

And dust shall you eat all the days of your life. (3:14)

Rebbeinu Bachya derives from the words kol yemei chayecha, “all the days of your life,” that the serpent’s punishment will not be mitigated l’asid lavo, after the advent of Moshiach Tzidkeinu. With the arrival of Moshiach, a new world culture will prevail. Harmony and peace will reign, and even the enmity between the serpent and human beings will come to an end. The punishment, “And dust shall you eat all the days of your life,” however, will continue unabated throughout time. In other words, despite the fact that, when Moshiach arrives the world will revert to pre-sin (of eating of the Eitz HaDaas) condition, as far as the role of the nachash in causing this sin to occur, which was the precursor for death to become a reality, there can be no pardon. Death cannot be repaired.

Veritably, although during Yemos Ha’Moshiach, death will no longer occur, the millions of lives that have been lost to the nachash’s evil can never be ameliorated. The punishment meted out to the serpent was twofold. He was to crawl on his belly and eat dust. Also, enmity was established between the serpent and humanity. The enmity and the curse symbolize the ongoing struggle between good and evil and the human condition of suffering and mortality. In Yemos Ha’Moshiach, only good will exist, thus eradicating the reason for enmity between the serpent and humanity. The death and suffering that the nachash engendered can never be dissolved. The enmity between good and evil leaves up to man to decide how he wants to live. If he truly hates the serpent and what he represents, then he will make the correct choice by living a Torah life. If he does not properly exercise his free will and subsequently falls prey to the wiles of the nachash, he has only himself to blame. Death, on the other hand, does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. The pious suffer, and the wicked suffer; the righteous confront mortality, and so do the wicked. They do not confront it in similar ways, but it is a reality that is the result of the serpent’s evil. This is a phenomenon that cannot be mollified. Thus, the serpent’s curse lives on.

Bearing this in mind, let us focus on spiritual demise. If one is able to reach out to an unaffiliated Jew and, with siyata diShmaya, Divine Assistance, succeed in spiritually resuscitating him, he has brought him back from the dead. The flipside is obviously frightening. If we could make a difference in someone’s spiritual life, and we either shy away or refuse to reach out, regardless of the reason, we are dealing with life and death. Who would want to have such an onus of guilt leveled against them?

As an example of how outreach to even one person can have a life-altering effect on literally thousands, Horav Uri Zohar, zl, was one of the secular Israeli world’s icons. A film director, actor and comedian, he became a baal teshuvah (after beginning to study Torah with a friend out of curiosity). His story of return inspired many. His outreach efforts have had a profound effect on unaffiliated Jews.

One of the most notable stories of Rav Uri’s was his outreach to other celebrities. These were individuals who were raised in a secular manner; obviously, living in the world of entertainment did little to alter their negative spiritual trajectory. Rav Uri’s transformation from superstar celebrity to devout ben Torah served as a powerful example for others who followed suit.

With his charisma and authenticity, he was able to attract thousands to his seminars, leading them to commence their own journeys to greater Jewish observance. In his book, “We Were Robbed,”

he candidly discusses his transformation and addresses common misconceptions about Orthodoxy and its adherents. His honesty and candor in presenting the issues have brought many readers closer to Jewish thought and practice.

Rav Uri's outreach efforts -- which mushroomed from his original curiosity about Torah to becoming a major expositor of its way of life -- have left an enduring legacy. His personal story continues to inspire, and the educational and communal initiatives which he innovated remain active, continuing to engage and support unaffiliated Jews. Every Jew has potential for change as long as he lives. Changing to a Torah life guarantees that his life is much more than mere existence. It is a life that is real. It is in this manner that we succeed in our contentious battle with the serpent and his minions.