

"And now that you have gone away because of your great longing for your father's home, why have you stolen my gods?" (31:30)

In his final confrontation with Yaakov, Lavan does not blame his son-in-law for taking his family and possessions to his father's land. His sole unanswerable indictment was, *"If you yearned so much to return to your father's home, go, but why did you steal my gods?"* Lavan's accusation is a condemnation of all those who feel that a Jew's distinctiveness is dependent upon where he lives. What difference does it make if one lives in America or in *Eretz Yisrael*, if he does not accept Hashem as the Creator and Ruler of the world? If our own synagogues resemble churches, if our spiritual leaders do not distinguish themselves in being different than their gentile counterparts, if our Shabbos is more like Sunday, if our children are reared and educated like theirs, then where is our uniqueness? Yaakov's response was unequivocal. *"In whose hand you will find your gods, he shall not live."* Unless one denounces the gods of the gentiles, his Jewish identity is not clearly defined. There is no hope for one who assimilates, superficially displaying a facade of "Jewishness," while clandestinely believing in the gods of Lavan. Thus, Yaakov answered, *"We will go back to our father's home. You are not going to steal my wives and children."* They parted ways with *"Lavan returning to his place"*, and *"Yaakov going on his way,"* raising his children in his father's faith.