

Rodef Shalom Pursuer of Peace

It is taught that Hillel said: "You should be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow man, and drawing them near to the Law." (Pirke Avos 1:12) Peace is not passive, It doesn't just happen, It requires action, and pursuing peace must be an active consistent process. We learn from the words of King David in the Psalms, "Depart from evil, and do good. Seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:15). The Torah does not obligate us to pursue the mitzvos, but only to fulfill them at the proper time and at the appropriate occasion. Peace however, in Jewish tradition, must be sought at all times. Both at home and away from home, we are obliged to seek peace and be proactive in pursuing it.

It seems that almost everyone, Jewish and non Jewish is familiar with the Hebrew word for peace, **שָׁלוֹם** - shalom. It is one of the most beautiful and important words in the Jewish vocabulary. We are told in Pirke Avos to meet every person with a friendly greeting. Therefore it has become customary in Jewish tradition to greet one another with the words **שָׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם** "shalom Aleichem" (peace be unto you). The Talmud (Brachos 6b) instructs us that one who does not return a greeting is called a robber. The inverted order **עֲלֵיכֶם שָׁלוֹם** aleichem shalom (upon you let there be peace) is the customary response to the shalom aleichem greeting. When we bid farewell to people we say **צֵאתְכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם** tzais'chem le'shalom leave in peace. Each week as another Shabbos arrives and candles are lit at sundown we greet each other with **שַׁבַּת שָׁלוֹם** shabbat shalom may your Sabbath be a peaceful one. Even when a person dies, our wish is that the deceased rest in peace.

The word shalom derives from the Hebrew word shalem, meaning "whole" or "complete." It also signifies welfare of every kind, including security, contentment, sound health, prosperity, friendship, peace, and tranquility of mind and heart. By contrast, the English word "peace" comes from the Latin word pax, that means "quiet."