

# A FAMILY CONVERSATION ABOUT GIVING:

Family Philanthropy Conversation Guide





# MANY OF US LEARNED ABOUT GIVING FROM OUR FAMILIES

...either by observing our family members' practices or through conversation. Whether that was recent or decades ago, this is an invitation to come back to that conversation. To sit down with your loved ones and listen to how and why you all give or are otherwise involved in causes you care about.

This conversation is for everyone, from teenagers to great-grandparents, Jewish and non-Jewish family members alike. If you've been giving for an entire lifetime or have not yet started giving, you have important insights to share! Invite your family into the conversation and listen to what everyone has to say. You may be surprised by what you hear and where it leads you!

We offer this guide as an opportunity to find shared language, reflect on your families' values, and move towards action. That might mean giving as a family, donating individually to causes that are more intentionally aligned with your values, or having more conversations about philanthropy.

# START

by inviting your family to have a conversation about Jewish values and giving. It's an opportunity for everyone to share their unique perspective and hear stories they may never have heard before.

## BREAK THE ICE

Go around the table and have everyone complete the sentence  
"I learned about giving from..."

## JEWISH WISDOM

Read the quotes below and choose the one which resonates most with how and why you give. If you don't have a giving practice, choose the quote that resonates with the changes you hope to make in the world.

Our rabbis have taught: We support the non-Jewish poor along with the poor of Israel, and visit the sick of the non-Jews, along with the sick of Israel, and bury the poor of the non-Jews, along with the dead of Israel, in the interests of peace.

**- Babylonian Talmud | Gittin 61A**

If a person has enough food in his house and wishes to use it for charitable purposes to support others, he should first support his father and mother; if there is anything left he should support his brothers and sisters; if there is anything left he should support his other relatives; if there is anything left he should support his neighbors; if there is anything left he should support those who live on the same street. Thereafter he should distribute charity liberally to the rest of Israel.

**- Midrash Tana Debei Eliyahu Chapter 27**

We are here to make a difference, to mend the fractures of the world, a day at a time, an act at a time, for as long as it takes to make it a place of justice and compassion where the lonely are not alone, the poor not without help; where the cry of the vulnerable is heeded and those who are wronged are heard.

**- Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.

**- Ruth Bader Ginsburg | Former Supreme Court Justice**

In a free society where terrible wrongs exist, some are guilty but all are responsible.

**- Abraham Joshua Heschel**

Then turn to the person next to you and share.



# STORYTELLING & VALUES

Values drive our giving whether we name them or not. They weave a thread connecting disparate events into a single story, tying our lives and actions into the broader tapestry of Jewish community and the work of building a better world.

First, consider the incomplete list of Jewish values below. Write down the value(s) that inspire you to give money or contribute to causes you care about.

**Loving Kindness** (Chesed חסד)

**Service** (Avodah עבודה)

**Hope** (Tikvah תקווה)

**Human Dignity** (Kavod כבוד)

**Responsibility** (Areyvut ערבות)

**Memory** (Zikaron זיכרון)

**Justice** (Tzedek צדק)

**Peace** (Shalom שלום)

Then, go around the table and invite each person to share a short story about their value in action. For example, you can share about someone who lived this value and used it to make change (even if just by inspiring you)? Or you can share how this value is connected to how you learned about giving from the ice beaker.

Once everyone has shared, ask, what do you have in common? There may be deep and meaningful differences, but there are likely some points of commonality.

What are they?

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# IMPACT

The Hebrew word tzedakah is often used to refer to charitable giving. However, its root is tzedakah which can mean justice, fairness, righteousness, and integrity. Much more than a one-time gift, tzedakah is a powerful way of living deeply-rooted Jewish values in our modern life, of asking ourselves how our actions can make a clear statement about who we want to be as Jewish citizens of the world.

**- Source: Jewish Future Promise Intergenerational Shabbat Guide**

What impact do you want your giving to have? Consider where your donation priorities fall on the spectra below, whether you have a giving practice or not. Read the prompts one at a time and choose a number for yourself. See where everyone falls.

Get creative – you can stand up and line yourself up as if the spectrum exists in your room with 1 and one end and 10 at the other. Or hold up the number of fingers that represent where you fall along each spectrum.

For each prompt, have the family members that are the farthest apart share why they chose their place along the spectrum. Hear from one or two people in the middle. Even if the disagreements are vast, the goal is not to convince anyone. Instead, listen to find places of commonality, where you can all say "yes" or "ok."

## GIVING JEWISHLY MEANS:

Giving to Jewish orgs that serve Jews

Giving aligned with Jewish values



## MY PRIORITY IS TO GIVE:

To Jews Only

To Everyone



## TO IMMEDIATE NEEDS:

To Immediate Needs

To Long-Term Change



# ACTION

Considering your values and the impact you hope to have, which organizations or which causes are you personally drawn to or are already supporting? Share with those at the table and commit to making a gift if you are able.

## OPTIONAL: BUILD IN GIVING

Consider making a family donation as part of the conversation. Start by inviting everyone to contribute a donation to the family pool. Do this before your event if possible. This can be as little or as much money as you are comfortable giving.

Go around the table and have everyone name an organization or cause they care about. If anyone has a cause but not an organization, allow a minute to do some quick Googling to find an organization or partner with someone who shares the same cause.

Take turns pitching your organizations based on the values and shared priorities of the family.

Once everyone has shared, choose one organization to give to as a family. Do this by voting (where no one can vote for their own organization) or having a conversation where you come to consensus together. However you decide, make sure everyone's voice is heard. Once you've made a decision, announce the full gift amount and donate the money!

## CLOSE & REFLECT

Close the conversation with reflection: Invite everyone to write an intention for their giving practice. Then go around the table sharing something you learned from someone else in the room.

Thank your family for participating and find a way to keep the conversation going!

If this experience was meaningful, consider running a family giving circle where you pool money and decide together where to give. Find out more about giving circles and other ways to engage in conversations about giving at [www.Amplifiergiving.org](http://www.Amplifiergiving.org).



## ABOUT AMPLIFIER

Amplifier, powered by Jewish Federations of North America, is an experiential learning lab for collaborative and democratized giving, rooted in Jewish values and engaging more people in tzedakah and amplifying their impact.

Check us out online to learn more: [www.amplifiergiving.org](http://www.amplifiergiving.org)



## ABOUT THE JEWISH FUTURE PROMISE

The Jewish Future Promise is a moral commitment to share Jewish stories, values, and traditions with family and friends. And, that if any charitable contributions are made upon passing, whether that be \$10 or \$10 million, at least 50% will be allocated to Jewish causes and/or the state of Israel. It is not a legal or binding agreement, but a promise to the next generation of the Jewish people.

[jewishfuturepromise.org](http://jewishfuturepromise.org)