

OLAMI MENTORSHIP



SEASON 2

**SESSION 2:
HUMILITY**

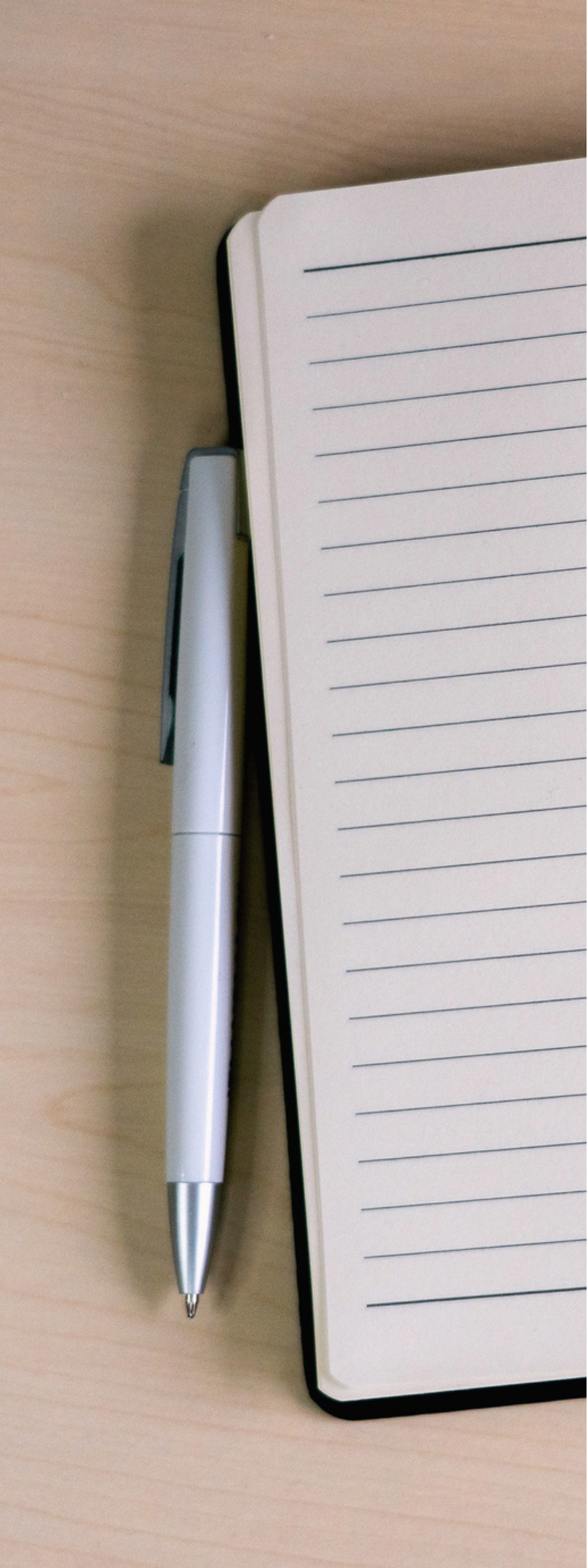
DEAR MENTEE AND MENTOR,

In a society that advocates self-promotion and self-marketing, the concept of humility is a very complicated one. A recent op-ed in one of America's top newspapers was titled: "Humility is a virtue; but can humble people succeed in the modern world". For so many the word humility conjures images of downtrodden or self-deprecating personalities. At the same time we know that the Torah places humility on a pedestal and that anavah=humility is a real prerequisite to genuine greatness.

The following resources will attempt to identify the Torah-true definition of humility, highlight its benefits, and provide a few practical tools and applications for incorporating anavah into one's lifestyle.

Please note: As we advance in life both personally and professionally, we begin to value and appreciate individuals with humility and modesty in a way that was hard to understand in our younger years. A discussion about anavah with your mentor/mentee can really add perspective and value by opening your eyes to a concept that may not readily occur in your daily life. These types of discussions are the core of successful mentorship.

Good Luck!



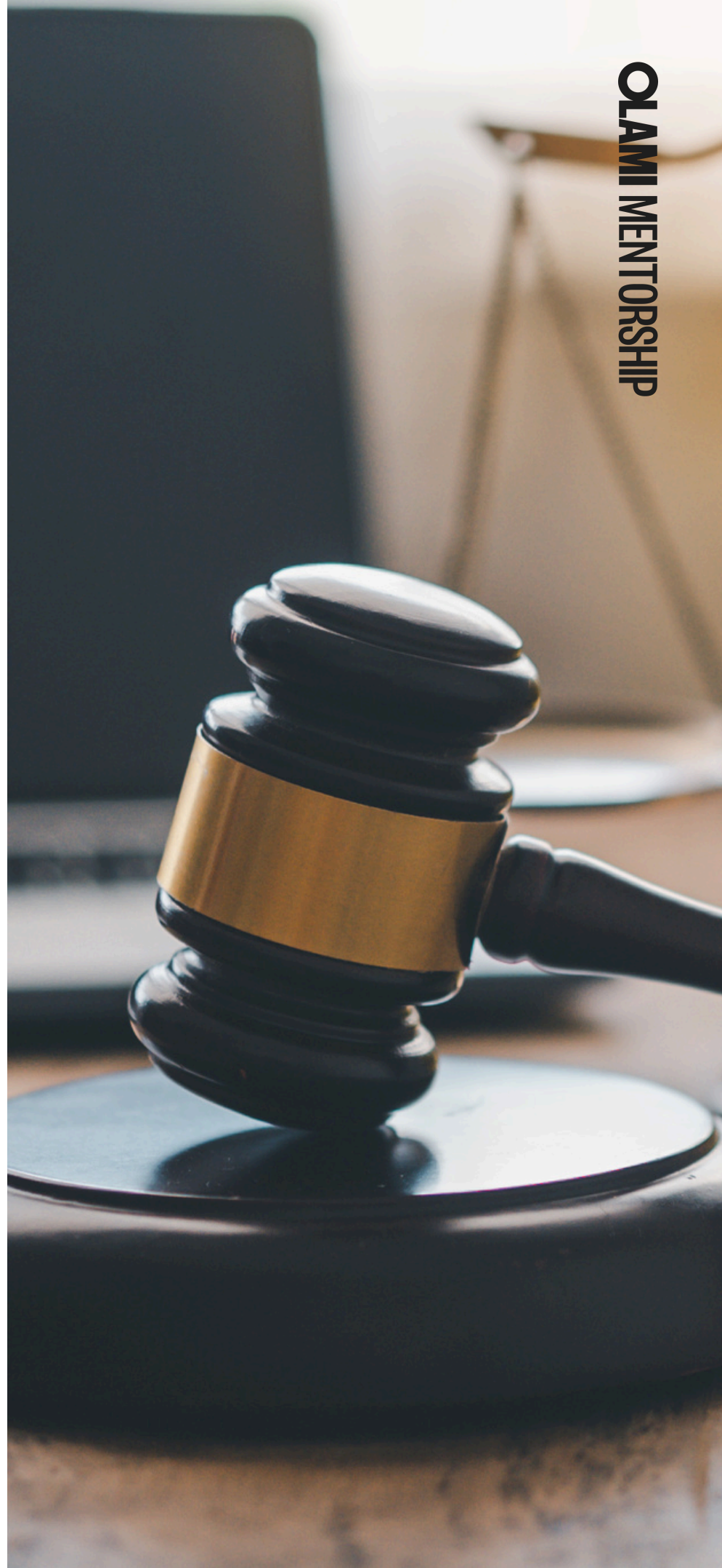
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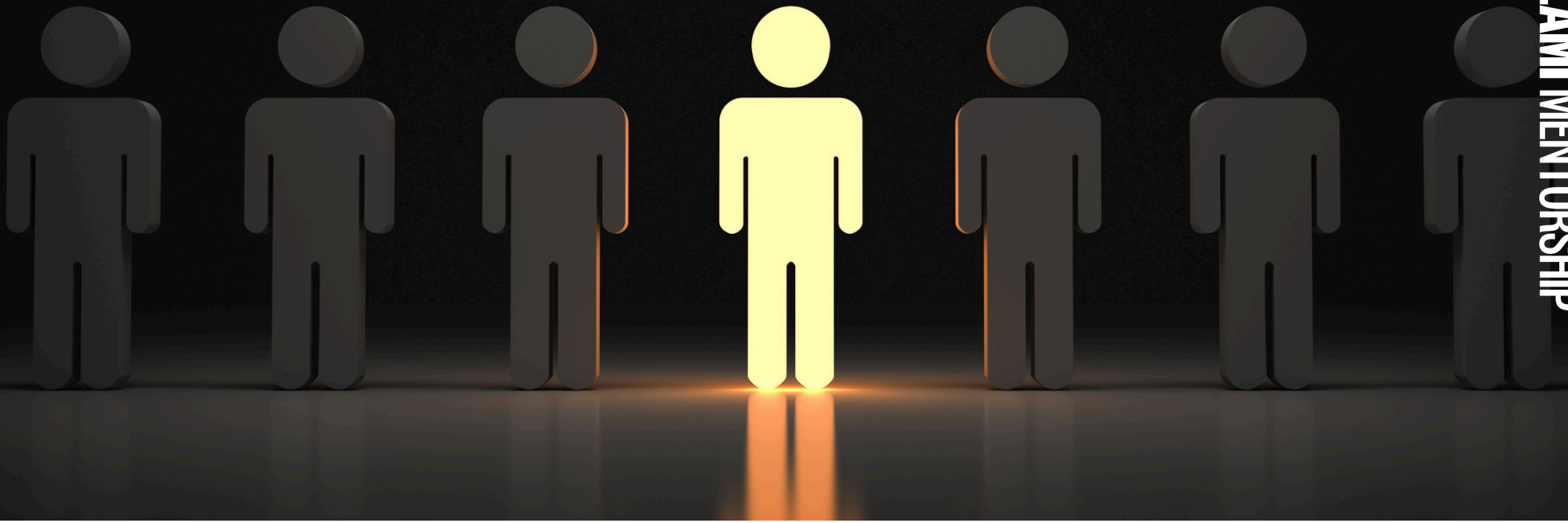
- Check-in: How was your week?
- Journaling: The journal is a space to track progress and growth throughout this journey.
- Set a time for your next meeting.

Intro

Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky was once needed to testify in a case in which the Beit Din of London was sued by a shochet [ritual slaughterer] who had been fired. As the head of the Beit Din, Rabbi Abramsky was summoned to testify in a secular court. His attorney asked him to state his name and his position. The attorney then asked, “Is it true that you are the greatest living halachic authority on the European continent?” Rabbi Abramsky said, “Yes. That is true.”

At that point the judge interjected and said, “Rabbi Abramsky, is that not rather haughty on your part? I thought that your laws and ethics teach you to be humble.” Without any hesitation, Rabbi Abramsky responded, “I know we are taught to be humble. But I am under oath.”





1. When you hear the word humility, what type of person or personality pops into your mind?

2. Is that personality type something that you admire? Do you aspire to be a humble person?

3. How would you personally define humility?

4. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Covenant & Conversation Shoftim

Humility means that you are secure enough not to need to be reassured by others. It means that you don't feel you have to prove yourself by showing that you are cleverer, smarter, more gifted or successful than others. You are secure because you live in God's love. He has faith in you even if you do not. You do not need to compare yourself to others. You have your task, they have theirs, and that leads you to cooperate, not compete.

PART 1: HUMILITY DEFINED



5. How does R. Sacks' definition line up with your previous definition?

6. See this almost cryptic statement in the Talmud Brachos 6b

Anyone who sets a particular place for himself to pray in the synagogue, the God of Abraham stands in his aid, and when he dies, people say of him, 'this was a humble person'" (Brachot 6b).

אָמַר רַבִּי הֶלְבוּ,
אָמַר רַב הוֹנָא: כֹּל
הַקּוֹבֵעַ מְקוֹם
לְתַפְּלוֹתוֹ — אֱלֹהֵי
אַבְרָהָם בְּעֶזְרוֹ.
וְכַשְׁמַת, אֹמְרִים
לוֹ: "אֵי עֲנִיו."

7. What does having a set spot in the synagogue have to do with humility?

8. Can you use Rabbi Sacks' definition of humility (above) to explain the Talmud in Berachos?

PART 2: THE BENEFITS OF HUMILITY

1. Can the two of you come up with the benefits of incorporating humility into your own lives? In which areas do you think you would gain?
2. Can you see how humility can bring a person to reverence of G-d? Wealth? Honor? Life?

3. Humility Brings Tranquility

Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, Begin Again Now, p. 148

Appropriate humility is a calming and healing attribute. Rather than denying your strengths, virtues, and achievements, acknowledge them while at the same time realize that everything you have is a gift. Humility... is a trait that allows you to be relaxed. It frees you from the need to appear to others as a perfect human being who never makes mistakes.





4. Humility Brings Popularity

Mesillat Yesharim, Ch. 22

People are pleased to be in the company of a humble person.

חברת הענו נאה עד מאד
ורוח הבריות נוחה הימנו

“There’s no need to show off when you know who you are.”

– Maxime Lagacé

5. Our tradition is replete with the spiritual benefits of humility. Can you see how humility might enhance one’s spirituality?

6. Proverbs 22:4

On the heels of humility come reverence of G-d, wealth, honor, and life.

עקב ענוה יראת השם
עשר וכבוד וחיים:

7. Humility as a Prerequisite to Torah Knowledge

Rabbi Chanina said, “Torah is compared to water, as it says, ‘All

[אמר] רבי חנינא בר אידי למה
נמשלו דברי תורה למים דכתיב

those who thirst, go to water,' to teach you that just as water flows to the lowest point, so too Torah resides only within someone who is humble in spirit."

הוּי כָל צִמָּא לְכוּ לַמַּיִם לֹמֵר
לָךְ מֵה מַיִם מִנִּיחִין מִקוּם
גְבוּהָ וְהוֹלְכִין לַמִּקוּם נִמּוֹךְ אִפֵּי
דְבַרֵי תוֹרָה אֵין מִתְקַיֵּימִין אֲלֵא
בְּמִי שֶׁדַּעְתּוֹ שְׁפֵלָה.

8. Why do you think that humility is a prerequisite for Torah knowledge?

9. Perhaps one of the most valuable spots for humility is in Leadership. Do you think that our current global leadership model even has a place for humility?

10. Did you know that the Torah requires a king to carry a Torah at all times! WHY?

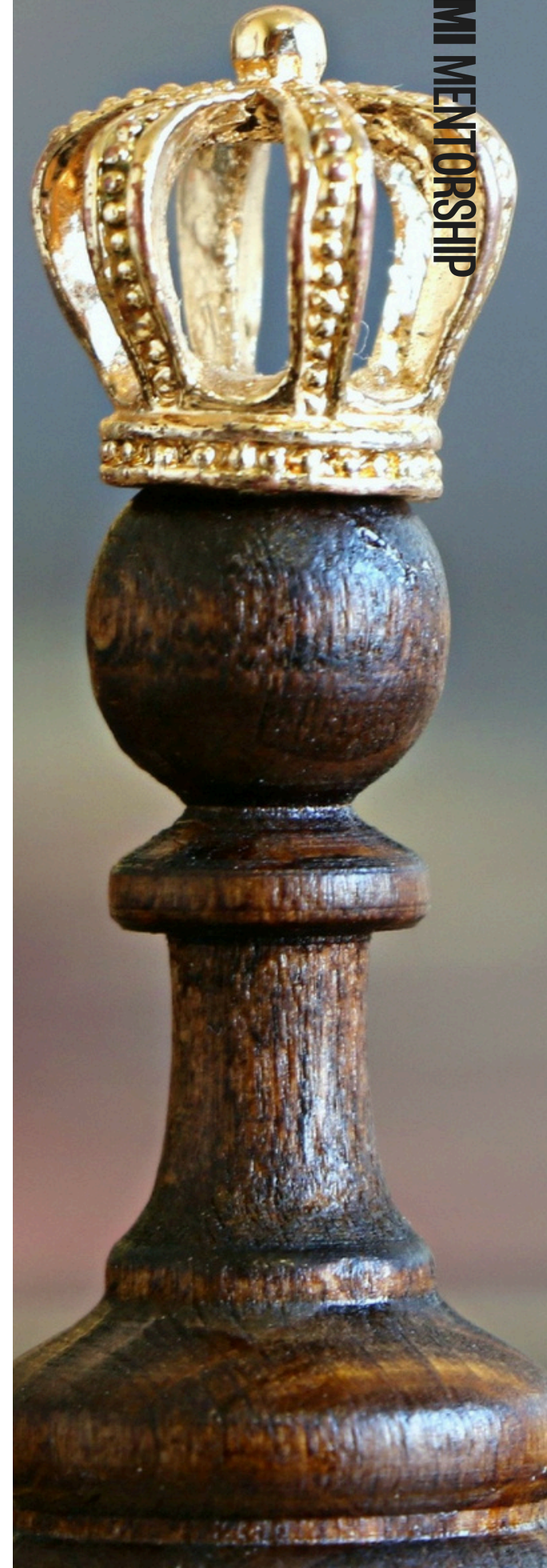
Deuteronomy 17:18:20

Let it remain with him and let him read in it all his life, so that he may learn to revere his God, to observe faithfully every word of this Teaching as well as these laws.

וְהִיְתָה עִמּוֹ וְקָרָא בּוֹ כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּו
לְמַעַן יִלְמַד לְיִרְאָה אֶת־ה' אֱלֹקָיו
לְשׁוֹר אֶת־כָּל־דְּבַרֵי הַתּוֹרָה
הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה
לַעֲשׂוֹתָם:

Thus he will not act haughtily toward his fellows or deviate from the Instruction to the right or to the left, to the end that he and his descendants may reign long in the midst of Israel.

לְבִלְתִּי רוּם־לָבֹב מֵאַחֵיו וּלְבִלְתִּי
סוּר מִן־הַמִּצְוָה יְמִין וּשְׂמֹאל
לְמַעַן
יֶאֱרִיךְ יָמֵים עַל־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ הוּא
וּבְנָיו בְּקֶרֶב
יִשְׂרָאֵל:



PART 3: ACQUIRING HUMILITY

The first step to any and all character refinement is reflection. Please take a few minutes to reflect on practical ideas in gaining the valuable trait of humility.

1. Anger Management

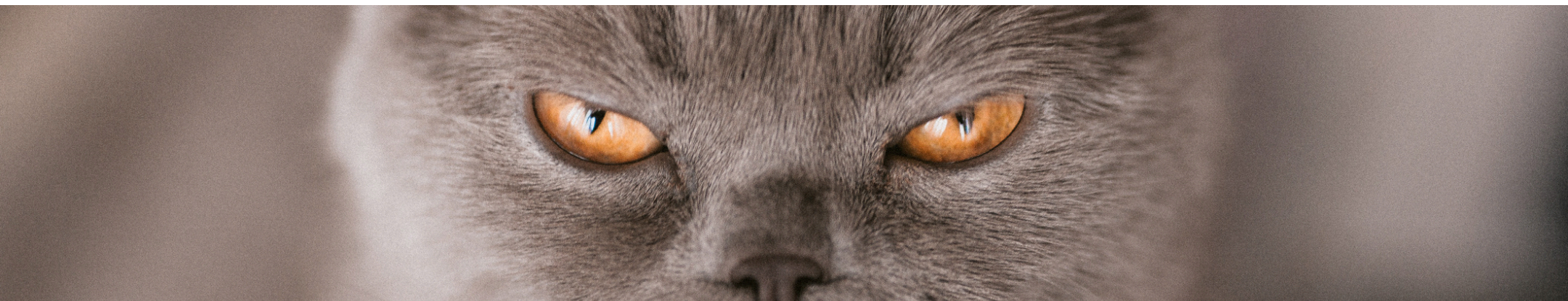
Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, Sifsei Chaim: Midot, Vol. II, p. 154

But how is it that by removing anger one is able to acquire the trait of humility? There are two ways by which we can understand this phenomenon.

1) Once one has removed anger, which is itself a stage in the uprooting of arrogance (since anger stems from arrogance), at that point it is possible to move forward and focus on the trait of humility.

2) Alternatively, it is not just a technical matter of removing something bad – the anger – and afterwards acquiring something good. Rather, one actually leads directly to the other. This means to say that when a person speaks softly at the moment when he feels justified in raising his voice and getting angry, that itself brings one to acquire the trait of humility!

מדוע ע"י שינצל מהכעס
יקנה את מידת הענווה?
אפשר לבאר זאת ב'
אופנים (א) אחרי הסור מרע
שלא יכעס שאף זה חלק
מעקירת הגאווה (הכעס
נובע מגאווה) אז אפשר
להתקדם ועשה טוב
להתבונן במידת הענווה אין
זה רק עניין של סדר שקודם
צריך להיות הסור מרע
ואח"כ העשה טוב אלא זה
מביא לזה לומר כשאדם
מדבר בנחת ובשפלות גם
במקום שיש לכאורה סיבה
מוצדקת להרים את קולו
ולכעוס זה גופא מביא אותו
לקנות את מידת הענווה.



2. Realizing the Fragility of Greatness

Rabbi Yissocher Frand, Rabbi Frand on the Parsha, Parshat Shemini, ArtScroll Publications

There is a famous Mishnah at the end of Masechet Sotah that states that when Rebbi (Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, the editor of the Mishnah) died, humility ceased. Rav Yosef in the Talmud questions this Mishnah and says that it could not possibly be accurate, “For I am here.” This comment of Rav Yosef begs for clarification.

I once heard a beautiful homiletic interpretation of this Talmudic passage. Rav Yosef was not saying, “I am humble. Therefore there are humble people around.” He was saying something else. We learn elsewhere that Rav Yosef became blind. When he became blind, he forgot all his learning. This great Talmudic Sage, Rav Yosef, whose opinion is found on so many folios of the Talmud, who learned so much, who taught so much – this same Rav Yosef forgot it all after his illness.

Rav Yosef is saying the following: Do not say that there cannot be humble people around anymore – because I am around. As long as I am around, people can look at me and see what can happen to a person. Let them see that a person can be a Talmudic Sage, know all of the Mishnah, have hundreds of students and yet forget it all. If people bear that in mind, then there can still be humble people. For the key to humility is realizing that everything is a gift that can be lost at any time.

3. Perspective Builds Humility

Rabbi Dan Roth, *Relevance*, Feldheim Publishers, pp. 94-95

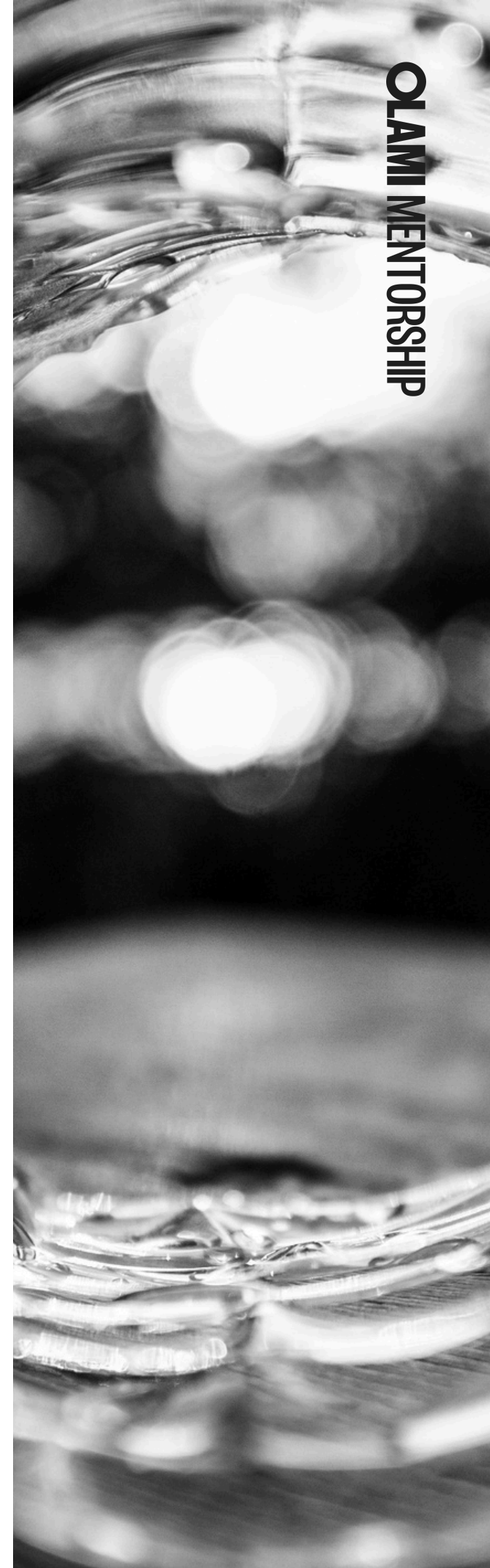
Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was once walking along the streets of Jerusalem when a trash collector jumped off the back of the garbage truck, kissed his hand, and returned to his work.

“Who knows if he should be kissing me, or I should be kissing him?” said Reb Shlomo Zalman to his students, who were surrounding him. “Look at my life. I was born to a scholarly father, my parents encouraged me to learn Torah from the day I could read, my in-laws are extraordinary people. Look what intelligence G-d blessed me with and what a supportive wife I have. Who knows how much is expected of me? I should be changing the world. This man, however, was probably born to a different kind of parents. He very likely never had the opportunities I did, the education I had, or the upbringing I was given. And yet look at how much he has grown. He is the great one. It is I who should be kissing him.”

Reb Shlomo Zalman’s comment encapsulates the way a humble person looks at the world. On one hand, he recognizes his accomplishments, but at the same time, he recognizes that all his successes and achievements are simply gifts that God has granted him in His kindness

4. Which of these three perspectives do you personally connect with the most?

5. Can the two of you come up with a few real-life actionable take-aways from this session?



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