

SEASON 1



# OLAMI MENTORSHIP

**SESSION 3:  
GETTING TO KNOW YOURSELF**



# DEAR MENTEE AND MENTOR,

In the last two sessions we focused on getting to know one another in a real way and understanding that being human means incorporating past, present and future into our lives.

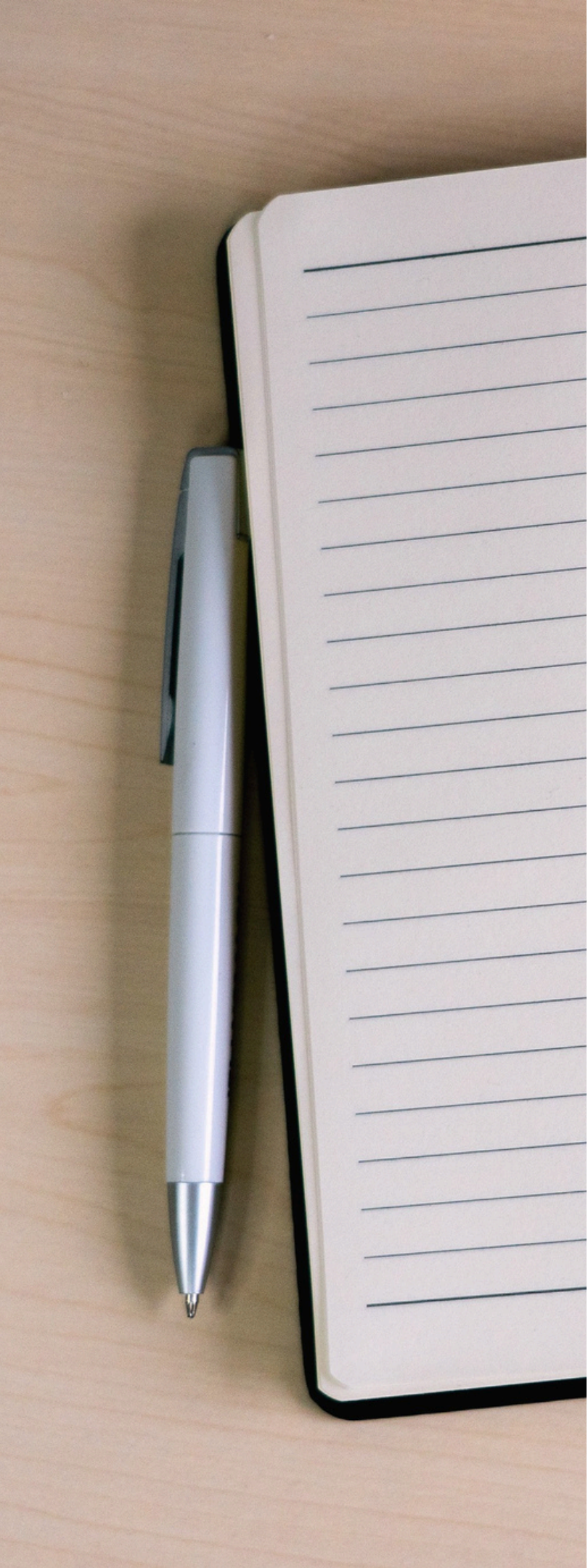
This session will delve into understanding one's unique essence or in Hebrew

דע את עצמך.

It is easy to feel like a number, to look at the world around us and wonder if we really matter. Yet, this thought is incredibly counterproductive, as it robs a person from feeling special and it sucks the wind from their sails.

Each and every person is a world in and of themselves. There has never and will never be anyone else even remotely similar in human chemistry, ability and purpose. This sentiment is incredibly empowering as it emboldens each person to understand that God put them in this world for their unique purpose.

Today's session is an opportunity for both mentor and mentee to fulfill this obligation and reflect on why it is that the world was created just for them.



## REMINDERS:

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

# PATH 1: UNIQUELY YOU

“The day you were born is the day G-D decided the world could not exist without you.”

- Rabbi Nachman of Breslov



## Step 1:

Have you ever experienced the following feeling? You are in an airport, train station, Times Square, really any place with a mass of humanity. It seems as if everybody is rushing to get somewhere or to see someone. As the throngs of people just pass you by with nary a glance, you would be justified in wondering if you really matter! In all likelihood your presence probably never even registered in anyone's conscious mind!

Or perhaps, you are at a sports event alongside 50,000+ people all cheering and rooting for their team. Do you really matter? Are you really an individual that is a world unto yourself, or are you just a digit in a really large number?

Thought question: Ask yourself the following questions. Am I unique? Am I special? How so?

## Step 2:

Imagine that it is night time and you are lying in warm desert sand gazing dreamily at the sky. Your gaze sweeps across the horizon to the sight of a brilliant moon surrounded by an infinite number of stars that stud the sky like shimmering diamonds on a black velvet tapestry. Now think about yourself in comparison with the celestial expanse, all five plus feet of your entire existence lined up against the infinity of the celestials. It's an intensely humbling experience, but at the same time it can get you thinking, do you really matter in the greater scheme of things?



## PATH 1: UNIQUELY YOU

### Step 3:

Remarkably, the aforementioned scenario is documented in a book that was written by King David almost three thousand years ago: Tehillim or Psalms.

#### Tehillim 8:4-6

When I see Your heavens, your handiwork, the moon and stars that You set in place.

What is man that You have been mindful of him, and mortal man that You should take note of him,

And you fashioned him a little less than the Divine, and adorned him with glory and majesty.

כִּי־אֶרְאֶה שָׁמַיִךְ מַעֲשֵׂי אֲצַבְעֶיךָ  
יָרַח וְכּוֹכָבִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנָתָה:

מָה־אָנוּשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבֶן־אָדָם  
כִּי תִפְקֹדֵנוּ:

וְתַחֲסֶרְהוּ מֵעֵט מַאֲלֵהִים וְכְבוֹד  
וְהֹדָר תַּעֲטֶרְהוּ:

King David writes the following describing his experience of lying in the desert:

“When I see Your heavens, your handiwork, the moon and stars that You set in place.”

King David then rhetorically questions out loud:

“What is man that You have been mindful of him, and mortal man that You should take note of him?”. He then answers his own question.

Man’s prominence outshines and overshadows even the greatest of galaxies due to the fact that he was created with a piece of the divine!

THOUGHT QUESTION:

WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS TO HAVE A PIECE OF THE DIVINE?





**Step 4:**

Each individual is a fragment of the Almighty, that makes each individual unique and special. The very fact that we humans have, at our core, a sanctified essence is elevating and gives us intrinsic self-worth because God thought it worthwhile to create our unique soul! If God created me, I must have a unique purpose in this world!

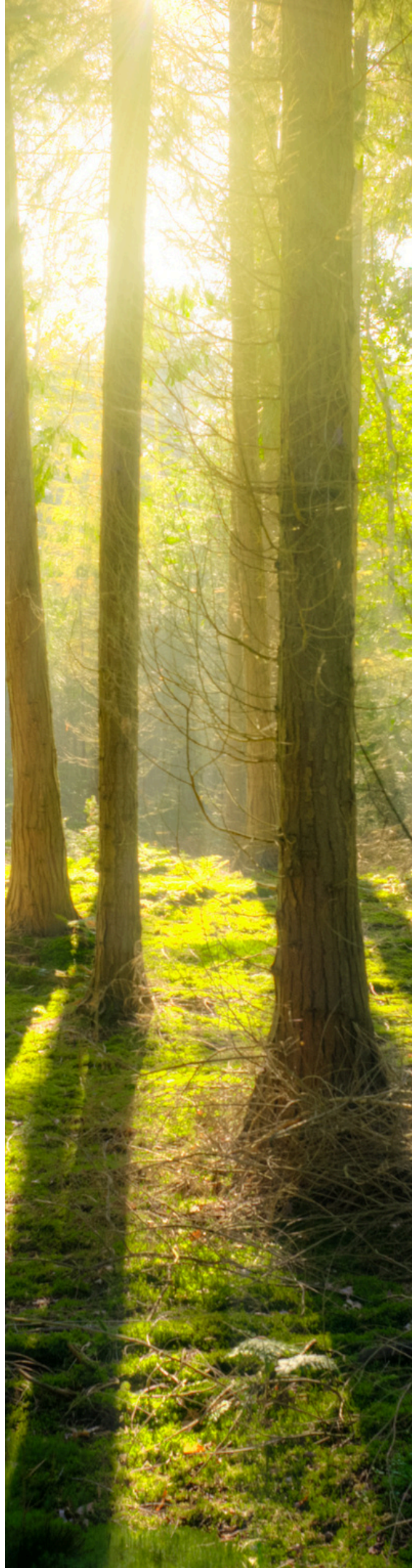
**Step 5:**

Can you think of any attributes or traits that make you unique? What is your unique purpose in this world?



# PATH 2: FIGURING YOURSELF OUT

In the 1957 novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, author Betty Smith, tongue in cheek, reflects on differences between Jewish and non-Jewish pregnant women. Unlike other women, she writes, Jewish women seem infused with pride. “I guess that’s why the Jews have so many babies... And why they sit so quiet... waiting... Each one thinks that she might be making” a baby who is so important they might change the world. “That’s why they walk so proud when they’re that way... When I grow up and know that I am going to have a baby. I will remember to walk proud and slow even though I am not a Jew.”



## Step 1:

From the moment of the conception of man, the Torah describes the creation of humankind in Divine terms.

### Genesis 1:27

And the Almighty created the man in His image.

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ

It’s a lofty idea reflecting the Jewish idea that each person is infinitely valuable and holy, that each one of us has a unique role in life that only we can fulfill.

### Talmud Sanhedrin 37a

And this serves to tell of the greatness of the Almighty, Whereas when man mints many coins from one mold, each one is a replica of the other. But Almighty, stamped all people with the seal of Adam the first man, as all of them are his offspring, and not one of them is similar to another. Therefore, each and every person is obligated to say: The world was created for me.

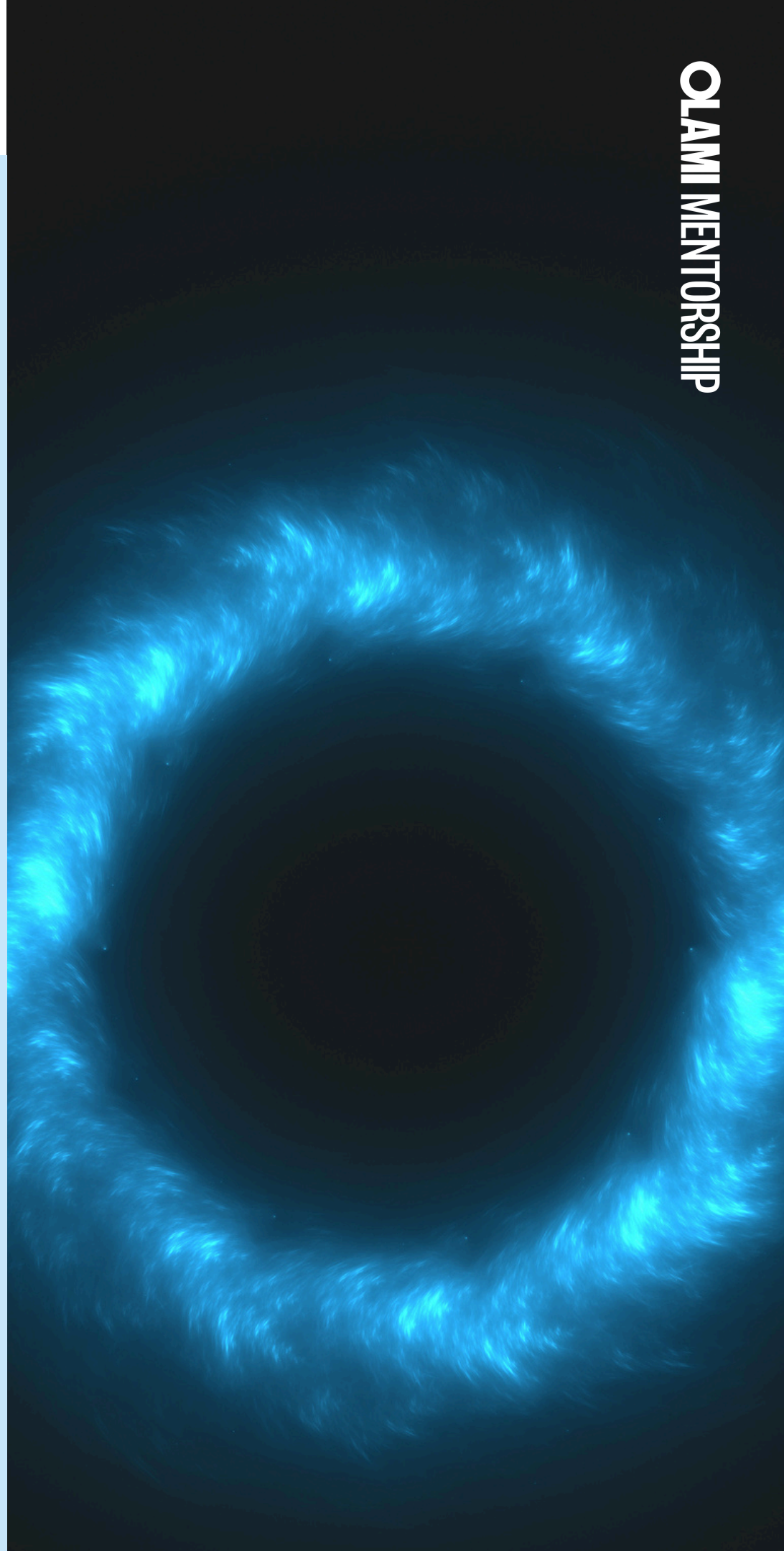
ולהגיד גדולתו של הקב"ה שאדם טובע כמה מטבעות בחותם אחד כולן דומין זה לזה ומלך מלכי המלכים הקב"ה טבע כל אדם בחותמו של אדם הראשון ואין אחד מהן דומה לחבירו לפיכך כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר בשבילי נברא העולם.



## PATH 2: FIGURING YOURSELF OUT

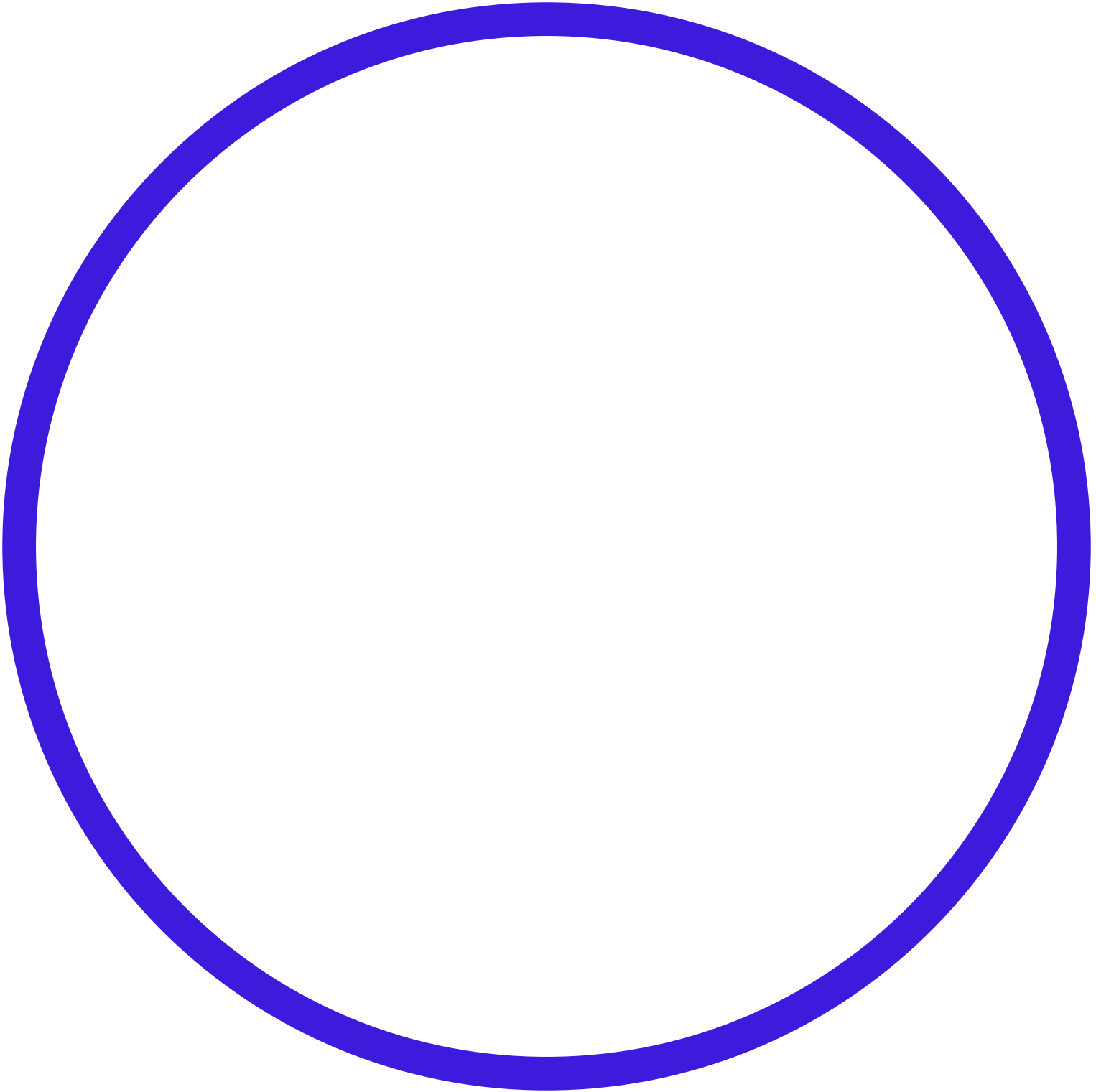
Draw a circle and write down all of your key skills, personality traits, abilities and talents inside. Then outside the circle, write down all the things that you are not. Study the circle well, because what you have just written down is you, the real you. If you are trying to work out what your role in the world is, the items inside the circle represent your tools, the exact set of tools given to you to fulfill your role in this world by God. If you think you lack the tools you need to lead a successful life, then either you do not understand your tools well enough or are unaware of your role. God gives every person the exact tools he needs to succeed and each person is unique. Once you understand this and understand yourself, then you will experience real happiness in knowing yourself and clearly identifying in which direction it is you need to go in. You will also be saved from jealousy of others' talents and traits, as the realization dawns that someone else's tools are irrelevant to your own role.

- Rabbi Akiva Tatz





PATH 2: FIGURING YOURSELF OUT



## PATH 2: FIGURING YOURSELF OUT

### Step 3:

Life can be split into two phases, the open circle period and the closed circle period. During the open period, our childhood/teenage years, we go through a process of discovery about our talents and abilities. The closed period, the rest of your life, is about deciding what is in the circle and what lies outside the circle. It takes maturity to realize that those things that are out of the circle, no matter how much you would like to bring them in, have to remain outside. Your work then consists of mastering the combination of talents and abilities that you have within that circle.

### Step 4:

Take a few minutes to reflect on your current situation in life. Are you in the open or closed circle period of your life or perhaps somewhere in between?



# PATH 3: NARROWING IT DOWN

Every person is an entire world. It is a one-time experience. There has never been anyone like them and there never will be anyone like them until the end of all generations. I, with my special and unique combination of talents and abilities. A unique child to my parents. Born in a very specific time and location. Unquestionably, I have a unique role and responsibility. The entire creation awaits me to accomplish my unique assignment. My mission can never be accomplished by anyone else in the entire history of existence.

**- R. Shlomo Wolbe,  
Aley Shor Vol 1:169**



## Step 1:

While R. Wolbe's quote is so empowering, it is also a bit unsettling. Granted that we all have a unique mission, but how are we to identify that mission?

## Step 2:

Picture the following. You've just finished a comprehensive and rigorous vocational interview to determine the best career for you. You are sitting in the waiting room awaiting the results. After a while the interviewer emerges and wordlessly hands you a toolkit. He then quickly walks away leaving you holding the toolkit in your hands. Somewhat stunned, you open the toolbox and see that it contains a wire-cutter, electric tape, voltage meter, circuit meter, wire stripper, long-nose plier, and a number of additional tools. Congrats, it seems like the interviewer has determined that you have a future as an electrician. Similarly, the first step in identifying your life-occupation would be to reflect on the unique tools and talents that the Almighty has gifted you specifically.

### Step 3:

This is true all the more in regard to the spiritual parameters of one's life, like the nature and tendencies of a person's soul and spirit. Some are born with laudatory character traits and leanings, while others suffer from evil tendencies and traits. These differences as well are meant to assist a person in completing their uniquely assigned task.

### Step 4:

Ok, so you have identified those tools, but now what, there are so many areas of life to focus on. Where does one invest the most time and effort?

The areas in one's life where one struggles the most and the character traits that need the most work are where one ought to direct their efforts. If one has a tendency to anger quickly, they must focus their efforts on anger management. If one is stingy by nature, they must refocus on becoming a more generous person. And if one is a couch potato, they must peel themselves off of the couch and figure out a way to be more industrious.

**- Nesivos Sholom**





### Step 5:

The Almighty tells Abraham Lech Lecha... “Go from your land and your birthplace and your father’s house.” Go – towards your individual promise, towards the betterment of your soul. Hashem’s directive to Avraham repeats itself to every Jew. We are all instructed to distance ourselves from our land, our birthplace, our father’s house, in the sense that we must overcome the conditions that we are challenged with individually. Some of these conditions stem from the land, the culture we were born into. Each land has its negative traits and dispositions. Predispositions towards murder or theft may be shared by many of the inhabitants; we are bidden to overcome them. Some characteristics are passed along to us by our birthplaces, meaning that we inherit them from our family groups. Others are vouchsafed to us by the houses of our fathers. The manner in which our parents conduct themselves in the realm of the Holy profoundly affects their children. The command “lech lecha” – go for your own good – instructs us all. If we are to achieve our individual goals, we must escape the limitations of the varied conditions with which we begin our journey.

**- Nesivos Shalom Lech Lecha**



## PATH 3: NARROWING IT DOWN

### Step 6:

Take a few minutes to take a hard look at your predisposed strengths and weaknesses. Once you have identified them, refocus on your unique talents, and then blend them into the narrative of your pre-dispositions and natural tendencies. This is your unique mission!

PROFESSIONAL  
THOUGHT QUESTION:  
HOW MUCH OF YOUR  
CURRENT JOB IS REALLY  
YOU? ARE YOU  
MAXIMIZING YOUR  
TALENTS?

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