

# HOW DO WE TALK ABOUT ISRAEL?

**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

What is an image or story that comes to mind when you hear the word “Israel”? Take a minute to jot down some notes. When we are all ready, we will each be invited (but not required) to briefly share our associations.

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

# LEARN

Following is a poem by the great modern Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai. Take a minute to read it out loud as a group.

Tourists  
Yehuda Amichai

Visits of condolence is all we get from them.  
They squat at the Holocaust Memorial,  
They put on grave faces at the Wailing Wall  
And they laugh behind heavy curtains  
In their hotels.  
They have their pictures taken  
Together with our famous dead  
At Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb  
And on Ammunition Hill.  
They weep over our sweet boys  
And lust after our tough girls  
And hang up their underwear  
To dry quickly  
In cool, blue bathrooms.

Once I sat on the steps by a gate at David's Tower,  
I placed my two heavy baskets at my side.  
A group of tourists was standing around their guide  
and I became their target marker.  
"You see that man with the baskets?  
Just right of his head there's an arch  
from the Roman period. Just right of his head."  
"But he's moving, he's moving!"  
I said to myself: redemption will come  
only if their guide tells them,  
"You see that arch from the Roman period?  
It's not important: but next to it,  
left and down a bit, there sits a man  
who's bought fruit and vegetables for his family."

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

### **Interpretive Questions**

- Who are the tourists in this poem? What is their relationship to Israel?
- Why is the Roman arch significant to these tourists?
- What does the narrator mean when he refers to “redemption” near the end of the poem?
- What is the narrator’s implied critique of the tourists? What would the narrator have them do differently?

### **Reflective Questions**

- Who in this poem do you most identify with, and why?
- What would “redemption” look like to you, when it comes to Israel?
- If you were to heed this poem’s call to action, what would that look like?

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

## PERSPECTIVES FROM JEWISH TRADITION

Rabbi Melissa Weintraub is a founder of Resetting the Table, an organization that specializes in fostering productive conversations about Israel. She writes:

This is a time when many of us, on every side of the political spectrum, are scared. Scared for Israel's security and future. Scared that Israel is in danger. Scared that there is so much at stake: not only our peoples' safety, but also our very identities and most strongly-held values and commitments. And what's more, scared that our very relationships are at stake when we disagree about what will best serve those commitments. Scared that if we open our mouths and say the wrong thing we may be ostracized, put in a box, or bludgeoned. Scared that speaking will open us to being misunderstood or misconstrued, our nuances lost..... But it is now when that spirit of inquiry and listening is most important. Because the closed, antagonistic, and avoidant ways we're communicating, understandable as they are, are destroying our people in the very moment we most need to be building our people up.

Link: <http://civility.jewishpublicaffairs.org/2013/12/10/why-civil-discourse-on-israel-must-become-a-national-jewish-priority/>.

### Discussion Questions:

- What does Rabbi Weintraub mean when she says that our current modes of communicating about Israel are “destroying our people”?
- What are your fears, when it comes to Israel?
- How do these fears affect your ability to engage in meaningful conversation about Israel?

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.**



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