

It has been customary in Jewish tradition to learn from the books of the Mishna, or Oral Law, in memory, honor, and to elevate the soul of the man or woman who has passed away. This is a tradition everyone can be a part of. These short passages are from Tractate Avot, a collection of wisdom teachings from the period of 200 BCE to about 200 CE.

הלל אומר, הוי מתלמידיי של אהרן, אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, אוהב את הבריות ומקרֵבן לתורה

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

Aaron, the high priest and brother of Moshe at the time of the Exodus from Egypt, was known for bringing people together and being a peacemaker. He exemplified Hillel's most famous teaching, 'love your neighbor as yourself'- and in this he upheld the most important principle in the Torah.

הוא היה אומר, אם אין אני לי, מי לי. וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני. ואם לא עכשיו, אימתי

He also used to say: If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?

These are Hillel's well-known calls to action. Stand up for yourself and also for others. Don't wait for someone else to do what's right, be a standard-bearer for good right now, today. Personal responsibility and active self-reflection are keys to being the best citizen, neighbor and individual you can be.

רֵבֵן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר, עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַדִּין וְעַל הָאֱמֶת וְעַל הַשְּׁלוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט
שְׁלוֹם שִׁפְטוּ בְּשַׁעְרֵיכֶם

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).

Hillel's great-grandson and a leader at a time of terrible suffering and grief, Rabban Shimon understood that without these three principles, only the brutal force imposed by the Roman legions stood, and there could be no peace, no righteousness, no truth to stand in its way. No justice could follow. He demands of us all that we build communities and societies where these principles are paramount.

As we commemorate two years since the Monsey stabbing attack resulting in the death of Josef Neumann, HY'D, and the wounding of five others, the **Jewish Federation and Foundation of Rockland County** and the **Anti-Defamation League** ask everyone to share their learning and their prayers, in his memory. May we merit through our learning and our actions to build a community of peacemakers, activists, and pursuers of justice as the wisdom of our forebears and the challenges of our times demand.