

MOUNT-UP TO A MOUNTAIN.

by Rabbi Label Lam

When you go out to war against your enemies and HASHEM your G-d will deliver them into your hands and you will capture its captivity. (Devarim 21:10)

The Torah only speaks versus the "negative inclination" (Rashi)

If it wouldn't be that HASHEM helps him (against his "negative inclination") he would not be able to be victorious. (Sukkah 52B)

With strategies you should wage for yourself war. (Mishlei 24:6)

To fight effectively and to emerge victorious versus the Yetzer Hora one needs a few important "things". First of all, one needs incredible Siata D'Shemya- help from heaven. How to attain that is a whole discussion, but let us at least give some credence to Davening-prayer. It helps more than we can measure for more reasons than we can mention. Secondly a person needs as many tools in the toolkit as possible. Abraham Maslow, a famous psychologist, wrote, "To a person with a hammer, every problem is a nail!" Here's a pair of tweezers!

The Talmud Sukkah 52A gives the following surrealistic account of what is in store ahead: "Rabbi Yehuda learns that in the future The Holy One Blessed Be He will bring the Yetzer Hora-the evil inclination and slaughter him in front of the righteous and in front of the wicked. To the righteous he will seem like a mountain and to the wicked like a strand of hair. These ones will be crying and these ones will be crying. The righteous will cry and exclaim, "How were we able to conquer such a high mountain?" The wicked will be crying and saying, "How is it that we could not overcome a single hair?"

What's this metaphor of the hair and the mountain about? Is it a hair or a mountain? Whose perception is correct, the wicked or the righteous? One valid approach is that of course the righteous are right? Since they saw it as a mountain, recognizing the size of the challenge and the profundity of the risk they mustered the requisite strength to conquer rather than be conquered. The wicked, too casual in their estimate of the opponent, were grossly underprepared and overmatched in the end.

Alternately, maybe it really is a hair and a mountain too. How so? With a searing insight the Maharsha points out that the archetype opponent of Yaakov, Essav eventually settled in a place called Har Seir or literally the Mountain of Hairs. How does that help? The wicked are bemoaning, in that moment of

ultra-clarity, that what had prevented them from making personal and moral progress was something as light as a hair.

People too often hold themselves back from Mitzvos and other good things in life, because of some unfounded peer fear like "what other might say" that "it's not cool", only to understand ultimately how proportionately miniature it really is in the grandest scheme of things. The righteous, on the other hand stand back in awe and can hardly believe that they were able to accomplish so much in a lifetime. How did they do it? What is so remarkable about this tall mountain is that it is a mountain of hairs -constructed one small yet courageous deed at a time.

Even the Vilna Gaon, not unlike other mortal men, learned one word at a time, just as a marathon runner continually places one foot in front of the other for a long distance. In the end, the cumulative mileage covered, when added up, can be astounding as when the total Mitzvos generated by a man **mount up to a mountain**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.