

HILLEL THE ELDER: A TALMUDIC PERSPECTIVE OF HIS LEADERSHIP INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

There is a great deal of interest in discovering the secrets behind quality/good leadership as this is the backbone for organisational or national success. This article traces and reviews Hillel the Elder's leadership intelligence, which saw him rise from being a woodcutter to become the 'Nasi' (President) of Israel, from a Talmudic perspective. Relevant literature from the Babylonian Talmud, journal articles and other Jewish books was reviewed in order to bring to light some of the secrets behind Hillel the Elder's leadership intelligence. A number of leadership lessons were discovered and are discussed in this article. This article will go a long way in influencing leadership practices in the 21st century given the rampant corporate failures due to mismanagement, corruption and misappropriation of funds.

Keywords: Leadership Intelligence, Lessons, Hillel the Elder, Talmud

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1. Introduction

The Talmud is a comprehensive term for the Mishnah and Gemara as joined in the two compilations known as the Babylonian Talmud (6th Century) and the Jerusalem Talmud (5th Century) (Miller, 2011). The Mishnah is a fundamental collection of the legal pronouncements and discussion of the Tanna'im (Rabbinic sages), compiled by Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nasi early in the 3rd Century. The Mishnah is the basic text of the Oral Law (Oral Torah) (Miller, 2011). The Talmud is principally concerned with *halacha* (Jewish law), but it also provides a detailed record of the beliefs of the Jewish people, their philosophy, traditions, culture, and folklore, that is, the *aggadah* (homiletics). The Midrash, a separate scripture, recorded the views of the Talmudic sages and is mainly devoted to the exposition of biblical verses¹. The canon of the Gemara, constructed from commentaries and discussions on the Mishnah, was first recorded in written form about 1500 years ago². According to Unterman (1971), states sprang up and states vanished but the Jew has always preserved his Talmud and from it drew the strength to overcome all the tragedies. The Talmud has been argued to be the Jewish secret for success. Unterman (1971) further argues that the inner world of the Jew has always remained whole and untouched; no outside influence,

no danger and no whirlwind had sufficient power to destroy this world. The Talmud has always been a book solely for scholars, savants, and researchers and it is considered a significant part of their [Jewish] daily life (Unterman, 1971). To Unterman (1971), the Talmud is the cornerstone of the Jewish culture, their creative strength as well as the backbone of their history. To the Jewish people the Talmudic literature, as well as the Bible, is imbued with the highest of universal ideals, full of love for mankind and human brotherhood. The Talmud creates a broad ethical world, and it is from this that the Jews have drawn their universal conception of morality and responsibility (Unterman, 1971). There is therefore a great deal of interest in discovering the leadership intelligence behind Hillel the Elder through a Talmudic eye.

2. Brief background of Hillel the Elder

Most people flee from study and contemplation. This then results in people lacking the vigor and therefore longingly waits for the day when a strong personality will arise and put the will of the people into effect (Unterman, 1971). There is a lot to learn from such a giant as Hillel the Elder. Hillel the Elder is considered one of those figures in world history which has to be put down upon paper. Hillel the Elder of Babylonia is one of the most brilliant Talmudic lights who personify most perfectly the great ideal of uncompromising love for mankind (Unterman, 1971). Hillel the Elder was born in Babylonia in the year 75 before our present era (Unterman, 1971). He had a

¹ Friedman, H.H. (2000), Biblical foundations of business ethics, Journal of markets and morality, Vol.3, No. 1, pp. 43-57

² Friedman, H.H. (2012), The Talmud as a business guide, MJAE, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 38-48

brother by the name Shebna (Buxbaum, 2008). Shebna was a wealthy merchant who wanted Hillel the Elder to become a partner in his business. Hillel the Elder, however, declined the offer and chose instead the career of a scholar³ (Unterman, 1971). Hillel the Elder lived in Jerusalem during the time of King Herod and the Roman Emperor Augustus. In the Midrash compilation Sifre⁴, the periods of Hillel the Elder's life are made parallel to those of the life of Moses. Both lived 120 years,⁵ and at the age of forty (40) Hillel the Elder went to the Land of Israel, another forty (40) years he spent in study; and the last third of his life he was the spiritual head of the Jewish people. Hillel the Elder was known as the innovator behind *prosbul*⁶, a system that ensured the availability of loans to poor people. Hillel the Elder often interpreted Scripture more liberally and humanistically than his more hard-line contemporaries, especially Shammai. Scholars suggest that at an early age Jesus became a rabbi in the House of Hillel the Elder (Kahaner, 2003).

3. Leadership intelligence from Hillel the Elder

A leader's thirst for knowledge

Hillel the Elder had an unquenchable thirst for the words of Torah, as the rabbis say: "sit amidst the dust of the sages' feet, and drink in their words with thirst"⁷ (Buxbaum, 2008). The rise of Hillel the Elder, the continuator of the Torah in his generation, was therefore almost a miracle⁸. Hillel the Elder is said to have left his homeland Babylonia, and came to Palestine to study at the feet of two Pharisee sages Shemaya and Avtalyon, who were the great sages and great Torah interpreters. This teaches us that one must have a mentor/teacher for him/her to succeed in life. Hillel the Elder was willing to contend with adversity in pursuit of the Torah, knowing that the spiritual reward gained thereby would be commensurate with the trouble (Buxbaum, 2008). Hillel the Elder's love for God and His Torah was on

the very highest level – it was like, according to Buxbaum (2008), the fiery and passionate love between man and woman, an exclusive love in which another can have no share as shown by his declining to become a business partner with Shebna his brother. Hillel the Elder chose poverty out of his devotion to God and to Torah. Hillel the Elder's devotion to God and to Torah was of the highest level which if followed by the 21st Century leaders, the world will be healed of its corrupt and unethical challenges. In order for him to exist, Hillel the Elder became a labourer (woodcutter). During the first half of the day he worked hard in order to eke (supplement) out a miserable existence, and spent the rest of the day in study. To illustrate his commitment and devotion to God and His Torah the following story is told of him in Yoma (35b) that:

Once it happened that he could not pay the house guard and therefore could not enter the yeshiva⁹. But since he did not wish to miss the wise words of these two famous Tanna'im (rabbinic sages) (Shemaya and Avtalyon), he climbed up upon the roof of the yeshiva, although it was cold and snowing outside, and listened in to the class through the skylight. The snow covered him up completely, and thus he lay frozen throughout the night. The next morning, when the students gathered, they noticed that no light came from the skylight. It was then that Hillel the Elder was discovered upon the roof and taken down. He was thoroughly washed, rubbed with ointment, and placed near a fire to warm himself. This happened on a Sabbath, but the elders of the yeshiva decreed that in honour of such a man it was permissible to violate the strict regulations of the Sabbath of making a fire. The entry fee was then abolished after this incident.

The Talmud and the Midrash¹⁰ tell many stories illustrating Hillel the Elder's amazing learning (Unterman, 1971). Thus it is told that Hillel the Elder knew all the seventy (70) languages of the world, and the language of all the beasts, trees and plants, hills, and valleys. Katznelson (1918) in Buxbaum (2008) suggests that this means (or originally meant?) that Hillel the Elder gave talks on mountains, hills, and valleys, that is, on natural geography, and also on botany and zoology ("the speech of plants and animals"). This tells that a leader must thirst for more and new knowledge. This can, however, be achieved through erudition and devotion. Although Hillel the Elder stemmed from the dynasty of King David, he became one of the few intellectual giants in all history (Unterman, 1971). Hillel the Elder's thirst for knowledge was immense, but this zeal did not prevent him from also having an interest in secular

³ Sota, 21a

⁴ Refers to either of the two works of Midrash halakhah, or classical Jewish legal Biblical exegesis, based on the Biblical books of Bamidbar (Numbers) and Devarim (Deuteronomy)

⁵ Deut. 34:7

⁶ *Prosbul*, (from Greek *pros boulē*, "in front of the court"), a legal procedure introduced into Judaism by Hillel the Elder in the 1st century BC to permit private loans to persons in need without fear on the lender's part that the debt would be legally abrogated at the end of the sabbatical year (every seventh year). The court assumed the obligation of collecting the debt, thus technically removing the personal element specified in the law: "every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the Lord's release has been proclaimed" (Deuteronomy 15:2). Though the procedure was criticized as an evident circumvention of the Law, it was retained to benefit those in urgent need of financial help

⁷ Avot 1:4

⁸ Succah, 20a

⁹ An institute of learning where students study sacred texts, primarily the Talmud or an Orthodox Jewish school

¹⁰ Rabbinic literature of Talmudic and post-Talmudic times based on a mode of scriptural interpretation that homiletically expounds words and verses; "a midrash," a single homiletic teaching

learning. He studied foreign languages and literatures, all for the sake of learning itself¹¹. He implanted this same zeal in his students and they too did not forsake foreign sciences¹² (Unterman, 1971). As a young man Hillel the Elder gave himself over, heart and soul, to the Torah (Buxbaum, 2008).

To further illustrate the importance of [Torah] study, the rabbis taught:

When a poor man who had neglected [the Torah] study shall appear before the Divine Judgment he will be asked: "Why did you not occupy yourself with [Torah] study?" If he/she answers, "I was poor and overwhelmed with the need to earn a living!" they will say to him: "Were you then poorer than Hillel the Elder?" (Buxbaum, 2008).

Because when Hillel the Elder was a young man he went out to work every day and earned just one tarpik-coin (half a dinar). Half of it he gave to the doorkeeper of the House of study, as admission fee, and with the other half he supported himself and his family. In its present context, this story serves as a lesson to the poor, that it is not about lack of money but it is about making up one's mind and knowing what one wants in life as well as appreciating and knowing the purpose of creation. As the saying goes, "nothing is impossible for a made up mind." The Talmud says that no poor man should think to use his poverty as an excuse.

Hillel the Elder bitterly deprecates those who leave the study of Torah for other things and used to say:

"one who seeks a name loses one's name, one who does not increase knowledge decreases it, one who does not study deserves to die, and one who makes use of the crown will die"¹³ (Rosenak, 2003).

Hillel the Elder just urged people not to cite their crowded schedules as an excuse not to study at all, and exhorted them not to delude themselves into thinking that what they don't have time for now, they will have time for in the future. People who begin a course of study now will develop the self-discipline necessary to keep studying for the rest of their lives. People who delay will find, as Hillel the Elder predicted, that they "never have free time"¹⁴ (Telushkin, 2010). Hillel the Elder used to say: "the more schooling the more wisdom; the more counsel, the more understanding"¹⁵ (Bialik and Ravnitzky, 1992).

Pertaining to Hillel the Elder's saying that: "He who does not increase, will decrease," Telushkin (2010) provides the below commentary by the rabbis;

The only way to continue growing in knowledge is through ongoing study. When one acquires new information, one's knowledge expands and wisdom grows. (Having wisdom and understanding together

leads to knowledge. When one knows the true name of a person or object, for example, one has complete wisdom and understanding. Knowledge leads to power as in the easing of the human struggle from the proper applications of science through engineering. Wisdom + understanding = Knowledge). But if one doesn't continue learning and reviewing, one's knowledge level will obviously decline, because one will not be adding new information and one will start to forget that which they knew. This is a very good lesson to all the people in leadership positions as well as to the general populace.

Hillel the Elder is also credited for saying that: "there is no comparison between one who reviews his studies 100 times and one who reviews it 101 times."¹⁶ According to Telushkin (2010), Hillel the Elder obviously believed need for ongoing repetition to ensure that material already learned will not be forgotten. Knowledge is not static. If one doesn't keep reviewing and adding, one declines. Eleven hundred years after Hillel the Elder, Maimonides responded to the question, "Until when is a person obligated to study [Torah]?" with the answer, "Until the day of one's death."¹⁷ This means that one must keep on learning until he/she dies. One must say till death do us part.

A leader must be able to turn nights into days as he/she and study after others went to sleep. This is what Robert Mugabe did when he was in prison as told by a fellow detainee who remembered Robert Mugabe 'turning the nights into days' as he read and typed long after the others were asleep so that he would have time to supervise their classes during the day (Holland, 2010). However, this has seen Robert Mugabe attaining seven (7) academic degrees in different fields (Arts and English, Education, Law and Economics) and being conferred with eleven (11) honorary degrees from Universities across the globe. The core teachings, however, of Judaism, in Hillel the Elder's explanation, are to act ethically and to keep learning (Telushkin, 2010).

A leader as a treasure of Knowledge

Knowledge as seen in previous paragraphs is a summation of wisdom and understanding which comes through erudition and devotion. A leader must possess a vast storehouse of knowledge in different fields of study and must be prepared to pass on that knowledge to his subordinates or followers. During the many years (forty, according to legend) Hillel the Elder attended on the rabbinic sages, Shemaya and Avtalyon among them, Hillel the Elder, acquired much Torah knowledge. As Yohanan ben Zakkai attests to the superior greatness of his own rabbi, Hillel the Elder:

¹¹ Tractate Sopherim, Chap. 16

¹² Succah, 28a; Baba Bathra, 134a

¹³ Avot 1:13

¹⁴ Hillel – Ethics of the fathers 2:4

¹⁵ Avot 2:7

¹⁶ Hillel, Chagigah 9a

¹⁷ Laws of Torah study 1:10

There was no part of the Torah that Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai had not mastered. He knew Scripture and Targum, Midrash, Halachah, Aggadah, and Parables too; he had studied every branch of Torah and learned everything there was to learn. He once exclaimed, "If the whole sky were parchment and all the trees on earth pens, all the seas ink – it would not suffice to write down all the wisdom I learned from my rabbi. But what was I able to receive from the wisdom of the sages, compared to what they knew? It is like a fly dipping in the ocean to bathe and then flying off; how much water does it carry away?" (Buxbaum, 2008).

Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai received his Torah knowledge from Hillel the Elder and Shammai (Buxbaum, 2008). There was nothing of the sages' words that Hillel the Elder had not learned. He had learned the languages of all the peoples of the world; as well as the speech of mountains, hills, and valleys; the speech of trees and grasses, the speech of wild and domestic animals, the speech of demons. His wisdom can be compared to that of King Solomon¹⁸ and the Gaon of Vilna¹⁹. Why was all this necessary? Because according to Telushkin (2010), "God desired to make Israel worthy, so God expanded the borders of the Torah and make it glorious."²⁰ It was this extraordinary knowledge of Torah that, wins Hillel the Elder the office of the Nasi²¹ (Prince or President) (Telushkin, 2010). In a similar sense, Robert Mugabe was never part of the various political campaigns that carried him to the top but a lot of people were impressed by his scholarly eloquence (Holland, 2010).

A leader`s humility and pride

Hillel the Elder rose to become the Nasi largely because of his genius in Torah. But scholarship alone is never enough to be an outstanding leader. Hillel the Elder was a remarkable man and leader but he did not look down on those he led and, as in the phrase of the sages, "his greatness was matched by his humility." The sages taught: "A person should always be patient and humble like Hillel the Elder...." a famous saying of Hillel the Elder explains his attitude to humility and pride.

My humiliation is my exaltation;
My exaltation is my humiliation²²

¹⁸ The book of King Solomon by Ahimaaz, court historian, 2005

¹⁹ The Genius: Elijah of Vilna and the making of modern Judaism by Eliyahu Stern, 2013, Yale University, US

²⁰ Isaiah 42:21 and Soferim 16:9

²¹ "President" in modern Hebrew. The meaning of the word evolved from "important person" or "tribal chief" in the Bible. In the rabbinic period it referred to the leader of the Sanhedrin, a person who often also had significant power. For several centuries in Palestine, the nasi was from the family of Hillel

²² Leviticus Rabbah 1:5

(More literally, "My being lowered is my being raised up; my being raised up is my being lowered.")

When a person is elevated by his own pride, or by the honour other people give him, his fullness of self-removes him from God; when he is lowered by his own honest reflection, or insulted or humiliated by others, his pride is destroyed and his humility brings him closer to God (Buxbaum, 2008). Hillel the Elder used to say; everyone who humbles himself, the Holy One, blessed be He, exalts; and everyone who exalts himself, the Holy One, blessed be He, humbles. To protect the dignity of another human, Hillel the Elder was completely willing to abandon his own dignity. Such a deed goes way beyond the bounds of conventional religiosity (Buxbaum, 2008).

The Talmud stresses the importance of humility in the halachic decision-making process: "Why did the school of Hillel the Elder merit to have the law fixed in accordance with their view? Because they were easy-going and modest. They studied both their own rulings and those of the school of Shammai, and they were even so humble as to mention the opinions of the school of Shammai before their own.... This teaches us that if a person humbles himself, God raises him up; and if a person raises himself up, God humbles him"²³ (Telushkin, 1994 and Miller, 2008). From everyone who tries to thrust himself upon eminence, eminence flees. But upon everyone who flees from eminence, eminence thrust itself. Everyone who tries to force time, time forces back. But everyone who is willing to abase himself before the hour [of success]²⁴, the hour [of success] remains waiting for him²⁵ (Bialik and Ravnitzky, 1992).

A leader`s superhuman patience and faith

Hillel the Elder possessed almost superhuman patience and faith. He was also a great moralist whose precepts are still used as values in the life of society. The rabbis taught: "Do not be easy to anger"²⁶ and to illustrate their teaching, cited the following story that presents Hillel the Elder as the model of the calm person who is hard to anger.

Two men once made a bet of four (400) hundred zuz (a large sum of money) about whether one of them could make Hillel the Elder lose his temper. One of them wagered that he would be able to evoke Hillel the Elder`s anger and impatience. He went to Hillel the Elder`s home just before the Sabbath evening, when Hillel the Elder was taking a bath, and called him out for a reply to some foolish question. Hillel the Elder presently came out covered by a cloth and he was asked: "Why are the eyes of the Tarmudites red?" Hillel the Elder patiently answered

²³ Eruvin 13b

²⁴ Something that Absalom failed to do (see 2 Sam.15)

²⁵ The book of legends; Sefer Ha-Aggadah legends from the Talmud and Midrash (708-709: 218)

²⁶ Avot 2:15

him: "Because they live in a very sandy place." Several minutes later the person returned and again called Hillel the Elder out to answer another foolish question. This was repeated several times, but each time Hillel the Elder answered the questions patiently and seriously.²⁷ Seeing his plans frustrated, the man cried out, "Are you the Hillel that everyone calls the 'Nasi' the 'Prince' of Israel?" "Yes," answered Hillel the Elder. "If so," the other blurted out in exasperation, "then may there not be many like you in Israel!" "Why is that, my son?" asked Hillel the Elder. "Because of you," said the man, "I've just lost a bet- of four (400) hundred zuz- that I could get you angry!" "Calm yourself," said Hillel the Elder. "It's better that you lose four (400) hundred zuz and still another four (400) hundred zuz than that Hillel should lose his temper."²⁸

People believed that nothing could anger Hillel the Elder. Although he was the Nasi of Israel, he disregards his honour; his thought was only to serve. Hillel the Elder's faith was very deep. He would always say, blessed be God today and every day. He never worried about tomorrow as long as he had enough for today. For tomorrow, he said, let God worry!²⁹ In a broader sense as Unterman (1971) states, Hillel the Elder was the most consistent humanitarian who believed that man is responsible for his own fate ["If I am not for myself, then who will be?"]. But the individual cannot fulfil himself when he remains alone, but he must be part of the community ["And if I am for myself only, what am I?"].

A leader as a mentor

It was said of Hillel the Elder that he renewed the Torah by his great erudition and noble character. He was a great mentor who managed to bring men to Torah. It is said of him that he used to stand in the gate of Jerusalem seeing people on their way to work.

"How much," he would ask, "will you earn today?" One would say: "A denarius"; the second: "Two denary." "What will you do with the money?" he would inquire. "We will provide for the necessities of life." Hillel the Elder would then say to them: "Would you not rather come and make the Torah your possession, that you may possess both this and the future world?"

It is said that eighty (80) of the most eminent men of his generation were his students. This tells us his mentorship capabilities and prowess. Thirty (30) of his students merited the Divine Presence resting upon them, just as it rested upon Moses. Another thirty (30) merited that the sun should stop in its path, just as it stopped for Joshua, the son of Nun.³⁰ The other twenty (20) students were of lesser calibre, and,

nevertheless, among these was Jonathan, the son of Uzziel, whose zeal for the Torah was so great that when a bird fluttered by him while he was immersed in Torah study, it was consumed by the flames of his inspiration.³¹ All this shows how great Hillel the Elder was and how an epitome of a leader must be. Hillel the Elder managed to mentor his students as he himself was also mentored by Shemaya and Avtalyon.

A leader's kindness and modesty

The chief traits in Hillel the Elder's character were his kindness and modesty. The Talmud tells many charming stories on this score. His modest character grew out of his profound moral conscience and deep understanding. The main idea running through all his work was human fellowship, and religion was for him merely a means to achieve this end. This is indicated in his very first saying that is considered the golden rule: "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving thy fellow-creatures, and bringing them nigh to the Torah."³²

Hillel the Elder, was the first of the Tanna'im to make love for one's fellow man the mainspring of the Jewish religion. Once, when a gentile came to him and asked him to teach him the entire Torah in one sentence, Hillel the Elder told him: "What you do not wish to be done unto you that you should not do unto others. This is the entire Torah and the rest is merely an elaboration of this virtue. As you will study the Torah you will find that out for yourself."³³

A leader's open door policy

The populace loved Hillel the Elder, and his home was always open to anyone who wished to ask him anything. Once the Aggadah³⁴ tells us, several serious minded men came to him and asked him:

"Tell us, dear teacher, what is the best way to find favour in God's and man's eyes?"

"Three things will merit it," Hillel the Elder replied. "Work, modesty, and a life of sorrow and suffering which is so anchored in faith that it is never weakened."

A leader as a lover of people and peace

A leader must love people as well as being a peacemaker. Hillel the Elder was the first Tanna'im credited for making love for one's fellow man the mainspring of the Jewish religion. How much worldly wisdom is embodied in his wonderful stroke of genius to transform the positive but utopian dictum, "love thy neighbour as you would thyself," into the negative but realizable, "Do not unto others what you

²⁷ Shab. 31a

²⁸ ibid

²⁹ Betza 16a

³⁰ Joshua 10:12-13

³¹ Succah 25a

³² Aboth, chap.1, Mishna 12

³³ Shab. 31a

³⁴ The nonlegal portions of Talmudic and midrashic literature

would not have others do unto you!” (Unterman, 1971). Hillel the Elder’s first teachings as found in Pirke Avot (The Ethics of the Fathers, at 1:12) is of special importance as it underlies the theme of almost all his teachings and actions. Hillel the Elder said,

“Be of the disciples of Aaron,
Loving peace and pursuing peace,
Loving people and bringing them close to the Torah.”

The deeds of Aaron, which were “loving peace and pursuing peace” in Hillel the Elder’s words, bring a leader the blessing of peace from God and from men. Shemaya and Avtalyon did the deeds of Aaron, of loving peace and loving people; and they, in turn, were beloved by the people, who saw in them their true leaders, leaders who hated lordship. Buxbaum (2008) suggests that Hillel the Elder must have taken his lesson about peaceableness from Malachi 2:6, which is understood to refer to Aaron the priest- “The Torah of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightly and turned many away from sin.” The same elements mentioned in the verse – Torah, peace, and bringing back sinners- are all found in Hillel the Elder’s saying, about the disciples of Aaron loving peace and bringing people to Torah. Hillel the Elder’s language must have also been influenced by Psalms 34:15, which says: “Seek peace and pursue it.” Commenting on Hillel the Elder’s saying, the rabbis taught about the words of the Psalm: “seek’ peace in your own place and ‘pursue’ it in another place.”³⁵ A person or leader must not only seek peace in his own life and sphere, but must be a peacemaker and bring others together: husband and wife, neighbours, families, cities, nations. This was an ideal of the sages, who considered it a sign of a true sage, and taught: “Sages increase peace throughout the world.”³⁶

A leader’s precept of bathing, anointing and clothing

A leader must devote an amount of time to bath, anoint and clothe his/her body as it is said, “He who does good to his own person is a man of piety.”³⁷ Such a one was Hillel the Elder. After taking leave of his disciples, he proceeded to walk along with them. His disciples asked him, “Master, where are you going?” He answered, “To perform a precept.” “What precept?” “To bath in the bathhouse.” “But is this a precept?”

“It is indeed, kings’ statues set up in theatres and circuses are scoured and washed down by the official specially appointed to look after them, who receives a salary for the work. More he is esteemed as one of the notables of the empire. How much more and more am I required to scour and wash myself,

who have been created in God’s image and likeness, as it is written, ‘In the image of God made He man!’”³⁸

This was one of the chief teachings of the Essenes, to keep the body clean by bathing in cold water three (3) times daily. This severely disciplined life made the Essenes strong and healthy. They all lived to an advanced age and many of them reached 100 years and more (Unterman, 1971). Though anointing (oil) and bath (water) do not enter the body, the body benefits from them.³⁹ If a man bathes but does not anoint himself, it is like water on top of a [covered] cask⁴⁰ (since it is not possible for the water to penetrate the body, the body does not benefit from it). The rabbis say: “A man should always eat and drink less than his means allow, but clothe himself in keeping with his means.”⁴¹ To illustrate the importance of one’s garments the rabbis taught: “Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, and their robes, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.”⁴² From this one may infer that even in a time of danger, one should not give up the dignity of one’s bearing, for behold, these men were going out to be burned, yet they adorned themselves [with their finery].⁴³ Robert Mugabe always wears his suits even when he went into camps during the liberation struggle. Although Tongogara thought this was ridiculous and tried to put him into military uniform, Robert Mugabe dressed in fatigues only once or twice (Holland, 2010). To further illustrate the importance of garments, the rabbis taught that: “David went and stealthily cut off the corner of Saul’s cloak.”⁴⁴ R. Yose son of R. Hanina said: He who treats garments with contempt ends up by deriving no benefit from them, as is said, “Kind David was now old, well advanced in years; and though they covered him with bed clothes, he never felt warm.”⁴⁵

The rabbis states that: “In my town, my name’s my fame; elsewhere, it is what I wear.”⁴⁶ According to R. Judah in the name of Rav: “One should sell even the beams in his house in order to buy shoes for his feet.”⁴⁷ A leader must be known by his garments. R. Yohanan called his garments “my aggrandizers.”⁴⁸

³⁸ Gen. 9:6; Lev. R. 34:3; The book of legends; Sefer Ha-Aggadah legends from the Talmud and Midrash (593:187)

³⁹ Ibid (594:195)

⁴⁰ Shab. 41a

⁴¹ Ibid (592:172)

⁴² Dan. 3:21

⁴³ Ibid (593:175)

⁴⁴ 1 Sam. 24:5

⁴⁵ 1 Kings 1:1 ; The book of legends; sefer Ha-Aggadah legends from the Talmud and Midrash (593:177)

⁴⁶ Shab. 145b; The book of legends; sefer Ha-Aggadah legends from the Talmud and Midrash (593:179)

⁴⁷ Shab. 129a; The book of legends; sefer Ha-Aggadah legends from the Talmud and Midrash (593:182)

⁴⁸ Shab. 113a

³⁵ Avot d’Rabbi Natan, chap. 12

³⁶ Berachot 64a

³⁷ Prov. 11:17

4. Hillel the Elder`s inspirational sayings

The following sayings by Hillel the Elder were adapted from Telushkin (2010), and Bialik and Ravnitzky (1992) and adopted in this article. Of the seventy-two scholars quoted in *Ethics of the Fathers*, Hillel the Elder is by far the most widely cited (Telushkin, 2010). His teachings appear in seven mishnayot (paragraphs of the Mishnah), while Rabbi Akiva⁴⁹, the second most frequently cited sage appear in four. The following are the teachings for which Hillel the Elder is widely known.

1:12. Hillel the Elder and Shammai received [the tradition] from them [Shemaya and Avtalyon]. Hillel the Elder says: “Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and drawing them near to Torah.”

1:13. He used to say: “A name made great is a name destroyed. He who does not increase will decrease. He who does not learn is deserving of death. He who uses the crown [of Torah for personal gain] shall soon be gone.”

1:14. He used to say: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am [only] for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

2:4. Hillel the Elder says: “Do not separate you from the community. Do not be too sure of yourself until the day of your death. Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place. Say nothing that cannot be understood, because in the end it will be understood. And do not say, ‘When I have [free] time, I will study,’ lest you never have [free] time.”

2:5. He used to say: “A boor does not fear sin; an ignorant person cannot be a saint; one who is bashful will never learn; the highly impatient person cannot teach; not all who steep themselves in business grow wise; and in a place where there are no men [willing to take action], try to be a man.”

2:7. He used to say: “The more flesh [one acquires], the more worms [in the grave]. The more possessions, the more worries. The more wives, the more witchcraft. The more servant girls, the more promiscuity. The more man-servants, the more theft. The more Torah, the more life. The more contemplation [alternatively, ‘schooling’], the more wisdom. The more counsel, the more understanding. The more charity, the more peace. He who has acquired a good name, has acquired it for himself. He who has acquired for himself knowledge of Torah, has acquired for himself life in the world to come.”

4:7. Rabbi Tzadok said: “... Do not use [the Torah] as a crown for self-glorification, or as a spade with which to dig.” Likewise Hillel the Elder used to say: “One who makes worldly use of the crown [of the Torah] shall fade away.” From this one learn that

one who seeks personal benefit from the words of the Torah risks destroying his life.

5. Summary of leadership intelligent lessons from Hillel the Elder

Below diagram (Fig. 1) summarily illustrates Hillel the Elder`s leadership intelligence.

⁴⁹ Rabbi Akiva (c.40-135 C.E.) considered one of the great Jewish scholars, didn`t learn to read or write until he was 40 years old. He worked as a shepherd for one of Jerusalem`s richest men, Kalba Savua. His life was a tale of conflict between his love for a woman and his love of Torah study

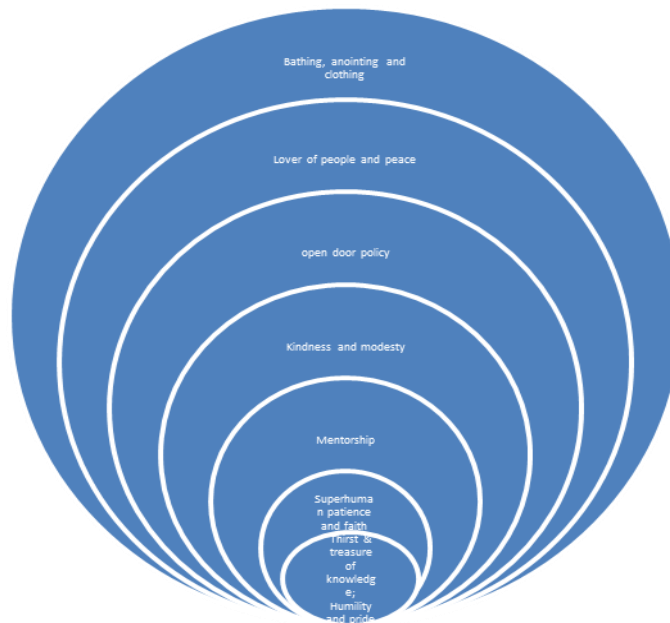


Figure 1. Leadership intelligence traits by author

Conclusion

In summary, the article managed to trace and review Hillel the Elder's leadership intelligence with a Talmudic eye. Leadership intelligence lessons were uncovered that will go a long way in assisting leaders in executing their daily duties in a manner that will heal the world of its corrupt tendencies. Hillel the Elder's two most famous sayings are typical Talmudic lessons and views on how a leader should live his/her life and conduct his/her daily business/duty:

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I only care for myself, what am I?"⁵⁰

"'What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow human,' that is the whole Torah, the rest is commentary."⁵¹

This article will be of much use and help for all leaders across the board as it touches the core intelligences behind a good and successful leader.

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⁵⁰ Avot 1:14

⁵¹ Shab. 31a