The single most impactful way to transform our Jewish community is through Adult Jewish Learning. The ideas that make us Jewish are taught from one generation to the next. Our tradition is inextricably linked to study, and through learning about Judaism and our history, we learn about ourselves. Engagement through learning not only adds meaning and value to our individual lives, it is a source of richness for our Jewish community, and is what binds us as a people.

CJP has long been at the center of leadership in fostering a cultural ethos in which learning and engagement are the foundation of our community’s values and aspirations. Building on our successes, we now seek to expand our program offerings through new and varied topics, formats, and delivery models. The time has never been better for us to launch our new Adult Learning and Engagement initiative, and we ask that you help us implement a new vision for adult learning as a compelling and dynamic component of Jewish life.
Background and Recent Accomplishments

Our most significant partner in adult learning is Hebrew College, and we continue to work closely with them on Me’ah, Parenting Through a Jewish Lens, Eser, and now Open Circles Learning. Founded in 1994, Me’ah has served as CJP’s flagship offering for adult learning. The two-year, 100-hour course of study on Jewish history and culture proved popular from the start, and continues to be our largest program annually, with a total of 5,000 learners enrolled since its launch. The success of Me’ah confirmed the desire in our community for meaningful, content-driven learning opportunities, and established that an in-depth, extended format would be attractive to potential participants.

Parenting Through a Jewish Lens (PTJL) was launched in 2005 in recognition that transitional moments, such as starting a family, are key points where many seek new opportunities for connection and enrichment. In this course, parents explore their own values and connection to Judaism, and what our traditions teach us about family life. More than 1,700 families have participated in this program, and it has grown with them. We recently expanded offerings to include Parenting Your Teen Through a Jewish Lens, Parenting Your Tween Through a Jewish Lens, and Childbirth Through a Jewish Lens.

The missing link in our offerings was a program targeted toward young adults who may not yet have children. We started the ten-session Eser program in 2010 for adults in their 20s and 30s. At a time in their lives when young people’s identities begin to solidify around choices of careers, relationships, and personal priorities, we felt that it was important to offer them robust learning opportunities in a setting that fosters a sense of community. Eser’s steady growth is driven by providing a forum for young people to engage with one another through the careful selection of topics chosen to appeal to this audience, such as last year’s “Ten Jewish Social Issues You Can’t Ignore.” In 2016, 223
participants took part in Eser programs, an astonishing increase of over 60% in just one year.

Understanding that not everyone interested in Jewish learning has the time or ability to commit to the comprehensive approach of Me’ah or even Eser, CJP continues to refine the Rabbi Samuel Chiel (z’l) Genesis Forum, our lunchtime learning series. Dr. Erica Brown recently taught ten sessions on “The Use and Abuse of Power in Jewish Tradition.” The Genesis Forum attracted 172 unique learners in 2015-2016, nearly doubling the number from the previous year.

Our partnership with Hebrew College enables us to leverage their expertise, and is a significant reason for the success of Me’ah, PTJL, and Eser. Partnerships with other organizations to deliver programs and unique learning opportunities are a way to expand our offerings, and test interest in the community. Learning about Israel, in all its aspects, is a critical component of adult learning. With the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America, we co-sponsored two events in 2016. More than 100 people attended the session on Jewish values, while 400 more participated in a discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For those who have interest in Israeli history and seek the depth of information similar to that found in Me’ah, we continue to support Tzion, a two-year program taught by Rabbi David Starr. Currently there are 140 students in seven classes throughout the metropolitan Boston area.

On the North Shore, we fund Torah Hub, a collaboration of Chabad of the North Shore and three local synagogues. Their course in 2016 explored and identified Jewish heroes from biblical, Talmudic, medieval, and modern times. We also provide sponsorship for LimmudBoston, a day focused on Jewish culture and identity. In 2016, more than 600 registrants participated in 80 sessions featuring discussion on Jewish text and values, demonstrations, and lively sharing of ideas.
Not every initiative has met with similar success. In 2013 we partnered with Kevah, a San Francisco based organization, to bring their model of informal study and discussion groups to Boston. While the model proved attractive, Kevah was unable to meet our expectations of having 40 such groups by the end of the second year. In fact, only 21 were launched, and many of those by CJP staff rather than Kevah.

We also wound down a pilot program called Leaders in Adult Learning through which 16 fellows were trained to guide other adult learners. More than 100 adults participated in classes taught by those fellows. While the program had value for the fellows, we decided that the significant resources required to launch a new cohort of this program could be better deployed in programs led by professional educators.

In recent years, we also witnessed a downward trend in Me’ah’s enrollment. We believe that this trend is the result of challenges of accessibility, not a waning in the fundamental interest in the intensity or content of the program. Using what we knew worked well (and not) in our other programs, we added venues and audiences for the classes beyond Reform and Conservative synagogues, including Hillels at Harvard and Tufts, Ma’ayan, the Brookline Clergy Association, and Young Israel. We also launched two new pilots in 2015-2016:

- *Me’ah Select* launched with courses offering a ten-week in-depth exploration of a specific theme, text, personality, or slice of history. Examples of Me’ah Select course topics taught last year include “Jewish Prayer,” “The History and Culture of Zionism and the State of Israel,” and “Relations between Jews and Muslims in the Medieval and Modern Islamic World.” Me’ah Select is an opportunity for people to learn with rigor and sample the richness of these classes, even if they are not ready to make a two-year commitment to Me’ah.
- *Me’ah Online* was launched with the support of a donor to Hebrew College. It was piloted to tackle the problem of some potential participants being unable to commit to a regular schedule or location. Last year, CJP partnered with Hebrew College to deliver the first Me’ah class via the internet. The course covered the first semester of Me’ah, “Journey Through the Bible,” and exceeded our expectations by enrolling 35 participants.

The success of these pilots have contributed to a dramatic reversal in enrollment trends for Me’ah, and we are now seeing steady growth utilizing three modes of delivery.

![Meah Enrollment 1995-2015](image)

The traction we’ve gained in over two decades of serving the learning interests of Boston’s Jewish community, in addition to recent program innovations, made 2015-2016 an incredibly successful year of Adult Jewish Learning. In the core programs of Me’ah, Parenting through a Jewish Lens, Eser, and Genesis Forum, we saw an aggregate increase in participation of almost 50%, serving 1,065 students.
Core Program Enrollment 2010-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Me'ah</th>
<th>Parenting Through a Jewish Lens</th>
<th>Eser</th>
<th>Genesis (unique attendees)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Numbers unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Numbers unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Numbers unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Over the last few years, our innovations and partnerships have yielded important lessons and incredible results. With the momentum we’ve established, the time is right to build on our strengths, capitalize on opportunities for growth, and affirm the importance of learning in the Jewish Community.

**Adult Learning in 2017 and Beyond**

Pride in our accomplishments does not overshadow our desire to serve more students, and work harder to build a Jewish community engaged in study and conversation. We know that there is an appetite in our community for more meaningful programs, content, and connections. And we know that when we lower the barriers to participation, increase the variety of topics being taught, and provide options in types of learning environments, more people participate. In the coming years, we will build on the strength of our existing programs by diversifying their content, delivery, and formats while using these same tools to develop new initiatives that meet the additional needs and interests of Boston’s Jewish community.
New Formats

Modular Learning

- The success of the Me’ah Select pilot demonstrated the demand for shorter, module-based learning opportunities. With the pilot complete, we will continue to develop the Me’ah Select program in 2016-2017 by offering 12 classes in this format, up from five in 2015-2016. We expect the popularity of this program to continue by not only easing participation for new learners, but also attracting graduates of the 100-hour Me’ah course who are looking for additional learning options with the same level of depth and scholarship.

- We will implement a new strategy for an expanded Genesis Forum. This year we will have three Forums: two in suburban locations, and one in downtown Boston. Each one is designed as a four-session course, but with each able to stand on its own. The Forums this year will be “Courageous Callings: Listening and Leadership,” “The Dimensions of Jewish Civic Duty,” and “E Pluribus Unum: Jewish Particularism and American Pluralism.”

- We will be launching a series of five mini-courses on Israel in partnership with Gann Academy. In 2017 we expect at least 75 participants in classes discussing media literacy, current events, culture, and other topics at the advanced beginner level.

Online Learning

- This January, we will launch an online portal that is a vital piece of our growth strategy. Once fully implemented, it will serve as an online concierge, facilitating easy, intuitive access to our programs as well as Jewish learning opportunities beyond CJP. As we grow, it will be an even more important resource for discovering the full-breadth of education and engagement opportunities, and it will serve as the technological window as we expand our online learning options.
- Me’ah Online’s success showed that there is a real interest in the ease, access, and the flexibility afforded by online classes. We are excited that Hebrew College has raised additional funds to build on the success of the pilot, and will add a second semester to Me’ah Online this year.

Using the internet to deliver classes will allow us to reach new audiences and think differently about new courses. Like our experience with Me’ah, online course delivery will also provide the opportunity to expand already popular programs by offering potential participants an alternative format. A prime candidate would be Parenting Through a Jewish Lens. While PTJL has had stable enrollment in recent years, we expect that an online option with the associated flexibility would prove attractive to families with children.

Learning in a Social Setting

- **Learning Circles.** The partnership with Kevah introduced the popularity of informal learning circles. Despite the outcome of that particular partnership, we know there is strong interest in this kind of learning format, and we now believe that Hebrew College is the right partner for this work. This year (2016-2017), we introduced Open Circle Learning, with the goal of 30 new learning circles of at least 8 participants each. They will be organized around different topics, settings, and locations in order to serve the broadest audience (see below).

- **Retreats.** We will be adding day-long and weekend retreats to provide a more intimate and focused environment. Participants will be able to "go deep" with the material, and build a closeness with their classmates. Topics will be chosen for their appropriateness for this kind of learning format, and to take advantage of the community-building nature of the experience.
New Content

- Our Open Circles Learning will provide a low cost, low risk opportunity to explore the popularity and content of new subject areas. In 2016-2017, the settings and topics will include:
  - The Salon—a living room (or café or library) experience built around Jewish texts of particular interest to participants;
  - Mindful Living—an exploration of topics within the realm of Jewish spirituality (e.g., Jewish Mindfulness, meditation, Mussar, and Mysticism);
  - People of the Book—a book group focusing on excerpts from selected books of the Bible;
  - Jewish Food for Thought—dinner discussions featuring expert-led conversations about the significance of Jewish holidays, life-cycle rituals and global Jewish communities using meals as the context for exploring how to incorporate Jewish rituals into our lives.

- We are eager to explore the opportunities for engaging adults in topics that touch their hearts as much as their minds. This year we will dedicate one of the Open Learning tracks to spirituality, and two retreats for women interested in exploring this dimension of Judaism. We will use these experiences to test interest and content for more fully-developed classes. As we plan to launch a fully-developed new course in spirituality in 2017-2018, we are considering partnerships with the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, the Mussar Institute, Rabbi Alan Ullman, and Hebrew College.

- Mayyim Hayyim. A busy center of community life, Mayyim Hayyim provides 1,500 immersions in its mikvah and more than 110 education programs each year. CJP is working with them to develop and market two new classes:
  - Beyond the Huppah is designed to offer couples of all denominations and backgrounds—including LGBTQ and interfaith—a connection to Jewish ritual,
an opportunity to explore Jewish values-based decision-making, and to lay the foundation for involvement in the Jewish community

- **Now What?** is an interactive and experiential class for people who have recently chosen Judaism. This five-session course recognizes that after conversion, many people want to continue learning, and are most interested in doing so in a pluralistic environment.

- This year will introduce the use of contemporary fiction and non-fiction as a means to build community through learning. We will initiate a year-long campaign to promote a community-wide conversation around a single book, and host an event this spring for 500 or more participants to learn and discuss together. This will be a powerful opportunity to create community-wide connections through a shared experience, and introduce a wider audience to the idea of Adult Jewish Learning.

**New Leadership**

For CJP to meet our ambitions in Jewish Learning, we must invest in staffing and leadership. In December, we hired Elyse Winick as the Director of Adult Learning. Elyse comes to us with over 20 years of experience as a rabbi, educator, chaplain, and outreach professional, most recently as Jewish Chaplain at Brandeis University. Elyse is a graduate of Brandies and the Jewish Theological Seminary. Never before have we had a leader dedicated to crafting the vision for adult learning, and building and maintaining the partnerships that will enable us to fully implement our strategy.

Elyse will work closely with Laura Baum, CJP’s Associate Vice President of Learning and Engagement who joined CJP in May of 2015. Prior to coming to CJP, Laura was a congregational rabbi for seven years and also built an online synagogue that reaches hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. She has been featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, in the New York Times, as a blogger for Huffington Post—and
was named one of the 50 most influential female rabbis by the Forward Newspaper. At CJP, she oversees the largest team in the planning department and works to connect people in Boston to Jewish life, learning, and community. Laura graduated at the top of her class at Yale and then earned a Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters and rabbinic ordination at HUC in Cincinnati, as well as an MBA at Xavier University.

Recognizing the value of input from the community, the new Director will benefit from a newly reorganized Jewish Learning & Engagement (JLE) Commission. The Commission is currently establishing four working groups focused on: adult learning, the day school ecosystem, strategic grant making for teen programs, and new transformative ideas. The Adult Learning Working Group will play a key role in helping to determine the new courses, new content areas, and new methods of instruction to launch in 2017, 2018, and 2019. We are seeking additional members who have engaged in adult learning, themselves, and care about bringing similar and new opportunities to others.

**The Impact of Your Gift**

The year-over-year increase in program enrollment of more than 45% in 2015-2016 was the result of careful planning and creative program innovations. With these pieces in place, we have every expectation that the trend will continue, and anticipate an aggregate increase in participation of 25% in 2016-2017. None of this would be possible without the vision and investment of philanthropists like you who care deeply about our community, and believe in the centrality of learning to our Jewish heritage.