

# FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE

## CONSIDERING OUR OBLIGATIONS TO JEWS AND OTHERS

### FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

#### NAME TAGS:

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Please ask everyone in the group to wear a name tag. Even if most people know one another, it is important that no one feel uncomfortable for not remembering everyone else's name.

#### INTRODUCTION AND ICE-BREAKER:

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Have everyone give their name, and identify one thing they have done in their lives "for the sake of peace." **OR** Have everyone give their name, and name their favorite non-Jewish holiday.

#### BIG QUESTION FOR THIS SESSION: "WHAT ARE OUR OBLIGATIONS TO JEWS AND TO OTHERS?"

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Part of being a Jew in the modern world is to have multiple identities, and to simultaneously be a citizen of many communities. Jewish tradition is based on a model of a self-governing community, in which Jews are obligated to support one another. But even our earliest Rabbis were not living in isolation; Jews have always lived in and among other communities, and have had to consider what obligations they have to non-Jews. This session will explore how we do and should prioritize our obligation to support other Jews and our responsibilities to others in our local or global communities.

#### OPENING ACTIVITY:

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Supplies: One copy of the attached "But is it Jewish?" exercise for each participant; pens.

- (1) Hand out a copy of the "But is it Jewish?" questions to each participant. The sheet lists a number of different types of social justice work. Ask each person to assign each one a score, from 1-5, according to how "Jewish" they think the activity is. Then have them assign a score for how "important" it feels.
- (2) Once everyone has completed the questions, have participants break into groups of 2 or 3, and compare their answers.
- (3) Bring the full group back together and discuss what they discovered during the exercise. What makes a particular activity "feel Jewish" to them? Was there general agreement or disagreement within their small groups? Does the "Jewishness" of the activity matter to them when choosing what social justice work to engage in?
- (4) It is worth noting that according to our tradition, ALL of the listed activities are "Jewish." Therefore there are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of the exercise is to help participants identify their own priorities and leanings.

#### "JEWISH VOICES"

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Attached is a text-study sheet entitled "Jewish Voices: For the Sake of Peace" that you may use to facilitate a discussion about balancing our responsibilities to Jews and to others.

Here are some things to consider:

- (a) It is customary to recite a blessing before studying Torah.

**BARUCH** atah, Adonai  
Eloheinu, Melech haolam,  
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah.

בָּרַךְ אַתָּה, יי  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתַי  
וְצִוָּנוּ לְעִסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

**BLESSED ARE YOU**, Adonai our God,  
Sovereign of the universe,  
who hallows us with mitzvot,  
commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

- (b) Our tradition teaches us that Torah study can be a source of healing and blessing. You may want to ask members of the group if they would like to dedicate their study to anyone in particular. This is a nice way to help the group get to know one another, and to learn about significant events in each other's lives.
- (c) Depending on the preferences of your group, you may choose to distribute this sheet the week before the meeting, so that participants will be familiar with the texts, and can begin to think about their own responses.
- (d) You can choose to either work through the texts as one group, or to break up into pairs ("hevruta") for an initial period of discussion, and then allow the pairs to share something they learned with the group.
- (e) The ultimate goal of these groups is not for participants to master a particular number of Jewish texts, but to connect with one another. If group members are sharing their own stories and experiences in a way that seems fruitful, there is no need to cut off that conversation in order to make sure you "finish" the text sheet. If you are unsure, you can always poll the group to decide whether it is time to move on.

## CONCLUSION

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We recommend that you wind down the text study about 15 minutes before the end of the session, to allow for a meaningful conclusion. This conclusion may take any shape you wish. Some possibilities are:

- (a) Ask each person to name one insight they have gained, or one question that they are taking with them.  
(b) Ask each person to offer a blessing to the group, drawn from your learning together.  
(c) Ask each person to say one word to represent how they are feeling coming out of your discussion.