

Disagreeing Without Becoming Disagreeable

Truth, Torah, and Shalom in the Community

Central Theme

The Almighty does not require His people to agree on every interpretation, practice, or secondary matter to walk together. He does require us to share a common allegiance and direction—and to conduct ourselves according to Torah when disagreements arise.

Main idea:

Unity does not require uniformity. We can hold strong convictions without becoming disagreeable toward those who reach different conclusions.

A useful refrain throughout the lesson:

Firm convictions. Humble hearts. Gracious disagreements.

I. Disagreement Is Not Necessarily Disunity

A. Amos 3:3 — What Must We Agree About?

“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”

— Amos 3:3

This verse is sometimes used to argue that two people cannot fellowship unless they agree doctrinally.

But look more closely at the Hebrew:

הֵי־לֶכְךָ שְׁנַיִם יַחְדָּו בְּלִתִּי אִם-נוֹעָדוּ

Ha-yelkhu shenayim yahdav bilti im-no'adu?

The important word is:

נוֹעָדוּ — no'adu

from the root **יעד** — y-'-d, carrying the idea of meeting by appointment, assembling, or agreeing to meet.

The thought is therefore closer to:

“Can two walk together unless they have agreed to meet?”

The necessary agreement is fundamentally an **agreement to walk together**.

It does not mean the two travelers must agree about everything they discuss while they walk.

Teaching point

Two people can disagree about many things while still saying:

“We are traveling the same road, toward the same destination, under the authority of the same King.”

That is an important distinction.

For our congregation, our common direction includes certain foundational convictions:

- The Almighty is the God revealed in Scripture and our King.
- Yeishua is the promised Messiah and The Almighty's appointed representative in this age.
- Torah is The Almighty's instruction—the constitution or rule of life for those who belong to His Kingdom.

Within that common journey, sincere people may still disagree about many details.

Amos does not say that two people must agree about everything they discuss while walking. They must agree to take the walk together.

Or:

Biblical fellowship requires common allegiance and a common destination—not identical opinions about every landmark along the road.

B. The Context of Amos 3

Amos follows this question with several other cause-and-effect questions.

- Does a lion roar without a reason?
- Does a bird fall into a trap without a snare?
- Does a trumpet sound without causing alarm?

The point is that observable circumstances have causes.

If two people are walking together, something happened beforehand.

They agreed to meet and walk together.

II. Walking Together Does Not Mean Thinking Identically

Key Scriptures:

- Proverbs 18:13
- Proverbs 18:17
- Proverbs 27:17
- James 1:19

Proverbs 18:17

“The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him.”

The first explanation we hear can sound completely convincing.

Then someone asks a question.

Someone notices something we missed.

Someone brings another passage into the discussion.

That is not necessarily an attack.

Sometimes disagreement is precisely what forces us to examine what we believe more carefully.

Proverbs 27:17

“Iron sharpens iron...”

Iron does not sharpen iron without friction.

Yet the purpose of the friction is not to destroy the other piece of iron.

It is to make both more useful.

The Application

If we have agreed to walk together, disagreement can help sharpen our understanding along the way.

Two sincere people can study the same passage and reach different conclusions without either one being dishonest or rebellious.

We should therefore be careful about assuming motives.

Disagreement does not automatically mean:

- rebellion;
- ignorance;

- dishonesty;
- lack of faith;
- lack of love for Torah;
- or rejection of The Almighty.

III. Not Every Doctrine Has the Same Weight

One mistake congregations can make is treating every disagreement as though it carries the same importance.

It does not.

There are foundational matters, important interpretive matters, and matters of personal practice or preference.

Our foundational convictions

For purposes of walking together as a congregation, I would describe these foundational convictions as:

1. The Almighty is our God and King.

He is the Creator, Sovereign, and ultimate authority revealed in the Scriptures.

See: Dt. 32:39; Isa. 44:6, 8; 45:5, 21; Hos. 13:4

2. Yeishua is the Messiah.

He is The Almighty's appointed and anointed representative through whom The Almighty is accomplishing His purposes in this age.

See: Mt. 16:13-17; Heb. 1:1-4

3. Torah is The Almighty's instruction for His people.

Torah functions as the **constitution of His Kingdom**—revealing how those belonging to the King are expected to live.

See Dt. 4:1, 2; Ps. 1:1-3; 19:7-11; 119; Mt. 4:4; 5:17-19; Rom. 3:31

These provide our common direction.

We may not agree about every detail along the journey, but we agree concerning **whom we serve and where we are going.**

IV. Membership in the Kingdom and Faithfulness

Within It

Matthew 5:17–19

Yeishua said that whoever loosens even the least of the commandments and teaches others accordingly will be called **least in the Kingdom**, while whoever does and teaches them will be called **great in the Kingdom**.

Notice that Yeishua speaks not merely about whether someone is in the Kingdom.

He speaks about **standing within the Kingdom**.

Therefore the question should not merely be:

“What is the minimum I must do?”

A better question is:

“If The Almighty is my King, how faithfully do I want to live as His subject?”

Torah obedience is not a price that purchases citizenship.

Rather:

Obedience is the appropriate response of those who recognize the authority of the King.

Our level of obedience reveals something about how seriously we take that kingship.

V. There Are Many Things About Which Faithful People May Disagree

Once our common foundation is established, there are numerous subjects on which sincere believers can reach different conclusions.

Examples might include:

- interpretation of prophecy;
- eschatological details;
- chronology;
- particular calendar questions;
- pronunciation of Hebrew names;
- various traditional Jewish practices;
- liturgical preferences;
- exactly how a particular commandment should be applied under modern circumstances;
- interpretation of difficult passages;
- how much weight should be given to particular traditions;

- individual matters of conscience.

These subjects can still be important.

Calling something a secondary matter does **not** mean:

“It doesn't matter.”

It means:

“This disagreement does not necessarily require us to stop walking together.”

VI. Torah Tells Us How to Disagree

Leviticus 19:17, 18 - ¹⁷ 'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. ¹⁸ 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

This passage brings several principles together:

- Do not hate your brother in your heart.
- Rebuke your neighbor when necessary.
- Do not bear sin because of him. (Do not allow him to cause you to sin is the idea behind the Hebrew)
- Do not take vengeance.

- Do not bear a grudge.
- Love your neighbor as yourself.
- Leviticus 19:17 gives us a responsibility to address genuine wrongdoing when appropriate; it does not give every individual authority to appoint himself as another person's judge or disciplinarian.

Notice that Torah does not teach:

“If you love someone, never correct him.”

Sometimes love requires correction.

But correction occurs **inside the framework of love and congregational halacha.**

Two dangerous extremes

Love without truth can become mere sentimentality.

But:

Truth without love can become cruelty.

Biblical love allows me to say:

“Brother, I believe you are mistaken, and this is why.”

It does not give me permission to say:

“You disagree with me, therefore you must be stupid, rebellious, deceived, or spiritually inferior.”

VII. Scripture Anticipates Disagreements Among Covenant People

Deuteronomy 17:8–13

Torah itself recognizes that difficult disputes would arise.

There would be cases too difficult for individuals to settle.

That tells us something important.

The existence of disagreement itself was not necessarily evidence of wickedness.

The question became:

How will the disagreement be handled?

Will there be order?

Will proper authority be respected?

Will people seek resolution?

Will they listen?

The Application

Mature covenant communities are not communities where disagreement never occurs. They are communities that know how to handle disagreement without allowing it to become destructive.

VIII. The Greatest Danger May Be Pride

Key Scriptures:

- Proverbs 13:10
- 1 Corinthians 8:1
- James 3:13–18
- 2 Timothy 2:23–25

Proverbs 13:10

“Only by pride comes contention...”

Sometimes the greatest problem is not the doctrine being debated.

It is **our need to win the debate.**

1 Corinthians 8:1

Paul warns that:

“Knowledge puffs up...”

There is a danger in biblical study.

The more we learn, the easier it can become to look down upon those who do not know what we know—or who do not reach the same conclusions.

A person can know a tremendous amount about:

- Torah;
- Hebrew;
- Greek;
- Second Temple Judaism;
- manuscripts;
- halacha;
- prophecy;
- theology;

and still fail one of Torah's most basic instructions:

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Personal examination

When I disagree with someone, what is my objective?

Is it:

“I want this person to understand what I believe to be true”?

Or has it become:

“I need to prove that I am right”?

Those are not always the same thing.

IX. When Does Disagreement Become Disagreeable?

There are warning signs.

Disagreement is becoming unhealthy when we begin:

- 1. Attacking motives instead of addressing the argument.**

“You only believe that because...”

- 2. Ridiculing instead of reasoning.**

- 3. Interrupting instead of listening.**

- 4. Treating disagreement itself as rebellion.**

- 5. Talking about the person instead of talking to the person.**

- 6. Recruiting others to take sides.**

7. **Questioning another person's faith because of a secondary matter.**
8. **Becoming angry simply because someone challenged us.**
9. **Refusing fellowship over matters Scripture does not make grounds for separation.**
10. **Equating our interpretation of Scripture with Scripture itself.**

That final point is particularly important.

There is a difference between saying:

“Scripture says...”

and saying:

“I understand this Scripture to mean...”

Wisdom requires knowing which statement we are actually entitled to make.

X. How to Disagree Biblically

Before correcting someone, ask:

1. Do I actually understand what this person believes?

Not what someone told me he believes.

Not what I assume he believes.

What does he actually believe?

2. Can I accurately explain his position?

A useful standard is:

Can I describe his position in words that he himself would say are fair?

If not, I probably do not understand his argument well enough to refute it.

3. Have I listened to the Scriptures he is using?

Proverbs 18:13 warns against answering before hearing.

4. Am I willing to discover that I might be mistaken?

That does not mean:

“Do I presently think I am wrong?”

Obviously, if I thought I was wrong, I would change my position.

The question is:

“Am I teachable enough to discover that I am wrong?”

5. How important is this issue?

Is this:

- foundational?
- important but debatable?
- personal practice?
- personal preference?

6. What will my manner of speaking accomplish?

Will my words help the person hear me?

Or will my manner guarantee that he stops listening?

XI. Truth and Shalom Belong Together

Zechariah 8:19

“Love truth and peace.”

We sometimes behave as though we must choose one.

We do not.

The biblical objective is:

Truth + Shalom

Truth without shalom can become harshness.

Shalom without truth can become compromise.

Maturity seeks both.

Sometimes the best conclusion to a conversation is:

“I understand why you believe that. I still disagree.”

And the other person says:

“I understand why you believe what you do. I still disagree.”

Then they continue:

- worshipping together;
- praying together;
- studying together;
- eating together;
- serving together;
- and walking toward the same destination.

That is not weakness.

That can be evidence of maturity.

XII. Disagreement Does Have Boundaries

This lesson should not be misunderstood to mean that doctrine is unimportant or that everything must be tolerated.

Scripture identifies matters serious enough to require correction and, at times, separation.

Examples include:

- idolatry;
- deliberate immorality;
- false prophecy;
- rejection of The Almighty;
- persistent rebellion;
- exploitation;
- deliberate divisiveness;
- and teaching that fundamentally undermines covenant faithfulness.

Therefore our principle is not:

“Anything goes.”

Rather:

We must learn to distinguish between something worth discussing, something requiring correction, and something requiring separation.

Those are not the same thing.

This is one reason mature leadership and congregational halacha are important.

Not every member should independently decide:

“This person disagrees with me, therefore he should not be here.”

There must be order, wisdom, due process, and proper authority.

XIII. Closing Challenge: Are We Trying to Win or Build?

2 Timothy 2:23–25

Paul tells Timothy that the servant of The Almighty must not be quarrelsome but should be:

- gentle;

- able to teach;
- patient;
- and able to correct opponents with humility.

Notice that Timothy was still expected to **correct error**.

The issue was not whether truth should be defended.

The issue was **how truth should be defended**.

Therefore:

I can be right about the doctrine and still be wrong in the way I handle the disagreement.

Conclusion

Our congregation does not need to become a place where everyone thinks exactly alike.

It should become a place where we:

- worship the same Almighty;
- recognize the same Messiah;
- submit ourselves to the same Torah;
- pursue the same Kingdom;
- and agree to walk the same road together.

Along that road we will sometimes disagree.

We may understand a commandment differently.

We may interpret a prophecy differently.

We may disagree about tradition, chronology, practice, or theology.

And sometimes one of us will eventually discover that we were wrong.

That should not frighten us.

It should remind us to remain teachable.

We should hold convictions strongly.

We should teach what we believe to be true.

We should defend Torah and sound doctrine.

But we should never assume that another brother or sister must agree with every conclusion we have reached before we can walk together.

Again, in **Amos 3:3**:

“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”

Yes—we must agree.

But first and foremost, we agree **to walk together**.

We agree concerning our King.

We agree concerning His Messiah.

We agree concerning His Torah.

And then, while walking together, we continue learning from one another.

Final refrain

Hold convictions firmly.

Know what you believe and why.

Hold interpretations humbly.

Remain teachable.

Hold one another lovingly.

Do not allow every disagreement to become division.

Firm convictions. Humble hearts. Gracious disagreements.