

What is Evil?

By Yochanan Zaqantov

When I mention the word Evil what comes to your mind? Is it an all-powerful force that is in a never-ending battle with good? Can the average person act in an evil way? Does a person have a tendency to be evil? Is evil everything we imagine it to be? Normally we jump right into the Hebrew but today I want to look at why we hold a concept of evil and what evil is in English. Then look and see if that is really what the word in Hebrew means that is translated as evil.

Where is our concept evil from?

O.E. *yfel* (Kentish *evel*) "bad, vicious," from P.Gmc. *\*ubilaz* (cf. O.Saxon *ubil*, Goth. *ubils*), from PIE *\*upelo-*, giving the word an original sense of "uppity, overreaching bounds" which slowly worsened. "In OE., as in all the other early Teut. langs., exc. Scandinavian, this word is the most comprehensive adjectival expression of disapproval, dislike or disparagement" [OED]. *Evil* was the word the Anglo-Saxons used where we would use *bad*, *cruel*, *unskillful*, *defective* (adj.), or *harm*, *crime*, *misfortune*, *disease*. The meaning "extreme moral wickedness" was in O.E., but did not become the main sense until 18c. *Evil eye* (L. *oculus malus*) was O.E. *eage yfel*.

<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=Evil&searchmode=none>

So we can see that the Evil we view and see today is necessarily the meaning the word had in its origins. It was a sense of overreaching ones bounds. Words that would have been used that are similar would have been bad, cruel, unskillful, defective, or harm, crime disease. So we see that the extreme meaning we have today is from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century forward. Hollywood has capitalized on this to create a even more extreme vision of Evil. Yet, we see that the would was not originally that way.

So what is Evil in hebrew and what does it mean? Does it reflect our current English view of the word or does it too have a different meaning than we are use to.

The word translated as Evil in the Tanakh is Ra (Rag) which is reference number 7451 in the BDB and found on Page 948. It is an adjective as well as a noun. We will look at each one separate. They are from the Root (Resh-Ayin-Ayin).

Bereshit/Genesis 6:5

5 Yehovah saw how great was man's **wickedness (evil – ra'at רָעַתְּ)** on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but **evil (ra רָע)** all the time.

What was evil in men, lets look at verses 11-13

11 The earth became corrupt before Elohim; the earth was filled with **lawlessness (violence – chamas 2555)**. 12 When Elohim saw how corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth, 13 Elohim said to Noah, "I have decided to put an end to all flesh, for the earth is filled with **lawlessness (violence)** because of them: I am about to destroy them with the earth.

Evil as an adjective was meant to describe the state of men that they filled the earth with violence and thus their ways became corrupt and the world became corrupt.

Bereshit/Genesis 8:21

21 Yehovah smelled the pleasing odor, and Yehovah said to Himself: "Never again will I doom the earth because of man, since the devisings of man's mind are **evil (ra רָע)** from his youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living being, as I have done.

Just like in Bereshit 6:5 the recognition that men plan evil (ra).

Bereshit/Genesis 13:13

13 Now the inhabitants of Sodom were very **wicked (Evil - raiym רָעִים)** [and] sinners against Yehovah.

If you remember the story of Sodom they would abuse strangers thus harming them or doing something bad. We will see this when we look at this later.

Bereshit/Genesis 31:24

24 But Elohim appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, "Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or **bad (evil – ra רָע)**."

Here we can see again the idea of doing something bad or harmful.

Bereshit/Genesis 41:3,4

3 But presently, seven other cows came up from the Nile close behind them, **ugly (bad/evil in appearance) (raot רָעוֹת)** and **gaunt (lean of flesh)**, and stood beside the cows on the bank of the Nile;

4 and the **ugly (bad/evil in appearance) (raot רָעוֹת)** and **gaunt (lean of flesh cows** ate up the seven handsome sturdy cows. And Pharaoh awoke.

These cows did not look good and harmed the good health cows. Though a metaphor the concept of doing harm or doing bad to something is reflected here.

Shemot/Exodus 33:4

I will send an angel (messenger) before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites—3 a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go in your midst, since you are a stiffnecked people, lest I destroy you on the way.” 4 When the people heard this **harsh (hara הָרָע)** word, they went into mourning, and none put on his finery.

Clearly this evil word was the bad report that if he came in their midst they would be harmed because of their stubbornness.

Vayikra/Leviticus 27:10

10 One may not exchange or substitute another for it, either good **for bad (bara בָּרָע)**, or **bad (‘o ra אֲוֵרָע)** for good; if one does substitute one animal for another, the thing vowed and its substitute shall both be holy.

This bad animal (having a defect) was not to be exchanged. Thus the concept of ra or evil being bad verses tov being good.

Lastly lets look at the evil in the sense of a spirit.

Shemuel Aleph/I Samuel 16: 14,15, 16, 23

14 Now the spirit of Yehovah had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit (ru’ach ra’ah רוּחַ רָעָה) from Yehovah began to terrify him. 15 Saul’s courtiers said to him, “An **evil spirit of Elohim (ru’ach Elohim ra’ah רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים רָעָה)** is terrifying you.

16 Let our lord give the order [and] the courtiers in attendance on you will look for someone who is skilled at playing the lyre; whenever the **evil spirit of Elohim (ru’ach Elohim ra’ah רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים רָעָה)** comes over you, he will play it and you will feel better.”

23 Whenever the spirit of Elohim came upon Saul, David would take the lyre and play it; Saul would find relief and feel better, and **the evil spirit (ru'ach hara'ah רֹחַ הַרְעָה)** would leave him.

What would this spirit cause him to do?

Shemuel Aleph/I Samuel 18:10-12

10 The next day an **evil spirit of Elohim (ru'ach Elohim ra'ah רֹחַ אֱלֹהִים רָעָה)** ) gripped Saul and he began to rave in the house, while David was playing [the lyre], as he did daily. Saul had a spear in his hand, 11 and Saul threw the spear, thinking to pin David to the wall. But David eluded him twice. 12 Saul was afraid of David, for Yehovah was with him and had turned away from Saul.

Shemuel Aleph/I Samuel 19:9-10

9 Then an **evil spirit of Yehovah (ru'ach Yehovah ra'ah רֹחַ יְהוָה רָעָה)** came upon Saul while he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing [the lyre]. 10 Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he eluded Saul, so that he drove the spear into the wall. David fled and got away.

Thus the evil in the spirit was something that vexed Saul and made him desire to hurt David.

Bereshit/Genesis 26:27-29

27 Isaac said to them, “Why have you come to me, seeing that you have been hostile to me and have driven me away from you?” 28 And they said, “We now see plainly that Yehovah has been with you, and we thought: Let there be a sworn treaty between our two parties, between you and us. Let us make a pact with you 29 that you will not do us **harm (evil – ra'ah רָעָה)**, just as we have not molested you but have always dealt kindly with you and sent you away in peace. From now on, be you blessed of Yehovah!”

Clearly this is showing that evil in the sense they use it here is to describe harm or hurt being done.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 1:35,39

35 Not one of these men, this **evil (ra'ah רָעָה)** generation, shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers—

39 Moreover, your little ones who you said would be carried off, your children who do not yet know good from **bad (vara וְרָע)**, they shall enter it; to them will I give it and they shall possess it.

The actions of this generation was bad and bring harm to the people in that they did not want to go up to take the land.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 6:22

22 And gave Yehovah signs, and wonders great and **evil (va ra'iyim וְרָעִים)** against Egypt against Pharaoh and all his household before our eyes.

Yehovah brought harm and bad against Egypt and Pharaoh.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 7:15

15 And shall turn aside Yehovah from you every sickness and all **evil (hara'iyim הַרְעִים)** diseases Egypt which you have known but will put them on all who hate you. Sickness and disease cause harm they are not evil in they think to do harm.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 13:6, 11-12

6 As for that prophet or dream-diviner, he shall be put to death; for he urged disloyalty to Yehovah your Elohim—who freed you from the land of Egypt and who redeemed you from the house of bondage—to make you stray from the path that Yehovah your Elohim commanded you to follow. Thus you will sweep out **evil (hara הַרְעִים)** from your midst.

11 Stone him to death, for he sought to make you stray from Yehovah your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 12 Thus all Israel will hear and be afraid, and such **evil (hara הַרְעִים)** things will not be done again in your midst.

In both cases the causing of someone to either worships another Elohim or to make one stray from Yehovah is bad or harmful to the relationship we have with Yehovah. Such things were not to be done by his people.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 17:2-7

2 If there is found among you, in one of the settlements that Yehovah your Elohim is giving you, a man or woman who has affronted Yehovah your Elohim and transgressed His covenant—3 turning to the worship of other Elohim and bowing down to them, to the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, something I never commanded—4 and you have been informed or have learned of it, then you shall make a thorough inquiry. If

it is true, the fact is established, that abhorrent thing was perpetrated in Israel, 5 you shall take the man or the woman who did that wicked [evil] (**ha ra הרע**) thing out to the public place, and you shall stone them, man or woman, to death.—6 A person shall be put to death only on the testimony of two or more witnesses; he must not be put to death on the testimony of a single witness.—7 Let the hands of the witnesses be the first against him to put him to death, and the hands of the rest of the people thereafter. Thus you will sweep out **evil (hara הרע)** from your midst.

Here we have another case showing the worshipping of another elohim as evil or bad/harmful. But only put to death on two or more witnesses.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 19:16-20

16 If a man appears against another to testify maliciously and gives false testimony against him, 17 the two parties to the dispute shall appear before Yehovah, before the priests or magistrates in authority at the time, 18 and the magistrates shall make a thorough investigation. If the man who testified is a false witness, if he has testified falsely against his fellow, 19 you shall do to him as he schemed to do to his fellow. Thus you will sweep out **evil (hara הרע)** from your midst; 20 others will hear and be afraid, and such **evil (hara הרע)** things will not again be done in your midst.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 21:18-21

18 If a man has a wayward and defiant son, who does not heed his father or mother and does not obey them even after they discipline him, 19 his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the public place of his community. 20 They shall say to the elders of his town, “This son of ours is disloyal and defiant; he does not heed us. He is a glutton and a drunkard.” 21 Thereupon the men of his town shall stone him to death. Thus you will sweep out **evil (hara הרע)** from your midst: all Israel will hear and be afraid.

Again here the person is doing bad and harmful but also breaking the covenant.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 24:7

7 If a man is found to have kidnapped a fellow Israelite, enslaving him or selling him, that kidnapper shall die; thus you will sweep out **evil (hara הרע)** from your midst.

Again the person doing harm to another Israelite should be put to death and removing evil of harm from your midst.

The verb form that this word comes from is ra'a (rah-gag) 7489 (Resh-Ayin-Ayin) which is found on page 949 of the BDB and pages 1186-1187 in the NEHC. It has the meaning of to break (causing harm).

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 11:14-17

14 As for you, do not pray for this people, do not raise a cry of prayer on their behalf; for I will not listen when they call to Me on account of their **disaster (evils) (ra'atam 7451 רַעַתָּם)**.

15 Why should My beloved be in My House, Who executes so many vile designs? The sacrificial flesh will pass away from you, For you exult while performing your **evil (ra'atekhiy 7451 רַעַתֶּיכִי)** deeds.

16 Yehovah named you

“Verdant olive tree, Fair, with choice fruit.” But with a great roaring sound He has set it on fire, And its boughs are **broken (va ra'u וַרְעוּ)**.

17 Yehovah of Hosts, who planted you, has decreed **disaster (evil ra'ah רַעַה)** for you, because of the **evil (ra'at רַעַת)** wrought by the House of Israel and the House of Judah, who angered [and vex] Me by sacrificing (burning incense) to Baal.

We see here the evil (harm they have done to the covenant) by worshipping other elohim and also that Yehovah would break them.

Yeshayahu/Isaiah 24:19

19 The earth is **breaking (ro'ah רַעַה)**, **breaking (hit'r'oa'ah הִתְרַעַעַה)**; The earth is crumbling, crumbling. The earth is tottering, tottering; 20 The earth is swaying like a drunkard; It is rocking to and fro like a hut. Its iniquity (trespasses) shall weigh it down, And it shall fall, to rise no more.

The breaking of the earth is causing bad to happen. Like the shaking of the earthquake.

Iyov/Job 34:24

24 He **shatters (breaks – yaroa יָרַע)** mighty men without number And sets others in their place.

Again breaking in the means of causing bad or harm.

Tehillim/Psalms 2:9

9 You can smash (**break tero'em תִּרְעֵם**) them with an iron mace, shatter them like potter's ware."

Again breaking or causing harm.

Shemot/Exodus 5:22-23

22 Then Moses returned to Yehovah and said, "O Yehovah, why did You bring **harm (hatare'otah הִרְעַתָּהּ)** upon this people? Why did You send me? 23 Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has **dealt worse (evil - hera הִרַע)** with this people; and still You have not delivered Your people."

Moshe is expressing the harm done to the people not the good done to them.

Bamidbar/Numbers 11:11

11 And Moses said to Yehovah, "Why have You dealt **ill (hatare'ot הִרְעַתָּהּ)** with Your servant, and why have I not enjoyed Your favor, that You have laid the burden of all this people upon me?"

Here again the harm done to Moshe himself in the bad things that happen to him.

Bamidbar/Numbers 16:15

15 Moses was much aggrieved and he said to Yehovah, "Pay no regard to their oblation. I have not taken the ass of any one of them, nor have I **wronged (hare'otiy הִרְעַתִּי)** any one of them."

Moshe expressing he has done not bad to them.

Vayiqra/Leviticus 5:4

4 Or when a person utters an oath to **bad (lehara לְהָרַע)** or good purpose—whatever a man may utter in an oath—and, though he has known it, the fact has escaped him, but later he realizes his guilt in any of these matters—

An oath may be for our good or our harm/bad.

We see that this word is again support the idea of the meaning of Evil as used in the Tanakh as causing harm, hurt or doing bad.

There is another masculine noun that is related to the same verb, which is roa (ro-ag) 7455 found on pg. 941 in the BDB. It is also translated as Evil I the Tanakh but has the same general meaning.

It is found most in Yermiyahu.

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 4:4

4 Open your hearts to Yehovah, Remove the thickening about your hearts—O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem—Lest My wrath break forth like fire, And burn, with none to quench it, Because of your **wicked (ro'a רַע)** acts.

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 21:12

12 O House of David, thus said Yehovah: Render just verdicts Morning by morning; Rescue him who is robbed From him who defrauded him. Else My wrath will break forth like fire And burn, with none to quench it, Because of your **wicked (ro'a רַע)** acts.

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 23:2,22

2 Assuredly, thus said Yehovah, the Elohim of Israel, concerning the shepherds who should tend My people: It is you who let My flock scatter and go astray. You gave no thought to them, but I am going to give thought to you, for your **wicked (et ro'a אֶת־רַע)** acts—declares Yehovah.

22 If they have stood in My council, Let them announce My words to My people And make them turn back From their **evil (ha ra 7451 הָרַע)** ways and **wicked (va mero'a וַמֵּרַע)** acts.

Here we see ro'a as the act itself being told like harmful one, bad one, evil one.

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 24:2-3

2 One basket contained very good figs, like first-ripened figs, and the other basket contained very **bad (raot 7451 רַעוֹת)** figs, so **bad (mero'a מֵרַע)** that they could not be eaten.

3 And Yehovah said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” I answered, “Figs—the good ones are very good, and the **bad** (va haraot 7451 וְהָרְעוֹת) ones very **bad** (raot 7451 רְעוֹת), so **bad** (mero’a מְרֹעַ) that they cannot be eaten.”

Showing the example of the figs we see then as being bad and not able to be eaten.

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 25:5-7

5 when they said, “Turn back, every one, from your **evil** (hara’ah 7451 הָרְעָה) ways and your **wicked** (vamero’a וַמְרֹעַ) acts, that you may remain throughout the ages on the soil which Yehovah gave to you and your fathers. 6 Do not follow other Elohim, to serve them and worship them. Do not vex Me with what your own hands have made, and I will not bring disaster upon you.” 7 But you would not listen to Me—declares Yehovah—but vexed Me with what your hands made, to your own **hurt** (lera – 7489 לַרַע)

Here we see how we cause bad or harm through our acts.

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 29:17

17 thus said Yehovah of Hosts: I am going to let loose sword, famine, and pestilence against them and I will treat them as loathsome figs, so **bad** (mero’a מְרֹעַ) that they cannot be eaten.

Again the level of bad is so great they cannot be eaten.

Yermiyahu/Jeremiah 44:22

22 When Yehovah could no longer bear your **evil** (ro’a רָע) practices and the abominations you committed, your land became a desolate ruin and a curse, without inhabitant, as is still the case. 23 Because you burned incense and sinned against Yehovah and did not obey Yehovah, and because you did not follow His Teaching, His laws, and His exhortations, therefore this disaster has befallen you, as is still the case.”

24 Jeremiah further said to all the people and to all the women: “Hear the word of Yehovah, all Judeans in the land of Egypt! 25 Thus said Yehovah of Hosts, the Elohim of Israel: You and your wives have confirmed by deed what you spoke in words: ‘We will fulfill the vows which we made, to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and to pour libations to her.’ So fulfill your vows; perform your vows!

Here we see they continued to worship other elohim and thus doing great harm to the covenant and to Yehovah as in return great harm was done to them and continue to us today.

Yeshayahu/Isaiah 1:16

16 Wash yourselves clean; Put your **evil (ro'a רָע)** doings Away from My sight. Cease to do **evil (hare'a -7589 הָרַע)**; 17 Learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice; Aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan; Defend the cause of the widow.

Put away the bad or harmful acts, which are the things we do against Yehovah.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 28:20

20 Yehovah will let loose against you calamity, panic, and frustration in all the enterprises you undertake, so that you shall soon be utterly wiped out because of your **evil (ro'a רָע)** doing in forsaking Me.

We have seen that Evil in the sense we know it today is an extreme concept that has been built upon to reflect high level of badness. Yet, we can see that this ra, ra'ah, ro'a, and ra'a all have the common meaning of badness in that one is doing harm or hurt to someone or something. This does not minimize that these practices that are referred to by this are something less than they are, which is an abomination to Yehovah. Anything that breaks the covenant, causes harm to another is equally bad in Yehovah's eyes there is no degree of badness.

Which brings us back to the tree of the knowledge of good (tov) and bad (va ra) (Bereshit/Genesis 2:9 - 3:22) The knowledge of tov va ra (good and bad) is something we all are taught to distinguish between by Yehovah's word we are to know the difference and that we should do tov (good). In this part of the study I have shown several examples of what is badness and what was the badness of our brothers before us. We should strive to do justice, defend the widow and orphan, and to defend the wronged. We need to keep his covenant and all it covers. Let us all turn to him by doing what he commands.

What about Yetzer hara?

The terms in Hebrew yetzer hara (inclination of evil) and yetzer hatov (inclination of good) as the rabbis would use the word Yetzer. In some of my research into this I find this is outlined in Hasidic judaism's founder. Who wrote a book called Ba'al Shem Tov (Master the good name).

This is from wikipedia. He is credited with the start of Kabbalah. Read the whole article to get a sense of his influence.

Rabbi **Yisroel (Israel) ben Eliezer** (רבי ישראל בן אליעזר) [August 27, 1698](#) (18 Elul) – [May 22, 1760](#)), often called **Baal Shem Tov** or **Besht**, was a [Jewish mystical rabbi](#). He is considered to be the founder of [Hasidic Judaism](#) (see also [Mezhibizh Hasidic dynasty](#)).

Besht was born to Eliezer and Sara in [Okopy](#), a small village that over the centuries has been part of [Poland](#), [Russia](#), [Galicia](#) and is now part of [Ukraine](#). He died in [Medzhybizh](#), which had once been part of [Lithuania](#), then [Turkey](#), [Poland](#) and [Russia](#), and is now in [Ukraine](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

Besht is better known to many religious [Jews](#) as "the holy Baal Shem" (*der heyliger baal shem* in [Yiddish](#)), or most commonly, the **Baal Shem Tov** (בעל שם טוב). The title *Baal Shem Tov* is usually translated into English as "Master of the Good Name", with *Tov* ("Good") modifying *Shem* ("[Divine] Name"), although it is more correctly understood as a combination of *Baal Shem* ("Master of the [Divine] Name") and *Tov* (an honorific epithet to the man). The name *Besht* (בעש"ט) — the acronym from the words comprising that name, *bet ayin shin tes*—is typically used in print rather than speech. The appellation "[Baal Shem](#)" was not unique to Rabbi Yisroel ben Eliezer; however, it is Rabbi Yisroel ben Eliezer who is most closely identified as a "Baal Shem", as he was the founder of the spiritual movement of [Hasidic Judaism](#).

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal\\_Shem\\_Tov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal_Shem_Tov)

If we look in Tanakh then we see that Yetzer (3336) is from the verb Yatzar (3335), which mean to form/create. So Yetzer is the noun with that meaning so it would be like formation/creation or formed thing/created thing. Yatzar is the verb form and means, "to form" in the sense of creating. "To create" is the verb barah.

We often think of the verse in Yeshayahu/Isaiah 45:7 (8) Forming (yotzer - from yatzar) light and creating (bore' from barah) darkness, making ('osheh from asah) peace (shalom) and creating (bore') evil (ra').

It is used only 8 times in the Tanakh.

Genesis/Bereshit 6:5

And saw Yehovah that much evil (bad/harm - ra'at) the man in land and all creation/formation (yetzer יֵצֵר) plans in his heart only evil (bad/harm ra') all the day.

This seems to be reflective of the violence being done hi Noach's day as we saw earlier.

Genesis/Bereshit 8:21

And smelled Yehovah fragrance soothing and said Yehovah in his heart not will curse again the ground for the sake of the man, because formation/creation (yetzer יֵצֵר)

) of heart the man evil (ra' - bad/harm) from his youth and not will again to strike every living thing in which I have done.

We recognize the heart as the seat of emotion not literally heart here or the previous example.

Deuteronomy/Devarim 31:21

And it shall be when have found him evils (ra'ot - harms/bads) multiplied and diseases and shall testify the song this before him to witness for not shall it be forgotten from mouth their seed for I know formation/creation (et yetz'ru אֶת־יָצְרוּ) which they make today before I bring them into the land which I have sworn.

Yehovah knew them from their creation as a nation that day and brought them into the land.

Isaiah/Yeshayahu 26:3

Formation/creation (Yetzer יֵצֵר) is placed they keep absolute peace because to you [they] trusts.

As some formed/created thing Yetzer is used to reflect the mind or something created.

Isaiah/Yeshayahu 29:16

Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of **him that made it** (hayotzer - 3335 הַיֹּצֵר), He made me not? **or shall the thing framed [formed/created thing]** (vaYetzer וַיֵּצֵר) say of **him that framed it [formed it/created it]** (leyotz'ru לְיוֹצְרוֹ), He had no understanding?

Here we see the former or creator yotzer/yatzar is spoken to by the one formed/created. Showing that this indeed formation or creation.

Habaquq/Habakkuk 2:18

What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the **maker (yotzer יֹצֵר)** of **his work [formed thing/created thing]** (yitz'ru יִצְרוּ) trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?

Shows that Yetzer is also that which is formed of a physical object.

I Chronicles/Diveri HaYamin Aleph 28:9

And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for Yehovah searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations (yetzer) of the thoughts [knows the formations/creation of plans]: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

I Chronicles/Diveri HaYamin Aleph 29:18

Yehovah Elohey of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the **imagination [formed/created thing] (yetzer יֵצֶר)** of the thoughts [plans] of the heart of my people, and prepare their heart to you:

From these we see that if we look at imagination as the formation of plans in the mind then Yetzer does seem to apply. It does not indicate that man plans to do harm/evil is sin but it does related that man is forming plans to do evil. Once the evil plan is acted upon then the sin can occur.

As we saw earlier in the study on Evil (Bad/Harm) in which I have shown that while evil can become sin in the harming of our neighbor. Evil in and of itself is not sin. Therefore I do not believe sin resides in the heart or that there is a Yetzer hara that we must struggle against. This is reflected in the verse of Cain where he is admonished to master Sin.

Genesis/Bereshit 4:5-7 for Kayin and his gift he had no regard. Kayin became exceedingly upset and his face fell. Yehovah said to Kayin: Why are you so upset? Why has your face fallen? Is it not thus: If you intend good, bear-it-aloft, but if you do not intend good, at the entrance (lapetach) is sin, a crouching-demon, toward you his lust- but you can rule over him.

Here we have a situation where sin is not inside yet. It can be let in if the door is opened yet it stands ready outside. A methaphor that shows us that by not letting ourselves be discouraged and making harmful or bad plans then we conquer sin. Sin is not a part of us but the result of not doing right. It is not the formation of the plan that is sin for the acting out of that plan. Again in this case Yetzer Hara is the hedge against which we should not pass thus acting out on our thoughts. We know we are not to add to Torah thus, the concept of evil in the mind we must fight against is not found in Torah.