

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

What to some individuals may be perceived as a curse could actually be a blessing in disguise -- and vice versa. The serpent was cursed with having to eat tasteless dust his whole life. Imagine being relegated to a life in which one's entire sustenance is without any taste. A life of no satisfaction, no pleasure, is truly a curse. But is it? While the serpent's food is not appealing, it is always available. He never has to worry about the source of his next meal. We have only to ask someone who struggles to earn a livelihood how he would receive this "blessing." Was the serpent really cursed?

Likutei Basar Likutei suggests that herein lies the curse. The serpent was surrounded by an abundant reservoir of "food." Indeed, he never would feel the need to turn to Hashem to supplicate Him for sustenance. Is there a greater curse than, in effect, being told by Hashem, "Here--take your food. Never turn to Me for a thing--I want nothing to do with you!" The serpent was forever banished from Hashem's Presence. He could never commune with Hashem. This is a curse that deprives an individual of his greatest gift. Hashem is a personal G-d. The feeling of hope and reassurance that comes with the knowledge that one can convey his emotions to Hashem, to pour out his heart to Him--and that Hashem will listen -- is perhaps what has maintained *Klal Yisrael* throughout its tumultuous history.

We may add that this curse is appropriate, given the nature of the serpent. His lack of gratitude to Hashem for creating him, his underhanded attempt to ensnare Chavah, causing her to sin against Hashem, Who gave him everything, warrants such a response. He who does not have *hakoras hatov*, gratitude, he who does not appreciate and acknowledge the good others do for him, has no place in our society.