PURSUING PEACE

Leon's Commentary on the saying of Hillel

"Hillel says; be of the pupils of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace,

loving your fellow man and bringing him closer to the Torah."(1)

Since its establishment, 50 years ago, the State of Israel has been pursuing peace with its Arab neighbors. So far this has mostly lead to war.

It's about time we realized that our pursuit is misdirected.

Instead of doing as Hillel suggests, pursuing peace, we've been pursuing each other to make peace.

Peace is a goal in itself.

When one thinks of a goal one thinks of achievement. One thinks of pursuit of one's goal. We need to pursue a goal because it's difficult to attain, it’s elusive..

Instead of pursuing each other we should pursue the goal of peace. Hillel, our great scholar of the 1st cen. CE, knew all about pursuing one's goals. He was famous for his desire to achieve great scholarship in the knowledge of Torah,that was his goal. He was also known for his leniency in judicial decisions. In this respect he resembled the high priest Aaron.(2)

The search for peace resembles the search for learning, both are somewhat elusive..

But both are worthwhile goals, because both bring about perfection, completeness. Without learning or without peace we aren’t complet.

Achieving peace is achieving perfection.

In Hebrew the word peace is derived from the word for perfection “Shalem” = complete. Shalom = peace..

Achieving perfection means we have to find our faults and correct them. As Hillel says, it ultimately involves a learning process. Self learning to learn what are our faults.

This approach would change the direction of the search for peace; Through learning about ourselves we'd discover what characteristics we have which are a hindrance to achieving our goal of peace. Once we find these we can change them.

It's easier, however, to look at someone else's faults than to look at our own. This is called blaming the other person.

In any situation of conflict it's almost second nature for us to do this.

One of the best examples of this is spouses blaming each other.

Every day,practically, a husband beats or even kills a wife.

Another example is road accidents, most often these are caused by blaming the other person.

The slightest disagreement over a parking place or the right of way often leads to serious conflict, which is again the result of blaming each other.

Finding fault with someone else rather than finding fault with ourselves is such a permanent part of human nature that it's futile to try to change it.

Just as it's true, however, that we find fault in others more easily than in ourselves it's also just as true that it's more easy to bring about change in ourselves than it is to change someone else. If, however, we don't see our faults, how can we change them?

The answer is to look at someone else's faults then adopt them as our own, then change them.

We must do this even though we are sure that the faults we've discovered in the other person aren't ours. This sounds difficult and it probably is but it's worth a try.

Let's continue to find fault in each other but let's adopt each other's faults as our own.

Pursuing peace on a personal level, by correcting our faults, will lead to pursuing peace in the same way on a national level.

Peace between us and our Arab neighbors can be achieved only by pursuing peace not each other.

1.Ethics of the Fathers, in the (Siddur) Jewish prayer book. after the Sabbath afternoon prayers.2.When the people of Israel in the wilderness asked Aaron to make them a golden calf so that they could worship it he agreed

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