

**EMUNAH - FAITH
BULLETIN # 24**

**WHO IS WEALTHY? THE ONE WHO
IS HAPPY WITH HIS PORTION (PIRKE AVOT)**

***THE RAMCHAL EXPLAINS THE FOUNDATIONS OF EMUNAH
IN HIS SEFER DAAT TEVUNOT***

OBSERVE, NOW, THE PROGRESS OF THE WORLD, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EARLIER AND THE LATER GENERATIONS. FOR, IN TRUTH, ONE WHO CONSIDERS THIS MATTER WILL INDEED MARVEL AT THE PHENOMENON OF MEN CEASELESSLY RACING BACK AND FORTH, DAY AND NIGHT, EACH IN HIS OWN PATH, WEARIED AND FATIGUED. AND FOR WHAT ARE THEY LABORING? FOR FOOD AND DRINK? FOR INANE VANITIES, FOR A ONE- NIGHT WORLD OF NOTHINGNESS—TODAY HERE, TOMORROW IN THE GRAVE.

But one who can observe well will see and understand that it was not for this that man was created; that it would befit him to engage only in the contemplation of the glory of his Creator; that it was this for which he was created and invested with great knowledge and wisdom, and not to devote himself to commerce or to other inconsequential enterprises. But man has perverted his deeds and has brought himself to his present state. The world is undergoing constant regression in this respect, the earlier generations having been closer to wisdom and having given greater priority to intellect, the later generations being farther from intellect and steeped in these elements of matter and nature, in commerce and in all manner of enterprise, which leave nothing behind them, as we have explained. The root of all this is as we have said. The one, Blessed Lord created the body through the concealment of His countenance, and not through its radiance, for which reason it is dark and ugly in essence. The soul, contrariwise, was created in the luminescence of His countenance and with projection for the good, for which reason it is eternally enduring and pure in essence. However, if man asserts his body and gives it the ascendancy, the Blessed One, measure for measure, will relate to him only in concealment of countenance, so that he will be far

from the Light of Life, from wisdom and from knowledge, and steeped in the mire of material pollution and the vanities of this world.

And this is precisely what happened to Adam in the beginning, and to his descendants after him, until this very day. Because they went astray after their eyes and gave precedence to the body and not to the soul, the Holy One, Blessed be He, responded in kind with concealment of countenance. To Adam He said (Genesis 3:9): “By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread,” and from that day forward (Ecclesiastes 6:7): “All the labor of man is for his mouth, and his soul, too, will not be filled.” Wisdom has progressively waned and has departed from man.

And this is a great principle: The bounds of a man’s intellect dictate the bounds of his thoughts and his desires. The little child does not recognize wisdom and does not desire it at all. To the contrary, every child wishes to run away from school, thinking there is no good but the vanities he occupies himself with. But when he grows in knowledge and his horizons expand, he comes to desire more sophisticated things, and so onwards, according to his progress. The same applies to men in general. When their intellect was stimulated by an abundance of illumination, they found pleasure in wisdom alone and in what was truly good; but when their intellect is not so stimulated, they recognize nothing as good but these earthly vanities. And this is the evil that resulted from Adam’s sin — the removal of providence and radiance from the human species, so that they remained steeped in gross, material elements alone. The Holy One, Blessed be He, indeed, corrected this state at the giving of the Law, but they reverted to it through the sin of the golden calf and through others, so that the world remained in the darkness of illusory natural processes.

“Everything Hashem does, He does for good.” (Berachot 60b)

Our sages said (Chulin 7b), "A person does not bruise his finger unless it was decreed in Heaven,"