

Text Study on the Need for Change

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The Blessing Before Study

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei Torah*

Praised are You Adonai, Ruler of the universe,
Who sanctifies us with mitzvot and commands us
to engage in the study of Torah.

Please note that God's Hebrew name appears on this page. As a sign of respect, instead of discarding it after use you may prefer to store it in a geniza—a place where printed materials containing God's name and old ritual objects are collected in preparation for ritual burial.

Texts for Discussion

Read these texts and then answer the questions that follow. You should break into small groups to discuss the texts and questions.

The Talmud, Tractate *Berachot*(64a):

“Rabbi Chiya bar Ashi said in the name of Rav: Torah scholars have no repose—not in this world, and not in the World-to-Come, as it is written (Psalm 84:8): ‘They shall advance from strength to strength, until they reach the divine Presence.’”

“The disciples of the wise increase peace in the world, as it says (Isaiah 54:13): ‘And all your children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.’ Read not banayich (your children), but bonayich (your builders).”

1. Why does Rabbi Chiya feel that scholars never have any rest?
2. What does it mean to keep advancing from “strength to strength”?

3. In what way has your work on this project exposed you to the ideas that Rabbi Chiya is speaking of?
4. The sages use a word analogy to associate children (banayich) with builders (bonayich). In what way do you feel that the re-imagine project is building for the future? How can you convince those reluctant to face change that change is not only a good thing, but one that is rooted in the texts of our tradition?
5. Several organizational specialists have written about the nature of change and the role of leadership:

“The function of culture in the life of the group changes as the group matures. When a group first forms, its evolving culture creates a stable, predictable environment and provides meaning, identity, and a communication system...Once the organization develops a substantial history of its own, its culture becomes more of a cause than an effect. The culture now influences the strategy, the structure, the procedures, and the ways in which the group members will relate to one another. Culture becomes a powerful influence on members’ perceiving , thinking, and feeling...”

Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*

Leaders owe a covenant to the corporation or institution, which is, after all, a group of people. Leaders owe the organization a new reference point for what caring, purposeful, committed people can be in the institutional setting...Corporations, like the people who compose them, are always in a state of becoming. Covenants bind people together and enable them to meet the corporate needs by meeting the needs of one another...”

Max Depree, *Leadership is an Art*

Discuss how your work on this project has changed your perspective on the need for change in the twenty-first century synagogue? How can the ideas and ideals of the project be transferred over to other aspects of synagogue life?