

*How can we disagree more constructively? What can we learn from our different traditions?*

Disagreement for the Sake of Heaven in Judaism	A Biblical View of Conflict in Christianity	Ethics of Disagreement (Adeh el Ihktilaf) in Islam	Constructive Conflict in Western Conflict Resolution Studies
<p><u>Mishna Avot, 5:17</u> (3<sup>rd</sup> Cen., Land of Israel) 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 in the name of Heaven? Such as was the disagreement between Hillel and Shammai; and which is the [kind of] disagreement that is not in the name of Heaven? Such as was the disagreement of Korah and his entire congregation.</p>	<p><u>I Corinthians 12:21-31</u> <sup>21</sup>The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” <sup>22</sup>On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup>and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup>while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup>so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup>If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. <sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. <sup>28</sup>And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup>Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup>Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues<sup>[d]</sup>? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup>Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.</p>	<p><u>Qur’an, Surah 11. Hud, Ayah 118</u> And if your Lord willed, He would have made mankind one people, but they will not cease to differ (<i>muchtalfin</i>).</p>	<p><u>Thomas Jefferson to P. H. Wendover, 1815. ME 14:283</u> Difference of opinion leads to inquiry, and inquiry to truth; and that, I am sure, is the ultimate and sincere object of us both. We both value too much the freedom of opinion sanctioned by our Constitution, not to cherish its exercise even where in opposition to ourselves.</p>
<p><u>Sefer Ya’arot Devash ii, pp. 136</u> (Rabbi Yonatan Eyeschutz, 1690, Krakow – 1764, Altona) They said “like the <i>machloket</i> of Shammai and Hillel” who loved one another and respected one another as lovers and friends. This is a sign that their disagreement is for the sake of Heaven.</p>	<p><u>Commentary of Al-Nawawi on Sahih Muslim, book of Waqf, p. 91</u> (Brought in the name of the Prophet): The difference of opinion between his faithful is a form of blessing (<i>ikhtilafu ummati rahma</i>).</p>	<p><u>John Stuart Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> chapter 2 (1859, England)</u> Though the silenced opinion be an error, it may, and very commonly does, contain a portion of truth; and since the general or prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied.</p>	

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<p>Howard Kaminsky, “Constructive Conflict in Jewish Tradition: <i>Machloket L’shem Shamayim</i>”<sup>1</sup></p> <p>In elaborating upon the concept of a disagreement "for the sake of Heaven" (<i>Ethics of the Fathers</i>, 1:12) the Rabbis were not merely attempting to define it only on a theoretical level. Rather, they were intent upon prescribing practical standards of comparison to be used in testing and evaluating the true nature of real-life conflicts that one either encounters or engages in. That means to say, if one is involved in a conflict and finds that his or her attitude and actions conform to the [1st Century teachers and rivals] Hillel and Shammai paradigm—that one is doing such things as engaging in dialogue, being receptive to the other party’s opinion, maintaining benevolent feelings, and exhibiting goodwill towards the other—then one can be confident that one is promoting constructive conflict.</p>	<p>Ken Sande, <i>The Peacemaker</i>, p. 30-31<sup>2</sup></p> <p>A Biblical View of Conflict: Conflict is not necessarily bad... Since God has created us as unique individuals, human beings will often have different opinions, convictions, desires, perspectives, and priorities. Many of these differences are not inherently right or wrong; they are simply the result of God-given diversity and personal preferences (I Corinthians 12:21-31). Therefore ... we should not demand <i>uniformity</i> (see Eph. 4:1-13). Instead of avoiding all conflicts or demanding that others always agree with us, we should rejoice in the diversity of God’s creation and learn to accept and work with people who simply see things differently than we do.... Most importantly, the Bible teaches that we should see conflict neither as an inconvenience nor as an occasion to force our will on others, but rather as an ...opportunity to glorify God, serve others and grow to be like Christ.</p>	<p>Taha Alwani, <i>Ethics of Disagreement in Islam</i><sup>3</sup></p> <p>(ch. 3) The differences which occurred among our forebears in early Muslim history and which continue to be with us are part of this natural manifestation of variety. Provided that differences do not exceed their limits, and provided they remain within the standard norms of ethics and proper behavior, this is a phenomenon that could prove to be positive and extremely beneficial....</p> <p>(ch. 4) When differences of opinion were inevitable... They (the Companions of the Prophet) would remain firmly within the bounds of what is allowed in striving to reach the truth. They would admit their errors without any bitterness or embarrassment while always having a tremendous respect for people of virtue, knowledge, and understanding. No one would overestimate himself or disparage the ability or the rights of his brother Muslim. The search for truth and for the correct judgment was the mutual endeavor, and they willingly accepted the truth from whichever quarter it came.</p>	<p>Johnson, Johnson and Tjosvold, “Constructive Controversy”, p 91,101<sup>4</sup></p> <p>For controversies to be managed constructively, participants need both cooperative and conflict management skills. The following skills are necessary for following and internalizing these norms:</p> <p>(1) I am critical of ideas, not people. I challenge and refute the ideas of the other participants, while confirming their competence and value as individuals. I do not indicate that I personally reject them. (2) I separate my personal worth from criticism of my ideas.... (3) I listen to everyone’s ideas, even if I don’t agree..... (4) I change my mind when the evidence clearly indicates that I should do so.....</p> <p>Thomas Jefferson based his faith in the future of democracy on the power of constructive conflict.... Engaging in the constructive controversy procedure skillfully provides an example of how conflict creates positive outcomes.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Howard Kaminsky, *Fundamentals of Jewish Conflict Resolution: Traditional Jewish Perspectives on Resolving Interpersonal Conflicts* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, forthcoming), chapter 3: “Rabbinic perspectives on constructive conflict: A “Dispute for the Sake of Heaven”.

<http://www.9adar.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Constructive-Conflict-in-Jewish-Tradition-by-Howard-Kaminsky.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker, A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict Third Edition*, USA: Baker Books, 2004, pp. 29 – 31.

<sup>3</sup> Alwani, Taha J. *Ethics of Disagreement in Islam*, The International Institute of Islamic Thought, Virginia, USA, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, Johnson and Tjosvold, “Constructive Controversy: The Value of Intellectual Opposition” in (Coleman, Deutsch and Marcus eds.) *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, Jossey- Bass, 2014, pp. 76 – 103.