

Interfaith– Avodah Zarah 1:1

פְּנֵי אִידִיָּהוּן שֶׁל גּוֹיִם שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים אֶסּוּר לְשֵׂאת וּלְתַת
עִמָּהֶן, לְהַשְׁאִילָן וְלִשְׁאַל מֵהֶן, לְהַלְוֹתָן וּלְלוֹת מֵהֶן, לְפָרַעַן
וְלְפָרַע מֵהֶן. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר, נִפְרָעִין מֵהֶן מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהוּא
מִצָּר לוֹ. אָמְרוּ לוֹ, אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁמִּצָּר הוּא עֲכָשְׂיוֹ, שְׂמַח
הוּא לְאַחַר זְמַן:

On the three days preceding the festivals of idolaters, it is forbidden to conduct business with them, to lend articles to them or borrow from them, to lend or borrow any money from them, to repay a debt, or receive repayment from them. Rabbi Judah says: we should receive repayment from them, as this can only depress them; But they [the Rabbis] said to him: even though it is depressing at the time, they are glad of it subsequently.

A discussion on Interfaith based on Avodah Zarah 1:1

Some Textual Questions to ask Chanichim:

- Do the Christian festivals come under this bracket?
- If so, what does that mean for Jews living in majority-Christian countries?
- Why do you think we cannot give them business or money from them?

Some General Questions to ask Chanichim:

- What does this Mishna mean for modern interfaith?
- Is there a way to promote interfaith and inclusivity without clashing with Jewish values?
- Are there certain issues which are key when it comes to interfaith? If so which ones?
- Do you think interfaith should be more used to work against issues which face the Jewish community in the 21st century?

Some Personal Questions to ask Chanichim:

- Do you engage/want to engage with interfaith when you are older?
- Do you feel that interfaith is an important value for the Jewish community?
- Can you think of any ways we, as a Tnua, can further interfaith initiatives?

Other sources and quotes to bring into discussion:

Derech Hashem 2:6

אנושיות אעפ"י שהיא שפלה רצה הקב"ה שיהיה להם מעין ואמנם כיון שיש בהם בחי' - מה שראוי לאנושיות האמיתית והיינו שיהיה להם נשמה כעין נשמות בני ישראל אעפ"י שאין מדריגתה מדריגת נשמות ישראל אלא שפלה מהם הרבה ויהיה להם מצות יקנו בהם הצלחה גופיית ונפשיית ג"כ כפי מה שראוי לבחינתם והם מצות בני נח

However since he has an aspect of man - even though he is lowly - the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted that they have that which is similar to the true mankind. And that is that they have a soul, similar to the souls of the Children of Israel, even though its level is much lower than the level of the souls of Israel; and that they have commandments through which they also acquire physical and spiritual success, according to that which is appropriate for their condition - and these are the Noachide laws.

Rabbi Lord Sacks: "In our interconnected world, we must learn to feel enlarged, not threatened, by difference"

A Related Story - Yoseph Haddad: Arab, Christian, Defender of Israel:

During the Second Lebanon War, Haddad lost his foot, which was later reattached. His experiences led him and some like-minded colleagues to found the organization Vouching for Each Other. The group includes Jews, Christians, Muslims, Druze and Bedouins. The goal of the organization, said Haddad, "is to bridge gaps of mistrust, to help Arab Israelis become more a part of Israeli society."

A Haifa native, as a child Haddad moved with his family to Nazareth, the city with the highest Arab population in Israel. "My friends were Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Druze," said Haddad, now 33. "There was no politics. We all just wanted to play soccer. When you play you count on your friends to help you score; there's nothing about who is what religion. We relied on each other."

When I saw my Jewish friends getting drafted while I wasn't, I thought, what's going on here?" said Haddad. "I decided to volunteer for the army and serve my country." He determined that he would serve only if "I could serve in the best brigade, and that's the Golani." The officer to whom he made this demand responded, "This isn't a grocery store, you don't get to choose." Haddad passed the necessary exams and tests and did indeed serve in the Golani. In October 2003, a female suicide bomber killed 21 people and injured 51, including four Arabs, in a crowded restaurant in Northern Israel. "I realized that when a suicide bomber kills, he doesn't think about who he's killing. When I joined the IDF I wasn't defending Jewish people, Christians or Muslims. I was defending Israel."

Haddad began his service a month later. "For the first time in my life I learned about the Arab-Israel conflict. In the Arab school system I didn't learn the Israeli national anthem or about the wars of '48, '67 or the Yom Kippur War in '73." He also learned about the Holocaust. "When I visited Yad Vashem, Israel's official Holocaust memorial, it was the first time I understood the horrific tragedy that had taken place," he recalled. Fourteen years later, he spoke in Florida at a Holocaust Memorial Day program. To speak there was an amazing achievement for me. I feel that as the leader of an organization, I have made an oath to remember, even in Arab society in Israel. It is important for Arabs to understand.

"They say Israel is an apartheid country, yet Arab officers in the IDF give orders to Jewish soldiers. One of my commanders was an Arab. The captain of the Israeli national soccer team is a Muslim. Thirteen members of the Knesset are Muslim; they speak badly about Israel all the time. When I hear about 'Israeli apartheid' I say, enough!"

Some Interactive Resources:

Ted Talk: The Interfaith Aimgos – Breaking the taboos of interfaith dialogue

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPnZArtsG_c

Video: Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks on interfaith dialogue in multicultural Britain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRRhU0efYtw>

Video: A Muslim and Jewish Girls bold poetry slam

<https://youtu.be/UCUz2b050IE>

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