

והארץ לא תמכר לצמיתות כי גרים ותושבים אתם עמדי

The land shall not be sold in perpetuity for you are residents and sojourners with me.

These words are used by the *Torah* to explain why a family's homestead in *Eretz Yisrael* may not be sold permanently. The wording "residents and sojourners" seems contradictory. If we are permanent residents, then we are not sojourners? Moreover, being sojourners or temporary residents in the land would not be a rationale against the permanent transfer of property. On the contrary, if we are not real residents should we be able to pass it to another family.

The *Dubner Maggid* (Rabbi Yaakov Kranz of Dubno, 1741-1804) answers this question with a parable.

A wealthy man with a large estate decided to retire and to travel the world. He decided to bequeath his magnificent mansion and land to a poor man with whom he was acquainted. He drew up a deed with just one stipulation, that the poor man cannot be conceited and demonstrate arrogance or ingratitude. The poor man accepted the property and the stipulation and moved into the magnificent estate. As time went on he became comfortable with the good life and felt as if this new reality was his true station in life.

Many years passed and his benefactor returned from his travels. He told the new owner that he intended to be in the area for a month or two and that he would like to use one of the cottages on the property as a home for the duration of his stay. The owner agreed and allowed him to use the cottage. As things developed the original owner had to extend his stay and remained in the cottage for a year. The new owner became upset and began to demand that he move out, eventually evicting him by force.

The evicted man took the case before the court and argued that the new owner had violated the stipulation he had made when he deeded the land to him. The court agreed with the claim and ruled that since the new occupant had indeed acted arrogant and ungrateful, he had forfeited his right to the property and it reverted in its entirety to the original owner.

When *Hashem* gave us the land, He told us that we have to remember that it was a gift from him. We cannot become so comfortable that we forget that we are there only as his guests. To underscore this point, *Hashem* gave us several *mitzvos* that restrict the use of the land to help us remember that we are sojourners. If we remember that we are on the land only by the grace of *Hashem*, then our stay will be permanent. This is why the *Torah* says that we are both residents and sojourners.

This is true of all of the blessings that *Hashem* bestows upon us, health, wealth, friends, family and happiness. The best way to make sure that we continue to have these wonderful blessings is to always remember that it all comes from Him. If we become complacent and are not grateful for His gifts, we jeopardize our continued benefits.