

## **Discussion Questions for Ruth Tenzer Feldman's *Blue Thread***

### **The Josefsohn Family**

- How does the death of Danny Josefsohn influence the lives and perspectives of Danny's mother, father and sister?
- In what way does Papa and Uncle Hermann differ in their attitudes toward the print shop, their wives, and their religion?
- What does Lillian Josefsohn want for her daughter and how does this differ with what Miriam wants for herself?
- Do you think that Miriam's parents were justified in taking her out of school to prepare her for the New York social season? Why?

### **Miriam's Motives**

- Miriam decides that she would rather confront her father at the polling tent on November 5 than let him pass by without noticing her. Why? Does this seem true to her character?
- Suppose Miriam had never known about the anti-suffrage petticoat card. Do you think she would have become as involved in the suffrage campaign as she did? Why? Why not?
- How does Miriam first react to being in the time/place of Moses? How and why does she come to accept that she really did cross the olam?

- If you could change one aspect of Miriam's personality, what would it be? How would that have changed the outcome of the story?

### **Suffrage for Women**

- During the suffrage rally in Blue Thread, Prudence mentions the fire in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory and the strike at the textile mill in Lawrence, Massachusetts. How do you think these events influence the momentum to gain voting rights for women?
- Prudence tells Miriam that the liquor interests are concerned women would pass laws against them if the women got the right to vote. Do you think this is an accurate statement? Why? Why not?
- Oregon and other states in the western part of the United States gave women the right to vote before states in the eastern part of the nation. Why do you think that was the case? How might this have related to the attitudes and hardships of western pioneers?
- Oregon's college students organized a suffrage league for the first time in 1912, although this was the sixth time that woman suffrage was on the ballot in the state. What difference do you think this might have made on the success of the campaign?

### **Life in 1912**

- Kirsten tells Miriam that it's difficult for a young woman to be on her own. Do you think that was more accurate in 1912 than now? Why?

- What influence do you think the sinking of The Titanic have on most Americans in 1912?
- It was considered scandalous in “proper society” in Portland for women to show more than just a hint of ankle in 1912? Yet only ten years later, skimpy dresses of the “Roaring Twenties” were tolerated. What do you think influenced the sudden change in fashion?
- Why do you suppose that Miriam thinks her cousin Albert would inherit the print shop?

### **Life in the Times of Moses**

- Miriam is furious that Tirtzah and her sisters are not allowed to marry outside of their tribe if they inherit their father’s land. But Tirtzah doesn’t seem to mind. Why do the two have different attitudes?
- Serakh tells the sisters that Miriam is a messenger. What kind of messenger do you think the sisters believe she is? Why?
- Why do you suppose the high priest was all dressed up but Moses was not?
- Serakh and Moses seem to be on good terms with each other. Why?

### **The Writer’s Craft**

- How much history should an author put in historical fiction? Would the story have been better without so many facts?
- Suppose Blue Thread were written from Mrs. Jenkins’s point of view. How much of the story could she have told

us? How would the story have been different from the one we read from Miriam's point of view?

- Does the time travel mechanism work? What other way might Miriam have traveled back to the time of Moses?
- The book's prologue takes a scene from the middle of the story. Is that an effective way to start *Blue Thread*? Why? Why not?

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