

“Accursed are you beyond all the animals and all the beasts of the field...and dust shall you eat all the days of your life.” (3:14)

One wonders if this is much of a punishment. On the contrary, the snake will never have to search for food. Why does Hashem say to the snake, “Accursed are you beyond all the animals and all the beasts of the field”? We derive from here that an easy life, a life without challenge and trial, is not necessarily a blessing. We grow and develop from our challenges. Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita, remembers when a bachur about to be married asked Horav Moshe Schneider, zl, Rosh HaYeshivah in London, for a brachah, blessing, prior to his wedding. Rav Moshe asked him, “What kind of blessing would you like?” The young man replied, “I would like to be blessed with an easy life, no challenges, no obstacles, no vicissitudes.” The Rosh HaYeshivah looked at the young man and said, “That is not a blessing! My blessing to you is that you should have obstacles and challenges, but that you should triumph over them!”

Thus, the snake is worse off than all of the animals and beasts. For, it goes through life without having to confront challenge or overcome hardship. The opportunity for growth and development is denied to the snake. Apparently, this applies also to those who feel life is all about sleeping, eating and satisfying one’s physical whims and desires. Torah study is something they do in their spare time, when they have thoroughly satisfied all of their wants. A Jew lives through yegia, toil. He grows through labor until he achieves sheleimus, perfection and completion. Sitting back and enjoying life does not give a person much to live for, because life becomes meaningless in that state.

The Baalei Mussar, Ethicists, explain the curse in a different manner. The snake would now have everything readily available to sustain himself. He would not have to turn to Hashem to supplicate Him for sustenance. This is a great curse. Hashem wants us to turn to Him, to entreat Him every step of our lives. The Kli Yakar explains that the prohibition against taking usury exists because usury is a process by which a person sits back and allows his money to grow on its own. The Torah wants a person to turn to Hashem every day, every moment, so that he never forgets from Where and from Whom he is sustained. Hashem did not want the snake’s entreaty. This is the greatest curse. We derive from here a valuable lesson. At times, we wonder why Hashem causes us to face serious challenges: monetary, physical, personal and family. We must remember that He wants to

hear from us, and this is the means by which He catalyzes our entreaty. What we think is a curse, might very well be a blessing in disguise. As long as Hashem interacts with us, it indicates that He still wants to hear from us. When everything seems to be going well is the time to begin to wonder if He is conveying a subtle message to us.