

“Lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle... and your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem, your G-d.” (8:12,14)

The text of these pesukim is ambiguous. The Torah seems to imply that satisfaction and success in Eretz Yisrael are doubtful, while haughtiness and forgetting Hashem, the Source of success, seems to be a certainty. Horav Yosef Konvitz, z.l., explains that if we scan Jewish history, we will note that during those times when we were blessed with material success, we were, regrettably, not able to withstand the allure of sin that inevitably accompanies it. The yetzer hara, evil inclination, works very hard to ensnare his prey. When he utilizes material benefits and comforts, he has added ammunition for success. The sin of the Golden-Calf, to a large extent, was the result of a nation that lost control of itself after being blessed with material blessings following the Egyptian exodus. It would, therefore, make sense that Hashem would act toward us in a passé manner and not “overburden” us with material abundance. If we have less, we will do less. We cannot make a golden calf if we do not possess any gold.

Jewish human nature has proven itself to be unique in this matter. We do not wait until we amass material wealth to renege the yoke of mitzvot. As soon as we begin to dream about success, we are already making plans for our new lifestyle which, regrettably, is not consistent with Torah dictate. The haughtiness that quite often accompanies this sudden rise in financial status takes hold of an individual even before the success has materialized.

This is the pasuk’s admonition to us: “Lest you eat and be satisfied.” Even before you have built your new homes and acquired abundant gold and silver, even if your wealth and material success is but a dream, a reality that is still elusive, yet you already have the nerve to “become haughty and forget Hashem.” The result will be that it will all be a dream. Your wealth will not materialize, and the haughtiness that preceded it will cause those around you to resent you. After all, there is nothing so revolting as an arrogant beggar.