

SWORDS INTO PLOUGHSHARES

ENVISIONING A MORE JUST FUTURE

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

NAME TAGS:

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:

Have everyone give their name, and identify one way that the world is different than they could have imagined it 10 or 20 years ago.

BIG QUESTION FOR THIS SESSION: "WHAT ARE YOUR DREAMS FOR A MORE JUST WORLD?"

Jews have inherited a rich tradition that consists not only of stories and laws, but also of prophetic calls to action. We turn to the teachings of our prophets to open our eyes to the reality around us, and to draw inspiration from their visions of a world redeemed. This session will allow you to explore your own dreams for the future, to envision a more perfect world, and to consider what role you might have in bringing those dreams to fruition.

OPENING ACTIVITY:

Supplies: One copy of the attached "If not now, when?" worksheet for each participant; pens.

- (1) Give each participant a copy of the "If not now, when?" worksheet and a pen. Ask them to take 5-10 minutes to answer the questions for themselves.
- (2) Bring the group together and invite participants to share their answers.
- (3) You may wish to ask questions such as:
 - a. What similarities did you notice in the aspirations of your group members?
 - b. How might you support one another in achieving your goals?

"JEWISH VOICES"

Attached is a text-study sheet entitled "Jewish Voices: Swords into Ploughshares" that you may use to facilitate a discussion about the extent of our obligation to offer financial assistance to those in need.

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.

בָּרַךְךָ אֱתָהּ, 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

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.