



## Shalom in Relationships, Community, and the World

Prepared by David Jaffe and Avi Fertig

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### THE VA'AD MEETING

This va'ad will focus on Shalom/Peace in our interpersonal relationship, community and larger society. As was explained in the introduction, our focus will be on several different components of making peace between people. These include the concept of *Shleimut*/Wholeness and Inclusion; Communal connection and principled disagreement; The role of the peacemaker; and the role of justice and truth in creating communal peace. May the study we engage in here contribute to bringing more peace into our relationships and the world.

#### A. Welcome and Centering

Your facilitator will open the meeting by greeting everyone and a centering exercise to bring your focus to this sacred space.

#### Outline of this *va'ad* session

- a. Welcome and Centering
- b. Check in
- c. Invocation
- d. Text Discussion
- e. Taking it to Heart
- f. Take Away
- g. Closing

#### B. Check in

Consider now: What does peace mean to you?

*Your facilitator will invite anyone who wishes to share briefly with the group.*

#### C. Invocation

##### Prayer for peace by Rabbi Natan of Breslov (d. 1844, Ukraine)

Rabbi Natan was Rebbe Nachman of Breslov's primary disciple and is responsible for much of what we know of Rebbe Nachman's teachings. His prayer for peace, below, has made its way into many Jewish prayer services around the world. As an opening for our session, you are invited to read the prayer.



*Nation shall not lift up sword against nation.  
 May it be your will to undo wars and bloodshed from the earth,  
 and spread a great and wondrous peace in the world.  
 All who dwell on the earth will recognize and know the whole truth.  
 We did not come into this world for conflict and strife.  
 We did not come into this world for hatred and jealousy.  
 We did not come into this world for bickering and bloodshed.  
 We only come into the world to know you.  
 May you be blessed forever.*

#### **D. Text Discussion**

*Through incisive questions, discussion and the sharing of personal experience, the lessons in the following texts will be opened-up, explored and illuminated, for the sake of deeper, fuller understanding. The sources we are bringing to this process are all gems that contain wisdom, even if that wisdom is not apparent to you at the outset. Engage with your group-mates to explore that wisdom and to take ownership of a deeper understanding. Consider how each source and practice might play a role in your own growth—particularly in how you might cultivate more peace in your relationships and in the world. Focus on how the lessons might inform your outlook and animate your behavior. Your facilitator will lead you to engage with as many sources as you have time for in the space of this va'ad.*

#### **Source 1: Shalom and Shleimut – Wholeness and Inclusion**

*The word “Shalom” has the same root as “Shleimut” which means “wholeness.” To be whole is to have all parts included. Inclusion is such a key part of creating Shalom. Just like when we exile or refuse to deal with parts of ourselves it is difficult to have inner-peace, when a collective banishes or pushes to the margins certain people or groups, it is difficult for that community to experience peace. Kavod/Respect/Dignity, is an important middah for moving towards communal Shleimut because it calls on us to see people for how they want to be seen and work for inclusion. The following source describes this kind of Kavod as a key element of building communal wholeness:*

*“I think there is something mystical about enabling others to begin to see and hear invisible and unheard people. I want to help people look at their neighbor, their domestic worker or even someone who they see as their enemy and be able to see that the Divine image is in this person that they didn't see before. Opening hearts around that human dignity aspect is essential to my activism....” – Rabbi Shmuly Yankelowitz*

#### **Source 2: Connection between people and Machloket L'Shem Shamayim / Principled Disagreement**

*The following two sources (labeled A and B) focus on the centrality of community members feeling connected to one another to build a peaceful society. People are always going to have different ways of seeing the same facts and different*



*approaches to addressing communal challenges. The key to peace is that these parties know that they share enough in common to build a sense of fellowship and love with their fellow community members and are both working towards similar goals. When that sense of connection is lost, disagreements can tear apart communities and societies. The first source names the importance of this sense of connection, calling it “the string that ties together” and the second source demonstrates the consequences of disagreement built on this type of love and connection versus disagreement that lacks these elements. Building this sense of common purpose and connection is essential work for peacemaking.*

A. ... In addition to [Shalom] being said with regard to the agreement between conflicting parties, behold *shalom* is also said, other than [in the context] of fighting and conflicts, [with regard to] the common good, and [with regard to] the agreement of people and their mutual love, which is the necessary component in the gathering of a nation, and it is the string that ties together and combines everything. And in general, *shalom* is said with regard to the healthiness of a matter and its wholeness, and goodness and beauty. Therefore, G-d is called *Shalom*, since He connects the whole world, and upholds all that is in it in accordance to its particular nature, because when something is in its proper order, there will be peace and uprightness. – Rabbi Don Yitzchak Abarbanel, *Nahalat Avot* 1:12

שעם היות שיאמר על הסכמת המריבים כמו שחשבו, הנה גם כן יאמר שלום, מזולת מריבה וקטטה, על הטוב המשותף ועל הסכמת האנשים ואהבתם זה לזה שהוא הדבר ההכרחי בקבוץ המדיני והוא החוט הקושר ומהחבר את כולם. ובכלל יאמר השלום על בריאות הדבר ושלימותו וטובו ויפיו. ולכן נקרא י' שלום לפי שהוא הקושר את העולם ומעמיד הנמצאים על סדר בצביונם וקומתם כי כאשר יהיה הדבר בסדרו הראוי יהיה בשלום ובמישור.

B. Every disagreement that is for the sake of heaven in the end will endure. And that is not for the sake of heaven will not endure. Which is a disagreement that is “for the sake of heaven?” – This is the dispute between Hillel and Shammai. And that isn't “for the sake of heaven?” This is the dispute of Korach and his community. – Pirkei Avot 5:17

כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים, סופה להתקיים. וְשֵׁאִינָהּ לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, אֵין סוּפָה לְהִתְקַיֵּם. אִיזוֹ הִיא מַחְלֻקַּת שֶׁהִיא לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, זֶה מַחְלֻקַּת הַלֵּל וְשַׁמַּי. וְשֵׁאִינָהּ לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, זֶה מַחְלֻקַּת קֶרַח וְכָל עֲדָתוֹ.

### Source 3: The Role of the Peacemaker

*Aharon the Cohen, Moses' brother, is the rabbinic model of the peacemaker. The following sources describe his peacemaking method. As you study these sources, consider your own role as a peacemaker and the importance of this role for your communities.*

A. Hillel said: Be like the students of Aaron – love peace, pursue peace, love people and draw them to Torah. – Pirkei Avot 1:12



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

B. An ancient midrash (Avot D'Rebbe Natan, ch. 12, translation, Rabbi Dr. Daniel Roth) gives us more details about Aaron's peacemaking methods:

When two men were in a conflict, Aaron would go and sit with one of them. He would say to him, "My son, look at your friend, [look at what he is saying], he is tearing at his heart and ripping his clothing. He says, 'Woe is me, how can I lift my eyes and see my friend? I am ashamed before him, for it is I who wronged him.'" And he [Aaron] would stay with him until he removed all of the jealous rage from his heart.

And Aaron would then go to the other man, and say, "My son, look at your friend, [look at what he is saying], he is tearing at his heart and ripping his clothing. He says, 'Woe is me, how can I lift my eyes and see my friend? I am ashamed before him, for it is I who wronged him.'" And he [Aaron] would stay with him until he removed all of the jealous rage from his heart.

And when the two would finally meet, they would hug and embrace and kiss each other. Therefore, it is stated, they wept for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel (Numbers 20:29).

C. Principles of Aharon's Method

1. If two people are in a fight, listen well to each of them. Help them talk with you about their anger, hurt and other feelings. Do this without the other person present.
2. Help each person remember deep down that, if they knew the other person cared about them and wanted to apologize, they would actually want to stay friends with the other person. Help them remember that they care about this relationship.
3. Help each person get to a point that they want to make peace with the other person.
4. If you know people who are in a fight or disagreement, and these people trust you, be willing to step in the middle and help.

#### Source 4: Justice, Truth and Peace

*In this source Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel states that society is held up by the three traits of justice, truth and peace. Why are justice and truth so important to sustaining a society and how do these two qualities contribute to peace?*

Rabbi Shimon the son of Gamliel would say: By three things is the world sustained: law, truth and peace. As is said (Zachariah 8:16), "These are the



things you are to do: Speak the truth to one another, render true and perfect justice in your gates.” (translation, sefaria.org)

רַבֵּן שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר, עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַדִּין וְעַל הָאֱמֶת וְעַל הַשְּׁלוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (זְכַרְיָה ח) אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט שְׁלוֹם שְׁפֹטוּ בְּשַׁעְרֵיכֶם.

### **E. Taking It to Heart**

*Your facilitator will lead you through a guided meditation/contemplation*

You will then have some time to make a list of the values you share with people with whom you disagree. What *middah* or *middot* might you call upon to allow you to see and hear the person/s with whom you disagree in the way that they want to be seen and heard?

### **F. Take Away**

Your facilitator invites each participant to share one take away from this session.

### **G. Closing: Shalom Chant**

Take a deep breath.

Slowly chant, “Shalom” – articulating every letter and vowel (Sh – A – Lome), letting the final “M” buzz on your lips “MMMMMMM.”

Repeat this three times, taking a deep breath between each chant.