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Bronfman Torah: commentary on the Torah that draws on the lives, skills, and insights of our community

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On Trust

Hannah Kapnik Ashar ('04) | Bronfman Torah | Mattot-Massei 2017

This week, Hannah Kapnik Ashar describes what the North American and Israeli Fellows have been learning about during their mifgash, or "encounter." Over the course of several days, the Fellows participated in homestays, workshops, learning sessions, and - as Hannah explains below - chevrutahs.

***Hannah Kapnik Ashar ('04)** is a Faculty Member and Manager of Fellowship Year Experience at The Bronfman Fellowship. She is also a Rabbinic Intern at Congregation Bonai Shalom, the Conservative synagogue in Boulder, Colorado. Hannah co-founded The Tefilah Retreat, a weekend of Jewish spiritual practice for young adults, and Come & Listen, a progressive Jewish podcast. She lives in Boulder with her spouse, Yoni, and her two young daughters.*

As I write, the North American Fellows and Israeli Amitim are engaged in a new morning ritual: daily "Coffee and Chevrutah," in which they sip mediocre coffee and explore fabulous texts together. We are on the closing day of mifgash, our week when the two cohorts come together. After a week of engaging the themes of Language and Translation, Families and Transmission, Individual and Community, the Fellows have encountered several sources on truth and trust.

Coming into the mifgash, each group had already formed its own rhythm, its own set of existential questions that animate the programmed daytime Fellowship and infuse the unstructured nighttime Fellowship. What does it take to trust another group? Or even a few more Fellows? Grab a friend and explore this sample of the sources they are encountering in Coffee and Chevrutah!

Excerpt from "Trust and Antitrust", Annette Baier (feminist philosopher), 1986

"What we now need to do, to get any sense of the variety of forms of trust, is to look both at varieties of vulnerability and at varieties of grounds for not expecting others to take advantage of it. One way to do the former, which I shall take, is to look at the **variety of sorts of goods or things one values or cares about**, which can be left or put within the striking power of others, and **the variety of ways we can let or leave others 'close' enough to what we value to be able to harm it**. ...The next thing to attend to is why we typically do leave things that we value close enough to others for them to harm them. The answer, simply, is that **we need their help in creating, and then in not merely guarding but looking after the things we most value**, so we have no choice but to allow some others to be in a position to harm them. The one in the best position to harm something is its creator or its nurse- cum-caretaker." (emphasis added)

"The Lovers," Rene Magritte, 1928

Bereshit Rabba 54:3

אמר רבי יוסי בר חנינא התוכחה מביאה לידי (בראשית כא. כה) 'והוכם אברהם את אבימלך וגו' הוכם לתכם ונאהבכם, היא דעתיה דרבי יוסי בר חנינא דאמר כל אהבה שאין עמה: (משלי ט. ח) אהבה, שנאמר תוכחה אינה אהבה. אמר ריש לקיש תוכחה מביאה לידי שלום, והוכם אברהם את אבימלך, היא דעתיה דאמר כל שלום שאין עמו תוכחה אינו שלום

And Abraham rebuked Avimelech: R. Yosi ben R. Hanina said: Rebuke leads to love, as it says, rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Such indeed is R. Yosi ben Hanina's view, for he said: Love unaccompanied by rebuke is not love. Resh Lakish said: Rebuke leads to peace; hence, 'And Avraham reproved Avimelech'. Such is his view, for he said: Peace unaccompanied by rebuke is not peace.

How does this phrase change when it's about love vs. peace?

In what ways are trust, peace, and tochecha (rebuke) connected?

When do we need trust to be explicit in order to give tochecha, honest critical feedback?

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Continue the conversation. Send Hannah your thoughts: hannah@byfi.org.

P.S.: We're always looking for more dvar torah writers. Interested? Contact stefanie@byfi.org. We look forward to hearing from you.



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