



**Birthright Israel NEXT Supplement Contributing Authors:** Judith Belasco, Justin Goldstein, Emily Comisar

**Food for Thought Authors:** Nigel Savage, Anna Hanau

**Design Work:** Daniel Infeld, Nadia Schreiber



Birthright Israel NEXT has provided generous support for the creation and implementation of  
*Food for Thought: Birthright Israel NEXT Supplement.*

Hazon gratefully acknowledges support from the following funders who sponsor our food work.

18 Pomegranates  
Anonymous  
The Jewish Education Project  
The Covenant Foundation  
Francis Goldsmith Fund of the San Francisco Jewish Community Endowment Fund  
FJC: A Foundation of Philanthropic Funds  
Lisa and Maury Friedman Foundation  
Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation  
Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund  
The Hadassah Foundation  
Hillel Soref Initiative  
Jim Joseph Foundation  
Lucius N. Littauer Foundation  
MASA Israel Journeys  
Mazal Foundation  
Nash Family Foundation  
Newton and Rochelle Becker Charitable Trust  
Oreg Foundation  
The Pears Foundation  
Rose Community Foundation  
The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life  
UJA-Federation of New York

And thank you to the riders and sponsors of the New York Jewish Environmental Bike Ride, California Ride, and the Arava Institute Hazon Israel Ride, all of whom significantly support our food work.

#### **Hazon**

125 Maiden Lane, Suite 8b

New York, New York 10038

212 644 2332

[www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org)

Copyright © 2011 by Hazon, Inc. All rights reserved.

Hazon works to create healthy and sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond.

*Jewish inspiration. Sustainable communities.*

# Setting the table...

**Hazon works to create healthy, sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond.**

Starting from what's on our forks, we can explore the immensely rich relationship between who we are and how we interact with the world. Where does our food come from? What is our obligation to the workers who help grow, transport, and package it? What do we do with our leftovers? Does being Jewish influence the ethics of our eating? How do we treat those who have less than we do, those who are hungry?

How we eat is an extension of who we are. The challenges of Jewish life and of contemporary life intersect through the prism of food. On one side, what Michael Pollan terms "nutritionism" has turned meat into protein and snacks into energy boosts. On the other side, too many elements of Jewish education seem to have an interior focus; one which excludes or minimizes wider societal issues.

In 2007, the first edition of *Food for Thought: Hazon's Sourcebook on Jews, Food, and Contemporary Life* was published. Since then, more than 2000 copies have been printed and used in college classrooms, adult education programs at synagogues, teen programs at JCCs, on farm trips, and at dinner tables across the US and in England, Israel, Australia, and beyond. In 2011, Birthright Israel NEXT and Hazon partnered to create a special supplement that draws essential texts from *Food for Thought* and highlights the texts' intersection with contemporary food issues.

In this supplement, we hope to raise questions and perhaps help you to find answers, too. Seven different study sheets will allow you to taste the breadth and depth of conversations that can arise when you put Jewish tradition and contemporary food conversations together. Explore ancient and contemporary market manipulation of our food system, consider our sphere of obligation and the role of fair trade, contemplate the role of gardens in ancient cities and the role of urban agriculture today, and much more. Each study sheet has an introduction that provides the overarching framework for the discussion and then a traditional Jewish text and a contemporary text each followed by discussion questions.

The Birthright Israel NEXT Supplement contains a step-by-step guide to help you with cultivating a learning community. If you have never before lead a study group or need a refresher, this section will help you plan an engaging evening of discussion with, of course, tasty snacks. From considering who to invite to how to learn together, this guide will help you to plan for a successful evening.

Whether you began to re-examine your food choices in light of Jewish tradition ten years ago, ten months ago, or ten minutes ago after your last meal, we hope this supplement will give you plenty of food for thought. So find a friend or friends, plan an evening, and dig in.



Although usually translated as “charity,” the word “tzedakah” has at its root the Hebrew word “tzedek,” which means justice. Pursuing justice is a key value in Jewish tradition—so important, that each person is obligated to give tzedakah (charity). Even someone who receives tzedakah is obligated to give tzedakah, which can include, but is not limited to, giving food or money to food banks, emergency food distribution centers, and soup kitchens, to feed those who are not able to provide for their own sustenance.

## Maimonides' Levels of Tzedakah

*Do you agree or disagree with this order? Why?*

*Maimonides was a rabbi, philosopher, and royal physician in Spain who lived from 1135-1204. How might the professions Maimonides practiced impact the levels of tzedakah he established?*

*If you give tzedakah, what level would you place it on? Can you or should you do something more than or different from what you do now?*

There are 8 levels of tzedakah each one higher than the other,

1. The highest of all of which there is no higher is when one takes another by their hand and gives him a gift or a loan or makes a partnership or finds him a job in order to strengthen their hand until they are no longer in need...
2. Less than that is one who gives tzedakah to the poor and they do not know to whom they give and the poor person does not know from whom they take, for this is tzedakah for its own sake...
3. Less than that is the one who knows to whom they give but the poor person does not know from whom they take...
4. Less than that is the poor person who knows from whom they take but the one who gives does not know the poor person...
5. Less than that is the one who gives before being asked.
6. Less than that is the one who gives after being asked.
7. Less than that is the one who gives without a pleasant expression on their face.
8. Less than that is the one who gives with sadness.

*Mishneh Torah Hilkhos Tzedakah Ch 10:7-14*

י קרפ מיינע תונתם תוכלה מ'במר  
ז הכלה

ניאש הלודג הלעמ, זומ הלעמל וז הקדצב שי תולעמ הנמש  
וא הנתמ ול נתנו דמש לארשי דיב קיזחמה הז הנממ הלעמל  
קזחל ידכ הכאלמ ול איצממ וא תופתוש ומע השוע וא האולה  
תקזחהו רמאנ הז לעו, לואשל תוירבל דרטצי אלש דע ודי תא  
דרטצי לופי אלש דע וב קזחה רמולכ דמע יחו בשותו רג וב  
ח הכלה

ינעה עדי אלו נתן ימל עדי אלו מיינעל הקדצ נתונה הזמ תוחפ  
התייהש מיאשח תכשל ונגכ, המשל הוצמ וז ירהש, חקל יממ  
סיבוט ינב מיינעהו יאשחב הב ינתנו מיקידצה ויהש, שדקמב  
לש הפוק דותל נתונה הזל בורקו, יאשחב הנממ ניסנרפתמ  
עדוי נכ מא אלא הקדצ לש הפוק דותל מדא נתי אלו, הקדצ  
נב היננח 'רכ הרושכ גיהנהל עדוי סכחו נמאנ הנוממהש  
וידרת.

ט הכלה  
ונגכ, חקל יממ ינעה עדי אלו נתי ימל נתונה עדיש הזמ תוחפ  
יחתפב תועמה ניכילשמו רתסב ניכלוה ויהש סימכחה ילודג  
נינוממה ניא מא איה הבוט הלעמו תושעל יואר הזכו, מיינעה  
הרושכ יגהנו הקדצב

י הכלה  
ילודג ונגכ, נתונה עדי אלו לטנ יממ ינעה עדיש הזמ תוחפ  
נהירוהאל נילישפמו נהינדסב תועמה מיררוצ ויהש סימכחה  
השוב נהל יהי אלש ידכ נילטונו מיינעה ניאבו  
אי הכלה

לאשיש שדוק ודיב ול נתיש הזמ תוחפ

בי הכלה

לאשיש רחא ול נתיש הזמ תוחפ

גי הכלה

תופי מינפ רבסב יוארה נמ תוחפ ול נתיש הזמ תוחפ

די הכלה

בצעב ול נתיש הזמ תוחפ

## Feeding America

*What level(s) of tzedakah are operating at a soup kitchen?*

*What are other ways we do or could feed those who are hungry in America? How do the different ways of alleviating hunger in America relate to the levels of tzedakah?*

Feeding America's mission is to feed America's hungry through a nationwide network of member food banks and engage our country in the fight to end hunger. In many ways, America is the land of plenty. But, in 2011, for 1 in 6 Americans, hunger is a reality. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 17.2 million children under 18 in the United States live in this condition – unable to consistently access nutritious and adequate amounts of food necessary for a healthy life. With a network of 200 member food banks across the country, Feeding America supplies more than 3 billion pounds of food and grocery products annually.

There is a direct connection between agricultural production, social justice and our relationship with God in the Torah. While we no longer live in the agrarian world of the biblical land of Israel, the underlying issues remain with us today. One practice commanded in the Torah to be followed in the land of Israel is *leket* (lit., gleaning). According to traditional Jewish law, produce that qualifies for *leket* is owned by the poor and anybody else who harvests that produce is stealing from the poor.

### Leket: Gleaning Your Field

*The Torah identifies “the poor” and “the stranger” to signify the weakest, poorest, most vulnerable members of their society. Who in your community or city or country is the weakest, the poorest, and the most vulnerable? How might you help?*

*What do you think our obligation to the poor and stranger could be or should be if we are not producing our own food or if we are producing food but not living in the land of Israel?*

<sup>9</sup>When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. <sup>10</sup>You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord I am your God.

- *Leviticus 19:9-10*

וּבְקִצְרְכֶם אֶת קְצִיר אֲרֻצְכֶם לֹא תִכְלֶה  
פְּאֵת שָׂדֶךְ לְקַצֹּר; וְלִקֵּט קְצִירְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט.  
וּכְרֹמְךָ לֹא תַעֲלֹל וּפְרֹט כְּרֹמְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט:  
לְעֹנִי וְלִגֵּר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

### Reports from the Field: Gleaning Past and Present

*With the spread of urban agriculture, could gleaning work in today's urban areas?*

*How is someone else gleaning for the poor and stranger different than what is described in the Torah? How is it similar? Does it matter?*

Gleaning has been legal in France since the time of Charlemagne, and it's understood that after a farmer has made his or her harvest, what's left in the field is free for the taking. The concept of letting strangers onto your field is much more foreign in the US. Some farmers who love the idea are a bit wary of how it will play out in their fields. Visitors to a farm can step on beds, compacting the soil, or accidentally harvest crops that were not meant to be gleaned. Still, with enough signage and direction, a group of people can harvest a lot of left-behind food. If it would have otherwise gone to waste in a farmer's field, it's an amazing win-win situation: city folks get a day in the country, and food pantries get a welcome infusion of fresh produce.

*Anna Hanau*

On both a global and a local level, our world experiences extremes in access to food. While individual countries experience famine, globally we produce enough food to feed the world population numerous times over. This imbalance plays out on a regional scale as well, where cities may have neighborhoods with plenty of grocery stores and farmers markets, and others that are known as 'food deserts.' In a food desert, instead of having access to healthy, affordable food sources, an abundance of convenient stores and fast-food chains contribute to malnutrition and high levels of obesity and diabetes.

## Vegetable Gardens

*What is the relationship between the list of requirements in Rav's list and the vegetable garden stipulated by Rabbi Bon?*

Rabbi Hezkayah and Rabbi Kohen (said) in the name of Rav: It is forbidden to live in a city in which there is no healer, no bathhouse, and no court which is recognizable and wise; Rabbi Yosi said in the name of Rabbi Bon: It is even forbidden to live in a city in which there is not a vegetable garden.

*Jerusalem Talmud, Kiddushin Ch. 4, 66b, Halakhah 12*

רוסא בר משב נהכ יבר היקזח גר  
אפור אל הב ויאש ריעב רודל  
ויכמ ד»ב אלו קחרמ אלו  
וישבוחו.  
פא נוב גר יב יסוי גר רמא  
הב ויאש ריעב רודל רוסא

## Urban Agriculture

*What role(s) does urban agriculture play in addressing food deserts?*

*In 2008, Los Angeles City Council passed a year-long moratorium on new fast food restaurants opening in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods. Should municipalities be able to stop fast food chains from opening stores in food deserts?*

*How might Novella's farm fulfill or not fulfill the requirement for a vegetable garden by Rabbi Bon?*

I have a farm on a dead-end street in the ghetto. My back stairs are dotted with chicken turds. Bales of straw come undone in the parking area next to my apartment. I harvest lettuce in an abandoned lot... The day we moved into [Oakland], a man was shot and killed outside a Carl's Jr. Restaurant a few blocks away. We heard on the radio that Oakland had been named number one – it had the highest murder rate in the country. When we drove by later, the body was gone and the business of selling hamburgers and soda had resumed.

*Novella Carpenter, author Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer*

Most of us are not in a position to grow all of our own food. There may be tomato plants in a sunny window, or a thriving vegetable garden out back, or a hopeful crop of sprouts on the kitchen counter. But in general, we are a society able to eat food that magically appears at our supermarkets, doorsteps, or refrigerators, and which we've had no role in growing or raising. Even so, the following text from Avot de Rabbi Natan raises some important questions: What is the connection between satisfaction, a place called home, and growing your own food? Is this something we should strive for? And if growing our own food is in fact impossible, what are some other ways we can feel rooted in a place and satisfied by what we eat?

## Grow Your Own

*What is the text saying? Why do you think it uses such visceral language?*

*What might be modern-day equivalents of the three categories?*

Rabbi Ahai ben Yoshiya says: One who purchases grain in the market – to what may such a person be likened? To an infant whose mother died, and they pass him from door to door among wetnurses and (still) the baby is not satisfied. One who buys bread in the marketplace – to what may such a person be likened? It is as if he is dead and buried. But one who eats from his own (what one has grown himself) is like an infant raised at his mother's breasts.

He used to say: During the time that a person eats from what he has grown himself – his mind is tranquil. Even one who eats from that which his father has grown or from that of his mother's or son's, his mind is not tranquil – and you do not [even] need to say [food grown] from that of others [non-relatives].

*Avot de Rabbi Natan 31:1*

רבי אחאי בן יאשיה אומר: הלוקח תבואה מן השוק, למה הוא דומה? לתינוק שמתה אמו ומחזירין אותו על פתחי מיניקות אחרות ואינו שבע. הלוקח פת מן השוק, למה הוא דומה? כאלו חפור וקבור. האוכל משלו דומה לתינוק המתגדל על שדי אמו:

הוא היה אומר: בזמן שאדם אוכל משלו, דעתו מיושבת עליו. ואפילו אוכל אדם משל אביו ומשל אמו ומשל בןיו, אין דעתו מיושבת עליו ואין צריך לומר משל אחרים.

## White House Garden

*What does it mean to have a garden at the White House? What does it mean to have a garden at your synagogue or school?*

*How do these institutions root us? How do gardens root us?*

In March 2010, the White House and First Lady Michelle Obama broke ground on the first garden on White House grounds since Eleanor Roosevelt's Victory Garden during World War II. The garden strives to yield a constant supply of fresh produce for the First Family and White House events. As part of Let's Move! Faith and Communities, First Lady Michelle Obama has challenged congregations and neighborhood organizations to plant gardens in their communities. According to the USDA, there are many benefits to starting a community garden: increasing access to healthy, fresh food; improving soil and water quality; providing exercise for people within a wide range of physical ability; and creating the opportunity to teach about nutrition, agriculture, and ecology. In short, starting a garden can help make real and lasting change in communities.

On average, our food travels 1,500 miles from field to plate, which means that the people involved in growing, harvesting, processing, and packaging our food are not, in a traditional sense, part of our community. And yet their work sustains us every day. What is our obligation to the people who grow, process, and transport our food? With our complex industrial agriculture system, is an obligation to these people even possible?

## Shepherds & Watchmen

*Why are you not allowed to buy wool, milk, or kids from a shepherd?*

*What is the difference between a watchman of an orchard and the owner of an orchard?*

*On whom is this text placing the obligation to avoid the possibility of theft?*

One may not buy wool, milk or kids from shepherds [of the flocks of others]. Nor may one buy wood or fruit from the watchman of orchards. ... [Even in circumstances where it is permitted to buy something,] in all cases in which the seller asks that the goods be hidden, it is forbidden [to make such a purchase].

*Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Bava Kama 10:9 (Mishna)*

אין לוקחין מן הרועים צמר וחלב וגדיים  
ולא משומרי פירות עצים ופירות. [...]  
וכלן שאמרו להטמין אסור.

## Fair Trade

*Does buying produce that may have been grown with unfair labor and environmental practices constitute buying goods that have been stolen? What about them is stolen?*

*How is the stealing done by shepherds and watchmen different to the stealing that is done with unfair labor and environmental practices?*

*How is avoiding buying from shepherds and watchmen and buying fair trade goods both forms of safeguards against stealing when you are buying food that is grown or produced by someone else?*

Fair Trade goods are just that. Fair. From far-away farms to your shopping cart, products that bear a Fair Trade logo come from farmers and workers who are justly compensated. When you buy Fair Trade coffee, tea, bananas, and chocolate, you are supporting the social and economic health of the people and communities who grow them. When you purchase Fair Trade products, the money you spend on day-to-day goods can improve an entire community's day-to-day lives.



Agriculture is the cornerstone of civilization. In the ancient world and today, farms and farmers are an integral part of the economy. Through legislation called the Farm Bill, the US government spends billions of dollars supporting American agriculture. The Bill contains funds for agricultural subsidies and farm relief programs, hunger relief and emergency food aid, environmental conservation programs and other government programs. The way the money is distributed has a direct effect on food prices, which in turn affects diet choices and general health. While the specifics of the Farm Bill's subsidies are modern, economists (and rabbis, it seems) have been contemplating marketplace manipulation since ancient times.

## Vegetables at the Market

*What do you think of each of Rav Huna's choices? If you had the money, would you choose to replicate his behavior or not?*

*How does Raba's comment shed further light on this passage?*

Raba said to Rafram bar Papa: Tell me some of the good deeds which Rabbi Huna did. [Rafram Bar Papa] said To him: [...]

On the eve of every Shabbat he would send a messenger to the market and any vegetables that the [market] gardeners had left over he bought up and had them thrown into the river.

Should he not rather have had these distributed among the poor? [He was afraid] lest they would then at times be lead to rely upon him and would not trouble to buy any for themselves.

Why did he not give the vegetables to the domestic animals? He was of the opinion that food fit for human consumption may not be given to animals.

Then why did he purchase them at all? This would lead [the gardeners] to do wrong in the future [by not providing an adequate supply].

...When he had a meal he would open the door wide and declare, Whosoever is in need let him come and eat.

Raba said: All these things I could myself carry out except the last one because there are so many [people] in Mahuza.

*Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Ta'anit 20b-21a*

## Farm Bill

It's an issue for our time, a \$90 billion per year tax bill for food, feed, fiber, fuel, and conservation... Despite \$3 to \$5 billion paid each year to corn growers in the form of direct payments, marketing loans, insurance, disaster relief, and other programs, US family farmers are struggling... At the same time, nearly 40 million Americans, 12 percent of all households, confront food insecurity, meaning that they often experience hunger or need to skip a meal to get by.

*Daniel Imhoff, author Food Fight: The Citizen's Guide to a Food and Farm Bill, 2007*

אמר ליה רבא לרפרם בר פפא:  
לימא לן מר מהני מילי מעלייתא דהוה  
עבד רב הונא אמר ליה: ...

וכל פניא דמעלי שבתא הוה משדר  
שלוואא לשוקא, וכל ירקא דהוה פייש להו  
לגינאי – זבין ליה, ושדי ליה לנהרא.

וליתביה לעניים?  
זמין דסמכא דעתיה, ולא אתו למיזבן.

ולשדיה לבמה?  
קסבר מאכל אדם אין מאכלין לבמה.

ולא ליזבניה בלל?  
נמצאת מכשילן לעתיד לבא.

כי הוה כרך ריפתא הוה פתח לבביה ואמר:  
'כל מאן דצריך – ליתי וליכול'.

אמר רבא: בולחו מצינא מקיימנא, לבר  
מהא דלא מצינא למיעבר, משום דנפיש  
בני חילא דמחוזא.

*Do you think the government has an obligation to support farming in order to ensure an adequate food supply? To help feed hungry people? Why or why not? Do you think individuals have either of these obligations?*

*What creative policies do you think Rav Huna might suggest if he were the US Secretary of Agriculture today?*

The unintended and unhelpful consequences of our “normal” behaviors are steadily becoming more and more apparent, and creative people are increasingly looking for solutions to our global waste problems. These texts provide no answers, but they do pose important questions and establish a framework for relating to a range of contemporary issues through the prism of Jewish tradition. Food waste is just one of our “stones” – the things we move from our property to public space, that do damage in the world.

## The Stones

*Why does the man laugh? What causes him to change his mind?*

*In what sense is the land that he owns actually not his? In what sense is the land that is not his, actually his?*

Our sages taught:

A man should not move stones from his ground to public ground.

A certain man was moving stones from his ground onto public ground when a pious man found him doing so and said to him,

“Fool, why do you move stones from ground that is not yours, to ground that is yours?”

The man laughed at him.

Some days later the man had to sell his field, and when he was walking on that public ground he stumbled over those stones.

He then said, “How well did that pious man say to me, ‘why do you move stones from ground that is not yours to ground that is yours?’”

*Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Bava Kama 50b*

תנו רבנן:

לא יסקל אדם מרשותו לרשות הרבים.

מעשה באדם אחד שהיה מסקל מרשותו לרשות הרבים, ומצאו חסיד אחד, אמר לו:

ריקה, מפני מה אתה מסקל מרשות שאינה שלך לרשות שלך?

לגלג עליו.

לימים נצרך למכור שדהו, והיה מהלך באותו רשות הרבים ונכשל באותן אבנים.

אמר: יפה אמר לי אותו חסיד מפני מה אתה מסקל מרשות שאינה שלך לרשות שלך?

## Wasteland

*In what ways is food waste an example of one throwing “stones” from land that you think of as yours to land you think of as not yours, and how do we all stumble over it?*

*What are “stones” that you throw away? What are some of the most pressing food issues to you? Do you know how you personally could help ameliorate them?*

Depending on which study you believe, [Americans] squander between a quarter and a half of all the food we produce. Even by the conservative estimate, that adds up to more than 100 billion pounds per year. Since America grows more than twice the amount of calories needed to keep its population fed, what’s the big deal? Why worry about waste?

One reason is that dumping more than 100 billion pounds of food has a financial cost. The last official estimate put that figure at \$96 billion in 1997 dollars... There is also an environmental cost to dumping food in landfills. Allowing food to rot in these giant piles creates methane, a greenhouse gas at least 20 times as potent a heat-trapper as carbon dioxide. Since landfills are America’s largest human-related source of methane emissions, cutting waste can have a measurable impact on the environment... Finally, there is an ethical price to be paid for teaching our children that food is disposable, as successive generations of Americans have done... Because today’s youth are disconnected from how food is grown, processed, and prepared, it is easier for them to squander it. They have been desensitized to waste by the constant sight of food left behind in restaurants, schools, and homes.

Jonathan Bloom, author, *American Wasteland*

When we learn, we acquire both facts and frameworks: new things that we didn't know before, and new ways to understand the world by interpreting things we already knew. With both, our world gets bigger. But there is also the less tangible, but very real, simple joy of learning itself. The setting. The people. The evening spent in discussion and the ah ha! moments of discovery. It is one thing to read a book—and there are many books written on the topics in this study guide, even more extensive than the material we've included here. But it's another thing to learn with others, to use conversation and questions to get from one place to another. You build relationships, not only with what you learn, but also with the person you are learning with. It's the difference between eating alone and sharing a meal with others.

Hazon works to create a health and sustainable community in the Jewish world and beyond. The materials in this book are an important step towards this goal, not just in terms of the subject matter, but also in relationship to the process of learning together, which we feel is an essential component of a strong and healthy community.

The pages that follow address questions of process. The texts will not teach themselves, and teaching risks falling flat if it's presented badly, no matter how compelling the subject. We share our experience with you in planning and holding classes. We hope this information is helpful to you in creating a memorable and meaningful educational experience that is right for you and your community.

## What Kind of Learning Community?

You can use this supplement to host a formal multi-week class (Beit Midrash), a one-day seminar, an evening lecture, chevruta (partner) study, or community gathering in your home or other comfortable location. This section will focus on the latter, a community gathering; for the former items, see *Food for Thought: Hazon's Sourcebook on Jews, Food, & Contemporary Life*, available at [www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org).

## Who? Consider the Group Dynamic

While it might be easiest to gather all your vegetarian friends and discuss the pros and cons of eating meat, if you want a richer experience, you would want to have the conversations with a few meat eaters in the room, too. Hazon always strives to put together a group with a wide range of Jewish background and involvement in the community; a range of familiarity with the subject matter (i.e., in this case, not all “foodies”); and a balance of ages and genders. Learning involves a certain risk, and the more people who feel that everyone there is committed to the group, and that “they aren't the only one who disagrees,” the more they'll be able to engage.

## How? An Overview of the Gathering

We suggest that you plan for a two-hour block of time, which will allow ample time to learn together, schmooze, and eat. Here is a suggested schedule for a 7 – 9 pm gathering assuming about 15 people attend.

7:00 – 7:30	Welcome guests/Enjoy snacks/Schmooze
7:30 – 7:35	Introduce yourself as the host and explain the plan for the rest of the night
7:35 – 7:45	Opening Circle
7:45 – 8:00	Introduce the topic and allow for chevruta (partner) discussion
8:00 – 8:30	Facilitated conversation

8:30 – 8:45	Closing Circle
8:45 – 9:00	Eat and schmooze some more!

## Opening & Closing Circles

An opening circle lets people get a sense of who they are going to be learning/interacting with. It can help to break down some of the shyness and the “I'm not good enough/don't know enough” thoughts that people often have when they come into a new situation where they might (gasp!) be invited to share their thoughts. It lets them share a piece of themselves that may not come up in ordinary chit-chat, which helps deepen relationships. It helps to focus the group on a particular question that will be discussed during the program. And it lets everyone be heard; even if the class will be mainly taught by one person, at least you'll have had a chance to say something at the beginning, and again at the end.

Similarly, a closing circle gives you a chance to say “a last word.” Particularly when a conversation has been energetic, some people may get to participate, and the closing circle again gives everyone a chance to be heard. A closing circle also reminds participants of highlights of the meeting, a sense of “what they will take away” and a chance to see how different pieces affected different people. It can be a chance once again for folks to share something about their personal life. It can also be a chance for you as a teacher to ask for feedback; often people enjoy a session but don't say so, and when you've worked hard at something, it is really important to hear positive feedback, and really important to ask for it. Finally, sloppy endings make people nervous. “Are we done now? Can I go? Will these people keep talking on this forever, should I just leave now?” Avoid participants feeling bewildered or excluded at the end of a session by creating the regular ritual of a closing circle where they can share their thoughts and feel closure.

In either an opening or closing circle, explain what is going to happen first, then pose the question, then indicate a person to start (don't just say, “who wants to start?” because it's awkward when no one does)

If you specifically want the last word, start with someone on either side of you and send the circle around in the opposite direction so it will end with you. Tell people that their answers must be brief. If someone speaks for too long, after they are done, emphasize this point by reminding people to keep it short. Say ‘thank you’ after each person speaks – this will reinforce that this is not a time for discussing, rather for each person to share with full attention from the others in the group. We often advise folks at the beginning, “Don’t spend the whole time thinking about what you’re going to say—listen to what others are saying and your ideas will come to you when it’s your turn.”

Here are some sample questions for opening circles. Remember to always ask people to say their name, and where they are from,” and then you as facilitator should choose one of the following questions:

- \* One meal you liked to eat as a child
- \* One food or meal you like to cook
- \* One thing you always wanted to learn about {fill in topic to be discussed}

Closing circles: if it’s a new group, ask people to re-introduce themselves, and then say one or two of the following:

- \* One thing you enjoyed about tonight’s discussion
- \* One thing you learned or thought that was new
- \* One thing you’re looking forward to this week

Don’t be afraid to cut people off if they are going on and on, though equally, don’t rush people unnecessarily. If it’s a small group, you can give people a little more space to speak.

### Chevruta Study

Chevruta means “fellowship” and refers to a traditional form of Torah or Talmud study in pairs. Two people sit together and read a text out loud, discussing words, sentences, and paragraphs as they go. Chevruta is an intense and provocative way to learn a text because you can engage deeply with a small section of text, and your partner’s questions may be substantially different from your own. The combined exploration of the text can make for a very rich discussion. The two partners do not have to have the same amount of knowledge, although they should be interested in each other’s questions, and in encouraging the other to ask his or her questions.

We suggest that you allow time for people to read and discuss the text in chevruta before having a larger group conversation. The

one-on-one time allows people to really think about the words on the page and perhaps get to know their chevruta partner in a new way. When the group is divided into pairs, ask each pair to start by reading out loud the text and then use the discussion questions to explore the meaning of the text further.

### Facilitated Discussion

For many people, one of the more intimidating things to do during the evening is to facilitate the whole group discussion. You might feel like you don’t have all the right answers or that you can’t handle whatever curve balls will be thrown your way (and there will be some!). To make matters worse, it’s even challenging to gauge whether you’re doing a good job or not.

But here’s the good news: that’s not what facilitating a group discussion is really about. You don’t have to have all of the right answers. You don’t have to lead the perfect discussion every time. You don’t even have to get through all of the material for the evening to be a success.

The main goal is to create discussion. We want to challenge people to think about the topic at hand, and to create a safe environment for people to share their thoughts—to help everyone feel valued about the input they’ve offered. Here are a few suggestions to help you facilitated a good discussion.

Ask open-ended questions. Avoid yes/no questions. You can actually start the conversation by posing one or more of the same questions asked on the text sheet that was used during chevruta. You can also ask other open-ended questions like, what did you find interesting? What did you find challenging? What is a question you now have about the text?

Ask follow-up questions. Some people may default to staying pretty surface-level with their answers, so get in the habit of not letting them off the hook. Ask more questions that follow up on their response. Here are some examples of good follow-up questions for the short/simple answers that people often give: What makes you say that? How do you feel about that?

Make connections to daily life. The Talmud has an interesting discussion whether learning or action is more important. It finally decides that learning is more important “for it leads to action.” The texts discussed might spark individuals’ thoughts about the choices they are making in their own lives. Challenge people to think if there is something they want to do differently in their lives. Ask what does this text have to do with our lives today?



## Food

On the face of it, it makes sense to serve food when you are learning about food. In practice, it is often complicated to do so. People might have different definitions of kashrut or commitments to local, seasonal, or organic food. Food for a whole meal can be expensive and also take up a significant amount of time to allow people to properly sit and eat. However, food can also provide the opportunity for people to try something new. Even if people don't keep kosher at home, maybe the gathering should be kosher, as a way to experience through doing (not just talking). Same holds for organic or seasonal. Even if you're not advocating that everyone who attends the gathering suddenly eats only organic produce grown within 100 miles of where they live for every meal of their life, it can be a powerful educational experience to try it out.

If you do want to weave a meal into the gathering, we suggest you read *How to Host a Sustainable Shabbat Meal* ([INSERT LINK](#)). Even if you don't plan to hold the gathering over Shabbat, the tips and guide is an invaluable resource for any delicious, sustainable meal.

If you don't plan to have dinner, here are a few tips. If the event runs approximately during dinner time, the food served should be substantial enough that people who haven't eaten dinner yet won't feel unnourished or unsatisfied. Hummus and pita is always a good option, as are carrot sticks, chips and salsa, vegetables, nuts, cheese, crackers, grapes, clementines, etc.

Set aside time to eat, and don't necessarily have food available during the learning. This is one reason to start the session half an hour earlier for people to come and eat and shmooze, and then discourage grazing during the learning. The food will be there at the end too. To make sure everyone has enough food, you might want to pass the food around one more time just before you start the learning, then put it on a table outside of the circle for later.

As you make your final shopping lists, just don't overdo it. People are often worried that "there won't be enough." Thankfully, most of us live in a world where there is enough, usually more than enough. Provide a few different foods. If people are hungrier for more than you offer, they'll eat when they leave and maybe even continue the conversation over the meal.

## It's Okay...

It's okay to say, "I don't know" if someone asks you a question you can't answer.

It's okay to share pieces of yourself (e.g., "I thought this topic was very interesting because...")

It's okay to allow for some silence.

It's okay to ask people to read out loud and encourage them to speak up!

It's okay if you planned for 15 people and 5 people show up or 35 people show up.

It's okay to use only the English translations for the texts.

It's okay to be nervous.

It's okay to use the texts and questions as they are presented and not add your own texts or questions.

**Avot de Rabbi Natan** is a commentary on the Mishnah tractate Pirkei Avot and is located among the minor tractates of the Babylonian Talmud. It probably dates from 700-900 CE.

**Babylonian Talmud** (Talmud Bavli) comprises the Mishnah and the Babylonian Gemara, the latter representing the culmination of more than 300 years of analysis of the Mishnah in the Babylonian Academies. Tradition ascribes the compilation of the Babylonian Talmud in its present form to two Babylonian sages, Rav Ashi and Ravina.

**Jonathan Bloom** writes about why we waste food, why it matters, and what we can do about it. His book, *American Wasteland*, chronicles how we waste food from farm to fork and examines the impact of our squandering.

**Novella Carpenter** is an author, blogger, and urban farmer. She most recently wrote *Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer*. <http://ghosttownfarm.wordpress.com/>

**Community Supported Agriculture** (CSA) is a cooperative arrangement between a farmer and a community, in which members agree to pay up front for a share of produce for the entire growing season. Farmers benefit from the secure income, and members benefit from having a direct relationship with the person/s who grows their food, and having access to fresh, local, and often organic produce.

**Feeding America** has a mission to feed America's hungry through a nationwide network of member food banks and engages our country in the fight to end hunger.

**Halacha/Hilkhot** is Jewish law, the complete body of rules and practices that Jews are bound to follow, including biblical commandments, commandments instituted by the rabbis, and binding customs.

**Daniel Imhoff** is a researcher, author, and independent publisher who has concentrated for nearly 20 years on issues related to farming, the environment, and design. He is the author of numerous articles, essays, and books including *Food Fight: The Citizen's Guide to a Food and Farm Bill*.

**Jerusalem Talmud** (Talmud Yerushalmi) is a collection of Rabbinic notes on the 2nd-century Mishnah (Oral Law) which was compiled in the Land of Israel about 450 CE.

**Leviticus/Vayikra** is the third of five books of the Torah.

**Maimonides** (the Rambam) (1135-1204) was a rabbi, philosopher, and royal physician in Spain. One of the most influential Jewish philosophers and legal writers of the post-Talmudic period, he is the author of the Mishneh Torah, Guide to the Perplexed, and Sefer-haMitzvot.

**Mishna** is the Oral Law, which according to Jewish tradition was received on Mt. Sinai with the Written Law (the Torah) and passed down orally through generations. It was recorded by a group of rabbis called the Tannaim from about 70 CE to 200 CE.

**Mishneh Torah** is a code of Jewish religious law (halakha) authored by Maimonides between 1170 and 1180 while he was living in Egypt. Mishneh Torah consists of fourteen books and details all of Jewish observance, including those laws that are only applicable when the Holy Temple is in existence, and remains an important work in Jewish thought and practice.

**Pirkei Avot** means "Chapters of the Fathers." The best known book of the Mishna, it contains a series of aphorisms on proper ethical and social conduct and the importance of Torah study.

**Talmud** is the recorded discussions of the rabbis (Gemarah) regarding the Oral Law (Mishna). It contains both legal material (halacha) and stories (agadah). There are two Talmuds. The Jerusalem Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi) was completed first, by about 450 CE. The Babylonian Talmud (Talmud Bavli) was completed by about 600 CE.

## About Hazon

Hazon means vision.

**Our vision is to create healthy and sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond. We do this in three primary ways:**



**Transformative Experiences:** *Encouraging Jewish people to make a difference in the world, and renewing and reframing their Jewish lives while doing so.*

- **Hazon's New York Bike Ride**
- **Hazon's California Ride**
- **The Arava Institute Hazon Israel Ride**
- **The Hazon Food Conference**
- **Hazon CSA**

**Thought-Leadership:** *Advancing Jewish and environmental conversations, practice and possibilities.*

- **"The Jew and the Carrot"**
- **The Jewish Food Education Network (JFEN)**
- **Jewish Climate Change Campaign**



**Capacity-Building:** *Support of the Jewish Environmental Movement in North America and Israel.*

- \$1.5 million raised through the Israel Ride for the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies
- Over \$600,000 given away from NY Rides proceeds to support more than 2000 projects since 2000
- Hazon fiscally sponsors Jewish Farm School, Wilderness Torah, Urban Adamah, and previously, Challah for Hunger.



## Connect with NEXT

Birthright Israel NEXT helps Taglit-Birthright Israel Trip alumni find or form communities where Jewish learning and celebration thrive. Tell us your story, find what inspires you about Jewish life, and make it your own. We provide grants for Shabbat and Holiday celebrations, opportunities to plan your own community programming, options to travel back to Israel, and a network to help you find your place in the Jewish world.



### Here's a sample of what we offer:

Join the 6,500 community of alumni who have hosted a Shabbat dinner for friends with NEXT Shabbat. With Shabbat meals happening in 48 states since 2008, NEXT Shabbat dinner is becoming a movement! Sign up: [www.birtherightisrael.com/Shabbat](http://www.birtherightisrael.com/Shabbat)



This year NEXT is providing support for Holiday celebrations as well. For an example of last year's Passover program, visit [www.birtherightisrael.com/Passover](http://www.birtherightisrael.com/Passover).



Share your trip experience, photos, or stories about your Jewish community with our blog, Alef. Visit [www.alefnext.com](http://www.alefnext.com), find Alef: The NEXT Conversation on Facebook, and follow @AlefNEXT on Twitter.

Learn Hebrew with local classes and our Hebrew iPhone app, HebrewNEXT (just scan this QR code for a free download) – coming soon to Android!



### Check out NEXT near you:

Atlanta	Detroit	San Diego
Bay Area	Los Angeles	Seattle
Boston	NYC/Tri-State	South Florida
Chicago	Philadelphia	Washington
Colorado	St. Louis	DC

**Learn more. Visit at [www.birtherightisrael-next.org](http://www.birtherightisrael-next.org) and follow @BI\_NEXT on Twitter.**



Want to learn more about what you've just read? Check out...

## Food for Thought

### Hazon's Sourcebook on Jews, Food & Contemporary Life

Learn from Jewish tradition and explore your own relationship to the food you eat and the way you eat it. This cutting-edge sourcebook enables you to look at Jewish texts through fresh eyes—and to apply three thousand years' of Jewish wisdom about food to a broad range of contemporary issues.

**Food for Thought** is suitable for adult education groups, rabbis, college classes, high schools, Hillels, educators—and anyone else who want to learn in serious and creative ways about Jews, food, and the multitude of choices we face today.

Topics include:

- Gratitude, mindfulness & blessing our food
- Kashrut
- Bread & Jewish tradition
- Hospitality and social separation
- Health and nourishment
- Land and place: Local foods and the land of Israel
- Food and Ethics: the implications of what we eat



*Hazon is America's largest Jewish Environmental Group. We create healthy and sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond.*

[www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org)



**Nigel Savage** is the founder and Executive Director of Hazon. He holds an MA from Georgetown University, and learned at Pardes, Yakar, Hebrew University and the Jerusalem Fellows.

**Anna Hanau** is the Associate Director of Food Programs at Hazon. She managed the farm at ADAMAH in 2008 and 2009, and has worked with Hazon since 2003. She is the co-founder of Grow and Behold Foods, a kosher pastured meat company, and holds BAs from Barnard College (in Urban Studies) and from the Jewish Theological Seminary (in Bible Studies).