

Humility - ענווה

Focus phrases

- “No more than my place, no less than my space.”
- *Hineini*
- Not too much, not too little
- “At times we should not be afraid of the feeling of greatness, which elevates a person to do great things. And all humility is based on such a holy feeling of greatness.” (Rabbi Abraham Yitzchak Kook)
- Let your voice be gentle, and your head bowed. Let your eyes be turned earthwards and your heart heavenwards. (Nachmanides)
- Every person should have two pockets so he can reach into one or the other, according to his needs. In his right pocket are to be the words: “For my sake was the world created,” and in his left: “I am earth and ashes.” (Rabbi Simchah Bunim of Przysucha)

Kabbalot – Practices

- At least once every morning and once every afternoon, before you make a decision, find someone to consult with and ask them what they think of the decision you are about to make. If you can apply this exercise in the context of your communal leadership, all the better, though not essential. You will have to be very deliberate to do this because it is easy to skip this step, but it is the very behavior we learn from God that we are meant to model.
- Give thought to the many sorts of gifts you have received and feel and express gratitude to others for the role they have played in your life and your accomplishments.
- Whenever you are working on something with others, make sure to share the credit.
- Try out what it feels like, and how others respond to you differently, when you occupy different amounts of space. For example: At times, challenge yourself to speak up more and at other times, keep your silence. At times, sit in a prominent place in the room and at other times, occupy a hidden seat. Try out other sorts of behavior that tends toward either end of the spectrum, and see what it feels like, how others respond, and what you learn.

Heshbon HaNefesh – Journaling Prompts

- Record in your journal anything that you can note in your day when you did or did not “occupy your rightful space.” When did you speak up too much? Or maybe too little? When did you take an action not for the sake of the goal but for the sake of ego? When did you let feelings of self-worth (whether exaggerated or minimized) influence your thoughts, words and deeds?
- Rabbi Micha Berger teaches: When we’re conversing with someone, do we spend the whole time searching for launching points for what we want to say? Or do we actually listen to appreciate what they are trying to relate? The first stance is the hubris of believing that what we have to say is primary; certainly, my insight is brighter, my interpretation more inspiring and my perspective more valuable. The root of the Hebrew word for humility (*anavah*) is *la’anot*, which means “to answer.” When the humble person speaks, s/he participates as one component of the whole. S/he truly responds.
 - What is Rabbi Berger saying with this text? Does this change your understanding of humility? Of contribution?
- What does speaking and listening have to do with humility? What does humility have to do with being relationship with others? Make notes 2-3 times each day about your interactions and observations.
- What is your relationship to “taking space?” In what ways does the space you take depend on the situation?
- Who is a role of model of *Anavah* for you?
- Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Przysucha taught: “Every person should have two pockets so he can reach into one or the other, according to his needs. In his right pocket are to be the words: “For my sake was the world created,” and in his left: “I am earth and ashes.” If you were to write your own phrases - in your right pocket, what would it be? If you were to write something in your left pocket what would it be?