

WHERE DO YOU FEEL AT HOME?

A GUIDED CONVERSATION



WELCOME

Before we begin, let's review the brit—the covenant—that animates our time together:

1. **Accountability:** I'll show up to our agreed-upon meetings. I'll let the host know the (good) reason I will be absent. I will also be punctual and respect everyone's time.
2. **Presence:** When we're together, I'll be present and mindful. I will listen and share. Life (and our mobile devices) offer many distractions, but I will stay present and engaged.
3. **Double Confidentiality:** What I hear and say stays here. If I see another group member in a different context, I will not bring up anything they said here unless they do first.
4. **Vulnerability:** I'll 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.
5. **Respect:** I will remember that all of us are here for a common purpose and I will respect and acknowledge everyone in my group.
6. **No Fixing, Advising, Saving or Setting Straight:** I will give each person the gift of true attention without trying to "solve their problem." No advice unless it's asked.
7. **Stepping Up & Stepping Back:** I understand that some of us are natural talkers while others are quieter. I'll pay attention to how much I am contributing, and will seek to balance how much I am talking with how much I'm listening.
8. **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.
9. **Ownership:** This is our community to create. While we have guidelines and suggestions, it is ours to shape and form. We will get out of it what we put into it.

ASK & SHARE

As we introduce ourselves, answer one of the following questions: “When was a time you were surprised to feel at home?” or “When was a time you expected to feel at home and didn’t?”

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

LEARN

On the next page, there are several images of or about home. Take some time to look at them. There are larger versions of each of these images in the Appendix at the end of this conversation guide.



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

Interpretive Questions

- What's going on in each of these photos?
- In what ways does each image evoke the concept of "home" for you?
- In what ways does each image challenge the concept of "home" for you?

Reflective Questions

- Which of these images resonates most strongly with you? Why?
- Which of these images makes you most uncomfortable? Why?
- What makes you feel most at home?
- Has your idea of home changed during your life? How?

Use the space below to write some notes to yourself.

PERSPECTIVES FROM JEWISH TRADITION

In the Book of Ruth, Naomi, a Jew, becomes widowed and her sons die. She prepares to return to her homeland of Yehudah from Moab, where she had been living, and her daughter-in-law, Ruth, a Moabite, makes the following speech to her, asking to join her on this journey.

Do not urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Eternal deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me.

--Book of Ruth 1:16-17.

Discussion Questions:



- What is it about these 48 things that lead one to Torah (understood here as Divine Truth)?
- What values does this text promote? Why are these qualities particularly important to the pursuit of Truth?
- Which of these qualities poses the greatest challenge for you?

The Jewish home has been called a mikdash me'at, a little sanctuary. It is an evocative image. From the moment you walk through the doorway of a sanctuary, you know you are entering a unique kind of space. A sanctuary does not look like other places. It is defined and ornamented by ritual objects, books and art. A sanctuary feels different from the workplace and the marketplace. In a sanctuary, the mundane criteria for success and failure fall away. What matters is not what you do but who you are.

A sanctuary is a place of safety and asylum. It is where the dispossessed go for shelter, where the hungry go for food, where the weary find rest. Sanctuaries are filled with voices, sometimes singing in unison, sometimes raised in disagreement. And sometimes a sanctuary is as still as a garden. Today, when so many families face the pressures of multiple roles, needs and schedules, making a home into a sanctuary seems more difficult than ever-and thus more important than ever.

Anita Diamant, Contemporary journalist and author. "Home."

Discussion Questions:

- How does Diamant define a "sanctuary"? How do you?
- In what ways does your home serve as a sanctuary? In what ways does it not?
- What would you have to do to make your home into more of a sanctuary, by Diamant's definition or by your own?

You can use this space 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?

Use the space below to note your response to these questions.

Thank you for being part of this conversation.

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

APPENDIX: LARGER IMAGES









The Union for Reform Judaism leads the largest and most diverse Jewish movement in North America. We strengthen communities that connect people to Jewish life. Visit <https://urj.org/> for more information.



Ask Big Questions was developed, launched, and scaled by Hillel International: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life. Ask Big Questions is a national initiative to help people deepen understanding, strengthen community, and build trust through reflective conversation. Visit AskBigQuestions.org to learn more.

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