



"Would it be that My people listen to me, if Israel would go in My ways,
I would subdue their enemies in a instant, and turn My hand against their foes."

King David, Psalm 81

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SUGGESTED READINGS:

SEE THESE AND OTHER ARTICLES AT OUR SITE

Maimonides' 13 PRINCIPLES

THE BASIC FOUNDATIONS WHICH ALL JEWS MUST KNOW AS TRUE. WE URGE YOU TO READ THEM:
www.mesora.org/13principles.html

God's Existence Belief or Proof?

www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html

God's Land Without God?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html

Torah is Joy

RABBI REUVEN MANN

We read in the Hagadda: Rabbi Eliezer Ben Azaria said, I am as a seventy year old and did not understand why we mention the Exodus every night until Ben Zoma explained etc. The main subject of this paragraph is the Talmudic debate regarding the proper interpretation of "All the days of your life" which pertain to the recitation of the Shema. We may ask; what is the purpose of introducing a halachik discussion with Rabbi Eliezer's revelation about his age? Of what significance is it that he did not learn the reason for a certain observance until he was seventy?

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Judging People Superficially

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In today's society, an extremely large amount of value and concern is placed on how one looks and dresses. Jews sinfully categorize their own brothers and sisters into superficial categories; "Does he wear a black jacket or hat?" "What type of yarmulke does he wear?" "Does she wear jeans skirts?" With anguish, I have heard that this nonsense has spread from personal characteristics, to amenities of the home, such as table coverings. Do people really believe that G-d felt that garments, or anything other than the person's values and midos should carry any weight? Further, one violates a halacha d'oraisa (positive command) of "Viahavta l'racha comocha" ("thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself") when one passes judgment or prevents a shidduch if one is a convert, divorced, not Sephardic or Ashkenaz, and the like. This is clearly a despicable trait, one which must immediately be removed from one's value system, regardless of others who may disagree.

As always, when one desires to follow what is in accord with the Torah, one must look into the sources, not to what people say, or what is popularly believed or performed.

Who did King David, and King Solomon descend from? Ruth the Moabite. Who did Joshua marry? Rachav the harlot. Who did Moshe Rabbeinu marry? Zippora - a woman whose father practiced every form of idolatry. Ruth partook of greatness, as she exemplified modesty to such a high degree. G-d therefore selected her to be the mother of our greatest kings. Did G-d rebuke Moshe or Joshua for marrying people with such backgrounds? At the time of marriage, these individuals were living the correct philosophy. That is all G-d is concerned with. In Genesis 21:17, Rashi states this point clearly: "The

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ASK YOUR CHILDREN:

"Should we look for the bad or the good in others, and why?"
Have your children email us with their answers: questions@mesora.org

Peace and Love

RIVKA OLENICK

Hillel said: "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving the created beings, and bringing them near to the Torah." (Avos, Chapter 1:12)

There are many people who feel tremendous guilt because they sin and have difficulty overcoming their sins. And others may know of their sins and judge them harshly and unfairly. We all sin - so why should we think that the sins of another are so much worse than our own? What does it mean to be the disciples of Aaron? In Pirkei Avos, God says of Aaron: "He walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many away from sin." Hillel said of Aaron: "When he would feel or hear that a person had wickedness within him, or that he would commit sins, Aaron would always greet him first, become friendly with him, and speak with him frequently."

Aaron was a compassionate person and looked past a person's sins to find that person's essence. How was Aaron able to find the person's essence? This is difficult. Most people are looking to find a person's sins and poor character traits, not their essence and then they use those sins and flaws to taunt that person. People do this conveniently through humor and sarcasm. "As a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death and then says: "I am only joking." King Solomon from Proverbs 26:18-19 (death here refers to loshon hora - as speech kills.) Nevertheless, this is a quick way to categorize the other person negatively and you purposely avoid finding his essence, his true self - you choose to see only his sins.

How was Aaron able to greet the sinner, become friendly with him and speak with him frequently? Why did Aaron choose this method? Isn't it true that when we choose to look past a person's sins and show sincerity and interest in the person - the person, begins to speak from the heart and starts to feel lifted - because someone else cares. At the same time the person feels guilt. However, a little guilt is good because it acts as a motivator. The guilt motivates the person to feel shame and embarrassment over their sins. "Oh, if he found out how much I really sinned - he would have nothing to do with me ever. Now is my chance to prove that I can overcome my sins, repent and be respected." Every person wants to be respected. No one wants to be "imprisoned" by sin.

Aaron pursued peace which seems logical and rational, but why should one love peace? Why was Aaron called a lover of peace? Why did he choose this very compassionate way of drawing another person near to him? This very compassionate way is what causes peace between people. And the way Aaron pursued this peace proved he was a lover of peace. And one who loves peace also loves created beings. Because in order to love peace and pursue peace you need to have who to love and pursue it with.

God created all human beings to live their life with the highest purpose. For the Jewish person it is to bring others near to the Torah - through the peaceful ways of the commandments, ways that promote love and unity between people. Not ways of judgment and harshness, or cruelty and indifference. The same ways of love and peace that we are asked to use to "love your neighbor as yourself" which also creates unity. We were all created for the same purpose, which is to be the teachers of Torah and to be the light unto all the nations. This is our real job. God in His great wisdom gave us a purpose, and by giving us His Torah He allows us to fulfill this purpose and help others to do the same, by bringing them near to Torah. □