

These shall stand to bless the people on Har Gerizim...and these shall stand for curse. (27:12,13)

Interestingly, this *parsha* is filled with promises of blessing for good behavior and punishment and curse for disobedience. Nowhere, however, do we find the entreaty, "*Please, Hashem, do not punish us for the wrong behavior we have committed. Overlook our sins.*" **Horav Moshe Swift, zl**, emphasizes that the concept of reward and punishment is an integral part of Jewish doctrine. When you do something wrong, you pay for your sin. When you do a good deed, you are rewarded. Every action, every activity, every word, is all taken into account recorded and compensated.

Furthermore, if we note the text, Hashem did not utter the curses and blessings Himself. The proclamations were issued from the lips of men. Punishment is a response to our actions. If an individual runs into the street without looking and is hit by a car, it is not a punishment; it is a natural consequence. It is his own fault. If one plants a seed and it produces a beautiful flower, it is not a reward; it is a natural result of his action. "*Baruch*" does not mean "*may you be blessed*;" it means, "*blessed is.*" "*Arur*" does not mean "*be cursed*;" it means "*cursed is*". He who is obedient, he who is observant, is a blessing. He who is disobedient, he who rebels, is a curse.

A person is the product of the life he has made for himself. A child is the result of the home that his parents have created. We cannot expect a child who hails from a home that is devoid of respect, sensitivity and human decency, to grow up to be a *mentch*. Likewise, a child who grows up in a home in which he does not observe respect for *Torah* and its disseminators, will most likely follow suit. This is not a punishment; it is a natural consequence. We will reap what we sow. Hopefully, we will plant early so that we can nurture our plantings.