

TriBE

SMALL GROUPS AT
 TEMPLE BETH EL

Leader Guide Find Your People

Contents	
Background	
GUIDING IDEAS.....	2
A TEM NITZAVIM: WHY TBE AND TriBE?	3
TriBE VISION	4
THE CORE VALUES OF TriBE	5
WELL BALANCED TriBE	7
HOW TriBEs FIT INTO TEMPLE BETH EL.....	9
WHAT A TriBE IS NOT!.....	10
HOW DO TriBEs FORM?.....	11
Guiding a TriBE	
TriBE LEADER: JOB DESCRIPTION FOR TriBE LEADERS.....	11
HOSTING BASICS.....	13
TEMPLATES FOR A SUCCESSFUL TriBE GATHERING.....	13
TIPS FOR GUIDING YOUR TriBE	14
CREATING A COVENANT FOR SAFE SPACE.....	17
SAMPLE <i>BRIT</i> (COVENANT).....	19
TriBE CONVERSATIONS (ASK BIG QUESTIONS)	20
Ongoing Support	
COACHES AND CONTACTS.....	21
HELP! MY TriBE HAS BEEN HIJACKED!.....	22
ADDENDUM: SAMPLE EMAILS AND HANDOUTS.....	24

Guiding Principles for TriBEs

- “When two people relate to each other, authentically and humanly, God is in the electricity that surges between them.”
- *Martin Buber*
- “...friendship is not in great shape in America today. In 1985, people tended to have about three really close friends, according to the General Social Survey. By 2004, according to research done at Duke University and the University of Arizona, they were reporting they had only two close confidants. The number of people who say they have no close confidants at all has tripled over that time.”
- *New York Times Columnist David Brooks*
- “Why most institutions disturb us so: they regularly treat us more as objects than as persons. We then begin to long for social structures that encourage people to reach out to one another in dialogic concern. Buber terms such a group a ‘community’...Normally this humanization of society takes place quite slowly, by individuals meeting and developing relationships...Then, as we may have experienced on a small scale in work, recreation, prayer or study, we all momentarily become bound up in a unity that does not negate our individuality but fulfills it, not person to person but in mutuality with many others.”
- *Rabbi Eugene Borowitz*
- “Love and belonging are irreducible needs of all men, women, and children. We’re hardwired for connection -- it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives. The absence of love, belonging, and connection always leads to suffering.”
- *Author Brene Brown*
- “The Torah clearly teaches what our own life experiences affirm: We were not created alone, or to be alone. We are part of a larger community of human beings, whose presence in the world adds texture to our lives, individually and collectively. Because we know that we are not alone, we must always be aware of others as we attempt to understand the world and what it means to be alive. As a result, how we see ourselves is often dependent on how we see others and how others see us. Only in the process of recognizing the “other” can we begin to understand what being human truly means.”
- *Rabbis Kerry Olitzky and Rachel Sabath-Halachmi*

Nitzavim: TriBE - Find Your People

Atem nitzavim, hayom, kulchem lifnei Adonai – You stand here today before God. Moses speaks to the people for the last time before they enter the Promised Land. He reminds them of their Covenant with God. He reminds them of their promise to uphold this Covenant, in honor of the past and in anticipation of the future.

Standing on the cusp of change the Israelites *lean in* as they choose to affirm their covenant with God, after a long, harrowing journey through the desert. The text explains that every Israelite stood there: from the chieftain to the water drawers, from the richest to the poorest, the oldest to the youngest, from the leaders to those fulfilling the most menial tasks. All were equal and accepted the covenant equally. This teaches us that standing together in community, in all our diversity, is critical to living a life of covenant.

What are TriBEs?

TriBEs are a multi-year effort to deepen connections with one another, to Temple, to God and to the rhythms of Jewish time and life. We began with the watchword of our faith: *Shema*: Listening. We trained members of Temple Beth El to listen deeply to the diverse voices of our congregants. Hundreds of people met in members' homes and in small group conversations.

What did we hear?

The experience helped us discover both troubling truths and enlightening visions about our community. Geographically spread-out, some members did not realize that they live on the same block with other Temple members. People lamented that they do not have deep relationships. People are frustrated with surface-level friendships. Some people spoke about serving on a committee at Temple or even coming to the congregation for years and feeling like no one really knew them. We heard sadness that people feel imprisoned and fragmented by the broader secular culture of ambition, busyness, and superficial interactions.

We also heard a sense of possibility and optimism. People raved about the small group gatherings. They also spoke about moments of sacred connection here at Temple. Members want to connect with other Jews and build relationships that add substance, support, and meaning to their lives. Jews with deep spiritual practices and Jews with secular backgrounds told us that they want a paradigm shift in congregational life. We heard that people are ready to build face-to-face connections in a digital age and slow down in a culture that often rewards us for speeding up. We heard that people need friends who can be relied upon during the ups and downs of life. People were inspired because the experience was an invitation to share their unique gifts and insights with others. We heard that people are seeking opportunities to grow and to become the best within themselves. Perhaps we also hear a piece of ourselves in these desires.

The Vision for TriBEs at Temple Beth El

TriBEs are regular gatherings of five to fifteen members in people's homes, offices, and other places that promote relationship building. They are led by TriBE Leaders. Some TriBEs will connect around common interests and affinities. Other TriBEs will gather to discuss topics of deep concern or importance to their lives. All will engage in meaningful conversations and learning through curriculum provided by Temple Beth El.

The idea to create TriBEs developed directly out of listening to the needs of our members. Sometimes, we need the anonymity of our robust communal events. Other times, we desire smaller settings in which to grow and share in the lived experience of being a Jew. In truth, we need both large and small gathering moments: to pray, celebrate and learn from our tradition and to experience our Jewish values in personal and relatable smaller settings, where we are seen for who we are, and where we see others for who they are.

Small groups are not new to this congregation: over the years we have had *Chavurot*, Jewish Living Groups, Shabbat Supper Clubs, Torah Study, the choir and much more. What is new, however, is the structure and shared responsibility that we all shoulder in creating a more substantive web of relationships that make up our community and combine to create the Jewish world we hope to see for our future. Therefore, the TriBEs become the intentional connections that we make in order to inspire each other and transform ourselves and our world.

Imagine coming into a group of people who you do not know well. You begin to share yourself with others and open yourself to learning from others. Together you dig into our tradition and discuss big questions of life. You begin to invite each other into your homes with regularity. When you are sick or hurt or need help, the TriBE members will be there for you. When we are celebrating good times in our lives, we are dancing and singing with members of the TriBE. When we are trying to determine how we will live with our values and even make difficult decisions, the TriBE is there for you. When we stand (*nitzavim*), well-connected with each other, we can better care for the well-being of one another.

When we stand *nitzavim*, in support of one another's spiritual growth, we will live better and richer and fuller lives. When we stand (*nitzavim*), we gain the strength to participate in the world's healing. That is the essence of what it means to build a living and breathing community of faith that can strongly face any obstacle. This is the core of what we strive for through Temple Beth El and TriBEs. This is at the core of what it means to be a place where God dwells among us.

TriBE Vision Statement

Imagine hundreds of congregants gathering regularly in small groups to learn and laugh, to rest and rejuvenate, and to deepen connections to one another, to Temple, to the Jewish people, and to the rhythms of Jewish time and life. TriBEs will help Temple Beth El realize this future of a connected, committed membership through the formation of small groups which will:

- Focus on the lives and significant concerns of our members.
- Organize around shared interests, life stages and geographies.
- Feature shared Jewish experiences, learning and celebration.
- Be self-led by lay leaders working in a group dynamic.

What does that mean?

TriBEs are about creating relationships and deep connections that inspire personal growth and cultivate meaning, so we can transform ourselves, our communities, and our world. TriBEs are about developing stakeholders, where Temple Beth El members own their own Jewish lives and feel intimately connected to each other and our community. TriBEs are about small groups of people that are **learning together** through the pursuit of Jewish wisdom; **praying together** and developing personal spiritual practices and inspiring worship that uplifts the soul and connects to God; **Acting together** through ongoing significant acts of loving kindness and world repair; **Playing together** in fun social settings where people can relax, laugh, and be ourselves; **Caring for each other** by valuing and supporting one another in times of joy and sorrow; and are **Accountable to each other** through shared leadership that serves the best interests of the individual and community.

Our lives are at the center of the Venn-Diagram. TriBEs are about the holistic Jewish soul, opening the door to sacred encounter where the relationships developed in small groups help to cultivate relationships, inspire personal growth and meaning, so we can transform ourselves, our community, and our world.



TriBEs are intended to engage Temple Beth El members to become stakeholders and to develop a living Judaism that speaks to their daily interests, needs, concerns and aspirations. We want TriBEs to weave a strong social fabric and a meaningful and living Judaism. We want to be able to hear success stories that people can feel, experience, and touch. We want our members to say:

- My TriBE has become a center of my life.
- My TriBE is a place where I can be myself and it is non-judgmental.
- I look forward to my TriBE and it is worth making time for it.
- My TriBE is like an extended family with connection to others, responsibility for others, and accountability to others.

This is why TriBEs are focused on **personal** and **communal** transformation. On a personal level, we want our members to feel changed, different, less lonely, and unburdened because they are able to share with others, a strong feeling of belonging and connectedness - that our members are not living life alone. We want our members to feel transformed in their Jewish lives through an increased connection to their spiritual selves, the development of spiritual practices and living with Shabbat with the seasons and cycles of Jewish time.

Through small groups, members will experience Judaism as having increasing relevance to their daily lives. After time in a TriBE, we want our members to be able to say:

- My TriBE experience has helped me create better clarity about the meaning of life through Jewish learning and meaningful conversations.
- Everything about being Jewish is clearer: the importance and possibility of connectedness, accountability and responsibility to and for others.
- The increased exposure to Jewish texts and learning has helped me improve my comfort level with Judaism.
- Because of my TriBE experience, I have attended Shabbat services, or holiday worship, a program, or learning experience that I may not have previously attended.
- As a result of being in a TriBE, I feel I have increased clarity about living a Jewish life.

Key Elements of a Healthy TriBE

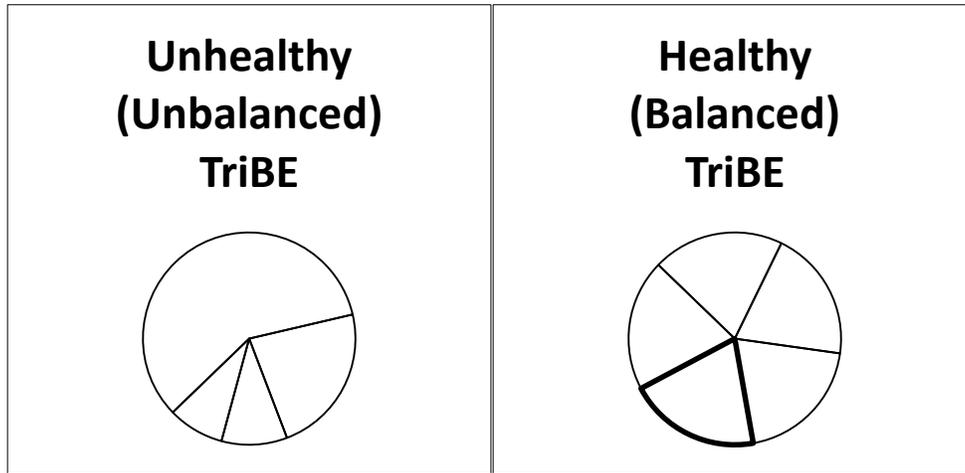
- **Expectations of Members**
 - Meet regularly in a home or in an agreed upon setting that is conducive to creating a safe space.
 - Agree to and observe a *brit* (covenant) with each other.
 - Create real and honest relationships.
 - Have meaningful discussion of provided materials, where applicable.
 - Encourage regular attendance by the majority of its members.
 - Include sharing by all members.
 - Create a place where members are present for each other.
 - Embrace all members of the group.
 - Have fun and look for joyful opportunities.
 - Participate in acts of justice.
 - Celebrate Shabbat, holidays, and life-cycles together.
 - Attend Temple programs or larger gatherings together.
 - Support group members in times of need and celebrate in times of joy.
- **Expectations of TriBE Leaders**
 - Communicate outside of meetings.
 - Tend to the group as a whole.
 - Encourage shared responsibilities.
 - Provide feedback to Coaches and the Core Leadership Team.

Well Balanced TriBEs:

We are a vibrant Jewish community that strives to be sacred, where learning, prayer and deeds change our understanding of ourselves, our world, and our responsibilities in it. For us, community means a sense of warm welcome, meaningful relationships, and mutual responsibility. We seek to bring Jewish learning and values to our daily lives, to nurture spiritual practices, and build an exciting and relevant Judaism that elevates our souls and challenges us to make an impact on a world in need.

To bring this vision of community to life, we engage within our groups in ways that seek to balance many factors: personal vs. communal transformation; sacred time vs. regular time; listening vs. speaking; compassion vs. speaking truth; and balancing time devoted to exploring the variety of Jewish values such as prayer, learning, social justice, and commitment to Israel and Jewish communities abroad. In all of these elements, the key is to continue evaluating the health of the group and its needs. Coaches are great people to consult in these matters.

- TriBEs are about personal and communal transformation.
- TriBEs understand that balancing Temple Beth El's values (learn together, pray together, act together, play together, care for each other, and be accountable to each other) is the key to a healthy group.
- Not every value needs to occur when your TriBE meets. Over time, you should try to seek balance.

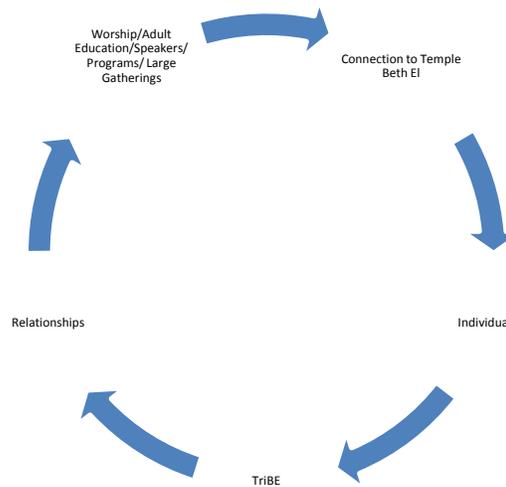
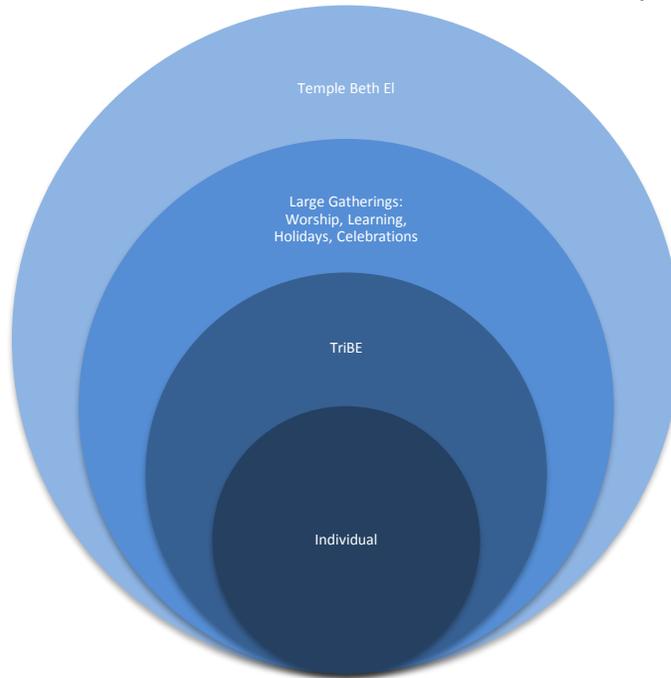


An unbalanced TriBE will focus too heavily on one value to the exclusion of others.

A balanced TriBE will balance learning, praying, acting, playing, and caring for one another.

How Do TriBEs Fit into Temple Beth El?

We see a direct connection between the large gatherings of Temple life and the intimate gatherings in TriBEs. TriBEs are about the lived experience of being Jewish. Shabbat worship, holiday celebrations, lifelong learning and social justice will enhance and deepen the TriBE experience. Likewise, the strength of your TriBE can help lead to personal transformation that will enliven and enrich all of Temple life.



What a TriBE is not

If you want a vibrant and healthy TriBE, you have to be intentional. Aim to balance Temple Beth El's values and remember that a TriBE *is not* the following.

A TriBE is not a class. If a group simply becomes an information dump or an academic pursuit, people will quickly lose the point (and you will probably lose the members of your TriBE). Many of us love learning and lectures. But if the TriBE experience becomes an intense learning space where members are pupils and the *TriBE leader* is a lecturer, you will miss the whole idea of building community.

A TriBE is not a social club. Because TriBEs are not a class, it is possible to swing to the opposite extreme by having a group that is too relationally focused and is not transformational or connected to Jewish learning. In our over-scheduled world, most people shed unnecessary responsibilities. The TriBE that operates as a social club will be the first to go. A good TriBE challenges its members to grow. The social club does not concern itself with that – which is a key reason it is not a healthy TriBE.

A TriBE is not a weekly meeting. Your role as a TriBE Leader is to help create a positive and intentional experience. You will schedule TriBE gatherings around work, kids, and vacations. A group that meets infrequently risks losing its identity quickly. You should work hard to build and maintain relationships. The meeting frequency should not feel like a chore either. It also should not feel like a poorly thrown-together meeting designed around the convenience of the group members. It may be worthwhile to offer a few options from which the group can rank/choose so mutually convenient dates/times are selected.

A TriBE is not just a group of five to fifteen. You can have a vibrant TriBE with three or twenty – it just depends on how you handle the time, how you share responsibility of guiding the group and its discussion. Do not get hung up on the total group numbers. Focus on the experience of the TriBE!

A TriBE is not just “home-based.” We encourage you to *begin* meeting in homes and in settings where meaningful conversations and sharing can occur. **Over time**, as your group knows each other better, the locations may change. Find places that are right for you: homes, a nature trail, classrooms at Temple, conference rooms, are all acceptable places to gather. We hope that your TriBE will also participate in the larger gatherings of Temple life (Shabbat, holiday celebrations, educational programs, etc.).

A TriBE is not group therapy. People in your TriBE will likely share aspects of their personal lives. The discussions will be enriched through the sharing that intimacy and safety provide. Remember, the TriBE is not a time for members of the group to get off-track and describe and discuss their personal problems in great detail. But it is okay for people to share their struggles! Acknowledge pain with silence. Remember, no fixing, advising, saving or setting straight. No advice is necessary. Use the *brit* to encourage people to respect one another and bring their full presence and attention to the group.

Different Types of TriBEs

TriBE Affinity – Find People Who Love What You Love

These are based on interests and needs/stages of life. Current examples range from hiking to Mah Jongg to groups for professional moms. If you cannot find the right fit, please start a new group. We will provide you with discussion materials.

TriBE Local – Find People Who Live or Work Near You

Based on where you live or work (and if you would like to meet people in your demographic), these groups will bring our vision and values to life by learning from discussion materials. Meet your neighbors, know what your Temple stands for, and transform your life.

TriBE Profession

Based on your profession, meet other people in homes or offices to learn, laugh and connect. We will provide you with materials, you will provide the expertise of your vocation. Some examples include gatherings of doctors, lawyers, builders, and teachers.

How Do TriBEs Form?

Any congregant can form a group. If you have a small group that is already meeting, we applaud your initiative and we want to support you. Your group can become a TriBE and we will train a member of the group and share necessary resources so a member can lead meaningful conversations that lead to deeper relationships.

Temple Beth El will hold matching events periodically to help match members to TriBEs. Email Andy Harkavy, aharkavy@templebethel.org or call 704-366-1948 for questions about starting a group.

TriBE Job Description for Leaders

As a TriBE leader you are core to weaving the social fabric of shared belonging by cultivating a safe space and modeling behavior that demonstrates your own openness to the transformative power of community.

Your role will be central to shaping a group - based on the idea that when we are in a relationship and well-connected, we can better care for the well-being of one another. And when we support the spiritual growth and learning of one another, we will live better, richer, and fuller lives.

What is a TriBE leader?

Being a *TriBE leader* means that you are willing to welcome a small group of people into your home or arrange for another suitable location. We do not expect you to be Rabbi Akiva, an expert in Judaism. We do not expect you to be Moses, a professional group moderator and facilitator. You only need to be like our patriarch and matriarch, Abraham and Sarah, who welcomed-in guests and embodied the value of hospitality. You need an open heart and an open mind.

What are your responsibilities as a TriBE Leader?

Once your group is formed you should send them a letter of introduction and welcome and set your initial meeting which should take place in your home. As a leader, you will initially be in charge of scheduling and coordinating the calendar of your group. Your group should meet at least once per month for at least ten months per year. Consult your TriBE Coach with advice on best practices for guiding a discussion.

- Three to five days before each meeting we ask you to send a reminder email to your group confirming time and place. You can use our template as a guide. (See in Addendum: Sample Emails and Handouts (pg. 24).
- At the beginning of each meeting, make sure there is time to *nosh*, say a blessing, review the *brit* (covenant) for the TriBE, and ask a relational question (something to help TriBE members create a deeper connection and relationship). We also ask you to record who is present. This will help us in our evaluations.
- At the first meeting, read through the sample *brit* and determine an appropriate frequency of gatherings. Then, ask if anyone proposes any additions to the group *brit*. Some possible additions: Meeting place? Childcare? Day of the week? Start time? End time?
- This can also be a good time to talk about the fact that meetings will begin on time and end on time and that attendance at small group meetings is expected to be a priority. Members of your TriBE are accountable to one another.
- If someone cannot make a meeting, they are expected to contact the TriBE Leader beforehand. We understand someone may miss one or two sessions, but if absence becomes habitual (three times), it is time to reach out to that individual. Simply calling or scheduling a time to meet and asking about the absences may be enough to find out what is going on. Please be in touch with your Coach so she or he is aware of the situation and to talk about strategies if the need arises.

At the end of each session we ask you to send a quick update to your Coach. You might respond to the following questions:

Who came to the meeting?

How did the group respond to the learning or activity? Did it spark conversation?

Is there something pressing that needs to be communicated to us?

Remember, in addition to your training, each TriBE Leader will have a TriBE Coach. Do not hesitate to be in touch.

Key Ideas for Effective TriBE Leaders:

- Help the TriBE develop and observe a *brit* (covenant).
- Create a safe space and embrace those who are present.
- Schedule TriBE gatherings so that the group meets regularly.
- Provide or organize the *nosh* and the location of the TriBE gathering.
- Facilitate or delegate the facilitation of the learning.
- Encourage shared responsibilities.
- Communicate with TriBE members outside of the meetings.
- Communicate with your Coach.

Basics for Hosting a TriBE at Your Home

(Share this with anyone from your group who hosts)

We encourage groups to meet in one another's homes. It can rotate around between group members' homes. We want to create a space where group members can speak and share openly in a safe space. This is unlikely to occur in a restaurant or public space at first. In order for TriBEs to be effective, members need to feel safe. We are often asked, can we meet at a restaurant? There is nothing wrong with going as a group to a restaurant or grabbing drinks, but best to do it after a meeting or another day. The setting is not right when the TriBE is in its formation stage. Perhaps later, but not at first.

If family is going to be home, it is best if they can be in another area of the home and to ensure that they not walk through your gathering space. We ask that gatherings be kept to those who are part of the invited group.

You may be wondering about snacks or "nosh." You may want to have some light refreshments, but do not go crazy. Different group members can take turns bringing snacks as well. It is important to refrain from alcohol in the meeting to help establish the safe space.

Templates for TriBE Meetings

TriBEs are designed to be flexible. For example, a dinner group could eat and talk/study at the same time. That said, we suggest that you guide the learning **before** participating in a shared activity or affinity. A group based on an affinity may also choose to devote the entire gathering to learning. After a group has met for some time, you may choose to "swap" the learning time for a *tikkum olam* experience once or twice. The point is to create **balance**. If you find that your group is learning, and never celebrating Shabbat or participating in Tikkun Olam, balance it out and create a positive shared experience. We suggest the following templates.

<p>TriBE Meeting Template #1 Learning (90 minutes)</p> <p>0:00-0:15 - Welcome, <i>nosh</i>, blessing, and relational question (to be provided) 0:15-1:10 - Learning and discussion 1:10-1:20 - Planning or conclusion 1:20-1:30 - Schmoozing</p>	<p>TriBE Meeting Template #2 Affinity or Shared Activity (120 minutes)</p> <p>0:00-0:10 - Welcome, <i>nosh</i>, blessing, and relational question (to be provided) 0:10-1:30 - Shared affinity or activity 1:30-2:00 - Planning, learning, and/or schmoozing</p>
---	--

Please note: Not all learning materials will take one hour. You may choose to guide a session for forty-five minutes. Similarly, there may be a learning session that may take longer. You will need to look at the materials and help plan the session accordingly.

Meeting Regularity: How often should my TriBE meet?

As a part of the development of your *brit*, you will help guide your TriBE to create a plan about the frequency of gatherings. TriBEs should meet at least once a month. Greater regularity will help deepen the experience. Some TriBEs will meet weekly. Some will meet every two weeks. The regularity of meetings should be both attainable and worthwhile.

Tips for Guiding Your TriBE

Warm Welcome

We need to remember that some of our members are taking the proverbial "leap of faith" simply by attending a TriBE meeting. Our initial response to their arrival is important. Put their fears to rest by answering the door with a smile. Introduce yourself right away and help them feel welcome. Then take the time to introduce them to others in the small group. Even these simple tactics let newcomers know we are engaged with them and want to get to know them.

Nosh

All TriBEs should offer light snacks and beverages. There is natural bonding that occurs over chocolate chip cookies and tea. The casual conversation that occurs breaks down some of the fears for the newcomer. It also enhances relationships that are currently in place, allowing members to talk about their lives. A simple snack and drink can allow for great discussion and opportunities to get to know one another.

Blessing, *Brit*, and Check-In

Once people have had the opportunity to mingle, mobilize the group with a blessing. Emphasize the shared *brit*, which will be included in the learning materials. Then, do a relational question. The blessing, *brit*, and check-in should take no more than ten to fifteen minutes.

Start with a Blessing.

Blessing:

As we gather in our TriBE, may we honor the values of our Jewish tradition. May we bring compassion, insight, and wisdom to our presence with each other through learning and dialogue. May we recognize the Divine Image in one another, and let that awareness be reflected in our words and actions.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzi-vanu la'asok b'tzorkhay tzibur.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of All, who has made us holy with your *mitzvot* and instructed us to engage deeply with our community.

Brit: Read the *brit* aloud or in silence as a reminder of the importance of these intentions and the ground-rules.

Check-in:

If you do not build the relationships within the group, you will not have a group for long. A few years ago, Gallup conducted research on the health of faith communities. One of the important factors that contributed to enthusiasm for faith communities was friendship. The research showed that when people have friends – people who call you when you are absent, ask how you are doing spiritually, and encourage you – they were more likely to have strong commitments to their faith and to their congregation. Present relational questions and encourage each person to speak for up to one minute. Please model this for the members of the group. There should be no interruptions or questions.

Example for first session: At the beginning of the first session, say your name and the name of the person who spoke before you then tell the group who would be proud of you for committing to be a member of the TriBE and why that person would be proud.

Examples for subsequent sessions:

- A positive thing that happened to you this past week/month.
- Something that you read or learned recently that energized you.
- If you could go back to any age, which would you choose and why?
- If you could have dinner with a deceased family member, who would it be and why?

These questions may seem silly, but they help open the door to connect members. These questions can also help you know where your members are spiritually and personally. We will post more relational questions on the Temple Beth El website.

Personal updates

Before beginning the discussion, ask the group if there is anybody to whom they would like to dedicate their learning this week.

Examples:

- If it is the *yartzheit* of a family member or friend, the study could be in memory of that person.
- If a family member or friend is ill, the study could be in honor of the healing of that person.
- If there is a family birthday or other *simcha* (happy occasion) that week, the study could be in honor of that person or occasion.

The learning could be in honor or memory of more than one person on any given week. This is a way to stay informed of major milestones in the lives of the people in the group. This is not the time to ask questions or give advice. Simply acknowledge the request before beginning. If there is no dedication, that is fine.

Learning and/or Affinity - Be Aware of What People Are Looking for in a TriBE

- Do I fit here? This is a question of **acceptance**.
- Does anyone want to know me? This is a question of **friendship**.
- Am I needed? This is a question of **value**.
- What is the advantage of joining a group? This is a question of **benefit**.
- What is required of joining a TriBE? This is a question of **requirement**.

1. Other Keys to Success

- Be comfortable with silence and quiet.
- Give affirmation.
- Involve everyone.
- Leave sarcasm aside.
- Challenge everyone in the group to share ownership.

2. Shared Ownership

There are many ways to share ownership of a TriBE. Here are a few examples:

- Create a schedule for hosting, where each meeting is held in another group member's home.
- Ask members to sign up to be responsible for nosh.
- Lead the first few learning sessions and then invite others to lead the learning as well.
- After a few sessions, ask someone else to be responsible for communication between sessions (reminders about meeting locations and times).

Creating a Covenant for Safe Space¹

TriBEs are designed to be a **safe space** in which we respect each other's soul. We neither invade nor disregard each person's inner life. We desire to make each other feel valued and supported.

Safe spaces are rare today. Safe space enables us to let down our guard, without concern that we will be wounded or neglected. Safe space permits us to explore the unknown without fear of not having answers for ourselves. Safe space allows us to embrace our questions.

We want TriBEs to create space for emotional expression and honesty. Thus, safe space is an essential component of TriBE. The safe space we create in our TriBE will allow us to speak from our inner voice.

With safe space there is no:

- Cynicism or judging.
- Disregarding.
- Attacking or criticizing.
- Need to be defensive.

With safe space people can:

- Deeply listen to one another.
- Value each individual's unique decisions and paths.
- Guard the privacy and integrity of each other's inner life.
- Express successes and failures, dreams and anxieties, momentous and embarrassing moments.
- Share words and solitude with similar equanimity.

In order to help create a safe environment, we ask each group to develop a ***brit***, a covenant (a contract with each other). We have provided a sample. Please feel free to utilize the covenant provided or to amend it to what is right for your TriBE. The key is that each member agrees to the covenant.

¹ Excerpted and borrowed heavily from Ayekah and Central Synagogue.

Questions to consider in the creation of your TriBE *Brit*

1) How often do we want to meet?

We suggest that the TriBE meets at least once a month. Greater regularity will help deepen the experience. Some TriBEs will meet weekly. Some will meet every two weeks. At your first meeting, please create a plan with your group about how often and when you want to meet. It should be attainable. The organization of logistics (where, when, who is bringing nosh) does not need to be included in the *brit* itself. Please be clear about how often you want to meet in your covenant, so that members of the group can hold each other accountable.

2) How do we balance learning with schmoozing?

TriBEs are designed to be transformational. Our goal is to focus on the lives of our members, organize around shared interests, and feature shared Jewish learning and celebration. Groups need to balance all of these things. Indeed, our experience has taught us that groups do not succeed when they focus only on schmoozing, learning, or a shared affinity. The learning content has been created to allow for anyone to lead it, regardless of experience. If your group is meeting more than once a month, plan on learning at one of the sessions. If your group is meeting only once a month, plan on learning at each session, but plan the session for a longer period of time.

3) What is not included in the *brit* that is right for your group?

The *brit* is designed to help create a safe space for listening, learning, and sharing. But the *brit* is not all encompassing and is fluid. Please feel free to add to it based on what the group members decide. At the same time, please make sure to consider all of the aspects of the *brit* and how the document can help each person commit to the TriBE.

4) Additional Questions that do not need to be included in the *Brit*:

- Meeting place?
- Childcare? Do parents want to share childcare?
- Day of the week? Start-time? End-Time?
- Frequency of Meetings (once or twice per month?)
- Pets?
- Allergies?

בְּרִית
Brit for TriBEs

Accountability: I will show up at our agreed upon times: (weekly, bi-weekly, tri-weekly, monthly). I will let the TriBE Leader know the (good) reason I will be absent. I will also be punctual and respect everyone's time.

Presence: When we are together, I will be present and mindful. I will listen and share. Life (and our mobile devices) offers many distractions, but I will stay present and engaged.

Confidentiality and Privacy: I will maintain complete confidentiality. What I hear and say stays here and remains private. Refrain from gossip (*Lashon Hara*).

Vulnerability: I will stretch myself to be as open and honest as possible with my perspectives and experiences in order to create a safe environment that might encourage others to take risks as well.

Respect: I will remember that all of us are here for a common purpose and I will respect and acknowledge everyone in my group.

No Fixing, Advising, Saving or Setting Straight: I will give each person the gift of true attention without trying to “solve their problem.”

Listening: I understand that some of us are talkers, while some of us are quieter. I will be aware not to dominate discussions and to balance how much I am talking with how much I am listening.

Curiosity: Judaism is a religion of exploration; of big questions more than answers. I will get the most out of my group by being open to our discussions and the people around me.

Shared Ownership: This is our TriBE. This is our community to create. While we have guidelines and suggestions, it is our responsibility to shape and form. We will get out of it what we put into it.

TriBE Conversations

Temple Beth El has partnered with Ask Big Questions and the Union for Reform Judaism to develop a dynamic curriculum for meaningful conversations with step-by-step instructions that will help you to guide your TriBE.

Why “Ask Big Questions?”

The leadership team of Ask Big Questions has trained thousands of young adults to convene dynamic, thought provoking and meaningful conversations. Their discussion guides and handouts are designed for everyone, no matter your experience level.

Why Big Questions?

Big questions are concerned with topics that matter to all of us, regardless of our gender, sexual orientation, and personal or political beliefs. Each session will include Jewish and secular texts and discussion questions. Through these conversations, we can better understand each other, ourselves, and make the world a better place.

Big questions are different than hard questions. Hard questions rely on expertise and lead to debates. Big questions rely on the wisdom and experience that the members of your TriBE already possess. Big questions matter to most people, lead to meaningful conversations, and everyone can answer.

Your Role:

- Attend a training session on how to use the learning guides.
- Make sure TriBE members have hard copies or digital formats.
- Encourage members to bring something to write on and something to write with.
- Model learning and listening.
- Have fun.

Sample Questions:

- What are you thankful for?
- How do you recharge?
- What does the world need from you?
- What have you learned so far?
- Where do you feel at home?
- What will your legacy be?
- When are you satisfied?
- For whom are we responsible?

TriBE Coaches

Each TriBE Leader will be assigned a TriBE Coach. Coaches will initially be selected from the TriBE Leadership Team. They will each be asked to serve one year and to coach or mentor three to five TriBEs. Mentoring will encompass the following responsibilities:

- Check in between Coach and TriBE Leader after meetings.
- Discussions of challenges and successes in groups.
- Advise TriBE Leaders as necessary.
- Suggest techniques to maintain or establish balance in group meetings.
- Suggest ideas for managing all kinds of group members so that everyone is listened to, heard and actively participating.
- Periodically meet with other TriBE Leaders with the same Coach.
- Periodically meet with other Coaches and TriBE Leaders in the TriBE community.
- Provide feedback regularly to TriBE Leadership Team

Coaches will regularly report to and work with Joy Miller, Janette Schwartz, and Andy Harkavy.

Questions about TriBE? Contact Us!

Chairs of Small Group Initiative

Joy Miller (joygirl@bellsouth.net)

Janette Schwartz (janetted727@gmail.com)

Coaches

You will receive your TriBE Coach's contact information after your TriBE is formed.

Staff

Andy Harkavy (aharkavy@templebethel.org)

Rabbi Asher Knight (aknight@templebethel.org)

Pastoral Concerns - If pastoral concerns arise and need clergy attention, please contact Liz Cicirello, Rabbi Knight's administrative assistant, ecicirello@templebethel.org. You may also contact Rabbi Asher Knight at aknight@templebethel.org.

Help! My TriBE Has Been Hijacked!

Four common hijackers and ways to respond.

It is possible for TriBEs to be dominated by one or more people. During every session, it is always good to re-emphasize the *Brit*. The *Brit* emphasizes the key elements that help make a safe space. Here are four additional TriBE “hijacker” personalities and how to deal with them:

The Talking Hijacker

This is the person who answers every question before anyone else can respond. While most of the members of the TriBE are still pondering the question, the talking hijacker is spurting out a response. Although you may be grateful for their liveliness and contributions, the talking hijacker leaves the group with a sense that no one else has a chance to respond. Instead of drawing other people out, the talking hijacker makes people want to withdraw. What needs to be said after it feels like everything has already been said?

Taking Control from the Talking Hijacker

First, try to pull the person aside one-on-one. Thank the person for their contributions, but be honest about the need for others to contribute. Encourage the person to only respond to every other or every third question and keep responses brief. Or, encourage the person to allow two or three other people to share before sharing.

If the Talking Hijackers still cannot help themselves, you may need to structure your discussions differently. Set up this ground rule for the next session: you'll be calling on specific people to respond to questions. This will encourage the quieter person while deterring the talkative one.

The Emotional Hijacker

This TriBE member shows up every week with an emotional crisis. Before you know it, the majority of the gathering is spent trying to unravel the problem and the majority of time and energy is spent on the Emotional Hijacker.

Taking Control from the Emotional Hijacker

One way to deal with an Emotional Hijacker is to take the person out to coffee or lunch. Once this person has space to share everything going on in their life, he or she may not need as much of the small group's time to share. Spending more one-on-one time may also allow you to better understand the person's needs. Depending on the situation, you may be able to suggest a visit with a Temple clergy member. At the next gathering, if the person tries to hijack the group with another crisis, re-emphasize the *brit* and remind the TriBE that the purpose of the meeting needs to focus on the learning at hand. This will allow you to get through the material and still allow the person to share within a more limited time constraint.

The Back-Seat Driver Hijacker

This hijacker gives you constant directions on how to best guide the group. The Back-Seat Driver assumes he or she has the best approach to guiding and frequently mentions past leadership positions. The other members do not know who to listen to: you or the hijacker.

Taking Control from the Back-Seat Driver Hijacker

Talking directly with the Back-Seat Driver will take courage, but it is the quickest way to a result. Sift through his or her comments to see if you can glean anything helpful. Sometimes there will be good suggestions that can benefit the group. If so, mention these helpful suggestions in your conversation, which will keep the atmosphere positive. Let them know that you appreciate his or her willingness to share leadership skills and then politely ask the back-seat driver to stop doing so at the TriBE meetings.

Let the Back-Seat Driver know that sharing these ideas during the meeting promotes conflict in the group. Affirm the hijacker by asking for input (at a one-on-one meeting) when you feel you need it, and by offering to listen to suggestions outside of meetings. At the same time, confirm that you are leading in a way that suits your personality and leadership style, noting that it may be different from the hijacker's. If the hijacker makes another comment in a TriBE meeting, respond by saying: "Let's talk about that suggestion outside of our gathering."

The Late Hijacker

Without fail, this person walks into the TriBE meeting late. You have spent twenty minutes building momentum toward a specific point, and right before you ask the most important question, the Late Hijacker bursts in. The entrance disrupts the group and you cannot get the group's attention again. The momentum and focus are lost.

Taking Control from the Late Hijacker

Approach the Late Hijacker privately and encourage this person to make a better effort to be on time. Explain how it is hard to get the group refocused once everybody is distracted. If the person cannot get there any earlier, encourage them to enter more quietly and sensitively.

Discuss with your Coach:

1. Have you encountered these hijackers? What, if anything, did you do?
2. Do you still have any of these hijackers in your group? If so, create a plan.

Addendum: Sample Emails and Handouts

Sample Welcome Email

Shalom!

I want to welcome you to our TriBE. Our first TriBE gathering will be on (date) at (time). We will meet at (insert address). (Name) will be bringing the snacks [if applicable]. I am excited to see you again and start this journey. Please be in touch with any questions in the meantime. Remember to bring your calendar so we can determine a schedule.

All the Best,
(Your name)

Sample Reminder Email

Hi TriBE!

I want to send a quick reminder that our next TriBE gathering will be on (date) at (time). We will meet at (insert address) and (name) will be bringing the snacks [if applicable]. I am excited to see you all again and continue this journey. Be in touch with any questions in the meantime. Remember to bring your calendar so we can determine a schedule.

All the Best,
(Your name)

Opening Prayer:

As we gather in our TriBE, may we honor the values of our Jewish tradition. May we bring compassion, insight, and wisdom to our learning and conversation. May we recognize the Divine Image in one another, and let that awareness be reflected in our words and actions.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzi-vanu la'asok b'tzorkhay tzibur.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of All, who has made us holy with your mitzvot and instructed us to engage deeply with our community.

Your TriBE Plan

- 1) What is the date of our first meeting?
- 2) *Brit* – Do we have the *Brit* and has everyone agreed? Any additions?
- 3) What is the schedule (dates and times) for our meetings?
- 4) Hosts and Nosh. Do we have people who will help host or provide nosh?
- 5) Learning and Curriculum – What questions do I have for my Coach about the curriculum and learning?
- 6) Looking at the Temple Beth El Calendar: What are three to four services, programs, holidays, events, and/or gatherings we would like our group to participate in? _____

- 7) What are the goals for my TriBE in the first year?
