



BRIT LASHON HATOV • ברית לשון הטוב

Covenant for Communicating in a Holy Community / *Kehillah Kedoshah*

“Everyone is created in God’s image,”¹ so את האדם בצלמו בצלם אלוהים ברא אתו

- ... We will assume the **best intentions** on the part of our listeners.
- ... We will **speak for ourselves**, not as representatives of any group, and not ask others to represent, defend, or explain an entire group of people.
- ... We will strive to make **“I” statements**, rather than “we” or “you” statements.

“Everyone has a place in the Torah,”² so.... כי יש לכל ישראל אות מיוחד בתורה

- ... We will seek to **understand others’ opinions** before ours is understood.
- ... We will **share airtime** and refrain from interrupting others. We will make sure that everyone has had an opportunity to speak before we share again.

“Disagree for the sake of Heaven,”³ so.... כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים סופה להתקיים

- ... We will seek to **clarify misunderstandings** productively.
- ... We will **express our different viewpoints in a thoughtful manner** and without an insulting spirit. We may respectfully disagree with others, but we will resist the urge to convert them to our way of thinking.
- ... We will treat our **conversational partners** as we would want to be treated.

“There is a time to keep silent and a time to speak,”⁴ so.... עת לחשות ועת לדבר

- ... We will greet questions with a **moment of silence** to give everyone ample time to formulate a thoughtful response.
- ... We will understand the roles and responsibilities that congregants, board and clergy have in a particular matter so there is clarity about who is **responsible for making decisions**.
- ... We will **hang on when we hear something that is hard to listen to**. We will, when appropriate, “**take-five**” if we find that we are no longer able to listen with an open and clear mind.

“Words carry the power of life and death,”⁵ so... מות וחיים ביד לשון

- ... We appreciate the spirit and passion of our community as it is reflected in **diverse opinions**
- ... We do not engage in **lashon hara**—gossip, rumor mongering, slander
- ... We strive to listen and hear each other as members of a **holy community** -- in public meetings, in community forums, in classes, in emails, on the phone – anywhere we talk to each other.

**Although we strive to keep this covenant, sometimes we fall short.
We try to recognize those times and apologize to those we have harmed.
We try again. We are human.**

This covenant is adapted from the *Brit Lashon HaTov* of Congregation B’nai Jeshurun in New York City and the Communication Agreement of the Encounter Project

1. Genesis 1:27 2. Sefat Emet on Parashat Bamidar 3. Pirke Avot 5:19 4. Ecclesiastes 3:7 5. Proverbs 18:21