

# SHABBAT CONVERSATION PROMPTS

with Children of Different Ages



## CANDLE-LIGHTING

*A candle of God is the soul of humanity.*

— Proverbs 20:27

When you light Shabbat candles tonight, take a closer look.

See how the light of the Shabbat candles moves and dances.

When we light Shabbat candles we remember that we are light too!

When we act with kindness, we bring light to our whole family.

What act of kindness did you do or see today (even a hug)?

End Shabbat by asking,

***“How can we bring light around us this week?”***



## ISRAEL: THE WORD

*Israel, trust in God, God is your helper and protector.*

— Psalm 115:9

The Hebrew word for Israel is *Yisrael*. In this word are the Hebrew words for “struggle,” for “God,” and for “straight.”

There is a big struggle happening in Israel now. What is one thing that helps you when you struggle? When have you seen people work together to make something wrong be better or straight? How would you tell God, in your words, to help all the people working together now to benefit Israel?

***“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’” Mr. Rogers***

While there is a big struggle in Israel right now, there are so many people who are helping. Jewish people are helping each other non-stop and non-Jews are helping too, both in Israel and where you live.

Ask your parents who they know who is helping.

In what ways do you want to be a helper?



## BIG QUESTIONS

*If I am not for myself, who will be for me?  
But if I am only for myself, what am I?  
And if not now, when?*

— Pirkei Avot 1:14

What do you think it means to be “for yourself”?

In what ways can it be a good thing to be “for yourself”?

Bring to mind an example of someone who seems like they’re “only for themselves.”

What is that person like? (Stay general, no need to share a name.)

Is this person someone you respect? Would you want to be like this person?

Usually when we talk about people, we say “who” not “what.” Why do you think the Mishnah says, “If I am only for myself, what am I?” instead of “...who am I?”

Why do you think the Mishnah shifts so abruptly from talking about who we are and what we stand for to asking a time-related question: “If not now, when?”

When is the “now” that the Mishnah refers to in your opinion?



## WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER

*The people of Israel are similar to a ship. If there is a hole in the lower part, one does not say, “Only the lower part has a hole in it.” Rather they must immediately recognize that the ship is liable to sink and that they must repair the hole below.*

— Midrash Eliyahu Rabbah, 11

Why do you think the global Jewish people are so often referred to as “the people of Israel” in our foundational texts? If you imagine the Jewish people as a ship, what do you see? What are different parts of this ship?

Consider the metaphor of the Jewish people as a ship. What are some of the strengths of this boat? What are some of its challenges?

Reflect on some times over the course of history that the Jewish people have been “liable to sink.” What do you think has helped us to be so resilient and buoyant over thousands of years? What can we learn from those lessons now?