

# STUDY GUIDE FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS

## GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSIONS ABOUT GOD

Many people are fearful or self-conscious talking about God. There may be concerns that others will judge them or laugh at their ideas, if not out loud, at least to themselves. (Please reread chapter 4: Sex is Easier to Talk About, so you can be sensitive to these issues before leading a discussion group on God.) When you begin the discussion it is important to allay people's fears by setting these ground rules. Read these rules out loud to the group. This will create a comfortable space so people can feel more free to share their thoughts.

1. There is NO one correct answer. Any idea you have about God is right for you.
2. You are NOT allowed to respond to others with phrases such as, "That is a stupid idea," or "How can you believe that?"
3. Keep an open mind, even to thoughts that you previously might have described as "silly," "unbelievable," or "crazy."

## USING THE PERSONAL SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT

Have each person in the group read over and write down their answers to the "Personal Spiritual Assessment." After they are done, go question by question. Ask those who are comfortable, to share their thoughts with the group. This can be the basis to begin the discussion. You can find a printable PDF version of the spiritual assessment and study guide questions [here](#).

## OTHER QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OF PART I: PACKING FOR THE JOURNEY

1. How is learning about God like a traveling on a journey? What parallels do you see? How is it different?
2. Do you agree with the definition of God presented in the Spiritual Travel Guide? "**Whatever it is—any being, force, higher power, idea, ideal, conscience, consciousness, etc.—that inspires you to do *mitzvot*. That is God.**" Does this definition make it harder or easier for you to understand God? What definition of God would you offer?
3. Does changing the definition of God, make it easier for you to believe in or relate to God?
4. Do you believe that to connect to God, you need to find and believe in one particular understanding of how God relates to the world? (i.e. God controls and knows everything; or

God is not a super being; or God is our conscience.) Can God encompass all these different concepts even though they contradict each other at times? Is it easier or harder for you to have many different ideas about how God relates to you and to the world you live in?

5. The Spiritual Travel Guide proposes that to understand God, we need to let go of our educational upbringing, which teaches us that for something to be true and valid, it must make linear and logical sense. Does this concept make it easier or harder for you to understand God? Why?
6. Do you think that believing in God is a requirement for being Jewish? Why or why not?
7. The Spiritual Travel Guide offers a comparison between God and a GPS. Under which of the GPS categories would you find God on your GPS? (Favorite locations, Food, Lodging, Fuel, Community, Hospitals, Transit, etc.) Why?
8. Which of the suggestions in the Spiritual Travel Guide do you think might be helpful for you? (Paying more attention to God's presence, trying not to let routine become routine, making a conscious effort to appreciate what you have, saying blessings, praying privately, praying in community, singing or listening to new styles of Jewish liturgical music, studying more about Judaism and God, etc.) Which do you plan on incorporating into your life?

#### DISCUSSION FOR PART II: GOD QUESTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Assign a different chapter each session for attendees to read ahead of time. After reviewing each section as a group, take time for people to reflect on the questions asked in the "Thoughts to Ponder" which follows that section.