

Foundations

Loving others who are different than us

Best for ages 3-8. **The purpose of this table talk to help instill in your child the inherent value of “vahavata l'reiacha kamocho (love thy neighbor like thyself)” and the inherent detriments of sinas chinam (baseless hate).**

When exploring the roots of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, the issue of baseless hate arises again and again. One of the fundamental foundations of the Torah is “vahavata l'reiacha kamocho,” and it’s important for children to learn how to do this and appreciate people with different Torah lifestyles.

Differences between people are often condemned rather than embraced or respected. It is noted in Chazal, “shivim panim l'Torah,” there are (at least) 70 different ways to interpret the Torah.

People often confuse respect and love with agreement and being of the same opinion as someone else. Friction or discord often occurs when people’s perspectives are different.

Teach your child the balance of recognizing and sticking to one’s own value system and beliefs, while having the ability to be respectful and considerate to those who do not share the identical beliefs or lifestyle. A good way to segue into this topic is to ask your child to identify something that they enjoy. Then, ask them to identify something that they do not enjoy but a friend/sibling may. Do this a few times and tie it into lifestyle choices. Everyone serves Hashem differently and has different values. Providing that they are within the realm of the Torah, these differences are what help each person connect to Hashem in their own way. While one does not need to agree with everyone else’s choices, they need to appreciate and love every Jew as themselves.

It’s appropriate to note to your child the importance of loving Jews who are not aware of the Torah lifestyle as well.

Sample conversation:

Parent: We’re coming up to Tisha B’Av in a few weeks. Do you know why the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed?

Child: No..

Parent: Because of something called sinas chinam, hating other Jews for no reason.

Child: Why did they hate each other?

Parent: You know how sometimes people do things that we don’t understand and we get annoyed or frustrated?

Child: Oh, yeah.

Parent: Sometimes we allow that annoyance to become so deep we stop being nice to each other, which is pretty bad. You know the song “vahavata l'reiacha kamocho?”

Child: Yeah! We sing it in school

Parent: That idea is so, so important in life, especially when it comes to dealing with people who we have a hard time understanding. It’s easy to love someone who agrees with us all the time.

Continue with the above suggested format



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