**Sample 9Adar Newsletter Article Focused on Tochacha/Constructive Communication – For Schools**

(Here is a sample newsletter article for schools about 9Adar: Jewish Week of Constructive Conflict for you to edit and use as you see fit. Please share with us your final article by sending a copy or link to [9Adar@pardes.org.il](mailto:9Adar@pardes.org.il)).

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We all know about the biblical commandment to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Leviticus 19:18) But just prior to that verse in the Torah is a more puzzling command: “Do not hate your kinsman in your heart. Admonish your neighbor but incur no guilt because of them.” (Leviticus 19:17)

What is “*tochacha*” or “admonishment” and why would we speak this way to people we care about? To which relationships does this *mitzvah* apply? What is the connection between “admonishment” or “rebuke” (as the word is often translated) and hating another in our heart? What good could come of this practice?

The Jewish classical commentaries and laws flowing from this brief passage on *tochacha* (also known as constructive communication) contain a reservoir of wisdom about the conduct of difficult conversations when one person has hurt another.  Our classical texts use this mitzvah as a locus of reflection and guidance on how to conduct difficult conversations: when to challenge another on their behavior and when to refrain; how to speak the truth in a way that supports the relationship rather than harming it; how to know whether or not we are ready to conduct the conversation in a way that is constructive, moral and even sacred.

Painful words, slights, and insults happen every day in ordinary human relationships.  There is scarcely a person who cannot learn more about how to respond to these situations in a way that is helpful both for the individuals and for the relationship. In a time when public conversation is notoriously coarse, aggressive, and dehumanizing, the principles and practices associated with *tochacha* have much to offer us in our public life as well.

In our school, we will be joining with synagogues, schools, campuses, and Jewish organizations around the world in the fifth annual 9Adar: Jewish Week of Constructive Conflict, February 19-25, 2017. On the 9th of Adar approximately two thousand years ago, according to the Talmud, the normally peaceful and constructive conflict between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai erupted into a violent and destructive battle over a vote on eighteen matters of law. According to later rabbinic sources, as many as 3,000 students died that day. (According to other sources, the 9th of Adar marked the first “disagreement for the sake of Heaven” between the rabbis. Even though the disagreement was “for the sake of Heaven,” it was still considered risky and potentially dangerous.)

This year in Israel, *Dibur Hadash*: Israeli Week of Constructive Conflict will be led by a range of organizations that work year-round facilitating constructive conflict in interpersonal, inter-religious, and intra-Jewish contexts. In our school, we will use the 9Adar Project as an opportunity to highlight the traditional Jewish values and practices of *redifat shalom* (pursuit of peace), *tochacha* and *mahloket l’shem shamayim* (disagreement for the sake of Heaven/constructive and sacred disagreement).

Please join us [INSERT SPECIFIC PROGRAMMING IN YOUR SCHOOL]. May our efforts be a concrete expression of the prayers for peace we recite so often and so fervently. *Oseh shalom bim’romav, Hu ya’aseh shalom, aleinu v’al kol Yisrael [v’al kol yoshvei teivel]*. May the One who creates peace on high make peace for us, for all Israel, [and for all the peoples of the earth].