

# TriBE

SMALL GROUPS AT  
 TEMPLE BETH EL

Learn  
Together

Pray  
Together

Accountable  
to Each Other

Act  
Together

Care for  
Each Other

Play  
Together

## Leader Guide



## Leader Guide

*Find Your People*

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# Guiding a TriBE

## Would you Like to Start a TriBE?

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 **Nicole Sidman**, [nsidman@templebethel.org](mailto:nsidman@templebethel.org) or call 704-366-1948 for questions about starting a group.

Through small groups, members experience Judaism as having increasing relevance to their daily lives. TriBE experiences can help members obtain clarity about the meaning of life through Jewish learning and meaningful conversations and result in attending additional programming at TBE or elsewhere that they may not have previously attended.

## 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 one another. And when we support each other's spiritual growth and learning, we 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 only an open heart and an open mind.

“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*

# TriBE Leader Responsibilities

Once your group is formed you can email the group and set your initial meeting. 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.

## TriBE Leader Responsibilities

- 3-5 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 Sample Emails on pg. 8).
- At the first meeting, read through the sample brit (pg. 6) and determine an appropriate frequency of gatherings. Then, ask if anyone proposes any additions to the group brit. Some possible additions: goals, intentions, commitments.
- At the beginning of each meeting, make sure there is time to nosh, say a blessing, review the *brit* for the TriBE, and ask a relational question (something to help TriBE members create a deeper connection and relationship). We also ask you to note who is present. This will help us in our evaluations.
- 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.

## 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.

## Follow-Up Is Key

At the end of each session we ask you to reflect. You might consider 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 you need support or help with?*

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

# Hosting TriBEs

## Basics for Hosting a TriBE in 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 connect to one another. 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.

## 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 occasionally choose to "swap" the learning time for a *tikkum olam* experience. 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.

### Template #1

0:00-0:15	Welcome, nosh, blessing, and relational question <i>(to be provided)</i>
0:15-1:10	Learning and discussion
1:10-1:20	Planning or conclusion
1:20-1:30	Schmoozing

### Template #2

0:00-0:10	Welcome, nosh, blessing, and relational question <i>(to be provided)</i>
0:10-1:30	Shared affinity or activity
1:20-1:30	Planning, learning, and/or schmoozing

**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, your 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 without burden.

# Tips for Guiding Your TriBE

## Warm Welcome

Remember that some of your TriBE members are taking the proverbial “leap of faith” simply by attending a TriBE meeting. Your 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 they are engaged with them and want to get to know them.

## Nosh

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, bring the group together with a blessing. Emphasize the shared *brit*, which will be included in the learning materials. Then, do a relational question.

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

**CHECK-IN:** Research has shown that one of the important factors that contributed to enthusiasm for faith communities was friendship. When people have friends – people who call you when you are absent,

ask how you're 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?

These questions can help open the door to connect members. These questions can also help you know where your members are spiritually and personally. For more relational questions please visit the Temple Beth El website.

# Tips for Guiding Your TriBE

## 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**.

## 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.

## Shared Ownership

There are many ways to share ownership of a TriBE.

Here are a few examples:

- Create a schedule for hosting or finding a location.
- 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 Space

TriBEs are designed to be a welcoming space in which each person feels respected and heard. Members 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.*
- *Attacking or criticizing.*
- *Disregarding.*
- *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.*

# All About Your *Brit*

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

### 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 logistics do 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.

### 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.

### 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.

## 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.*



## Four Common Challenges and Ways to Respond

It is possible for TriBEs to be dominated by one or more members. 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 member personalities and how to deal with them:

### ■ The Conversation Dominator

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

#### *Taking Control*

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 they 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 Attention Seeker

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 one person's problems.

#### *Taking Control*

One way to deal with this 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

This member 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.

#### *Taking Control*

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

*"I Need Help!"*

group. Affirm them 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 this person. 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*

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.

# Sample Emails & Opening Prayer

## 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, chonen ha-da'at.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of All, who gives us wisdom as we 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?

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

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4) Hosts and Nosh. Do we have people who will help host or provide nosh?

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5) Learning and Curriculum – What questions do I have for my Coach about the curriculum and learning? \_\_\_\_\_

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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?

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

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