

ABRAHAMIC FAITHS PEACEMAKING INITIATIVE

American Clergy And Religious Activists Who Advocate Peacemaking

Interflavor Relations: A Children's Story

©2007 Rabbi Neil Comess-Daniels

You may have heard a story about how it is that people in the world came to speak different languages. It happened because a long, long, long, long, long, time ago, when everyone spoke the same language, they all decided to build a tall, tall, tall, tall, tall, tower to try to reach God. They thought God was way, way, way, way, way up and if they built this tall, tall, tall, tall tower, they would get to God! Now God knew that God was (and still is) Everything and Everyone and... Everywhere. God IS up in the sky, but the sky, even including the sun and the moon and the stars, is just a tiny, small part of what God is. So, God is not just up, but everywhich way around and down and all over and under and through. God is things that are so big you can't help but notice them and things so small you can't even see them! God is right in front of your nose. God IS your nose. And God is things and people and animals and plants on the other side of the world.

God was REALLY concerned for the people from a long, long, long, long time ago who were building this tall, tall, tall, tall tower because they thought that God was only way, way, way, way up. So...God tried to speak to the people. God spoke from some of the OTHER places that God is, besides up, so that they would know that God was, REALLY, everywhere and everything.

God spoke to them as a beautiful, colorful, delicate butterfly flying by the tall, tall, tall, tall, tower they were building. As you might imagine, a

Everyone and Everywhere that God was and is came something brand new: Different languages. When the people started speaking different languages they couldn't talk to each other. They couldn't help each other. They couldn't figure out what needed to be built next and how. They couldn't ask, "Could you please pass the hammer?" or "Does anybody have a pair of pliers?" or say "Let's stop for a while and have lunch!" The languages were so new inside of them, they couldn't even teach them to each other because they didn't know what they were saying themselves! So, finally, they stopped building and climbed down the tower.

When they got to the bottom, things didn't get any better. In fact, things actually got worse. The people only wanted to speak with other people who spoke their language. So they searched around for those people and when they found them they built their houses next to each other and lived in new places they called countries and only people who spoke that language could live in that county. And all the people with the same language had children who were also taught that same language. They also taught the children what to believe and how to think and to be very proud of their language and their country and their country's way of thinking, which they called "faiths." Sometimes people from a different country with different thoughts who spoke a different language accidentally wandered into a country other than their own. Oy! It was as bad as the tower! No, it was worse! People didn't even TRY to understand one another, all they knew is that this other person spoke funny, wore funny different clothes, did funny dances, played different and funny instruments, played games that looked, well...dumb and they also had a different faith! The people from the

different countries with different languages started fighting NOT because they UNDERSTOOD each other and disagreed. Instead, they fought about what they DIDN'T understand! And that's pretty much the way it's been until today.

People have tried all kinds of things to make peace between countries: talking, singing and dancing together, making art together, planting trees. For peace, people would create large remembering statues called memorials to remember all the people who fought and died over different languages and different faiths and different dances and games. The artists of the memorials hoped that the people who saw them would say – “Fighting and dying for different languages and ways of thinking is...dumb!” But very few people responded that way. For peace, they would have thinking discussions called “InterFAITH Relations Conferences.” At the end, everyone would hug and say how wonderful the conference was. But when they'd go back to their own countries and their own languages and their own faiths they'd forget about the interfaith stuff until the next conference.

Today we're going to try something that no one has tried before to make peace between the different peoples. We're going to try...ice cream! Not any ice cream will do. It must be special, “interFLAVOR relations” ice cream. Here's what's in InterFLAVOR Relations ice cream:

- Chips – because some people don't think new thoughts for themselves; they become little chips of something bigger. Remember that when you eat a chip and try to help limited thinkers to think beyond themselves.

- Marshmallows – because talking with people who are REALLY different can get pretty sticky sometimes. But...if we STICK with it, it can turn out pretty sweet.
- Nuts – because it sometimes seems to us that ALL people from different faiths and different cultures are nuts! Some people DO get pretty crazy about their own faith and that's too bad and that happens in every group and every country. But the goal of interFLAVOR relations is to help all of us know that different isn't "nuts." Different is just...different.
- Ribbons of caramel and fudge – because just one of them wouldn't be enough to hold everything and everyone together and because when you're making your very own ice cream flavor you don't have to choose between them. You can have both!
- And finally, green ice cream with brownies and blueberries – the colors of the Earth – Not the color of anyone's skin. These colors are really all of our colors anyway, because we all live here, all our bodies come from the earth and all our bodies go back to the earth.

Can an unusually flavored ice cream help bring peace between the countries of the world? I hope so. I don't know for sure, but...it can't hurt and it will taste good!