

Introduction

Curriculum Goals:

1. To make Sefer Dabarim relevant and inspiring to students' lives by bringing out the ethical and halakhic principles embedded in the Sefer.
2. To pay close attention to Debarim's structure and to place each of its sections within the structure. This helps students understand and remember the book as a whole as well as appreciate the importance of each section. Using a Tanakh Shalem will facilitate this goal.
3. To help students distinguish between peshat and derash.
4. To include all those elements from tradition Jewish day school education that are important for "cultural literacy."
5. To help students gain skills so that they can learn Humash and Rishonim on their own.
6. To encourage group work, student participation, use of multimedia – maps, charts, diagrams, Powerpoint, and other modern techniques of teaching without lecturing.

Sefer Debarim contains many of the most important principles of faith and action in the entire Torah. It is the address by Moshe Rabbenu to the entire nation about to enter the Land. As such, it contains all of the timeless messages that are essential for every descendant of those Israelites. It is our job as teachers to bring all of the grandeur of that momentous occasion to our students.

The goal of this project is to provide, at the least, a helpful reference tool for teachers preparing their own lessons and, at the most, an outline which each teacher can tailor to fit his/her needs. This guide is not meant to be a substitute for research and planning lessons by the teacher because every classroom has its own requirements and each teacher must bring together his/her own background, skills, and interests to the class. Lesson plans can and should be deleted, added to, or modified. To this end, student handouts contain no reference to lesson numbers or page numbers so that they can be used selectively.

Parts of Each Lesson Plan:

Each lesson in the curriculum may have the following sections:

Objective – The primary goals for this lesson. This should help you focus on the essential message and skills that students should receive from this lesson and be responsible to remember on a test.

Background – Each lesson assumes a certain amount of familiarity with the text and its structure. Often, a lesson will assume the point of view of a certain commentator over another or will prefer one way of breaking up sections over another. It is important to be aware of these assumptions and to relay them to the students when necessary.

Activity – This is the meat and potatoes of the lesson. This section will include worksheets, activities, and discussion topics that you should use for this lesson. Of course, these are only suggestions and you should feel free to edit the worksheets and tailor the activities to suit the needs of your class.

Further Readings – Articles, books, or web sites related to the ideas of this lesson in case you want to delve further into them.

This curriculum assumes that all students come to class with a תנ"ך שלם (קורן is preferred because it retains the פתוחות וסתומות) and a מקראות גדולות.

Students should have a basic understanding of the words in each section before delving deeper into their significance and other questions it may raise. You may wish to get the class involved by going around the room and letting each student read and explain one *pasuk*. Alternatively, since all of דברים is a speech, you can assign each section/chapter to a different student to present in front of the class. The student should volunteer or be given his part a couple of days before you learn that section in class so that he/she can prepare it. Then, the student has to reenact Moshe's delivery of that speech to Israel. Ask them to think about the key words that need special emphasis or intonation and make this presentation part of their grade. This will benefit presenter who will know that section well, perhaps even by heart. It will also benefit the class to hear the words preached to them so that they can imagine what kind of impression the words would have made on Bnei Yisrael.