

## About the Curriculum

JOFA's Shemot enrichment curriculum addresses issues of leadership in the Shemot narrative, on an individual (Miriam, the midwives) and collective level. The modules echo one another and build thematically on each other. They give voice to a counter-narrative embedded in the book of Shemot, a narrative of resistance to the dominant voice – at times, a voice of *gezerah* (decree), at others, a voice of despair. The women's leadership stems from their abiding faith in God, despite circumstances which hide God's power. From their courageous and ingenious behavior in the midst of slavery – partnering with God, defying Pharaoh, rousing their husbands out of the numbness of slavery – to their readiness for celebration and their refusal to abandon God, the women align themselves with the divine narrative.

Each module contains:

- Textual and thematic goals that guide the development of the unit
- The framework and materials to help the class complete Hevruta, full group and small group activities/discussions
- Small group or independent activities that encourage students to grapple with text-based interpretive questions
- Triggers and activities geared to engage students with a variety of different learning styles and skill levels
- Notes to help the teacher understand the rationale of each section within the module
- Teacher supplements that enrich the teacher's own learning and serve as a useful toolbox for addressing questions that might be raised by students

Each module is shaped by both thematic and textual goals. While the thematic goals vary from module to module, the textual goals are reinforced throughout the modules. In each module, the students are guided through their own close reading of the Torah text while they are prompted to apply the following textual skills:

- Noting repeated words within the Torah text and understanding their significance
- Intertextual analysis - noting similarities or repetition from other biblical sources and comparing the texts
- Attending to verb form and tense
- Observing and interpreting absence or silence within the Torah text

Some of the modules feature individual or group study of midrashic passages.

JOFA is interested in teaching the students how to read and interpret *midrashim* such that they do not fall into the pattern of “literal reading” -- i.e. either the *midrashim* are taken on blind faith and are absolutely “true” in all senses, or the *midrashim* are taken literally and deemed to be absurd or untenable. To that end, the modules work to inculcate textual skills for the reading of the *midrash*:

- Recognizing the anchor to the biblical verses, whether it be linguistic or thematic
- Considering the logic of the *midrashic* passage itself -- how it flows from one part to the next, etc.

- Using the *midrashic* passages to bolster or deepen the students' understanding of the verses, or a theme which emerges from the verses

In addition, within each module, the following student dispositions are encouraged:

- Open-ended study: although the modules have clearly defined goals, there is plenty of room within each module for multiple interpretations that are grounded within the text
- Individual sense making: each student is asked and encouraged to express his/her own questions on the Torah text
- Recognizing the characters within the text as whole people with complex human relationships, religious faith, emotions and motivations

The Modules:

1. Multiple Births - Shemot 1:1-7
2. Creating Slavery - Shemot 1:11-14
3. Responding to Slavery Shmot 1:11-14
4. Midwives - Shemot 1:16-22
5. Miriam – Young Leadership - Shemot 2:1-10
6. Moshe at the Well - Shemot 2:15 - 22
7. Paving the Way with Gold and Silver - Shemot 3:21-22, 11:2-3, 12: 34-36
8. Shirat Hayam - Shemot 15:1-21
9. Golden Calf - Shemot 31:18 - 32:4