

Civilly Speaking

A Curriculum on Civil Discourse

Curriculum by Joel Lurie Grishaver and Ira J. Wise

UNIT 3

Why Are We Arguing?



The Covenant Foundation

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

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. 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.

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.

UNIT 3: Why Are We Arguing?

Learner's Handout for Grades 8 to 10



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

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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?
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 - 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.”

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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.)

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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.

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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.
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 - 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.
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UNIT 3: Why Are We Arguing?

Learner's Handout for Grade 11 to Adult



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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?
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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?
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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.”

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

John F. Kennedy

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 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.



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