**Sample Standards-based Unit**

**Standards 1 and 8**

**Genesis 4:1-16**

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| **Standard 1: Students will become independent and literarily astute readers of the biblical text in Hebrew.**  **Standard 8: Students will develop a love of Torah study for its own sake and embrace it as an inspiring resource, informing their values, moral commitments and ways of experiencing the world.**  **Benchmarks:**  **1.16d recognizes vav consecutive imperfect.**  **1.18 recognizes unusual verse structure [*poetry vs prose].***  **1.19 Recognizes gaps in the text.**  **8.15 analyzes and evaluates the tanakh’s internal resolutions of its conflicts and moral dilemmas.**  **8.17 applies key phrases and quotes drawn from the biblical texts to real life situations in which moral questions are raised.** | | | |
| **Students will know** | **Students will be able to do** | **Content Material (text references, questions, activities)** | |
| **1.16d recognizes vav consecutive imperfect.** | | | |
| Basic past tense  Basic future tense  Nikud of vav+future (וַ plus dagesh) | Identify vav consecutive verbs  Translate vav consecutive verbs  Convert vav consecutive verbs to regular verbs and vice versa | ותהר, ותלד, ותאמר (1)  (for more advanced students) | ויפלו (5)  ויאמר (passim)  ויקם (8)  ויצא (16) |
| Worksheet practicing vav consecutive  “Simon says” game for guided practice of vav consecutive | |
| **1.18 recognizes unusual verse structure (poetry vs prose).** | | | |
| Characteristics of Biblical prose  Characteristics of Biblical Poetry (e.g. parallelism, archaic language)  Definition of the distinction (Alter, Art of Biblical Narrative, p. 2; Art of Biblical Poetry, ch. 1 [summary/teacher resource]) | Classify particular Biblical verses as either prose or poetry  Explain classification | God’s speech in verses 6-7  Possibility that they are earlier folk saying redacted into the text  Reading out loud with feeling competition  Try to integrate with language arts teacher prose/poetry unit  Some students might be able to read pieces of the Alter; for others, need to provide summary | |
| **1.19 Recognizes gaps in the text.** | | | |
| Biblical text is laconic  Biblical text was transmitted by scribal copying, perhaps with occasional errors and omissions | Identify possible gaps in the text  Evaluate whether a gap in the text is due to the text’s laconic nature or due to scribal error  Suggest personal interpretations of gaps in the text | ויאמר קין אל הבל אחיו ויהי בהיותם בשדה (8) (scribal?)  Verse 3: lack of reason for bringing sacrifices (laconic)  Verse 5: lack of explanation of Cain’s feeling (laconic)  Verse 15: rationale for God’s decision (laconic) | |
| **8.15 analyzes and evaluates the tanakh’s internal resolutions of its conflicts and moral dilemmas.** | | | |
| Conflicts/dilemmas | Identifies background to and essence of the conflict/dilemma  Offers explanations of characters’ actions  Suggests alternative courses of action that characters could have taken  Proposes interpretive explanations of characters’ motivations | Create conflict-resolution chart for entire chapter  Who is at fault here? Cain, God, Adam/Eve?  Why did the characters make offerings in the first place?  Why did God act in that way?  What alternatives could any of the characters have taken?  What was Cain feeling?  Tableau activity on Cain’s feelings  Why didn’t God stop Cain?  Bibliodrama activity getting students to think about alternative options  רועה צאן / עובד אדמה  Verses 3-4: analysis and evaluation of usual rabbinic reading of the different offerings  ויחר (5) – interpret  Verses 6-7: evaluate God’s actions  Verse 9: suggest multiple interpretations for characters’ motivations | |
| Biblical texts may contain imperfect resolutions  Legitimacy of interpreter to evaluate, critique Bible’s internal resolutions | Identifies one or more internal resolutions  Evaluates Tanakh’s internal resolutions, including those of narrator, characters, God  Suggests alternative resolutions | Verses 4-5 – God’s response – Why?  Verses 11-12 – Cain’s punishment – was it fair, just, proportionate? Suggest alternatives  Classroom courtroom activity on verses 11-12  Verses 13-14 – how does this affect our view of Cain’s character?  Haiku-writing activity on Cain’s character  Verse 15 – again, evaluate | |
| **8.17 applies key phrases and quotes drawn from the biblical texts to real life situations in which moral questions are raised.** | | | |
| Key phrases / catchphrases  Examples of applications of key phrases to real life situations (e.g. “All that glitters is not gold” – Shakespeare – e.g. when buying a used car; שן תחת שן – Tanakh – e.g. in arguments with friends)  Idea of quoting in order to “put your finger” on emotions or situations | Memorize teacher-identified key phrases  Understand core idea of key phrases  Suggest examples of real life situations to which phrase (or slightly altered phrase) may be applied  Explain why phrase is relevant to real life situation | השומר אחי אנוכי  Homework assignment to find examples of Biblical texts/phrases in news or real life  Hallmark card discussion – why not just use blank greeting cards?  Play movie or TV show in which Biblical text/phrase is used in significant way (NEED TO FIND!) | |

**BIG IDEAS AND ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

BIG IDEAS:

* Gaps in the text force us to become **active, interpreting readers**
* Changes in the text’s style force us to become **active, interpreting readers**
* Biblical characters are not perfect; as **active, interpreting readers**, we can evaluate their actions
* Biblical phrases can be applied to contemporary situations
* Taking responsibility for our actions is one of the hardest things to do [text-specific]

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

* How does reading the text in Hebrew enrich my interaction with it?
* What would you do if you were in the same situation as one of the Biblical characters?
* Can the Bible speak to contemporary situations?
* Why do people commit crimes? [text-specific]

**PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT WITH ENGAGING SCENARIO**

**Engaging Scenario**

Following a complaint by the residents of the Land of Nod, God’s handling of the Cain and Abel story has gone to the Heavenly Supreme Court for judicial review.

**Task 1: Prosecutor’s brief**

You have been tasked with preparing the prosecutor’s brief for this review. Your job is to put together an argument that God mishandled this situation. You should write a 1-2 paragraph summary of this argument.

*Checklist: A good brief will:*

* Build one piece of the argument around an original interpretation of one of the gaps in the text (either laconic or scribal)
* Suggest an alternative route that God could have taken in verses 11-12 and/or 14-15.
* Evaluate the actions of at least two of the characters (e.g. God, Cain, Abel, Adam, Eve)
* Include 2 direct quotes from the text, at least one of which contains a correctly-translated vav consecutive.

**TASK 2: god’s defence**

# In a dramatic move, God Herself makes a personal submission to the heavenly court. God retells the story of Cain and Abel from His perspective, explaining what She had intended or hoped to happen, and explaining His justification for Her treatment of Cain.

# *Checklist: a good submission will:*

* Offer God’s interpretation of Cain’s response of verse 5.

# Propose an explanation in God’s voice of what He hoped to achieve in verses 6-7; the explanation should take account of the textual style of verses 6-7.

* Interpret in original fashion one of the gaps in the text (either laconic or scribal).
* Respond to the question: why didn’t God stop Cain?
* Suggest God’s response to the question: why do people commit crimes?
* Include 2 direct quotes from the text, at least one of which contains a correctly-translated vav consecutive.

**TASK 3: A commotion outside**

“Order! Order! Please be quiet, ladies and gentlemen!” Suddenly no-one’s paying attention to the judge any more, and everyone’s murmuring about what they just heard outside. As proceedings were continuing in the courtroom, something happened outside in the street. It’s not clear exactly what, but there were arguing voices, and the phrase “השומר אחי אנוכי?" was distinctly heard drifting through the court’s stained glass windows. A court reporter who’d been taking a bathroom break, and saw what happened, meanders back into the chamber. “I guess that’s why this case is so important,” she says. “It’s not just about the murder of Abel, but about all kinds of other situations too. Here’s what I just saw…”

Your task is to describe the scene that the court reporter saw. At the end of this unit, you will have some time to get into small groups, choose one or two of the scenes that you have written, and perform them to the whole class.

*Checklist:*

* I wrote no more than 1-2 paragraphs.
* I suggested a real-life scenario (not a murder) appropriate for one character making the statement “השומר אחי אנוכי”.
* I extrapolated the core idea of the statement.
* I applied the statement to the natural context of the scene.
* My scene concludes with the court reporter explaining why she thought the scene outside was relevant to the story of Cain and Abel.
* I wrote the scene in English, but also included *one* sentence in simple Biblical Hebrew that described one part of the scene. The sentence included at least *two* vav consecutives.