**Sim Shalom**

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| שים שָׁלום טובָה וּבְרָכָה. חֵן וָחֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשרָאֵל עַמֶּךָ.  בָּרְכֵנוּ אָבִינוּ כֻּלָּנוּ כְּאֶחָד בְּאור פָּנֶיךָ. כִּי בְאור פָּנֶיךָ נָתַתָּ לָּנוּ ה' אֱלהֵינוּ תּורַת חַיִּים וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד. וּצְדָקָה וּבְרָכָה וְרַחֲמִים וְחַיִּים וְשָׁלום.  וְטוב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת כָּל עַמְּךָ יִשרָאֵל בְּכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה בִּשְׁלומֶךָ:   בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הַמְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּו יִשרָאֵל בַּשָּׁלום: | Grant peace, goodness and blessing, grace, kindness and mercy to us and to all of Israel, your people.  Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, in the light of your face, for the light of your face, Adonai our God, you gave us the Torah of life, a love of grace, righteousness, blessing, mercy, life and peace.  And in your eyes it is good to bless your people Israel, at all times and in all hours with your peace.  Blessed are You, Adonai, who blesses his people Israel with peace. |

**Shalom: Peace or Well-Being**

Shalom is a difficult word to translate. Sometimes it means something like the word "peace" in English, the absence of fighting or conflict. For instance, the Mishnah teaches us that one of the greatest mitzvot is "to bring peace (shalom) between one person and another." Most siddurim translate the word here as "peace."

However, the word can also mean "well-being" or "wholeness" as in the similar Hebrew word "*shalem*."

* What is the meaning of asking God for "well-being" or "wholeness"?
* How is this different from peace?
* Why might the same word be used for both in Hebrew? What might this teach us?

**The Priestly Blessing: יברכך ה' וישמרך…**

In Israel and in some synagogues on holidays in America, before the Sim Shalom prayer, the kohanim bless the tzibbur with the Birkat Kohanim, the blessing of the priests, taken from Bamidbar 6:24-26). While reciting these words, the kohanim cover their hands with a tallit and people are not supposed to look at them when they are blessing the people. However, the tzibbur is also not supposed to turn their backs to the kohanim. Some people cover their own heads with a tallis while others just look down.

* Why do you think that people should not see the kohanim while they are blessing the people?
* Some people are disturbed by the fact that only kohanim, those born to a father who is a kohen, can recite this blessing. In some synagogues for this reason the birkat kohanim is never done.
* Why do you think this bothers some people? What is the problem with the message it might send?
* What do you think about this custom?

**Shalom: Peace in the Jewish Tradition**

**Mishnah Eduyot 8:7**

[What will Elijah do when he comes]…:

And the Sages say: [He will] make peace in the world, for it is said, “Behold I send to you Elijah the prophet”, etc., “and he shall turn the heart of the parents to the children and the heart of the children to their parents” (Malachi 3:23-24).

The rabbis in this mishnah debate what Elijah the prophet will do when he returns to the world. According to the sages, when Elijah comes he will bring peace to the world. The proof is what the prophet Malachi (a prophet whose words are found in a book in the Tanakh) says, that God will turn the hearts of parents to their children and children to their parents. We should note that there seems to be a slight difference between what the sages say, "bring peace to the world" and what Malakhi says, bring peace between parents and children. It seems that "shalom" begins with what is called "Shalom Bayit" peace in the home. Bring peace to the world does not just mean going out and ending wars and oppression. It especially means bring peace into our own homes.

**Mishnah Avot 1:18 and Yerushalmi Taanit 4:2**

Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel used to say: on three things does the world stand:

On justice, on truth and on peace, as it is said: “execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates” (Zechariah 8:16).

These three are things are linked: when justice is done, truth is achieved, and peace is established.

* Why does peace depend upon justice?
* Are there times when peace and justice might be opposed to each other?

**Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 14b**

Although the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel were in disagreement--what the one forbade, the other permitted--nevertheless the school of Shammai did not refrain from marrying women of the families of the school of Hillel, nor did the school of Hillel refrain from marrying those of the school of Shammai. This should teach you that they showed love and friendship toward one another, thus putting into practice the injunction "You shall love truth, but also peace" (Zech. 8:19).

Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel were famous for always disagreeing with each other. Nevertheless, they remained at peace with one another, people from each school married each other. According to other sources, they still ate at each other's houses. In short, they didn't split and form two totally different groups.

* How can people strongly disagree with each other and still remain in a state of "shalom"? When does this happen today and when does it seem not to happen?
* Are there times when it might be better to side with "truth" over "peace"? Are there times when unity is wrong?
* Why was it important for the schools of Shammai and Hillel to marry each other? Why was it important that they didn't split up into two groups?