

When you will go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem your G-d will deliver them/him into your hand. (21:10)

The pasuk begins with lashon rabim: plural, oyvecha, your enemies; and concludes with lashon yachid, singular: u'nesano, will deliver him. This teaches us, explains Horav Bunim, zl, m'Peshischa, that we actually have only one enemy, but he has different names. He cites the Talmud (Succah 52a), "The yetzer hora, evil inclination, has seven names." This is reference to the various images, metaphors, for describing the yetzer hora and its deleterious effect on people. Obviously, every individual has a different relationship with and understanding of the yetzer hora. To some, he is an enemy; to others, he is an obstacle or evil, impurity incarnate. It all depends on how each person perceives the yetzer hora. Sadly, to some, the yetzer hora may not be an enemy, but a friend. This is how deeply embedded in our lives he has become.

The Peshischa explains homiletically that the "enemy" against whom the Jewish soldier is waging war (homiletically) is the yetzer hora, always presenting himself in a different light, projecting a different. The Jew begins to think that he has many enemies, when, in fact, he has only one. Once we have confirmed this reality, it becomes much easier for us to wage war and emerge triumphant. We should not be concerned about the quantitative size of the army, but rather, its qualitative power. If we do our part, Hashem will deliver him into our hands.

One of the ways the yetzer hora ensnares a person is through subtle, inconsequential acts, which are isolated and do not directly impact a person. Each isolated, (supposedly) inconsequential breach adds up, however, until the individual becomes the yetzer hora's client and, through the process of aveirah goreres aveirah, sin begets, drags along, causes another sin. In this way, he becomes entrapped and enslaved to the yetzer hora.

Yalkut Me'am Loez relates the story of an evil king who issued a decree against a Jew to force him to commit an aveirah, sin. He gave him a "choice" of one of three sins to transgress: adultery; eating treif; drinking wine that had been touched by a gentile. The Jew figured that, since z'nus, immorality, was a Biblical sin which was liable for capital punishment, and treif was punishable by Heavenly excision, he would drink the stam yeinam, ritually contaminated wine, since it was only Rabbinically prohibited. ("What could be so bad, it is only a d'Rabbanan?") He did not realize that an aveirah, even a simple, "light" sin, will drag along another sin, one that is serious, stringent. He drank and became inebriated and, while in his intoxicated state, he consumed treif meat and committed an immoral act. The yetzer hora had "convinced" him that drinking the wine was inconsequential. Nothing is inconsequential, because it brings you through the front door – and slams it behind you!

The Chasam Sofer explains this with an analogy. There were two neighbors, one of whom owned a beautiful diamond ring. The second neighbor was an unsavory fellow who badly wanted that diamond. He said to his neighbor, "I purchased a diamond ring, but I am unsure if the purchase

price was a good value or not.” The owner of the ring was a trusting soul who said, “Take a look at mine, and see how yours compares.” He “accepted” the offer, and after looking at the diamond for a few moments, proceeded to put it in his pocket. “Hey, what are you doing with my diamond?” the trusting soul asked. “Your diamond? It is my diamond! How dare you call me a thief?” the thief countered.

Nu, what does one do in such a case? The owner said, “Fine, we will settle this in *bais din*, Jewish court.” “I cannot go to court, because I do not have appropriate clothing. The judges will take one look at me, and I will be on the defensive.” “Fine,” replied the diamond’s owner, “I will lend you my nice jacket to wear to court.” “But I have no way to get there. I cannot walk all the way to *bais din*.” “Fine, I will lend you my donkey upon which you can ride.”

The thief now had the man’s diamond, jacket and donkey. They arrived at *bais din* where the claimant presented his case. The judge listened and turned to the thief, “Well, what do you have to say in defense?” The thief replied, “Sir, my neighbor’s a liar in the first degree. I can prove this. You already heard his claim that I took his diamond. There is no end to this man’s imagination. I am certain that he is such an audacious prevaricator that he will probably say that I am wearing his jacket. Furthermore, he will claim that I rode to court on his donkey! When the owner heard these ludicrous lies perpetrated about him, he screamed, “He took my jacket, and he is riding on my donkey!” The judge listened to the story. Who do you think he believed? The thief! His story was so ludicrous it had to be true!

The *yetzer hora* plays a similar ruse with us by parlaying the mitzvos that we perform throughout our life. He convinces us to commit a sin “here” and a sin “there” until he owns us. At that point it is too late. Our mitzvos have been hijacked by the master thief.

A stingy man was compelled to host a guest for Shabbos. He went to the market and purchased two fish: one excellent fish for himself; and one spoiled fish which was inexpensive for his guest. Upon eating the spoiled fish, the guest became ill and was rushed to the hospital. The host said to his wife, “We really should visit our guest in the hospital.” A few days later, the guest passed away as a result of his illness. The host said to his wife, “We must attend the funeral.” They did, after which the host said to his wife, “We really should comfort the bereaved.” On their return trip home, the man said to his wife, “Look how many wonderful mitzvos we were able to perform because of the spoiled fish. We welcomed a man to our home; we visited him in the hospital when he became ill; we attended his funeral when he died; we comforted his family when they mourned.”

The *yetzer hora* presents an *aveirah* in the image of a mitzvah and convinces us to act promptly. After we fall in line, he drags along more “mitzvos” which are all built upon the foundation of that first *aveirah*.

This is why Hashem appreciates each and every mitzvah that we perform. He knows that mitzvos do not come easily. He is acutely aware of the “hoops” through which we must jump in order to

succeed. Perhaps, the following analogy will inspire and hearten those who feel overwhelmed by their yetzer hora. A king invited one of his close ministers to visit the palace. As the minister walked from room to room, he beheld beautiful paintings hanging from the walls, all signed by prominent artists. Finally, he came to the king's study, his inner sanctum, a room in which he felt that he would find the most impressive of all the king's works of art. Imagine his surprise when he saw that the painting hung most prominently was far from impressive. It was a simple graphic, whose colors were far from stunning and lacked the powerful imagery projected by the other paintings.

He was staring at this work of "art" when his host, the king, entered the study, "I see that you are staring at my favorite painting. You must be wondering, 'Why this, what is special about this painting that it maintains such a prominent position in my palace?'"

"The artist who painted this drawing was in a terrible accident, during which he lost both of his arms. He now paints with his toes. His love for art and for me, his king, is so great that he toiled and expended much back-breaking physical and emotional effort to draw this work of 'art'. Do you see now why it means so much to me?"

Likewise, Hashem has billions of angels who carry out His directive with the greatest purity and sanctity. Why not? They do not have a yetzer hora with which to contend every step of the way. We human beings have so much to overcome until we "squeeze" out each mitzvah. This is why each one means so much to Hashem!