**Bible Project**First Quarterly Report
November 20, 2018

1. **General Remarks**

The National Bible Project, of which the project at the Center for Israeli-Jewish Identity at the Shalom Hartman Institute is the cornerstone, is a pioneering attempt to bring about systemic change in teaching Bible in Israel’s state (secular) schools. The project set itself an ambitious goal: social change in which Bible is given centrality in the discourse around Israeli-Jewish identity. It is perceived as a personal and relevant asset for the youth who attend these schools. The project at the Shalom Hartman Institute is intended to enhance the level of Bible teaching by training top-notch teachers of Bible—a crucial measure for the attainment of the national program’s goal.

The Bible is a source for the Hebrew language, a source for Jewish and general culture, and a common basis for value clarification among millions of people around the world. In Israel, the Bible is a tie that binds individuals to their people and land and a source of content on which a Jewish and democratic Israeli worldview in the state education system may be built.

A basic assumption in the Bible project is that Bible teachers motivated by a powerful vision and equipped with effective pedagogical tools are key in strengthening the standing and importance of the Bible in the education system. They are also key in bringing salutary influence to bear on pupils in Israel. Bible is a discipline that builds individuals’ values and identity.

The project identifies and helps to develop outstanding teachers of Bible, who are then given knowledge, tools, and resources with which they may become spearheads of dialogic, challenging, and thought-provoking teaching. The project staff facilitates the teachers, works with them, aspires to reinforce their confidence in their ability, gives them tools and resources, and seems the enhancement of the stature and quality of the Bible teaching profession. The teachers’ facilitation focuses on setting forth a pluralistic Jewish-Israeli worldview that corresponds to the values of the State education system, instilling professional pride among teachers of Bible, and emphasizing the development of self-renewing teaching methods.

The project at the Institute is carried out in conjunction, and in full coordination, with the Ministry of Education and integrates the new Bible curriculum that was recently approved. The Ministry sets aside various resources for the project, including funding of new teacher initiatives that adopt proposals from the field to improve Bible teaching in schools countrywide, and an allocation of hours for in-service activities for Bible teachers, led by teachers who are taking part in the project.

1. **From inception to the first months of work—growing the project *ex nihilo***

This report describes the work that was done for the project since it was first commenced under the auspices of Shalom Hartman Institute on August 1, 2018. The table below itemizes measures taken from the moment the project came under the Institute’s responsibility and the onset of work under a very tight schedule.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Stage** | **Description** |
| 1. | **Formulation of practical goals** | Writing a founding document that describes the overall objective of the project and the working goals of the pilot program in its first months of operation.The document is meant to accomplish two things: to create a consensual infrastructure for joint action and to leave ample room for questions that will arise as a consequence of the work itself. |
| 2. | **Formation of management and teaching team** | Building a project team that optimally reflects the elements of content, pedagogy, and management. The team-building process was complex and included several revisions, at the end of which the team stabilized and each member’s duties and responsibilities were determined. Project manager—Rani JaegerAdministration member and chief content officer—Dr. Roni MagidovInnovative teaching pedagogy—Dr. Gali Mir-TibbonAdministrative director—Merav Fishman |
| 3. | **Formation of facilitation team** | The five facilitators were chosen for their posts by those who ran the project in its previous phase. It was necessary to meet with all of them and create an infrastructure on which to work together. |
| 4. | **Facilitators’ meetings** | Each Sunday, the program administration met with the five facilitators for a day of study and discussion. We found very quickly that we were, in fact, creating **a** **training program for teachers of teachers**—a mode of action that comes with goals of its own:1. development of the facilitators as a peer group, allowing discussion of the challenges of teaching Bible, sharing of successes, and development of a strategy of change in teaching;
2. creation of a shared language of content/pedagogy;
3. preparation of and feedback about the Wednesday teachers’ meetings;
4. imparting group-facilitation tools in order to lead the teachers’ work;
5. familiarizing the participants with the ideas and language of Hartman Institute.

We have held eight encounters thus far, each addressing the aforementioned goals, and have discussed the construction of an overall work plan for the project.  |
| 5. | **Learning groups for teachings working in the districts and in the primary education system****Working with the primary education system** | Teachers in the Northern, Southern, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv Districts, along with those from the primary education system, meet every Wednesday for a day of study and discussion run by the district facilitator.Our goals in the district-level meetings are:1. creating a working group of teachers for the sharing of difficulties and successes;
2. assimilating a shared language of content/pedagogy;
3. learning by observing peers’ teaching;
4. innovative pedagogy—practice session;
5. work on developing initiatives and presenting and obtaining feedback on educational initiatives in the field of Bible;
6. forming a community of teachers in school and equipping them with facilitation tools.

Once every three weeks, all the groups visit the Institute for study. These encounters have specific goals:1. creating a sense of belonging to the project and the broad national process of improving the teaching of Bible;
2. learning about innovative tools and relevant knowledge for teaching Bible;
3. offering an inspiring encounter with readers of the Bible. Thus far, teachers in the project have met with several of the Institute’s officials and researchers, including Rabbi Dr. Daniel Hartman, Prof. Israel Knohl, Prof. Moshe Halbertal, and Adv. Ziona King-Yair.
4. making the Bible central in Israeli-Jewish identity.

Thus far, four meetings have been held at the Institute and six in the districts.The primary teachers receive knowledge and tools for Bible teachers at large and discuss their relevance and suitability for primary schools. Also, the group is a space where questions from the field itself are discussed.The project administration and the facilitator of the primary teachers’ group discuss challenges specific to the primary education system. This topic requires further study at the field level and examination of intervention methods that other entities in this system use. At the end of the process, we wish to present a document containing several proposals for action next year. |
| 6. | **Presenting teachers’ initiatives to the Ministry of Education for funding**  | Despite the very tight deadline (Sept. 30), 90 percent of teachers in the project presented the Ministry of Education with a proposal for the funding of an initiative related to development of a new area/pedagogy in the field of Bible in schools. All of these proposals cleared initial screening and are being reviewed by the Ministry of Education. |
| 7. | **Establishing an administrative system: venues for meetings, busing to the Institute, and a payment system for staff and stipends**  | Much time was invested in developing the system that makes all project-related study and discussion work possible. Emphasis was placed on the appropriate conditions of study and the high level of professionalism that would create conditions allowing and promoting the change in teaching that we wish to bring about. |
| 8. | **Forming professional relationships with our partners: the Ministry of Education and the donor foundation** | The Institute is the central player in work that has crucial partners. We are investing in developing a regular working relationship with each of them.We are planning to establish a joint steering committee that should meet in mid-December and again during the year. |
| 9. | **Putting together an annual work plan** | The program administration is putting together an annual work plan. This process involves several rounds of discussion, including:1. formulation of landmarks and issues by the program’s management committee;
2. presenting the plan to the forum of facilitators for discussion;
3. assimilating the landmarks and issues into the calendar and discussing them by the administration of the Center for the Formation of Jewish-Israeli Identity;
4. a round of additional comments in a forum composed of the Center’s administration, the facilitators, and representatives of the donor foundation;
5. insertion of corrections and onset of work in accordance with the work plan.
 |