Introducing the Rodef Shalom (Pursuer of Peace):
Study the following Mishnah (3rd Century CE, Land of Israel) carefully in havruta (study partner). Make a list of all of the questions you can think of on this Mishnah.

Mishnah, Avot, 1:12
Hillel says:  
Be a student of Aaron. 
A lover of peace  
A pursuer of peace (rodef shalom),  
A lover of people,  
Who brings them closer to Torah.

משנה אבות א: יב  
הילל אומר:  
והי תלמידו של אהרן.  
אוהב שלום  
ורודף שלום (רוֹדֶף שָׁלוֹם),  
אוהב את הבריות  
ומקרב את תורה.
1. Why Be a Student of Aaron?

Why do you think the Mishnah first said to be a student of Aaron’s, instead of just “a lover of peace and pursuer of peace”?

How does Rabbi Shmuel de Ozedah (16th century Tzfat, Land of Israel) answer this question in his commentary on the mishnah?

**Midrash Shmuel, Avot 1:12 (Rabbi Shmuel de Ozedah)**

And it is possible that he said “be of the students of Aaron,” and did not (just) say “be a lover of peace” since every person in their own eyes is a lover of peace, and even if he is a person of strife and conflict, he does not see any fault with himself. Therefore, (Hillel in the Mishnah) had to give clear guidelines saying, so long as you are not like Aaron, you are not a lover of peace...

---

How may Rabbi Dr. Marc Gopin, director of George Mason University’s Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, answer the question?


Ch. 8- Paradigms of Religion and Conflict Resolution A Case Study of Judaism: Conflict Management, Resolution, and Reconciliation: The Ideal Jewish Peacemaker

Some of the most important constructs of conflict resolution in numerous rabbinic sources are expressed by midrashic metaphor. The rabbis make the biblical figure Aaron, the High Priest and brother of Moses, into the paradigmatic peacemaker… It is also significant that the rabbis do not speak about conflict resolution abstractly but do so by installing those values in a particular personality. This raises some important issues, for further study elsewhere, about whether the field of conflict resolution has focused too much on skills and not enough on the formation of character, namely, the ideal personality of the peacemaker. Religion focuses heavily on role modeling and on the development of moral character. More reflection is required on whether this is simply a different way to attain the same goal as conflict resolution training that focuses on objective skills, or whether there is something that these paradigms can learn from each other…. 
2. Why Love and Pursue Peace?

Why, in your opinion, did the Mishnah need to say to be "a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace"? What, in your opinion, is the difference? How does Rabbi Shmuel de Ozedah answer this question?

Midrash Shmuel on Avot 1:12
(Rabbi Shmuel de Ozedah)

And he (Hillel in the Mishnah) said "lover of peace," (meaning) within oneself and in one’s home, and "pursuer of peace" between others to bring peace between people and between husband and wife. And this is the meaning of the word rodef (pursuer), for he pursues and goes with his feet to his friend’s home to bring peace between him and his wife. And he needs first himself to love peace for himself, and since it is a good thing in his own eyes, and he loves it for himself, he will be drawn to go and bring peace between others.

In your opinion, how important is it for the rodef shalom to find peace within him/herself and with others before engaging in other people’s conflicts?

3. What Does Shalom Mean (in the mishnah)?

What, in your opinion, does shalom mean in the context of the mishnah? How does the Abarbanel answer the question?

Rabbi Don Yitzchak Abarbanel, (1437-1508, Spain) (Nahalat Avot 1:12)

In addition to it (shalom) being said with regard to the agreement between conflicting parties...behind shalom is also said, other than (in the context) of fighting and conflicts, (with regard to) the common good, and (with regard to) the agreement of people and their mutual love, which is the necessary component in the gathering of a nation, and it is the string that ties together and combines everything. And in general, shalom is said with regard to healthiness of a matter and its wholeness, and good and beauty. Therefore, G-d is called Shalom...

4. Who would Aaron Pursue Peace Between?

Mishnat Rabbi Eliezer ch. 4 p. 74 (8th cen.)
[Aaron] used to pursue peace between a person and his/her friend, between husband and wife, between families, and between tribes.

משנה רבינית על שבת פרשה ז עמוד 74
(אוחרי הכתובות) רודף שלום בין אדם לבראש. בין איש לאשתו. בין משפחה למשפחה בין שבט לשבט.
The following midrash attributed to Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai (30-90 C.E., Land of Israel), also mentions who the peacemaker must be making peace between. What is the scope of the rodef shalom according to this source?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechilta R. Yishmael (B’Chodesh 11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raban Yochanan ben Zakkai said:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...The person who makes peace between fellow men, between husband and wife, between city and city, between nation and nation, between family and family, between government and government, all the more so there shall not come upon him any harm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rabbi Eliezer Azkari (1533-1600, Tzfat), in his book Sefer Charedim, describes his personal role model of a rodef shalom, Rabbi Yosi Saragosi (early 16th century Tzfat). What may be learned from this regarding the scope of the rodef shalom?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sefer Charedim, ch. 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And they said regarding learning from Aaron, for it was his practice to cease from his learning and go to place peace in its place and pursue peace in another place after he would hear of a conflict. And so it was here in Tzfat, that Rabbi Yosef Saragosi, the Rabbi of Rabbi David Zimra (The Ridbaz, 1479-1573) that he would always place peace between fellow people, between husband and wife and even between the idol worshippers, and he merited to see Elijah the prophet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Who is your personal rodef shalom role model and why?**
The Rodef Shalom Agreement

I hereby agree, to do my utmost in being mindful of myself as a rodef shalom (pursuer of peace), seeking to understand, respect and assist in constructively balancing conflicting needs and perspectives, between individuals and communities, in the spirit of machloket l’shem shamayim (conflicts for the sake of Heaven).

http://9adar.org/rodef-shalom-agreement/