

אושר החיים

לע"נ ר' חיים יוסף ליב בן ר' שאול יצחק ז"ל

Genuine Servitude

The *Gemara* (*Kiddushin* 22b, see also *Rashi* in *Mishpatim* 21:6)¹ tells us that Hashem finds disfavor with a person who sells himself to another Jew as an *Eved Ivri*. It is upon him that Hashem says, "This person heard Me say by *Matan Torah*, 'Ki li Bnei Yisroel avadim, v'lo avadim l'avadim – B'nei Yisroel are My exclusive servants, and they are not servants to other servants.' Yet, he still allowed himself to be acquired as a slave to another!"

The question may be asked: The *Torah* condones this sale for the first six years for a good reason (as he was extremely poverty-stricken and unable to support himself). If so, how can we fault this person to such a great degree for wanting to continue his stay afterward with this master? True, it is essentially wrong for him to stay onward. But surely, this master had treated him so well during this time, that he might have become very comfortable under these conditions while there for so long. Thus, it is only conceivable that he would decide to continue living with such a lifestyle.

Therefore, we may explain that his primary misdeed is not merely founded upon his choice to continue now as an *eved*. Rather, it originated with his approach to the first six years. An *Eved Hashem* knows very well that for each and every situation in which he finds himself, whether he is in a position of open *ruchnius* or even while doing mundane actions, he is always meant to direct his thoughts to doing the *r'tzon Hashem* – and nothing more. Therefore, even if the *Torah* allowed him to initially be sold as a slave to this master out of his inability to live because of his tremendous poverty, he should have developed a proper mindset. From the beginning, he might have understood that he was being sold solely for the sake of Hashem. Thus, during those years of servitude, he would have been living a life focused upon serving Hashem alone. Yes, he was living in the capacity as a slave to another. But his underlying thoughts should have been, "Even under these circumstances, I am truly an *eved laHashem*; I am solely serving Hashem - even in this role of being a slave to someone else!"

Chazal are teaching us that the gauge to determine the sincerity of his actions would be seen at the culmination of these first six years. If he would then want to remain with this master rather than being free to serve Hashem in a more direct manner, then this is a clear sign that his first years were not entirely *l'sheim Shomayim*. When one serves Hashem alone, in every situation that arises – regardless of the circumstances, then as soon as he can go back to a more direct form of *avodas Hashem*, he will do so with alacrity.

This teaches us an integral lesson. Whether it is the bochur who has some time off from *Yeshiva* or the *yungerman* who must take leave of the *Beis Midrash* for an important errand, one should know that he is still truly serving Hashem during this time. The *bein hazmanim* is meant just as well as a time of growth in itself, as well as obviously giving one a time to rest up for his future learning. The obligation or appointment that one needs to take care of may be done with the thought of carrying out the will of Hashem. With these thoughts in mind, we will only look forward to coming back once again to our distinct and open role of *avodah*, from where we had originally taken leave.

משפטים
תשפ"ה

The more one values the words of the one from whom he is listening, will cause him to try to gain a greater understanding into the profundity of his words. (side 2)

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True Listening

The Gemara (Shabbos 88a) tells us that when Klal Yisroel preceded “Na’aseh” before “Nishma”, Malachei Hashareis came and tied two crowns to each of them. One crown represented “Na’aseh”, while the second one represented “Nishma”. The question we can ask is, the greatness of the act of Klal Yisroel was that they acted upon “doing” before they “listened”, thus showing their complete commitment and subservience to Hashem. If so, why did they receive from the Malachim two crowns? Wouldn’t it have been more appropriate to just give them one crown for their outstanding display of devotion to Hashem because they placed “Na’aseh” before “Nishma”?!

We may answer, that the “Nishma” that came after their “Na’aseh” was also greater, as it was an entirely different “shmi’a”! There is a vast difference between “herrin” and “der herin”. Listening does not merely mean the ability to hear another’s words. Rather it is the ability to contemplate the depth of what he has heard; to gain a true understanding of it. I once heard Rav Shlomo Wolbe quote a Rambam in a shmuez. After the shmuez, I approached my magid shiur with a question on what he quoted. The rebbe told me, “Quick, go ask your question to the mashgiach before he leaves!” When I approached him, Rav Wolbe asked, “Did you look up the words of the Rambam?!”, implying that the question should not be asked so hastily, but rather, time and effort should be given to properly digest what had been said.

We can add to the above principle, that the more one values the words of the one from whom he is listening, will cause him to try to gain a greater understanding into the profundity of his words. When one merely hears the words of another, it will certainly not have the same effect as when he listens out of a complete loyalty and submissiveness. With this we may explain, that after Klal Yisroel accepted upon themselves complete hisbatlus to Hashem by preceding “Na’aseh” to “Nishma”, their ability to hear the profundity of the Torah was on an entirely new level.

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The author’s sefer, “Passion for Perfection”, includes topics such as: recognizing one’s ability for spiritual greatness, the greatness of Klal Yisroel, bitachon, tefillah, teshuvah, as well as many more subjects.



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