

# HSI

Homing Shabbat Innovation

## LOVE

### HOST INSTRUCTIONS:

- This guide is intended to be served on Shabbat.
- The language used for participants is guests. This is intentional. The deep questions asked assumes that the host is a friend and that the participants trust the Host and are treated as guests in their home.
- Likewise, the language used for the person leading the Shabbat is host rather than facilitator or leader. Yes, you are to guide the conversation but you should be as much a part of the conversation as you are guiding it.
- The conversations intended are intense and deep. It is up to the host to ensure that the atmosphere is casual but safe and encouraging towards participation.
- Questions posed are a suggestion. Not all questions need to be asked, nor do each set of questions need to be asked. However, the questions set with the main are connected to the theme.
- The host should encourage guests to open up facilitation and ask questions to the group as well.
- There are no time limits for conversation once the Shabbat dinner begins. Conversation should flow freely and not be impeded by time limits. Likewise, If there is silence after a question, that is okay. Some of these texts and questions may take time to process and it's okay to embrace this silence.
- Not all conversation should be centered on the guide. It is ok to veer off-topic. This dinner should be as social as it is educational and introspective.

Serves 5 - 10 guests

## Conversation 1 – To be served with the pre-dinner schmooze

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Start question once two guests have arrived. Continue asking the question to new guests/ inviting new guests into the conversation. Allow talking about the question to continue until max 10 minutes after the final guest arrives.

- **What quality do you value most in others?**

### **Setting the atmosphere – to be served with the pre-dinner rituals (Candle-lighting; Shalom Aleichem; Kiddush; Washing; Hamoitzzi etc. as per your custom)**

Inform/ remind guests that this dinner is not a normal Shabbat dinner - that it is meant to inform deep conversation about beliefs that many hold personal and can only be successful if people both share what is personal, and respect the personal that is shared. Further, that conversation is to be free-flowing and that questions are only a guide – guests are encouraged to ask their own questions based off of rituals, question stimuli, and the answers of others so long as it is a question for the whole table and not just individuals. Additionally, guests should also be encouraged to empower and make space for softer and more introverted voices without singling anyone out.

## Conversation 2 – To be served with Challah and Appetizers

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**Instructions:** *Allow a different person to read each text first then follow with the questions. Allow conversation to continue until the vibe peaks.*

**Stimulus 1** – *More than the Jews have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews.* – Quote by Secular Jewish thinker and cultural Zionist Ahad Ha'am

**Stimulus 2** – *Edgar Bronfman – Secular Jewish Philanthropist*

*'Shabbat, above all, underscores the idea that 'being' is as important as 'doing'.*

**Stimulus 3** – *'The Sabbath Lie' by Yahuda Amichai - Secular Jewish Writer*

*On Friday, at twilight of a summer day  
While the smells of food and prayer rose from every house  
And the sound of the Sabbath angels' wings was in the air,  
While still a child I started to lie to my father:  
"I went to another synagogue."*

*I don't know if he believed me or not  
But the taste of the lie was good and sweet on my tongue  
And in all the houses that night  
Hymns rose up along with lies  
To celebrate the Sabbath.  
And in all the houses that night*

*Sabbath angels died like flies in a lamp,  
And lovers put mouth to mouth,  
Blew each other up until they floated upward,  
Or burst.*

*And since then the lie has been good and sweet on my tongue  
And since then I always go to another synagogue.  
And my father returned the lie when he died:  
“I’ve gone to another life.”*

## **Suggested Questions**

- What did you connect to in these texts?
- What did you find troubling?
- These three writers were secular Jews, meaning they didn’t necessarily believe in the G-d described in the Torah. Can you really appreciate Shabbat without believing in G-d or the story of creation?
- What do you appreciate about Shabbat?

## **Conversation 3 – To be served with the Main**

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### **Stimulus 1 – Leviticus 19:18**

*(18) You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the LORD.*

### **Stimulus 2 – Ramban on Leviticus 19:18**

*The phrase “Love your neighbor as yourself” cannot be meant literally, since man cannot be expected to love his neighbor as himself. Moreover, Rabbi Akiva has ruled that “Your life comes first.” The Torah here enjoins us that we should wish upon our neighbor the same benefits that we wish upon ourselves...Indeed, sometimes a person may wish upon his neighbor certain benefits, but only wealth, not wisdom and the like. But even if he wishes his cherished friend well in everything, i.e. wealth, honor, learning, and wisdom, he will not do so unstintingly; he will still insist on a larger share of the benefits. It is this shortcoming that the Torah condemned. Rather, a man should wish his fellow well in everything, just as he does in his own case, and he should place no limitations on his love...*

### **Stimulus 3 – Sigmund Freud – Secular Jewish neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis**

*“Whoever loves becomes humble. Those who love have , so to speak , pawned a part of their narcissism*

**Stimulus 4** – Verse 6 of Hallelujah by Leonard Cohen – Secular Jewish poet and singer

*Maybe there's a God above  
But all I've ever learned from love  
Was how to shoot at someone who outdrew you  
And it's not a cry that you hear at night  
It's not somebody who's seen the light  
It's a cold and it's a broken Hallelujah*

### Suggested Questions

- After reading these texts, what are your thoughts about love?
- Can you love someone as much as yourself? Should you?
- What is Cohen trying to say about love?
- Is the vulnerability love causes worth it?
- What is love to you?

## Conversation 4 – To be served with Dessert

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**Stimulus 1** – Edgar Bronfman

*'Questioning, arguing, and even outright rebellion is integral to Judaism...Even when the perpetrator is G-d himself, we are invited to stand up, to challenge, to question and even chastise'*

**Stimulus 2** – Stephen Jay Gould- Secular Jewish Scientist

*"Nothing is more dangerous than a dogmatic worldview - nothing more constraining, more blinding to innovation, more destructive of openness to novelty."*

### Suggested questions:

- What are these quotes trying to say?
- Do you agree with Bronfman – Does Judaism allow G-d to be questioned, challenged and even chastised?
- What troubles you about Judaism and why?
- In what ways do you wrestle with your Jewish identity?
- What does it mean to you to be Jewish?

**Compulsory question** – Did you find this Shabbat dinner helpful in articulating your Jewish connectivity?