

## **D'var Torah by Rabbi M. Jaroslawicz for Parshas Mishpatim 5775 (2015)**

This week's Parsha, Mishpatim, starts by teaching us some of the laws of an Eved Ivri, a Hebrew slave/servant. Such a servant shall work for you for six years, and in the seventh year you must let him go free. If, at the end of his six years, he wants to remain on as a slave and continue to work for his master, both slave and master must go to the Bais Din, the Jewish court. Bais Din has the master take an awl and bore a hole in the slave's ear at the doorpost. The slave is then obligated to work for his master "L'Ohlam," until the Yovel (Jubilee) year.

Of all the body parts that could be "drilled," why did the Torah choose the ear? Says Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zackai, "With that ear he heard G-d say at Mount Sinai, 'To "Me" the B'nai Yisroel shall be slaves.' And yet, even after being offered freedom, he still chose to remain a slave to his physical master. That same ear should be drilled as a reminder of the sovereignty of Hashem over all of his people."

We can add to this thought the question of the O'hr Ha'Chaim: "Why does the Torah use the term 'Ivri' when referring to the Jewish slave, and not the word 'Yisroel'? Why don't we call him an Eved Yisroel?" By combining some of the O'hr Ha'Chaim's answers to this question, I would like to suggest the following answer.

The word "Ivri" comes from the root word "Eiver," which is spelled "Ayen," Vet," and "Raish" and means "bypassed." This Jew bypassed the laws of "Thou shall not steal!" and he stole. Not being able to pay restitution, he is forced to work to satisfy his debt. However, when he completed his sentence, he bypassed the law of "Hashem should be your only Master," and he accepted upon himself additional years of servitude to another.

But just possibly, worst of all, is that he bypassed his Emunah, the faith in the fact that Hashem -- who just let him go free after six years in slavery -- would take care of him without his needing to be a slave. He basically "GAVE UP." Every Jew must always be willing and able to refocus his/her self and NEVER give up.

As Rebbi Nachman of Breslov says; "Gevalt!!!, Never give up!!!"

This past Tuesday night, we were very fortunate to have an hour-and-a-half concert from the group called "Simply Tsfat!" In less than 48 hours from the time that I was notified of their availability, we were able to gather over forty members and friends -- and had an absolutely amazing time.

We sang, we clapped, we exercised, we danced and we thirsted for more. The boys did not just share beautiful music with us, but they also combined it with Torah stories, insights and lessons. Perhaps the most important lesson that they shared that night was from the teachings of Rabbi Nachman:

"GEVALT...NEVER GIVE UP!!!"

We are never too old; we are never too locked in our ways... and we are NEVER out of luck. We must always have Emunah and look at the bright side of what life has to offer.

I cannot think of a stronger or better connection between the good fortunes that we had having Simply Tsfat with us this week, and this week's Parsha lesson.

Always be b'simcha and don't be depressed. When the opportunity presents itself to break free from whatever bondage surrounds us, WE MUST GRAB IT!! We must have faith in Hashem and in ourselves. And once again the most important lesson of the week is:

GEVALT.... NEVER GIVE UP"