

FOR THE SAKE OF HEAVEN

WITH WHOM DO WE ALLY OURSELVES AND HOW DO WE HANDLE IDEOLOGICAL DISAGREEMENTS?

OPENING QUESTION:

During this session we will consider two distinct but related questions:

1. When is it appropriate to collaborate with those with whom we may differ on certain core moral issues?
2. What are Jewish themes surrounding compromise? How do these ideas apply to questions of collaboration?

OPENING QUESTION:

Go around the circle and ask each person to share a time they compromised on something that was important to them. How did they feel about making that compromise?

DIRECTING MEMBERS TO THE READING:

At least a few days before you meet, please direct your group members to the article by Yehuda Kurtzer entitled “Linda Sarsour and American Jewish Politics,” which can be found here: <http://jewishjournal.com/opinion/214276/linda-sarsour-american-jewish-politics/> . It is also accessible through a link on the CORE Groups page on our website. Please ask everyone to read the article before the session, as it will form the basis for a significant portion of the discussion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- (a) Do you agree with the distinction Kurtzer draws between “moral imperatives” and “moral concerns”?
- (b) Can you identify beliefs that you hold that fit into each of these categories?
- (c) What do you think of Kurtzer’s “two-thirds and 51 percent” rule? If you were to set the percentages, what would they be?
- (d) Would it make you uncomfortable to organize for a cause in partnership with people with whom you agreed only to this extent? If not, should that discomfort prevent you from doing so?

RABBINIC PERSPECTIVES ON COMPROMISE:

Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Ancestors 5:17

Every argument that is for [the sake of] heaven's name, it is destined to endure. But if it is not for [the sake of] heaven's name --it is not destined to endure. What is [an example of an argument] for [the sake of] heaven's name? The argument of Hillel and Shammai. What is [an example of an argument] not for [the sake of] heaven's name? The argument of Korach and all of his congregation.

Mishnah Eduyyot 1:4

Why are the opinions of Hillel and Shammai recorded [only] to be nullified? To teach the generations that one should not be insistent on their opinions, for the fathers of the world were not insistent on their opinions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- (a) What is the difference between the two kinds of arguments named in *Pirkei Avot*?
- (b) How do the questions surrounding allying yourself with another group relate to the idea of “disagreements for the sake of heaven”? Based on the Yehuda Kurtzer article, how can you tell if your disagreements with another group are for the sake of heaven?
- (c) When is it good to be insistent on your opinions? When is it good to not be insistent on your opinions?

Sanhedrin 6b

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa says: It is a mitzvah to mediate a dispute, as it is stated: “Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates” (Zechariah 8:16). Is it not that in the place where there is strict judgment there is no true peace, and in a place where there is true peace, there is no strict judgment? Rather, which is the judgment that has peace within it? You must say: This is mediation, as both sides are satisfied with the result.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- (a) What is the relationship between judgment and peace in the above text? Why does strict judgment not allow for true peace?
- (b) What are political or personal examples you have seen of “judgment that has peace within it”?

The Talmud teaches that God prays to God’s self (Berachot 7a):

May it be My will that My mercy may suppress My anger, and that My mercy may prevail over My [other] attributes, so that I may deal with My children in the attribute of mercy and, on their behalf, stop short of the limit of strict justice

(a) What should we learn from our interactions with other groups based on this prayer? How would you fill out the following worksheet having read everything above?

	Would you ATTEND AN EVENT at which someone was BEING HONORED who disagreed with you on this issue?	Could you be CLOSE FRIENDS with someone who disagreed with you on this issue?	Would you PARTICIPATE IN A DEMONSTRATION or similar action organized by a group that disagreed with you on this issue?	Could you support a POLITICAL CANDIDATE who disagreed with you on this issue?
Climate change				
Abortion access				
Gun control				
Recognizing Israel as the Homeland of the Jewish People				
Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions (BDS) as a tool to advocate for Israel				
Transgender “bathroom laws”				
Refugee/immigration issues				
Compulsory vaccination				