

And Hashem tested Avraham and said to him, “Avraham,” and he replied, “Here I am.” (22:1)

Avraham *Avinu's* loyalty to Hashem was ratified through ten trials, which he passed with exemplary devotion. Every trial had its own unique degree of challenge. The tenth, and most significant trial, was the *Akeidah* -- when Hashem instructed Avraham to bind Yitzchak and sacrifice him. Avraham responded, “*Hineni*,” I am prepared and ready to serve You in any way that You ask. In response to a test of this caliber, the *Satan* was working overtime, challenging Avraham every step of the way. The *Satan* appeared to Avraham in the guise of an old man. He questioned Avraham regarding his destination. At first, Avraham was evasive, but when he saw that the *Satan* was not giving up, he told him emphatically, “I will not listen to you. Leave me alone!” Avraham refused to have any dialogue with the *Satan*. He knew that any relationship with the *Satan* would be devastating. Noach also had an interchange with the *Satan*, but, unlike Avraham, he seemed to have no problem learning an ethical lesson from him. When Noach was about to plant the vine, the *Satan* appeared and asked Noach if he would like him to join, to become his partner in nurturing the vine. Noach readily agreed. *Satan* left, returning with a little lamb which he slaughtered over the vine. He left again, only to return with a lion, which he slaughtered and whose blood he poured over the vine. He left yet again, returning with a monkey which he slaughtered, pouring its blood over the vine. Finally, he brought a pig which he slaughtered, and its blood stained the earth under the vine.

The lesson was: excessive drinking can have repulsive results. One cup of wine can make a man docile as a lamb. If he drinks two cups, he behaves like a lion--arrogant, boasting about his physical prowess. After three cups, he dances foolishly, like a monkey. Four cups will bring him to the point of inebriation, when he will vomit and roll in the mud like a pig. “Be careful,” the *Satan* told Noach, “if you imbibe excessively, it can have such results that you enter into my domain. You will no longer have self-control; you will act like a swine, wallowing in the filth. You will be mine!”

Two great people--Noach and Avraham. One chooses to accept *mussar* from the *Satan*, while the other banishes him from his presence. Avraham refused to talk with the *Satan*. What are we to learn from these disparate approaches? **Horav Moshe Schwab, zl**, observes that herein lies the distinction between Noach and Avraham. Noach and his followers/students have no compunction to derive from the *Torah* only those lessons that the *Satan* disputes. Those things with which the *Satan* agrees, on the contrary, learn from the *Satan*! When it comes to social laws, manners, character refinements, etiquette, they want to be students of *Satan*. Avraham *Avinu* and his students view *Torah* as a code which encompasses every aspect of life. *Torah* does not focus on *Olam Habah*; it should be our guide and directive as to how we should relate and act in *Olam Haze*. Noach and his milieu believe in *Torah* study, *tefillah*--indeed, everything spiritual. They also believe that this world is for enjoyment--not necessarily the enjoyment as seen through the perspective of the *Torah*. Their perspective is secular. In those areas which they know are not

antagonistic to *Torah* -- or simply should not be in the *Torah's* domain -- they have no problem inviting the *Satan* to teach them ethics. Avraham understands that only when an endeavor is totally guided by the *Torah* can it become part of one's psyche and, thus, be bequeathed to the next generation. The answer for every question concerning life, from birth until the end of life, can be found in the *Torah*. One only has to be willing to look.