

# FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT



## VALUE

# LEARNING & GROWTH

## *Limud v'Hitlamdut*

Passover is a celebration of questions, and often, a gathering of generations. Around the Seder table, we ask, we argue; we stretch ourselves to hear other perspectives. For many, these moments bring back memories of spirited conversations with family, moments that challenged us to stay open even when emotions run high. **This is the heart of *Limud v'Hitlamdut*, the Momentum core value of Learning and Growth, a reminder that real learning isn't just about digesting information, it's about the courage to be challenged and the willingness to grow.** In this session, we'll explore how disagreement, when approached with care and curiosity, can be a powerful tool for connection. We will reflect on arguments not as battles to win, but as conversations that open new possibilities.



**TIMELINE: 90 MIN**

**BEGIN WITH INTENTION | 5 MIN**

**WELCOME | 5 MIN**

**THINK PAIR SHARE | 15 MIN**

**THREE TYPES OF ARGUMENT | 15 MIN**

**ARGUMENT ANCHORS | 10 MIN**

**SCENARIOS | 30 MIN**

**BRING YOUR LEARNING HOME | 5 MIN**

**END WITH MEANING | 5 MIN**



### WHO FACILITATES THE SESSION

This session can be co-facilitated by Community Leader(s) and participants. Facilitation should include:

- **Opening** the session with the framing paragraph.
- **Playing both short videos** and **guiding** the group through the “Think-Pair-Share” and “Three Types of Argument” activities.
- **Sharing the instructions** for the “Argument Anchors” and inviting volunteers to read each Anchor aloud.
- **Guiding** the group through the discussion questions provided.

The most important aspect of facilitation is moving the conversation forward and making space for different voices.



### MATERIALS

- Journals
- Pens
- AV set up for videos



### FACILITATOR PREPARATION

Facilitators should watch both short videos ahead of time to familiarize themselves with the core ideas, and they should review the Argument Anchors. Choose in advance which of the two scenarios your group will explore, or be prepared to offer both as options. Reflect on your own experiences of disagreement and be ready to model vulnerability and respectful listening. Remind participants to bring their journal and a pen. Ensure that both videos are ready for playback during the session.

## PART I

## BEGIN WITH INTENTION



5 MIN

Looking for ways to start your session with purpose?

Turn to the Universal Guide on p. 4 for simple, meaningful ideas to open your gathering with presence, connection, and shared energy.

## PART II

## WELCOME



5 MIN

This Journey of Growth session is about the power of disagreement, not as something to avoid, but as something we can engage with purpose and care. In Jewish tradition, we don't shy away from argument. Our tradition thrives precisely because we encourage meaningful debate. Our exploration together today is rooted in the value of **Learning and Growth**. It's about growing not only from the texts we read, but from each other; from the real, sometimes messy conversations that stretch us. Together, we'll look at what it means to argue well, to stay in dialogue when things get heated, and to bring those skills back to our homes and our communities, and perhaps our Seder tables.

## PART III

THINK-PAIR-SHARE:  
ARGUMENT  
AS AN ACT OF  
CREATION

15 MIN



Watch:  
Argument as an  
Act of Creation

Watch the video: [Argument as an Act of Creation](#)

2:38 MIN

*Rebbe Nachman teaches that creation itself depends on opposition. Before the world could be formed, God had to withdraw to make room for creation. This dynamic, called tzimtzum, is mirrored in human speech and disagreement. When we get curious about different opinions, we create space for new worlds of meaning to be born. Just as God created through speech, so too do we create through our words and engagement with respectful disagreements. Our differences can catalyze holy acts of co-creation.*

**Think**

3 MIN

Write down your thoughts in your journal or simply sit with the question.

When have you experienced disagreement as something creative or generative?

**Pair**

7 MIN

Pair up and share a highlight from your reflection with your partner. As she speaks, listen to understand, not to respond.

**Share**

5 MIN

Reconvene as a full group and invite a few volunteers to share an insight from this exercise.

PART IV

# THREE TYPES OF ARGUMENT



15 MIN



Watch: Three Types of Argument

Watch the video: [Three Types of Argument](#)

4-8 MIN

As you watch, use the Note Catcher to track the three types of arguments discussed:

- Debate
- Negotiation
- Healthy Argument

For each type of argument, write down the following:

- **Goal** – What is the purpose of this kind of argument?
- **Pros** – What are the strengths or benefits of this approach?
- **Cons** – What are the limitations or challenges?

*The video is short and contains a lot of information. Consider playing it twice.*

	GOAL	PROS	CONS
DEBATE			
NEGOTIATION			
HEALTHY ARGUMENT			

## Reflection

5 MIN

Once you've finished filling out your Note Catcher, take a quiet moment to reflect on the following prompts. Feel free to write down your thoughts in your journal:

- What kind of argument *do I most often* find myself in?  
How does my answer change when I consider the setting, whether at home, at work, or in my community?
- What kind of argument *would I like* to be in?

This reflection will help you notice your patterns and begin shifting them. Not every disagreement has to be a debate. Not every tension needs to be solved with a compromise. **Sometimes, the most powerful thing we can do is engage in a healthy argument, one where we show up with a commitment to listening, curiosity, and growth, even if the other person has different goals. A healthy argument doesn't require agreement; it requires us to hold space for disagreement while staying rooted in respect and purpose.**

## PART V

## ARGUMENT ANCHORS



10 MIN

## Practices to Stay Grounded During Difficult conversation

*This set of Argument Anchors<sup>1</sup> offers practices for showing up in disagreement with integrity, curiosity, and care. These aren't rules; they're tools to help us stay grounded when conversations get hard. They remind us how to speak honestly and listen generously, even when we feel uncomfortable or unsure.*

Now, as a group, we'll go around and read them aloud, one commitment per person. Speak slowly and clearly so everyone can absorb the words. This is a shared grounding practice, not a performance. Feel free to pause if a line resonates with you or sparks a thought.

## 1. I will remember that there's no warmth without heat.

Disagreement can feel uncomfortable, but that discomfort often signals that people are showing up and caring deeply. Warmth requires honesty, courage, and sometimes tension. I will choose to stay present even when the conversation heats up, trusting that discomfort can be a path to deeper connection.

I can say:

- *I'm going to turn up the temperature here with a bold or challenging statement to bring energy, depth, and even warmth to this conversation.*
- *This might be hard to say or hear, but it can be important for growth.*

## 2. I will be open to change.

I don't need to arrive at every conversation with my mind made up. I can allow space for my thinking to shift, deepen, or evolve in real time. I recognize that changing my mind is not a weakness, it's a sign that I'm listening and growing. And I will honor that same openness in others.

I can say:

- *I know earlier I said X, but now I think Y.*
- *I'm still working this out, but here's where I am now.*

## 3. I will honor emotions as part of the process.

Real conversations engage both the head and the heart. I welcome emotions into the room, even when they're uncomfortable, because they carry important truths. Feeling something deeply doesn't mean I have to shut down or walk away. There is a difference between feeling hurt and being harmed. **Emotions are signals, not stop signs.**

I can say:

- *That's hard for me to hear, but I want to stay in the conversation.*
- *I'm feeling emotional, but I'm here and I'm listening.*

Note: If harm is happening, not just discomfort or hurt, it is okay to step away.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from For the Sake of Argument's "5 Prompts for Healthy Arguments" and "Setting Intentions for a Healthy Argument."

#### 4. I will speak my truth with care.

I can challenge the idea without attacking the person. I can respect someone else's perspective while holding firm to my own. I don't need to flatten our differences or pretend we agree. I can say "yes, but" with integrity, because naming disagreement clearly can actually move the conversation forward.

I can say:

- *Yes, I hear you. But I see it differently.*
- *I respect what you're saying, and here's another way I'm thinking about it.*

#### 5. I will be a gatherer rather than a hunter.

I'm not here to win an argument. I'm here to gather new information and learn from different opinions, to grow, connect, and understand. I'll notice when I'm talking more than listening and make space for others to share. I'll seek out voices that haven't yet been heard and stay curious about what's missing from the conversation.

I will try saying:

- *I've been talking a lot. What do you think?*
- *What haven't we heard yet?*

## PART VI SCENARIOS



30 MIN

*Now that we've explored the frameworks of argument as a creative act, identified different types of arguments, and practiced grounding ourselves with our Argument Anchors, we're going to explore one of two scenarios created by For the Sake of Argument. Option one, The Eleventh Plague, is overtly Israel-related, and it's emotionally charged, which is why it's worth engaging. Option two, The Brothers' House, focuses on values, power, and identity.*

**Choose the scenario that feels most appropriate for your group. Both present a powerful opportunity for learning and growth.**

What matters most is engaging with the argument fully and honestly, using the frameworks we've built together. You'll work through the scenario using guided questions to explore what kind of argument you're in, how you're showing up in it, and what might help you move forward with integrity and curiosity.

### Option One: The Eleventh Plague\*

A father and son clash over what belongs at their Passover seder when a new list of modern plagues sparks a heated debate. The story explores how deeply personal, political, and moral questions surface around the table, and what happens when family members see the same events in very different ways.

#### 1. READ ALOUD

5 MIN

Ensure everyone understands the key characters and tension.

\* The full story can be found at the end of the session on p. 38-39.

**2. SMALL GROUP CONVERSATION**

15 MIN

- What came up for you as you explored this scenario?
- Is this disagreement moving toward understanding or away from it? Why?
- In what ways is the Seder table the right place for this kind of conversation? In what ways is it challenging?
- What might each need to hear from the other in order to feel more respected or understood?

**3. REGROUP & REFLECT**

10 MIN

*As a full group, share insights or questions that surfaced.*

**Option Two: The Brothers' House\***

Two brothers, Jonny and David, have inherited their childhood home. Jonny lives in it year-round; David lives abroad and visits occasionally. Over time, Jonny has changed and so has the house. He's become more religious, made the kitchen kosher, and fenced off the backyard for safety. David, returning for a visit, is dismayed by these changes and feels alienated in what is also supposed to be his home. Their argument escalates: Does David have the right to criticize decisions in a home he doesn't maintain? And is Jonny justified in shutting down that criticism because he's the one doing the day-to-day work?

**1. READ ALOUD**

5 MIN

Ensure everyone understands the key characters and tension.

**2. SMALL GROUP CONVERSATION**

15 MIN

- What kind of argument are Jonny and David having? Debate, negotiation, or healthy argument? Does it shift throughout the story?
- Where do you see the Argument Anchors being ignored or modeled?
- Does David have a right to criticize changes in the house? Why or why not?
- What might each need to hear from the other in order to feel more respected or understood?

**3. REGROUP & REFLECT**

10 MIN

*As a full group, share insights or questions that surfaced.*

\* The full story can be found at the end of the session on p. 39-40.

## PART VII

# BRING YOUR LEARNING HOME



5 MIN

Here are some ways to bring the tools and values of healthy argument into your own life:

### WITH YOURSELF

Every family disagrees—but not every family knows how to grow through it. *Living Wondrously* the newest Momentum publication, has a chapter titled, “Engaging in Difficult Conversations,” with stories, insights, and questions to help you reflect on how you argue, listen, and stay connected even in tough conversations. Use it on your own or around the table to spark meaningful dialogue.



Scan the QR code to order a copy for yourself and others on Amazon now!

### WITH A PARTNER

- Choose a topic you disagree on, even something small, and try to explore it using the Argument Anchors.
- Before jumping in, say: *I want to talk about this in a way that helps us understand each other better.*
- Practice active listening: Repeat the essence of what you hear before responding. Try saying: *What I hear you saying is...* Notice what shifts when your goal is understanding, not agreement.

### WITH KIDS

- Invite them into a real conversation: *When have you had an argument that felt just too hard?*
- Share the idea that disagreement is part of growth. Ask: *What can help you stay in a tough conversation instead of shutting down or melting down?*
- Share your Note Catcher on the different kinds of arguments. Encourage them to reflect: *What kind of argument do you want to be in?*

### WITH TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

- Ask open-ended questions about hard conversations they’ve had on campus, with friends, or in class.
- Reflect on how it feels when disagreement gets shut down vs. when it creates connection.
- Share one of the Argument Anchors and ask: *What resonates with you here?*
- Remind them that it’s possible to disagree without disconnection, and that holding complexity is a strength, not a weakness.

**BEYOND THE FAMILY**

- In your community, at work, or online, pause before reacting. Ask: *What haven't I heard yet?*
- Bring the Argument Anchors into meetings or conversations where tensions run high.
- Model respectful disagreement. Show that we can hold strong opinions and hold each other with care.

We can't control every argument we find ourselves in, but we can control how we show up. Let your home and heart be a place where listening, learning, and growth are always welcome.

**PART VIII****END WITH MEANING**

5 MIN

Head back to the Universal Guide on p. 4 for thoughtful ways to close your gathering with reflection, gratitude, and a sense of shared purpose.

**Continue the Journey**

Continue growing your skills as a Jewish communal leader through the **Momentum Fellowship**, an opportunity for listening, learning, mentorship, and meaningful leadership development.



We all face difficult conversations about Israel. The Yomm Journey **Better Conversations About Israel** with Ariel Halevi gives you tools to engage thoughtfully, even when emotions run high.



How do we talk, and truly listen, when the stakes are high? In the Yomm Journey **Conversations That Matter**, award-winning journalist and author Celeste Headlee shares practical tools for navigating meaningful conversations.

FOR THE SAKE  
OF ARGUMENT**About Our Content Collaborator**

For the Sake of Argument is an educational initiative that believes that arguments have the potential to make us smarter and bring us closer. For the Sake of Argument (FSA) develops and distributes the materials, the tools, and the training to enable healthy arguments at the dinner table, the campus, the family and the workplace.

Learn more at [forthesakeofargument.org](http://forthesakeofargument.org)

## SCENARIOS

Want to enrich your family or community with stories like this one? Purchase the book *Stories for the Sake of Argument* at:



### Option 1: The Eleventh Plague

BY ABI DAUBER STERNE AND ROBBIE GRINGRAS

It was a proud moment for me. Every year I build our family Haggadah with all my favorite additions and alterations: the “points” we give for asking a good question, the four children role-play show, and the ten modern plagues. I love updating our seder night to reflect what’s happening in the world each year, encouraging the kids to relate to Judaism as a living tradition.

This year I was especially proud when Joshua, my 16-year-old, offered to write the modern plagues himself. Ignoring a twinge of sadness at letting go of one of my favorite tasks, I delighted in such an expression of connection from my teenager. In addition to spilling a drop of wine every time we call out each of the plagues that God wreaked on the Egyptians, we also call out the plagues of the modern era. Slavery, exploitation, fossil fuels, genocide...

“Wait a minute! Josh! Come over here,” I called. “What the hell is this?”

“It’s the list of modern plagues I came up with,” replied Josh coolly.

“Genocide? What’s that referring to?”

He looked at me with that disdain that only teenagers can conjure. “What do you think it’s referring to, Dad?”

“No way. You’re not bringing up that word at our seder night. Not in relation to Israel. No way.”

“What?” drawled Josh, “I put in ‘Kidnapping’ as number 8. I thought that would even things out.”

“Even what things out?”

“They’ve kidnapped and held hundreds hostage, and we... we’re on the genocide.”

I didn’t know where to put myself. It was the glib way he dropped that word, and the way he knew that however horrifically Hamas had treated the hostages, it could not “even out” an accusation of genocide.

“I don’t like the use of that word, Josh. Whatever concerns we may have for Gazan civilians, it’s not a genocide, unless you go along with a wholesale redefinition of the word. I personally think it’s an antisemitic slur to use that word against Jews.”

“The word,” repeated Josh. “Who cares about the word? All right then, let’s not call it genocide. How about we spill the wine with the word *plafitinity*? And we can explain that we invented the word *plafitinity* to refer to razing an entire region to the ground, preventing humanitarian aid, and killing over 20,000 children.” He put up his hand in admission, “I know, I know, we got those numbers from the Hamas authorities. They probably exaggerated the numbers. So shall we say only 10,000 children killed? Only a few thousand children blown up? Is that not a modern plague, Dad?”

I took a breath to calm myself. It didn’t help.

## SCENARIOS

“I’m not arguing about numbers, Josh. The word genocide suggests there’s been a wholesale, premeditated massacre against innocents. But that’s what Hamas wrought on October 7th. What’s been going on in Gaza ever since is called a war. Hamas declared war on us, and we’ve been responding. We’ve been responding with terrible force, and thousands of innocents have died. It’s terrible, but that’s what happens in wars. If it was a genocide, how is it so many Israeli soldiers have been killed? By whom?”

“Maybe it’s both? Wouldn’t be the first time there was a war accompanied by a genocide. How about our modern plagues one and two are war and genocide?”

I was getting nowhere.

Josh sighed. “Dad, to be honest, I don’t mind if we do or don’t put that word into our Haggadah. I don’t want to talk about a word. I want us to talk about what the hell is going on over there. And it will come up, won’t it? Our whole family around the table together, of course we’re going to talk about it. But if we only sigh and make faces, and shrug, and talk about what words are right to describe a modern plague, then I think I’m going to scream. I mean come on, Dad, *ma nishtana*? What’s different? Why is this the only plague we avoid? Is it because it’s Jews who are sending this plague? Can we talk about that?”

### Option 2: The Brothers’ House

BY ABI DAUBER STERNE AND ROBBIE GRINGRAS

Once upon a time there were two brothers, Jonny and David. As children they loved playing in their family home. Time passed, as time does, and the boys grew up. Their parents aged, and eventually the time came for the boys to bury their father, and then some years later, their mother.

David got a job abroad. The brothers agreed that Jonny would live in their family home, and would always keep David’s room available for his occasional visits. In the meantime, Jonny kept up the house—fixing things that needed fixing, dealing with things that needed to be dealt with—while David would send money to cover his half of the costs.

One day, many years later, David came for a visit. Jonny was delighted. Together, the two of them opened up David’s room and cleared away the cobwebs. They were together again in their home, if only for a short time.

But things had changed. Since David’s last visit, Jonny had become more religiously observant, and now the whole kitchen had separate areas for meat and milk. There were two ovens, two sinks, and different cutlery and plates for each of them. David didn’t have a problem with religion per se, but it was kind of irritating having to suddenly be careful about what food he brought into what was, after all, *his* house.

More troubling was the garden outside. It had once been an open, grassy area that all the neighborhood houses backed up to. All the kids would play together in its weeds and puddles. But now the garden was a beautiful green lawn, trimmed and carefully cultivated with flowers around the edges—all completely fenced in.

## SCENARIOS

“What’s the fence for?” wailed David when he first saw it. “It was so wonderful when everything was open to all the neighbors!”

“Yes,” acknowledged Jonny, “but the neighbors are different now. I know we were friends with them when we were kids, but it’s their children who live there now, and they are monsters. There’ve been break-ins and vandalism. There was no choice but to put up the fences. And besides,” he said, gesturing proudly, “isn’t it beautiful now?”

David grunted.

“What is your problem?” shouted Jonny. “You’ve been away for years while I’ve dealt with everything in this house. What right do you have to criticize?”

“Because it’s *my* house too!”

“But I *live* here. All the time! You don’t like the way I do things here? Come back and move in permanently. Then we can talk about ‘our’ house!”

“The more time I spend in *your* house, the less I want anything to do with it,” shot back David.

The huge argument had only just begun.