



מסכת אבות פרק א משנה יב: "הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן"



The Mishna:

Avot, Chapter 1, Mishna 12:

... Hillel used to say:
be of the disciples of Aaron,
loving peace and pursuing peace,
loving mankind and drawing them
close to the Torah

המשנה:

אבות א, יב

... הלל אומר
הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן,
אוהב שלום ורודף שלום,
אוהב את הבריות ומקרבו לתורה.

A short explanation on the Mishna:

This Mishna, brought in the name of Hillel the Elder, teaches us to follow the path of Aaron Hakohen (Moses and Miriam's brother). Aharon was a righteous leader who excelled in his love of humanity and invested constant effort to help everyone.

In this Mishna, Hillel guides us to love peace, and also to pursue peace actively, to love all mankind that God created, and to bring them closer to the Torah (being close to the Torah will be good for a person).

(Based on Rabbi Even-Israel Steinsaltz's commentary on Pirkei Avot, p. 49, courtesy of the Steinsaltz Center).



Level 1:

- **Memorize** the Mishna with hand movements.

(Click or scan the barcode)



- **Learning in Havrutas:** who was Hillel the Elder?

A short worksheet on the Mishnah.

In this study, we use the Havruta practice. You can read more about Havruta on United's website:

<https://unitedjed.org/practice-page-havruta/>

In this activity we will learn the story of two people who bet on who would be able to aggravate Hillel the Elder and cause him to lose his temper. Whoever wins would get 400 zuzim.

There was an incident involving two people who wagered with each other and said: Anyone who will go and aggravate Hillel to the point that he reprimands him, will take four-hundred zuz. One of them said: I will aggravate him. That day that he chose to bother Hillel was Shabbat eve, and Hillel was washing the hair on his head. He went and passed the entrance to Hillel's house and in a demeaning manner said: Who here is Hillel, who here is Hillel? Hillel wrapped himself in a dignified garment and went out to greet him. He said to him: My son, what do you seek? He said to him: I have a question to ask. Hillel said to him: Ask, my son, ask. The man asked him: Why are the heads of Babylonians oval? He was alluding to and attempting to insult Hillel, who was Babylonian. He said to him: My son, you have asked a significant question. The reason is because they do not have clever midwives. They do not know how to shape the child's head at birth.

That man went and waited one hour, a short while, returned to look for Hillel, and said: Who here is Hillel, who here is Hillel? Again, Hillel wrapped himself and went out to greet him. Hillel said to him: My son, what do you seek? The man said to him: I have a question to ask. He said to him: Ask, my son, ask. The man asked: Why are the eyes of the residents of Tadmor bleary [terutot]? Hillel said to



him: My son, you have asked a significant question. The reason is because they live among the sands and the sand gets into their eyes.

Once again the man went, waited one hour, returned, and said: Who here is Hillel, who here is Hillel? Again, he, Hillel, wrapped himself and went out to greet him. He said to him: My son, what do you seek? He said to him: I have a question to ask. He said to him: Ask, my son, ask.

The man asked: Why do Africans have wide feet? Hillel said to him: You have asked a significant question. The reason is because they live in marshlands and their feet widened to enable them to walk through those swampy areas.

That man said to him: I have many more questions to ask, but I am afraid lest you get angry. Hillel wrapped himself and sat before him, and he said to him: All of the questions that you have to ask, ask them. The man got angry and said to him: Are you Hillel whom they call the Nasi of Israel? He said to him: Yes. He said to him: If it is you, then may there not be many like you in Israel. Hillel said to him: My son, for what reason do you say this? The man said to him: Because I lost four hundred zuz because of you.

Hillel said to him: Be vigilant of your spirit and avoid situations of this sort. Hillel is worthy of having you lose four hundred zuz and another four hundred zuz on his account, and Hillel will not get upset.

- Following are questions and suggested answers:

- ❖ Why did the man ask Hillel so many questions?

He wanted to get Hillel to come out of the shower again and again, hoping to make him angry.

- ❖ "This incident occurred on a Friday, on the eve of Shabbat, and Hillel was washing his hair." Why is it important to say that the incident happened on Friday afternoon and that Hillel was busy washing his hair?

Because preparing for Shabbat is a busy time, and the fact that Hillel was in the midst of preparations for Shabbat and was repeatedly interrupted, might have increased the chances of him getting angry.

- ❖ According to this story, what outstanding quality does Hillel the Elder have?

Patience, tolerance.



Level 2:

- ❖ How does the story you read connect to Hillel's words in the Mishna?

When a person loves other people, and loves peace, he is also more patient with the things that they do.

- ❖ **Question for discussion:** What is the difference between "loving peace" and "pursuing peace"?
- ❖ Give examples of what one who loves peace does, and what does one who pursues peace does?

Such as convincing two people not to fight: "seeking peace." Trying to get along with my friends: "loving peace" etc.

- ❖ **"Be of the disciples of Aaron"**

What do we know about Aaron the Priest? (Worksheet attached for the students).

