

Throwing the Ball

Right effort, right target, and the honor of Hashem

כבוד ה' הסתר דבר

Watch someone learn to throw a ball at a target. The beginner almost never misses by aiming wrong. He misses by force. He throws with everything he has and the ball sails past the target, or he holds back, unsure, and it drops short. Aim was never the problem. Calibration was.

Most of our avodah has the same shape. We are not usually failing because we chose the wrong goal. We are failing because we pour in an amount of energy that has no relationship to the thing in front of us — and then we judge ourselves by where the ball landed, which was never fully ours to decide.

This guide is about the amount. How much to put in, how to learn a measure you were never taught, and how to keep the target itself clear: not the result, not your name on the result, but the honor of Hashem being recognized, enjoyed, revealed — and you being included in it.

1

The target is kavod Hashem

Before any question of effort, the target has to be named honestly, because energy always flows toward whatever the target actually is — not toward the one you announced.

The target is four movements, and they are one movement: to recognize the honor of Hashem in what is in front of you; to enjoy it, to actually taste that it is good and not merely agree that it is; to reveal it, so that through your speech and conduct it becomes visible in this world; and then to be included in it, so that your own honor is not competing with His but carried inside it.

Test it plainly. If the goal were only that Hashem's honor increase, would it matter to you who did it, whether it was noticed, whether it came out polished? If those questions carry heat, some part of your energy is aimed at your own honor. That is not a verdict on you. It is only information about where the ball is going.

2

Effort is yours; the result is not

עליך המלאכה לגמור — the work is on you; finishing it is not. Effort is our territory. Outcome is His.

This is not a consolation prize for people who fail. It is an accurate map of jurisdiction. When you take responsibility for the result, you have quietly stepped into a domain that was never assigned to you — and the moment you do, the energy has to go up, because now you are trying to guarantee something no amount of force can guarantee.

Notice what excess effort is actually made of: it is not extra love of the mitzvah. It is anxiety about the outcome, wearing the clothes of devotion. Perfectionism is the same thing at a finer resolution — the attempt to make the result airtight so that nothing can come back at you.

And when the outcome is the target, embarrassment becomes the real fear. Not “will Hashem’s honor be revealed” but “how will I look if this doesn’t work.” That fear is the surest sign that the ball is being thrown at the wrong thing.

3

Why you lost the measure

If you were praised for going beyond, you learned that more is safer. If you were shamed for falling short, you learned that more is protection. Either way you trained one muscle — maximum — and you never trained estimation.

So now, when something small is asked of you, you have no small setting. You have on and off. And because maximum is exhausting, the swing follows: overexertion, collapse, avoidance, guilt, and then overexertion again to make up for the collapse.

A person in this pattern genuinely cannot tell how much a task requires. He is not lazy and he is not lying. His gauge was never calibrated, because it was never allowed to be wrong in a small, safe way — which is the only way a gauge ever gets calibrated.

4

How you learn to throw

No one learns distance by being told the distance. He learns by throwing, watching, and adjusting — and the adjustment has to be small enough to feel. Five steps, in order:

1. **Name the target out loud.** Before acting: “the purpose of this is that Hashem’s honor be recognized here.” If saying it feels false, you have found the real target — that is useful, not shameful.

2. **Estimate before you throw.** Guess the effort out loud in plain terms: “this is a twenty-minute, B-minus task.” Guessing badly is fine. Not guessing is what keeps the gauge broken.
3. **Throw at the estimate, not past it.** Do the amount you named, then stop — even if it feels unfinished. Stopping on time is the repetition that trains the muscle. Going over teaches nothing.
4. **Watch where it landed, without a verdict.** Short, long, or on target — report it like a coach, not a judge: “that needed a bit more,” “that was double what it needed.” No commentary about your worth.
5. **Adjust by one notch, and throw again.** Not a new system. One notch. Repetition with small correction is the only thing that has ever built an accurate gauge.

The whole skill lives in the fourth step. If you cannot tolerate a small miss without a verdict on yourself, you cannot calibrate, because every throw becomes a trial instead of information.

5

The next micro-move

The unit of avodah is not the project. It is the next honest small move.

When you feel the surge — the impulse to do more, to fix it now, to make it perfect, to prove it — that surge is the ball leaving your hand too hard. Pause. Ask one question: what is the smallest true step that is mine right now? Then do only that, and let it land.

Discouragement, embarrassment, overwhelm and fear of results all share one root: they are all responses to a future outcome that you have taken on as your responsibility. Hand the outcome back, and they lose most of their fuel — not all at once, but reliably, each time.

6

Be happy: you are on the winning team

There is a game being played in this world, and its whole purpose is that the honor of Hashem be recognized and revealed. That game is not in doubt. His honor will be revealed.

So the only real question is whether you are playing on that side — and if you have thrown even one honest throw at that target today, you are. Not on the strength of the result. On the strength of the direction.

And when it does come through you, you are permitted — obligated, really — to be glad. That is kavod Shabbos, that is a seudas mitzvah: sitting down and celebrating that the honor of Hashem came into the world through a person, and that the person was you. Being included in His honor is not the erasure of your joy. It is where your joy finally becomes safe.



You will still overthrow sometimes. That is what a person with an old habit and a new skill looks like.

But the throw itself has changed. It is no longer an attempt to secure a result and protect a name. It is a measured effort, aimed at the honor of Hashem, released — and left with the One whose territory the landing always was.

עליך המלאכה לגמור