

YESOD – GROUNDEDNESS

WHAT GROUNDS YOU? WHAT MAKES UP YOUR FOUNDATION?

CHECK-IN

Share your name, then think of someone in your life who grounds you and brings you strength. Share with your group why that individual and/or relationship is so grounding for you.

OUR BRIT (COVENANT)

- ❖ Everybody's story is sacred: we commit to respectful communication.
- ❖ Listening is important for understanding: we commit to active and thoughtful listening.
- ❖ Our hearts are open when we feel safe: we commit to confidentiality.
- ❖ We will not try to fix, explain, or judge one another.
- ❖ We will allow for silences within the discussion so that everyone has the space to speak.
- ❖ As our Omer Groups are under the umbrella of Isaiah Together and the broader umbrella of Temple Isaiah, we will keep the values of each front and center.

COUNTING OF THE OMER

Hineini – I am ready to fulfill the mitzvah of counting the Omer.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ, וְצִוֵּנוּ
עַל סְפִירַת הָעֹמֶר.

Baruch atah, Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al sfirat haOmer.

Praised be You, Adonai our God, who rules the universe, instilling within us the holiness of mitzvot by commanding us to count the Omer.

Today is the _____ day, which is _____ weeks and _____ days of the Omer.

May I recognize the foundations of my life that hold me up.

WHAT IS YESOD?

In Jewish mysticism, *yesod* is one of the *sephirot*, emanations of God. Translated literally, *yesod* means foundation. Indeed, *yesod* is a foundational *sephira* (emanation) as it thought to connect the upper and lower realms, the spiritual and the more earthly. *Yesod* then can be a grounding force in our lives, but it is not restive. *Yesod* is often connected to our procreative power as well.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

One could argue that groundedness and creativity are opposites. The concept of *yesod* argues that this is not the case. How are groundedness and creativity partners and enablers of one another? How can that which grounds you lift you up? And how can that which lifts you up also ground you?

WISDOM FROM OUR TRADITION:

Earlier in our Omer study, we encountered this text, which we return to now:

Shimon the Righteous used to say, "On three things the world stands: On Torah, on worship and on acts of loving-kindness." – Pirkei Avot 1:2

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

How are these three things the foundations of our world? Do you agree? If not, on what do you think our world stands? What is the foundation on which *you* most essentially stand?

MORE WISDOM FROM OUR TRADITION:

The Sages taught that there is one pillar in all the world that reaches from the earth to the heavens, and who is that? It is the ***tzaddik (the righteous person)***. We know... that the blessed Creator created all the worlds through the Torah, that is, the twenty-two letters of the Torah... A *tzaddik* who wishes to connect himself to the Blessed Creator must also connect himself to all of the letters of the Torah, from *tav* to *aleph*, drawing all the levels near to the cosmic *aleph*... The *tzaddik* is called "one" referring to oneness/unity – since he unites himself with all of the levels from the earth to the heavens. That is, he unites himself with the farthest reaches of earthliness/materiality, which is "tav", all the way to the heavens, the most exalted level, which is "aleph". The *tzaddik* connects both heaven and earth...

In this manner, the *tzaddik* is also called “foundation of the world,” just like the foundation of a building. Then, when one wishes to raise up the building, one begins under the foundation, and the whole structure built on that foundation will rise up as well. So it is with the *tzaddik*. He connects himself with all the levels. When he, himself, rises up higher and higher, all the other levels are raised up with him. – Hagigah 12b

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

How might the type of person who is both on-the-ground and spiritual be ‘foundational’ in the world (read: important and necessary to our society)? What might we learn from this type of person? What is the value of connecting the practical and the spiritual?

BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS:

The end is wedged in the beginning, and the beginning in the end. – *Sefer Yetzirah* 1:7

No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man. – Heraclitus

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- (a) How do these texts (one Jewish, one not) challenge or add to our notion of time and our beginnings and foundations?
- (b) How could the act of reflection or looking back on the experiences of our lives positively change our present and our future?

MODERN VOICES:

DAY 38: BURDEN: *a psalm of comfort*

Set down your pack.

Wrap your arms around your chest.

Let your shoulderblades unfurl like wings.

Let me rub the knots from your palms,
smooth the shadows from under your eyes.

Lean back: my hands are here.

Your fragile glass heart is safe.

The light that shines through you --

I don't want you to hide it away.

The stones you're lugging, both whole
and broken: they're mine too.

You're mine too. Let me carry you.

-Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

- (a) When you encountered the poem above, were you the speaker or the listener?
- (b) God is often portrayed as the one who carries us in our sacred texts. How does God/ the divine/ the spiritual/ the Universe/ fill-in-the-blank carry you?

A FINAL WORD:

Take at least one full minute (or more if your group decides to write for longer) to write down for yourself a list of grounding forces in your life. Make sure they include internal grounding forces as well as external grounding forces.

After you do this, were you surprised by the brevity or the length of your list? Were there less or more grounding forces in your life than you were expecting? If others in your life did this activity, do you think that you would be on their lists? How will you intentionally glean strength from your grounding forces in this week to come?