

Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren. Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him, and his wife, Rivkah, conceived. (25:21)

Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him – by Yitzchak *Avinu*. Lavan had given Rivkah *Imeinu* a blessing, *Achoseinu, at hayi l'alfei revavah*, “Our sister, may you come to be the thousands of myriads” (*Bereishis* 24:60). It seems like a “reasonable” blessing. The fact that Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by Yitzchak is a clear indication that Lavan’s blessing was unacceptable. Why? A blessing is a blessing – regardless of its source – or is this not true? The **Melitzer Rebbe, Shlita**, contends that a *bircas rasha einah ela kelalah*, “The blessing bestowed by a wicked person is nothing more than a curse.” In order to explain this idea, he relates the following analogy, which I feel not only gives meaning to this issue, but opens up for us a new vista in understanding why the blessings/ efforts/deeds of some individuals lack efficacy.

A man, by vocation a silversmith, moved from a small hamlet to the capital city. In the hamlet, he was well known as an artist without peer, a reputation which resulted in his ability to earn a steady living. Expenses were nominal, as rent and utilities for his small shop did not make a great dent in his living expenses. In the big city, it was a totally different story. Storefronts went for a premium. He was, therefore, forced to rent a tiny shop in a small alleyway. He was not concerned, because he felt that his beautiful work spoke for itself. He would eventually attract customers through word of mouth.

The man was in his shop for only one day when a man appeared at his door. At first glance, he had an unsavory appearance. He was a sharp dresser, with pasted down hair, sporting a fedora on the tip of his head and wearing a white tie over a black shirt. He could have passed as a goon or a permanent fixture at a casino. He certainly was not the type of customer that frequented his shop in the hamlet. Perhaps the big city was a different scene.

“Good morning, my friend,” the man began in a loud voice. “I see that you have recently moved to the big city. Well, I have come to help you, because you have selected a spot to do business that has not seen a customer in years. How do you expect people to become aware of your presence? You are stuck deep in a corner of a small alley hardly visited by anyone of substance. Who will purchase your crafts – if no one hears of you? This is why I am here. Today is your lucky day.

“First, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Sammy, and I am a financial advisor. I will help you to earn a good living. You just have to adhere to my advice. It does not come cheap, but, trust me, it is well worth the expense.”

The silversmith at first demurred to Sammy’s offer of “assistance.” “You do not seem to understand,” Sammy continued. “The big city is different from the hamlet in which you lived. The city is run by “movers and shakers,” and, if one is not well-connected, he stands no chance of

earning a living. Let me help you, and you will see how quickly your success shall be realized.

“Here is what you should do. Gather together various rings, necklaces and bracelets; take along armbands and brooches for good measure. All in all, you should have one hundred pieces of jewelry. Meet me on Monday at 9:00 a.m. by the palace gates and I will show you how to make your sale. The queen will be so impressed with your wares that she will purchase them all.”

The simple silversmith took Sammy’s advice and waited by the palace gates. Immediately, two burly guards approached and asked what he was doing there. He explained that he was working with Sammy, and he was waiting for the queen. Need we say more? “Sammy! He is a con man, a thief, a fraud. What are you doing with him? You are probably a lowlife like he is.” They began to beat him within an inch of his life. Luckily, he was able to escape, all bloodied, beaten and torn, but alive. Surprise of surprises: Sammy never showed up.

Two weeks elapsed with no customers, no money and no food left in the cupboard. The silversmith was going through a severe bout of depression when, one day, a well-to-do man, very smartly dressed, entered the store. The man was clearly a distinguished person. He was dressed in a long black frock, top hat, white shirt and morning trousers. Regrettably, the silversmith had lost his patience with people. “Can I help you? Are you interested in purchasing jewelry, or are you going to waste my time by just looking around?” This was certainly not the way to greet a potential customer, but the silversmith was simply not in the mood to put up with anyone. He had taken a serious hit.

The man removed a one-hundred ruble note from his pocket, gave it to the silversmith and said, “Here, you look like you have gone through a bad situation. I imagine that you have had no business since you moved here. It is no wonder. No one comes here to shop. I see your jewelry and, indeed, it is fit for a king. Come with me, and I will see to it that you are given a chance to earn some money.”

He took the silversmith to the king, who was so impressed with the jewelry that he purchased it all and even instructed the silversmith to return with more of the same. The man had done very well for himself.

As expected, when someone is the beneficiary of good fortune, the “Sammys” of the world climb out of their holes in the ground and expect to receive a cut of the profits. After all... when Sammy appeared the next day (after the man had made the sale to the king) to congratulate the silversmith and demand his cut of the take, the silversmith immediately chased him from the store.

The lesson is quite simple. Rivkah *Imeinu* is that simple silversmith. Lavan’s blessing is the work of the *yetzer hora*, evil-inclination, whose advice is never in our favor. Rivkah did not have children, because this would have meant that Lavan’s blessing had been fulfilled. That evil person would have shared in all of Rivka’s success, her children’s success and, indeed, that of all of her

descendants. The true *tzaddik* need not piggy back his prayers on the prayers of Lavan; nor does the truly righteous person require assistance from the likes of Lavan. This is why Hashem listened to Yitzchak's prayer, so that he would give neither credit nor reward to Lavan.

Not everyone is suited to be Hashem's emissary – and not everyone is worthy of being the medium for conveying Hashem's blessing. One could be the greatest, most successful doctor, but, if he is not worthy of blessing, he will not be the conveyance for effecting blessing. Sometimes, we must maintain our patience – and continue to pray.