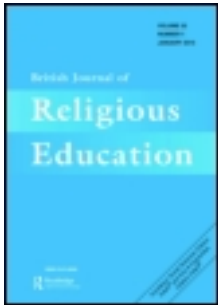


This article was downloaded by: [Bar-Ilan University], [Eli Kohn]

On: 04 December 2011, At: 05:21

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## British Journal of Religious Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cbre20>

### Designing a curriculum model for the teaching of the Bible in UK Jewish secondary schools: a case study

Eli Kohn<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Curriculum Development, Lookstein Center, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel

Available online: 17 Nov 2011

**To cite this article:** Eli Kohn (2011): Designing a curriculum model for the teaching of the Bible in UK Jewish secondary schools: a case study, British Journal of Religious Education, DOI:10.1080/01416200.2011.628191

**To link to this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2011.628191>



PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## **Designing a curriculum model for the teaching of the Bible in UK Jewish secondary schools: a case study**

Eli Kohn\*

*Curriculum Development, Lookstein Center, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel*

This paper describes the process of designing a curriculum model for Bible teaching in UK Jewish secondary schools. This model was designed over the period 2008–2010 by a team of curriculum specialists from the Jewish Curriculum Partnership UK in collaboration with a group of teachers from Jewish secondary schools. The paper first outlines the context of UK Jewish secondary schools and then the curriculum context in which this specific model was designed. It then details the model itself and concludes with a discussion of the implementation of the model and associated challenges.

**Keywords:** Bible study; curriculum design; Jewish secondary schools; curriculum implementation

This paper describes the process of designing a curriculum model for Bible teaching in UK Jewish secondary schools. This model was designed over the period 2008–2010 by a team of curriculum specialists from the Jewish Curriculum Partnership (JCP) UK in collaboration with a group of teachers from Jewish secondary schools.

The paper first outlines the context of UK Jewish secondary schools and then the curriculum context in which this specific model was designed. It then details the model itself and concludes with a discussion of the implementation of the model and associated challenges.

### **1. Background**

#### ***1.1. Context of UK Jewish studies curriculum partnership***

In 2005, community leaders of the United Synagogue, the UK centrist orthodox umbrella organisation under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi and the United Jewish Israel Appeal (UJIA), the major UK Jewish fund-raising body, came together to form the JCP. The rationale for the partnership was that instead of each centrist orthodox school providing its own very limited

---

\*Email: [eli@lookstein.org](mailto:eli@lookstein.org)

funding to design its own Jewish studies curriculum, a concerted effort could be made to create partnerships between schools and provide Jewish studies curriculum and associated professional development in a collaborative way to the greater benefit of centrist orthodox schools.

Following substantial funding support from the Sebba Trust, this writer was appointed Educational Director of the JCP and, supported by Gabriel Goldstein, a recently retired Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), we began writing a Scoping Paper which would lay the foundations of the curriculum partnership. The Scoping Paper would try to answer the question, 'What is the Jewish studies ideal graduate profile of a student after 12 years studying in a UK centrist orthodox Jewish day school?'

Once we reached some consensus among the various stakeholders on an ideal graduate profile it was agreed that we would begin to design the curriculum model units in particular subject disciplines in Jewish studies for partner schools. The Bible, agreed by all schools as a core focus for teaching and learning, was chosen as a key area for our work.

This paper focuses on the design of the Bible model for Jewish secondary schools. In order to better understand the rationale behind the Bible curriculum model which was developed in collaboration with schools it is important to understand the particular context in which centrist orthodox Jewish day secondary schools in the UK work.

### ***1.2. UK Jewish secondary schools for pupils aged 11–18***

There are approximately eight Jewish secondary schools in the UK that admit more than 75 pupils each year. The vast majority are in London with a number in Manchester, and one in Liverpool. Most of these schools are state-aided and are affiliated with the centrist orthodox Jewish community which is affiliated to the Office of the Chief Rabbi. Figure 1 summarises the overall Jewish learning experiences of children in these Jewish secondary schools.

Table 1 shows in greater detail, the scope of the content of each of these experiences, and the approximate number of periods per week (ppw) allocated to those in the formal curriculum.

It is interesting to highlight the following points:

- In Key Stage (KS) 3, each school defines its own Jewish studies curriculum.
- All schools follow a prescribed curriculum, taken by all pupils aged 14–15, in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) religious studies. Some pupils proceed to study General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level Religious Studies beyond age 16. For GCSE and A-level, schools choose to take one of the two RS courses available.

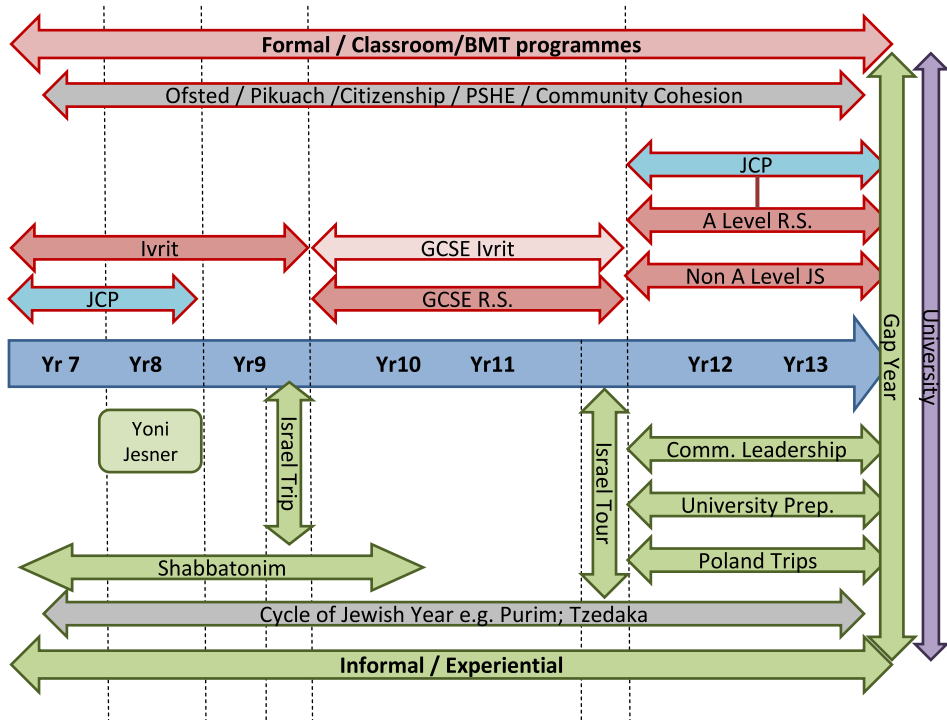


Figure 1. Overall Jewish learning experiences of children in Jewish secondary schools.

- All schools teach modern Hebrew language (Ivrit) to most pupils in KS3. Some pupils take modern Hebrew language GCSE. Some schools offer a Biblical Hebrew option which can be studied to GCSE and, after age 16, also to GCE Advanced Level.
- Some schools teach Jewish history as a distinct discipline in KS3 while some integrate Jewish history with general history lessons
- All schools have informal Jewish programmes throughout the secondary school experience. These may include, religious weekends centred on the Sabbath, social action opportunities, youth movement programming and special assemblies and activities during religious festivals, e.g. Purim.
- All schools have an Israel trip at the end of KS3 which is customised to suit each school's needs.

### 1.3. The new secondary school reforms

At the same time as analysing the Jewish content of these schools' programmes we also examined the wider context of general curriculum reform in the UK to see how wider curriculum thinking can be integrated into our model.

Table 1.

Periods per week (ppw)	End of KS3	KS4	End of KS4	Year 12	End of Year 12	Year 13	End of Year 13
<b>Formal provision</b>	KS3 Torah texts/texts from Prophets & writings/Mishnaic or Talmudic texts/general Jewish knowledge/Israel studies/Jewish history (2–4 ppw) Enrichment courses Hebrew language taught to most pupils (2–3 ppw). Hebrew reading/writing catch-ups	KS4 Judaism & Texts/Philosophy & Ethics GCSE (1–3 ppw)	End of KS4 GCSEs	Year 12 Judaism & Ethics/Jewish scriptures A-level/text track/general JS track (3–5 ppw) Non-examinable Jewish studies (1–2 ppw)	End of Year 12 AS Levels	Year 13 Judaism & Ethics/Jewish scriptures A-level/text track/general JS track (4–5 ppw) Non-examinable Jewish studies (1–2 ppw)	End of Year 13 A-levels
<b>Informal provision</b>	Prayers/trips/Sabbath & festival celebrations/lunchtime & after school sessions	Prayers/trips/Sabbath/festival celebrations	Prayers/trips/Sabbath/festival celebrations	Poland trip/festival celebrations/leadership opportunities in school	Poland trip/festival celebrations/leadership opportunities in school	Festival celebrations/leadership opportunities in school	

In its recent publication ‘The 11–19 curriculum: From implementation to development’ the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) sets out a number of curriculum principles which have a crucial role to play in schools’ improvement and which are of particular relevance to our work with secondary schools. They include:

- *Three statutory curriculum aims of successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. These can help to provide a focal point for curriculum planning.* In our curriculum thinking we need to ask ourselves the question; what does it mean for our students to be successful Jewish learners and confident and responsible Jews?
- *More opportunities for greater flexibility to allow for personalisation of the curriculum to adapt to individual schools’ and learners’ particular needs.* What are the implications of this development for working with secondary schools?
- *Cross-curriculum dimensions that promote coherence between subjects to help learners make effective links in their learning.* How are these links being made in our Jewish schools not only between subject areas but in the wider Jewish learning experience of our pupils?

In the design of the Bible curriculum model, we took note of these explicit principles that were being promulgated for the secondary curriculum. We now describe the process and the design of the Bible curriculum for secondary schools, and how they incorporated those explicit principles.

## **2. Design of the curriculum model for the Bible in UK Jewish secondary schools**

### ***2.1. Theoretical underpinnings of the curriculum model***

Our curriculum model utilised what Schremer and Bailey (2001) have called Bible teachers’ ‘ideologies’ or what Holtz (2003) has named Bible teachers’ ‘orientations’. ‘Orientation’ as a term encompasses aspects of both the knowledge and belief sides of a teacher’s relationship to the subject matter. It includes the individual teacher’s motivational drive that would mobilise him to teach the material in a particular direction. Grossman (1990) has described how teachers come to these orientations which she attributes to ‘a probable combination of personal values and disciplinary training’. Schremer, Bailey and Holtz have all made their own categories for the different modes of teacher orientations or ideologies in Bible teaching. These categorisations were important to the design of our model as they helped define the type of teacher-orientations to Bible study we could expect within our diverse group of teachers.

Schremer and Bailey formulated four composite profiles of teaching ideologies into which teachers of Bible studies could be classified. They include:

- (1) focus on values and ethics;
- (2) focus on text study;
- (3) focus on Bible identification and Bible continuity; and
- (4) focus on the value of Bible study itself.

#### *Focus on values and ethics*

The aim of this approach is to teach the Bible as a book of instruction regarding the values, ethics morality and behaviour that a Jew should learn and practice. The primary focus of teaching Bible, according to this ideology, is to reveal to students the central values, practices and ethics of Judaism inherent in the narratives and teachings of the Bible as explained by the Rabbinic Sages. The skills of reading, translating and analysing text are secondary. This approach needs to be distinguished from the ‘values clarification’ approach to moral education, which focuses on the student responding to stated Bible values in a personal subjective way rather than moral imperatives to which the student should aspire. The teacher does not require personal opinions or critical thinking of students because they need to learn the fundamental Torah values first. This ideology or orientation is prevalent among ultra-orthodox Bible educators.

#### *Focus on text study*

The primary focus of teaching Bible in this orientation is to convey to the student the depth and sophistication of biblical texts as a complex erudite work; to show that it is internally consistent, intricate, poetic, spiritual and profound – the source text of all that comprises Judaism. In order to do this, the teacher focuses on skills such as analysis of language and structure of the text as well as the story themes, images and concepts of social law and ritual. Nechama Leibowitz, professor of Bible at Tel Aviv University during the mid-1900s, was a principal proponent of this ideology.

#### *Focus on Bible identification and Bible continuity*

For the teacher adhering to this approach, it is of ultimate importance that students see Bible study as the foundation for their contemporary identification with biblical topics or ideas that may be reflected in their personal experience or in community participation. The Bible represents our collective memory of what has made Jews different from everyone else. Therefore, the curriculum focuses on the birth and development of the Bible people, their history and their customs. All of these biblical topics and issues are shown within the context of contemporary communal and national life. This conveys a sense of self definition and belonging.

*Focus on the value of Bible study itself*

What is most important in this approach is that today's students value learning Bible. The primary goal of teaching is not mastery of text skills or even comprehension of specific content but rather *to create an experience* that will connect the student to Bible learning in a positive way. The teaching approach focuses on those texts that evoke inspiration, excitement, surprise and are wholly engaging to a modern adolescent.

Holtz (2003) added more orientations. In particular, his *contextual orientation (category 5)* is relevant to our discussion. This approach aims at the meaning of the biblical texts within their own times. It views the Bible as a record of an ancient civilisation. It includes the use of various tools that help locate the Bible in its historical setting. This orientation to teaching Bible has also been very influential in the secular school system in Israel, though much less so in the Diaspora.

Clearly, these profiles or categories are flexible and as Greenstein has noted (1999) the notion of multiple ideologies or orientations can exist in the practice of one teacher.

In preparation for our engagement with teachers we were mindful of these various orientations and their possible impact on the curriculum to be designed. With this theoretical background will now describe the process of designing the Bible curriculum model.

**2.2. The design of the curriculum model**

During the months of March and May 2008 two seminars were held for a group of 12 Jewish studies teachers from UK centrist-orthodox Jewish secondary schools. Their purpose was to discuss prepared sample Bible curriculum and to explore the possible future structure of a KS3 Bible programme for UK Jewish secondary schools. Participants included representatives from the great majority of the UK's Jewish secondary schools admitting more than 75 pupils annually.

In advance of the seminars, teachers from the various schools were, therefore, asked to focus on their two major goals or orientations for the study of the Bible. For most they included:

- Relevancy of the text to the lives of their pupils (orientation 1);
- Analysis of text to enable students to discover meaning for themselves and to attain some degree of skills in independent learning of text (orientation 2).

In order to meet these different goals for the teaching of the Bible, we attempted to synthesise both the values-based and text-based orientations in the design of the Bible curriculum. In order to help achieve the goal of



textual analysis, enabling pupils to discover textual meaning for themselves, it was agreed in the first seminar that, wherever possible and appropriate, the Bible methodology of Professor Nechama Leibowitz would be adopted in teaching texts even where these were in English.

However, as the process developed over the following years, we learned that our attempt at synthesis was fraught with challenges. An overall concern, expressed by some teachers at the seminar, was whether the new curriculum, which balanced both values and skills-based elements, adequately met the needs of each school's diverse student population and the different pedagogic styles of the teachers themselves. We refer back to these challenges in the reflection section of the paper.

During the second seminar there was general consensus among participants concerning the need to establish consistent criteria for the choice of Bible units for KS3. Agreed criteria included texts which:

- Have an important educational message which is relevant to the lives of pupils.
- Are age appropriate.
- Allow for 'freshness' of text study with 'new' eyes, so that texts already studied closely in the JCP Bible Primary curriculum would be avoided.
- Contain significant opportunities for textual analysis and discovery.

Intensive discussions were also held as to the actual choice of units (about 18 in total, six for each year/age group) and both chronological and theme-based options were debated.

The following programme balanced the wish expressed during these seminars for an approach that allows for chronological and/or thematic study of the Bible, and fosters progressive development of skills from Years 7–9. It was also to give pupils the opportunity to develop parallel themes across the Bible, building on skills from previous years. Units were to be differentiated to allow maximum access to the text for pupils with different skills backgrounds; and they would accent the relevance of the issues raised to the lives of Jews living in contemporary times. An overview of progressive knowledge, skills and understanding goals has been developed for the programme and recorded below.

### ***2.3. Rationale for structure of JCP Bible KS3 curriculum***

Participants expressed the wish to design a programme in which units are not only chronological but follow a particular logical theme rather than being chosen randomly. These units also needed to reflect the secondary school national curriculum reforms mentioned earlier in this paper. In particular, we emphasised the need to integrate themes across all areas of study. 'Responsibility' and 'citizenship' were themes that Jewish studies teachers

were happy to see reflected in the new Bible units, as these dove-tailed well with the new national priorities in the national curriculum.

The over-arching question which was agreed upon as being the axis of the Bible curriculum running throughout Years 7–9 is:

2.3.1. *What does it mean for me to be a responsible Jew?*

Year 7 was to focus on themes in the *Book of Genesis* which deal with the pupil's *individual* responsibility to himself/herself, to God, and to family and those around him/her. Year 8 work was to focus on themes in the *Book of Exodus and Leviticus* which deal with the pupils' *collective* responsibility as members of the Jewish *people*. Year 9 was to focus on themes in the *Book of Numbers, Deuteronomy* and Early Prophets which deal with the pupil's responsibility to *prepare for his future*. This division is presented in Figure 2.

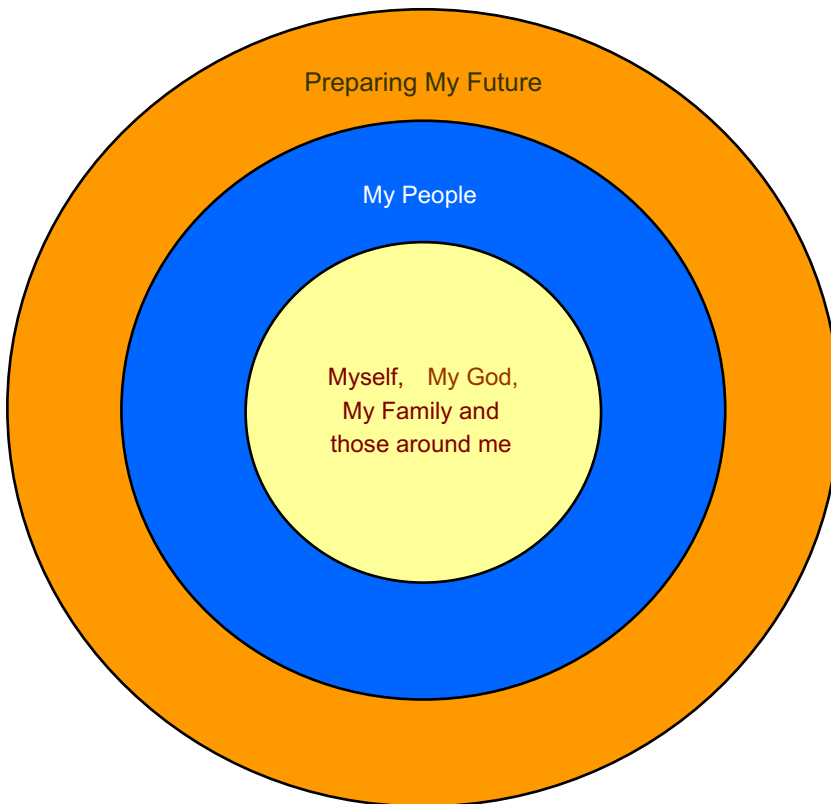


Figure 2.

#### 2.4. *The Year 7 Bible curriculum*

The Year 7 Bible curriculum attempts to grapple with this question through the eyes of the *individual* and his/her personal sensitivity, struggles and dilemmas. The *Book of Genesis* is ideally suited to examine these issues as themes of individual struggles, choices and dilemmas lie at the heart of the book. They are age appropriate for 11 year olds discovering their own personal identities as they join a new school and make new friends.

The Year 7 pupil would grapple with his individual responsibility as a Jew in the three following spheres:

- his/her responsibility to fulfil the will of his maker;
- his/her responsibility to himself and
- his/her responsibility to be sensitive to the needs of family and people around him.

The following six units in the *Book of Genesis* were chosen by participants as being ideally suited to build on these themes. In addition, they all offer serious opportunities for textual analysis and skills acquisition as requested by all schools.

- (1) *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden – Personal Choice and Responsibility I* (3:1–3:24). The unit offers opportunities to examine issues of personal responsibility including the special nature of man and woman as created by God; personal choice and sin; and responsibility for one's actions.
- (2) *Cain and Abel – The Responsibility of the Individual to Others I: The Family Unit* (4:1–4:16). This unit examines the responsibility of the individual as he relates to others, beginning with the family unit. It explores the dynamic of sibling rivalry and builds on the themes of individual responsibility discussed in the previous unit. In addition, it explores man's ability to rectify his actions through repentance.
- (3) *Noah and Abraham – The Responsibility of the Individual to Others II: Society at Large* (6:9–6:12 – the character of Noah and 18:17–18:33 – should Sodom be destroyed). This unit enables pupils to discover the character differences between Noah and Abraham by examining and comparing their concern for those around them. While units 1 and 2 focus on responsibility within the family, unit 3 widens the discussion to the individual's responsibility to society at large
- (4) *Responsibilities in Family Relationships I – The husband and wife relationship* Jacob, Rachel, Leah and Laban (29:1–30). This unit returns to the family unit and examines the relationship between Jacob, Rachel, Leah and Laban. In particular, it focuses on the love relationship between Jacob and Rachel and the way it impacts on their relationships with those around them.

- (5) *Responsibilities in Family Relationships II – Relationships between brothers*. The reconciliation between Jacob and Esau (32:4–33:16). This unit examines the dynamics behind the reconciliation between these brothers and compares these events to other examples of two brothers in rivalry in the *Book of Genesis* including Cain and Abel (already learned in unit 2) Yishmael and Issac (learned in primary Year 4) and Joseph and his brothers (learned in primary Year 5).
- (6) *Personal Choice and Responsibility II – Can I Really Change?* (41:1–41:32). The year ends by returning to the theme of personal choice and responsibility discussed in unit 1. It examines changes in Joseph's personality through an analysis of his transformation as he goes down to Egypt, and a comparison of his own dreams and his understanding of Pharaoh's dreams.

The first four units have so far been written and piloted by some schools.

### 2.5. *The Year 8 Bible curriculum*

This year extends the theme of being a responsible Jew by exploring the pupil's identification as a responsible member of his/her *people*. The *Book of Exodus* is ideally suited to examine these issues as it focuses on themes of peoplehood, covenant and chosenness, and the social and religious behaviours that they require. They are also age appropriate for 12–13 year olds discovering their responsibilities to the Jewish people in their Bar and Bat Mitzva year. It was felt that the Year 8 Bible curriculum would also deepen textual skills by allowing for analysis of parallel themes throughout the Torah.

The Year 8 pupil would examine his own identity and responsibility as a member of the Jewish people by exploring the following two central questions:

- What defines us as a people?
- What are our social and religious responsibilities as a people?

The following units are mostly from the *Book of Exodus*.

- (1) *What defines the Jews as a people? – Part I: Definition by Others* (1:1–1:22). This opening chapter of the *Book of Exodus* examines the Jewish people's roots and how they were first defined by others as a People. It also raises the issue of the maintenance of a group Jewish identity within a larger host society.
- (2) *What defines the Jews as a people? – Part II: Definition by Commitment to Values* (15:22–16:31). This unit examines two incidents involving Israel's complaints during their first weeks of life in the desert ('bitter waters' and the *Manna*) as the first stage in building a society defined by certain values and responsibilities.

- (3) *What defines the Jews as a people? – Part III: Chosenness* (19:1–19:23). This unit examines the concept of chosenness, the definition of the Jewish people as a ‘Chosen People’ in anticipation of receiving the Torah at Sinai. The study explores the tension between universalism and particularism in Judaism.
- (4) *Servants of God – Part I: Social Implications* (21:1–5, 22:20–22:26, 23:4–5, 23:9 and *Leviticus* 19:1–18 – selected passages as well as corresponding passages of *Deuteronomy*). This unit explores the social implications of the covenant at Sinai – the transition of the Jewish people from servants of Pharaoh to servants of God. It does so by examining a selection of precepts including treatment of the slave; the treatment of the stranger and the down trodden; returning lost objects and loving one’s neighbour.
- (5) *Servants of God – Part II: Religious Implications* (Genesis 2:1–2:3 – Exodus 31:12–17, *Leviticus* 23:1–3 and *Leviticus* 25:1–24). This unit explores the religious implications of the covenant at Sinai – the transition of the Jewish people from servants of Pharaoh to servants of God. It does so by examining a selection of precepts including the Sabbath and Festivals throughout the Torah.
- (6) *The Sin of the Golden Calf – Can the People Change?* (32:1–32:19). This unit examines the dramatic story of the Golden Calf and its implications regarding the group dynamics of change and resistance to change. The unit parallels the final unit of Year 7 which deals with individual change.

The first three units have been written so far and some have been piloted by schools.

## 2.6. The Year 9 Bible curriculum

This year further deepens the themes of responsibility through an exploration of the pupil’s *responsibility to prepare for his future*, by studying the transition of the Jewish people as they prepare to enter the Land of Israel. The books of *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*, and sections of the early Prophets, are ideally suited to examine these issues as they chronicle the preparation of the people to enter the land, the transition from reliance on miracles to the self-reliance demanded for building a national life in the land of Israel and the changing demands of leadership related to that transition. The Year 9 curriculum also allows for integration possibilities for those schools which organise an Israel trip during Year 9, and offer serious opportunities for textual analysis and skills acquisition.

The Year 9 pupil would examine his/her responsibility to prepare for the future by exploring the following central questions:

- What is the place of the Land of Israel in the life of the Jewish people?
- What are the qualities of effective leadership?
- What particular type of leadership is needed to lead the nation in its own land?

The following units are primarily from Numbers but also include selections from Deuteronomy and the early Prophets:

- (1) *Preparing to enter the land – The Sin of the Spies* (Numbers 13:1–13:25, Deuteronomy 1:20–1:25 and comparison with Joshua 2:1–2:24). This unit examines the special qualities of the Land of Israel and the manner in which public opinion can be swayed by inappropriate reporting and nuances.
- (2) *Qualities Needed for Leadership I: The Waters of Contention* (Numbers 20:1–13). This unit examines the ups and downs of Moses's leadership and analyses why he could not be the leader who would bring the people into the Land of Israel.
- (3) *Qualities Needed for Leadership II: The appointment of Joshua* (Numbers 27:12–27:23 and Deuteronomy 31:1–31:30 and 34:1–34:12). This unit takes a comparative look at the leadership qualities of Joshua and Moses and analyses why Joshua is considered the most suitable leader to take the people into the land of Israel.
- (4) *The Ideal System of Leadership: Democracy, Theocracy, or Monarchy* (Numbers 16:1–22; Deuteronomy 17:14–17:20 and Samuel 1 12:1–15). This unit focuses on the Torah's attitude toward different forms of leadership by analysing Korach's leadership claim against Moses, the law of kingship, and Samuel's appointment of Saul as the first king of Israel. It considers the ideal form of leadership for the Jewish people in the land of Israel.
- (5) *Preparing to inherit the Land* (Numbers 32:1–32:42 and 27:1–27:11). This unit examines the request of the tribes of Gad and Reuben to settle on the other side of the Jordan and their communal responsibility to their people and land. It will also explore the rights of women to inherit the land through a study of the daughters of Zelofchod.
- (6) *Planning for the future – The Transition to a New Era* (Numbers 33:50–53; Deuteronomy 27:1–10, 31:1–30 and 34:1–12). This unit will explore the death of Moses and the final consolidation of the people into a united nation with a sense of mutual obligation.

The first two units have been written and some have been piloted by schools.

### 3. Implementation of model: reflections and challenges

#### 3.1. Challenges of differentiation

One of the main challenges of the Bible programme for KS3 was to design it in a way that meets the different needs of the varied Jewish secondary schools in the UK. While the programme responds to the commonality between the schools, it must deal, as well, with the challenging differences between them. For example, some schools focus on textual study in Hebrew and some do not, and others may provide different tracks for students with different backgrounds and interests. Similarly, schools differ with regard to the amount of time that they dedicate to Jewish studies. Accordingly, the JCP Bible programme presents a differentiated programme. This approach allows each school to select the learning outcomes that meet the needs of their pupils, and the components of the programme that further those outcomes. Schools that teach using English texts will also have the option of making a gradual transition to the use of Hebrew texts. These learning outcomes are attached here as an Appendix.

The programme approaches differentiation on two levels:

- (1) *Language*. The curriculum and materials are presented both for classrooms that use original Hebrew texts for instruction, and for those that use English translations. This allows schools to utilise the approach that they have adopted, and also allows for teachers who wish to differentiate by language within one class to do so.
- (2) *Definition of core curriculum*. In the curriculum framework, each unit is defined by the essential questions, ideas, and skills that make up the core of the curriculum. This core is common for all students. The differentiation of content, skills, and understanding would relate to elements beyond the core curriculum.

Despite these attempts at differentiation, the increased individualisation of UK Jewish secondary schools, especially over the last few years, and their desire to create more personalised curriculum to meet the specific needs of each of their schools has led to challenges in the implementation of this Bible curriculum across these schools.

#### 3.2. Challenges of arriving at consensus

Our curriculum approach that aimed for consensus between varied groups or constituencies can lead to compromises that no group is completely comfortable with. While teachers did agree on the two overall aims for the teaching of Bible as described above, they differed as to some particular objectives of the curriculum. Some schools favoured the values aspect of Bible learning while others focused more on the acquisition of textual skills. The Bible

curriculum for secondary school, for example, in light of the various teacher views, blended both values and skills-based pedagogies in the curriculum. However, this blended or integrated model did not always satisfy proponents of either camp. In fact, although all schools participated in the initial curriculum planning meetings only some were satisfied with the final curriculum units and went ahead to pilot them.

#### 4. Lessons to be considered for the future

A number of lessons can be learned from our experience in developing and implementing a Bible curriculum for a group of secondary schools.

- (1) While teachers generally appreciated the overall structure of the model and the theme-based approach which was adopted, the design of specific lesson plans and resources should allow for greater flexibility and adaptability to meet the needs of different schools and teachers. The establishment of a digital data base of resources, which is under development, will hopefully alleviate this issue by enabling teachers to adapt resources to their specific needs.
- (2) On-going and intensive professional development for teachers is vital to ensure successful implementation. The textual discovery-based pedagogic approach to Bible teaching which was adopted, although attractive to teachers, needed more intense follow-up in schools. Finding time in secondary teachers' busy schedules to work through new pedagogies is challenging but essential in order to ensure successful implementation.
- (3) Perhaps most importantly, as Schwab (1983) and Fullan (1997) have both emphasised, the implementation of successful collaborative curriculum models require particular attention to each school's particular culture and specific milieu. A deeper understanding of individual school contexts and specific geographical, cultural and social 'milieu' is essential to the design and successful implementation of collaborative curriculum development models.

#### Notes on contributor

Rabbi Dr Eli Kohn is director of Curriculum Development at the Lookstein Center for Jewish Education at Bar Ilan University in Israel. In this role, he designs religious studies curriculum in partnership with Jewish day schools worldwide and in particular in the UK. His research focuses on the design and implementation of religious studies curriculum models in Jewish schools.

#### References

- Floden, R.E. 1997. Reforms that call for teaching more than you understand. In *Teaching and its predicaments*, ed. N.C. Barbules and D.T. Hansen, 11–28. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.



- Fullan, M. 1997. *The meaning of educational change*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Greenstein, E. 1999. Reading strategies and the story of Ruth. In *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A reader*, ed. A. Bach, 211–31. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Grossman, P. 1990. *The making of a teacher: Teacher knowledge and teacher education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Holtz, B. 2003. *Textual knowledge, teaching the Bible in theory and practice*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary.
- Schremer, O., and S. Bailey. 2001. *Curriculum: Real teachers in focus – a study in Jewish education*. Bar Ilan, Israel: Lookstein Centre for Jewish Education.
- Schwab, J. 1983. The practical 4: Something for curriculum professors to do. *Curriculum Inquiry* 13: 240–384.

## Appendix

### Outline of the main aspects of the Bible curriculum

---

Bible knowledge	Knowledge of Bible content and vocabulary K1 Know the source of the Bible and its main constituent parts K2 Know events, people and places in the Bible K3 Know geographical features in the Bible K4 Know Hebrew words and key phrases in the Bible K5 Know the historical period in which events in the Bible took place K6 Know some legal sections of the Bible K7 Know selections of classical commentaries on the Bible
Bible skills	Literal comprehension of Bible and some related commentaries in Hebrew and English S1 Have reference skills for locating text S2 Read the Bible in Hebrew S3 Locate and read commentaries in Hebrew S4 Apply skills of Hebrew grammar to comprehension S5 Comprehend translated text S6 Comprehend the literal meaning of Bible texts in Hebrew S7 Comprehend the literal meaning of the text of a commentary
Understanding of the Bible	Interpreting texts in Hebrew and English to elicit deeper meaning and implications U1 Understand Bible content in terms of its deeper meaning and implications for us U2 Understand the impact of particular phrasing, Hebrew grammar and nuance on meaning in the Bible U3 Analyse and interpret Bible text using comparison U4 Analyse and interpret Bible text of a commentator

---

## A selection of level descriptors

---

Year	K2	Know events, people and places in the Bible
7	K2.1	Retell events in correct sequence within a passage studied, and recall the people and places involved
7	K2.2	Recall the details in a range of passages associated with particular people or places
7	K2.3	Identify a story or a situation in the sections studied that possesses a particular feature
7	K2.4	Identify stories or situations in the sections studied that have a particular feature in common
7	K2.5	Place in chronological order events occurring in one book
8	K2.6	Place in chronological order events occurring in several books
8	K2.7	Know associations between people, places and events mentioned in Bible
9	K2.8	Independently locate accounts of people, places and events mentioned in Bible
	K3	Know geographical features in the Bible
9	K3.1	Locate on a map, places associated with events in the books studied
9	K3.2	Locate on a map, cities and countries that are mentioned in a book
9	K3.3	Locate on a map, rivers and the borders of countries that are mentioned in the Bible
Year	K5	Know the historical period in which events of the Bible took place
7	K5.1	Identify, on a local time-line, events described in a section
7	K5.2	Identify, on a local time-line, events described in a book
8	K5.3	Identify, on a world history time-line, events described in the Bible
9	K5.4	Consistently identify associations between events, or other content, in the Bible and corresponding events, or other background, in the world history

---

---

Year	S1	Have reference skills for locating text and finding the meaning of vocabulary.
	B.	Using reference tools:
7	S1.4	<i>Look up Hebrew words in notes or wordlists</i>
7	S1.5	<i>Look up Hebrew words in a dictionary, identifying their roots and forms correctly.</i>
7	S1.6	<i>Search Torah text online to locate all occurrences of a particular word, root or form.</i>
7	S1.7	<i>Correctly identify roots and phrases when using concordances or online searches to find all occurrences in Bible of particular words or phrases.</i>
8	S1.8	With adult support, identify portions of a book, through online searches or skim reading, that contain any material relevant to an enquiry
9	S1.9	Unaided, identify portions of Bible, through online searches or skim reading, that are highly relevant to an enquiry
	S2	Read Bible in Hebrew.
7	S2.1	<i>Read words accurately, accentuating syllables correctly.</i>
7	S2.1A	<b>Read words accurately, accentuating syllables correctly.</b>
7	S2.2	<i>Read words accurately and fluently, i.e. without effort or hesitation.</i>
8	S2.2A	<b>Read words accurately and fluently, i.e. without effort or hesitation.</b>
7	S2.3	<i>Read a verse accurately as a sequence of phrases.</i>
9	S2.3A	<b>Read a few verses accurately as a sequence of phrases.</b>
7	S2.4	<i>Read verses accurately and fluently.</i>
8	S2.6	<i>Read independently a range of Bible texts in an accurate, fluent and appropriately punctuated manner.</i>

---

Notes: In the list of level descriptors below, the following coding has been used:

Roman text = relevant to all pupils regardless of previous Bible and language background.

*Italic text* = relevant only for those pupils with a background of Bible study using Hebrew texts.

**Bold text** = relevant only for those pupils entering without a background of Bible study using Hebrew texts.