

A person should always be patient like Hillel, etc. – לעולם
 ואל יהא קפדן בשמאי. מעשה בשני בני
 אדם

To the best of one's ability, one should
 adopt the trait of patience and humility, distancing himself
 from arrogance and anger, as per the Gemara's depiction of
 Hillel (Rambam *Sefer HaMadda, Hilkhot Deot* 2:3).

Perek II
 Daf 31 Amud a

NOTES

They said that anyone who will go and aggravate Hillel will take, etc. – אמרו כל מי שילך ויקנט את הלל יטול וכו' – The attempt to provoke Hillel combined several factors, each of which was aggravating. The first was the choice of the day and time. Shabbat eve is a busy time, in general, and the person chose to disturb Hillel while he was washing his hair. Hillel was forced to interrupt his shampoo in order to respond. The second factor was the contemptuous manner in which he addressed Hillel, as if he did not know who Hillel was. Finally, the series of ridiculous questions with inflammatory implications was particularly irritating (Maharsha).

You have asked a significant question – שאלה גדולה שאלת: Hillel's approach was to respond seriously and deliberately to anyone who asked him a question. If the questioner was turned away and embarrassed when asking a frivolous question, he would not return to ask significant questions that required meaningful answers (*Iyyun Ya'akov*).

LANGUAGE

Bleary [*terutot*] – תרוטות: There are several opinions as to the origin of this word and its meaning. One possibility is that it is a derivative of the Greek verb *δρῦσταιν*, to tear. Another possibility is the Latin *teres*, genitive *teretis*, meaning round.

BACKGROUND

Tadmorians and Africans – תרמודיים ואפריקיים: The Tadmorians are the residents of Tadmor, Palmyra, a city located in the heart of the Syrian desert and visited by sandstorms from time to time.

The Africans mentioned here are apparently the inhabitants of the southern Nile Valley, the swampy regions adjacent to southern Sudan.

Four hundred zuz – ארבע מאות זוז: The easiest way to appreciate the value of this sum is by quantifying its buying power. Four hundred zuz was approximately four months' salary.

תנו רבנן: לעולם יהא אדם ענוותן כהלל
 ואל יהא קפדן בשמאי. מעשה בשני בני
 אדם

Since the Gemara discussed the forbearance of Sages, who remain silent in the face of nonsensical comments, it cites additional relevant examples. The Sages taught in a *baraita*: A person should always be patient like Hillel¹⁴ and not impatient like Shammai. The Gemara related: There was an incident involving two people

שהמרו זה את זה, אמרו: כל מי שילך
 ויקנט את הלל – יטול ארבע מאות זוז.
 אמר אחד מהם: אני אקניטנו. אותו היום
 ערב שבת היה, והלל חפף את ראשו. הלך
 ועבר על פתח ביתו, אמר: מי כאן הלל? מי
 כאן הלל? נתעטף ויצא לקראתו. אמר לו:
 בני, מה אתה מבקש? אמר לו: שאלה יש
 לי לשאול. אמר לו: שאל בני, שאל! מפני
 מה ראשיתך של בבלים סגלגלות? אמר
 לו: בני, שאלה גדולה שאלת – מפני שאין
 להם אחיות פקחות.

who wagered with each other and said: Anyone who will go and aggravate Hillel to the point that he reprimands him, will take^N 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.^N The reason is because they do not have clever midwives. They do not know how to shape the child's head at birth.

הלך והמתין שעה אחת, חזר ואמר: מי כאן
 הלל? מי כאן הלל? נתעטף ויצא לקראתו.
 אמר לו: בני, מה אתה מבקש? אמר לו:
 שאלה יש לי לשאול. אמר לו: שאל
 בני, שאל! מפני מה עיניך של תרמודין
 תרוטות? אמר לו: בני, שאלה גדולה
 שאלת – מפני שדרין בין החולות.

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*]?¹ 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.

הלך והמתין שעה אחת, חזר ואמר: מי כאן
 הלל? מי כאן הלל? נתעטף ויצא לקראתו.
 אמר לו: בני, מה אתה מבקש? אמר לו:
 שאלה יש לי לשאול. אמר לו: שאל בני,
 שאל! מפני מה רגליהם של אפריקיים
 רחבות? אמר לו: בני, שאלה גדולה
 שאלת – מפני שדרין בין בצעי המים.

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 Africans⁸ 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.

אמר לו: שאלות הרבה יש לי לשאול,
 ומתירא אני שמא תבעוס. נתעטף וישב
 לפניו, אמר לו: כל שאלות שיש לך
 לשאול – שאל. אמר לו: אתה הוא הלל
 שקורין אותך נשיא ישראל? אמר לו: הן.
 אמר לו: אם אתה הוא – לא ירבו כמותך
 בישראל. אמר לו: בני, מפני מה? אמר לו:
 מפני שאבדתי על ידך ארבע מאות זוז.
 אמר לו: הוי זהיר ברוחך, כדי הוא הלל
 שתאבד על ידו ארבע מאות זוז וארבע
 מאות זוז – והלל לא יקפיד.

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 zuz⁸ 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.

On one foot – על רגל אחת: Apparently, his intention was to ask the Sage for a single fundamental principle, one foot, upon which all of Judaism is based. Indeed, just as Hillel based the Torah upon this single principle, so too Rabbi Akiva and ben Azzai later attempted to formulate the same concept in different, broader terms (Maharsha).

That which is hateful to you do not do to another – דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד: This phrase appears in the Aramaic translation, *Targum Yonatan*, of the Torah verse: “And you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). It is not a precise translation; rather, it is a limited interpretation. It does not express the positive mitzva to love another, but the prohibition, proscribing actions harmful to others. Apparently, Hillel sought to express through this principle that at the basis of the Torah are those mitzvot, which are fundamental principles that may be universally applied (Maharsha).

Accepting converts – קבלת גרים: In practice, people like the ones Hillel converted are not accepted as converts because the *halakha* insists that a convert accept upon himself the entire Torah without intention to accrue personal benefit. However, Hillel apparently relied on the fact that these converts could eventually accept Judaism in its entirety at a later time.

BACKGROUND

ואלה הבגדים וכי – ואלה הבגדים וכי: These are the priestly garments worn by the High Priest, also referred to as the golden garments (Exodus 28). Four of them, the breastplate, the *efod*, the robe, and the frontplate, were unique to the High Priest. Four other garments, the trousers, the tunic, the sash, and the miter, resembled those worn by common priests. There was a debate among the Sages whether the sash worn by the High Priest was identical to that worn by the common priests. It appears that the miters differed, at least in the way they were worn.



Priestly garments

LANGUAGE

Protocols [*takhsisei*] – טכסיסי: From the Greek τάξις, *taxis*, which means, among other things, order, protocol, and observances.

תנו רבנן: מעשה בגוי אחד שבא לפני שמאי, אמר לו: כמה תורות יש לכם? אמר לו: שתים, תורה שבכתב ותורה שבעל פה. אמר לו: שבכתב – איני מאמינך, ושבעל פה – איני מאמינך. גיירני על מנת שתלמדני תורה שבכתב. גער בו והוציאנו בניו. בא לפני הלל – גייריה, יומא קמא אמר ליה: א"ב ג"ד, למחר אפיך ליה. אמר ליה: והא אתמול לא אמרת לי הכי? אמר ליה: לאו עלי דידי קא סמכת? דעל פה נמי סמוך עלי.

שוב מעשה בגוי אחד שבא לפני שמאי, אמר לו: גיירני על מנת שתלמדני כל התורה כולה בשאני עומד על רגל אחת. דחפו באמת הבנן שבדי. בא לפני הלל, גייריה. אמר לו: דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד – זו היא כל התורה כולה, ואיך – פירושה הוא, זיל גמור.

שוב מעשה בגוי אחד שהיה עובר אחורי בית המדרש, ושמע קול סופר שהיה אומר: ואלה הבגדים אשר יעשו חושן ואפוד. אמר: הללו למי? אמרו לו: לכהן גדול. אמר אותו גוי בעצמו: איך ואתגני, בשביל שישמוני כהן גדול. בא לפני שמאי, אמר ליה: גיירני על מנת שתשימני כהן גדול. דחפו באמת הבנן שבדי. בא לפני הלל – גייריה.

אמר לו: בלום מעמידין מלך אלא מי שיועד טכסיסי מלכות? לך למוד טכסיסי מלכות. הלך וקרא, בין שהגיע והזר הקרב יומת? אמר ליה: מקרא זה על מי נאמר? אמר לו: אפילו על דוד מלך ישראל. נשא אותו גר קל וחומר בעצמו: ומה ישראל שנקראו בנים למקום, ומתוך אהבה שאהבם קרא להם: “בני בכורי ישראל” – כתיב עליהם: “והזר הקרב יומת”, גר הקל שבא במקלו ובתרמילו – על אחת כמה וכמה!

בא לפני שמאי, אמר לו: בלום ראוי אני להיות כהן גדול? והלא כתיב בתורה: “והזר הקרב יומת”! בא לפני הלל, אמר לו: ענוותן הלל, ינחו לך ברכות על ראשך שהקרבתי תחת כנפי השכינה. לימים נודונו שלש שנים למקום אחד, אמרו: קפדנותו של שמאי בקשה לטורדנו מן העולם, ענוותנותו של הלל קרבנו תחת כנפי השכינה.

The Sages taught: There was an incident involving one gentile who came before Shammai. The gentile said to Shammai: How many Torahs do you have? He said to him: Two, the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. The gentile said to him: With regard to the Written Torah, I believe you, but with regard to the Oral Torah, I do not believe you. Convert me on condition that you will teach me only the Written Torah. Shammai scolded him and cast him out with reprimand. The same gentile came before Hillel, who converted him and began teaching him Torah. On the first day, he showed him the letters of the alphabet and said to him: *Alef, bet, gimmel, dalet*. The next day he reversed the order of the letters and told him that an *alef* is a *tav* and so on. The convert said to him: But yesterday you did not tell me that. Hillel said to him: You see that it is impossible to learn what is written without relying on an oral tradition. Didn't you rely on me? Therefore, you should also rely on me with regard to the matter of the Oral Torah, and accept the interpretations that it contains.

There was another incident involving one gentile who came before Shammai and said to Shammai: Convert me on condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot.^N Shammai pushed him away with the builder's cubit in his hand. This was a common measuring stick and Shammai was a builder by trade. The same gentile came before Hillel. He converted him and said to him: That which is hateful to you do not do to another,^N that is the entire Torah, and the rest is its interpretation. Go study.

There was another incident involving one gentile who was passing behind the study hall and heard the voice of a teacher who was teaching Torah to his students and saying the verse: “And these are the garments^B which they shall make: A breastplate, and an *efod*, and a robe, and a tunic of checkered work, a mitre, and a girdle” (Exodus 28:4). The gentile said: These garments, for whom are they designated? The students said to him: For the High Priest. The gentile said to himself: I will go and convert so that they will install me as High Priest. He came before Shammai and said to him: Convert me on condition that you install me as High Priest. Shammai pushed him with the builder's cubit in his hand. He came before Hillel; he converted him.

Hillel said to him, to the convert: Is it not the way of the world that only one who knows the protocols [*takhsisei*]^L of royalty is appointed king? Go and learn the royal protocols by engaging in Torah study. He went and read the Bible. When he reached the verse which says: “And the common man that draws near shall be put to death” (Numbers 1:51), the convert said to Hillel: With regard to whom is the verse speaking? Hillel said to him: Even with regard to David, king of Israel. The convert reasoned an *a fortiori* inference himself: If the Jewish people are called God's children, and due to the love that God loved them he called them: “Israel is My son, My firstborn” (Exodus 4:22), and nevertheless it is written about them: And the common man that draws near shall be put to death; a mere convert who came without merit, with nothing more than his staff and traveling bag, all the more so that this applies to him, as well.

The convert came before Shammai and told him that he retracts his demand to appoint him High Priest, saying: Am I at all worthy to be High Priest? Is it not written in the Torah: And the common man that draws near shall be put to death? He came before Hillel and said to him: Hillel the patient, may blessings rest upon your head as you brought me under the wings of the Divine Presence. The Gemara relates: Eventually, the three converts gathered together in one place, and they said: Shammai's impatience sought to drive us from the world; Hillel's patience brought us beneath the wings of the Divine Presence.^N