

**LEADER GUIDE**



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**Job Description of a Small Groups Leader**

**Core Purpose:**

Leaders provide the structure and space for members of the Small Group to create meaningful connections with one another.

**A leader will:**

1. Set all meeting dates and times before the launch of the group
2. Schedule meetings so the Small Groups meet regularly
3. Coordinate location and any details needed for set up
4. Help develop and observe a Brit (covenant)
5. Create the structure and plan for each meeting
6. Communicate with group members before each meeting, encouraging regular attendance
7. Create a safe space for the members
8. Encourage shared responsibility within the group
9. Communicate and provide feedback to your Coach.

**Temple Isaiah Small Groups Mission Statement:**

Temple Isaiah’s peer-led Small Groups will provide a variety of new pathways to connect our members to one another and the larger Isaiah community around shared interests. Small Groups will have a limited time commitment, with a specific start and end date.

**Responsibilities of a Small Groups Leader**

* When your group has been approved and is ready for members to sign up, please share your group sign-up information with your friends and acquaintances to help get the numbers you need. *Note:* If there is not enough interest in your group, it may not be the right time for this group to begin and that’s ok. This happens in synagogue life all the time.
* When you receive your list of group participants, please reach out within 48 hours to welcome them, and provide information on the groups first meeting.
* 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 Resources: Sample Emails (pg. 12))
* Nametags can be a helpful aid for making people feel comfortable and welcome.
* At the beginning of each meeting, make sure there is time to schmooze, review the Brit (covenant) for the Small Groups, and ask an opening question (something to help Small Groups members 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.
* 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 for the success of the group. Members of your Small Groups are accountable to one another.
* If someone cannot make a meeting, they are expected to contact the Small Groups 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.

**Tips for Guiding Your Small Group**

**Warm Welcome**

We need to remember that some of our members are taking the proverbial “leap of faith” simply by attending a Small Groups meeting. Our initial response to their arrival is important. Put their fears to rest by welcoming them 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.

**Meeting Regularity**

Small Groups should meet at least once a month. Greater regularity will help deepen the experience. Some Small Groups will meet weekly. Some will meet every two weeks. The regularity of meetings should be both attainable and worthwhile.

**Snacks**

There is natural bonding that occurs over chocolate chip cookies and tea. 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.

**Blessing, Brit and Check-In**

Once people have had the opportunity to mingle, one way to mobilize the group is with a blessing. You could also emphasize the shared Brit to set the tone for each meeting by reminding the group of the intentions and expectations of the group. You could also consider asking an opening question as a check-in. The blessing, Brit and check-in should take no more than ten to fifteen minutes.

**Four Common Hijackers and Ways to Respond**

It is possible for Small Groups 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 Small Groups “hijacker” personalities and how to deal with them:

**The Talking Hijacker**

This is the person who answers every question before anyone else can respond. While most of the members of the Small Group are still pondering the question, the talking hijacker is spurting out a response. Although you may be grateful for their liveliness and contributions, the talking hijacker leaves the group with a sense that no one else has a chance to respond. Instead of drawing other people out, the talking hijacker makes people want to withdraw. What needs to be said after it feels like everything has already been said?

***Taking Control from the Talking Hijacker***

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 Talking Hijackers 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 Emotional Hijacker**

This Small Groups member shows up every week with an emotional crisis. Before you know it, much of the gathering is spent trying to unravel the problem and most of the time and energy is spent on the Emotional Hijacker.

***Taking Control from the Emotional Hijacker***

One way to deal with an Emotional Hijacker 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 hijack the group with another crisis, re-emphasize the Brit and remind the Small Group 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 Hijacker**

This hijacker 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 the hijacker.

***Taking Control from the Back-Seat Driver Hijacker***

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 Small Group meetings. Let the Back-Seat Driver know that sharing these ideas during the meeting promotes conflict in the group. Affirm the hijacker 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 the hijacker’s. If the hijacker makes another comment in a Small Group meeting, respond by saying: “Let’s talk about that suggestion outside of our gathering.”

**The Late Hijacker**

Without fail, this person walks into the Small Group meeting late. You have spent twenty minutes building momentum toward a specific point, and right before you ask the most important question, the Late Hijacker 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 Hijacker***

Approach the Late Hijacker 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.

**Questions to Consider in the Creation of**

**Your Small Groups Brit**

1) How often do we want to meet? We suggest that the Small Groups meets at least once a month. Greater regularity will help deepen the experience. Some Small Groups 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 organization of logistics (where, when, who is bringing snack) does 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.

2) 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 the aspects of the Brit

and how the document can help each person commit to the Small

Groups.

3) Additional questions that do not need to be included in the Brit:

• Meeting place?

• Childcare? Do parents want to share childcare?

• Day of the week? Start-time? End-Time?

• Frequency of Meetings (once or twice per month?)

• Pets?

• Allergies?



**Plan of Action**

1) What is the date of our first meeting? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2) What is the schedule (dates/times) for our meetings? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3) Brit: Do we have the Brit and has everyone agreed? Any additions? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4) Hosts and Snacks: Do we have people who will help host or provide snacks? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5) What type of Ice Breaker will I use at my first meeting? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6) What is the agenda/structure for my meetings? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

7) What are the goals for my Small Group?

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**Templates for Small Group Meetings**

Small Group are designed to be flexible. Below are some possible templates for your meetings:

**Small Group Meeting Template #1**

*Learning (90 minutes)*

0:00-0:15 Welcome, snacks, and ice breaker or opening question

0:15-1:10 Learning and discussion

1:10-1:20 Planning or conclusion

1:20-1:30 Schmoozing

**Small Group Meeting Template #2**

*Affinity or Shared Activity (120 minutes)*

0:00-0:10 Welcome, snacks, and ice breaker or opening question

0:10-1:30 Shared affinity or activity

1:30-2:00 Planning, learning, and/or schmoozing



**Sample Emails**

**Welcome Email**

Shalom!

I want to welcome you to our Small Group, (Title of Small Group). Our first Small Group gathering will be on (date) at (time). We will meet at (insert address). I am excited to see you again and start this journey.

Please be in touch with any questions in the meantime.

All the Best,

(Your name)

**Reminder Email**

Hi Small Group!

I want to send a quick reminder that our next Small Group 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.

All the Best,

(Your name)



**Opening Blessing**

As we gather in our Small Group, 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.

**Sample Brit (Covenant)**

**Accountability**

I will show up at our group’s agreed upon dates and times. I will let the group 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.

**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 problems.

**Listening**

I understand that some of us are talkers, while others 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 thinking about big questions more than arriving at finite 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 small group. 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.



**Ice Breaker Ideas**

**Questions:**

1. How many languages do you speak?
2. What is your favorite place?
3. Where did you grow up?
4. What is your favorite hobby?
5. Are you a listener or a talker?
6. What animal would you choose to be and why?
7. What song describes your life right now?
8. Describe your dream vacation?
9. If you could have any superpower, what would it be and why?
10. If you could give a piece of advice to your younger self, what would it be?
11. If you could have an extra hour of free time every day, how would you use it?
12. Do you prefer the beach or the pool?
13. Do you prefer morning or nights?
14. Do you prefer dogs or cats?
15. Would you rather have invisibility or flight?
16. Would you rather always be cold or always be hot?
17. What is your favorite ride at a theme park?
18. Who was your childhood actor/actress crush?
19. What is your favorite family tradition?
20. What is something people assume about you, but isn’t true?

**In Person Activities:**

1. **Two Truths and a Lie**

Participants list three things about themselves, two are true, and one is a lie. Others must guess which is which.

1. **10 Things in Common**
Divide into partners with instructions to discover 10 things that you have in common.
2. **The Envelope Please!**
Group members list 5 facts about themselves on strips of paper and then put them in an envelope. The group leader reads the facts aloud, one by one, as other group members guess the person’s identity.
3. **People BINGO**

Create bingo cards with a characteristic like “played a varsity sport” or “has at least three siblings” in each square. Everyone mingles and asks each other questions attempting to get a BINGO.

1. **Would You Rather...**
The group leader tosses a ball to someone in the group and asks a question such as “Would you rather be an astronaut or a zoo keeper?” After answering the question and explaining why, that person tosses the ball and asks the next question.

**Virtual Activities:**

1. **Menti.com**

Create a Menti.com survey or word cloud

1. **Say It with an Emoji**

Which emoji best describes your current mood?

1. **Virtual Scavenger Hunt**

Ask people to stay in their chairs until you call out a household item. The first one to get it and bring it back to the camera gets the point. Tally up the points at the end to see who wins a prize.

Examples: Grab a book with a red cover. Grab something that was a gift.

1. **Have You Ever?**

Come up with a list of work-appropriate questions that can be answered with a yes or a no. Begin the game by asking, “Have you ever…?” and ask people to either stand up if their answer is yes or raise their hand if they are virtual. Examples: Have you ever … sang in the shower? Regifted something? Flown in a helicopter?

1. **Show-and-Tell**

Share something from your home with the group.



**Questions about your Small Group? Contact us!**

**COACHES**

You will receive your Small Groups Coach’s contact information after your Small Group is formed.

**STAFF**

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**PASTORAL CONCERNS**

If pastoral concerns arise and need clergy attention, please contact:

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