

THE TACTICS OF THE SATAN

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Shoftim

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #646, Cutting Branches of Fruit Trees Good Shabbos!

The verse says: *"then the two men who have the grievance shall stand before Hashem, before the Kohanim, and the judges who will be in those days"* [Devorim 19:17]. The expression "who will be in those days" immediately raises a question: To which other judges would a person present himself, if not to the judges who are around in his time? Obviously, he can't go to judges of previous generations!

Rashi famously adds: "Even though he is not of equal stature to judges who existed in previous generations, one must listen to him, for one only has the judges available in his own time." This does not only apply to judges. It applies to Rabbis, teachers, Roshei Yeshivas, Gedolim. The Torah leaders with whom you interact may, in fact, not measure up to those of years gone by. That cannot be helped. You, however, must have the attitude that the individuals who are Torah leaders in your time are the greatest authorities that exist and you must approach them with proper respect and deference.

Rav Pam, zt"l, quotes the Gemara in Bava Basra (15b) which records a dialog between the Almighty and the Satan. The Satan told G-d: "I have traversed the whole world and found none so faithful as your servant Avraham. You promised him that you would give him the length and breadth of the land which he traversed, and yet when he was unable to find any place in which to bury Sarah until he bought one for four hundred shekels of silver, he did not complain against your ways."

Then G-d said to the Satan: "Have you considered my servant Iyov? For there is none like him in the earth..." The Satan then challenged the Almighty to let him test Iyov to check out his true character. This initiated the well-known events at the beginning of the book of Iyov.

Rav Pam asked: Since when is the Satan in the business of praising people like Avraham? "There is no one around who compares with the righteousness of Avraham" does not sound like the Satan!

Rav Pam answered that this is, in fact, EXACTLY the tactic of the Satan. The Satan picks some previous Gadol [great pious person] and sets him up as a "fine and wonderful Jew". But he does this only to find fault with contemporary Jewish leaders. Such are the devious techniques of the Satan.

We must show respect and reverence to the leaders who are present in our own days. The Satan = Yetzer Hara = Evil Inclination tries to always belittle our contemporary leaders in comparison to the "great leaders" of past generations. We must avoid this trap when approaching the leaders who are present "in our own days".

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Shoftim from the Commuter Chavrusah Series is provided below:

Tape # 019 - Copying Cassette Tapes

Tape # 109 - Hasogas G'vul: Infringing on Another's Livelihood

Tape # 155 - Ba'al Tashchis: Cutting Down That Troublesome Tree

Tape # 202 - Melech v'lo Malkah: A Jewish Queen?