

MECHINAH: Preparing Oneself

Developed by HUC-JIR's National Department of Distance Education and drawing upon the expertise of an international team of scholars, designers, educators, and technologists, *Mechinah: Preparing Oneself* is being designed to offer graduate and professional students entering HUC-JIR and serious adult learners a structured approach to deepening their Judaic knowledge. This new online learning experience, which is in the process of being field-tested, integrates uniquely crafted core content with multiple aspects of e-learning: interactivity, skill-building through the use of audio and video, immediate access to multiple layers of online reference material, and a flexible learning environment that recognizes the needs and styles of adult learners.

The two-semester online course, facilitated by an instructor, allows students to access materials at any time and anywhere in the world and to learn at their own pace while being part of a larger group of learners. The course is comprised of "Cycles and Rhythms of the Jewish Year and Jewish Life Cycle," interlaced with seven "Enduring Understandings" – core principles of Judaism based on the concepts of texts, dialogue, prayer,

halakhah and *aggada*, *am v'erezt*, community, and covenant.

Mechinah was originally designed as a high level "Jewish Cultural Literacy" program for students entering HUC-JIR's professional graduate programs, which grew out of a faculty-directed, multi-year redesign of the Rabbinical Core Curriculum. However, it is also being developed to meet the needs of professionals serving Jewish communal organizations and synagogues as well as congregational educators who seek to strengthen their understanding of the Jewish values and teachings underlying their service to their communities.

Mechinah will offer a serious engagement with Jewish study that has the potential to make a profound and lasting change on participants by enhancing the meaning they draw from Judaism and enriching their sense of identity and connection as Jews. It represents a contemporary portal through which adult learners can enter into an age-old dialogue with the Jewish texts, scholarly writings, and cultural heritage that have inspired Judaic learning for generations.

The Mechinah: Preparing Oneself website, currently being field-tested.