

## With whomever you find your gods, he shall not live... Now Yaakov did not know that Rachel had stolen them. (31:32)

Yaakov *Avinu* uttered the curse, because he suspected that one of the pagan servants had stolen the *teraphim*. Had he known that it was Rachel *Imeinu* who had taken them, he certainly would not have pronounced the curse. Sadly, the curse took effect, catalyzing (in some way) Rachel's untimely death. Every word that exits our mouth must be carefully weighed. One never knows... We find this occurring a number of times in Tanach. One notable instance occurred when the brothers returned from Egypt and related to their father, Yaakov *Avinu*, the troubles that the Egyptian viceroy had caused them. Imagine, had Yaakov issued a curse against this Jew-hating pagan (not knowing that, indeed, it was none other than his own son, Yosef), his curse might have been the catalyst for the Egyptian viceroy's death!

**Horav Yitzchak Eliyahu Landau, zl**, was a brilliant and pious *gaon*, who was a contemporary of *Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl*. Unfortunately, he was not blessed with biological offspring. One day, the son of *Horav Itzele Volozhiner (Rav Chaim's son)* became seriously ill. *Rav Itzele* was beside himself in fear for his son's life. His father said to him, "*Halevai* (if only) *Rav Yitzchak Eliyahu* would experience your pain. Sadly, he has no children." The child's condition worsened, and he passed away.

Meanwhile, *Rav Yitzchak Eliyahu* was appointed *Rav* in Zaskowitz, a small town which bordered on Vohozhin. In due time, the change of *makom*, place, engendered a change in his *mazel*, fortune, and he and his wife were blessed with a son. When the child reached the age that *Rav Itzele's* son had become ill, this child, too, became gravely ill, and, in a short time, was on the verge of death.

When *Rav Yitzchak Eliyahu* heard about *Rav Chaim's* remark (years earlier) to *Rav Itzele*, he became overwhelmed with concern. He sat the entire night by his son's bedside, praying, pleading, beseeching Hashem to spare his child. He added, "This is not what *Rav Chaim* meant when he remarked to his son that *Rav Yitzchak Eliyahu* would have been pleased with your worry. He did not wish me to have a child that would become ill. He meant that I, too, should become a father! Please, Hashem, spare my child!" The child lived. One never knows the effect of the words that leave his mouth.

On a positive side, **Horav Shimon Pincus, zl**, relates that, prior to the *bar-mitzvah* of one of his sons, he was blessed with a daughter. The obvious question was: Should he make a separate *kiddush*, celebration, or, rather, merge the *bar-mitzvah* with the *kiddush* for his daughter. It would be economical both from an economic and time perspective.

After giving the matter some thought, he came to the conclusion that he should make two separate affairs. He conjectured: The idea of a *kiddush* is based upon the words of *Yitzchak Avinu* prior to sending Eisav to bring back for him *matamim*, delicacies, which he had been used to eating. The

joy incurred as a result of eating those delicacies would create a spiritual bond between the two (father and son), thereby increasing the efficacy of the blessings. Likewise, when one celebrates a milestone joyous occasion in the company of good friends, satiated with food and drink, the blessing of *mazel tov* and the various good wishes that are articulated by the guests represent a powerful force of benediction. This is the power of the Jewish “word.”

In the *Sefer Bais Elokim*, the **Mabit** (*Horav* Yeshaya D. Trani) writes that the power of a blessing uttered by a Jew is similar to that of a prayer. Thus, the power of a multitude of people all issuing a blessing, constitutes an incredible prayer on behalf of the newborn infant for whom the *kiddush* is being rendered.

Likewise, when one Jew blesses another on *Rosh Hashanah* night with the well-known, *L’shanah Tovah Tikaseivu*, “You shall be inscribed for a good year,” it is a compelling merit for the individual who is the recipient of the blessing. We should never take a Jew’s blessing for granted.