

משנכנס אדר מרבים בשמחה ונלחמים בשנאה

הנה מה טוב ומה נעים שבת אחים גם יחד' (תהלים קלג:א)

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers also to dwell together!”
(Psalms 133:1)

This well-known verse from Psalms about brotherhood (and sisterhood) reminds us that we are meant to come together in unity. Even though our goal is to live with others happily, being amongst others sometimes causes strife or frustration. We each have our own opinions and ideas of how the world should function; of what is fair; of what the necessary next steps are. These differences in opinions can lead to disagreements. Sometimes our disagreements are small and perhaps meaningless, but other times they are large enough to cause a civil war.

The question then comes to mind, how can we disagree? Is there even a way to disagree while still showing love and respect towards the other person?

A few years ago the 9Adar Project was started. The 9Adar Project “seeks to cultivate the culture of constructive conflict and healthy disagreement across personal, political, and religious divides.” Not only do we need to look and change the way that we disagree with others, but we can learn how to do so from Jewish tradition and texts.

In the Shulchan Aruch, we see that there was a day of commemoration held on the 9th day of the month.

On the 9th of the Hebrew month of Adar, approximately 2,000 years ago, the initially peaceful and constructive disagreements between two dominant Jewish schools of thought, Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai, turned destructive over a vote on 18 ideologically charged legal matters, leading, according to some sources, to the death of 3,000 students. The day was said to be as tragic as the day the golden calf was created. It was later declared a fast day, however it was never observed as such.

(Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, Laws of Fasts 580)- @ <http://www.9adar.org/about/what-is-9adar/>

On this day we are encouraged to think about what we are able to do, in order to disagree constructively. It is understood that there will be disagreements. The issue is how to disagree with respect.

Here in Israel, the theme of this day is relevant to our lives more than ever.

We have been witnessing an increasing atmosphere of alienation and hatred in our society. During these last few months, public debate in Israel has been led by the extreme ends of the spectrum, at the expense of moderate voices.



We see the exchange of ever more serious accusations between the opposing parties in almost all issues. Mutual name-calling has poisoned public discourse, transforming this discourse into ever continual shallow and hostile attacks.

How do we respond to the social trends of intolerance, racism and xenophobia occurring around us ?

The Masorti Movement is one of the founding members of the [Tag Meir](#) organization, striving to create a more respectful discourse in Israeli society. Tag Meir is a wordplay on Tag Machir (Price Tag), an expression used by right-wing Jewish extremists to describe revenge attacks against Palestinian targets. Tag Meir's goal is to fight against violence that can come from religious conflict and racism in Israel, be it between Arabs and Jews, Christians and Jews, or Jews and Jews. Tag Meir, means “A Tag that brings Light”

Tag Meir was founded in 2001, shortly after there was a Rabbinic Responsa written by a rabbi in Israel, calling for the murder of Arab children. There was a decision among many that something positive must be done in response. From that day, Tag Meir continues to form positive actions in response to acts of terror and hatred. Some past events have been in the areas of Nechum aveilim (comforting mourners), creating moments of song and solidarity in places that have been vandalized, and speaking out openly against acts of terror, especially those in the name of God and Judaism.

When speaking to Tammy Gottlieb, the Masorti Movement's director of Social Media, (who in addition is a very active member of Tag Meir), she relates that one of the goals of Tag Meir is to show that acts of racism are being done in the name of Judaism, despite the warped personal motivations of the perpetrators, and that all of us deserve to be treated equally in a Jewish society, and enjoy the same rights.

Last week, members of NOAM, the Masorti youth movement in Israel, took part in a workshop (organized with Tag Meir) to create and promote posters with messages of tolerance, equality and acceptance of others.

About 100 members took part in the event. The result: a wonderful exhibition of creative expression for pluralism.

Perhaps, this year, when we observe Adar twice, we will be reminded that despite all of the conflict we witness – we must continue to feel joy, even a double measure of joy, in knowing that we may be part (even a small part) of a solution.

The Zohar comments on the verse from Psalms 133:1:

הִנֵּה מַה טוֹב וְיַמָּה נְעִים' וגו' – אלו הם החברים, בשעה שהם יושבים כאחד ואינם נפרדים זה מזה. בתחילה הם נראים כגברים מגיחי קרב שמבקשים להרוג זה את זה, ולאחר מכן שבים באהבת אחים. הקב"ה מה הוא אומר: 'הִנֵּה מַה טוֹב וְיַמָּה נְעִים שְׁבַת אֲחִים גַּם יַחַד', 'גַּם' – לכלול עמהם את השכינה. ולא עוד אלא הקב"ה מקשיב למילותיהם ונוח לו ושמח בהם. זהו שכתוב: (מלאכי ג) 'אֵז נִדְבְּרוּ יְרָאִי יְהוָה אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ וַיִּקְשֹׁב יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמַע וַיִּכְתֹּב סֵפֶר זִכְרוֹן לְפָנָיו' וגו'. [זוהר ח"ג, נט ע"ב (פרשת אחרי מות)]

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers also to dwell together!” -These are companions, that when they sit together as one, they don't separate from one another. At first they look like warriors that want to kill one another, but then they sit lovingly, as brothers. What does God say: ‘Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers also to dwell together!’. ‘Also’- comes to include the Schina (Divine Presence). And not only this, but God listens to their words and feel happy by them. This is why it is written: (Malachi 3:16) “Then the God-fearing men spoke to one another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it. And a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who feared the Lord and for those who valued His name highly.”

May we be blessed to learn to sit with our brothers and sisters lovingly, even in times that we may want to wage war with them. May we all learn to be able to both love and disagree.

