

# VIRTUE: HUMILITY

עֲנָוָה

Ah-na-vah / humility

noun / hu•mil•i•ty / hyü-'mi-lə-tē

*the quality or state of not thinking you are better than other people: the quality or state of being humble*

## Guide for Your Group

### 1 WELCOME

Ask each person to introduce themselves and to share with the group a part of their day or week they would like to bring with them as they begin this conversation, and/or a part of their day or week they would like to leave behind.

As we gather in our Sh'ma group, may we honor the values of our Jewish tradition. May we bring compassion, insight, and wisdom to our learning and conversation. May we recognize the Divine Image in one another, and let that awareness be reflected in our words and actions.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, חוֹנֵן הַדָּעַת

Baruch atah Adonai chonein ha'daat.

Blessed are You, Adonai,  
who grants us wisdom and awareness.

Before we begin, let's review the brit—the covenant—that animates our time together:

- **Accountability:** I'll show up to our agreed upon times. I'll let the guide(s) know the (good) reason I will be absent. I will also be punctual and respect everyone's time.
- **Presence:** When we're together, I'll be present and mindful. I will listen and share. Life (and our mobile devices) offers many distractions, but I will stay present and engaged.
- **Double Confidentiality:** I'll maintain complete confidentiality. What I hear and say stays here. It means that even when I see group members in another context, like at Temple or in the neighborhood, I will not initiate a conversation on what has been shared.
- **Vulnerability:** I'll stretch myself to be as open and honest as possible with my perspectives and experiences in order to create a safe environment that might encourage others to take risks as well.

- **Respect:** I will remember that all of us are here for a common purpose and I will respect and acknowledge everyone in my group.
- **No Fixing, Advising, Saving or Setting Straight:** I will give each person the gift of true attention without trying to “solve their problem.” No advice unless it's asked.
- **Listening:** I understand that some of us are talkers, while some of us are quieter. I'll be aware not to dominate discussions and to balance how much I'm talking with how much I'm listening.
- **Curiosity:** Judaism is a religion of exploration; of big questions more than answers. I will get the most out of my group by being open to our discussions and the people around me.
- **Ownership:** This is our Sh'ma Group. This is our community to create. While we have guidelines and suggestions, it is ours to shape and form. We will get out of it what we put into it.

### 2 REFLECT ON LAST MONTH'S DISCUSSION/ CONVERSATION

What challenges did you face in pursuing last month's virtue? What are you still thinking about from your last discussion?

### 3 TODAY'S DISCUSSION/CONVERSATION

Compare Ben Franklin's definition of the virtue with the passage from Pirkei Avot. Use the questions below to help guide the conversation.

### 4 MAKE YOUR COMMITMENT

Before your meeting ends, set a goal for yourself for how you can better live that month's virtue. Share it with the group and plan to follow up on how you did at your next meeting.

**Example:** Part of being humble is learning to listen, to show others they are as important as you are. To practice humility, could you try to listen more intently and interrupt less?

## Side-By-Side: Ben Franklin and Pirkei Avot

### **BEN FRANKLIN'S DEFINITION**

Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

### **PIRKEI AVOT**

(PA 2:4)

Rabbi Eleazar ben Shamua said, Let the honor of your disciple be as dear to you as your own; and the honor of your friend, as the reverence for your master; and the reverence for your master as the reverence for Heaven.

(PA 4:13) and He used to say Do His will as you would do your own will, so that He may do your will just as He does His will. Set aside your will for the sake of His will, so that He may set aside the will of others before your will.

## Questions To Discuss

- There are a lot of different ways to think about humility. By referencing Jesus and Socrates, Franklin suggests that humility involves thinking of yourself as unimportant and undistinguished, and being a loving servant or others. How would you define it?
- How is Moses also a paragon of humility? What does it mean that he is the leader of the Israelites?
- Why is it important to be humble? How does it improve the community?
- How does Judaism emphasize both humility and service?
- Is there a danger in being too humble? When does humility become servility or obsequiousness? Have you ever been too humble?