

G-DCAST: Disagreements for the Sake of Heaven (DSH)

Below is a menu of activities, assessments and resources to use in 5-9th grade classrooms when teaching about מחלוקת לשם שמים/disagreements for the sake of Heaven (DSH), based on the G-dcast, "Disagreements for the Sake of Heaven".

Enduring Understandings for the lesson/s:

- There are differences between constructive conflict and destructive conflict.
- We can develop the skills necessary to help us identify the difference between destructive and constructive conflicts.
- Hillel's and Shammai's disagreements were constructive arguments for the sake of heaven.

Notes to teacher:

- Below is a menu of resources and activities that can be combined, modified and adapted to suit almost any 5-9th grade day school classroom. Choose the appropriate combination of options for your class based on your students' age and level, as well as your style and the amount of time you want to devote this topic. The activities and resources below are **not necessarily** meant to be used in succession as one lesson or unit.
- Almost all of the activities can be done as individual work, pair work, class work or homework – adapt them so they best suit your needs.

- All the source sheets, resources and worksheets are in Word format so they can be easily edited and modified.
- None of these activities include a rubric, so that you can tailor ones that best fit your goals and priorities.
- If you significantly modify any of these activities, or create ones of your own – please let us know. Email us 9Adar@pardes.org.il.

Suggested activities and assessments (see below for full descriptions)	#
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G-dcast video on DSH in Hebrew and English	5
Hebrew/English source sheet which includes all the sources mentioned in the G-dcast	6-9
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Link to a pre-prepared one ~45 minute lesson which teaches a <i>mishnah</i> (Hebrew and English) that introduces the idea of DSH	
Link to a 1-2 week long 6-8th grade unit that explores the texts and concepts of the G-dcast in depth	

Suggested Activities and Assessments

#1: Students reflect on disagreements or arguments they have had in their own lives

Ask students: Think of an argument or disagreement that you have had in the last few weeks: Quiet work - Ask students to answer the following questions to themselves (preferably in writing):

- Who was it with?
- What was it about?
- How did it make you feel?
- How did the argument end?

For class discussion: In pairs and/or as a whole class discuss these follow up questions. (Students should not feel pressured to share any personal details of a disagreement they had): Think a little bit further about the same argument/disagreement:

- Was the argument productive?
- Did anything good come out of it? If so, what?
- Did anything bad come out of it? If so, what?
- Would you do or say something differently if you had the chance?

#2: Ask students to write a definition of DSH

Based on class discussion, common sense/creativity, or having watched the video write a definition for the phrase: 'Disagreement for the sake of heaven'. There is no one right or wrong answer.

#3: Introduce Hillel and Shammai

Intro Hillel and Shammai to your students if necessary. [Background info on Hillel and Shammai from Wikipedia](#). (The who, where, when, etc of Hillel and Shammai).

Consider reminding/teaching your students that there are things we do today based on Hillel and Shammai's disagreements, such as the way we light Hannukah candles.

Also, consider clarifying the distinction between Hillel and Shammai themselves (who only had 3 recorded disputes amongst them) and *Beit* Hillel and *Beit* Shammai (their respective academies).

#4: Students apply the different understandings of DSH to 'conflict dialogues'

Watch video while asking students to record the 4 different explanations of 'disagreement for the sake of heaven' on Handout #1. Consider showing the video twice. Here is a brief summary of the **four explanations of 'disagreement for the sake of heaven'**:

- Debate the issues; but respect the person and maintain good relationships
- Check your motivations; are you trying to win or solve problems?
- Listen carefully; truly be open to the possibility that you are wrong
- There isn't necessarily one winner; maybe we are both right?

Checking for understanding - Have students work on Handout #2 to apply their understanding of the four explanations to contemporary arguments. You can have pairs of students perform the dialogues, read them quietly in pairs or to themselves. But make sure all students have enough time to think through all the possible matches.

Then, have students share aloud what matches they made between the four explanations and the three scenarios. There is more than one right answer per scenario and hearing students' explanations is the teachers chance to check students understanding of the four explanations.

Make sure that each of the four explanations gets mentioned at least once when students are explaining their matches.

#5: Matching activity, using the source sheet

Goals:

- Students get a taste for the original sources that the video is based upon
- Stress the importance of textual evidence for our claims
- Practice close reading skills
- Practice distilling a coherent idea/summary from difficult texts
- Opportunity for critical thinking

Activity:

1. Give students cut outs of all or some of the sources that each of the four explanations in the video is based upon and the four 'Header Pages' (Handout #3 a-d).
2. In pairs, ask students to read each source carefully and place it under the correct header. (Note, some of these will be easy, but others are less straight forward).
3. By the end of the activity, students should have the four Header pages lined up in front of them and all of the commentary cut-outs placed on the appropriate page.
4. Review the placements that all the pairs came up with, giving students time to defend their position or respectfully challenge other students' choices.
5. Once the placements have been agreed upon, consider giving the students tape or glue to fasten the sources under the correct heading.
6. Finally, students should be given the opportunity to challenge whether they think the video appropriately summarizes the teaching in that source, or they might summarize the idea/s in the source differently.

#6: Connect, extend, challenge thinking routine

[Connect, Extend, Challenge](#) on the [Visible Thinking website](#). After watching the video check for understanding by implementing 'connect, extend, challenge' thinking routine. Samples of what this might look like applied to the G-dcast:

Connect:

- I have arguments with my sister, and no matter what I say, she always tells me I am wrong, she doesn't listen to me.
- This is like different commentaries on the Torah, they say different things, but all of them can be right.

Extend:

- I wonder if Americans in the North and Americans in the South had operated by these principles, we would have had to fight the Civil War?
- I guess I realize now that I should be nicer to my brother when we fight, tell him why he is wrong without making fun of him.

Challenge:

- But what if I really try to listen to my mother, and I truly consider that I might be wrong, but at the end of the argument I still think that I am right?
- Some of these seem a little too simple to me... Could the conflict in the Middle East really be resolved if everyone was operating by these principles?

#7: Students write a dialogue resolving the conflict between Jacob & Esau

1. Break students into four groups (consider more if you have more than 20 students in your class) and assign each group to one corner (side/part) of the room. Each group is

assigned one of the four explanations of 'disagreement for the sake of heaven' (be sure to give each group the correct card/sheet – Handout #4 a-d). Students must write a fictional dialogue between Jacob & Esau, according to one of the four different understandings of DSH.

2. Students can perform or submit their dialogues to the teacher.

#8: Students create their own skit/scene (or drawing) based on DSH

Let students pick one of the four explanations of DSH (or assign them to be sure that all four get addressed) and ask them to write a skit or dialogue where a disagreement is being conducted by that principle.

OR

You might consider having students write two smaller dialogues; the first, where one of the four explanations of DSH is NOT being practiced and then a second dialogue which 'fixes' the first.

OR

Have students draw a scene, or a cartoon, that captures a disagreement being conducted according to one of the four explanations of DSH.

#9: Students create their own personal DSH checklist

Based on personal thinking and experiences, class discussion and activities, and the G-dcast, ask students to make their own checklist of criteria for constructive disagreements (these do not need to include all or even any of the four from the G-dcast; students should be encouraged to include criteria that are not mentioned in the video).

You might encourage students to post this list somewhere where they will see it.

For example:

- 5 seconds of wait time before responding in a disagreement
- Telling the person you like/respect/love them, even though you disagree
- Stopping to imagine what this argument must feel like from the other person's perspective

OR

You might consider creating a class blog, where every student's ideas get included, so that there is one class resource for conducting DSH.

#10: Final project: options for students to organize and demonstrate their personal take-aways

If you want to devote more time to this topic you can turn students' DSH checklists into a bigger project. Students can choose their own medium in which to present their criteria for DSH (video, written manifesto, website, etc).

[G-dcast "Disagreements for the Sake of Heaven" in English](#)

[G-dcast "Disagreements for the Sake of Heaven" in Hebrew](#)

Sources Behind

G-dCast Video “Disagreements for the Sake of Heaven”

“How to celebrate the holidays”

<p><u>Mishnah Sukkah 2:7</u> If a person’s head and most of their body were in a sukkah, and their table was in the house, Beit Shammai declared it invalid, while Beit Hillel declared it valid.</p>	<p><u>משנה סוכה ב:ז</u> מי שהיה ראשו ורובו בסוכה, ושולחנו בתוך הבית--בית שמאי פוסלין, ובית הלל מכשירין.</p>
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“Who can marry whom”

<p><u>Mishnah Eduyot, 4:7</u> According to Beit Shammai one <i>dinnar</i> or its worth is consideration in the marrying of a wife; Beit Hillel set it down at a <i>perutah</i> or its worth.</p>	<p><u>משנה עדויות ד:ז</u> האישה מתקדשת בדינר ובשווה דינר, כדברי בית שמאי; בית הלל אומרים, בפרוטה ובשווה פרוטה.</p>
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“Whom do we allow into our schools”

<p><u>Avot deRabbi Natan, version 1, chapter 3</u> And establish many students: Beit Shammai say one should only teach students who are wise, humble, of good lineage, and wealthy. Beit Hillel say one should teach everyone, as many sinners have, by studying Torah, become righteous.</p>	<p><u>אבות דרבי נתן נוסח א' פרק ג'</u> והעמידו תלמודים הרבה: שביט שמאי אומרים אל ישנה אדם אלא למי שהוא חכם ועניו וכן אבות ועשיר. ובית הלל אומרים לכל אדם ישנה שהרבה פושעים היו בישראל ונתקרבו לתלמוד תורה ויצאו מהם צדיקים חסידים וכשרים.</p>
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Hillel and Shammai's Disagreements were for the Sake of Heaven

<p><u>Pirkey Avot, 5:17 (3rd Cen. CE)</u> Every disagreement (<i>machloket</i>) that is for the sake of Heaven will continue to exist; but one that is not in the name of Heaven will not continue to exist. Which is the [kind of] disagreement that is for the sake of Heaven? Such as were the disagreements between Hillel and Shammai.</p>	<p><u>משנה אבות ה:יז</u> כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים סופה להתקיים ושאינה לשם שמים אין סופה להתקיים. איזו היא מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים? זו מחלוקת הלל ושמאי. ושאינה לשם שמים? זו מחלוקת קרח וכל עדתו:</p>
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1st commentary: Maintain Good Relationships**Bertinoro, Mishnah Avot 5:17**

(R. Ovadiah Bertinoro, Italy and Land of Israel, 1440-1530)

Every controversy that is in the name of Heaven, the end thereof will continue to exist – That is to say that the people of controversy are destined to exist and not be destroyed, as with the dispute between Hillel and Shammai that were not destroyed. Neither them nor the students of Hillel and Shammai.

רבי עובדיה מברטנורא, אבות

ה'יז' (1440 – לא ידוע, איטליה וא"י)

כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים סופה להתקיים –
(.1) כלומר שאנשי המחלוקת ההיא מתקיימים ואינם אובדין, כמחלוקת הלל ושמאי שלא אבדו לא תלמידי בית שמאי ולא תלמידי בית הלל. אבל קורח ועדתו אבדו.

Tosefta Yevamoth, 1:11

(3rd cen. CE, Land of Israel)

Even though these would forbid, and those would permit, they did not refrain from eating together, to fulfill that which is written "All the ways of a person are clean in their own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits. (Proverbs, 16:2)

תוספתא יבמות א:יא

אע"פ שאילו אוסרין ואילו מתירין, לא נמנעו, עושין טהרות (אוכלים יחד לפי דיני טהרה) אילו על גבי אילו, לקיים מה שנ' "דרך איש זך בעיניו ותוכן לבות ה'" (על פי משלי טז:ב).

Babylonian Talmud, Yevamoth 14b

(6th Cen. CE)

Although Beit Shammai and Beth Hillel are in disagreement on the questions of (marital and personal status) Beit Shammai did not, nevertheless, abstain from marrying women of the families of Beit Hillel, nor did Beit Hillel refrain from marrying those of Beit Shammai. This is to teach you that they showed love and friendship towards one another, thus putting into practice the Scriptural text, 'Love ye truth and peace' (Zacharia, 8:16).

בבלי יבמות יד ע"ב

אף על פי שנחלקו בית שמאי ובית הלל...לא נמנעו בית שמאי מלישא נשים מבית הלל, ולא בית הלל מבית שמאי, ללמדך, שחיבה וריעות נוהגים זה בזה, לקיים מה שנאמר: (זכריה ח:טז) האמת והשלום אהבו.

2nd commentary: Check Your Motivations**Lev Avot, Mishnah Avot, 5:17**

(Rabbi Shlomoh ben

Rabbi Yitzchak of the House of Levi, Turkey, 16th century)

The Tannaic scholar states that when the dispute is for the sake of Heaven, then the intentions of the disputants as a result of the dispute is that the truth will be clarified and that which may only be revealed through this dispute be revealed;

פירוש לב אבות, משנה אבות**ה"ז:**

(ר' שלמה ב"ר יצחק לבית הלוי, תורכיה
המאה ה-16)

יאמר התנא שכשהמחלוקת
הוא לשם שמים, שכוונת
החוקלים הוא שעם אותו
המחלוקת יתברר האמת ויצא
לאור מה שלא היה יוצא
זולתו....

3rd Commentary: Open to Being Wrong**Yanyin Lavanon, Avot 5:17**

(Rabbi Naftali Hertz, Wessely, 1725 – 1805, Germany, Denmark)

Since their disagreements were for (attaining) the truth, therefore, when the truth became known they would not continue to insist (on their opinion), and they would accept in joy the correct opinion that became clarified..... Because from the onset, they did not intend to disagree other than for the sake of Heaven.

פירוש יין לבנון, משנה**אבות ה"ז:**

(ר' נפתלי הירץ וייזל, 1725 - 1805)
כי לפי שלא היתה מחלוקתם
אלא למען האמת, לכן
כשתודע להם האמת לא
יתעקשו, ויקבלו בשמחה
הדעת הנכונה המבוררת...
כי מתחלה לא כונו לחלוק
אלא לשם שמיים.

Mishna Edoyot, chapter 1

(2nd c CE, Land of Israel)

(1) Shammai said.... And Hillel said.... And the Sages said, not like the words of this and like the words of that. (2) Shammai said... and Hillel said.... And the Sages said not like the words of this one and like the words of that one.... (3) Hillel said.... and Shammai said... and the Sages said not like the words of this one and not like the words of that one... (4) And why do they record the opinions of Shammai and Hillel when these do not prevail? To teach

משנה עדויות פרק א:א-ד, יב

(א) שמאי אומר.... והלל אומר
.... וחכמים אומרים לא כדברי זה
ולא כדברי זה
(ב) שמאי אומר והלל אומר
... וחכמים אומרים לא כדברי זה
ולא כדברי זה

(ג) הלל אומר.... ושמאי אומר
....
וחכמים אומרים לא כדברי זה
ולא כדברי זה
(ד) ולמה מזכירין את דברי

the generations that come after that none should persist in his opinions, for look, the 'fathers of the world' did not persist in their opinion.

(12) These are the matters that Beit Hillel reverted to rule in accordance to the words of Biet Shammai....

שמאי והלל לבטלה ללמד
לדורות הבאים שלא יהא אדם
עומד על דבריו שהרי אבות
העולם לא עמדו על דבריהם:

(יב) אלו דברים שחזרו בית הלל
להורות כדברי בית שמאי....

4th commentary: We are Both Right

Magen Avot, Mishnah Avot, 5:17

(Rabbi Shimon ben Zemach Doran, Algeria, 1361 – 1444)

And it is possible to explain that the opinion of both will continue to exist, the one who forbids and the one who permits, because both are the words of the living God. (Eruvin 13b).

מגן אבות לרשב"ץ על אבות

ה'י"ז (1361 – 1444, אלג'ריה)

ואפשר לפרש שדברי שניהם
יתקיימו, האוסר והמתיר, לפי
שאלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים הם
[ערבין יג ב].

Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 13b

(6th Cen. CE)

Rabbi Abba said in the name of *Shmuel*:
For three years, *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel*
argued. One side said that the *halachah* is like
us, and the other said that the *halachah* is like
us. A *Bat Kol* [i.e. a Heavenly voice] called out:
Elu v'elu divrei Elohim chaim -- These and
These are the words of the Living G-d.

בבלי עירובין יג ע"ב

אמר רבי אבא אמר
שמואל:

שלוש שנים נחלקו בית
שמאי ובית הלל,
הללו אומרים הלכה כמותנו
והללו אומרים הלכה
כמותנו. יצאה בת קול
ואמרה: אלו ואלו דברי
אלהים יים הן.

This G-dcast video offer four possible explanations for what the phrase 'disagreement for the sake of heaven' might mean. As you watch the video, keep track of the four explanations in your own words.

Explanation #1 – Rabbi Ovadiah Bartinoro

Explanation #2 – Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak

Explanation #3 – Rabbi Naftali Hertz Wessely

Explanation #4 – Rabbi Shimon ben Zemach Doran

Applying the four explanations of 'disagreement for the sake of heaven' from the G-dcast to three possible real-life 'disagreements for the sake of heaven'.

Instructions: Each of these disagreements is being conducted 'for the sake of heaven' according to *at least one* of the explanations from the G-dcast. Match any of the four appropriate explanations to each of the three disagreements below. Remember: There can be more than one right answer.

A.

Adam: I think we would get to the theater faster if we turned left on Elm st., instead of driving all the way to Maple st.

Gabe: No way, Maple will be a lot faster...

Adam: Are you just trying to prove to me how well you know this neighborhood? Because Elm st. makes way more sense based on the map.

Gabe: Um, no, I just heard the traffic report which said there is a lot of traffic on Elm st... believe me, I want to get to the movie on time as much as you do,

Adam: Yeah, OK, I guess that makes sense, I'll drive down to Maple st.

This is a disagreement for the sake of heaven according to explanation number/s:

B.

Jamie: I can't believe that you have that homeless person a dollar, that is so irresponsible... you don't know what she will do with the money!

Leah: How could you be so insensitive! Her situation is so much worse than mine, and by giving her the money I am acknowledging that she is a person and doesn't deserve to live on the street. It is her choice what she does with the money.

Jamie: Yeah, but there are so many people in need and so many respected charities you could give that dollar to. Then you would know that dollar was being spent on food or medicine.

Leah: I guess you're saying that I should still give the dollar, but do it through a formal charity... But don't you think there is more to the situation than the dollars and cents? How do you think that woman feels when hundreds of people pass her a day and mutter to themselves, "she'll only use my money to buy alcohol"?

Jamie: That's a good point, I never thought about it from that perspective before. But I think that I would still want to feel that I knew how the money I gave was being used...

This is a disagreement for the sake of heaven according to explanation number/s:

C.

Abby: Let's not stop here, because I think we should go to the pizza place for lunch before we go to the appliance store.

Sam: That's the stupidest thing I ever heard. We are already parked in front of the store, why would we drive ten minutes away to the pizza store, and then have to come back this way. You aren't usually so dumb!

Abby: Hey. Why are you being so mean to me!? I have a good reason.

Sam: Sorry. I shouldn't have insulted you, but really, what you said makes no sense to me.

Abby: Well, if you would let me explain... We are both already hungry and it will take us a while to decide on all the appliances that we want from the store. I don't want to rush the decision because we became grumpy and distracted by our rumbling stomachs. We are about to buy a lot of expensive items and I think we don't want to feel rushed. I think that's worth driving a few minutes out of our way, don't you?

Sam: Yeah... I guess that does make sense. I shouldn't have been so quick to judge you or your idea.

This is a disagreement for the sake of heaven according to explanation number/s:

1st commentary: Maintain Good Relationships

Place the commentary/ies that teach this explanation of 'disagreement for the sake of heaven' below.

2nd commentary: Check Your Motivations

Place the commentary/ies that teach this explanation of 'disagreement for the sake of heaven' below.

3rd Commentary: Open to Being Wrong

Place the commentary/ies that teach this explanation of 'disagreement for the sake of heaven' below.

4th commentary: We are Both Right

Place the commentary/ies that teach this explanation of 'disagreement for the sake of heaven' below.

Reminder of the important aspects of the relationship and disagreement between Jacob and Esau:

- a) When Rebecca was pregnant with her twin sons, Esau and Jacob, she had terrible pains in her belly and she could feel the two boys wriggling around fiercely inside her.
- b) Esau was the older of the twins, which made him the *bechor*. This meant that he was entitled to a bigger inheritance than Jacob and perhaps a special blessing.
- c) Years later, when Esau returned home hungry from a day of hunting, Jacob convinced Esau to trade his birthright (his position as the *bechor*, with all of its benefits) for a bowl of soup. Esau made the deal willingly, as the Torah says, he disdained his birthright.
- d) With Rebecca's encouragement, Jacob tricked his father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing intended for Esau. Dressed up as Esau, Jacob went before his father (who was blind) and succeeded in getting the blessing intended for his brother. Esau was furious when he learned what his brother had done. Jacob ran away because he feared that Esau might kill him out of anger.

Epilogue:

- e) About 20 years later, Jacob and Esau meet and hug and kiss. Jacob offers him a generous gift, which Esau initially refuses. However, after some persuading, he agrees to take Jacob's gift. They part on good terms, and only see each other one last time, when they both bury their father Isaac.

Instructions:

Imagine that you can go back to the day that Jacob tricked Isaac and got Esau's blessing. You are standing in Isaac's tent just minutes after Esau found out what Jacob had done. Pretend that you could calm Esau down, so that he no longer wanted to kill Jacob. Imagine that you have convinced Jacob that it would be safe for him to stay and talk to his brother.

With your group, write a 1-2 minute dialogue between Esau and Jacob that demonstrates a disagreement for the sake of heaven from the perspective of the **1st explanation: debating the issue, but still respecting one another.**

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Imagine that you can go back to the day that Jacob tricked Isaac and got Esau's blessing. You are standing in Isaac's tent just minutes after Esau found out what Jacob had done. Pretend that you could calm Esau down, so that he no longer wanted to kill Jacob. Imagine that you have convinced Jacob that it would be safe for him to stay and talk to his brother.

With your group, write a 1-2 minute dialogue between Esau and Jacob that demonstrates a disagreement for the sake of heaven from the perspective of the **2nd explanation: checking one's motivations and making sure you are arguing to solve problems, not just win.**

Reminder of the important aspects of the relationship and disagreement between Jacob and Esau:

- a) When Rebecca was pregnant with her twin sons, Esau and Jacob, she had terrible pains in her belly and she could feel the two boys wriggling around fiercely inside her.
- b) Esau was the older of the twins, which made him the *bechor*. This meant that he was entitled to a bigger inheritance than Jacob and perhaps a special blessing.
- c) Years later, when Esau returned home hungry from a day of hunting, Jacob convinced Esau to trade his birthright (his position as the *bechor*, with all of its benefits) for a bowl of soup. Esau made the deal willingly, as the Torah says, he disdained his birthright.
- d) With Rebecca's encouragement, Jacob tricked his father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing intended for Esau. Dressed up as Esau, Jacob went before his father (who was blind) and succeeded in getting the blessing intended for his brother. Esau was furious when he learned what his brother had done. Jacob ran away because he feared that Esau might kill him out of anger.

Epilogue:

- e) About 20 years later, Jacob and Esau meet and hug and kiss. Jacob offers him a generous gift, which Esau initially refuses. However, after some persuading, he agrees to take Jacob's gift. They part on good terms, and only see each other one last time, when they both bury their father Isaac.

Instructions:

Imagine that you can go back to the day that Jacob tricked Isaac and got Esau's blessing. You are standing in Isaac's tent just minutes after Esau found out what Jacob had done. Pretend that you could calm Esau down, so that he no longer wanted to kill Jacob. Imagine that you have convinced Jacob that it would be safe for him to stay and talk to his brother.

With your group, write a 1-2 minute dialogue between Esau and Jacob that demonstrates a disagreement for the sake of heaven from the perspective of the **3rd explanation: listening closely to the other side and being open to admitting you are wrong.**

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Imagine that you can go back to the day that Jacob tricked Isaac and got Esau's blessing. You are standing in Isaac's tent just minutes after Esau found out what Jacob had done. Pretend that you could calm Esau down, so that he no longer wanted to kill Jacob. Imagine that you have convinced Jacob that it would be safe for him to stay and talk to his brother.

With your group, write a 1-2 minute dialogue between Esau and Jacob that demonstrates a disagreement for the sake of heaven from the perspective of the **4th explanation: recognizing that in an argument, sometimes both sides are right.**