Oren share all

Text Study
Talmud Vs. Ma'aseh
The DTF program is in need of Jewish source text based anchors for all of its content areas. One of the most pressing areas is what we call impact projects. These are small group (3-5 teens) social, environmental, educational or other initiatives that serve a real need in the teens' local community. Some of the work needed was clarifying the task and stages of design and implementation but what concerned me most was framing this stage in the flow of the program and anchoring it in Jewish source text.

Context: It is close to the end of the 15-month program. Fellows have returned from Israel on a high. They have learned a lot of different skills, been exposed to diversity in the Jewish world and shared many new experiences. At this point local coordinators seek to engage them in local service opportunities called 'impact projects.' It is a transition from the learning to the doing even though they have been doing all along and the learning does not end, this particular moment offers them some independence and ownership.

Mindset: shifting teen's from the learning/exploring state of mind into the learning/doing state of mind.

Choice Text: Babyloninan Talud, Kidushin 40:b
I bring this text to staff to 'test' it out and ultimately own it with enough confidence to use it with the teens. You can't teach it to others without having encountered it first yourself.

Learning Goals: Participants will
- Become familiar with the text
- Become confident enough to use the text in relevant ways in our program
- Test assumptions on their personal work / learning balance

Engaging Goals:
- Become more familiar with each other in personal and professional aspects (first time learning together)
- Become familiar with team members' learning/interpretation styles

Takeaways:
- Never enough time

Introduction: personal story- Rabbi Yakov Travis & blessing

Structure: Bloom's PaRDeS (taxonomy)

Facilitate: I chose a very light facilitation role (only 4 staff and desire to create level field). I introduced via story, lead us in blessing and turned over reading and comments in open popcorn style while generally following the suggested questions. At two points I did draw attention to how quickly we jump to interpretation and reflection.

Evaluate: We did a quick assessment at the end with overall positive response to goals.

What happened?

a. The staff read/heard & followed along in Hebrew and in English.
b. The staff asked a few clarifying questions, answered for each other and checked the background sheet for some answers.
c. Staff related back the story in their own words but already with an interpretive and personally subjective stance.
d. Staff went into a deeper conversation regarding 'action' the text might refer to
e. Staff gave personal perspectives and share personal life examples
f. Staff discussed how this relates to work with Fellows
g. Staff made suggestions as to our team working styles in light of the text.

Was it as planned? For the most part:

- Say vs. do.
- Values vs. practice.
- Personal reflections vs. changing habits
- All thought it was great for impact projects and want to use it forward

Were there surprises? Yes:

- Applications and actually using them.
- Learning the new text and using the new text.
- How to learn text and then use this with fellows (sequence & background doc)
- How do we do new at Diller?
- Performance review to enable growth (PD)

What pleased you? I enjoyed the connected but stretch applications mentioned above in surprises. I truly enjoyed learning more about my staff's backgrounds, values, styles, thought process etc. We identified and middle part, 'the switch' and began discussing how, when and if this switch can be flicked. It was interpreted best as the rationale behind everything we do. We judge others by their actions not intentions and we judge ourselves by our intentions not behavior.

What were you not happy with?

Report on experience:
It was not my first text study nor first time I encountered this text but it did renew previous thinking and add some ingredients to my thinking about text learning and my team dynamic moving forward.

What changes would you make? I would add more time, more participants and then design in more of a hevrutah- think pair share method.

NA Staff Text Learning

2015-09-17

The Greatness of Learning & Doing

תלמוד בבלי, קדושין מ:ב

וכבר היה רבי טרפון וזקנים מסובין בעלית בית נתזה בלוד, נשאלה שאילה זו בפניהם: תלמוד גדול או מעשה גדול? נענה רבי טרפון ואמר: מעשה גדול, נענה ר"ע ואמר: תלמוד גדול, נענו כולם ואמרו: תלמוד גדול, שהתלמוד מביא לידי מעשה.

Babylonian Talmud 40:b

Rabbi Tarfon and some elders were reclining in an upper chamber in the house of Nitza in Lod when this question came up: Which is greater, study or action? Rabbi Tarfon spoke up and said: Action is greater. Rabbi Akiva spoke up and said: Study is greater. The others then spoke up and said: Study is greater because it leads to action.

[Soncino translation]

Discussion Questions

Read

- Read text out loud in English and Hebrew.

Decipher

- What words/terms/people/places need unpacking to better understand?

Scan

- Tell us what is going on in your own words.
- Who are the characters, the setting etc?

Analyze

- What do you notice about the text once we dig beneath the surface?
- What is the case made by the text?
- What types of action might the text be referring to?
- What questions do you have for the author?

Interpret

- What do you think is the deeper meaning/message of the text?
- Which of these actions do you believe is the most important? Why?

Reflect

- What relevance does this message have for your personal and professional life?
- How does this text relate to Jewish informal education? DTF?

Integrate

- What is your learning and what is your action?
- What will you do differently, if anything, that you feel is inspired from the text?

Background Info

Talmud

The body of Jewish civil and ceremonial law and legend comprising the Mishnah and the Gemara. There are two versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian Talmud (which dates from the 5th century AD but includes earlier material) and the earlier Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud.

Seder Kidushin

Kodashim (Hebrew קדשים, "Holy Things") is the fifth Order in the Mishna. Kodoshim deals largely with the religious service in the Temple of Jerusalem, the *Korbanot* ("sacrificial offerings"), and other subjects related to these "Holy Things". (wikipedia)

Rabbi Tarfon- III generation Mishnah Sages ~70-135 C.E.

One of the great Tannaim who lived at the time of the destruction of the Temple. R. Tarfon lived in Lydda, but he very often came to Yavneh to take part in the discussions of the Sanhedrin. He was a descendant of a priestly family, both on his father's side and mother's side. R. Tarfon was a rich man. Rabbi Tarfon never wished to use his great knowledge of the Torah for his own personal gain. He never used his fame to gain material advantage. R. Tarfon and R. Akiba very often had differences of opinion as to the meaning of a certain Mitzvah or precept. Rabbi Tarfon was never ashamed to admit that R. Akiba was correct if he felt that he himself had made a mistake. (Habbad)

Rabbi Akiva- III generation Mishnah Sages ~50-135 C.E.

Rabbi Akiva arguably represents a combination of everything that is heroic about the Jewish people. He is one of the most beloved figures in Jewish history, a person whose influence and stature is a source of inspiration throughout all of the ages. R. Akiva did not descend from Jewish aristocracy or nobility rather from a family of converts. His lineage created a social handicap. It says to be careful of converts 36 times in the Torah. The reason is because it is human nature to be clannish, to not like outsiders. Therefore, the Torah emphasizes over and over again that we also are strangers. Although R. Akiva began life with this handicap he turned it into a positive by becoming the symbol of “every man” who has within him the ability to rise above his limitations and become truly great scholar and role model. (Jewish History)

True Story- Once R. Akiba, met R. Tarfon and said to him: "Would you like me to buy you some durable goods?" R. Tarfon immediately gave him four thousand golden coins. R. Akiba took the money and gave it away to poor Torah scholars. When Rabbi Tarfon met R. Akiba later, he inquired as to the location of the properties that R. Akiba was to have bought for him. R. Akiba took him by the hand and led him into the Beth HaMidrash. There he took out a book of Psalms, and started reciting the Psalms from the beginning until they reached the verse: "He gave away to the poor people…" - "These are the everlasting possessions that I bought you . . ." R. Akiba told him. R. Tarfon arose and kissed R. Akiba on his head and exclaimed: "My teacher and leader-my teacher in wisdom and my leader in conduct."