



Week 3

כבוד

This guided learning sheet explores the middah of *Kavod*—honor and respect. The sheet is divided into five boxes corresponding to the five domains of *kavod* covered this week—self, others, Torah, Hashem, and Shabbos. You may choose to focus on one topic, or as many as you would like. Sources are accompanied by commentary and discussion questions to facilitate personal reflection and group dialogue.

In addition to the main questions included with each source, you will find a box of boxes below. This set of questions are general questions about participants' experience of working on *middot* and remain the same from week to week. These questions are a helpful tool to check in and reflect on growth over time in a consistent manner. Even though the questions remain the same, the answers will naturally change depending on which middah is being explored. You may choose to start or end your learning session with these questions.

General questions when reflecting on the *middah* of the week:

General questions remain the same from week to week and are helpful tools to reflect on growth over time. The answers will vastly change depending on the *middah* of the week.

1. What did I learn about myself this week?
2. What felt difficult when working on this *middah*?
3. What felt natural or easy when working on this *middah*?
4. How has practicing this *middah* improved your life or how does it have the potential to impact your life?
5. Does anyone in the group have a story of how this *middah* came up in a real situation (this week or beyond)? How did you respond?
6. Does anyone in the group have insights, advice or tips to keep in mind when working on this *middah* going forward?

1 Self-Respect: כבוד עצמי

In recounting the creation of human beings in Bereishit, the Torah specifies where man comes from.

בראשית ב:ז

וַיִּצְרֶה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפֹּחַ בְּאַפּוֹ נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְגִפְשׁ חַיָּה:

Hashem fashioned man from the dirt of **the ground** and He blew into him and man became a living being.

*While Bereishit uses the word **אדמה** in referring to the ground, Yeshayhu uses an almost identical word, in a very different manner.*

ישעיהו יד:יד

אֲעֹלָה עַל־בִּמְתֵי עַב אֲדָמָה לְעֹלָיוֹן:

I will ascend across heights of cloud, **be like** the Most High!

Takeaway: Adam, humans, have two potentials based on the contrasting pesukim. Adamah, reflects that human beings are made from the ground. This is the part of a person which wants to give in to baser instincts, the lower part of oneself. Alternatively, Adam is found in the word Adameh, I will be like [G-d Himself]. Man has the potential to be a G-dly being, to rise above and ascend. Human beings have two options in life: reflect the lower parts [the ground] one is made from or to ascend and reflect the higher parts, the G-dliness within. This is each person's ongoing battle.

Discuss:

1. In what situations do you feel pulled more by your "earthly" side, and in what moments do you feel in touch with your "Divine" side?
2. What are some real-life choices people face that reflect the tension between the two meanings of "אדמה" — our earthly side ("adamah," from the ground) and our G-dly side ("adameh," aspiring to be like Hashem)? In what kinds of decisions do we see the pull between staying grounded in our physical nature and rising toward our Divine potential?

There is yet another element involved in the creation of human beings.

בראשית א:כז

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

G-d created Man in His image, in G-d's image He created him [man], male and female He created them.

Takeaway: *Human beings are created in the image of Hashem (Tzelem Elokim), implying that we carry a Divine spark, a part of G-d, within us. If G-d is the ultimate source of holiness, then each of us, created in His image, carries a spark of that holiness—and that demands that we treat ourselves with self-respect.*

רב וולבה עלי שור חלק ב דף רכה

במקום שיש קדושה שם יש כבוד

Where you find holiness, that is where respect/honor will be.

רב וולבה עלי שור חלק ב דף רכז

כבוד הוא הנהגה חיצונית המחויבת מהמציאות של קדושה פנימית ומתאימה לה

Respect is the external behaviors necessary to reflect the reality of my internal holiness which is befitting for her [the neshama].

Takeaway: Holiness and respect always go hand-in-hand. For example, think about holy places and the respect we are commanded to practice and have in those spaces. True *kavod atzmi*—honor and self-respect, comes from recognizing our inherent inner holiness and expressing it through external dignity and action.

Kavod Atzmi Takeaway: *While every person will struggle with ongoing choices between the two forms of אדמה within, ultimately, a person is first, foremost and eternally a Tzelem Elokim, a piece of Hashem Himself. Kavod Atzmi—self respect, is about respecting and honoring that reality. Self-respect isn't arrogance or pride. Self-respect, and the actions we take to cultivate and uphold it, is not about earning others' approval. Rather, it is about treating ourselves in a way that honors the Tzelem Elokim, the piece of G-dliness within us. When we understand we are holy, we live up to this aspiration and it thereby impacts the choices we make.*

Discuss:

1. Do you think most people see themselves as intrinsically holy? How might it impact a person's choices to see oneself as a piece of Hashem housed in a body? How might people's actions change if they truly saw themselves as inherently holy?
2. What are some examples of ways people could act in a way that honors and reflects that piece of Hashem within themselves?
3. What are small actions or habits that help you live in a way that honors your Tzelem Elokim?

4. Why is it important to develop self-respect even if no one else sees or acknowledges it?
5. Can you think of a time when acting from self-respect changed your decision-making?

#2 Respecting Others: כבוד הבריות

The following sources delineate the interplay between honor from and towards others.

משנה אבות ד:א

בן זומא אומר...איזהו מכבד, המכבד את הבריות, שנאמר (שמואל א ב) כי מכבדי אכבד ובזי יקלו

Ben Zoma said Who is honorable? One who honors his fellow man as it states (Samuel 1:2) "Those who honor Me will I honor and those who despise Me shall be degraded."

Takeaway: *The Mishnah teaches that those who give honor to others will be honored in return, yet the verse it quotes says that Hashem honors those who honor Him. This seems to be a different idea entirely. Perhaps the Mishnah is pointing to something deeper: that honoring other people is, in some way, connected to honoring G-d.*

Discuss:

Why do you think the Mishnah connects honoring people with a verse about honoring Hashem? What might it imply and teach us about the nature of *kavod* for others?

עירובין ג:ב

כל המחר על הגדולה — גדולה בורחת ממנו, וכל הבורח מן הגדולה — גדולה מחזרת אחריו.

Anyone who chases honor, honor will run from them. Whoever runs from honor, honor will chase after him.

Takeaway: *Trying to chase greatness or recognition often pushes it further away. But when one acts humbly and with integrity, honor tends to follow naturally. Like we discussed earlier, there is an element of self-respect and inner G-dliness which entails being driven by internal Divine purpose, not by recognition from others.*

Discuss:

1. Why do you think chasing honor from others causes it to "run away," while avoiding it causes it to "chase after you"?
2. Can you think of a time when someone was clearly seeking recognition — and it backfired? What made it feel inauthentic?

Rabbi Irving Bunim, Ethics from Sinai pg.440

You can tell the character of a person by noting whom he praises, whom he honors, whom he considers his heroes.

Discuss:

The way we distribute honor—whom we look up to, praise, and emulate—reflects and influences our own moral character. Are there ways in which we honor the wrong things in society (e.g., fame, wealth, popularity)? What would it take to shift that?

In the above sources, one theme that emerges is that honor is less about oneself and more about how one honors and relates to the greater world and others around them. The Netivot Shalom (Rebbe of Slonim) explains why the two are inherently connected:

נתיבות שלום דף קז

שהמבט של אדם בחברו הוא כהבטה במראה שאם פניו מלוכלכות רואה במראה פנים מלוכלכות, כך כאשר אדם מביט על אחרים כל כמה שהוא יותר טהור וזך כך הוא רואה את זולתו במבט יותר טוב ומאידך אם הוא נגוע ברע רואה אז בכל אחד מדות רעות...שיודע להעריך את כל אחד והרי זה אות שהוא מכובד בעצמו

The way a person views their friend is like looking into a mirror. If your own face is dirty, you will see a dirty face in the mirror. This is how a person is with others. The more pure and sincere he is then he will look at others with a better perspective. And so, if he is infected with negative traits, he will see bad characteristics in everyone...If a person can value others, it is a testimony that he respects himself.

Takeaway: *We see others as a reflection of ourselves—self-respect influences how we perceive others. When we feel good about ourselves, it is easier to feel and see the good in the others. To honor others, we must see the good in them—but this starts within ourselves. If we are filled with negativity, we tend to project that onto others. Being able to value others is a sign that we also value and respect the Tzelem Elokim and goodness within ourselves.*

Discuss:

1. Have you ever noticed that your mood, self-perception, or self-respect affected how you judged someone else? What happened?
2. Have you ever had an experience when you felt good about yourself and thereby felt good about others, or conversely, felt bad about yourself and therefore had a harder time respecting others?
3. Why do you think it's easier to see the good and respect others when you feel good and respect yourself?
4. How might this piece by the Netivot Shalom connect to the *pasuk* "ואהבת לרעך כמוך" —loving another like yourself?

Kavod HaBriyot Takeaway: *Much about the honor we receive has to do with the honor we give. Our ability to give honor reflects a tremendous amount about who we are, the self-perception we have, and the values we hold.*

Discuss:

1. Why can people only get honor and respect if they give it to others? Why does true honor come from honoring others first?
2. Can you think of someone who seems to treat others with *kavod*? What might that say about how they view themselves?
3. How does understanding that *kavod* comes from how we treat others — not what others think of us — change the way we carry ourselves?
4. If people are so different, then respecting people is not a one-size-fits-all. Are there universal ways to show respect, or must we individualize our approach to respecting and honoring each person?

#3 Honoring Torah: כבוד התורה

If respect and honor arise from the inherent value of a person or thing, then we must acknowledge the profound worth of the Torah—and the great honor it accordingly deserves.

שיר השירים ד:יא

נֶפֶת תִּטְּפֶנָּה שְׁפֹתֶיךָ כֶּלֶה דְּבַשׁ וְחֵלֶב תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנֶיךָ...

Sweetness drops from your lips, O Bride, honey and milk are under your tongue.

Rav Meir Soloveitchik, Sacred Time

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein once noted, milk is basic to a child's growth and necessary to its health while honey, something sweet, is a luxury. To speak of the Torah as both milk and honey is to say that it is simultaneously a crucial prerequisite to our existence and the greatest imaginable luxury. Nothing is more necessary; nothing is more delightful.

Takeaway: *Torah is both sweet and sustaining—like honey and milk.*

Discuss:

1. Can you share a time when learning or living Torah felt sweet to you—something that brought deep joy or satisfaction?
2. How has Torah served as nourishment for you—something sustaining or strengthening in hard times?
3. Like vital nutrients, how is Torah an essential element in your life?

משנה אבות ה:כב

בן בג בג אומר, הפך בך והפך בך, דכלא בך...

Ben Bag Bag said [about Torah], 'turn it over and turn it over, for all is in it.'

רש"י שם

שבכל שעה תמצא בה חדושים וטעמים. דכלה בה. שכל מה שתמצא תמצא בה

Every time you will find new ideas and meanings, because all is in it and you will find whatever you want to find.

Takeaway: Hashem is infinite and so, the Torah that He wrote, has infinite layers of meaning too. Torah is endlessly deep and always relevant. A person is never done learning because there is always more to understand and apply. Regardless of how life evolves, Torah is ever relevant and resonant. No matter the issue one needs to resolve or understand, be it in relationships, politics, financial matters, health, etc. the Torah has an approach to it.

Discuss:

What is a moment you felt personally that Torah spoke to you and something you were going through in your life, or about world events at large?

Kavod HaTorah Takeaway: Honoring Torah means seeing it as both a source of joy and a life-guiding necessity. There's always more to discover and incorporate into our lives when learning Torah.

Discuss:

1. The title we give an incredibly learned and knowledgeable person in the realm of Torah is a "Talmid Chacham". Literally, this means "the student of knowledge/smart student". Why do we call such a person a student, even though this person is likely themselves a Rabbi and highly revered in their role as a teacher?
2. What are some ways we can show honor to Torah?
3. What is a way we can show honor to those who teach Torah?

#4 Honoring Hashem: כבוד שמים

We are ambassadors of the Hashem, called to reflect and bring honor to His name in this world. Our actions represent something much greater than ourselves.

אורחות צדיקים ה:ח

והאזהב את הכבוד לא יהיו מעשיו לשם שמים, כי בכל המצוות שיעשה, או יתן צדקה או עוסק בתורה או בשאר מצוות – תהיה מחשבתו וכוונתו אחר השבח והכבוד, והפץ שיתנו לו כבוד וגדלה. וזה הפסד גדול במעשה העבודה, ואפלו מי שיש בו תורה ומעשים טובים.

Someone who loves honor will not act for Hashem's honor, because with every mitzvah he does whether giving tzedakah or learning Torah, or any other mitzvot—his thoughts and

intentions will be about the praise and honor; he will want others to give him honor and greatness. This is a huge deficit in his service of Hashem, *even* if he has Torah and good actions.

Takeaway: *Craving honor corrupts even good deeds, turning them into self-serving acts rather than service of Hashem. Genuine avodat Hashem requires that we seek Hashem's honor—not our own.*

Discuss:

Is there a mantra to help you stay focused on Hashem's honor rather than your own honor or ego when engaging in Torah and mitzvot?

כלי יקר דברים ל:טו

שלא יבקש לעשות הטוב בעיני ה' כדי שיחיה אלא יחיה כדי שיעשה טוב

A person should not say they will do good things in order to get more life rather they should ask for more life because there is so much more good they can do.

Takeaway: *A righteous person seeks more time in this world not for personal gain, but for the opportunity to do more mitzvot and contribute.*

Discuss:

How does the Kli Yakar reframe our perspective on life itself and reshape our goals? How does it relate to honor for Hashem instead of honor for ourselves?

Rabbi Irving Bunim, Ethics from Sinai, Vol. 1 p. 20

No matter what our occupation, we must act and conduct our affairs so that those about us will explain 'Great is the G-d that inspires such action!'

Takeaway: *Our everyday actions should inspire others to see Hashem and Torah's greatness.*

Kavod Shamayim Takeaway: *We honor Hashem not only with our actual acts of mitzvot, but with our inner thoughts and daily behavior. Our intentions and true goals matter. True Kavod Shamayim is about being a living Kiddush Hashem, for the sake of G-d, and G-d alone.*

Discuss:

1. Who is someone who you feel brings Kavod Shamayim in their day to day actions?
2. How can you incorporate more Kavod Shamayim in your everyday life? (This may entail internal or external action/behavior.)

#5 Honoring Shabbos: כבוד שבת

The honor we give Shabbos is a reflection of its inherent holiness and its power to elevate us.

שבת י:ב

אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה: מתנה טובה יש לי בבית גנזי ושבת שמחה, ואני מבקש ליתנה לישראל, לך והודיעם

Hashem said to Moshe: I have a special gift in my treasure house and it is called Shabbos. I want to give it to the Jewish people, go and tell them.

Discuss:

Many people count Shabbos as one of their favorite mitzvot. Hashem called it a “good gift” when giving it to us. What about Shabbos is such a gift, especially in 2025?

סידור קבלת שבת

לקראת שבת לכו ונלכה פי היא מקור הברכה

Come let's go and greet Shabbos because it is the source of all blessings.

רמב"ן ב:ג

ובשם הגאון רב סעדיה אמרו שהברכה והקידוש על השומרים שיהיו מבורכים ומקודשים

Rav Saadia Gaon said that blessing and holiness come to those who bless and sanctify Shabbos.

Discuss:

How has Shabbos brought bracha into your life and uplifted yourself, your family and/or your week?

Kavod Shabbos Takeaway: *Shabbos is not just a pause in time, but a source of blessing and holiness for those who honor it. When we honor it, it elevates us in return. By treating it with care and reverence, we step into a world of blessing that reshapes how we live the rest of the week. It uplifts our entire week and our entire self.*

Discuss:

What do you do (or want to do) to bring kavod to Shabbos and make it special?

You have now reflected on five aspects of kavod explored in these sources above (self, others, Torah, Hashem and Shabbos).

Discuss:

1. What does the common thread of *kavod* look like across self, others, Torah, Hashem, and Shabbos?
2. How do these different forms of *kavod* build upon or reinforce each other? How does honoring one area (e.g., yourself or Shabbos) help you better honor another (e.g., others or Hashem)?
3. Which type of *kavod* comes most naturally to you? Which one do you find most challenging? Why?
4. What does it mean to live a life of *kavod*? How might a life rooted in *kavod* look different from one driven by personal status or achievement?
5. If every person and moment deserves some element of *kavod*, what mindset or habits can help you become more attuned to honoring them consistently?

Now that you have learned these sources, you can also use the questions from the question boxes at the beginning of the learning packet for further discussion and reflection.