

## 9ADAR RESOURCE: Land for a People or People for a Land?

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### Educator's Guide

#### Goals

1. To facilitate constructive disagreement (*mahloket l'shem shamayim*) and dialogue around a controversial topic.
2. To demonstrate that Jewish texts and Jewish wisdom are relevant to contemporary issues and debates.
3. To provide an opportunity for intellectual challenge, personal growth, and character development.

#### Background

One fact people across political divides today may still agree upon is that civil discourse is turning less and less civil. Indeed, the sheer lack of desire to try to understand those with opposing political opinions and to disagree constructively over critical questions is posing an existential threat to democracies around the world. In response, Pardes created *Mahloket Matters: How to Disagree Constructively*.

A befitting time to engage in *Mahloket Matters* programming is during the week of *9Adar: Jewish Week of Constructive Conflict*, a related Pardes project. Two thousand years ago on the 9th of the Hebrew month of Adar, the typically constructive disagreements between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai turned destructive. *9Adar* serves as a powerful reminder of what can happen when the values and skills of *mahloket l'shem shamayim* are neglected.

Since 2013, schools, campuses, synagogues, Jewish organizations, and conflict resolution organizations have taken the time during the week of *9Adar* to study and practice cultivating a culture of constructive conflict across personal, political and religious divides.

The resources presented here have been created to address some of the current debates whose clash of values have been present throughout the ages. Each unit takes on a “central question” and presents Jewish text study, commentaries, and/or related historical events before addressing the issue in modern times. Every unit consists of a source sheet with guiding questions, educator's guide (this document) and accompanying podcast.

# MAHLOKET MATTERS

## HOW TO DISAGREE CONSTRUCTIVELY



At the end of the session, we ask that both you and the participants complete a feedback form:

- For educators: <http://www.pardes.org.il/MM9Adar-Educ-feedback>
- For participants: <http://www.pardes.org.il/MM9Adar-feedback>

Your feedback is important to us and to our sponsors, so we appreciate you taking the time to submit it.

### For additional *Mahloket Matters* and *9Adar* resources, see the following:

- **The Sanhedrin Way** [https://elmad.pardes.org/register/mm\\_sanhedrin\\_way/](https://elmad.pardes.org/register/mm_sanhedrin_way/)

A 60–90 minute educational workshop for use in your community. Participants study Jewish texts about the ancient Sanhedrin’s guidelines for engaging in constructive *mahloket* and practice constructive controversy by engaging in an exciting and interactive mock-Sanhedrin exercise.

- **The Beit Midrash Way** [https://elmad.pardes.org/register/mm\\_beit\\_midrash\\_way/](https://elmad.pardes.org/register/mm_beit_midrash_way/)

A five-part educational workshop series where each unit examines a central question currently under political debate, such as “When do we agree to meet with our political adversaries, and when do we refuse?” These central questions are first analyzed through a biblical conflict story. After carefully analyzing the biblical story and their ambiguities, various interpretations of these facts are then introduced through the study of classic commentaries on the story. Each unit then examines contradictory historical precedents that can be used to support or refute opposing responses to the central question of the unit. The units each conclude with an activity involving reading contradictory news from a recent event.

- **Mahloket Matters for schools**

Materials on constructive disagreement adapted for middle school or high school students. For information about bringing this to your school, contact Sefi Kraut at [sefik@pardes.org.il](mailto:sefik@pardes.org.il).

- **9Adar: Jewish Week of Constructive Conflict** <https://www.9adar.org/resources/>

More information for studying, practicing and commemorating *9Adar*.



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### Preparation for Facilitating the Session

1. Carefully review this document and the accompanying source sheet.
2. Consider factors specific to your setting - how much time you have for the session, availability of projector, room setup, etc.
3. Consider the participants' background with Jewish text and deep, group conversation. Adjust the introduction and the body of the session accordingly.
4. Decide if you will use the G-dcast video "[Disagreements for the Sake of Heaven](#)".
5. Print out your source sheets, gather any required materials, advertise, etc.

### Introduction (5–15 minutes)

1. Welcome participants and, if time permits, invite them to introduce themselves and share one sentence as to why they came. You might want to acknowledge that constructive disagreement is not easy, and you appreciate everyone's willingness to listen without judgement, engage constructively, and learn with an open mind. You may share why you as the facilitator see constructive disagreement as an important personal and Jewish value.
2. Introduce *mahloket l'shem shamayim* (disagreement for the sake of Heaven). You may do this by showing the 3-minute G-dcast video "[Disagreements for the Sake of Heaven](#)" and/or a short text study from the G-dcast source sheet. You may also choose to share a personal anecdote.
3. Explain the components of a *Mahloket Matters: 9Adar Resource* session. We explore sources from classical Jewish texts that reflect genuine disagreement and differing perspectives as a means of engaging in contemporary conflicts and debates with an open mind. That means we study one (or more) classical Jewish text and commentaries on that text. We may look at pertinent historical events, and we end with a discussion/exercise on the issue in today's world.
4. Present the goals for the session. In addition to the general goals listed above, you may want to talk about specific goals that relate to this particular topic and how it is affecting your community. For example, is your goal greater space for diversity within your community, more openness to those outside your community, or greater appreciation of the complexity of the issue under discussion?
5. Give an overview of *havruta* study. *Havruta* study is the study of text in pairs, where the text is read aloud and then discussed. Each partner is tasked with both expressing their own view, and listening carefully to the view of their partner. Studying in *havruta* can itself be an experience that fosters an environment of openness, dialogue, and respectful disagreement. For those participants who came expecting a lecture or debate-style format, explaining *havruta* upfront is particularly important.



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6. Introduce the central question of the session: Does the Land of Israel have inherent holiness or is its purpose only functional? Conflicts around land for peace, the value of Jews living over the Green Line, and the importance of *aliya* are dividing the Jewish world. This session raises the question of how Jewish sources relate to the value and meaning of the Land of Israel. By exploring different approaches to the religious and functional role of the Land, we can better appreciate the values and beliefs that may stand behind these debates. We can engage others with views that oppose our own with greater openness and curiosity. This process enables us to maintain positive relationships with those with whom we disagree.

### Biblical Text

1. Read Text 1 with the whole group. Discuss the questions with the group. Your goal here is to show that while receiving the Land and being in the Land are deemed essential, the Biblical text never gives an explicit answer as to why. (5–8 minutes)

### Conflicting Rabbinic Approaches and The Centrality of the Land of Israel in Contemporary Zionism

2. Ask the participants to break up into *havrutot* (study pairs). Have them study Texts 2–5 and discuss the related questions (15–25 minutes).
3. Bring the group back together to reflect on the *havruta* study (7–10 minutes). Ask the group about the different ideas and approaches to the value and meaning of the Land of Israel that emerged in the *havrutot*.

### This *Mahloket* in Other Historical Contexts

4. Different conceptions about the significance of land have motivated other conflicts in the past. Together, we look at different notions of land held by Europeans and Native Americans, which played a significant role in their conflict. Study texts 6.1–6.3 as a group (5–10 minutes).

### Bringing this *Mahloket* into the Present

5. Have the group discuss Questions 7 and 8 in small groups of 3–4 people. (10–15 minutes).



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### Conclusion (5–10 minutes)

1. Regather as a big group. Ask participants to share how the study session affected their views of the *mahloket*. Did participating in the session help them understand why someone would hold a view that opposes their own?
2. Ask participants to write down 1 takeaway that they will want to use the next time they find themselves in a disagreement.
3. Thank everyone for participating!  
Please ask them to share their feedback at [www.pardes.org.il/MM9Adar-feedback](http://www.pardes.org.il/MM9Adar-feedback).
4. Please complete the Educator's Feedback Form at <http://www.pardes.org.il/MM9Adar-Educ-feedback>.

