

Lesson based on material
developed by the Skirball
Museum at Hebrew Union College

THE TORAH TELLS

Note to the teacher:

This lesson was developed to show students about how the Bible is used as an archaeological resource to supplement the artifacts and other writings, which have been found in the Near East. The quotes were selected by Biblical scholars at Hebrew Union College.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify the five books of the Torah.
2. Students will extract and interpret information from the Torah text to draw conclusions about ancient Hebrew life.
3. Students will create a class book illustrating what they have learned.

Materials:

1. 6 sets of Torah quote cards (27 cards in each set) (Handout #1)
2. 6 worksheets (Handout #2)
3. Teacher answer key

Lesson Length:

This lesson takes approximately three class periods.

Introductory Activity:

The teacher explains that the Bible is an important source of information about history as well as a document to guide faith. Archaeologists use the Bible as a supplement to artifactual evidence about the lifestyles of ancient Near Eastern people. Archaeology provides many of the specifics, such as objects people used, but other sources are needed to understand the bigger picture.

"It's the same way with the Bible. We can't use the Bible to prove that Abraham and Sarah lived [in the scientific sense], but the accounts in the Bible help us learn how people lived in the days when Abraham and Sarah would have been alive."*

*Teacher's Guide, M.U.S.E. Archaeology Kit, Skirball Museum, Hebrew Union College.

The teacher reads the following quote from the New JPS Translation of the Torah and asks the students to think about all the possible information that it gives about what life was like during this era.

"He [Abraham] was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground, he said, 'My lords, if it please you, do not go on past your servant. Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet and recline under the tree. And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves; then go on ---seeing that you have come your servant's way.' They replied, 'Do as you have said.' Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said 'Quick, three measures of choice flour! Knead and make cakes!'"

Genesis 18:1-6

Working in pairs, students write out as many "facts" about the lifestyle of the time that they can in five minutes.

Teacher leads a discussion asking for and recording the lifestyle descriptions that the students developed. The teacher should make a copy of the text for the overhead projector and ask the students to identify the place in the text, which was the source of their information.

The teacher records the students' descriptions and creates a composite description of what life was like during the time of Abraham and Sarah.

Question:

Are there other kinds of things that may be true but there is not quite enough information in the quote?

Example:

The men, such as Abraham, may have been more powerful members of society than women because Abraham was the one who greeted the visitors personally while Sarah stayed in the tent.

This kind of interpretation is called conjecture. It is based on interpretations of the text but cannot be considered fact unless there is corroborating evidence from other sources for the conclusion.

Step 2:

Teacher duplicates 6 or more sets of the cards (handout #1) on green card stock paper.

Divide the class into groups of 2-4 students. Hand out one set of cards (Handout #1, pages 1-3) to each group.

Students sort through the cards noticing the references found on the bottom right of each card. This shows exactly where the quotes are from. Students write down the names of the books from which the quotes were taken and share them with the total class.

The teacher writes down the five books that are the source of the quotes: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These are the five books of Moses or the Torah.

Step 3:

Teacher hands out the worksheet (Handout #2). Using the quotes, students complete the worksheet.

Culminating Activity:

Go over the worksheet in class to correct the answers. Then using the cards and worksheet as sources, students create pages of a Big Book about life among the Hebrews during the time of Moses. Using descriptions from the cards, each group makes a drawing and writes a few lines of description on a page demonstrating some aspect of one the following topics:

Clothing

Customs

Food Housing

Laws

Handout #1

<p>He left the assembly, taking a spear in his hand.</p> <p>Numbers 25:7</p>	<p>Take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him.</p> <p>Exodus 29:7</p>
<p>If your offering is a meal offering in a pan, it should be made of choice flour and oil.</p> <p>Leviticus 2:7</p>	<p>Jacob gave Eau bread and lentil stew.</p> <p>Genesis 25:34</p>
<p>Let a little water be brought; bath your feet and recline under a tree.</p> <p>Genesis 18:4</p>	<p>His eyes are darker than wine; his teeth are whiter than milk.</p> <p>Genesis 49:12</p>
<p>He said, "Please, my Lords, turn to your servant's house to spend the night, and bathe your feet; then you may be on your way early."</p> <p>Genesis 19:2</p>	<p>You shall not wear cloth combining wool and linen.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 22:11</p>
<p>Twenty years I have ben in your service. Your ewes and she-goats never miscarried, and I did not eat rams from your flock.</p> <p>Genesis 31:38</p>	<p>Seven days you shall make offerings by fire to the Lord.</p> <p>Leviticus 23:8</p>

<p>When you say, "I want to eat meat," for you have the urge to eat meat, you may eat meat whenever you wish.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 12:20</p>	<p>However, if you do not listen to the voice of the Lord your God... Deuteronomy 28:15 Though you have olive trees throughout your land, you will have no oil for anointment, for your olives shall drop off the trees. Deuteronomy 28:40</p>
<p>Your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand.</p> <p>Exodus 12:11</p>	<p>The Lord your God is bringing you into a good land ... a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 8:7-8</p>
<p>A man goes with his neighbor into a grove to cut wood; as his hand swings the ax to cut down a tree, the ax-head flies off the handle, strikes his neighbor and kills him, the man may then flee to the city and live ...</p> <p>Deuteronomy 19:5</p>	<p>You shall not make false measures of length, weight or capacity.</p> <p>Leviticus 19:35</p>
<p>If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, he has the right to change his mind and reclaim the house for one year.</p> <p>Leviticus 25:29</p>	<p>When you see the donkey of your enemy collapsed under its load ... you must raise it with him.</p> <p>Exodus 23:5</p>
<p>You shall make a screen for the entrance to the tent, of blue, purple, and red yarns, and fine twisted linen, done in embroidery.</p> <p>Exodus 26:36</p>	<p>The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God: you shall not do any work -- you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or your donkey, or any cattle, or the stranger in your settlements, so that male and female slave may rest as you do.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 5:14</p>

<p>The Lord said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites to take up an offering which shall consist of oil for lighting, spices and oil for anointing ...</p> <p>Exodus 25 1-6</p>	<p>You shall present a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing order to the Lord; thirteen bulls of the herd, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs; they should be without blemish.</p> <p>Numbers 29:13</p>
<p>Whether the cloth is made of linen, or of wool, or of skin</p> <p>Leviticus 13:48</p>	<p>You will gather your new grain and wine and oil, and I (God) will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat your fill.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 11:14-15</p>
<p>When you cut the harvest of your land, you shall not cut all the way to the edges of your field ... you shall not pick your vineyard: you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger.</p> <p>Leviticus 19:9-10</p>	<p>When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years: in the seventh year he shall be freed, without payment.</p> <p>Exodus 21:2</p>
<p>Now the flax and barley were ruined [by hail] for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in the bud.</p> <p>Exodus 9:31</p>	

Handout # 2

Worksheet

The Torah gives us clues about how the ancient Hebrews lived. Use the green cards to answer the questions.

1. What are some of the foods that the ancient Hebrews ate?

2. What kind of animals did the Hebrews have? How were they used?

3. What kind of cloth did the Hebrews have? What can you find out about their clothes?

4. Did the ancient Hebrews own slaves? How do you know?

5. The ancient Hebrews prayed to God by making sacrifices or offerings. What is a sacrifice? What did they offer? _____

6. Which tools or weapons are mentioned on the cards?

7. What is one way that ancient Hebrews gave Tzedakah? (Helping the poor)

8. What did the Hebrews live in?

9. What uses did olive oil have?

Handout # 2
Teacher Answer Key

The Torah gives us clues about how the ancient Hebrews lived. Use the green cards to answer the questions.

1. What are some of the foods that the ancient Hebrews ate?
7) Bread, lentil stew 8) wine, milk 11) meat (17 wheat barley vines (grapes, wine), figs, pomegranates, olive oil, honey 5) goats, rams 24) barley 26) wine, oil
2. What kind of animals did the Hebrews have? How were they used?
5) goats, rams (for food) 19) donkeys (to carry loads) 20) ox, donkey cattle (for doing work) 26) cattle (for food)
3. What kind of cloth did the Hebrews have? What can you find out about their clothes?
10) wool, linen/ they could not mix both into one fabric 12) they wore sandals. 15) they used yarns, embroidery, linen 22) linene, wool, skins (leather) 24) flax (linen)
4. Did the ancient Hebrews own slaves? How do you know?
20) Yes, this quote mentions they had slaves. 27) Yes, but if they did were Hebrew (Jewish) slaves they only served 6 years, then were freed.
5. The ancient Hebrews prayed to God by making sacrifices or offerings. What is a sacrifice? What did they offer? 2) a meal offering is one sacrifice (flour and oil loaves were offered) 9) offerings were sometimes sacrifices by fire (something was burned) 25) sacrifice by fire, offered were: bulls, rams, lambs, (perfect ones)
6. Which tools or weapons are mentioned on the cards?
1) spear 13) ax 18) tools to measure length weight, capacity
7. What is one way that ancient Hebrews gave Tzedakah? (Helping the poor)
23) leaving the edges of fields unharvested and not picking vineyards clean
8. What did the Hebrews live in?
14) houses, walled cities 15) tents
9. What uses did olive oil have?
2) for meal offering 6&16) anointment 17) eating