

# Q's to Use from the weekly parsha

open-ended thought questions | ice breakers | Shabbat table discussions | youth groups | find-the-verse game



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## Starting Meaningful Discussion Every Week of the Year

How is this list of questions different from all other lists of questions? There are hundreds of sources for parasha questions. Most educational materials on Jewish values materials include questions for discussion. So why another set of parasha questions? How are these parasha questions different?

Most weekly parasha questions fall into two categories. Some are factual questions—"Who was Abraham's first born son?" "What was the birthright that Jacob bought from Esav?" "How long did Jacob work for Laban?" "According to Rashi, what is connection between shemita and Har Sinai?" These types of parasha questions are extremely important for education and review. The answers form the basis of what it means to know Torah; without knowing the who, the when, the where and the what, it is impossible to know the parsha. But these questions are closed-ended questions; they have correct answers, and there is little ambiguity as to what the answer should be. You reach the correct answer, and that is it. Beyond citing another fact or quoting another commentator who gives a different answer, there is no room for further discussion. These questions also privilege the person holding the sheet of questions (particularly when the sheet has the answers) over those answering them and privilege those who have studied the material over those who have not.

Other parasha questions are middot (values) related questions—"Why did God punish Adam and Chava?" "Why was building the Golden Calf wrong?" "How can one be more patient?" These, too, are extremely important questions that enable parents and educators to use the stories of the Torah to inculcate values in children and students. The problem with these questions is that they tend to be leading questions where there are "good," i.e. moral answers and "bad," i.e., immoral answers. The goal of the questions is to teach proper values, not to open up a discussion where everyone feels free to share their ideas.

The parasha questions below, in contrast, are open-ended thought questions. The questions were designed as a non-judgmental way to allow people to share their values, priorities, and dreams. The open-ended questions provide an opening for people to talk about themselves and connect through conversation. Unlike closed-ended questions, these open-ended questions allow for more involved, personal answers. Because they are designed to validate all participants' ideas, these open-ended questions encourage creative, non-linear thinking, and they will, hopefully, create deeper, more meaningful exchanges between people.

While the questions for each parasha relate to some story or law contained in the parasha, knowledge about the parasha is not required. The questions stand on their own. They can and should allow for different answers, opinions, and solutions. We hope that these questions will encourage participants to open up to the group and invite deep, meaningful, and thought provoking answers. There are many ways to use these questions. They can be used at the dinner table to spark discussion, as a "getting to know you" activity before a meeting, or at a retreat to help deepen the connections between students or staff members. One person can ask the questions or you can take turns letting everyone choose a question to ask the group. Everyone can focus on the same questions or each person can ponder a different question. (Those who have studied the parasha are encouraged to find the verse or story in the parasha that connects to the questions.) Use questions as a jumping off point for your own questions, ask follow-up questions to learn more, and don't be afraid to delve deeply into the conversation. Answering the specific question listed isn't the goal; having an interesting conversation is!



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## Bereshit

What is something that is  
"very good" in your life?

If you were an animal (other than human),  
what animal would you be?

What do you know about your ancestors?



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## Noach

What animal do you wish you could see in the wild?

If the world were being destroyed and you could save seven non-family members, whom would you save?

Do you think banning alcohol would be a good idea?



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## Lech Lecha

Would you be willing to move to another country for the rest of your life if you knew that you would be very successful in the new country?

When two people are fighting over something, what is the best way to divide it or decide who gets what? How about three or more people?



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## Vayeira

What living person would you  
want to host in your home?  
What questions would you ask them?

When has your curiosity gotten the best of you?

What in your life makes you laugh?



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## Chayei Sarah

Do you consider yourself to be  
a good negotiator?

At what age should people get married? Why?

What is the most important quality in a spouse?



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## Toldot

What is the best and worst thing about your place in your family birth order?

Have you ever been tempted to steal something?

If you had to leave home, where would you go?





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## Vayetzei

What is a powerful dream that you have had?

What would you be willing to wait  
seven years to get?



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## Vayishlach

What keeps you up at night?

If you had to change your name,  
what would your new name be?

What description name would you give yourself?  
He/She who...

What is the hardest apology you have given?



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## Vayeshev

What is the worst present you have received?

What does a sibling of your have  
that you are most jealous of?

Who is your oldest friend?  
What do you like to do with them?



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## Miketz

What is the strangest dream you have ever had?

What things make you cry?

When, if ever, is it ok to trick someone?



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## Vayigash

What is one of the most pleasant surprises you have ever had?

If you ruled the world, how would you solve world hunger?



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## Vayechi

Does it matter to you where you will be buried after you die? Have you shared your thoughts with your family?

What blessing would you give the person sitting next to you? What do you wish for them?



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## Shemot

Do you have a secret hiding place?

What traditional name/description of God do you relate to? When you pray how do you relate to God? What name would you give to God?

What parts of your job or school work do you most dislike? What parts of your job do you wish you could spend more time on and what do you wish you could do less?



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## Vaeira

What is a plague in our world and how do you think it could be solved?

Moses had Aaron; whom do you like to have at your side when you have to do something hard?





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## Bo

Are you afraid of bugs? Why or why not?

Are you afraid of the dark? Why or why not?

Moses had Aaron; whom do you like to have at your side when you have to do something hard?



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## Beshalach

What songs would you put on the sound track of your life?

If you had to pick one food to eat every day, what food would it be?



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## Yitro

What is a piece of really good advice  
that someone has given you?

What does honor mean to you?  
How important is it to you?  
What exemplifies honor?



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## Mishpatim

What new rule do you think  
your house should have?



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## Terumah

What is the present that you are most proud of giving to someone else?



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## Tetzaveh

What smells do you really enjoy?

Do you have a morning ritual?

What clothes make you feel at your best?



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## Ki Tisa

If you could custom blend a perfume or cologne, what would it include?

When has someone disappointed you?

How do you fill time when you are waiting?

When has someone forgiven you?

What is one time you received a second chance?



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## Vayakhel

What gift/skill do you wish you had?

How would you like to redecorate your room?

What art project would you like to work on?

What is the most generous gift  
you have ever received?





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## Pekudei

Do you prefer to receive money or a gift? Why?

What is your favorite piece of clothing?

What is holy in your life?



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## Vayikra

What is your favorite thing to cook for other people?

What foods do you like to have at a barbecue?

What are some unintentional mistakes you have made?



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## Tzav

What is an ideal restaurant for you?

What are your bedtime rituals?



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## Shemini

What wild and wacky thing you have done that you wish you hadn't?

Is drinking wine ultimately a good or bad thing?

What food have you never had before that you wish you could try?

What food completely disgusts you?



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## Tazria

How quick are you to go to the doctor when you are not feeling well?

When, if ever, should quarantines be imposed?

When do you wish you could impose a "time-out" on yourself?

Who do you feel is excluded from your community?



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## Metzora

How important is it to you to have  
a clean house?

Do you need to tidy up before you leave  
your room or your house or are you  
comfortable leaving a mess to deal with later?



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## Acharei Mot

What rituals provide comfort to you?

Do you believe that everyone  
deserves forgiveness?



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## Kedoshim

What are the most important things your parents have taught you?

What do you think are the most important qualities of a good parent?

Do you hold a grudge against someone for something they did to you as a young child?

Do you believe in ghosts?

Who is an old person that you respect?





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## Emor

Do you have any physical features that you try to cloak or hide? How come?

What is something that you tend to hoard?

What is your favorite holiday?

Do you have any personal rituals for the beginning of spring?



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## Behar

Would you prefer to rent or own your home?

Do you think that everything should go back to the way it was fifty years ago?



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## Bechukotai

What do you like to do on a rainy day?

If you wanted to curse someone,  
what would you curse them with?



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## Bamidbar

Which of our friends would be most likely to survive in the wilderness?

What household chore is your job?  
Do you secretly enjoy that job?



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## Naso

What are three things that you like that you could give up for a month?

What gift do you wish you could give?

What three blessings would you like to give to your family?



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## Beḥa'alotkha

What is one time you have received a second chance?

What food that you ate as a child do you miss?

Do you think everyone has the capacity to be a leader?



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## Shelach

What is the worst advice you have ever received?

When have you quit because the task in front of you seemed too difficult?

How do you make Shabbat special for yourself?  
What do you do or not do?



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## Korach

What is the worst thing you have done due to "peer pressure"?

Have you ever been near an earthquake?  
What happened?





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## Chukat

Are there any laws or social rules that completely baffle you?

What person who died do you miss?

What is something really bad you have done because you were angry?

Have you ever come face to face with a snake in the wild? What did you do?



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## Balak

What wisdom have you received  
from an animal?

What unintended blessings have  
you received from your enemies?



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## Pinchas

When you are angry how do you calm yourself down? How do others calm you?

How do you respond when you get bad news?

What do you think are important qualities in a leader?

What do you feel passionate enough about to protest?



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## Mattot

Is war a necessary evil?  
What are the rules for a just war?

Is it okay to move far away from your family  
in order to make more money?



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## Masei

Would you like to move somewhere else?  
Where would you like to move?



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## Devarim

How would you summary your family's story in 25 words or less? What incidents would you include and what would you leave out?

What do you know how to do that you could teach someone else?



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## Va'etchanan

What are the miracles that you see in your life?

What advice do wish you had  
received five years ago?



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## Eikev

How do you do God's work?

What is a miracle that happens every day?

If you could only eat bread and one other food,  
what would the other food be?

What are seven foods that you really like?

What have you seen or experienced that you  
would want your children to know about?





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## Re'eh

When, if ever, is it okay to destroy churches, mosques, or other places that non-Jews consider holy?

Should governments make laws to protect people from hurting themselves?

Do you ever analyze your dreams?



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## Shoftim

Do you believe in magic? When have you felt it?

Would you like to write a book?  
What would you write about?



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## Ki Teitzei

What you be willing to do to save  
the life of an animal?

What is a promise that you made  
that you still need to fulfill?

What would you like to be remembered for?



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## Ki Tavo

What gets you excited about the future?

What is the worst thing that you  
could be cursed with?



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## Nitzavim

What are questions that we should now have the answers to? What are secrets that should remain secret?

Who in could be called as a witness against you?

Who knows your worst secrets?



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## Vayeilekh

What is something that you used to be afraid  
of that you are no longer scared of?



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## Ha'azinu

What's your personal anthem or theme song?

When did you last sing for someone else?

What happened to you that you would want your children and grandchildren to know about?



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## Vezot Haberaḳah

What have you inherited that  
you are grateful for?

What blessings would you like to receive?

