

'Seek Peace and Pursue it': Becoming Peace Builders in our Communities

RRC, January 11, 2015, Daniel Roth

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"ב

הלל אומר:

הווי תלמידו של

אהרן.

אוהב שלום

ורודף שלום

אהב את הבריות

ומקרבן לתורה.

[Save for Group Discussion]

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?

<p><u>Midrash Shmuel, Avot 1:12 (Rabbi Shmuel de Ozedah)</u> 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...</p>	<p><u>ר' שמואל די אוזידא, מדרש שמואל אבות א:יב</u> ואיפשר עוד שאמר "הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן" ולא אמר 'הוי אוהב שלום' לפי שכל אדם בעיני עצמו הוא אוהב שלום ואף אם הוא איש ריב ומדון אינו רואה חובה לעצמו לכן נתן לו גבול לומר, כל זמן שאין אתה כמו אהרן אין אתה אוהב שלום....</p>
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How may Rabbi Dr. Marc Gopin, director of George Mason University's Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, answer the question?

<p><u>Marc Gopin. Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking. Oxford Press 2000</u> Ch. 8- Paradigms of Religion and Conflict Resolution A Case Study of Judaism: <i>Conflict Management, Resolution, and Reconciliation: The Ideal Jewish Peacemaker</i> 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....</p>
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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.

מדרש שמואל אבות א:יב

(ר' שמואל די אוזידא)

ואמר 'אוהב שלום' לעצמו ובביתו ו'רודף שלום' לאחרים ליתן שלום בין אדם לחבירו ובין איש לאישתו. וזה לשון 'רודף' שהוא רודף והולך ברגליו לבית חבירו ליתן שלום בינו לבין אשתו וצריך תחלה שיהי הוא אוהב שלום לעצמו וכיון שהוא דבר טוב השלום בעיניו ואהב אותו לעצמו ימשך לו מזה גם כן שיתן שלום בין אחרים.

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...behold *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*...

נחלת אבות א:יב (דון יצחק אברבנל)

והנה לא הכירו את מעלת השלום ולא ראו את יקר תפארת גדולתו לפי שעם היות שיאמר על הסכמת המריבים כמו שחשבו, הנה גם כן יאמר שלום, מזולת מריבה וקטטה, על הטוב המשותף ועל הסכמת האנשים ואהבתם זה לזה שהוא הדבר ההכרחי בקבוץ המדיני והוא החוט הקושר ומהחבר את כולם. ובכלל יאמר השלום על בריאות הדבר ושלמותו וטובו ויופיו. ולכן נקרא י' שלום ...

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.

משנת רבי אליעזר פרשה ד עמוד 74

שהיה (אהרן) רודף שלום בין אדם לחבירו, בין איש לאשתו, בין משפחה למשפחה, בין שבט לשבט.

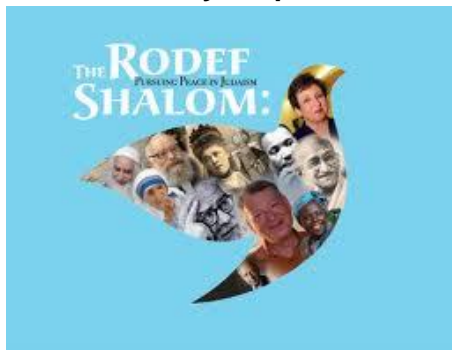
The following midrash attributed to Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai (30-90 C.E., Land of Israel), also mentions who the peacemaker must be making peace between. What is the scope of the rodef shalom according to this source?

<p>Mechilta R. Yishmael (B'Chodesh 11) Raban Yochanan ben Zakkai said: ...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.</p>	<p>מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל, בחדש יא עמ' 244 רבן יוחנן בן זכאי אומר: ...המטיל שלום בין איש לאיש בין איש לאשה בין עיר לעיר בין אומה לאומה בין משפחה למשפחה בין ממשלה לממשלה. על אחת כמה וכמה שלא תבואהו פורענות.</p>
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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?

<p>Sefer Charedim, ch. 8 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.</p>	<p>הר' אליעזר בן משה אזקרי, ספר חרדים פרק ח (1533-1600, צפת) ומה שאמרו שילמדו מאהרן לפי שהיה לו זו אומנותו מתבטל מתלמודו והולך לשים שלום במקומו ורודף שלום למקום אחר כשהיה שומע שיש מחלוקת. וכן היה פה בצפת הרב יוסף סראגוסי רבו של הרב רבי דוד בן זמרא (הרדב"ז ד.ר.) שהיה משים שלום תמיד בין אדם לחברו ובין איש לאשתו אפילו בין העובדי כוכבים וזכה לראות אל אליהו.</p>
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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/>