their practice and are manifested in their personal curriculum narratives. My previous experiences discussing classroom practice have not been for research purposes, but rather for giving feedback to teachers and evaluating them.

How then, did I attempt to maintain an objective and neutral position while at the same time acknowledging my biases? I used the methodology of qualitative research, which Briscoe describes as a method “in which the other is treated as a ‘you’ rather than as an object” (p. 34), thus providing a means for the researcher to develop theories and understandings that will include the viewpoints of the research subjects. I took the time to try to establish a relationship of trust with the proposed participants during my initial sessions with them. I asked open ended
questions that gave the participants the opportunity to explain their actions and ideas in their own words, and allowed them as much time as they needed. I took a step back from my own involvement with the curriculum to reduce potential bias, and did not judge the teachers’ perceived or personal curriculum narratives in terms of what I believe to be the intent of the formal written curriculum. Proactively, I sought to preserve my neutral position as a researcher by asking colleagues to review my research questions to look for bias, and I pre-tested the research questions with two teachers who were not participating in the study before I refined the interview protocol for the final data collection.

In this section, I have described specific characteristics of the researcher and the research participants in order to explore the issue of positionality. By examining my own attitudes and biases, I strived to conduct research in a manner that took my own positionality into consideration. Hopefully, this has led to more accurate collection and interpretation of data.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter has provided an overview of the research topic, including its significance and potential audiences. The theoretical framework has been explained. Chapter Two explores the research literature about theories of teacher knowledge, including personal practical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Within pedagogical content knowledge, studies related to general beliefs, religious beliefs, and the beliefs of teachers of culturally valued texts will be considered. This will include a discussion of orientations to teaching bible. The methodology for this research project is explained in Chapter Three, while Chapter Four introduces the teachers and their narratives, and considers what we have learned about their pedagogical content knowledge. Chapter Five will conclude with the analysis and interpretation
of the data. Chapter Five will also review how all of the previous chapters have figured into the interpretation of what was learned from the study, consideration of the implications of this study for educators of culturally valued or sacred texts, and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER TWO: The Knowledge and Beliefs of Teachers

Introduction

The study explores the ways in which the beliefs of Jewish Day School Torah teachers inform their implementation of a written curriculum as reflected in their personal curriculum narratives. Beliefs are one of the many elements that compose a teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge. The two kinds of beliefs to be explored focus on the teachers’ conception of what “works” in a classroom, and the teachers’ orientations—the way the individual approaches a culturally-relevant or sacred text. This literature review will situate those beliefs within the larger realm of teacher knowledge and teaching knowledge, and specifically as part of the pedagogical content knowledge of the teachers.

Teaching and the Nature of Knowledge

In order to understand the milieu into which Shulman posited his theory of pedagogical content knowledge in the 1980’s, this review will first look at the contemporaneous literature on teaching knowledge. Buchmann (1987) distinguished between “teachers’ knowledge” and “teaching knowledge” by noting that the former “implies that what is known is special to teachers as a group” (p. 152) while the latter considers “knowledge related to the activities of teaching” (p. 152). Teaching knowledge is further divided into four interdependent categories, each with its own focus. While three of the categories—folkways of teaching, local mores, and private views—highlight the sources of teaching knowledge, the fourth category—teaching expertise—examines the quality of the knowledge. Teaching expertise includes: “(1) judgments of appropriateness, testing of consequences, and consideration of ends, not just means; and (2)
less typical modes of practice, such as explanation, discussion and the deliberate management of value dilemmas by the teacher” (p. 154).

Folkways of teaching do not give priority to inquiry or conceptual understanding and they may perpetuate the status quo of the classroom, which often includes more time spent on the control and management of students than on explanations and discussions. Buchmann (1987) further claims that folkways of teaching will not change if educational reforms remain ideological rather than offering concrete and specific actions to replace those born of folkway knowledge.

Elbaz (1981) and Clandinin (1985) use the terms *teachers’ practical knowledge* and *personal practical knowledge* respectively, to denote the special kind of knowledge employed by teachers in the classroom that includes their personal backgrounds and beliefs as well as their subject matter knowledge. Each researcher examined one teacher in depth by means of interviews and observations. In the decades before their research, the 1960s and 1970s, the view of the teacher as an instrument had become popular: “she is a cog in the educational machine and one which often seems to fall below the quality-controlled standards of the whole” (Elbaz, 1981, p. 45). Elbaz joined her voice to other researchers who had been moving away from previous conceptions that viewed teachers from a negative stance and in a fragmented way. She offered a new view against the prevailing concept of “the teacher as a passive transmitter of knowledge” (p. 43) which she believed to be wrong and misleading. Elbaz’s research elaborated upon the conception of teachers’ practical knowledge with a focus on the experiential aspects of the knowledge. This new focus was contrary to the prevailing views of knowledge as “analytical” and “empirical”, and that placed a relatively low value on experiential knowledge.
Clandinin (1985) explored images used in the teacher’s narrative that serve as metaphorical structures embodying the human understanding and experience that compose the teacher’s personal practical knowledge. One of Clandinin’s goals was to further recognize and explain teachers’ personal practical knowledge as a means of “enhancing their professional status” (p. 71). By studying and describing personal practical knowledge, Clandinin hoped to make curriculum writers, professional development leaders, and school reformers appreciate that teachers, as professionals, possess a unique body of knowledge.

Practical knowledge is the added element that transforms the written curriculum into the enacted classroom discussions and activities. It is important to study this knowledge since “It is apparent that teachers are ultimately the people whose task it is to translate theoretical notions into practice” (Elbaz, p. 43). Clandinin (1985) agrees with Elbaz about the influence that personal practical knowledge exerts upon a teacher’s practice, stating that it “actively carries our being into interaction with classroom events” (p. 93). Furthermore, Clandinin notes that personal practical knowledge “is an emotional and moral knowledge” (p. 93) that is “intimately connected with the personal and professional narratives of our lives” (p. 93).

Fenstermacher begins his 1994 review of studies about research on the nature of teaching knowledge by noting the existence of a “growing research literature on the knowledge that teachers generate as a result of their experience as teachers, in contrast to the knowledge of teaching that is generated by those who specialize in research on teaching” (p. 3). He restricts his examination to the epistemological aspects of recent studies; that is--the features of the research that deal with the nature of knowledge. Like Clandinin and Elbaz, one of his goals is to inform educational policy and school reform by deepening the understanding of teaching practice.
Fenstermacher organizes his discussion of the literature into categories built around four questions:

1. What is known about effective teaching?
2. What do teachers know?
3. What knowledge is essential for teaching?

Research related to the first question—What is known about effective teaching?—seeks to produce knowledge about teaching, rather than teacher knowledge. These studies use conventional scientific methods and are designed “to yield a commonly accepted degree of significance, validity, generalizability, and intersubjectivity” (p. 8). In contrast, research designed to answer the second question—What do teachers know?—assumes that as a result of experience and training teachers know a great deal. The above mentioned works of Clandinin and Elbaz fall into this category. Research of practical knowledge does not study what is effective by means of traditional scientific research, but rather tells the stories of individual teachers while trying to understand “how they think about their own work and what knowledge they use as a basis for their actions” (Fenstermacher, 1994, p. 10).

Another strand of research about the question “What do teachers’ know?” is based upon the concept of reflective practice as developed by Schön (1991). Unlike the observer status of researchers like Elbaz and Clandinin, reflective practice “is developed from participating in and reflecting on action and experience” (Fenstermacher, 1994, p. 12). Researchers using reflective practice have different assumptions, methods, and outcomes from those in the Elbaz/Clandinin camp. For example, the latter’s methodology relies heavily on the teachers’ narratives of what took place. In contrast, reflective practice studies uncover teacher knowledge by analysis of the
actions of the teachers in the course of their teaching experiences. Reflective practice studies are more concerned with how knowledge is constructed within the context of action, as opposed to the practical knowledge studies that rely upon teachers’ narratives.

Fenstermacher’s third category of research into teaching and teacher knowledge is based upon the question “What knowledge is essential for teaching?” This category is addressed in greater detail in the following section about pedagogical content knowledge.

Regarding the fourth question, “Who produces our knowledge about teachers and teaching?” Fenstermacher notes that in the past thirty years there has been an increasing amount of research by teachers about their own practice, in contrast to previous research about teachers that was traditionally limited to university professors. There is a “tight connection between the form of inquiry one uses and the type of knowledge one produces” (Fenstermacher, 1994, p. 18). Whereas formal and practical knowledge are the focal concepts in the previous paragraphs, formal and practical inquiry become important when looking at the differences in types of studies about teacher and teaching knowledge.

Fenstermacher further differentiates between the epistemological categories of performance knowledge and propositional knowledge, where performance knowledge connotes knowing how and propositional knowledge connotes knowing that. Although similar, Fenstermacher cautions, they are not identical with practical knowledge and formal knowledge. Teachers’ practical knowledge is more than knowing how. It is a concept that focuses “on the mental lives of teachers, their thinking, ruminations, purposes, planning, desires, and a host of other features of what Dewey called ‘lived experience’” (Fenstermacher, 1994, p. 36).
Fenstermacher concludes his review of knowledge in research on teaching by noting the metacognitive significance of the results: “Teacher knowledge research is not for researchers to know what teachers know but for teachers to know what they know” (p. 50).

The next section will describe how Shulman further defined and explicated teachers’ practical knowledge by introducing the concept of pedagogical content knowledge.

**Pedagogical content knowledge**

Pedagogical content knowledge denotes knowledge of the appropriate pedagogy to use for a specific discipline. Shulman developed his theory of pedagogical content knowledge in two seminal articles in 1986 and 1987. In his research at that time, Shulman and his colleagues were attempting to rectify an imbalance in the research of the previous century that had focused on what teachers did in their classrooms, as opposed to what they knew about the subject matter and how to teach it. Some of their research questions for looking at how both novice and experienced teachers develop in their craft included:

When this novice teacher confronts flawed or muddled textbook chapters or befuddled students, how does he or she employ content expertise to generate new explanations, representations, or clarifications? What are the sources of analogies, metaphors, examples, demonstrations, and rephrasings? How does the novice teacher (or even the seasoned veteran) draw on expertise in the subject matter in the process of teaching? What pedagogical prices are paid when the teacher’s subject matter competence is itself compromised by deficiencies of prior education or ability? (Shulman, 1986, p. 8)
As Shulman and his colleagues further researched teacher knowledge, they realized that a “more coherent theoretical framework” (p. 9) was needed to “probe the complexities of teacher understanding and transmission of a content knowledge” (p. 9). New questions arose, such as:

- What are the domains and categories of content knowledge in the minds of teachers?
- How, for example, are content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge related?
- In which forms are the domains and categories of knowledge represented in the minds of teachers? What are promising ways of enhancing acquisition and development of such knowledge? . . . How might we think about the knowledge that grows in the minds of teachers, with special emphasis on content? (p. 9)

Shulman then extended the category of content knowledge—the knowledge of the discipline that the teacher possesses—to the theory that a second kind of content knowledge exists, as well. Pedagogical content knowledge refers to the subject matter knowledge and how to teach that knowledge to students. Pedagogical content knowledge refers to illustrations, demonstrations, analogies, etc., that are employed in the classroom as ways to represent and formulate the subject matter so that it is comprehensible to the students. The pedagogical content knowledge of teachers includes an understanding of the difficulties in learning the discipline, which may be the result of students’ preconceptions and misconceptions. Pedagogical content knowledge includes the knowledge of which strategies to use when, and with which students.

Shulman’s 1987 paper addressed the issue of school reform and presented his argument that “an elaborate knowledge base for teaching” exists. Among the seven types of knowledge that Shulman included, pedagogical content knowledge once again appears and is defined as: “that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding” (p. 8).
Shulman presents a model of pedagogical reasoning and action (Appendix A) that is based upon research about the teaching knowledge of several dozen teachers over the course of three years. The model presents a process that begins with the teacher’s initial comprehension of the subject matter and its purposes, and ends with new comprehension resulting from the learning experience of teaching. In between the initial comprehension and the new comprehension, the teacher will transform, instruct, evaluate, and reflect upon the structures, purposes, and ideas in the subject matter.

Ball (2008) applied the theory of pedagogical content knowledge in her studies of math education and agrees with Shulman that “content knowledge is immensely important to teaching and its improvement” (p. 404). She argues for the need to map and measure pedagogical content knowledge for the purpose of knowing more about the components of effective teaching. Ball has further refined our understanding of pedagogical content knowledge by showing that it has four distinct parts: common content knowledge (CCK), specialized content knowledge (SCK), knowledge of content and students (KCS), and knowledge of content and teaching (KCT).

Grossman (1991) uses the pedagogical content knowledge theory to analyze the teaching of six high school English teachers, three of whom had formal training in schools of education, and three who did not. She shows that the two groups made different kinds of content and strategy decisions based upon their backgrounds. Grossman (Grossman & Schoenfeld, 2005) points out that the research on teachers’ knowledge of subject matter suggests that “knowing the big ideas and deep structures of the discipline” (p. 210) is more powerful preparation for teaching than simply knowing facts within a subject. She therefore argues for “the centrality of pedagogical content knowledge in the teacher education curriculum” (p. 202). Grossman developed the theory of orientations to literature as part of the pedagogical content knowledge of
language arts teachers. Orientations will be further discussed in the section of this review about orientations to teaching text.

Of particular interest to the proposed research is the work of Gudmundsdottir (1990) on Values in Pedagogical Content Knowledge. Gudmundsdottir studied four high school teachers and found that their values were an integral part of their teaching and of their pedagogical content knowledge. She concluded that moral and spiritual values do influence pedagogy. Moreover, Gudmundsdottir’s work may serve to link findings about teachers’ religious values and beliefs with their orientations to text as part of their overall pedagogical content knowledge.

Two of the components of pedagogical content knowledge that will be reviewed in more detail in the next two sections are teachers’ beliefs and orientations to text.

**Teachers’ Beliefs**

**Introduction.** Beliefs are part of a teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge and, like values, “are interconnected in practice” (Court, 1991, p. 391). Teachers’ beliefs are described as “tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught,” (Kagan, 1992, p. 65). Other researchers may refer to them as perspectives, personal epistemologies, principles of practice, or orientations. The term teacher beliefs, when used in educational research, refers specifically to the educational beliefs of teachers. Educational beliefs fall into the following main categories: content or domain specific (subject matter); teacher efficacy, self-efficacy, and self-concept (self as teacher); students as learners (the learning process); and epistemological beliefs (the foundations, validity, and scope of knowledge).
The studies and theories of Shulman (1987) and Nespor (1987) in the 1980s influenced research about teachers’ beliefs, which was a nascent field of study at that time. Shulman developed the concept of pedagogic content knowledge. The knowledge base of teachers often contains misconceptions, which may also be interpreted as erroneous beliefs. Nespor developed interview methodology for assessing teachers’ beliefs. He used research in cognitive psychology to understand the role of beliefs in teachers’ thinking. Nespor maintained that a model of belief systems could serve as a framework for comparative and systematic research on teaching.

In 1992, Pajares defined the problems that had limited the research on teacher beliefs over the previous twenty years and recommended changes in order for teachers’ beliefs to become an important research focus. In recent years, studies have investigated the four main categories of teachers’ beliefs: content or domain specific (subject matter); teacher efficacy, self-efficacy, and self-concept (self as teacher); students as learners (the learning process); and epistemological beliefs (the foundations, validity, and scope of knowledge) (Pajares, p. 316; Borg, 2001, p. 187). Research on teachers’ beliefs is found in a wide range of journals, including those devoted to teaching and teacher education, educational psychology, educational research, curriculum studies, and educational policy.

The studies on teachers’ beliefs cover a wide range of issues that are important to 21st-century education. Teacher collaboration (Vaino, Holbrook, & Rannikmäe, 2013), curriculum development and implementation (Southerland, 2003), understanding diverse populations (Subedi, 2006), the correlations between teachers’ beliefs and practice (Baurain, 2012; Beyer & Davis, 2008; Brickhouse & Bodner, 1992; Stemhagen, 2011; Wiebe Berry, 2006), and the preparation of new teachers (S. A. An, T. Ma, & M. M. Capraro, 2011; Caudle & Moran, 2012) are all fields of education that may benefit from research on teachers’ beliefs. Most of these
studies therefore fulfill the admonition of Mohrman and Lawler (2012) that “to achieve relevance, researchers need to work with and learn from practitioners, and they need to spend time in organizations gathering data” (p. 41).

Research in teachers’ beliefs appears to be in the stage of intermediate theory as defined by Edmondson and McManus (2007). Building on the theories of Shulman and Nespor from the 1980s, and making periodic course adjustments after critiques of the field by Pajares in 1992 and Fang in 1996, the research today is both qualitative and quantitative. Relationships are being proposed between new and established constructs, and the data analyses include both content coding of narratives and exploratory statistics of facts and correlations. Identifying “new relationships among variables” (Edmondson & McManus, 2007, p. 1167), another characteristic of intermediate theory, can be seen particularly in the study of An, Ma, & Capraro (2011), which brings together a variety of elements that do not occur all together in any of the other studies. These elements include measuring teacher beliefs, measuring change in teacher beliefs, and measuring the effect of the change on other aspects of practice.

In the introduction to their study of epistemic beliefs of teachers, Buehl and Fives (2009) mention some “underexplored aspects of teachers’ belief systems” (p. 367). Research on epistemic beliefs extant at the time of their research focused mainly on student, not teacher, beliefs. They express the need for more “insight into teachers’ beliefs and their role in relation to teacher practices and development” (p. 368). Teacher beliefs about the sources of knowledge are even more complex when the literature is a sacred text, since the teacher’s understanding of the divine authority and origin of the text are beliefs that are intertwined with beliefs about the source and validity of knowledge in general. In several studies cited by Buehl and Fives (e.g. Hofer, 200, 2004; Schraw et al., 2002; Wood & Kardashian, 2002), “beliefs about the source of
knowledge are conceptualized along a continuum” (p. 371). One end of the continuum is the belief that knowledge originates with and is conveyed by authority figures, while at the other end knowledge is “actively constructed by the individual learner on the basis of . . . personal experience and reason” (p. 371).

**Beliefs and knowledge—sources and distinctions.** The use of multiple overlapping terms, such as: principles of practice, perspectives, teachers’ conceptions, practical knowledge, personal knowledge, teachers’ teaching criteria, and personal construct/theories/epistemologies, has caused such great confusion that it is difficult to draw the line of where knowledge ends and belief begins. With such confusion, a look at the distinction between beliefs and knowledge is appropriate.

Pajares (1992), who encourages clarification of the terminology in order to improve the research on teacher beliefs, simplifies the matter by stating: “Belief is based on evaluation and judgment; knowledge is based on objective fact” (p. 313). An individual’s belief system, according to Pajares, is composed of one’s beliefs, attitudes, and values. Beliefs are “static and represent eternal truths that remain unchanged in a teacher’s mind regardless of the situation” (p. 312). Knowledge, on the other hand, “is fluid and evolves as new experiences are interpreted and integrated into existing schemata” (p. 312).

Orton (1996) says that the pragmatist understands knowledge as beliefs that have survived to be passed from one generation to the next. Knowledge is therefore genetic and evolutionary. Knowledge “evolves by better helping the human being deal with his/her situation” (p. 137). The “situation” may be a problem, or the intellectual or historical milieu of the individual.
A specific sub-set of teacher beliefs involves beliefs about the origin of knowledge. In a theoretical discussion of teacher beliefs about the source of knowledge, Shulman (1987) emphasizes external sources. These include scholarship and research in the content disciplines, schooling, teaching, human development, and “the wisdom of practice”—the knowledge passed on by previous and current practitioners.

In addition to Shulman’s external sources, Buehl and Fives (2009) consider interpersonal and internal sources of belief among the sources of teaching knowledge. Six themes emerge in their investigation of this category of beliefs: observational learning, informal education, enactive experiences, self-reflection, collaboration with others, and formal bodies of knowledge.

The importance and challenges of studying beliefs. Developing, measuring, and understanding teacher beliefs is challenging for a variety of reasons. Beliefs are connected to vivid and emotional personal experiences. They are not always objectively reasonable, and they can be persistent—even in the face of contrary evidence. Teacher beliefs are formed early in life, and are often based upon the experience of being a student. Having passed through the education system personally, prospective teachers have absorbed the beliefs and practices of their own teachers. They may then perpetuate unproductive ways of teaching by reproducing their own experience. Even after taking pre-service courses based on the research and theory of pedagogy, teachers may express the desired beliefs, but may behave contrary to those same beliefs when placed in the classroom. Other pre-service teachers hold onto the same beliefs they had before they entered higher education, apparently not influenced by reading the educational research (G. Dorph, 2010).

Since beliefs are not always challenged and articulated, researchers need to infer or uncover teachers’ beliefs. One researcher (Kim, 2011) developed a method of eliciting teachers’
beliefs and helping to make them explicit by looking at metaphors about learning. These
metaphors “provided useful insight into their personal interpretation of what they believed about
learning and teaching since they reflect their personal philosophies--ones which they have
developed through expectations in different situations” (p. 141).

Overview of the research. Many studies of teacher beliefs focus on the measurement
and evaluation of beliefs before and after teacher education programs. Pajares reviews literature
from 1960-1992 in his article Teachers' Beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning up a Messy
Construct (1992). This meta-analysis argues that although the study of teacher beliefs should
remain a focus for educational research, “clear conceptualizations, careful examination of key
assumptions, consistent understandings and adherence to precise meanings, and proper
assessment and investigation of specific belief constructs” (p. 307) are required.

Eleven years after Pajares’ article, Tatto and Coupland (2003) reviewed studies dealing
with interventions to change teacher beliefs. In addition to the “messy construct” that Pajares
found in 1992, the 2003 meta-analysis points out additional areas of concern in teacher beliefs
research. Tatto and Coupland (2003) concentrate on three issues that they regard most relevant:
“(a) the theoretical basis for the kind of belief change that is currently seen as important in
reformed teacher education; (b) the current approaches used to measure belief change in teachers
as a result of a given intervention; (c) the degree to which current measurements indeed capture
the kinds of belief change advocated by teacher education reform” (p. 124). The beliefs
examined include domain-specific beliefs towards subject matter and content, and beliefs about
student learning. Tatto and Coupland also discuss findings about beliefs that specifically
influence teachers’ thinking. The interventions designed to change teacher beliefs in the various
studies include discrete courses, reflective strategies, and “more holistic attempts, such as teacher preparation programs” (p. 146).

Tatto and Coupland’s (2003) critique includes the observation that “there seems to be a sense that belief change among teacher candidates is a self-justifiable activity” (p. 147), and yet little or no evidence is provided in the studies to prove this justification. Surprisingly, only one study looks at the outcomes on teaching practice, and none document outcomes in terms of student learning.

Change is a major topic of discussion in the studies of teacher beliefs, on the assumption that change in belief will lead to change/improvement in instructional practice, which in turn will affect student learning outcomes. Tatto and Coupland (2003) found four theoretical elements regarding belief change. The various studies assume that beliefs will change if the educational training provided to teachers includes improvement in quality and quantity of the following:

i. Experience as students in the classroom and practitioners in the field
ii. Opportunities to reflect upon one’s practice, either individually or with peers
iii. Facing challenges and new situations within a secure environment in order to lead to greater self-understanding
iv. Theoretical and applied knowledge about teaching, learning, student diversity, curriculum, pedagogy, and subject matter.

Tatto and Coupland (2003) also review the various tools for collecting qualitative and quantitative data that have been used in teacher belief studies. These include observations, interviews, surveys, and questionnaires. Some of the tools used were existing scales for measuring self-efficacy and attitudes towards a specific subject. The authors did not find the measurement tools and techniques to be adequately comprehensive. They recommend including
findings from multiple instruments both before and after the intervention—preferably over a longer period of time and with larger groups of subjects in order for the research to be valid. Tatto and Coupland offer that their most important conclusion “is the need to develop more rigorous and programmatic studies of belief change in teacher preparation programs” (p. 159).

Both general and domain specific teacher beliefs are studied in the research literature of the past few decades. Domain specific studies include the research of Yun-Jo and Reigeluth (2002) that examines K-12 teachers’ beliefs and perceptions, among other factors, in creating learner-centered, technology enhanced classrooms, and Kim’s (2011) study of native English speaking teachers of non-native students. The latter study investigates the sources of teachers’ beliefs, their beliefs about learning and teaching, and their beliefs about teacher roles in the second language classroom. Kim’s qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with eight teachers, while Yun-Jo and Reigeluth used an on-line survey of 126 teachers. Another domain specific study (Bates, A. B., Kim, J., & Latham, N., 2011) looked at the link between math teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs and their classroom performance. This quantitative study of 89 early childhood pre-service teachers used several existing scales of math self-efficacy.

Roache and Lewis’s (2011) study, Teachers’ Views on the Impact of Classroom Management on Student Responsibility, looked at the beliefs of over 500 teachers. Based upon questionnaire responses, Roache and Lewis examined the teachers’ beliefs about their own strategies as factors in student behavior. Another study relating teacher beliefs to student behavior was done by Chang (2003), in which over 4,000 students and their 82 teachers responded to questionnaires. This study attempted to determine the ways in which teachers’
beliefs about the classroom behavior of aggressive and withdrawn students influenced both the behaviors and the peer perceptions of the behaviors.

Buehl and Fives (2009) developed their own qualitative instrument, the Open Ended Teaching Beliefs Questionnaire (OTBQ) in order to assess the beliefs of pre-service and practicing teachers concerning “the nature of teaching, as well as beliefs about the source, stability, and content of teachers’ teaching knowledge” (p. 374).

As Tatto and Coupland (2003) recommend, other studies look at the ways in which teacher beliefs about student learning may impact their instructional practice. Both positive and negative correlations are found among the studies. This has led researchers to investigate how beliefs and practice can be aligned by means of reflection (Seker, 2011) and professional development (Rosenfeld & Rosenfeld, 2008).

**Relationship of beliefs and classroom practice.** There are studies that have found both correlations and discrepancies between teachers’ beliefs and practices. Kagan (1992) refers to several studies in which content-specific beliefs of teachers have been shown to influence teaching practice. Consistent with Grossman’s (1991) studies of literature teachers, Kagan finds that the types of instructional activities chosen by English and history teachers were determined by their orientation towards the subject. Kagan also delineates four possible orientations of science teachers: discovery, processes, didactic/content mastery, and conceptual change (p. 72).

Belief in an orientation informs the teacher’s understanding of what it means to learn and to teach science, and results in different kinds of classroom activities and expectations. A greater conceptual understanding on the part of math and science teachers results in instruction that emphasizes conceptual explanations and modifies textbooks. Teachers with more shallow conceptual understanding rely heavily on textbooks without modification. Kagan concludes that
a teacher’s beliefs are usually reflected in the kind of instruction he or she provides. She leaves open the possibilities that “teacher belief may be mediated by epistemological differences inherent in respective content areas or by the kinds of instructional materials that happen to be available” (p. 73).

Rosenfeld and Rosenfeld’s study (2008) investigates the effect of a professional development course upon teachers’ beliefs. They identified beliefs that effective teachers hold about student learning to see if instruction about those beliefs, and practices flowing from them, would increase among the participating teachers. From previous studies, they identify three beliefs that, when acted upon, lead to effective practice: all students can learn, learners have diverse needs, and teachers can intervene to make a difference in student learning. Rosenfeld and Rosenfeld further distinguish between interventionist and non-interventionist beliefs. Interventionist beliefs are characterized by the attitude that a teacher can intervene to help learners with their difficulties, and are identified with effective practice. Non-interventionist beliefs, characterized by the attitude that learners are to blame for their own difficulties, do not lead to effective practice. “In other words, effective teachers have interventionist beliefs about students: a set of beliefs that have been shown in inclusive classrooms to lead to effective teacher practice and improved student performance and self-esteem” (p. 246).

A similar dichotomy is found by Peterson et al. (n.d.) between most of the 27 teachers in their study who believe that students need to be self-motivated to achieve academic success and the one dissenting teacher who stated that part of a teacher’s job is to facilitate student achievement. Peterson et al. (n.d.) also refer to studies showing that students achieve the greatest academic gains “when teachers take collective responsibility for student success and failure, rather than blaming the students for failure” (p. 3). The authors suggest that the teachers are
using their belief in lack of student effort as a justification. With this belief, they can distance themselves from student failure.

Yun-Jo and Reigeluth (2012) discuss the customized learning and support given by teachers who believe in learner-centered instruction. Interventionist and learner-centered teacher beliefs are not identical but they do share common characteristics. Teachers acting upon interventionist and learner-centered beliefs strive in both cases to create a positive and supportive classroom environment in order to foster the intellectual, social, and emotional growth of their students. Teachers acting upon learner-centered beliefs consider themselves to be facilitators, as opposed to transmitters of knowledge. Learner-centered teachers actively engage students by sharing power, encouraging student participation, and giving increased responsibility to students for the learning process. Guided by beliefs in learner-centered instruction, teachers also help students develop learning strategies and metacognitive skills.

Beliefs can also serve as obstacles to effective practice. In studying the integration of technology into learner-centered classrooms Yun-Jo and Reigeluth (2012) found that in addition to institutional barriers, obstacles intrinsic to teachers included not only knowledge and skills, but also beliefs and attitudes.

In addition to hindering or enhancing effective instruction, Yun-Jo and Reigeluth (2012) mention a number of studies that find incongruence between teacher beliefs and practices. Learner-centered practice does not automatically result from learner-centered philosophy. Based on their own findings, Yun-Jo and Reigeluth suggest that the lack of knowledge of specific techniques might be the cause of the incongruence, since most participants in their study wanted to learn more practical strategies for teaching in a learner-centered classroom.
Another category of beliefs that influence teacher practice is the source and stability of teaching knowledge. Buehl and Fives (2009) place beliefs about the source of knowledge on a continuum: “At one end of the continuum, knowledge is viewed as originating with and conveyed by authority figures, and at the other end, knowledge is viewed as being actively constructed by the individual learner on the basis of his or her personal experience and reason” (p. 371). Beliefs about the source of knowledge have not been studied for their impact on classroom instruction as extensively as other types of belief, but there is evidence that “stronger belief in authority as the source of knowledge has been related to lower levels of motivation, more surface-level strategy use, and lower levels of meaningful cognitive engagement” (p. 371). Seker (2011) also found that epistemological beliefs of teachers do influence instructional practice.

A better understanding of the relationship between teacher beliefs and instructional practice in the classroom is clearly needed. Investigating this connection is recommended by Buehl and Fives (2009). Tatro and Coupland (2003), and Kagan (1992) call for longitudinal studies in order to chart the development and evolution of beliefs over a longer period of time than has been done thus far.

Rosenfeld and Rosenfeld (2008) would like to see studies that look at the interrelationships of classroom practice, student performance, and teacher beliefs after teachers complete professional development courses targeting specific beliefs and instructional strategies.

Kim (2011) emphasizes the importance of “reflective teacher education” (p. 143) particularly in a context where the backgrounds of the teacher and the students are not similar. By “reflective,” Kim means being aware of one’s own beliefs and creating one’s own personal
theory. He believes that this awareness can lead towards improved practice, and recommends researching whether the stated teacher beliefs reflect their classroom practice.

In a meta-study of research about the stated beliefs and practices of language teachers Basturkmen (2012) found only a limited correspondence between the two. However, he did find that beliefs were reflected in the practices of more experienced teachers (p. 286). Two of the studies “found that in the case of the more experienced teachers the beliefs were more consistently reflected in their classroom practices compared to less experienced teachers” (p. 287).

The results of Southerland, Gess-Newsome, and Johnston’s (2003) work with scientists who were creating and teaching a new curriculum, show that even experts in their field may not exhibit pedagogic practice that is consistent with their beliefs. If it is determined that specific teachers’ beliefs are directly predictive of practices that foster effective student learning, then we are confronted with the problem of how to change beliefs that do not promote student learning.

What will happen to teacher candidates who have “wrong” or “ineffective” beliefs? Will people be prevented from being teachers because they do not hold the research-proven desirable beliefs? Must beliefs change in order to change behavior? Can one have the “wrong” beliefs and still be an effective teacher? These provocative questions remain to be studied.

Religious beliefs. In addition to a teacher’s professional beliefs about student learning, curriculum, and pedagogy, the formation of teacher knowledge and practice is also influenced by personal spiritual and religious beliefs. Baurain (2012) argues that these beliefs need to be considered as an integral part of teacher beliefs since they are essential components of professional identity and knowledge. Baurain’s study of Christian ESOL teachers explored the impact of teachers’ religious beliefs on their relationships with students, pedagogical
commitments, curricular choices, and teaching philosophies. Four themes emerged from the data about how these teachers put their religious beliefs into practice as a teacher:

(a) Christian love or charity, in the sense of acting for the good of others; (b) respect for persons, based on a high spiritual view of personhood; (c) student-centeredness as an outgrowth of religious conviction; and (d) Christian witness, that is, sharing one’s faith in ways appropriate to the context. (p. 321).

Personal faith thus informed the teachers’ social interactions as well as their student-centered beliefs about learning.

Although Kagan (1992), as mentioned above, shows that one’s orientation to science informs the teaching approach, Smith (2010) found no significant correlation among high school science teachers’ religious affiliation, religious practice, or beliefs about evolution with their approach to teaching evolution. This may indicate that religious beliefs have a different kind of influence upon pedagogical content knowledge, and that some teachers may be able to teach objectively and put their religious beliefs on hold when they conflict with the content of the subject matter.

**Summation of teachers’ beliefs.** Pedagogical content knowledge includes the teachers’ beliefs related to self-efficacy, student learning, the foundations of knowledge, and orientation towards specific subject area content. The preceding section discussed the challenges of studying beliefs, the role of beliefs and belief-change in pre-service and professional development education, as well as the conflicting research on the correlation of beliefs and practice. The next section looks at the domain-specific beliefs about literature: orientations to text in general and orientations to teaching Bible.
Orientations to Text and Teaching Bible

**Introduction.** The study of Jewish texts, particularly the Bible, is often central to the curriculum in formal Jewish educational settings for both children and adults. Since the 1960s, and especially in the last thirteen years, research and literature about the teaching of Bible in Jewish settings has included the exploration of orientations. In his 1994 study, Chervin looks at:

1.) the nature of teacher’s personal and pedagogical orientations, 2.) the transformation of the personal orientation for teaching purposes, and 3.) the ways in which teachers deal with conflicts between their own religious beliefs and beliefs reflected in the text. He follows Grossman’s understanding of *personal orientation* as the different ways of reading the text, and *pedagogical orientation* as the different ways of teaching literature. In Bible education, the personal orientation includes two components: The teacher’s knowledge of the text, and the teacher’s personal religious beliefs about Torah. Pedagogical orientation also includes two components: Pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical content knowledge. Chervin concludes: “Therefore the notion of *orientation* has been introduced to refer to the integration of one's knowledge and beliefs”

In his overview of theories and research on teaching Torah, Chervin cites several earlier models of orientations from the 1960s and 1970s. Israeli Bible Professor Zvi Adar described five general orientations used in Israeli schools (cited in Chervin, 1994, p. 27). Adar finds the first four orientations lacking (traditional/religious, scientific/critical, nationalistic, and socio-moral) and prefers the humanistic-literary approach. Only the humanistic-literary orientation, according to Adar, “is properly suited to discovering the *lessons* embodied in that educational work” (Chervin, 1994, p. 29). This orientation encourages independent, critical thinking by the students and close analysis of the text. This approach does not promote indoctrination and
requires “that students base their analyses and interpretations on evidence, primarily from the text itself, and secondarily from other literary and scientific sources” (p. 30).

Schoneveld (cited in Chervin, 1994, p. 30), based on Adar’s analysis, offered his own scheme of how modern man understands the text according to four hermeneutic structures that are based on the ways in which the modern self-identity interprets the text: *subjecting* itself to the ancient text, *projecting* itself onto the ancient text, *confronting* itself with the ancient text, and *detaching* itself from the ancient text.

In developing his own orientations, Elliot Dorph (cited in Chervin, 1994, pp.31-32) considers the method of study, the nature of revelation, the authority of the Bible’s laws and ideas, and the human ability to change the bible’s laws and ideas. His four orientations are based upon how one understands the nature of revelation: verbal revelation, continuous revelation, progressive revelation, and the absence of revelation. (See Appendix B for a comparison chart of Adar's, Schoneveld's and Dorph's categorizations of orientations to teaching Torah.)

The theory about orientations to text as part of pedagogical content knowledge was developed by Grossman (1991) as she studied teachers of literature and compared their various approaches to the text. The classification of orientations is based upon the nature of the approach to the text. Different orientations are appropriate for different goals.

Holtz delineates nine orientations in his book *Textual Knowledge: Teaching the Bible in Theory and Practice* (2003). Scholars and practitioners followed his lead, and articles about the teaching of Bible in Jewish settings that have been written in the past thirteen years often refer to the concept of orientations and to Holtz’s work. This section looks at the theory and critique of the orientations approach as expressed by Holtz (2003), Greenstein (2009), Cook and Kent
(2012) Levisohn (2008), and Galili-Schachter (2011), as well as the purposeful choice and application of specific orientations by three classroom teachers.

**Review of the literature.** Holtz considers some of the unique challenges to teaching Bible—an ancient, sacred text—to modern Jewish children living in North America. He asks:

What does it mean to teach a communal tradition in a culture that lauds individualism:

What does it mean to teach a tradition with explicit demands on behavior in a culture that resents anyone telling anyone else what to do? What does it mean to teach a tradition with specific religious and theological content in a culture that values a kind of free-floating spirituality? . . . . Teaching Jewish texts means swimming against a powerful and long-standing current. (Holtz, 2003, p.28)

In attempting to answer these questions relating to the milieu of American Jewish students, Holtz considers the role of the teacher in transmitting the tradition in a way that is relevant, authentic, and potentially transforming for the student. The teacher’s larger vision of the means and purpose of education are often expressed by the instructional practices used in the classroom. Knowledge of the subject matter together with instructional practice is the pedagogical content knowledge of the bible teacher.

Holtz (2003) builds upon the work of Grossman, who studies the pedagogical content knowledge of beginning English teachers, and uses the term *orientations* to signify the teachers’ “basic organizing framework for knowledge about literature” (cited in Holtz, 2003, p. 47). A text-based approach, a context-based approach, and a reader-response-based approach are the three main orientations to a literary text in Grossman’s construct. Holtz questions how an understanding of orientations might help to improve education. He concludes that “an individual teacher’s orientation will deeply influence much of what takes place in his or her planning and
execution of lessons” (2003, p. 50). These differences can be seen in the choice of literature, in the goals for instruction, and in the activities and assignments used in the teaching/learning process. Holtz believes that a clearer picture of the teaching taking place in a school can be attained by a better understanding of the teachers’ orientations. Teachers who are familiar with a range of orientations increase their pedagogic possibilities.

Holtz presents the metaphor of a "map" of orientations. This implies that each orientation take us in a specific direction, and that we can visualize the journey--the starting point, the travel, and the destination. Holtz discusses--maps out, as it were-- nine orientations for teaching Bible: The Contextual Orientation; The Literary Criticism Orientation; The Reader-Response Orientation; Parshanut, The Jewish Interpretive Orientation; Moralistic-Didactic Orientation; The Personalization Orientation; The Ideational Orientation; The Bible Leads to Action Orientation; and The Decoding, Translation, and Comprehension Orientation (p. 95). He posits that knowledge of orientations should help teachers and teacher educators further enrich and improve their work. (Appendix C presents an overview of Holtz’s Orientations.)

In his paper A Pragmatic Pedagogy of Bible (2009), Greenstein asks how one is to decide, from the multiplicity of orientations, which approach to take? He answers that one should select the orientation that is likely to help the students reach the desired result. If the teacher is not sure what will result, Greenstein advises: “See where the various approaches lead you, and then take your students down whichever roads lead to where you want to take them on any particular learning occasion. You can always choose a different purpose, and a different corresponding path, at another time” (2009, p. 292). Greenstein illustrates his point by showing how the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) can be approached by various orientations, each with its own main point for the student to grasp. Greenstein concludes that the center of our concern in
text study should not be “the analytical techniques we employ in reading texts, but rather the meanings that give significance to our enterprise ” (2009, p. 301). Greenstein urges us first to consider the outcomes we hope to achieve, and then to choose the orientation that will be most likely to bring our students to those goals.

Levisohn (2009) expands upon Greenstein’s analysis of text study as a “pluralistic enterprise” (p. 312) with multiple possibilities for interpretation and insight. Levisohn identifies four issues in Greenstein’s article that raise questions for him. He first considers whether the choice of an approach is “irrational or arational” (p. 313). Other words to describe this choice might be “illogical or not governed at all by logic”. Rather than the choice of an approach to text being a personal preference, Levisohn believes that one’s personal convictions and beliefs impel us towards our choices. Our choice can never be objective, and we are always comparing and evaluating the possible readings and interpretations of text.

Levisohn also questions Greenstein’s concept of “pragmatic pedagogy” as a problem-solving tool. The teacher is not looking for the one correct orientation that will produce the one correct answer, since every text and textual problem can be approached from multiple angles. Sometimes it is the nature of the text or problem that drives our choice of approach, even if the choice is not our personally preferred orientation.

The third issue that Levisohn looks at is the meaning of “pragmatic”. Greenstein implies that we need to try out different solutions/methodologies and see what works. Sometimes an approach may bring the desired result, but at the same time, leave out other equally valid interpretations. Among the possibilities are texts and interpretations that confront us and challenge our beliefs. “If Greenstein is correct about the way in which we choose an approach in order to suit our needs,” asks Levisohn, “what becomes of this potential for confrontation?” (p.
Indeed, to facilitate growth and change in ourselves and our students, we need to confront the challenges of difficult, contradictory, and troubling texts, in addition to texts that reinforce our existing beliefs and assumptions.

The final issue that Levisohn explores is the pedagogical aspect of “pragmatic pedagogy”. Greenstein believes that awareness of the possible orientations will help us choose the appropriate interpretive approach, and that a set of criteria exists to help us make that choice. Levisohn raises additional aspects of pedagogical choices, including the choice of text and the selection of learning activities. He concludes with a warning that we not replace the idea of one correct interpretation with a pedagogy of “here-is-one-of-several-possible-correct-meanings or even a pedagogy of here-is-the-best-meaning-for-this-particular-occasion” (2009, p. 323). Ultimately, our pedagogic content knowledge should inform and justify our choices.

Cook and Kent (2012) report on the trends they observe while visiting bible classes from early childhood through high school. Two kinds of student activities predominate: personalization and language/translation. They critique that although teachers’ motivations for these kinds of activities are laudable, their sole use limits the students from experiencing and understanding the significance of bible on a deeper level. They believe that a central goal of Torah learners should be to become engaged in the interpretation of texts. Going beyond the language and personalization orientations, they recommend that a third approach take priority: the interpretive exercise and the interpretive experience. In order to reach the highest goals of learning Torah there must be “an authentic interpretive experience” (p. 59) in which the student and the text make meaning by means of a partnership:

The text needs a human partner to notice it, wonder about it, grapple it, and appreciate it in order to convert fixed words into living ideas, expression into meaning. The human
partner needs the text to invite the student, through its complexity, beauty, difficulties and sacredness, into new horizons of understanding and growth, intellectually, ethically as well as spiritually. (p. 59)

The approach that Cook and Kent advocate is most akin to Holtz’s Reader-Response Orientation which focuses on “the experience of the reader in encountering the text” (Holtz, 2003, p. 93). The directions in which the students make meaning are left open. Interpretations may be varied, but must be text-based.

In *Pedagogic Hermeneutic Orientations in the Teaching of Jewish Texts*, Galili-Schachter (2011) also emphasizes the centrality of what she calls the “interpretative activity” in text study. Focusing more on the teachers than the students, she identifies five pedagogic hermeneutic orientations—part of the pedagogic content knowledge of text teachers—that she finds among the teachers of Jewish Thought in Israeli high schools. The differences in these orientations are shown by the teachers’ approaches toward three specific issues identified by Galili-Schachter: “reading and interpreting text; the role of teachers in the process of interpreting and teaching text; the place of students in the process of interpreting and learning a text” (p. 222). The five teacher orientations are:

1. Conveying objective knowledge
2. Leading an intellectual and spiritual quest
3. Creating midrash to convey moral ideas
4. Facilitating dialogue between the students and the text
5. Creating radical interpretation to convey moral ideas

There are parallels and overlap between Galili-Schachter’s and Holtz’s delineations of orientations. Both researchers emphasize that there is not one orientation that is considered
superior to the others. Galili-Schacter writes of the importance of helping teachers develop, articulate, and understand their preferred orientations as part of the education and professional development of text teachers. She also believes that open discussion among faculty might result in “the development of common concepts and criteria for thinking about good teaching” (p. 234).

**Orientations in practice.** Holtz devotes the second part of his book to the practical issue of “How might knowledge of orientations help teachers?” (2003, p. 106). The self-studies of three teachers are examined here in light of Holtz’s suggestions for the application of his theory of orientations.

Three teachers write about their own experiences in choosing an orientation to use in teaching a specific group of students. The teachers reflect upon the process and results for the students and for themselves. Sigel (2009) taught four co-ed fifth grade classes at Orthodox Jewish schools in large metropolitan areas: one in New York, one in London, and two in Israel. Although she chooses to teach Midrash as her subject, which is part of the Jewish Interpretive Orientation, she mainly employs the Literary Criticism Orientation to understanding the midrashic text. Morrison (Cousens, Morrison, & Fendrick, 2008) chooses the Contextual Orientation to teach a Bible study group of minimally and non-affiliated Jewish young adults in their twenties and thirties in the Boston area. Tanchel chooses source criticism, a subset of the Contextual Orientation, to teach the Documentary Hypothesis to 12th grade students at a pluralistic American Jewish high school.

Choosing an orientation helps each teacher to “clarify goals and pedagogy” (Holtz, 2003, p. 106). Sigel seeks to “design and evaluate a strategy for teaching Midrash explicitly” (Sigel, 2009, p. 47) to elementary school students. She defines the problem that causes her to design a new strategy: Jewish school children are customarily first exposed to midrash by means of
Rashi’s commentary, which includes insights from classical midrash texts. However, she finds that these midrashic texts are taught superficially in many settings. They are often taught in a literal way despite their complexity. A teacher typically reads the midrash with the class as an answer to an issue or problem in the text, without further “unpacking” and discussion. Sigel identifies two potential negative effects of this traditional methodology. One effect is confusion in the minds of students between biblical and midrashic texts. A result of the two texts being taught together is that children cannot differentiate the boundaries. The second potential negative effect is that a student who questions the literal meaning of midrash may be reluctant to question or challenge the teacher. The child may dismiss bible as irrelevant and midrash as implausible, leading to a crisis of faith. Sigel does not use the word “orientation” at all in her article, but refers repeatedly to her “literary strategy” of helping students understand the “interpretive strategy” of the rabbinic authors. She chooses her pedagogy of a literary approach in order to attain her goals of developing the students’ ability to differentiate peshat (the literal meaning) and derash (the interpretive meaning), to articulate the literary devices employed by the rabbis, and to analyze the motivation behind the text. Since the students discussed the underlying messages and moral values of the midrash, elements of the Moralistic-Didactic, Personalization, and Ideational Orientations are also present. This fulfills another of Holtz’s suggestions that knowledge of orientations might help teachers by supporting “a diversity of readings and interpretations of texts” (Holtz, 2003, p. 106).

Morrison’s challenge is to connect young adults to Jewish texts and Jewish life. He deliberately chooses the Contextual Orientation, which he predicts will result in a positive experience for students from a variety of Jewish backgrounds. In considering the reasons that this orientation to Bible study was effective with young adults, the authors reflect:
The contextual orientation and its focus on exposing the multiple layers and voices in the biblical text can connect young adults to Jewish study and Jewish life. Because this approach parallels approaches to literary texts with which this highly educated cohort is familiar, and because it fosters a religious stance that is not unpalatable in the context of their other social networks, the contextual orientation can serve as a novel but, in the end, not wholly surprising method of drawing Jewish young adults into Jewish life and fostering Jewish Identity. (Cousens et al., 2008, p. 25)

Morrison chooses to emphasize the Contextual Orientation based upon his own personal experience of the pivotal impact this kind of learning had upon him in rabbinical school. Similar to Sigel, Morrison includes elements of other orientations in his teaching. By including personalization; parshanut; reader-response; decoding, translation, and comprehension; and literary criticism, Morrison “exposes students to multiple types of Jewish texts as well as . . . multiple ways of approaching the Bible” (Cousens et al., 2008, p. 8).

Tanchel (2008) has a specific goal in mind: to expose her students to a new way of understanding Torah. The students at her pluralistic high school study Torah with an emphasis on the Literary Criticism Orientation in grade nine, and the Jewish Interpretive Orientation in grades ten and eleven. Tanchel strongly believes that it is intellectually and developmentally appropriate, as well as beneficial to their theological and intellectual growth, for high school seniors to experience and understand the Contextual Orientation to Bible. This leads her to employ a different pedagogy than would be used in the grades nine, ten, and eleven bible classes. Similar to Sigel’s challenge to the traditional teaching of midrash, Tanchel believes that teachers who do not expose their students to increasingly sophisticated methods of understanding ancient sacred texts “run the risks of their students either interpreting texts literally or dismissing them as
irrelevant, as simple stories that cannot withstand adult analysis” (2008, p. 47). She not only teaches “about” the method, but also requires students to analyze texts using source criticism. Tanchel emphasizes to her students that the approach she is teaching them is a hypothesis, rather than a definitive explanation. This allows her students to explore the hypothesis intellectually without contradicting the beliefs of those who understand the transmission and development of Torah in a more traditional manner. In this way, like Morrison and Sigel, she also allows for a diversity of interpretations in reading the text.

All three teachers “locate their approaches to subject matter in reliable, scholarly sources” (Holtz, 2003, p. 106)—another advantage mentioned by Holtz for teachers with knowledge of orientations. All three teachers also make use of the Personalization Orientation, encouraging their students to consider in what ways the text speaks to them as individuals. Tanchel, in particular, regularly requires her students to discuss and write about their personal beliefs concerning the sacredness, historicity, and authority of biblical texts.

Another way that knowledge of orientations might help teachers is in matching the texts they choose to teach with the specific orientation and pedagogy. Sigel chooses specific texts for each of the literary devices used in midrash. Metaphor, parable, and exaggeration are each illustrated by a different midrash. Morrison chooses selections from different parts of the bible so that his students can compare texts and ideas. For instance, one student notes that the conception of God presented in Leviticus is not identical with the God of Genesis. Tanchel also chooses texts from different parts of the bible so that the students can practice applying the documentary hypothesis to different kinds of texts, such as Genesis 1-2 (the two versions of the creation narrative) and Numbers 16 (the story of Korach’s rebellion, which can also be seen as the conflation of two stories from different strands of origin).
Holtz’s final point about the usefulness of orientations for teachers is that it may help them “develop ‘flexible subject-matter understanding’” (2003, p. 106). By this he means:

- To respond to different kinds of questions and issues that learners may have
- To make connections across topics and disciplines
- To make use of contributions of scholarship and their potential for education” (p. 106).

Using scholarly and literary methodologies in their teaching, all three teachers succeed in making connections across disciplines and in using the contributions of scholarship. Each teacher also documents his or her ability to respond to varying questions and issues of their learners:

Tanchel is cognizant of the developmental needs of her students in terms of both intellect and faith. She provides a safe classroom environment in which students can discuss their personal struggles of faith and religious observance. Morrison understands that many of his students have never studied Jewish texts on an adult intellectual level, and that some have rejected the conceptions of Judaism that they learned as children. The contextual orientation allows students to develop their own new understandings of the bible, and to “potentially construct their own Jewish identities—and establish what will be emphasized in their own Jewish lives—from within this set of ideas” (Cousens et al., 2008, p. 12). Sigel knows that her students have a literal understanding of midrash, and she brings them systematically to new and more sophisticated understandings.

Thus far, we have been discussing the orientations of the teacher. More recently, Hassenfeld (2016) has begun to look at the relationship between the orientations of the Bible teacher and the orientations of the students in his classroom. She shows that the teacher needs to be aware of the various “interpretive stances” of the students in order not to “force students into
an interpretive framework set by the teacher” (2016, p. 82). She observed a fourth grade Bible class after ascertaining the interpretive stances of the teacher and seven of the students. She found that when the students who did not share the same interpretive stances as the teacher asked questions or made comments, they were not validated in the same way as students whose approaches matched the teacher’s. She warns that “misaligned” students may feel marginalized and might become progressively more alienated and disengaged from class discussion.

**Orientations in the study of other Jewish texts.** Levisohn (2013) has brought the orientation approach to the study of rabbinic texts. In lieu of Holtz's "map" of orientations metaphor, which implies that each path leads to a specific destination and are mutually exclusive, Levisohn prefers to use the image of a “menu”, stating that

... orientations are more like cuisines: each cuisine uses a set of common ingredients, culinary techniques, and tastes, but none of these is necessarily exclusive to that cuisine. Orientations, too, can overlap in the teacher’s beliefs about the purpose of the subject, about the kinds of questions that are worth asking, and about what constitutes a compelling answer, as well as in terms of pedagogic and interpretive practices. (p. 58)

The language used by Levisohn is similar to the language used in describing pedagogical content knowledge. Orientations are a “theory of practice”, (2013, p. 56) subject specific, and without hierarchy. Orientations are conceptual models of how to teach a specific subject that include “the teacher’s conception of the purposes of teaching that subject and a set of paradigmatic teaching practices” (p. 58).

Levisohn includes ten orientations to teaching rabbinic literature in his menu. Some are very similar to Holtz’s bible orientations, while others are unique to the legal, cultural, and historical aspects of rabbinic literature. After explaining each orientation in detail, Levisohn
advises how to use the menu. Similar to Holtz’s conclusions about the benefit of using orientations to guide bible instruction, Levisohn believes that by practitioners being aware of and using orientations, they will realize more options in the teaching of rabbinic literature, including a greater range of practices and purposes.

Levisohn concludes with the observation that the menu of orientations may serve as a starting point for discussion among teachers and teacher educators about the goals of teaching rabbinic literature and the desired pedagogical content knowledge of rabbinics teachers.

**Summation of orientations.** This section has considered the ways in which an understanding of orientations to teaching biblical and rabbinic texts might help expand a teacher’s perspective and improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. We have identified several variations of the possible orientations for teaching Jewish texts, considered how three different teachers selected and implemented specific orientations, and have explored how one scholar has broadened the orientation concept to another area of Jewish studies.

Orientations to teaching biblical text have always existed, but it is helpful for educators to now have common vocabulary and terminology to discuss the process of bible education. It is clear that there is not one orientation that is superior to the others, and that for a teacher to rely on only one or two orientations may significantly limit the opportunities for students to grow intellectually and spiritually in relation to the text. Using a variety of approaches in any subject is desirable in order to reach students with different interests and styles of learning. More possibilities for professional growth are open to teachers when they have more options from which to choose.

A repeated theme among the researchers is the potential usefulness of understanding orientations in improving classroom instruction and student results.
The three teachers who reported on their personal experiences are all scholar-practitioners; Sigel and Tanchel have doctoral degrees and Morrison was a doctoral candidate at the time he was teaching and writing the article. All three achieved results that might not have come to fruition had they not been cognizant of orientations. An implication of the research is the need for teacher professional development programs, both pre-service and in-service, to include the study of orientations and to provide opportunities for teachers to improve their practice by choosing among the rich variety of approaches to teaching Bible.

**Pedagogical Content Knowledge of Jewish Day School Teachers**

A number of doctoral dissertations have explored the beliefs and practices of Jewish day school Bible teachers. Although none of the studies deal with the exact topic of this study, (the personal curriculum narratives of Jewish day school Bible teachers), all of them include discussion and analysis of teachers’ religious beliefs and orientations to sacred text.

In the six studies discussed below, beliefs and orientations were uncovered by a variety of methods, including personal interviews, surveys, and studying text together with the researcher.

The focus of Chervin’s (1994) study is the relationship between the personal and pedagogical orientations of Torah teachers. He examines the nature of teachers’ personal and pedagogical orientations, how the personal orientation is transformed for teaching purposes, and how teachers deal with beliefs in the text that conflict with their own beliefs. Clarifying his use of the terminology, Chervin uses “personal orientation” to refer to the way in which the teacher understands and approaches the text, and “pedagogical orientation” to denote the way the text is taught.
Regarding the teaching of a sacred text, such as Torah, the personal orientation includes beliefs as well as content knowledge. Chervin assesses the personal orientations of the study participants in terms of four overlapping dimensions:

1. Origins and nature of the Torah
2. Significance and content of the Torah
3. Authority of the Torah
4. Interpretive frameworks (p. 8)

Chervin finds that the transformation of a teacher’s personal understanding of a topic into a pedagogical form that is appropriate for the students is informed by knowledge in the following areas:

- **General pedagogical knowledge**: the broad principles of teaching that transcend subject matter
- **Curriculum knowledge**: the materials, texts, lesson plans, and programs that serve as “tools of the trade” for teachers
- **Knowledge of learners and their characteristics**: general understanding of students’ developmental characteristics, as well as specific knowledge of one’s students and their motivations, capacity to understand, the beliefs and other “baggage” they bring with them; familiarity with the students’ culture and value system
- **Knowledge of educational contexts**: familiarity with the nature of the school, the families and the community
- **Knowledge of educational ends**: purposes and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds (pp. 9-10)
Chervin concludes that the teachers took neither a neutral nor indoctrinary approach to teaching Torah. In addition to presenting their own personal beliefs and points of view, they provided their students “with opportunities to make their own free, and informed choices” (p. 197). The importance of teacher beliefs in religious education is also underscored by Chervin since beliefs and faith “are central to one’s personality and character, not easily separated from any aspect of experience” (p. 202). This study further shows that “a given teacher’s denominational affiliation does not give us specifics about his/her orientation to the Torah” (p. 204) The orientation is informed, rather, by “multi-faceted aspects of personality and experience that inform a Torah teacher’s approach” (p. 205).

Aldouby-Schuck’s 2008 study Roman Catholic and Conservative Jewish Bible Teachers: Perspectives on the Nexus of Personal Background and Professional Practice, addresses “the complex and often tacit relationships between the professional and personal backgrounds of teachers, their stated beliefs, and their teaching” (Aldouby-Schuck, 2008, p. 3). All of the questions that guide her inquiry include the word “beliefs”:

(a) How do Bible teachers’ beliefs about religion, and the Bible in particular, emerge from their life experiences? (b) How do these beliefs relate to the ways in which teachers reflect on teaching Bible? (c) How do these beliefs relate to what are generally considered the "official teaching" of their religion? (p.7).

Aldouby-Schuck notes that the research enabled her to explore the implications of the integration of knowledge and belief on the way we understand the professional training and pedagogy of Bible teachers.

Aldouby-Schuck’s study generated six personal paradigms, each of which contains different aspects of Holtz’s orientations. She used Holtz’s orientations as a framework
through which the teachers could “reflect, deconstruct, and attempt to identify their approach to teaching Bible” (p. 229). Results of the study found that both the Jewish and the Catholic teachers constructed paradigms that are a mixture of “different approaches, teachers' formative experiences, religious beliefs, and their instructional experiences” (p. 229) rather than “clearly defined educational approaches to teaching the Bible” (p. 229). Aldouby-Schuck sees that “challenging teachers to define their personal approaches to teaching Bible” (p. 229) may be a way to raise their own awareness about planning and implementing bible instruction. Among the questions that emerge from Aldouby-Schuck’s study that she recommends for further research are two that might find some answers in the current study: “What special sets of skills and knowledge do Bible teachers require?” (p. 238) and “What are the characteristics of Bible teachers beyond their skills and knowledge?” (p. 238).

Miller’s 2005 study *What is the Impact of a New Bible Curriculum on Four Teachers Who Use It?* briefly discusses beliefs and orientations as part of the pedagogical content knowledge of Torah teachers. She emphasizes that teaching Torah is “a weightier enterprise” (Miller, 2005, p. 77) than other subjects because Jewish educators feel a strong sense of responsibility for bringing their students into a sense of Jewish peoplehood and into a religious culture. Miller’s case studies of four teachers explores the ways in which learning to implement a new bible curriculum impacts each one of them as an individual—both professionally and personally:

This study connects the teachers’ reactions to the content of the curriculum and to the change process itself, with the largest themes of their inner lives: Their beliefs, values, subject matter orientations, commitments and personalities. (p. iii)
A chart of Holtz’s nine orientations is included along with a column for each teacher describing her level of familiarity, comfort, and usage of each orientation. Each teacher’s Jewish background, beliefs, and practices are also discussed and analyzed.

Ultimately, Miller uses her study of the teachers’ beliefs and orientations to look at the process of change. She concludes that in order to help teachers transition to and accept a new curriculum, professional development should include constructivist learning and differentiated instruction so that teachers can better understand their own beliefs and orientations.

Dorph (2010) investigates the beliefs and knowledge about Torah among prospective Jewish teachers. She refers to the findings of her doctoral research, as well as her subsequent studies in the same area. The skill set and level of knowledge about Torah that are needed to teach in liberal Jewish settings assume “an open approach to the text that posits multiple interpretations, and demands close reading and explication of the text as in a literary-critical approach”. However, Dorph finds that most prospective Jewish teachers do not possess this sophisticated knowledge. In fact, even students who had been exposed to scholarly bible study on the college level often reverted back to their childhood conceptions. Similar to Miller’s (2005) use of her study of teachers’ beliefs and orientations to look at the process of change, the information gathered by Dorph was used to develop a course of study to help prospective Jewish teachers learn to teach Torah. She was guided by conceptual change theory (Posner et al. 1982 cited in Dorph, 2010, p. 76) which suggests that in order for significant change to occur, teachers need to be aware of their existing beliefs as well as being exposed to alternate approaches and beliefs. Dorph sought to learn more about the teachers’ existing knowledge and beliefs about Torah—a research based decision since
recent studies had “emphasized the impact of teachers’ own prior conceptions about subject matter on their learning to teach” (p. 66).

Dorph asks two key questions to assess the beliefs and knowledge about Torah of more than 60 students: “(1) Who wrote the Torah? . . . and (2) How do we read, interpret, and make meaning of Torah texts? (In children’s words: Is the Torah true?)” (p. 64). She found that the answers to these questions have an impact on how the pre-service teachers articulate and understand their purposes in teaching Torah, the ways in which they understand and respond to students’ questions, and the ways that they frame lessons and activities.

A noteworthy finding in Dorph’s study is the “unreflective stance” of the students; they had little insight into their own beliefs about Torah. The first challenge for educators of pre-service teachers, therefore, is to raise the students’ level of self-awareness about their own ideas and beliefs. Two more challenges Dorph recommends dealing with in the training of Torah teachers is enabling them to “develop a variety of responses to issues of authorship and sacredness” (p. 76), and learning to integrate a variety of ways to read and interpret the text.

Bacon’s (1993) study of curriculum reconsideration is, in a sense, a study of the opposite relationship between teacher and text from Miller’s study. Miller seeks to discover how implementing a new curriculum impacts the teacher’s beliefs and practice, and concludes with suggestions for teacher training and professional development. Bacon wants to know what content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge are necessary in order for teachers to effectively implement a specific curriculum. After creating a curriculum that failed to be implemented in schools as it was intended, Bacon decides to use the process of curriculum...
reconsideration to identify elements that made the curriculum difficult to implement. The process of curriculum reconsideration includes:

1) examining the rationale and contents of the curriculum in relation to the four commonplaces of teacher, student, community, and subject matter to see if its assumptions remain valid and if the implementation of the curriculum at present would still be worthwhile;

2) examining the initial attempts at implementation to locate factors which may have hindered successful implementation;

3) deciding on a tactic to deal with the problem, whether rewriting parts of the curriculum or running a workshop which attempts to remedy the problems. The workshop would include the discussion of teaching cases;

4) observing teachers in the classroom and interviewing them to locate additional problems;

5) writing additional cases and refining the workshop. (pp.179-180)

In other words, curriculum reconsideration approaches curriculum as an ongoing process, and “implies that the curriculum building is never completed” (p. 178). The relevance of Bacon’s work to the current study is that she had to learn about both the content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge of the teachers with whom she worked and trained.

Bacon looks at the operational curriculum of teachers who have already used the curriculum. She defines operational curriculum as “what happened in the classroom” (p. 119) and her data was collected by means of interviews, classroom observations, and teachers’ lesson plans and logs. Four central factors emerge from the data:
1.) The Jewish educational philosophy of the teachers influenced the emphases that they placed on various parts of the curriculum;

2.) Teachable moments were lost because of the theological fuzziness, uncertainty, or insensitivity of the teachers;

3.) The extent of the utilization of the curriculum material depended upon the demands of the school schedule and the time available for the teachers’ own preparation. Within that framework, teachers chose the parts of the curriculum which they thought would be particularly meaningful and/or interesting for their students;

4.) Most teachers prepared for their classes by reading only the teachers’ guide and by drawing upon the material and pedagogic methods already in their repertoires.

Each of the above four factors include aspects of pedagogical content knowledge that the current study will also examine: educational philosophy, theological beliefs, making choices about which material to teach, perceived necessity of preparing to teach a lesson, and the use of pedagogic methods.

Bacon develops her new teacher-training plan based upon these findings. She adds two major new elements: Deliberation of educational philosophy and of theological issues will take place through discussion of case studies and a demonstration lesson by each teacher participant. This provides workshop participants with the opportunity to focus on their own beliefs and to sharpen their pedagogical content knowledge.

Tanchel’s (2006) unique dissertation is an empirical self-study of her own content knowledge as a bible scholar and her pedagogical content knowledge as a bible teacher in a pluralistic Jewish high school. Her goals are to discover “what does a teacher need to know to teach Tanakh, how does a Tanakh teacher use her scholarly knowledge of Tanakh to
teach challenging material, and how does a Tanakh teacher manage her dual responsibilities to the subject matter and to the students” (p185.) Four topics in her dissertation that are of particular relevance to this study will be discussed: her personal evaluation of her content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge; the particular role of the teacher of sacred text; the relationship between curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge; and the implications for teacher training.

As Tanchel uncovers her pedagogical content knowledge by means of video-taped lessons and reflective journaling, she considers how being a bible scholar informs her teaching. Her deep subject matter knowledge is advantageous for a number of pedagogical decisions. It allows her to choose appropriate texts, to invoke other biblical texts for comparisons, to answer students’ questions, to support students’ interpretations, to support one interpretation over another, to present multiple interpretations, and to correct students’ misconceptions. On the other hand, Tanchel also discovers that deep content knowledge can be potentially limiting for the teacher. She finds three instances while analyzing the video tapes that highlight the paradox that “deep subject matter knowledge can hinder a teacher’s practice” (p. 208). In the first example, she found that her subject matter knowledge impeded her understanding of the true meaning of a student’s question. In the second instance, she later realized that she had not looked at the basic question underlying her lesson from the students’ point of view, and therefore did not fully understand the question that was asked. Tanchel interprets this as a case of her scholarly knowledge “betraying” her pedagogical goal. In the third example, her subject matter knowledge blocked her ability to appreciate the interpretation offered by the student, and she cut off the student’s response.
She concludes that this final interaction shows how her own understanding limited her ability
d... to stay open to a student’s idea and to respect her as an interpreter of biblical texts. More generally this incident serves as a public reminder of how deep subject matter knowledge can constrict a teacher’s imagination and therefore can limit her ability to teach in as optimal a way as possible. (p.216)

Like Miller, Tanchel remarks on the unique role that Judaic studies teachers, especially text teachers, may play in the spiritual development of their students. The students’ understanding of God and Judaism, and their personal religious practice may be influenced, challenged and broadened by their study of sacred text. Being a bible scholar as well as a high school teacher further complicated Tanchel’s ability to deal with the students’ spiritual growth. She experienced tension that she describes as a “balancing act” (p. 229) between her responsibilities to the subject matter and her responsibilities to the learners. This dilemma adds a “unique level of complexity to a Tanakh teachers’ [sic] task” (p. 229) since some of the assumptions of biblical scholars may conflict with students’ beliefs.

Tanchel learns from her experience that a scholar/text-teacher “needs to work harder to stay open to students’ ideas, to listen more carefully to their questions, and to be more conscious of the assumptions they bring to bear when reading biblical texts” (p. 229). The scholar/text-teacher should pay close attention to the experience of the students, including points that are troubling them and how they are making sense of the material.

Tanchel discusses the relationship between curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge. Curricula
are the reflections and the end product of numerous choices that were made about what material to teach and in what way to teach the selected content . . . . they should not merely be a matter of personal taste, but rather the result of justifiable decisions explaining why certain material was chosen in place of other options. (p. 128)

She discusses Bruner and the Woods Hole conference of 1959 that brought together scientific experts to create a new science curriculum. She contrasts the resulting conceptual-learning and discipline-based approach with Dewey’s beliefs that this methodology must be accompanied by honoring the needs and interests of the students. Bruner, on the other hand, argued that it is the teacher, not the curriculum designer, who has the responsibility “to figure out how to transform her knowledge in age appropriate ways and in ways that meet the students where they are” (p. 133). In current terminology, it is the teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge that transforms the formal/written curriculum into the enacted curriculum. Ideally, then, curriculum developers need to include a balance of people with content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Tanchel calls for teachers to be involved in making curricular decisions in order to “be more able to justify the selection of content” (p. 135). Teachers joining content area experts in designing curriculum would thus merge the content knowledge of the experts in the discipline with the pedagogical knowledge of the teachers who are on the “front lines” and who can design educational experiences to promote specific educational objectives.

The final issue from Tanchel’s study that relates to this research involves the implications for teacher training. In the field of Judaic studies, and particularly in Bible, the preparation of prospective teachers must include skills and background enabling them to promote the religious development of their students. In order to deal with the questions and
concerns of their own future students, prospective teachers should have the opportunity “to 
grapple with and to articulate their own ideas and beliefs about the compositional history 
and historicity of these texts and the ‘truth’ of the Tanakh” (p.243) and to be exposed “to the 
spectrum of understandings on this topic” (p. 243). Teachers of future Jewish educators 
should also help them “differentiate between the methods they are acquiring as learners and 
the methods they will be teaching to their students” (p. 243). Discussion of these issues will 
enable prospective Bible teachers to begin integrating and transforming their content 
knowledge and pedagogical training into pedagogical content knowledge. Ongoing 
professional development and reflective practice are also imperative for the success of 
Tanakh teachers. They must “continue to read, to study, and to interpret biblical texts, as 
well as continue to be students of the pedagogical process, by reflecting on their own 
teaching practices and their students’ learning” (p. 247).

Tanchel’s concluding remarks advocate that her research will be just the beginning of 
research on the content knowledge of Tanakh teachers. The proposed study intends to delve 
into some of these exact issues:

1.) “. . . how teachers’ understanding of the general contents of biblical books, 
central characters, concepts and themes, as well as their knowledge of methods of 
interpretation. . .all inform and shape their teaching” (p. 245).

2.) “. . . teachers’ beliefs about the nature of knowledge in biblical studies, about the 
different methods necessary to read and to interpret biblical texts, and about the 
origins of the Bible (p. 245).

3.) How Bible teachers think pedagogically and how they use their content 
knowledge in their teaching.
Finally, Tanchel urges *Tanakh* teachers to make themselves and their classrooms open to researchers so that we will have more records of practice to inform and improve teacher education programs.

**Summary.** This section has reviewed dissertations that seek to understand the personal and pedagogic content knowledge of day school Judaic studies teachers—particularly their beliefs about and approaches to teaching Torah. All of the researchers comment on the self-reflection of the teachers that took place due to their participation in the studies. Dorph (2010) emphasizes the disconnect between the teachers’ beliefs and orientations and what they were expected to teach. Dorph and Miller (2005) both address the necessity of the teachers’ understanding their own existing beliefs before learning about new approaches and orientations to sacred text. Chervin (1994) examines the nature of teachers’ personal and pedagogical orientations, how the personal orientation is transformed for teaching purposes, and how teachers deal with beliefs in text that conflict with their own beliefs. The importance of teachers’ beliefs in Aldouby-Schuck’s study was one element in understanding the personal and professional backgrounds of the participants. Tanchel concludes that her own scholarly content knowledge could be both an advantage and a disadvantage in her teaching. Bacon shows the importance of teachers grappling with personal and pedagogic beliefs in order to effectively implement curriculum.

**Conclusion**

This section has reviewed scholarly literature related to teacher beliefs and teacher knowledge. It discussed studies and theories about Teaching and the Nature of Knowledge, Pedagogical content knowledge, and Teachers’ Beliefs. We looked at the role of teacher beliefs
and teacher knowledge within the context of religious text study and orientations to text—both personal and pedagogical. We have situated the theories of orientations to text as being a part of the pedagogical content knowledge of bible teachers and a continuation of the scholarly research concerning the personal practical knowledge of teachers. The next section will explain the methodology for the current study about the personal curriculum narratives of Jewish day school bible teachers.
CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

Overview

Personal curriculum narratives are the teachers’ stories of how they understand and implement a written formal curriculum. Personal narratives reflect the personal practical knowledge and the pedagogical content knowledge of the teachers. The narratives may elucidate how the teachers think about the process of teaching, and give us insight into their beliefs and approaches to the text. Therefore, this research studies how beliefs inform the personal curriculum narrative of bible teachers, with a specific focus on the pedagogic content knowledge and their orientations to the text.

The central research question is: How are teachers' orientations to culturally valued texts reflected in their curriculum narratives?

By learning and analyzing each teacher’s personal curriculum narrative, this study strives to make meaning of the ways in which beliefs might inform each teacher’s enacted lessons in terms of implementing the curriculum, making pedagogic decisions, and responding to challenging questions.

Research Design

Methodology. Qualitative studies occur in the natural settings of the milieu of the participants. The researcher uses multiple methods to gather data and aims to understand “the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research” (Creswell, 2012, p. 47). Qualitative research strives to capture the voices and stories of the participants. The purpose of this study is not to make generalizations about all bible teachers, but rather, to discover the personal stories, in terms of
beliefs and practices, of a small group of individuals. Qualitative methodology is therefore appropriate since this research interviewed teachers in the natural setting of their schools, and used several data collecting methods to understand the meaning that teachers give to their personal practice of teaching and their understanding of the curriculum. The study is reflective, interpretive, and holistic, which are all characteristics of qualitative research.

**Research Paradigm.** A research paradigm “sets the context for an investigator’s study” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 128). *Constructivism-Interpretivism* is the paradigm used in this study. In constructivism “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). The researcher strives to understand the lived experience from the participants’ perspective. This paradigm is appropriate since the goal of the research is to understand the teachers from the stories they tell in their own words. The meanings will be hidden in the data, and the researcher, using a hermeneutical approach (Merriam, 2009), must uncover those meanings by helping the participants reflect on their personal beliefs and practices. *Interpretivism* refers to the researcher’s intent to make sense of—to interpret—the participant’s world of experience. The lenses through which people view and interpret events, and the meanings that they attribute to these events are central to the interpretive constructivist researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

**Role of the researcher.** The researcher plays an active role in a constructivist paradigm by asking open-ended questions in order to learn about the participants’ experiences in their own words. She works collaboratively with the research participants to elicit, record, and discuss the details of their stories. According to Ponterotto (2005) this deeper meaning can be uncovered by means of an interactive dialogue in which the researcher stimulates reflection on the part of the participant. The centrality of this interaction is “a distinguishing characteristic of constructivism”
(Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129). The researcher must examine her own beliefs and biases and recognize the ways in which they may impact the research (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). A collaborative relationship often forms between the participant and the narrative researcher, and the researcher must aim to remain neutral and non-judgmental in interviews, notes, and interpretations.

**Research Tradition**

This study uses the narrative approach as a method to capture the stories of the experiences of teachers who are all using the same curriculum to teach *Torah* to elementary Jewish day school students. Narrative research looks at the lived stories of individuals in order to better understand “the ways humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative research is a distinct methodology that supports and enhances the task of collecting and analyzing stories “about individuals’ lived and told experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 71). The stories are subjectively told from the participant’s point of view, and co-constructed with the researcher as she asks open ended questions, and later looks for themes and meanings within the stories.

The “interrelationship between design and approach” (Creswell, 2013, p. 134) is discernible at each step of the narrative research process. From stating the purpose and developing the research questions, to gathering and analyzing the data, a narrative study is less about presenting claims that might add to the existing knowledge in the field, and more about creating “a new sense of meaning and significance with respect to the research topic” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) prefer to think of research questions as “research puzzles” (p. 124). Unlike problems with specific solutions, narrative inquiry aims to
put together the pieces of the puzzle in ways that uncover new meanings. In this study, the research looked not for definitive or effective beliefs and practices of bible teachers, but rather, investigated and interpreted the stories of individual teachers in order to understand their experiences. The specificity of the context—in this case, a Jewish day school bible class—is another defining characteristic of narrative research (Creswell, 2013).

Narrative data is collected by multiple means (Creswell, 2013). This study will use one-on-one interviews and field notes to explore the stories of each teacher’s personal experiences from different perspectives. From the interview, the participant and the researcher will together co-construct the story of how teaching bible is implemented and experienced. In this way, we will tell the story of the personal curriculum narrative, that is—the teacher’s understanding of the curriculum process from the formal curriculum (the way it is written), to the perceived curriculum (the way that the teacher understands it), to the enacted curriculum (what happens in the classroom).

The data collection methods used in this project are typical of narrative inquiry; the researcher listened attentively, recorded, transcribed, and later analyzed and interpreted the experiences of individuals. The researcher looked for clues and evidence of the beliefs that lie beneath the teachers’ thinking processes as they plan, implement, and reflect upon their classroom practice. Analyzing the teachers’ experiences by “restorying” (Creswell, 2013) means that the researcher re-organizes the data into a general framework. In restorying, the chronology or details may be arranged differently than the text of the transcripts, in order to make the story more complete. In this study, the analysis groups the stories of all of the participants together by the themes that emerged.
Collaborating on or co-creating the stories through the relationship that forms between the participant and the researcher is another distinctive feature of narrative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013). There is a potential for both parties to learn and change as a result of this encounter. Participants are involved in member checking—reading and giving feedback to the researcher about interpretations and analyses of the experiences. Participants are invited to disagree and to suggest revisions. Member checking also serves as a means of validating the research. The process of collecting data, re-reading, and revising is an iterative and collaborative endeavor of the researcher and the participants.

The final narrative that emerges from this study is the personal stories of each participating teacher. This narrative will be written with rich thick description, which is a detailed style of writing that uses quotes, actions, and adjectives to vividly convey the feelings, sights, and sounds of the story to the reader. Thick description also insures that “the narrative presents both the context and the web of social relationships” (Moen, 2006, p. 8) that surround the story. The beliefs and practices of each teacher have been reconstructed and restoryed. Common themes, similarities, and differences among the teachers will be explored. The resulting stories will provide insight into the content and teaching knowledge of bible teachers with an emphasis on their beliefs about teaching Torah to young children, and their approaches/orientations to sacred text.

Key theorists in the development of the narrative approach. Compared to other qualitative approaches, narrative inquiry has so recently gained in popularity that Creswell (2012) believes that “its methods are still developing” (p. 502). Researchers in all fields of the humanities have used the narrative methodology. Clandinin and Connelly provided the first comprehensive overview of the narrative research design in 1990 in their classic article *Stories of*
Experience and Narrative Inquiry. Creswell (2012) refers to three trends that have influenced the use and development of narrative research in the field of education: (1) “an increased emphasis on teacher reflection” (p. 503), (2) more emphasis on how teachers make decisions in the classroom and develop professionally, and (3) researchers and educators seeking “to bring teachers’ voices to the forefront by empowering teachers to talk about their experiences” (p. 503). 

Outside of the field of education, researchers in the fields of psychology (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998), and sociology (Cortazzi, 1993; Riessman, 1993) have also developed procedural guidelines for the narrative method of qualitative research (Cresswell, 2012).

In Riessman’s (2008) book about narrative methods, she discusses four types of narrative analysis: thematic analysis, structural analysis, dialogic/performance analysis, and visual analysis. Classrooms are one of the venues that Riessman (2008) mentions as appropriate for dialogic/performance analysis. Not only are the words of the participants recorded and transcribed, but field notes add to the analysis in terms of the positions of the characters, the tone of voice, and facial and body language expressions.

In his study Considering the Significance of Teacher Narratives in Contemporary Jewish Education (1999) Pomson notes the importance of continuing to use this methodology in Jewish education research. Narrative inquiry opens possibilities for understanding Jewish education from the point of view of the practitioners, to recognize teachers as sources of insight, and “to obtain a perspective on their lives, work, and careers” (p. 2).

Participants

This study looks at a very specific group of people: Jewish day school bible teachers who use the MaToK Bible Curriculum. A purposeful sampling strategy was utilized in order to
explore the beliefs and orientations of teachers as they go through the process of implementing a written curriculum. The researcher must consider three elements in a purposeful sampling: (1) the specific type of sampling strategy, (2) the size of the sample, and (3) whom to select (Creswell, 2012). The decisions are based upon finding the best individuals and sites to “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 156).

**Sampling strategy.** The goal of this study is to understand and describe a specific group in depth and will therefore use homogeneous sampling. In homogeneous sampling, individuals and/or sites are chosen “based upon membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics” (Creswell, 2012, p. 208). The defining characteristics in this study’s sampling are teachers who: (1) teach bible, (2) work in a Jewish day school, and (3) use the MaToK Bible Curriculum. With these characteristics being similar, the research can then concentrate on the beliefs and practices of the teachers as the variables to be analyzed.

**Size of sample.** In order to provide an in-depth picture of the impact and interaction of beliefs upon the implementation of a written curriculum, the sample includes six teachers. This is an appropriate sample size in order to give detailed, rich, thick descriptions of the experiences of the individuals, and to capture the phenomenon of the interaction of teachers’ beliefs and their implementation of a written curriculum.

**Selection of participants.** The researcher contacted the Heads of School and/or Judaic studies curriculum coordinators at Jewish day schools using the MaToK Bible Curriculum in the northeastern United States. She explained the research project and asked permission to speak with the bible teachers at each school and to solicit them to be research participants. A local school that uses MaToK was not used due to the researcher’s familiarity with many teachers and
families involved in Jewish education in her area. Jewish day schools are found in cities with substantial Jewish populations, and the researcher was prepared to travel up to two hours by car to visit schools with qualifying potential participants.

In order to work with as diverse a group as possible, I was seeking to find a balance of ages, genders, length of teaching experiences, and religious backgrounds. However, the final research subjects, the six teachers represented in this study, are all experienced female teachers between the ages of 49 and 65. Instead of a broad overview, this study therefore provides insight into a specific generation of teachers, all born between World War II and the technology explosion of the 1980s.

Participants in narrative studies are often influenced by their participation and experience in the research process (Creswell, 2012). The researcher chose people who were excited about the prospect of being a participant, and with whom the researcher felt she could build relationships.

Restricting participation to teachers using the MaToK curriculum limits the external validity of the findings. The findings will apply to a very small subset of bible teachers: those who are teaching students in grades two through seven of Jewish day schools. MaToK is not used in non-Jewish parochial schools, nor is it used by “right-wing” orthodox Jewish schools or Jewish schools affiliated with the Reform Jewish day school movement. Finally, only 28 schools in North America are using this curriculum in the current 2015-16 school year from a potential pool of about 140 North American schools. This self-selecting group of schools has chosen MaToK due to the approaches that the formal curriculum advocates.
Trustworthiness

It is imperative that qualitative researchers consider and ensure the trustworthiness and validity of their studies. Creswell (2013) emphasizes two interrelated questions to guide considerations of trustworthiness: “Is the account valid, and by whose standards? How do we evaluate the quality of qualitative research?” (p. 243). I incorporated the following validation strategies in my research to maintain the trustworthiness of my study:

1. **Member checking.** The participants in this study are, in many ways, also co-creators of the research. In member checking the participants are consulted during the analysis process as one way of validating the findings (Saldana, 2013). The teachers who participated were given the opportunity to read the transcript of their own interview. They were asked to check for their own agreement with the accuracy of the materials, and to revise or delete material as they saw fit.

2. **Triangulation.** The process of triangulation “involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Data was obtained by three different methods in order to check and compare the evidence: interviews, field notes, and member checking. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. The research was also guided by theories of pedagogical content knowledge and orientations to sacred text.

3. **Clarifying researcher bias.** Before starting my data collection, I reflected about “past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations” (Creswell, p. 251) that were likely to shape my approach to the study and my interpretation of the data. These biases include my age and status as a senior Jewish educator working with participants who may be in earlier stages of their teaching careers. I took note of the need to be a supportive co-
creator of the research with the participants. This meant not being threatening in any way and avoiding behavior and comments that might be construed as evaluative, judgmental, or supervisory. The narrative accounts that I restory need to be authentically the voices of the teachers and not a reconstruction of their words that is tainted with my own research agenda.

4. “Prolonged engagement and persistent observation” (Creswell, p. 250) refers to the investment of time that I put into my research to build trusting relationships with the study participants. This included a conversation about general demographic matters with each participant before the formal interview began. The purpose of this introduction was to put the teacher at ease by making sure she understood the process of the research and the roles that each of us will play. Although I had anticipated that my relationship with the participants would extend over a period of several months, sufficient information was obtained from the initial interview and there were no follow-up interviews.

5. Rich thick description. This refers to a style of writing in narrative research that is enriched with depth and detail in order to give the reader a vivid picture of the participants and their settings (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This information enables the reader to decide if the findings are transferrable to other settings. Rich thick description uses quotes and strong action verbs to detail activity, movement, and physical characteristics of people and places.

Creswell defines validity as “an attempt to assess the ‘accuracy’ of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants” (p. 249-250). Problems in drawing the correct conclusions and inferences from the data are referred to as threats to internal validity. Following
are some of the problems that I anticipated might occur in my study, and the ways in which I planned to minimize the threats:

1. *Mortality* refers to participants dropping out over the course of the study for any reason. I planned to tell the stories of a small group of teachers and started with seven teachers so that in the event of participant mortality, there would still be a significant cohort of teachers with whom to work. This did indeed occur and one teacher dropped out. That left six teachers, still a good sized group from which to draw and analyze data.

2. *Maturation* refers to changes and developments in the lives of the participants over the course of the research. Each teacher was interviewed only one time, so the possibility of change over time was not relevant and was not a threat to the validity of the study.

3. *Researcher bias* is another potential threat. I tried to guard against my own biases by regularly re-reading and updating the personal reflections written before the study began. I also engaged in the writing of analytic memos (Rubin and Rubin, 2012) in order to reflect on what I was seeing, thinking, and feeling.

4. *Familiarity*. This is a very real problem in performing research in the relatively small world of Jewish day school elementary bible teachers. I did not solicit participation from the school in my immediate community since I know many of the teachers, administrators, and families of the students. I was prepared to drive up to two hours from my home in order to find day school bible teachers at schools that use the MaToK curriculum. I intended to disqualify candidates with whom I have had a significant personal or professional relationship, or who have family members who are known to me.
Researcher reflexivity throughout the data collection and analysis stages of the research also served as a safeguard against threats to the validity of the study. Reflexivity means that the researcher constantly questions and challenges her own ideas and findings. Employing analytical memo writing also facilitated this process as an attempt to step back from the research and collect my thoughts.

As a final thought on the trustworthiness and validity of my qualitative narrative research study, I was struck by Creswell (2013) referring to Angen’s (2000 cited in Creswell, 2013, p.248) concept of “generative promise” (p. 248). The concept of generative promise means that our research should open up new questions, stimulate dialogue and raise possibilities: “Our research must have transformative value leading to action and change. Our research should also provide non-dogmatic answers to the questions we pose” (p. 248). It is exactly these promises that I believe will be fulfilled by this narrative study about the beliefs of bible teachers and their enactment of a written curriculum.

**Reciprocity**

Narrative inquiry is a collaborative process. It is “a relational research methodology, and, while it is research, it is also a transaction between people, which makes ethical issues and concerns about living well with others central to the inquiry” (Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin, 2013, p. 578). In order to understand teachers’ lives and work, the researcher interacts with them by means of a shared endeavor. Opportunities for teacher-participants to grow and learn alongside the researcher occur organically within narrative research. “Professional growth and learning would be almost a side-benefit of such research” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010, p. 267). Partners in the research relationship are brought together by their overlapping stories and by the
attention and sensitivity they bring to remembering, discussing, and restorying lived experiences (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013). Therefore, teacher-participants in this study were given an opportunity for deep reflection and growth by means of discussing their classroom practice with the researcher. Although the researcher sought to understand the teachers’ practical and pedagogical content knowledge, the teachers’ own awareness of who they are as teachers, what they know, and what they do, may be heightened by sharing their experiences and by looking deeply at themselves as professionals. There may also be a therapeutic or cathartic experience for the participants should they need to, or decide to, share troubling experiences as well as neutral and positive ones.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

It is imperative to protect human research subjects from risk of harm and recognition. “Not harming interviewees means not exploiting them” (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p. 89) and not publishing materials that might be harmful to their reputation. Moreover, in narrative research, when we are exploring and writing about the personal and professional lives of other people, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) further caution us “to compose a text that does not rupture life stories” (p. 174) that are meaningful and sustaining to the participants. As required in all research involving human subjects, safeguards were built into the study in order to maintain ethical conduct and to ensure the personal and professional protection of the research participants. Cities and states are not identified, and pseudonyms are used in place of the names of the schools and participants. Information was coded without reference to specific individuals.

Potential participants listened to and read a summary of the purpose and methodology of the research. They were reminded that participation in the project is voluntary and that they would be free to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were assured of
confidentiality throughout the study. Employing member checking as a means of validation enabled participants to review the transcripts of their own interviews, to comment on inaccuracies, and to request the removal of any narrative or quotation with which they were not comfortable.

All non-digital data, such as handwritten notes from interviews, were kept in a locked drawer that was accessible only to the researcher until they were all transferred to digital form, after which the non-digital data was destroyed. All digitally stored data was located on a computer used only by the researcher, and the files were coded and password protected.

One potential risk to the participants may be the uncovering or remembering of troubling experiences in their past. Another potential risk might be if their supervising administrators read the final dissertation and recognize a specific teacher. A potential benefit for the participants is that by engaging in dialogue based upon the interview questions, teachers will experience reflective practice and may improve their skills in becoming reflective practitioners. Furthermore, the teacher-participants may also gain a better understanding and appreciation of their own pedagogical content knowledge.

Participants could ask any questions that they had about the content or process of the research before signing the informed consent document. By signing the consent form, participants acknowledged their own voluntary participation in the research, and that they were giving their permission to be recorded and quoted.

The researcher has successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”. The proposal for this study was approved by the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board in August 2015, and reapproved in August 2016.
Recruitment

The first step of the recruitment process was to identify and contact Jewish studies coordinators and/or the Head of School at Jewish day schools that use the MaToK Bible Curriculum and are within a two hour driving distance of the researcher’s home. A packet was mailed to eight Jewish day schools in the northeastern United States. Each packet contained a cover letter in which the researcher introduced herself and presented a brief overview of the proposed study, and a copy of the informed consent document. Recipients were asked if they would be willing to meet with the researcher in person to learn more about the project, and to consider allowing teachers from their school to be research participants. No responses were received from this initial contact, and the researcher subsequently spoke by phone to each Head of School, Judaic studies head, or receptionist, or left a voice message. The researcher offered to meet with the Jewish studies coordinator and/or director of each school to explain the research and ask permission to approach their teachers about participating as study subjects. The phone conversation, however, was sufficient for three of the schools to allow the researcher to come in person for teacher recruitment.

The researcher met in person with the grades two through six bible teachers in each school to introduce herself, explain the purpose of the research and the procedures involved, and invited the teachers to participate. She also provided each potential participant with a copy of the informed consent document (Appendix D) which she read out loud. Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants was emphasized. The teachers were assured that no one, including administrators at the school, would have access to any research data, and would not be allowed to be present during the interviews. All questions that the teachers had were answered by
the researcher. Each teacher was given an addressed and stamped envelope in which to return the informed consent document if interested in participating.

Three teachers attended the recruitment meeting at the first school, the Akiva Jewish Day School, which has an enrollment of 80-90 students in grades K-8. The school is located in a suburban area adjacent to a large city. We met in the classroom of one of the teachers. All three subsequently signed and returned the informed consent documents and were interviewed. However, one teacher stopped responding to my emails and did not let me know either that she approved the transcript of the interview, or that she was withdrawing from participation. She is not included in this study.

The second school was the Rashi Academy, a K-5 school with an enrollment of fewer than 70-80 students. The school is located in a residential section of a state capital city. I met with two teachers in the school’s Teachers’ Room, both of whom consented and participated as interview subjects. At the first two schools, the Heads of School greeted me when I arrived, and both mentioned that they were encouraging their teachers to participate in the study as a form of professional development in reflective practice. The teachers at the first two schools were all native English speakers and their demeanor was open and friendly.

The Jewish Community Day School was the third school visited for recruitment. Unlike the first two schools, which are architecturally connected to synagogues in residential areas, the Jewish Community Day School is located on a spacious 17 acre campus that was previously a private school. The surrounding neighborhood is residential. Community Day School has over 200 students spanning the grades from a Transitional Kindergarten through grade eight. About 20% of those students are in a program for children with learning disabilities. My contact person at this school was the Judaic Studies Coordinator. She arranged for me to meet with six teachers
in a conference room located in an administrative building. All but one of the teachers were Israeli born, and the atmosphere at the recruitment meeting was not as relaxed and easy-going as in the other schools. Three of the teachers signed and returned the informed consent documents, and two of them were interviewed. The third teacher and I could not find a mutually convenient time to meet.

Access

There are ethical issues involved in human research that must be addressed. Safeguards were built into the study in order to maintain ethical conduct and to ensure the personal and professional protection of the research participants. The research project received IRB approval before the recruitment of study subjects began. Ethical issues pertaining to the study are outlined in the informed consent documents (Appendix D). The researcher read the consent form aloud and answered the questions and concerns of the potential participants. They were reassured that their participation would not involve serious risk to them professionally or personally, and that every possible attempt would be made to prevent identification from reading the research. It was also mentioned to the potential participants that a possible benefit of participation might be their growth as reflective practitioners. Potential research subjects were assured of complete confidentiality, as well as their ability to withdraw from the study at any time. Potential participants were given time to consider whether or not they wish to participate. They received an informed consent document with a stamped envelope addressed to the researcher, and were asked to read, sign and return the consent form within one week if they wished to proceed. Transcripts of each interview were shared with the teacher in order to check for accuracy, to delete any portions that the participant choose not to share, and to add information if desired.
Although there is no monetary compensation for participants, the researcher expressed her willingness to meet privately with each participant when the entire doctoral project is completed for a private consultation or discussion related to any aspect of teaching bible.

**Data Collection and Storage**

Data collection in narrative research is gathered from multiple sources in order to create a rich and diverse data base. The sources for this study included interviews with individual teachers and field notes.

The interview with each teacher served two purposes: (1) Building the researcher-participant relationship and (2) Assessing the teacher’s patterns of religious beliefs and orientations to teaching sacred text/Torah. The interviews consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions estimated to last between 60 and 90 minutes and took place at the schools. The interviews also included looking at and discussing together a selection of biblical text.

All data was transcribed before conducting the next teacher interview. This gave the researcher time to transcribe and begin first cycle coding of the data. This pause in the momentum also provided an opportunity to begin to consider the possible themes that may emerge or gaps in the information gathered thus far that should be followed-up. In addition to recordings of interviews with the teachers and the lessons, field notes were written by the researcher during the interviews, making note of such things as tone of voice, body language, emotional state, etc.

Analytical memo writing was concurrent with the data collection process. This process of data collection provided the researcher with clues and direct answers to the research questions.
The data contained first hand reflections by the teacher as well as observations by the researcher that helped uncover the beliefs and practices of the teachers.

Transcripts, recordings, and other records were stored in a locked drawer and/or a password protected computer. Teacher confidentiality was maintained as only the researcher had access to these records and to the password. Confidentiality was maintained by labeling all records with codes. The key to the codes was accessible to and known only by the researcher. Recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation defense.

**Interview Protocol**

The interviews were conducted on the school premises in classrooms or small meeting rooms, with only the researcher and one teacher present. After devoting a few moments for demographic questions and a review of the informed consent document, each participant gave permission for the discussion to be recorded on a digital audio recorder, and the interview commenced.

The interview protocol (Appendix E) was designed to elicit information about the teachers’ attitudes, values, beliefs about student learning, beliefs about sacred text, and approaches to teaching text. The questions were open-ended. Some teachers were very articulate and volunteered a wealth of information. Others were more succinct and the researcher often followed up by asking probing and/or clarifying questions. The interviews lasted between 60 and 80 minutes.

Part one of the interview was the *Interviewee Background/Warm-up*. It was designed to help the teacher relax and to talk about things that are more factual, before moving on to the more reflective questions at the end of this section and in subsequent sections. This gave the
researcher a chance to continue to build rapport and to understand the teacher’s specific position with the curriculum in terms of the grade level and the sections of the bible that she teaches.

The next part of the interview was the Torah Biography. The researcher prefaced asking the questions with the following introduction: “I am calling this part of the interview the Torah Biography, because I want to learn about your relationship with Torah study as you have progressed throughout your life up to this point. Let’s look at each section of your life: childhood, adolescence, adulthood.” This section gave the researcher a clearer idea of each teacher’s previous experiences with Torah before they became Torah teachers, as well as their ongoing personal and professional development.

The second set of open-ended questions was designed to help each teacher reflect on her current teaching. The researcher introduced this section, Reflecting on Current Teaching, with the preface, “We are going to transition now from your past experiences with Torah to speaking about you as a teacher here, now, this year!”

The researcher next studied a passage of biblical text together with the teacher. This section, Studying Text Together was prefaced with, “I would like to look at some Torah text with you. We will read through it and then I want you to think about how you might teach this to your students.” The selection chosen was the story of the Tower of Babel, found in Genesis 11:1-9 (Appendix F). This text was chosen for several reasons:

- All three schools used materials from the MaToK Bible Curriculum which does not have a unit on the Tower of Babel. Therefore, it was likely that the teachers had not taught this recently to any of their current classes.
- It is a short succinct story.
- It raises a lot of questions that remain unanswered in the text.
There is no mention of Jews or the Jewish people in this story, and I was curious how the teachers would deal with that.

God is a major character in this selection.

Each teacher was given one sheet of paper with the text printed on it in Hebrew and English, and another sheet with guiding questions (Appendix G) as they considered how they might teach these nine verses. They read the selection and then spoke about their ideas and answers to the guiding questions.

The final part of the interview was intended to stimulate the teachers to reflect about the various orientations to text that they use in their class. Eight different approaches were written on slips of paper. The teachers divided them into three categories: Approaches I use often; approaches I sometimes use; approaches that I rarely or never use. When the terminology used for the names of the approaches were not clear to a teacher, I restated it in more familiar words and gave some examples. Finally, the teachers were asked to prioritize the approaches in the “used often” column in order of importance or frequency of usage. The categories were based on Holtz’s (2003) chart of orientations (Appendix C): Contextual, Literary Criticism, Parshanut-Jewish Interpretive, Moralistic-Didactic, Personalization, Ideational, Bible Leads to Action; Decoding, Translating, and Comprehension. The Reader Response Orientation was very confusing to the first two teachers, and was subsequently removed from the choices. In addition, I asked each teacher orally which orientations they might apply to teaching the story of the Tower of Babel.

The recorded interviews were transcribed and sent back to each teacher for her approval, corrections, or revisions.
Data Analysis and Coding

The process of data analysis in narrative research is the process of making meaning. This requires reducing, consolidating and interpreting the data in order to answer the research questions (Merriam, 2009). The process begins with the verbatim transcription of raw data from the field work—in this case, recordings of interviews. Merriam (2009) cautions the researcher to begin this part of the analysis process immediately after the first interview or observation, in order to keep oneself focused rather than overwhelmed by mounting piles of data.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) review the process of turning these “field texts” into research texts as follows: The researcher reads and rereads the field texts in order to become intimately familiar with the material. This verbatim material is built upon specific events. It is descriptive and close to the experience. Reflective intent, which is not found in the field texts, begins to form as the researcher transitions to the next step—the first cycle of narrative coding. This preliminary analysis pays attention to topics such as “character, place, scene, plot, tension, end point, narrator, context, and tone” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 131).

The transcribed interviews were typed into an Excel spreadsheet in chunks of dialogue. The first cycle coding experimented with descriptive coding, affective coding, and in vivo coding, with each type of coding using one of the columns immediately to the right of the transcribed text. The descriptive coding was used to assign labels in order to inventory the topics, and summarized each basic topic in a word or phrase. The affective coding was used to mark subjective qualities of human experience, such as emotions, values, attitudes, beliefs, perspective, worldview, conflicts, etc. In vivo phrases were noted when the teachers’ literal words captured an important feeling or belief, or expressed an idea in a unique way. The affective and in vivo
categories yielded a small amount of data. The descriptive coding appeared to be the most useful to analyze.

When all of the descriptive codes were gathered and sorted, two main topics were easily discernable from the rest. They were The Meaning of Torah and Orientations/Interpretive Stances. “Meaning of Torah” is meant to convey the teachers’ ideas and feeling about the role of Torah in the lives of their students, and the reasons that it is important to study Torah. Orientations/Interpretive Stances could be further divided into two sections: Information that was implied in the teachers’ narratives as they were answering interview questions, and information gained when they were explicitly asked about different approaches to text.

The remaining descriptive codes fall into four general areas: Information about the personal background and professional development of the teacher; Methodology; Students; and God Talk (theological issues raised by the students). The Methodology section is further refined into the categories of: Preparation for teaching; Implementation of the teaching; Assessment, and Hebrew Language—a special issue for Jewish Day School Teachers. Further points of consideration in organizing the data was whether or not the Orientations/Interpretive Stances data should be included in the Methodology section (which was not done), and whether God-Talk could be combined with Meaning of Torah (which was done). All of these categories of data comprise the Pedagogical Content Knowledge of the teacher.

The teachers’ comments in the transcribed interviews were then re-ordered according to the thematic topics that emerged from the coding in order to restory each narrative with the same structure.

The scope and organization of the data can be viewed visually in Figure 3.1 below:
Due to the distinctive feature of participant-researcher collaboration in narrative inquiry, the ongoing work of analysis is shared with the participant and feedback is invited (member checking). The iterative cycle of reading, analyzing, and sharing continues until the multitude
of possibilities for interpretation have been examined and exhausted. The analytic memo writing, begun in the data collection phase, continues throughout the coding, analysis, and interpretation phases as a vehicle for researcher reflexivity.

In narrative research, the techniques and theory of a particular perspective or discipline serve as lenses to analyze the text. The theory of pedagogical content knowledge serves as the structural lens for this research. The study attempts to understand what teachers know and believe about the specific content area that they teach, and how that knowledge leads them to the implementation of a formal curriculum. Pedagogical content knowledge includes beliefs about and orientations to the subject matter. The framework of orientations to biblical text (Holtz, 2003) also helped the researcher analyze the approaches to text that are part of each teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge.

Limitations

As mentioned above, the specialized nature of the curriculum and the type of schools that use it may limit the scope of the applicability of specific conclusions in this research. However, the insight gained into the pedagogical content knowledge, including beliefs and orientations that inform the process of bringing a formal written curriculum to life in a classroom of students may prove to be applicable to other ways of teaching bible in both Jewish and non-Jewish venues.

An unexpected limitation is that the teachers who were interviewed are all experienced, female, non-Orthodox, and within a 16 year age span. Thus, instead of a diverse overview of teachers, the data represent teachers born during a specific period of world and Jewish history from 1950-1966. They are “baby boomers” who were born within living memory of the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel.
Two of the teachers grew up in pre-1967 Israel in secular families. This was a period of economic hardship, as well as a period of adjustment in a newly founded state. Many of the residents were attempting to rebuild their lives after World War II and Israel’s War of Independence. Both of these traumatic events shattered families. The Bible education these women received was focused on Zionism and love of the Land of Israel. Torah was taught as a national story, rather than as a guide to religious behavior.

Three teachers grew up during that same period in the United States. This was a time of growth with Jewish communities moving from the cities to the suburbs. Two teachers were from families who were connected and identified with the Conservative Movement of Judaism, which flourished in the 1960’s and 1970’s especially with the growth of their summer camps and day schools. The third teacher was raised in a home connected with the Reform Movement. The remaining teacher was raised in England in a minimally connected Jewish household.

These points are raised to emphasize a major limitation of the study: It is a snapshot in time of a specific generation of Jewish day school teachers. They grew up and were trained as teachers in a pre-digital world. They lived through the civil rights and feminist movements. Their stories may or may not contain the same elements as their younger colleagues who grew up in the 1980’s and 1990’s.

Summary

This study seeks to understand the curriculum narratives of Jewish day school bible teachers as seen through the lenses of their pedagogical content knowledge and orientations to sacred text. The personal curriculum narratives will result from their own personal, practical, and pedagogical content knowledge interacting with, filtering, and interpreting the formal written
curriculum. The teacher-participants’ stories will be restoryed by using the tools of narrative inquiry including interviews, field notes, and member checking.
CHAPTER FOUR: Research Findings

Introduction

The goal of this study is to examine how Jewish day school bible teachers understand their own practice of implementing curriculum by using the qualitative research method of narrative inquiry. By carefully listening, restorying, and analyzing the teachers’ personal curriculum narratives, the researcher seeks to uncover their pedagogical content knowledge, and to consider how that knowledge informs their implementation of curriculum.

Personal curriculum narratives are the teachers’ stories of how they understand and implement a written formal curriculum. The personal narratives reflect the personal practical knowledge and the pedagogical content knowledge of the teachers. The narratives elucidate how the teachers think about the process of teaching. This study looks at how beliefs inform the personal curriculum narratives of bible teachers, with a specific focus on the teachers’ orientations to the text as part of their pedagogical content knowledge. By analyzing each teacher’s personal curriculum narrative, this study aims to make meaning of the ways in which beliefs might inform each teacher’s enacted lessons in terms of implementing the curriculum, making pedagogic decisions, and responding to challenging questions.

This chapter will first present profiles of each of the six teachers, and will tell their stories in a “restoried” fashion by grouping the narratives thematically based upon categories developed from the coding process.

Research Question

The central research question is: How are teachers’ orientations to culturally valued texts reflected in their curriculum narratives?
Overview of the Teachers

The six teachers fall into three groups based upon demographics, background, and training. They are the Rabbis, the Israelis, and the American/Conservative Jews.

**The Rabbis.** Both Emily, age 49, and Arlene, age 57, grew up in homes that were affiliated with the Reform movement of Judaism. Emily studied and was ordained at the rabbinical school of the Conservative movement. She teaches bible in grades six and seven at the Akiva Jewish Day School. Arlene studied and was ordained at the rabbinical school of the Reconstructionist movement. Arlene teaches grades four and five at the Rashi Academy. Each woman mentioned the strong influence of a synagogue or summer camp rabbi during their teenage years. Of the six teachers who were interviewed, only the rabbis expressed their feminist views and reflected on how that influences their teaching.

**The Israelis.** Hadar, age 65, and Aliza, age 60, both grew up in secular Zionist homes in Israel. They were born within the first decade of the existence of the State of Israel, which was established in 1948. Both say that after many years of living in the United States, they consider themselves M'sorti (traditional), which has the connotation of a person with deep respect for the tradition who observes many Jewish customs, but is not Orthodox. Both women studied Bible as a subject in public school from grades two through twelve. They were trained as teachers in Israel, but not in Judaic Studies. Hadar was an art teacher and Aliza was a math teacher. They have each been teaching for thirty years, but only the past 13-15 years as bible teachers in Jewish day schools.

Hadar and Aliza both teach at the Jewish Community Day School, which is the only one of the three schools that participates in the Jewish Day School Bible Standards and Benchmarks Project. Both speak highly of the training that they have received as part of this project, and their
interview responses strongly reflect the influence that it has had on them in terms of pedagogy and bible study. Aliza teaches bible to second graders. Hadar teaches second, third, and fourth graders who are in the program for students with special learning needs.

**American/Conservative Jews.** Rita, age 61, and Joan, age 53, grew up in the Conservative movement in families that were concerned enough about Jewish education to send them to summer camps affiliated with the Conservative movement. Rita spent her junior year of college in Israel at the Hebrew University. Joan attended a Jewish day school affiliated with the Conservative movement from kindergarten through grade eight. Rita teaches second and third grades at the Rashi Academy. Joan also teaches second and third grade at the Akiva Jewish Day School.

The order in which the teachers are presented in both the profiles and the thematic analysis is based upon the groupings described above, and not upon the order in which they were interviewed.

**Profiles of the Teachers**

**Rabbi Emily.** Emily, age 49, grew up in a secular home in England, but initiated her own Jewish education by insisting on attending classes at a local Reform synagogue when she was 11 years old. As a teenager, she was part of a select group of students who learned with the rabbi. It was a privilege to be part of this “little group of protégés”, as she put it. It was from studying with this rabbinic scholar that Emily gained her knowledge and appreciation of Biblical Hebrew as a means of understanding the deeper meaning of the text. Emily has been teaching for over 30 years, starting with the Hebrew school bible classes she taught as a 17 year old. After college, Emily studied and was ordained at a rabbinical school of the Conservative
movement. She describes her current religious affiliation as, “I'm sort of a middle-of-the road Conservative rabbi.” Emily teaches Comparative Judaism, Bible, Prayer, and Zionism to students in grades six, seven, and eight at the Akiva Jewish Day School.

The interview with Emily was dynamic; she was articulate, enthusiastic, and confident. This interview lasted 30 to 45 minutes longer than the interviews with the other five teachers, but it was never boring or pedantic.

**Rabbi Arlene.** Arlene, age 57, is quiet and soft-spoken. At times, I sensed that there might have been a sadness or melancholy related to her private life, in contrast to the enthusiasm she expressed for her students and for teaching. Arlene grew up in a family that was affiliated with the Reform movement of Judaism. She attended a Hebrew school program that met in the afternoon when the public school day was over. She remembers learning Torah stories as a child, as well as some of the well-known Midrashim. At age 16, Arlene knew that she wanted to be a rabbi, and began teaching informally in her synagogue’s religious school and youth group. She was very active in the youth group, attending their conventions and choosing to be in the “Torah Corps” – a group for students who were interested in deeper academic study of Judaism. Her rabbi was a significant role model and mentor with whom Arlene “used to have really big philosophical discussions mainly around Martin Buber.” After her first summer at an educational Jewish summer camp affiliated with the Reform movement, Arlene chose to be in the intensive academic track for her second summer. Arlene deepened her understanding of bible during college by taking courses on biblical history and Biblical Hebrew. Later at rabbinical school she was exposed to an intensive and holistic learning experience about the bible. The curriculum of the Reconstructionist rabbinical school follows the idea of Judaism as a civilization, with each year concentrating on a different period of history. Arlene explains:
You can see how it evolves and changes through the years. So you do biblical, then rabbinic, then medieval, and then modern and contemporary. So the whole first year of my rabbinical school was totally immersed in biblical civilization and therefore in terms of really looking at the whole bible—not just Torah. And looking a little at Hebrew, looking at text, looking at the evolution of the society, looking at all the different aspects of it.

Arlene’s narrative confirms that she continues this holistic approach with her own students, often looking not only at the language and ideas of the story, but also at the historical context, its relevance for the students, and comparisons with our world today.

When asked what she considers herself now on the spectrum of Jewish beliefs and practices, she replied, “I'm definitely a Reconstructionist in terms of looking at Judaism as a whole civilization—and that really does evolve over time.”

When I asked Arlene at the end of the interview if there was anything else that she would like to add, or that she would like me to know about her as a Torah teacher, she laughed good-naturedly and replied, “I don't think so. I feel like it was pretty comprehensive!”

Hadar. As I sat around the table with the six teachers in the conference room at the Community Day School, Hadar, age 65, was seated to my left at one of the short sides of the rectangular table. She leaned away from me and crossed her arms over her chest. I was not sure if her body language meant that she was absolutely not interested in hearing about my proposed research project, or if she was just not in a positive frame of mind due to personal reasons. After my presentation, she raised her hand to politely inquire what in my background qualified me to analyze the practices of Jewish day school bible teachers. I repeated, as I had said in the beginning when I introduced myself, that I had 25 years of experience working in Jewish day
schools as a teacher and as an administrator. But this time I went into more detail about the grades and topics I had taught throughout the years, which included bible study with many different age groups. I also mentioned my experience in working on curriculum development together with bible teachers. A wide smile came over her face, her arms came down, and I felt accepted and welcomed. In fact, this women who was initially the most vocally skeptical, was the first one to send me her signed informed consent document. When she sat down for our first interview, she was very warm and with a smile of delight on her face said, “This is great! No one ever asked me before what I think!”

Since Hadar’s first language is not English, I sometimes rephrased things that she said to make sure that I understood her correctly. She would either agree that it was what she meant, or clarify the thoughts.

Hadar’s curiosity about the reasons behind everything I was doing as a researcher distinguished her from all of the other teachers I interviewed. When we began to look at the Tower of Babel narrative she asked, “I'm interested to know—why did you choose this text?” I replied that I chose it because most teachers in elementary schools are not teaching it. She persisted, “Ok, and what is the purpose of studying it? What are you going to learn from it? What are you looking for? Not that I'm against it, I'm just curious.” I answered that I am trying to understand how teachers think, and what they are thinking about when they create and implement curriculum. Hadar replied with a satisfied “OK”.

Hadar’s family in Israel was secular but respectful of those who were religiously observant. In the Israeli public schools she attended, Bible was taught as the national story, rather than as a religious guide. She loved studying Torah from the time she was first introduced to it in second grade, and felt a deep connection with the stories and with the land of Israel:
I always used to tell myself that wherever I went in Israel—like this is where Moshe [Moses] was, this is where King David built his barns, this is where Shlomo [Solomon] had his horses, this is the exact mountain that Shaul [Saul] stood on. Until today it thrills me. To feel the stories really happening and being able to identify myself with them—that was my strongest connection to the Torah.

One high school bible teacher who stands out in Hadar’s memory was a man who was . . . not a very Orthodox one, but he was really a believer and he knew every single word in the Torah, and it was amazing. He made us learn, recite chapters from Tehilim [Psalms]. . . . It was instilled in me and I think it was a good thing that he did.

Hadar did not study bible after high school until she became a Judaic studies teacher in the United States. Although she teaches Torah, when she picks up a bible to read for her personal pleasure, she prefers to read selections from Prophets and Writings. “I think the Nev’im [Prophets] and K’tuvim [Writings] are closer to my heart than the Torah.” She finds the latter texts “. . . more challenging. I think they speak to me as a person, as an adult, more than the stories in the Torah. And maybe because I'm not so familiar with them.” Since she engages with Torah daily as a teacher, “I want to do something for myself; I want to look at a different book.”

All of Hadar’s students during the year of this study were part of the school’s program for children with special learning needs. She has attended some training workshops and was enjoying this new challenge in her teaching career.

Aliza. Aliza did not send me her informed consent document until after I had already interviewed her colleague Hadar. She is vivacious and an effusive talker who could go on and on giving examples to illustrate whatever she has just said. Her manner of talking led to very long answers and I realized after ten minutes that if this style of answering continued—we would be
there for hours! I told her that I appreciated her examples but that since I am well versed in the
texts and methodologies she was explaining, that one example would be sufficient. Still, I had to
cut her off numerous times to keep the interview proceeding at a reasonable pace, and she
appeared to accept this good-naturedly.

Aliza shared that her grandfather came to Israel from Romania in 1881, and that she grew
up in a Zionist, secular family. She implied that her mother’s family emigrated from Europe to
Israel after World War II. Her father was well versed in Torah, and would review and repeat with
her at home the verses that she had learned in school. Aliza and her classmates were required to
learn certain sections by heart, and she proudly relates that she can still recite two well-known
poetic pieces of text: *Shirat HaYam* (The Song of the Sea, Exodus 15:1-18) and *Kinat David*
(David’s Lament, II Sam. 1:18-27). As with Hadar, her bible education in Israel was from a
secular, nationalistic point of view. She reflects:

This is the sad part about studying Torah in a secular family in Israel. Most of the things
I've learned here [in the United States]. Basically . . . . they know really nothing about,
like Judaism, the beauty. Because what happened in Israel is that you could be religious
or not. Now it's different, but at that time you could be Orthodox or you were secular,
there's no in-between.

Aliza now considers herself a *M'sorti* (traditional) Jew. She enjoys going to synagogue on Friday
nights, learning from the Rabbi’s sermons, and sometimes participating in a study group about
the weekly Torah portion.

Aliza’s command of the English language is lacking in coherence and specificity.
Sometimes she cannot find the words she needs. Perhaps this provides a reason for why she feels
that she has to give so many examples, or perhaps, regardless of the language, she has difficulty
distilling ideas down to their essence. I often rephrased Aliza’s comments back to her in order to make sure that I correctly understood the points she was making. She either agreed or would clarify her meaning. In the discussion below, I have rephrased most of Aliza’s comments, even those presented as quotations, in order to enable the reader to understand her meaning.

Rita. Rita, age 61, has been teaching for 39 years, with the last 32 years at a Jewish day school. She has taught middle school students and has been a “pull-out” special education teacher for grades one through six. This year she is teaching all of the Judaic Studies subjects in a combined classroom of second and third graders. Rita grew up with a strong connection to the Conservative movement of Judaism. Her family belonged to a Conservative synagogue, where she attended a religious school that met in the afternoons, after the public school day was over.

Rita also attended the educational summer camp of the Conservative movement for eight years, and attributes her Judaic background to the strong influence of the camp. She remembers not so much the content of what she learned at camp, but rather the strong influence of the counselors as role models: “They were really good Torah readers, that kind of thing; as an adolescent girl at camp I was sort of attracted to that.” During the school year, she was involved in a synagogue youth group that emphasized study and leadership. Here, too, she remembers the role models more than the content: “So again, the people who led these things were attractive.”

Rita spent two different years of her life in Israel, including her junior year of college, during which she took courses mostly in Judaic subjects. Two of the courses were with the well-known and distinguished teachers Nechama Leibowitz and Rabbi David Hartman.

I would say that they had influence on me and how I looked at Torah study. . . . Maybe that discussion, maybe that was really opening my eyes up to the different interpretations
and how you look at text, and how you can take one line of text and really delve into it, and have so many different ways of seeing it.

Rita was the only teacher who used the word “faith” during the interview. The context concerned the factors that contribute to the choices she makes about what to emphasize in the curriculum. One of those factors is her goal that the students “understand how strong a faith can be”. She returned to this idea when considering goals for her students who are studying the narratives of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs: “I want them to think about faith and how strong a belief can be—what it could motivate you to do.”

**Joan.** At age 53, Joan radiates energy and enthusiasm. She has been teaching for 19 years, with the past twelve years at a Jewish day school. Her undergraduate degree was in Accounting and Economics, but she has a strong Judaic background based upon her nine years (grades K-8) at a Jewish day school and her attendance at a Jewish summer camp during her teenage years. Both the school and the camp were affiliated with the Conservative movement of Judaism. Joan considers her education at the day school “priceless”. She adds that “growing up—it shaped my whole life”.

One bible teacher in particular, who taught her in grades three through eight, had a strong impact on her knowledge and attitude towards Torah and Judaism. When asked what characteristics made this teacher so memorable, Joan replied:

Everything about him. I mean, the passion that he had, and the love that he had, and the energy that he had. I mean I'm 53 years old and still everything that he gave me is there and I sometimes feel myself channeling him when I'm with my kids. But what he gave me is priceless. . . It's there, it's there all these years later.
Fortunately for Joan, she was able to thank this teacher many years later. “Through this amazingly bizarre set of coincidences” he was in the office of her school one day last year when she walked in.

I was able to share with him everything that he gave me and what it meant to me and he came in and met my students and talked to them.

He gave me a hug like crying and he said you have no idea what this means seeing what you do now with the next generation.

Joan’s grandparents also wielded significant influence upon her Jewish identity. She went to synagogue with them almost every Friday night and Saturday morning, and she sensed how important this was to them. Joan volunteered the information that her father is not Jewish, and that her childhood was “a very, very interesting melding of everything--but I came away with this love for Judaism.”

Today, Joan is very active in synagogue life. In addition to teaching at the day school, she tutors students for Bar and Bat Mitzvah, attends a weekly class with her rabbi (who is also the grandfather of one of her students), and participates regularly in the synagogue service by chanting from the Torah and the Haftarah (a selection from the prophets read each week after the Torah reading). When asked how she would identify herself on the spectrum of Jewish beliefs as an adult, she laughed and said “Joan-ism”. She describes herself as “very spiritual”. Noting that she belongs to a Conservative synagogue and teaches at a Conservative day school, Joan laughs again and says “I would say “Conservative,” but maybe my own little brand of Conservative. . . . I don't think anybody really fits into a specific peg. I think everybody kind of comes from their own place.”
A recurring theme in Joan’s story is the conflict she feels between instilling in her students a love and passion for the text and its inherent values, versus teaching the details of the language and understanding Biblical Hebrew.

**Table 4.1 Demographic Information about Study Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym, age</th>
<th>Training in Education</th>
<th>Training in Judaic Studies</th>
<th>Grew up as</th>
<th>Identifies now as</th>
<th>years of teaching experience total/Jewish Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emily, 49</td>
<td>School of Education</td>
<td>Private university, Conservative Rabbinical School</td>
<td>Reform-secular UK</td>
<td>&quot;middle of the road Conservative Rabbi&quot;</td>
<td>30/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arlene, 57</td>
<td>Reconstructionist Rabbinical School</td>
<td>BA Judaic Studies, Ordination Reconstructionist Rabbinical College</td>
<td>Reform USA</td>
<td>Reconstructionist</td>
<td>40/40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadar, 65</td>
<td>BA Art Education in Israel</td>
<td>BJE-NY workshops for special education, MaToK Training, Standards and Benchmarks Training</td>
<td>Secular Zionist ISRAEL</td>
<td></td>
<td>30/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliza, 60</td>
<td>teachers' seminary in Israel, trained as math teacher</td>
<td>Standards and Benchmarks Training</td>
<td>Secular Zionist ISRAEL</td>
<td>M'sorti= Traditional</td>
<td>31/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita, 61</td>
<td>Private University</td>
<td>workshops, personal background, junior year of college at Hebrew University (Jerusalem); Camp Ramah</td>
<td>Conservative USA</td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>39/32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan, 53</td>
<td>None formally (BS in Accounting and Economics)</td>
<td>Conservative Jewish Day School K-8; Camp Ramah as teenager; community Jewish high school (supplementary)</td>
<td>Conservative USA</td>
<td>Conservative- &quot;Joan-ism&quot;</td>
<td>19/12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Narrative Themes**

**Personal and professional growth.**

*Emily.* Emily credits the Institute of Education in her home town for training her in progressive education:
They really took the idea of the “teacher-being-the all-knowing-one-who's- just-going-to fill-the-empty-vessels-with-knowledge” away from me, and . . . . made me realize that active learning and having the kids finding the answers, rather than me giving them the answers, was much more effective and powerful.

Reflecting on the Professional Development programs in which she has participated in recent years, she cites three in particular that influenced her teaching in a positive manner. The common factor of the three programs was that the facilitators modeled the skills that they wanted the teachers to learn. Most effective for Emily was when the school brought in a team of experts on Differentiated Instruction to work with the entire faculty. In particular, the mentor who was assigned to her discussed “issues and philosophy” that have had a long-lasting influence on her pedagogy.

I asked Emily how her teaching has changed over the years and what her goals would be for continued improvement. When she started her teaching career, Emily reflects,

I thought it was all about me. So I would teach the text, a lot of me telling them things with my voice definitely being the center of everything. And now I think part of a successful lesson is if I've talked less and they've talked more. It's definitely about them bringing out the text and me being a facilitator and not be the holder of all the information and me spreading my wisdom.

Two challenges that Emily finds in her current teaching are that the school has moved to multi-grade classes, and that for some students, “the text seems very apart from them”. Emily attributes the latter either to weak Hebrew language skills or because they come from a home where Torah study is not a valued activity. She speaks with her supervisor on a regular basis about how to engage these students and how to make the text relevant to them.
Arlene. The professional development workshops that Arlene has attended are usually intended for teachers of secular subjects, rather than Judaic studies or Bible teachers. She is confidently able to take the skill-sets from the workshops and apply them to teaching Torah. A workshop about “reading texts and questioning” stands out in her mind. She was inspired and motivated to consider “How do you bring that to a Jewish text?”

Reflecting upon how she has grown and changed as a teacher, Arlene says that she is a better teacher “in terms of my patience and in terms of being able to ask better open-ended questions rather than just asking questions and waiting for the correct and ‘right’ answer.” She considers herself more relaxed, self-confident and creative. By “creative”, Arlene explains that she means she is more knowledgeable about “how to bring in supplemental materials to help augment and really ground what I’m trying to teach”. She appreciates the autonomy that her school gives to her as a teacher. She is free to add her own choice of materials that relate to the inherent concepts, issues, and questions in the text.

When Arlene was asked to consider how she would like to grow and improve as a teacher, she mentioned three main categories of skills: pacing, age appropriate expectations, and personalizing the experience. “Pacing” and “age appropriate expectations” are of concern since she formerly taught middle school students but is now with fourth graders. She says that she is still learning “how to adapt to fourth grade cognitive level” and how to adjust her expectations to fit the abilities of her fourth grade students. By “personalizing the experience” Arlene implies that she wants each child to be engaged. She would like to become more skilled at teaching the students how to work in Chevruta, a traditional way to study Jewish texts that encourages two partners working together to sharpen and clarify each other’s thinking and understanding of the text.
**Hadar.** Hadar has attended two major training workshops for bible teachers. One was offered by the MaToK Bible Curriculum when the school at which she previously taught decided to use that curriculum. With her colleagues at her present school, she has been involved in the on-going training for participants in the Jewish Day Schools Bible Standards and Benchmarks Project. The MaToK training was the first time she had studied bible as an adult, and learning with colleagues in pairs and small groups had a powerful impact upon her:

> Everyone points out some interesting points about [the text] so when we started MaToK that was the beginning. We had to start the unit, the text of the unit and we really went into studying first. This was really exciting and amazing to see how people bring their understanding of what the text means. Even before you plan the unit you're already being excited about teaching it because you're learning so much about it! So that was fascinating. I love joining *chavrutot* whenever I can.

Hadar called the Standards and Benchmarks workshop “amazing”, and says that the training has changed “my whole approach to teaching”:

> They give you the goals. It gives you the focus of: What do I have to teach? And what do I teach first? And how do I go about teaching the text? What are the skills that I have to teach before I can even enter the text? So what are the skills they're going to do while I'm teaching the text? And how do I review the whole thing? And how do I assess the children? So it's really—for me it was an eye-opening approach to teaching anything, not just *chumash*.

Hadar adds that the skills she learned are transferable to every subject she teaches, and that she will use the same approach when teaching Holidays and Hebrew Language. When asked if her new knowledge has changed anything that occurs in the classroom with the students, Hadar
explained that previous to this training “we were just teaching a text,” and she was concerned only with the main ideas and concepts. Now, however, she understands the need to teach specific skills of parsing the text so that students will be able to use the skills on their own and become independent learners. Her lessons now are:

... much more specific and more detailed in what I want them to be able to do and to be able to understand. ... You can get the big idea which is not essential depending on the skills, but if you want to be able to approach a text, to become an independent learner, they have to get all the skills and they have to be able to use them in the correct way so they can rely on their own skills to approach a new text.

Looking back on her teaching career, Hadar says that her methodology changed as her knowledge increased. Hadar sees herself continuing to grow as a teacher as she now modifies lessons and units to meet the needs of her students with special learning needs. She wishes that she had more time for personal bible study, including some of the traditional and modern commentaries. As for her goals as a teacher, Hadar hopes that

I'll get more inspiration to be able to be a more creative teacher. I'm not satisfied; I'm not fixed on where I am right now. I really would like to get better and to do it in a better way—but that's the goal of every teacher, I hope.

Aliza. Aliza has been strongly influenced by the professional training she received as a result of her school’s inclusion in the Day School Bible Standards and Benchmarks project. She specifically mentioned the mentoring of teachers as an important element in the training process. The project has helped her to form and assess the goals for her students:

When you set up your goals and know which skills your students need to learn, you teach toward those skills—no surprises. Since you are aware of the specific goals and break it
down to small pieces, you see the progress even in those students who are sometimes struggling with reading, with comprehension, or with processing information. A teacher is satisfied and happy when she is able to deliver the message.

Aliza appreciates the autonomy that she is given as a teacher. She feels free to mention ideas to her supervisor, who will allow her to incorporate those ideas into the curriculum. Aliza gave an example of how her input was accepted: An essential question for grade two *Torah* study is “how to distinguish between good and bad”. Aliza suggested taking that idea one step further with the added question,

‘How can I make good choices?’ It came from me. They said, ‘You know what? It's relevant, you can add it, it's perfect.’ And I see that it works with the students because when you work in the field, you get a sense of the needs of the students.

Aliza feels valued and validated from the fact that her idea was accepted and implemented: “The beauty of this school is that you have the freedom, and it motivates teachers to do even more.”

Looking forward to the rest of her career in education, Aliza says that although she always wants to be in the classroom, she would also like to get involved in curriculum development according to the principles she has learned in the Standards and Benchmarks project:

I can see now the differences between the beginning of my career and now after the Standards and Benchmarks training. It has become a joyful part of the process, so it's not only teaching, but also developing new approaches for second grade—so I'm excited. I would like to develop that.

*Rita.* As an adult, Rita continued her personal Torah study by participating in a group that met every Shabbat to discuss the weekly portion.
Reflecting on courses, workshops, or conferences that have been helpful to Rita as a Torah teacher, she says that educational “best practices” that she has learned can always be applied to teaching Torah. For example: “I’ve taken a course on how to have discussion in a classroom so that it’s not all teacher-focused, but where the kids are talking to each other—that sort of thing.” Rita strives to constantly change and grow. She is always looking for new methodology “to make it more active and to have more student engagement.”

When Rita considers how she may have grown and changed as a teacher during the course of her career, she notes that she now relies less on the teachers’ guides than she did earlier in her career, and that:

I feel more knowledgeable now than I was . . . Even just in terms of Torah text and being more knowledgeable and being more aware of more commentary, that kind of thing, so I think that's certainly changed. And learning from those around me, other Torah teachers also, for sure.”

Rita’s goals for her students are guided by the curriculum statements and scope and sequence documents that were prepared for her school’s accreditation, but she is still able to have a personal impact and input about what she teaches:

One of the things that's been wonderful about teaching in a school like this is really having some autonomy to be able to make choices and nobody watching over me to say “Well, you should be on page twelve today and next Tuesday be on page fifteen.”

Nobody's that involved with my day-to-day, thankfully.

Rita’s goals for future growth would be to make her classes “more active and to have more student engagement.”
Joan. Several times over the course of the interview, Joan repeated that she has “evolved” as a teacher. In order to encourage her to be more specific, some probing questions were asked:

Can you be a little more specific about that? What's changed? Is it your approach, your methodology, your relationship with students? In what ways have you evolved? In what ways has your teaching changed over the course of your career?

Joan answered by describing what she considers the positive characteristics of the curricular materials that her students use for learning Torah:

I think that they've really figured out how to reach each child, whether you're a visual learner, whether you're an auditory learner, whether you're tactile—it really does that and it lets them see the text from the text. They're really learning text from a child-friendly book that is attractive to them. They get to highlight, they get to write things, they're involved in it.

However, Joan goes on to explain the problems she sees in the way this curriculum presents Torah text:

But sometimes I think you lose the forest for the trees; that's what I sometimes feel about that book, from that curriculum. You lose the beauty of it because of the mechanics of it. So I think that those kinds of books definitely have a place but I think a little bit older. I think in these younger grades I think you want to give them more of the passion for the stories and the characters and everything like that and not so much the mechanics of it.

How does this explain the ways in which Joan has evolved? Perhaps she is trying to say that earlier in her career, she would “go by the book”, but that now she has a clearer idea of her own priorities and the needs of the students. She now, therefore, prefers to emphasize the literary and
ethical aspects of Torah (“give them more of the passion for the stories and the characters and everything like that”) over the “mechanics” of understanding the Biblical Hebrew. This contradicts, however, the fact that earlier she had proudly shown a workbook from another curriculum that she uses to supplement and drill the “mechanics” of Biblical Hebrew. At the same time, Joan is also passionate about the Hebrew language. She teaches both Torah and Hebrew to her combined class of second and third grade students, and mentioned the advantages of being able to integrate concepts from each subject into the other.

Joan speaks enthusiastically about a professional development program in which she participated last summer. She and one other Judaic studies teacher from her school attended a two-week seminar in Israel to work on the holiday curriculum for their school. She emphasizes the role-modeling done by the workshop leaders and that she felt treated as a respected professional:

They were modeling ways to teach. If I could have …. I would have stayed there as a student forever. It was amazing, everything about it! The way they treated teachers as first class people, it was just incredible…. the people they brought in from the university and all over the place was really top notch. I learned a lot.

**Summary and implications for Pedagogical Content Knowledge:** Four of the teachers mentioned their appreciation of not being “micro-managed” and of having a significant degree of autonomy in their selection of materials and approaches to students and the text. Emily, Rita, and Joan spoke of their growth in moving from being teacher-centered to student-centered in their classrooms. Three common characteristics of professional development programs that have had a positive impact upon the teachers are role-modeling of the methodology, working with a mentor, and on-going follow-up. Five of the teachers articulated areas in which they would like to
improve in the future as classroom teachers, while Aliza spoke of her desire to become more involved with curriculum development. This shows self-awareness that they are still learning and improving even though they are veteran teachers.

The summary above has no mention of teacher knowledge that is content specific. The main point about pedagogical knowledge to be gleaned from this section is that three of the six teachers raised the issue of a student-centered classroom being preferable to a teacher-centered classroom. There was no question in the interview that used these terms, so this came spontaneously from the teachers.

**Students.**

This section explores the teachers’ understandings of their students and the goals they are setting for their students.

*Emily.* Teaching her students to make good choices and to be critical thinkers are points that Emily makes repeatedly. She wants her students to understand the Hebrew text and to consider the bigger issues that are raised in the stories. Emily is sensitive to her students’ individual needs and preferences, as shown by her allowing one student to use a biblical text that is accompanied by a more traditional translation and commentary.

Emily’s comments about students fall into the following categories: their Jewish identity, their developmental levels and abilities, the ways in which she responds to them and learns from them during the process of class discussion, and her goals for her students. Her goals of developing critical and independent thinkers with a strong Jewish identity are summed up by the way she describes integrating themes in several courses that she teaches to the same group of students:
Critical thinking is something that goes through everything I teach; and passion and enthusiasm. And sort of a sense of everything we do makes up the totality of your identity as a Jewish person. So when we're studying identity issues in language arts and we're studying it in Jewish history and we're looking at it in the Tanakh and we're looking at it in a Conservative Jewish school, it's more like there's a really big mix of kids in the class and it's all very respectful and it's . . nothing's pushed on them. I don't believe in teaching as propaganda, rather teaching the tools to make their own, informed decisions. This is all about them making choices, but the idea from my side is that they're knowledgeable about the choices they're going to make in the future.

Emily is delighted to acknowledge that she learns from her students and gets excited when they see something in the text that she had not picked up. She recalls an incident from studying the Book of Esther the previous year:

There's a story where the female character is heroic and is not treated well at the beginning of the story which is very controversial. Last year my kids totally helped me to see the text in a completely different way just because of one word in the text which was amazing and sort of life-changing in a way.

When Emily enumerates the goals that she would set for her students in studying the Tower of Babel passage, she considers both the Hebrew language learning and the “big ideas”:

1. The students will be familiar with the Hebrew and be able to translate the passage from Hebrew to English.
2. The students will know how to identify the first person plural form of Hebrew verbs in the text.
3. The students will be able to identify key phrases and explain their significance.
4. The students will have a conversation about the “bigger issues”:
   i. What does it mean “to make a name for ourselves”?
   ii. What is it that displeases God? Is God giving a punishment?
   iii. What does it mean to be “spread out” and to “confound” or “confuse” their speech?

   **Arlene.** Arlene wants to be sure that the content of the text is appropriate for the developmental stage of her students. As an example, she mentions that she would not teach a biblical text about the laws of sexual morality to fourth and fifth grade students. The text needs to be one from which the students are “going to be able to find meaning and understand it within the larger context.” Arlene does not want her students to be overwhelmed or frustrated with their inability to understand the text, so she will proactively teach the more difficult words and concepts before the students confront the text. When a student asks a question that is tangential to the text, Arlene will go off-topic with the discussion as a way to respect the student’s interest, since “that's where their learning is.”

   Arlene’s overall goals for her students are that they learn the skills that will enable them to engage with the text. These skills include understand the Biblical Hebrew language, literary devices, and the ability to differentiate between *p’shat* (the literal meaning of the text) and *d’rash* (the interpretive meanings of the text). The student should also be able to understand the “teachings that can be gleaned” from the text, and to apply the moral values in their own lives.

   Arlene has two more specific goals for her students as Torah learners. First are the mechanical language skills of parsing and unpacking the text, and second, understanding the plain meaning of the text and its interpretation. She understands these skills as
... a vehicle through which they understand the beauty and value that Torah really has --the wisdom of it. I also want them to gain an appreciation of the value that Torah can have in their lives, and that still is something that has meaning for us today in terms of how we are supposed to live our lives.

**Hadar.** Hadar is concerned about her students’ attitude toward studying Torah. This is a year of transition for the special needs bible curriculum. Previously the students studied the text in English translation. This year the Hebrew text is included. This is more challenging for some students and has led to negative attitudes towards Torah study. Hadar considers “improving student attitudes” as one of her tasks in teaching bible to this particular group of students:

My main goal is for them to learn *chumash* with fun and to be happy about it, because right now in 4th grade, it's a very challenging group. I have some that just see *chumash* on the daily schedule and start screaming ‘It's too hard, it's too hard, it's too hard!’ so I want to take that away. I want them to come to *chumash* with fun and ‘Yes we can do it!’

At another point in the interview she returns to this theme: “So for me it's a big challenge because not only am I teaching the text, I have to make them like it and love it and be willing to work with it. So it is a lot of work.”

Hadar is excited when the students apply critical thinking skills and make personal connections and meaning from the text. She wants the students to question, disagree with, and challenge the text and the characters. These kinds of interactions lead to “… a nice discussion, a very true discussion to the text … If I’m able to make them agree with everything, I'm kind of disappointed because I did not initiate any independent thinking.” Hadar understands these kinds of questions and challenges to be evidence of genuine student engagement with the text. It shows
that “They're really learning; they're not just sitting there being polite and waiting for the time to pass.”

**Aliza.** Aliza is gratified to see her second grade students thinking deeply and questioning the text. “They discover things by themselves that they feel so proud about. It's an open area for them; an opportunity for them to raise questions because that's how they learn.” Aliza is particularly excited when the students ask questions for which no answer is found in the text. She tells them, "Great question! Let's think about it." She tells them that it is “ok that there is no answer” and challenges them to be interpreters. “That's how we study Torah,” she tells them. “We are interpreters of Torah.” Her ultimate goal is for the students to become independent learners of Torah.

Aliza wants to give each student a chance “to shine.” By this she means that she gives options for how an assignment may be completed, so that students can choose their area of comfort or interest, such as writing, drawing, dramatizing, etc. Aliza is prepared to change course if needed during a lesson, and is guided by the behavior and reactions of her students:

If I see students struggling with one of the instructions, if I see that they're not reaching the goal that I'm looking for, I'd rather change it on the spot instead of them struggling or not achieving the goal. So when I see on their faces that they're not able to do the job, it's better to do less because sometimes less is more. And the other way around—if I find it's too easy for the kids, I always have some challenges ready for them to go to the next step.

**Rita.** Rita’s ultimate goal for her students is to help them become independent learners of Torah. She wants to give them the tools to analyze (or as she puts it, to “attack”) a section of text:
So for my students . . . to be able to look at a piece of unfamiliar text and be able to approach it without having to say “Oh I don't understand anything in there,” but to actually be able to look at it and say “Oh wait a minute, I know some of the suffixes and prefixes and if I start to look for shorasheem, for the roots, I could actually say ‘oh, there are a bunch of words that I do understand’ so maybe I can get the gist of what's going on here by attacking it in that way.”

A significant part of the year in second grade is devoted to basic skills, “It's really an introduction to Torah language that I want them to come away with. I want them to feel confident enough to not be overwhelmed.” Rita delights in their progress and accomplishments:

I've really gotten into teaching the creation story and Breisheet to my 2nd graders. The beginning of the year, really almost two-thirds of the year, pushing to get them to read well enough and have enough vocabulary to at least begin the creation story. I love it. They really get into memorizing it and seeing the poetry of it, and the refrains. So that's been really nice.

Rita encourages conversation, discussion, and deep thinking. Even though she teaches the same texts each year, the students are the ones who make each year and each discussion unique, with the perspectives and insights that they bring to the discussion. Some of the challenging issues that the students have raised this year include:

- “Where are the women? And why aren’t they talking about the women?”
- “This is not what science would say about how the world was created.”
- “We don’t really know if Avraham was a good person or not.”
- "Why did God speak to people at that time and not to us?"
- “How do we know there really is a God?”
"I think that there was a flood but it probably was only in their area of the world and they thought that it destroyed the whole world."

Rita will throw difficult questions back to the students for them to discuss, rather than giving an answer:

Often what happens is that I really turn it to them, and I sometimes find that they, the other classmates, give more on-target answers than I can. So I think it enriches us to listen to others' ideas. . . So, again, I might throw some of these questions back to them because I don't feel that I have all the answers, and I don't feel that I need to have all the answers. I think their understanding of the richness of our tradition of questioning is really important; I want them to understand that, that the questions themselves have an importance. There doesn't always have to be one answer and that as they go through their lives, their understanding of God will grow and change as they do and their relationship to God will also.

Sometimes Rita will put a difficult question “on hold”, until a Rabbi can come in to address issues such as good and evil, the existence of God, or the authenticity of the text. She enjoys listening to their answers but “I still don’t answer it myself.” She knows the issues that puzzle second and third graders so well, that she is able to predict the questions that they might raise about the Tower of Babel story:

I think they may have a question of “If God's everywhere and the people understood that, why did they need to build this tower so high?” That might be one of their questions. I think they might ask about God and wonder why God needs to punish the people so often. I had one child ask about why we would call God a merciful god when actually God seems very much like a punitive god. I think they might wonder about that. They
might also wonder about the idea of free will and if God has created these people, why are they bad? The idea of destruction—I think it really bothers them. It bothers them that animals were killed in Noah's ark story. Yeah, I think they would have a lot of questions.

**Joan.** Joan considers Torah study a critical component to developing the Jewish identity of her students. Her goal for them is to grow into adults who love being Jewish. She wants to instill excitement and appreciation for the stories and values that the students will encounter in her class. Torah is

…who we are, it's why we are, it's where we are and what we do. So I think that Torah is the most important thing because first of all, that's the part that goes into their heart, that goes into their soul, that helps them become who they're going to be. I hope that it's still there when they're 20 and 30 and 40—some of what they've learned; if not the details of it, the feelings and the ideas and everything that they got from doing Torah

Joan teaches the Genesis narratives, and is both challenged and fascinated at the way her students explain and interpret the moral dilemmas faced by the matriarchs and patriarchs. She is impressed at the depth of the students’ understanding:

The mother loved this one and the father loved this one, and the brother killed the brother and the, it's terrible! Terrible things happen but the kids are smart and the kids are much more sophisticated than I was when I was that age. They get things on a very deep level and it's just really interesting but it's juicy and it's human nature and it's interesting and the kids, sometimes they surprise me by the depth of what they get out of it. I just sit back and go whoa! (laughter) Wow! How
did you get that or from where? It's just the coolest thing ever! I think it's very challenging trying to figure out how to give it to them because I think it's such a hard book to teach that I want them to …I want these characters to be their heroes; I want our ancestors to be their heroes.

Joan acknowledges that while some students arrive at impressive conclusions, others need to be “spoon-fed.” Regarding this disparity in student abilities Joan admits, “so it's challenging to figure out how to be able to touch every student at that same time.”

**Summary and implications for Pedagogical Content Knowledge.** The teachers’ goals for and understanding of their students are probably consistent with those of other experienced literature teachers. They stress the importance of “critical thinking”, “deep thinking”, and “independent thinking”. They recognize the need to be cognizant of the developmental and skill levels of their students, and that there are “big ideas” and “moral values” to be learned from the text. They recognize the importance of class discussion, wherein the questions are sometimes more important than the answers. They mention learning from their students and not needing to have all of the answers.

Creating “independent learners” is another theme, which in the case of these teachers, means that the students need to know the basics of Biblical Hebrew and literary analysis. Two teachers mention their own responsibility for encouraging positive attitudes by the way the material is presented.

One issue raised that is content specific is that of Jewish identity. As opposed to teaching any other text or learning any other language, the teachers recognize that learning Torah in the original Hebrew and understanding the inherent values and concepts are important components in the development of a strong Jewish identity.
The teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge about students that they have arrived at through years of teaching Torah to elementary school children are that: 1) the content needs to be meaningful to the students, 2) teachers must differentiate according to the needs and interests of the students, and 3) the material they are teaching is providing a foundation for the current and future Jewish identity of the students. The teachers recognize that ultimately they are teaching students about the meaning of life and giving them the opportunities to grow intellectually, morally, and spiritually by means of discussing the content of the text.

The Meaning of Torah.

This section presents the teachers’ comments about why they believe Torah should be taught to children.

Emily. Emily’s concern for her students moral, intellectual, and spiritual development are also reflected in her understanding of what Torah study can mean for students in the 21st century:

I think the most important thing is a love of Torah . . . I really want them to understand that whatever is in the Torah . . . it's part of who we are as a people. It's the basis, it's the core myth, . . . we can find ourselves in the text and we can bring something to the text. . . . I really want these kids to understand that this text is as sophisticated as reading anything they read in language arts or social studies. I don't want them to come with a feeling like “Oh, these are just children's stories.” I want them to understand that you have to study them and you have to analyze them and you have to think about allusions and all those literary techniques that they do in language arts apply also to this text... I really want them to see that the text has something to offer us now—whether it's about Jewish leadership, whether it's about it being relevant to our lives or lessons that they can learn from it, but that this ancient text that's been around thousands of years has
something important to teach us. It . . . can be a platform for discussing theology in a very non-confrontational and safe environment. . . . God becomes part of the conversation when you're talking about Torah and . . . that really gives them a space to express opinions and try opinions out and use the class kind of as a sounding board.

**Arlene.** Arlene believes that teaching Torah is different from other texts because “it sets the whole foundation for everything else.” It is very important to Arlene that her students learn to make connections about how the content of Torah applies to their lives:

Torah really sets the whole foundation and tone for who we are supposed to be as Jews and giving us the structure through which to learn how to interact with the world, interact with God, and interact with ourselves. Torah is the way that helps to set what are the ethical and ritualistic precepts that help to give meaning to our lives.

**Hadar.** Over the course of the interview, Hadar commented about the meaning of Torah in our lives and in the curriculum. “I see the Torah mostly as our heritage, mostly as the book that we base our life on, as tradition, as what we do as Jewish people, how we see the world as Jewish people.” This is definitely an expansion of the way Torah was presented to her as a child in Israel: the story of a nation and not a religious guide. She now recognizes that Torah can guide us in our actions, our traditions, and our worldviews. When Hadar talks about her students and about what transpires in the classroom, she mentions that values can be learned from the text, and that moral issues are raised.

**Aliza.** Aliza commented several times about the beauty of the Biblical Hebrew language, and the fact that we can learn values, such as how to make choices between good and evil, from
studying the Torah. Other than that, Aliza did not reveal any sense of personal meaning that the Torah, or teaching Torah, holds for her.

**Rita.** The meaning of Torah for Rita today as an adult is that “it is the glue for us as a Jewish people.” Although she personally grapples with the concept of the divine origin of the Torah, she wants her students to

... get a full story of what the Torah has to give us as far as the history of our people and the beginnings of our laws, so they're understanding that this is a holy book, and they're understanding that this is critical to us as Jewish people and that this is where it's all based from.

If Torah is to have meaning for her students, Rita believes that it must be shown to be relevant to their lives.

**Joan.** Joan understands Torah to be the foundation of Jewish identity, and an important component in learning to love Jewish tradition and being Jewish. “I think if you love Torah, you love being Jewish. That's my goal for them when they're adults—that they love being Jewish.” Joan also believes that the characters in the Torah should serve as role models for her students, and that the ethical dilemmas are important to discuss and can contribute to their moral growth.

**Summary and implications for Pedagogical Content Knowledge.** All of the teachers see Torah learning as a means to an end. They want their students to develop into Jews who are proud of who they are and of the stories of their people. They use Torah as a vehicle to promote the intellectual and moral development of the students, as well as their Jewish identity. All of these are aspects of the pedagogical content knowledge of teaching a foundational, sacred text.

**Preparation and activities.** This section explores the ways that teachers prepare and implement their lessons and units.
Emily. Emily shared her thoughts out loud as she considered the Tower of Babel text and how she might teach it. Her “think-aloud” reflects all of the major themes of her curriculum narrative: She is very cognizant of the developmental stages of her students. She is passionate about the Hebrew language and uses literary analysis to help students understand biblical passages. She wants to stimulate intellectual growth and critical thinking in her students.

Even though Emily is familiar with this text, as she is with the vast majority of texts that she teaches, she begins by reading the Hebrew. Emily estimates that she would spend one to two weeks on this passage if she were teaching it to her sixth and seventh graders. She would first focus on key words in the Hebrew and on activating prior knowledge:

First of all, I would probably have them look and see if they can find the word *bavel* [Babel or Babylonia] and if not, I might give them the word because I would want them to have some context—like just scaffold onto what they already know because this is not the easiest of texts in terms of the Hebrew, and if I want them to really get it, it would be helpful to have that little file open in their brain.

Emily would break the text into smaller chunks and focus on some of the key phrases and ideas. She notes that the phrase *kol ha’aretz* [the entire world] occurs three times in these nine verses and anticipates questions that her students might raise: “In the beginning of the text, it's talking about everyone and I think that kids might ask ‘Well, really? The whole world? Everyone on Earth is doing this?’ And I think the kids might have problems with that.”

Emily interprets the repeated use of the first person plural form of the verbs as a sign that the text wants us to know that the people are working together as one unified group. She considers why this is problematic; why doesn’t God like this? Sensitive to the issues of peer-pressure (in another place she calls it “group-think”) that her 12 and 13 year old students are
likely to encounter, she offers the following: “So one of the issues for teenagers that can come out of this is the bigger issue of what happens when a group gets together and does something that maybe isn’t the best choice?”

Emily again shows how much in touch she is with her students by remarking that they will have difficulty understanding the word “lest” in the phrase pen nafutz [lest we be scattered; translated in the English version in Appendix F as “else we be scattered”]. She also notes the limited ability of her students to think far into the future:

Yes, this concept of “lest”, this pen nafutz, I’ve had trouble with that in the past for kids to understand the word "lest" meaning, if this happens, then . . . They have trouble with the word lest but they have trouble with the concept. . . . I also think that this idea of them thinking through "lest we get scattered across the whole world;" they’re thinking ahead, they’re planning ahead for the future. I don't think that's a concept that 6th and 7th graders are really great at "getting" so I think that would be something that we have to have conversations about.

Emily reveals her interest in discussing theology with her students. She notes that the first person plural is used when voicing God’s plan of how to deal with the “we” situation on earth. She also wants her students to notice the irony in the text. The people say in verse four “Come, let us build us a city, and a tower with its top in the sky, to make a name for ourselves; else we shall be scattered all over the world.” They make the tower but we learn in verse eight that what happens is exactly the thing they sought to prevent: “Thus the LORD scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.” She would want her students to figure out that na’aseh lanu shem [Let us make a name for ourselves] is a key phrase. She would encourage her students to express their understanding of what this might mean, but
also mentions that she would look up at least one of the traditional commentaries to help her consider the possible meanings and implications of this phrase. The final issue that Emily would discuss with her students is that of having a common language. What are the pros and cons of a group of people sharing a common language?

Emily notes the significance of the placement of the Tower of Babel story in relation to the other Genesis narratives. This story appears right before the account of God choosing Abraham, and therefore contrasts a universal message with a particularistic message:

I also want them to know that this is just before *Lekh Lekha* [Genesis 12-17] so they get the sense that this is a universal story. This is not a story that's particular to the Jewish people but it includes everybody. So what does that say that's different from the text than maybe *Lekh Lekha*?

*Arlene*. Discussing how she might prepare to teach a lesson or unit gives insight into Arlene’s methodology as a bible teacher. She would first read and re-read the passages from the text. If it was her first time teaching a specific text, she would look over the Teachers’ Guide. As mentioned above, Arlene is also guided by trying to anticipate the difficulties her students might encounter. Focus, big ideas, and student engagement are additional issues that Arlene considers when planning to teach a unit.

Arlene likes to help the students understand how events in the text might apply to issues in their own lives. One of her guiding questions is, “What is the best vehicle through which to be able to make that [the concepts in the text] come to the surface and allow the students to engage with it?” Tangential student questions are treated respectfully: “I think that the kids are going to have really good questions and my whole approach is that I want to encourage the questions, not necessarily find all the answers.” She is especially delighted when a student asks a question that
shows they have made a connection with something beyond the text. For example, students have asked "Why is it we can't just rebuild the third temple?" and, "It lists all the animals in Genesis that get created, why aren't dinosaurs listed?" Arlene says, “Those are great questions! Those are the types of questions that allow you to say ‘Wow! Let's talk about that. Let's figure all that out.’” She believes that “. . .kids are going to have really good questions and my whole approach is that I want to encourage the questions, not necessarily find all the answers.”

While learning the Exodus narratives about slavery in Egypt, the students do an activity of making bricks from water, straw, and clay and then leave them in the sun to “bake” The students reflect upon and contrast their experience with how it might have been for the slaves. One year the students used their home-made bricks to construct a brick oven and used it to make matzah (the unleavened bread that the Israelites ate upon leaving Egypt). This gave the students the opportunity to consider how their lives differ from the ancient Israelites in the practical realm of food preparation. The following year, however, when hordes of refugees from the Middle East were streaming across Europe and bringing with them a foreign culture, Arlene chose to focus on “what does it mean to be the ‘other’”:

So they're doing all this research on Egypt and then we're going to look at the Israelite society and compare and contrast and show that here were these Israelites who were living off to themselves, keeping their own rituals, their own patterns of living. Is it surprising that the pharaoh would be nervous because they weren't integrating, weren't assimilating into the Egyptian society? How much of it was from the Israelite perspective and how much was it because the Egyptians didn't allow them to, and what does it mean to be a refugee that comes into an established society?—because that has implications today.
In asking the students to consider Israelite culture in Egypt not only from “our” point of view, but also from the view of the dominant culture, Arlene introduces her students to a deeper understanding of both viewpoints that can be transferred to the current events of a dominant European culture clashing with a the incoming refugees’ predominantly Moslem culture.

When confronted with the hypothetical preparation of a class about the Tower of Babel, Arlene immediately thinks of activities that the students might do before looking at the text that will expose them to the key issues of communication and cooperation among a group of people trying to accomplish a common goal:

I think I would first . . . Just let the kids try to build something. Tell them they have to build towers and then I would tell them that they have to build a tower without talking; that they have to find a way of communicating without words. And getting each other to understand in terms of building this together and seeing how tall they can build it. That way it introduces this whole idea of what it means to build a tower and what are the issues in terms of communication.

**Hadar.** Hadar prepares to teach a lesson by first reading the text, and then referring to lesson plans from previous years to see if there is anything that she would like to add or change for the current group of students. She also reviews the units that she has developed collaboratively with the other bible teachers to clarify in her mind the specific skills for her grade level that are Benchmarks for the Bible Standards chosen by the faculty. In previous years the skills would be integrated throughout the unit. However, with her special education students this year, she spends more time teaching the skills prior to looking at the text.

Hadar adds activities to her lessons that will be enjoyable for the students and will reinforce key concepts:
So I think what I'm focusing first and foremost is the ability of the students, the personality, and I started to introduce some activities that are . . . text-based but they're not reading and writing and it's more like acting out. We made puppets; we did a lot of re-enacting the text because they also have memory issues—so it's the whole thing.

As Hadar thinks out loud about how she might teach the Tower of Babel story to her students, we learn more about the way in which she goes about constructing a unit or a lesson:

I would think about vocabulary and the general idea of who are the people we're talking about because we left with Noach [Noah] with the ark so, and now we have a big group of people and we don't know who they are and where they're coming from so what would be like a prediction, what are we talking about?

By the statement above, Hadar confirms her commitment to considering first of all what vocabulary is going to be challenging for her students. She then goes on to consider the place of the story in the overall Genesis narrative: It follows the story of Noah and the flood, but does not specify who these people are who are trying to build a tower. She would have the students make a prediction, thereby activating previous knowledge before confronting a new text. She continues that the next steps might be to have the students look at art with themes from this story. The pictures are rife with interpretation since so many details are not answered in the text. She then considers some contextual background about the ancient near east:

My way would be to show them art—like artists who dealt with that idea and what they thought about that. And on the other hand, archeological finds from the era that might be like the ziggurat . . . so they have some kind of an idea of what a migdal [tower] is because I think that migdal is a word that could be a lot of things so I want to give them the broader context.
The two main ideas that Hadar would emphasize are modesty and cooperation. She anticipates that the students would ask a lot of “why?” questions:

Why did they build, why did they need to build something so high?
Why did they want to get to the sky, to heaven, to God, what drove them?
Why is it not good?
Why was it bad to build a tower, to build something probably so magnificent?

Hadar would also bring in a midrashic interpretation that the sin of the builders was that they cared more about a brick that fell than about a person who fell:

They couldn't care about each other, God was upset with them. If a brick fell, they were concerned, if a human fell . . . So that would be something I want them to learn . . . your goal is not worth it unless everyone is considered and being respected . . . it's like when you have a group and you have to do something, you have to make sure that everybody enjoys the task and that everybody's included. And you don't just run and let's say throw the ball into the thing without considering the rest of your group. So that was one more thing I wanted them to learn from this.

After reading the text, she would ask the students to draw their own pictures to illustrate their interpretations of what the tower looked like and what was at the top that the builders were trying to reach. She mentioned a song she knows about the Tower of Babel that illustrates the difference between one language and a “babel” of languages.

Aliza. The recurring themes that Aliza mentions when she speaks about preparing, implementing, and assessing a lesson are skills acquisition, backwards design, and making learning Torah “fun” for the students. Her plans are guided by the steps she must take in order to help her students achieve the specific skill-goals she has identified. She also considers activities
that will keep the students active and engaged. Aliza wants her students to be familiar with the main vocabulary in advance so that they do not feel overwhelmed when they encounter the words in the text:

I would like them to be able to understand the text at the very beginning, although maybe it's not the interesting part of it, but at least they'll be familiar with the vocabulary. So here's the thing: to bring vocabulary you could give them a list, or you can make it more interesting by using flashcards with pictures.

When asked to elaborate on how she balances and integrates the learning of discrete skills with the discussion of ideas Aliza explains, “I know exactly the skills that I would like to teach. When you come to the discussion, the discussion can take you to a different level.” What she seems to be expressing here is that teaching discrete skills is more teacher directed and predictable, whereas discussions often lead to new places and new ideas that the students bring up, but that the teacher had not anticipated.

Aliza has the students play games with flashcards to allow them to move around, work in small groups, and reinforce grammatical structures such as root letters and affixes:

I do some games with the words so they don't have to sit the entire time. This is another thing that I usually do no matter what grade I'm teaching, so that they're moving. They need to put the flashcards in order, to put them in groups: this is masculine, this is feminine, these are the root letters. So they have some activity with the words. . . I cannot tell that they know exactly what each word is, and what it means. But at least they become familiar; they are able to make the connection between words with the same root letters. . . and show their recognition with enthusiasm by saying "Oh, I know this! I know this!"
Aliza believes that presenting the text in a variety of ways can be advantageous for some students. Her various means of presentation are: she reads the text out loud, she may play a recording that she has made of her reading, or she may have the students read and take the parts of the narrator and the characters. “Some kids need to read, some kids need to hear—so it's different learners, so I'm always providing at least two ways to become familiar with the text.”

Aliza says that she commonly asks the students the following questions: “What do you already know? What we would like to know? What's the question that the text raises for you?” Sometimes she will ask, "Do you think we have a similar situation in our life?" She explains how she encourages the students to identify with characters who have a problem, or who find themselves in a challenging situation. She might say to the students:

This is a really interesting text because sometimes we can become confused in our own lives. Forget about the text for a moment. Let’s think: What do we do? And then let's go back to the text and ask what the characters might do. So we try to answer those questions and when they make the connection to our own lives, they get excited. "Oh, in my family, my brother, at school, in sports…”

**Rita.** When Rita first began to teach using the MaToK Bible Curriculum, she would diligently review the teachers’ guide, take copious notes to guide her in class, and even list the questions to be asked. In contrast, now the teachers’ guide is “just a resource” that she glances at to refresh her memory. Since she has been teaching the same sections of Torah for many years now, she likes to keep it “fresh” for herself by exploring different ways to approach the story. Using the framework of questions in the teachers’ guide as a place to “jump off”, and responding each year to the concerns of her current students, are two techniques that help keep the story “fresh” for Rita.
When considering the Tower of Babel story, Rita brainstormed about the ways she could get the students to understand the importance of people having a common language. She thought immediately of games and activities that she could introduce. She often has the students act out parts of the story so that they can remain active in class.

**Joan.** Joan’s school has chosen themes on which to concentrate in each grade, and these themes help her focus when beginning to prepare a unit or a lesson. She considers how she might enrich the instruction so that students will work with the text in a variety of ways, such as “hands-on things to do with it” and “some smart-board stuff”, skits, and collages. She also looks closely at the Hebrew to see if there is anything she can integrate into the Hebrew language class that will assist the students in understanding the Biblical Hebrew.

In preparing to teach a biblical story Joan always thinks about her ultimate goal of the students developing a passion for Torah and Judaism. She considers how to teach each selection in a manner that will help reach these goals:

I have to be very careful of how I present it to them. It's hard to teach *Torah*, I mean what are your goals, what do you want them to come away with? And I think especially with the second and third graders who are so sophisticated, I find it very challenging to figure out how I'm going to present everything so that they get the most benefit out of it and it develops their love and their passion for it.

Joan asks her students what the story means to them: “It doesn't matter what it means to me. What does it mean to you?” She is delighted when students ask questions that show they can personalize the events of the story:

When they put themselves in that place, when they can picture themselves there and ask questions about the motivations of the character. What was the father
thinking? Or he just left his home, didn't he miss his mom? Like really real questions that a second and third grader would think about if they were in that position.

When considering how she would approach the Tower of Babel story with her students, Joan defines two major points: the arrogance of the human beings who attempted to “make a name” for themselves by building a structure that would reach to heaven, and the existence of different languages in the world.

**Summary and implications for Pedagogical Content Knowledge.** Four of the six teachers mention that a careful reading or re-reading of the text is their first step in preparing a lesson. Arlene and Rita referred to the Teachers’ Guides. Rita said that she glances at it to refresh her memory and uses the suggested questions as her “jump-off” point. Arlene said she will consult it if it is the first time that she is teaching a particular section of Torah. Emily will sometimes compare several different translations, look up a commentary, or check what the exact root of a word is, if she is not sure. Hadar will look at her lesson plans from previous years to see what she might want to change or add to meet the needs of this year’s students.

Each teacher considers which of the main ideas of the text she wants her students to understand. The school at which Emily and Joan teach has chosen specific themes for each grade in the school. Hadar and Aliza’s are guided by the work they have done with the Standards and Benchmarks project. Arlene and Rita, who teach at the same school, spoke of identifying a “focus” or “key issue” to guide their planning.

While four of the teachers said that they anticipate and/or encourage questions from the students, Aliza noted that while she can prepare for teaching skills, she cannot prepare in the same way for discussions, since she cannot know in advance where the children’s questions will take them. Arlene emphasized that the questions are more important than the answers.
Hadar and Aliza consider how to make the lesson “fun” for the students. Rita and Arlene look for ways to achieve a high level of student engagement. Since Hadar also used the word “engagement” in this context, it is probably what she and Aliza meant by “fun”; the lesson has to be enjoyable so that the students remain involved. Hadar and Aliza mentioned activating prior knowledge. By this they mean asking questions to get the students to think about what they might already know about the topic, the context, the characters, and making predictions about what might happen based upon this prior knowledge.

In planning learning activities, the teachers spoke of the importance of providing multiple ways to learn and to become familiar with the material. The variety of experiences and activities mentioned include: drama (skits, role playing, puppets), physical activity such as games involving movement, art (both analyzing and discussing art related to the theme of the story to understand the artists’ interpretations, and creating art to illustrate their own interpretations), and activities related to key issues, such as baking matzah, making bricks, or building a tower.

The teachers recognize that the impact of the text is more powerful when students can relate it to their own lives. They encourage personalization: identifying with characters, their dilemmas, their relationships, etc. Arlene extends this to current events by comparing the experiences of the Israelites in Egypt and their degree of assimilation with the migrant communities settling in Europe from war torn areas of the Middle East.

Finally, the teachers look at the Hebrew language words and skills that the students will need to know. They each dealt with this in slightly different ways: Hadar teaches specific skills prior to looking at the text with her special learning needs students. She remarked that with previous classes, skills were more integrated in the teaching and not separate from other aspects of learning the text. Aliza pre-teaches the difficult words to her second grade students, often
using flashcards with pictures. Joan considers how she might integrate some of the Biblical Hebrew skills or vocabulary into the Hebrew language class that she will teach the same students at a different point in the school day.

**Language Issues.**

In this section, the teachers discuss the unique challenges and difficulties in teaching sacred text in a language that is not native to the students.

**Emily.** The Hebrew language in general, and Biblical Hebrew in the context of bible classes, is very important to Emily:

I really believe that for students to be able to be part of the Jewish community and fully participate, they have to be able to read Hebrew really well. In the future when they go to camp or they go to birthright . . . or they belong to a synagogue, if you can't read Hebrew fluently and correctly . . . then you can't participate fully. So I have kids read and I correct very carefully and the kids know this is something I do.

The importance of learning the original Hebrew text is also shown by the fact that Emily’s students use a Hebrew version of the bible without English translation in class. (Note: Emily teaches some books of the bible to grades six and seven for which materials from the MaToK curriculum that the rest of the school uses, do not exist.) She also teaches her students to make use of the cantillation notes as a means of understanding the content.

Emily weighs the balance of when to stay with conducting the class in Hebrew and when to switch to English. She says,

I also think about how I'm going to teach it like what parts I'm going to do in Hebrew, what parts I think are not really accessible with the Hebrew that kids have—so those are things I'm going to do in English. So I make those kind of choices.
Recognizing that reading and re-reading a passage could become tedious and boring, Emily has created her own methodology for reinforcing Hebrew language skills that also enables the students to be active, rather than passive, participants. Her method involves small groups of students sitting around a table with an assigned task for each person. One student is assigned the role of reader, while each of the others is given a particular part of grammar or language that they need to look for. Upon finding the target item, each one has a different signal they give to the group, such as a clap, a tap on the table, a cough, etc.

Arlene. Arlene weighs the balance of teaching the text in the original Hebrew and the students limited Hebrew skills. Although she has a “deep commitment” to the text, she doesn’t want the students to feel overwhelmed when answering questions and doing activities in Hebrew “so I will allow them to write in English because to me it's the content” that is the most important.

Hadar. One of the Standards chosen by Hadar’s school deals with the decoding, reading, and understanding of the Hebrew text. This is the area which necessitates modifications in Hadar’s methodology and expectations because of her students’ special learning needs. (The other two Standards are more conceptual and can be discussed and assessed in English.) The students are given an English copy of the text being studied to aid their understanding. The students are allowed to write in English and to refer to the text in English. Hadar spends more time on decoding skills, such as identifying affixes and word roots, than she would with students who do not have the added learning issues. She is aiming for familiarity with the Hebrew text rather than complete mastery:

I really want them to be able to approach the text in Hebrew to a certain degree, at least so when they look at it they'll say, "Oh, this looks familiar, I can understand. I can identify something in this."
I paraphrased what I thought Hadar was trying to express: “So you take a little of the language barrier away so that you can focus more on the deeper meaning.” She confirmed, “Yes, I believe that. I have to balance what is more important.”

**Aliza**. Aliza recognizes that her students are learning Modern Hebrew with her in Hebrew language class, and are confronting Biblical Hebrew, which is from a different historical period, in the Torah class. She says that Modern Hebrew is a second language for her English speaking students, and that Biblical Hebrew is their third language. So she will point out similarities and differences in the two levels of Hebrew, such as similar roots but different prefixes. Although it would be easier for the students to read the text in English, Aliza says that they would lose a sense of “. . . the beauty of the language. When you translate it, you lose it!” Studying the text in Hebrew also strengthens their connection with the Hebrew language. For discussions, however, the class switches to English so that the students can more fully express their thoughts and ideas.

**Rita**. Rita refers to the “dilemma” of balancing the amount of Hebrew and English used in her Torah classes. She tries to use Hebrew as much as possible when approaching the words and language of the text, but she and the students “compromise a bit” and switch to English when discussing concepts and opinions. There is a deep commitment to understanding the text in the original Hebrew, but also a commitment for the students to express themselves and make deep connections with the text, which is easier for them in English. Since Rita is also the Hebrew language teacher for her students, she is “always looking for opportunities to make connections between what we're doing in Hebrew language and Torah study”. She considers her ability to “make connections” to be an advantage over teachers who do not teach both Torah and Hebrew to the same students.
Rita explained an activity that she has developed related to understanding the grammar of the Biblical Hebrew that keeps the students actively involved. The Hebrew words for “mine” “his” and “ours” are each written on a different Popsicle stick. Each student has a set of the three sticks. When the teacher is reading the passage and stops at a word, the students have to hold up the Popsicle stick that matches the suffix of the word just read. An incentive is built into this activity: “Every time they hold it up correctly, they get a check on a chart anachnu ohavim ivrit [we love Hebrew] and eventually they can earn a little bit of iPad time.”

Joan. Joan’s personal struggle between teaching the students language skills versus a deeper understanding of the story and characters is a recurring theme throughout the interview. She repeats a number of times in different contexts during the interview that the deeper understanding takes precedence over the mechanics of Biblical Hebrew, but that the students still need to know the basic skills.

It's important to know the sofiot [suffixes] and the shoresh [word root]—that's the mechanics of it. And if you're going to study text, you need to have those skills. But is that the most important thing? I don't think so. I want them to know who we are in our history; where we come from. You know, people are people-- and people back then were people. I remember, too, that growing up that the Torah was very one-dimensional and I don't want it to be one-dimensional to them. I want it to be three-dimensional to them. And I want them to have the passion and that's the most important thing to me.

The implication is that emphasizing the mechanics of Biblical Hebrew will not lead to the passion she so dearly wants her students to acquire.

Joan seems to have solved the conflict for herself by using two textbooks: one that concentrates on the patterns and fine points of Biblical Hebrew, and the other one to delve
deeply in to the events and characters of the story. She says that both she and the students like the Hebrew language book because

It's color-coded for the kids that are very visual…they really love it because it really reaches them. It's bold and they have to highlight it and then they have to go through and not highlight it and see if they can still figure it out. And again, it really matches the Hebrew piece of it using everything they need for Torah skills.

Summary and implications for Pedagogical Content Knowledge. None of the six teachers conduct their classes entirely in Hebrew. Each one of them expresses a great love and appreciation of the Biblical Hebrew, while acknowledging that deep discussion and personalization cannot take place without switching to the children’s native English. Emily places great emphasis on fluent reading of the text for her middle school students, but reflects in advance which parts of the lesson she will conduct in English. Arlene does not want her students to feel overwhelmed and allows them to write in English when they are answering questions or doing activities, so that they can concentrate on the content of the text. Hadar admits that her goal for the students is familiarity rather than mastery. Aliza switches to English for discussion, and Rita says that she “compromises” and switches to English when discussing concepts and opinions. Joan has solved the conflict by separating language skills and content skills into separate parts of the curriculum, each with its own text.

Two teachers have each created original activities to keep the students engaged and active. Emily’s method strengthens fluent reading and comprehension of the text, and Rita’s activity reinforces Biblical Hebrew suffixes.
Each teacher has arrived at the pedagogical content knowledge that to teach Torah to American-Jewish students necessitates mixing the use of the two languages, Hebrew and English. They all share the goal of students reading the text in the original Hebrew, while allowing discussion and activities to take place in English.

**Assessment.**

The teachers were each asked during the interviews how they would judge if a lesson or unit was a success. Their answers brought out different approaches to assessment.

*Emily.* Emily assesses her students’ progress by the level of engagement in discussion and by what the students can recall at the next class session. Success, for example, is “when they don’t want to get up from the table…to go to lunch!” Sometimes she will give a formal assessment, but Emily says that “it's not really my style”. Projects are another means of assessment. The project may center on a specific verse or idea and may be illustrated with artwork, poetry, music, movies, animations, etc. She wants the project to highlight something that the student found important, and for the project to explain that personal meaning and importance.

In order to assess the goals she set for the hypothetical lesson on the Tower of Babel, Emily would assign a project that would center on a small piece of the text that each student would choose:

I would want them to hone in on a particular, what they think is a really important phrase or an important piece like up to a *pasuk* (verse) but no more than that. They can look at the bigger picture if they want but they have to hone in on what it is. They have to design their piece and it can be in any kind of media. I don't particularly like telling kids what kind of art work they have to produce. It could be on the computer, it could be a play, a
skit, a video, it could be anything and it could be abstract also. I think thinking about text in that way helps kids to hone their thinking about the bigger issues also. Then they would present and we would have conversations about each of their presentations.

*Arlene.* Arlene gives tests as summative assessments to her students in order to judge their skills acquisition about vocabulary, identifying themes, and recognizing literary devices. Many questions are open-ended. Activities, essays, and projects are ongoing formative assessments during the course of the units.

*Hadar.* Hadar did not talk much about assessment. She did note that all of the teachers teaching a specific grade worked together on assessments as part of their work with Standards and Benchmarks. She has used those assessments in the past, but noted that she would have to “reframe the assessment” to match the expectations of her special needs students.

*Aliza.* Aliza uses the performance assessments that the team of Torah teachers have created as part of the Standards and Benchmarks project. She describes them as “a task at the end of each unit; usually the tasks are very creative.” Aliza considers the unit a success “when I see them talking in the character’s voice.” By this she implies that the students have made a connection with a character, or have personalized some meaning for their own lives from what they learned about the character.

*Rita.* Rita relies only on formative and not summative assessment. She does not consider tests and quizzes appropriate for her second and third grade students. She therefore bases her assessment of each child on their participation in class discussions and the effort that they put into learning specific verses. Rita attempts to assess her students “very gently, and not overwhelm them, and have every child feel they're a success as they progress.”
**Joan.** Joan does not refer to assessment at all. When asked how she knows if a lesson or unit has been successful, she replies,

Well, because I get that from the artwork, I get that from the plays, and they go up and explain it. So if they totally miss the point or the themes or the lessons to be learned from that *parasha* [section of the text], then it wasn't—I give them opportunities of explaining it to me.

**Summary and implications for Pedagogical Content Knowledge.** There are greater differences among the teachers in this area than in any of the other categories. The starkest difference is between Hadar and Aliza and the other four teachers. Hadar and Aliza teach at the school that participates in the Day School Bible Standards and Benchmarks program. They speak knowledgably about performance assessment, while none of the other four teachers use that terminology. Although Hadar and Aliza both teach second graders, they did not say, as did Rita and Joan who also teach second grade, that assessment is not appropriate for this age student.

Emily and Arlene, who teach grades 5, 6, and 7, are the only ones who say that they administer tests. Whereas Arlene considers projects to be formative assessments, Emily considers them summative.

Table 4.2 provides an overview of the teachers, the grades they teach, and their responses to interview questions about assessment.

**Table 4.2 Teachers’ Responses about Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Formative</th>
<th>Summative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
<td>Level of engagement, recall</td>
<td>Projects, occasional test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arlene</td>
<td>4, 5</td>
<td>Activities, essays, projects</td>
<td>Tests (for skills acquisition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadar</td>
<td>2, 3, 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aliza</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pedagogical content knowledge about assessment in the Torah classroom is not as uniform as in the other areas explored. Influences on this aspect of pedagogical content knowledge appear to be twofold: 1) personal beliefs, such as “testing is inappropriate for second grade students”, and 2) the results of professional learning, such as the knowledge gained about performance assessment by the teachers who worked in teams as part of their participation in the Day School Bible Standards and Benchmarks project.

**Orientations/Interpretive Stance.** Uncovering the teachers’ approaches to Torah was done in two ways. The first way was implicit: clues and key words within their narratives indicated a specific approach. The second way, done at the very end of the interview, was explicit. They were given index cards, each one containing the name and brief description of one of the Orientations, as compiled by Holtz (2003). Each teacher was asked to group the approaches according to how often she used them: frequently, sometimes, seldom or never.

**Emily.** During the course of the interview, Emily refers several times to “big ideas” in the Torah, such as covenant, idolatry, divine punishment, and the role of the prophet/messenger. When asked how she chooses or decides what to emphasize in a given text, Emily says that “the text sort of leads me”. Sometimes the students notice something in the Hebrew usage or choice of words, and that guides the interpretive stance of the discussion.

When presented with the choices of various orientations to the text, and asked which ones she uses, Emily said that she uses each one of them as some point, and that she selects her approach depending upon the specific text and what she wants the students to gain from it.
Arlene. Arlene mentioned a variety of approaches during the course of our conversation, including literary, contextual, values oriented, Midrash (interpretation), decoding for basic meaning, and big ideas. The literary approach helps the students gain knowledge from structure:

I love . . . how you can derive meaning just from the word usage and the phrasing of things. All the literary devices that get applied in terms of the number of times or where it gets used or the flurry of verbs or things like that. Just to me, like wow! The way that literally it was put together is to me so amazing.

The contextual approach helps students understand customs from the ancient near east that are foreign to them:

There are some troubling verses in the Torah in terms of today's understandings and political correctness. And therefore how to frame it so that the students will still have a positive understanding and understand it within the context of the framework of culture that was happening in society, that was happening back then.

Contextual and values-oriented approaches are evident when Arlene talks about teaching the story of Abraham welcoming the three strangers. This is emphasized as the value of hachnasat orchim [welcoming guests]. The students can understand that Abraham orders his household to prepare a meal, but washing the feet of his guests is not a custom with which students are familiar:

I'm looking at what does hospitality really mean and we're right there and you can see this compare and contrast in terms of what do you do for hospitality today and what did Abraham do? What are the similarities? What did he do differently? Why did he wash feet? I mean if somebody came in to your house today and washed your feet, would that really be welcoming or would the person look at you and say "Oh my God, you are so
weird, I'm out of here!” And therefore why was that such a symbol of real hospitality back then? What was it? What was it about the geography, about the climate that would cause that to be? When there's a value there, I definitely will hone in on that and make sure that it gets risen up.

Arlene sees as one of the big ideas in the Tower of Babel story the issue of the people wanting to “make a name for ourselves” and God’s disapproval of this.

The big question is what was so wrong about what they were trying to do? Why did God not like this? Look at the term v’na’aseh lanu shem [Let us make a name for ourselves]. What does that mean to make a name for ourselves? What's the issue with that? Because to me, that's the crux of what the problem was with building this migdal bavel [Tower of Babel].

Since the text itself does not give clear answers to these questions, Arlene would also rely on midrash, both from classical commentators and the students’ own ideas.

When asked to choose from the approaches to text listed on the cards and to order them in the frequency their usage, Arlene insists that she cannot do this because, The text is going to tell me how to approach it. So I really could not. It really will depend on the text. There will be some texts that speak much more to parshanut [interpretation] and there are some other texts that leads to the moralistic didactic.

Hadar. Over the course of the interview, Hadar mentioned several approaches to teaching Torah: values and ethics, decoding, literary (understanding character development), and midrash/interpretative. Hadar admits that “I think the characters are more appealing to me than actually what happened.” As an example of a moral issue she offers: “The story of Hagar is very challenging because in modern day we don't understand why he took a second wife and why she
had to be sent away.” She does not say that she gives her students a contextual understanding of the practices of multiple wives and primogeniture in the ancient near east. Instead, she presents this as a moral issue that we cannot understand:

We were not in his shoes, we can't . . it's very personal so how can you stand in his shoes even though we ask them to stand in the person's shoes, it's hard to be there, it's hard to understand, especially if you're a child and you're protecting your parents.

She continues with other examples of moral difficulties in the text that she uses as a springboard for discussion:

One student asked me "Why didn't Ya'akov [Jacob] get punished for lying to his father? Why did Rivka [Rebecca] do that?" Those are hard, tough questions that I'm not even trying to answer for myself. I think I prefer the discussion to continue and not just to give an answer.

When shown the choices and explanations of orientations, Hadar places the Interpretive and Literary Criticism approaches in the “I seldom use” category, an all of the rest in the “I use” category. She chooses as the two approaches she most uses the Ideational Orientation and the Moralistic-Didactic Orientation.

Aliza. Over the course of the interview, Aliza implies a variety of approaches to the text: decoding the Hebrew, moralistic-didactic, interpretative, ideational, and personalization. Connected with decoding the Hebrew, she mentions fluent reading, and understanding root word families and affixes. The values she wants the students to acquire in the moralistic-didactic approach may be evident in the simple meaning of the stories or understood through class discussion. The ideational and moralistic-didactic approach seem to overlap greatly, since learning how to make decisions and to choose between good and evil are key concepts, as well as
values, that she wants her students to learn from the Genesis narratives. This also overlaps with personalization, since Aliza wants the students to consider personal challenges and choices in their own lives.

When presented with the choices of approaches to biblical text, Aliza chose the literary, personalization, and moralistic-didactic approaches as the ones she most often uses. By a literary approach, Aliza referred to such things as analyzing a gap in the story, or finding a word root that occurs over and over in a passage.

*Rita.* Decoding and Translating is the approach most used by Rita. Occasionally her students will write their own Midrashim [interpretive stories]. She considers how Personalization might play out in a class discussion, but doesn’t give examples of this other than having the students act out parts of the story, in the hope that it will bring them closer to the characters and ideas.

From the entire list of approaches on the index cards, Rita chose Decoding, Translating, and Comprehension, Personalization, Moralistic-Didactic, and Bible Leads to Action as the approaches she uses the most.

*Joan.* For Joan, the Torah contains the fundamental stories of the Jewish people. By means of these stories, students learn who they are as Jews. The characters can become their role models, and consideration and discussion of the difficult decisions and challenges faced by the biblical characters can help students hone their moral thinking. Big Ideas, Personalization, and Decoding are also in the repertoire of Joan’s approaches to Torah.

When shown the choices of possible approaches, Joan said that she used Personalization and Ethical Behavior.
Summary and implications for Pedagogical Content Knowledge. Each one of the teachers mentioned aspects of the Decoding, Translating, and Comprehension Orientation implicitly and/or explicitly. The remainder of the answers grouped themselves into the same three patterns that I defined before the profiles of the teachers earlier in this chapter.

The two rabbis, Emily and Arlene, were the hardest to pin down to specific approaches. Emily said “the text leads me” and “it depends on the text”. Arlene said that “the text will tell me” which approach to use. Only the rabbis mentioned approaching the text in its historical context and, except for one brief comment by Rita, only the rabbis spoke of their feminist concerns and readings of the text.

The two native Israelis, Hadar and Aliza, work at the Jewish Community Day School, where the faculty has chosen to teach their students from the interpretive stance of three of the eight Standards that they could choose from in the Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project:

**Standard 1:** Students will become independent and literarily astute readers of the biblical text in Hebrew.

**Standard 2:** Students will be engaged in the learning of ancient, rabbinic, and modern modes of interpretation of the biblical text and will see themselves as a link in this ongoing chain of interpretation.

**Standard 4:** Students will view Tanakh as the formative narrative of the Jewish People – past, present, and future. (Neufeld, 2011, p. 25)

The Decoding, Translating, and Comprehension Orientation is a necessary approach to achieve the benchmarks of Standard 1, and both Hadar and Aliza emphasized the Hebrew language learning in their narratives. Standard 2 appears to be a combination of Parshanut—the Jewish
Interpretive Orientation and the Personalization Orientation. In other words, students not only study classical commentators, but are also involved in making personal meaning by means of performance assessment, including writing their own Midrashim [interpretive stories]. Both Hadar and Aliza discussed the moral lessons and big ideas of Torah, which matches Standard 4 of viewing Torah as “the formative narrative of the Jewish People – past, present, and future” (Neufeld, 2011, p. 25).

The American/Conservative Jews, Rita and Joan, both emphasize Personalization and the Decoding, Translating, and Comprehension in their classrooms.

The teachers did not discern a difference between the Moralistic-Didactic Orientation and the Bible leads to Action Orientation, which Holtz defines respectively as “What is the moral lesson that the Bible teaches us?” and “Study leads us to performing commandments; ethical behavior” (2003). Emily, in fact, states: “I don't always think that the study always leads to performing commandments and ethical behavior.” Except for this one statement by Emily, none of the teachers used the words mitzvot or commandments in their narratives.

A strong theme in the narratives of both Emily and Joan is that of the developing the Jewish identities of their students. This is a goal rather than an orientation. With that goal in mind, the teachers would need to consider which approaches are most compatible with achieving it.

Conclusion

In chapter four, we have explored the main themes that evolved from the coding of the curriculum narratives of six Jewish day school bible teachers. The narratives are rich in evidence of the pedagogical content knowledge of the teachers, including their beliefs about students and
their approaches to sacred text. In chapter five, we will discuss the research findings and their implications for educational practice. We will also look specifically at the goals and approaches of the curriculum used in the schools, the MaToK Bible Curriculum, to see how they compare with what the teachers report they are doing in the classroom.
CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion of Research Findings

Purpose of Study

The meaning of “curriculum” is not always clear. Shkedi (2009) suggests that from the teacher’s point of view, three phases of curriculum may be discerned: The *formal curriculum* was written by the professional curriculum writers. The *perceived curriculum* is the teacher’s understanding of the formal curriculum. The *curriculum-in-use* is the report by the teacher about what actually happened in the classroom. This study analyzes the *curriculum-in-use* of six Jewish day school bible teachers who all used the same *formal curriculum*. The data is based on interviews in the teachers’ own words—their *personal curriculum narratives*. The personal narratives elucidate how teachers think about the process of teaching, and give us insight into their beliefs about students, the learning process, and approaches to the text. The data from this research reveals the pedagogical content knowledge of the teachers, with a specific focus on their orientations to teaching an ancient text.

Research Question

The primary research question as stated in previous chapters is: How are teachers' orientations to culturally valued texts reflected in their curriculum narratives?

Upon reading and analyzing the teachers’ narratives, I realized that orientations (also called approaches or interpretive stances), were not the only component of pedagogical content knowledge uncovered, and that the stories were rich with many other components as well. The findings, therefore, reflect not only on orientations, but also on teachers’ thoughts about students, about their priorities in preparing lessons, and in their understanding of issues unique to teaching an ancient Hebrew text to English speaking students.
Interpretation of Research Findings

**In relation to research question.** Orientations to the text were revealed both implicitly and explicitly. Approaches used by each teacher were deduced implicitly from the free flowing words of the narrative. At the end of the interviews, each teacher looked at index cards with descriptions of each orientation, and stated explicitly which ones she uses.

A constant factor in this study was that all of the schools used the same formal curriculum—The MaToK Bible Curriculum. It is therefore instructive to interpret the findings about orientations in light of the stated goals of the formal curriculum. These goals are summarized on the back cover of each student booklet published by the MaToK Bible Curriculum. (Appendix H). The following table combines Holtz’s (2003) Orientations in Appendix C with the MaToK curriculum goals in Appendix H:
### Table 5.1

**Comparison of Holtz’s Orientations with Curriculum Goals of MaToK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Key Element</th>
<th>Corresponding Goal in MaToK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Contextual Orientation</td>
<td>Bible in the context of its own times</td>
<td>• Engage in critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Literary Criticism Orientation</td>
<td>Tools of modern literary criticism as applied to the Bible</td>
<td>• Develop literary skills to study the Torah independently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Engage in critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Become sensitive to shades of meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Reader-Response Orientation</td>
<td>Tools of post-modern literary criticism as applied to Bible</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parshanut—the Jewish Interpretive Orientation</td>
<td>Exploration of classical commentators’ understanding of Bible</td>
<td>• Prepare to explore traditional commentaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• See themselves as links in the chain of Torah understanding and interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moralistic-Didactic Orientation</td>
<td>What is the moral lesson that the Bible teacher us?</td>
<td>• Grapple with moral issues that arise from the Torah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Personalization Orientation</td>
<td>How can the Bible speak to us—psychologically, politically, spiritually?</td>
<td>• Search for personal meaning in Torah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Engage with questions about God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• View Torah as kadosh (a sacred text) and read it in an inquiring, deep and reverent way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Are participants in the continuing revelation and uncovering of truth emanating from God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ideational Orientation</td>
<td>What are the “big ideas” of the Bible?</td>
<td>• Connect Torah with their lives as Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible Leads to Action Orientation</td>
<td>Study leads us to performing commandments; ethical behavior</td>
<td>• Connect Torah with their lives as Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Decoding, Translating, and Comprehension Orientation</td>
<td>Decoding the Hebrew, comprehending the basics</td>
<td>• Learn Torah in the original Hebrew.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1 shows that the goals of the formal curriculum place a heavy emphasis on The Personalization Orientation. The Decoding, Translating, and Comprehension Orientation is central to the formal curriculum since students study the original Hebrew text. The purpose of many of the exercises for the students involve learning and strengthening their decoding, translating and comprehension skills.

The Reader-Response Orientation was not used by any of the teachers. Explaining this orientation to the teachers was difficult and not within their frame of reference. Certainly, the student reader interacts with the text and makes meaning from it, but the ideas seemed too close to Personalization, since the student readers are guided to interact with the text in a specific direction. After the first two teachers were confused by this, the Reader-Response Orientation was left out of the choices that were discussed at the end of the interviews.

All six of the teachers described using multiple orientations in teaching the text. Table 5.2 shows the relationships among the orientations, the teachers who used each one and the associated goals for students using the MaToK Curriculum. While Emily and Arlene each claim to use all of the orientations at one time or another, Hadar mentions six approaches, Aliza mentions five, and Rita and Joan each mention four.
Table 5.2

Orientations, Teachers who Use them, and Goals of the Formal Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Teachers who use It</th>
<th>Goals in MaToK that we might expect the teachers to embrace:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Contextual Orientation</td>
<td>Emily Arlene (2)</td>
<td>• Engage in critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Literary Criticism Orientation</td>
<td>Emily Arlene (3), Hadar (3)</td>
<td>• Develop literary skills to study the Torah independently. • Engage in critical thinking. • Become sensitive to shades of meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Reader-Response Orientation</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parshanut-the Jewish Interpretive</td>
<td>Emily Arlene (4), Hadar (3)</td>
<td>• Prepare to explore traditional commentaries. • See themselves as links in the chain of Torah understanding and interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moralistic-Didactic Orientation</td>
<td>Emily Arlene (4), Hadar (3), Aliza (4), Rita (5), Joan (6)</td>
<td>• Grapple with moral issues that arise from the Torah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Personalization Orientation</td>
<td>Emily Arlene (6), Hadar (6), Aliza (6), Rita (6), Joan (6)</td>
<td>• Search for personal meaning in Torah. • Engage with questions about God. • View Torah as kadosh (a sacred text) and read it in an inquiring, deep and reverent way. • Are participants in the continuing revelation and uncovering of truth emanating from God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ideational Orientation</td>
<td>Emily Arlene (5), Hadar (5), Aliza (5), Joan (5)</td>
<td>• Connect Torah with their lives as Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible Leads to Action Orientation</td>
<td>Emily Arlene (3), Rita (3)</td>
<td>• Connect Torah with their lives as Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Decoding, Translating, and</td>
<td>Emily Arlene (6), Hadar (6), Aliza (6), Rita (6), Joan (6)</td>
<td>• Learn Torah in the original Hebrew.</td>
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</table>
The number of orientations identified by each teacher can be divided according to the demographic groupings mentioned in Chapter Four preceding the profiles of the teachers: the Rabbis, the Israelis, and the American-Conservative Jews (Table 4.1). The two teachers who attended rabbinical school and who have the deepest background of Torah study and knowledge are the ones who discuss the greatest variety of approaches. The Israelis, Hadar and Aliza who each studied bible in Israel from the interpretive stance of it being the national story of the Jewish people, and who have had intensive training in the Bible Standards and Benchmarks project, used the same four orientations. However, Hadar added a fifth orientation of Literary Criticism, which Aliza, who teaches only second graders, did not. Rita and Joan, the ones who grew up in American Conservative Jewish families, each identified four approaches that they use. Neither Rita nor Joan received specific training in Jewish education before working in day schools.

**In relation to problem of practice.** A written curriculum usually suggests themes, approaches, texts, and activities to guide the teacher. The teachers’ own pedagogical content knowledge and orientations toward bible may or may not be consistent with the curriculum they are asked to use. Gudmundsdottir (1990) found that the personal curriculum of teachers often conflicts with the textbooks they use. Moreover, studies have found that teachers often default to teach in the same ways in which they were taught (Dorph, 2007), and not necessarily in the ways advised by the curriculum guide or by research on current best practices. The problem, therefore, is that the curriculum-in-use may not reflect, and could possibly even conflict with, the intentions of the formal curriculum that the school has chosen in order to meet specific goals.

This study uncovers information from the teachers’ narratives which help to explain the ways in which the teachers’ pedagogic content knowledge, particularly their orientations to
teaching text, transforms the formal curriculum to the curriculum-in-use. This study expands and builds upon existing research that looks at the connection between teachers’ beliefs and curriculum in its various forms: formal, perceived, and in-use.

The narratives reveal that all six teachers place the students’ understanding of the Biblical Hebrew (Decoding, Translating, and Comprehension Orientation) at the center of their teaching. Each teacher, however, prioritizes which of the other goals of the MaToK curriculum are important for her students. The following two MaToK goals, that deal with personal beliefs and spirituality, were not addressed by any of the teachers:

Students who study Torah with MaToK:

• View Torah as *kadosh* (a sacred text) and read it in an inquiring, deep and reverent way.
• Are participants in the continuing revelation and uncovering of truth emanating from God.

The teachers speak about theology as an intellectual discussion. However, most of the teachers did not speak about spirituality in the sense of the Torah being *kadosh* (holy) or about *kedusha* (holiness) in general. Nor were any forms of the words for revelation or reverence mentioned in any of the narratives. Rita is the only teacher who uses the words “holy” and “faith”. In the context of her goals for her students, she said:

Another goal, is for them to get a full story of what the Torah has to give us as far as the history of our people and the beginnings of our laws so they’re understanding that this is a holy book.

Rita also wants her students to: “think about faith and how strong a belief can be, what it could motivate you to do”. But, in context, she implies that this is about the faith of the biblical
characters, not the students. Rita continued to be the “outlier” as she told me the questions her students ask about God:

One of the typical questions I get is "Why did God speak to people at that time and not to us?" That's always a question. And about God's existence; how do we know that there really is a God? How do we know that this really happened?

We therefore know that students are interested in these issues. We do not know how these teachers answer such inquiries. In fact, Joan remarks that she does not answer these questions, but “throws them back” to the students:

Questions about God, theological questions. I can't answer; you know, what do you think? I always try to get them to try to figure out what they were thinking. But questions about God, questions about God's motivation, questions about - again, in Bereisheet there's some really difficult subject matter that you deal with and I think it's very hard for 2nd and 3rd graders. And when they're asking questions that I think are at a level like psychologically, higher than where they necessarily should be, I think that's challenging because it's hard.

What does this mean for the problem of practice? The curriculum-in-use does not share two of the goals of the formal curriculum. These two goals aim for the students to connect to Torah as a holy text that reveals “truth emanating from God”. Although the students ask questions about God, the questions are most likely to be about God’s behavior in the text. One of the motivating factors for creating the MaToK curriculum was that in the 1990s, most day school bible teachers were not knowledgeable about non-Orthodox approaches to the text (Miller, 2005). One might have expected that the two rabbis, Emily and Arlene, and the two women who
grew up in the Conservative movement, Rita and Joan, would have spoken more about these spiritual issues.

An important caveat concerning this issue is that the teachers were not interviewed about their personal beliefs. The researcher originally intended to conduct two interviews: one for the teachers to reflect on their practice, and the second to explore their religious beliefs. The researcher was discouraged from conducting a second round of interviews. Had they occurred, more would be known about the personal beliefs and spirituality of the teachers, and if and how they bring that to their teaching.

**In relation to theoretical framework.** Shulman’s (1986, 1987) theory of pedagogical content knowledge was used to guide the analysis of the data. Pedagogical content knowledge refers to the subject matter knowledge and how to teach that knowledge to students. Pedagogical content knowledge refers to illustrations, demonstrations, analogies, etc., employed in the classroom as ways to represent and formulate the subject matter so that it is comprehensible to the students. The pedagogical content knowledge of teachers includes an understanding of the difficulties in learning the discipline, which may be the result of students’ preconceptions and misconceptions. This special knowledge of how to teach subject content includes the knowledge of which strategies to use when, and with which students.

Therefore, the data gathered in this study was used to uncover what the teachers believe and know about the methodology of teaching the Hebrew text of Torah to native English speaking children. The teachers show evidence of all six steps in the process of gaining pedagogical content knowledge as outlined by Shulman’s Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action (Appendix A):
1. **Comprehension of content:** The narratives show evidence of the teachers’ comprehension of the purposes of teaching Torah, the structure of the texts, and the connections between the text and ideas within and outside the discipline. In the narratives about the meaning of Torah in chapter four, all six of the teachers see Torah learning as a means to an end. They want their students to develop into Jews who are proud of who they are and of the stories of their people. They use Torah as a vehicle to promote the intellectual and moral development of the students as well as their Jewish identities.

2. **Transformation of content (preparation, representation, selection, adaptation and tailoring to student characteristics):** Four of the six teachers mention that a careful reading or re-reading of the text is their first step in preparing a lesson. Arlene and Rita mentioned the Teachers’ Guides. Rita said that she glances at it to refresh her memory and uses the suggested questions as her “jump-off” point. Arlene said she will consult it if it is the first time that she is teaching a particular section of Torah. Emily will sometimes compare several different translations, look up a commentary, or check what the exact root of a word is, if she is not sure. Hadar will look at her lesson plans from previous years to see what she might want to change or add to meet the needs of this year’s students.

   Each teacher considers which of the main ideas of the text she wants her students to understand. The school at which Emily and Joan teach has chosen specific themes for each grade in the school. Hadar and Aliza’s goals are guided by the work they have done with the Standards and Benchmarks project. Arlene and Rita, who teach at the same school, speak of identifying a “focus” or “key issue” to guide their planning.

   While four of the teachers say that they anticipate and/or encourage questions from the students, Aliza notes that while she can prepare for teaching discrete skills, she cannot prepare in
the same way for discussions. The reason she gives is that she cannot know in advance where the children’s questions will take them. Arlene emphasizes that the questions are more important than the answers.

All six teachers are very much in touch with the needs of their students. The teachers’ understanding of their students, and the goals they set for them are probably consistent with those of other experienced literature teachers. They stress the importance of “critical thinking”, “deep thinking”, and “independent thinking”. They recognize the need to be cognizant of the developmental and skill levels of their students, and that there are “big ideas” and “moral values” that the text teaches. They recognize the importance of class discussion, in which the questions are sometimes more important than the answers. They mention learning from their students and not needing to have all of the answers.

Creating “independent learners” is another theme, which to these teachers means that the students need to know the basics of Biblical Hebrew and literary analysis. Two teachers mention their own responsibility for encouraging positive attitudes by the way they present the material.

One issue raised that is content specific is that of Jewish identity. As opposed to teaching any other text or learning any other language, the teachers recognize that learning Torah in the original Hebrew, and understanding the inherent values and concepts, are important components in the development of a strong Jewish identity.

The teachers share pedagogical content knowledge about students as a result of their years of teaching Torah to elementary school children:

i. The content needs to be meaningful to the students.

ii. Teachers must differentiate according to the needs and interests of the students.
iii. The material they are teaching is providing a foundation for the current and future Jewish identity of the students.

The teachers recognize that ultimately they are teaching students about the meaning of life and giving them the opportunities to grow intellectually, morally, and spiritually by means of discussing the content of the text.

3. Instruction: Hadar and Aliza consider how to make the lesson “fun” for the students. Rita and Arlene look for ways to achieve a high level of student engagement. Since Hadar also used the word “engagement” in this context, it is probably what she and Aliza mean by “fun”; the lesson has to be enjoyable so that the students remain involved. Hadar and Aliza mention activating prior knowledge. By this they mean asking questions to get the students to think about what they might already know about the topic, the context, the characters, and making predictions about what might happen based upon this prior knowledge.

In planning learning activities, the teachers speak of the importance of providing multiple ways to learn and to become familiar with the material. The variety of experiences and activities that they mention include: drama (skits, role playing, puppets), physical activity such as games involving movement, art (both analyzing and discussing art related to the theme of the story in order to understand the artists’ interpretations, and creating art to illustrate their own interpretations), and activities related to key issues, such as baking matzah, making bricks, or building a tower.

The teachers recognize that the impact of the text is more powerful when students can relate it to their own lives. They encourage personalization: identifying with characters—their dilemmas, their relationships, etc. Arlene extends this to current events by comparing the
experiences of the Israelites in Egypt and their degree of assimilation with the migrant communities settling in Europe from war torn areas of the Middle East.

Finally, the teachers look at the Hebrew language words and skills that the students will need to know. They each deal with this in slightly different ways: Hadar teaches specific skills prior to looking at the text with her special learning needs students. She remarks that with previous classes, skills were more integrated in the teaching and not separate from other aspects of learning the text. Aliza pre-teaches the difficult words to her second grade students, often using flashcards with pictures. Joan considers how she might integrate some of the Biblical Hebrew skills or vocabulary into the Hebrew language class that she will teach to the same students at a different time in the school day.

4. Evaluation: This was referred to as “assessment” in the previous chapter. There is a greater difference among the teachers in this area than in any of the other categories. The starkest difference is that Hadar and Aliza, who teach at the school that participates in the Day School Bible Standards and Benchmarks project, speak knowledgably about performance assessment, while none of the other four teachers use that terminology. Although Hadar and Aliza both teach second graders, they did not say, as did Rita and Joan who also teach second grade, that assessment is not appropriate for this age student.

Emily and Arlene, who teach grades 5, 6, and 7, are the only ones who say that they administer tests. Whereas Arlene considers projects to be formative assessments, Emily considers them summative.

The pedagogical content knowledge about assessment in the Torah classroom is not as uniform as in the other areas explored. Influences on this pedagogical content knowledge appear to be twofold: 1) personal beliefs, such as “testing is inappropriate for second grade students”,
and 2) the results of professional learning, such as the knowledge gained about performance assessment by the teachers who worked in teams as part of their participation in the Day School Bible Standards and Benchmarks project.

5. **Reflection (evidence based analysis of self and students):** The teachers were directly asked during the interviews to reflect on their personal and professional growth over the course of their teaching careers. Although the interview process gave them a unique opportunity for reflection, there are no clues in the narrative, and the question was not explicitly asked, whether or how often teachers engage in personal reflective practice. All of the teachers show evidence of reflective practice when it applies to considering their students.

6. **New Comprehensions:** Emily, Rita, and Joan speak of their growth in moving from being teacher-centered to student-centered in their classrooms. The three common characteristics of professional development programs that have had a positive impact upon the teachers are role-modeling of the methodology, working with a mentor, and on-going follow-up. Five of the teachers articulated areas in which they would like to improve in the future as classroom teachers, while Aliza spoke of her desire to become more involved with curriculum development. This shows self-awareness that they are still learning and improving even though they are veteran teachers.

The teachers’ narratives about new comprehensions gained from experience are not content specific. The main point about pedagogical knowledge gleaned from what they have learned over the course of their careers is that three of the six teachers believe that a student-centered classroom is preferable to a teacher-centered classroom. There was no question in the interview that used these terms, so they came spontaneously from the teachers.
In relation to the literature review. It is instructive to review the findings of this study in light of the literature about the knowledge and beliefs of teachers, and about orientations to text.

The personal and practical knowledge of teachers. One aspect of teaching knowledge defined by Buchmann (1987) is teaching expertise, which includes “(1) judgments of appropriateness, testing of consequences, and consideration of ends, not just means; and (2) less typical modes of practice, such as explanation, discussion and the deliberate management of value dilemmas by the teacher” (p. 154). The six veteran teachers in this study display this expertise, according to their own accounts. They often consider the developmental levels and needs of their students when planning how to present the content, and the amount of focus that should be dedicated to Biblical Hebrew. They test consequences by trying new techniques and evaluating their usage. They each have goals that they consider to be the ultimate purpose of studying Torah—the ends, not just the means. Explanations, discussions, and “the deliberate management of value dilemmas” (p. 154) are all methods employed by the study participants.

The special kind of knowledge employed by teachers in the classroom that includes their personal backgrounds and beliefs as well as their subject matter knowledge was studied by Elbaz (1981) and Clandinin (1985). This practical knowledge, they tell us, is the added element that transforms the written curriculum into the enacted classroom discussions and activities. The same three grouping of the teachers by their backgrounds (Rabbis, Israelis, American/Conservative Jews) were present in their beliefs about assessment and orientation. In the cases of Rabbi Emily and Rabbi Arlene, their deep intellectual understanding of the text and of Judaism in general gave them access to more orientations. Hadar and Aliza have loved studying Bible since their childhood in Israel, and were influenced significantly by the training they received in
the Day School Bible Standards and Benchmarks project. They appeared to have a deeper understanding of backward design, goal setting, and assessment, than the other four teachers. Jewish identity is a key issue for Rita and Joan. They had personally developed their own strong Jewish identities at American Jewish schools, camps, and youth groups. This finding is also consistent with Grossman’s (1991) findings that two groups of high school English teachers made different kinds of content and strategy decisions based upon their backgrounds.

Fenstermacher (1994) concludes his review of knowledge in research on teaching by noting the metacognitive significance of the results: “Teacher knowledge research is not for researchers to know what teachers know but for teachers to know what they know” (p. 50). The interviews in this study provided the teachers with an opportunity to reflect on what they know and believe. A follow-up study about their experience of reflective practice, and whether or not it is something that they continued, would let us know how important or how lasting an effect the interview experience played in that respect.

Gudmundsdottir (1990) found that the values of high school teachers were an integral part of their teaching and of their pedagogical content knowledge. In this study, as well, moral and religious values played a role in the teachers’ methodology and choices.

Buehl and Fives (2008) point out that, “beliefs about the source of knowledge are conceptualized along a continuum” (p. 371). One end of the continuum is the belief that knowledge originates with and is conveyed by authority figures, while at the other end knowledge is “actively constructed by the individual learner on the basis of . . . personal experience and reason” (p. 371). In the present study, this may be analogous to beliefs about the origin and authority of Torah, with one end of the continuum believing that Torah is the word of God, and as such is true and binding, while at the other end, actively constructing meaning based
on human reason and experience is central. All of the teachers in this study are at the part of the continuum that emphasizes actively constructing meaning based on human reason and experience.

Tatto and Coupland (2003) reviewed studies dealing with interventions to change teacher beliefs. Their critique includes the observation that “there seems to be a sense that belief change among teacher candidates is a self-justifiable activity” (p. 147), and yet little or no evidence is provided in the studies to prove this justification. Surprisingly, only one study looks at the outcomes on teaching practice, and none document outcomes in terms of student learning. The one intervention mentioned by the teachers that seems to have had a profound effect is the Day School Bible Standards and Benchmarks project in which Hadar and Aliza participated. When Hadar was asked if the training added to what she already knew about Torah or if it changed her teaching, she replied:

Of course it did change my whole approach to teaching it, because I think the standards give us . . . I can only use the word amazing (laughter) because the standards give you the benchmarks, they give you the goals. It gives you the focus of “What do I have to teach?” and “What do I teach first?” and “How do I go about teaching the text?” “What are the skills that I have to teach before I can even enter the text?” So what are the skills they're going to do while I'm teaching the text, and how do I review the whole thing, and how do I assess the children? So it's really . . . for me it was an eye-opening approach to teaching anything, not just chumash.

Aliza confirmed that the intervention changed her teaching, too:

Not only the language we got through the training; combining the mentoring and the standards and benchmarks. But when you set up your goals and your skills and you teach
toward those skills - no surprises. You get to the goals and you see that even those students who are sometimes struggling with reading or struggling with the comprehension, processing information, when you break it down into small pieces you see the progress.

As for the relationship of beliefs and classroom practice, studies have found both correlations and discrepancies between teachers’ beliefs and practices. Due to the limitations of this study the researcher cannot judge for correlations or discrepancies since there were no classroom observations to confirm or deny the teachers’ self-reported classroom practice.

From previous studies, Rosenfeld and Rosenfeld (2008) identify three beliefs that, when acted upon, lead to effective practice: all students can learn, learners have diverse needs, and teachers can intervene to make a difference in student learning. Evidence of all three of these beliefs are present in the narratives. Again, conclusions cannot be drawn as the beliefs were self-reported, and not witnessed in action in the classroom. If Basturkmen’s (2012) conclusion that beliefs are reflected in the practices of more experienced teachers (p. 286) holds to be true, we could expect that these veteran teachers’ beliefs are also reflected in their classroom practice.

**Orientations to text and teaching bible.** This section will explore whether or not the teachers’ narratives in this study are consistent with, or contradict, the current literature. Chervin (1994) defines orientation as “the integration of one’s knowledge and beliefs”. Grossman’s (1991) theory includes orientations to text as part of the pedagogical content knowledge of literature teachers. Holtz (2003) believes that a clearer picture of the teaching taking place in a school can be attained by a better understanding of the teachers’ orientations.

In his paper *A Pragmatic Pedagogy of Bible* (2009), Greenstein asks how one is to decide, from the multiplicity of orientations, which approach to take? The teachers in this study would
agree with his answer: to first consider the outcomes we hope to achieve, and then to choose the orientation that will be most likely to bring our students to those goals. As shown in Table 5.2 in this chapter, the three orientations that were used by all six teachers definitely reflect their major goals for their students: Becoming independent learners of the Hebrew text corresponds to the Decoding, Translating, and Comprehension Orientation. Making the biblical text relevant and meaningful for each student, and helping the students to grow emotionally and Jewishly corresponds to the Personalization Orientation: How the Bible can speak to us. Finally, the moral values that the teachers hope to instill by means of discussing dilemmas in the text corresponds to the Moralistic-Didactic Orientation.

Emily and Arlene would agree with Levisohn (2009) that our choice can never be objective, and we are always comparing and evaluating the possible readings and interpretations of text. Emily remarked that she uses each one of the orientations at some point, and that she selects her approach depending upon the specific text and what she wants the students to gain from it. Emily said that “the text sort of leads me”. Similarly, Arlene said, “The text is going to tell me how to approach it”.

The findings of this study are congruent with Cook and Kent’s (2012) observation that personalization and language are the predominate activities in the Bible classes they visited. They critique that although teachers’ motivations for these kinds of activities are laudable, their sole use limits the students from experiencing and understanding the significance of Bible on a deeper level. Cook and Kent emphasize that learning Torah must include “an authentic interpretive experience” (p. 59) in which the student and the text make meaning by means of a partnership. Galili-Schachter (2011) also considers “interpretive activity” to be a necessary central element of text study. In this study, all of the teachers use personalization and language
skills orientations. However, there are comments that show that the teachers encourage individual interpretations of the text, as well. Both Hadar and Joan use art as a means for the students to express their understanding and interpretations. Emily considers learning the Biblical Hebrew to be a tool for the student to gain direct access to the text. She wants the students to read “without there being an interloper in the middle of all that who interprets it for them” before the students can develop their own interpretations.

Dorph’s 2010 study of prospective Jewish teachers found that the vast majority of them do not possess the knowledge to teach Torah in liberal Jewish settings as “an open approach to the text that posits multiple interpretations, and demands close reading and explication of the text as in a literary-critical approach”. The experienced teachers in this study do have this knowledge. Whether they knew this when they were prospective teachers is unknown. Hadar and Aliza both mention that they learned things about Judaism and bible in America that they had not or could not learn in Israel. The more sophisticated knowledge of the teachers in the study was gained from rabbinical school, college courses, and professional development such as the MaToK orientation workshop and the Jewish Day School Bible Standards and Benchmarks training.

Dorph asked two key questions to assess the beliefs and knowledge about Torah of more than 60 students: “(1) Who wrote the Torah? . . . and (2) How do we read, interpret, and make meaning of Torah texts? (In children’s words: Is the Torah true?)” (p. 64). She found that the answers to these questions have an impact on how the pre-service teachers articulate and understand their purposes in teaching Torah, the ways in which they understand and respond to students’ questions, and the ways that they frame lessons and
activities. Regretfully, the proposed second interview about personal beliefs did not take place, and we can only infer how these teachers might have answered.

Bacon’s (1993) study of curriculum reconsideration found four central factors that influenced the extent to which a curriculum was implemented. Of particular interest to this study is the finding that “Teachable moments were lost because of the theological fuzziness, uncertainty, or insensitivity of the teachers”. Although none of the teachers interviewed for this study would be considered insensitive, the data did show an absence of the teachers trying to bring theological issues to the personal level of the students. The discussions about God that the narratives reveal appear to be about God’s behavior and motivation in the text, rather than the students’ personal connection and beliefs. Tanchel (2008), too, remarks that the preparation of prospective teachers must include skills and background enabling them to promote and develop the religious development of their students. Evidence of these skills are not readily apparent in the teachers interviewed for this study.

**In relation to the research design.**

**Research model.** Using the model of narrative qualitative research with a *Constructivist-Interpretivist* research paradigm proved appropriate and successful in this research. Qualitative studies occur in the natural settings of the milieu of the participants. Qualitative research strives to capture the voices and stories of the participants. The purpose of this study is not to make generalizations about all bible teachers, but rather, to discover the personal stories, in terms of beliefs and practices, of a small group of individuals. The study is reflective, interpretive, and holistic, which are all characteristics of qualitative research.

The narrative approach was employed as a method to capture the stories of the experiences of teachers who are all using the same curriculum to teach Torah to elementary
Jewish day school students. Narrative research looks at the lived stories of individuals in order to better understand “the ways humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative research is a distinct methodology that supports and enhances the task of collecting and analyzing stories “about individuals’ lived and told experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 71). This study collected and analyzed stories that are subjectively told from the participant’s point of view, and co-constructed with the researcher as she asks open ended questions, and later looks for themes and meanings within the stories.

The research paradigm of Constructivism-Interpretivism also proved to be appropriate and successful in this study. This research sought to understand the world of the teacher in her Torah classroom by means of her own reflections. This is consistent with Creswell’s (2013) observation that in constructivism “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (p. 24). Interpretivism refers to the researcher’s intent to make sense of—to interpret—the participant’s world of experience. The lenses through which people view and interpret events, and the meanings that they attribute to these events are central to the interpretive constructivist researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The researcher has interpreted the participants’ narratives of their personal experiences in light of current literature on pedagogic content knowledge and teaching bible, as well as in relation to the stated goals of the formal curriculum.

**Role of the researcher.** The researcher played an active role in the constructivist paradigm by asking open-ended questions in order to learn about the participants’ experiences in their own words. She worked collaboratively with the research participants to elicit, record, and discuss the details of their stories. She attempted to understand and interpret the experiences they described. A collaborative relationship often forms between the participant and the narrative researcher, and the researcher must aim to remain neutral and non-judgmental in interviews,
notes, and interpretations. The researcher examined her own beliefs and recognized the ways in which they may have impacted the research (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). She did this primarily in the way she formulated the interview questions, the way she responded to the answers, and the follow-up questions that were asked.

**Trustworthiness.** Qualitative researchers must consider and ensure the trustworthiness and validity of their studies. Creswell (2013) emphasizes two interrelated questions to guide considerations of trustworthiness: “Is the account valid, and by whose standards? How do we evaluate the quality of qualitative research?” (p. 243). The following validation strategies were employed in this research to maintain the trustworthiness of the study:

1. **Member checking.** The teachers who participated were given the opportunity to read the transcript of their own interview. They were asked to check for their own agreement with the accuracy of the materials, and to revise or delete material as they saw fit.

2. **Triangulation.** Data was obtained by three different methods in order to check and compare the evidence: interviews, field notes, and member checking.

3. **Clarifying researcher bias.** Before starting data collection, the researcher reflected about “past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations” (Creswell, p. 251) that were likely to shape her approach to the study and her interpretation of the data. Reminders of the researcher’s positionality arose several times such as when Rita concluded her interview by asking, “Would you hire me?” and when Emily commented, “The other thing I do is . . . you're probably going to make fun of me about this but anyway…” The researcher maintained her impartiality by not making judgmental comments, and by being an attentive listener rather than a participant in a dialogue.
4. **Rich thick description.** The researcher attempted to use this style of writing, typical of narrative research, in order to give the reader a vivid picture of the participants and their settings (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). She wrote with rich thick description by using quotes and strong action verbs to detail activity, movement, and physical characteristics of people and places.

**Reciprocity.** Narrative inquiry is a collaborative process. It is “a relational research methodology, and, while it is research, it is also a transaction between people, which makes ethical issues and concerns about living well with others central to the inquiry” (Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin, 2013, p. 578). Opportunities for teacher-participants to grow and learn alongside the researcher occur organically within narrative research. “Professional growth and learning would be almost a side-benefit of such research” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010, p. 267). Indeed, two of the Heads of School encouraged their teachers to participate in this study as an exercise in reflective practice. Teacher-participants were given an opportunity for deep reflection and growth by means of discussing their classroom practice with the researcher. Although the researcher sought to understand the teachers’ practical and pedagogical content knowledge, the teachers’ own awareness of who they are as teachers, what they know, and what they do, was hopefully heightened by sharing their experiences and by looking deeply at themselves as professionals.

**Limitations of This Study and Suggestions for Future Studies**

The multiple limitations of this study also point the way for future research topics. The subjects of this narrative study were six female Jewish day school Bible teachers who teach grades two through seven. They are all experienced teachers who have been teaching Judaic studies from between twelve to forty years, and were born between 1950 and 1966. This study
should therefore be seen as a “snapshot” of a small group of teachers from roughly the same generation. They were born before the information/technology era, and all currently live in the northeastern United States. None was raised in an Orthodox Jewish home, nor were any of the schools Orthodox in philosophy. The Interview Protocol did not include sufficient questions about the teachers’ personal religious beliefs and the ways in which they answer their students’ questions about religious belief. This was due to the fact that a proposed second interview, during which these questions were to be asked, was not conducted.

These limitations invite the following studies with which to compare the narratives of the small group of teachers in this study:

1. Curriculum Narratives of different demographic subsets of bible teachers:
   i. Males
   ii. Teachers in other parts of North America
   iii. Novice and/or younger teachers
   iv. Teachers using curricula other than MaToK
   v. Teachers in Orthodox schools

2. A study of the teaching practices of bible teachers before and after a major intervention such as the Jewish Day School Bible Standards and Benchmarks Project.

3. A follow-up of the study participants to discover if and how participation in this project impacted them as reflective practitioners.

4. A study that looks specifically at the religious beliefs of experienced teachers and how they deal with issues of spirituality in the classroom.
Significance for the Field of Bible Education

Implications for theory. This research explores how the personal and professional knowledge and beliefs of Jewish Day School Torah teachers inform their implementation of a written curriculum as reflected in their personal curriculum narratives. It addresses issues similar, although not identical to those in the research of Dorph (2007), Miller (2005), and Shkedi (2009; 1995; 2006). These scholars have studied issues of teachers’ beliefs and curriculum with bible teachers in the United States and Israel. The present study brings to the discussion the voices of six experienced day school bible teachers.

Like Shkedi’s findings, this study found that the curriculum-in-use does not always match the formal curriculum. Unlike Dorph’s pre-service teachers, this study found that the six experienced teachers did have a sophisticated, liberal understanding of the bible as being more or other than the literal word of God. Unlike the teachers in Miller’s study, these teachers, although they did sometimes create their own supplementary materials, had the advantage of a written formal curriculum as their base. Many of the bible teachers in Miller’s study, and in Jewish day schools in general at that time, were Israelis who, although well versed in Bible, did not know or understand the ideology of the Conservative movement of Judaism. The teachers in this study showed evidence that they do know and understand the ideology of Conservative or liberal Judaism. There was scant evidence, however, that they were transmitting this knowledge in a sophisticated and effective manner to their students.

Pomson (1999) has called for more opportunities for teachers in Jewish education to tell their stories. This study gives voice to teachers by means of their personal curriculum narratives, thereby fulfilling one of Pomson’s suggestions: “to generate narratives authored by those who
live and work in Jewish schools in order that we might ask in an informed fashion whether such accounts might serve as significant sources of insight into Jewish education” (p. 430).

The narratives in this study also address some of the issues that Tanchel (2006) calls for when she recommends more study of the pedagogical content knowledge of Tanakh teachers:

We need to learn more about how teachers’ understandings of the general contents of biblical books, central characters, concepts and themes, as well as their knowledge of methods of interpretation . . . all inform and shape their teaching. Education scholars need to learn more about teachers’ beliefs about the nature of knowledge in biblical studies, about the different methods necessary to read and to interpret biblical texts, and about the origins of the Bible. (p. 245)

Holtz’s (2003) claim that teachers who are familiar with a range of orientations increase their pedagogic possibilities was born out by the narratives of Emily and Arlene. These two rabbis reference more ways to approach the text than do their colleagues. This may be a result of their exposure to many approaches to text that they learned at their respective rabbinic seminaries.

This study has continued the discussion about the pedagogical content knowledge of Jewish bible teachers. Sections from the narratives and parts of the analysis may be useful to facilitators who are training pre-service or in-service bible teachers.

**Implications for practice.** The knowledge gained from this study suggests actionable items for practitioners, including heads of Jewish day schools, curriculum coordinators, classroom teachers, and for the project director of the MaToK curriculum.

**Heads of schools.**
1. **Spirituality.** None of the websites of the three day schools involved in this research contain the words “God” or “spirituality”. These words do not appear in the mission statement or in the description of Judaic studies curriculum goals. Although this may be in order not to alienate potential families, it is a major statement about Jewish education. This is a discussion that needs to take place with all constituents: parents, board members, administration, teachers, and local rabbis. Are we only educating children for values, holidays, peoplehood, etc., or should there be a spiritual component in the education? Are we teaching only to the intellect, or also to the heart? Are we choosing to exclude spirituality in our mission statements and goals because the adults are uncomfortable with the idea, or because we think children do not need this? If the two goals of MaToK that address spirituality are excluded, does studying Torah become like studying any other piece of literature? If spirituality is not presented as an integral part of Judaism, might students look elsewhere—to other traditions—when spirituality does become a concern later in life?

2. **Professional development.** We have learned from these teachers that the most effective and valuable professional development programs are spread out over time. This could be two consecutive weeks or an initial training that is followed up by shorter workshops. Modeling of new techniques and on-going mentoring were the other two characteristics that teachers mentioned as contributing to professional development programs that had a strong impact upon them. Heads of school need to work with teachers to assess their needs, and then to find the
facilitators and mentors who can work with them on specific issues over the course of a year or more.

3. *Autonomy*. Several teachers expressed their appreciation for the autonomy given to them in their classrooms. Heads of school and faculty need to work together to understand in what areas teachers do want guidance, and in what areas they would like to make their own decisions.

**Curriculum coordinators.**

1. *Goals*. The teachers used several means to guide them in choosing their goals for teaching Torah content. One school had identified a focus for each grade; one was guided by agreed-upon standards and benchmarks; and one school by the curriculum statements and scope and sequence documents that were prepared for the school’s accreditation. This suggests that curriculum coordinators need to discuss and clarify goals with the teachers at their school: Which goals are school-wide, which goals apply to the specific grade, and which are the goals that the teacher brings with her?

2. *Assessment*. Is there a school wide policy on assessment or is it up to each teacher? If teachers are writing comments on reports to parents, but say that they do not give assessments, then they are assessing the children in their own minds. Is it fair for assessment to be so subjective? The teachers who participated in the Standards and Benchmarks project speak knowledgeably about performance assessment, sometimes called authentic assessment, and worked as a team to create the assessments with other teachers. Curriculum coordinators should look
towards expanding the teachers’ understanding and ability to use a variety of assessments.

3. **Purpose of teaching Torah.** The bible teachers at the Benchmarks and Standards schools study text together. This is a good model for all schools. It provides the opportunity for adults to discuss what they get from the text, and to consider what the purpose might be of teaching that text to children. If a school decides that spirituality should be part of the Torah curriculum, an ongoing group study experience for the teachers could prove valuable. The teachers could discuss what they have learned from the text that guides or adds to their personal sense of spirituality, or relationship with God, before bringing the questions and discussions to the classroom.

**Classroom teachers.**

1. **Discussions of personal spirituality in the classroom.** The MaToK teachers’ guides suggest that students keep a “God Journal” in which they record their personal feeling, questions, and understandings. This exercise, which is not a graded assignment, needs to be encouraged, and could be technologically upgraded to be in the form of a personal blog or online journal. When questions are asked about God’s motivation, behavior, or relationships with individuals and nations in the Torah, teachers should bring the discussion one step further by comparing the answers with how the children understand God in their own lives.

2. **Understanding the concept of ongoing revelation.** A well know quote from Rabbi Louis Finkelstein states: “When I pray, I speak to God. When I study, God speaks to
me." Teachers should discuss among themselves and with their students the possibility of Torah study providing an opportunity for us to relive the revelation at Sinai. What do we hear and what do we understand from our Torah study that brings us closer to God and helps us grow spiritually?

3. **Child development.** Teachers should be familiar with some of the theories of moral development and faith development in order to better understand how their students perceive the biblical stories containing ethical dilemmas and relationships with God.

**MaToK Project Director.**

1. **Teacher training.** My workshops for teachers new to MaToK will be significantly changed. From this study I have learned the importance of modeling the methodology, of facilitating teachers to work together studying text in small groups, and to spend much more time on issues related to God and spirituality.

2. **Stimulating discussion.** In the periodic newsletters that I send out to teachers and curriculum coordinators at schools using MaToK, I will present a few questions for discussion or ideas for the classroom to advance the goals of MaToK, especially the two goals related to spirituality. (Appendix H)

3. **New materials.** As we create new curriculum materials and revise the existing teachers’ guides, we need to keep in mind that most teachers use the Decoding, Translating, and Comprehension Orientation, and the Personalization Orientation. We need to encourage questions and activities that will help teachers use some of the other orientations with confidence.
Conclusion

This research employed qualitative narrative inquiry and took place in three Jewish day schools by listening to and re-storying the words of classroom teachers. It therefore fulfills the injunction of Mohrman and Lawler (2012), who stated that “to achieve relevance, researchers need to work with and learn from practitioners, and they need to spend time in organizations gathering data” (p. 41). The study uncovered many aspects of the teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge, including how they view their students, what they understand to be the purpose of teaching Torah to young children, special issues involved in teaching an ancient Hebrew text to English speaking children, and the orientations that they use in their classrooms for approaching and interpreting the text. The study confirms that the curriculum-in use does not always include the goals of the formal curriculum, and that an effective professional development program has the potential to exert great influence upon the participants. The teachers are skilled at literary analysis, questioning the text, and analyzing characters. However, the narratives reveal little evidence that deep discussion of personal spirituality is taking place in these Torah classrooms.
Appendix A

Shulman’s Model of Pedagogical Reasoning and Action (Shulman, 1987, p. 15)

Comprehension:
Of purposes, subject matter structures, Ideas within and outside the discipline

Transformation:
- Preparation -- critical interpretation and analysis of texts, structuring and segmenting, development of a curricular repertoire, and clarification of purposes
- Representation -- use of a representational repertoire which includes analogies, metaphors, examples, demonstrations, explanations, and so forth
- Selection -- choice from among an instructional repertoire which includes modes of teaching, organizing, managing, and arranging
- Adaptation and Tailoring to Student Characteristics -- consideration of conceptions, preconceptions, misconceptions, and difficulties, language, culture, and motivations, social class, gender, age, ability, aptitude, interests, self-concepts, and attention

Instruction:
- Management, presentations, interactions, group work, discipline, humor, questioning, and other aspects of active teaching, discovery or inquiry instruction, and the observable forms of classroom teaching

Evaluation:
- Checking for student understanding during interactive teaching
- Testing student understanding at the end of lessons or units
- Evaluating one's own performance, and adjusting for experiences

Reflection:
- Reviewing, reconstructing, reenacting and critically analyzing one's own and the class's performance and grounding explanations in evidence

New Comprehensions:
- Of purposes, subject matter, students, teaching, and self
- Consolidation of new understandings, and learnings from experience
Appendix B

Comparison Chart of Orientations Described by Chervin (1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional/Religious</td>
<td>Subjection of modern self-identity to the text</td>
<td>Verbal revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific/Critical</td>
<td>Confronting self-identity with the text</td>
<td>Continuous revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Detachment of self-identity from text</td>
<td>Progressive revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalistic</td>
<td>Projection of self-identity onto the text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-moral</td>
<td></td>
<td>No revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanistic/Literary</td>
<td></td>
<td>No revelation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Orientations to Teaching Bible (Holtz, 2003, p. 95)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Key Element</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Where Found?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Contextual Orientation</td>
<td>Bible in the context of its own times</td>
<td>Academic Research on Bible—historically oriented studies</td>
<td>Universities; secular schools in Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Literary Criticism Orientation</td>
<td>Tools of modern literary criticism as applied to the Bible</td>
<td>Academic Research on Bible—literary critical studies; sometimes in textbooks</td>
<td>Universities; some (usually) non-Orthodox schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Reader-Response Orientation</td>
<td>Tools of post-modern literary criticism as applied to Bible</td>
<td>Academic Research on Bible—literary critical studies; sometimes in textbooks</td>
<td>Universities; some (usually) non-Orthodox schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parshanut-the Jewish Interpretive Orientation</td>
<td>Exploration of classical commentators’ understanding of Bible</td>
<td>Nehama Leibowitz as a model</td>
<td>Schools of various sorts, though mainly Orthodox; rarely in universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moralistic-Didactic Orientation</td>
<td>What is the moral lesson that the Bible teacher us?</td>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>Schools of various sorts, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Personalization Orientation</td>
<td>How can the Bible speak to us—psychologically, politically, spiritually?</td>
<td>Usually not in curriculum materials—found in contemporary works on the Bible</td>
<td>Schools of various sorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ideational Orientation</td>
<td>What are the “big ideas” of the Bible?</td>
<td>Melton curriculum as a model</td>
<td>Schools, mainly non-Orthodox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible Leads to Action Orientation</td>
<td>Study leads us to performing commandments; ethical behavior</td>
<td>Found in textbooks of various sorts</td>
<td>Schools of various sorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Decoding, Translating, and Comprehension Orientation</td>
<td>Decoding the Hebrew, comprehending the basics</td>
<td>Found in older textbooks</td>
<td>All Schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Informed Consent Document

Northeastern University, Department of Education
Name of Investigator(s): Dr. Billye Sankofa Waters, Principal Investigator; Galya Greenberg, Student

Researcher

Title of Project: The Curriculum Narratives of Jewish Day School Bible Teachers

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

The people who are being recruited to participate in this study are Jewish Day School bible teachers who use the MaToK Bible Curriculum and teach in grades 3, 4, 5, and/or 6.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this study is to help Jewish Day School bible teachers tell their stories in order to understand how teachers implement curriculum.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to:

1. Participate in a 90 minute two part interview:
   a. Part one will consist of open-ended questions about your background and beliefs as a bible teacher.
   b. Part two will consist of looking at a biblical text with the researcher in order to consider and discuss how you might go about teaching that particular text.

2. Review the written transcript of the first interview in order to:
   a. Comment on accuracy or inaccuracy
   b. Clarify a point
   c. Ask for anything to be removed, if desired

3. Participate in follow-up interview several months after the first interview. This interview will include:
   a. Clarification, if needed, of anything in the first interview.
   b. You will explain to the researcher how you prepared for and taught a recent lesson to your students. You may be asked open ended questions to help you reflect upon the experience you describe.
   c. The researcher may ask you clarifying questions concerning the preparation,
implementation, and reflections about the lesson.

4. Review the written transcript of the follow-up interview in order to:
   a. Comment on accuracy or inaccuracy
   b. Clarify a point
   c. Ask for anything to be removed, if desired

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each of the two interviews will take no longer than 90 minutes. The interviews will take place at a location of your choosing at a convenient date and time.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?</th>
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<tr>
<td>One potential risk may be remembering a troubling experience from the past. Should this happen, the researcher will ask you whether or not you wish to continue. If you do wish to continue, the researcher will turn off the recording device until you are ready to resume the interview. If you do not want to continue, you may withdraw from the study immediately with no repercussions. Another potential risk might be if an administrator from your school reads the final dissertation and recognizes a specific teacher. This risk is very unlikely since few people are expected to read the dissertation outside of the designated readers. Also, confidentiality will be maintained in the writing by using pseudonyms for the names of teachers and schools, and the city will not be identified.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Will I benefit by being in this research?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are no direct benefits for you. Potential benefits include</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>Who will see the information about me?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the interviewer/researcher in this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way as being of this project. All names of participants and their schools will be replaced with pseudonyms when the recordings are transcribed. The school will not be identified, except to say that it is a Jewish Day School in the northeastern United States. No one will have access to the audio recordings or to the research in progress except for the researcher. All written parts of the study will be stored on the researcher’s personal computer in a locked folder. The only limits to confidentiality are those required by law, such as, e.g., child abuse or other criminal activity.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**
It is not anticipated that you will suffer any harm from this research. No special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of my participation in this research.

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as an employee.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**
If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the person responsible for the research: Galya Greenberg at 860-235-5657 or greenberg.g@husky.neu.edu. You can also contact Dr. Billye Sankofa Waters, the Principal Investigator, at b.sankofawaters@neu.edu.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**
No. However, the researcher is prepared to meet with you at the completion of the research if you wish to have a discussion or consultation on any aspect of teaching bible.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**
No.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**
Although the researcher is also the project director of the MaToK Bible Curriculum, this research project is totally independent of MaToK. The researcher will not be evaluating the use of the MaToK curriculum by the teacher, or make any formal judgements about the teacher. The purpose of this narrative inquiry is for the researcher to listen carefully and to transmit the teachers’ stories about how they teach bible to elementary Jewish day school students.
I agree to take part in this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of person agreeing to take part</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed name of person above</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed name of person above</td>
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</table>
Appendix E

Interview Protocol Form

Institution: _____________________________________________________
Interviewee (Title and Name): _______________________________________
Interviewer: _____________________________________________________
Date: __________________________________________________________________
Location of Interview: __________________________________________
Age_______ First language__________________________
If Hebrew is your first language, would you rather answer in Hebrew? ______________
Where did you get your training in education?

________________________________________________________________

Where did you get your training in Judaic Studies?

________________________________________________________________

Curriculum Narratives of Bible Teachers—Interview #1

1.) Introductory Protocol

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. In many ways, you will be my co-
researcher, since the goal is for me to be able to retell your story of who you are, what you
believe, and how you teach as a Torah teacher in the elementary grades of a Jewish Day School.
Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I
would like to audio record our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this
interview? [if yes, thank the participant, mention you will ask them again for the record on
the tape, and turn on the recording equipment]. I will also be taking written notes during the
interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be
used when quoting from the transcripts. I will be the only one privy to the recordings which will
be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. My co-researchers may also help to review
the transcriptions, but they will not have access to the audio files and only your pseudonym will
be attached to the transcript. To meet our human subjects’ requirements at the university, you
must sign/you have already signed the informed consent document. Essentially, this document
states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and
you may stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and
(3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Do you have any questions about the interview process
or this form?

We have planned this interview to last about 90 minutes. During this time, I have several
questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt
you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Do you have any questions at
this time?
2.) Interviewee Background/Warm-up

1. How long have you been a teacher? A Judaic Studies teacher? A bible teacher?
2. What grades have you taught during your total years of teaching?
3. What grades do you teach this year?
4. Which parts of the bible have you taught in the past?
5. Which parts of the bible are you scheduled to teach during this school year?
6. *For teachers teaching more than one subject in Judaic Studies:* Tell me how you would rate the subjects you teach starting from the subject you like the most as #1.
7. What are the similarities that you see in teaching bible and teaching other Judaic Studies subjects? Are there any differences? Is there anything unique to teaching bible?
8. Which parts/stories/books of the bible do you most like to teach and why?
9. Which parts/stories/books of the bible do you find the most challenging to teach and why?

3.) Torah Biography—*I am calling this part of the interview the Torah Biography, because I want to learn about your relationship with Torah study as you have progressed throughout your life up to this point. Let’s look at each section of your life: childhood, adolescence, adulthood*

2. Your past: Were you brought up in a specific ideological framework or movement of Judaism? How would you identify yourself today on the spectrum of Jewish beliefs?
   a. What do you remember about learning Torah as a child?
      i. Did your parents or grandparents ever talk about Torah or Torah stories?
      ii. What do you remember about Torah books, Torah celebrations at synagogue?
      iii. Are there any Torah teachers who stand out in your memory? If so, what was it about them that makes them memorable?
   b. What do you remember about learning Torah as a teenager?
      i. Did you learn Torah in a formal setting? Summer camp? Youth group?
      ii. Are there any Torah teachers who stand out in your memory? If so, what was it about them that makes them memorable?
   c. What do you remember about learning Torah as a college student?
      i. Jewish organizations? Formal classes?
      Are there any Torah teachers who stand out in your memory? If so, what was it about them that makes them memorable?
      d. What do you remember about learning Torah as an adult?
i. Formal classes? Study groups? On your own? Read books about Torah? Hear Torah read in synagogue?

Are there any Torah teachers who stand out in your memory? If so, what was it about them that makes them memorable?

3. Your present:
   a. Can you tell me about any courses or workshops or conferences that you have attended that relate in some way to teaching Torah? In what ways were they helpful or not helpful to you? Did you change anything in your teaching as a result of these courses/workshops?
   b. How would describe your relationship/involvement with Torah today?
      Can you give me an example?

4.) Reflecting on Current Teaching. *We are going to transition now from your past experiences with Torah to speaking about you as a teacher here, now, this year!*

   4. 1. What are your goals as a Torah teacher? For yourself? For your students?
   5. 2. How much choice do you have in choosing the materials that you will use in teaching Torah? What are some of the choices that you have made?
   6. 2. Describe for me what steps you take when you are preparing a lesson.
   7. 3. What, if anything, might influence you during a lesson to change something that had been in your plans? Can you give me an example?
   8. What kinds of questions do you like to hear from students that get you especially excited?
   9. What kinds of questions do students sometimes ask that you find challenging to answer?
   10. What goals do you have for your students this year? For a unit? For a Lesson? What do you want them to come away with? What do you expect them to know and to be able to do?
   11. Are there things you do when teaching bible that are specific to teaching bible? Things you wouldn’t do in other classes?
   12. How do you choose what to emphasize when you are teaching a text?
   13. How do you determine whether or not a lesson/unit has been successful?
   14. There are a number of factors that might influence your classroom implementation of the curriculum such as those you have mentioned......as well as the contents and structure of the student booklets, the teachers’ guide, S&B, your own ideas about how Torah should be taught, your school's mission statement, the influence of your supervisor or curriculum coordinator. How do all of these factors interact as you plan and implement a lesson? Which carry the greatest weight? Which are the least influential?
   15. Are there any ways in which you might want to improve or grow as a Torah teacher? What are they and why?
16. In what ways, if any, has your teaching changed during the course of your career? 
(What, how, why, approach, methodology, etc.? 

5.) **Studying text together**—I would like to look at some Torah text with you. We will read through it and then I want you to think about how you might teach this to your students. 


Guiding Questions (print out on a sheet of paper for each interviewee: 
- What kinds of things might you think about as you prepare to teach this story to your students? 
- How would you prepare for the lesson/unit? 
- What would you organize the main parts of the lesson? 
- Which aspects of the story are the most important for them to understand? 
- What questions do you think the students might raise? 
- What would you expect the students to know and to be able to do at the end of this lesson/unit? 

6.) **Orientations** 
I am going to give you a set of cards that describe possible ways to approach any biblical story/text. 

A. Please sort them into three columns: 
   i. I use this approach 
   ii. I do not use this approach 
   iii. I am not familiar with this approach. 

B. Which approaches might you choose to use for the Tower of Babel story? 

C. In the first column of approaches you use, arrange them from most important to least important according to your priorities as a teacher. 

6. **Closure** 
   i. Next steps: I will send you a transcript of this interview for you to look over. You may add clarifying comments, change something, or ask that something be removed. 
   ii. Is there anything else you would like to add to anything you have said during the interview? Is this anything else that you would like me to know about you that hasn't been brought up in the course of this interview?
Appendix F

Tower of Babel Text in Hebrew and English

Genesis 11

1 Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words.

2 And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there.

3 They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them hard.”—Brick served them as stone, and bitumen served them as mortar.—

4 And they said, “Come, let us build us a city, and a tower with its top in the sky, to make a name for ourselves; else we shall be scattered all over the world.”

5 The LORD came down to look at the city and tower that man had built,

6 and the LORD said, “If, as one people with one language for all, this is how they have begun to act, then nothing that they may propose to do will be out of their reach.

7 Let us, then, go down and confound their speech there, so that they shall not understand one another’s speech.”

8 Thus the LORD scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city.

9 That is why it was called Babel, because there the LORD confounded the speech of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.
Appendix G

Guiding Questions for Study of Tower of Babel

1. What kinds of things might you think about as you prepare to teach this story to your students?
2. How would you prepare for the lesson/unit?
3. How would you organize the main parts of the lesson?
4. Which aspects of the story are the most important for them to understand?
5. What questions do you think the students might raise?
6. What would you expect the students to know and to be able to do at the end of this lesson/unit?
Appendix H

MaToK Bible Curriculum—Goals for Students

Students who study Torah with MaToK:

• View Torah as kadosh (a sacred text) and read it in an inquiring, deep and reverent way.
• Are participants in the continuing revelation and uncovering of truth emanating from God.
• Learn Torah in the original Hebrew.
• Develop literary skills to study the Torah independently.
• Engage in critical thinking.
• Become sensitive to shades of meaning.
• Search for personal meaning in Torah.
• Connect Torah with their lives as Jews.
• See themselves as links in the chain of Torah understanding and interpretation.
• Prepare to explore traditional commentaries.
• Engage with questions about God.
• Grapple with moral issues that arise from the Torah
Glossary

*Breisheet*  The Hebrew name for the book of Genesis.

*Chevrutal chavrutot*  A traditional form of text study in which pairs of students learn together to by challenging and sharpening each other’s understanding of the text.

*Chumash.*  Another term for Torah from the Hebrew word for “five”.

*Derash*  The interpreted meaning of the text.

*Kadosh/Kedushah*  Holy/Holiness

*Midrash*  Interpretive commentaries and explanations, sometimes in the form of stories.

*Mitzvot*  Hebrew word referring to the commandments given by God.

*Parshanut*  The genre of rabbinic commentary on the text.

*Peshat*  The literal, plain, or simple meaning of the text.

*Rashi*  Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, a medieval commentator. His commentary is the first one traditionally studied by school children learning Torah.

*Shorasheem*  Literally: roots. This refers to the three letter roots underlying most Hebrew words.

*Tanakh*  A Hebrew acronym for the Hebrew bible, made up of the first letters of each of the three parts: Torah (The Five Books of Moses), Nevi’im (Prophets), and K’tuvim (Writings).

*Torah*  The Hebrew word for the Pentateuch—the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament.
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