



Text Study - Think Tank Six Going Forward—Lech Lecha

After saying the blessing before study, discuss the following questions in small groups.

א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץְךָ וּמִמִּזְבְּחֶיךָ וּמִבֵּית
2 אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶךָ :

“God said to Abram, “Go forth from your native land and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” Genesis 12:1

Questions for Discussion

1. In Hebrew, the first two words of God’s command are *lech lecha*. Though the rabbis all agree that *lech* means “go,” below are three different interpretations of how we might understand *lecha*.
 - a. Rashi says that *lecha* means “for yourself.” He suggests that Abraham’s going out will be for his own good, for his own benefit.
 - b. Samson Raphael Hirsch interprets *lecha* to mean “by yourself.” He suggests that in order to properly fulfill God’s command, Abraham had to become like a stranger to those around him, willing to stand outside the world in order to view it clearly.
 - c. In the Chasidic commentary, *Itture Torah*, the rabbis say that *lecha* means “to yourself” suggesting that Abraham’s journey is one on which he will return to his roots and from there discover his potential.

Which of these interpretations do you find most helpful in thinking about the journey God sent Abraham on? What other meanings might *lech lecha* have?

2. Think about ways in which the Think Tanks have impacted you personally. Do the words of Rashi, Samson Raphael Hirsch or the Chasidic commentary open a window into how you *feel* about what you have experienced with your colleagues?
3. During our first Think Tank we read a Kofman and Senge article called, *Communities of Commitment: The Heart of Learning Organizations*. They write, “Building learning organizations, we are discovering, requires basic shifts in how we think and interact....We

are also discovering that moving forward is an exercise in personal commitment and community building.” In what ways have the Think Tanks affected:

- a. How you *think* about supporting educational innovation or your role as a consultant?
- b. How you *think* about your interaction with your colleagues?

Building learning organizations is not an individual task. It demands a shift that goes all the way to the core of our culture. We have drifted into a culture that fragments our thoughts, that detaches the world from the self, and the self from its community. We have gained control over our environment but we have lost our artistic edge....We believe to regain our balance we must create alternative ways of working and living together. We need to invent a new more learningful model of business, education, health care, government and family. This invention will come from the patient concerted efforts of communities of people invoking aspiration and wonder. As these communities manage to produce fundamental changes, we will regain our memory—of the community nature of the self and of the poetic nature of language and the world—the memory of the whole. (p. 25)

Communities of Commitment: The Heart of the Learning Organization

Fred Kofman and Peter Senge

4. From the excerpt above, what idea or comment stands out for you? In what ways has your work in the Think Tanks tapped your “memory of the whole?” How will this memory of the whole impact *what you do* as a consultant and educational professional as we move forward?
5. What is your greatest hope as you move forward? What is your greatest concern?

Background

Rashi-(1035-1105 CE)- Name is an acronym for Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchak. Highly regarded Biblical and Talmudic commentator who also was a grape grower in Troyes, France. His commentary appears alongside the Talmudic text in every edition of the Talmud.

Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), the founding father of Modern Orthodoxy
Fred Kofman is an assistant professor at MIT’s Sloan School of Management. One area that he teaches about is systems thinking and organizational change.

Peter Senge – a senior lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the chairman of the Society for Organizational Learning, and the author of The Fifth Discipline in which he developed the notion of a learning organization. He is a recognized pioneer, theorist, and writer in the field of management innovation.