

## CONTEXT

Thank you for taking the time to study with colleagues this summer. We hope that through this experience you will:

- Deconstruct Hebrew terms and experiment with translation and interpretation
- Experience texts written by contemporary Jewish thinkers
- Explore your own leadership qualities and work towards definition of your expression of leadership
- Create and/or deepen relationships with your colleagues
- Experience “spaciousness,” in not needing to do or get through everything and being okay with that!

## STRUCTURE

It is up to you and your group to determine when you will meet. We encourage you to **set up 2 90-minute sessions** this summer **between July 1 and August 30**. You can decide if you want to meet online or in person; two days in a row, every other week, or once a month.

*Chevruta* means “friendship” (in Aramaic) and is the term used in Jewish tradition for text that is studied in pairs. *Chevruta* learning can provide a powerful space to explore texts, their ideas, meanings, and applications. There are many ways to approach *chevruta*. One method is suggested [here](#). But know that however you choose to read and engage with your texts and study buddies is the right way!

Suggestions for your *chevruta* study:

- When you arrive in your group, take a bit of time to say hello, connect, and settle in together before turning to the text.
- Each member of the group has something to offer the study. Some traditions introduce *chevruta* study as being like rubbing two sticks together to create a flame. The participation of all group members is what creates the energy of ideas.
- Move through the texts at a pace that works for your group - some groups will engage with all texts, some groups might study just one. There is no “right” destination for your study. Where your conversation takes you is the right place to go.
- When the conversation is robust, remember, “No more than my space, no less than my place.” Ensure that all participants get to share their ideas.
- When the conversation lulls, sit with the silence, take a breath, pause for reflection.
- Keep a bit of an eye on the clock so that you can move from text to text to give time for the texts to inform one another.
- At the end of your session, pull out your journal and write for three minutes on the prompt: “What is live for me right now?”
- Take a few moments at the end of the session to thank your *chevruta* partners and celebrate the chance you had to learn together.

### **Translation is about making meaning...**

When we isolate a Hebrew word and use it when speaking English, we often give it a one word translation. But what happens if we want to give it an interpretation - a deeper meaning that includes socio-cultural context as well? People who work with American Sign Language and spoken English are familiar with the difference between translation and interpretation. To learn more about this from the deaf and hard of hearing community, click [here](#).

Two of the Jewish community's great contemporary meaning makers are familiar with the fact that we, each of us, will add our own experiences to the act of interpreting our ancient (and contemporary!) texts:

"When we understand the meaning of a religious text in and for its time, we are freer to take the text and apply it to our own time. Seeing how particular sources answered the religious needs of some people in the period in which they were written allows us to look at contemporary needs and to interpret for today." - [Judith Plaskow](#)

"...the artistry of the Hebrew Bible, whose full colors and intricate patterns and designs we can never see in full, especially as they have faded under the accumulations of theological and historical readings. And the task of restoring those original colors and shadings - their nuances - is, I believe, still incomplete."  
- [Robert Alter](#)

If you are not yet familiar with Judith Plaskow or Robert Alter, take a moment to read their bios, linked above.

*Now it's your turn...*

*... your adventure continues on the next page!*

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|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| <a href="#">מנהיגות</a><br>Manhigut | <a href="#">קשר</a><br>Keshar | <a href="#">הגשמה עצמית</a><br>Hagshama Atzmit<br>Hagshama : <a href="#">הגשמה</a><br>Atzmit : <a href="#">עצמית</a> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|

The three terms listed above for you to explore relate to our work in [Voices for Good](#). And, you're right! We left them in Hebrew and transliteration only. We want you to play with their meaning and to do your own work of translation and interpretation.

For each term:

1. Look up the Hebrew word in a Hebrew/English dictionary. If you don't have access to a print Hebrew/English dictionary, use the hyperlinks provided.
  - a. What are the translations offered?
  - b. In what ways are those words related?
  - c. If you are able to identify the three letter root, the [shoresh](#), of the word, now look that up. What additional meanings for the word can you find?
2. Now, consider the themes and ideas we have explored in Voices for Good. How does the learning we have done to date inform your sense of this word?
3. Open and review [Making Mensches: A Periodic Table](#). Few of our terms appear here, but what are other terms that are related to our terms?
4. Next, access our [Summer Chevruta padlet](#) and add a translation, an interpretation, and/or an inquiry for one or more of the terms. If you prefer to access the padlet through a QR Code:



*How is your summer chevruta going?*

*Would you like to continue?*

*See the next page...*

### Putting it all together...

1. Read the following texts out loud with your study partner.
2. The following questions are inspired by the PaRDeS Text Study model which you can learn about [here](#). Discuss them with your study partner. You can linger on the questions for as long or short a period of time as you would like.
  - a. What are the words in this text? What questions do you have about the words? How do these words relate to the three terms we looked at above? In what way do any of these words define your actions as a leader?
  - b. What is the author's message of the text? Why might the author have chosen these words? How do the author's words enhance the author's message?
  - c. When you consider the text, what meaning do you derive from it for your own expression of leadership?
  - d. In what ways, if at all, do you experience your work as a leader as a way of spiritual fulfillment or connection with the divine?
3. Revisit the Summer Chevruta Padlet (link above) - what might you add to our shared learning based on your study of these texts?

### **Lisa Schiffman | *Generation J***

In her book, [Generation J](#), published in 1999, author [Lisa Schiffman](#) explores the Gen X experience of growing up Jewish in the United States at the end of the 20th century and plays with themes of faith, identity, and belonging. This excerpt (p 52-53) is pulled from chapter five, titled “Notes from the Field,” in which she is looking at the professional organizational system of Jewish life. She is referring to the [1990 National Jewish Population Survey](#), which has been repeated roughly every ten years since.

“The numbers - what do they show? They show almost anything. They show that you can be a Jew if you call yourself a Jew. They show that some people are Jews because they go to synagogue, while others are Jews because they have Jewish blood. They show that a lot of people of Jewish lineage don’t identify themselves as Jews. And they show that the Jewish Population Survey can give you a headache if you stare at it long enough.

The numbers - what do they mean? They mean that millions of American Jews fall outside mainstream Judaism. That’s the condition of my generation, the post-Holocaust generation of Jews. Millions answer the question of whether Judaism is religion, culture, or race with a shrug.

Religion. Culture. Race.

Synagogue. Museum. Body.

These are my vehicles to encounter Judaism, avenues at my disposal.

Now for the test: Where will I truly make contact?”

### **Loolwa Khazzoom | “United Jewish Feminist Front” in *Yentl’s Revenge***

[Loolwa Khazzoom](#)’s essay, United Jewish Feminist Front, was published in [Yentl’s Revenge: The Next Wave of Jewish Feminism](#) in 2001. The essay opens with a description of learning about her Iraqi Jewish heritage and how, as a young person, she “came to understand, however, ‘Jewish’ meant ‘Ashkenazi.’ It did not mean my heritage, and it did not mean me. Any people and any traditions that were not from Northern Europe were, according to the messages of my childhood, not really Jewish.” (p168)

The essay describes her journey of claiming and promoting Mizrahi and Sephardi practices and identities. She notes that, “though all this work was rewarding, it was also painful and exhausting. I was young, female, Mizrahi and (despite it all) asserting myself out of nowhere as a leader in fractured, assimilated or separatist, patriarchal, old-school Mizrahi and Sephardi communities and an Ashkenazi-dominated mainstream.” (p173).

In conclusion, she asks readers to consider ways in which the Jewish seminaries might better serve our community (p179-180):

“Must non-Ashkenazim reinvent the wheel to see ourselves reflected in progressive rabbinic and cantorial schools? Must we take the separatist route and develop our own institutions? Or can the existing progressive Jewish movements open their arms just a little bit more, to embrace all progressive Jews?...

...So many Mizrahi, Sephardi, Ethiopian and Central/East Asian Jewish women I know are doing their parts, each on the issues about which they are passionate. We cannot and should not do this work alone. I do not want to see a separatist split between Ashkenazi and non-Ashkenazi women, progressive Ashkenazi and progressive non-Ashkenazi movements. Despite the betrayal and pain of inner strife over the past fifty years, I still believe in *klal Yisrael* - a united Jewish people.

So I call on you to open your eyes and see the many colors of Jewish women. Open your ears and listen to our voices. Open your hearts and take in our stories. There are so many fronts on which our Jewish community needs to heal. Put your hand in ours, and let’s heal together.”

**Jill Hammer & Taya Shere | "Rosh Chodesh New Moon Ceremony" in *Siddur HaKohanot: A Hebrew Priestess Prayerbook***

[Rabbi Jill Hammer](#) and [Taya Mâ Shere](#) are co-founders of the [Kohenet Hebrew Priestess Institute](#) which draws on ancient Jewish wisdom to train women for spiritual leadership roles.

Among their publications is [Siddur HaKohanot](#), a prayer book which features feminine-gendered Hebrew God-language as well as masculine and gender-neutral language. The prayer book is intended to be used as a stand-alone or companion tool for prayer. It is published "in-house;" Afikomen Judaica is the official distributor of the *siddur*.

Following are excerpts from the [Rosh Chodesh](#) ceremony designed to welcome the new month. Rosh Chodesh has long been a sacred time for Jewish women to gather, celebrate, learn together. This summer we will mark [Rosh Chodesh Tammuz](#) June 28-30, 2022 and [Rosh Chodesh Av](#) July 28-29, 2022.

בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ שְׂכִינָה אֱלֹתֵינוּ רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם מְחַדֶּשֶׁת אֶת הַלְּבָנָה  
beruchah at shekhinah eloteinu ruach ha'olam, mechadeshet et halevanah.  
Blessed are You, Presence enlivening the world, who renews the moon.

RENEW THE WOMEN  
בְּרוּכָה אַתְּ שְׂכִינָה  
שְׁעָשְׂנִי אִשָּׁה  
מְחַדֶּשֶׁת אֶת הַנְּשָׂמָה  
עִם הַלְּבָנָה  
brucha at shekhinah  
she'astani isha  
m'chadeshet et haneshama  
im halevana  
You who renew the women  
As you renew the moon  
Please renew the spirit  
As you renew the womb  
*Taya Shere*