

Orientation session

Welcome

READING	<i>Everyday Holiness</i> All of Part I
ASSIGNMENT	Come to your first <i>va'ad</i> meeting prepared to answer questions and discuss this reading. Bring your own questions as well.

We now begin to explore Mussar and the natural place to start is with a description and understanding of just what it is that we call the Mussar tradition in Judaism. Before we get to that, though, a few words on getting organized for this course.

You should already have received your copy of the course text, *Everyday Holiness: the Jewish spiritual path of Mussar* by Alan Morinis. If you have not yet been given it, please speak with your local course administrator.

The course alternates small group [*va'ad*] meetings with a session of personal study and practice. You will receive a reading assignment in advance of every *va'ad* meeting and it is very important that you complete that reading before your group meets so you come to the session well prepared to discuss and engage—and sometimes even wrestle—with what's on the agenda for that period. The better prepared you are, the more you will bring to your group, and the more you yourself will get from the process.

Every meeting will follow the same format, which is:

1. Welcome
2. Invocation
 - An inspiring or focusing practice that also establishes a separation between the mundane activities before the meeting and the spiritual atmosphere we aim for in the meetings.
3. Check-in
 - An opportunity to say a few words about where you are at and how the process is going for you.
4. Review of previous practice
 - Sharing how the Mussar practice between meetings has been going.

5. Review of the reading
A guided discussion to probe the chapter that was assigned for that period, and often some additional sources reflecting on the same focus.
6. Taking it to heart
Mussar is more than intellectual learning. Through practices like contemplations and visualizations, we take what we have learned and impress it on our hearts.
7. Your take-away
Your chance to summarize the main lesson you are taking away from our inquiry.
8. Closing
A guided practice to bring the meeting to an appropriate conclusion.

You should already know where and when your first *va'ad* meeting is scheduled to take place. If you have not received information on the date, time and location, please contact your local course administrator without delay.

To kick off the course, your group will meet for two sessions in a row—the first being an Orientation session and then next to start the curriculum with the first trait we will explore, which is humility, or *anavah* in Hebrew. *Va'ad* meetings will then alternate with personal study and practice.

So let's begin. As we said, the first and obvious topic to delve into is Mussar itself. What is this Jewish tradition and discipline we are going to explore? How can there be a tradition like this that is 1,100 years old that so few contemporary members of the Jewish world have even heard of?

To start to answer these questions, read Part I of *Everyday Holiness*.

Your small group will soon meet for the first time. If you are not clear on where and when the meeting is scheduled to take place, please contact your local program administrator without delay. If you are unsure who that is, please email info@mussarinstitute.org to get that person's name. Be sure to include the name of the city where your group is meeting so we can be sure to connect you to the right group administrator.

We wish you an journey of inquiry, learning, discovery and growth.