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FORMULATING A CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR BIBLE STUDY: CREATING COURSE OBJECTIVES FOR BIBLE CURRICULUM IN JEWISH SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Bible teachers worldwide lack a shared language with which to describe expectations of what pupils will learn at various stages of their schooling. This article attempts such a language. It defines a framework, formulated with the assistance of twenty-five Bible teachers in Jewish schools in the United Kingdom. It is hoped that this article will contribute toward the discussion of curriculum benchmarks in the teaching of biblical studies.

During the last ten years we have had the privilege to develop Bible Studies curriculum especially for Jewish day schools in the English-speaking world. This work has been done under the auspices of the Lookstein Center, School of Education, Bar Ilan University.¹ Despite the obvious cultural differences between countries like North America and England we are struck by the fact that Bible educators, whether based in New York or London, lack a shared language with which to describe expectations of what pupils will learn in Bible at various stages. This article attempts to develop such a language. It defines a framework within which learning outcomes for different aspects of work in Bible can be accommodated and described in terms of different levels of attainment in the subject. This framework makes no assumptions about what parts of Bible should be taught in depth, or about which texts and associated ideas should be studied in Hebrew or English. It simply helps to ascertain how far aspects that are addressed and taught in a Bible curriculum have actually been learnt. It is hoped that this article will be a serious contribution toward the discussion about curriculum benchmarks and attainments in Bible Studies. Although the discussions described in this article were held with educators in Jewish schools and focused on the teaching of the first five books of

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the Bible (Torah), we are confident that our study can be beneficial for teachers of all books of the Bible of whatever faith.

ESTABLISHING ATTAINMENT TARGETS IN EDUCATION: BRIEF HISTORY OF RESEARCH

An attainment target can be defined as a "fixed measure against which learning progress and achievement in particular areas of the curriculum can be judged" (Husen and Tuijnman 1994). Already in the early 1950s Tyler spelled out the purpose of evaluation in education in which he emphasized the importance of a coherent approach all the way from curriculum planning to the assessment of standards of student performance in key subjects and cross-curriculum skills (Tyler 1989). In the wake of the Sputnik success in the late 1950s, critics in the United States attacked the poor standards of performance in American schools especially in mathematics and science and called for the establishment of empirical measures to evaluate student achievement (Foshay 1962). Although some progress to this end was made in the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and later in Europe under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) concern with the quality of education continued to be heard throughout the 1960s and 1970s (Lessinger 1970; Walker 1976). The 1980s saw a shift in priorities from managing the quantitative growth of the education system to focusing on quality assurance. Until that time many countries had not bothered to specify concrete goals as well as content and performance standards for school education. Japan, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom were early in specifying objectives for student achievement. In several countries—not least the United States—this trend was reinforced by the publication of the results of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) second international science study (IEA, 1988; Postlethwaite and Wiley 1992; Keeves 1992). By the early 1990s coherent approaches to create standards for student performance were in place in an increasing number of countries around the world. This is particularly true in the United Kingdom with the standards and assessment targets defined in the National Curriculum and more lately in the United States with the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002), which requires public schools across that country to provide evidence that all of the students they serve are learning. Although attainment targets have so far been developed

in many areas of the curriculum, a hiatus exists in the area of Bible Studies. This article attempts to begin to address this area of learning.

BACKGROUND TO STUDY

A significant number of schools in England serve Jewish communities that broadly subscribe to an Orthodox ethos as interpreted by the United Synagogue: "Centrist Orthodoxy." Pupils at these schools come from homes with varied levels of commitment to, and interest in Jewish study and practice. The writers were invited to visit a large number of schools serving such "Centrist Orthodox" Jewish communities in London and Manchester, England. The visits were undertaken in 2003 by members of the United Jewish Israel Appeal's (UJIA) Educational Leadership Team and of the Lookstein Centre at Bar Ilan University. During each visit, lessons and work related to Bible were observed. In response to this series of visits it was decided to respond to schools' needs by supporting a program of curriculum development and staff training in some pilot elementary schools. Part of this work involved defining a framework for analyzing aspects of Bible learning in a way that focuses on learning outcomes. This framework helps curriculum developers to design teaching approaches and materials. It is also intended to help teachers of primary (elementary) and secondary (high) schools to assess pupils' response to, and progress in, Bible Study.

This framework was constructed so as to be usable by educators with widely differing views about which texts should be taught and to what depth. It does not specify too precisely curriculum content, methodology, or materials as these matters are less likely to command consensus between teachers in schools that cater for learners with widely differing interests and needs. It is hoped that this article will provoke discussion of the principle of sharing common terms to describe learning outcomes and levels of attainment.

OBSERVATIONS OF TEACHING BIBLE IN ENGLAND'S "CENTRIST ORTHODOX" SCHOOLS

In all the primary schools visited, teachers made reference to the challenge they were experiencing in teaching Bible in a way that stimulates and interests pupils of all backgrounds and abilities. In many schools the teaching of Bible texts is not sustained throughout the

year. Nominally, two 40-minute periods a week may be available. In practice, however, these periods are available only when they are not required for topics or events related to, for instance, the Jewish calendar, Israel, or special school occasions. Moreover, in most schools, teachers feel that the differences in terms of Jewish practice between their pupils and those of other schools prevent the sharing of common approaches to teaching and assessment. Many teachers feel obliged to devise their own approaches to teaching Bible and to produce their own syllabuses, assessment tests, and learning materials. It is a genuine hardship for teachers to find the time to undertake such long- and medium-term planning, and all this with little professional support or training. Teachers spend much time in working up private approaches and materials for curricula and lessons. At best, they are able to adapt some approaches and materials produced elsewhere to the needs of their own learners.

Despite teachers' efforts to make the study of Bible interesting and relevant, pupils' learning gains are not always commensurate. Many teachers expressed their disappointment with what they achieve with pupils in the subject and many realize that they are professionally isolated in their work. They may succeed in imparting some love of Bible and some knowledge of texts in the time available. Generally, however, they have too little time left in lessons, and too few lessons, to empower their pupils, most of whom have little command of Hebrew, to become confident learners, who enjoy studying Bible, and can engage with it with little support.

The current professional isolation of many teachers of Bible results in some wasted effort because of a lack of common learning objectives; of well-tested teaching approaches; and of effective, shared resources for teaching and learning. To be sure, there is much evidence that, when teachers are asked about their goals and aspirations for Bible as a subject and what they want their pupils to learn, there is, indeed, much common ground. Almost all the twenty-five teachers interviewed claimed that their goals were:

- A. to instill in all pupils a strong love for the study of Bible;
 - B. to equip all pupils with the skills to undertake textual study, using Hebrew texts as far as possible and English as the main tongue for sharing meaning and articulating understanding;
 - C. to guide pupils to reflect on the meaning of Bible, and the implications it has for their everyday life and conduct;
- Some teachers added:

D. to enable some pupils to be independent and perceptive in interpreting a range of Bible texts and commentaries.

In spite of this professional consensus about general goals, there is far less agreement about what specific learning outcomes may be appropriate for each stage of learning. Quite aside from differences over what specific Bible content should be taught at various stages, teachers differ widely in the approaches they adopt in teaching specific content to a specific age group. Different teachers might concentrate on combinations of some or all of the following:

- teaching a love of the Bible narrative and related traditions and commentaries;
- teaching the content of verses in Hebrew or English, and with some commentary on them;
- drilling and chanting Hebrew Bible texts, often together with their English translation,
- understanding selected commentaries;
- teaching Hebrew grammatical forms so as to ensure that pupils comprehend simple biblical texts with minimum support.

Many teachers combine several of these approaches, but without stating clearly what detailed learning outcomes they expect from the majority of pupils, and from pupils who have special needs or who come from a non-religious background. It is not uncommon for pupils in Centrist Orthodox schools to experience uneven progression in Bible Studies over the course of a given Key Stage and across Key Stages. (In England, the National Curriculum defines various Key Stages of learning in each general studies discipline. Key Stage 1 is from ages 5–7; Key Stage 2 is from ages 7–11; Key Stage 3 is from ages 11–14; Key Stage 4 is from ages 14–16 and Key Stage 5 is from age 16 onward.) The situation of Bible Studies contrasts with the rigor with which progression is treated in most National Curriculum subjects in all state schools, including Jewish ones.

DEFINING ATTAINMENT TARGETS

The development and planning of the English National Curriculum for a well-established subject, such as science, was helped by the existence of a shared understanding of standards and of professional

practice in teaching the subject. This background of professional experience among educators in science provided the context and a common language for practitioners to debate what should constitute the essential content of that subject for all pupils.

The research method used adopts the traditionalist approach to curriculum development represented by Tyler. This approach is most suitable for the research because it is the framework by which the National Curriculum in the United Kingdom has been formulated.

In the English National Curriculum, the content to be taught in each subject is, therefore, couched in terms and conventions familiar to educators in that subject; the headings for the various aspects of a subject, for instance, describe its unique characteristics in terms that are well understood. For instance, the headings for the English language curriculum specify three aspects (“Attainment Targets”): Speaking & Listening; Reading; and Writing. In Science, there are four major attainment targets: Scientific Enquiry; Life Processes and Living Things; Materials and Their Properties; and Physical Processes. For each attainment target in a subject, the National Curriculum defines various “Level Descriptions.” These set out a progression of standards that describe what pupils achieve at various stages of study.

BROAD ATTAINMENT TARGETS FOR PUPILS

In the absence of a National Curriculum for Bible Study, the writers posed the question to twenty-five Bible educators in Jewish day schools throughout England: “What broad attainment targets should pupils possess in Bible by the time they are 12 years of age?” This drew interesting and mostly consistent views from these educators. However, unlike the short titles for attainment targets in English, such as “Reading” or “Writing,” it was necessary for clarity to describe “attainment targets in Bible” using longer titles, ones that state more precisely what the various aspects of Bible Study entailed. For instance, discussion identified one attainment target as: “Know events, people and places in the Bible.” Another was to be able to: “Apply skills of Hebrew grammar to comprehension.” After identifying some fourteen titles for attainment targets in Bible Study the writers addressed the same question to a second cohort of nineteen experienced Jewish studies teachers of Years 3 to 9 (Grades 3 to 9) before revealing the set of fourteen titles.

These teachers’ answers turned out to be similar in many respects to the fourteen titles identified earlier, although individual teachers

used slightly different words to express each title. Several teachers suggested attainment targets that the writers had not included, and these were duly added to the collection. When all the attainment targets identified by any teacher were listed together, they formed a full collection of titles, each of which was fairly distinct, although several competences were clearly dependent on others, or reinforced others. Remarkably, almost every teacher who was asked to identify attainment targets for Bible immediately identified at least 60% of this full collection. Moreover, when told of a competence in the full collection that he or she had not named, a teacher typically did not hesitate to agree that this too was a valid competence, whether or not it was one that was taught in the teacher's particular school. This confirms again that teachers do in fact share a significant consensus on what constitutes the broad aspects of Bible Study.

The full collection of "attainment targets in Bible Study" identified in this way is shown in Table 1. For convenience, and for consistency with some of the language used in the English National Curriculum, these titles are grouped in three columns as follows:

- **Knowledge** titles: These define the Bible study content that pupils may be familiar with in terms of events, people, places and historical and geographical contexts, and the amount of Hebrew elements that pupils command;
- **Skills** titles: These describe the grammatical and reading skills in Hebrew, and the plain, literal comprehension skills (in English and Hebrew) that pupils possess and are able to call on when studying Bible;
- **Understanding** titles: These describe how pupils use their knowledge and skills to interpret the significance of Bible texts in Hebrew and English and to elicit meaning that lies "between the lines"; and how pupils derive from the close reading of texts implications for their own lives and behavior.

Within each of these three columns in Table 1, the titles are listed in arbitrary order. There is no suggestion that attainment targets with lower reference numbers are easier than those that follow them, or that an earlier title should be taught before those that follow it. Nor is there any suggestion that all pupils must follow all the titles in a column in order to be considered "knowledgeable," "skilled," or "understanding." Indeed, it was clear that no individual teacher would address all the

TABLE 1. Main aspects of attainment in Bible study identified for pupils (aged 7 to 14)—15th July 2006

Knowledge	Skills	Understanding
<p>Knowledge of Bible content and vocabulary</p>	<p>Literal comprehension of Bible and some related commentaries in Hebrew and English</p>	<p>Interpreting texts in Hebrew and English to elicit deeper meaning and implications for us</p>
<p>Pupils</p>	<p>Pupils</p>	<p>Pupils</p>
<p>1.1 Know the source and structure of the Bible</p>	<p>2.1 Have reference skills for locating Hebrew text and meaning</p>	<p>3.1 Understand Bible content in terms of its implications for us</p>
<p>1.2 Know events, people and places in the Bible</p>	<p>2.2 Read Bible in Hebrew</p>	<p>3.2 Understand the impact of particular phrasing, Hebrew grammar and nuance on meaning in Bible</p>
<p>1.3 Know geographical features in the Bible</p>	<p>2.3 Locate and read commentaries in Hebrew</p>	<p>3.3 Analyze and interpret Bible text using textual comparison</p>
<p>1.4 Know words and key phrases in the Bible</p>	<p>2.4 Apply skills of Hebrew grammar to comprehend translated text</p>	<p>3.4 Analyze and interpret the text of a</p>
<p>1.5 Know the historical period in which events in the Bible took place</p>	<p>2.6 Comprehend the literal meaning of Bible texts in Hebrew</p>	<p>commentary</p>
<p>Know some legalistic sections of the Bible</p>	<p>2.7 Comprehend the literal meaning of the text of a commentary in Hebrew</p>	<p>Except where the Aspect title or the context indicates otherwise, the “text” or “passage” referred to may be in English or Hebrew.</p>
<p>1.6 Know selections of classical commentaries on Bible</p>		

possible attainment targets for Bible shown in Table 1. This collection of attainment targets is as inclusive as possible in order to reflect the language and broad aspirations for pupils of as many teachers of Bible as possible.

Some of the titles shown as columns in Table 1 are clearly interdependent. To attain the attainment targets in the first (Knowledge) column, one may need to apply some operational targets (e.g., 2.4 and 2.6) found in the second column (Skills). Conversely, “Knowledge of words and key phrases in Bible” (1.4) and “Knowledge of events, persons and places in Bible” (1.2), are needed to increase a skill, such as 2.6—“Comprehend the literal meaning of Bible texts in Hebrew.” In turn, the Knowledge and the Skills competences (e.g., 1.2 and 2.6) can support the development of the attainment targets listed in the Understanding column, for example, the ability to “Analyze and interpret Bible text” (3.3) and to “Understand Bible content in terms of its implications for us” (3.1).

WHAT DETAILED ATTAINMENTS CHARACTERIZE EACH ATTAINMENT TARGET?

Although teachers readily agree on the broad aspects of attainment in Bible that educators strive to teach, they are less used to articulating perceptions about standards of attainment reached by pupils and about progress in the subject.

It is by no means easy to devise agreed level descriptions of attainment for Bible. Teachers had very different and strongly held views on what constitutes attainment and progress within any one of the attainment targets shown in Table 1. Their views diverged particularly when they considered pupils of differing abilities or backgrounds. For many attainment targets, it took much discussion before a sequence of even three or four descriptions could be recognized as representing very easy, harder and yet harder levels of pupil attainment. Some sequences of level descriptions that were initially suggested for describing successive levels of difficulty had to be amended because they appeared to depend too closely on teachers’ understanding of specific content or on the methods by which pupils in particular classes were taught specific content. Such sequences of level descriptions did not command the support of all other teachers consulted. They had to be changed to avoid misunderstandings and to ensure that the language used in two adjacent level descriptions implied to all teachers the same comparative levels of demand on pupils.

For instance, in Competence 1.2—“Know events, people and places in the Bible”—the first three levels were initially as follows:

- 1.2.1 Retell events in the Bible section studied and the names of people and places involved.
- 1.2.2 Recall details of a range of stories studied and correctly associate events, people and places in them.
- 1.2.3 Identify stories or situations in detail from the Bible section studied that possess a particular feature, e.g., a well, a dispute, a journey.

It had been thought that this wording would indicate clearly that, at the basic level, pupils would be familiar with, and show knowledge of what happens in the Bible section studied in depth, to whom and where. The second level would be to broaden this competence by showing awareness of greater detail within stories, and to familiarity with events and people in more than just the Bible section studied in depth. The third level of attainment would indicate an ability to start with a stated feature, and to identify relevant stories that relate to such a feature. It was thought “obvious” that these three statements were “progressive” in level of difficulty!

They may have been progressive for some teachers but not for all. Some teachers were not clear about the level of precision that was expected in the retelling required in 1.2.1. Others were not happy about how sharp the distinction was between 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 as both refer to several events or stories. The distinction between “events” and “stories” was none too clear either. Both 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 were recognized by all to be easier than 1.2.3. Some more clarification was needed and this was achieved through discussion of what teachers meant by basic knowledge of passages or stories. In Bible, the most basic level of knowing a passage is to know the sequence of events in ONE story, and the characters and places within it. Only then can another level be to recall details, some of them incidental, in a range of passages. The range of passages from Torah that may be required to demonstrate this second level of attainment also had to be limited for this second level. The two first statements that precede 1.2.3 now read:

- 1.2.1 Retell events in correct sequence within a passage studied, & recall the people and places involved.

1.2.2 Recall the details in a range of passages associated with particular people or places.

The level descriptions within a particular title in Table 1 thus had to be neutral to the methodology, or specific content, used in teaching the title. Furthermore, the descriptions had to be simply and unambiguously phrased. Where they were in any way ambiguous teachers invariably differed when they attempted to place descriptions in ascending order of difficulty for learners. Table 2 shows two stages of development of a set of level descriptions for competences 2.1 and 3.1.

The descriptions on the right column of Table 2 were too wordy. They contained too many opportunities for reaching slightly conflicting interpretations of meaning. This reduced the likelihood of all teachers identifying the same progression of difficulty. Difficulties arose where a set of level descriptions for an attainment target contained statements that could not be compared easily with others from the set. Thus, in descriptions 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 on the right in Table 2, one is talking about referring to a place in a text determined by an EXTERNAL key, whereas the other refers to finding relevant text based on an INTERNAL criterion, for example, the letters in a word or the beginning of a commentary. It became clear, therefore, that this competence of “Reference skills” was more complex than anticipated and had to be subdivided to ensure that the progression of difficulty was transparent (see the 2.1 descriptions in the left hand column in Table 2).

The greatest enemy of clarity was the composite description (see 3.1.1–3.1.5 on the right). To achieve unanimity in leveling, it was necessary to reduce each description to a single, simple concept and avoid ambiguous expressions (e.g., “with little teacher support”) by using pithier forms (e.g., “unaided,” see the left hand column in Table 2). An extra level description could sometimes provide help in differentiating further between levels, but it was more common for proposed sets of descriptions to be reduced in number to ensure that the levels described were sufficiently distinct from one another.

It was clear that teachers needed to be given examples in order to clarify some descriptions or the meaning of specific phrases within them. These have been included where necessary. Nevertheless, there is a danger that including examples may limit the reader because the examples do not span entire range of meanings that a description is intended to encompass.

TABLE 2. The refinement of level descriptions

Current version—July 2006	Version of August 2004
<p>2.1 Have reference skills for locating Hebrew text and meaning</p>	<p>2.1 Reference skills</p>
<p>A: Locating text</p>	
<p>2.1.1 Recognize the beginnings and ends of verses and chapters</p>	<p>2.1.1 Recognize beginnings and ends of Bible verses in the unit being studied.</p>
<p>2.1.2 Locate text when given its chapter and verse reference in the Book being studied.</p>	<p>2.1.2 Correctly refer to a chapter and verse reference in the Book being studied with a little help from a teacher.</p>
<p>2.1.3 Cite the verses and chapters unaided when referring to text anywhere in Bible.</p>	<p>2.1.3 Locate a chapter and verse reference anywhere in the Bible independently.</p>
<p>B: Using Reference tools</p>	
<p>2.1.4 Look up words in notes or wordlists</p>	<p>2.1.4 Locate a commentary of a commentator such as Rashi.</p>
<p>2.1.5 Look up words in a dictionary, identifying their roots and forms correctly.</p>	
<p>2.1.6 Look up words and phrases in a concordance by identifying roots correctly and then locating appropriate references.</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>This description was moved to another competence: "2.3 Locate and read commentaries in Hebrew."</p> </div>
<p>3.1 Understand Bible content in terms of its implications for us.</p>	<p>3.1 Understanding the Bible text and its implications for us.</p>
<p>3.1.1 Express, with support, reflections on the events in a simple story in the Bible section studied, and on the likely feelings of any characters involved.</p>	<p>3.1.1 Understand a simple Bible story in the unit being studied and express, with teacher guidance, their own reflections on the events and the likely feelings of those involved.</p>
<p>3.1.2 Express unaided the likely perceptions of, and reactions to, events and situations by characters in a story.</p>	<p>3.1.2 Understand a simple text in the unit with little teacher's guidance, relating it to everyday life and discuss the values that the story is teaching us.</p>
<p>3.1.3 Relate a passage or story in Bible to everyday life and discuss, with support, the values it teaches us.</p>	<p>3.1.3 Articulate, with teacher's guidance, different perceptions of, and reactions to, events and situations that various people involved in a Bible story might have.</p>
<p>3.1.4 Compare and contrast, with support, the behavior of characters in Bible (e.g., Abraham and Noah), and discuss the implications for us.</p>	<p>3.1.4 Compare and contrast, with little teacher guidance, the behaviors of two or more characters in the Bible (e.g., Abraham and Noah), and discuss their implications for us.</p>
<p>3.1.5 Discuss unaided the implications for us of accounts in Bible of behavior (e.g., Joseph ascribing to God the solution to Pharaoh's dreams).</p>	<p>3.1.5 Make independent connections between the behavior of various characters in the Torah (e.g., Moshe's reaction to God regarding the servitude in Egypt as compared to Abraham's), and discuss their implications for us.</p>

TABLE 3. A Curriculum Framework for Bible study for 7 to 14 year olds: JSCP 15 July 2006 sets of level descriptions for some of the competences shown in Table 1

Knowledge of Bible Content and vocabulary	Skills Literal comprehension of Bible and some related commentaries in Hebrew and English	Understanding Interpreting Bible texts in Hebrew and English to elicit deeper meaning and implications for us
<p>Pupils ...</p> <p>1.1 Know the structure of the Bible.</p> <p>1.1.1 Recall the names of the five books of the Torah in order.</p> <p>1.1.2 Recall the names of the books of the Bible.</p> <p>1.2 Know events, people and places in the Bible.</p> <p>1.2.1 Retell events in correct sequence within a passage studied, and recall the people and places involved.</p> <p>1.2.2 Recall the details in a range of passages associated with particular people or places.</p> <p>1.2.3 Identify any stories or situations in the Bible sections studied that possess a particular feature (e.g., a well; a dispute; a journey; asking for a favor or for a change of mind).</p>	<p>Pupils...</p> <p>2.1 Have reference skills for locating Hebrew text and meaning.</p> <p>A: Locating text</p> <p>2.1.1 Recognize the beginnings and ends of verse and chapters</p> <p>2.1.2 Locate text when given its chapter and verse reference in the Bible section being studied.</p> <p>2.1.3 Cite the verse and chapter unaided when referring to text anywhere in the Bible.</p> <p>B: Using Reference tools</p> <p>2.1.4 Look up words in notes or wordlists</p> <p>2.1.5 Look up words in a dictionary, identifying their roots and forms correctly.</p> <p>2.1.6 Look up words and phrases in a concordance by identifying roots correctly and then locating appropriate entries and references.</p>	<p>Pupils...</p> <p>3.1 Understand Bible content in terms of its implications for us.</p> <p>3.1.1 Express, with support, reflections on the events in a simple story in the sections studied, and on the likely feelings of any characters involved.</p> <p>3.1.2 Express unaided the likely perceptions of, and reactions to, events and situations by characters in a story.</p> <p>3.1.3 Relate a passage or story in Bible to everyday life and discuss, with support, the values it teaches us.</p> <p>3.1.4 Compare and contrast, with support, the behavior of characters in Bible (e.g., Abraham and Noah), and discuss the implications for us.</p> <p>3.1.5 Discuss unaided the implications for us of accounts in Bible of behavior (e.g., Joseph ascribing to God the solution to Pharaoh's dreams).</p>

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 3. A Curriculum Framework for Bible study for 7 to 14 year olds: JSCP 15 July 2006 sets of level descriptions for some of the competences shown in Table 1 (*Continued*)

Knowledge of Bible Content and vocabulary	Skills Literal comprehension of Bible and some related commentaries in Hebrew and English	Understanding Interpreting Bible texts in Hebrew and English to elicit deeper meaning and implications for us
1.2.4 Place in chronological order events occurring in one book of the Bible.	2.2 Read Bible in Hebrew 2.2.1 Read words accurately, accentuating syllables correctly.	3.1.6 Independently suggest similarities or differences between the behavior of various characters in Bible, and draw conclusions about any implications for us (e.g., Jacob's and Moshe's concern for doing what is right when they encounter shepherds at the wells).
1.2.5 Place in chronological order events occurring in several Bible books.	2.2.2 Read phrases accurately and fluently (i.e., without effort or hesitation). 2.2.3 Read a verse accurately and fluently as a sequence of phrases.	3.2 Understand the impact of particular phrasing. Hebrew grammar and nuance on meaning in Bible
1.2.6 Know associations between events, places and people, mentioned in the Bible (e.g., the spies and the land of <i>Canaan</i> and 40 years in the desert).	2.2.4 Read verses fluently and without effort. 2.2.5 Read independently a range of Bible texts in an accurate, fluent, and appropriately punctuated manner.	3.2.1 Show, with support (e.g., by acting out) how certain words and phrases in a sentence describing a situation or event provide clues about the likely feelings or intentions of those involved. Suggest, with support, how fewer, or alternative, words or phrases might have offered fewer, or different, clues.
1.2.7 Independently locate accounts of events and places mentioned in Bible in order to prepare for further study.	2.3 Locate & read Commentaries in Hebrew 2.3.1 Accurately read letters in Rashi script. 2.3.2 Locate on a page, and read, a short, simple, vowelled Rashi with support.	
1.3 Know geographical features in the Bible	2.3.3 Read a short simple vowelled Rashi unaided with fluency. Recognized key essential phrases in Rashi. 2.3.4 Locate a commentary in a chapter, and read it aloud with intonation and expression.	
1.3.1 Locate on a map, places associated with events in the Books studied (e.g., Abraham's journeys).		
1.3.2 Locate on a map, cities and countries that are mentioned in a book in Bible.		

- 1.3.3 Locate on a map, cities, countries and borders (e.g., rivers) that are mentioned in Bible.
- 1.4 Know words and key phrases in the Bible
- 1.4.1 Command a sight vocabulary of 80 common Hebrew words and key phrases from the Bible books studied, including common forms of nouns, adjectives and verbs.
- 1.4.2 Fluently recall 10 key phrases from the Bible books studied.
- 1.4.3 Command a sight vocabulary of 160 common Hebrew words, including roots, from the Bible books studied.
- 1.4.4 Fluently recall 30 key phrases from the Bible.
- 1.4.5 Command a working vocabulary of 350 common Hebrew words and roots in the Bible.
- 2.4 Apply skills of Hebrew grammar to comprehension
- 2.4.1 Identify four common prefixes, and two common suffixes, in the Bible section being studied.
- 2.4.2 Identify all the common prefixes, and suffixes, in the Bible section studied.
- 2.4.3 Apply knowledge of vocabulary and roots to lend meaning to unfamiliar words or structures.
- 2.5 Comprehend translated text
- 2.5.1 Read a translation of a text to gain information.
- 2.5.2 Explain the plain meaning of a translated text in terms of the story, topics or characters involved.
- 2.5.3 Compare and contrast words or phrases in different selected texts (e.g., to determine correspondence or incongruity between one version of a story, statement or *mitzva* and another).
- 3.2.2 In a particular passage, show unaided how (repetition of) certain words, phrases or Hebrew roots can provide clues about likely feelings, intentions or leading ideas.
- 3.2.3 Understand that, in general, the Hebrew language of Bible may allow a phrase, verse or passage to be interpreted in different ways.
- Identify, with support, examples of such “ambiguities” in the Bible sections studied, and how interpreting an ambiguity one way or another has implications for understanding such material.
- 3.2.4 Have a breadth of understanding of Hebrew phrasing and grammar to notice and point out (i) unexpected grammatical forms and phrasing in Hebrew Bible texts and (ii) differences and similarities of language used in related phrases or passages.

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 3. A Curriculum Framework for Bible study for 7 to 14 year olds: JSCP 15 July 2006 Sets of Level descriptions for some of the competences shown in Table 1 (*Continued*)

Knowledge	Skills	Understanding
1.5 Know the historical period in which events of the Bible took place.	2.5.4 Summarize the main messages of a passage of text, e.g., a chapter or story.	3.2.5 Independently derive meaning and values from the Bible by carefully interpreting nuances of language in (different) texts, including the interpretations of commentaries.
1.5.1 Identify, on a time-line, events encountered in a Bible book	2.5.5 Summarize the main messages of a Bible section or Book.	
1.5.2 Identify, on a time-line, the order of events encountered in a Bible book	2.6 Comprehend the literal meaning of Bible Texts in Hebrew	3.3 Analyze and interpret Bible text using textual comparison
1.5.3 Identify, on a time-line, the order of events encountered in Bible	2.6.1 Read an uncomplicated verse in the section studied and comprehend its plain meaning with support.	3.3.1 Identify and derive meaning and values, with support, from differences and similarities of language used in two separate passages in the sections studied.
1.5.4 Consistently identify associations between events in Bible and parallel historical events, or their historical background, e.g., the Egyptians and their Nile god; idol worship and privileges of its priesthoods; Hyksos conquest of Egypt; Hammurabi's code and the rights of Hebrew slaves.	2.6.2 Read a verse in the Bible and comprehend its plain meaning unaided, apart from use of reference tools.	3.3.2 Compare and contrast unaided, parallel or related texts in Bible in terms of meaning and values.
1.6 Know some legalistic sections of the Bible.	2.6.3 Explain in own words the plain meaning of a passage in Bible, unaided apart from use of reference tools, e.g., notes. Read the text with intonation and expression that show comprehension.	3.3.3 Independently, derive meaning and values from interpreting parallel or related texts in Bible, using commentaries or own previous knowledge of texts.
1.7 Know selections of a range of classical commentaries on Bible.	2.6.4 Identify words or roots in a text that provide keys or clues to its overall themes or messages.	3.4 Analyze and interpret the text of a Commentary.
	2.6.5 Comprehend unfamiliar, uncomplicated text in Bible, unaided apart from reference tools and commentaries.	
	2.7 Comprehend the literal meaning of the text of a Commentary in Hebrew.	

Table 3 shows the level descriptions for most of the competences shown in Table 1. Together the attainment targets and corresponding level descriptions form a framework of curriculum expectations. This framework does not prescribe what sections of Bible text or ideas must be taught. Nor does it imply that all attainment targets must be taught. The framework merely suggests what knowledge, skills, and understanding could be gained through the study of any texts or text-related topics that a teacher chooses to teach, and what some stages of attainment might be for pupils following such Bible study, using the teacher's chosen texts or topics.

CONCLUSION

Goals and attainment targets are set because they are believed to carry incentives that may strengthen the achievement motivation of students and teachers (Husen and Tuijnman 1994). This statement is indeed verified by the positive reaction of teachers to their involvement in this process of Bible Studies attainment targets formation and their enthusiasm about sharing a common language regarding attainments in Bible education. Teachers also commented how this process has been an "eye-opener" of how much they have in common with other practitioners and yet how limited communication has so far been between professionals in this sphere. The successful involvement of teachers in the Bible Studies attainment formulation rather than political policymakers, as is the norm in other disciplines (Nutall 1993), is an interesting by-product of this study and one that deserves further research.

Focusing on the product that has been formulated, the level descriptions in the framework have been used to shape and focus the learning outcomes in unit and lesson plans for Bible that are currently being piloted in some U.K. Jewish day schools. In the shorter term, we expect to evaluate the success of this approach through a series of ongoing interviews with participants who are involved in the design of assessment tasks that are enjoyable and provide evidence of pupils' attainment at various levels in their Bible learning. In the longer term, by further improving the wording and sensitivity of the level descriptions in this framework, we hope to enhance the quality of unit planning and assessment in any Bible classroom, whether or not the teacher adopts the teaching methods or content used in the English pilot schools.

All this material is a work in progress, and the writers would very much welcome readers' comments concerning the desirability of such a framework for Bible Study, and suggested modifications of its content or presentation. Beyond the confines of the Jewish day school it is hoped that this research will have implications for other religious and instructional contexts such as synagogues and churches. Certainly a shared language of attainment targets in Bible will be of interest and importance to a wider audience of teachers and learners of Bible.

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