

## **Sin rests at the door. (4:7)**

The yetzer hara, evil inclination, does not give up. It waits vigilantly for the yetzer hara, evil inclination, does not give up. It waits vigilantly for the opportunity to entice the individual to sin. The Midrash draws a comparison between the evil inclination and the dogs in Rome.

Apparently, the dogs in Rome were extremely astute in providing sustenance for themselves. They would park themselves at the back of the baker's door, where he stacked his freshly baked breads. As the baker stacked the breads, the dog feigned sleep in order not to arouse the baker's vigilance. As soon as many breads were arranged on the trays, the dog jumped at the trays as if he were about to steal many breads. The baker, although he had been caught off guard, succeeded in driving away the dog. His loss was only one loaf of bread, a paltry sum, considering what the dog could have taken. The baker felt that he saved the day, and that he "showed" the dog who really was in charge. His mistake was that in reality, the dog had only wanted to steal one loaf of bread. He made a ruse of wanting to steal the whole lot, but that was only to distract the baker from focusing on each individual bread.

The yetzer hara works the same way. At times, a person sins and is remorseful, filled with regret. Under other circumstances, he sins at the behest of the yetzer hara and, instead of repenting, he arrogantly declares that he has managed to triumph over the yetzer hara, when, in fact, the yetzer hara has bested him. Horav Nissan Bobruisker, zl, cites the following examples to support this idea. Case number one: A person may be running late for work. The yetzer hara "suggests" that he not bother with Tefillin for that day since he is running late. The man "vanquishes" his inclination and hurriedly wraps his Tefillin, mumbling a few words of prayer – the absolute minimum – and goes to work feeling good about himself. After all, he has emerged victorious over the yetzer hara. What he does not realize is that this is all the yetzer hara had wanted. It wanted to steal "one

bread” – to get him to put on his Tefillin hurriedly and daven without kavanah, intention and devotion. The yetzer hara has succeeded.

Case number two: A wealthy man is tempted to keep his business open on Shabbos. He resists, because he would never give in to his evil inclination. Instead, he remains open on Friday as late as possible, running home at the last second, jumping into the shower, and most often, not even making it to shul on time. Shabbos night, he opens his store at the earliest z'man, time, that Shabbos is over. He even “walks” to his store on Shabbos, to be there at the very moment Shabbos is over, to open up. He thinks he has won; he claims victory. The fool does not realize that all the yetzer hara had wanted was to disrupt and disturb the sanctity of his Shabbos. The yetzer hara has succeeded – again.

In the third case scenario, a man argues with his friend. Rather than getting carried away with fists flying and expletives being flung at each other, they “control” themselves and do not go beyond sharp words and a few insults. It could have been worse, so they both feel that they have emerged victorious from a situation that had been rapidly deteriorating. What they do not realize is that this is what the yetzer hara sought to accomplish: create discord, fling a few insults and make sure that these two do not speak to each other for a while. True, they did not punch each other out, still, discord prevails and hurt exists. The yetzer hara has won again.

Last are those who refuse to stand up to the wicked for fear of creating “controversy” in the community. Instead, they bend over backward to compromise at every conceivable juncture. They pat themselves on the back for preventing the scoffers from making inroads into the observant community. They do not realize that compromise is an inroad and that their tolerance is a sign of weakness. The yetzer hara has won.

The evil inclination is a brilliant tactician and master warrior. It allows itself room to withdraw, so that it can pursue its grand design at a later date. Meanwhile, it has weakened its adversary. As a seasoned negotiator, it demands much more than it really wants, just like the dog who pretends to want all of the breads when it only wants one. Above all, it wants its victims not to feel remorseful, to always feel smug and secure, proud that they did not capitulate. If they feel regret, they will be on guard the next time when the yetzer hara comes in for the kill.

The yetzer hara only seeks an opening. This opening is called compromise. To compromise is to open the door. To compromise in matters of Torah law, and thus lower one's standards concerning Torah commitment, will lead to laxity in dedication to Torah.

