

# Civilly Speaking

## A Curriculum on Civil Discourse

Grade 6 to Adult Learners



Curriculum by Joel Lurie Grishaver and Ira J. Wise

Cover photo by Zion Ozeri



The Covenant Foundation

As Jewish educators, it is our responsibility to bring more kind and empathetic discourse—and possibly more peace—to our classrooms and our world.

With that goal in mind, we commissioned a six-part curriculum, written by master Jewish educators Joel Lurie Grishaver and Ira J. Wise, on the topic of teaching civil discourse. This curriculum includes material appropriate for Grades 6 and 7, Grades 8 to 10, and Grade 11 to adult learners.

Each lesson is enclosed here and is also available for download on our website at [www.covenantfn.org](http://www.covenantfn.org).

Explore these lessons and let us know if they bring a modicum of civility to your classrooms, and your worlds.

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*Ira J. Wise is Director of Education at Congregation B'nai Israel in Bridgeport, Connecticut. He is also a teacher, an author, a mentor, an educational consultant, and a student of Joel Lurie Grishaver.*

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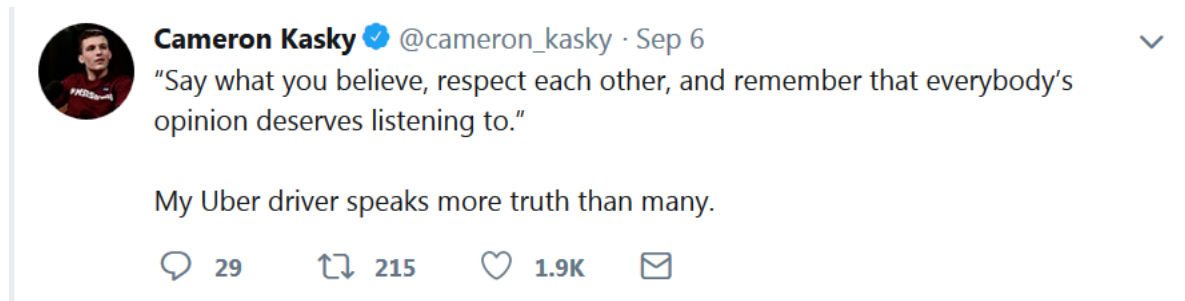
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UNIT 1

# Civil Discourse

## UNIT 1: Civil Discourse

### Learner's Handout for Grades 6 and 7



The human being was placed in the Garden of Eden to till it and to tend it.

*Genesis 2:15*

This is what the Holy One said to Israel: "My children, I have lacked for you nothing - what do I seek from you? I seek no more than that you love one another and honor one another and fear one another and that there should not be any sin, thievery, or harmful actions among you so that you do not come to invalidate the world."

*Eliyahu Rabbah 26 [AJWS translation]*

One must be careful not to embarrass another person in public, whether of greater or lesser stature, and not to call them by a name that they are ashamed of, and not to say in front of them something that they are embarrassed about. When does this apply? In regard to issues between one person and another.

*Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8*

In 2016, two Chicago-area sportswriters, Julie DiCaro and Sarah Spain, decided to produce a video in response to the many vile comments – many through Twitter – that they had each received. For the video, they invited a group of men – who had not seen the tweets before – to read those tweets aloud to either DiCaro or Spain. Here are a few of the tweets that can be printed:

“One of the players should beat you to death with their hockey stick.”

“I hope your dog gets hit by a car, [expletive].”

“Hopefully this [expletive] Julie DiCaro is Bill Cosby’s next victim. That would be classic.”

“Why bring up your own rape in the story? Is it your way of firing back at critics who said you can’t get any?”

“You need to be hit in the head with a hockey puck and killed.”

“What is civil discourse? A 2011 conversation among national leaders from many fields, held at the U.S. Supreme Court, defined civil discourse as ‘robust, honest, frank and constructive dialogue and deliberation that seeks to advance the public interest’ (Brosseau 2011).

James Calvin Davis, in his book *In Defense of Civility*, proposes ‘the exercise of patience, integrity, humility, and mutual respect in civil conversation, even (or especially) with those with whom we disagree’ (2010, 159).

National Public Radio journalist Diane Rehm, during an event at Oberlin College, said simply: our ability to have conversation about topics about which we disagree, and our ability to listen to each other’s perspectives (Choby 2011).”

*A Plea for Civil Discourse: Needed, the Academy’s Leadership by Andrea Leskes*



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## UNIT 1: Civil Discourse

### Leader's Guide for Grades 6 and 7

#### BIG IDEA

Learners will develop a working definition of civil discourse.

#### SET INDUCTION: 15 Minutes

1. Print out the following script and ask two participants to act it out:

Participant 1: (*surprised*) Hey! What do you think you are doing? I was here!

Participant 2: (*arrogant*) Too bad. You snooze, you lose.

Participant 1: (*angry*) I can't believe you are being a complete and total jerk about this. You have to wait your turn like everyone else!

Participant 2: (*dismissive*) You are a complete tool. You should have been paying attention. Now get lost!

Participant 1: (*angrier, but not louder*) You suck. You are a complete and total...

Participant 2: (*dismissive*) Loser.

2. Discussion:

- a. What did we just see? Was it a debate? An exchange of opposing views? Something else?
- b. What was positive about the interaction between these two people? What was troubling about it?
- c. Who started the name calling? Who went low first?
- d. Does it matter who started it?

## TEXT STUDY: 20 Minutes

Distribute the Learner's Handout and tell the class that you will spend some time exploring the meaning of civil discourse through some Jewish texts. As the teacher, you will likely want to ask your own questions. However, here are a few questions to help get you started.

1. Cameron Kasky  
This quote is provided as more of an introduction and a guiding principle, and less for initial discussion. We suggest returning to it when you summarize the entire session.
2. Genesis 2:15
  - a. What are the two jobs given to humans?
  - b. Is there a distinction between the two jobs?
  - c. Why do you think the distinction between creation (tilling) and maintenance (tending) is important?
  - d. How do these ideas help us begin to unpack how we can and should interact with one another?
  - e. How would you restate the purpose of human beings in modern terms?
3. *Eliyahu Rabbah* 26
  - a. Based on this text, what are the responsibilities of human beings?
  - b. What does this text add to your understanding of humanity's purpose?
  - c. What do you think the text means when it suggests that certain actions could invalidate the world? (Perhaps it suggests that a certain level of sin and incivility might make God regret the promise made to Noah through the rainbow or revisit the events of Sodom and Gomorrah.)
4. Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8
  - a. Maimonides (RaMBaM) is narrowing our field of misbehavior. What concerns him in this text?
  - b. Why is he concerned about embarrassment or humiliation?

## FORTY YEARS OF (UN)CIVIL DISCOURSE: 30 Minutes

1. Share the following story with your students: In 1978, Melissa Ludtke, a writer for *Sports Illustrated*, won a lawsuit against Bowie Kuhn, the commissioner of Major League Baseball. She had been prohibited from entering team locker rooms to interview players because she was a woman. At the time, the locker room was the only place teams made the players available for interviews immediately before and after games.



While Ludtke endured a great deal of verbal abuse from athletes, fans, and even fellow writers, the worst comments were condescending or sarcastic.

- a. What can you say about how people spoke and behaved 40 years ago?
  - b. Ludtke gave several interviews the last week of September 2018. In those interviews, she described having felt a lot of frustration and experienced a fair amount of meanness. But she did say her situation did not reach some of the lows of today.
2. Ludtke often refers people to DiCaro and Spain's video to get an idea of what things are like today. Although female reporters have greater access to athletes, civility in the larger society has not improved.
- a. The video is pretty rough for this age group. We recommend discussing the tweets on the student handout rather than showing the video. (We recommend showing the final minute of the video after the discussion of the tweets. See below.)
  - b. Some of the tweets are on the handout.
    - i. Are you surprised by the nature of the tweets?
    - ii. Could these same things have been said to Melissa Ludtke in 1978? Why or why not? (If the students answer yes, by whom could these things have been said?)
    - iii. What has changed in 40 years?
    - iv. One possibility that has been suggested is that the prevalence of social media has caused some changes. What do you think? (By giving us the opportunity to say what we think without looking anyone in the eye, we feel freer to say things that might otherwise embarrass us. Without the sense of others watching or listening, we might feel less pressure to fight our *yetzer ha-ra* – our evil impulse. Consequences may seem less real or apparent. Social media also lets us say things without the opportunity to proofread ourselves and think about what we sound like to others. Finally, sometimes we post or tweet when our judgment is impaired by lack of sleep or other factors.)
    - v. Do you think that the authors of the tweets would say those things to the faces of the women they sent them to?
    - vi. Show the last portion of the video produced from having men (not the authors of the tweets) read them to the two sports writers (3:25 to the end). Please preview it first!! It can be found at <https://youtu.be/9tU-D-m2JY8>.
    - vii. How did the men in the video (who had never seen the tweets before) seem to react to what they were reading?
    - viii. Discuss the difference between what you say online and what you would say face-to-face again.

## CONCLUSION: A DEFINITION OF CIVIL DISCOURSE: 20 Minutes

1. Andrea Leskes presents us with three quotes. Read each quote and use the following questions as discussion prompts:
  - a. How does this quote help us define “civil discourse”?
  - b. How is every instance of “civil discourse” a statement of people’s purpose?
2. Return to Cameron Kasky’s quote in the tweet at the beginning of Unit 1. What do we need to remember in order to move forward as a society? (Note: Cameron is one of the students who survived the shootings at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in February 2018. He currently works as an activist.)

## UNIT 1: Civil Discourse

### Learner's Handout for Grades 8 to 10



**Cameron Kasky** ✓ @cameron\_kasky · Sep 6

"Say what you believe, respect each other, and remember that everybody's opinion deserves listening to."

My Uber driver speaks more truth than many.

💬 29 ↺ 215 ❤️ 1.9K ✉

The human being was placed in the Garden of Eden to till it and to tend it.

*Genesis 2:15*

This is what the Holy One said to Israel: "My children, I have lacked for you nothing - what do I seek from you? I seek no more than that you love one another and honor one another and fear one another and that there should not be any sin, thievery, or harmful actions among you so that you do not come to invalidate the world."

*Eliyahu Rabbah 26 [AJWS translation]*

One must be careful not to embarrass another person in public, whether of greater or lesser stature, and not to call them by a name that they are ashamed of, and not to say in front of them something that they are embarrassed about. When does this apply? In regard to issues between one person and another.

*Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8*

In 2016, two Chicago-area sportswriters, Julie DiCaro and Sarah Spain, decided to produce a video in response to the many vile comments – many through Twitter – that they had each received. For the video, they invited a group of men – who had not seen the tweets before – to read those tweets aloud to either DiCaro or Spain. Here are a few of the tweets that can be printed:

“One of the players should beat you to death with their hockey stick.”

“I hope your dog gets hit by a car, [expletive].”

“Hopefully this [expletive] Julie DiCaro is Bill Cosby’s next victim. That would be classic.”

“Why bring up your own rape in the story? Is it your way of firing back at critics who said you can’t get any?”

“You need to be hit in the head with a hockey puck and killed.”

“What is civil discourse? A 2011 conversation among national leaders from many fields, held at the U.S. Supreme Court, defined civil discourse as ‘robust, honest, frank and constructive dialogue and deliberation that seeks to advance the public interest’ (Brosseau 2011).

James Calvin Davis, in his book *In Defense of Civility*, proposes ‘the exercise of patience, integrity, humility and mutual respect in civil conversation, even (or especially) with those with whom we disagree’ (2010, 159).

National Public Radio journalist Diane Rehm, during an event at Oberlin College, said simply: our ability to have conversation about topics about which we disagree, and our ability to listen to each other’s perspectives (Choby 2011).”

*A Plea for Civil Discourse: Needed, the Academy’s Leadership by Andrea Leskes*

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## UNIT 1: Civil Discourse

### Leader's Guide for Grades 8 to 10

#### BIG IDEA

Learners will develop a working definition of civil discourse.

#### SET INDUCTION: 15 Minutes

1. Show the YouTube video of Dan Akroyd and Jane Curtin's Point/CounterPoint sketch. You can find it at <https://youtu.be/c91XUyg9iWM>. Depending on the age of your group, you may need to tell them that this clip ran on network television in 1979, the fourth season of *Saturday Night Live*.

Needless to say, each classroom, youth group, or setting is unique. In some settings, this clip will be deemed inappropriate. If so, go to the alternate set induction.

#### Alternate SET INDUCTION

Print out the following script and ask two participants to act it out:

Participant 1: (*surprised*) Hey! What do you think you are doing? I was here!

Participant 2: (*arrogant*) Too bad. You snooze, you lose.

Participant 1: (*angry*) I can't believe you are being a complete and total jerk about this. You have to wait your turn like everyone else!

Participant 2: (*dismissive*) You are a complete tool. You should have been paying attention. Now get lost!

Participant 1: (*angrier, but not louder*) You suck. You are a complete and total...

Participant 2: (*dismissive*) Loser.

2. Discussion:
  - a. What did we just see? Was it a debate? An exchange of opposing views? Something else?
  - b. What was positive about the interaction between these two people? What was troubling about it?
  - c. Who started the name calling? Who went low first?
  - d. Does it matter who started it?
  - e. (If you showed the SNL clip) How should Aykroyd have responded (if he weren't a comedian

trying to get a laugh)?

## TEXT STUDY: 20 Minutes

Distribute the handout and tell the students that you will spend some time exploring the meaning of civil discourse through some Jewish texts. As the teacher, you will likely want to ask your own questions. However, here are a few questions to help get you started.

Cameron Kasky

This quote is provided as more of an introduction and a guiding principle, and less for initial discussion. We suggest returning to it when you summarize the entire session.

1. Genesis 2:15
  - a. What are the two jobs given to humans?
  - b. Is there a distinction between the two jobs?
  - c. Why do you think the distinction between creation (tilling) and maintenance (tending) is important?
  - d. How do these ideas help us begin to unpack how we can and should interact with one another?
  - e. How would you restate the purpose of human beings in modern terms?
2. *Eliyahu Rabbah* 26
  - a. Based on this text, what are the responsibilities of human beings?
  - b. What does this text add to your understanding of humanity's purpose?
  - c. What do you think the text means when it suggests that certain actions could invalidate the world? (Perhaps it suggests that a certain level of sin and incivility might make God regret the promise made to Noah through the rainbow or revisit the events of Sodom and Gomorrah.)
3. Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8
  - a. Maimonides (RaMBaM) is narrowing our field of misbehavior. What concerns him in this text?
  - b. Why is he concerned about embarrassment or humiliation?

## FORTY YEARS OF (UN)CIVIL DISCOURSE: 30 Minutes

1. Share the following story with your students: In 1978, Melissa Ludtke, a writer for *Sports Illustrated*, won a lawsuit against Bowie Kuhn, the commissioner of Major League Baseball. She had been prohibited from entering team locker rooms to interview players because she was a woman. At the time, the locker room was the only place teams made the players available for interviews immediately before and after games.

While Ludtke endured a great deal of verbal abuse from athletes, fans, and even fellow writers, the worst comments were condescending or sarcastic.

- a. What can you say about how people spoke and behaved 40 years ago?
  - b. (If you showed the SNL video) Was the language used by Dan Aykroyd and Jane Curtin normal speech, or was it considered funny because it was so outrageous? Did people talk that way normally? (You may have to be the voice of the past, and make it clear that this language was pretty outrageous. “Jane, You Ignorant Slut” may have been the first time the word “slut” was ever used on television. There were rules in place, both official and societal. This was jarring. And it was live.)
  - c. Ludtke gave several interviews the last week of September 2018. In those interviews, she described having felt a lot of frustration and experienced a fair amount of meanness. But she did say her situation did not reach some of the lows of today.
2. Ludtke often refers people to DiCaro and Spain’s video to get an idea of what things are like today. Although female reporters have greater access to athletes, civility in the larger society has not improved.
- a. Show the video. The whole thing is kind of rough. We recommend showing either from 1:43 to 2:33, or from 3:25 to the end. Please preview it first!! You can find the video at <https://youtu.be/9tU-D-m2JY8>. If you do not care to show either section of the video, just use the printed tweets.
  - b. Some of the tweets are on the Learner’s Handout.
    - i. (If you showed the video) How did the men in the video (who had never seen the tweets before) seem to react to what they were reading?
    - ii. Are you surprised by the nature of the tweets?
    - iii. Could these same things have been said to Melissa Ludtke in 1978? Why or why not? (If the students answer yes, by whom could these things have been said?)
    - iv. What has changed in 40 years?
    - v. One possibility that has been suggested is that the prevalence of social media has caused some changes. What do you think? (By giving us the opportunity to say what we think without looking anyone in the eye, we feel freer to say things that might otherwise embarrass us. Without the sense of others watching or listening, we might feel less pressure to fight our *yetzer ha-ra* – our evil impulse. Consequences may seem less real or apparent. Social media also lets us say things without the opportunity to proofread ourselves and think about what we sound like to others. Finally, sometimes we post or tweet when our judgment is impaired by lack of sleep or other factors.)



- vi. Do you think that the authors of the tweets would say those things to the faces of the women they sent them to?

## **CONCLUSION: A DEFINITION OF CIVIL DISCOURSE: 20 Minutes**

1. Andrea Leskes presents us with three quotes. Read each quote and use the following questions as discussion prompts:
  - a. How does this quote help us define “civil discourse”?
  - b. How is every instance of “civil discourse” a statement of people’s purpose?
2. Return to Cameron Kasky’s quote in the tweet at the beginning of Unit 1. What do we need to remember in order to move forward as a society? (Note: Cameron is one of the students who survived the shootings at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in February 2018. He currently works as an activist.)

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## UNIT 1: Civil Discourse

### Learner's Handout for Grade 11 to Adult

Our differences need not pull us apart.  
Disagreements and divides can be an  
opportunity to find common ground if we  
engage with respect and civility.

*Rabbi Asher Lopatin*

The human being was placed in the  
Garden of Eden to till it and to tend it.

*Genesis 2:15*

This is what the Holy One said to Israel:  
“My children, I have lacked for you  
nothing - what do I seek from you? I seek  
no more than that you love one another  
and honor one another and fear one  
another and that there should not be any  
sin, thievery, or harmful actions among  
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the world.”

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another person in public, whether of  
greater or lesser stature, and not to  
call them by a name that they are ashamed of, and not to say in front of them something that they are  
embarrassed about. When does this apply? In regard to issues between one person and another.

*Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8*

Oh, to be in the desert,  
At an encampment for wayfarers!  
Oh, to leave my people,  
To go away from them—  
For they are all adulterers,  
A band of rogues.

They bend their tongues like bows;  
They are valorous in the land  
For treachery, not for honesty;  
They advance from evil to evil.  
And they do not heed Me  
—declares Adonai.

Beware, every man of his friend!  
Trust not even a brother!  
For every brother takes advantage,  
Every friend is base in his dealings.

One man cheats the other,  
They will not speak truth;  
They have trained their tongues to speak falsely;  
They wear themselves out committing sin.

*Jeremiah 9:1-4*

In 2016, two Chicago-area sportswriters, Julie DiCaro and Sarah Spain, decided to produce a video in response to the many vile comments – many through Twitter – that they had each received. For the video, they invited a group of men – who had not seen the tweets before – to read those tweets aloud to either DiCaro or Spain. Here are a few of the tweets that can be printed:

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“Why bring up your own rape in the story? Is it your way of firing back at critics who said you can’t get any?”

“You need to be hit in the head with a hockey puck and killed.”

“What is civil discourse? A 2011 conversation among national leaders from many fields, held at the U.S. Supreme Court, defined civil discourse as ‘robust, honest, frank and constructive dialogue and deliberation that seeks to advance the public interest’ (Brosseau 2011).

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## UNIT 1: Civil Discourse

### Leader's Guide for Grade 11 to Adult

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#### SET INDUCTION: 15 Minutes

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2. Discussion:
  - a. What did we just see? Was it a debate? An exchange of opposing views? Something else?
  - b. What was positive about the interaction between these two people? What was troubling about it?
  - c. Who started the name calling? Who went low first?
  - d. Does it matter who started it?
  - e. How should Akroyd have responded (if he weren't a comedian trying to get a laugh)?

#### TEXT STUDY: 20 Minutes

Distribute the Learner's Handout and tell the students that you will spend some time exploring the meaning of civil discourse through some Jewish texts. As the teacher, you will likely want to ask your own questions. However, here are a few questions to help get you started.

Rabbi Asher Lopatin

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1. Genesis 2:15
  - a. What are the two jobs given to humans?
  - b. Is there a distinction between the two jobs?
  - c. Why do you think the distinction between creation (tilling) and maintenance (tending) is important?

- d. How do these ideas help us begin to unpack how we can and should interact with one another?
- e. How would you restate the purpose of human beings in modern terms?

2. *Eliyahu Rabbah* 26

- a. Based on this text, what are the responsibilities of human beings?
- b. What does this text add to your understanding of humanity's purpose?
- c. What do you think the text means when it suggests that certain actions could invalidate the world? (Perhaps it suggests that a certain level of sin and incivility might make God regret the promise made to Noah through the rainbow or revisit the events of Sodom and Gomorrah.)

3. Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8

- a. Maimonides (RaMBaM) is narrowing our field of misbehavior. What concerns him in this text?
- b. Why is he concerned about embarrassment or humiliation?

4. Jeremiah 9:1-4

- a. Jeremiah presents a dark picture of humanity. (Remember that he prophesied the exile to Babylon (586 BCE)!) What does he add to our understanding of how we should treat one another?
- b. What have we learned about the power of our words?

## FORTY YEARS OF (UN)CIVIL DISCOURSE: 30 Minutes

1. Share the following story with your students: In 1978, Melissa Ludtke, a writer for *Sports Illustrated*, won a lawsuit against Bowie Kuhn, the commissioner of Major League Baseball. She had been prohibited from entering team locker rooms to interview players because she was a woman. At the time, the locker room was the only place teams made the players available for interviews immediately before and after games.

While Ludtke endured a great deal of verbal abuse from athletes, fans, and even fellow writers, the worst comments were condescending or sarcastic.

- a. What can you say about how people spoke and behaved 40 years ago?
- b. Was the language used by Dan Aykroyd and Jane Curtain normal speech, or was it considered funny because it was so outrageous? Did people talk that way normally? (If you are teaching a younger group, you may have to be the voice of the past, and make it clear that this language was pretty outrageous. "Jane, You Ignorant Slut" may have been the first time the word "slut" was ever used on television. There were rules in place, both official and societal. This was jarring. And it was live.)

- c. Ludtke gave several interviews the last week of September 2018. In those interviews, she described having felt a lot of frustration and experienced a fair amount of meanness. But she did say her situation did not reach some of the lows of today.
2. Ludtke often refers people to DiCaro and Spain's video to get an idea of what things are like today. Although female reporters have greater access to athletes, civility in the larger society has not improved.
  - a. Show the video. You can find it at <https://youtu.be/9tU-D-m2JY8>.
  - b. Some of the tweets are on the handout.
    - i. How did the men in the video (who had never seen the tweets before) seem to react to what they were reading?
    - ii. Are you surprised by the nature of the tweets?
    - iii. Could these same things have been said to Melissa Ludtke in 1978? Why or why not? (If the students answer yes, by whom could these things have been said?)
    - iv. What has changed in 40 years?
    - v. One possibility that has been suggested is that the prevalence of social media has caused some changes. What do you think? (By giving us the opportunity to say what we think without looking anyone in the eye, we feel freer to say things that might otherwise embarrass us. Without the sense of others watching or listening, we might feel less pressure to fight our *yetzer ha-ra* – our evil impulse. Consequences may seem less real or apparent. Social media also lets us say things without the opportunity to proofread ourselves and think about what we sound like to others. Finally, sometimes we post or tweet when our judgment is impaired by lack of sleep or other factors.)
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## CONCLUSION: A DEFINITION OF CIVIL DISCOURSE: 20 Minutes

1. Andrea Leskes presents us with three quotes. Read each quote and use the following questions as discussion prompts:
  - a. How does this quote help us define “civil discourse”?
  - b. How is every instance of “civil discourse” a statement of people’s purpose?
2. Return to Asher Lopatin’s quote at the beginning of Unit 1. What do we need to remember in order to move forward as a society?

UNIT 2

# How to Argue



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## UNIT 2: How to Argue

### Learner's Handout for Grades 6 and 7

ar·gu·ment (är'gyə-mənt)

1. An exchange of diverging or opposite views, typically a heated or an angry one.
2. A reason or set of reasons given in support of an idea, an action, or a theory.

*Etymology:* Middle English (in the sense 'process of reasoning'): via Old French from Latin *argumentum*, from *arguere* 'make clear, prove, accuse'.

*Oxford English Dictionary*

In logic and philosophy, an argument is a series of statements, called the premises, intended to determine the degree of truth of another statement, the conclusion.

*Wikipedia*

A form of expression consisting of a coherent set of reasons presenting or supporting a point of view; a series of reasons given for or against a matter under discussion that is intended to convince or persuade the listener.

*West's Encyclopedia of American Law*



## *Monty Python's Flying Circus: "The Argument Clinic"*

Man: An argument isn't just contradiction.  
Mr. Vibrating: It can be.  
Man: No it can't. An argument is a connected series of statements intended to establish a proposition.  
Mr. Vibrating: No it isn't.  
Man: Yes it is! It's not just contradiction.  
Mr. Vibrating: Look, if I argue with you, I must take up a contrary position.  
Man: Yes, but that's not just saying "No, it isn't."  
Mr. Vibrating: Yes it is!  
Man: No it isn't!  
Man: Argument is an intellectual process. Contradiction is just the automatic gainsaying<sup>1</sup> of any statement the other person makes.

## *Pirkei Avot 5:7*

There are seven things that characterize an ignorant fool, and seven that characterize a wise person:

- A wise person does not speak before one who is greater than them in wisdom or age.
- A wise person does not interrupt his fellow's words.
- A wise person does not hasten to answer.
- A wise person's questions are on the subject and their answers are to the point.
- A wise person responds to first things first and to latter things later.
- Concerning what a wise person did not hear, they say, "I did not hear."
- A wise person concedes to the truth. With the ignorant fool, the reverse of all these is the case.

## How to Argue

### *Arguing Positively*

1. Play fair.
2. Respect the other person.
3. Attack ideas, not the person to whom they're attached.
4. Admit when you are wrong.
5. Apologize when appropriate.
6. Be open to new ideas.

### *Arguing Persuasively*

1. Make the other person feel smart.
2. Use evidence tailored to the argument and audience.
3. Look for logical fallacies.
4. Paint the other person as the hero or victim.
5. Curate your language.
6. Know when to stop.

### *Arguing Effectively*

1. Don't provoke an argument.
2. Be real.
3. Stay on topic.
4. Explain, explain, explain.
5. Understand and acknowledge the other person's argument.
6. Argue from a good premise.
7. Don't require the last word.

[www.wikihow.com/Argue](http://www.wikihow.com/Argue)

What other types of arguing or rules would you suggest to make arguments more constructive and meaningful?

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## UNIT 2: How to Argue

### Leader's Guide for Grades 6 and 7

#### BIG IDEA

Learners will develop an understanding of what it means to argue in a meaningful way.

#### SET INDUCTION: 15 Minutes

ar·gu·ment (är'gyə-mənt)

1. Ask students the following questions in sequence:
  - a. What is an argument?
  - b. Who is involved?
  - c. Are there different kinds of arguments?
  - d. Are arguments a good thing? A bad thing? Neither? Both?
  - e. Let's assume (for argument's sake) that arguments can be a valuable form of communication. How should we have an argument? What rules would you suggest in order to keep arguments valuable? Write some of the students' suggestions on the board.
  - f. Distribute the Learner's Handout. Draw the students' attention to the definitions.

#### ACTIVITY: 15 Minutes

##### *Monty Python's Flying Circus: "The Argument Clinic"*

Show the video of Monty Python's Argument Clinic. Before showing the video, provide a little context for it. It was first broadcast in November 1972 on *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. This was a sketch comedy show (in some ways similar to *Saturday Night Live*, but with significant differences) starring a troupe of five British men and one American. In its day, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* was very cutting edge and was popular in both Britain and the United States.

You can find a trimmed version of the video at <https://youtu.be/ohDB5gbtaEQ>. It eliminates the ending where the sketch wanders into other kinds of clinics and has nothing to do with our lesson.

After showing the clip, ask the following questions:

1. What did you think of the video? Let's take this comedy a bit seriously for a moment. Did this add anything to our definition of an argument?
2. Does it suggest any rules we should add to our list?

3. Look at the portion of the script on the handout. How does it impact our understanding of how to have a meaningful argument?

## TEXT STUDY: 15 Minutes

### *Pirkei Avot 5:7*

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What does this Talmud text tell you about arguments?
2. Why are the rabbis concerned about the difference between a wise person and a fool?
3. How does a wise person argue? How does a fool argue?

When they have provided answers, give the students the following assignment:

In teams of two or three, write your own guide as to how to argue. You may use our list from the board and ideas that occur to you from this text.

When each group has finished, have the students share their rules. Compare them to the following text:

Arguments don't have to be hurtful, but they can easily turn that way if you're not careful. Luckily, there are several techniques and tricks you can try, which will allow you to get your point across without turning the discussion into a full-on fight. The ability to argue effectively is actually a great skill to learn; it can come in handy in a wide variety of situations, giving you the confidence to stand up for yourself and what you believe in. Remember to pick your battles, though – some things just aren't worth arguing over!]

## CONCLUDING ACTIVITY: 15 Minutes

### *How to Argue*

This final activity can be a close study of the text or just a conversation. The whole point is to bring together the work we have done so far and to develop a plan for being constructive arguers.

This text comes from wikiHow, which is not connected to Wikipedia. wikiHow is a worldwide collaboration of thousands of people focused on one goal: to teach anyone in the world how to do anything. A wiki is a server program that allows users to collaborate in forming the content of a website. The term comes from the word “wikiwiki,” which means “fast” in the Hawaiian language.

1. First, have the students read through the list and work together in teams to answer the question on the page. (What other types of arguing or rules would you suggest to make arguments more constructive and meaningful?)
2. Then, choose one of the following methods:
  - a. Ask students to compare the rules the class made with the rules from wikiHow.

- b. Have the students look at both their own list and the one on the page and try and distill them into a mutually agreed upon list of ten principles.
- c. Simply read through and discuss the ideas on the page. Below you will find elaborations on each of them to help your discussion.

### *Arguing Positively*

1. **Play fair.** Odds are you know exactly how to push the other person's buttons. However, it's important to resist if you want to have a civil argument. Resolve that no matter how upset he or she makes you, you will *not* say the one thing you know would push the argument over the edge.
2. **Respect the other person.** Respect what the other person has to say. An argument has to be two-sided; if you fail to hear the other side out, the other person will return the gesture and not listen to you. Refuting a person's opinion is fine, but refusing to hear it makes a debate pointless.  
  
Always be respectful when arguing with another person. Remember, that's who you are arguing with – another person. Treat that person the way that you would want to be treated. Don't immediately dismiss their ideas just because the other person does not agree with you. Listen to them.
3. **Attack ideas, not the person to whom they're attached.** When you argue with someone, you should remember to only attack that person's ideas. You should never attack the person instead. That means you shouldn't call the person stupid for thinking what he or she thinks. In addition, you shouldn't devolve to attacks on the person's physical appearance either.
4. **Admit when you are wrong.** When you make a mistake, admit it. Admit that you misunderstood or were misinformed. Being wrong doesn't make you a lesser person, but admitting you're wrong does make you the bigger person.
5. **Apologize when appropriate.** If you've hurt someone or your argument caused problems, you should apologize. Be the adult in the situation and take responsibility for your actions.
6. **Be open to new ideas.** The best way to argue positively is to be open to new ideas. You don't want to be wrong in an argument again, do you? Open yourself to the possibility of a better way of thinking or new, fascinating information.

### *Arguing Persuasively*

1. **Make the other person feel smart.** When you make people feel stupid, they tend to shut down. The result is likely to be an argument that leads nowhere. If you make the other person feel smart, on the other hand, you'll have an easier time turning the argument in your favor.
2. **Use evidence tailored to the argument and audience.** Using evidence from reliable sources that specifically supports and deals with what you're arguing about can be one of the easiest ways to win an argument. You should also tailor the type of evidence you use to the person you are arguing with, using more logical or more emotional evidence based on what you think your opponent will respond to best.

3. **Look for logical fallacies.** Pointing out fallacies in the other person's logic and politely explaining why that logic is bad is a good way to start to change someone's mind. Learning to recognize logical fallacies can be challenging, but here are a few common ones:
  - Be on the lookout for arguments that incorrectly assume that correlation means causation. For example, rates of autism diagnosis increased with the usage of cell phones. Therefore, autism is caused by cell phone usage. Post hoc fallacies are similar, but they are based on the idea that because A preceded B, B was caused by A.
  - An "Argument from Silence" fallacy is the idea that something does not exist because there is no evidence for it. For example, God/germs/evolution/aliens do not exist because we have never physically witnessed them.
  - A non sequitur is a conclusion to an argument that is unrelated to its premise. For example, the argument that we can't pay teachers more because policemen and firefighters do not make that much money is a non sequitur.
4. **Paint the other person as the hero or victim.** People like to think of themselves as the main character in their own life story. Keep your opponent thinking this and charm them into changing their views by carefully tailoring how you talk about the issues.

For example, "I know you really, really want to help people. You're one of the most generous people that I know. But if you really wanted to help people, you wouldn't donate to a charity that misuses its money like that. Don't you want to be sure that your money is directly saving lives?"
5. **Curate your language.** When you argue, avoid language like "you" and "me." Instead, use words like "we." This tactic makes your opponent think of the two of you as a single unit with singular interests, rather than as separate units with interests that drive you apart.
6. **Know when to stop.** At times you will have an opponent who cannot change their mind in front of you. Sometimes you have to just back off and give your opponent time to think about you said. Over the course of time, he or she may end up being persuaded to your opinion. Of course, sometimes you just have to persist, too. It's a subtle art with which you may just have to experiment.
  - Generally, if someone seems to be getting really upset, it's time to stop.
  - Close the argument with something like, "Okay, I can see that I can't change your mind. Please, just think about what I said."

## *Arguing Effectively*

1. **Don't provoke an argument.** Starting an argument – clearly provoking one – will get noticed by the people with whom you argue. They'll be much less likely to take you seriously, because they know you just want to shout for a while. Avoid looking like a troll if you want to have an effective argument.



2. **Be real.** Let your humanity and who you are as a person show through. This will make you appear more sympathetic to the people against whom you argue and will make them less angry. Explain why you believe what you do and be willing to admit when an idea is your own. Don't use the "devil's advocate" cover up for an idea you know won't be popular.
3. **Stay on topic.** The fastest way to make an argument totally pointless is to let it get derailed. Stay on topic when you argue; when the other person derails, get them back on track. Solving a single disagreement is better than getting nowhere with twenty separate issues. Discuss one issue at a time, covering everything you want to say about it. When it's been settled, or you've reached an impasse, move on to the next topic.

Don't allow the subject to change. The other person might try to change the subject in order to cover up a mistake. Many people, when proven wrong in some area, will be dismissive of their mistake rather than acknowledging their error. Either leave the argument if the person refuses to acknowledge mistakes ("It doesn't matter," "Whatever, that's my opinion," etc.), or insist that they acknowledge the error.

4. **Explain, explain, explain.** Explain why you have the belief that you have, where you got your information from, and how you came to your conclusions. Your explanations could expose some misunderstandings, but the process also forces your opponent to enter your headspace and follow your line of reasoning. It can be an effective way to win people over!
5. **Understand and acknowledge the other person's argument.** When you argue with someone, acknowledge that person's argument and make sure that you actually understand what they're saying. Ask the other person to clarify if you have to.
6. **Argue from a good premise.** Make sure that you understand the basis of your argument before you argue. You should also make sure that you agree with the premise of your opponent's argument. If you don't agree with the example they're using, or if you think it isn't representative or the idea is flawed in some way, say so before getting knee-deep in an argument. Letting your opponent work from a flawed premise makes it harder to show them the correct ideas.
7. **Don't require the last word.** If you both feel the need to have the last word in an argument, it can quickly lead a conversation into a "Bottomless Anger Pit of Doom." Don't go there. You wouldn't like the Bottomless Anger Pit of Doom. Just "agree to disagree" and go cool down.

If you've been talking for a long time and neither one of you is budging, consider calling it a day. There are some arguments you can't win – no matter how good your argument is – if the other person isn't willing to rethink the problem. If you know when to quit, you might still be able to preserve your relationship with the other person.

[www.wikihow.com/Argue](http://www.wikihow.com/Argue)

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## UNIT 2: How to Argue

### Learner's Handout for Grade 8 to Adult

ar·gu·ment (är'gyə-mənt)

1. An exchange of diverging or opposite views, typically a heated or an angry one.
2. A reason or set of reasons given in support of an idea, an action, or a theory.

*Etymology:* Middle English (in the sense 'process of reasoning'): via Old French from Latin *argumentum*, from *arguere* 'make clear, prove, accuse'.

*Oxford English Dictionary*

In logic and philosophy, an argument is a series of statements, called the premises, intended to determine the degree of truth of another statement, the conclusion.

*Wikipedia*

A form of expression consisting of a coherent set of reasons presenting or supporting a point of view; a series of reasons given for or against a matter under discussion that is intended to convince or persuade the listener.

*West's Encyclopedia of American Law*



## *Monty Python's Flying Circus: "The Argument Clinic"*

Man: An argument isn't just contradiction.  
Mr. Vibrating: It can be.  
Man: No it can't. An argument is a connected series of statements intended to establish a proposition.  
Mr. Vibrating: No it isn't.  
Man: Yes it is! It's not just contradiction.  
Mr. Vibrating: Look, if I argue with you, I must take up a contrary position.  
Man: Yes, but that's not just saying "No, it isn't."  
Mr. Vibrating: Yes it is!  
Man: No it isn't!  
Man: Argument is an intellectual process. Contradiction is just the automatic gainsaying<sup>2</sup> of any statement the other person makes.

## *Pirkei Avot 5:7*

There are seven things that characterize an ignorant fool, and seven that characterize a wise person:

- A wise person does not speak before one who is greater than them in wisdom or age.
- A wise person does not interrupt his fellow's words.
- A wise person does not hasten to answer.
- A wise person's questions are on the subject and their answers are to the point.
- A wise person responds to first things first and to latter things later.
- Concerning what a wise person did not hear, they say, "I did not hear."
- A wise person concedes to the truth. With the ignorant fool, the reverse of all of these is the case.

## **Bereshit (Genesis) 4:3-8**

In the course of time, Cain brought an offering to God from the fruit of the soil; and Abel, for his part, brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock. God paid heed to Abel and his offering, but to Cain and his offering He paid no heed. Cain was much distressed and his face fell. And God said to Cain, "Why are you distressed, and why is your face fallen? Surely, if you do right, there is uplift. But if you do not do right, sin couches at the door; Its urge is toward you, yet you can be its master." "Cain said to his brother Abel ... and when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him.

## **Bava Metzia 59b**

Rabbi Joshua and Rabbi Eliezer were having a halachic argument over the purity of an oven owned by Achnai. Rabbi Eliezer brought them all the evidence he possibly could to legitimize his argument, but Rabbi Joshua rejected him.

Upon being rejected, Rabbi Eliezer said to Rabbi Joshua, "If the *halakhah* is with me, then let the carob tree prove it!" to which the carob tree uprooted itself and moved 100 cubits (approx. 50 yards). Some say 400 cubits (approx. 200 yards). Rabbi Joshua responded by saying that one cannot prove anything from a carob tree.

Rabbi Eliezer then said to him, "Then if the *halakhah* is with me, let the stream prove it!" to which the water responded by flowing in the opposite direction. Rabbi Joshua responded by saying that one cannot prove anything with a stream.

Rabbi Eliezer then said, "Then if the *halakhah* is with me, let these walls prove it!" to which the walls of the academy began to cave in. Rabbi Joshua then rebuked the walls by saying that the walls had no authority in an *halakhic* debate. The walls then stopped, remaining at angles in respect to both of the rabbis.

Finally, Rabbi Eliezer said, "If the *halakhah* is with me, then may it be proven by heaven!"

In response to this, a voice came down from heaven and said to Rabbi Joshua, "Why do you argue with Rabbi Eliezer? The *halakhah* is in accordance with him in every way".

Rabbi Joshua said to the heavenly voice, "The Torah is not in heaven, so we take no notice of heavenly voices, since you have already written in the Torah to follow the majority."

The heavenly voice then exclaimed with delight, "My sons have defeated me; my sons have defeated me!"

After this, Rabbi Eliezer was excommunicated from the group.

## How to Argue

### *Arguing Positively*

1. Play fair.
2. Respect the other person.
3. Attack ideas, not the person to whom they're attached.
4. Admit when you are wrong.
5. Apologize when appropriate.
6. Be open to new ideas.

### *Arguing Persuasively*

1. Make the other person feel smart.
2. Use evidence tailored to the argument and audience.
3. Look for logical fallacies.
4. Paint the other person as the hero or victim.
5. Curate your language.
6. Know when to stop.

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[www.wikihow.com/Argue](http://www.wikihow.com/Argue)

What other types of arguing or rules would you suggest to make arguments more constructive and meaningful?

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## UNIT 2: How to Argue

### Leader's Guide for Grade 8 to Adult

#### BIG IDEA

Learners will develop an understanding of what it means to argue in a meaningful way.

#### SET INDUCTION: 15 Minutes

ar·gu·ment (är'gyə-mənt)

1. Ask students the following questions in sequence:
  - a. What is an argument?
  - b. Who is involved?
  - c. Are there different kinds of arguments?
  - d. Are arguments a good thing? A bad thing? Neither? Both?
  - e. Let's assume (for argument's sake) that arguments can be a valuable form of communication. How should we have an argument? What rules would you suggest in order to keep arguments valuable. Write some of the students' suggestions on the board.
  - f. Distribute the Learner's Handout. Draw the students' attention to the definitions.

#### ACTIVITY: 15 Minutes

##### *Monty Python's Flying Circus: "The Argument Clinic"*

Show the video of Monty Python's Argument Clinic. Before showing the video, provide a little context for it. It was first broadcast in November 1972 on *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. This was a sketch comedy show (in some ways similar to *Saturday Night Live*, but with significant differences) starring a troupe of five British men and one American. In its day, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* was very cutting edge and was popular in both Britain and the United States.

**Note:** If you used Unit 1, an attentive student might notice that, like the Curtain/Ackroyd clip in that unit, this clip is over 40 years old. You may want to revisit the question of whether or not mores have changed over the past two generations. Or it may be time to use more modern clips! In either case, we think this video will be silly enough for your students to enjoy it. (Please let us know if we are wrong.)

You can find a trimmed version of the video at <https://youtu.be/ohDB5gbtaEQ>. It eliminates the ending where the sketch wanders into other kinds of clinics and has nothing to do with our lesson.

After showing the clip, ask the following questions:

1. What did you think of the video? Let's take this comedy a bit seriously for a moment. Did this add anything to our definition of an argument?
2. Does it suggest any rules we should add to our list?
3. Look at the portion of the script on the Learner's Handout. How does it impact our understanding of how to have a meaningful argument?

## TEXT STUDY: 15 Minutes

### *Pirkei Avot* 5:7

Ask the students the following questions:

1. What does this Talmud text tell you about arguments?
2. Why are the rabbis concerned about the difference between a wise person and a fool?
3. How does a wise person argue? How does a fool argue?

When they have provided answers, give the students the following assignment:

In teams of two or three, write your own guide as to how to argue. You may use our list from the board and ideas that occur to you from this text.

When each group has finished, have the students share their rules. Compare them to the following text:

Arguments don't have to be hurtful, but they can easily turn that way if you're not careful. Luckily, there are several techniques and tricks you can try, which will allow you to get your point across without turning the discussion into a full-on fight. The ability to argue effectively is actually a great skill to learn; it can come in handy in a wide variety of situations, giving you the confidence to stand up for yourself and what you believe in. Remember to pick your battles, though – some things just aren't worth arguing over!

## ACTIVITY: 20 Minutes

### *Bereshit* (Genesis) 4:3-8

1. Explain to the students that this is an exercise in *midrash*. Among other things, *midrash* is the art of interpreting Torah. Let's look at the final sentence of the quote:  
"Cain said to his brother Abel ... and when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him."  
2. The Torah does not tell us what Cain said or how Abel responded. It just says that Cain spoke, they were in the field, and then Cain killed Abel.
3. Let's imagine the conversation that took place between the two brothers. In pairs, create a short dialogue for actors playing the roles of Cain and Abel. Think about the stage directions you give them. What emotions should they show behind the words? What should the words be?



4. Have one pair of students act out their script. Have the group discuss the performance. Continue the process for a few more pairs, asking students who think their scripts are substantially different to share them.
5. What do the scripts have in common? Were they simply conversations between two brothers trying to resolve a conflict? Or were they something else?
6. Rashi was one of the greatest and most prolific interpreters of Torah. He lived in Troyes, France, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Following is his interpretation of what happened:

AND CAIN SPOKE TO ABEL — He began an argument, striving and contending with him, to seek a pretext to kill him. There are midrashic explanations of these words, but this is the plain sense of the text.

What do you think he meant by the “plain sense of the text”?

7. How could the story have ended differently?

## ACTIVITY: 30 Minutes

### *Bava Metzia 59b*

NOTE: There is a lovely animated version of the story available from Bimbam at [www.bimbam.com/achnai](http://www.bimbam.com/achnai). If you feel your audience will enjoy it, please show it!

1. This Talmudic story is a bit fantastic. It includes events that seem supernatural and God’s voice speaking to the rabbis. Yet, it features people who really lived. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus was born in the last half of the first century in the Common Era (C.E.). He was a student of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai (who escaped the destruction of Jerusalem and established the rabbinic court in Yavneh in 70 C.E.). He was a very learned rabbi.
2. What is the dispute between the two rabbis? How do they settle it?
3. Rabbi Eliezer states that, because he is correct, God will change reality in support of his claims. And reality changes. However, each time Rabbi Joshua dismisses the miracle, it stops. Why do you think the miracles stopped?
4. What does Rabbi Joshua mean when he says, “The Torah is not in heaven, so we take no notice of heavenly voices, since you have already written in the Torah to follow the majority”?

In Deuteronomy 30:11-12, it says: Surely, this Instruction which I enjoin upon you this day is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond reach. It is not in the heavens, that you should say, “Who among us can go up to the heavens and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?”

The rabbis took this to mean that once we were given the Torah, it becomes our responsibility to interpret it. We do not ask God to tell us what it means. We do not expect God to answer.

5. So what is the problem with how Rabbi Eliezer argued his case? Why did he fail?

He did not argue persuasively with logic. He relied on God, rather than logic, to verify his answer. He did not provide arguments that we can understand.

6. In the end, God laughs. Why is God happy that the rabbis have outthought their creator?

One answer is that God recognized from Rabbi Joshua's rebuke that the rabbis truly understood God's intentions for the Torah. Just as parents want their children to learn how to stand on their own, so, too, does God.

7. Finally, why do you think the rabbis excommunicated (cast out) Rabbi Eliezer?

## CONCLUDING ACTIVITY: 15 Minutes

### How to Argue

This final activity can be a close study of the text or just a conversation. The whole point is to bring together the work we have done so far and to develop a plan for being constructive arguers.

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1. First, have the students read through the list and work together in teams to answer the question on the page. (What other types of arguing or rules would you suggest to make arguments more constructive and meaningful?)
2. Then, choose one of the following methods:
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6. **Be open to new ideas.** The best way to argue positively is to be open to new ideas. You don't want to be wrong in an argument again, do you? Open yourself to the possibility of a better way of thinking or new, fascinating information.

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1. **Make the other person feel smart.** When you make people feel stupid, they tend to shut down. The result is likely to be an argument that leads nowhere. If you make the other person feel smart, on the other hand, you'll have an easier time turning the argument in your favor.
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3. **Look for logical fallacies.** Pointing out fallacies in the other person's logic and politely explaining why that logic is bad is a good way to start to change someone's mind. Learning to recognize logical fallacies can be challenging, but here are a few common ones:
  - Be on the lookout for arguments that incorrectly assume that correlation means causation. For example, rates of autism diagnosis increased with the usage of cell phones. Therefore, autism is caused by cell phone usage. Post hoc fallacies are similar, but they are based on the idea that because A preceded B, B was caused by A.
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4. **Paint the other person as the hero or victim.** People like to think of themselves as the main character in their own life story. Keep your opponent thinking this and charm them into changing their views by carefully tailoring how you talk about the issues.

For example, “I know you really, really want to help people. You’re one of the most generous people that I know. But if you really wanted to help people, you wouldn’t donate to a charity that misuses its money like that. Don’t you want to be sure that your money is directly saving lives?”

5. **Curate your language.** When you argue, avoid language like “you” and “me.” Instead, use words like “we.” This tactic makes your opponent think of the two of you as a single unit with singular interests, rather than as separate units with interests that drive you apart.
6. **Know when to stop.** At times, you will have an opponent who cannot change their mind in front of you. Sometimes you have to just back off and give your opponent time to think about what you said. Over the course of time, he or she may end up being persuaded to your opinion. Of course, sometimes you just have to persist, too. It’s a subtle art with which you may just have to experiment.
  - Generally, if someone seems to be getting really upset, it’s time to stop.
  - Close the argument with something like, “Okay, I can see that I can’t change your mind. Please, just think about what I said.”

## *Arguing Effectively*

1. **Don’t provoke an argument.** Starting an argument – clearly provoking one – will get noticed by the people with whom you argue. They’ll be much less likely to take you seriously, because they know you just want to shout for a while. Avoid looking like a troll if you want to have an effective argument.
2. **Be real.** Let your humanity and who you are as a person show through. This will make you appear more sympathetic to the people against whom you argue and will make them less angry. Explain why you believe what you do and be willing to admit when an idea is your own. Don’t use the “devil’s advocate” cover up for an idea you know won’t be popular.
3. **Stay on topic.** The fastest way to make an argument totally pointless is to let it get derailed. Stay on topic when you argue; when the other person derails, get them back on track. Solving a single disagreement is better than getting nowhere with twenty separate issues. Discuss one issue at a time, covering everything you want to say about it. When it’s been settled, or you’ve reached an impasse, move on to the next topic.

Don’t allow the subject to change. The other person might try to change the subject in order to cover up a mistake. Many people, when proven wrong in some area, will be dismissive of their mistake rather than acknowledging their error. Either leave the argument if the person refuses to acknowledge mistakes (“It doesn’t matter,” “Whatever, that’s my opinion,” etc.), or insist that they acknowledge the error.

4. **Explain, explain, explain.** Explain why you have the belief that you have, where you got your information from, and how you came to your conclusions. Your explanations could expose some misunderstandings, but the process also forces your opponent to enter your headspace and follow your line of reasoning. It can be an effective way to win people over!

5. **Understand and acknowledge the other person's argument.** When you argue with someone, acknowledge that person's argument and make sure that you actually understand what they're saying. Ask the other person to clarify if you have to.
6. **Argue from a good premise.** Make sure that you understand the basis of your argument before you argue. You should also make sure that you agree with the premise of your opponent's argument. If you don't agree with the example they're using, or if you think it isn't representative or the idea is flawed in some way, say so before getting knee-deep in an argument. Letting your opponent work from a flawed premise makes it harder to show them the correct ideas.
7. **Don't require the last word.** If you both feel the need to have the last word in an argument, it can quickly lead a conversation into a "Bottomless Anger Pit of Doom." Don't go there. You wouldn't like the Bottomless Anger Pit of Doom. Just "agree to disagree" and go cool down.

If you've been talking for a long time and neither one of you is budging, consider calling it a day. There are some arguments you can't win – no matter how good your argument is – if the other person isn't willing to rethink the problem. If you know when to quit, you might still be able to preserve your relationship with the other person.

*[www.wikihow.com/Argue](http://www.wikihow.com/Argue)*

UNIT 3

# Why Are We Arguing?

## UNIT 3: Why Are We Arguing?

### Learner's Handout for Grades 6 and 7



1. Every argument that is for the sake of Heaven will endure (forever). But if it is not for the sake of Heaven, it will not endure at all.

What (kind of) argument is for the sake of Heaven?

The argument of Hillel and Shammai;

What (kind of) argument is not for the sake of Heaven?

The argument of Korach and all his congregation.

*Mishnah, Avot 5:17*

- a. What does the *Mishnah* mean when it says that an argument will (or will not) endure?
  - b. Before we look at the examples, what do you think the difference is between arguments that are for the sake of Heaven and those that are not?
  - c. Why do you think the rabbis who wrote the *Mishnah* cared about the difference?
2. Even though *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* disagreed (on many critical halakhic issues)... (the children of) *Beit Shammai* did not refrain from marrying the children of *Beit Hillel*, nor did (the children of) *Beit Hillel* refrain from marrying the children of *Beit Shammai*. They behaved with love and friendship toward one another, as it says in *Zechariah* 8:19: "Love truth and peace."

*Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 14b*

- a. What about this description suggests to you that the arguments between the two schools were for the sake of Heaven?
  - b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is for the sake of Heaven?
  - c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as being for the sake of Heaven?
  - d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?
3. Now Korach, son of Izhar son of Kohath son of Levi, betook himself, along with Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth—descendants of Reuben—to rise up against Moses, together with two hundred and fifty Israelites, chieftains of the community, chosen in the assembly, men of repute. They combined against Moses and Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! For all the community are holy, all of them, and God is in their midst. Why then do you raise yourselves above God’s congregation?”

*Numbers 16:1-3*

- a. Why do you think the rabbis of the *Mishnah* describe Korach and company’s argument as **not** being for the sake of Heaven?
  - b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is not for the sake of Heaven?
  - c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as not being for the sake of Heaven?
  - d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?
4. Speaker at a (fictional) political rally:

“We don’t need another liberal like Steven Smith in Congress! He thinks the solution to every problem is to spend more money to create more government agencies. He is a socialist and wants to redistribute wealth from those who have earned their fortunes to those too lazy to work hard. If the poor want to stop being poor, they need to work harder and stay in school and off of drugs. If this country is so unfair, how is it that we elected an African American to be president? He went to an Ivy League school. He had access to better education and jobs. Smith’s policies are not conservative enough.”

5. Speaker at a different (fictional) political rally:

“We don’t need another neoconservative like Annabel Jones in Congress! She thinks the solution to every problem is to spend less and cut taxes. She believes that being poor is



entirely the fault of poor people. She refuses to take into account historical inequities that make it extremely difficult for those at the bottom of the economy – many of whom are people of color – to get ahead. Their educational and employment opportunities are fewer and of lower quality simply by virtue of who their parents are, where they came from, and where they live. This is America, where we welcome everyone, and everyone is supposed to have equal access to the American Dream. Her policies are not liberal enough.”

6. Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.

*John F. Kennedy*

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## UNIT 3: Why Are We Arguing?

### Leader's Guide for Grades 6 and 7

#### BIG IDEA

With this lesson, we are beginning to look at the motivations behind arguments. Is the debate designed to move us (friends, families, communities, nations, etc.) forward in some way, or do one or more parties to the argument have an agenda to advance their own personal desires, even if they come at the cost of the public good? This distinction may be seen as being at the heart of the entire curriculum; it provides the basis for rules of engagement in civil discourse.

#### SET INDUCTION: 15 Minutes

1. Divide the students into *chavruta* pairs (or triads if necessary).  
(If you have not done this with these learners before, you may want to explain that a *chavruta* – from the same root as *chaver* or friend – has been the traditional mode of Jewish text study for centuries. It is based on the idea that two people sharing their ideas can come up with and learn more than either of them working alone.)
2. Distribute the handouts.
3. Read text number one aloud.
4. Ask the learners if there are any words they don't understand. If there are, explain them.  
If they ask about the meaning of "For the sake of Heaven," **do not answer**. Explain that figuring out the meaning of that phrase is part of the lesson.
5. Instruct the learners to try to answer the three questions that immediately follow text number one, making notes on the page so they will remember what they said.
6. After ten minutes, have some of the *chavruta* pairs share some of their answers. Allow others to respond to them.

#### ACTIVITY: 30 Minutes

##### BimBam Video

1. If you have never used BimBam's materials with this group of learners before, explain what the organization is.
  - a. BimBam is an organization that sparks connections to Judaism through digital storytelling for learners of all ages. Its website features a video and curriculum made with Rabbi Daniel Roth, the Director Emeritus of the Pardes Center for Judaism and Conflict Resolution. This video uses animation to tell the story of the first three texts on your handout.

- b. Also, tell the students that the Hebrew for “Argument for the Sake of Heaven” is “*Machloket L'shem Shamayim*.” Extra points for using the Hebrew!
2. You can find the video at [www.bimbam.com/machloket-lshem-shemayim](http://www.bimbam.com/machloket-lshem-shemayim). The page contains a link to download the video to your device (computer, tablet, phone, flash drive). We recommend downloading it in advance to avoid any potential issues with online streaming during your session. And, of course, set up and test your equipment with the actual video and sound before the learners arrive!
3. Show the video to the learners.
4. Review the three questions for text number one from the Learner’s Handout. Then, ask the following three questions: Does what we just saw help us answer the three questions we discussed before the video in a different way? If so, how? What are our new answers (if any)?

### TEXT STUDY: 30 Minutes

We suggest that you work with texts numbers two and three in a single large group. If your group is exceptionally large (by your definition), and you have additional teachers, you might want to divide into two or even three groups. Our goal is to vary the stimulus as well as create a different kind of conversation.

1. Explain that Hillel and Shammai were two teachers from the first century BCE. They lived at a time when the Temple still stood in Jerusalem and sacrifices were offered by the priests. They frequently opposed one another’s opinions in terms of how to interpret the law. By one scholar’s count, they differed 316 times. And Shammai was voted to have the correct answer only six times!

(Note: Not all of the arguments took place between the two men. Some of them were between their two schools, known as *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel*, the two groups that dominated Jewish learning in *Eretz Yisrael* for several generations.)

As a rule, *Beit Shammai*’s interpretation of each law was more literal, exacting, and strict. On the other hand, *Beit Hillel*’s interpretations tended to be a bit more liberal and made an effort to bring more people together in observing the law.

Tell the students that the piece of Talmud the group is about to read comes from the Babylonian Talmud, which was compiled over 500 years after the deaths of Hillel and Shammai. Therefore, it is a discussion of a memory, rather than a current event to those doing the writing.

2. Ask a student to read text number 2 from *Yevamot*, which seeks to explain the second line of our original *Mishnah* on *Machloket L'shem Shamayim*.
3. Have the group discuss the questions on the Learner’s Handout (repeated below for the leader/teacher). Ask each group to write the answers they come up with on the handout.
  - a. What about this description suggests to you that the arguments between the two schools were for the sake of Heaven?

- b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)
  - c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as being for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)
  - d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?
4. Explain that the next text (number 3) comes from the Torah, from *Bamidbar*/Numbers. It is what the final verse of our *Mishnah* is referencing. Korach is a first cousin to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. And Korach's father Izhar was the second born son of Kohath (their common grandfather), after Moses's father Amram. Earlier in the book of Numbers, we see that Elzaphan, son of Uziel (the youngest brother of Amram and Izhar), is the chief of all of the Kohathites, including Korach, who was higher in the birth order.
5. Ask a student to read text number 3 from *Bamidbar*/Numbers, which seeks to explain the final line of our original *Mishnah* on *Machloket L'shem Shamayim*.
6. Have the group discuss the questions on the Learner's Handout (repeated below for the leader/teacher):
  - a. Why do you think the rabbis of the *Mishnah* describe Korach and company's argument as **not** being for the sake of Heaven?
  - b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is not for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)
  - c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as not being for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)
  - d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?

## CONCLUSION: 30 Minutes

### Case Study

Remind the students that the first two of our final texts are **fictional**. They are composites of actual arguments made by a variety of politicians, activists, or "people on the street" being interviewed by reporters.

1. Divide the group in half. Assign text number 4 to one group and text number 5 to the other group.
2. Explain that their text describes their position on a candidate for Congress that they **oppose**. Take five minutes to read and discuss the position in order to be prepared to debate. Direct students to partner with a member of their own group to meet with a pair from the other group.
3. Now, tell them that they must have that discussion with their counterparts in a way that is a *Machloket L'shem Shamayim*, an argument for the sake of Heaven. We have purposely only included descriptions of the candidates that are stated from the perspective of those opposed to them. The students will need to use that information to imagine what their candidate actually believes. (Note: This is often more information than people who are not actually working on a campaign use in such conversations.)

Tell them their goal is to try and come to a conclusion about who is truly the best candidate for Congress.

4. Give the groups approximately ten minutes for their discussion. The leader should move around and listen, helping where necessary.
5. At the end of the ten minutes, ask the groups to stop advocating for a candidate and analyze their conversation, using the questions we used to discuss Hillel, Shammai, and Korach.
6. Bring the whole group back together and have students share their analysis. Ask how many people were convinced to change their mind by an argument that was angry. Ask how many changed as a result of a calm, respectful argument. Ask how many changed their mind for any reason.
7. Finally, the quote by John F. Kennedy is one possible logical outcome of choosing to argue for the sake of Heaven. Ask the students what they think the president meant. Ask if they agree with him. Ask if they can answer the question for themselves.
8. At this point, discuss other outcomes of choosing to limit our arguments to those that are *b'shem shamayim*. Ask students to come up with more arguments they see in the world; for each one, ask whether or not it is for the sake of Heaven in their opinion.

The illustration that appears at the beginning of the Learner's Handout for Unit 3 is from the BimBam.com lesson on this topic; we encourage you to use it for Grades 6 and 7. You can find it at [www.bimbam.com/machloket-lshem-shemayim](http://www.bimbam.com/machloket-lshem-shemayim).

In addition, the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies offers ways to take this learning further and encourages civil discourse in our world. We recommend you visit and explore Pardes' resources at [www.9adar.org](http://www.9adar.org).

## UNIT 3: Why Are We Arguing?

### Learner's Handout for Grades 8 to 10



1. Every argument that is for the sake of Heaven will endure (forever). But if it is not for the sake of Heaven, it will not endure at all.

What (kind of) argument is for the sake of Heaven?

The argument of Hillel and Shammai;

What (kind of) argument is not for the sake of Heaven?

The argument of Korach and all his congregation.

*Mishnah, Avot 5:17*

- a. What does the *Mishnah* mean when it says that an argument will (or will not) endure?
  - b. Before we look at the examples, what do you think the difference is between arguments that are for the sake of Heaven and those that are not?
  - c. Why do you think the rabbis who wrote the *Mishnah* cared about the difference?
2. Even though *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* disagreed (on many critical halakhic issues)... (the children of) *Beit Shammai* did not refrain from marrying the children of *Beit Hillel*, nor did (the children of) *Beit Hillel* refrain from marrying the children of *Beit Shammai*. They behaved with love and friendship toward one another, as it says in *Zechariah* 8:19: "Love truth and peace."

*Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 14b*

- a. What about this description suggests to you that the arguments between the two schools were for the sake of Heaven?
  - b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is for the sake of Heaven?
  - c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as being for the sake of Heaven?
  - d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?
3. Now Korach, son of Izhar son of Kohath son of Levi, betook himself, along with Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth—descendants of Reuben—to rise up against Moses, together with two hundred and fifty Israelites, chieftains of the community, chosen in the assembly, men of repute. They combined against Moses and Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! For all the community are holy, all of them, and God is in their midst. Why then do you raise yourselves above God’s congregation?”

*Numbers 16:1-3*

- a. Why do you think the rabbis of the *Mishnah* describe Korach and company’s argument as **not** being for the sake of Heaven?
  - b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is not for the sake of Heaven?
  - c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as not being for the sake of Heaven?
  - d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?
4. Love your neighbor as yourself:

The elements included in this *mitzvah* follow the general principle that one should treat another person in the way he would treat himself (e.g. protecting his property, preventing him from being harmed, speaking only well of him, respecting him), and certainly not glorifying oneself at his expense. The Sages have said regarding this last point, “One who glorifies himself at the expense of his fellow has no share in the World to Come.” (*Talmud Yerushalmi, Chagigah* 2:1) Whereas, one who behaves with others in a loving and peaceful manner fulfills the verse, “Israel, by whom I am glorified.” (*Isaiah* 49:3)

*Sefer HaChinukh, Mitzvah 243*

5. Speaker at a (fictional) political rally:

“We don’t need another liberal like Steven Smith in Congress! He thinks the solution to every problem is to spend more money to create more government agencies. He is a socialist and wants to redistribute wealth from those who have earned their fortunes to those too lazy to work hard. If the poor want to stop being poor, they need to work harder and stay in school and off of drugs. If this country is so unfair, how is it that we elected an African American to be president? He went to an Ivy League school. He had access to better education and jobs. Smith’s policies are not conservative enough.”

6. Speaker at a different (fictional) political rally:

“We don’t need another neoconservative like Annabel Jones in Congress! She thinks the solution to every problem is to spend less and cut taxes. She believes that being poor is entirely the fault of poor people. She refuses to take into account historical inequities that make it extremely difficult for those at the bottom of the economy – many of whom are people of color – to get ahead. Their educational and employment opportunities are fewer and of lower quality simply by virtue of who their parents are, where they came from, and where they live. This is America, where we welcome everyone, and everyone is supposed to have equal access to the American Dream. Her policies are not liberal enough.”

7. Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.

*John F. Kennedy*



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## UNIT 3: Why Are We Arguing?

### Leader's Guide for Grades 8 to 10

#### BIG IDEA

With this lesson, we are beginning to look at the motivations behind arguments. Is the debate designed to move us (friends, families, communities, nations, etc.) forward in some way, or do one or more parties to the argument have an agenda to advance their own personal desires, even if they come at the cost of the public good? This distinction may be seen as being at the heart of the entire curriculum; it provides the basis for rules of engagement in civil discourse.

#### SET INDUCTION: 15 Minutes

1. Divide the students into *chavruta* pairs (or triads if necessary).  
(If you have not done this with these learners before, you may want to explain that a *chavruta* – from the same root as *chaver* or friend – has been the traditional mode of Jewish text study for centuries. It is based on the idea that two people sharing their ideas can come up with and learn more than either of them working alone.)
2. Distribute the Learner's Handouts.
3. Read text number one aloud.
4. Ask the learners if there are any words they don't understand. If there are, explain them.  
If they ask about the meaning of "For the sake of Heaven," **do not answer**. Explain that figuring out the meaning of that phrase is part of the lesson.
5. Instruct the learners to try to answer the three questions that immediately follow text number one, making notes on the page so they will remember what they said.
6. After ten minutes, have some of the *chavruta* pairs share some of their answers. Allow others to respond to them.

#### TEXT STUDY: 30 Minutes

We suggest that you work with texts numbers two and three in a single large group. If your group is exceptionally large (by your definition), and you have additional teachers, you might want to divide into two or even three groups. Our goal is to vary the stimulus as well as create a different kind of conversation.

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(Note: Not all of the arguments took place between the two men. Some of them were between

their two schools, known as *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel*, the two groups that dominated Jewish learning in *Eretz Yisrael* for several generations.)

As a rule, *Beit Shammai*'s interpretation of each law was more literal, exacting, and strict. On the other hand, Hillel's interpretations tended to be a bit more liberal and made an effort to bring more people together in observing the law.

Tell the students that the piece of Talmud the group is about to read comes from the Babylonian Talmud, which was compiled over 500 years after the deaths of Hillel and Shammai. Therefore, it is a discussion of a memory, rather than a current event to those doing the writing.

2. Ask a student to read text number 2 from *Yevamot*, which seeks to explain the second line of our original *Mishnah* on *Machloket L'shem Shamayim*.
3. Have the group discuss the questions on the Learner's Handout (repeated below for the leader/teacher):
  - a. What about this description suggests to you that the arguments between the two schools were for the sake of Heaven?
  - b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)
  - c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as being for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)
  - d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?
4. Explain that the next text (number 3) comes from the Torah, from *Bamidbar*/Numbers. It is what the final verse of our *Mishnah* is referencing. Korach is a first cousin to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. And Korach's father Izhar was the second born son of Kohath (their common grandfather), after Moses's father Amram. Earlier in the book of Numbers, we see that Elzaphan, son of Uziel (the youngest brother of Amram and Izhar), is the chief of all of the Kohathites, including Korach, who was higher in the birth order.
5. Ask a student to read text number 3 from *Bamidbar*/Numbers, which seeks to explain the final line of our original *Mishnah* on *Machloket L'shem Shamayim*.
6. Have the group discuss the questions on the Learner's Handout (repeated below for the leader/teacher):
  - a. Why do you think the rabbis of the *Mishnah* describe Korach and company's argument as **not** being for the sake of Heaven?
  - b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is not for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)
  - c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as not being for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)
  - d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?

## TEXT STUDY: 20 Minutes

### What's Love Got To Do With It?

The goal of the following text is to help our learners put themselves in the place of the other. Perspective matters. We suggest remaining as a large group.

We also recommend reading an essay by Rabbi Bernie Fox as part of your preparation. You can find it at this shortened link: <http://bit.ly/FoxLoveNeighbor>

1. Tell the following story, which comes from the Babylonian Talmud (*Bavli*), *Shabbat* 31a, first:  
... a non-Jew came before Shammai and said: "If you can teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot, I will convert to Judaism." Shammai pushed him away with the builder's measuring stick he had been holding.

The same man went to Hillel with the same offer. Hillel said "That which is hateful to you do not do to another; that is the entire Torah, and the rest is its interpretation." Go study.

The man went to study and did become Jewish.

- a. Why do you think the man challenged these rabbis? Do you think he was serious about learning Torah and becoming Jewish when he began? (Probably not!)
  - b. Why do you think Shammai pushed him away? (He was insulted; perhaps he felt the man was mocking Judaism and the Torah. The first century BCE was not a time known for lots of people wanting to become Jewish – if there ever was such a time!)
  - c. Hillel's answer seems to have caused the man to change and become serious. Why do you think this was the case? What about Hillel's answer caused him to look at things differently?
  - d. Ask the learners to look at the next text on the handout.
2. Introduce the source of text number 4:  
The *Sefer HaChinukh* (Book of Education) was written in Spain during the Golden Age (c.1255 - c.1285 CE). It was published anonymously. The book explores the 613 commandments of the Torah as described by RaMBaM in his *Sefer HaMitzvot*. Each *mitzvah* is presented in the order it appears in the Torah, allowing the reader to follow the weekly *parshah*, *mitzvah* by *mitzvah*.
  3. Invite a student to read the first line of the text and ask if anyone can explain it. Invite additional comments and clarifying questions. Repeat with the remainder of the text. The text is not very difficult in terms of basic understanding. However, we want to make sure that the students are clear on the basic meaning.
  4. Ask "What is the point of loving your neighbor as yourself?"
  5. Putting yourself in the place of the other can change your outlook. How can doing so help us make our arguments be for the sake of Heaven?

## CONCLUSION: 30 Minutes

### Case Study

Remind students that the first two of our final texts are **fictional**. They are composites of actual arguments made by a variety of politicians, activists, or “people on the street” being interviewed by reporters.

1. Divide the group in half. Assign text number 5 to one group and text number 6 to the other group.
2. Explain that their text describes their position on a candidate for Congress that they **oppose**. Take five minutes to read and discuss the position in order to be prepared to debate. Direct students to partner with a member of their own group to meet with a pair from the other group.
3. Now, tell them that they must have that discussion with their counterparts in a way that is a *Machloket L'shem Shamayim*, an argument for the sake of Heaven. We have purposely only included descriptions of the candidates that are stated from the perspective of those opposed to them. The students will need to use that information to imagine what their candidate actually believes. (Note: This is often more information than people who are not actually working on a campaign use in such conversations.)

Tell them their goal is to try and come to a conclusion about who is truly the best candidate for Congress.

4. Give the groups approximately ten minutes for their discussion. The leader should move around and listen, helping where necessary.
5. At the end of the ten minutes, ask the groups to stop advocating for a candidate and analyze their conversation, using the questions we used to discuss Hillel, Shammai, and Korach.
6. Bring the whole group back together and have students share their analysis. Ask how many people were convinced to change their mind by an argument that was angry. Ask how many changed as a result of a calm, respectful argument. Ask how many changed their mind for any reason.
7. Finally, the quote by John F. Kennedy is one possible logical outcome of choosing to argue for the sake of Heaven. Ask the students what they think the president meant. Ask if they agree with him. Ask if they can answer the question for themselves.
8. At this point, discuss other outcomes of choosing to limit our arguments to those that are *b'shem shamayim*. Ask students to come up with more arguments they see in the world; for each one, ask whether or not it is for the sake of Heaven in their opinion.

In addition, The Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies offers ways to take this learning further and encourages civil discourse in our world. We recommend you visit and explore Pardes' resources at [www.9adar.org](http://www.9adar.org).

## UNIT 3: Why Are We Arguing?

### Learner's Handout for Grade 11 to Adult



1. Every argument that is for the sake of Heaven will endure (forever). But if it is not for the sake of Heaven, it will not endure at all.

What (kind of) argument is for the sake of Heaven?

The argument of Hillel and Shammai;

What (kind of) argument is not for the sake of Heaven?

The argument of Korach and all his congregation.

*Mishnah, Avot 5:17*

- a. What does the *Mishnah* mean when it says that an argument will (or will not) endure?
  - b. Before we look at the examples, what do you think the difference is between arguments that are for the sake of Heaven and those that are not?
  - c. Why do you think the rabbis who wrote the *Mishnah* cared about the difference?
2. Even though *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* disagreed (on many critical halakhic issues)... (the children of) *Beit Shammai* did not refrain from marrying the children of *Beit Hillel*, nor did (the children of) *Beit Hillel* refrain from marrying the children of *Beit Shammai*. They behaved with love and friendship toward one another as it says in *Zechariah* 8:19: "Love truth and peace."

*Babylonian Talmud, Yevamot 14b*

- a. What about this description suggests to you that the arguments between the two schools were for the sake of Heaven?
  - b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is for the sake of Heaven?
  - c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as being for the sake of Heaven?
  - d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?
3. Now Korach, son of Izhar son of Kohath son of Levi, betook himself, along with Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth—descendants of Reuben—to rise up against Moses, together with two hundred and fifty Israelites, chieftains of the community, chosen in the assembly, men of repute. They combined against Moses and Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! For all the community are holy, all of them, and God is in their midst. Why then do you raise yourselves above God’s congregation?”

*Numbers 16:1-3*

- a. Why do you think the rabbis of the *Mishnah* describe Korach and company’s argument as **not** being for the sake of Heaven?
  - b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is not for the sake of Heaven?
  - c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as not being for the sake of Heaven?
  - d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?
4. Love your neighbor as yourself:

The elements included in this *mitzvah* follow the general principle that one should treat another person in the way he would treat himself (e.g. protecting his property, preventing him from being harmed, speaking only well of him, respecting him), and certainly not glorifying oneself at his expense. The Sages have said regarding this last point, “One who glorifies himself at the expense of his fellow has no share in the World to Come.” (*Talmud Yerushalmi, Chagigah* 2:1) Whereas, one who behaves with others in a loving and peaceful manner fulfills the verse, “Israel, by whom I am glorified.” (*Isaiah* 49:3)

*Sefer HaChinukh, Mitzvah 243*

5. Speaker at a (fictional) political rally:

“We don’t need another liberal like Steven Smith in Congress! He thinks the solution to every problem is to spend more money to create more government agencies. He is a socialist and wants to redistribute wealth from those who have earned their fortunes to those too lazy to work hard. If the poor want to stop being poor, they need to work harder and stay in school and off of drugs. If this country is so unfair, how is it that we elected an African American to be president? He went to an Ivy League school. He had access to better education and jobs. Smith’s policies are not conservative enough.”

6. Speaker at a different (fictional) political rally:

“We don’t need another neoconservative like Annabel Jones in Congress! She thinks the solution to every problem is to spend less and cut taxes. She believes that being poor is entirely the fault of poor people. She refuses to take into account historical inequities that make it extremely difficult for those at the bottom of the economy – many of whom are people of color – to get ahead. Their educational and employment opportunities are fewer and of lower quality simply by virtue of who their parents are, where they came from, and where they live. This is America, where we welcome everyone, and everyone is supposed to have equal access to the American Dream. Her policies are not liberal enough.”

7. Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.

*John F. Kennedy*

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## UNIT 3: Why Are We Arguing?

### Leader's Guide for Grade 11 to Adult

#### BIG IDEA

With this lesson, we are beginning to look at the motivations behind arguments. Is the debate designed to move us (friends, families, communities, nations, etc.) forward in some way, or do one or more parties to the argument have an agenda to advance their own personal desires, even if they come at the cost of the public good? This distinction may be seen as being at the heart of the entire curriculum; it provides the basis for rules of engagement in civil discourse.

NOTE: The Learner's Handouts for Grades 8 to 10 and Grade 11 to Adult are almost identical. The difference is in the instruction. Feel free to use any of these approaches (repeated below). Alternatively, you can use the material on the Learner's Handout and ignore this Leader's Guide.

#### SET INDUCTION: 15 Minutes

1. Divide the students into *chavruta* pairs (or triads if necessary).  
(If you have not done this with these learners before, you may want to explain that a *chavruta* – from the same root as *chaver* or friend – has been the traditional mode of Jewish text study for centuries. It is based on the idea that two people sharing their ideas can come up with and learn more than either of them working alone.)
2. Distribute the handouts.
3. Read text number one aloud.
4. Ask if there are any words learners don't understand and explain them.  
If they ask about the meaning of "For the sake of heaven" **do not answer**. Explain that figuring out the meaning of that phrase is part of the lesson.
5. Instruct the learners to try to answer the three questions that immediately follow text number one, making notes on the page so they will remember what they said.
6. After ten minutes, have some of the *chavruta* pairs share some of their answers. Allow others to respond to them.

#### TEXT STUDY: 30 Minutes

We suggest that you work with texts numbers two and three in a single large group. If your group is exceptionally large (by your definition) and you have additional teachers, you might want to divide into two or even three groups. Our goal is to vary the stimulus as well as create a different kind of conversation.

1. Explain that Hillel and Shammai were two teachers from the first century BCE. They lived at a time when the Temple still stood in Jerusalem and sacrifices were offered by the priests. They



frequently opposed one another's opinions in terms of how to interpret the law. By one scholar's count, they differed 316 times. And Shammai was voted to have the correct answer only six times!

(Note: Not all of the arguments took place between the two men. Some of them were between their two schools, known as *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel*, the two groups that dominated Jewish learning in *Eretz Yisrael* for several generations.)

As a rule, *Beit Shammai's* interpretation of each law was more literal, exacting, and strict. On the other hand, Hillel's interpretations tended to be a bit more liberal and made an effort to bring more people together in observing the law.

Tell the students that the piece of Talmud the group is about to read comes from the Babylonian Talmud, which was compiled over 500 years after the deaths of Hillel and Shammai. Therefore, it is a discussion of a memory, rather than a current event to those doing the writing.

2. Ask a student to read text number 2 from *Yevamot*, which seeks to explain the second line of our original *Mishnah* on *Machloket L'shem Shamayim*.
3. Have the group discuss the questions on the Learner's Handout (repeated below for the leader/teacher):
  - a. What about this description suggests to you that the arguments between the two schools were for the sake of Heaven?
  - b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)
  - c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as being for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)
  - d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?
4. Explain that the next text (number 3) comes from the Torah, from *Bamidbar/Numbers*. It is what the final verse of our *Mishnah* is referencing. Korach is a first cousin to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. And Korach's father Izhar was the second born son of Kohath (their common grandfather), after Moses's father Amram. Earlier in the book of Numbers, we see that Elzaphan, son of Uziel (the youngest brother of Amram and Izhar), is the chief of all of the Kohathites, including Korach, who was higher in the birth order.
5. Ask a student to read text number 3 from *Bamidbar/Numbers*, which seeks to explain the final line of our original *Mishnah* on *Machloket L'shem Shamayim*.
6. Have the group discuss the questions on the Learner's Handout (repeated below for the leader/teacher):
  - a. Why do you think the rabbis of the *Mishnah* describe Korach and company's argument as **not** being for the sake of Heaven?
  - b. What are the key characteristics of an argument that is not for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)

- c. What arguments/debates/disagreements today do you think might be described as not being for the sake of Heaven? (Write the students' answers on the board.)
- d. Describe them. Why do you think they qualify?

## TEXT STUDY: 20 Minutes

### What's Love Got To Do With It?

The goal of the following text is to help our learners put themselves in the place of the other. Perspective matters. We suggest remaining as a large group.

We also recommend reading an essay by Rabbi Bernie Fox as part of your preparation. You can find it at this shortened link: <http://bit.ly/FoxLoveNeighbor>

1. Tell the following story, which comes from the Babylonian *Talmud* (*Bavli*), *Shabbat* 31a, first:

... a non-Jew came before Shammai and said: "If you can teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot, I will convert to Judaism." Shammai pushed him away with the builder's measuring stick he had been holding.

The same man went to Hillel with the same offer. Hillel said "That which is hateful to you do not do to another; that is the entire Torah, and the rest is its interpretation." Go study.

The man went to study and did become Jewish.

- a. Why do you think the man challenged these rabbis? Do you think he was serious about learning Torah and becoming Jewish when he began? (Probably not!)
  - b. Why do you think Shammai pushed him away? (He was insulted; perhaps he felt the man was mocking Judaism and the Torah. The first century BCE was not a time known for lots of people wanting to become Jewish – if there ever was such a time!)
  - c. Hillel's answer seems to have caused the man to change and become serious. Why do you think this was the case? What about Hillel's answer caused him to look at things differently?
  - d. Ask learners to look at the next text on the handout.
2. Introduce the source of text number 4:  
The *Sefer HaChinukh* (Book of Education) was written in Spain during the Golden Age (c.1255 - c.1285 CE). It was published anonymously. The book explores the 613 commandments of the Torah as described by RaMBaM in the his *Sefer HaMitzvot*. Each *mitzvah* is presented in the order it appears in the Torah, allowing the reader to follow the weekly *parshah*, *mitzvah* by *mitzvah*.
  3. Invite a student to read the first line of the text. Ask if anyone can explain the line. Invite additional comments and clarifying questions. Repeat with the remainder of the text. The text is not very difficult in terms of basic understanding. However, we want to make sure that the students are clear on the basic meaning.
  4. Ask "What is the point of loving your neighbor as yourself?"

5. Putting yourself in the place of the other can change your outlook. How can doing so help us make our arguments be for the sake of Heaven?

## CONCLUSION: 30 Minutes

### Case Study

We want to offer a possible departure from the Learner's Handout here, particularly for adult groups. This curriculum very deliberately avoids using current public figures. We do so primarily because there is no unity of opinion about the people who lead our nation. If we chose one quote or another, we might alienate some of the learners. Our goal is not to advocate a particular position with this curriculum. (Although we do have positions, they are not germane to the idea of civil discourse.)

Working with older teens and/or adults, however, you may want to cross that line and take actual statements from the news. We caution you to seek balance. If you seek to vilify those whose statements bother you, you take the risk that at least one or possibly more of your students will take issue with you about the content or context (or both) of the chosen statements. And you will find yourself debating politics instead of exploring how to have civil discussions about politics.

One way to seek balance is to ask your learners to do some homework before coming in. Ask them to find a quote with which they can actually **agree** from someone with whom they generally disagree (or whom they even detest). It may serve the purpose of putting them in the place of the other in ways they hadn't imagined.

### Here's an alternative suggestion:

Some adult groups might not enjoy the format of the following exercise. You know your learners. If you do not think they would enjoy this one, just continue to do a straight text study.

Remind students that the first two of our final texts are **fictional**. They are composites of actual arguments made by a variety of politicians, activists, or "people on the street" being interviewed by reporters.

1. Divide the group in half. Assign text number 5 to one group and text number 6 to the other group.
2. Explain that their text describes their position on a candidate for Congress that they **oppose**. Take five minutes to read and discuss the position in order to be prepared to debate. Direct students to partner with a member of their own group to meet with a pair from the other group.
3. Now, tell them that they must have that discussion with their counterparts in a way that is a *Machloket L'shem Shamayim*, an argument for the sake of Heaven. We have purposely only included descriptions of the candidates that are stated from the perspective of those opposed to them. The students will need to use that information to imagine what their candidate actually believes. (Note: This is often more information than people who are not actually working on a campaign use in such conversations.)

Tell them their goal is to try and come to a conclusion about who is truly the best candidate for Congress.

4. Give the groups approximately ten minutes for their discussion. The leader should move around and listen, helping where necessary.
5. At the end of the ten minutes, ask the groups to stop advocating for a candidate and analyze their conversation, using the questions we used to discuss Hillel, Shammai, and Korach.
6. Bring the whole group back together and have students share their analysis. Ask how many people were convinced to change their mind by an argument that was angry. Ask how many changed as a result of a calm, respectful argument. Ask how many changed their mind for any reason.
7. Finally, the quote by John F. Kennedy is one possible logical outcome of choosing to argue for the sake of Heaven. Ask the students what they think the president meant. Ask if they agree with him. Ask if they can answer the question for themselves.
8. At this point, discuss other outcomes of choosing to limit our arguments to those that are *b'shem shamayim*. Ask students to come up with more arguments they see in the world; for each one, ask whether or not it is for the sake of Heaven in their opinion.

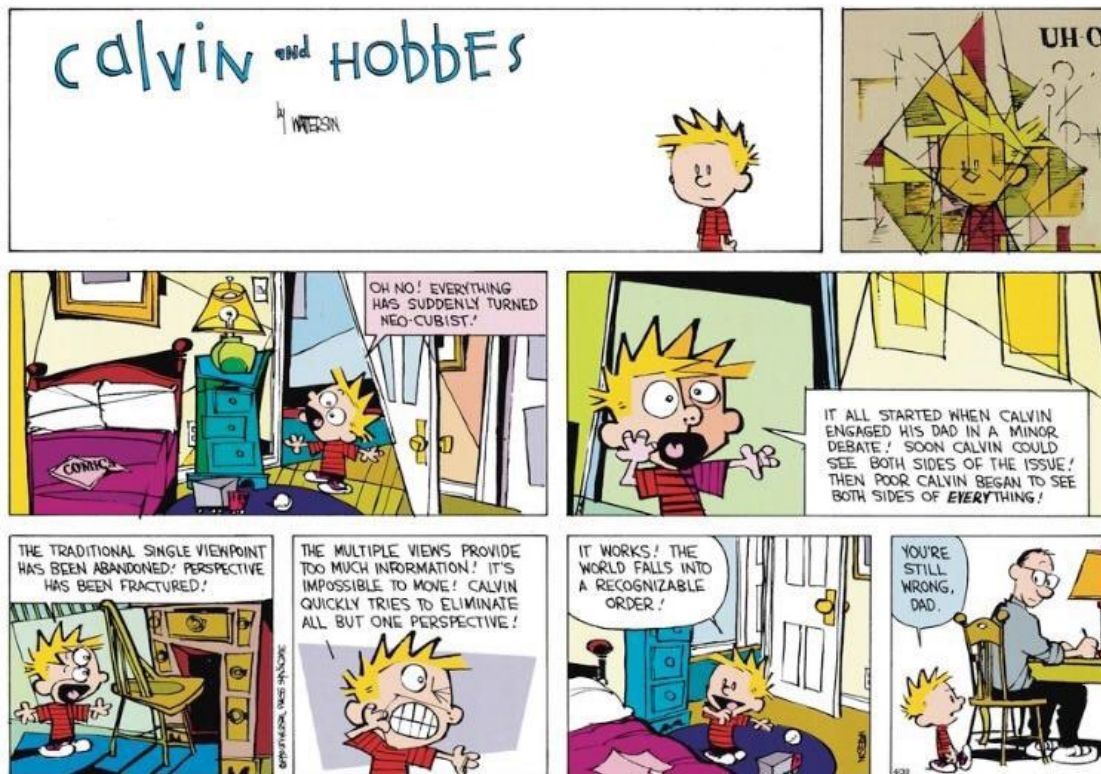
In addition, The Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies offers ways to take this learning further and encourages civil discourse in our world. We recommend you visit and explore Pardes' resources at [www.9adar.org](http://www.9adar.org).

## UNIT 4

# Both are the Words of the Living God

## UNIT 4: Both are the Words of the Living God

### Learner's Handout for Grades 6 and 7



### *Fiddler on the Roof*

- Mendel: What's the matter with you? Why don't you ever bring us some good news?
- Avram: It's not my fault. I only read it. "An edict from the authorities."
- Innkeeper: May the authorities grow like onions, their heads in the ground.
- ALL: Amen!
- Perchik: What good will your cursing do? You stand around, you curse and you chatter, and you don't do anything. You'll all chatter your way into the grave.
- Mendel: Excuse me. You're not from this village.

Perchik: No.

Mendel: Where are you from?

Perchik: Kiev. I was a student in the university there.

Innkeeper: Tell me. Is that the place where you learned how not to respect your elders?

Perchik: That is where I learned there is more to life than talk. You should know about events in the outside world!

Avram: Careful, my paper.

Innkeeper: Why should I break my head about the outside world? Let the outside world break its own head.

Mendel: Well put!

Tevye: He is right. As the Good Book says, "If you spit in the air, it lands in your face."

Perchik: Nonsense. You can't close your eyes to what's happening in the world.

Tevye: He is right.

Avram: He's right and he's right? They can't both be right.

Tevye: You know, you are also right.

### ***Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 13b***

R. Abba stated in the name of Samuel: "Rabbi Abba said that Shmuel said: For three years *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* disagreed. These said: 'The *halakhah* is in accordance with our opinion,' and these said: 'The *halakhah* is in accordance with our opinion.' Ultimately, a Divine Voice emerged and proclaimed: 'Both these and those are the words of the living God. However, the *halakhah* is in accordance with the opinion of *Beit Hillel*.'

For three years there was an argument between *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel*. These (*Beit Shammai*) said: 'The *halakhah* (law) is with us (it agrees with our opinion),' and these (*Beit Hillel*) said: 'The *halakhah* is with us (it agrees with our opinion).'

Finally, a *bat kol* (a heavenly voice) was heard to say: 'Both these AND these (*eilu v'eilu*) are the words of the living God, but the *halakhah* is in agreement with the rulings of *Beit Hillel*.'

Since, however, both are the words of the living God, what was it that entitled *Beit Hillel* to have the *halakhah* fixed in agreement with their rulings?

Because they were kindly and modest, they studied their own rulings and those of *Beit Shammai*, and were even so [humble] as to mention the actions of *Beit Shammai* before theirs."



1. Who were *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*? Based on this text, how would you describe each group?
2. What does “Both these AND these (*eilu v’eilu*) are the words of the living God” mean?
3. Why do you believe “the *halakhah* is in agreement with the rulings of *Beit Hillel*”?
4. What can you learn about civil discourse from this text?

## In Congress

The United States Constitution gives the House of Representatives the power to expel any member by a two-thirds vote. The House has other less severe measures with which to discipline members. Censure and reprimand are procedures in which the House may vote to express formal disapproval of a member’s conduct. Only a simple majority vote is required for a censure or a reprimand. Members who are censured must stand in the well of the House chamber to receive a reading of the censure resolution.

- William Stanbery was a U.S. Representative from Ohio. On July 11, 1832, he was censured for saying of Speaker Andrew Stevenson that his eye might be “too frequently turned from the chair you occupy toward the White House.”
- John Wood Hunter was a U.S. Representative from New York. On January 26, 1867, he was censured because he “insulted another member during debate.”
- Fernando Wood was a U.S. Representative from New York. On January 15, 1868, during debate on the floor of the House, Wood referred to a piece of legislation as “a monstrosity, a measure the most infamous of the many infamous acts of this infamous Congress.” An uproar immediately followed this utterance, and Wood was not permitted to continue and was censured.
- William Dallas Bynum was a U.S. Representative from Indiana. In 1890, he was censured for calling a Republican foe “a tyrant and despot.”



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## UNIT 4: Both are the Words of the Living God

### Leader's Guide for Grades 6 and 7

#### BIG IDEA

Civil discourse begins with the understanding that all people involved in a conversation must recognize that those with whom they disagree are also created in the divine image. Participants must also accept that those with whom they disagree have their own perspective and an honest belief in their position. For our discourse to be civil, we must believe that there may be more than one path to an acceptable outcome.

#### SET INDUCTION: 20 Minutes

Show the clip from *Fiddler on the Roof* in which the character Perchik is introduced. Depending on the learners in the room, you might prefer to have them act out part of the scene. If so, you will need to set up the scene to provide context.

Before you show the clip, ask the learners how many of them have seen the film or the play. If few have, you might want to explain that Perchik brings a new and different worldview into the *shtetl* of Anatevka. The men of the town are discussing news from the outside world, a place that they would prefer to avoid even though the events out there continue to impact their small community and the Jews of the world.

You can find the video on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/ZexzMtIaJck>.

After showing the clip, ask the following questions:

1. The men of Anatevka are hearing news of the world from a newspaper read by the resident intellectual, Avram. What is the attitude of the men toward the outside world?
2. What do you think about their attitude of preferring to ignore outside influences such as the government?
3. Are there people with similar attitudes in our world/country today? Do you agree or disagree with them?
4. Perchik is an outsider. He says: "What good will your cursing do? You stand around, you curse and you chatter, and you don't do anything. You'll all chatter your way into the grave." What is he trying to say? Do you agree with him?
5. Perchik also says "...I learned there is more to life than talk. You should know about events in the outside world!" Do you agree or disagree with him? What do you do to make sure you know about such events?
6. What does Perchik think this group of people should do?
7. Why does Tevye say that both the innkeeper and Perchik are right? Can they both be right? Why or why not?

## TEXT STUDY: 30 Minutes

### *Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 13b*

Divide the class into pairs or triads and ask them to read the text together.

Have each group discuss their answers to the questions that appear on the Learner's Handout (repeated below for the leader/teacher). Ask each group to write the answers they come up with on the handout.

1. Who were *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*? Based on this text, how would you describe each group?
2. What does "Both these AND these (*eilu v'eilu*) are the words of the living God" mean?
3. Why do you believe "The *halakhah* is in agreement with the rulings of *Beit Hillel*"?
4. What can you learn about civil discourse from this text?

Bring the group back together and discuss their answers. The following text may inform how you lead that conversation.

*Netivot Olam* is a book that outlines the way to live an ethical life. It is composed of 33 *netivot* (pathways) that include topics such as humility, the proper use of speech, and love of God. It was written by the Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel) sometime between 1575 and 1595 CE.

For what reason did *Beit Hillel* deserve that the *halakhah* be established according to their opinion? **Because they were calm, and even when they were insulted, and they would teach both their teachings and the teachings of the *Beit Shammai*...**

...And don't say that *Beit Shammai* weren't wise; on the contrary, they were very wise and intellectually sharp. Only in the area of *halakhah*, which is the straight path, does it follow the view of *Beit Hillel*, because they were masters of calmness who never wavered from that disposition. Even when they were insulted, they still taught their words and the words of their friends. And all of this refers to being completely calm, for in the case of other people, when someone says something to him, he is quick to become angry and insult the person who insulted him. But in the case of *Beit Hillel*, they were masters of calmness and did not insult even someone who insulted them.

...And so too when they taught their teachings and the teachings of *Beit Shammai*. Furthermore, they would put *Beit Shammai's* teachings before their own. In all of these matters, they were disciplined in their actions; they were not from the group of the highly competitive against their friends, but they were from the group that succeeds.

*Netivot Olam, Netiv HaKaas, Chapter 1*

## CASE STUDY: 30 Minutes

### In Congress

We have made a deliberate effort to avoid current political speech in this curriculum, even though the overall tenor of our times is what prompted us to create it in the first place. Our goal is to avoid any appearance of partisanship that might lead schools or teachers to decide not to implement these lessons. Examples of *uncivil* discourse can certainly be found on all sides of most issues today. Each institution must provide appropriate guidelines on how to look at and present those issues. Our hope is that you will be able to apply the learning here to current events easily and successfully.

This activity digs deep into American political history to find issues with civil discourse that might help us engage in the conversation without partisanship. Feel free to adapt it to the current day!

1. Describe the idea and process of censure in the Congress of the United States. Tell the learners that only 28 Representatives and 10 Senators have ever been censured. Only a few were chastised in this way for violations of the standards of civil discourse of either house of Congress; most were censured for criminal acts or abuse of power.

“The United States Constitution gives the House of Representatives the power to expel any member by a two-thirds vote. The House has other less severe measures with which to discipline members. Censure and reprimand are procedures in which the House may vote to express formal disapproval of a member’s conduct. Only a simple majority vote is required for a censure or reprimand. Members who are censured must stand in the well of the House chamber to receive a reading of the censure resolution.”

2. Share the following Rules of Decorum & Debate in the House (which only apply when on the floor of the House).

#### **Members must:**

- o Address themselves solely and directly to the Chair. They may not address other Members, individuals in the gallery, or persons who might be observing through the media.
- o Refer to Members by state, not by name (as in the Representative from Iowa).
- o Avoid characterizing another Member’s personal intent or motives and discussing personalities.
- o Refrain from speaking disrespectfully of the Speaker, other Members, the President, or Vice President.
- o Refrain from referring to the official conduct of other Members where such conduct is not under consideration by way of a report of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct or as a question of the privilege of the House.
- o Refrain from referring to the specific votes of individual Senators.
- o Refrain from using profane or vulgar language.

- o Avoid walking in the well when a Member is speaking.
  - o Ensure that all handouts distributed on the floor or in adjacent rooms comport with the rules of propriety for spoken words, and that all handouts bear the name of the authorizing Member.
  - o Refrain from eating, smoking, or using electronic equipment, including cellular phones or laptop computers, on the floor.
  - o Wear appropriate business attire.
3. Invite four students to each read one of the descriptions of the censured representatives.
  4. After each one is read, ask the following questions:
    - a. What did the censured representative say?
    - b. Why do you think he said it?
    - c. Why do you think he was censured for saying what he said?
    - d. What principle do you think is at stake?
  5. After the final case is read, ask the following questions about these Congressional standards of discourse:
    - a. Why do you think Congress felt the need to create rules of debate?
    - b. Should we have rules about speech in public?
    - c. What about the First Amendment?  
(Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or **abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.**)

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## UNIT 4: Both are the Words of the Living God

### Learner's Handout for Grades 8 to 10



#### *Fiddler on the Roof*

- Mendel: What's the matter with you? Why don't you ever bring us some good news?
- Avram: It's not my fault. I only read it. "An edict from the authorities."
- Innkeeper: May the authorities grow like onions, their heads in the ground.
- ALL: Amen!
- Perchik: What good will your cursing do? You stand around, you curse and you chatter, and you don't do anything. You'll all chatter your way into the grave.
- Mendel: Excuse me. You're not from this village.
- Perchik: No.
- Mendel: Where are you from?
- Perchik: Kiev. I was a student in the university there.
- Innkeeper: Tell me. Is that the place where you learned how not to respect your elders?
- Perchik: That is where I learned there is more to life than talk. You should know about events in the outside world!
- Avram: Careful, my paper.
- Innkeeper: Why should I break my head about the outside world? Let the outside world break its own head.
- Mendel: Well put!
- Tevye: He is right. As the Good Book says, "If you spit in the air, it lands in your face."

Perchik: Nonsense. You can't close your eyes to what's happening in the world.

Tevye: He is right.

Avram: He's right and he's right? They can't both be right.

Tevye: You know, you are also right.

### ***Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 13b***

R. Abba stated in the name of Samuel: "Rabbi Abba said that Shmuel said: For three years *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* disagreed. These said: 'The *halakhah* is in accordance with our opinion,' and these said: 'The *halakhah* is in accordance with our opinion.' Ultimately, a Divine Voice emerged and proclaimed: 'Both these and those are the words of the living God. However, the *halakhah* is in accordance with the opinion of *Beit Hillel*.'

For three years there was an argument between *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel*. These (*Beit Shammai*) said: 'The *halakhah* (law) is with us (it agrees with our opinion),' and these (*Beit Hillel*) said: 'The *halakhah* is with us (it agrees with our opinion).'

Finally, a *bat kol* (a heavenly voice) was heard to say: 'Both these AND these (*eilu v'eilu*) are the words of the living God, but the *halakhah* is in agreement with the rulings of *Beit Hillel*.'

Since, however, both are the words of the living God, what was it that entitled *Beit Hillel* to have the *halakhah* fixed in agreement with their rulings?

Because they were kindly and modest, they studied their own rulings and those of *Beit Shammai*, and were even so [humble] as to mention the actions of *Beit Shammai* before theirs."

1. Who were *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*? Based on this text, how would you describe each group?
2. What does "Both these AND these (*eilu v'eilu*) are the words of the living God" mean?
3. Why do you believe "the *halakhah* is in agreement with the rulings of *Beit Hillel*"?
4. What can you learn about civil discourse from this text?

### ***Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, The Dignity of Difference, pp. 64-65***

Truth on earth is not, nor can be, the whole truth. It is limited, not comprehensive; particular, not universal. When two propositions conflict, it is not necessarily because one is true the other false. It may be, and often is, that each represents a different perspective on reality, an alternative way of structuring order, no more and no less commensurable than a Shakespeare sonnet, a Michelangelo painting, or a Schubert sonata. In heaven there is truth; on earth there are truths.

Therefore, each culture has something to contribute. Each person knows something no one else does. The sages said: "Who is wise? One who learns from all men." The wisest is not one who knows himself wiser

than others: he is one who knows all men have some share of the truth, and is willing to learn from them, for none of us knows all the truth and each of us knows some of it.

## In Congress

The United States Constitution gives the House of Representatives the power to expel any member by a two-thirds vote. The House has other less severe measures with which to discipline members. Censure and reprimand are procedures in which the House may vote to express formal disapproval of a member's conduct. Only a simple majority vote is required for a censure or reprimand. Members who are censured must stand in the well of the House chamber to receive a reading of the censure resolution.

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- William Dallas Bynum was a U.S. Representative from Indiana. In 1890, he was censured for calling a Republican foe “a tyrant and despot.”

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## UNIT 4: Both are the Words of the Living God

### Leader's Guide for Grades 8 to 10

#### BIG IDEA

Civil discourse begins with the understanding that all people involved in a conversation must recognize that those with whom they disagree are also created in the divine image. Participants must also recognize that those with whom they disagree have a perspective and an honest belief in their position. For our discourse to be civil, we must believe that there may be more than one path to an acceptable outcome.

#### SET INDUCTION: 20 Minutes

Show the clip from *Fiddler on the Roof* in which the character Perchik is introduced. Depending on the learners in the room, you might prefer to have them act out part of the scene. If so, you will need to set up the scene to provide context.

Before you show the clip, ask the learners how many of them have seen the film or the play. If few have, you might want to explain that Perchik brings a new and different worldview into the *shtetl* of Anatevka. The men of the town are discussing news from the outside world, a place that they would prefer to avoid even though the events out there continue to impact their small community and the Jews of the world.

You can find the video on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/ZexzMtIaJck>.

After showing the clip, ask the following questions:

1. The men of Anatevka are hearing news of the world from a newspaper read by the resident intellectual, Avram. What is the attitude of the men toward the outside world?
2. What do you think about their attitude of preferring to ignore outside influences such as the government?
3. Are there people with similar attitudes in our world/country today? Do you agree or disagree with them?
4. Perchik is an outsider. He says: "What good will your cursing do? You stand around, you curse and you chatter, and you don't do anything. You'll all chatter your way into the grave." What is he trying to say? Do you agree with him?
5. Perchik also says "...I learned there is more to life than talk. You should know about events in the outside world!" Do you agree or disagree with him? What do you do to make sure you know about such events?
6. What does Perchik think this group of people ought to do?
7. Why does Tevye say that both the innkeeper and Perchik are right? Can they both be right? Why or why not?



## TEXT STUDY: 45 Minutes

### *Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 13b*

Divide the class into pairs or triads and ask them to read the text together.

Have each group discuss their answers to the questions that appear on the Learner's Handout (repeated below for the leader/teacher). Ask each group to write the answers they come up with on the handout.

1. Who were *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*? Based on this text, how would you describe each group?
2. What does "Both these AND these (*eilu v'eilu*) are the words of the living God" mean?
3. Why do you believe "The *halakhah* is in agreement with the rulings of *Beit Hillel*"?
4. What can you learn about civil discourse from this text?

Bring the group back together and discuss their answers. The following text may inform how you lead that conversation.

*Netivot Olam* is a book that outlines the way to live an ethical life. It is composed of 33 *netivot* (pathways) that include topics such as humility, the proper use of speech, and love of God. It was written by the Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel) sometime between 1575 and 1595 CE.

For what reason did *Beit Hillel* deserve that the *halakhah* be established according to their opinion? **Because they were calm, and even when they were insulted, and they would teach both their teachings and the teachings of the *Beit Shammai*...**

...And don't say that *Beit Shammai* weren't wise; on the contrary, they were very wise and intellectually sharp. Only in the area of *halakhah*, which is the straight path, does it follow the view of *Beit Hillel*, because they were masters of calmness who never wavered from that disposition. Even when they were insulted, they still taught their words and the words of their friends. And all of this refers to being completely calm, for in the case of other people, when someone says something to him, he is quick to become angry and insult the person who insulted him. But in the case of *Beit Hillel*, they were masters of calmness and did not insult even someone who insulted them.

...And so too when they taught their teachings and the teachings of *Beit Shammai*. Furthermore, they would put *Beit Shammai's* teachings before their own. In all of these matters, they were disciplined in their actions; they were not from the group of the highly competitive against their friends, but they were from the group that succeeds.

*Netivot Olam, Netiv HaKaas, Chapter 1*

## Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, pp. 64-65

Ask the learners to read the text by Rabbi Sacks that appears on the Learner's Handout. They can do so individually, in pairs, or with one person reading the text out loud.

(Note: For many years, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks was the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain. As such, he is a member of the House of Lords. He is also an extremely highly regarded theologian. Rabbi Sacks self-identifies as Modern Orthodox.)

Then ask the learners to answer the following questions:

1. What do you think Rabbi Sacks is trying to say about truth?
2. Is he saying that there is no right or wrong? Correct or incorrect?
3. How can two seemingly opposed ideas both be true in some way?
4. What can we learn about wisdom from this passage by Rabbi Sacks? What is he trying to say by quoting the sages?

## CASE STUDY: 30 Minutes

### In Congress

We have made a deliberate effort to avoid current political speech in this curriculum, even though the overall tenor of our times is what prompted us to create it in the first place. Our goal is to avoid any appearance of partisanship that might lead schools or teachers to decide not to implement these lessons. Examples of *uncivil* discourse can certainly be found on all sides of most issues today. Each institution must provide appropriate guidelines on how to look at and present those issues. Our hope is that you will be able to apply the learning here to current events easily and successfully.

This activity digs deep into American political history to find issues with civil discourse that might help us engage in the conversation without partisanship. Feel free to adapt it to the current day!

1. Describe the idea and process of censure in the Congress of the United States. Tell the learners that only 28 Representatives and 10 Senators have ever been censured. Only a few were chastised in this way for violations of the standards of civil discourse of either house of Congress; most were censured for criminal acts or abuse of power.

“The United States Constitution gives the House of Representatives the power to expel any member by a two-thirds vote. The House has other less severe measures with which to discipline members. Censure and reprimand are procedures in which the House may vote to express formal disapproval of a member's conduct. Only a simple majority vote is required for a censure or reprimand. Members who are censured must stand in the well of the House chamber to receive a reading of the censure resolution. “

2. Share the following Rules of Decorum & Debate in the House (which only apply when on the floor of the House).

**Members must:**

- o Address themselves solely and directly to the Chair. They may not address other Members, individuals in the gallery, or persons who might be observing through the media.
  - o Refer to Members by state, not by name (as in the Representative from Iowa).
  - o Avoid characterizing another Member's personal intent or motives and discussing personalities.
  - o Refrain from speaking disrespectfully of the Speaker, other Members, the President, or Vice President.
  - o Refrain from referring to the official conduct of other Members where such conduct is not under consideration by way of a report of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct or as a question of the privilege of the House.
  - o Refrain from referring to the specific votes of individual Senators.
  - o Refrain from using profane or vulgar language.
  - o Avoid walking in the well when a Member is speaking.
  - o Ensure that all handouts distributed on the floor or in adjacent rooms comport with the rules of propriety for spoken words, and that all handouts bear the name of the authorizing Member.
  - o Refrain from eating, smoking, or using electronic equipment, including cellular phones or laptop computers, on the floor.
  - o Wear appropriate business attire.
3. Invite four students to each read one of the descriptions of the censured representatives.
  4. After each one is read, ask the following questions:
    - a. What did the censured representative say?
    - b. Why do you think he said it?
    - c. Why do you think he was censured for saying what he said?
    - d. What principle do you think is at stake?
  5. After the final case is read, ask the following questions about these Congressional standards of discourse.
    - a. Why do you think Congress felt the need to create rules of debate?
    - b. Should we have rules about speech in public?
    - c. What about the First Amendment?  
(Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or **abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.**)

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## UNIT 4: Both are the Words of the Living God

### Learner's Handout for Grade 11 to Adult



#### *Fiddler on the Roof*

- Mendel: What's the matter with you? Why don't you ever bring us some good news?
- Avram: It's not my fault. I only read it. "An edict from the authorities."
- Innkeeper: May the authorities grow like onions, their heads in the ground.
- ALL: Amen!
- Perchik: What good will your cursing do? You stand around, you curse and you chatter, and you don't do anything. You'll all chatter your way into the grave.
- Mendel: Excuse me. You're not from this village.
- Perchik: No.
- Mendel: Where are you from?
- Perchik: Kiev. I was a student in the university there.
- Innkeeper: Tell me. Is that the place where you learned how not to respect your elders?
- Perchik: That is where I learned there is more to life than talk. You should know about events in the outside world!
- Avram: Careful, my paper.
- Innkeeper: Why should I break my head about the outside world? Let the outside world break its own head.
- Mendel: Well put!
- Tevye: He is right. As the Good Book says, "If you spit in the air, it lands in your face."
- Perchik: Nonsense. You can't close your eyes to what's happening in the world.

Tevye: He is right.

Avram: He's right and he's right? They can't both be right.

Tevye: You know, you are also right.

### ***Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 13b***

R. Abba stated in the name of Samuel: "Rabbi Abba said that Shmuel said: For three years *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* disagreed. These said: 'The *halakhah* is in accordance with our opinion,' and these said: 'The *halakhah* is in accordance with our opinion.' Ultimately, a Divine Voice emerged and proclaimed: 'Both these and those are the words of the living God. However, the *halakhah* is in accordance with the opinion of *Beit Hillel*.'

For three years there was an argument between *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel*. These (*Beit Shammai*) said: 'The *halakhah* (law) is with us (it agrees with our opinion),' and these (*Beit Hillel*) said: 'The *halakhah* is with us (it agrees with our opinion).'

Finally, a *bat kol* (a heavenly voice) was heard to say: 'Both these AND these (*eilu v'eilu*) are the words of the living God, but the *halakhah* is in agreement with the rulings of *Beit Hillel*.'

Since, however, both are the words of the living God, what was it that entitled *Beit Hillel* to have the *halakhah* fixed in agreement with their rulings?

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1. Who were *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*? Based on this text, how would you describe each group?
2. What does "Both these AND these (*eilu v'eilu*) are the words of the living God" mean?
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### ***Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, The Book of Jewish Values: A Day-By-Day Guide to Jewish Living, pp. 186-187***

Significantly, the heavenly voice ruled in favor of Hillel and his disciples, even in areas of ritual dispute, for moral reasons: he and his followers were "kindly and humble."

The wording of the passage suggests that Shammai's followers had grown somewhat arrogant. Certain that they possessed the truth, they no longer bothered to listen to, or discuss the arguments of, their opponents. Their overbearing self-confidence led them to become morally less impressive (the language of the *Talmud* suggests by implication that they were not "kindly and humble") and probably led them to become intellectually less insightful (after all, how insightful can you be if you are studying only one side of the issue?)

Because the School of Hillel studied their opponent's arguments, when they issued a ruling, they were fully cognizant of all the arguments to be offered against their own position. Thus, their humility not only led to their being more pleasant people, but also likely caused them to have greater intellectual depth.

We can all learn a lesson from the behavior of Hillel and his followers: Don't read only books and publications that agree with and reinforce your point of view. If you do so, and many people do, you will never learn what those who disagree with you believe (at best, you will hear a caricature of their position, presented by people who, like you, disagree with it). It would be a good thing in Jewish life if Jews in the different denominations, or in different political camps, started reading newspapers and magazines of the groups with which they disagree, on a regular basis.

If you seldom hear, read, or listen to views that oppose your own, and if almost everyone you talk to sees the world just as you do, your thinking will grow flabby and intolerant. That is often the case with ideologies on the right and left, both in religion and in politics.

As this text teaches us, humble people are not only more pleasant human beings, but in the final analysis, they may well be the only ones who will have something eternally important to teach.

### **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, pp. 64-65**

Truth on earth is not, nor can be, the whole truth. It is limited, not comprehensive; particular, not universal. When two propositions conflict it is not necessarily because one is true the other false. It may be, and often is, that each represents a different perspective on reality, an alternative way of structuring order, no more and no less commensurable than a Shakespeare sonnet, a Michelangelo painting, or a Schubert sonata. In heaven there is truth; on earth there are truths.

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### Leader's Guide for Grade 11 to Adult

#### BIG IDEA

Civil discourse begins with the understanding that all people involved in the conversation must recognize that those with whom they disagree are also created in the divine image. Participants must also accept that those with whom they disagree have their own perspective and an honest belief in their position. For our discourse to be civil, we must believe that there may be more than one path to an acceptable outcome.

#### SET INDUCTION: 20 Minutes

Show the clip from *Fiddler on the Roof* in which the character Perchik is introduced. Before you show it, ask the learners how many of them have seen the film or the play. If few have, you might want to explain that Perchik brings a new and different world view into the *shtetl* of Anatevka. The men of the town are discussing news from the outside world, a place that they would prefer to avoid even though the events out there continue to impact their small community and the Jews of the world.

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6. What does Perchik think this group of people should do?
7. Why does Tevye say that both the innkeeper and Perchik are right? Can they both be right? Why or why not?



## TEXT STUDY: 50 Minutes

### *Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 13b*

Divide the class into pairs or triads and ask them to read the text together.

Have each group discuss their answers to the questions that appear on the Learner's Handout (repeated below for the leader/teacher).

1. Who were *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*? Based on this text, how would you describe each group?
2. What does "Both these AND these (*eilu v'eilu*) are the words of the living God" mean?
3. Why do you believe "the *halakhah* is in agreement with the rulings of *Beit Hillel*"?
4. What can you learn about civil discourse from this text?

Bring the full group back together and discuss their answers. The following text may inform how you lead that conversation.

*Netivot Olam* is a book that outlines the way to live an ethical life. It is composed of 33 *netivot* (paths) that include topics such as humility, the proper use of speech, and love of God. It was written by the Maharal of Prague (Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel) sometime between 1575 and 1595 CE.

For what reason did *Beit Hillel* deserve that the *halakhah* be established according to their opinion? **Because they were calm, and even when they were insulted, and they would teach both their teachings and the teachings of the *Beit Shammai*...**

...And don't say that *Beit Shammai* weren't wise; on the contrary, they were very wise and intellectually sharp. Only in the area of *halakhah*, which is the straight path, does it follow the view of *Beit Hillel*, because they were masters of calmness who never wavered from that disposition. Even when they were insulted, they still taught their words and the words of their friends. And all of this refers to being completely calm, for in the case of other people, when someone says something to him, he is quick to become angry and insult the person who insulted him. But in the case of *Beit Hillel*, they were masters of calmness and did not insult even someone who insulted them.

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*Netivot Olam, Netiv HaKaas, Chapter 1*

### **Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *The Book of Jewish Values: A Day-By-Day Guide to Jewish Living*, pp. 186-187**

Once you have completed the group discussion of the preceding text, ask participants to read the commentary of Rabbi Telushkin that appears on the Learner's Handout. Select learners to each read two paragraphs aloud. Before the next reader begins, ask the group to comment on whether anything Rabbi Telushkin says resonates with them or leads them to a new or clearer understanding of the *Talmud* passage. If the answer is yes, ask them to share how it does so.

**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, pp. 64-65**

Ask the learners to read the text by Rabbi Sacks that appears on the Learner's Handout. They can do so individually, in pairs, or with one person reading the text aloud.

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1. What do you think Rabbi Sacks is trying to say about truth?
2. Is he saying that there is no right or wrong? Correct or incorrect?
3. How can two seemingly opposed ideas both be true in some way?
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**CASE STUDY: 30 Minutes**

**In Congress**

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This activity digs deep into American political history to find issues with civil discourse that might help us engage in the conversation without partisanship. Feel free to adapt it to the current day!

1. Describe the idea and process of censure in the Congress of the United States. Tell the learners that only 28 Representatives and 10 Senators have ever been censured. Only a few were chastised in this way for violations of the standards of civil discourse of either house of Congress; most were censured for criminal acts or abuse of power.  
  
"The United States Constitution gives the House of Representatives the power to expel any member by a two-thirds vote. The House has other less severe measures with which to discipline members. Censure and reprimand are procedures in which the House may vote to express formal disapproval of a member's conduct. Only a simple majority vote is required for a censure or reprimand. Members who are censured must stand in the well of the House chamber to receive a reading of the censure resolution."
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  - o Wear appropriate business attire.
2. Invite four students to each read one of the descriptions of the censured Representatives.
  3. After each one is read, ask the following questions:
    - a. What did the censured representative say?
    - b. Why do you think he said it?
    - c. Why do you think he was censured for saying what he said?
    - d. What principle do you think is at stake?
  4. After the final case is read, ask the following questions about these Congressional standards of discourse.
    - a. Why do you think Congress felt the need to create rules of debate?
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(Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; **or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.**)

## ***Bamidbar Rabbah 21:2***

The following *midrash* might be a nice way to end the session. If you have several visual learners, we suggest that you either project it or write it on a board.

The law is: If one sees many thousands of people, one should say: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Wise One who knows secrets, just as their faces are different from one another's, so too their understandings are different, for each one has a different understanding...and so too Moses requested from God, when he died. He said: Master of the Universe! Every person's thoughts are known and revealed before you, and none of your children's thoughts are similar to another's. When I die, please appoint a leader who can sustain them all according to their own understanding....

We expect the *midrash* to lead to a great deal more conversation....

UNIT 5

# Anger Management

## UNIT 5: Anger Management

### Learner's Handout for Grades 6 to 10



1. Watch the segment from President Obama's speech at the 2015 White House Correspondents' Dinner that features Luther, the President's anger translator. Your leader will then ask you to answer the following questions:
  - a. What is the difference between what President Obama says and what Luther says? What is each person trying to communicate?
  - b. What is different about the manner in which each of them speaks?
  - c. What takes place during the final exchange about climate control?
  - d. Is the entire piece entertaining? Is it meaningful? What meaning do you take from it?
  - e. Barack Obama is known for his very even temperament and the fact that he is almost never seen as angry. Keegan-Michael Key (Luther) was not the only comedian to make fun of that reputation. What are your thoughts on the demeanor of Presidents of the United States in general?
  - f. Now look at your own life and your own behavior. What do you think of your own demeanor and that of those around you? How do you and/or should you behave?
2. Ben Zoma says: **Who is wise? One who learns from all people**, as it says, "I have acquired understanding from all my teachers" (Psalms 119:99). **Who is mighty? One who conquers their (evil) impulse**, as it says, "slowness to anger is better than a mighty person and the ruler of their spirit than the conqueror of a city." (Proverbs 16:32). **Who is rich? One who is happy with their lot**, as it says, "When you eat [from] the work of your hands, you will be happy, and it will be well with you" (Psalms 128:2). "You will be happy" in this world, and "it will be well with you" in the world to come. **Who is honored? One who honors other people**, as it says, "For those who honor Me, I will honor; and those who despise Me will be held in little esteem" (I Samuel 2:30).

בן זומא אומר: איזהו חכם? הלומד מכל  
אדם, שנאמר: (תהלים קיט, צט) מכל מלמד  
השכלתי כי עדותיך שיהיה לי. איזהו גבור?  
הכובש את יצרו, שנאמר: (משלי טז, לב)  
טוב ארך אפים מגבור ומשל ברוחו מלכד  
עיר. איזהו עשיר? השמח בחלקו, שנאמר:  
(תהלים קכח, ב) יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך  
וטוב לך. אשריך, בעולם הזה. וטוב לך,  
לעולם הבא. איזהו מכבד? המכבד את  
הבריות, שנאמר: (ש"א ב, ל) כי מכבדי אכבד  
ובני יקלו:

*Pirkei Avot 4:1*

With your *chavruta* team, study *Pirkei Avot* 4:1 and answer the following questions:

- a. Ben Zoma asks about four kinds of people and tells us how to identify them by their behavior. According to the text, how can we identify someone who is:
    - Wise?
    - Mighty?
    - Rich?
    - Honored?
  - b. The description of each of those traits is based on a proof text from the *Tanakh*. Read each proof text and explain what it teaches us about the kind of person we are discussing.
  - c. Focus on the quality of being mighty and the way we can identify a mighty person. List all the reasons that anger can get in a person's way. Then list all the reasons that anger might be a useful tool. What must be true for anger to be useful?
3. As soon as Moses came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, he became enraged; and he hurled the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר קָרַב אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיֵּרָא אֶת  
הָעֵגֹל וּמַחֲלֵלֵת וַיַּחַר אַף מֹשֶׁה וַיִּשְׁלֶךְ  
מִיָּדוֹ אֶת הַלְּחֹת וַיִּשְׁבֶּר אֹתָם תַּחַת הָהָר.

*Exodus 32:19*

- a. Was Moses' anger justified? Why or why not?
- b. How else might Moses have reacted?
- c. Have you ever had a similar experience when you exploded with anger about something? If so, what did that experience feel like for you?
- d. Sforno<sup>3</sup> read this text and made the following comment: "Moses' anger was aroused over the fact that people rejoiced over the damage to *themselves* they had caused. We find something parallel in Jeremiah 11:15; 'for you exult in performing your evil deeds.' At this point, Moses despaired of the people doing *teshuvah* (repenting) before being punished. They were no longer fit to receive the Tablets of the Law (Ten Commandments)." What does Sforno's comment add to the conversation about anger?
- e. Can being angry (and acting while still angry) be a good or useful tactic? Why or why not?
- f. Name some real-world examples of a leader getting angry. How did that leader act? Did they act appropriately? Would you describe that person as mighty?

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## UNIT 5: Anger Management

### Leader's Guide for Grades 6 to 10

#### BIG IDEA

Public conversation can become uncivil in many different ways. Our unscientific survey of public rants, social media trolling by public figures, and civil discourse violations suggest that anger is one of the more frequent bases for the kind of behavior we hope a civil, humane society would seek to end. Anger leads to poor decision making, seeing opponents as less than human, and publicly erratic and uncivil behavior. In this lesson, we will explore the role of anger and how Judaism suggests we move beyond it.

#### SET INDUCTION: 20 Minutes

Introduce the following segment from President Obama's speech at the 2015 White House Correspondents' Dinner, featuring Luther, the President's anger translator. Your introduction should take into account what you know about the experience and knowledge base of the learners.

Explain that this dinner is meant to be both entertaining and meaningful. Tell the learners that most presidents who have spoken there in recent years have attempted to make their speech as funny as it is informative – often more so.

NOTE: Learners of all ages should find this piece funny. Although it does feature a partisan politician, the context is not a serious one. Furthermore, the video contains no implied advocacy for or against any past or current occupants of the Oval Office. If one or more learners do not find the piece funny, try to uncover why they feel that way. Don't let partisan concerns distract from the conversation about anger and its role.

Show the video of "Luther, President Obama's Anger Translator." You can find it at: <http://bit.ly/Luther-Translates>

After showing the clip, discuss the questions from the Learner's Handout (repeated below for the teacher/leader) as a group.

- a. What is the difference between what President Obama says and what Luther says? What is each person trying to communicate?
- b. What is different about the manner in which each of them speaks?
- c. What takes place during the final exchange about climate control?
- d. Is the entire piece entertaining? Is it meaningful? What meaning do you take from it?
- e. Barack Obama is known for his very even temperament and the fact that he is almost never seen as angry. Keegan-Michael Key (Luther) was not the only comedian to make fun of that reputation. What are your thoughts on the demeanor of Presidents of the United States in general?
- f. Now look at your own life and your own behavior. What do you think of your own demeanor and that of those around you? How do you and/or should you behave?



## ACTIVITY: 30 Minutes

### Chavruta Text Study

We will study the two texts found on the Learner's Handout, *Pirkei Avot* 4:1 and *Exodus* 32:19. In the first text, Ben Zoma, a rabbinical student who died early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E., asks about four kinds of people and how to identify them. We are ultimately interested in the "mighty" person who is identified as being slow to anger. The word "mighty" may refer to greatness in general or to a leader in particular. The term in Hebrew, *gibor*, is usually reserved for warriors and kings in most classic contexts.

Divide learners into pairs or triads to explore the two texts using the *chavruta* model. Ask them to answer the questions on the Learner's Handout (repeated below for the teacher/leader).

#### *Pirkei Avot* 4:1

1. Ben Zoma asks about four kinds of people and tells us how to identify them by their behavior. According to the text, how can we identify someone who is:
  - Wise?
  - Mighty?
  - Rich?
  - Honored?
2. The description of each of those traits is based on a proof text from the *Tanakh*. Read each proof text and explain what it teaches us about the kind of person we are discussing.
3. Focus on the quality of being mighty and the way we can identify a mighty person. List all the reasons that anger can get in a person's way. Then list all the reasons that anger might be a useful tool. What must be true for anger to be useful?

#### *Exodus* 32:19

1. Was Moses' anger justified? Why or why not?
2. How else might Moses have reacted?
3. Have you ever had a similar experience when you exploded with anger about something? If so, what did that experience feel like for you?
4. Sforno<sup>4</sup> read this text and made the following comment: "Moses' anger was aroused over the fact that people rejoiced over the damage to *themselves* they had caused. We find something parallel in Jeremiah 11:15; 'for you exult in performing your evil deeds.' At this point, Moses despaired of the people doing *teshuvah* (repenting) before being punished. They were no longer fit to receive the Tablets of the Law (Ten Commandments)." What does Sforno's comment add to the conversation about anger?
5. Can being angry (and acting while still angry) be a good or useful tactic? Why or why not?

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4 Ovadia ben Jacob Sforno was an Italian rabbi, Biblical commentator, philosopher, and physician who lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

6. Name some real-world examples of a leader getting angry. How did that leader act? Did they act appropriately? Would you describe that person as mighty?

In the final five minutes, bring the group back together for a wrap up. Ask the students the following questions:

1. How does anger help or hinder someone who is considered a leader?
2. *Gibor* can also be translated as strong. Why does it take strength to be slow to anger?

## ACTIVITY: 60 Minutes

### Profiles in Courage?

The following activity allows the use of personal technology.

**A word of caution:** Although many students in this age group will have a smartphone, some may not. In some cases, parents have chosen to put off their children having access to the internet in their pocket until a later age; other parents do not feel they can afford to buy a smartphone for their child. If possible, make internet-accessible devices available, rather than relying solely on the learners' own devices.

You may be able to make use of tablets or other internet-enabled devices that your institution owns. You could also invite parents to make devices available for the session. In any case, make conscious choices that will avoid embarrassing students who do not have smartphones.

Be sure that WiFi is available in your learning space. Some devices do not have independent direct access to the internet, while others may incur a data usage charge that may be undesirable. As with all technology issues, check it out thoroughly well before the day you plan to teach the lesson.

1. Equip three teams of learners with internet-enabled devices – ideally at least one for every two teammates. Choose 3 or 4 URLs (internet addresses) to which they will be limited (so that they don't get sidetracked in their web searching). Choose the URLs from well-known news sites. We suggest including sites that lean both left and right, while avoiding ideological extremes.

Following are some suggestions (but by no means limitations):

<i>The New York Times</i>	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com">www.nytimes.com</a>
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	<a href="http://www.wsj.com">www.wsj.com</a>
<i>CNN</i>	<a href="http://www.cnn.com">www.cnn.com</a>
<i>Fox News</i>	<a href="http://www.foxnews.com">www.foxnews.com</a>
<i>MSNBC</i>	<a href="http://www.msnbc.com">www.msnbc.com</a>
<i>National Public Radio</i>	<a href="http://www.npr.org">www.npr.org</a>

2. Tell the learners that *Profiles in Courage* is a book that was written in 1956 by then-Senator John F. Kennedy. It consists of short biographies that describe acts of bravery and integrity by eight United States Senators who defied the opinions of their party and constituents to do what they felt was right. They suffered severe criticism and losses in popularity because of their actions. Senator Kennedy won the Pulitzer Prize for this book. In addition, his authorship of the book contributed to his being perceived as a viable candidate for the 1960 presidential election.

3. Ask the teams to find stories about leaders. They can be leaders of governments or governmental agencies, political parties, the military, businesses, labor movements, religious organizations or denominations, social movements, schools or universities, or anyone who leads more than a few people. These leaders can come from or live in any part of the world.

The stories need to show these leaders in moments of crisis, pressure, or stress and need to give a clue as to how they responded to those pressures. Some of the leaders might be seen as courageous, like those profiled in Kennedy's book, while others might be seen as not measuring up.

4. Give the teams 12 minutes to find one story on which all members can agree. Ask them to prepare to share a brief profile of the leader. Copy the questions below and give them to each team, telling the learners what to include in their profile.
  - a. Which person did you choose?
  - b. Whom does or did that person lead, and in what context?
  - c. How did this person become a leader? (Did they volunteer? Were they elected, or did they simply fall into a position of leadership?)
  - d. Name three leadership qualities that this person has.
  - e. What crisis did this leader face?
  - f. What stress factors, competing demands, or dire consequences did this person have to consider?
  - g. What choices did the leader have?
  - h. Whom else did this leader involve, impact, or consult in trying to resolve the crisis?
  - i. What did this person do?
  - j. What values did this leader uphold in making their decision/resolving the dilemma?
5. Invite each group to share its profile and its answers to the questions, using the protocol below. Timekeeping is essential.

### **Protocol**

- a. Search one or two news websites to identify someone who is known as a leader and who faced a crisis or pressure situation. The website should include information on how this leader dealt with the situation. (12 minutes)
- b. Answer the questions provided to help you prepare to present your story. (8 minutes)
- c. The first group presents its profile and conclusions, with no interruptions from others. (3 minutes)
- d. Other groups ask clarifying questions to better understand the profile; the presenting group answers. (3 minutes)
- e. Other groups then ask probing questions and debate whether this leader was courageous, and whether he or she managed his or her anger. (7 minutes)

- f. The second group presents its profile and conclusions, with no interruptions from others. (3 minutes)
  - g. Other groups ask clarifying questions to better understand the profile; the presenting group answers. (3 minutes)
  - h. Other groups then ask probing questions and debate whether this leader was courageous, and whether they managed their anger. (7 minutes)
  - i. Third group presents its profile and conclusions, with no interruptions from others. (3 minutes)
  - j. Other groups ask clarifying questions to better understand the profile; the presenting group answers. (3 minutes)
  - k. Other groups ask probing questions and debate whether this leader was courageous, and whether they managed their anger. (7 minutes)
6. The teacher summarizes the conversation and asks learners to share any conclusions they have reached.

## UNIT 5: Anger Management

### Learner's Handout for Grade 11 to Adult



1. Watch the segment from President Obama's speech at the 2015 White House Correspondents' Dinner that features Luther, the President's anger translator. Your leader will then ask you to answer the following questions:
  - a. What is the difference between what President Obama says and what Luther says? What is each person trying to communicate?
  - b. What is different about the manner in which each of them speaks?
  - c. What takes place during the final exchange about climate control?
  - d. Is the entire piece entertaining? Is it meaningful? What meaning do you take from it?
  - e. Barack Obama is known for his very even temperament and the fact that he is almost never seen as angry. Keegan-Michael Key (Luther) was not the only comedian to make fun of that reputation. What are your thoughts on the demeanor of Presidents of the United States in general?
  - f. Now look at your own life and your own behavior. What do you think of your own demeanor and that of those around you? How do you and/or should you behave?
2. Ben Zoma says: **Who is wise? One who learns from all people**, as it says, "I have acquired understanding from all my teachers" (Psalms 119:99). **Who is mighty? One who conquers their (evil) impulse**, as it says, "slowness to anger is better than a mighty person and the ruler of their spirit than the conqueror of a city." (Proverbs 16:32). **Who is rich? One who is happy with their lot**, as it says, "When you eat [from] the work of your hands, you will be happy, and it will be well with you" (Psalms 128:2). "You will be happy" in this world, and "it will be well with you" in the world to come. **Who is honored? One who honors other people**, as it says, "For those who honor Me, I will honor; and those who despise Me will be held in little esteem" (I Samuel 2:30).

בן זומא אומר: איזהו חכם? הלומד מכל  
אדם, שנאמר: (תהלים קיט, צט) מכל מלמד  
השכלתי כי עדותיך שיהיה לי. איזהו גבור?  
הכובש את יצרו, שנאמר: (משלי טז, לב)  
טוב ארך אפים מגבור ומשל ברוחו מלכד  
עיר. איזהו עשיר? השמח בחלקו, שנאמר:  
(תהלים קכח, ב) יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך  
וטוב לך. אשריך, בעולם הזה. וטוב לך,  
לעולם הבא. איזהו מכבד? המכבד את  
הבריות, שנאמר: (ש"א ב, ל) כי מכבדי אכבד  
ובני יקלו:

*Pirkei Avot 4:1*

3. As soon as Moses came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, he became enraged; and he hurled the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain.

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר קָרַב אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיֵּרָא אֶת  
הָעֵגֹל וּמַחֲלֹת וַיַּחַר אֵף מֹשֶׁה וַיִּשְׁלֶךְ  
מִיָּדוֹ אֶת הַלְּחֹת וַיִּשָּׁבֶר אֹתָם תַּחַת הָהָר.

*Exodus 32:19*

Sforno<sup>5</sup> read this text and made the following comment: “Moses’ anger was aroused over the fact that people rejoiced over the damage to *themselves* they had caused. We find something parallel in Jeremiah 11:15: ‘for you exult in performing your evil deeds.’ At this point, Moses despaired of the people doing *teshuvah* (repenting) before being punished. They were no longer fit to receive the Tablets of the Law (Ten Commandments).” What does Sforno’s comment add to the conversation about anger?

4. Anger is an exceptionally evil tendency and it is proper that one move away from it and adopt the opposite extreme. One should teach oneself not to become angry even over a matter when it seems fitting to be angry. If one should wish to arouse awe in their children and household—or within the community, if one is a communal leader—and wishes to be angry at them to motivate them to return to the proper path, one should present an angry front to them to punish them, but he should be inwardly calm. One should be like one who acts out the part of an angry person but is not actually angry. The sages said, “One who becomes angry is like one who worships idols.”

וְכֵן הַכַּעַס - דְּעָה רָעָה הִיא עַד לְמַאֲד, וְרָאוּי  
לְאָדָם שְׂתִירְחֹק מִמֶּנָּה עַד הַקָּצָה הָאַחֵר, וַיִּלְמַד  
עַצְמוֹ שְׁלֹא יִכְעַס, וְאִפְלוּ עַל דְּבַר שְׂרָאוּי לְכַעַס  
עָלָיו. וְאִם רָצָה לְהַטִּיל אֵימָה עַל בְּנָיו וּבְנֵי בֵיתוֹ,  
אוּ עַל הַצִּבּוּר אִם הָיָה פְּרִנָּס, וְרָצָה לְכַעַס עַל־הֶן  
כְּדֵי שְׂתִיחֲזָרוּ לְמוֹטֵב - יִרְאֶה עַצְמוֹ בְּפָנֵיהֶם שֶׁהוּא  
כּוֹעֵס, כְּדֵי לִיִּסְרָם, וְתִהְיֶה דַּעְתּוֹ מִיִּשְׁבֵּת בֵּינוֹ  
לְבֵין עַצְמוֹ, כְּאָדָם שֶׁהוּא מְדַמָּה אִישׁ בְּשַׁעַת  
כַּעֲסוֹ, וְהוּא אֵינוֹ כּוֹעֵס. אָמְרוּ חֻקְמִים הָרִאשׁוֹנִים:  
כָּל הַכּוֹעֵס - כְּאֵלוֹ עוֹבֵד עֲבוּדָה זָרָה.

*Rambam, Mishneh Torah,  
Sefer Maddah, De'ot 2:3*

5. Rabbi Elai said: In three matters a person’s true character is ascertained; in his cup, i.e., his behavior when he drinks; in his pocket, i.e., his conduct in his financial dealings with other people; and in his anger. And some say: A person also reveals his real nature in his laughter.

אָמַר רַבִּי אֵילְעָאִי: בְּשְׁלוֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים  
אָדָם נִיבֵר - בְּכוֹסוֹ וּבְכִיסוֹ וּבְכַעֲסוֹ.  
וְאָמְרִי לֵיהּ: אֵף בְּשַׁחֲקוֹ.

*Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 65b*



6. We get angry in situations that are unpleasant, that feel unfair, where our goals are blocked, that could have been avoided, and that leave us feeling powerless. This is a recipe for anger. But you can also tell that anger is probably not the only thing we're feeling in these situations. Anger doesn't happen in a vacuum. We can feel angry at the same time that we're scared or sad or feeling a host of other emotions.

*Ryan Martin, Psychology Department Chair, University of Wisconsin at Green Bay*

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## UNIT 5: Anger Management

### Leader's Guide for Grade 11 to Adult

#### BIG IDEA

Public conversation can become uncivil in many different ways. Our unscientific survey of public rants, social media trolling by public figures, and civil discourse violations suggest that anger is one of the more frequent bases for the kind of behavior we hope a civil, humane society would seek to end. Anger leads to poor decision making, seeing opponents as less than human, and publicly erratic and uncivil behavior. In this lesson, we will explore the role of anger and how Judaism suggests we move beyond it.

#### SET INDUCTION: 20 Minutes

Introduce the following segment from President Obama's speech at the 2015 White House Correspondents' Dinner, featuring Luther, the President's anger translator. Your introduction should take into account what you know about the experience and knowledge base of the learners.

Explain that this dinner is meant to be both entertaining and meaningful. Tell the learners that most presidents who have spoken there in recent years have attempted to make their speech as funny as it is informative – often more so.”

NOTE: Learners of all ages should find this piece funny. Although it does feature a partisan politician, the context is not a serious one. Furthermore, there is no implied advocacy for or against any past or current occupants of the Oval Office. If one or more learners do not find the piece funny, try to uncover why they feel that way. Don't let partisan concerns distract from the conversation about anger and its role.

Show the video of “Luther, President Obama's Anger Translator.” You can find it at: <http://bit.ly/Luther-Translates>

After showing the clip, discuss the questions from the Learner's Handout (repeated below for the leader/teacher) as a group.

- a. What is the difference between what President Obama says and what Luther says? What is each person trying to communicate?
- b. What is different about the manner in which each of them speaks?
- c. What takes place during the final exchange about climate control?
- d. Is the entire piece entertaining? Is it meaningful? What meaning do you take from it?
- e. Barack Obama is known for his very even temperament and the fact that he is almost never seen as angry. Keegan-Michael Key (Luther) was not the only comedian to make fun of that reputation. What are your thoughts on the demeanor of Presidents of the United States in general?
- f. Now look at your own life and your own behavior. What do you think of your own demeanor and that of those around you? How do you and/or should you behave?



## ACTIVITY: 30 Minutes

### *Chavruta* Text Study

We will study texts #2 and #3 from the Learner's Handout, *Pirkei Avot* 4:1 and *Exodus* 32:19. In the first text, Ben Zoma, a rabbinical student who died early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E., asks about four kinds of people and how to identify them. We are ultimately interested in the “mighty” person who is identified as being slow to anger. The word “mighty” may refer to greatness in general or to a leader in particular. The term in Hebrew, *gibor*, is usually reserved for warriors and kings in most classic contexts.

Divide learners into pairs or triads to explore the two texts using the *chavruta* model. In presenting these texts, suggest that the *chavruta* groups focus on the impact of anger on leadership.

Given the age of the students, you may not need to provide guiding questions, although you may choose to do so. If you would like to use some, you can take them from the questions provided on the Learner's Handout for Grades 6 to 10 (repeated below). We recommend using some of them to review the *chavruta* work with the whole class.

#### *Pirkei Avot* 4:1

1. Ben Zoma asks about four kinds of people and tells us how to identify them by their behavior. According to the text, how can we identify someone who is:
  - Wise?
  - Mighty?
  - Rich?
  - Honored?
2. The description of each of those traits is based on a proof text from the *Tanakh*. Read each proof text and explain what it teaches us about the kind of person we are discussing.
3. Focus on the quality of being mighty and the way we can identify a mighty person. List all the reasons that anger can get in a person's way. Then list all the reasons that anger might be a useful tool. What must be true for anger to be useful?

#### *Exodus* 32:19

1. Was Moses' anger justified? Why or why not?
2. How else might Moses have reacted?
3. Have you ever had a similar experience when you exploded with anger about something? If so, what did that experience feel like for you?
4. Can being angry (and acting while still angry) be a good or useful tactic? Why or why not?
5. Name some real-world examples of a leader getting angry. How did that leader act? Did he or she act appropriately? Would you describe that person as mighty?

As a final summary of this activity, ask the learners the following questions:

1. How does anger help or hinder someone who is considered a leader?

2. *Gibor* can also be translated as strong. Why does it take strength to be slow to anger?

## ACTIVITY: 30 Minutes

### Group Text Study

In this activity, we will study texts #4 and #5 from the Learner's Handout.

As a group, answer the following questions about *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Sefer Maddah*, and *De'ot* 2:3:

1. Why should a person fake anger rather than becoming angry?
2. People advise against talking "politics and religion." However, civil discourse involves nothing but politics and religion. Why is this an important text for civil discourse?
3. Why did the rabbis of the Talmud compare anger to idolatry?

*Talmud Bavli, Eruvin* 65b

1. Do you agree or disagree with the message of this text? Why?
2. In what way is a person's true character revealed in anger?
3. How could this method of revelation be good/bad? Does it have implications for us in our work, relationships, etc.? If so, how?

## ACTIVITY: 40 Minutes

### Video and Conversation: "Why we get mad – and why it's healthy"

Anger researcher Ryan Martin, Chair of the Psychology Department at the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, draws from a career studying what makes people mad to explain some of the cognitive processes behind anger. He also explains why a healthy dose of anger can be useful. "Your anger exists in you...because it offered your ancestors, both human and nonhuman, an evolutionary advantage," he says. "[It's] a powerful and healthy force in your life."

The transcript of Martin's TED Talk follows. We suggest you read through it before showing students the video. You can find it at <http://bit.ly/PositiveAnger>. Ask the students the following list of questions and add some of your own.

1. What makes you angry? (Compile a list of the students' responses.)
2. What other emotions do you feel when you are angry?
3. The speaker suggests anger can serve an important and useful purpose. What do you think? In what circumstances is anger appropriate and useful today?
4. What do we need to do in order to make anger work *for* us and not against our own best interests?
5. Give some examples of anger that you have seen in which the anger got the better of the person, leading them to act in ways they or others might regret?

6. Give some examples of anger that you have seen in which the person who was angry was able to channel that anger and accomplish remarkable things.
7. When have you been able to channel *your* anger and accomplish remarkable things? OR When do you wish you had been able to channel *your* anger and accomplish remarkable things?
8. What can you or I do to channel anger? How can we encourage others to do the same?

## TRANSCRIPT

Alright, so I want you to imagine that you get a text from a friend, and it reads ... “You will NOT believe what just happened. I’m SO MAD right now!” So you do the dutiful thing as a friend, and you ask for details. And they tell you a story about what happened to them at the gym or at work or on their date last night. And you listen and you try to understand why they’re so mad. Maybe even secretly judge whether or not they should be so mad.

And maybe you even offer some suggestions. Now, in that moment, you are doing essentially what I get to do every day, because I’m an anger researcher, and as an anger researcher, I spend a good part of my professional life -- who am I kidding, also my personal life -- studying why people get mad. I study the types of thoughts they have when they get mad, and I even study what they do when they get mad, whether it’s getting into fights or breaking things, or even yelling at people in all caps on the internet.

And as you can imagine, when people hear I’m an anger researcher, they want to talk to me about their anger, they want to share with me their anger stories. And it’s not because they need a therapist, though that does sometimes happen; it’s really because anger is universal. It’s something we all feel and it’s something they can relate to. We’ve been feeling it since the first few months of life, when we didn’t get what we wanted in our cries of protests, things like, “What do you mean you won’t pick up the rattle, Dad, I want it!”

We feel it throughout our teenage years, as my mom can certainly attest to with me. Sorry, Mom. We feel it to the very end. In fact, anger has been with us at some of the worst moments of our lives. It’s a natural and expected part of our grief. But it’s also been with us in some of the best moments of our lives, with those special occasions like weddings and vacations often marred by these everyday frustrations -- bad weather, travel delays -- that feel horrible in the moment, but then are ultimately forgotten when things go OK.

I have a lot of conversations with people about their anger and it’s through those conversations that I’ve learned that many people, and I bet many people in this room right now, you see anger as a problem. You see the way it interferes in your life, the way it damages relationships, maybe even the ways it’s scary. And while I get all of that, I see anger a little differently. Today, I want to tell you something really important about your anger, and it’s this: anger is a powerful and healthy force in your life. It’s good that you feel it. You need to feel it.

But to understand all that, we actually have to back up and talk about why we get mad in the first place. A lot of this goes back to the work of an anger researcher named Dr. Jerry Deffenbacher, who wrote about this back in 1996 in a book chapter on how to deal with problematic anger. Now, for most of us, and I bet most of you, it feels as simple as this: I get mad when I’m provoked. You hear it in the language people use. They say things like, “It makes me so mad when people drive this slow,” or, “I got mad because she left the milk out again.” Or my favorite, “I don’t have an anger problem -- people just need to stop messing with me.”

Now, in the spirit of better understanding those types of provocations, I ask a lot of people, including my friends and colleagues and even family, “What are the things that really get to you? What makes you mad?” By the way, now is a good time to point out that one of the advantages of being an anger researcher is that I’ve spent more than a decade generating a comprehensive list of all the things that really irritate my colleagues. Just in case I need it.

But their answers are fascinating, because they say things like, “when my sports team loses,” “people who chew too loudly.” That is surprisingly common, by the way. “People who walk too slowly,” that one’s mine. And of course, “roundabouts.” Roundabouts --

I can tell you honestly, there is no rage like roundabout rage.

Sometimes their answers aren’t minor at all. Sometimes they talk about racism and sexism and bullying and environmental destruction -- big, global problems we all face. But sometimes, their answers are very specific, maybe even oddly specific. “That wet line you get across your shirt when you accidentally lean against the counter of a public bathroom.”

Super gross, right?

Or “Flash drives: there’s only two ways to plug them in, so why does it always take me three tries?”

Now whether it’s minor or major, whether it’s general or specific, we can look at these examples and we can tease out some common themes. We get angry in situations that are unpleasant, that feel unfair, where our goals are blocked, that could have been avoided, and that leave us feeling powerless. This is a recipe for anger. But you can also tell that anger is probably not the only thing we’re feeling in these situations. Anger doesn’t happen in a vacuum. We can feel angry at the same time that we’re scared or sad or feeling a host of other emotions.

But here’s the thing: these provocations -- they aren’t making us mad. At least not on their own, and we know that, because if they were, we’d all get angry over the same things, and we don’t. The reasons I get angry are different than the reasons you get angry, so there’s got to be something else going on. What is that something else? Well, we know that what we’re doing and feeling at the moment of that provocation matters. We call this the pre-anger state -- are you hungry, are you tired, are you anxious about something else, are you running late for something? When you’re feeling those things, those provocations feel that much worse. But what matters most is not the provocation, it’s not the pre-anger state, it’s this: it’s how we interpret that provocation; it’s how we make sense of it in our lives.

When something happens to us, we first decide, is this good or bad? Is it fair or unfair, is it blameworthy, is it punishable? That’s primary appraisal; it’s when you evaluate the event itself. We decide what it means in the context of our lives and once we’ve done that, we decide how bad it is. That’s secondary appraisal. We say, “Is this the worst thing that’s ever happened, or can I cope with this?”

Now, to illustrate that, I want you to imagine you are driving somewhere. And before I go any further, I should tell you, if I were an evil genius and I wanted to create a situation that was going to make you mad, that situation would look a lot like driving.

It’s true. You are, by definition, on your way somewhere, so everything that happens -- traffic, other drivers, road construction -- it feels like it’s blocking your goals. There are all these written and unwritten rules of the road, and those rules are routinely violated right in front of you, usually without consequence. And who’s violating those rules? Anonymous others, people you will never see again, making them a very easy target for your wrath.

So you’re driving somewhere, thus teed up to be angry, and the person in front of you is driving well below the speed limit. And it’s frustrating because you can’t really see why they’re driving so slow. That’s primary appraisal. You’ve looked at this and you’ve said it’s bad and it’s blameworthy. But maybe you also

decide it's not that big a deal. You're not in a hurry, doesn't matter. That's secondary appraisal -- you don't get angry.

But now imagine you're on your way to a job interview. What that person is doing, it hasn't changed, right? So primary appraisal doesn't change; still bad, still blameworthy. But your ability to cope with it sure does. Because all of a sudden, you're going to be late to that job interview. All of a sudden, you are not going to get your dream job, the one that was going to give you piles and piles of money.

Somebody else is going to get your dream job and you're going to be broke. You're going to be destitute. Might as well stop now, turn around, move in with your parents.

Why? "Because of this person in front of me. This is not a person; this is a monster."

And this monster is here just to ruin your life.

Now that thought process, it's called catastrophizing, the one where we make the worst of things. And it's one of the primary types of thoughts that we know is associated with chronic anger. But there's a couple of others. Misattributing causation. Angry people tend to put blame where it doesn't belong. Not just on people, but actually inanimate objects as well. And if you think that sounds ridiculous, think about the last time you lost your car keys and you said, "Where did those car keys go?" Because you know they ran off on their own.

They tend to overgeneralize, they use words like "always," "never," "every," "this always happens to me," "I never get what I want," or "I hit every stoplight on the way here today." Demandingness: they put their own needs ahead of the needs of others: "I don't care why this person is driving so slow, they need to speed up or move over so I can get to this job interview." And finally, inflammatory labeling. They call people fools, idiots, monsters, or a whole bunch of things I've been told I'm not allowed to say during this TED Talk.

So for a long time, psychologists have referred to these as cognitive distortions or even irrational beliefs. And yeah, sometimes they are irrational. Maybe even most of the time. But sometimes, these thoughts are totally rational. There is unfairness in the world. There are cruel, selfish people, and it's not only OK to be angry when we're treated poorly, it's right to be angry when we're treated poorly.

If there's one thing I want you to remember from my talk today, it's this: your anger exists in you as an emotion because it offered your ancestors, both human and nonhuman, with an evolutionary advantage. Just as your fear alerts you to danger, your anger alerts you to injustice. It's one of the ways your brain communicates to you that you have had enough. What's more, it energizes you to confront that injustice. Think for a second about the last time you got mad. Your heart rate increased. Your breathing increased; you started to sweat. That's your sympathetic nervous system, otherwise known as your fight-or-flight system, kicking in to offer you the energy you need to respond. And that's just the stuff you noticed. At the same time, your digestive system slowed down so you could conserve energy. That's why your mouth went dry. And your blood vessels dilated to get blood to your extremities. That's why your face went red. It's all part of this complex pattern of physiological experiences that exist today, because they helped your ancestors deal with cruel and unforgiving forces of nature.

And the problem is that the thing your ancestors did to deal with their anger, to physically fight, they are no longer reasonable or appropriate. You can't and you shouldn't swing a club every time you're provoked.

But here's the good news. You are capable of something your nonhuman ancestors weren't capable of. And that is the capacity to regulate your emotions. Even when you want to lash out, you can stop yourself and you can channel that anger into something more productive. So often when we talk about anger, we talk about how to keep from getting angry. We tell people to calm down or relax. We even tell people to let it go. And all of that assumes that anger is bad and that it's wrong to feel it.

But instead, I like to think of anger as a motivator. The same way your thirst motivates you to get a drink of water, the same way your hunger motivates you to get a bite to eat, your anger can motivate you to respond to injustice. Because we don't have to think too hard to find things we should be mad about. When we go back to the beginning, yeah, some of those things, they're silly and not worth getting angry over.

But racism, sexism, bullying, environmental destruction, those things are real, those things are terrible, and the only way to fix them is to get mad first and then channel that anger into fighting back. And you don't have to fight back with aggression or hostility or violence. There are infinite ways that you can express your anger. You can protest, you can write letters to the editor, you can donate to and volunteer for causes, you can create art, you can create literature, you can create poetry and music, you can create a community that cares for one another and does not allow those atrocities to happen.

So, the next time you feel yourself getting angry, instead of trying to turn it off, I hope you'll listen to what that anger is telling you. And then I hope you'll channel it into something positive and productive.

Thank you.

## UNIT 6

# It's NOT Just HOW You Say It (Truth Matters)



## UNIT 6: It's NOT Just HOW You Say It (Truth Matters) Learner's Handout for Grade 6 to Adult



You must not carry false rumors; you shall not join hands with the guilty to act as a malicious witness:

*Exodus 23:1*

“You must not carry false rumors” – Take it as the Targum renders it: You shalt not accept (listen to) a false report. This is a prohibition addressed to one who is about to accept a slanderous statement, and it is addressed also to a judge – that he should not hear the pleadings of one party to a suit before the other appears (*Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael* 23:1:1; *Sanhedrin* 7b).

*Rashi on Exodus 23:1:1*

(א) לא תשא שמע שוא אל-תִּשָּׂא יָדְךָ עִם-רָשָׁע לְהִיט עַד חֵמָס:  
שמות כ"ג:א'

לא תשא שמע שוא: בתרגומו לא תקבל שמע דשקר, אזהרה  
למקבל לשון הרע, ולדיין, שלא ישמע דברי בעל דין עד שיבא  
בעל דין חבירו:

רש"י על שמות כ"ג:א' א'

# Wikipedia

Lyrics by Hanan Ben Ari and Keren Peles, Music by Hanan Ben Ari

How easy it is to go along with your brain on automatic –  
a condition that doesn't demand effort  
Just to tag and bark<sup>1</sup>, to distract and to sacrifice as much  
as you can to the rating<sup>2</sup> gods  
Everything is already arranged in our heads,  
drawer upon drawer.  
We cannot be bothered by reality to see that every leftist  
is a traitor; every Arab is a suicide bomber,  
Every Haredi is a thief and all settlers murdered Rabin,  
All Tel-Aviv is vegan, All Netivot<sup>3</sup> is a folk traditional,  
All the orthodox are primitives in tzitzit and  
deleted Darwin along the way.

Don't lock me up in a cage  
Don't sum me up in Wikipedia  
I am everything, I am nothing at all  
Eternal<sup>4</sup> light dressed in a body  
So don't lock me up in no cage

Call me a Don Quixote that dares to challenge,  
Put a price on my head and guillotine me in the square  
The time of the demons is past and the king is naked  
Erase everything you knew about me up to now  
No, I am not the settler; I am not God's representative,  
Not a frummer<sup>5</sup> who excludes women,  
not a bridge between the sectors  
The sectors can burn, burn up all prejudice  
May everyone have a chance to write their own story  
Because if everything is already known And revealed  
cliché by cliché.  
Let's not allow reality to disturb us from seeing  
That every Mizrahi<sup>6</sup> is discriminated against, Every  
secular person is a dirty blasphemer,  
All the women should go to the kitchen and All the  
Russians – the Russians love Stalin!  
All the extremes have already been, All members of  
Knesset are bribe-accepting vermin,  
All the Ethiopians are runners And those that don't sing  
with (Idan) Reichel

Don't lock me up in a cage  
Don't sum me up in Wikipedia  
I am everything, I am nothing at all  
Eternal<sup>4</sup> light dressed in a body  
So don't lock me up in no cage

The day will yet come...

The day will come  
when you won't lock me up in any cage  
You won't summarize me on Wikipedia  
I am everything, I am nothing at all  
I came naked and so I will return  
So don't lock me in any cage  
You will not lock me in any cage

כמה נוח לזרום עם המוח בהתניות אוטומטיות שלא דורשות  
לטרונ  
רק לתייג ולנבוח, להסית ולזבוח לאילולי הרייטינג אייטמים בכל  
הכוח  
הכול כבר מסודר לנו בראש מגירות-מגירות  
לא ניתן למציאות להפריע לנו לראות  
שכל שמאלני הוא בוגד, כל ערבי מחבל מתאבד  
כל חרדי הוא שודד וכל המתנחלים רצחו את רבין  
כל תל אביב טבעונית, כל נתיבות מסורתית עממית,  
כל הדתיים פרימיטיביים עם ציצית ועל הדרך מחקו את דארווין.

אל תכלאוני בשום כלוב  
אל תסכמו אותי בויקיפדיה  
אני הכול, אני לא-כלום  
אור אינסוף לבוש בגוף  
אז אל תכלאוני בשום כלוב

תקראו לי דון קישוט שמעז לקרוא תיגר  
שימו לי פרס על הראש וגיליוטינה בכיכר  
השדים זמנם עבר והמלך הוא עירום  
תמחקו את כל מה שידעתם עליי עד היום  
לא אני לא המתנחל, לא נציג של אלוהים  
לא דוס שמדיר נשים, לא גשר בין המגזרים  
יישרפו המגזרים, תשרפו דעות קדומות  
לכל אחד יהיה סיכוי לכתוב את הסיפור שלו  
כי אם הכול גלוי וידוע מראש קלישאות-קלישאות  
לא ניתן למציאות להפריע לנו לראות  
שכל מזרחי מקופה, כל חילוני הוא כופר מלוכלך  
כל הנשים למטבח וכל הרוסים הרוסים על סטאלין  
כלו כבר כל הקיצים, כל חבר כנסת קופה של שרצים  
כל האתיופים רצים ואלו שלא שרים עם רייכל

אל תכלאוני בשום כלוב  
אל תסכמו אותי בויקיפדיה  
אני הכול, אני לא-כלום  
אור אינסוף לבוש בגוף  
אז אל תכלאוני בשום כלוב

עוד יבוא יום...

יום יבוא ולא תכלאוני בשום כלוב  
לא תסכמו אותי בויקיפדיה  
אני הכול, אני לא-כלום  
עירום באתי ואשוב  
אז אל תכלאוני בשום כלוב  
לא תכלאוני בשום כלוב

- 1 **tag and bark** – add a hashtag or tag an image and use all caps to make a point
- 2 **item ratings** – Likes and emojis
- 3 **Netivot** – a town in southern Israel that was initially a refugee and absorption camp for immigrants from Morocco and Tunisia. For many years, Netivot suffered from high unemployment. It was also home to the tomb of the Baba Sali, a Moroccan-born kabbalist.
- 4 **Eternal** – The Hebrew here is *Ein Sof*, the name of the highest sphere of the Kabbalistic tree of life.
- 5 **frummer** – an Orthodox Jew, possibly Haredi (ultra-Orthodox)
- 6 **Mizrahi** – a Sephardic Jew, descended from Jews who lived in Spain, across North Africa, or throughout the Middle East. As a group, their history in the modern State of Israel is worth learning, as it sometimes differs from those descended from European origins. (We are attempting to remain neutral here to avoid influencing the conversation.)

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## UNIT 6: It's NOT Just HOW You Say It (Truth Matters)

### Leader's Guide for Grade 6 to Adult

#### NOTE TO THE LEADER/TEACHER

We believe this lesson will work with all three age groups, so we have only provided one Learner's Hand-out and one Leader's Guide. The source material should be accessible to all. While the conversations will be different – each informed by the maturity and experience of the individual learners – each group should be able to have an interesting and engaging exploration. Throughout the Leader's Guide, we provide suggestions that are intended to work better with one or two of the levels more than the third. We rely on you to select the ideas and conversations you feel will move and engage your learners best. After you complete the Unit, please let us know what worked best for you!

#### BIG IDEA

If we are serious about entering into civil discourse – in debating multiple perspectives and ideas with open minds and in a manner that respects all participants (and bystanders) – then **the truth matters**. Unfortunately, due to the unregulated nature of the internet, civil laws against libel and slander have made it easier than ever for anyone to make a public statement with no reference to actual facts. And to make matters worse, broadcast and cable media then report those postings as news.

In this lesson, we conclude our series by exploring the ideas of honesty and truth telling. We are not referring to the meta-Truths that people in a society might view as self-evident (e.g. life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness). Instead, we are talking about accurate statements of accepted facts. In today's society, we see many examples of the Big Lie – individuals saying that something false is true loudly and often until at least some people begin to accept it as truth.

#### SET INDUCTION: 20 Minutes

##### Two Truths and a Lie

Begin by playing a party game that is quite popular in some circles to get us used to shading the truth.

1. Ask each person in the room to tell the group three things about themselves. Two should be true, and the third should be a lie. The more outrageous the items are, the more interesting and fun the game will be. Here is an example from one of the authors of this curriculum (Ira J. Wise):
  - I was in a Diet Pepsi commercial that aired during the Super Bowl featuring Ray Charles and Joe Montana. I received royalties for it.
  - My son and I went skydiving last summer. It was terrifying.
  - I danced in a performance of the Twyla Tharp Dance Company. People paid to attend.

2. Once everyone confirms they have thought of two truths and a lie, ask one person to share their three items. Explain that the order is unimportant.
3. After the first person has shared, ask the group to come to a consensus on which answer was the lie. The person who shared now reveals the truths and the lie. (As of this writing, Ira has never skydived.)
4. Repeat the process until every learner has shared. Have fun.
5. When every learner has had a turn, ask the students whether or not they think the truth is important. Why or why not?
6. Ask them if the truth matters in other contexts. Why or why not?

## TEXT STUDY: 25 Minutes

### **Exodus 23:1**

The first page of the Learner's Handout contains both the text of Exodus 23:1 and Rashi's commentary on it. Following the game, you might find it difficult to get the learners – particularly the younger ones – to work in *chavruta* pairs. We suggest that the whole group study and discuss the text and commentary, using the following questions:

1. Ask one learner to read the quote from Exodus.
2. What are the two commands here?
3. What do these commands have to do with each other?
4. Give one or two examples that we might recognize of someone violating these *mitzvot*. Give an example of someone who is clearly making an effort to observe either or both of them.
5. Today, social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and others spread people's words further and faster than ever before. Does your understanding of the quote from Exodus suggest how we should behave on the internet? Are things different there?
6. (NOTE: If you have the time and interest, we recommend <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/06/technology/section-230-hate-speech.html>. It is an article that discusses a specific loophole in U.S. law that says that websites are not subject to the same slander and libel laws as publishers of print media.)
7. Ask a different learner to read the quote from Rashi.
8. In his comment on the first text, Rashi suggests that we should read it as "listen" to one or accept it as true rather than as "carry" a false rumor. How does that change our role in fulfilling this *mitzvah*?
9. What is our responsibility now?
10. Give one or two examples that we might recognize of someone violating this understanding of the *mitzvah*. Give an example of someone who is clearly making an effort to observe it.
11. Does Rashi give us any more guidance on how we should act online?

## ACTIVITY: 45 Minutes

### Music Video Exploration

1. Introduce the video “Wikipedia” by Hanan ben Ari by providing the following information to the group:
  - a. Explain that Hanan Ben Ari is an Israeli music superstar. Born in the religious village of Karnei Shomron and having studied in several Religious Zionist yeshivas, he still managed to become a crossover hit among Israel’s secular public.
  - b. Tell the students that there are subtitles on the screen to help them understand the words. In addition, let them know that you will provide the lyrics in Hebrew and in English on the Learner’s Handouts to assist your conversation after you have watched the video.
2. Show the video. You can find it at <http://bit.ly/BenAriWikipedia>. Because of the subtitles, make the image as large as possible. Of course, sound quality is important as well.
3. Divide the learners into *chavruta* for the last time. Ask the pairs or triads to discuss the questions and the lyrics, both of which are on the Learner’s Handout. They should be prepared to share their answers.

The questions are repeated below for the leader/teacher:

- a. What is Ben Ari trying to say with this song?
  - b. What cage is he trying to avoid?
  - c. Ben Ari describes several people as either being or not being a certain way. What does he want us to do with that information?
  - d. Why is the composer afraid of Wikipedia?
  - e. Ben Ari appears to be critical of internet culture. Explain why you either agree or disagree with that statement.
  - f. Why does he call himself Don Quixote? What battle is he fighting?
  - g. In an interview, Ben Ari explained that the sectors refer to the many different sectors of Israeli society. They are defined by economics, by type of Judaism, by national origin, by race, by religion in general, and even by the accent in one’s Hebrew. He states that he is not a “bridge between the sectors” and that the sectors can burn. What does this mean? Why do you think he is saying it?
  - h. The song begins, “How easy it is to go along with your brain on automatic – a condition that doesn’t demand effort.” How does this line connect to our conversation about honesty and the truth?
  - i. Read the lyrics. Which phrases recall aspects of our conversation about honesty and the truth?
4. Following are a few excerpts from a 2017 interview with Hanan Ben Ari. You may want to share some of this information with your students during your conversation.

- a. Ben Ari cemented his position in the Israeli music scene this past year, when one of his songs, 'Tutim' (strawberries) was named 'song of the year' in the Israeli annual Hebrew song chart which aired on *Army Radio*.
  - b. The single we are about to hear, 'Wikipedia,' caused a storm among the religious public when it was released in 2017. In the song, he begs the public not to look at him as a representative of the larger religious community and implores the public not to believe in stereotypes.
  - c. "Erase everything you knew about me up to this point," Ben Ari sings. "No, I am not a settler, not a representative of God, not someone who segregates women, not a bridge between the societal sectors."
  - d. The song caused a storm in the religious community. Many thought that Ben Ari was trying to hide his affiliation with the Religious Zionist community, criticism that he rebuffed.
  - e. "'Stop putting people in a cage and saying, 'He's religious, he makes music for the religious and he does music that deals only with religious issues,'" Ben Ari said.
5. After 20 minutes (or if the conversation dies down), bring the group back together. Ask the learners to discuss their answers, inviting people to share insights they learned from their partners. If it does not flow from the last few questions, bring the learners back to the original issue of honesty and truth telling from Exodus.

## FINAL ACTIVITY: 30 Minutes

### Sacha Baron Cohen

If you wish, and if there is time, show the speech that Sacha Baron Cohen gave at the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) *Never is Now Conference* (<http://bit.ly/SachaADL>). We have provided the transcript for the final 16 minutes of the nearly 25-minute speech on the next four pages. **We strongly suggest that you choose no more than a five- to eight-minute clip.** Our experience with using video is that more than that amount of time leads to eyes glazing over, loss of focus, and occasionally snoring. When you are showing a video with amazing comedy or action and adventure, a little more time can be fine. However, although Cohen is occasionally funny in this speech, it is still a speech.

The following two excerpts from the speech can enhance the conversation we have had so far. Copy the relevant sections of the transcript and distribute it to your students. Go to the speech online to cut and paste your own copy, as the .pdf or printed version of this lesson may not be as simple to maneuver. You can find it on the ADL website at <http://bit.ly/SachaTranscript>.

**Option 1 – Internet trolls and free speech.** This excerpt is an even five minutes and runs from 8:35 to 13:35. In this part of the speech, Cohen begins to lay out his case for limiting what may be allowed on internet platforms. He points out that the principle of free speech means that there are no limits on what people post. Although this segment goes a bit afield from the topics we have discussed thus far, it raises some interesting points.

**Option 2 – Is there objective truth?** This excerpt runs from 13:35 to 19:51, a length of six minutes and 16 seconds. In this segment, Cohen gets into the idea of whose truth is acceptable. He makes it clear that there are indeed facts in evidence that can be accepted as truth and others that are clearly falsehoods and can be rejected. Cohen does not address the grey area.

Both sections should generate a great deal of conversation.

We hope that you have found these lessons helpful. We would love to hear how they worked (or failed) with your learners. Please send feedback to us at [ijw8212@gmail.com](mailto:ijw8212@gmail.com).



**Sacha Baron Cohen, Keynote Address**  
**ADL *Never is Now* Conference, November 21, 2019**

8:35 I'm speaking up today because I believe that our pluralistic democracies are on a precipice and that the next twelve months, and the role of social media, could be determinant. British voters will go to the polls while online conspiracists promote the despicable theory of "great replacement" that white Christians are being deliberately replaced by Muslim immigrants. Americans will vote for president while trolls and bots perpetuate the disgusting lie of a "Hispanic invasion." And after years of YouTube videos calling climate change a "hoax," the United States is on track, a year from now, to formally withdraw from the Paris Accords. A sewer of bigotry and vile conspiracy theories that threaten democracy and our planet—this cannot possibly be what the creators of the internet had in mind.

9:35 I believe it's time for a fundamental rethink of social media and how it spreads hate, conspiracies, and lies. Last month, however, Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook delivered a major speech that, not surprisingly, warned against new laws and regulations on companies like his. Well, some of these arguments are simply absurd. Let's count the ways.

First, Zuckerberg tried to portray this whole issue as "choices...around free expression." That is ludicrous. This is not about limiting anyone's free speech. This is about giving people, including some of the most reprehensible people on earth, the biggest platform in history to reach a third of the planet. Freedom of speech is not freedom of reach. Sadly, there will always be racists, misogynists, anti-Semites, and child abusers. But I think we could all agree that we should not be giving bigots and pedophiles a free platform to amplify their views and target their victims.

10:54 Second, Zuckerberg claimed that new limits on what's posted on social media would be to "pull back on free expression." This is utter nonsense. The First Amendment says that "Congress shall make no law" abridging freedom of speech; however, this does not apply to private businesses like Facebook. We're not asking these companies to determine the boundaries of free speech across society. We just want them to be responsible on their platforms.

11:32 If a neo-Nazi comes goose-stepping into a restaurant and starts threatening other customers and saying he wants to kill Jews, would the owner of the restaurant be required to serve him an elegant eight-course meal? Of course not! The restaurant owner has every legal right and a moral obligation to kick the Nazi out, and so do these internet companies.

11:58 Third, Zuckerberg seemed to equate regulation of companies like his to the actions of "the most repressive societies." Incredible. This, from one of the six people who decide what information so much of the world sees. Zuckerberg at Facebook, Sundar Pichai at Google, at its parent company Alphabet, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, Brin's ex-sister-in-law Susan Wojcicki at YouTube, and Jack Dorsey at Twitter.

The Silicon Six—all billionaires, all Americans—who care more about boosting their share price than about protecting democracy. This is ideological imperialism—six unelected individuals in Silicon Valley imposing their vision on the rest of the world, unaccountable to any government and acting like they're above the reach of law. It's like we're living in the Roman Empire, and Mark Zuckerberg is Caesar. At least that would explain his haircut.

Here's an idea. Instead of letting the Silicon Six decide the fate of the world, let our elected representatives, voted for by the people, of every democracy in the world, have at least some say.

- 13:35 Fourth, Zuckerberg speaks of welcoming a “diversity of ideas,” and last year he gave us an example. He said that he found posts denying the Holocaust “deeply offensive,” but he didn’t think Facebook should take them down, “because I think there are things that different people get wrong.” At this very moment, there are still Holocaust deniers on Facebook, and Google still takes you to the most repulsive Holocaust denial sites with a simple click. One of the heads of Google once told me, incredibly, that these sites just show “both sides” of the issue. This is madness.

To quote Edward R. Murrow, one “cannot accept that there are, on every story, two equal and logical sides to an argument.” We have millions of pieces of evidence for the Holocaust—it is an historical fact. And denying it is not some random opinion. Those who deny the Holocaust aim to encourage another one.

Still, Zuckerberg says that “people should decide what is credible, not tech companies.” But at a time when two-thirds of millennials say they haven’t even heard of Auschwitz, how are they supposed to know what’s “credible?” How are they supposed to know that the lie is a lie?

There is such a thing as objective truth. Facts do exist. And if these internet companies really want to make a difference, they should hire enough monitors to actually monitor, work closely with groups like the ADL, insist on facts, and purge these lies and conspiracies from their platforms.

- 15:34 Fifth, when discussing the difficulty of removing content, Zuckerberg asked “where do you draw the line?” Yes, drawing the line can be difficult. But here’s what he’s really saying: removing more of these lies and conspiracies is just too expensive.

These are the richest companies in the world, and they have the best engineers in the world. They could fix these problems if they wanted to. Twitter could deploy an algorithm to remove more white supremacist hate speech, but they reportedly haven’t because it would eject some very prominent politicians from their platform. Maybe that’s not a bad thing! The truth is, these companies won’t fundamentally change because their entire business model relies on generating more engagement, and nothing generates more engagement than lies, fear, and outrage.

- 16:52 It’s time to finally call these companies what they really are—the largest publishers in history. And here’s an idea for them: abide by basic standards and practices just like newspapers, magazines, and TV news do every day. We have standards and practices in television and the movies; there are certain things we cannot say or do. In England, I was told that Ali G could not curse when he appeared before 9:00 pm. Here in the U.S., the Motion Picture Association of America regulates and rates what we see. I’ve had scenes in my movies cut or reduced to abide by those standards. If there are standards and practices for what cinemas and television channels can show, then surely companies that publish material to billions of people should have to abide by basic standards and practices too.

- 17:44 Take the issue of political ads. Fortunately, Twitter finally banned them, and Google is making changes, too. But if you pay them, Facebook will run any “political” ad you want, even if it’s a lie. And they’ll even help you micro-target those lies to their users for maximum effect. Under this twisted logic, if Facebook were around in the 1930s, it would have allowed Hitler to post 30-sec-

ond ads on his “solution” to the “Jewish problem.” So here’s a good standard and practice: Facebook, start fact-checking political ads before you run them, stop micro-targeted lies immediately, and when the ads are false, give back the money and don’t publish them.

- 18:47 Here’s another good practice: slow down. Every single post doesn’t need to be published immediately. Oscar Wilde once said that “we live in an age when unnecessary things are our only necessities.” But is having every thought or video posted instantly online, even if it is racist or criminal or murderous, really a necessity? Of course not!

The shooter who massacred Muslims in New Zealand live streamed his atrocity on Facebook where it then spread across the internet and was viewed likely millions of times. It was a snuff film, brought to you by social media. Why can’t we have more of a delay so this trauma-inducing filth can be caught and stopped before it’s posted in the first place?

- 19:51 Finally, Zuckerberg said that social media companies should “live up to their responsibilities,” but he’s totally silent about what should happen when they don’t. By now it’s pretty clear, they cannot be trusted to regulate themselves. As with the Industrial Revolution, it’s time for regulation and legislation to curb the greed of these high-tech robber barons.

In every other industry, a company can be held liable when their product is defective. When engines explode or seatbelts malfunction, car companies recall tens of thousands of vehicles, at a cost of billions of dollars. It only seems fair to say to Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter: your product is defective, you are obliged to fix it, no matter how much it costs and no matter how many moderators you need to employ.

- 21:04 In every other industry, you can be sued for the harm you cause. Publishers can be sued for libel; people can be sued for defamation. I’ve been sued many times! I’m being sued right now by someone whose name I won’t mention, because he might sue me again! But social media companies are largely protected from liability for the content their users post—no matter how indecent it is—by Section 230 of, get ready for it, the Communications Decency Act. Absurd!

Fortunately, internet companies can now be held responsible for pedophiles who use their sites to target children. I say, let’s also hold these companies responsible for those who use their sites to advocate for the mass murder of children because of their race or religion. And maybe fines are not enough. Maybe it’s time to tell Mark Zuckerberg and the CEOs of these companies: you already allowed one foreign power to interfere in our elections, you already facilitated one genocide in Myanmar; do it again and you go to jail.

- 22:37 In the end, it all comes down to what kind of world we want. In his speech, Zuckerberg said that one of his main goals is to “uphold as wide a definition of freedom of expression as possible.” Yet our freedoms are not only an end in themselves, they’re also the means to another end—as you say here in the U.S., the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But today these rights are threatened by hate, conspiracies, and lies.

Allow me to leave you with a suggestion for a different aim for society. The ultimate aim of society should be to make sure that people are not targeted, not harassed, and not murdered because of who they are, where they come from, who they love, or how they pray.

If we make that our aim—if we prioritize truth over lies, tolerance over prejudice, empathy over

indifference, and experts over ignoramuses—then maybe, just maybe, we can stop the greatest propaganda machine in history, we can save democracy, we can still have a place for free speech and free expression, and, most importantly, my jokes will still work.

24:43 Thank you all very much.



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