"Accursed are you beyond all the cattle and beyond all the beasts of the field; upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life." (3:14)

Hashem cursed the serpent with what seems to be an ambiguous curse. What are the repercussions of dirt being its staple forever? At least the serpent will always have ready access to its food, which is more than can be said for any other creature. Furthermore, why does the pasuk add the words: yemei chayecha, "days of your life?" It would have sufficed to simply write, "all of your days." Why is emphasis placed on chayim, life? The Rebbe, zl, m'Piltz, explains that herein lies the greatest curse. Since the serpent will always have food available, it will never have the opportunity or privilege to pray to – or interact with – Hashem. Hashem was basically telling him, "I want nothing more to do with you. Here is your food. Goodbye!" There is no greater curse than having the door shut in your face – forever.

Yemei chayecha is an expression that is a reference to any moment in which one provides life-sustaining assistance or benefit to another creature. Life is defined by the opportunity we provide for others to live. The serpent was told that even when he has a "good" day, a day in which he actually provides benefit to another creature, he still will not interact with Hashem. He is shut out forever. Applying the same idea, we might suggest that "eating dirt" is a reference to bitterness. There are individuals who are regrettably unhappy, bitter people. Nothing in life generates a sense of satisfaction within them. They are always criticizing others or simply poking fun at everything and everyone. They see demons lurking everywhere, and everybody is considered a threat to their success. The result of envy and insecurity, this vexation with the world, clouds every one of their own laudatory endeavors and accomplishments. They have no life, for they taste only acrimony and hostility. Is there a greater curse than such a distorted perception of life?