



Gratz Insider, Fall 2015 - Story Continuation

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'Understanding Jewish Teens: Insights from Torah & Today'

The program begins with a dramatic portrayal by the presenters, who role-play a conversation among four biblical characters. This is a contemporary form of midrash.

One purpose of a midrash is "to flesh out the characters of the Bible," says Rabbi Rachel M. Solomin. "Midrashim take roughly sketched biblical characters and make of them archetypal figures with whom we can more easily identify." ([My Jewish Learning](#))

In the midrashic role-play for the Gratz program, the four biblical characters - Esther, Joseph, King David and Miriam - will represent four archetypes of Jewish teen development. The Gratz educators playing these roles will then follow up their acting debut by offering up their expertise in Jewish teen education.

First, **Dina Maiben** will discuss the issues raised by the four characters, highlighting insights from Jewish tradition, as well as contextualizing the discussion in the world of contemporary teens. Dina's extensive experience in the field of Jewish education has ranged from working as a supplementary school director and classroom teacher to serving as a youth leader, camp counselor, program director and consultant. Nationally recognized for her work in the area of Hebrew reading instruction, she has authored nineteen books and more than two dozen journal articles and stories. She is currently the Hebrew coordinator of both Gratz College and Gratz's Jewish Community High School (JCHS), and is a student in the Gratz doctoral program in Jewish Education.

Following Dina's presentation, workshop participants will separate into three breakout groups. The first group will focus on the needs of supplementary school teachers and others who work with Jewish teens in a formal educational context. This group will be facilitated by **Dr. Joshua Gutoff**. Dr. Gutoff is an assistant professor of Jewish Education at Gratz College, who has worked extensively with students of all ages, backgrounds and abilities in both formal and informal educational settings. He was the executive director of Hillel at the University of Minnesota, a Jewish chaplain and philosophy instructor at C.W. Post College and the rabbinic educator at the Solomon Schechter High School of New York.

The second breakout group will revolve around issues faced by informal Jewish educators, such as youth group advisors and camp directors. **Dr. Mimi Ferraro**, assistant director of JCHS, will lead this group. Dr. Ferraro spent 20 years as director of education at Old York Road Temple - Beth Am. She also worked at Ramah Day Camp and served on a variety of committees at Jewish Learning Venture and at the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education. Dr. Ferraro is an adjunct assistant professor in the College of Education at Temple University. She also holds the distinction of being the first to graduate from the Gratz College doctoral program in Jewish Education.

Finally, **Rabbi Erin Hirsh** will facilitate the breakout group for family and friends interested in gaining additional insight into Jewish teens. In addition to serving as the director of JCHS, Rabbi Hirsh also runs the NEXT program, which is Gratz's professional learning program for supplementary school teachers. Earlier in her career, Rabbi Hirsh worked as director of two congregational religious schools, and then, served as director of education for the entire Reconstructionist Movement. She has written curricula for children, teens, families and adults, and has also taught and worked in informal Jewish settings, such as overnight camps and youth groups.

Clearly, this talented Gratz panel has years of experience to draw on in both Jewish education and teen development. During the breakout sessions, participants will be able to work closely with the panelists, seeking their advice on a range of specific issues.

Gratz College is proud to offer this creative and practical program as our 2015 Deena M. Grossmann Memorial Program in Jewish Education. Deena was a dedicated educator who received her Master of Arts in Jewish Education from Gratz College in 1985. The annual Deena M. Grossmann Memorial Program is made possible by an endowment to Gratz College established in her loving memory by the Grossmann Family.

"Understanding Jewish Teens: Insights from Torah & Today," will be held at Gratz College on Thursday, October 29, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Admission is free, and advance registration is requested. To register, click [here](#), or call Hope Matles at 215-635-7300 x172. For more information, contact Barbara Rosenau, director of Adult Jewish Learning, at brosebau@gratz.edu.