

Text Study: Consultant as Facilitator, Mentor, Resource—All Need the Tool of Discernment

After saying the blessing before study, read the following text and discuss the subsequent questions.

Text One: Jacob left Beer-sheba and set out for Haran. He came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night, for the sun had set. Taking of the stones of that place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. He had a dream; a stairway was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it...and Adonai said, “I am Adonai, the God of your father Abraham, and the God of Isaac, the ground on which you are lying I will give to you and to your offspring...Remember I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely Adonai is present in this place, and I did not know it.” (*Genesis 28: 10-16*)

Text Two: (Once the brothers) arrived in a certain village, and though the head of the village wasn't in his house, his wife took them in as guests. When her husband came home in the middle of the night, he lit a candle on the table as he worked to mend a rip in his fur coat.

The two brothers who were in bed (but awake), heard how his wife called to him saying, ‘Hurry up and fix the coat while the candle is still burning.’ And one brother said to the other, ‘Did you hear what the lady of the house is saying to her husband?’

This is a great teaching, to fix yourself quickly and repent while your soul is still within you. (*Siah Sarfei Kodesh, II, p. 80, #260, Yitzchak Buxbaum in Jewish Spiritual Practices, p. 470*)

1. The first text describes a moment for Jacob of inference, discernment and understanding. Jacob needed to discern something that was not readily apparent. What did he need to discern? In what way do you think this is similar to the work of a consultant? What senses or clues would a consultant use to understand a moment in time?
2. Rabbinic commentary on the Jacob text suggests that one's state of mind is a tool of discernment. For example, in *Panim Yafot*, it is said, “When can man experience God's nearness? Only when he is suffused by ‘I don't know,’ when he himself knows that he does not know and does not



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pretend to have wisdom and insight.” Why do you think this mindset enables one to discern something that is not easily apparent? In what way do you think this mindset would be helpful/not helpful for a consultant?

3. One of the tools of discernment a consultant has is listening/hearing. In Text Two, what are the different levels of hearing illustrated in the passage? What are the different levels of hearing that a consultant must do?
4. The two brothers’ hearing was really overhearing the conversation between the husband and wife and was not directed to them. This is similar to the way ECE consultants will often hear. Instead of hearing a conversation directly, consultants will often hear conversations retold or reported to them. What challenges arise from this kind of hearing?
5. Asking the right question can help a consultant discern what is happening and what interventions are needed. Review the following questions. What important questions are missing?

22 Questions and Prompts for ECE Consultants

1. How would you like me to help you?
2. Tell me more. . . .
3. May I ask some questions to make sure I understand the situation?
4. What do you think?
5. Who else needs to be included in this discussion?
6. Who else might have some perspective on this?
7. And what did ____ say when you asked him/her about this?
8. If you were standing outside this situation, what would it look like to you?
9. What’s the most important aspect of this situation?
10. What would you like the outcome to be?
11. What’s worked for you in similar situations?
12. What options have you already thought of?
13. What parts of this situation do you have control (or influence) over?
14. What do you think would happen if you did nothing?
15. What’s the worst that can happen?
16. What’s the best that can come of this?
17. What if. . . ?
18. What values are in conflict here?
19. What would Jewish values lead you to do?
20. Would it help to hear how ____ handled a similar situation?
21. Is this a good time for a story from my own experience?
22. May I think about this and call you tomorrow?



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