

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

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BH

FOR THE WAYS OF PEACE

Occasionally, the sages needed to declare that certain practices were just, even though they had no textual basis for doing so. For example, they proclaimed that cohanim were to receive the first aliyah to the Torah and levi'im the second for the sake of the "ways of peace" (M. Gittin 5:8). In other words, sometimes the texts we are given do not hold all the answers and we have to see justice and proclaim it when it leads to greater peace. In the following text, Tosefta (the early commentary to the Mishnah) adds to this list of things we do for the sake of "the ways of peace".

A city in which Israelites and gentiles live-the collectors of funds for the support of the poor collect equally from Israelites and from gentiles for the sake of peace.

They provide support for the poor of the gentiles along with the poor of Israel for the sake of peace.

They make a lament for, and bury, gentile dead for the sake of peace.

They express condolences to gentile mourners, for the sake of peace. (T. Gittin 3:13-14)

These toseftot hardly need any commentary. It is clear: when we live among non-Jews, even if we are in the majority (maybe especially if we are in the majority). The universal human experiences of giving and receiving charity and grieving with those who have lost a loved one call forth a universal human response.

Discussion Questions:

1. If you were to add to the list of what is done for the sake of the "ways of peace" what would you add?
2. Do these rules apply at all times and in all situations? Do these rules help foster peace?