

# Pluralism

By Rabbi David Wolpe

With the constant conflict besetting our world, is there common ground? I know from experience that inviting someone with a different view to speak is always risky; people feel upset, even threatened. Does our tradition permit us to entertain or embrace different views?

In the *Tosefta* (Sotah 7:12) we read: "All the words have been given by a Single Shepherd ... so you build many chambers in your heart and bring into it the words of the House of Shammai and the words of the House of Hillel, the words of those who declare unclean and the words of those who declare clean."

Tolerance is admirable, but pluralism is harder. Tolerance means "You are wrong, but I will tolerate your wrongheaded views for the sake of peace." Pluralism means "You are wrong, but no one has a monopoly on truth, and in listening to you I may learn something, I may grow." Pluralism is an enlargement of our vision. Why do we place the mezuzah at an angle on our doors? Because Rashi believed it should be vertical and Rabbenu Tam that it should be horizontal. Neither great scholar is disregarded; we learn from both. Marking chambers in the world is like building chambers in our heart: taxing work, but that is the noble legacy of a tradition that teaches that no person is given the final and total truth.