

# CHAPTER 1: MISHNA 12: PART 2

by Rabbi Shaya Karlinsky

***Hillel and Shamai received (the tradition) from them (Shmaya and Avtalyon). Hillel says: Be from among the students of Aharon; one who loves peace, one who pursues peace, one who loves others and brings them closer to Torah.***

What is the distinction between the two elements of "loving peace" and "pursuing peace?" "Loving peace" means working to ensure that disagreements are not created. "Pursuing peace" means the pursuit of reconciliation, if and when they do arise. Once arguments and disagreements arise, it is in the nature of people to distance themselves as far as possible from each other. So it is necessary to PURSUE peace, going afar to bring together people who have moved apart.

Another reason that the verb "pursue" is used specifically in relation to peace is due to the elevated, transcendent nature of true peace. Division and conflict are inherent in the nature of the physical world. The source of peace and complete harmony resides in the Divine. (See Shoftim 6:24 indicating that "Shalom" is one of the names of G-d; and Shabbat 10a, which prohibits extending "Shalom" in a bath house, the same way other names of G-d may not be mentioned there.) Therefore, peace must be attained through "pursuit," minimizing the dimension of time in its attainment. Time is an element of the physical world, and the more elevated and spiritual the process, the less it should be extended over time. This is illustrated in the Mechilta on the verse (Shmot 12:17 and Rashi ibid.) " 'And you should watch the matzoth [that they not ferment]. ' Don't read it as 'matzoth' but as 'Mitzvoth' (both words are spelled the same) teaching us that if a Mitzvah comes to your hand, do not let it ferment (delay its performance)." Since a Mitzvah is a Divine activity, it should not be done with any time delay.

(Obviously, every activity that we perform in our physical existence requires time. However, for the activity to maintain its spiritual character, its performance should not wallow in time, not take LONGER than is necessary for its optimum performance. Leisurely pursuit of an activity, lolling around, is indicative of a materialistic and physical activity. It is significant to note that the fastest speed known in creation is the speed of light. No physical matter can move that fast, for it would reach infinite mass and require infinite energy to reach that speed. Only something with NO mass can move that fast...)

The prohibitions against allowing matzah to leaven and against allowing Mitzvoth to ferment

(referring to delay) are both rooted in the same principle. The Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt through a purely Divine process. Due to its Divine nature, it had no dimension of time, and the redemption was an instantaneous one (rather than a progressive one, which is the way all physical processes develop; see the Maharal's Gvurot HaShem, chapters 35 and 51 for a more extensive treatment of this concept). So the matzah, which represents this redemption, may not be allowed to leaven over time. A Mitzvah, too, is an act connected to the Divine, and as such it should not be extend over time (more than necessary). Therefore, we are taught not to allow a Mitzvah to "ferment," but to perform it with no delay.

Peace, harmony, is also a Divine reality, and as such, it should be PURSUED, allowing no time delay.

(For a more in depth treatment of "shalom" being a Divine reality, see the Maharal's Netivot Olam, Netiv Hashalom, Ch. 1; and Netiv Gemiluth Chasadim, end of Ch. 4. The world as created by G-d is composed of elements which are opposites, and mutually destructive: Fire and water; man and animal; man and the natural environment; even man and woman are listed by the Maharal as opposites which can be mutually destructive. Chazal teach us that the words "Ki tov," for it was good, are absent in the creations of the second day. For this is the day that division (between upper and lower waters) was created. It is only the unifying purpose of serving G-d which enables elements to co-exist harmoniously, rather than ultimately destroying each other. If we exist only for our selves, then every person and every creature views every other creation of G-d as a potential threat to its own existence. There is potential conflict in every interaction, and in fact the only thing that prevents mutual destruction is mutual self-interest, which has no real connection with true peace and harmony. The basis for true peace is the recognition that every element of creation exists for the united purpose of fulfilling G-d's purpose, the commitment to that purpose, and the recognition that every element is necessary to make its unique contribution. It is G-d Himself which is the true and only element which can unite everything in the world, leading to real peace.)

Aharon is also described as one who "loves others," which is a fitting characteristic for one who pursues peace, bringing others together until they are united. And he is described as one who "brings them closer to Torah." Just as he brings people closer to each other to create unity, he also brings people closer to G-d and His commandments, creates a unity between the Jewish people and their Heavenly Father. The common denominator of the lessons that Hillel is teaching us is that man should work to create an integrated and harmonious existence, leading to an ultimate unification of all creation.

(I think one hears in this lesson the fundamentally negative reality of leading a fragmented and compartmentalized life. As well as the echo of today's scientists in their search for a "grand unification theory" to explain nature.)

These lessons were taught by Hillel, the "Nasi," as the dimension of service rooted in the love of G-d. It is because one loves G-d that leads one to true love of others, G-d's creations. And this love of G-d

leads one to bring others closer to G-d's Torah. (This is a place to point out that the prerequisite of working to bring people closer to G-d's Torah is that there be true love of these people. It can't be motivated by trying to control others, telling others what to do, or in personal ego gratification. Unfortunately, these less than idealistic motivations can also be used to (try to) bring people closer to Torah... We will have more to say about this in a future shiur.)

A necessary character trait to be a lover and pursuer of peace is deep humility. (See Masechet Kalla, Braita 3) Pursuing peace requires that you extend yourself, going to each of the parties to work on getting them back together. Only a humble person can do this; and arrogant person would be focused on the fact that it is beneath his dignity to be running after other people. (Humility in no way compromises a person's awareness of himself and his true greatness. In fact, it is usually the insecure people, those who aren't sure of their true greatness and think little of themselves, that behave arrogantly. Professor Abraham Twerski's "Let Us Make Man" is highly recommended for deep insights in to the important concept of true humility coupled with an elevated self-concept.)

And of course, the pursuer of peace must love other people and be connected to them, something that requires humility. For arrogant people look to control other, and as such they are separated from them.

Hillel was famous for his humility. It is from this deep humility that the lessons of this Mishnah are taught to us. (See the stories told of him and his tremendous patience and humility in Shabbat 30b-31a.)

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