

1. See Rashi, beginning Sidra, quotes Tanhumah as to why Atem Mitzavim follows upon Tokhachah. Answers: Moses told them the 100 less two curses, their faces blanched, "who can survive such terrors?" He began to pacify them — history is like Ha-yom, just as the day turns dark then light again, so you will suffer darkness of curses then light will come.
2. But two questions: first, why idiomatic oddity of "100 lesstwo?" Should say explicitly 98 and avoid appearance of algebraic puzzle. Second, if actually count maledictions enumerated, find they are 100, not 98.
3. Answer given by Grandfather, za"l. Of the 100 curses, 98 are explicit, all gory details. Two are only in dark hints: "also every sickness and plague not written in this Torah." What does this mean, and why inexplicit? Rabbis: Refers to death of Zaddikim and Talmidei Chakhamim. In other words, other curses, horrible as they are, are bearable, can still undertake to spell out their agony to the last anguished syllable. But there is something too horrible, too incredibly evil, too unspeakably awesome to be able to express in words: the death of the appreciation of righteousness and the respect for scholarship. When these are gone, nothing is left for Israel to live for. So overwhelming are the implications of this malediction that the Torah did not want to spell it out openly, and so merely hinted at it in the words "every sickness and plague not mentioned..."
4. So that the 100 curses include these two unspeakable ones, and therefore the euphemistic expression "100 less 2". And that is what happened when Moses mentioned the curses. When they heard the other 98 that was bad enough. But you can survive physical punishment, political oppression, disease, poverty, ~~exterminations~~ racial excesses. But you cannot survive the "less 2", the indescribably horrible thoughts of Missas Tzaddikim and Missas Talmidei Chakhamim. So Israel's face blanched and they said Mi Yakhol laamod b'elu, who can possibly survive the other 98 if we have no Tzaddikim and Talmidei Chakhamim. This is the end. Therefore Moses told them ha-yom...if during bitter night of exile and pogroms... you lay the groundwork of Chinukh, build schools, study Torah...then, if it is "less 2", if you guard against these two curses, the dawn will break again, you will survive the long night...
5. So with us today, we are at the end of a year, twilight, dark mood, think our situation sometimes doubtful, wonder, will we survive or not... so we are told: as the day dark then light, so we if determine make this a great year of Torah education....
6. But not only for young, also for ourselves, for if we not learn, children also not. And insufficient just plan for later — must start today, this afternoon. Parable of Chafetz Chayyim: Rich man at market accosted Poor Man; need money food, can make good deal but need 5 rubles, please lend me. Rich: certainly, come to my house at 8 tonight. Poor Man never shows up. Next day at market, same Poor Man to same Rich Man: need money for food,...(same speech). Rich Man; had it for you last night, where were you? but alright, come again tonight will give you. Again doesn't show up. Next day at market — Poor Man repeats request...Rich Man: you're either a liar or mad or both — you're totally irresponsible. So we, we request "5 rubles" of G-d every morning: Binah le'havin u-le'haskil...chanemu me'itekha deah binah v'haskel...ve'ha'er einenu be'toratekha..... G-d has these talents, willing to lend us them, all He asks is that we come to His house — lecture hall, Sheur, Perek class...to pick them up, they are available. But we never show up — and next morning we're back again begging Him to lend us 5 rubles worth of wisdom, intelligence... Therefore, prophet: Kechu imakhem devarim...ve'shuvu... take your own words seriously, and return to G-d's House...
7. In megillah: Jews had Orah, Sasson, Simchah and Yekar. Rabbis: Orah is Torah. So, as the Jews of old had all these blessings, Ken Tihyeh Lanu. may we at threshold New Year have new dawn of Light, light of Torah...happiness....