

Win the war, not just the battle!

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In *Sichah* 10 of *Sichos HaRan*, Rebbe Nachman says that the wicked are full of regret for their wickedness. However, this regret does not bring them to *teshuvah*. Quite the opposite. Their regret only causes them to become more strongly rooted in wickedness. How so? The Rebbe compares this to two people fighting. When one person starts to win and gain an advantage over his adversary, the adversary musters up more strength to fight back. So too, when a little bit of good is awoken within a wicked person, the *yetzer hara* immediately rises up to fight back, and the result is that this remorse over his actions, this bit of good in the wicked person, leads to a strengthening of his *yetzer hara*.

While the people reading this are probably not classified as

“wicked”, each one of us has areas in which we need to improve. In those areas, we are like a wicked person. Could it be that the Rebbe is telling us that we should not try to improve because it will only make us worse? Certainly not. So why is he telling us this information?

The Rebbe wants us to understand that *avodas HaShem* is a lifelong battle. When a person overcomes his *yetzer hara* and breaks out of a bad habit, he may think he is home free, he is finished with that annoying *yetzer hara* and will just continue to rise. However, *Chazal* tell us that the greater a person is, the greater his *yetzer hara* is (*Sukkah* 52a). After spending time fighting the *yetzer hara* and finally succeeding, he is awarded with an even bigger *yetzer hara*. Now, he has to work even harder than before to overcome it.

This process can be very discouraging. After trying hard to succeed in serving HaShem, a person just wants to rest, to turn on the auto-pilot, sit back and relax. He does not want to have to deal with the *yetzer hara* all over again. Yet, there is no coasting in *avodas HaShem*. If we are not continually struggling to go up, the new, stronger *yetzer hara* will knock us back down.

So, the Rebbe is instructing us to be prepared for this battle, to be prepared to fight to win, and to be prepared to accept our losses. When we fall, it is not a sign that our previous efforts were worthless and that we are not advancing. On the contrary, it is a sign that we *are* advancing and that our *yetzer hara* is becoming stronger as a result, and therefore we fell. This is not a reason to despair. Rather, we should encourage ourselves by seeing how we have improved and resolve to continue to try no matter how many times we fall.

By following the Rebbe’s advice, not to give up, to maintain and build the desire to improve, to continually pray for assistance, and to always be *besimchah*, a person is winning the battle, no matter what the facts on the ground appear to

be.