

Virtue – Industry

עֲבוּדָה

Avodah / industry

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

Guide For Your Circle

1

ICE - BREAKER

Ask each person to introduce themselves, and to share with the group:

(a) their name; and

(b) a part of their day they would like to bring with them as they begin this conversation, and/or a part of their day they would like to leave behind

2

RECAP LAST MONTH'S VIRTUE

Ask the group to reflect on how they fared with their commitment from the last month

- Did you achieve your commitments around this virtue?
- What challenges did you face?
- What surprised you about the experience?
- Did your understanding of the virtue change over the month?

3

DISCUSS NEXT MONTH'S VIRTUE

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 Ask The Group

- 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?