



Besod Siach

The Enigma of Dialogue

Besod Siach is a non-political, non-profit association of professionals, established in 1993 by a group of religious and secular psychologists representing the political left and right. They founded Besod Siach out of concern for the growing polarization, alienation and violence that was threatening the integrity and the democratic base of Israeli society.

Besod Siach provides professional consultation and facilitation in the area of inter-group relations, trains group facilitators to promote dialogue between groups in conflict, develops new models and approaches for conflict management, initiates dialogue processes at the community and national level, sponsors professional conferences and workshops, conducts research and publishes articles, and maintains relationships with academic and professional organizations in Israel and abroad.

Besod Siach is concerned with the broad spectrum of conflicts in Israeli society, such as between the political left and right, between different ethnic and cultural groups, between the different streams of Judaism, between new immigrants and veteran Israelis, and others.

Vision - Besod Siach is committed to:

- Transforming the antagonistic and intolerant climate within which religious, political, social and ethnic-cultural differences are dealt with in Israel.
- Promoting a pluralistic and democratic value system, helping leaders from all sides find better solutions to the challenges of mutual co-existence in an evolving Israeli culture.
- Being at the cutting edge of advancing dialogue between groups in conflict within Israel.
- One of Besod Siach's basic assumptions is that every society is comprised of groups with different and even opposing worldviews, and that constructive dialogue between them, based on a mutual willingness to view the "other" as legitimate, is necessary for the development of a mature, internally strong civil society and for the reduction of social polarization.

Main Goals

- Promoting and leading open dialogue between groups in conflict within Israeli society.
- Developing knowledge, professional expertise and methodologies to advance dialogue between conflicted groups in Israeli society.
- Providing professional consultation and facilitation services to public institutions and governmental organizations in the area of social conflicts.
- Working on dialogue initiatives with leadership at the national and local level as a means for advancing social and cultural change.
- Developing different models and new conflict management approaches and training professional facilitators in how to intervene in situations of social conflict.

- Initiating and leading dialogue processes at the community and national level in collaboration with other non-profits, public organizations and government agencies.
- Sponsoring and conducting professional conferences and workshops, developing and disseminating relevant materials for professionals and the general public.

Quotes about Besod Siach

Extract from <http://www.gestaltreview.com/2001/ben-ziv.html>

We think that what we Gestaltists know about field theory absolutely applies. You cannot work with one force without working with the other. There are experimental groups in Israel of people from the religious right and people from the secular left who are talking to each other to work out their differences. One of them is called "Besod Siach." These words are taken from a prayer about the quiet dialogue of angels. Dialogue is a must.."

From http://www.irac.org/article_e.asp?artid=336 RABBIS MAKE

CONCILIATORY NOISES

Israel Harel September 14, 2000

This week the Besod Siach (Quiet Dialogue) association organized a meeting of several rabbis in Jerusalem. Sitting in the same room - an unusual sight - were rabbis from the three movements in modern Judaism - Orthodox, Conservative and Reform. The item on the agenda was unusual too - the problem of foreign labor in Israel.

Only a few of those present belonged to the majority Israeli Orthodox movement, and there were none from the Ultra-Orthodox community. The gathering was initiated by Besod Siach, which for a number of years has been trying to bring together various groups in conflict to help them resolve their differences. (Most of the association's leading members are psychologists.)

In the present climate, with its threat of a widening rift in Israeli society and (God forbid) a "Civil Revolution," it was important to see a gathering of this kind.

Rabbis of congregations, heads of yeshivot, and heads of batei midrash (Jewish study institutes), sat together to deal with a moral issue most of us would rather not think about, but one that should be worrying us considerably.

The participants did refer to the "revolutionary" slogans being bandied about and it was obvious from their tone what they thought of them. But the rabbis were discussing an important topic and, unsurprising in a scholarly forum, cited sources in the vast body of Jewish learning. The conference will no doubt be studied and clarified in the rabbis' congregations, yeshivot and batei midrash - an example of rabbis dealing with a burning issue in an authentically Jewish manner.

On the following day, a two-day conference opened in Jerusalem. The conference was organized by a very important "dialogue group" (that is, dialogue within the Israeli Jewish community) - Haskama Leumit or National Consensus. The topic of the conference was Shabbat in Israel.

Among the audience - many of whom said they were atheists - were a fairly large number of Ultra-Orthodox Jews, some of them in touch with major rabbinical authorities in Israel. ..."

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