

# WHERE DO YOU GIVE?

**A GUIDED CONVERSATION**



# WELCOME

## Core Purpose & Mission

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.



## 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

Before we begin, let's review the brit (covenant) that enriches our time together.



# ASK & SHARE

Take a few minutes to fill out the following chart, which asks you to reflect on what causes you choose to support financially, and why. When everyone is ready, we will break into pairs to compare our answers, and then join together as a group to share what we learned.

WOULD YOU RATHER GIVE TO		NOTES
An organization that fights poverty?	or	An organization that protects the environment?
An organization that helps homeless people in your city?	or	An organization that helps homeless people in Israel?
An organization that sends doctors to clinics in villages in India to perform surgery and train health workers?	or	A local clinic that provides medical care to low-income residents of your city?
Your local public library, which runs an after-school program that helps low-income elementary school students improve their reading and writing skills?	or	Your synagogue's scholarship fund that helps Jewish students in your community go to Hebrew school, day school or Jewish summer camp?
An organization that fights hunger by providing people with hot meals at a soup kitchen?	or	An organization that fights hunger by teaching people job skills so that they can get jobs and earn a living?
An organization that tutors low-income high school students in math?	or	An organization that tries to convince the government to give more money to public high school math programs?
Your cousin who is participating in a walk-a-thon to raise money for cancer research?	or	An organization that runs a camp for children with cancer?
An organization that provides new sports equipment to children who live in the slums in Kenya?	or	Your friend who is raising money for new uniforms for his/her basketball team?

# LEARN

The following poem is by Berthold Brecht (as translated by George Rapp). Take a minute to read it out loud, together.

## A Bed for the Night

I hear that in New York  
At the corner of 26th Street and Broadway  
A man stands every evening during the winter months  
And gets beds for the homeless there  
By appealing to passers-by.

It won't change the world  
It won't improve relations among men  
It will not shorten the age of exploitation  
But a few men have a bed for the night  
For a night the wind is kept from them  
The snow meant for them falls on the roadway.

Don't put down the book on reading this, man.

A few people have a bed for the night  
For a night the wind is kept from them  
The snow meant for them falls on the roadway  
But it won't change the world  
It won't improve relations among men  
It will not shorten the age of exploitation.

Published in *Poetry and Prose: Bertolt Brecht* (Continuum, 2003), Reinhold Grimm and Caroline Molina Y Vedia, eds.

As we reflect on this text, here are a few questions to consider:

### **Interpretive Questions**

- Why does Brecht say “Do not put the book down on reading this, man.”?
- Do you imagine that the narrator approves of the actions of the man who solicits people on behalf of those who need beds? Does it matter to him that these actions will not change the larger system of inequality?

### **Reflective Questions**

- What is your approach to giving to those who solicit donations on the street?
- How do you balance your ability to alleviate the immediate suffering of those in need with the need to address larger systems of inequality?

You can use the space below to write some notes to yourself.

## PERSPECTIVES FROM JEWISH TRADITION

Because participation in a self-sustaining Jewish community was central to our Rabbis' understanding of what it meant to live a Jewish life, most of our traditional texts concern our obligations of Jews to support one another. But even our earliest Rabbis were not living in isolation; Jews have always lived in and among other communities and have had to consider what obligations they have to members of the surrounding community.

Consider the following texts from the Babylonian Talmud:

R. Joseph learnt: "If you lend money to any of my people that are poor with you" [Quoting Exodus 20:2]: [this teaches, if the choice lies between] a Jew and a non-Jew, a Jew has preference; the poor or the rich, the poor takes precedence; your poor [i.e. your relatives] and the [general] poor of your town, your poor come first; the poor of your city and the poor of another town, the poor of your town have prior rights.

— Bava Metzia 71a

Our rabbis taught: We sustain the non-Jewish poor with the Jewish poor, visit the non-Jewish sick with the Jewish sick, and bury the non-Jewish dead with the Jewish dead, for the sake of peace.

— Gittin 61a

## Discussion Questions:

- What do you think “for the sake of peace” in the second reading meant at the time it was written? How might you understand it now?
- There is a tension between the first text’s suggestion that we care for Jews first and the second text’s instruction to care for both Jews and non-Jews. Do you feel this tension in your own life?
- Which of these approaches more closely represents your own priorities in giving or serving?

You can use the space below to write some notes to yourself.

# DO

As we conclude the conversation, here are a few final questions to consider.

- What's one insight that you've gained from this conversation?
- What is one action you might take, or practice you might try, before we meet next time, based on what you're taking from this conversation?
- What's one obstacle to taking that action? How can you overcome it? Who might you need help from in order to do so?
- What could we do together as a community based on what we talked about today?

You can use the space below to write some notes to yourself.

**Thank you for being part of this conversation.**

Portions of this guide were originally developed by Rabbi Nicole Auerbach for Central Synagogue.





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