



Instructions for War and Jewish Ethics (2005)

Aim: To show that Israel's attitude to war is governed by the democratically elected government of Israel, a modern humanistic ethical code and instructed by a Jewish ethical code that has developed over the centuries since biblical times.

1. Introduction (Aim: to get the participants to freely consider the breadth of the subject before limiting them to issues confined to printed sources)

The facilitator asks the group the following questions to arouse discussion:

The subject is War and Jewish Ethics. Do these things fit together?
Can there be ethics and war in the same sentence?
Are there ethical considerations or rules in such terrible circumstances?
Is there such a thing as a "moral war"?
Is peace important to Judaism?
What evidence can you show to indicate Judaism's attitude to peace?
If there is a "moral war" how do we know how to act?
Can you think of any cases in Jewish sources, Torah etc. that might serve as examples to how we should act in war?
In what circumstances are you "allowed" to kill someone?
In what circumstances are you allowed to put your own or your comrades' lives at risk in a war?

What types of war situation are there? Is the intifada a war? Are we at war now? Do suicide bombers mean that we are at war? Is the policy of selected liquidations (חיסולים) part of a war situation?

2. We will clarify some concepts on which a Jewish ethic of war is based.

General point: Judaism has something to say about everything including war.

Split the group into groups of 2-3 to look at texts. The texts clarify some key concepts.
**(3 pages of texts: Milchemet Mitzvah and Milchemet Reshut (Appendix I) ,
The value of life (Appendix II) and Pursuing Peace (Appendix III))**

3. Define with the group the key concepts:

- ✧ Milchemet Mitzvah and its conditions
- ✧ Milchemet Reshut and its conditions
- ✧ The supreme value of life, to what extent must we defend it, to what extent are we allowed to risk it, who is a legitimate target for us?
- ✧ The pursuit of peace

4. The IDF Spirit (Appendix IV)

Read the document out (a paragraph per participant)
To what extent does it relate to the Jewish sources?
Do you think it is adequate as a guide to how to act in situations that soldiers face?
If not, how would you improve it?
(If the group has done the dilemmas program prior to this: Who had a dilemma that would be easier to solve had they looked at the sources or the IDF spirit?)