DISCUSSION GUIDE – WEEK 4

NETZACH - PERSEVERANCE

WHAT ALLOWS ME TO PERSEVERE?

CHECK-IN

Share your name and response to the question, what in your life is giving you energy?

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.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וציווננו על ספירת העומר.

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 foster the endurance necessary to continue to strive in my life.
WHAT IS NETZACH?

In the context of the Omer, netzach is often understood as “victory.” Victory typically involves an external success, but when shifted to an internal victory, netzach can refer to the slow process of transformation.

In the idea of transformation, the creative element of netzach is revealed. Netzach is also the root meaning “to conduct” or “to orchestrate.” This reminds us that transformation is not haphazard: there is an organization and directionality to the internal transformation of netzach. Moreover, there is a sense of duration that comes with the understanding of netzach as transformation: duration which requires patience.

Netzach can also be translated to mean “eternity,” heightening our awareness of the time required for true transformation. We use netzach to refer to eternity in the sense of enduring or persevering over time. Netzach carries a sense of enduring energy and transformation. During this fourth week of counting, we ask: how do we foster our ability to persevere?

Rabbi Tarfon says, “The day is short, the work is great, the workers are lazy, but the reward is great, and the master of the house is knocking [at your door].” He would [also] say, “It is not upon you to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.” – Mishnah Pirkei Avot 2:15-16

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(a) Who are the “workers” Rabbi Tarfon speaks about, and who is the “master?”
(b) What “work” do you imagine he is talking about?
(c) What motivates you to keep working toward a goal? What causes you to desist?
(d) In saying “It is not upon you to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it,” Rabbi Tarfon eliminates the possibility of saying “no.” Is there a legitimate time to desist from the “work”? How do you identify it?
(e) When do you feel unable to say no to additional burdens, and when are you able to say no? What factors dictate whether a situation is one in which you can say no and one in which you know you must take on what is being asked of you?

DRAWING FROM EXODUS:

Next day, Moses sat as magistrate among the people, while the people stood about Moses from morning until evening. But when Moses’ father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, “What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?”
Moses replied to his father-in-law, “It is because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes before me, and I decide between one person and another, and I make known the laws and teachings of God.”

But Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “The thing you are doing is not right; you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You represent the people before God: you bring the disputes before God, and enjoin upon them the laws and the teachings, and make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow. You shall also seek out from among all the people capable men who fear God, trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these over them as chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and let them judge the people at all times. Have them bring every major dispute to you, but let them decide every minor dispute themselves. Make it easier for yourself by letting them share the burden with you. If you do this—and God so commands you—you will be able to bear up; and all these people too will go home unwearied.” – Exodus 18:13-23

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(a) What problem does Moses’ father-in-law identify in this passage? What is his solution?

(b) Moses needed Jethro to point out to him the danger of Moses’ management style. Why do we need outside perspectives to point out what seems like it should be obvious? Who are the Jethros in your life, and how do they help you find balance?

(c) When do you tend to act like Moses does here? When are you like Jethro?

FINDING THE BALANCE:

Stephen Covey, author of The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, recognizes that for us to persevere, and perform to the best of our ability, we need not only to take care of ourselves physically, but also to tend to our emotional, spiritual, and intellectual needs. Many of us are good at taking care of ourselves on one of these dimensions, but neglect the others.

The following diagram illustrates Covey’s understanding of these spheres of self-care. In each of the circles (body, mind, heart, and spirit), write down the ways that you care for that dimension or aspect of yourself. For example, in the “body” circle, you might include sleep or exercise. In the “spirit” circle, you might include a regular walk or meditation practice.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(a) Are you caring for yourself equally in all four spheres? Which categories are you attending to and which have you not focused on as much? Why do you think this is?
(b) Thinking on your life thus far, do you recognize the habits of self-care you’ve identified as consistent throughout your life, or have your behaviors changed? What is unique about your needs at this precise moment in your life, and what is enduring about who you are and how you need to be nourished?

A FINAL WORD:

Self-care is something many of us struggle to fit into our busy lives, yet this busy-ness is precisely the reason we need to take the time to care for ourselves. Take a moment to consider one way you might care for yourself this week, in a way that will allow you to act with netzach – perseverance, with respect to your goals. If you are comfortable doing so, you may share this goal with the group.