

## **Beyond Control**

**Excerpted and adapted from a *shiur* by Dayan Yitzhak Grossman**

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*Yosef acquired all the land of Mitzrayim for Paroh...and the land became Paroh's. As for the nation, he resettled it by cities, from one end of Mitzrayim's borders to the other.*

Bereishis 47:20-21

How does the Torah view socialism and communism? The vast majority of rabanim have argued that the Torah strongly opposes these systems. Clearly, they argued, the halachos of Choshen Mishpat support a capitalist economic system, where each individual owns his property and the government may not appropriate it to bring about equality. But R' Yehuda Leib Graubart, author of Chavalim Bane'imim, recounts that R' Itzeleh Ponovezher said that since many Jewish youths at the time supported socialism, it must be Hashem's will, and it should be supported, at least with reservations and limitations.

The *poskim* have also debated one specific area of socialist theory, rent control. Some *poskim* in Europe, such as R' Meir Arik and R' Aharon Lewin, argued that although halacha does not forbid landlords to raise rents, rent control is permitted due to *dina demalchusa dina* (the law of the land is halachically binding), especially when it is in the country's best interests. Other *poskim*, such as the Chavatzelless Hasharon and the Maharshag, argued that rent control was forbidden. They maintained that although the Rama says that laws designed to benefit the citizenry are subject to *dina demalchusa dina*, this is inapplicable to rent control, because class warfare against the wealthy in favor of the poor does not benefit the entire population.

In New York, R' Yosef Eliyahu Henkin supported rent control laws. He felt they were fair and necessary in large cities to prevent landlords from raising prices excessively and increasing poverty.