

Bareich aleinu... es ha'shanah ha'zos. Bless us...this year

B'zeias apecha tochal lechem, "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread" (*Bereishis* 3:19). Is this a curse – or a blessing? *Horav Yitzchak Kirzner, zl*, explains that people would now have to work to earn a living. The idyllic state of living in Paradise had come to a quick end. As a result of their sin, Adam and Chavah had plummeted from their original spiritual perch to a life filled with challenges. Had they remained on their exalted spiritual level, earning a livelihood would have had a negative connotation. Why waste so much precious time? Now, however, they would be challenged to spend their time wisely, because remaining ensconced in Paradise was no longer an option. *Rav Kirzner, zl*, quotes *Rabbeinu Bachya* who posits that, once Adam sinned, he needed the pressure of not knowing from where his next meal would come. He would have to make use of large amounts of time wisely.

Let us return to our question: curse or blessing? It depends upon the person. If he rises to the challenges and emerges triumphant, then earning a living becomes the blessing that helps to shape his character and to teach him the *middos*, attributes, of *emunah*, faith, and *bitachon*, trust, in Hashem. If he fails the challenge, then learning a livelihood becomes his curse; it becomes the sinkhole that takes him down. Once we are removed from the utopian spiritual lifestyle associated with Paradise, we must grapple with life on our own, relying solely on our faith and trust in Hashem. This could be a blessing.