

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

### INTRODUCTION

This book is the second in the Ziegler Adult Learning series. Our aim is to continue to provide high quality, stimulating and challenging materials to enable adults to expand their understanding of the basic concepts and tenets of Conservative Judaism – and to expose them to the thinkers, texts and ideas which underpin our tradition. The audience we have in mind is the questioning adult congregant who might not be entirely familiar with Jewish sources.

The book comprises twelve self-contained adult education units on the subject of social justice. Eleven of them are made up of:

- an essay
- a set of four texts, with questions
- a fifth text for group study
- session suggestions (with alternatives to text study where appropriate)

The final unit has no texts: instead it provides an opportunity for participants to reflect upon and consolidate their learning.

### RESOURCES

For each session you will need:

- the essays (for session 1, essays 1 and 2; for the rest, the essay for the session following to hand out at the end)
- copies of the texts
- materials (paper, pens etc) for participants to record their thoughts (so they can keep the materials in mind between sessions)

For the first session, you might wish to provide participants with materials/instructions as to how to evolve their personal manifesto (see below). You might also wish to provide a ring binder, or a folder of some kind, in which participants can keep the essays and texts.

### SUGGESTED SESSION LENGTH

The suggested length of the session is two hours – see the session suggestions for ideas as to how this breaks down. You can of course adjust this as you wish. Any session of two hours or longer will need a short break in the middle. Participants can look at texts/discuss them *while* they are having a warm drink, if time is short.

### SESSION SUGGESTIONS AND TEXT WORK

- The course has two parts. The first five units are historical/ideological, the next six address individual social justice issues. We suggest teaching the Introduction first, but after that you could skip to the individual issues if you prefer, and finish the course with the history and ideology. We suggest putting the Afterword last, however – it has been designed as a consolidating unit.
- The session notes have been designed to enable you to prepare your teaching quickly and easily, so you might want to read them first. Basically, if you read the essay and have some answers to the questions on the chavruta texts you will be ready to run the session.
- Four chavruta texts are provided per session, with questions to help guide the study. The idea is that you split your participants into four chavruta groups. Initially, give each group one of the texts. When the time comes to report back, give every group copies of all of the texts so that they can study them as their colleagues report on them, and take them home. This technique enables a lot of learning to be covered in a comparatively short time, and has the added benefit of empowering participants to teach each other. Then again, the sessions are packed and the material is rich, so you might want to be selective.
- The sources sometimes come from quite a way back in the tradition. The choices we made are deliberate – a paring back so as to allow your students to come forward to the issues and build their own reactions to them. If you google the term *tikkun olam* you will see that there is a wealth of other material available which can be used even when not mentioned in the session notes.



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- You may wish to use only two, or only one, of the texts for chavruta. You may have materials of your own on the subject of *tikkun olam* which can be incorporated in addition to, or instead of, what is here. The course has been designed to work whatever you decide. We only have one plea – please let the participants interact with the actual texts. Even when they are complex – and some of them are – there is a magic in people studying together which invariably means that precious insights arise and are shared. If you wish to change the questions at the bottom of every text to help focus the discussion, please feel free – they are only suggestions.
- It is entirely up to you what you do with the second part of the session. You can use the fifth text, or come up with something of your own – we give some ideas in the session outlines. We have sometimes made the fifth text one with which the participants might already be familiar so they can look at it with new eyes.
- The material has been designed for adult learners – if you are using it for other audiences, you might find that it needs adjusting. Please feel free to do whatever you need to do.
- The materials are all available for downloading from the AJU website ([www.ajula.edu](http://www.ajula.edu)). Follow the link to Walking with Justice.

### THE MANIFESTO

You will see that at the end of every session we suggest participants work on their personal manifestos. The aim here is to ensure that they journal their thoughts and insights at the end of every session, so they have a record of what they learned. This need not be long – a few sentences per session will still create a good body of material to work with at the end of the course.

The journal need not be in written form, however. You might wish to ask the group to create a story or a narrative which evolves week by week, a parable of how social justice can work. You could add music if you have musical participants (see, for example, our suggested playlist of modern music which you can find on the inside back cover). You could work with collage, with each participant bringing a picture, session by session, to be added to either a personal or a group collage. Bear in mind that if you are using these creative options, you might need to cut down on text work. The important thing is that the manifesto should be meaningful to the participant who creates it, providing a basis for action in the future.

### WIDER USE AND APPLICATION OF THE MATERIALS

Social justice has a practical impact. In putting the course together we have been mindful of how thought might translate into action. The final essay in the course is one way. Another is to intersperse the course with hands-on social justice work, applying what has been learned in the texts to the practical context of, for example, evolving a special needs policy, working with the homeless, and so on. This is a program which will take well to being combined with work in the field.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let us cite the words of the Rabbis from the Babylonian Talmud, *Kiddushin* 40b:

When Rabbi Tarfon and the elders were gathered at a meal in the upper chamber of Nitzeh's house in Lod, they were asked: "What is greater, study or action?" Rabbi Tarfon said, "Action is greater" and Rabbi Akiva's reply was, "Study is greater". The rabbis' answer as a group was: "Study is greater, for study leads to action."

It is our hope and our prayer that the study of the materials in this book will help prompt your communities to perform the multiple *mitzvot* connected to social justice, and in this way contribute to the building of a better world, grounded in the rich soil of Torah.

