

סֵדֶר

Se-der / order

noun / or•der / 'ör-dər

the arrangement or sequence of objects or of events in time

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: To practice the virtue of order, could you commit to setting aside a couple minutes every evening to organize the items on your desk so you begin and end every day with order?

Side-By-Side: Ben Franklin and Pirkei Avot

BEN FRANKLIN'S DEFINITION

Let all your things have their places. Let each part of your business have its time.

PIRKEI AVOT

(PA 3:16)

He used to say, Everything is given on pledge and a net is spread out over all the living. The shop is open, the merchant extends credit, the ledger is open and the hand records therein. Whosoever wishes to borrow, let him come and borrow. The collectors make their appointed round each day and take payment from man whether he knows it or not. It is on hand, that on which they can rely; the legal procedure is right; but all is ready for the festive banquet.

(PA 3:17)

AND Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah said, Where there is no Torah, there is no civic society; where there is no civic society, there is no Torah; where there is no wisdom, there is no fear of God; where there is no fear of God, there is no wisdom; where there is no knowledge, there is no understanding, where there is no understanding there is no knowledge. Where there is no sustenance (flour) there is no Torah; where there is no Torah, there is no sustenance (flour.)

Questions To Discuss

- The first text deals with order in the business world, and the second addresses broader questions of social order. How are the two ideas of order connected? How do you relate them to Franklin's definition?
- What are some places where order is important in Judaism?
- How do you struggle to maintain order in your life?
- Creativity and order seem to have a relationship. On the one hand, the creator orders chaotic and disparate elements—whether pigments, words, or musical notes—to create something beautiful. On the other hand, many creative types have reputations for being unruly and disorderly in their own lives. What's the relationship between creativity and order?
- What role does order play in a community? Should people keep their yards and street fronts clean and ordered? Why does it matter?