

TriBE

SMALL GROUPS AT
 TEMPLE BETH EL

Social Justice & Action Leader Guide

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Guiding Principles for SJA TriBEs

When two people relate to each other, authentically and humanly, God is in the electricity that surges between them.”

- *Martin Buber*

Standing on the parted shores of history we still believe what we were taught before we ever stood at Sinai's foot that wherever we go, it is eternally Egypt that there is a better place, a promised land; that the winding way to that promise passes through the wilderness. That there is no way to get from here to there except by joining hands, marching together.

Haggadah Section: -- *Exodus Story*

You are not required to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.

- *Pirkei Avot*

Important Dates + Action Items

1. Submit TriBE Leader Info (Posters) by Friday, September 9
<https://tbe.shulcloud.com/form/tribe-leader-info>
2. Publicize & personal invite to SJA TriBE Launch Party on Sunday, October 9 at 4:00pm
3. There is also a TriBE Leader Gathering on Tuesday, October 11 at 7:00pm

Resources

1. TriBE Homepage: <https://templebethel.org/get-involved/tribes/>
2. TriBE Leader Resources: <https://templebethel.org/get-involved/tribes/tribe-leader-resources/>
3. TriBE Curriculum: <https://templebethel.org/get-involved/tribes/curriculum/>
4. Relational Question Bank: <https://templebethel.org/get-involved/tribes/relationalquestionbank/>
5. Find My TriBE: <https://tbe.shulcloud.com/form/helpmefindmynewtribeform.html>
6. Jewish Social Justice Organizations: <https://www.jewishsocialjustice.org/affiliate-info>
 - a. RAC
 - b. National Council of Jewish Women
 - c. Hazon
 - d. Mazon
 - e. New Israel Fund
 - f. American Jewish World Service
 - g. Keshet
 - h. Bend the Arc
 - i. HIAS
 - j. T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
 - k. JOIN for Justice
 - l. The Jewish Center for Justice
 - m. Carolina Jews for Justice

TriBE Vision

What are TriBEs?

TriBEs are an effort to deepen connections with one another, to Temple, to God and to the rhythms of Jewish time and life. TriBEs are regular gatherings of five to fifteen members led by TriBE Leaders. Some TriBEs connect around common interests and affinities. Others gather to discuss topics of deep concern or importance to their lives. The intention is for each to engage in meaningful conversations and learning through curriculum provided by Temple Beth El.

What are Social Justice & Action TriBEs?

Social Justice & Action TriBEs (SJA TriBEs) are also regular gatherings of a small group of congregants led by a TriBE Leader. However, these TriBEs will gather around particular social justice and action issues. Congregants will join the SJA TriBE that speaks to the issue or issues they care most about. Through connections with like-minded TriBE members, congregants will work together to fulfill their goal of making change in their lives and communities. **It is important to note that all work done that is affiliated with Temple Beth El must fall within the guidelines and parameters of non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations and does not include partisan political work or the endorsement of candidates for elected office.**

Expectations of a SJA TriBE

- Focus efforts on a specific issue of social justice and, within their work, utilize at least one of the following frameworks
 - Advocacy
 - Direct Service
 - Education
- Meet regularly in an agreed upon setting that is conducive to achieving the social justice and action goals of the group
- Agree to and observe a brit (covenant) with each other
- Create real and honest relationships
- Ensure that, without further TBE Board approval, they are not acting on behalf of Temple Beth El, but on behalf of themselves as individuals
Work from the perspective of inclusion, making decisions and taking actions to center, protect and support diversity and emphasize those who are being served or supported by your work.

How Do SJA TriBEs Form?

Any congregant can form a TriBE. If you have a small group that is already working on a social justice issue or are part of a TBE initiative, we want to support you. If your group desires to become a TriBE we will provide leadership training to participant of the TriBE and share necessary resources so the TriBE can engage in meaningful conversations that lead to deeper relationships and are more conducive to accomplishing your goals. Please note, this does not mean that every existing group must transition into a TriBE, this is just an additional opportunity and resource.

Temple Beth El will be happy to help pair individual members with SJA TriBEs. Email Nicole Sidman, Social Justice Outreach Coordinator, nsidman@templebethel.org or call 908-423-9876 for questions about starting or joining a SJA TriBE.

SJA TriBE Vision Statement

“Action is the only remedy to indifference: the most insidious danger of all” – Elie Wiesel

Jewish tradition is clear that it is our sacred obligation to respond to injustice. In the Book of Leviticus, we are commanded, “Do not stand idly by the blood of your fellow.” In Deuteronomy we learn that “If you see your fellow’s ox or sheep gone astray, do not ignore it; you must take it back to your fellow.” In other words, “Justice, justice shall you pursue” (Exodus 23:8). The question becomes then, how do we act? How do we take action as individuals, as a community, as a congregation?

Imagine congregants gathering regularly in small groups to connect and act around the issues that matter most to them, deepening their relationships with each other, with Temple Beth El and inspired by the Jewish call to act. SJA TriBEs are an expansion of the success of the current TriBE model and the relationships and leadership built through our community organizing efforts and our long history of social justice and action at TBE. SJA TriBEs will help Temple Beth El realize this future of a connected, committed membership through the formation of small groups which will:

- Focus our *Tikkun Olam* on the issues which matter most to our congregants.
- Organize around shared interests, concerns, and desires to act.
- Feature shared Jewish experiences, learning and celebration as well as bringing a Jewish lens to the work being done in concert with others.
- Be self-led by lay leaders working in a group dynamic.



Different Types of SJA TriBEs

There is no one way to pursue justice. Below are the different types of TriBEs we envision, but please note that your TriBE does not have to be exclusively one of the following. You may decide to focus solely on one or decide to do a hybrid. TriBEs are not eternal and each TriBE and TriBE member will have the opportunity to make the decision every year whether to continue.

Direct Service: These TriBEs will focus on direct, tangible service that meets an immediate need in the community. These TriBEs may decide to dedicate one day a month to working at a food bank, commit to building a house with Habitat for Humanity, drive seniors or recent immigrants to appointments, or any other action that they wish to take together.

Education: These TriBEs will spend time learning about particular issues to better understand root causes, solutions and current trends in social justice matters. This could take the form of a book or film club, a lecture series or participating as a group in a course on a particular subject. An education focused TriBE works particularly well for a group who would like to work in direct service or advocacy, but do not feel well-versed enough in the subject matter to do so in an appropriate and effective way. An education TriBE could easily evolve over time into a direct service or advocacy TriBE.

Advocacy: The biggest changes can take the longest. Some TriBEs may want to focus on making the big structural changes that come from advocating for a particular issue. This can take the form of lobbying government on a particular issue, campaigns for better corporate governance or other efforts to change the way decisions are made. Please note that all advocacy must remain nonpartisan and issue, rather than candidate or political party, focused in accordance with 501(c)(3) regulations.

Time Bound: Some issues only arise during particular times of the year. In these cases, a TriBE could commit to getting together annually around primary and election season to work on efforts to expand voting access, or in August to help kids and teachers collect the supplies they need for back-to-school or during the holidays for toy drives and holiday meals.

Shalom Park Partnership: Temple Beth El has always proudly stood for social justice and action work. Although much of that work will fit well within TriBE structure, we recognize that some, particularly those that are part of larger Shalom Park partnerships, may not. However, it is entirely possible that TBE members who also work with Shalom Park initiatives (Shalom Green, Abraham's Tent, Freedom School, etc.) could form a TriBE within the larger



group. We have seen much of the work of these initiatives falling directly on shoulders of individual congregants who have held the weight for many years. Forming a TriBE around these initiatives could provide those leaders with a team of congregants resulting in increased awareness and training for the next generation of leaders as well as camaraderie and connection of TriBE relationships.

SJA TriBE Leadership

What is a SJA TriBE leader?

Being a SJA *TriBE Leader* means that you are willing to lead a small group of people who want to focus their work on a particular issue with whom you share a passion. You do not need to be an expert on the issue or have experience working on it. You only need to be dedicated to the work, welcoming to those in the group who may be coming with various levels of knowledge and comfort level, and approach those in your TriBE with an open heart and an open mind.

What are your responsibilities as a SJA TriBE Leader?

Once your TriBE is formed you should send them a message of introduction and welcome and set your initial meeting which should take place in your home or another convenient location. As a leader, you will initially oversee scheduling and coordinating the calendar of your group. At your first meeting you can discuss what scheduling works best to approach your social justice issue.

- 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).
- 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 participants 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? Specific goals? Different roles of the group?
- 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 they are 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?

What was accomplished at the meeting?

What is the next step for your TriBE?

Are there roadblocks or concerns you have about being able to accomplish what your TriBE wants to do?

Is there an upcoming opportunity that your TriBE would like to share with the broader TBE community?

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).
- Schedule TriBE gatherings so that the group meets regularly.
- Facilitate or delegate the facilitation of learning and, if appropriate, action.
- Help to make connections with the greater Charlotte community, including seeking out issue- appropriate events, actions or other groups working on similar issues
- Encourage shared responsibilities. There are many ways to share ownership of a TriBE. Here are a few examples:
 - Create a schedule for hosting, where each meeting is organized or planned by a different member of the group
 - Share the work that is being done in between the meetings. This can be:
 - Preparing materials for education
 - Reaching out to or meeting with outside organizations
 - Planning direct service actions
 - Gathering supplies for what may be needed for future action
 - Communicate with TriBE members between meetings.
 - Communicate with your Coach.

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. If there are people who do not know each other in the group, having name tags can be a great comfort.

Nosh

At the first meeting, it is nice to offer light snacks and beverages. There is natural bonding that occurs over sharing food. 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. It is always a good idea to inquire about your TriBE members' particular dietary restrictions ahead of time.

Blessing, *Brit*, and Check-In

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

Sample Blessing:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam shenatan lanu hizdamnut l'taken et haolam.

Blessed are you Adonai, our God, rule of the universe, who has given us the opportunity to repair the world.

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



Check-in:

Building relationships within your TriBE will help ensure the success of your group. 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 how you arrived at this TriBE meeting. Note that can be interpreted in a variety of way. There is no right way to answer that question. You are welcome to develop your own question that feels comfortable to you.

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 unnecessary, but they help open the door to connect members. These questions can also help you know where your members are spiritually and personally. More relational questions are available on the Temple Beth El website: <https://templebethel.org/get-involved/tribes/relationalquestionbank/>



בְּרִית

Sample 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 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 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 assigned TBE Staff and/or TriBE Co-Chairs.

Questions about TriBE? Contact Us!

Chairs of Small Group Initiative Coaches

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

Staff

Andy Harkavy (aharkavy@templebethel.org)

Rabbi Lexi Erdheim (rabbierdheim@templebethel.org)

Nicole Sidman (nsidman@templebethel.org)

Pastoral Concerns - If pastoral concerns arise and need clergy attention, please contact Amy Fine, afine@templebethel.org.

Help! My TriBE Has Been....!

Four common derailers 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 ways group conversations can be derailed and suggestions on how to deal with them:

The Super Talker

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, this person is already sharing a response. Although you may be grateful for their liveliness and contributions, this can leave the group with a sense that no one else has a chance to respond. Instead of drawing other people out, this makes people want to withdraw. What needs to be said after it feels like everything has already been said?

Taking Control from the Super Talker

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 Super Talker still dominates the conversation, 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 Over Sharer

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

Taking Control from the Over Sharer

One way to deal with an Over Sharer 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 dominate 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

The Back-Seat Driver 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 this person.

Taking Control from the Back-Seat Driver

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 their 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. It can be helpful to ask 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 theirs. If they make another comment in a TriBE meeting, respond by saying: "Let's talk about that suggestion outside of our gathering."

The Late Arriver

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 Arriver 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 Arriver

Approach the Late Arriver 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 derailers? What, if anything, did you do?
2. Do you still have any 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)

Sample 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 SJA TriBE Plan

- 1) What is the date of our first meeting?

- 2) What is the Social Justice issue your TriBE is organized around?

- 3) How will you take action on that issue?

- 4) *Brit* – Do we have the *Brit* and has everyone agreed? Any additions?

- 5) What is the schedule (dates and times) for our meetings?

- 6) Learning and Curriculum – What groups, readings, actions do we want to research and learn more about?

- 7) 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? _____

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

