



Parent Child Learning

פְּרֻשֵׁת מִשְׁפָּטִים

Prepared by Rabbi Poupko

Topic:

At Your Service



Read over the following pesukim about the Eved Ivri, the Jewish servant...

שמות פרק כא, א-ו

¹ These are the laws that you must set before [Bnei Yisrael]:

² If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years, but in the seventh year, he is to be set free without liability. ³

If he was unmarried when he entered service, he shall leave by himself. But if he was a married man, his wife shall leave with him. ⁴ If his master gives him a wife, and she bears sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall remain her master's property. [The slave] shall leave by himself. ⁵ If the slave declares, 'I am fond of my master, my wife and my children; I do not want to go free,' ⁶ his master

must bring him to the courts. Standing [the slave] next to the door or doorpost, his master shall pierce his ear with an awl. [The slave] shall then serve [his master] forever.

(א) וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשֶׂים לְפָנֶיךָ: (ב) כִּי תִקְנֶה עֶבֶד עִבְרִי שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים יַעֲבֹד וּבִשְׁבַעַת יֵצֵא לְחֻפְשֵׁי חָנָם: (ג) אִם בְּגֹפוֹ יָבֵא בְּגֹפוֹ יֵצֵא אִם בְּעַל אִשָּׁה הוּא וְיִצְאָה אִשְׁתּוֹ עִמוֹ: (ד) אִם אֲדָנָיו יִתֵּן לוֹ אִשָּׁה וְיִלְדָה לוֹ בָּנִים אוֹ בָנוֹת הָאִשָּׁה וְיִלְדֶיהָ תִהְיֶה לְאֲדֹנָיָהּ וְהוּא יֵצֵא בְּגֹפוֹ: (ה) וְאִם אָמַר יֹאמֶר הָעֶבֶד אֶהְבֵּתִי אֶת אֲדֹנָי אֶת אִשְׁתִּי וְאֶת בְּנֵי לֹא אֵצֵא חֻפְשִׁי: (ו) וְהִגִּישׁוּ אֲדָנָיו אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים וְהִגִּישׁוּ אֶל הַדָּלֶת אוֹ אֶל הַמְּזוּזָה וְרָצַע אֲדָנָיו אֶת אָזְנוֹ בַּמַּרְצֵעַ וַעֲבָדוּ לְעַלְמִם:

...and discuss the following questions based on what you read...

- 1) When were these mitzvot given? What famous event just took place?
- 2) How long may a Jewish servant be kept? When must he go free? Do these numbers remind you of anything else in the Torah?

- 3) To whom does the Jewish servants family belong? What does it depend on?
- 4) Is a Jewish servant allowed to stay in his job forever? Why or why not?
- 5) What is done to a Jewish servant who doesn't want to go free? Is this a punishment?
- 6) [Middle School Question] See the Gemara below. Why must a Jewish servant be treated this way? What connection can you make between the fact that we were slaves in Egypt and the lessons in this Gemara? Is the fact that we were slaves the reasoning behind these lessons?

תלמוד בבלי מסכת קידושין דף כ עמוד א

As it is taught in a *baraita*: The verse states concerning a Hebrew slave: **“Because he fares well with you”** (Deuteronomy 15:16), which teaches that the slave should be **with you**, i.e., treated as your equal, **in food**, meaning that his food must be of the same quality as yours, and **with you in drink**.

דתניא (דברים טו, טז) כי טוב לו עמך עמך במאכל ועמך במשתה. שלא תהא אתה אוכל פת נקיה והוא אוכל פת קיבר אתה שותה יין ישן והוא שותה יין חדש אתה ישן על גבי מוכים והוא ישן על גבי התבן מכאן אמרו כל הקונה עבד עברי כקונה אדון לעצמו.

The *baraita* continues: This means **that there shall not** be a situation in **which you eat fine bread and he eats inferior bread [kibbar]**, bread from coarse flour mixed with bran, which is low quality. There shall not be a situation in which **you drink aged wine and he drinks inferior new wine**. There shall not be a situation in which **you sleep** comfortably **on** bedding made from **soft sheets and he sleeps on straw**. **From here the Sages stated: Anyone who acquires a Hebrew slave is considered like one who acquires a master for himself**, because he must be careful that the slave's living conditions are equal to his own.