

## TREATMENT OF ANIMALS SHABBAT

[WITH A VEGETARIAN MEAL]

### 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 makes human beings different than animals?**

**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*

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*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** – Kol Ra’ash Gadol blogger, Hazon Food Conference 2007

*Being a shochet [kosher butcher] is a holy job, but not because killing is holy. It is holy, to the contrary, because a shochet requires an enormous level of ethics and personal integrity to not become accustomed to killing, but to always recognize it for what it is. It is said that the Baal Shem Tov when he sharpened his knife would wet the sharpening stone with his tears, asking, “How can I kill a living creature? Am I better than it?”*

**Stimulus 2** – Moses Maimonides, medieval Sephardic Jewish philosopher

*Since the desire of procuring good food necessitates the slaying of animals, the Torah commands that the death of the animal should be the easiest. It is not allowed to torment the animal by cutting the throat in a clumsy manner, by piercing it, or by cutting off a limb while the animal is still alive.*

**Stimulus 3** – Natalie Portman, Jewish movie star

*I became vegetarian when I was nine because, you know, you watch cartoons and animals have feelings and talk to each other and they’re not ... You think of them as, like, emotive creatures, not as dinner.*

**Stimulus 4** – Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, 20th Century Jewish scholar and contemporary authority on halacha (Jewish law)

*[In regard to the situation in which] every calf is in its own pen, which is so narrow that it does not have space*

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*even to take a few steps, and the calves are not fed the appropriate food for them, and have never tasted their mother's milk, but they are fattened with very fatty liquids...this is certainly forbidden on the basis of tzaar baalei hayim (suffering of animals). Even though it is permissible [to cause pain to animals] in order to satisfy human needs, by slaughtering animals for food, or by employing animals to plow, to carry burdens or other such things, it is not permissible otherwise to cause them suffering, even when one stands to profit from such practices.*

### Suggested Questions

- Do you think it is okay to eat meat if you don't think you would be able to personally take the animal's life?
- Jewish laws pertaining to slaughtering animals in a kosher way are designed to protect animals from unnecessary suffering (tzaar baalei hayim). Do you think it should be possible for an animal to be kosher if it was raised on a factory farm in the conditions described by Rabbi Feinstein?
- Humankind still struggles to show compassion and behave ethically toward other humans. As a society, if we haven't mastered how to treat other humans in a humane way, why should we be worried about animals?
- What are ways we as consumers can uphold the Jewish prohibition against cruelty to animals (tzaar baalei hayim)?

## 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?**