

## **Yeshurun waxed fat and rebelled. (32:15)**

It seems implied that prosperity has its dangers. The Torah intimates that, once the Jewish people's financial portfolio took an upward turn, the people felt that they no longer were under Heavenly obligation. They had money; it was now a free-for-all. This is clearly not true. We see many bnei Torah who, some after struggling, finally make it in the world of commerce. They are extraordinary baalei tzedakah, supporting every organization from Torah institutions to welfare and social organizations. Indeed, these bnei Torah act with the greatest reverence toward fulfilling their Heavenly obligations.

Apparently, not everyone can handle sudden wealth. Some become overwhelmed and lose sight of the priorities that guide the Jewish perspective on life. Others will use their wealth to dominate and lord over others, acting as if they do not answer to anyone who is not on their financial strata.

Clearly, prosperity is a test. Some pass with flying colors, while others fail dismally. It is not the wealth, but the individual. Those who pass view wealth as providing opportunities to make a positive contribution to society, to lead a higher quality of life, enabling their prosperity to provide benefits for themselves, and, by extension, for others.

For their counterparts, wealth can be self-destructive, leading to greed, isolation, and even moral corruption. It may foster unhealthy relationships, since these flawed individuals gravitate to like-minded people who will further their success.

I think it can all be encapsulated in the tefillah we recite on Shabbos Mevorchim, when we bless the upcoming new month. Among the supplications that we intone, we ask Hashem for chaim shel osher v'kavod, "a life of wealth and honor." Kavod, honor, is something from which we are to distance ourselves. Why would we seek honor? Our quintessential leader, Moshe Rabbeinu, earned the appellation anav mikol adam, humblest man (on earth). Did he also ask for honor? Apparently, kavod here means honorable. We pray that the prosperity that Hashem gifts us will be honorable – not through any undesirable means. We pray that the wealth will not negatively transform us. We hope that the wealth will be used responsibly to impact the community positively. Honorable wealth is characterized by transparency, fairness and a commitment to improve the lives of others. Such wealth is enviable.