

CBI 5776

Hosts: A Guide for Five Visits



Serving as a host is primarily offering hospitality for one or more friends or couples who have joined you for a weekly one-hour conversation in your home (or a Starbucks or even CBI, where we have made space available). The goal of the hour-long small group is to share. So it is wise to choose a small enough group to allow each person enough time to speak. Consider putting out light refreshments or asking others to bring items to share.

*The following are some suggestions as to how to build on the week's reading of *Increasing Wholeness*, utilization of the "Becoming Growthbook," and the daily quotes. We recommend 30-45 minutes of reflections, enabling remaining time for socializing. Some of the study is in "havrutah" (2-3 people) while other pieces are for the entire small group; similar to the traditional format for the study of Talmud. Encourage group members to bring the "Becoming" to the meetings.*

Thanks for hosting your friends on this shared communal journey.



Week one: Body

“Uniqueness Abounds” (see p.15 Increasing). Provide a basket of leaves from the same tree. Have participants take two leaves at random. Study the two leaves becoming aware of similarities in differences in color, texture, shape, and size. Share what surprised you in taking your time to compare the two leaves. Discuss how we often fail to notice these subtle differences.

Now look at the blessings in our Siddur Sim Shalom, pp. 708-712. Have each person with a havrutah (a study buddy) examine the blessings for ten minutes and pick one that resonates with you. As a group demonstrate how you will use the blessing that you have chosen. And discuss, “What is the spiritual value of having so many distinctive blessings?”

Concluding discussion: There is a midrash, “A king of flesh and blood stamps his image on a coin and all such coins look alike; but the King of Kings put the stamp on the first human and no person is like any other (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5; Sanhedrin 37a). Building on this midrash, Rabbi Joshua Heschel commented:

Is not a human face a living mixture of mystery and meaning? Is not a strange marvel that among so many hundreds of millions of faces, no two faces are alike? And that no face remains quite the same for more than one instant? The most exposed part of the body, the best known, it is the least describable, an synonym for an incarnation of uniqueness.

(Who is Man? Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965), 38-38).

Share reactions to the uniqueness and ever changing nature of the human face.

Week two: Heart

1. Examine the words of the Modeh Ani with a havrutah, discussing the specific selection of words and their meaning.

מוֹדָה (מוֹדָה) אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִּים. שֶׁחָזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחַמְלָה רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ.

Modeh ani le'fanecha- Grateful am I before you,

melach chai vikayam- Sovereign, dynamic and steadfast,

shehe'chazarta bi nishmati- that you have returned my soul/breath within me,

bechemlah- with graciousness;

rabah emunatecha- great is your faithfulness.

Consider discussion in Increasing Wholeness, pp. 41-42).

Some questions to consider:

Why are these chosen as the first words upon awakening?

What are your sensations and thoughts when first awakening?

How might you train yourself to awake with happier thoughts?

Or in this prayer's case, gratitude.

What would be the impact on your day if you began with such words of "thank you?"

2. Give out paper and pens to each person. Have each person make a list of ten items for which they are grateful. Share your list with a havrutah and then share with the group one item on your list that surprised you.

Week three: Mind

A Listening Exercise (Increasing, p. 67).

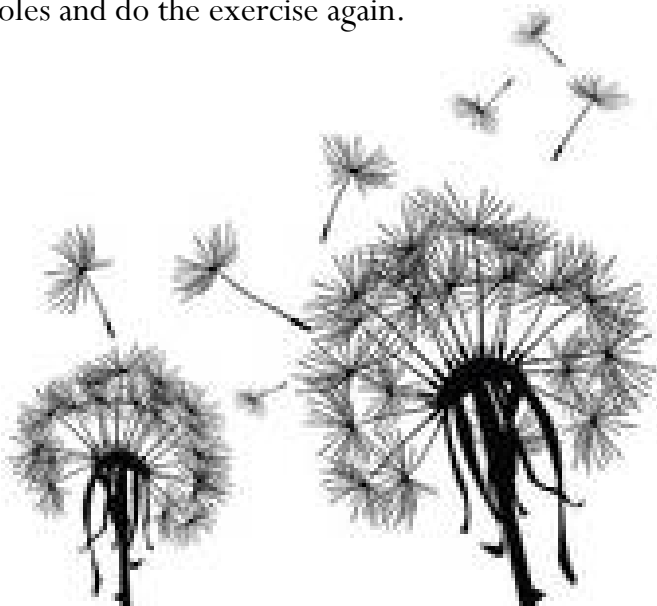
This exercise demonstrates the satisfaction of feeling heard and annoyance when feeling ignored.

Find a listening partner and set a timer for two minutes. You will each take a turn as the speaker and the listener. When listening to the other person do so initially as the model listener: make eye contact, lean forward intently, refrain from interrupting.

After one minute, the good listener will become a poor listener by looking away, whether fidgeting with socks or staring off into space. The speaker will continue to speak for a minute and then stop.

At the end of the two-part exercise, have the speaker share how it felt to be listened to closely and her reactions when the listener ceased to pay attention.

Switch roles and do the exercise again.



Questions to discuss with the group:

- a. How did it feel when a person was really listening to you?
- b. Once they switched and failed to pay attention, what was your reaction?
- c. How did you try and get their attention back?
- d. What does your reaction say about the divide between mind (you knew that they were supposed to stop listening) and heart (your reflexive emotional response)?

Short text study. The Shema.

The most famous line of Torah is “Hear O’Israel, YHVH is our God, YHVH is one. Which is followed by, “And you shall love YHVH, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

- a. Chant the line together.
- b. What associations do you have to reciting these two lines of Torah?
- c. Analyze the words. Some questions to consider regarding this touchstone of Jewish faith:
 - i. Why is the opening verb “Listen,” rather than Believe or Know?
 - ii. If no word is redundant (the premise of traditional analysis of text), why is there a need for God’s name YHVH- and not only once, but twice? It could have simply said, “Hear, O Israel, our God is one.”
 - iii. What does it mean to say that God is one?
 - iv. What is the connection between the declaration of God’s oneness and the use of YHVH (God’s intimate name) and love?
 - v. What does it mean to love God?

Week four: Spirit

1. Exploring God's names. In our tradition, there are many names for God, some in the Bible, others by the rabbis and some folk tradition. Each reveals a different aspect of relationship. See the list below.

a. In Hevrutah- pick three Hebrew names for God that you particularly like and share why. Pick a name that you do not relate to and explain.

b. Discuss the meaning of YHVH? (See p.95 of Increasing) as God's intimate name in the Bible- the one that is the focus of the third command "Do not take my name in vain." What is the reason for such a Biblical command?

Common names:

Adonai - Hebrew for "my lords", from adon "lord, owner".

Ba'ali or Ishi- my husband/mate.

Elohim [El]- God- generic name for God in Near East; also used for a human judge, implying authority over law.

El Shaddai- God Almighty

Rachamim- Merciful One (same root as "womb"- God's mothering dimension)

Shekhinah 𐤌- Indwelling- God's immanence (also a feminine noun).

YHVH- A conflation of tenses (was, is, and will be), suggesting that God transcends time. It is also the name used for God as an intimate name, so only pronounced outloud by the High Priest on Yom Kippur in the Holy of Holies.

Other names:

- Adir – "Strong One"
- Adon Olam – "Master of the World"
- Aibishter – "The Most High" (Yiddish)
- Aleim – sometimes seen as an alternative transliteration of Elohim
- Aravat – "Father of Creation"; mentioned once in 2 Enoch, "On the tenth heaven is God, in the Hebrew tongue he is called Aravat".
- Avinu Malkeinu – "Our Father, Our King"
- Borey – "The Creator"
- "Ehyeh asher Ehyeh"– "I Am That I Am"- offered to Moses at the Burning Bush in response to "and what shall I tell them is your name."
- Elohei Avraham, Elohei Yitzchak ve Elohei Ya`aqov – "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob"
- Elohei Sara, Elohei Rivka, Elohei Leah ve Elohei Rakhel – "God of Sarah, God of Rebecca, God of Leah, and God of Rachel"
- El ha-Gibbor – "God the Hero" or "God the Strong" or "God the Warrior"
- Emet – "Truth"
- E'in Sof – "Endless, Infinite", Kabbalistic name of God
- HaKadosh, Barukh Hu (Hebrew); Kudsha, Brikh Hu (Aramaic) - "The Holy One, Blessed Be He"
- HaRachaman – "The Merciful One"
- Kadosh Israel – "Holy One of Israel"
- Melech HaMelachim—"The King of Kings" or Melech Malchei HaMelachim "The King, King of Kings", to express superiority to the earthly rulers title.
- Melech HaOlam—"The King of the World"
- Makom or HaMakom – literally "The Place", as the whole of creation is embedded in God.
- "The Omnipresent"
- Magen Avraham – "Shield of Abraham"
- Ribono shel `Olam – "Master of the World"
- Ro'eh Yisra'el – "Shepherd of Israel"



- Tateh \neg "Father, : intimate expression in Yiddish.
- Tzur Israel – "Rock of Israel"
- Uri Gol – "The New LORD for a New Era" (Judges 5:14)
- YHWH-Yireh (Adonai-jireh) – "The LORD Will Provide" (Genesis 22:13–14)
- YHWH-Rapha – "The LORD that Heals" (Exodus 15:26)
- YHWH-Niss'i (Adonai-Nissi) – "The LORD Our Banner" (Exodus 17:8–15)
- YHWH-Shalom – "The LORD Our Peace" (Judges 6:24)
- YHWH-Ro'i – "The LORD My Shepherd"
- YHWH-Tsidkenu – "The LORD Our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6)
- YHWH-Shammah (Adonai-shammah) – "The LORD Is Present" (Ezekiel 48:35)
- Rofeh Cholim – "Healer of the Sick"
- Matir Asurim – "Freer of the Captives"
- Malbish Arumim – "Clother of the Naked"
- Pokeach Ivrim – "Opener of Blind Eyes"
- Somech Noflim – "Supporter of the Fallen"
- Zokef kefufim – "Straightener of the Bent"
- Yotsehr `Or – "Fashioner of Light"
- Oseh Shalom – "Maker of Peace"
- Mechayeh Metim – "Life giver to the Dead"
- =Mechayeh HaKol Mohye al Kol– "Life giver to All"

With the group discuss: When do you use God's name- what is the context. What different names in English do you relate to for God. What is your comfort or discomfort in using God's name or addressing God in prayer?

2. A taste of meditation of YHVH. Consider doing the six-minute meditation on youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsJfYi6BEPM>

(Increasing, pp. 96-97).

When you finish the listening, continue to sit quietly for another sixteen minutes, following your breath, allowing thoughts that arise to pass and returning to breath. Afterwards discuss what the experience was like for you and how it increases your connection to the Hebrew word YHVH as a name for God.

Week five: Hand

1. A Hypothetical: Money to Give.

With your havrutah discuss what you would do with \$10,000 if given to you to distribute to tzedakah; then discuss as a group. This exercise allows for exploring priorities in enabling help.

2. A writing exercise: Jot down, “I feel at peace when...” Finish the sentence five times. See what surprises you about the pattern of your answer and share with the group.

3. Consider sharing in the following short meditation: “A Taste of Wholeness” (Increasing, p. 140-141)- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apj-zmHB5KM>. Share reactions with the group.

4. Discuss as a group what you found as the memorable take-aways from the journey to “Becoming Your Best.” What do you individually seek to do to further cultivate the lessons learned? How might you as a group continue to learn together?





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