

**"You shall plant vineyards and dress them but you shall not drink of the wine... for the worm shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your borders but you shall not anoint yourself (with the) oil, for your olives shall drop off."  
(28:39,40)**

These *pesukim* which represent the *tochechah*, curses, present a question. The curses concerning the wine/grapes and those relating to the olives/oil are distinct. Regarding the wine, the *Torah* states that the grapes will be ruined and therefore there will be no wine. Regarding the olives, on the other hand, the *Torah* apparently states that we will have olives, but we will not be able to use their oil. Consequently, it would seem that the curse regarding the wine/grapes was greater than that of the oil/olives.

This concept, however, is inconsistent with *Rabbi Yochanan's* statement in the *Talmud, Bava Basra 8* regarding punishment and curse. He asserts that whatever is written last is the greater curse. *Rabbi Yochanan* is implying that the curse of having olives, but no oil, is a greater punishment. How are we to understand it?

*Horav Aharon Walkin z.l.* contends that the curse of having olives but not being able to avail oneself of their oil is indeed a greater curse than not having anything at all. We see in our own times that various countries have the ability to supply enough of certain grains that would feed the entire world population! The world community responds to this surplus in a paradoxical manner. It causes farmers to hold back on their planting schedules. When there is too much supply the demand decreases, causing prices to plummet. When farmers refrain from planting, workers are laid off.

How do countries plagued by this "surfeit" respond to the "problem"? They convene meetings to decide the best way to destroy the surplus grain. Imagine in one room the national leadership is in conference, struggling to find the best way to deal with the hungry and homeless, while in the next room another group of legislators is seeking the simplest and quickest method for disposing of their surplus grain! This absurd situation is unfortunately the reality of today's world.

*Horav Walkin* writes that he was privy to a time of hunger in his country. Nevertheless, those whose business acumen and wherewithal were above average profited during those times. They would "buy low" and "sell high". In this manner, many Jewish businessmen were able to sustain the poor of their community. When the hunger results from destroying the surplus, however, there is no way to alleviate the problem. This is the *Torah's* message. We will be plagued with surplus that will be destroyed simply because we have "too much." How ironic is the curse of having nothing just because we have too much!

We may advance this idea. Frustration is a debilitating curse. To have olives before our eyes and not be able to use them, to have success and salvation within our grasp and not benefit from them, is most enervating. One who doesn't have, has no aspirations; one who has the opportunity, ability, or wherewithal to succeed and loses it, is apt to succumb to a deep depression, which in itself is the greatest curse!