

# VIRTUE: INDUSTRY

עֲבוּדָה

Avodah / industry

noun / in•dus•try / 'in-(,)dəs-trē  
the habit of working hard and steadily

## Guide for Your Group

### 1 WELCOME

Ask each person to introduce themselves and to share with the group a part of their day or week they would like to bring with them as they begin this conversation, and/or a part of their day or week they would like to leave behind.

As we gather in our Sh'ma group, may we honor the values of our Jewish tradition. May we bring compassion, insight, and wisdom to our learning and conversation. May we recognize the Divine Image in one another, and let that awareness be reflected in our words and actions.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, חוֹנֵן הַדָּעַת

Baruch atah Adonai chonein ha'daat.  
Blessed are You, Adonai,  
who grants us wisdom and awareness.

Before we begin, let's review the brit—the covenant—that animates our time together:

- **Accountability:** I'll show up to our agreed upon times. I'll let the guide(s) know the (good) reason I will be absent. I will also be punctual and respect everyone's time.
- **Presence:** When we're together, I'll be present and mindful. I will listen and share. Life (and our mobile devices) offers many distractions, but I will stay present and engaged.
- **Double Confidentiality:** I'll maintain complete confidentiality. What I hear and say stays here. It means that even when I see group members in another context, like at Temple or in the neighborhood, I will not initiate a conversation on what has been shared.
- **Vulnerability:** I'll stretch myself to be as open and honest as possible with my perspectives and experiences in order to create a safe environment that might encourage others to take risks as well.

- **Respect:** I will remember that all of us are here for a common purpose and I will respect and acknowledge everyone in my group.
- **No Fixing, Advising, Saving or Setting Straight:** I will give each person the gift of true attention without trying to “solve their problem.” No advice unless it's asked.
- **Listening:** I understand that some of us are talkers, while some of us are quieter. I'll be aware not to dominate discussions and to balance how much I'm talking with how much I'm listening.
- **Curiosity:** Judaism is a religion of exploration; of big questions more than answers. I will get the most out of my group by being open to our discussions and the people around me.
- **Ownership:** This is our Sh'ma Group. This is our community to create. While we have guidelines and suggestions, it is ours to shape and form. We will get out of it what we put into it.

### 2 REFLECT ON LAST MONTH'S DISCUSSION/ CONVERSATION

What challenges did you face in pursuing last month's virtue? What are you still thinking about from your last discussion?

### 3 TODAY'S DISCUSSION/CONVERSATION

Compare Ben Franklin's definition of the virtue with the passage from Pirkei Avot. Use the questions below to help guide the conversation.

### 4 MAKE YOUR COMMITMENT

Before your meeting ends, set a goal for yourself for how you can better live that month's virtue. Share it with the group and plan to follow up on how you did at your next meeting.

**Example:** Benjamin Franklin kept a daily schedule to track how he was using his time. Could you try something similar and eliminate actions that are unnecessary?

## Side-By-Side: Ben Franklin and Pirkei Avot

### **BEN FRANKLIN'S DEFINITION**

Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary actions.

### **PIRKEI AVOT**

(PA 2:16)

He used to say, It is not incumbent upon you to complete the work; yet, you are not free to desist from it. If you have studied much Torah, a great reward will be given to you, for your Employer is trustworthy to reward you for your labor. And know, that the reward for the righteous is in the time to come.

(PA 2:2)

Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi said: Excellent is the study of the Torah together with a worldly occupation; for the exertion [expended] in both of them causes sin to be forgotten. And all [study of the] Torah in the absence of a worldly occupation comes to nothing in the end and leads to sin.

(PA 3:4)

Rabbi Chananya ben Chakhinai says: One who stays awake at night, and one who wanders on a road alone, and one who turns his heart to idleness, such a one is liable for [forfeiture of] his life.

## Questions To Discuss

- What do both Franklin and Pirkei Avot say about how we prioritize our time?
- Today, we might call industry by another name, “productivity.” Do you consider yourself a productive person? Do you think our society is productive?
- Is there such thing as a Jewish work ethic?
- How does Shabbat provide an antidote to industry? How do we appreciate both Shabbat and industry as values?
- Franklin writes, “Be always employed in something useful.” What’s your definition of “something useful”? How do you determine what is useful? How can our practice of industry benefit the larger community?