

“Your sons and daughters will be given to another people – and your eyes will see and pine in vain for them... You will bear sons and daughters, but they will not be yours, for they will go into captivity.” (28:32,41)

There seems to be a redundancy in these two tragic curses. We suggest that, unfortunately, they are two distinct curses, each one focusing on a different type of loss. In the former, the children are given over to another people. They might be living under the same roof as their parents, but their values are different. They are alienated from their people and instead are enchanted by the culture of another nation. In the latter curse, the children are no longer home; they have been taken captive by another nation. They are slaves to another people.

In the first curse, the Torah refers to the sons and daughters as “your sons and daughters.” They are home. You see them every day but, regrettably you pine in vain for them. In the latter, they are gone, no longer your sons and daughters. They have been taken captive. Which curse is worse? No parent should ever be faced with this question, but from the sequence it would seem that the curses become more serious as they progress. Thus, having the children at home, even though they no longer respect and adhere to their parents’ wishes and level of observance, is still far better than having them out of the sphere of parental influence and taken captive by another nation. As long as a child is home, there is hope. The parents still have an opportunity to reach out, to assuage the hurt feelings, to repair the breach. Once the child has moved out and moved on, it is so much more difficult. On the other hand, to observe a child’s deterioration on a daily basis is a traumatic experience, one that for most people is gut-wrenching and devastating. Yet, the Torah seems to be telling us that as long as the child stays home, there is hope; as long as we consider them our children, they can still come back, because the return address has not been erased.