

# DEALING WITH THE ENEMY

*by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky*

There are few descriptive verses in the Torah that defines the evil-inclination. Many of them appear in Sefer Braishis. After all, if Hashem created man with a Yetzer Horah (evil-inclination) then man ought to have the formula to defeat it. In fact, after Kayin fails by offering an inferior sacrifice, Hashem guides him by revealing something about the enemy - the Yetzer Horah. "Surely, if you improve you can carry him (the Yetzer Horah), and if you do not improve, he crouches at your door and his desire is toward you. But you can rule over him!" (Genesis 4:7)

The two sides seem to lack a study in contrast. If you improve you will carry him, but if not he will wait for you, he will desire to get you -but you will rule over him! It seems that the Yetzer Horah is defeated both ways. Even if you are not able to carry him and he crouches in ambush, you still can overrule him. Shouldn't the negative have stated, "and if you do not improve, he crouches at your door, his desire is toward you and he will rule over you"? In a recent volume about the life of Rabbi Ahron Moshe Stern, the Mashgiach of the Kaminetz (not related to Kamenetzky) Yeshiva in Jerusalem, I saw an amazing story about Reb Naftali Trop, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Chofetz Chaim's Yeshiva in Radin.

There was an itinerant Jew who had visited Radin and had earned a reputation as a thief. This particular individual had stolen from the very people who had invited him in as a guest in their homes. Word got out that he had stolen, and the next time he came to Radin, no one invited him into their homes - except Reb Naftali Trop.

Upon hearing of the offer of hospitality, some of the prominent members of the community approached Reb Naftali. "The man you invited is a thief! Last time he was here he walked off with some of his hosts valuables. You mustn't have him sleep in your home!"

Reb Naftali did not react. "The Torah tells us that a thief must pay a fine for his actions. It does not tell us that a thief should not be invited to eat or sleep. I have a responsibility to invite guests. If I am afraid that they may steal, well, that's my problem. I guess I must arrange to make sure that all my valuables are guarded. However, my fears can in no way relieve me of my responsibility to shelter my fellow Jew."

The Torah's message to Kayin is twofold. You can get the Yetzer Horah out of your way completely. You can carry him. You can place him out of your path and lift him out of sight. But that may not work for all of us. Those who cannot rise to that level and have the Yetzer Horah in our doorways

constantly still may not give up hope. He may be lying in ambush but we can not ignore him. We must deal with him. If it means channeling your anger against evil - so be it. If it means steering an improper stinginess, channel that attribute to those times when splurging unnecessarily is uncalled for.

The Torah is telling us that when the Yetzer Horah is part of our lives we must deal with him. We never have an excuse by saying that the desires were too great and insurmountable. If we let him in the door we have to make sure that we are able to fulfill the mitzvos in spite of his presence.

The mussar luminaries used to comment: The Talmud tells us that our matriarch Rachel warned Yaakov about the deceptive shenanigans that her father Lavan was wont to perform. Yaakov responded by saying, "I am his equal in the ability to deceive."

The question that was raised is simple. "Where did Yaakov learn to be so crafty?" The answer that they gave was that when dealing with a Yetzer Horah, one must be wily too. Yaakov learned from the trials of life how to deal with the most clever and cunning of men.

If you tame the beast correctly, he may crouch and wait for you. But you will rule over him. And you will learn to use his resources for your gain.

### **Good Shabbos!**

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Copyright © 1998 by [Rabbi M. Kamenetzky](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

If you enjoy the weekly Drasha, now you can receive the best of Drasha in book form! Purchase **[Parsha Parables](#)** - from the Project Genesis bookstore - **[Genesis Judaica](#)** - at a very special price!

The author is the Dean of the [Yeshiva of South Shore](#).

Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a weekly torah facsimile on the weekly portion which is sponsored by ***The Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation***

### **Books by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky:**

