



RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS
RAV, THE JERUSALEM SHUL
BAKA, JERUSALEM

Hillel's Humility and Love

Rav Kook on Pirkei Avot 2:5

Hillel says: “Do not separate yourself from the community, do not trust in yourself until the day of your death, do not judge your fellow until you reach his place...”
(*Pirkei Avot* 2:5)

Rav Chaim Volozhin, the famed founder of the Volozhin Yeshiva, interpreted each phrase of this Mishna in the context of Torah study. When one engages in learning with many in the community one will find those who can serve as teachers, others who will serve as colleagues, and others who they will relate to as students. All three relationships have a unique quality as is emphasized by the Talmud's statement: “I learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues, and the most from my students” (*Makkot* 10a). (*Ruach Chaim*, 2:5)

The second statement of the Mishna: “Do not trust in yourself” is also a warning concerning the way one studies Torah. Rav Chaim Volozhin comments: “Never feel so confident of your abilities that you may assume you can study alone without making an error in judgment” (Ibid).

The next statement in the Mishna: “Do not judge your fellow” is interpreted by Rav Chaim Volzhin once again to refer to an interaction in the context of Torah study. When studying with a partner, do not automatically reject the other's logic or perspective. Think carefully about his approach. Often there is wisdom and insight to be gained from an opposing view. (Ibid)

Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, an eminent student of the Volozhin Yeshiva who undoubtedly imbibed the teachings of the Yeshiva's founder, echoes this approach in many of his own teachings. One of Rav Kook's well known comments is his teaching on the talmudic passage which is recited daily at the end of the morning prayers: “The Sages increase peace in the world” (*Berachot* 64a). Rav Kook



Rav Abraham Isaac Kook zt"l

writes: “Some mistakenly think that world peace will come about only through uniformity of opinions and characteristics...in truth this is not so. True peace cannot come to the world other than by diversification. There must be made visible all the sides and opinions, and it must be clarified how all have

their place.” (*Olat Reiyah*, vol.1, pp. 330-331)

Thus, the Sages increase peace in the world when broadening and expanding upon their concepts, they arrive at greater clarity and understanding. The variety of positions enables one to see that each perspective has its time and place. Peace stems more from multiplicity than from sameness.

The statement of Hillel in the Mishna cited above, was not merely a teaching stated by Hillel but rather was truly emblematic of his own character. The Talmud tells the story in which two people made a wager to see if they could arouse Hillel’s anger by asking preposterous questions of him. The perpetrator waited until the hours right before Shabbat, when it is generally more hectic and stressful, to knock on Hillel’s door. When Hillel answers the door he asks the following question:

“Why are the heads of Babylonians round?” Hillel responded: “My son, you have asked a great question. It is because they do not have skilled midwives.” The Talmud tells us that this fellow persisted another two times. Each time Hillel responded with patience and offered an insightful answer. At that point the fellow gives up and admits to Hillel that he went through this charade only to see if he could cause Hillel to lose his temper. (Shabbat 30b-31a)

Rav Kook comments that this tale conveys the humility of Hillel. Not only does Hillel express his humbleness by not getting angry - but in general arrogance can get in the way of intellectual pursuits. The arrogant person is often quick to dismiss a question as nonsense. Hillel’s humility enabled him to think seriously about the questions and find an answer that was thoughtful and meaningful. Humility enables more sympathetic

interactions with others, as well as the ability to analyze ideas more successfully. (*Ain Aya, Shabbat* 119a)

Rav Kook embodied this exemplary trait in his interactions with others. A beautiful story is told in regard to Rav Kook’s celebrated trip to many of the secular settlements in northern Israel in 1914. Led by Rav Kook, an illustrious group of rabbis traveled to various new communities to share words of inspiration and to meet the young pioneers who were working to build the Land.

When the eminent entourage of rabbis pulled up to the gate of one of the new settlements, members met them at the entrance. They turned to Rav Kook and told him that they preferred that they not enter because they were not interested in being lectured about Jewish traditions and mitzvah observance. Rav Kook smiled and answered warmly, “We didn’t come here in order to teach you. We came here because we are sincerely interested in learning from you.”

The first Mishna of Pirkei Avot states, “Moshe received the Torah from Sinai.” The wording of the Mishna seems perplexing. Did Moshe receive the Torah “from” Sinai? Mount Sinai was the *place* where he received the Torah. It was given to him by Hashem, not by Mount Sinai! The Baal Shem Tov explains: The Mishna is teaching us *how* Moshe merited

Arthur Samuels, DPM



PODIATRIST

Over 30 years experience

Licensed in Israel
& America

053-427-6363

ArthurMSamuels@gmail.com

to receive the Torah. He merited it because of his humility. Thus, Moshe received the Torah from Mount Sinai, i.e., from the humbleness that he learned from the mountain. Hashem chose to give the Torah on Mount Sinai, a small mountain, to serve as a lesson for the Jewish people, to teach them that they should be humble, as was Mount Sinai. (Beis Halevi on Ahavas Yisrael, Sutton, p.51)

Humility is not merely a noble character trait but an essential attribute which allows a person to be more open-hearted and accepting of others which helps bring greater understanding and peace between people and ultimately to the world. ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, "Torah United" on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

HIGH QUALITY PREMIUM FOLDING CHAIRS

- STYLE & COMFORT
- MANY COLORS & DESIGNS
- STORAGE CARTS AND RACKS
- FAST DELIVERY



FOLDEES

Foldees.co.il | 058-707-8181



Be'er Tziporah a"h - Bottled Water Gemach



Walking down King George St. in Jerusalem and want a cold bottle of water?

Come help yourself to a bottle at 52 King George.

In loving memory of Yoni's wife **Tziporah a"h**, a true Eishes Chayil, always full of chessed, kindness and laughter, and brought life and strength to so many people, that she touched! She was like Aron, who loved peace and pursued peace.



Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

To help refill the supply - send tax deductible donations for Be'er Tziporah a"h Bottled Water Gemach to Chabad of Rechavia - Rabbi Yisroel Goldberg email

Rabbi@JerusalemChabad.org
02 800-1717

www.JerusalemChabad.org/DonateShekels

הודו לה' כי טוב

All your jewelry needs in one place!

A 5th generation skilled craftsman will fix, refurbish, polish or restore your family heirlooms, Kiddush cups, candlesticks, and any gold/silver jewelry · Deliveries directly to/from your home in Jerusalem area

Details: Santo - 052-228-9627

רפואה שלמה

Peleg Shabtai ben Chaviva Leah