

ACTION-ORIENTED READER'S GUIDE

Chapter One: ANTI-SEMITISM 101

MODULE 1 (Ch. 1) You are now beginning the section “How Did Things Get So Hard?”

After check-in, break into pairs and each share for three minutes:

- „What has been good about growing up as a Jewish girl, or as a Jew?
- „What has been difficult?
- „What are the earliest messages you remember receiving from your family about being Jewish?

These opening exercises are key to getting to know each other, for laying the groundwork for the rest of the learning and community building. Allow significant time, including for questions after each person shares. And remember to listen well.

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In the whole group, take turns sharing (for several minutes each):

- „Where your people come from, who they were/are, what you know about their struggles.
- „Include your responses to the questions you discussed in pairs too, about growing up Jewish.

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After everyone has shared and answered a few questions, discuss as a group: do you notice any common themes? Any differences?

Action: Pick one or two key themes from your discussion. Pay attention to these in your life until the next meeting. Notice how these themes come alive: journal about them, discuss with others, consider creating a collage or art or a song to bring to the group.

Action: Watch a movie, documentary, or TV show with Jewish content (examples: Gentlemen’s Agreement, The Longest Hatred, Fiddler on the Roof, Azi Aiyma (Come Mother), Yentl, Liberty Heights, Sophie’s Choice, Routes of Exile: A Moroccan Jewish Odyssey, Schindler’s List, The Pianist, Life Is Beautiful, The Partisans of Vilna, The Last Marranos, Yoo Hoo Mrs. Goldberg, Hollywoodism, Trees Cry for Rain, The Wedding Song, Borat, Seinfeld). You could do this with others in the group. See what themes you notice, journal about your responses.

MODULE 2 (Ch. 1)

After check-in, take turns (for a few minutes each) telling any stories or fresh insights about the themes that arose at the last meeting. Discuss as a group.

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Form triads and take ten minutes each to share:

- „What role has anti-Semitism played in your life/how does it affect you today? (At home, school, work, with partners/friends, in political/social groups, on the Internet?)
- „Have you ever been violently threatened or attacked (verbally/physically) as a Jew, or has this happened to any Jew you know? If so, how have you responded?
- „Have you heard offensive statements (possibly masquerading as humor) about Jewish mothers, Jewish American Princesses, Jewish women?
- „What would you like to never hear or read again, as a Jew?

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Discuss in the group what you learned in your triads. Make sure everyone shares with the group what you never want to hear or read again, as a Jew.

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Discuss as a group: how is the Nazi Holocaust similar to other genocides? How is it different?

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Action: Before the next meeting, visit <http://www.christianhegemony.org/> hosted by Paul Kivel. Journal about whatever you learn, whatever it brings up for you.

Action: Before the next meeting, spend an hour researching on the Internet, or reading a book chapter, about a Jewish ethnic minority group (Mizrahi, Sephardic, Ethiopian) other than your own (not Ashkenazi). How has this group been oppressed as Jews from outside the Jewish community? (Note: this is distinguished from racism within the Jewish community, which comes later.) Consider bringing this info back to the group as a poem, song, art, or in another creative form.

MODULE 3 (Ch. 1)

After check-in, take turns sharing your research (from last time) about anti-Semitism against Jewish ethnic minorities/Jews of color. Discuss.

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Discuss as a group:

- „In your life today, where do you see Jews functioning in a middle-role position?
- „Are they representing decisions they are not actually making?
- „Are they targeted as Jews in this role?
- „Do you see ways they are colluding with decision-makers at the top, participating in dominating and/or exploiting other people?

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In pairs or triads, for three minutes each:

- „Compare anti-Semitism with discrimination against two other U.S. groups regarding: physical safety, economic security, communal solidarity.

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Discuss as a group your insights from reading Kivel’s Christian Hegemony website.

MODULE 4 (Ch. 1)

After check-in, share in triads for an hour or more, dividing up the time, each person choosing the questions which most resonate:

- „Do you think that anti-Semitism has been discussed plenty, so you feel embarrassed to bring it up? Are you concerned that by asking others to deal with anti-Semitism you are “draining the movement” of precious energy that would be better used elsewhere?
- „What examples can you remember of anti-Semitism that you did not confront, and why you didn’t?
- „What would you have needed to confront these? Did not confronting it cost you anything?
- „If you have raised issues of anti-Semitism, did anyone say that you were being too sensitive, even paranoid? How did that affect you?
- „If you strongly disagree with Israeli policies, are possibly also ashamed of those policies, do you feel that, as a result, you can’t defend Jews wholeheartedly against anti-Semitism?
- „Do you associate the struggle against anti-Semitism with conservatism? Why?

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Discuss as a group. Remember to listen well and avoid interrupting, to allow for different perspectives without attacking:

- „Have you been part of progressive groups where you felt attacked as a Jew, and/or where you felt Jews were invisibilized, disparaged, or snickered at if anyone raised a “Jewish issue” or brought up anti-Jewish attitudes or behavior?
- „Have you seen signs at peace demonstrations that you consider anti-Jewish? Anti-Israel?
- „What is the difference between these and signs that are pro-peace-and-justice?

Explain and discuss why you think so.

• What examples do you notice of the misuse of the term anti-Semitism, where sincere critiques of unjust Israeli policies are dismissed as anti-Jewish?

Take turns sharing in the group what had the most impact for you in this chapter, and why?

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Action: For the next meeting, journal about, and/or bring to the meeting, music, poetry, art, or movement to share the story of your racial identity. Respond to the questions:

- How would you place yourself on a continuum with white privilege on one end and racism on the other?
- How do you think others perceive you on this continuum?
- Have you been targeted by racism: if so, how and by whom?
- Have you benefitted from white privilege?
- Have you participated in racism yourself?
- How do the above interact with any vulnerability/how safe you feel as a Jew?