

SEASON 2



SESSION 9: GENEROSITY

OTLAMI MENTORSHIP

DEAR MENTEE AND MENTOR,

I want to share a personal story. Several years ago, my family and I went to celebrate the Purim feast with my in-laws in Brooklyn. Purim in Brooklyn is a sight to behold as the streets are teeming with children in costumes, blaring music, and an atmosphere of shared joy and celebration. Additionally, being that one of the key components of Purim is distributing charity, massive sums of money are donated to a plethora of individuals collecting for various causes. In anticipation of the opportunity to give, I had gone to the bank a few days before Purim and withdrew a tidy sum of cash to distribute.

Towards the end of our celebration, there was a knock at my in-law's door. My five-year-old son and I went to open the door. Standing at the threshold was a disheveled-looking individual who shyly asked us for tzedaka/charity. I reached into my pocket and removed the bank envelope that contained the cash for charity, but it was empty. I reached into my pocket for my wallet, but I must have left it behind. Sadly, I had nothing to give this poor fellow.

Suddenly, my five-year-old son tugged at my jacket. "Daddy", he said. "I have some money that I got on Purim. Can I give him some?" "I think so", I replied. He reached into his pocket and took out his wallet containing exactly \$5. Truth be told, it was his entire fortune. He looked at me with eyes brimming with compassion and asked me. "Daddy, do you think he is poor?" "It appears that way", I replied...

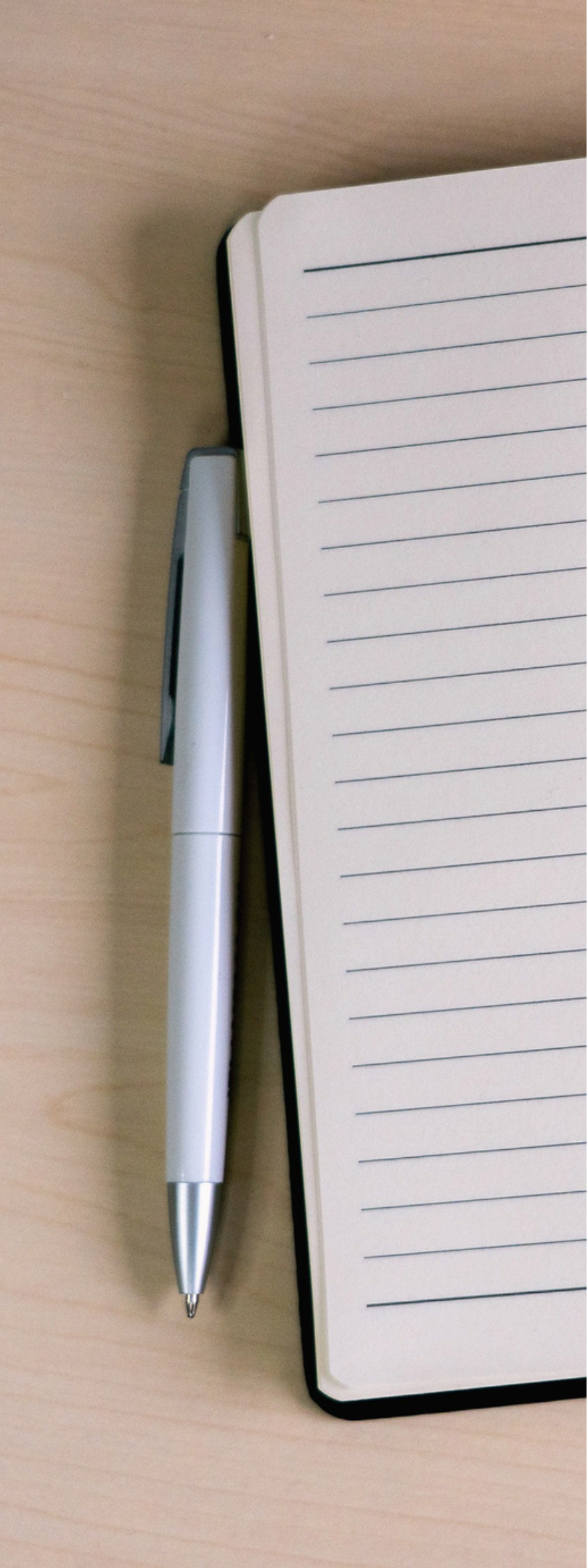
And then an absolutely remarkable thing happened. My five-year-old son took his \$5, every last drop of money that he possessed and he gave all of it to the poor fellow!

I remember the poor fellow muttering a blessing and thanks and then disappearing into the Brooklyn night. Initially, I just stood there stunned, but then instinctively, I grabbed my five-year-old, lifted him, and smothered him with hugs and kisses as my eyes overflowed with tears of gratitude and amazement at the incredible generosity of my five-year-old. Ten-plus years have passed, but I never forgot that moment, and truth be told neither did my son.

You know different folks are born with different levels of generosity. Some people are natural givers, while others are more into themselves. Regardless, Judaism advocates a life that constantly strives to become more giving and to work on one's current level of generosity.

This session will assist us in gaining a better appreciation of the value of generosity and practical applications that assist in being kinder and a more giving individual.





REMINDERS:

- ☐ Check-in: How was your week?
- ☐ Journaling: The journal is a space to track progress and growth throughout this journey.
- ☐ Set a time for your next meeting.

PART 1: GIVERS AND TAKERS

1. As we indicated in the introduction, we are all born with different levels of generosity. Where do you stand in the spectrum of giving? Are you a born giver? Not really a giver? Somewhere in between?
2. It is fascinating to note that human beings were created with an inborn affinity when it comes to giving. Think about the last time that you gave someone something meaningful. How did it make you feel?



3. Contemplate the following question posed to me by a high school student. How would you respond?

About a year ago, I began volunteering my free time at a wonderful program for special needs students. What began as a once-a-week commitment has turned into an all-encompassing pursuit. I spend almost every weekend, much of my vacation, and even my summer working with these special kids and I love it! My issue is that recently, I realized that the reason that I am spending so much time with these special souls is because of the incredible pleasure and inner satisfaction that I get from helping them. If so, doesn't that make me selfish?

4. Psalms 89:3

For I have said that the world
was built for kindness

כִּי־אֶמְרָתִי עוֹלָם
חֶסֶד יִבְנֶה

5. The Almighty fashioned our world that the components of existence that are critical for the continuity of the world are pleasurable. I.e. eating, exercise, and procreation

6. Conclusion: Since the world was built for kindness, the Almighty built into our psyche a drive to be generous and the pleasure that follows when we are. And here is something really incredible: the Hebrew word for give is נָתַן. The word נָתַן is a palindrome, for when you give you always get.

7. Can you identify a moment in your life where you experienced the nirvana of generosity?

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PART 2: THE BENEFITS OF GENEROSITY

Proverbs 21:21

One who pursues charity, and kindness
will find life, charity, and honor.

רִדְף צֶדֶקָה וְחֶסֶד
וְיִמְצָא חַיִּים צֶדֶקָה וְכָבוֹד:

Life

In a study that followed a group of adults over the age of 50 for five years, they found that those who volunteered at least once a week had a 44% lower risk of dying during the study period than those who did not volunteer. (BMC Public Health)

Charity

The Malbim (a foremost commentary on Proverbs) explains that when we are generous and giving to others we trigger the Almighty's kindness and generosity to us.

Honor

Studies show that people who give regularly experience a tangible increase in self-esteem and self-worth. (The Journals of Gerontology)

Analyze the benefits of kindness as King Solomon shares in Proverbs. Can you pinpoint the logic behind each benefit?





PART 3: TOOLS TO INCREASE GENEROSITY

1. Awareness: The most meaningful gifts we can give don't cost a cent. The list is endless: Time is a luxury these days. Giving your children or loved ones undivided attention. A phone call to a friend in a challenging situation. A hug to someone who looks like they need it. An email to an old friend to say you are thinking of them. A visit to an elderly relative. Making dinner for your family. Doing the carpool even though it's not your turn. A listening ear to someone who needs to let off steam. A hug to someone who looks like they need it. A sincere word of thanks to a hard-working colleague.

2. A plan: Take some time to reflect on the many moving pieces that comprise your daily schedule and build a few opportunities a week into your calendar.

3. Maaser: Did you know that observant Jews donate 10% of their income to charity? Doing so automatically creates regular giving opportunities. Try it for one month! You will be hooked!

4. Learn it and then live it: One of the best ways to bring any positive quality into your life is to learn about it. Find a Jewish book about generosity and kindness and read a few pages daily. It will change your life!

Here are a few ideas. Chofetz Chaim: Loving Kindness, Living Chessed, The Glittering World of Chessed



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