

נעשה ונשמע

NA'ASEH V'NISHMAH

we will do and we will
“hear” (“understand”)

Try it– Learn by Doing

The Jewish approach includes taking an action without necessarily knowing why it's important or how it will work out, but trusting that it will lead to understanding.

SENSIBILITY CARD



On One Foot: Na'aseh v'Nishmah

IMPORTANT TEXTS

"All that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will hear" (understand)
— Exodus 24:7

"The heart follows the actions a person does." — *Sefer HaChinuch Mitzvah 16*

"Ruth replied, 'Do not urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.'" — Ruth 1:16-17

The Implications

We will look at *Na'aseh v'Nishmah* in the context of:

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Learning to Trust and Trusting to Learn

This Activity is Great For



Learning

- Beit Midrash
- Group Learning



Holidays

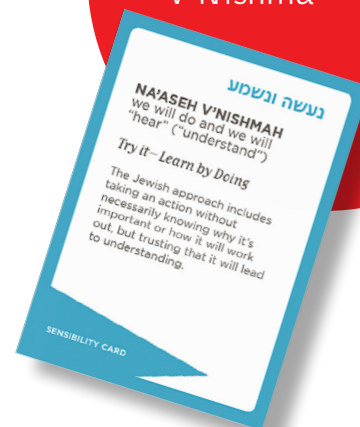
- Shavuot



**Pastoral
Counseling**



**Identity &
Relationships**



Big Idea

The Israelites' response of "Na'aseh v'Nishmah" created a relationship of trust and love, rather than mere obedience.

I. Beginning the Conversation

Trust Drive

Start your session by dividing students into pairs for a "trust drive."

As Jim Cain explains in "Find Something to Do":

Begin with partners of similar heights, in an open space with no obstacles, with one partner standing behind the other, both facing forward. The front 'driver' holds onto an imaginary steering wheel and closes their eyes. The 'backseat driver' eyes open, places their hands on the driver's shoulders and tells them, "I've got your back." The front driver controls the speed, while the rear driver provides information and direction (sort of a human GPS system), avoiding collisions with other drivers and fixed objects. After a few minutes, the front driver opens their eyes and the two participants exchange roles.

TALK IT OUT

- What words would you use to describe the experience of being the front driver?
- What kind of relationship did you need to have with the back driver in order to feel comfortable as the front driver?



II. A Deeper Dive

A. Receiving the Torah

Read together the description of *Matan Torah* — the Receiving of the *Torah*, on Mount Sinai. If your group is open to more text study, you may wish to read Exodus 19-20 together to get the full effect of the drama of the Revelation. If not, describe to students the awesome scene at Mount Sinai and then read together *Shemot* 24.

Shemot (Exodus) 24

ג וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וַיְסַפֵּר לָעָם אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי ה' וְאֵת כָּל הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וַיַּעַן כָּל הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה.

ד וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי ה' וַיִּשְׁכַּם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיְבִן מִזְבֵּחַ תַּחַת הָהָר וּשְׁתֵּים עָשָׂר מִצֵּבֹה לְשָׁנִים עָשָׂר שְׁבֹטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

ז וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנוֹ הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע.

3 And Moses came and recounted to the people all the Lord's words and the laws, and the people answered with a single voice and said, "all the words that the Lord has spoken we will do" (*na'aseh*).

4 And Moses wrote down all the Lord's words, and he rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the tribes of Israel . . .

7 And [Moses] took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will hear" (*na'aseh v'nishmah*).

(Translation adapted from Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*)

- Ask students to compare the Israelites' response in verse 3 and verse 7 — "*naaseh*" and "*na'aseh v'nishmah*". What does the extra word "*v'nishmah*" imply about how the Israelites will accept the *Torah*?
- Tell students that the phrase "*na'aseh v'nishmah*" is traditionally seen as the Jews accepting the *Torah* without knowing everything it contained - and that this was considered praiseworthy. Read the following *Talmud* text together.

B. The Glorious Secret of *Na'aseh v'Nishmah*

Shabbat 88a-b

דרש ר' סימאי בשעה שהקדימו ישראל נעשה לנשמע באו ששים ריבוא של מלאכי השרת לכל אחד ואחד מישראל קשרו לו שני כתרים אחד כנגד נעשה ואחד כנגד נשמע

Rabbi Simla lectured: When the Israelites gave precedence to 'we will do' over 'we will hear,' six hundred thousand ministering angels came and set two crowns upon each man of Israel, one as a reward for 'we will do,' and the other as a reward for 'we will hear' . . .

Shabbat 88a-b (continued)

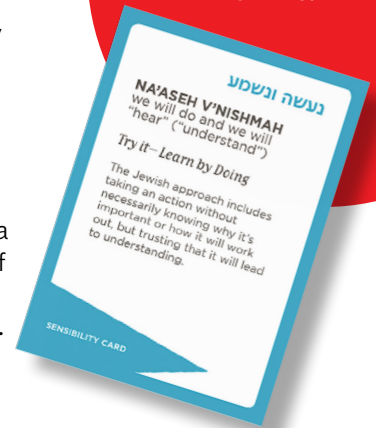
אמר רבי אלעזר בשעה שהקדימו ישראל נעשה לנשמע יצתה בת קול ואמרה להן מי גילה לבני רז זה שמלאכי השרת משתמשין בו דכתיב (תהילים קג) ברכו ה' מלאכי

גבורי כח עושי דברו לשמוע בקול דברו ברי- שא עשי והדר לשמע א"ר חמא ברבי חנינא מ"ד (שיר השירים ב) כתפוח בעצי היער וגו' למה נמשלו ישראל לתפוח לומר לך מה תפוח זה פריו קודם לעליו אף ישראל הקדי- מו נעשה לנשמע הוא מינא דחזייה לרבא דקא מעיין בשמעתא ויתבה אצבעתא דידיה תותי כרעא וקא מייץ בהו וקא מבען אצבע- תיה דמא א"ל עמא פזיזא דקדמיתו פומיכו לאודניכו אכתי בפחזותיכו קיימיתו ברישא איבעי לכו למשמע אי מציתו קבליתו ואי לא לא קבליתו א"ל אנן דסגינן בשלימותא כתיב בן (משלי יא) תומת ישרים תנחם הנך אינשי דסגן בעלילותא כתיב בהו (משלי יא) וסלף בוגדים ישדם:

R. Eleazar said: When the Israelites gave precedence to 'we will do' over 'we will hear,' a Heavenly Voice went forth and exclaimed to them, Who revealed to My children this secret, which is employed by the Ministering Angels ...?

There was a certain Sadducee who saw Raba engrossed in his studies while the finger[s] of his hand were under his feet, and he ground them down, so that his fingers spurted blood. 'You rash people,' he exclaimed, 'who gave precedence to your mouth over your ears: you still persist in your rashness. First you should have listened, if within your powers, accept; if not, you should not have accepted.' Said he to him, 'We who walked in integrity, of us it is written (Proverbs 11): "The integrity of the upright shall guide them." But of others, who walked in perversity, it is written (Proverbs 11): "but the perverseness of the treacherous shall destroy them."

Na'aseh
v'Nishma



TALK IT OUT

- These texts praise the Israelites for saying *Na'aseh v'Nishmah* and accepting the Torah before they heard everything that it contained. Do you think their action was praiseworthy?
- Think about the driving activity we did together at the beginning of this session. What does closing your eyes while someone drives you around, have to do with *Na'aseh v'Nishmah*?
- What kind of relationship do you need to have with someone in order to say *Na'aseh v'Nishmah*?

Reflective Questions

Students should write down their answers to the following reflective questions. If you wish, you can end the class here; or you may wish to then group students in pairs and give them a few minutes to discuss their reflections together.

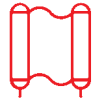
- Have you ever had a *Na'aseh v'Nishmah* relationship with someone? Would you want to?
- How do you think the Jews were capable of having this *Na'aseh v'Nishmah* relationship with God?
- In your own relationship with God and Judaism, do you have a need for proofs and all the information before you sign on?
- What kind of relationship would you like to have with God and Judaism?





Ritual: What's the Point?

This Activity is Great For



Learning

- Beit Midrash
- Group Learning



Holidays

- Passover



Spirituality

- Alternative Service
- Mindfulness

Big Ideas

- Our actions have a great influence on who we are.
- Jewish rituals can have an effect on our character.

I. Beginning the Conversation

Put a piece of *matzah* in the center of the table.

Ask participants:

- Do you eat *matzah* on campus on Passover?
- If yes, what is it like to eat *matzah* on campus? If not, why not?
- What happens when you see another student on campus eating *matzah*?
- How is eating *matzah* on campus on Passover so much more than just eating a cracker?
- Jews have a lot of rituals. What is one word you would use to describe how you feel about Jewish rituals?

II. A Deeper Dive

A. 60-Second Debates

Before this session, write the following debate statements on separate sheets of paper, and then fold them and put them in a container.

Ask for two volunteers. One should stick his/her hand into the container and pull out a statement. Assign one volunteer to argue "for" and the other "against" this statement. Time them so that they each have only one minute to make their points:

- Jewish rituals are not important. What is important is how you feel.
- You should never do a Jewish ritual unless you know everything about it beforehand.
- Rituals are destructive. They let people feel righteous even when they are oppressing other people.
- Keeping kosher is an outdated ritual.
- [Add whatever statements are relevant to your group and the time of year.]



B. Text Study — Why Jewish Rituals?

Ask for a volunteer who can read the following selection in a dramatic fashion. In this text, the *Sefer HaChinuch* makes the case for why rituals are so important in Judaism:

Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 16 (Outward actions have the power to shape character. The *mitzvot* are those actions which will guarantee the improvement of one's character.):

דע, כי האדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו, ולבו וכל מחשבותיו תמיד אחר מעשיו שהוא עוסק בהם, אם טוב ואם רע. ואפילו רשע גמור בלבבו וכל יצר מחשבות לבו רק רע כל היום, אם יערה רוחו וישים השתדלותו ועסקו בהתמדה בתורה ובמצוות, ואפילו שלא לשם שמים, מיד ינטה אל הטוב, ומתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה, ובכוח מעשיו ימית היצר הרע, כי אחרי הפעולות נמשכים הלבבות. ואפילו אם יהיה אדם צדיק גמור ולבבו ישר ותמים, חפץ בתורה ובמצוות, אם יעסוק תמיד בדברים של דופי - דרך משל, שהכריחו המלך ומינהו באומנות רעה, באמת אם כל עסקו תמיד כל היום באותה אומנות - ישוב בזמן מן הזמנים מצדקת לבו להיות רשע גמור. כי ידוע הדבר ואמת, שכל אדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו.

A person is influenced by his actions, and one's heart and thoughts follow the acts he or she does whether they are good or bad. Even one who is a completely wicked person, who constantly thinks of doing bad deeds, if s/he is inspired for the better and puts time into fulfilling *Torah* and *mitzvot*, even if it is not for the sake of Heaven, s/he will turn to the good and he will overcome his/her Evil Inclination through the power of these actions, since the heart follows the actions a person does. Similarly, even if one is a completely righteous person who desires *Torah* and *mitzvot* but always involves himself or herself in bad deeds . . . after a certain amount of time s/he will become a wicked person, for we know, and it is true, that every person is affected by his or her actions.

(Credit: The *Mitzvot* and Why They Are Detailed, *Morasha* Syllabus, <http://www.morashasyllabus.com/class/The%20Mitzvot.pdf>, p. 3.)

- According to the *Sefer HaChinuch*, what is the point of rituals and *mitzvot* (commandments)?
- Do you agree that ultimately that "the heart follows the actions a person does"? Is it what you *do* that determines what kind of person you are?





C. Step Into the Circle Discussion

Invite the group to stand in a circle.

Ask:

Have you ever had a time when a Jewish festival, object, or practice had an impact on you? Describe what happened.

- Anyone who would like to share an answer should step into the middle of the circle.
- If many people step forward, after each person has said their piece they step back to join the rest of the group.
- If others want to comment, they should step forward into the middle of the circle at any point.
- The discussion ends when everyone has stepped back to join the rest of the group.

OFF THE PAGE AND INTO LIFE

Year of Living Jewishly

Abigail Pogrebin is a journalist who decided to embark on an experiment: she was going to celebrate every Jewish holiday - major and minor, famous and obscure - for a full year. Watch this video as she begins her "year of living Jewishly": <https://vimeo.com/104432639>



“ TALK IT OUT

- Have you ever tried out a Jewish holiday or ritual that you had never done before? What was the experience like?
- Is there a Jewish holiday or ritual that would like to try? What would you need in order to give it a go?



Soul Session: Following In the Footsteps of Ruth — Taking the Next Step

This Activity is Great For



Learning

- Group Learning



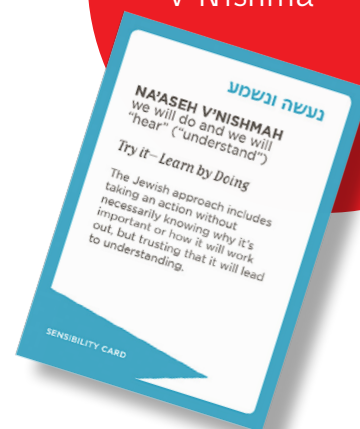
Holidays

- *Shavuot*



Spirituality

- Alternative Service



Big Idea

The book of Ruth can help us think about how we make decisions in our lives.

I. Beginning the Conversation

Soul sessions are based on the work of Parker Palmer, specifically his development of the “circle of trust” and his emphasis on drawing out the soul and giving it a safe space. In these soul sessions, we will use a piece of text or artwork connected to a sensibility, and give ourselves the time and safe space to fully experience the text and discover our relationship to it. Our goals in these sessions are: (1) to get in touch with the wisdom that we have within; (2) to have real, meaningful encounters with Jewish ideas; and (3) to create a welcoming community that nurtures true, honest and kind communication.

For more information about Parker Palmer, the Center for Courage and Renewal, and the principles and procedures of Circles of Trust, see <http://www.couragerenewal.org/approach/>.

Note to Facilitator: As the facilitator, your role is to help the circle participants create a secure space where they can meaningfully encounter themselves, each other and the text. As much as possible, try to facilitate and not teach: you should be involved in the discussions, journaling and small discussions like other members of the group. Give the group the space and trust to proceed without telling them what they should think or how they should interpret.



II. A Deeper Dive

A. How to conduct a soul session:

1. Set up chairs in a circle, where everyone can see each other.
2. Welcome students to the soul session, and explain what a soul session/circle of trust is. You may wish to distribute the Courage and Renewal touchstones, and read each touchstone out loud, in order to set the stage for the work that the group will do together. ([http://www.couragerenewal.org/PDFs/CourageRenewal-Circle-of-Trust-Touchstones-\(c\)2015.pdf](http://www.couragerenewal.org/PDFs/CourageRenewal-Circle-of-Trust-Touchstones-(c)2015.pdf))
3. Explain that the principle of double confidentiality will apply to this session: What other people mention in this soul session, and in the breakout sessions, is totally confidential. You may not tell anyone what someone else said in this session. In addition, if you see participants from this soul session after the session has concluded, you may not ask them about what they talked about here, unless they specifically invite you to do so.
4. Introduce the text: Tell students that we traditionally read the Book of Ruth on the holiday of *Shavuot*. In our session today, it does not matter whether you have read the Book of Ruth 100 times or if this is your first encounter with the book. What we will do, is read it as if it is the first time, and create the space and atmosphere to have a deep and meaningful personal encounter with the text.
5. Ask for two volunteers to read the text out loud, one after the other, so that we can hear the text in two different voices. (See below for text)
6. Invite members of the circle to comment on what resonates for them in the piece they just read. You should be involved as a member of the circle, but don't rush to fill the silence — give participants the time and space to comment and reflect. Encourage participants to speak into the middle of the circle, rather than to each other.
7. Journaling: Before the session, write out the following questions — or any other questions you would like to pose - on a large sheet of paper. At this point in the session, post the paper on the wall and read the questions out loud.
 - How do you think Ruth is able to make her decision when there is so much that is unknown and scary?
 - Are you more of an Orpah, or a Ruth?
 - Have you ever had a time when you needed to make a big decision? How did it work out? What advice would you give yourself if you had to do it all over again?
 - What are some of the values that are most important to you when taking your next steps? How much information do you need before you leap?



Invite students to spend 10 minutes writing in their journal, or if this session occurs on *Shabbat* or a holiday, silently reflecting on these questions. They should find a place to sit comfortably, and take their time. Their written reflections will be kept private unless they choose to reveal them.

8. Small Group Discussion: Bring the group back together and explain that you will now separate them into groups of two or three (depending on how much time you have carved out for this session, and your space constraints). Each group will find someplace to gather, and then each individual in the group will have 10 minutes to talk about their reflections on the text and questions, or whatever thoughts the text has prompted in them. Each group should appoint a timekeeper to raise his or her hand when the 10 minutes are up. After each member of the group has had his or her ten minutes, they should return to the circle.



Ground rules for the breakout groups:

- a. Sit in silence and give the individual who is speaking, the space and time to talk at his or her own pace. Do not jump in with questions or comments. Hold the space for them to talk. If they take all 10 minutes to talk, then your job is simply to listen. If they decide they do not want to talk at all, sit in silence with them for 10 minutes. If they have finished what they have to say, and they invite questions before the 10 minutes are up, ask brief, open and honest questions — without introducing your own opinion or offering advice.
- b. Do not give advice — your job is not to tell the others what they should do. Your job is to help create a safe, open space where honest, soulful reflection can occur.
- c. The rule of double confidentiality applies. Members of the group may not tell anyone else what they heard in this conversation. In addition, if you see a member of your group later on, you may not ask them about what they talked about, unless they specifically invite you to do so.

9. Whole Group Reflection: When everyone returns to the circle, invite participants to share with the whole group something they have discovered (about themselves only - no talking about what others had said) through their journaling and small group discussions, or to reflect on the soul session and its process of reflection and building of safe space. Allow students to sit in silence to reflect; do not rush to close.

10. Closing: Thank students for their time and for creating a welcoming, honest, safe space. Remind them again that double confidentiality applies. Tell students that you are always happy to speak with them about some of the issues that have come up for them in this session, but that because of double confidentiality you will not refer back to what they said unless they explicitly and proactively invite you to do so (make sure to let them know that, so no misunderstandings occur).



B. Text study

Ruth Chapter 1

א וַיְהִי, בַּיָּמִי שִׁפְטוּ הַשֹּׁפְטִים, וַיְהִי רָעָב, בְּאֶרֶץ; וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לְחָם יְהוּדָה, לְגוֹר בְּשָׂדֵי מוֹאָב הוּא וְאִשְׁתּוֹ, וּשְׁנֵי בָנָיו.

ב וְשֵׁם הָאִישׁ אֱלִמֶלֶךְ וְשֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ נָעֳמִי וְשֵׁם שְׁנֵי בָנָיו מַחְלוֹן וְכִלְיוֹן, אֶפְרַתִּים מִבֵּית לְחָם, יְהוּדָה; וַיָּבֹאוּ שָׂדֵי מוֹאָב, וַיְהִיו שָׁם.

ג וַיָּמָת אֱלִמֶלֶךְ, אִישׁ נָעֳמִי; וַתִּשָּׂאָר הָיָא, וּשְׁנֵי בָנֶיהָ.

ד וַיִּשָּׂאוּ לָהֶם, נָשִׁים מְאֹבִיּוֹת שֵׁם הָאֶחָת עֶרְפָּה, וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית רוּת; וַיִּשְׁבוּ שָׁם, כַּעֲשֶׂר שָׁנִים.

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.

2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

3 Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons.

4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years,

ה וַיָּמָתוּ גַם שְׁנֵיהֶם, מַחְלוֹן וְכִלְיוֹן; וַתִּשָּׂאָר, הָאִשָּׁה, מִשְׁנֵי יַלְדֶיהָ, וּמְאִישָׁהּ.

ו וַתִּקֶּם הָיָא וְכַלְתֶּיהָ, וַתִּשָּׂב מִשְׂדֵי מוֹאָב: כִּי שָׁמְעָה, בְּשָׂדֵהּ מוֹאָב כִּי פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת עַמּוֹ, לְתַת לָהֶם לְחָם.

ז וַתֵּצֵא, מִן הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה שָׁמָּה, וּשְׁתֵי כַלּוֹתֶיהָ, עִמָּה; וַתֵּלַכְנָה בְּדֶרֶךְ, לְשׁוּב אֶל אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה.

ח וַתֹּאמֶר נָעֳמִי, לְשְׁתֵי כַלְתֶּיהָ, לָכֵן שָׁבְנָה, אִשָּׁה לְבֵית אִמָּה; יַעֲשֶׂה (יַעֲשֶׂה) ה' עִמָּכֶם חֶסֶד, כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם עִמִּי הַמֵּתִים וְעַמְדִי.

ט יֵתֵן ה', לָכֶם, וּמִצָּאֵן מְנוּחָה, אִשָּׁה בֵּית אִישָׁה; וַתִּשָּׂק לָהֶן, וַתִּשָּׂאנָה קוֹלָן וַתִּבְכִּינָה.

י וַתֹּאמְרָנָה לָהּ: כִּי אֵתְךָ נָשׁוּב, לְעַמֶּךָ.

יא וַתֹּאמֶר נָעֳמִי שָׁבְנָה בְּנֹתַי, לָמָּה תֵלַכְנָה עִמִּי: הַעוֹד לִי בָנִים בְּמַעַי, וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לְאֶנְשִׁים.

9 May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud

10 And they said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands?"

12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have

Ruth Chapter 1 (continued)

יב שְׂבָנָה בְּנֹתַי לָכֵן, כִּי זָקַנְתִּי מֵהָיִוֹת לְאִישׁ:
כִּי אֲמַרְתִּי, יֵשׁ לִי תִקְוָה גַם הֵייתִי הַלַּיְלָה
לְאִישׁ, וְגַם יִלְדֹתַי בָּנִים.

יג הֲלֹהֶן תִּשְׁבְּרֶנָּה, עַד אֲשֶׁר יִגְדְּלוּ, הֲלֹהֶן
תִּעַגְּנָה, לְבִלְתִּי הָיוֹת לְאִישׁ; אֵל בְּנֹתַי, כִּי מִר
לִי מְאֹד מִכֶּם כִּי יֵצְאָה בִי, יַד ה'.

יד וַתִּשְׁנֶה קוֹלָהּ, וַתִּבְכֶּינָה עוֹד; וַתִּשָׁק עֶרְפָּה
לְחֻמוֹתָהּ, וְרוֹת דָּבְקָה בָּהּ.

טו וַתֹּאמֶר, הִנֵּה שָׁבָה יְבָמְתָךְ, אֶל עַמָּהּ, וְאֶל
אֱלֹהֶיהָ; שׁוּבִי, אַחֲרַי יְבָמְתָךְ.

טז וַתֹּאמֶר רוּת אֶל תַּפְּגְעִי בִי, לְעֵזְבֶךָ לְשׁוּב
מֵאַחֲרַיָּךְ: כִּי אֵל אֲשֶׁר תִּלְכִי אֵלָי, וּבְאִשׁוֹ
תִּלְוִי אֵלַיִן עַמִּי, וְאֵלֶיךָ אֶלְקָי.

יז בְּאִשׁוֹ תִמְוֹתַי אֲמוֹתַי, וְשָׁם אֶקְבְּרָה; כֹּה
יַעֲשֶׂה ה' לִי, וְכֹה יוֹסִיף כִּי הִמּוֹתַי, יִפְרִיד בֵּינִי
וּבֵינָךְ.

another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—

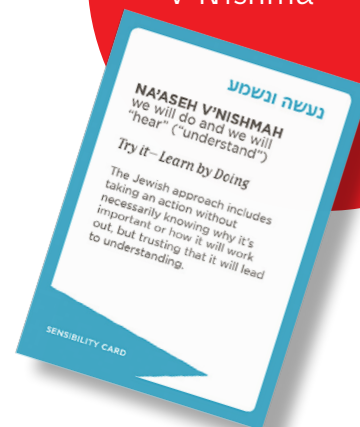
13 Would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!"

14 At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

16 But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.

17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."



Na'aseh
v'Nishma



Just for Hillel Professionals: Trusting in Your Work

This Activity is Great For



Just for Hillel
Professionals

I. Beginning the Conversation

As Hillel professionals, we invest so much in our students, teaching them and caring about them. Sometimes we may feel that we are throwing away our efforts, and that nothing is taking hold. At those times, it may be helpful to hold onto the *Na'aseh v'Nishmah* sensibility — we do our best, and have faith that it will yield returns.

Use these questions to reflect on how you can incorporate some of the lessons of *na'aseh v'nishmah* into your teaching and relationships with students:

1. When do you feel that your teaching and work with students is successful?
2. Have you ever thought that you did not have an impact with your teaching or work, and find out later that you did?
3. What are some tools you could use to bolster yourself when you work hard, but you do not see the effects?
4. Think about some of your role models. Have you let them know how much they have meant in your life?

Textsheets for Students

On the next pages, you'll find just the texts mentioned in each of the sections of this curriculum, without the facilitator's guide. Use these sheets if you would like to make copies of the texts for students, while keeping the facilitator's notes just for you!

Na'aseh
v'Nishma



Trusting to Learn and Learning to Trust



Shemot (Exodus) 24

- ג** וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וַיְסַפֵּר לָעָם אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי ה' וְאֵת כָּל הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וַיַּעַן כָּל הָעָם קוֹל אֶחָד וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה.
- ד** וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי ה' וַיִּשְׁכַּם בַּבֹּקֶר וַיְבִן מִזְבֵּחַ תַּחַת הָהָר וּשְׁתֵּים עָשָׂר מִצֵּבֹת לְשֵׁנִים עֶשֶׂר שְׁבֻטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.
- ז** וַיִּקַּח סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית וַיִּקְרָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ הוֹי כָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע.
- 3** And Moses came and recounted to the people all the Lord's words and the laws, and the people answered with a single voice and said, "all the words that the Lord has spoken we will do" (*na'aseh*).
- 4** And Moses wrote down all the Lord's words, and he rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the tribes of Israel . . .
- 7** And [Moses] took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will hear" (*na'aseh v'nishmah*).

(Translation adapted from Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*)

Shabbat 88a-b

דרש ר' סימאי בשעה שהקדימו ישראל נעשה לנשמע באו ששים ריבוא של מלאכי השרת לכל אחד ואחד מישראל קשרו לו שני כתרים אחד כנגד נעשה ואחד כנגד נשמע

אמר רבי אלעזר בשעה שהקדימו ישראל נעשה לנשמע יצתה בת קול ואמרה להן מי גילה לבני רז זה שמלאכי השרת משתמשין בו דכתיב (תהילים קג) ברכו ה' מלאכי

גבורי כח עושי דברו לשמוע בקול דברו ברישא עשי והדר לשמע א"ר חמא ברבי חנינא מ"ד (שיר השירים ב) כתפוח בעצי היער וגו' למה נמשלו ישראל לתפוח לומר לך מה תפוח זה פריו קודם לעליו אף ישראל הקדימו נעשה לנשמע ההוא מינא דחזייה לרבא דקא מעיין בשמעתא ויתבה אצבעתא ידיה תותי כרעא וקא מייץ בהו וקא מבען אצבעתיה דמא א"ל עמא פזיזא דקדמיתו פומייכו לאודניכו אכתי בפחזותייכו קיימיתו ברישא איבעי לכו למשמע אי מציתו קבליתו ואי לא קבליתו א"ל אנן דסגינן בשלי- מותא כתיב בן (משלי יא) תומת ישרים תנחם הנך אינשי דסגן בעלילותא כתיב בהו (משלי יא) וסלף בוגדים ישדם:

Rabbi Simla lectured: When the Israelites gave precedence to 'we will do' over 'we will hear,' six hundred thousand ministering angels came and set two crowns upon each man of Israel, one as a reward for 'we will do,' and the other as a reward for 'we will hear' . . .

R. Eleazar said: When the Israelites gave precedence to 'we will do' over 'we will hear,' a Heavenly Voice went forth and exclaimed to them, Who revealed to My children this secret, which is employed by the Ministering Angels ...?

There was a certain Sadducee who saw Raba engrossed in his studies while the finger[s] of his hand were under his feet, and he ground them down, so that his fingers spurted blood. 'You rash people,' he exclaimed, 'who gave precedence to your mouth over your ears: you still persist in your rashness. First you should have listened, if within your powers, accept; if not, you should not have accepted.' Said he to him, 'We who walked in integrity, of us it is written (Proverbs 11): "The integrity of the upright shall guide them." But of others, who walked in perversity, it is written (Proverbs 11): "but the perverseness of the treacherous shall destroy them."'

Ritual: What's the Point?

Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 16 (Outward actions have the power to shape character. The mitzvot are those actions which will guarantee the improvement of one's character.):

דע, כי האדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו, ולבו וכל מחשבותיו תמיד אחר מעשיו שהוא עוסק בהם, אם טוב ואם רע. ואפילו רשע גמור בלבבו וכל יצר מחשבות לבו רק רע כל היום, אם יערה רוחו וישים השתדלותו ועסקו בהתמדה בתורה ובמצוות, ואפילו שלא לשם שמים, מיד ינטה אל הטוב, ומתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה, ובכוח מעשיו ימית היצר הרע, כי אחרי הפעולות נמשכים הלבבות. ואפילו אם יהיה אדם צדיק גמור ולבבו ישר ותמים, חפץ בתורה ובמצוות, אם יעסוק תמיד בדברים של דופי - דרך משל, שהכריחו המלך ומינהו באומנות רעה, באמת אם כל עסקו תמיד כל היום באותה אומנות - ישוב בזמן מן הזמנים מצדקת לבו להיות רשע גמור. כי ידוע הדבר ואמת, שכל אדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו.

A person is influenced by his actions, and one's heart and thoughts follow the acts he or she does whether they are good or bad. Even one who is a completely wicked person, who constantly thinks of doing bad deeds, if s/he is inspired for the better and puts time into fulfilling *Torah* and *mitzvot*, even if it is not for the sake of Heaven, s/he will turn to the good and he will overcome his/her Evil Inclination through the power of these actions, since the heart follows the actions a person does. Similarly, even if one is a completely righteous person who desires *Torah* and *mitzvot* but always involves himself or herself in bad deeds . . . after a certain amount of time s/he will become a wicked person, for we know, and it is true, that every person is affected by his or her actions.



(Credit: The *Mitzvot* and Why They Are Detailed, *Morasha* Syllabus, <http://www.morashasyllabus.com/class/The%20Mitzvot.pdf>, p. 3.)

Soul Session: Following in the Footsteps of Ruth — Taking the Next Step

Ruth Chapter 1



א וַיְהִי, בַיָּמֵי שְׁפֹט הַשְּׁפֹטִים, וַיְהִי רָעַב, בְּאֶרֶץ; וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה, לְגוֹר בְּשֹׂדֵי מוֹאָב הוּא וְאִשְׁתּוֹ, וּשְׁנֵי בָנָיו.

ב וְשֵׁם הָאִישׁ אֱלִימֶלֶךְ וְשֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ נְעֹמִי וְשֵׁם שְׁנֵי בָנָיו מַחְלוֹן וְכִלְיוֹן, אֶפְרַתִּים מִבֵּית לָחֶם, יְהוּדָה; וַיָּבֹאוּ שָׂדֵי מוֹאָב, וַיְהִיו שָׂם.

ג וַיָּמָת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ, אִישׁ נְעֹמִי; וַתִּשְׁאַר הִיא, וּשְׁנֵי בָנֶיהָ.

ד וַיָּשָׂאוּ לָהֶם, נָשִׁים מֵאֲבֵיֹת שֵׁם הָאֵחָת עֶרְפָּה, וְשֵׁם הַשְּׁנִיית רוּת; וַיָּשֻׁבוּ שָׂם, כְּעֹשֶׂר שָׁנִים.

1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.

2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

3 Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons.

4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years,

ה וַיָּמָתוּ גַם שְׁנֵיהֶם, מַחְלוֹן וְכִלְיוֹן; וַתִּשְׁאַר, הָאִשָּׁה, מִשְׁנֵי יַלְדֶיהָ, וּמְאִישָׁהּ.

5 Both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

ו וַתִּקֶּם הִיא וְכַלְתֶּיהָ, וַתִּשָּׁב מִשְׂדֵי מוֹאָב: כִּי שָׁמְעָה, בַּשָּׂדֶה מוֹאָב כִּי פָקַד יְהוָה אֶת עַמּוֹ, לְתֵת לָהֶם לָחֶם.

6 When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there.

ז וַתֵּצֵא, מִן הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה שָׁמָּה, וּשְׁתֵי כַלּוֹתֶיהָ, עִמָּה; וַתֵּלְכְנָה בְּדֶרֶךְ, לָשׁוּב אֶל אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה.

7 With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

ח וַתֹּאמֶר נְעֹמִי, לְשְׁתֵי כַלְתֶּיהָ, לָכֵּן שָׁבְנָה, אִשָּׁה לְבֵית אִמָּה; יַעֲשֶׂה (יַעֲשֶׂה) ה' עִמָּכֶם חֶסֶד, כְּאֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתֶם עִם הַמֵּתִים וְעַמְדִי.

8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me.

ט יִתֵּן ה', לָכֶם, וּמִצָּאֵן מְנוּחָה, אִשָּׁה בֵּית אִישָׁה; וַתִּשָּׁק לָהֶן, וַתִּשָּׂאנָה קוֹלָן וַתְּבַכְיֶנהָ.

9 May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud

י וַתֹּאמְרָנָה לָהּ: כִּי אַתְּ נָשׁוּב, לְעַמְּךָ.

יא וַתֹּאמֶר נְעֹמִי שְׁבְנָה בְּנֹתַי, לְמָה תֵּלְכְנָה עִמִּי: הַעוֹד לִי בָנִים בְּמַעֲי, וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לְאֲנָשִׁים.

10 And they said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands?"

Soul Session: Following in the Footsteps of Ruth — Taking the Next Step (continued)

Ruth Chapter 1 (continued)

יב שָׁבְנָה בְּנֹתַי לְכֹן, כִּי זָקַנְתִּי מֵהָיִוֹת לְאִישׁ:
כִּי אָמַרְתִּי, יֵשׁ לִי תִקְוָה גַם הַיְיִתִּי הַלַּיְלָה
לְאִישׁ, וְגַם יִלְדֹתַי בָּנִים.

יג הֲלֵהֶן תִּשְׁבְּרֶנָּה, עַד אֲשֶׁר יִגְדְּלוּ, הֲלֵהֶן
תִּעֲגְגְנָה, לְבִלְתִּי הָיִוֹת לְאִישׁ; אֵל בְּנֹתַי, כִּי מִרְ
לִי מֵאֵד מִכֶּם כִּי יֵצְאָה בִּי, יַד ה'.

יד וַתִּשְׁנֶה קוֹלָהּ, וַתִּבְכֶּינָה עוֹד; וַתִּשְׁקַע עַרְפָּהּ
לְחֻמוֹתָהּ, וְרוֹת דָּבְקָה בָּהּ.

טו וַתֹּאמֶר, הִנֵּה שָׁבָה יְבַמְתָּהּ, אֵל עַמָּהּ, וְאֵל
אֱלֹהֶיהָ; שׁוּבִי, אַחֲרַי יְבַמְתָּהּ.

טז וַתֹּאמֶר רוּת אֶל תִּפְגְּעִי בִּי, לְעֲזָבָה לְשׁוּבִי
מֵאַחֲרַי: כִּי אֵל אֲשֶׁר תִּלְכִּי אֱלֹהִים, וּבְאִשׁוֹ
תִּלְיִנִי אֱלֹהִים עִמִּי, וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲלֹהֵי.

יז בְּאִשׁוֹ תִּמְוִיתִי אֲמוֹתַי, וְשֵׁם אֲקַבְּרֶנּוּ; כֹּה
יַעֲשֶׂה ה' לִּי, וְלֹא יוֹסִיף כִּי הִמּוֹת, יִפְרִיד בֵּינִי
וּבֵינָהּ.

12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—

13 Would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!"

14 At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

16 But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.

17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

