



Gratz Insider, Summer 2017 - Story Continuation

[To return to the newsletter, close this page.]

### Gratz Pioneers Online Hebrew Learning for Teens

Gratz was a pioneer in online Jewish education at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Through JOLT, the College has since extended this expertise to students in grades eight through 12. With its distance learning programs, JOLT makes it possible for teens living in communities with small Jewish populations or limited access to Jewish education to connect with Jewish students in other parts of the country, and even the world.

JOLT offers courses in Jewish studies and Hebrew language. Online language instruction may at first seem counterintuitive, but the language classes work exceedingly well and are the most popular programs offered by JOLT. Unlike many other online Hebrew programs, the JOLT classes are taught as live webinars, specifically geared to high school students, with real-time communication, both among the students and with the teacher. JOLT offers four levels of Hebrew instruction, as well as an online one-on-one preparatory class.

According to [Dina Maiben](#), Hebrew coordinator for Gratz College and director of JOLT, one reason for the growing popularity of JOLT's language program is that while Hebrew is rarely offered in synagogues post-bar/bat mitzvah, there are students who want to learn it for a variety of reasons. For example, one of our students, from Henderson, Nevada, enrolled in JOLT to learn how to better communicate in Hebrew with her Israeli mother. Another student, from Marin County, California, wanted to further her Hebrew language learning after having spent a semester in Israel. From New Jersey to California, Maine to Florida and many states in between, high school students have turned to JOLT to meet their Hebrew language needs.

In addition, Maiben anticipates an uptick in online language learning as a result of current economic realities in the field of education. With budget cuts often impacting foreign language offerings, schools are beginning to accept credit from online programs in order to provide their students with a variety of language options. Reflecting this trend, most of our JOLT students in the last two years have received foreign language credit from their high schools. A few have even opted to take our online college-level Hebrew classes.

“Our expertise in online education, combined with our long tradition of excellence in both Hebrew language teaching and teen programming, makes us ideally suited to blaze new trails in this exciting and emerging area,” says Maiben.

In addition to the Hebrew courses, JOLT will also be offering an online music class and a world religions class this year. The music class, called “Songs of My People,” is open to members of [HaZamir](#), the

international Jewish high school choir. The world religions class, for which students can earn college credit, complements [Walking the Walk](#), a cross-cultural program created by the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia.

---

*For more information about JOLT, visit our [website](#) or contact Dina Maiben at 215-635-7300, x 162 or at [dmaiben@gratz.edu](mailto:dmaiben@gratz.edu).*