

Summary of General Meeting Discussion of the Havurah Book Group

March 16th, 2021

General feelings about Book Group's current functioning are positive. Members of the Book Group appreciate that it as a way to stay connected to others in Havurah, to read things they wouldn't necessarily pick, to listen to and learn about others' perspectives, and to read more fully than they have ever done before. For some, either because of physical distance, or because of lack of mobility, Zoom has been a blessing in guaranteeing ongoing, easy access.

Membership – Anyone who signs up for the email list for HS Book Group is a member. All members can vote on book selections. Members can join discussions of any book they want, without having to commit to reading or discussing a certain number of books. There was agreement that we accept having a few non-Havurah members.

How we choose books - All members as well as HS Cluster leaders and Committee heads can make suggestions about books to read for the next cycle.

Regarding what books are appropriate to select:

Members stated they appreciate the "eclecticism" of selections that have been made.

If long books are chosen, since some members find it daunting to read very long books, the number of pages in each book should be added to the book blurbs so that those who feel put off by it can self-select whether to read it or not. Note, however, that some long books are less dense and qualify as "fast reads," which should be noted in the blurb.

Members agreed that not every book suggested has to have a Jewish theme, and that many issues have relevance for Jews, e.g., the theme of social justice is integral to Judaism.

In making book suggestions, Members should check on the accessibility of the book beforehand, by looking at what is available in the public library and in bookstores. Recent bestsellers may be less accessible, only available in hardcover.

Meeting Time – Members agreed to sticking with our existing fourth Tuesday of the month. At some point it would be good to revisit this with a doodle poll, especially if there is a demographic within the HS community whom we find is excluded by this time constraint. See long-range planning, below.

Meeting Format – Zoom, In-Person, or Hybrid model

There are some members who would not be able to attend if Zoom is not available, and some that prefer Zoom, although they could attend in person.

It will be best to revisit this issue when Havurah has worked through the issue of how/whether a hybrid model would work for future meetings.

Authors – In response to the question whether authors should be solicited/encouraged to attend our meetings, most members feel positively about this, with the caveat that this should be a special event, not occurring too frequently.

Access to books –

- Most members accessible books have been able to access books either through the public
- library or through used online booksellers, like Thriftbooks and Abebooks.
- Our Havurah library will have most of the books we are reading (with the exception that
- some are too far afield from the Jewish focus of the HS library).
- We also have a line item in the Havurah budget this year, and will be able to buy some
- books for members who let us know they need this assistance.

- Books that are newly published best sellers are more likely to be available in paperback form later in our reading cycle and should be scheduled with this in mind.

Should Havurah have Youth Book Group? Consideration is being given to this possibility, in collaboration with HS staff. The group would have the modest goal of reading one to two books/year. None of the members present at the meeting were interested in being actively involved in starting a Havurah Youth Book Group. Deborah Eisenberg-Budner had expressed her interest in working on this with someone from the Book Group previous to our meeting. For the moment, this possibility will be postponed, until the groundwork for it has been laid within the Havurah Middle School/High School. Requests for our Book Group assistance can be further considered at that time.

Note: Since Marjorie and David are looking for **a third Co-Chair for the Book Group** it would be helpful if the third Co-Chair would be someone with a child in school. At the point when we are ready to develop a Youth Book Club, the third Co-Chair could be their point-person. Interested volunteers please contact Marjorie Walters and David Newman.

Long range planning – Stacey Hankin, a member of Havurah's Long Range Planning Committee, has asked whether there is anything the Book Group members would like to include/ask the broader HS community that they would include in their survey.

We would like to know:

- a) Would changing something about the format or meeting time of the Havurah Book Discussion Group enable you to participate in this group?
- b) Would you identify what has stopped you from participating in it presently?