



The human being was placed in the Garden of Eden to till it and to tend it.

Genesis 2:15

This is what the Holy One said to Israel: "My children, I have lacked for you nothing - what do I seek from you? I seek no more than that you love one another and honor one another and fear one another and that there should not be any sin, thievery, or harmful actions among you so that you do not come to invalidate the world."

Eliyahu Rabbah, 26, [AJWS translation]

One must be careful not to embarrass another person in public, whether of greater or lesser stature, and not to call them by a name that they are ashamed of, and not to say in front of them something that they are embarrassed about. When does this apply? In regard to issues between one person and another.

Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8

Begin Page 2 here

In 2016, two Chicago-area sportswriters Julie DiCaro and Sarah Spain determined that they had each received so many vile comments – through Twitter alone – that they produced a video. They invited a group of men – who had never seen the tweets before – to read the tweets aloud to either DiCaro or Spain. Here a few of the tweets that can be printed:

“One of the players should beat you to death with their hockey stick.”

“I hope your dog gets hit by a car, [expletive].”

“Hopefully this [expletive] Julie DiCaro is Bill Cosby’s next victim. That would be classic.”

“Why bring up your own rape in the story? Is it your way of firing back at critics who said you can't get any?”

“You need to be hit in the head with a hockey puck and killed.”

“What is civil discourse? A 2011 conversation among national leaders from many fields, held at the US Supreme Court, defined civil discourse as “robust, honest, frank and constructive dialogue and deliberation that seeks to advance the public interest” (Brosseau 2011).

James Calvin Davis, in his book *In Defense of Civility*, proposes “the exercise of patience, integrity, humility and mutual respect in civil conversation, even (or especially) with those with whom we disagree” (2010, 159).

National Public Radio journalist Diane Rehm, during an event at Oberlin College, said simply: our ability to have conversation about topics about which we disagree, and our ability to listen to each other’s perspectives (Choby 2011).

A Plea for Civil Discourse: Needed, the Academy's Leadership By: [Andrea Leskes](#)

UNIT: 1--Civil Discourse

Leader's Guide for 6th/7th Grades

Goals: Learners will develop a working definition of civil discourse

Supplies and Materials:

- Projector and screen or Monitor with internet access or videos downloaded to computer or handheld device
- Handouts for participants

Set Induction:

1. Print out this script and ask two participants to act it out:

Participant 1: (*surprised*) Hey! What do you think you are doing? I was here!

Participant 2: (*arrogant*) Too bad. You snooze, you lose.

Participant 1: (*angry*) I can't believe you are being a complete and total jerk about this. You have to wait your turn like everyone else!

Participant 2: (*Dismissive*) You are a complete tool. You should have been paying attention. Now get lost!

Participant 1: (*angrier, but not louder*) You suck. You are a complete and total...

Participant 2: (*Dismissive*) Loser.

2. Discussion:

- a. What did we just see? Was it a debate? An exchange of contrary views? Something else?
- b. What was positive about their interaction? What was troubling about it?
- c. Who started the name calling? Who went low first?
- d. Does it matter who started it?

Jewish Text Study

Distribute the handout. We will spend some time exploring the meaning of Civil Discourse through some Jewish Texts. As the teacher, you will likely want to ask your own questions; here are some to help get you started.

1. Cameron Kasky
 - This quote is provided as more of an introduction and guiding principle, and less for initial discussion. We suggest returning to it in summarizing the entire session.
2. Genesis 2:15
 - a. What are the two jobs given to humans?
 - b. Is there a distinction between them?
 - c. Why do you think the distinction between creation (tilling) and maintenance (tending) is important.

- d. How do these ideas help us begin to unpack how we can and should interact with one another?
 - e. How would you restate the purpose of human beings in modern terms?
3. Eliyahu Rabbah, 26
- a. Now what are our responsibilities?
 - b. What does this text add to your understanding of humanity's purpose?
 - c. What do you think the text means when it suggests certain actions could invalidate the world? (Perhaps it suggests that a certain level of sin and incivility might make God regret the promise made to Noah by the rainbow or revisit the events of Sodom and Gomorrah?)
4. Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8
- a. Maimonides (RaMBaM) is narrowing our field of misbehavior. What concerns him in this text?
 - b. Why is he concerned about embarrassment or humiliation?

Forty Years of (un)Civil Discourse

1. Share: In 1978, Melissa Ludtke, a writer for Sports Illustrated won a lawsuit against Bowie Kuhn, the commissioner of baseball and Major League Baseball. She had been prohibited from entering team locker rooms to interview players. The locker room was at the time, the only place teams made the players available for interviews immediately before and after games.

While she endured a great deal of verbal abuse from athletes, fans and even fellow writers, the worst of it was condescending or sarcastic.

- a. What do you think you can say about how people spoke and behaved forty years ago?
 - b. Was the language used by Dan Aykroyd and Jane Curtain normal speech, or was it considered funny because it was so outrageous? Did people talk that way normally? (You may have to be the voice of the past, and make it clear that this was pretty outrageous. "Jane, You Ignorant Slut" may have been the first time slut was ever used on television. There were rules in place, both official and societal. This was jarring. And it was live.)
 - c. There were several interviews with Ludtke the last week of September 2018. She described a lot of frustration and a fair amount meanness. But she did say it did not reach some of the lows of today.
2. Ludtke often refers people to DiCaro and Spain's video to get an idea of what things are like today. Although there is more access to athletes for female reporters, civility in the larger society has not improved.

- a. The video is pretty rough for this age group. We recommend discussing the tweets on the student handout rather than showing the video. (We recommend showing the final minute afterward. See below.
- b. Some of the tweets are on page two of the handout.
 - i. How did the men in the video (who had never seen the tweets before) seem to react to what they were reading?
 - ii. Are you surprised by the nature of the tweets?
 - iii. Could these same things have been said to Michelle Ludtke in 1978? Why not? (Or if they answer yes, then by whom?)
 - iv. What has changed in 40 years?
 - v. One possibility that has been suggested is social media. What do you think?
(By giving us the opportunity to say what we think without looking anyone in the eye, we feel freer to say things that might otherwise embarrass us. Without the sense of others watching or listening, we might feel less pressure to fight our yetzer ha-ra – our evil impulse. Consequences may seem less real or apparent. And Social Media also lets us say things without the opportunity to proofread ourselves and think about what we sound like to others. And sometimes we post or tweet when our judgment is impaired by lack of sleep or other factors.)
 - vi. Do you think that the authors of the tweets would say those things to the faces of the women they sent them to?
 - vii. Show a portion of the video produced from having men (not the authors of the tweets) read them to the two sports writers (3:25 to the end). Please preview it first!! It can be found at <https://youtu.be/9tU-D-m2JY8>
 - viii. Discuss the difference between what you say online and face to face again.

Conclusion: A Definition of Civil Discourse

1. Andrea Leskes presents us with three quotes. Read each and discuss:
 - a. How does this help us define what we mean when refer to civil discourse?
 - b. How is every instance to “civil discourse” a statement of people’s purpose?
2. Return to Cameron Kasky’s quote on page 1. What do we need to remember to move forward as a society? (Note, Cameron is one of the students who survived the shootings at Marjorie Stoneman Douglass High School in February 2018 and now works as an activist.

Joel Lurie Grishaver is an author, teacher, spiritual counselor, artist and the Creative Chairman of Torah Aura Productions, a publisher of books that help Jewish teachers create learning experiences in and out of the classroom. He lives in Los Angeles, CA. Ira J. Wise is Director of Education at Congregation B'nai Israel in Bridgeport, CT and also a teacher, author, mentor, educational consultant and Joel's student.



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Genesis 2:15

This is what the Holy One said to Israel: "My children, I have lacked for you nothing - what do I seek from you? I seek no more than that you love one another and honor one another and fear one another and that there should not be any sin, thievery, or harmful actions among you so that you do not come to invalidate the world."

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One must be careful not to embarrass another person in public, whether of greater or lesser stature, and not to call them by a name that they are ashamed of, and not to say in front of them something that they are embarrassed about. When does this apply? In regard to issues between one person and another.

Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8

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In 2016, two Chicago-area sportswriters Julie DiCaro and Sarah Spain determined that they had each received so many vile comments – through Twitter alone – that they produced a video. They invited a group of men – who had never seen the tweets before – to read the tweets aloud to either DiCaro or Spain. Here are a few of the tweets that can be printed:

“One of the players should beat you to death with their hockey stick.”

“I hope your dog gets hit by a car, [expletive].”

“Hopefully this [expletive] Julie DiCaro is Bill Cosby’s next victim. That would be classic.”

“Why bring up your own rape in the story? Is it your way of firing back at critics who said you can't get any?”

“You need to be hit in the head with a hockey puck and killed.”

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James Calvin Davis, in his book *In Defense of Civility*, proposes “the exercise of patience, integrity, humility and mutual respect in civil conversation, even (or especially) with those with whom we disagree” (2010, 159).

National Public Radio journalist Diane Rehm, during an event at Oberlin College, said simply: our ability to have conversation about topics about which we disagree, and our ability to listen to each other’s perspectives (Choby 2011).

A Plea for Civil Discourse: Needed, the Academy's Leadership By: [Andrea Leskes](#)

UNIT: 1--Civil Discourse

Leader's Guide for 8th -10th Grades

Goals: Learners will develop a working definition of civil discourse

Supplies and Materials:

- Projector and screen or Monitor with internet access or videos downloaded to computer or handheld device
- Note: There are two videos recommended. Please preview them. There is some guidance in the lesson below.
- Handouts for participants

Set Induction:

3. Obviously, each classroom, youth group or setting is different. In some settings, this clip, which ran on network television in 1979 will be deemed inappropriate. If so, go to the alternate set induction

Show the YouTube video of Dan Aykroyd and Jane Curtin's Point/CounterPoint sketch. It can be found at <https://youtu.be/c91XUyg9iWM>. Depending on the age of your group, you may need to tell them that this clip is from 1979, the fourth season of Saturday Night Live.

Alternate Set Induction:

Print out this script and ask two participants to act it out:

Participant 1: (*surprised*) Hey! What do you think you are doing? I was here!

Participant 2: (*arrogant*) Too bad. You snooze, you lose.

Participant 1: (*angry*) I can't believe you are being a complete and total jerk about this. You have to wait your turn like everyone else!

Participant 2: (*Dismissive*) You are a complete tool. You should have been paying attention. Now get lost!

Participant 1: (*angrier, but not louder*) You suck. You are a complete and total...

Participant 2: (*Dismissive*) Loser.

4. Discussion:

- a. What did we just see? Was it a debate? An exchange of contrary views? Something else?
- b. What was positive about their interaction? What was troubling about it?
- c. Who started the name calling? Who went low first?
- d. Does it matter who started it?
- e. (If you showed the SNL clip -)
How should Aykroyd have responded (if he wasn't a comedian trying to get a laugh)?

Jewish Text Study

Distribute the handout. We will spend some time exploring the meaning of Civil Discourse through some Jewish Texts. As the teacher, you will likely want to ask your own questions; here are some to help get you started.

Cameron Kasky

– This quote is provided as more of an introduction and guiding principle, and less for initial discussion. We suggest returning to it in summarizing the entire session.

5. Genesis 2:15
 - a. What are the two jobs given to humans?
 - b. Is there a distinction between them?
 - c. Why do you think the distinction between creation (tilling) and maintenance (tending) is important.
 - d. How do these ideas help us begin to unpack how we can and should interact with one another?
 - e. How would you restate the purpose of human beings in modern terms?
6. Eliyahu Rabbah, 26
 - a. Now what are our responsibilities?
 - b. What does this text add to your understanding of humanity's purpose?
 - c. What do you think the text means when it suggests certain actions could invalidate the world? (Perhaps it suggests that a certain level of sin and incivility might make God regret the promise made to Noah by the rainbow or revisit the events of Sodom and Gomorrah?)
7. Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8
 - a. Maimonides (RaMBaM) is narrowing our field of misbehavior. What concerns him in this text?
 - b. Why is he concerned about embarrassment or humiliation?

Forty Years of (un)Civil Discourse

3. Share: In 1978, Melissa Ludtke, a writer for Sports Illustrated won a lawsuit against Bowie Kuhn, the commissioner of baseball and Major League Baseball. She had been prohibited from entering team locker rooms to interview players. The locker room was at the time, the only place teams made the players available for interviews immediately before and after games.

While she endured a great deal of verbal abuse from athletes, fans and even fellow writers, the worst of it was condescending or sarcastic.

- a. What do you think you can say about how people spoke and behaved forty years ago?

- b. Was the language used by Dan Aykroyd and Jane Curtain normal speech, or was it considered funny because it was so outrageous? Did people talk that way normally? (You may have to be the voice of the past, and make it clear that this was pretty outrageous. “Jane, You Ignorant Slut” may have been the first time slut was ever used on television. There were rules in place, both official and societal. This was jarring. And it was live.)
 - c. There were several interviews with Ludtke the last week of September 2018. She described a lot of frustration and a fair amount meanness. But she did say it did not reach some of the lows of today.
4. Ludtke often refers people to DiCaro and Spain’s video to get an idea of what things are like today. Although there is more access to athletes for female reporters, civility in the larger society has not improved.
- a. Show the video. The whole thing is kind of rough. We recommend either 1:43- 2:33 or from 3:25 to the end. Please preview it first!! If you do not care to show either, just use the printed tweets.
It can be found at <https://youtu.be/9tU-D-m2JY8>
 - b. Some of the tweets are on page two of the handout.
 - i. How did the men in the video (who had never seen the tweets before) seem to react to what they were reading?
 - ii. Are you surprised by the nature of the tweets?
 - iii. Could these same things have been said to Michelle Ludtke in 1978? Why not? (Or if they answer yes, then by whom?)
 - iv. What has changed in 40 years?
 - v. One possibility that has been suggested is social media. What do you think?
(By giving us the opportunity to say what we think without looking anyone in the eye, we feel freer to say things that might otherwise embarrass us. Without the sense of others watching or listening, we might feel less pressure to fight our yetzer ha-ra – our evil impulse. Consequences may seem less real or apparent. And Social Media also lets us say things without the opportunity to proofread ourselves and think about what we sound like to others. And sometimes we post or tweet when our judgment is impaired by lack of sleep or other factors.)
 - vi. Do you think that the authors of the tweets would say those things to the faces of the women they sent them to?

Conclusion: A Definition of Civil Discourse

3. Andrea Leskes presents us with three quotes. Read each and discuss:

- a. How does this help us define what we mean when refer to civil discourse?
 - b. How is every instance to “civil discourse” a statement of people’s purpose?
4. Return to Cameron Kasky’s quote on page 1. What do we need to remember to move forward as a society? (Note, Cameron is one of the students who survived the shootings at Marjorie Stoneman Douglass High School in February 2018 and now works as an activist.

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UNIT: 1--Civil Discourse Learners Handout for 11th Grade – Adult

Page1

“Our differences need not pull us apart. Disagreements and divides can be an opportunity to find common ground if we engage with respect and civility.”

- Rabbi Asher Lopatin

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Genesis 2:15

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Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8

Oh, to be in the desert,
At an encampment for wayfarers!
Oh, to leave my people,
To go away from them—
For they are all adulterers,
A band of rogues.

They bend their tongues like bows;
They are valorous in the land
For treachery, not for honesty;
They advance from evil to evil.
And they do not heed Me
—declares the Adonai.

Beware, every man of his friend!
Trust not even a brother!
For every brother takes advantage,
Every friend is base in his dealings.

One man cheats the other,
They will not speak truth;
They have trained their tongues to speak
falsely;
They wear themselves out committing sin.

Jeremiah 9:1-4

Begin Page 2 here

In 2016, two Chicago-area sportswriters Julie DiCaro and Sarah Spain determined that they had each received so many vile comments – through Twitter alone – that they produced a video. They invited a group of men – who had never seen the tweets before – to read the tweets aloud to either DiCaro or Spain. Here a few of the tweets that can be printed:

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UNIT: 1--Civil Discourse

Leader's Guide for 11th Grade - Adult

Goals: Learners will develop a working definition of civil discourse

Supplies and Materials:

- Projector and screen or Monitor with internet access or videos downloaded to computer or handheld device
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Set Induction:

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 - a. What did we just see? Was it a debate? An exchange of contrary views? Something else?
 - b. What was positive about their interaction? What was troubling about it?
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 - d. Does it matter who started it? How should Akroyd have responded (if he wasn't a comedian trying to get a laugh)?

Jewish Text Study

Distribute the handout. We will spend some time exploring the meaning of Civil Discourse through some Jewish Texts. As the teacher, you will likely want to ask your own questions; here are some to help get you started.

Rabbi Asher Lopatin

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 - a. What are the two jobs given to humans?
 - b. Is there a distinction between them?
 - c. Why do you think the distinction between creation (tilling) and maintenance (tending) is important.
 - d. How do these ideas help us begin to unpack how we can and should interact with one another?
 - e. How would you restate the purpose of human beings in modern terms?
9. Eliyahu Rabbah, 26
 - a. Now what are our responsibilities?

- b. What does this text add to your understanding of humanity's purpose?
- c. What do you think the text means when it suggests certain actions could invalidate the world? (Perhaps it suggests that a certain level of sin and incivility might make God regret the promise made to Noah by the rainbow or revisit the events of Sodom and Gomorrah?)

10. Maimonides, Laws of Character 6:8

- a. Maimonides (RaMBaM) is narrowing our field of misbehavior. What concerns him in this text?
- b. Why is he concerned about embarrassment or humiliation?

11. Jeremiah 9:1-4

- a. Jeremiah presents a dark picture of humanity. Remember he prophesied the exile to Babylon (586 BCE)! What does he add to our understand of how we should treat one another?
- b. What do we now understand about the power of our words?

Forty Years of (un)Civil Discourse

- 5. Share: In 1978, Melissa Ludtke, a writer for Sports Illustrated won a lawsuit against Bowie Kuhn, the commissioner of baseball and Major League Baseball. She had been prohibited from entering team locker rooms to interview players. The locker room was at the time, the only place teams made the players available for interviews immediately before and after games.

While she endured a great deal of verbal abuse from athletes, fans and even fellow writers, the worst of it was condescending or sarcastic.

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 - a. Show the video. It can be found at <https://youtu.be/9tU-D-m2JY8>

- b. Some of the tweets are on page two of the handout.
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Conclusion: A Definition of Civil Discourse

- 5. Andrea Leskes presents us with three quotes. Read each and discuss:
 - a. How does this help us define what we mean when refer to civil discourse?
 - b. How is every instance to “civil discourse” a statement of people’s purpose?
- 6. Return to Asher Lopatin’s quote on page 1. What do we need to remember to move forward as a society?

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