

"And they wept for Aharon thirty days, all the house of Israel." (20:29)

Rashi explains the reason that all of *Bnei Yisrael* grieved over Aharon's death was his devotion to the promotion of harmony and love among all of the people. Indeed, this is stated in *Avos (1:13)*, *Be of the disciples of Aharon, love peace and pursue peace, love the people and bring them closer to the Torah*. Dedication to seeking peace and harmony among people is a noble trait. Aharon exemplified this attribute through his loving sincerity in pursuing peace. His endeavor emanated from a deep sense of love for *Bnei Yisrael*. He did not desire to ingratiate himself in anyone's eyes or to receive public accolades for his humanitarian ideals. He simply loved his fellow man with such devotion that he could not tolerate any form of strife among them.

We may, however, question the use of the word "pursue", in regard to seeking to establish peace. This verb generally refers to pursuing with the intent to destroy; in other words, to "persecute" peace. This is not quite as paradoxical as it seems. There are moments when those who seek true peace must actually disrupt the peaceful status quo. When attaining peace demands a compromise or appeasement with regard to *Torah's* precepts; when we are asked to lower our standards of morality and tolerate subtle forms of moral degradation in return for peace; when we are asked to join with those who would destroy our observance with their carefully orchestrated inroads into our Heritage, then we must "persecute" peace and wage war in order to promote peace.

There is a noteworthy exposition by the *Mharam Shick Z"l* on the *Mishna* in *Avos (1:18)*, "*By three things the world endures, by justice, by truth, and by peace*". He questions the *Mishna's* placing the attribute of "peace" at the very end. Isn't peace the paramount quality to be maintained so that society and the world thrive? After all, the supreme accolade is not a "justice" or "truth" prize, but rather a "peace" prize, which presumably reflects man's greatest contribution to civilization. Many of us will go to great lengths to achieve peace. We may even demean and degrade ourselves in order to give honor to the wicked, to those who would barter true *Torah* observance for a sterile form of religious devotion. We have lost perspective of the standard for the pursuit of peace. This is why "truth" precedes "peace." Only when the truth of *Torah* is maintained does the pursuit of peace become a mandatory consequence. If the truth, however, becomes jeopardized, if our Holy *Torah* and faith in Hashem are degraded to "second place" by other pursuits in the name of harmony, then peace is not worth the price. To maintain a fictitious union between falsehood and truth) will not effect world preservation and existence. By maintaining rigid standards of integrity, we will merit the ultimate peace that we are long awaiting.