



CHAPTER 1, MISHNA 12

THE CENTRALITY OF SHALOM - PEACE!

 הֵלֵל וְשַׁמַּי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֵם. הֵלֵל אָמַר, הָיִי מִתְלַמְּדֵי שֵׁל אֶהְרֹן, אֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם וְרוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם, אֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת וּמִקְרָבָן לַתּוֹרָה:

Hillel and Shamai received the Torah from them (the Sages previously mentioned). Hillel used to say, “Be from the disciples of Aaron – love peace, pursue peace, love people, and bring them to Torah.” 

**FILL IN YOUR OWN QUESTIONS ON
THE MISHNA ABOVE BEFORE PEEKING
AT OUR QUESTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE!**

OUR QUESTIONS

- 1** Why does Hillel say, “Be from the students of Aaron” rather than simply “Be like Aaron” directly?
- 2** Also, it doesn’t say to be “like” the students of Aaron, but rather “from” the students of Aaron. What is this nuance in language trying to convey?
- 3** Love peace and pursue peace. Why do you need both? If you love it, won’t you pursue it? If you don’t love it, shouldn’t we obligate a person to pursue it anyway?
- 4** The verse in Psalms says “sur merah, v’aseh tov, bakesh sholom v’radfaihu” – separate from evil, seek peace, and pursue it. Why does the Mishna add love peace before pursuing it, when the verse never mentions love?
- 5** What is the connection to loving our fellow man, which is next? Shouldn’t loving our fellow man come first, and actually lead us to loving and pursuing peace?
- 6** How is loving and pursuing peace the lynchpin of the entire process? I think I would have imagined loving others would be the most potent motivator.
- 7** How does loving one’s fellow man lead to bringing them close to Torah? Also, why is this the end goal?

COMMENTARY BY RABBI MORDECHAI ROTTMAN

“Hillel and Shamai received the Torah from them (the Sages previously mentioned). Hillel used to say, “Be from the disciples of Aaron – love peace, pursue peace, love people, and bring them to Torah.”

SYNOPSIS:

Love of peace is a value that is an absolute must for mankind. And not just to love peace, but to pursue it. To actively seek out ways of creating peace and harmony among men.

These qualities are especially important for one who teaches Torah. For the one who teaches Torah without these qualities will find his words

A Deeper Look:

Aaron, the brother of Moses, was famous for the way he related to people. His love of humanity was so deep that there was virtually no one he did not befriend. Aaron was the kind of a person who made it his business to get to know who you are. The kind of a man that everyone knew and loved.

But what Aaron was most famous for was his love of peace. If there was an argument taking place between two people somewhere, Aaron was there to try to influence the two to make peace. There are others who love peace, but they do not love it enough to make it happen. Aaron not only loved peace, he pursued it as well.

The Sages teach us that G-d looked for a vessel in which He could place the blessings He gave the Jewish People, and found only one that could do the job. This vessel was Peace. Without peace, no blessing is worthwhile. A family can have a luxurious home filled with all the comforts the 20th century has to offer, and still be destroyed because of divisiveness and quarreling. Peace is the only vessel that can enable man to benefit from his other blessings.

Aaron's desire for peace was a result of his love for people. When there is love, peace is a

simple matter. Each party is willing to forgo personal wishes for the sake of the connectedness and unity that love craves. Peace without love is a tight-lipped tolerance of the other's right to exist. While this is certainly better than nothing, it is not a peace that can foster true serenity and bliss.

It is therefore no wonder that the Mishna advocating peace includes the idea of loving people as well.

Finally, the Mishna teaches us that a teacher of Torah must be one who loves people and desires peace. Although one may think that the love that the speaker has (or does not have) for the people he is addressing has little to do with the impact of his words, we see from this Mishna that this is not so. There is an emotional component to speech that may not be detected by the auditory nerve, but is detected by the heart nonetheless. In other words, there is more to the word than meets the ear.

"Words that leave a heart, enter a heart," said the Sages of Israel. A teacher of Torah must speak from his heart, with love of man, love of peace, and love of Torah.

SUMMARY

Peace is not a nice option for certain well-meaning individuals. It is a goal that everyone must strive for, for without it, we are but fragments of a vessel that cannot hold its own blessings.