

# WHAT HAD TO BE SAID

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

...lest you eat and be sated, and build good houses and dwell therein, and your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold increase, and all that you have increases, and your heart grows haughty, and you forget HASHEM, your G-d, Who has brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, Who led you through that great and awesome desert, [in which were] snakes, vipers and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought water for you out of solid rock, Who fed you with manna in the desert, which your forefathers did not know, in order to afflict you and in order to test you, to benefit you in your end, and you will say to yourself, **"My strength and the might of my hand that has accumulated this wealth for me."** But you must remember the Lord your God, for it is He that gives you strength to make wealth, in order to establish His covenant which He swore to your forefathers, as it is this day. And it will be, if you forget HASHEM your G-d and follow other gods, and worship them, and prostrate yourself before them, I bear witness against you this day, that you will surely perish. (Devarim 8:11-19)

I detect a theme. It's hard to avoid. It's not a hint at all. It's brutal honesty. Moshe is admonishing them and us. It is a severe warning that applies then and now. It lends truth to the statement, "Nothing fails like success!" We are cautioned again and again to be on guard when things are going well. The test of wealth may be more challenging than the test of poverty, although most of us would petition, "Test me!" A poor person is constantly in need. He is forever prayerful and is grateful for the smallest benefits.

However, when things are going swimmingly, we may become intoxicated with the illusion that we did it, all by our lonesome selves, lending credence to another aphorism, "Born on third base and thinks he hit a triple!"

We are warned that if we forget HASHEM and we grow overconfident in our own abilities, there are reminders in the world that graduate from the subtle to the dramatic and even the destructive. We can only hope we are responsive to the wink and the nod and we do not require the rude awakening.

About 16 years ago we had a newly wedded couple at our Shabbos table. It was a special event, although both of them had joined us many times. We had hosted each of them over the years as singles. It had been an arduous journey to the Chupa for both of them. He had dated for a long time and she had a few near misses (Mrs.). Now they had arrived at our table as husband and wife. We

were overjoyed. I don't recall what got the conversation off the rails but once it went there it was hard to stop. It was beyond awkward. He started recalling episodes from his dating history, referring to places people and events that "pre-dated" his wife.

She was more than uncomfortable with the content of the conversation. Now that he had arrived in the promised land of marriage he was leisurely reflecting with nostalgia at the "good old days". I was trying to get his attention, even kick him but he was too far away and deeply engrossed. I tried singing but he swerved back again. Things were moving from bad to worse.

Swiftly and mercifully, HASHEM sent an angel. My four year daughter Sara had been studying intently the bride's face with curiosity. She had been at our table a year earlier with a fellow she was seeing "seriously". His name was David. Suddenly, my little daughter, referencing a one year old memory, asked pointedly, "Where's David!" She got a shock but he halted his monologue in a hurry and asked, "Who's David!?" He got a potent dose of his own medicine and it worked immediately. No one else could have said then, **what had to be said**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).