



From the desk of
MORDECHAI MALKA
 Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel
 Founder and President of Or Hamelech Institutions
 Member of Chief Rabbinate of Israel



Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

OHR

Parashat Vayetzei

HAMELECH

Stolen Go(o)ds

As Yaakov prepared to flee from Lavan's house, Rachel took her father's *terafim*, a type of idol. Lavan was fuming mad. He took up the chase. He caught up to Yaakov and accused him of stealing the idols. Yaakov responded, "The one with whom you find your idols will not live."

Lavan searched but did not find. Nonetheless, Rachel died young and our Sages reveal that this was the result of Yaakov's curse.

The Power of the Tongue

No one likes to be cursed. This is because a curse has power. Certain angels are appointed to listen to curses and at a time of danger, they are empowered to actualize the curse. (Zohar Parashat Vayishlach p.175) (Sefer Hachinuch 231)

Shlah HaKadosh teaches that one who curses his wife is cursing himself as well, as husband and wife are two parts of one whole. Chid"ra teaches that cursing another Jew contains a trace of cursing Hashem since each Jew has within him a G-dly soul.

The greater the person, the more powerful are his words. Therefore, a blessing or *c"v* curse from a *tsaddik* is more likely to take effect. The truth is that we are taught not to treat lightly a blessing

nor a curse from even a simple individual (Bava Kama 93a).

Marriage

We need not go too far to realize the power of the tongue. Every Jewish marriage takes place when the chatan gives the kallah a ring and makes a declaration. With that declaration, she becomes his wife, with all of the relevant ramifications, death penalty included. Similarly, a Jew can declare any article of his to be consecrated to *hekdesh* and lo and behold, it is so, now forbidden to any commoner.

Parents

We also find extreme severity in the sin of cursing one's parents. A person who strikes and wounds his parent is put to death by strangulation. One who curses his parent receives the most severe capital punishment: stoning. These were carried out when we had a Sanhedrin. Nonetheless, the Torah is eternal and they remain severe sins throughout all generations.

The Deaf

The Torah tells us that we must not curse even a deaf man. We see from here that the severity of a curse is not only due to the torment done to the listener, but because a curse is a real authentic attack.



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Oneself

Rabbi Avin teaches that it is also forbidden to curse oneself. This is a violation of the obligation to guard one's own soul very well (Shavuot 36a). Shlah HaKadosh teaches that one who curses himself is asking for trouble. In the fourth Heichal of the Heichalei HaKelipot are the Orrerei Yom whose job it is to take those curses which a person utters against himself and see to their fulfillment c"v.

Midrash Eichah teaches that Rabbi died before Antininus just because he said he would.

The Kohein

Rabbi Yehuda Assad was once asked the following question. One year on Yom Kippur, a Kohein made a mistake and mispronounced part of Birkat Kohanim. A disturbed congregant berated the Kohein for having done so and bemoaned his own welfare. He exclaimed, "Because of you, I just may die an untimely death!"

Indeed, not long later, this man passed away.

Now the kohein asked Rabbi Yehuda Assad if he is really at fault for this man's untimely death. Rabbi Assad assured him that he has nothing to worry about. On the contrary, it was that man's own words which invited the Angel of Death.

Turnabout

We are taught not to take curses lightly, even if uttered by simpletons. Avimelech cursed Sarah Imeinu and due to that, her son Yitzchak's vision dimmed.

Bilaam attempted to curse the Jewish People. Hashem went to great lengths, as it were, to see to it that his curses be transformed to blessings. Apparently there was what to fear from his curses.

Sometimes, the curses a person utters boomerang upon himself or his children. Dovid Hamelech gave a string of curses to Yoav, each of which befell a different descendant of Dovid himself (Sanhedrin 48a).

The first day of a person's illness he ought not publicize it (Berachot 55b). Meharsha explains this is conjunction with Chazal's admonition, "Do not open one's mouth to the Satan," i.e. do not give Satan any "ideas."

Don't Say What If

A person should be careful not to say, "What if..." with a negative ending. This we see from Bava Metzia (68a). Mar ben Ameimar asked a question to Rav Ashi. Rav Ashi acknowledged that Mar had a valid point but it would only apply for as long as Ameimar were alive. But were he to die, then it no longer would apply.

At that, Ameimar died.



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Long Nails

A man named Pinchus was sitting Shiva and he grew his nails long. The Talmudic Sage Shmuel visited him and commented that mourners need not grow out their nails. Pinchus retorted, "If it would be you sitting shiva, would you really be so lenient?!"

Sure enough, not long later, Shmuel found himself sitting shiva. He attributed this to Pinchus' sharp retort (Moed Katan 18a).

Young Yosef Chaim

Now let's move on to a story that happened in our times. A woman had a baby boy and insisted that he be called "Dagan." Her husband was not very happy with that decision. He preferred to use the name of a tsaddik, such as "Yosef Chaim."

The woman was adamant. She screamed, "Only if he becomes deathly ill will I allow my son's name to be changed!"

She repeated this three times.

Hashem heard her cry and the boy fell ill. In keeping with her word, she allowed the name to be changed. Indeed, the baby recovered.

The Tenth Man

One time by the Baba Sali they needed a *minyan* for *maariv*. They waited for a tenth man and

someone arrived. They got ready to begin, but the Baba Sali said to wait a bit longer. An eleventh man came and the prayers began.

Later on, the Baba Sali revealed to his close ones that he did not feel comfortable counting the tenth man to his *minyan* since that man regularly got into fights and cursed people.

The Gentle Gardener

So we see that we really must pay attention to what we say. Even if something or someone upsets us, we must have a red line which we just do not cross. We must realize that our words carry weight, and we ought not wish upon someone anything which we do not want to happen to them or to ourselves.

This is especially applicable in the home, when we tend to be less on guard, as we are out of the public view and earshot.

A gardener once did some work in my yard. As is normal, curious children got in his way. But he had such a beautiful approach. Instead of screaming at them, he said, ever so gently, "May you be blessed as you move aside."

Blessing you with a Shabbat Shalom Umevorach,

Mordechai Malka