



Text Study – Reflecting on What You Have Done and Understood

After saying the blessing before study, read the following texts and discuss the questions that follow each text in small groups.

After Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the Laws of Torah, Moses “wrote all the words of the Lord.” (Exodus 24:4)

Then after a peace offering, “Moses took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, ‘All that the Eternal has spoken we will do (na’aseh) and we will hear (v’nishma).’” (Exodus 24:7)

Questions for Discussion:

1. The Kotzker Rebbe notes the unusual order of the Israelites response to hearing the Laws of Torah. Why do you think the Torah presents this unexpected order of action?
2. After performing the mitzvot, how would the Israelites be able hear them?
3. In the phrase from Exodus, *na’aseh v’nishma*, the word *nishma* is often translated as understand instead of hear. What is the difference between hearing something and understanding it? How does first doing something contribute to one’s ability to understand it?
4. Rabbi Shlomo Riskin points out that understanding new ideas, as the Israelites had to when receiving the Laws of Torah, requires a special kind of understanding. He notes the Hebrew word for hear (*sh’ma*) is related to the Hebrew word for guts, innards, intestines (*me’i*). Rabbi Riskin writes, “to hear is to go through an experience that takes what one hears and internalizes it...hearing is making it your own, making it so close to you that it actually enters your innards, your guts, the very essence of your being.” (The Art of Listening, Feb. 1989)

During The RE-IMAGINE Project you have done (*na’aseh*) many things that have led you to understand (*nishma*) education in new ways. Think back to some of the experiences you had along the RE-IMAGINE journey. For example:

- The memorable Jewish learning experiences discussion;
- The challenging assumptions discussion;
- Viewing the alternative models of education from other congregations;



- Exploring the questions: What is the role of family in a child's education?; What is the role of the community in a child's education?; What is the link between what is learned and what is lived?; How do we build long lasting memories?

From these many experiences what idea(s) about Jewish education have moved to your gut, to a deep understanding that you now hold?

Background:

The Kotzker Rebbe (1859-1987) is often compared to the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. Both searched for a way to determine how one lives one's life in accordance with a personal religious creed and commitment.

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin writes a weekly syndicated column from his home in Israel that is published in a number of Jewish weekly newspapers across the United States.