

He just wants YOU

Excerpted from the Perfectly Imperfect guidebook



Have you ever felt like it's almost impossible to be "good enough" for Hashem?

Torah and its demands truly never end. Chazal describe Torah as "longer than the earth and broader than the sea" (Iyov 11:9). And the Vilna Gaon reminds us (Mishlei 15:24) that the minute we stop trying to move upwards, we move downwards.

As we put in the work – and fall – and try again – and fall again, how can we ward off that disheartening, destructive sense of never, ever, ever being good enough?

By realizing we've got the wrong definition of "good enough" when it comes to avodas Hashem.

"Good enough" to us means – results. Accomplishments. Serving Hashem successfully means getting things right. Overcoming our challenges. Making progress. Acing our nisyonos.

But that's not actually what Hashem wants most from our avodah (spiritual work).

Of course He wants us to change for the better. To accomplish spiritually. To get things right. But none of those are His primary interest.

What is His primary interest?

You.

More than anything, Hashem wants you – us – to be engaged with Him. To be living our relationship with Him.

In Mishlei (2:4), Shlomo Hamelech tells us: “Im tevakshenah kakosef v’chamatmonim tachpisenah az tavin yiras Hashem v’da’as Elokim timtzah.”

The word “im” is generally translated as “if.” So people usually read the verse like this: If we would pursue Torah like people pursue money, we would deeply understand and connect with Hashem and His will.

“Im” has another meaning, though. Sometimes, it means “when.”

Look at the difference that makes in our understanding of the posuk:

“When you’re in the midst of pursuing and searching – that’s when you’ll understand yiras Shamayim (fear of Heaven) and find connection with Hashem.”

We’ve fallen into thinking our relationship with Hashem is about bringing Him trophies. We think it’s only accomplishments that make Him happy.

But much as we all love the gifts, favors, and compliments we get from our loved ones – parents, children, spouses, etc. – that’s not what we want from them most.

What do we want most? To know their heart is with us. To know we’re a central part of their lives. That – not the playroom full of toys or the respectful treatment or the \$10,000 bracelet – is how we know we’re truly important to them.

Not that we shouldn’t strive to give our loved ones everything we can. But in a truly healthy relationship, the partners don’t just want what the other person can do for them.

They want the other person, unconditionally.

They want to be with them. Connected to them.

That’s what Hashem wants from us most. Us.

When do we give Him “us?” Not once we’ve won, or checked the right box. We’re engaged with Hashem when we’re struggling. When we’re trying to figure out what He wants from us. When we’re wrestling with the questions and choices that present themselves every day in our avodah.

“Getting it right” doesn’t necessarily mean we’re with Him. Because if we’re just focused on knocking down tasks and doing a good job, we can easily forget to connect with Hashem along the way.

We’re most fully with Hashem when we’re in a state of bikush, “seeking.” In the middle of a struggle. In that grey zone of questions.

That’s what “connecting with Hashem” means. Not “being picture-perfect.” Just being with Him. Trying. Caring. Wanting to be closer.

So. If Hashem sees getting things right as less important than being involved with Him, teshuvah becomes the most lechatchila (ideal) process in the world.

Our flaws and failings enable us to seek. Without them, we couldn’t be in that state of bikush. We couldn’t grow our relationship.

Teshuvah is an incredibly positive opportunity. Not just because it helps us clean ourselves off so we don’t have to hide our faces in shame. Because it allows us to give Hashem what He wants most – us. Our involvement. Our relationship.

With this attitude in mind, the last vestiges of that crippling self-negativity start fading away. We haven’t simply blurred the sting of our flaws by liking ourselves better. We haven’t just learned to ignore them for the sake of making change.

Our flaws are gifts. They’re the gateway into the most intense, desired part of our relationship with Hashem.