



BIBLICAL YARTZEIT

Of all the holy people in the Torah, from Abraham to Moses, the Torah only mentions the yartzeit of one – Aaron. Why?

TEACHER'S MANUAL



JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



ROSH CHODESH AV

הקדשה

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Rabbi Shimon Potash

Yartzeit 9 Av

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Yartzeit 22 Teves

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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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The Torah spells out the date of the passing of Aaron Hakohen, on the first of Av (Source 1). The Rebbe asks, why does the Torah mention this yartzeit, and exclude all others?

The Midrash describes Aaron's efforts to make peace between people (Source 2). This behavior was unique to Aaron, in contrast with other figures in the Torah who didn't always get along with everyone. This is why Aaron merited for his yartzeit to be mentioned. Additionally, Aaron's passing had such an effect on the Jewish people, it is plausible that the people gathered on that day in the next year to mark the occasion and grow in his ways.

B. 'Be a Student of Aaron'6

Ethics of the Fathers exhorts us to "Be of the disciples of Aaron; loving peace ..." (Source 3)

The Rebbe asks:

A. If the objective is to be a "lover of peace," why does it matter that Aaron was the one who exemplified this? When the Mishnah tells us to study Torah regularly, does it cite Moses' conduct?

B. Acting in a way that contradicts peace is against the Torah; why does loving peace fall into the category of "beyond the letter of the law?"

In chapter 32 of Tanya, the Alter Rebbe extolls the virtue of loving our fellow Jews, even people who are not righteous. The Alter Rebbe cites the above Mishnah, and highlights various aspects of it. (Source 4)

The Rebbe asks:

A. The relevant section of the Mishnah seems to be "love the creations and bring them close to Torah," that one should also love those who are only "creations." Why does the Alter Rebbe add "Be a student of Aaron; love peace?"

B. The mishnah says "Hillel says" but the Alter Rebbe references him as Hillel the Elder. Why?

C. The Unique Peace of Aaron.....10

The Midrash relates another story about Aaron that illustrates his love of Jews, and how he would engage sinners and influence them to change their ways (Source 5). This conduct is not part of the biblical obligation to love fellow Jews; it falls under the rubric of “acts of piety.” That’s why the Mishnah tells us to be a student of Aaron – because his conduct was a way of life, and in order to emulate it one must be his “student.” Hillel said this Mishnah, and Hillel’s conduct was similar. The Talmud recounts a story of a gentile who approached Hillel wishing to convert on the condition that he could become a high priest ... Hillel welcomed him and converted him. (Source 6)

Now we can understand why the Alter Rebbe quotes “Be a student of Aaron,” because it is from Aaron’s conduct we learn to engage even the sinners. This is why the Alter Rebbe refers to Hillel the Elder, a dignified title, to give credence to his opinion in favor of Shammai’s opinion.

Story: Honoring a “Heretic” in the synagogue?

Introduction

This week is Rosh Chodesh Menachem Av, the first day of the month of Menachem Av. On that day, we mark the yartzeit of Aaron the High Priest. What is special about that day, and how is it relevant to us today?

שיעור זה

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תורת מנחם ה'תשל"ה כרך פ"א עמוד 143

A. The Only Yartzeit in the Torah

Last week's Torah reading of Masei, recounts the journeys of the Jewish people, and the Torah counts 42 stops they made, without detailing what they did there, just listing the locations.

Maimonides explains that the objective of this very brief description is to permanently record the miraculous lifestyle the Jewish people enjoyed at this time. G-d knew that with time, the realists and cynics will find it hard to believe a story claiming that a nation of millions spent 40 years in the desert without basic necessities like bread and water.

They would suggest that the Jews lived near the edge of the desert near cities where they bought food and water. Therefore the Torah names all the places they stopped, deep in the desert, to demonstrate that it would have been impossible to obtain food and water from traveling merchants or stores, and that it was only by miracle that they lasted 40 years.

However, in the middle of this brief retelling, the Torah pauses with a specific incident that occurred on Mount Hor.

The Passing of Aaron

Source 1 Numbers 33:38-39

Student's
pg. 1

Aaron the priest ascended Mount Hor at G-d's bidding and died there, in the fortieth year of the children of Israel's exodus from Egypt, in the fifth month, on the first of the month. Aaron was one hundred and twenty three years old when he died at Mount Hor.

וַיַּעַל אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן אֶל הָרִי
הַהוּא עַל פִּי ה' וַיָּמָת שָׁם
בְּשָׁנַת הָאַרְבָּעִים לְצֵאת
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם
מִצְרַיִם בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַחֲמִישִׁי
בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ. וַאֲהֲרֹן בֶּן
שָׁלֹשׁ וָעֶשְׂרִים וּמָאתַיִם
שָׁנָה בָּמָוֶתוֹ בְּהָרֵי הָהָר.

>> The Rebbe

Why Aaron?

Student's
pg. 1

The schoolchild studying the Torah for the first time will have a question: "I haven't seen any other instance in the Torah where

כאן מתעוררת שאלה אצל הבן חמש
למקרא: לא מצאתי לו חבר בכל המקרא
- טוען הבן חמש - שהכתוב יפרש את

Student's pg. 1 the date of a person's passing is specified." The date of passing is not specified for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah and Adam—and not for Aaron's siblings Moses and Miriam. Why then does the Torah specify the precise date of Aaron's passing, "in the fortieth year . . . in the fifth month, on the first of the month."

We do actually know the dates of passing for Moses and Miriam—Moses on Adar 7, and Miriam on Nisan 10. But these dates are deduced in the Oral Torah through various calculations. The date of Aaron's passing, by contrast, is spelled out explicitly in the Written Torah, "in the fifth month, on the first of the month."

Student's pg. 2

The Peacemaker

Student's pg. 2 The beginner student already learned about the event of Aaron's passing, in the portion of Chukat. The verse there states "the whole community learned that Aaron had expired, and all the Israelites mourned for him thirty days." Rashi explains that "both the men and the women all mourned, because Aaron would pursue peace and restore love between disputants and between husbands and wives."

Source 2 Avot Derabi Natan 12

Student's pg. 2 When two people were quarreling, Aaron would approach one:

שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אָדָם שֶׁעָשׂוּ מְרִיבָה זֶה עִם זֶה, הָלַךְ אַהֲרֹן וַיֵּשֶׁב אֲצֶל אֶחָד מֵהֶם.

תאריך הפטירה?! לא מצינו זאת אצל אברהם, יצחק ויעקב, ולפני זה אצל נח ואדם הראשון, וגם לא אצל משה רבינו (אחיו של אהרן) ומרים (אחותו של אהרן), ואם כן, מהי אפוא הסיבה לכך שבנוגע לפטירת אהרן הכהן מספרת התורה את התאריך המדויק "בשנת הארבעים... בחודש החמישי באחד לחודש"?!

אמנם, גם בנוגע למשה ומרים ידוע היום שבו מתו - משה רבינו בשבעה באדר¹, ומרים בעשירי בניסן², אבל את זאת למדים בתורה שבעל פה על פי חשבונות כו', מה שאין כן בנוגע לאהרן הכהן - מפורש בתורה שבכתב שמת "בחדש החמישי באחד לחודש"!

והביאור: הבן חמש למקרא למד כבר על המאורע של מיתת אהרן בפרשת חוקת, ששם נאמר: "ויראו כל העדה כי גווע אהרן ויבכו את אהרן שלושים יום כל בית ישראל", ומפרש רש"י: "האנשים והנשים, לפי שהיה אהרן רודף שלום ומטיל אהבה בין בעלי מריבה ובין איש לאשתו".

1. מגילה יג, ב.
2. טוש"ע א"ח סתק"פ ס"ב. שו"ע אדה"ז שם סתק"ל ס"א.

Student's
pg. 2

"My son," Aaron said, "Your friend is full of regret and tearing his clothing, saying 'Woe is to me, how can I raise my eyes and see my friend; I am ashamed for I am at fault to him.'" Aaron would sit with him until he had removed any feelings of animosity from his heart.

Then, he went to the other party, telling them the same thing, until they too, were free of animosity.

אמר לו: בְּנִי, רֵאָה חֵבְרֶךָ מֵהוּ
אוֹמֵר, מִטְרַף אֶת לְבוֹ וְקוֹרֵעַ אֶת
בְּגָדָיו, וְאוֹמֵר אוֹי לִי הֵיֵאָךְ אֲשָׁא
אֶת עֵינַי וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת חֵבְרִי, בְּשָׂתִי
הֵימָנוּ שְׂאֲנִי הוּא שֹׁפְרֶחְתִּי עָלָיו.
הוּא יוֹשֵׁב אֲצֻלוֹ עַד שֶׁמִּסִּיר קִנְאָה
מִלְּבוֹ.

וְהוֹלֵךְ אַהֲרֹן וְיוֹשֵׁב אֲצֻל הָאֲחֵר,
וְאוֹמֵר לוֹ: בְּנִי רֵאָה חֵבְרֶךָ מֵהוּ
אוֹמֵר, מִטְרַף אֶת לְבוֹ וְקוֹרֵעַ אֶת
בְּגָדָיו, וְאוֹמֵר אוֹי לִי הֵיֵאָךְ אֲשָׁא
אֶת עֵינַי וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת חֵבְרִי, בְּשָׂתִי
הֵימָנוּ שְׂאֲנִי הוּא שֹׁפְרֶחְתִּי עָלָיו.

הוּא יוֹשֵׁב אֲצֻלוֹ עַד שֶׁמִּסִּיר קִנְאָה
מִלְּבוֹ.

>> The Rebbe

Unique Conduct

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pg. 3

This unique quality is only found in Aaron—not in Moses and Miriam, and not in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (On the contrary, Abraham had a dispute with Nimrod, Isaac with Ishmael, and Jacob with Esau.) We also don't find this quality in Noah and Adam.

The only person in whom we find the quality of "pursuing peace and restoring love between disputants" in such a strong way is Aaron.

Since at the death of Aaron there was a unique and unparalleled feature, there is no wonder that the Torah accords his passing special importance by specifying the precise date, "in the fifth month, on the first of the month."

מעלה מיוחדת זו - מצינו דווקא אצל אהרן,
לא אצל משה ומרים, ולא אצל אברהם,
יצחק ויעקב [ואדרבה: אברהם - היה
לו ריב עם נמרוד, יצחק - עם ישמעאל,
יעקב - עם עשן], וכמו כן לא אצל נח
ואדם הראשון.

היחידי שמצינו אצלו בהדגשה את המעלה
של "רודף שלום ומטיל אהבה בין בעלי
מריבה", הוא - אהרן.

ומכיון שבנוגע למיתת אהרן מצינו מעלה
מיוחדת שלא מצינו אצל משהו אחר - שוב
אין כל פלא שהתורה מייחסת חשיבות
מיוחדת למיתת אהרן, בכך שמפרשת את
התאריך המדויק של יום מיתתו - "בחודש
החמישי באחד לחודש" (אף שלא פירשה
זאת אצל אחר).

Student's pg. 3 We can take this further and suggest that since the entire people mourned Aaron's death together, it follows logically that when the anniversary of this event came the next year the entire people gathered together to commemorate the event, and consider how they can better follow his example.

The Torah specifies the exact date of Aaron's death because it was an event of national importance, an event commemorated every year through the generations. By contrast, we have no indication that the entire Jewish people were present at the passings of Moses and Miriam, and as a result these events weren't commemorated by the entire nation in subsequent years.

Student's pg. 4

A Timely Message

Student's pg. 4 Aaron's general conduct is closely related to the theme of the period of Bein Hametzarim, the three weeks of mourning commemorating the destruction of the Temple.

The reason for the destruction of the Temple—and the subsequent exile—was because there was baseless hatred among the Jewish people. This is the opposite of Aaron's conduct, absolute love for fellow Jews.

This has special relevance for us during the three weeks, and especially in the nine days between the first of the month of Av—the date of Aaron's passing—and Tishah Be'av. (Most of the mourning customs mentioned in

ולהמתקת הענין יש להוסיף בזה: מכיון שבמיתת אהרן נכחו "כל העדה", וכולם יחדיו התאבלו על מותו - מובן, שבבוא יום זה בשנה הבאה, התאספו כל העדה יחדיו כדי להזכיר ולהיזכר שוב במאורע זה, להתבונן בכל הדרוש תיקון בהליכה בדרכיו של אהרן, וכיוצא בזה.

ומטעם זה מפרשת התורה את התאריך המדויק של מיתת אהרן - מכיון שזהו מאורע שנוגע לכל בני ישראל, מאורע שזוכרים אותו משנה לשנה ומדור לדור; מה שאין כן בנוגע למיתת משה ומרים וכיוצא בזה - שאין כל הכרח שבמאורע זה נכחו כל העדה, ובמילא, גם בשנה שלאחרי זה לא נשמר זיכרון מאורע זה על ידי כל בני ישראל.

והנה, כללות הנהגתו של אהרן קשורה במיוחד עם הזמן של "בין המצרים":

הסיבה לחורבן בית שני (והגלות שלאחריה) היא - "מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם"³ היפך הנהגתו של אהרן - אהבת ישראל בתכלית השלימות.

ומזה מובן, שכאשר נמצאים בזמן של "בין המצרים", ובפרט החל מתשעת הימים שמראש חודש מנחם-אב (יום פטירתו של אהרן) עד תשעה באב [שכן, רובם ככולם של המנהגים של היפך השמחה שב"שולחן-ערוך" עצמו הם בנוגע לתשעת הימים בלבד] - יש להוסיף ביתר שאת וביתר עוז בכל הענינים של

3. יומא ט, ב.

Student's
pg. 4

the original Code of Jewish Law are only for the nine days, while the restrictions for the three weeks are added in the Rema's glosses.) At this time we need to increase in all matters related to love for our fellow Jews, to the point of "baseless love." This will negate the reason for the exile, and as a result the exile itself.

אהבת ישראל, עד לאופן של "אהבת
חינם", שעל ידי זה מבטלים את סיבת
הגלות, ובמילא - בטל המסובב.

משיחת שבת פרשת מסעי, מברכים החודש
מנחם-אב, ה'תשד"מ.
בלתי מוגה
תורת מנחם ה'תשד"מ כרך ד' עמוד 2277

B. "Be A Student of Aaron"

In *Ethics of the Fathers*, we learn "matters of piety"—things one should do that are beyond the letter of the law. One such exhortation is to "be of the disciples of Aaron":

Source 3 Ethics of the Fathers 1:12

Student's
pg. 5

Hillel says: "Be of the disciples of Aaron: loving peace and pursuing peace; loving the creations and bringing them closer to the Torah."

הֵלֵל אָמַר, הָיוּ מִתְלַמְּדֵי
שֶׁל אַהֲרֹן, אוֹהֲבֵי שְׁלוֹם וְרוֹדְפֵי
שְׁלוֹם, אוֹהֲבֵי אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת
וּמְקַרְבֵּן לַתּוֹרָה.

>> The Rebbe

Why is it Important to Imitate?

Student's
pg. 5

Why was it necessary for the Mishnah to begin with "be of the disciples of Aaron?" The main thing is the practical instruction to "love peace"—why is it important to note that Aaron acted like this?

The Mishnah gives other instructions, such as "make your Torah study a permanent fixture of your life," without providing an introduction like "be of the disciples of Moses, who received the Torah at Sinai and devoted his life to it" or some other example of a sage who was completely devoted to Torah study. Similarly the instruction "be cautious in judgment" isn't introduced with an example of anyone's conduct. Such elaboration is more appropriate to the Talmud or commentaries on the

צריך להבין: מהי הצורך בהקדמה "הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן" - הרי העיקר הוא שצריכה להיות ההנהגה באופן של "אוהב שלום וכו'", ומדוע זה נוגע שכך התנהג אהרן?

מדוע זה שונה משאר הוראות המשנה, כ"עשה תורתך קבע"⁴, שלא נאמר בהקדמה לזה "הוי מתלמידיו של משה רבינו, שקיבל תורה מסיני, ומסר נפשו עליה" וכו', או דוגמא מפלוני שהיתה הנהגתו באופן שתורתו אומנתו; ועל דרך זה בהוראה "הוי מתונים בדין"⁵, שלא הובאה ראייה מהנהגתו של פלוני (שזהו ענין ששייך לגמרא או למפרשי המשנה), ואם כן, גם כאן היה לו לומר

4. שם משנה ט"ו.
5. שם משנה א'.

Student's Mishnah. Why does the Mishnah in our case
pg. 5 introduce the instruction to "love peace" with the statement, "be of the disciples of Aaron?"

"הוי אוהב שלום וכו'", ולמה הקדים
"הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן"?

Is Peace Extra?

Student's An additional point that requires explanation:
pg. 6 Why does "love peace" belong in Ethics of the Fathers, which is devoted to instructions for pious conduct? Conflict is clearly forbidden by the Torah, as the Sages teach, "anyone who perpetuates a dispute violates a prohibition, as it is stated: 'don't be like Korach and his assembly.'" Moreover, "the entire Torah was given in order to make peace in the world," in the words of Maimonides. Peace doesn't seem to be an element of extra pious conduct.

כמו כן, לכאורה אינו מובן: מהי
השייכות של "אוהב שלום וכו'" לפרקי
אבות שענינם "דברי חסידות" - בה
בשעה שהענין של היפך השלום הוא
איסור מפורש בתורה, כמאמר חכמינו
ז"ל⁷ "כל המחזיק במחלוקת עובר בלאו,
שנאמר⁸ ולא יהיה כקרח וכעדתו",
ויתירה מזו: "כל התורה ניתנה לעשות
שלום בעולם" (כמו שכתב הרמב"ם¹⁰),
כך, שבשביל ענין השלום אין צורך
ב"דברי חסידות"!!

This Mishnah raises two questions:

A. The Mishnah advises us to adopt many positive practices in our life, but usually doesn't provide a role model of that behavior. Only here does the mishnah give an example—Aaron. Why?

B. Why is loving peace considered "beyond the letter of the law?" It's a mitzvah!

Tanya's Citation From The Mishna

Student's We can add insight to this mishnah from the
pg. 6 way the Alter Rebbe cites it in chapter 32 of Tanya:

ויש להוסיף ולדייק במשנה זו כפי
שהביאה רבינו הזקן בתניא פרק ל"ב:

The Rebbe notes that the Alter Rebbe cites this Mishnah, but highlights specific aspects:

The Rebbe will analyze the emphasis the Alter Rebbe places and ask why those parts are emphasized.

נמנה במנין המצוות וכו' (ראה שאלות פ' קרח. סהמ"צ
להרמב"ם שורש שמיני, רמב"ן שם ועוד, ובג"כ שם. מל"ת מה.
וראה לקו"ש ח"י ע' 104 הערה 19, ח"י"ח ע' 204 הערה 22).
10. הל' חנוכה בסופו.

6. ראה ב"ק ל, א.
7. סנהדרין קי, א.
8. קרח יז, ה.
9. כפרשי הדעות בזה – אם הוא אסמכתא או לאו גמור, ואם

Source 4 Tanya, chapter 32

In this chapter, the Alter Rebbe writes about Ahavat Yisrael—love for our fellow Jews; everyone, even if they may not be the most righteous people:

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Of this situation, Hillel said, “Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace etc., loving the creations and bringing them closer to the Torah.” This usage of the term “creations” in reference to human beings means that even those who are far from G-d’s Torah and His service, for which reason they are classified simply as “creations”—indicating that the fact that they are G-d’s creations is their sole virtue—even those, one must attract with strong cords of love. Perhaps thereby one will be able, after all, to draw them close to the Torah and the service of G-d. Even if one fails in that aspect, he has not forfeited the merit of the mitzvah of neighborly love [which he has fulfilled by his efforts in this direction].

הנה על זה אמר הלל
הזקן: "הוי מתלמידי
של אהרן, אוהב שלום
וכו', אוהב את הבריות
ומקרבן לתורה".
לומר, שאף הרחוקים
מתורת ה' ועבודתו,
ולכן נקראים בשם
"בריות" בעלמא –
צריך למשכן ברחמי
עבודת אהבה, וכולי
האי ואולי יוכל לקרבן
לתורה ועבודת ה'; והן
לא – לא הפסיד שכן
מצות אהבת רעים.

The Alter Rebbe interprets the term “creations” to mean that we must love everyone, even those with seemingly no redeeming qualities—other than being created by G-d. Hillel doesn’t say to only love the righteous, but the creations – everyone.

The order of Hillel’s teaching is first to “love the creations” and then to “bring them close to Torah.” Loving the “creations” is not merely a method of bringing them close to Torah, but is an end in and of itself. If one is able to bring the other closer to Torah as a result of this love, good for them! They are fulfilling the Mishnah’s directive to “be a student of Aaron.” However, even if they did not bring their fellow to Torah, they have fulfilled the mitzvah of loving a fellow Jew.

>> The Rebbe

An Intriguing Quote

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A. Why does the Alter Rebbe write “be of the students of Aaron, loving peace etc.?” In the context of the Tanya, the key phrase is “love the creations and draw them close to the Torah,” which teaches us that even those

(א) מדוע כותב רבינו הזקן "הוי מתלמידי של אהרן אוהב שלום וכו'" - לכאורה, כאן נוגע בעיקר הענין של "אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה", לומר שאף הרחוקים מתורת ה' ועבודתו, ולכן נקראים בשם

Student's pg. 7 who are distant from Torah and Divine service, to the point that they are termed merely "creations," need to be brought closer to Torah. Why then does the Alter Rebbe also cite the words "loving peace?" He did omit the words "pursuing peace," so he already isn't quoting the full passage.

בריות בעלמא, צריך... לקרבן לתורה כו", ואם כן, למה הביא גם המילים "אוהב שלום", ולאידך, השמיט את המילים "רודף שלום", כך, שמכיון שאינו מביא את לשון המשנה בשלימותה, לא היה צריך לצטט גם את המילים "אוהב שלום"?

Hillel the "Elder"

Student's pg. 7 B. The Mishnah says "Hillel said." Why does the Alter Rebbe add "Hillel the Elder said?" We can't answer that he added "the Elder" so that we wouldn't make the mistake of thinking that the reference is to one of the other sages by the name of Hillel. The Alter Rebbe cites in Tanya teachings from other sages who shared names, yet he didn't feel the need to clarify exactly which sage it is in these instances. Moreover, the student of Tanya can be assumed to know already which Hillel this is, and doesn't need any clarification.

ב) במשנה נאמר "הלל אומר", ולמה מוסיף בתניא ש"אמר הלל הזקן"? ואין לומר שהוסיף "הלל הזקן" כדי לשלול טעות שהכוונה להלל אחר (כי יש כמה שנקראו בשם הלל) - שהרי מצינו בתניא שמות נוספים של תנאים שנקראו באותו שם, ובכל זאת לא הוסיף רבינו הזקן סימן שכוונתו לפלוני! ומה גם שזהו דבר שאין בו צורך למי שכבר לומד תניא, שבוודאי ידע מעצמו ולא יטעה בכך!

There are two questions on the way the Alter Rebbe quotes the Mishnah:

A. The Alter Rebbe wants to bring proof that loving a fellow Jew applies also to not good people. To do so, he would need to quote the words "Love the creations and bring them close to Torah." Why did he add the words "Be a student of Aaron, love peace ...?"

B. Why does he emphasize that Hillel the Elder said this teaching?

C. The Unique Peace of Aaron

>> The Rebbe

Even the wicked

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When the Mishnah says “be of the students of Aaron, love peace” etc. it intends to teach us not only to “love peace,” but to do it like Aaron. Avot Derabbi Natan elaborates on Aaron’s conduct, relating that Aaron would even draw wicked people close, speaking to them with a smile. The next day, when that person would want to commit a transgression, they would think to themselves, “what will Aaron say when he hears about this? I should rather act in a manner that befits a person whom Aaron talks to.” This conduct of Aaron is not a Biblical obligation, but a pious form of conduct, and this is why it features in Ethics of the Fathers.

הביאור בזה: המשנה אומרת “הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן, אוהב שלום וכו’”, היינו, לא רק “אוהב שלום” סתם, אלא כפי שהיתה הנהגתו המיוחדת של אהרן, כפי שמובא באבות דרבי נתן¹¹, שאהרן היה מקרב אפילו אדם רשע, ומדבר עמו בסבר פנים יפות, ולמחרת, כשאותו אחד רצה לעשות עבירה, הוא היה חושב לעצמו, מה יעשה אהרן כשזה יוודע לו? עדיף שאתנהג בצורה שמתאימה לאדם שאהרן מדבר עמו... שהנהגה כזו שאהרן נהג בה, היא לא מצווה מן התורה אלא “דברי חסידות”, ולכן היא מופיעה במסכת אבות.

Source 5 Avot Derabi Natan 12

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What does it mean to love peace?

One should love peace between Jews, between every individual, as Aaron did. As the verse states, “True teaching was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. In peace and equity he went with Me, and he brought many back from iniquity” (Malachi 2:6).

Rabbi Meir says: What does “He brought many back from iniquity” teach us?

אוהב שלום כיצד?

מלמד שיהא אדם אוהב שלום בישראל בין כל אחד ואחד, בדרך שהיה אהרן אוהב שלום בין כל אחד ואחד. שנאמר: “תורת אמת היתה בפיהו, ועולה לא נמצא בשפתיו, בשלום ובמישור הלך אתי, ורבים השיב מעון”.

רבי מאיר אומר: מה תלמוד לומר “ורבים השיב מעון”?

11. פי”ב, ג.

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When Aaron went on his way and met a wicked person, he would greet them. The next day, that person had an urge to sin. He told himself: Woe is to me! How will I raise my eyes and see Aaron? I am ashamed that he greeted me. Thus, this individual stopped himself from sinning.

כְּשֶׁהָיָה אֶהֱרֵן מְהִלָּה בְּדֶרֶךְ,
פָּגַע בּוֹ בְּאָדָם רָשָׁע, וְנָתַן
לוֹ שְׁלוֹם. לְמָחָר בִּקֵּשׁ אוֹתוֹ
הָאִישׁ לַעֲבֹר עֲבֵרָה. אָמַר: אוֹי
לִי, הֵיכָּה אֶשָּׂא עֵינַי אַחֵר כֶּךָ
וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת אֶהֱרֵן, בְּשִׁתִּי הֵימָנוּ
שְׁנָתָן לִי שְׁלוֹם. נִמְצָא אוֹתוֹ
הָאִישׁ מוֹנֵעַ עֲצָמוֹ מִן הָעֲבֵרָה.

There are two well-known stories that come up when speaking about the love Aaron had for Jews:

The first, and better-known one, is that when he'd meet a couple or pair quarreling, he would speak with them and bring peace between them.

The second, perhaps lesser-known: He maintained good relationships with questionable individuals. This connection itself had the effect of preventing them from sinning, because they'd be embarrassed to speak to him again after such behavior.

In other words, Aaron brought about peace between so many, even wicked people! This extent is not required by the Torah; it is beyond the letter of the law—which is why it appears here in Ethics of the Fathers.

>> The Rebbe

Two Schools

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The Mishnah states "Hillel says, be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace" etc. The Mishnah uses the words "be of the students of Aaron," not just words to the effect of "follow the path of Aaron."

There are two general modes of conduct—students of Moses and students of Aaron. Students of Moses act in accordance with Torah law, which states that a person is not obligated to seek out every Jew—even wicked people—in order to engage with them and ask them how they are doing. Therefore, Moses did not have a relationship with all Jews. Aaron, however, acted

וְזֶהוּ "הֵלֵל אוֹמֵר הוּא מִתְלַמִּידוֹ שֶׁל אֶהֱרֵן אוֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם וְכוּ'" - וּמַדְיִיק לֹאמַר "הוּא מִתְלַמִּידוֹ שֶׁל אֶהֱרֵן", וְלֹא הִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּדַרְכּוֹ שֶׁל אֶהֱרֵן וְכִיוּצָא בְּזֶה:

בְּכֻלָּלוֹת יִשְׁנֵי שְׁתֵּי הִנְהֻגוֹת שׁוֹנוֹת - תְּלַמִּידֵי מֹשֶׁה וְתְלַמִּידֵי אֶהֱרֵן, וְהַחִילוֹק בֵּינֵיהֶן: הִנְהֻגַת מֹשֶׁה הִיטָה עַל פִּי דִינֵי הַתּוֹרָה, שֶׁעַל פִּיהֶם אָדָם לֹא מְחֻיֵּב לִלְכֹּת לְכָל יְהוּדִי - אִפִּילוּ רָשָׁע, לְהִתְעַסֵּק עִמּוֹ וּלְשֹׂאוֹל בְּשִׁלוּמוֹ, וְלִכְנֹן לְמֹשֶׁה לֹא הָיָה קֶשֶׁר עִם כָּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. מֵה שְׁאִין כֵּן הִנְהֻגַת אֶהֱרֵן הִיטָה לְפָנִים מִשּׁוֹרֵת הַדִּין, הוּא קִירֵב

beyond the letter of the law, drawing everyone close, even wicked people. This is why the verse states regarding Aaron's passing "the entire Jewish people cried," while regarding Moses's passing it only states "the Jewish people cried."

This is why the Mishnah states, "be of the disciples of Aaron." There are two possible paths of conduct, that of Moses and that of Aaron. The Mishnah specifies that we need to be students of Aaron.

In order to pursue such peace with evildoers, we need to be a student of Aaron. This attitude cannot be adopted just like that, by the way; it is a way of life.

We see this in our generation with the way the Rebbe educated Chabad, to accept everyone, from all backgrounds, without difference. People are often amazed and find it heartwarming that Chabad doesn't judge anyone and accepts everyone as they are. How do they do this? The answer is, we are students of the Rebbe. It's not a message emailed off from headquarters; it is an education of generations, by the Rebbe, who believed in this and fostered it in all his students and followers.

To pursue peace with the "wicked" we need to be students of Aaron. This isn't something that comes by itself; it's a way of life. In other words: Most people have a kind of person they feel comfortable around; they feel at home with moral people, people of peace who think and act like them. Then there are the people we aren't comfortable around. Perhaps because of their ethnicity, their language, their sketchy business dealings, or a culture we aren't used to and perceive as unethical or rude. We tend to avoid hanging around with such people, and we engage with them as little as possible. Aaron would go out of his comfort zone. He made contact with people from the underworld, shady characters, people of less cultured backgrounds, less ethical people. He would wish them a good morning and have a coffee with them, embracing them warmly.

His objective was twofold: Firstly, he loved everyone without distinction—boundless love. Secondly, just maintaining contact with them influenced them positively.

The Mishnah advises us all to learn from Aaron; we must all go beyond our comfort zones and get to know others, even if they are very different from us and act with lower moral standards than we expect. We should get to know them, connect with them and influence them to better themselves.

(Besides, this is not one-sided. It may be that in some matters, I live more morally than another,

את כולם - אפילו את הרשעים, ולכן בפטירתו נאמר "ויבכו גו' כל בית ישראל"¹², ואילו בפטירתו של משה נאמר רק "ויבכו בני ישראל"¹³, ולא כל בית ישראל.

ובזה מובן דיוק הלשון "הוי מתלמידי של אהרן". מכיון שישנן שתי הנהגות - הנהגת משה והנהגת אהרן - לכן מדייק שעלינו להיות "מתלמידי של אהרן".

12. חוקת כ, כט.
13. ברכה לז, ח.

and in other matters, he lives more morally than I do. If we connect, we can learn from each other and both become better people.

There may be one person who studies a lot of Torah but does not excel in mitzvot and acts of kindness to others. On the other hand, his neighbor might be a simpler person who neither studies Torah nor is particularly educated but has a heart of gold and helps all the needy in the neighborhood.)

We can take an example from the way Chabad Houses welcome everyone, from all walks of life and backgrounds, without any discrimination. People are always amazed that in Chabad, no one is judged, and everyone is accepted as they are. "How do you do it?" they ask. The answer is that we are "students of the Rebbe." This is not a message sent from headquarters. It is the education of generations. The Rebbe believed in it and instilled it in all his followers.

Hillel The Forbearing

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Hillel exemplified this conduct in his own life. Hillel and Shammai were both students of Shemayah and Avtalyon, but they had opposing modes of conduct. Shammai was strict and exacting, so when a non-Jew came to him and asked to convert in order to become a High Priest, he pushed him away. Hillel, by contrast, embraced him.

וזהו גם החילוק בין הלל לשמאי - שאף ששניהם קיבלו משמיעה ואבטליון, היו אצלם הנהגות הפכיות (כמבואר בהמשך תער"ב¹⁴ איך יתכן הדבר) - שהנהגת שמאי היתה באופן של דיוק ודקדוק בדיני התורה, ולכן כשבא נכרי לפני שמאי ואמר לו גיירני על מנת שתשימני כהן גדול, דחפו כו', ואילו כשבא לפני הלל, קירב אותו וכו'¹⁵.

Source 6 Talmud, Shabbat 31a

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There was another incident involving a gentile who was passing behind the study hall and heard the voice of a teacher who was teaching Torah to his students and saying the verse: "And these are the garments which they shall make: A breastplate, and an efod..."

The gentile said: These garments, for whom are they designated? The students said to him: For the High Priest.

שוב מַעֲשֶׂה בְּגוֹי אֶחָד שֶׁהָיָה עוֹבֵר אַחֲרֵי בֵּית הַמִּדְרָשׁ, וְשָׁמַע קוֹל סוֹפֵר שֶׁהָיָה אוֹמֵר: "וְאַלֶּה הַבְּגָדִים אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה חוֹשֵׁן וְאַפֻּד".

אָמַר: הֲלֵלוּ לִמִּי? אָמְרוּ לוֹ: לְכֹהֵן גָּדוֹל.

14. ח"א פ"ג (ע' כא [כח]).
15. שבת לא, א.

The gentile said to himself: I will go and convert so that they will install me as High Priest.

He came before Shammai and said to him: Convert me on condition that you install me as High Priest. Shammai drove him away with the measuring stick in his hand. He came before Hillel; and Hillel converted him.

Hillel said to him: Is it not the way of the world that only one who knows the protocols of royalty is appointed king? Go and learn the royal protocols by engaging in Torah study.

He went and read the Bible. When he reached the verse which says: "And the common man that draws near shall be put to death" (Numbers 1:51), the convert said to Hillel: With regard to whom is the verse speaking? Hillel said to him: Even with regard to David, king of Israel. The convert reasoned to himself: If the Jewish people are called G-d's children, and due to the love that G-d loved them he called them: "Israel is My son, My firstborn" (Exodus 4:22), and nevertheless it is written about them: And the common man that draws near shall be put to death; a mere convert who came without merit, with nothing more than his staff and traveling bag, all the more so that this applies to him, as well.

The convert came before Shammai and told him that he retracts his demand to appoint him High Priest, saying: Am I at all worthy to be High Priest? Is it not written in the Torah: And the common man that draws near shall be put to death?

He came before Hillel and said to him: Hillel the patient, may blessings rest upon your head as you brought me under the wings of the Divine Presence.

אמר אותו גוי בעצמו: אלך
ואתגזיר בשביל שישימוני
כהן גדול.

בא לפני שמאי, אמר לו:
גזירני על מנת שתשימוני
כהן גדול. דחפו באמת
הבגין שפידו. בא לפני
הלל, גזיר אותו.

אמר לו: כלום מעמידין
מלך אלא מי שיודע
טכסיסי מלכות, לך למוד
טכסיסי מלכות.

הלך וקרא. כיון שהגיע
”והזר הקרוב יומת”, אמר
לו: מקרא זה על מי נאמר?
אמר לו: אפילו על דוד מלך
ישראל. נשא אותו גר קל
וחומר בעצמו: ומה ישאל
שנקראו בנים למקום
ומתוך אהבה שאהבם קרא
להם: "בני בכורי ישראל",
כתיב עליהם "והזר הקרוב
יומת" — גר הקל שפא
במקלו ובתרמילו, על אחת
במה וכמה.

בא לפני שמאי, אמר לו:
כלום ראוי אני להיות כהן
גדול? והלא כתיב בתורה:
”והזר הקרוב יומת”.

בא לפני הלל, אמר לו:
ענותן הלל, גזירני לך ברכות
על ראשי, שקרבתי תחת
כנפי השכינה.

>> The Rebbe

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Hillel embraced everyone, and his students did the same. We are told about Beit Hillel (the School of Hillel) that they were "agreeable and forbearing and would quote the opinion of Beit Shammai before their own." This is why it is emphasized that Hillel is the one who advised us to be students of Aaron and pursue peace.

וזאת מכיון שהנהגתו של הלל היתה לקרב את כולם, ובהתאם לכך היתה גם הנהגת בית הלל, "שנוחין ועלובין היו כו' שמקדימין דברי בית שמאי לדבריהן"¹⁶. ולכן "הלל (דווקא) אומר הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן אוהב שלום וכו'", שצריכה להיות ההנהגה באופן של "תלמידיו של אהרן".

We see in the story of Hillel and the convert how patient and friendly he was even to a non-Jew who wanted to convert in order to be a High Priest. Hillel conveyed this form of conduct to his students, and they were also modest and patient. This is why it is specifically Hillel, who acted like a student of Aaron himself, who urges us all to be students of Aaron.

Be Students of Aaron

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Based on the above we can also explain why the Alter Rebbe in Tanya cites not only "loving the creations and bringing them closer to Torah," but also the beginning of the Mishnah, "be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace."

The Alter Rebbe doesn't cite the words "pursuing peace" because they aren't relevant to the context in Tanya. But he does cite "be of the disciples of Aaron" who drew even the wicked close, because this underlines that we must draw "creations" close all the more. "Creations" refers to people that have no quality other than their being creations of G-d. But they aren't wicked, G-d forbid, and they certainly need to be brought close to Torah.

ועל פי זה יש לבאר גם את דברי רבינו הזקן בתניא שמביא (לא רק את הענין של "אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה", אלא גם) את התחלת המשנה "הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן אוהב שלום וכו'":

את הענין של "רודף שלום" - לא מביא רבינו הזקן, כיון שאין זה נוגע לענין המבואר בתניא כאן; אבל הוא כן מביא את הענין של "הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן", שקירב אפילו רשע כו', שמזה למדים במכל שכן וקל וחומר בנוגע ל"בריות", שעם היותם "בריות בעלמא", שאין להם מעלה נוספת מלבד היותם בריות של הקב"ה, הרי אינם רשעים חס ושלום, ואם כן, בוודאי שצריך לקרבם לתורה.

¹⁶. עירובין יג. ב.

The Alter Rebbe cites the words "be of the students of Aaron" because Aaron showed love even to the wicked, and this teaches us how much we must love those who aren't even wicked, just mere "creations."

Listening To The Elders

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Introducing this quote, the Alter Rebbe writes, "Hillel the Elder said." He does so because there is also the alternative conduct of Shammai, which also has its basis in Torah. A person can therefore argue, "why must I follow Hillel's instruction to be 'a student of Aaron?'"

The Alter Rebbe introduces the quote with "Hillel the Elder said" because the elders are termed "the eyes of the community." This indicates to us that we must follow Hillel's example specifically. (While Shammai is also sometimes referred to as Shammai the Elder, this title is more commonly given to Hillel.)

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The practical directive from this is that we need to engage in "loving the creations and bringing them closer to the Torah." This means working with all Jews and encouraging them in the three areas of Torah, prayer, and charity. This will bring us the redemption, as the sages teach, "Anyone who engages in Torah study and acts of kindness, and prays with the congregation, I [G-d] ascribe to him credit as if he redeemed Me and My children from among the nations of the world."

ובהקדמה לזה כותב רבינו הזקן ש"אמר הלל הזקן כו": כיון שישנה גם הנהגת שמאי שגם היא הנהגה על פי תורה - יכול יהודי לטעון: מהו ההכרח לקיים הוראת הלל "הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן"?

לכן מוסיף רבינו הזקן ומדגיש "שאמר הלל הזקן" - שענינו של זקן הוא "עיני העדה"¹⁷, ולכן צריכה להיות ההנהגה כמותו (ואף שגם בנוגע לשמאי מצינו את הלשון "שמאי הזקן"¹⁸, אולם ברוב המקומות נאמר "הזקן" דווקא בנוגע להלל).

ההוראה מזה: צריך לעסוק בענין של "אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה", היינו, להתעסק עם כל אחד מישראל - כולל ובמיוחד - לעורר אותו אודות שלושת הענינים של תורה, תפלה וצדקה בציבור. ועל ידי זה פועלים את הגאולה, כמאמר רבותינו ז"ל¹⁹ "כל העוסק בתורה ובגמילות חסדים ומתפלל עם הציבור אמר הקב"ה מעלה אני עליו כאילו פדאני לי (שהרי גם השכינה בגלות²⁰) ולבני מבין אומות העולם".

משיחת שבת פרשת מטות-מסעי,
מברכים החודש מנחם-אב, ה'תשל"ה, בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם ה'תשל"ה כרך פ"א עמוד 143

20. ראה זהר ח"א כו, ב. ח"ב ב, ב. ח"ג עה, ב. ועוד. וראה מגילה כט, א. ספרי ס"פ מסעי.

17. שלח טו, כד. וראה תניא אגוז"ק סי"ד.
18. ראה - לדוגמא - סוכה כח, א (במשנה). ועוד.
19. ברכות ח' רע"א.

Story - Honoring a "Heretic" in the Synagogue?

On the night of Simchat Torah 1975 Hakafot, a delegation from the Israeli consulate came to participate in the Hakafot with the Rebbe at 770, as was their custom every year. Along with them came Judge Haim Cohen, who during his public life served as Deputy President of the Supreme Court, Attorney General, and Minister of Justice.

(Cohen grew up in an observant home, yet abandoned the traditions as a young man. At a certain point in his life, he decided to marry a divorced woman. Since he was a Kohen, no rabbi was willing to officiate for him, so he got married in Cyprus in a civil ceremony despite being the Minister of Justice of the Jewish state. In general, he was known for his distinctly anti-religious views.)

The custom was for various guests to be honored with leading the recital of the introductory verses of Hakafot. Judge Cohen was duly honored with reciting a verse that night.

Afterwards, the delegation was honored with carrying the Torah scrolls for one of the Hakafot. The members of the delegation walked towards the Bima, each taking a Torah scroll to dance during the Hakafah. Near the Bima stood Rabbi Berel Lipsker, who was holding a Torah scroll known as "Moshiach's Torah scroll," which was large and heavy, with a big, beautiful crown. This Torah scroll was not brought in to the dance circle, but rather held off to the side, to ensure that it did not get worn out or damaged during the dancing.

Haim Cohen, unaware of the custom, naturally approached Reb Berel and wanted to take the scroll. Reb Berel, who was not one to make exceptions for anyone, told him that nobody gets that scroll. Neither individual was willing to give in, and a debate began that escalated beyond mere words.

At that moment, the Rebbe turned from where he was standing towards them and said, "A Jew wants to take upon himself the yoke of Torah ... give it to him." So, Haim Cohen took the Moshiach's Torah scroll for the Hakafah.

During the Hakafah, the Rebbe greatly encouraged the congregation and specifically the members of the Israeli delegation. Judge Haim Cohen danced with all his might and strength, together with the large Torah scroll, sweating profusely, until the end of the Hakafah, which lasted much longer than usual.

In the Orthodox world, many were astonished and even resentful that the Rebbe accepted Haim Cohen and even honored him with reciting a verse and a joining a Hakafah.

Student's What we learned today well explains the Rebbe's behavior. The Rebbe
pg. 14 brought everyone closer, even someone like Mr. Cohen, with no exceptions. The Rebbe hoped that they would be positively affected. And many were.

Key Points:

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- The Torah generally does not mention the yartzeits of anyone, but notes the date of Aaron's passing—the first day of Av. The reason being that Aaron was unique in that he always made peace between people.
 - Due to Aaron's pursuit of peace, his passing touched the hearts of all the people, and it is likely that on his anniversary, they gathered together to eulogize him and learn from his ways. Therefore, his yartzeit was relevant to the entire nation.
 - Aaron would also connect with the wicked, and in doing so, influence them to avoid sin.
 - This special behavior is not an obligation but rather "acts of piety," and to adopt it, one must be "a student of Aaron." Therefore, the Mishnah does not suffice with the words "love peace" but says "be of the disciples of Aaron—loving peace."
 - Hillel is the one who said this Mishnah, because he also acted in this way. For example, he brought closer even a gentile who wanted to convert in order to be appointed as the High Priest.

Takeaway:

We should all adopt Aaron's way of life; bringing peace to all people, wherever they are.