

Ki Savo – 5773
Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

In preparing us for the Yamim No'ra'im Chazal arranged that we should be subjected to hearing the terrible To'cha'cha- the 98 curses delineated in graphic detail, through which HaShem warns us of what will happen if we do not keep His Torah. The curses contain the mirror image of the blessings. Rather than being “blessed in the city and blessed in the fields, blessed in our coming in and blessed in our going out”, we will be “cursed in the city and cursed in the fields, cursed in our coming and cursed in our going out”.

Strangely enough, the Targum Yonatan ben Uziel translates and interprets the pasuk (28:19) “You will be cursed when you come in” meaning, “you will be cursed when you come into the theaters and when you come into the circuses- because you wasted your time on frivolous entertainment rather than spending time in learning Torah. Then the Targum concludes, “You will be cursed when you go out” meaning, you will be cursed **when you go out to make a living**”.

What is wrong with making a living? We have to support our family and earn a living! As a matter of fact the Torah implicitly states [Parashat Eikev 11:14] “VE'ASAFTA DEGANECHA”, and you shall gather in your produce”. One can well understand the curse associated with lewd or inappropriate forms of entertainment which the Romans were notorious for, but what is the curse associated with trying to earn a living?

The Tanna R' Yonatan ben Uziel was well aware of the fact that there is nothing wrong with earning a living and time spent earning a living is NOT considered as ‘bitul Torah’. Yehoshua, during battle of city Ai, (Yehoshua 5:14) was criticized by an Angel of G-d, according to Gemara Megillah (3a-b) for neglecting Torah study. Not during time of battle was he expected to be involved in studying Torah, but at night, when there was no battle taking place [in those days-without proper lighting] the Malach tell him he should have organized Torah classes for the soldiers. So too with earning a living. There are enough minutes, or even hours, after work to set aside time for Torah study. It's all a matter of priorities.

Rav Henkin, once met the Chazon Ish when they were both in Europe. At that time, Rav Henkin did not know the Chazon Ish and he certainly did not realize his greatness. They were both coincidentally in the home of a certain Rav, and while waiting to see him in his study, began talking with one another. Rav Henkin asked the Chazon Ish “What is your name?” and he replied “My name is Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz”. “What do you do?” inquired Rav Henkin, “I own a store”, replied Rav Karelitz. [The fact is that the Chazon Ish's wife ran the store while he learned most of the time-that's how he earned a

living]. Rav Henkin then asked, “Do you set aside fixed times for learning Torah daily?” The Chazon Ish replied, “When I have time I learn”.

Later, when Rav Henkin got in to the study to see the Rav, the Rav told him that he was about to leave his position for several months and he was planning on leaving his community in the interim with the gentleman in the parlor named Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, who was noted as a great Talmid Chacham. What the Chazon Ish told Rav Henkin was absolutely true. Whenever he had time, he learned! That is why he became the Chazon Ish.

Time is our most precious possession. Every minute that ticks away is a minute less for us to live. Let us not squander our precious days, hours, minutes or seconds. A pocket Siddur, Chumash, Mishnayot or Gemara can help us fill many long periods of time while waiting on a line, while waiting for a bus. Let us resolve to “Learn whenever we have time”, so that we will be in the pasuk of “blessings”, BARUCH ATA BE'TZEI'TECHA

You will be blessed when you go out to earn a living and have a fixed time for learning.