In this sermon, Rabbi Buchdahl explores the idea of the Jews as a chosen people. She suggests that rather than being chosen above others, Jews have been chosen to be the other: to use our experience as outsiders to empathize with “the stranger,” and to raise a prophetic voice calling on everyone to extend our hands to the outcast. This discussion will allow participants to reflect on the concept of chosenness and on their own experience of being “the other,” and to consider what it might mean to act as a “light unto the nations” in modern times.

NAME TAGS:
Unless you have all known each other well for quite some time, please ask everyone in the group to wear a name tag (or, if seated around a table, to place a name card in front of them). Even if most people know one another, it is important that no one feel uncomfortable for not remembering everyone else’s name.

INTRODUCTION AND ICE-BREAKER:
Ask each person to introduce themselves, and to share with the group:

(a) their name; and
(b) a part of their day they would like to bring with them as they begin this conversation, and/or a part of their day they would like to leave behind

OR

(c) a time when they were unexpectedly made to feel like the “other,” for whatever reason.

OPENING ACTIVITY
Option #1
Pass out the attached sheet, and ask each participant to take a few minutes to list: (a) the “tribes” to which they belong; and (b) environments in which they tend to feel like “the other.”

Then have them break into groups of two or three to discuss their answers. What do the various “tribes” have in common? What tends to make them feel alienated? What similarities or differences do they notice in their answers? What new insights can they gain from each other’s responses?
WHERE DO YOU BELONG? WHEN ARE YOU THE STRANGER?

In her sermon, Rabbi Buchdahl writes:

We all need our tribes. Our families, our congregations, our sports teams, our book groups. Tribes give us a sense of identity and belonging. They give us roots and a community. They help us find our own unique place and purpose.

What tribes do you belong to? And when or where do you tend to feel like the “other”?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRIBES I BELONG TO:</th>
<th>I FEEL LIKE “THE OTHER” WHEN . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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Option #2

Pass out copies of the following page, which contains a number of different images. Ask participants to reflect in pairs on the following questions:

What is going on in each of the photos?

In what way does each photo evoke the idea of “belonging,” or “tribe”?

In what way does each image challenge the idea of “belonging,” or “tribe”?

Which of these images resonates most strongly with you? Why?

Which of these images makes you most uncomfortable? Why?

Which of these images makes you feel most like you belong? Which makes you feel most like an outsider?

How do you know when you belong? What helps you feel that way?

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1 This exercise is adapted from a discussion guide created by Ask Big Questions, in cooperation with Central Synagogue and Temple Emanu-El of Dallas. [http://www.centralsynagogue.org/assets/downloads/ABQ1%20-%20Where%20do%20you%20feel%20at%20home%20F.pdf](http://www.centralsynagogue.org/assets/downloads/ABQ1%20-%20Where%20do%20you%20feel%20at%20home%20F.pdf)
ATTACHED IS A TEXT-STUDY SHEET THAT YOU MAY USE TO FACILITATE A DISCUSSION OF THE SERMON. PLEASE MAKE SURE TO EITHER MAKE A COPY FOR EACH MEMBER OR ASK EVERYONE TO BRING IT THEMSELVES, IN PAPER OR ELECTRONIC FORM. IF YOU CHOOSE THE LATTER COURSE, YOU MAY STILL WISH TO PRINT A FEW EXTRA COPIES FOR THOSE WHO MAY FORGET TO BRING THEIRS.

Here are some things to consider:

(a) It is customary to recite a blessing before studying Torah.

(b) Our tradition teaches us that Torah study can be a source of healing and blessing. You may want to ask members of the group if they would like to dedicate their study to anyone in particular. This is a nice way to help the group get to know one another, and to learn about significant events in each other’s lives.

(c) Depending on the preferences of your group, you may choose to distribute this sheet the week before the meeting, so that participants will be familiar with the texts, and can begin to think about their own responses.

(d) You can choose to either work through the texts as one group, or to break up into pairs (“hevruta”) for an initial period of discussion, and then allow the pairs to share something they learned with the group.

(e) The ultimate goal of these groups is not for participants to master a particular number of Jewish texts, but to connect with one another. If group members are sharing their own stories and experiences in a way that seems fruitful, there is no need to cut off that conversation in order to make sure you “finish” the text sheet. If you are unsure, you can always poll the group to decide whether it is time to move on.

CONCLUSION

We recommend that you wind down the text study about 15 minutes before the end of the session, to allow for a meaningful conclusion. This conclusion may take any shape you wish. Some possibilities are:

(a) Ask each person to name one insight they have gained, or one question that they are taking with them.
(b) Ask each person to offer a blessing to the group, drawn from your learning together.
(c) Ask each person to say one word to represent how they are feeling coming out of your discussion.

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