



I DISSENT

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Disagreeing does not necessarily make you disagreeable. Just ask Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the first Jewish woman on the US Supreme Court. When she was a young girl, lots of people told her she didn't have what it took to do the things she wanted to do, but she disagreed – and proved them wrong. Now she shows the whole world that sometimes it's important to say "I dissent!"

JEWISH CONCEPTS

More than two thousand years ago, two leading centers of Jewish thought were the schools of Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai. Hillel and Shammai were sages, and they disagreed about many things. They disagreed about things we might find trivial today—should nine lights be kindled at the beginning of Hanukkah or at the end? They disagreed about matters that remain deeply significant—is it always wrong to lie, or are some untruths acceptable and even welcome?

The followers of Shammai and Hillel debated hundreds of ideas, and their conflicts shaped the oral tradition of Jewish law. While they were debating, members of Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai maintained strong peaceful relationships; they respectfully disagreed, often married into one another's families, and sometimes even switched positions and beliefs.

The friendly rapport alluded to in this book between Justice Ginsburg and her colleague Justice Antonin Scalia, who passed away shortly after this book was written, is an example of *machloket l'shem shamayim*. This concept means "dispute for the sake of Heaven," and offers a strikingly Jewish model for constructive conflict. IT seems that for Justice Ginsburg and the late Justice Scalia, their conflicts were not bitter fights. Instead, they argued as a way to learn more, to explore a greater truth. One might say they disputed for the sake of Heaven.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

At this age, children are developing the ability to solve problems with their own creative strategies. Encourage your child to think like Ruth Bader Ginsburg and imagine resolutions for some of the challenges that she faced. You might ask your child, "What would **you** do if..."

You had to write with the "wrong" hand? (right if left-handed or left if right-handed)

- You were required to take classes in a subject that gave you a lot of trouble?
- You seemed to have no talent in an area that you really loved?
- You disagreed quite often with someone who was also a good friend?
- People told you to stop doing something you were good at because of your age?

When children have opportunities to plan solutions to problems on their own, it helps them understand the social environment and prepare for greater independence and responsibility. Let Ruth Bader Ginsburg be a role model for your child. You might be helping shape a future Supreme Court justice!