

Sustaining our Community

Ki Tavo 5781

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Immediately prior to commencing his terrifying rebuke of the Jewish people, the *tochakha*, Moshe foretells of the covenant which would be ratified in the days of his successor, Joshua, at the twin Samarian mountain site of Gerizim and Abal. Moshe enumerates twelve curses to be pronounced, with corresponding blessings, at this future date. The climax of this list, strikes both a general and specific chord,

ארור אשר לא יקים את דברי התורה הזאת לעשות אותם. (דברים כז:כו)

'Cursed is the one who does not fulfill the words of this Torah to perform them.' (Deuteronomy 27:26)

Undoubtedly, the plain meaning of the verse relates to the entire corpus of the Torah. However, there is a critical secondary meaning of the verse, and I would add, not quite a homiletical one either. The Torah's selection of the word יקים, which means both to fulfill and to support, in place of perfectly suitable and more commonly used alternatives, such as ישמור or יעשה, which only connote performance, underscores this point.

As noted by the Talmud Yerushalmi (Sotah 7:4), the Torah is cursing one who does not financially support the study of Torah, and conversely, blessing one who does. However, the Sages of the Talmud were far more radical in articulating the message than, I deeply suspect, any of us would dare to be.

'R. Acha said in the name of R. Tanchum son of Chiyah. If one has studied and taught the Torah, guarded and performed the commandments, and was capable of offering financial support for the study of Torah, and did not do so, he is cursed.' (ad loc.)

The words of the Yerushalmi are utterly shocking. Is it conceivable that one who has learned intensively, taught diligently, performed meticulously, but fallen short in just one way, with respect to supporting the study of Torah according to his means, could be cursed? Apparently so. However startled we are by this Talmudic passage, we ought to be doubly shocked by its continuation, which presents precisely the inverse scenario.

'R. Yirmiyah said in the name of R. Chiyah. One who has *not* studied, nor taught, nor guarded, nor performed, and was not in a financial position to support Torah study, but did so nonetheless, is amongst those who is blessed.'
(ad loc.)

While the individual concerned may have glaring, massive flaws in his spiritual character, gaping holes in his knowledge and observance, the simple fact that he extends himself financially to support the study of Torah merits him Divine blessing.

There is not a person in our community, fortunately, who matches this description of the Talmud Yerushalmi- totally unlettered, with no meritorious deeds to his credit. And yet, in so far as we may all describe ourselves having fallen short of the mark, at least in some respect, we ought to take great solace in the words of the Yerushalmi.

By giving of our hard earned and limited resources, in challenging economic circumstances, to support people and institutions who study and teach the eternal and inspiring truths of the Torah, we all merit a special blessing.

As Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur draw nearer with each passing day, let us strive to remember the importance of sustaining our community institutions, especially our beloved Center.

In particular, as we have dramatically increased costs this year to provide both indoor and outdoor minyanim, please consider all the shul has done over the past year and a half as our community has faced unprecedented challenges .

May He who is *ne'eman l'shalem sachar*, faithful to recompense, reward our generosity many times over.