

**What happened? (Describe the workshop)**

The workshop was the “learning together” portion of our last faculty meeting of the year. It was attended by four teachers, four teen *madrichim*, our youth advisor and one of the Israeli *Shin-Shinim* (gap-year students) working in our community this year. I was surprised that Noam (the Israeli) chose to participate, but welcomed his contributions to the discussion nonetheless. I chose to use the Rabbi Nehunya text, which we have used before in our sessions, to give the participants a familiar starting place with which to practice potentially unfamiliar techniques/language, so that they could more clearly compare/contrast their experience with previous ones, and to bring our learning together for the year full circle.

**How did you (or did you not) use the prompts and language that were provided in the guidelines for the assignment?**

I prepared a handout (attached) explaining the “Havruta Study Triangle,” and giving examples of Attentive Listening, Supporting & Challenging language. I considered making cards like the ones in the video, but thought they might be a distraction, so did not do so this time. We talked about the Havruta Study Triangle, and how it is different from the “I-Thou-It” Relational Triangle we had studied earlier. We talked about the idea of giving the text a voice, and what that might mean. I chose a teacher as a temporary partner, and asked him to give a brief interpretation of the text while I modeled using the language on the handout. Then I asked the teens and teachers to pair themselves into havruta, with the guidance that they not work with their usual classroom partner. Each pair ended up with an adult and a teen working together.

One member of each pair was asked to give an interpretation of the text, with the other practicing using the prompts on the handout to support and challenge the interpretation. Then the partners switched roles. I circulated through the group to observe their interactions. None of the partnerships appeared to experience any significant difficulty in using the supporting/challenging language. Having the prompts on the handout definitely seemed to help: several of the participants read the prompts verbatim off the sheet, but the discussion that followed seemed genuine.

**How did this compare with what you assumed or hoped would happen?**

This was what I had hoped — and given my faculty’s eagerness for learning together and openness to new ideas, kind of assumed — would happen.

**Were there aspects of what happened that surprised you?**

Other than Noam deciding to participate, not really.

**Were there aspects that pleased you? Why?**

I was very happy to see the growth in the group from the first faculty meeting in August through this one, and to read the reflections and end-of-the-year prayers that they wrote at the conclusion of the session. It was particularly gratifying to see the teachers and *madrichim* learning together as equal partners, and treating each

## MTEI COHORT SEVEN

### Post-Seminar 3 Assignment

Attentive Listening, Supporting & Challenging as Interpretive Practices  
others' ideas as equally worthy of discussion, whether from a teen or a veteran teacher.

#### **What did participants report about their experience and/or learning?**

At the end of the session, I asked the participants to debrief the experience by comparing and contrasting it with the other times they had studied this text together. They all said that practicing supporting and challenging language had led them to consider interpretations that they had not thought about before, and that they felt that this exercise had led them to a deeper understanding of the text.

#### **Read the Journal entry you wrote on your learning of these practices during our last seminar:**

##### **Anything new you've learned?**

Not really. Our experience as a faculty bore out my experience during the seminar that supporting/challenging practices afforded a deeper understanding through examining multiple perspectives.

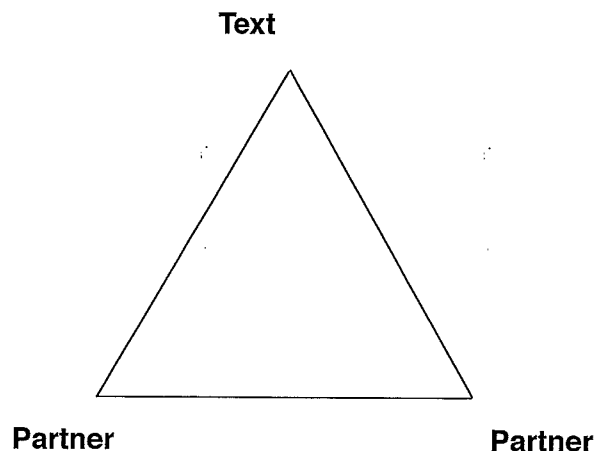
##### **Any new question or insights you have about your learning of these practices?**

I used the phrase "rabbit hole of refinement" in my journal entry: I'm still wondering about what the end product of this process might look like — there has not yet been time in a learning session, either during the seminar or during my faculty learning session, for the learning partnership to feel "finished" with a text.

##### **Any new question or insights you have about teaching these practices to colleagues?**

The brief study time we had during this session, and the fact that none of the pairs had worked together before, did not transmit the intensity of relational text study the way that the longer study (and the longer, and much more topical, text of Resh Lakish & Rabbi Yochanan) we experienced during the last seminar. It would be interesting to see what happens with this group of colleagues during a much longer period of text study, and/or with keeping consistent havruta partners over multiple study sessions.

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Post-Seminar 3 Assignment  
Attentive Listening, Supporting & Challenging as Interpretive Practices  
**Havruta Study Partnering Techniques**



**Attentive silence**

**Clarifying questions:**

What's your evidence?

Is there another way of understanding that?

Tell me more about what you mean

I don't understand. Could you explain that in a different way?

Please give an example

Am I understanding that you mean...?

What in the text triggered your response?

**Supporting:**

I can see additional textual evidence to support your interpretation

Your interpretation helps me better understand... about the text

Would you say that when the text says ... this reinforces your point?

**Challenging:**

In the text it says ... How do you make sense of this particular part according to your interpretation?

How do you account for...?

Why do you say that...? How does that fit with this other part of the text...?

I am having a difficult time with your interpretation because it assumes that...