THE REDUNDANT SECURITY GUARANTEE

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshios Behar & Bechukosai

The Redundant Security Guarantee

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Weekly Portion Torah Tapes: Tape # 544, Bedikas Chametz. Good Shabbos!

Following the laws of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years, the Torah writes: "You shall perform My decrees, and observe My ordinances and perform them; and you shall dwell securely on the land. The land will give its fruit and you will eat to satisfaction; and you will dwell securely on it." [Vayikra 25:18-19]

There is a redundancy in these two pasukim [verses]. Both pasukim 18 and 19 end with the exact same idea: "You will dwell securely on the land." Rashi takes note of this. Rashi interprets that the first pasuk states "you shall dwell securely on the land" to teach us that exile is a punishment for the sin of not observing the Shmitah [Sabbatical] year. The second pasuk teaches "you shall dwell securely upon it" to promise us that we will not need to worry about a year of drought. In other words, the first pasuk refers to military / national security while the second pasuk refers to economic / agricultural security.

The Chasam Sofer offers a different interpretation to explain this redundancy:

It is hard for us to imagine, but when one lives in an agrarian economy, without the world wide economy of import and export that exists today, if people do not plant, they will not eat. One hundred years ago, when the first Jews returned to Eretz Yisrael from Europe and the question was raised of what to do during Shmitah -? there was literally a threat that the entire community would starve and be wiped out if they did not find a permitted way to farm on the Shmitah year!

The Chasam Sofer interprets that the promise "you will dwell securely on the land" in pasuk 18 addresses just this fear. The Torah promises us in pasuk 18 that if we observe the laws of Shmitah, we will nevertheless miraculously have economic security, as the pasuk then explains: "I will ordain

My blessing for you in the sixth year and it will yield a crop sufficient for the three years." [25:21].

According to the Chasam Sofer, Pasuk 19 is offering another guarantee.

One of the great "tests" of money is that it goes to our heads. We begin to think: "My might and the power of my hand made me this great wealth." [Devorim 8:17] The great challenge of affluence is that we must never forget the source of the income. When people begin to earn a lot of money, it often happens that they begin to think: "It is because I'm smarter, I'm better, I know how to invest, I know how to run a business." The challenge of affluence ?- what it does to one's ego and what it does to one's life style -- is not an easy one to face.

In pasuk 19, the Torah is teaching as follows: If you realize that this fruit comes miraculously; if you realize that the produce did not come by virtue of your work, but by virtue of your keeping the commandments of the Almighty, then you will dwell in security upon your land. You will then have the blessing that your wealth will never get to your head.

As long as we recognize that everything comes from the Hand of G-d, then we will never be overcome by the corrupting challenges of wealth. This is the second promise of security in the parsha ? "You will be secure that your wealth won't negatively affect you. Why? Because you will realize that it came from the Almighty."

The Person Who Does Not Have A Redeemer

Later on in Parshas Behar, the Torah says that if a person becomes poor to the extent that he has to sell off his inheritance in Eretz Yisrael, his relative should step in to redeem the field so that he might retrieve his family inheritance. However, if the person has no such relative who is prepared to bail him out, but he later obtains a windfall that allows him to repurchase his land, then he is entitled to make that redemption himself. [Vayikra 25:25-26]

One might ask on this sequence of events presented by the Torah: Why does the Torah need to tell us that a person who was out of luck and had to sell his land and had no relative to bail him out, may indeed buy back this land if he obtains the money? Would we not have assumed this to be the case on our own? If my brother or my uncle can redeem the land for me, certainly ? if I obtain the money, I should be able to redeem my own land for myself!

The Chasam Sofer explains that the Torah is telling us as follows: "You were down on your luck. You had no money. You sold your property. There was no one to help you out. You were helpless. How, were you suddenly able to obtain money? The answer is that when a person realizes that there is no one to turn to except the Ribbono Shel Olam, then the Ribbono Shel Olam comes to the rescue."

There are some situations in life when a person says, "I'm hopeless. I tried this and I tried that, I went here and I went there. Nothing helps!" When a person gets to that situation and he turns to G-d and says "Ribbono Shel Olam, I am stuck, I have no one else to turn to but You..." then "He will find

enough for his redemption." Suddenly, something will happen.

This is the interpretation of pasuk 26. "If a man has no redeemer" (there is no brother or father or uncle to turn to), then suddenly "he acquires enough" because he finally put his faith in the 'person' who he should have put his faith with in the first place ? the Ribbono Shel Olam, and "he will find enough for its redemption."

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