



## KNOW YOUR ENEMY AND START FIGHTING

### A TWO-FRONT BATTLE

כי תצא למלחמה על איביך ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך ושביית שבו.

*When you go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem your G-d will deliver them in your hand, and you will capture their captives. (Devarim 21:10)*

The month of Elul is a month for introspection and becoming aware of what one's challenges are in this world. Do you know what our biggest challenge is? The biggest challenge that everybody has in this world is the same one. I share the same challenge as all of you. We both share a common enemy, and that enemy's name is *yeitzer hara* or as the *chassidim* say *yeitzer hurah* or as the Sefardim say *yeitzer ha-rah*. But whatever the name is, however you pronounce it, it's all the same thing, it's the same enemy.

It's sad because if you'll ask most people, "What's your biggest challenge?" do you know what they might say? "My wife. My kids. My *parnasah*. My friends. My health." They give you all kinds of nonsense. They are so unaware, so out of touch with what they're really challenged with, so out of touch with who their biggest enemy, whom they face on a daily basis, is. When a person is unaware of that, you know one thing. He's lost. Goodbye. Down the drain. If you're not aware of what's challenging you, it's a sad state of affairs.

What are the fronts of this daily battle? Everybody is challenged by his enemy on two fronts. What are those two fronts? *L'mashal*, Eretz Yisrael has challenges on different fronts, one on the northern front from Syria, and then one from Gaza; those are two fronts. The *yeitzer hara* is your enemy. He's your Arab terrorist trying to get you. He's trying to get you on two fronts. What are these two fronts? The answer is *בין אדם למקום* and *בין אדם לחברו*. There are two battlefronts that every single one of us faces all day, and every day. Every time you have an interaction with another human being, you're presented with a series of challenges. And so it is, every time you face some *avodas Hashem* between you and Hashem. Every single person, from the greatest *tzaddik* to the smallest worm, has got a challenge - that of not doing the *avodas Hashem* properly. Not *davening* properly. Not learning properly. Not doing *mitzvos* properly. These are the two fronts of the battle.

It's very important to know this. Do you know why? If you don't realize what fronts you're battling on, you don't stand a chance in this war. People are unaware of their *yeitzer hara*. My *zeida* (HaRav Avigdor Miller, zt"l) used to speak to me about this when I was a kid. The *yeitzer hara* puts forth tremendous effort to make sure that people don't talk about the challenges presented by the *yeitzer hara*. People should not discuss it. Don't think about the *yeitzer hara*. He always tries to diminish this realization and awareness.

Now, all the adults and people who will hear this *shmooze*, should ask themselves the following question: "Was I aware of this information until today?" Sure. After the fact, everybody tends to say, "Oh, you didn't know that?" If you've got to explain to the general of Israeli army that the country is being challenged by Syria and by the Gaza border, he doesn't belong in the army. He should work as a street cleaner instead. He's clueless. So it should be obvious to every one of us that the only two *avodos* - actions and activities that you're involved in on a daily basis - are *בין אדם למקום* and *בין אדם לחברו*. There are no others.

### KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS

So you've got to realize that the *yeitzer hara* is your enemy. The *Chovos Halevavos* describes what kind of enemy he really is. He writes an amazing piece of how intense the *yeitzer hara* is. He explains that when the *yeitzer hara* deals with you, he's involved with you in your *middos*. He's involved with you in your mind. He's involved with you in the deepest recesses of your emotional being, in your physical being, in every aspect. *Davening* for example involves emotion. It involves your physical state, your mind, your heart, your body.

Let's say a person gets up to *daven*. You know how many parts of the body are involved in the *davening*? First, your mind. You've got to be *mechaven keneged* the *kodesh hakadashim*. You've got to be *mechaven* that you're standing and talking to Hashem. You know what the *yeitzer hara* says? "Don't do that." Do you know why he does that? If you're not

thinking about Hashem when you're *davening*, you're not *davening*! He wipes the floor with you before the game starts! Checkmate before you even begin to *daven*! I don't care if you're standing there on time. I don't care if you're even shaking frontways, sideways or all around, but if you're not aware of the fact that you are standing in front of Hashem and thinking about Him, you are not *davening*. You know what he does? He gets into your mind. When he gets into your mind, he gets into your body. You know what he says? "Don't bow down when you're supposed to bow down. Who needs this? Hashem cares if you bow down?!" So the guy stands there and he doesn't bow down.

You know, when you go into a meeting with a king or a president, there are all kinds of rules of how you walk in, which foot you put out first, how many steps you take, etc. You don't walk in and say, "Hi guys! Hi Mr. President." No, you don't do that. You don't say, "Hi, Donald!" Even though you may know him as Donald, you don't say that to the President. He may even remind you of Donald Duck, with that orange hair of his. But you don't say that. If anybody would say that, he would be bounced out before he knew it. That's not the kind of thing the President wants you to think about when you are meeting with him.

You should know that there's a way to approach Hashem. You have to know how to take the steps back and how to take the steps forward, how to bow down. When you go into a meeting with a president, *l'havdil*, they tell you this is what you say and this is what you don't say. You've got to present yourself properly. First state your name. State who you are. There's a *mehalech*. But when it comes to tefillah or other mitzvos, the *yeitzer hara* tells you that there's no *mehalech*. Just do as you please. No *mehalech*.

### WHAT TO THINK WHEN YOU MEET A FRIEND

When you meet your friend, you're supposed to think: "Do I have an *ayin tovah* for this person?" Every time two people meet each other, there's a tremendous challenge. Do you think, "I want good for this person?" Every time you meet someone, whether you realize it or not, you're having this challenge. A lot of people don't realize this, but when they meet somebody, do you know what they're thinking? "What can I get from this guy? Is there money to be gotten from this guy? Are there favors to be gotten from this guy?" At the very least do you know what you're hoping to get out of this encounter? "Can I get *kavod* from this guy?" That's what you want. Can I get *kavod*? If the guy can't offer you anything, you know what you say to yourself? "You have no value to me. Goodbye." You have to think: "What are my obligations? Do I have a good eye on this person? Do I think I'm better than him or do I think I'm equal to him?" Whether you realize it or not, the *yeitzer hara* is in your *kishkes* every time you meet somebody. The *yeitzer hara* tells you, "You put this guy to shame! This guy is nothing next to you! You are a big honcho." He says this and then he starts to massage your *ga'avah* a little bit. After that you start to put the guy down. You say a joke about him. That's called being *מתכבד בקלון חברו* - "honoring oneself with the shame of a friend." (Chofetz Chaim, Introduction of Hilchos Lashon Hora). He tells you straight, "Go ahead and put the guy down." So that's what you do. You don't even realize it. You are totally unaware of it.

The first thing you have to make yourself aware of, is compartmentalize your life into *בין אדם לבין אדם* and *בין אדם למקום* and realize you're challenged in both of these areas. You are going to be always challenged on both of these fronts.

### STEP 1: ARE YOU IN THE GAME?

Let's say a person sits down to learn. You know how many people are learning Torah for years and they have no idea of the *chashivus* of what they're doing?! They have no idea. "Am I doing Hashem a favor? Am I doing the *ratzon* of Hashem? What am I gaining from this?" The *yeitzer hara* gets into your mind and he tells you, "You're not mentally involved in this project. You're not emotionally involved in this." And then you know what he tells you? "You can't even stand it!" He tells you this: "You can't stand it. Come on, be honest with yourself. Say, 'I can't stand it.'" And he gets you to do that. So you start thinking, "You know, it makes my back hurt sitting here. It's not for me." It's all your *yeitzer hara* battling you, weakening you, melting you down to make sure you fail. And if you're unaware of it, you don't stand a chance.

When you want to prepare for the Yom Hadin, are you going to become the Vilna Gaon in a week? You probably won't become the Vilna Gaon in your lifetime. And the goal is not to be the Vilna Gaon. The goal is to be the best that you can be. And the only way that's going to happen is if you undertake to go to war. You're going to have to go to war. It says *רגזו ולא תחטאו* - *tremble and sin no more* (Tehillim 4:5), where *רגזו* means you've got to get into war mode, *milchamah*. You've got to be in war mode. When you go into war, you don't go into war haphazardly. You don't go into war listening to music. Did you ever see soldiers dancing into war with their guns? Why not? That sounds like the perfect time to have a little music in the background. We'll mow the other guy down. We'll chill out with the music. What's wrong with that? But you know what the problem is? Lack of concentration. They're not into it. You've got to have your mind in focus. You've got to have your heart set in the right place. You've got to have your eyes focused on the target. Anytime you're sidetracked, you become fodder in the war.

A person has to be careful. He has to stay awake in a battle. You've got to stay conscious in a battle. When a person's life is on the line, and they realize they're in the midst of a war, they get competitive. People have a competitive spirit within themselves. People don't like to lose. That's a wonderful thing. And I love it when I tell a guy, "You don't like to lose," and

he says, “No, I don’t care.” What a liar! What kind of *mentch* are you? You’re not a *mentch*. Have you ever chased an ant around on the table? He’s fighting you. How can he fight you? For him to travel from one side of the table to the other side is like you running from here to another city. And he’s running. You put an obstacle in front of him and at the side of him, and he’s dodging it! He doesn’t stop! He’s not listening to the music in his ear buds. He’s conscious. He’s in the game.

You’ve got to get in the game. That’s the first thing.

### THE YEITZER’S MAIN GAME

The Torah tells us in this week’s parsha: *כי תצא למלחמה על איביך* - *when you go out to war against your enemies* (Devarim 21:10). You’ve got to take the battle. Now everybody thinks, “I’ve got to tell you, you don’t know this, but I’m so deep in the *yeitzer hara*.” Now, let me tell you what that means. I want to tell you, on a deep level, what the *yeitzer hara* means. One of the main challenges the *yeitzer hara* does, is he convinces you - when he infiltrates your inner being - that you don’t know where you start and where you end. I can’t tell you how many phone calls that I’ve gotten, and how many people I’ve met who told me, “I’m so bad. I’m telling you, Rabbi, you don’t know. Yes, I look like a normal person, but I am an animal.” Do you know what I tell him? “I don’t want to hear what your *yeitzer hara* has to say. To tell you the truth, I’m sick of hearing what your *yeitzer hara* is saying. You’re a fool. You may have done a lot of bad things, you’ve had bad friends. The *yeitzer hara* is a ‘bad friend,’ and he convinces you that you’re bad, and you don’t know where you begin and where you end.”

When I meet a person who tells me, “I don’t like Yiddishkeit. I hate it. I don’t like learning. I don’t like *davening*,” do you know what I think? “Oy, you are such a sucker. You fell for it hook, line and sinker. Wake up! You’re a *neshamah Elokah mima’al!* You have a Jewish soul! You’re a son of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. You’re a *kadosh elyon!* You’re amazing! Yes, you’ve gotten involved with bad stuff, but so what? You can overcome that, too.

### MEETING MR. TAAVAH HIMSELF

I once had a guy, who I thought was in *sha’ar shishim*. Not *sha’ar* 49. The guy was beyond 49. The guy spent literally years destroying himself. When I met him, it must have been eight years that he spent working out and eating four meals a day. He did it for one purpose and one purpose only. He was in the business of selling *ta’avos*. That’s what his business was. He was the *shpitz ta’avah*. He lived for one *zach*, to be *memaleh* his *ta’avos*. There wasn’t one day that he wasn’t *memaleh* his *ta’avos*. Not a day. I’m not talking about your *ta’avos*. The guy was serious about it. I mean, he had muscles to the gazoos. I said, “You’re such a disciplined person!” I was amazed at the guy. He had muscles from his ears to his shoulders. His feet, his stomach were all toned. I thought to myself, “What is it? What motivates a person to get so dedicated?” You want to know the answer? Pure *ta’avah*. He got money for it. He sold himself. As I said, this is *sha’ar shishim*. This is absolutely *sha’ar shishim*. This is the worst. The guy considered himself the lord of *ta’avos*. That was his *zach*.

When I met this guy, I said, “Shreck. Are you sure you’re Jewish? Are you sure?” He didn’t want to acknowledge that he was Jewish. He didn’t know why he detested Jews, and Orthodox Jews, in particular, to the degree that he told me that if he would be on a plane, and he would see me on that plane, he’d go to the other end of the plane to get as far away from me as possible! Not to sit in my *daled amos*.” I told him, “At least that makes us equal. If I saw you on a plane, I’d get off the plane! I’d jump out of the plane.”

I told myself it was hopeless. My wife said, “I think this time you made a mistake. You stepped over the line. I think we’ve got to let him go, and please don’t bring people like this around the house. I don’t want him in the neighborhood.” And he flaunted his body. It was not *stam*. I said, “If Hashem sent him to me, Hashem has got to be trying to show me something.”

### BECOMING AWARE OF YOURSELF

When I told him that Yiddishkeit demands no *ta’avos*, he said, “Will Hashem take two fingers in exchange?” That’s what he said. “I’ll be willing to cut off two fingers. I can’t give up the *ta’avos* in my life. That’s my *metzius*. It’s my *mehus*. It’s what I live for. I exercise. I put so much effort into this.” I said, “No, but I’m going to show you that you’ve just been very bamboozled and you’ve been sitting in the wrong *mikveh* too long. I’m going to show you that even you can get out of it.” I had to believe in him.

I told the guy another thing - which he wasn’t *maskim* to me right away - but I told him, “I’m going to reveal something about yourself that I don’t know if you know, and that is, that you’re frightened that the *ta’avah* is starting to leave you. Even though you’re 27 years old, you’re getting frightened that the *ta’avah* doesn’t hold its allure to you anymore. You’re starting to burn out.” (He told me later that when I said that to him, he started to shake inside because he started to think that he’d been losing it lately). The only thing that kept him going were all his friends that would call him and ask him, “What are you doing today?” and they would go over and over his daily routine.

I told him, “My friend, I’ll tell you another thing. I’m going to reveal to you a little future in your life. The next step is that you’re going to become interested in the same type as yourself. That’s where you’re headed.” He said, “No, no.” And I showed

him the Ramban (Devarim 29:18). That's what the Ramban says.<sup>1</sup> The Ramban says whenever a person is *memaleh* his *ta'avos* to the max, he gets so sick of it that he goes over to things that he never had a thirst for and never had a desire for and he starts to pursue that, to create a new venue, a new avenue for his *ta'avos*. I told him, "Did you ever wonder why the biggest movie stars, people who were gods in their world, lost their normal desires? They were *memaleh* their *ta'avos* to such a degree that now they're moving on to the next thing."

It shook him up. I told this fellow, "You could become *frum*. You are just not aware of who you are. Inside of you, there is a Jew. The *yeitzer hara* convinced you, like he convinced everyone else that you and him are one, that you are so tightly bound to him. You don't *chap* there's even a division! You think *you* do *aveiros*. You think *you* want to do *aveiros*. I know people who tell me, "I *davened* to do *aveiros*. I *davened* for *siyata dishmaya* to do *aveiros*. I *davened* to Hashem to give me the opportunity to sin. But what can I tell you? I have no *mazel*. I have *goyishe mazel*. I go out there and I can't find any *aveiros*! When I go looking for them, they're not there. I hear all the guys going out and having so much fun. The most I can get is a cigarette!"

I told the guy, "I want to tell you a little secret. Everybody is doing the same thing out there. They're all looking for action. Where is the action? There's no action. It's all the *yeitzer hara*. It's all baloney. The action that's out there is going to get you such illnesses and you're going to end up with such diseases, that if you come out not having pimples on every part of your body, it's going to be a miracle! You have to go to the *ashpos*, you have to go to the garage dump and look for the people picking out wheat kernels from the dung. Those are the people who are going to be available for you. The *yeitzer hara* fools you all the time. That's what you have to understand."

### FACING THE TOUGHEST CHALLENGE

I want to tell you what happened with this guy. The guy started to change. I didn't believe it, but he started to change. It was unbelievable. I told him, "You're going to be challenged. You're going to be challenged big time. He said, "I'm going to stay right here. I'm not going anywhere. I have a job," and this and that. One day he was challenged. He had a tremendous challenge, tremendous. A *nisayon* that we all *daven* for *לא לידי ניסיון*, the kind of *nisayon* that you read in the *gemara*. The *yeitzer hara* tried to challenge the *tana'im* and *amora'im* and Rabbi Akiva. They tried Rav Amram Chasida. They came with these challenges. He was challenged in that way. And he ran away.

He went for a job interview. He walked into this place. He was all fixed up. He had that jelly stuck in his hair, and he had his nice shirt on. He had a problem with his *tefillin* because he could never get his *tefillin* in his jacket because he had big muscles. He looked good. The guy was nicely toned. He went for this interview. There were a lot of people at the interview. He goes in there and the *yeitzer hara* was waiting for him over there, and the person starts to look at his resume and says, "What school did you go to? You know what? I was in your class."

He said, "I don't remember you." She said, "I didn't look like I look today. I always had a crush on you. You've got the job. Only one condition. Go out with me now. Let's go to dinner." The guy said he started to *shuckle*. He said another time he wouldn't have thought twice. "I just started to become *frum*. What is Hashem doing to me?!" He told the interviewer, "Let me just freshen up and go to the washroom." He walked out and he ran here, *pashut*. I wasn't home at the time. I was taking my family on a *chol hamoed* trip. I came home and he jumped on me and he grabbed me. "Where were you?!" I said, "Hey, calm down! I was with my family on a *chol hamoed* trip." With a frustrated and angry tone he asked me, "Why weren't you home?" I said, "What is going on here?" I didn't even get a *shalom aleichem*. What happened?!"

### DELIVERANCE COMES ONLY IF YOU GO INTO BATTLE

We came into the house. He told me the story. I said, "You realize the *yeitzer hara* was trying so hard to get you to go back there? You're a *tzaddik*. Do you know what's going on in *shamayim* now? They are asking: This guy?! He's a *shtick* Bilam! You're like Bilam and his *chamor*. You're a *shtick* Bilam, a *ba'al ta'avah*, and you *pashut* ran away?! You're a *tzaddik*!" I could tell that he was torn. He said that he almost fell. I said, "My friend, that's how Hashem makes you aware that He is going to help you correct the behavior you did. But you've got to take *למלחמה על איביך* - you've got to decide you're taking on the battle. I don't care what *aveiros* you did in the past. I don't care how big of a *rasha* you are." - and I've met the best of them. I said, "If you want to change and you want to do *teshuvah*, then you take the battle to the *yeitzer hara*; but if you're going to do it half heartedly, if you're going to do it with the 'earbuds' in your ear or you're going to do it with partial challenges - i.e. I'll do this, I won't do that, I'll play games, I won't play games - then you're going to lose." I said, "And if you go out to war, then *ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך*, then Hashem will deliver your *yeitzer* - your worst enemy - right into your hands."

<sup>1</sup> ופירוש "למען ספות הרוה את הצמאה" להוסיף השבעה עם המתאוה כי נפש שבעה תקרא רוה כענין ורויתי נפש הכהנים דשן ועמי את טובי ישבעו (ירמיהו לא יג) והיתה נפשם כגן רוה (שם פסוק יא) והמתאוה תקרא צמאה צמאה לך נפשי (תהלים סג ב) והטעם כי נפש האדם הרוה שאינה מתאוה לדברים הרעים לה כאשר תבא בלבו קצת התאוה והוא ימלא תאוותו או יוסיף בנפשו תאוה יתירה ותהיה צמאה מאד לדבר ההוא שאכל או עשעה יותר מבראשונה ותתאוה עוד לדברים רעים שלא היתה מתאוה להם מתחלה כי המתאוה לזמת הנשים היפות כשיהיה שטוף בזמתן תבואה תאוה לבוא על הזכר ועל הבהמה וכיוצא בזה בשאר התאוות וכענין שהזכירו חכמים (סוכה נב) משביעו רעב מרעיבו שבע ולכך יאמר הכותב בהולך בשרירות לבו שהוא אם ימלא נפשו בתאוות השרירות והחזקות עליו אשר היא צמאה להם יוסיף נפשו הרוה עם הצמאה כי יתאוה ויצמא למה שהיה שבע ממנו וכאשר השביע נפשו בו, וכו'.

But then everybody tells me, “But it’s so hard. The *yeitzer hara* is so hard.” And I tell them, “Duh. You know how hard it really is? It’s so hard you can’t beat the *yeitzer hara*. You don’t stand a chance against him. It’s not a fair fight. You know that?” The guy says, “What do you mean?” I say, “You know what the *gemara* says in Kiddushin (30b)? Every day, the *yeitzer hara* tries to kill a person, to destroy him, and you don’t stand a chance *עוורו לך* - אלמלא הקב"ה עוורו לך - if it wasn’t for Hashem helping you, *לא יכול לו*, there’s no ability for you to overcome the *yeitzer hara*. But if you go out and take the battle to the *yeitzer hara*, Hashem is going to be *עוורו לו*. You’re going to win *b’ezras Hashem*. You’re going to win with the assistance of Hashem.

I wanted to tell you that about a year ago, this young man from our story finished *Shas*! And he did a beautiful *Siyum HaShas*! And he wrote a few *halacha seforim* before that as well. And it all happened because he *shechted* his *yeitzer hara* on that fateful day.

## LOSING ONESELF

Everybody knows a very common thing in this world is people who have temperaments. People beat their wives, smack them around. Some wives beat their husbands up, too. I know a number of wives who beat their husbands up. A guy once came to me and he was all bloody. I didn’t believe it. I said, “What happened? You met a cat?” He said, “No, my wife.” I said, “On Shabbos? *Chovel*?” “She got ticked,” he told me. I said, “You must have done something really awful.” It wasn’t that awful when I heard about it, but she lost herself. Her ticker got busted. “Did she say she’s sorry?” No. Tough. Tough challenge. A very tough challenge. People ignore them. They ignore their weaknesses! They don’t deal with them. They don’t say, “I’ve got to get better. I must deal with myself.”

I once knew a lady whose husband didn’t do what she wanted. She was in an apartment house full of *yungerleit*, and she lost it. She opened the door and she screamed at him. He said, “I’m walking out the door now. I’m not going to deal with this anymore.” He didn’t scream. He said, “I’m walking out. You’ve got to calm down.” He opens the door. “I’m going to divorce you!” she screamed at the top of her lungs. She made a total fool of herself. I called her up and I said, “You’ve got a problem.” “No! He does.” “No,” I said. “You do.” “Well, maybe you do,” she tells me. I said, “Chill out. I know I have problems, but this is your problem right now. I’m trying to help you with your problem.” Unbelievable. I said, “You know what? Let’s do the following.” They were fighting constantly like cats and dogs. I said, “When your husband comes home, I want you to put a little cassette tape recorder on the table. I want you to be aware of it, and I want him to be aware of it. I want you to sit down and have supper. I’m going to listen to it afterwards, and I’m going to tell you who is at fault.” She was a mad woman. I told her, “You need medication. You need serious help. You’re not well!” “You weren’t there, Rabbi Brog! You don’t know what really happened.” “I just heard the tape, and your husband is reminding you that there’s a tape going. Could you please calm down?” “No.” I said, “You’re nuts.” This happens when people don’t deal with their problems. Men have tempers. They don’t deal with it, either. They don’t try to learn how to deal with it. If you’re not going to take on the battle to the *yeitzer hara*, you will lose. But if you do, you’re going to win.

## ARE YOU FIGHTING ANY BATTLES?

So step number one is: Know your *yeitzer hara*. First, know it’s not you. I don’t care how many things you’re doing wrong. It’s not you. It’s your *yeitzer hara* convincing you and you were foolish over and over and over again. Also, understand there’s nothing, not one area in *בין אדם למקום*, not one area in *בין אדם לחברו* where he’s not going to try to mess you over. I want to tell you that he does a very smart thing. You know what he does? He picks one area, sometimes in *בין אדם לחברו*, where he doesn’t bother you and he tells you, “You’re a *tzaddik*.” You know, I spoke to many guys who are off the *derech*. You know what they said to me? “At least I care about other Jews! I love my friends. I love *chessed*.” I said, “That *yeitzer hara* has you bamboozled. You think that’s *chessed*?!” I’ve seen people even learn and the *yeitzer hara* has them so messed over in the area of *בין אדם לחברו*, but in learning - he lets them learn. But in all other *mitzvos* they are completely lacking. He even helps you learn, where logically you should not be able to learn, because you’re *shakua* in *aveiros*, so your *yeitzer hara* is helping you learn. That’s your *chavrusa*. He’s your best friend. He helps you actually get a *geshmak* out of learning because he knows he’s got to have you in his pocket because you won’t really think about Hashem when you’re learning. You won’t gain anything from your learning. And when you decide not to learn, you blow it off. You blow Hashem off entirely. That’s what a person has to realize.

I remember hearing this from my grandfather over and over and over, “What are you working on?” “Oh, I’m working on this *sefer*, a *sefer* from Rav Wolbe. I’m working on *Mesillas Yesharim*. I’m learning the *sefer* from the Manchester Rav.” “What do I care what *sefer* you’re learning? What battles are you fighting?” It’s like a guy reading battle plans, but he’s not doing any battle. He doesn’t practice any battle plans. Reading *sefarim* doesn’t mean you are in a fight! Do I know where my *yeitzer hara* challenged me in each area of *בין אדם לחברו*?” But the *yeitzer hara* tells you so many thousands of things. I told the guy, “Why don’t you start?” “Where am I going to start? If I start, I’ll never finish. You know how many millions of *aveiros* I have?” I said, “You sound like the *yeitzer hara*. The *yeitzer hara* is talking out of your mouth. It’s not millions of things. You *daven* three times a day. That’s not millions of times. You learn a few hours a day. That’s not millions of times. You deal with people. How many times do you meet people a day? A number of times a day.”

I told him, "It's not that many, but you're not actively involved."

### A THIRTY-DAY PLAN

When I told you guys this morning to sit down and everybody should write down how much time he didn't learn, some people actually did it! You may wonder, what am I trying to do? I'm trying to make you aware. Somebody did it for thirteen minutes. It's amazing! Somebody did it a few minutes more, but his *chavrusa* wasn't here. That's phenomenal! You know how many times your *chavrusa* is not here and your *yeitzer hara* tells you, "You're *patur* from learning! Put your head down and go to sleep or sneak out and go to bed. You're *patur*." You know what kind of learning it is when you are by yourself and your *chavrusa* is not here?! You know how much more valued that Torah is?! Your *yeitzer hara* is very disappointed. He's going to try to come up with an *eitzah* to pull you down. He gets you sidetracked and diverted. You're hot. You're cold. You're thirsty. You're hungry. You've got to go back to get candies. You've got to get this. You've got to get *nosh*. You've got to go to the pizza store. You have to go into everything.

But if you're aware of the battle and you'll take it, it's not complex. Otherwise, you're never going to get anywhere. But if you do it, you're going to be a changed man because all it takes is thirty days. That's all it takes. Today is *tes Elul*. *Yud Tishrei* is Yom Kippur. Thirty days from today is Erev Yom Kippur. In thirty days you can be a new person, a totally new person, without fasting, without starving, without doing crazy things, but you have to be aware of what you are working on. If I ask you the question, what are you working on and you say, "I don't know," that's not the right answer. You've got to tell me, "I'm working on *בין אדם למקום* and *בין אדם לחברו*." Everybody should turn it up one notch. By learning, turn it up a notch. By *davening*, turn it up a notch. That's all.

In the last few weeks, I got many calls from *yungerleit* who went to work in businesses, they're exposed to *goyim* and the *nivul peh* they hear is just awful. That's what we mentioned yesterday. One of the things the *Sefer Chareidim* says on *nivul peh* is, *ולא יראה בך ערות דבר* - *let there not be found anything unseemly among you* (Devarim 23:15). If a person talks *nivul peh*, he could have a *gezeirah tovah* for seventy years, but he messes it up with *nivul peh*. "Of course," you say, "everybody does it, and I don't say it twenty times a day like the *goy* does. I just do it three times a day." I told a guy this week - get out of the job! "But I need *parnasah*." I told him, "You're dying. You're in the grave. Get out of this job! If you can't control yourself and you're talking like a *goy* already and you're bringing home *nivul peh*, get out of there! That's called *בין אדם למקום*." You've got to know. Speech. It's not so hard.

When you meet a person, you should say to yourself, "What can I do for him?" Think the following thought: "I wish everything would be good for this guy." Don't even say anything. Just think, "Everything should be good for him." And, no, I'm not better than him. Who am I to measure if I'm better than him or not? We're all *Yidden*. We're all children of Hashem. Just have that thought. That's a tremendous accomplishment! That's called working on *ga'avah* in *בין אדם לחברו*.

If you want to win the war, *כי תצא* - you've got to go out and take on the war! Don't wait for Hashem to shine the light on you. Take yourself and go out to battle! Hashem will deliver the enemy in your hands and you're going to take captives. You're going to be very successful. Hashem should help us succeed in this undertaking. Don't wait. Start right now. Every one of you who didn't do it this morning, start doing it now. From now on. Now it's 4 o'clock. You have from 4:00 to 6:30. That's easy, two and a half hours. It's not a long time. See how much time you can learn from 4:00 to 6:30. See. Just do it with awareness. Stay in the *shiur*, listen, focus. Stay focused. Do you need a break? Take a brief break but keep it with a *cheshbon*, that's all. Be matzliach.

## ⌘ THE BOTTOM LINE ⌘

Most people are not aware that the main challenge of their lives is the battle with their *yeitzer hara*, in two areas of their daily Avodah: בין אדם לחברו and בין אדם למקום. The first step of their fight in winning this battle and improving in these areas, is to become aware that this is a real fight. The second requirement is go out and wage the battle against the *yeitzer hara* - כי תצא למלחמה על איביך. By recognizing and knowing the nature of our enemy (i.e. knowing the areas of בין אדם לחברו and בין אדם למקום where we are weak) and then waging the war, we are laying the ground for Hashem to deliver the *yeitzer hara* into our hands, as the Torah promises us, ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך. This coming week and throughout Elul, I won't just read mussar sefarim to prepare myself for the *Yamim Nora'im*, but I will spend, *bli neder*, a few minutes each day in self introspection, to identify two areas of my Avodah - one in בין אדם לחברו and another one in בין אדם למקום - where I am weak. These areas may involve my speech, how I speak and relate to others, or how well I learn or daven or do chessed, etc. After identifying my "enemy," I will devise strategies on how to wage the battle to conquer and capture it, with Hashem's help. In the *zechus* of fighting the main battle of my life, I will, IY"Y, see much *siyatta diShmaya* in my fight and be *zoiche* to a good din on Rosh Hashanah, Amen!