

Turn the Torah and turn it
again, for all things are in it.

—Pirkei Avot 5:22

An Invitation to You and Your Students

The Explorer's Bible invites your students to enter the world of Torah study in a modern, accessible, and exciting way. It combines elements of our timeless tradition with a contemporary outlook and approach to personal growth and values. Teaching Torah to Jewish children is a special joy and privilege. As teachers of Torah, we join a long line of those who have ensured that our tradition is passed securely to each successive generation. No subject in Jewish education is more important to the future of the children we teach and the communities we serve.

Through a rich and varied assortment of stories, discussion, and activities, *The Explorer's Bible* introduces students to the lifelong exploration of our most sacred text. In the process they are encouraged to reflect on their personal values, goals, and relationships. They are encouraged to emulate the great heroes of the Bible, but also to learn from their mistakes. Above all, they are encouraged to make the lessons of Torah a part of their own lives.

The PaRDeS Method

Over the centuries, teachers have used a four-part approach to Torah instruction. These steps are known by their Hebrew names: **P'shat**, **D'rash**, **Remez**, and **Sod**. The method is often called **PaRDeS**, an acronym built from the first letter of each step. The Hebrew word *pardes*, meaning orchard, is the origin of the English word "paradise." According to the PaRDeS method, Torah study should be like paradise. *The Explorer's Bible* incorporates elements of the PaRDeS model to help guide and inspire students as they learn.

P'shat (the basic meaning):

The first step in the PaRDeS method lies in understanding the basic meaning of text. *The Explorer's Bible* provides this understanding with a new translation of the biblical text that is both true to the original text and accessible to young readers. To help you further clarify this basic

meaning for students, the Overview section at the beginning of each chapter in this Teacher's Guide highlights the *p'shat* of the chapter's contents.

D'rash (interpretation):

The second step in the PaRDeS method is discovering the moral and ethical values in the text. Telling a story that is based on or furthers the text is one traditional *d'rash* method. This kind of story is known as *midrash*. The Midrash Maker feature of *The Explorer's Bible* introduces students to classical *midrashim* and invite them to create their own.

Other features of *The Explorer's Bible* also present opportunities for interpretation. The **Word Wizard** feature provides commentary on specific Hebrew words and phrases from the text. The **Time Traveler** feature asks students to interpret one aspect of the story as if they were "part of the action."

NOTE: Of course, there is no “correct” *remez* in Torah study; students may discover their own lessons in each chapter. The Wisdom Weavers feature focuses on one *remez* from each chapter that is especially applicable to students’ everyday lives.

Remez (core concept or allegory):

The third step in the PaRDeS method involves applying the ethical values from the text in new contexts and exploring ways to apply these teachings in our own lives. This essential step lies at the heart of the Wisdom Weavers feature that concludes each chapter. Additional values are highlighted in each chapter as they appear, encouraging students to integrate these values into their own lives.

Sod (hidden or mystical):

The final step in the PaRDeS method is *sod*, which is based on the mystical idea that a hidden meaning, or *sod*, can be found in each verse and story of the Torah. In *The Explorer’s Bible*, these mystical ideas are expressed through the illustrations that begin each chapter and the color photographs throughout the book. In addition, compass icons in the margin of the text pose questions that both point students toward the *p’shat* of a single verse and encourage them to explore the verse’s deeper meaning.

Structure of the Textbook

The Explorer’s Bible is divided into eighteen chapters, which cover the text of the Torah from Genesis 1:1 through Exodus 12:42. These chapters present the biblical account of creation and early human beings, the stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs, and the saga of the birth of the people of Israel as they left the oppression of Egypt.

The **table of contents**, on pages 4–5, not only lists but also presents a visual clue about the contents of each chapter. You may wish to preview the

table of contents with you students before you begin reading the text or use it to review chapters the class has already read.

The **introduction**, on pages 6–7, uses the book’s cartoon “guides” to explain the purpose of the text and to introduce recurring features. You may wish to assign parts and have students read their character’s speech bubbles aloud, either in small groups or as a class. Both the table of contents and the introduction can be used to start a class discussion about what students hope to learn in the coming year.

Each chapter of *The Explorer’s Bible* contains the following features:

- An **opening illustration** captures a key moment in the chapter.
- **Core text** presents a translation of selected passages from the Torah.

- **“Compass notes”** in the margins expand on, explain, or propose questions based on the core text.

The Explorer’s Bible also contains recurring features that enrich the core text. These features, presented by cartoon “guides,” are:

- **Time Traveler** challenges students to imagine that they are present at the time of the story—and to learn from biblical figures “firsthand.”



- **Word Wizard** explores the meaning behind key Hebrew words and phrases. (If you and your class are comfortable decoding Hebrew, you may wish to have students read the Hebrew words or phrases provided.)



- **Midrash Maker** introduces students to classical *midrashim* from rabbinic and other sources and invites students to create their own *midrashim*.



- **Wisdom Weavers** summarizes and reinforces the main theme of the chapter. Following each Wisdom Weavers is a visual activity that allows students to further explore the chapter’s core concept.



- In sections that include dialogue, assign parts and have students read the text as a play. Encourage students to read expressively. Make sure to assign a narrator.
- For short passages especially, you may wish to have the class read chorally. You may need to read with them to help them keep a consistent pace.
- Have students read independently, in pairs, or in small groups. To check comprehension, have them summarize the text for the class.

Techniques for Reading the Biblical Text

Using a variety of reading techniques can keep students attentive and engaged. Use these strategies to help your class read the biblical material in *The Explorer’s Bible 1*:

- Especially if this is the first experience with Torah study for many students, you may want to read straight through the biblical text in each chapter as a class before engaging students in the compass notes, recurring features, or activity pages. (The narrative passages are labeled with citations from the Torah, such as “Genesis 1:1-5.”) This is a particularly effective technique for helping students grasp the *p’shat* (basic or straightforward meaning) of the text.
- Use the compass notes to enhance students’ understanding of the biblical text. You may wish to discuss these notes as you read, whenever the question or statement seems most pertinent. You may also wish to wait and discuss the notes after the class has read the passage, or after students have finished reading the entire chapter.
- Read the text aloud to the class or ask volunteers to read sections of the text aloud. After each section, pause for questions and discussion. You may wish to discuss the compass notes, highlight the most important points, confirm that students understand any difficult words or ideas, use the suggestions and strategies provided in this Teacher’s Guide—or any combination of the above. Give students the opportunity to ask questions as well as to answer them.

Structure of the Teacher’s Guide

The Teacher’s Guide is designed to help you use *The Explorer’s Bible* easily and effectively. It includes a variety of activities that engage a wide range of learning modalities: questions that stimulate critical thinking and in-depth discussion of the text; step-by-step instructions for art projects; and activities that integrate math, science, and music. For your convenience, this guide closely follows the structure of *The Explorer’s Bible*. The eighteen chapters in the Teacher’s Guide correspond to the eighteen chapters in the student textbook. Each chapter in the Teacher’s Guide also contains sections that follow the main subject headings in the textbook.

Each chapter of the Teacher’s Guide contains the following features:

- **Overview** A brief summary of the textual material covered in the chapter.
- **Core Concept** A brief statement of the chapter’s central theme.
- **Learning Objectives** Specific learning goals for each chapter.
- **Vocabulary** Definitions of key words that appear in each chapter.
- **Set Induction** Practical suggestions for introducing the chapter.

A NOTE ON USING THE TABLE OF

CONTENTS: You may wish to introduce your study of *The Explorer's Bible 1* by having students review the table of contents on pages 5 and 6. Ask your students: Do any of the names or drawings look familiar? Based on the table of contents, what ideas or values do you expect to learn about in this book? You may also wish to return to the table of contents later in order to help students review what they have learned, and to introduce upcoming chapters.

Each chapter of the Teacher's Guide also includes teaching tips, topics for discussion, critical thinking questions, and hands-on activities based on the PaRDeS method. In addition, the sections focused on teaching the text contain one or more of the following recurring features:



• **Turn It and Turn It** Opportunities for enrichment of the text and for students to engage in thought-provoking discussions. Look for the icon.



• **Bring It to Life** Activities that enhance the study of text through art, crafts, drama, and other creative activities. Look for the icon.



• **Worth a Thousand Words** Discussion material that uses a photograph or artwork from the textbook as starting point. Look for the icon.

The Teacher's Guide also contains a section in each chapter that provides a **Wrap-up** discussion or activity—and a hint of what's coming in the following chapter.

Finally, each chapter in the Teacher's Guide closes with a section called Putting the Text in Context that provides additional background information to help you better understand the text. You may wish to share this material with your students if you believe it will help to answer their questions or provoke further class discussion.

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Before You Begin . . .

One of the most exciting aspects of teaching Torah is that it provides you with the opportunity to learn along with your students. In the Talmud (*Ta'anit* 7a), Rabbi Nahman ben Isaac asked, "Why are words of Torah compared to a tree, as it is said, 'It is a tree of life to those who hold it fast' (Proverbs 3:18)? This is to teach you that just as a small tree can ignite a big tree, so too can young students sharpen the minds of great scholars. This agrees with the statement of Rabbi Hanina, 'Much have I learned from my teachers, more from my colleagues, but from my students most of all.'" May it be so in your classes as well!

B'hatzlahah—much success!