

SEASON 1



# OLAMI MENTORSHIP

## SESSION 2: YOUR LIFE JOURNEY



# DEAR MENTEE AND MENTOR,

Session two attempts to broaden your previous conversation about your unique stories and add a more macro-context to the narrative. Perhaps this analogy can contextualize the next phase of your mentorship journey.

Sitting at the window seat of an airplane is a truly remarkable experience. As the plane taxis to the runway, the world appears as it usually does. The houses are normal size, the cars race regularly on the adjacent freeway. Then, you feel a lurch and the plane takes flight, suddenly a dramatic shift in perspective begins. The normally large buildings begin to shrink, the highways start to look like ribbons winding around in patterns, and entire blocks of houses appear like models set in orderly patterns.

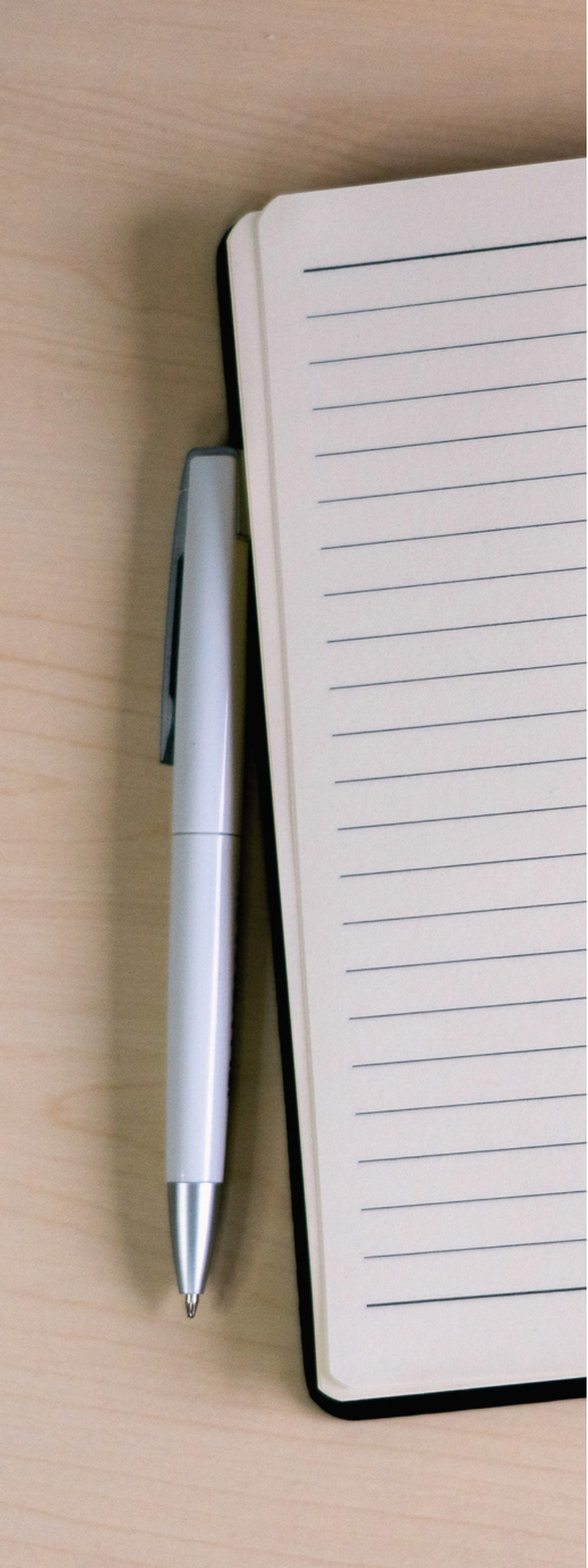
At 35,000 feet, you see the world in a wholly different manner. Patterns emerge. Neighborhoods can be identified. Cities can be seen for their true size and scope, and your entire viewpoint changes.

In the thick and thin of our daily routine, it becomes impossible to see the larger patterns. At 35,000 feet, we begin to understand the bigger picture.

The Olami Mentorship journey attempts to give the mentees a birds-eye view of their personal and collective lives by taking a step back and refocusing on the bigger picture.

Every moment in our lives encompasses our personal and collective past, is experienced in the present and ultimately impacts our future. The goal of this session is to introduce these three pillars of Olami Life Mentorship Journey; past, present and future. Where are you from? Where are you going? What are your challenges to get you from your current state to your future potential?

In the subsequent sessions, we will take a deeper look at these concepts. While the conversation should focus on the mentor and mentee's past, present and future, here are a few to introduce these themes and enhance the flow of the conversation.



## 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: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Shulchan Aruch  
222&223  
Mishna Berura ibid

בנה בית חדש או קנה כלים חדשים...  
מברך על כל פעם שהחיינו... על  
שמועות שהן טובות לו לבדו מברך  
שהחיינו... דבפעם ראשון כשרואה  
אותה מברך ברכת שהחיינו.

If one builds a new home or purchases new items... Each time one must recite shecheyanu. On personally good news one recites shechyanu... the first time that one sees their newborn daughter one recites shechyanu.



## Past:

A great Rabbi once congratulated a new grandfather by saying, “Today you are a human being!” The grandpa was stunned. Was there perhaps some hidden insult implied by his remarks?? The rabbi then explained that in the animal kingdom it is common to find creatures that have an instinct to protect their young; bear cubs, kittens, fledglings...

However, it is only in the human race that a grandparent demonstrates love and care for their grandchild, and grandchildren have constancy for grandparents. This is indicative of real feelings to see one’s self in a grander historical or familial context. The greater one’s physical ability, the broader is their grasp of the importance of the historical relevance in their life-journey.

## THOUGHT QUESTION:

DO YOU HAVE A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR GRANDPARENTS?  
DO YOU VALUE IT? WHY?

## PATH 1: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

### **Present:**

Jewish tradition mandates that at special moments in the journey of our life such as the birth of a child, purchase of a special item, arrival at an auspicious juncture in time, we recite a meaningful blessing called shecheyanu. “Blessed are You, Almighty... who kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this moment in time. This blessing redirects us to focus on the moment and take stock of the present.

THOUGHT QUESTION: CAN YOU THINK OF A “SHECHEYANU” MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE? PLEASE DESCRIBE WHAT YOU WERE FEELING?

### **Future:**

Human beings are the only life form capable of using the future tense. Only beings who can imagine the world other than it is, are capable of freedom. And if we are free, the future is open, dependent on us. We can know the beginning of our story but not the end...

Western civilization is the product of two cultures: ancient Greece and ancient Israel. The Greeks believed in fate: the future is determined by the past. Jews believed in freedom: there is no ‘evil decree’ that cannot be averted. The Greeks gave the world the concept of tragedy. Jews gave it the idea of hope. The whole of Judaism – though it would take a book to show it – is a set of laws and narratives designed to create in people, families, communities and a nation, habits that defeat despair. Judaism is the voice of hope in the conversation of mankind.

– Rabbi Jonathan Sacks *A Letter in the Scroll*

THOUGHT QUESTION: WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY AND OUR SOCIETY, ARE YOU FILLED WITH HOPE, DESPAIR, NEITHER?



## PATH 2: MAXIMIZING YOUR JOURNEY

So many people spend their lives in auto-pilot barely giving thought to their goals and objectives, and before they know it they have lived most of their lives and it's just too late. The purpose of Olami Mentorship is to give (you and) your the opportunity to take hold of the controls and live with a destination in mind.

### Step 1:

Think about this. A Russian man walking along the streets of Moscow one morning witnessed the following scene: a worker with a shovel dug a hole in the stretch of earth bordering the boulevard, after which the second man took his shovel and filled in the hole.

The man witnessing this scene ran up to the two men and cried, "Comrades, this is madness! What in the world are you doing?" The first worker calmly regarded the stranger and explained. "Look here. Usually I dig a hole, Ivan plants a tree in the hole, and Misha fills in the earth around the tree. But today Ivan is sick. So what do you suggest? That just because Ivan isn't here today, Misha and I shouldn't do our work?"

PROFESSIONAL THOUGHT QUESTION: HOW MUCH OF OUR DAILY SCHEDULE IS SPENT ON POINTLESS TASKS AND PURSUITS?



## PATH 2: MAXIMIZING YOUR JOURNEY

### Step 2:

**Pirkei Avos 3:1** (the section of our tradition that is a collection of ethics, honesty, and advice)  
Akavya ben Mahalalel says: visualize three things and you will not come to sin. Know from where you have come, to where you are heading, and before Whom you will give justification and accounting.

עֲקֵבִיָּא בֶן מַהֲלֵלָאֵל אָמַר, הִסְתַּכֵּל בְּשְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים וְאִי אָתָּה בָּא  
לְיַדִּי עֲבֵרָה. יָדַע מֵאֵין בָּאתָ, וּלְאֵן אָתָּה הוֹלֵךְ, וְלִפְנֵי מִי אָתָּה עֹתִיד  
לִתֵּן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבוֹן.

THOUGHT QUESTION: HOW DO YOU PERSONALLY UNDERSTAND EACH OF THESE THREE STATEMENTS?

### Step 3:

Picture this. Two men traveling through a dense forest have lost their sense of direction. In an effort to regain their bearings, one of the pair began climbing up to a knoll above the treeline. “But we never intended to climb this hill,” protested his companion, “so this has to be the wrong way.” “Perhaps so,” replied the first. “But if we can get up high enough to see the point from which we came, then we will be able to deduce the direction in which we should go.”

THOUGHT QUESTION: WHY DO YOU THINK THAT THE SECOND FELLOW PROTESTED “BUT WE NEVER INTENDED TO CLIMB THIS HILL?”

### Step 4:

Think about this:

“If you are not a better person tomorrow than you are today, what need have you for a tomorrow?”

- **Rebbe Nachman of Breslov**



# PATH 3: THE UNIQUELY HUMAN JOURNEY

Here is a quote from Rabbi Shimon Schwab on the blessing our forefathers recited in the daily Shemoneh Esrei, the silent devotion, a central prayer in Jewish liturgy.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS WOULD BE THE APPROPRIATE TIME TO SEE IF YOUR MENTEE IS FAMILIAR WITH DAVENING AND TO TALK A BIT ABOUT YOUR DAILY COMMITMENT TO TEFILLAH.

[Click here to pull up the text of the first beracha.](#)



## Rav Schwab on Prayer; Shemoneh Esrai

We open Shemoneh Esrei; the silent devotion, by mentioning each of our three Patriarchs – Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, as we give thanks to the Almighty for providing us with such a rich past and a sacred heritage. Reciting the names of our forefathers drives home the significance of looking back at the generations that preceded us. We value the legacy they left us and strive to emulate the living example of their actions.

We conclude the blessing solely with the name of Avraham. Avraham was the first to chart his own path, and – on his own initiative – acknowledge the presence of the Almighty (Chagigah 3a) and understand that only a life filled with loving-kindness is a life that is truly worth living. Rabbi Schwab maintains that by noting these attributes of Avraham, we are reinforcing the notion that while our rich past is a big part of who we are, nevertheless each person needs to develop his or her unique strengths and chart a course that will lead to a life filled with purpose and meaning.

## Step 2:

### Shnei Luchos Habris Asara Mamaros Mamar 1

The Almighty's actual name יה-ו-ה referred to as "Havaya" is composed of יהיה - is, הוה - was, יהיה - will be; past, present and future.

היה וזהו פירוש שם ההויה הרומז היה הוה יהיה.

While we do not pronounce the Almighty's actual name, electing instead to say "Ad-onay" our Our Master, the Almighty's actual name referred to as "Havaya" is spelled יה-ו-ה. Our traditions teaches us that within the letters of this name, are actually three simpler words, יהיה - will be or in simple terms, past, present and future. The Almighty, who is infinite and above and beyond time encapsulates the past, present and future.

Human beings on the other hand are finite creatures. We have a past, live in the present and anticipate the future but are very much limited due to our inability to experience all three simultaneously.

Yet in the creation story of man the Torah writes:

### Genesis 1:27

And the Almighty created the man in his image.

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ.

### Midbar Shur 2

The Almighty's will was that the body created in His image be primed for holiness. This concept is man's infinity.

אבל מצד שרצון השי"ת הוא שיהי' הגוף העשוי בצלמו מוכן לקדושתו, ד"ז הוא ענין נצחי.

THOUGHT QUESTION:  
IF HUMANS ARE LIMITED  
BY THEIR INABILITY TO  
RISE ABOVE TIME, THEN  
WHAT IS MEANT BY THE  
CONCEPT OF BEING  
CREATED WITH INFINITY  
IN THE IMAGE OF G-D?

## PATH 3: THE UNIQUELY HUMAN JOURNEY

### Step 3:

The human being is unique in that it is the only living creature that contemplates the future consequences of its actions prior to deciding. It does so with awareness of past experiences while deciding in the present about future outcomes. This ability stems from the fact that we were created in the image of the Almighty. And while we do not live above time as the Almighty does, we very much live in the present reflecting on our past to determine our future. Focusing on one's past and contemplating one's future is living human life in a Godly way.

### Step 4:

How can we build into our daily experience opportunities to stop, and reflect on our present lives in relation to our past, while choosing our future?



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