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## ***What does the Torah teach us about addiction?***

***Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer***

It is human nature, declares Torah, to err: "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." (Gen. 8:21) It also recognizes the corollary, that we have the capacity to change our ways. And so our tradition offers us a path – through sacrifices, prayer or self-examination – to repentance, renewal, reconciliation and recovery.

One of my favorite Biblical quotes is from Genesis 4:6-7. God has accepted Abel's offering, but rejected the one from Cain. Yet God doesn't give up on Cain. He offers him some straight talk: "Why are you angry? If you are do what is good, shouldn't you hold your head high? And if you don't do what is good, sin is crouching at the door. It wants you, but you can rule over it."

Temptation is there. Always ready to pounce. Always ready to snare us. So that we say the wrong word. Or waste away time. Or self-medicate with alcohol or drugs or too much junk food.

But we can also be the master over it. Not because we resort to prayer or turn to a Higher Power to pull us through – that is *not* what God says to Cain – but because we can take charge over our own actions.

The first step is acknowledging our human nature. We will fail over and over. We can also make good choices and get on the right path again.