The works included here have been recommended by teachers of Jewish studies at a variety of levels. All annotations and other comments are the opinions of the recommenders (or, occasionally, are paraphrased from the publisher's summary of the material). We welcome further annotations and comments on these articles and books, as well as additional submissions, at http://www.brandeis.edu/centers/mandel/BridgingBibliography.html.

Sections:
- Bible
- Rabbinic Literature
- General Resources

Bible

“[Provides a perspective on] Israeli secular Bible teaching from an ethical basis.”

“As far as approaches to text study, this is my all-time favorite….It makes a cogent and compelling case for approaching the Bible as a literary unity compiled by an artful and wise redactor; this argument is illustrated with wonderful close textual readings.”

“I have relied on this wonderful book….Andrasick is an English teacher who talks about writing as a tool for exploring literature, and she walks through a variety of types of exploratory, more formal, and less formal strategies of writing in response to texts--everything from imitation of texts to 'dialogue journals' that are like Rashi commentaries to free response. She bridges literary theory in the reader-response mode with English teacher practice. It was my ‘Bible bible’ for a long time.”


“A lovely introduction to the interpretive lens of *pshat*, and Rashi in particular.”


“This is a two-part study starting with ‘a conceptualization of the content specific domains of subject matter knowledge for teaching Torah in Conservative Jewish settings.’ The author then interviews graduate students entering education programs affiliated with the Conservative movement and raises questions about how we teach Torah and what we teach.”

“The major goal of the study was to examine student reactions to two alternate learning strategies…and to attempt to correlate student preferences regarding these two strategies with profiles generated by the Sternberg-Wagner Thinking Style Self-assessment Inventory.”

“Looks at the question ‘What is reading?’…a definition emerges through exploratory activity.”


“A historical analysis of the ways in which Bible was taught to children in the first half of the 20th century, primarily focused on collections of children’s collections of Bible stories.”


Holtz, Barry. Textual Knowledge: Teaching the Bible in Theory and in Practice. (Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2003).

“Argues for the importance of ‘overviewing’ and ‘extensive reading’ as a pedagogical technique, rather than a focus chiefly on individual verses and commentary, in order to support student interest and meaningful comprehension of the text.” Available online at http://www.edah.org/backend/JournalArticle/3_2_Lapian.pdf

"McLay argues for emphasizing critical thinking in the teaching of Bible, even at the expense of teaching content."

"Recognizing the gap between the way their schools wanted Bible taught, and the way the teachers—primarily Israelis not affiliated with the Conservative movement—were teaching it, the principals of the Solomon Schechter Day Schools asked for a Bible curriculum. This study addresses the nature of the impact of the Bible curriculum on four teachers who use it, their views of themselves as professionals and as Jews, and their views about the meaning of teaching Bible.

“A collection of college assignments with brief introductions from master teachers. The book is divided into sections on Hermeneutics, Methodologies, Approaches and Resources, Torah, Prophets, Writings, Varia, New Testament. Although it lacks a conceptual coherence, teachers [will] find several of the assignments useful."

“There are two related questions that lie at the heart of this dissertation. First, how can the subject matter scholarship of Bible be treated and analyzed in order that it might play a part in educational deliberation? Second, how might the subject matter scholarship of Bible be conceived of and understood by future teachers, as opposed to those studying the subject matter for research purposes alone?”


"The best and most succinct argument that I've seen for the positive value of modern biblical criticism for the construction of religious meaning. Sommer wants us to see that reading biblical texts critically is not a mere academic exercise, and is certainly not a hostile act, but rather that it can open up religious possibilities for the reader who is so inclined, including especially new ways of understanding intra-communal theological debates."


Walzer, Michael. Exodus and Revolution. (Basic Books, 1986). “A sourcebook and also a great example of a running thematic commentary, which uses rabbinic commentary and political thought to illuminate each other and the chumash text.”


Zielenziger, Ruth. “A History of the Bible Program of the Melton Research Center with Special References to the Curricular Principles on Which It is Based.” Doctoral dissertation, The Jewish Theological Seminar of America, 1989. “Presents an overview of the thinking of the scholars, educators, and psychologists responsible for the preparation of this Bible program.”


**Rabbinic Literature**

Blau, Ludwig. "Methods of Teaching the Talmud in the Past and in the Present." Jewish Quarterly Review 15 (1987). "Blau offers a critique of the state of Talmud study in both modernist and more traditionalist Jewish settings, in particular arguing for a more thoughtful selection of material in line with a set of articulated purposes. ‘There is no well-defined syllabus of the subjects which it is intended to impart to the students, nor any previously determined course of study for the purpose of mastering it...It quite depends on chance which particular treatise and which folios thereof the students are made acquainted with. There being no defined subject matter, there can be no ultimate object of tuition’ (p 126, emphasis added). Coming from over a hundred years ago, this article offers a refreshing (and sobering) perspective, which cannot but raise the question, in the mind of the reader, of how much has changed over time.”

“The author laments the lack of any systematic approach to teaching Talmud. He makes a number of suggestions of how the Talmud should be taught. The question that comes up is whether we have moved ahead in the past century or remained pretty much in the same classroom that we were in then.” Available online at http://masliah.googlepages.com/teachingtalmud.pdf.


Friedman, Shamma. Lecture text, “The Talmud Today.” “Friedman compares and contrasts academic and traditional approaches to the Talmud, and argues for the importance of further incorporating talmudic studies into the work of ancient historians and classical scholars--and academic critical methodologies into yeshiva studies.” Available online at http://www.atranet.co.il/sf/talmud_today.pdf.

Friedman, Shamma. Lecture text, “Benjamin and Minna Revees Chair Lecture”. “Friedman softens his previous commitment to the notion that Talmud instructors from high school and up should be 'engaged in creative personal research of the subject being taught', but maintains that such research--done by academic specialists--can and should be used 'in each and every of the many contexts in which the Talmud is studied', so that students may fully appreciate its complexity and inner beauty.” Available online at http://www.atranet.co.il/sf/revees_chair.pdf.


Gribetz, Beverly. “On the Translation of Scholarship to Pedagogy: The Case of Talmud.” Doctoral dissertation, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1995. “An exploration of the theory that a teacher must be familiar with her subject matter and methodological approaches to it in order to successfully handle difficulties that may arrive in the classroom. Using the Talmud as an example, the author presents three different passages and suggests sources which assist in resolving issues that arise from each.”


Hammer-Kossoy, Meesh. “Talmud and the Quest for Personal Transformation”, ATID Journal. “The author presents three case studies of outstanding teachers who are all concerned with the question, "What is the point of Talmud education?" One focuses on the content of the Talmud discussion itself and how it highlights matters of personal significance to students; the second focuses on the Talmud's discursive style and its impact on the human psyche and the student's worldview; the third emphasizes the significance of the experience of talmudic study itself, as a form of submission to God's will.” Available online at http://www.atid.org/journal/journal01/hammer_sum.asp.


Lehman, Marjorie. “Examining the Role of Gender Studies in the Teaching of Talmudic Literature.” *Journal of Jewish Education, 72*(2), 2006. “Lehman explores a variety of ways of reading gender in rabbinic texts, in order to think about their education impact. By working through an example of a rabbinic text, the paper proposes that reading gender is not limited to finding women in classical texts, although that is important for educational reasons; and is not limited to confronting the rabbinic attitudes towards women, although that too is important for educational reasons. Rather, reading gender ought to include understanding the way that the rabbis' talk about women is a key to their culture more generally. If we are able to communicate this to our students, we enable our students to see women as an integral part of the rabbis' language of interpretation and central to their identity as interpreters of rabbinic culture' (p. 119).”


- Sherry Blumberg, “‘The Whole Earth is Full of God’s Glory’: Midrash as a Means of Teaching the Acceptance of Diversity”
- Joel Lurie Grishaver, “Of Mishna and Mishegas: a Reflection on the Role Mishna Study Plays in Developing Ethical Problem-solving Skills”
- Betsy Dolgin Katz, “Creating a Community Around Text Study: Analyzing the Dynamics of an Adult Study Group,”
- Moshe Sokolow, “I Know What It Says, But What Does It Mean?: The Tension Between Peshat and Derash”
- Devora Steinmetz, “A Curriculum for Developing Life-Long Learners of Text”


“Includes Pinchas Hayman, ‘Methodology and Method in the Teaching of Tannaitic Literature’, and Simcha Goldsmith, ‘Utilizing Literary Discourse and Reading Research to Understand the Difficulties of Talmud Instruction’.”


Available online at http://atid.org/journal/journal00/wieselberg.doc.

**General Resources**

*Note: This section includes resources for teaching Jewish texts in general, as well as other material on Jewish education and on pedagogy from general education that teachers of Jewish texts have recommended as being helpful in thinking about their work.*


“This article attempts to draw the lines of connection between the six different types of knowers laid out in Belenky et al’s *Women’s Ways of Knowing* and different approaches to text study.”


“An excellent empirical study of successful college teaching, though much of what it says goes beyond best practices or techniques. Useful for teachers at all levels, even though the focus is college. Divided into useful chapters about faculty attention to student learning, preparation, expectations from students, conducting classes, treating students and evaluation.”


“Written [by] teachers, trainers, faculty administrators, professional developers, facilitators, and other educational leaders, *Discussion as a Way of Teaching* is a comprehensive volume that offers step-by-step guidance for everything from preparing students to participate in a discussion to evaluating its meaning and effect. The chapters in this practical resource contain a wealth of helpful techniques, suggestions, and applications that can be adapted to a wide variety of discussion settings.”


“A book of five essays of which 1, 3, 4 talk about education. It is classic Buber, speaking of the I-Thou connection between teacher/student, and the capacity to teach/build character.”
“Prompted by his teaching of a Torah text that he could not explain away by reference to historical context, Cohen reconsiders ideas about how to teach troubling texts. He offers a three-fold approach, based on three biblical models: to abide the tension without apologetics, to judge the text from within its own standards, and finally, to take responsibility for the text -- and to reject it as ‘not Torah’.”

“A ‘tool chest’ of teaching strategies for improving the teaching practice of teachers at all levels; primarily useful for university teachers.”


“Offers a particularly accessible review of recent developments in a wide range of fields (including mathematics, physics, biology, psychology, and philosophy). With the background established, Doll emphasizes the implications of the creative and ‘self-organizing’ patterns towards which these scientific findings point… Particularly in Jewish studies, where little ‘off-the-shelf’ curricular materials are available, forcing teachers to create their own, it appears to me that [the more creative approaches advocated here] should be examined in a serious way.”

Fish, Stanley. Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.
“A collection of literary critical and theoretical essays that place the emphasis on the reader as the maker of meaning and on the forces at work in the reader’s activity.”


Fox, Seymour, and Geraldine Rosenfield, eds. From the Scholar to the Classroom: Translating Jewish Tradition into Curriculum (New York: Melton Research Center for Jewish Education, Jewish Theological Seminary, 1977).
“Includes Gerson D. Cohen’s great piece ‘Translating Jewish History into Curriculum: From Scholarship to Paideia—A Case Study’.”


Hartman-Halbertal explores the dilemmas surrounding the teaching of canonical Jewish texts from a "tradition which at best does not hear the voices of women, and at worst is blatantly misogynist" (p. 62). She draws on the literature of psychoanalysis, which has faced a parallel problem in the interpretation of its canonical Freudian texts, to present three models of different responses: the Reaffirmation Model, the Rejectionist Model, and the Reinterpretive Model. This last model "challenges its participants to constantly engage and re-engage with traditional texts, revisiting them through different lenses, and thereby creating a dynamic dialogue between modernity and tradition" (p. 100).


“This novel from around 1981 provides a suggestive perspective on the Bible as a text whose sacredness derives in part from its unintelligibility and whose difficulty derives from its, well, difficulty."


“Accessible language, doesn’t make many assumptions, and written in (an) enthusiastic voice/s about Jewish text, rather than detached academese...does not have a focused chapter on halachic literature (codes, responsa, etc.).”


“Great practical how-to list for anyone on the cusp of assembling a course from scratch, or even a seasoned professional looking to improve the quality of their teaching.”


“As an educational anarchist, one of my favorite books… bucks the popular trend that advocates creating rigid curricular goals and methods. By empowering the teacher to be the independent master of his or her classroom, each child is encouraged to think creatively, rather than being force-fed a structured mass of information. My favorite chapter is ‘Teachers Should Be Unprepared.’ "

“Key depth lessons on the who and why of teaching, from a master teacher of teachers.” (Many of Palmer’s articles are available at http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/events/afc99/articles.html.)

“Discusses ‘quality’ as a goal in learning in and all things, and explains that there is no absolute logic by which to argue but only rhetoric--how we present is critical to what we present.”

“The book that has had the most impact on me as a teacher.”


Or Rose, "Wrestling With Words," Sh’ma, April 2001
“In this response to Aryeh Cohen’s article in the same issue of Sh’ma, Rose offers three critiques: first, that Cohen portrays his engagement with troubling texts as an individual rather than by reference to any communal norms; second, that Cohen meditates on his own struggle regarding to the teaching of troubling texts, but does not address how this meditation affects his actual teaching; and third, that the historicizing of troubling texts (explaining them by reference to historical context) is not so easily dismissed as a significant approach.”


“The [most] impressive thing I have seen on pedagogy.”


“Very illuminating as an example of rhetorical and historical criticism of a short text.”

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