

# Parsha Pearls

Vayeitzei 5768

**"Whomever you find your idols with shall not live..." but Yaakov did not know that Rachel had stolen them. (31:32)**

Rashi, quoting the Midrash, says that this curse caused the untimely death of Rachel soon afterward, on the way back to the Land of Canaan. Although Yaakov did not know that it was Rachel who had stolen the idols, and he certainly did not mean to curse her, the curse took effect in any case. This principle is called "bris krusa lasfosayim" – G-d has made a covenant with the lips of the righteous and He fulfills their words. Thus a righteous person must be extremely careful with his words.

Our Sages used this principle to explain the puzzling story of Yeihu, king of the Ten Tribes. The dynasty of Achav had instituted the worship of the Baal and the Asheirah in northern Eretz Yisroel and its capital, Shomron. The wickedness of Achav reached the point where G-d decided to wipe them out and bring in a new dynasty. He chose the righteous Yeihu to carry out the revolution. Yeihu did as he was commanded: he gathered an army, overthrew the king, and killed every member of his family. Then he set to work purging the land of Baal-worship. As a ploy to gather all the idolatrous prophets and priests to one place, he announced, "Achav worshipped the Baal a little; Yeihu will worship him a lot. And now, all prophets of the Baal, all his worshippers and all his priests, come to me, let no one be missing. For I am making a great festival

to the Baal; whoever does not come will not live" (Melachim II 10:18-19). When the temple of the Baal was full from door to door, Yeihu and his army surrounded the temple and slaughtered all the worshippers. Hashem was pleased with Yeihu, and promised him that his dynasty would continue for four generations.

But then the prophet tells us that Yeihu himself worshipped the golden calves built by Yeravam: "And Yeihu did not keep the Torah of Hashem, G-d of Israel with all his heart; he did not desist from the sins of Yeravam, who brought Israel to sin" (ibid. v. 31). How did this happen? Abaye said, "There is a covenant with the lips." Yeihu said he would worship the Baal a lot; although he meant it as a trick, his words had their effect (Sanhedrin 102a).

Today there are many good Jews who are opposed to the Zionist state, yet will not refrain from using expressions from the Zionist language or singing Zionist songs that speak of Hebron or Jerusalem being "ours". They do this jokingly or for aesthetic reasons, not because they actually believe in the ideology. Some go even further: they feign belief in some aspects of Zionism, or at least lend respect to those beliefs, in order to reach out to non-observant Jews and bring them closer to Torah. Their hope is that someday, when those Jews are

observant, they will learn the true Torah view of Zionism. These people should remember the lesson of Yeihu, that pretense of idolatry for any purpose, even a noble one, can lead to actual idolatry.

Rava gives a different explanation of why Yeihu stumbled, which is also reminiscent of today's situation: "He saw the signature of Achiyah Hashiloni and he erred" (Sanhedrin 102a). When Yeravam, the first king of the Ten Tribes, took the throne, he gathered all the leaders of the people together and made them sign and pledge allegiance to him. He asked them if they would do anything he told them, and they said yes. "Even if I tell you to worship idols?" he asked. The righteous men present said, "G-d forbid!" But the wicked ones said to the righteous, "Do you really think that such a great man as Yeravam would worship idols? He only means to test us, to see if we are really loyal to him." So they all signed, including the great prophet, Achiyah Hashiloni. Once Achiyah had given his signature in

support of Yeravam, anything that Yeravam did later appeared to have Achiyah's stamp of approval. This is why Yeihu, the great fighter against idolatry, worshipped the golden calves built by Yeravam.

The Agudath Israel organization was founded to combat Zionism, and in its early years it gained the approval and signatures of many gedolei yisroel, such as the Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman and Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky. But when the Zionist state was established, years after all these gedolim had passed away, Agudah activists joined the Zionist government and sought only to make the state more religious. Many people endorsed Agudah's Zionist activities because of those early signatures of gedolim, which made it appear as though all activities done under the name "Agudah" for all time would have the approval of those gedolim. Like Yeihu, Jews who are great zealots against all forms of idolatry and heresy are, at the same time, supporters of the idolatry of Zionism.