

## **Online Jewish Learning: Collaborative Interpretation of Jewish Texts**

**Shai Goldfarb Cohen**

### **Abstract**

The practice of interpretation is one of the key features in Jewish learning and teaching. It is the basis of the Jewish canon, as it created an ongoing engagement with ancient texts, forging connections between them, and creating new meanings. Today, there is an increase in the number of online platforms that make Jewish history, thought, philosophy, religion, and education more accessible. The goal of this research is to better understand how learners use and experience the collaborative interpretation of Jewish sacred texts through online platforms. This study will focus on how digital spaces enable a variety of learners to create new social connections, engage in learning Jewish sacred texts, and access a community of Jewish learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To answer this question, I will conduct a multiple case study including three online Jewish learning websites: *Project Zug*, *Sefaria*, and *929*. Using socio-cultural frameworks of learning, I will analyze data from semi-structured interviews with members of the websites' educational teams and a sample of learners. Preliminary findings show that these online learning spaces support a growing community of practice for Jewish learning through the collaborative interpretation of Jewish sacred texts. As adult lifelong learners, participants describe a strong sense of membership in a community of learners as they actively create connections between texts and their own life experiences while exploring their Jewish identities with others. The implications of my research on Jewish studies and educational technologies will provide a deeper understanding of Jewish education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.