

Approaches to Teaching Bible

"שבעים פנים לתורה"

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כי שבעים פנים לתורה. (אברהם אבן עזרא)

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.

בראשית יא

א וַיְהִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ שָׁפָה אֶחָת וּדְבָרִים אֶחָדִים.

ב וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעֵם מִקֶּדֶם וַיִּמְצְאוּ בְקֵעָה בְּאָרֶץ שִׁנְעָר וַיִּשְׁבוּ שָׁם.

ג וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-רֵעֵהוּ הֲבֵה נִלְבְּנָה לִבְנִים וְנִשְׂרָפָה לְשִׂרְפָה וְתֵהִי לָהֶם הַלִּבְנָה לְאֶבֶן וְהַחֲמֶר הִיא לָהֶם לְחֹמֶר.

ד וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֲבֵה נִבְנֶה-לָנוּ עִיר וּמִגְדָּל וְרִאשׁוֹ בַשָּׁמַיִם וְנַעֲשֶׂה-לָנוּ שֵׁם פֶּן-נִפְּוֹץ עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ.

ה וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה לִרְאוֹת אֶת-הָעִיר וְאֶת-הַמִּגְדָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ בְנֵי הָאָדָם.

ו וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הֵן עִם אֶחָד וְשָׁפָה אֶחָת לְכָל־מֶלֶם וְזֶה הַחֲלֹם לַעֲשׂוֹת וְעַתָּה לֹא-יִבְצָר מֵהֶם כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִזְמוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת.

ז הֲבֵה נִרְדָּה וְנִבְלָה שָׁם שִׁפְתֵם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ אִישׁ שִׁפְתֵי רֵעֵהוּ.

ח וַיִּפֹּץ יְהוָה אֹתָם מִשָּׁם עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וַיִּחְדְּלוּ לִבְנֹת הָעִיר.

ט עַל-כֵּן קָרָא שְׁמָהּ בָּבֶל כִּי-שָׁם בָּלַל יְהוָה שִׁפְתֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וּמִשָּׁם הִפְּיֵצָם יְהוָה עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ.

This chart is from page 95 of the book:

Textual Knowledge--Teaching the Bible in Theory and in Practice

Barry Holtz (2003), The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York.

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

Group #____

Our group assignment:

1. Read the commentary provided.
2. Which approach(es) is/are being used?
3. How does this approach help us understand the text?
4. What difficulties in understanding the text are not answered or addressed by this approach?
5. With what kind of group would you use this approach? Why?
What would your goals be?

Greenstein, E. L. (2009). A pragmatic pedagogy of Bible. *Journal of Jewish Education*, 75, 290-303. doi: 10.1080/15244110903079284

Group 1

Rashi (on verse 7) adduces a *midrash* that can explain how this state of affairs materialized: The word *tit* denotes brick in one language and mortar in another. Once each builder is given a different language, chaos ensues. One builder asks for a brick and his coworker brings him mortar. The first one looms over the other one and smashes his head. Lack of communication breeds systematic misunderstanding and the social fabric is rent asunder. The language of the verse that concludes the story seems to give solid support to the interpretation that sees in it an explanation of the way things are (what we call in the academy an etiology): “For this, he called its name Babel, for there YHWH mixed up the language of all the earth and from there YHWH scattered them over the face of all the earth.” One can further strengthen this interpretation by highlighting verse 7, which relates what is arguably the climax of the story: “Let us go down and mix up their language, so that no man understands the language of his fellow.” (Greenstein, pp. 294-295)

The story seems to highlight language by repeating many words and through a long series of wordplays—*shem* and *sham*, “brick” (*lδvena*) and “to stone” (*lδ’aven*), *homer* and *hemar*, “let us bake” (*nilbδna*) and “let us mix up” (*navδla*)—and of course, *balal* “to mix up” and *Babel*. There are also several instances of a word or expression that appears in one place with one apparent meaning and in another place with another. For example, at the beginning of the story, “all the earth” refers to the population while at the end of the story it is a geographical designation. The polysemy of language receives special treatment in Rashi, where the phrase *dδvarim ’ahadim* is interpreted in no fewer than three (and perhaps as many as four) different ways (Greenstein, 1989b). Recall the *midrash* cited by Rashi in which the word *tit* is shown to mean something different in different languages. There is no natural, fixed correlation between the sound of a word and the meaning we assign to that word. (This is a key insight of the founder of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure; see de Saussure, 1966.)

This concept, which sits well with deconstruction, can be found in verse 3 of the story, in what to many appears to be nothing more than a marginal aside: “Brick was stone for them, and mortar was clay for them.”⁸ This seemingly parenthetical remark can be understood as a key to the narrative’s meaning; “the rock the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (Psalm 118.22.).⁹ Language is made like the buildings of Babel: They are constructed of materials that can be replaced with different materials. Just as there is no single method of building, there is no one system of language. Meaning can be conveyed by this system or by that system. And there is no stability in meaning; meanings can change.

The builders of Babylon thought they could make a “name” for themselves. A name implies a fixed relationship between word and meaning. But such a thing is neither natural nor possible. The outcome of the story, that language must splinter and disseminate meaning after meaning, is a basic characteristic of being human. We cannot change that fact, either by trying to abolish the differences distinguishing people from people and culture from culture, or by trying to unify humanity artificially by means of a universal language. Any such attempt runs contrary to the divine order that finds expression in our story.¹⁰ (Greenstein, pp. 298-299)

Group 2

One of the most prominent approaches within the scholarly treatments of the story is that of form criticism, which regards this particular story as a myth or legend. Its purpose, in this view, is to explain the name of the city Babylon—Bavel, from *balal* “to mix up”—and the well-known fact that many different peoples speaking many different languages are spread around the world (von Rad, 1961, p. 146; Kugel, 2007, pp. 86–88). The current state of human diversity results from what we read in verses 8–9 of the narrative: God mixed up the languages of all the peoples and scattered them over the face of all the earth. (Greenstein, p. 294)

Here the historian might enter the arena of interpretation and suggest that the legendary story is rooted, like all legends, in some historical context (e.g., Klein, 1982, pp. 83–84; Walton, 1995, pp. 155–175; for illustrations of ziggurats, see Saggs, 2000, pp. 45, 85, 165, and plates I and IX and for the Elamite sack of Babylon, see p. 121; for a concise history of Mesopotamia, see Nemet-Nejat, 1998, pp. 17–45). In the twelfth century BCE, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar I began erecting a sanctuary in the middle of his capital city in the form of a ziggurat—a temple tower. Before the work could be completed, the city, and the temple tower in its midst, were destroyed by the invading armies of Elam, from the east. Perhaps, a historian could suggest, the biblical story is meant to echo this early historical event (see Plaut [Ed.], 1981; Lieber [Ed.], 2001).

This is possible, of course, but for how many generations would the Israelites maintain an interest in preserving this information, assuming that in an age before newspapers and CNN they would even have known of it? And what historical significance would this event have had for the ancient Israelites? Paradoxically, the historical event might have significance for the Israelites only when the story loses its historical dimension and is transformed into a myth—namely, when the story is no longer confined to a specific time and place but rather comes to describe a recurrent or ongoing state of affairs, and becomes paradigmatic. (For this and other contemporary understandings of “myth,” see, e.g., Rauch, 1982; see also Barbour, 1974). Who among the Israelites would care that Babylon had been destroyed by the Elamites? Who among us cares?

However, in the period just following the Babylonian assault on Jerusalem and the Israelite temple that stood in its midst, and indeed in every period ever since, the sacking of Babylon by the Elamites takes on a new significance: The nation that destroyed our city and our temple receives its just deserts—its city and its temple were destroyed before they were even completed. And who was it who conquered Babylon in the mid-sixth century BCE but Cyrus the Persian—and Persia was formerly Elam! (Greenstein, p. 295)

Group 3

The great medieval commentators adopted one of two main approaches (see Sokolow, 1989, esp. p. 55). Rashi is most impressed by the builders' intention to build "a tower with its head in the sky" (verse 4). What would be the point of reaching the sky? Apparently to make war on God (see his first interpretation of the phrase "one in words," in verse 1).⁵ Or perhaps they had heard that the sky was about to collapse, and wanted to reach the sky in order to prop it up with supports; that is also in Rashi's commentary. One can find additional warrant for this reading in verse 6, where God seems to worry over the builders' attack: "If they are all one people and have one language, and this is what they have begun to do, then they cannot be blocked from doing all they have plotted to do!"

This approach, however, does not deal equally with the builders' other explicit intention, expressed in verse 4: ". . . lest we scatter over the face of all the earth." Rashbam (Rashi's grandson) and Ibn Ezra as well, place the theme of dispersal at the center of their interpretations.⁶ The verse in Deuteronomy 1:28 shows that there is nothing inherently objectionable to God about cities whose structures reach the sky. God tolerated the Canaanites' skyscrapers, so why not the Babylonians'? Rather, by concentrating in one location, the builders of Babylon violated the command that God had issued humankind after the Flood: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth!" (Genesis 9:1; for the history of interpretation of this commandment, see Cohen, 1989). They were told to spread out, and they didn't. Therefore, writes Rashbam, God scattered them from there.

Rashbam reads the story in a somewhat broader context than that of Rashi. By ordering human beings to separate, God seems to indicate that dividing the inhabited world among different peoples, cultures, languages, and outlooks is a good thing. Moreover, without the dispersion of peoples, there would be no background for "*Lekh-lekha*"—Abraham couldn't be told to leave his native land and go to the Land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1). The whole Jewish paradigm of relinquishing the Diaspora and making *aliyah* to the Land of Israel disappears without the dispersion of the peoples (for the theme of *aliyah/yeridah* to/from the Land of Israel as a theme in the narratives of Genesis, see Peleg, 2000, and 2004, see further Gitay, 1996). Nevertheless, as I mentioned above, the dispersion came into existence prior to the Tower of Babel story; and the interpretative line taken by Rashbam and Ibn Ezra does not deal much with the builders' attempt

to reach the sky. In other words, this interpretation, too, is only partial; it does not draw out all of the narrative's meaning. (Greenstein, pp. 296-297)

Group 4

The predominant literary reading of the story in modern times, represented by Martin Buber (1994, pp. 116–117) and the Dutch scholar Jan Fokkelman (1975, pp. 11–45), focuses on the supposedly symmetrical structure of the text (see also Avishur, 1982; Sokolow, 1989, pp. 57–59; and Walsh, 2001, pp. 94–95) Compare the following diagram of the narrative structure according to Buber and Fokkelman:

A All the earth one language
 B There
 C A man to his fellow
 D Let us bake bricks
 E Let us build ourselves
 F City and tower
 X YHWH went down to see
 F' City and tower
 E' That the humans had built
 D' Let us . . . mix up
 C' A man to his fellow
 B' From there
 A' The language of all the earth (he mixed up)

Buber (1994) describes the story as two halves: the humans' plot versus the Lord's plot. He points to seven leading words (*Leitworte* in German, *millim manhot* in Hebrew) that connect the two halves: "all the earth," "language," "let us," "build," "a city and a tower," the words "there" (*sham*) and "name" (*shem*), and the verb "to scatter." What meaning is drawn out of this analysis? In a word: irony—the text is suffused with irony (for irony as a framework for interpreting Biblical literature, see Sharp, 2009). Our schemes are doomed to fail if they are in opposition to the will of God.

This line of interpretation appears on the surface to be perfect. It is based on a seemingly clear structure that is manifested by the arrangement of the leading words. But the analysis—which is, after all, an interpretation—is only partly correct. The builders declare: "Let us build ourselves a city and a tower . . ." and God responds: "Let us go down and mix up their language." The builders mention both a city and a tower, but there is no mention of a tower in what God is reported to say and do in response. (Buber admits this point in a parenthetical remark.) In addition, the builders declare their intention to make themselves a name; but in God's response there is no reference to this intention. God, we read, mixes up the builders' language so that "no man

understands the language of his fellow.” It seems to me that any adequate reading of the story will come to grips with the theme of language.⁷ (Greenstein, pp. 297-298)

Group 5

Before concluding, let me briefly cite Nechama Leibowitz’s (1969) famous reading of this narrative in her *Studies* series—the ‘*iyyunim* (see also Greenstein, 2002). Since she tended to pay acute attention to the language and literary form of a text, we might have expected her to incline toward the analysis of Buber (1994) and other modern literary scholars. A literary reading would have enabled her to incorporate the interpretations of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Rashbam. But Leibowitz chose to delve into the declared intention of the builders to make themselves a name. It will be clear to those who are familiar with her *Studies* that what primarily concerned her were not the techniques of interpretation per se but rather the meanings, the lessons, the values, which are the aim of analysis and interpretation (for Leibowitz’s underlying pedagogical concerns, see Frankel, 2007).

According to Leibowitz, the builders committed a religious, moral sin. They did not mean for their efforts to lead to *tikkun ‘olam* but rather to an aggrandizement of their own name, an elevation of their status by means of their edifice. She adduces a *midrash* from *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* in which the builders cared not at all when one of them fell off the tower and died, but they became terribly distressed over any brick that fell.¹¹ Leibowitz draws a moral from the fate of the builders: we must not regard the work of our hands as superior to the work of God’s hands. We must not place human technology over the values that are embodied in proper religious behavior. We might even suggest a somewhat broader interpretation: we must not regard technology as anything but a means toward the attainment of our humane goals (compare Kugel, 2003, pp. 85–89). (Greenstein, pp. 300-301)

Group 6

Scholars agree that the edifice referred to in Genesis 11 is clearly a *ziqqurat*, or Mesopotamian temple tower. The *ziqqurat* (from Akk. *zaqāru*, "to raise up," "elevate") was the central feature of the great temples which were built in all important Mesopotamian cities. Rising in progressively smaller, steplike levels from a massive base, these towers ranged from three or four stories to as many as seven and were ordinarily constructed of crude sun-dried bricks covered with kiln-fired bricks. Clearly, the writer of the account in Genesis 11 was familiar with the building techniques of Mesopotamia, since he is at pains to point out that bricks and bitumen were used in the construction; that is in contrast to the stone and clay which were the common building materials in Canaan.

The particular *ziggurat* described here was formerly identified with the tower of Ezida, the temple of the god Nebo (Nabû) in Borsippa, a city southwest of Babylon. However, the discovery at the end of the 19th century of Esagila, the great temple of *Marduk in *Babylon, has led most scholars to agree that it is the tower of this temple which inspired the writer of Genesis 11. This *ziggurat*, which was called E-temen-anki, "house of the foundations of heaven and earth," rose to a height of about 300 feet, and contained two sanctuaries: one at its base, which was 300 feet square, and one at its summit. The tower was probably constructed at the time of *Hammurapi, but was damaged or destroyed several times and repaired by Esarhaddon (seventh century B.C.E.) and Nebuchadnezzar II (sixth century B.C.E.), among others. It is interesting to note that the Babylonians believed that Esagila was built by the gods, thus making the statement in Genesis 11:5 "... which the sons of men had built," particularly meaningful, since it may be understood as a polemic against this belief. This tower, which was the object of such pride among the Babylonians, was the product of strictly human endeavor which can be quickly and easily destroyed in accordance with the Divine Will. In fact, it is quite likely that it was the sight of the ruins of Esagila (which was destroyed in the mid-16th century B.C.E. with the destruction of Babylon by the Hittites) which inspired the creator of the Tower of Babel narrative.

Although it is clear from the story that the work on the city and tower displeased the Lord, the specific sin of the builders is nowhere mentioned. Many scholars believe that it was the presumption of these men in thinking that they could build a tower with "its top in the sky," and their conceit in wanting "to make a name" for themselves, which incurred the wrath of the Lord. Others believe that their goal was to storm the heavens and that it was for this sin that mankind was punished.

Modern scholars (already anticipated by R. *Samuel ben Meir) have pointed out that the desire to remain together in one place was in direct conflict with the divine purpose as is expressed to Noah and his sons after the flood: "Be fertile and increase and fill up the earth" (Gen. 9:7) and was, therefore, an affront to God and so necessarily doomed to failure. It is hardly likely that the expressed wish to "make a name for ourselves" could be construed as sinful, since a similar phrase is used in connection with the divine promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:2). Further, Babylonian temple inscriptions frequently refer to the "making great" of the name of the king under whom the particular temple was built or repaired, thereby demonstrating that this formula was commonly used in such instances and need not be understood as expressing an inordinate desire for fame. As for the phrase "with its top in the sky," it has been noted that there are several examples of Babylonian temple inscriptions which describe buildings as reaching to heaven so that the phrase should be understood not as an expression of the presumption of these people or of their desire to ascend to heaven, but rather as a borrowing by the biblical writer from the technical terminology of Mesopotamian temple inscriptions with which he was evidently familiar. According to this interpretation the sin of these people was, therefore, not presumption or a desire to reach heaven and gain fame, but rather an attempt to change the divinely ordained plan for mankind.

A new link to an ultimate cuneiform background of the Tower of Babel narrative has been provided by a Sumerian literary work, no doubt composed during the third Dynasty of Ur, which states that originally mankind spoke the same language, until Enki, the Sumerian god of wisdom, confounded their speech. Though the reason for the confusion of tongues is not stated, Kramer has suggested that it may have been inspired by Enki's jealousy of another god, Enlil. Hence, in the Sumerian version it was a case of the rivalry between two gods, whereas in the Bible the rivalry was between God and man (see below, "The Meaning of the Story").

The etymology of the name Babel given in this narrative is a contrived one, used ironically. The Babylonians understood it to mean "the gate of the god" (*bāb-ilim*), thereby endowing the city with additional honor and importance. By a play on words, the Bible has given it a pejorative sense, making the pride in this city seem almost ludicrous.

The Tower of Babel narrative is a turning point in history, as understood by the Bible, in that it signals the end of the era of universal monotheism which had existed since the beginning of time. Since the divine election of Abraham and his descendants immediately follows, it must be tacitly assumed that the incident led to the introduction of idolatry into the world.

[by Myra J. Siff], accessed 7/31/12 at:

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0003_0_01801.html

Group 7

The bridge which some modern writers have constructed between the single short clause "and fill the earth" in Genesis 1:28 (or 9:7) and the account of the vain attempt of an early generation of men to avoid dispersal in Genesis 11:1–9, is superior homiletics but (quite apart from the finding of source analysis that the one belongs to document P and the other to document J) unsound exegesis. Genesis 1:28 reads as follows: "God blessed them [namely, the human beings, male and female, whose creation has just been narrated in the preceding verse] and God said to them, 'Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that move about on earth.'" This purports to be, and is, not a command but a blessing; moreover "and fill the earth" is preceded by "be fertile and increase." It is absurd to read into it a wish of God that the human species shall spread over the earth otherwise than as, with increasing numbers, its own interests may dictate. And in 11:1–9 there is nothing to suggest that the human population has already attained such a figure that there is a need for a migration of colonists to realms beyond the confines of the plain of Shinar; and neither is there a word in 11:1–9 about that being the Deity's motive in bringing about the dispersal. Instead, there is an explicit declaration of an entirely different motive by no less an authority than the Lord himself, who explains to the divine beings, verses 6–7; "If this is what, as one people with one language common to all, they have been able to do as a beginning, nothing they may propose to do will be beyond their reach. Come, let us go down, etc." It takes a willful shutting of the mind to avoid hearing the same anxiety lest man should wrest complete equality

with the divine beings (or worse) in these words as in the Lord's earlier explanation to the same audience, in 3:22, of his motive in driving man out of the Garden of Eden: "Now that man has become like one of us in knowing good and bad [i.e., in being intellectually mature, the first evidence of which was his newfound modesty], what if he should stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever!" Once, to obviate the danger of further baleful results from cooperation between man and snake, the Lord set up a barrier of enmity between them (3:15); now, in order to eliminate the threat of disastrous consequences from the cooperation of men with each other, he is erecting among them barriers of language and distance. [by Harold Louis Ginsberg] accessed 7/31/12 at:

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0003_0_01801.html

Group 8

The biblical account of the Tower of Babel is singularly brief and vague (Gen. R. 38). The prevailing opinion of the rabbis is that it was designed to serve the purposes of idolatry and constituted an act of rebellion against God (Sanh. 109a; Gen. R. 38:6; et al.), for which reason they also associated Nimrod ("the rebel") with its building (Hul. 89a). Many additional reasons are also suggested, among them the fear of a recurrence of the flood and the need to guard against such a recurrence by supporting the heavens or by splitting them so that waters would drain away slowly from the earth's surface (*Ma'asim al Aseret ha-Dibberot*; cf. Sanh. 109a). According to Josephus they were trying to dwell higher than the water level of the flood (Ant., I, IV). In this way the builders thought they would be spared, believing as they did that God had power over water alone (PdRE 24). At the same time the rabbis laud the unity and love of peace that prevailed among them (Gen. R. 38), as a result of which they were given an opportunity to repent, but they failed, however, to seize it (*ibid.*). Various opinions are expressed as to the punishment which the builders incurred (Tanḥ. B., 23). According to the Mishnah (Sanh. 10:3), they were excluded from a share in the world to come. In the view of one *amora*, their punishment varied with the differing aims that inspired them; those who thought to dwell in heaven being dispersed throughout the world, those who sought to wage war against God being transformed into apes and demons, and those bent on idol worship being caught up in a confusion of tongues (Sanh. 109a). One-third of the tower was destroyed by fire, one-third subsided into the earth, and one-third is still standing. It is so high that to anyone ascending and looking down from the top, palm trees look like locusts (*ibid.*). This *aggadah* testifies to the existence of ruins at that time, which were popularly believed as being of the Tower of Babel. *Aggadot* about the tower are also to be found in Josephus and in the apocrypha (cf. Jub. 10:18–28), while several of its motifs are much discussed in Hellenistic Jewish literature.

[by Israel Moses Ta-Shma] accessed 7/31/12 at:

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0003_0_01801.html

Group 9

The biblical story of the tower of Babel appears repeatedly in medieval and Renaissance literature, treated as an historical incident with strong moral overtones. Some examples are the *Chronicon* of Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636 C.E.), the *Weltchronik* of Rudolf von Ems (1200–1254), and the *Speculum humanae salvationis* (c. 1324), a Dominican manual of devotion which was frequently copied. Giovanni *Boccaccio wrote on the subject in his *De casibus virorum illustrium* (1355–60), as did an anonymous poet of Lyons in *Le Triumphe de Haulte Folie* (c. 1550). Two 17th-century Spanish works were entitled *Torre de Babilonia*: one was an *auto sacramentale* by the eminent dramatist Pedro Calderón de la Barca, the other by the Marrano author Antonio Enríquez *Gómez. Modern treatments include *Tower of Babel* (1874) by the English poet Alfred Austin and *Babel* (1952), an apocalyptic work by the French poet Pierre Emmanuel (1916–1984).

The subject appealed to medieval artists, appearing in 12th-century mosaics at Palermo and Monreale in Sicily and in the 13th-century Cathedral of St. Mark, Venice. There are representations in illuminated manuscripts from the 12th to the 14th centuries, including the German *Hortus Deliciarum* (Garden of Delights) and the Sarajevo *Haggadah*. Two 15th-century painters who used the theme were the Frenchman Jean Fouquet and the Italian Benozzo Gozzoli, who painted the fresco of Campo Santo, Pisa, now destroyed. With its landscape setting and the opportunities it offered for fantasy and close observation of the daily scene, the Tower was of considerable interest to the early Flemish painters. It was generally depicted either as a multistory structure, diminishing in size as it rose or, more often, as a square or circular building surrounded by a ramp. Some artists illustrated contemporary building methods, a fine example occurring in the Book of Hours of the Duke of Bedford (Paris, c. 1423), where the construction of the Tower proceeds at night under the stars. In Pieter Brueghel's *Tower of Babel* (1563), the building – leaning slightly – is shown in a vast landscape near the banks of a river, with a king arriving to inspect the progress of the work.

Although the Babel story might appear to be a temptation to composers, since the confusion of tongues can be expressed most effectively in music, very few works have in fact been written on the theme. These are mainly oratorios including César Franck's *La Tour de Babel* (1865) and Anton Rubinstein's markedly unsuccessful *Der Turm zu Babel* (1858; revised as an opera, 1872). Two 20th-century works are *La Tour de Babel* (1932) by René Barbier and Igor Stravinsky's *Babel*, a cantata for narrator, men's chorus, and orchestra (1944, published in 1952).
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PREPARING TO TEACH AND APPLYING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED:

“Textual reading and interpretation, like all other human activity, is goal oriented. It serves the personal, social, cultural, religious, and political interests of the reader. We engage in an activity in the hope or expectation that we will achieve desirable results. When we teach, we need to consider whether and how the approaches that we take and the meanings that we make will serve the personal interests of our students. What meaning or meanings will interest, arouse, provoke, excite? I will try to choose an approach that will yield the kind of meaning that will produce the response, or set of responses, I am seeking to produce in the students.” (page 294)

Edward Greenstein, A Pragmatic Pedagogy of Bible, *Journal of Jewish Education*, 75:290–303, 2009

What are the Goals and Objectives in teaching this section of Bible to this group of students in this school?

What are the desired outcomes?

At the end of this lesson/unit the student will

KNOW . . . (knowledge)	BE ABLE TO . . . (skills)
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

Enduring Understanding: What is the “big idea” that I want the students to remember five years from now?

I will assess the extent to which the students have achieved the desired outcomes by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Understanding By Design Unit Template

Title of Unit	Approaches to Teaching Bible	Grade Level	Adult
Curriculum Area	Teaching Bible	Time Frame	1-2 hours
Identify Desired Results (Stage 1)			
Teachers of Bible in Jewish schools will be familiar with multiple approaches to teaching the biblical text, and will consider which approaches are most appropriate to use in their schools and classrooms.			
Understandings		Essential Questions	
Overarching Understanding		Overarching	Topical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every text in the Tanakh can be understood in a variety of ways. • The approaches we choose to use in teaching should result in the desired outcomes of the curriculum. 		What approach should I use in teaching Tanakh?	What approach(es) should I use to teach a specific text to a specific group of students while taking into account the goals and desired outcomes of my school's Tanakh curriculum?
Related Misconceptions			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is one true meaning of the biblical text. • The Tanakh is an ancient text that has little or no relevance to modern Jews. • The Bible is the history of the Jewish people. • Confusing words, passages, or events in the Bible 			
Knowledge		Skills	
Students will know...		Students will be able to...	
The names of nine different approaches to teaching biblical text and the key element of each approach.		Choose one or more approaches to teaching bible based upon the desired goals and outcomes of the curriculum of their schools.	
Assessment Evidence (Stage 2)			
Performance Task Description			
Goal	To be an effective Bible teacher.		
Role	Teacher, discussion facilitator, provider of resources and probing questions.		
Audience	Your students.		
Situation	Teaching a Bible lesson or unit in your school.		
Product/Performance	Did your students achieve the goals that you and/or the school curriculum desired? Did you choose your approach(es) based upon the desired outcomes?		
Standards			
Other Evidence			
Evidence of teachers in this workshop attaining the goals will be seen in how they apply what they have learned in this workshop in the context of their own future teaching.			

Learning Plan (Stage 3)	
Where are your students headed? Where have they been? How will you make sure the students know where they are going?	
How will you hook students at the beginning of the unit?	
What events will help students experience and explore the big idea and questions in the unit? How will you equip them with needed skills and knowledge?	
How will you cause students to reflect and rethink ? How will you guide them in rehearsing, revising, and refining their work?	
How will you help students to exhibit and self-evaluate their growing skills, knowledge, and understanding throughout the unit?	
How will you tailor and otherwise personalize the learning plan to optimize the engagement and effectiveness of ALL students, without compromising the goals of the unit?	
How will you organize and sequence the learning activities to optimize the engagement and achievement of ALL students?	

From: Wiggins, Grant and J. Mc Tighe. (1998). *Understanding by Design*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
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