

## CHAPTER 2

# *Straightforward Definition of Enemy*

Enemy is here defined as an adversary who is working against our well-being; someone who is acting against our health, survival, values, vision or security; someone who is trying to undermine what we are building, or who is stealing something that belongs to us. The term enemy is used here as a subjective label that applies to a whole range of phenomena, from interpersonal to international (and even to the hostile forces that lurk within our own psyches). If we experience someone (or something) as an enemy, then these teachings apply, even if others around us would disagree with that assessment.

There are many types of enemies. They can be mortal foes seeking our demise or overly-competitive colleagues threatened by our success. They can be inconsiderate neighbors, a hurtful spouse, or a rebellious child. They can be rotten to their core or possess one rough edge. Either way, from gross to subtle, the “enemy” appears to us, at least partially, as a witting or unwitting agent of *bad* or even evil (a thorny term defined further on).

Enemies are real, in the sense that the Torah employs the term liberally. Conflict, war, antagonism, and hostility are well-documented in the Bible and comprise a major portion of its teaching tales.

Nearly every saint and hero struggles with enemies, and so is this true for the Jewish people as a whole. Indeed, enemies are a universal phenomenon. It is unlikely that anyone passes from cradle to grave without having to struggle with at least one of them. Character development and expanding consciousness are measured, largely, by our evolving capacity to deal with the hurt, frustration, fear, and anger that get triggered by enemies.

At the same time, from a Torah perspective, only something that partakes of eternity is fully real.<sup>7</sup> Everything else is a figment that appears to exist but is really a virtual reality, here today and gone tomorrow. And since we know that enemies will cease in the messianic age of peace and love, they are really an illusion of sorts.<sup>7</sup> Their (positive) effects on the soul will endure, but their status as enemy will cease, either because they transform into allies or self-destruct.<sup>7</sup>

Fig 2. Whether real or imagined, in full or part, permanently or momentarily, the enemy becomes identified with “bad.” This figure illustrates how the underlying force of *bad* (which kabbala calls evil) serves a useful purpose—it catalyses the transformation of good into very good. Yet evil pays a heavy price for its assault. Like a bee that stings and dies, when evil strikes, an exchange occurs: it loses lights to and absorbs contaminants from its victim.<sup>7</sup> The lights were its lifeline. Now, without a source of life-juice, the evil ceases to exist.

