



## Week 5

### ענוה

This guided learning sheet explores the *middah* of *Anavah*—humility. 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?

***Anavah—humility—is often misunderstood. Is it about being quiet? Thinking you're not special? The five boxes below correspond to each day of this week's learning, allowing you to explore Torah perspectives that challenge those assumptions and show how anavah is actually the root of inner strength, greatness and deep connection to Hashem and others.***

### **#1: Humility: What It Is - and What It's Not**

*Humility is often mistaken for low self-worth, but the Torah paints a very different picture:*

**במדבר יב: א**

וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עָנָו מְאֹד מִכָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

And the man Moshe was very humble—more than any other person on the planet.

**Takeaway:** *Despite being a tremendous leader, Moshe Rabbeinu is described as the most humble person. This may seem surprising as we don't often think of leadership and humility as co-existing.*

#### **Discuss:**

What are some common misconceptions about humility that you've encountered or believed?

---

### **Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski zt"l**

Self-esteem is a true and accurate awareness of one's skills, capabilities, and limitations.

**Takeaway:** *Humility isn't about denying your strengths—it's remembering their Source. It is the recognition of your strengths and value, paired with the knowledge that those gifts come from Hashem.*

#### **Discuss:**

1. What is the difference between humility and low self-esteem/insecurity?
2. Have you ever struggled to balance recognizing your strengths with staying humble? What helped you navigate that?
3. Can someone be confident and humble at the same time? Is there anyone who comes to mind in your life who embodies this?
4. How might thinking of strengths as "gifts from Hashem" change how we speak or act?
5. Have you ever held back from sharing a strength because you thought it wasn't "humble"? Have you ever confused humility with insecurity in yourself or others?
6. What's a way to own your strengths without showing off?

## **#2: The Anatomy of Anavah**

*Middot are an interconnected system. A weakness in one middah can impact other middot. Strengthening one middah can elevate others, as the Ramban explains:*

### **אגרת הרמבן**

וְכַאֲשֶׁר תִּנְצֵל מִן הַכֶּעָס, תִּעֲלֶה עַל לִבְךָ מִדַּת הָעֲנָוָה, שֶׁהִיא מְדָה טוֹבָה מְכַל מְדוֹת טוֹבוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (משלי כב ד): "עֲקֹב עֲנָוָה, יִרְאֶת ה'".

When you free yourself from anger, then the *middah* of humility will enter your heart which is the best of all good *middot*, as it says in Mishlei, “On the heels of humility, comes fear of G-d”.

**Takeaway:** *Humility is not just a belief or mindset, but an internal emotional posture that influences—and is influenced by—other traits. Anger blocks humility. Anger comes from a place of ego. Humility allows us to pause, listen, and respond with perspective. By reducing anger, we create space for anavah to emerge. Strengthening humility, in turn, weakens the hold of anger. As humility grows, so does our yiras Hashem.*

### **Discuss:**

1. According to the Ramban, why is *anavah* considered the greatest of all *middot*?
2. Ramban links anger to blocking humility. Have you seen that play out in your own reactions or relationships? Have you ever lashed out when your ego felt threatened? Why does anger prevent humility?
3. Why does humility lead to fear of G-d?
4. Do you relate to the idea that strengthening or weakening one *middah* can impact others? Can you think of an example in your own life where *middot* growth in one area influenced another?

### **#3: Thinking Like an Anav**

*After examining emotions' relationship to middot, we now look at thought patterns. Specifically, we learn how humble people think about themselves and others.*

**רמח"ל, מסילת ישרים פרק כב**

הנה כלל הענוה היות האדם בלתי מחשיב עצמו משום טעם שיהיה, וזה הפך הגאון ממש

The general idea of humility is for a person not to ascribe importance to himself for any reason whatsoever. This is the very opposite of haughtiness.

**קהלת ז:כ**

כי אדם אין צדיק בארץ אשר יעשה טוב ולא יחטא

There is no person on earth who does only good and never sins.

**Takeaway:** *Humility is realistic. It sees success as a gift from Hashem, meant to be used with purpose to serve Hashem and others. It sees flaws and making mistakes as inevitable and recognizes no one is perfect (neither ourselves nor others). Recognizing both of these elements keeps us grounded.*

#### **Discuss:**

1. How does seeing our talents and successes as gifts from Hashem—as opposed to personal achievements—shift the way we relate to ourselves or others? How does it shift how we use those talents?
2. How can we remind ourselves regularly that our strengths are not just blessings, but also responsibilities? What is the connection between humility and accountability?
3. Why is it sometimes hard to admit our flaws or mistakes—even to ourselves?
4. How does internalizing “*There is no one who only does good and never sins*” help keep a person humble? How does realizing everyone has flaws make it easier to forgive?

### **#4: Humility in Action**

*Humility impacts our behavior and how we show up in the world.*

**רמח"ל, מסילת ישרים פרק כב**

יגדבר עתה מענות המעשה... בהתנהג בשפלות וזה ראוי שיהיה בדבורו, בהליכתו, בשבתו ובכל תנועותיו

We will now discuss humility in one's conduct...conducting oneself in an unassuming matter. It is appropriate for this humble conduct to be manifest in one's manner of speech, in how he walks, in how he is seated, and in all his movements.

**Takeaway:** *Humility shapes our behavior, not just inner feelings. It shows up in how we walk, talk, and interact with the world.*

**Discuss:**

How does the way a person speaks reflect their inner sense of humility—or lack of it? What does a “humble posture” look like in real life?

---

*The Ramchal shifts us into practice: real humility shows up in our responses.*

**רמח"ל, מסילת ישרים פרק כב**  
החלק השני הוא סבילת העלבונות

The second category of humility in one's conduct is tolerating insults.

---

*Moshe Rabbeinu models this. When criticized by his sister, he doesn't respond defensively. Through his restraint, he earns the Torah's description as the most humble of all men.*

**במדבר יב: א-ג**

וַתִּדְבֹּר מִרְיָם וְאַהֲרֹן בְּמֹשֶׁה עַל־אֲדֹתָיִם הָאִשָּׁה הַכֻּשִׁית אֲשֶׁר לָקַח כִּי־אִשָּׁה כֻּשִׁית לָקַח: וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָרֶק אֶדְ־בְּמֹשֶׁה דִּבֶּר יְהוָה הֲלֹא גַם־בָּנוּ דִּבֶּר וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה. וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עֲנֹו מְאֹד מִכָּל־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

Miriam and Aron spoke about Moshe because of the Cushite woman. They said, “Has Hashem spoken only through Moses? Has G-d not spoken through us as well?” and Hashem heard. And the man Moshe was very humble—more than any other person on the planet.

**רשי שם**

**ענו. שָׁפֵל וְסָבֵל:**

Humble: lowly and patient

**Takeaway:** *Humility reveals itself in moments when we could react but choose not to. It is visible in how we speak, in how we carry ourselves, and especially in how we respond when we feel wronged. Choosing restraint, tolerance and quiet strength is one of the most powerful expressions of anavah.*

**Discuss:**

1. What is the difference between true humility and passivity? How does the example of Moshe Rabbeinu help clarify this? How does Moshe's silence exhibit strength rather than weakness?
2. What's the difference between humility and letting people “walk all over you”?
3. Can you think of a time when holding back a reaction—not defending yourself or needing to prove a point—felt like the stronger choice?

## #5 The Paradox of Humility

*The following statements of self-reflection come from some of our greatest leaders.  
Despite their greatness, each expressed profound humility.*

*Dovid HaMelech says:*

**תהילים כב:ז**

וְאֲנֹכִי תוֹלַעַת וְלֹא-אִישׁ

But I am a worm and not a man.

*Avraham Avinu says:*

**בראשית יח:כז**

וְאֲנֹכִי עָפָר וָאֵפֶר

And I am but dust and ashes.

*Moshe Rabbeinu says:*

**שמות טז:ז**

וּבֹקֶר וּרְאִיתֶם אֶת-כְּבוֹד יְהוָה בְּשָׁמְעוֹ אֶת-תְּלַנְתְּיָכֶם עַל-יְהוָה וַנִּחְנוּ מֶה בִּי (תלוינו) [תלינו] עָלֵינוּ

And in the morning you shall behold the Presence of G-d, because G-d has heard your grumblings against Him. For who are we that you should grumble against us?

**Takeaway:** *There's a striking progression in how they viewed themselves: Dovid HaMelech compares himself to a lowly creature, saying, "I am a worm", Avraham Avinu goes a step further, describing himself as "dust and ashes"—not even a living being, but something inanimate and insubstantial. Moshe Rabbeinu, the most humble of all, says simply, "What are we?" He does not compare himself to anything at all. He erases his own self entirely—seeing his existence only in relation to Hashem.*

*Dovid, Avraham, and Moshe each express extreme humility—yet they are leaders and amongst the most important figures in Jewish history. They realized their power and success were a reflection of Hashem's will. Leaders see themselves not as a figure of status, but as a pure vessel for Hashem's will. Real humility means using your gifts with responsibility and remembering where they come from. That's what allows a person to truly make a difference.*

### Discuss:

1. What can we learn from the different ways Dovid HaMelech, Avraham Avinu, and Moshe Rabbeinu expressed humility?
2. What is the paradox of humility and greatness?
3. How does humility strengthen—not weaken—greatness?

4. In what situations do you find it hardest to be humble—and why?
5. How can we teach or model humility for the next generation, without confusing it with self-deprecation or low self-esteem? How can we model humility in a way that still encourages strength and leadership?
6. Our greatest leaders' humility did not hold them back from leading. Rather, they were able to do so with self-awareness [as vessels of G-d's will] instead of with self-importance. Can you think of how this shows up in your life?

**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.**