

Study Guide 7: The Corroding Effects of Anger
A CODE OF JEWISH ETHICS: VOLUME I, YOU SHALL
BE HOLY
Rabbi Joseph Telushkin

Getting Started

Reading Rabbi Telushkin's A CODE OF JEWISH ETHICS will challenge you to consider how and why you live an ethical life; discussing what you've read with others will allow you to share these profound considerations.

Conversations about ethics will necessarily get personal as each participant shares examples from his or her life. An open, respectful environment will ensure that you have a lively discussion. Referring back to A CODE OF JEWISH ETHICS as much as possible – bringing your discussion from the personal back to the rabbinic commentaries and contemporary stories in the book – will enrich your discussion experience.

We've provided a series of discussion questions on several key passages in A CODE OF JEWISH ETHICS to help you focus your discussion. You may decide to move through these questions one by one, or you may decide to skip around a bit and tackle questions as they arise. The questions are here to provide a road map, to help you regain direction if your discussion veers off track, and to help you get where you're going: to a clearer, deeper, and more satisfying understanding of Rabbi Telushkin's remarkable book.

In addition to using the following questions to direct your conversation, we recommend that you begin your meeting by introducing yourself to the other members of your group. Why are you interested in Jewish ethical teachings? What do you hope to get out of your discussion? To be sure that each person gets what he or she wants, we suggest this simple exercise:

- Get yourself something big to write on so everyone can see—a poster-sized paper taped up on the wall, for instance, or a poster board propped up against a chair or table.
- Choose someone, maybe your hostess or discussion leader, to write down a word or phrase for each person's vital discussion issue, something basic to remind you of the big idea.

- Then go around the room and ask each person to contribute one *specific* aspect of the reading that he or she would like to discuss—a particular passage, a question left unanswered, a positive, negative, or neutral observation.
- Each time you notice you've discussed a new point from the list on your board, give the person who chose this topic a chance to expand on her question or observation.
- Ask one member to keep an eye on the clock and call time once you have only fifteen or twenty minutes remaining before the end of the meeting. The discussion-board secretary can then check off each of the topics that you've already hit upon and see if there are any big or burning issues still left unaddressed.

Best wishes for a stupendous discussion experience! Enjoy all the discoveries you will make about yourself, your faith, and your world as you read, study, and talk about A CODE OF JEWISH ETHICS.

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THE CORRODING EFFECTS OF ANGER

- There are times when (almost) all of us become angry but we do our best to rein our anger in. As Rabbi Telushkin says, "Uncontrolled anger is... the most destructive of emotions." Read pages 248-252 #1-7 and explore the consequences of allowing anger to overwhelm us.
- On pages 253-255 #8-11, read about the self-destructive aspects of anger and discuss how rage supplants common sense, induces lying (particularly in children), and makes us both unproductive and unhappy.
- Rabbi Telushkin recommends avoiding bad-tempered people. As Jacob remarked, "Into their company let me not come." Negative emotion is volatile and it is difficult not to be affected by it. Read pages 255-258 #1-7 and consider the many ways other people's anger influences our own behavior and how to deal with their anger if it is not possible to avoid it.

- There are times when anger is justified. Read pages 258-262 #1-6 and review the circumstances when not getting angry would be inappropriate. Discriminate between being angry and how to express your feelings without making matters worse.
- We can be in the middle of a raging argument but still answer the phone or the doorbell relatively calmly. This proves that it is possible to control our anger. Using page 262 #1 as a starting point, think of techniques to help us deal with the tendency to lash out.

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