



Mariel Sable (in the middle) and friends Esmé Moskowitz and Zach Miller settle their misunderstandings in their school's Sukkat Shalom.

THE RASHI SCHOOL

# Mariel in the MIDDLE

BY BETH PANITZ

**Being a peacemaker is not easy, but it's what makes Mariel tick.**

It happens every day on playgrounds and in classrooms all across the country. Tempers flare, feelings get hurt, and before you know it, an argument is raging. At times like these, a cool head is needed. Meet Mariel Sable, a cool head if ever there was one. When arguments flare up at The Rashi School in Newton, Massachusetts, 11-year-old Mariel is often in the middle trying to make peace.

Mariel remembers one particularly heated argument last year when she felt the need to step in. “I saw two of my friends fighting, and I shouted, ‘Stop it, you guys.’” She urged her buddies to take their dispute to the Sukkat Shalom, a special area in school where students resolve their conflicts peacefully. The Sukkat Shalom is designed to resemble a סוכה (*sukkah*, the

temporary structure built for the holiday of Sukkot). Rashi students designed colorful quilts on the theme of peace to hang as walls from the *sukkah's* metal frame. The area—which is set up with beanbag chairs and books about peacemakers—is dedicated in memory of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin, who was assassinated in 1995 after starting peace talks with the Palestinians.

When the skirmish broke out last year, Mariel offered to go to the Sukkat Shalom with her friends. “I’m kind of like a referee,” she explains. With Mariel’s help, by the end of a 15-minute discussion, each of her girlfriends accepted blame for their misunderstanding. “Usually the fights end with everybody hugging each other,” Mariel says, laughing.

Solving conflicts is nothing new for Mariel. “I joined the school in the middle of first grade, and I immediately started acting like the psychiatrist,” she says. “If people had a problem, they would come to me and I would help them.” She even made a game out of solving playground disputes—setting up a mock court, with herself as the judge.

“You can solve problems anywhere,” says Mariel. But she always finds herself returning to the Sukkat Shalom to talk through problems, because it’s

“a peaceful place....You feel very blessed and connected [to Judaism] there.” She uses the space to resolve her own conflicts with classmates as well as to help others.

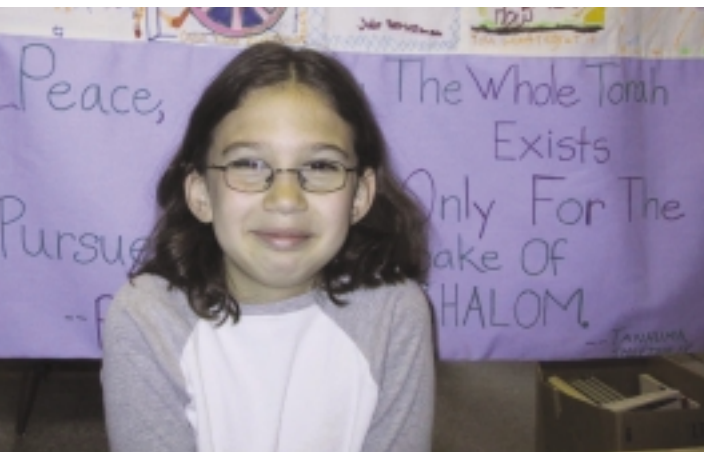
Mariel says she strives for peace for the simple joy of seeing people get along. “I’m really into peace,” she says, beaming. “It brings me such pleasure to see my friends smiling together.”

## THE PEACE PROCESS

The ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (עשרת ימי תשובה, *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*, the Ten Days of Repentance) is a special time to repair our broken relationships. Before we can ask for God’s forgiveness, we must apologize to those whom we’ve wronged.

Mariel Sable gives this advice on how to resolve misunderstandings:

- 1) Gather up the self-confidence needed to approach the person with whom you have a dispute. “If you have a problem, you need to speak up,” says Mariel.
- 2) Remain calm during the discussion. Together, choose a friend who will help make sure the conversation doesn’t become a yelling match. If you do get upset, “walk away for a minute and breathe,” says Mariel.
- 3) Admit your mistakes, apologize, and move on.



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