

Pirkei Avot 1:2

Translation

Hillel and Shammai received the Torah from them. Hillel said: Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow creatures and bringing them close to the Torah.

Maimonides

Of the disciples of Aaron: They said: When Aaron, peace be upon him, would sense that a man was inwardly evil, or when they would tell him that he was inwardly evil and that he was guilty of transgression, he would initiate a peaceful greeting to him, endear himself to

him, and converse at length with him. That person would then be embarrassed of himself and say, "Woe to me, had Aaron known what is concealed in my heart and the wickedness of my deeds, he would not have permitted himself to look

upon me—much less would he have spoken with me. Yet, in his opinion I am considered as an upright man. Therefore, I will verify his words and thought and I shall turn back to the right path," and he would become one of his disciples who learns from him. When He portrayed him with this honorable attribute, the Lord, may He be blessed, said, ". . . he walked with Me in peace and uprightness and turned many away from iniquity." It was to this quality for which he was renowned that Hillel referred.

Rabbi Dovid Rosenfeld

(Based on *Avot de Rabi Natan*)

If Aaron would see someone acting improperly, he would not go over and rebuke or criticize the fellow directly. He would *befriend* him, pretending not to be aware of

his faults. The person would eventually grow ashamed: "What would my friend Aaron think if he knew I acted this way behind his back? How could I betray his trust and friendship?" Sooner or later the man would repent his ways. Further, if Aaron would observe two people quarreling, he would afterwards approach one of them with the following: "I just saw the other fellow besides himself with grief. He's sitting there saying it's all his fault and how can he possibly face you again." Aaron then promptly went to the other fellow with the exact same story. Needless to say,

the next time the people met they were hugging and kissing each other, the life-or-death issues they had been arguing about long forgotten. (Most arguments are about life-or-death issues which nobody can quite

recall after.) Lastly, Aaron was credited for saving many a marriage, for running back and forth between husband and wife working his same magic. The mishna attests that in those times thousands of children were named after him -- because they would have never been born had Aaron not been there to save the parents' marriages. For all the above reasons, when Aaron died the Torah writes: "*All* the Children of Israel cried for Aaron 30 days" (Numbers 20:29). When Moses died, the Torah states merely that "The Children of Israel cried" (Deuteronomy 34:8): the word "all" does not appear, but for Aaron everyone cried. Everyone, learned and unlearned, man and woman, appreciated who Aaron was and what he had done for them.

הִלֵּל וְשַׁמַּי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֵם. הִלֵּל
אוֹמֵר: הָיִי מִתְלַמְּדוֹ שֶׁל
אַהֲרֹן, אוֹהֵב שְׁלוֹם וְרוֹדֵף
שְׁלוֹם, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת
וּמְקַרְבֵּן לַתּוֹרָה: