

## MISHPATIM 2 - THE DESCENT AND ELEVATIONS OF THE SLAVES

The term for slave is Eved a direct derivative of the verb Avod - to work. We are already aware that the commandments are divine and reflect something parallel to the conditions which exist in the spiritual realm. 1 So what exactly is the slave to accomplish spiritually by working as a slave here in this world. In order to get a better view of the matter we need to take note that there are a number of classes of slaves. These include Eved Cena'ani, Eved Ivri - with each having its own particular set of work requirements to effect something in the celestial realm. All slaves have one thing in common - namely that their status as a slave is reflective of a spiritual state that needs to be elevated. During the term of service they will be required to physically work according to the dictates of the Law - in order to elevate spiritual sparks that either descended with them or that exist in a lower state. We will discuss three classes of slaves - detailing how and what they are to elevate spiritually during their tenure of servitude. These are in ascending order Eved Cena'ani - an alien slave; Eved Ivri - a hebrew slave: Eved Misri - the Jews during servitude in Egypt; There is technically a fourth elevated class which we will also mention - known as Ovde YHVH - The Jews as servants of Hashem after their settlement in the land. We will see that while the Alien slave or the Eved Cena'ani must elevate himself; the other three are or were required to elevate sparks upwards - to conform with the biblical dictum not to ascend from "slavery" or Avdout empty handed or Reqam - That latter expression representing the biblical code to bring forth holiness from the the spiritual state of slavery to freedom.

### THE ALIEN SLAVE

The Eved Cena'ani - has his source in the curse of Cena'an - the grandson of Noah. Sefer Beresheet provides us with some background into the roots of slavery. It is apparent from the biblical source that the sin of (Ham) Cena'an is associated with Ervah - in that "he saw his father's nakedness and that he told this to his brothers outside." 2 Rabbinic exegesis attributes great sinfulness to this act. 3 The Talmud teaches that Cena'an's last will and testament included instructions to his children to love robbery and lewdness. 4 The Sages teach that Ham was punished and that his descendants were lead into exile with their buttocks uncovered. 5 In the classification of slaves it is apparent that the Torah considers Cena'an - the lowest of slaves to his brothers. 6 In this state the Shelah teaches - Gentile slaves originate from a state of Arour or the cursed - and by being the slave of a Jew - he can be elevated to join the ranks of the blessed. 7 We can learn that it is the exposing of Ervah - that resulted in slavery - and his Tiqun or rectification - is not to elevate sparks but rather to elevate himself via his semi conversion and then service of a Jew as an Eved Cena'ani - Alien slave.

### HEBREW SLAVE

Our parasha opens with the ruling associated with an Eved Ivri - a hebrew slave. 8 We will focus on one who enters this class of slavery by order of the Bet Din - He is sold by the court as a thief who is unable to make restitution for his theft. 9 R. HaAri explains that he is to descend spiritually and then work for six years to rectify annually one of the six blemished spiritual channels. 10 The Torah teaches that in the seventh year he is to ascend from the lowly spiritual state. Sefer Devarim instructs that he is not to be sent out without the sparks that he has elevated via his servitude - Lo Teshlehenu Reqam - He must not leave empty handed. 11 The Talmud teaches that he must be given a severance - referenced biblically as Ha'aneq Ta'aniq. 12 - The Torah enjoins that the slave upon his ascent must be furnished from the flock, threshing floor and vat. Specifically items that are similar to these three that are endowed with blessing by their own nature that grow and multiply by themselves. 13 This of

course is the physical manifestation of the sparks of holiness he has to bring forth from his lowly state of slavery. The verse following this requirement to furnish the departing slave - specifically calls out its relationship to our redemption from Egyptian slavery. 14 How did this Eved Ivri descend? Rashi quoting our Sages points out that the Parasha opens with VeEleh HaMishpatim - And these are the rulings - This he notes is to attach the portion of Yitro with Mishpatim. 15 It appears to me that the Sages intended to attach the final ruling in Yitro with the initial one in Mishpatim. The last verse in Yitro reads Lo Tigaleh Ervatekha - that "the nakedness of the Kohanim not be revealed on the ramp of the altar - 16 Juxtaposed is the law in Mishpatim of Eved Ivri thereby connecting the magnet of Ervah to that of Avdout. Didn't we say that the Eved descended as a result of theft? Perhaps so - but the Sages have linked theft with immorality. They teach that both constitute what a person desires and covets. The Talmud goes on to group their reward - 17 so perhaps we can associate their blemish as well. Furthermore - Cena'an the prototypical Eved had linked the two ills in his testament to his children.

### WE WERE SLAVES IN EGYPT

The Jews were sent to be slaves in Egypt. R. HaAri teaches that their descent was for them to bring forth a spiritual Rekhush Gadol - as was promised Abraham. 18 When the brothers descended upon Egypt to secure food - Yoseph refers to Egypt as nakedness of the land - Ervat HaAres - 19 The Sages have associated this with the immorality of the place. 20 The brothers acknowledge to him that they are indeed slaves - Avadim. 21 After a few centuries the Jews leave Egypt - In fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham that Israel would leave BeRekhush Gadol, they are commanded not to leave empty handed. 22 To this the Hizquni teaches that Israel was to gather up prior to their departure the sparks from Egypt this time in the form of Gold Silver and Clothing. This he writes is in comparison to what is furnished in the form of the three benefits (flock, threshing floor, vat) given to the Eved Ivri. 23 The former of course were to be further elevated and be used in the Mishkan. We see again the association of Ervah with slavery -(Egypt) and that the ascent upwards must not be empty-handed - Reqam - It must be accompanied by the Qedusha in the particular form found below. It is interesting to note that a Misva associated with the leaving from Egypt - is Pidyon HaBen. In this perpetual commandment we are taught that one should redeem the firstborn and not see the Divine Reqam. You must continually redeem the sparks of Egypt via this Misva and do not leave empty handed. 24 Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that R. Meir is sighted in the Talmud as connecting the severance pay of a slave to the redemption money of the Pidyon. 25

### SERVANT OF GOD

The highest level of slavery is to be a servant of God - an Eved Hashem Twice in Sefer Shemot and once in Sefer Devarim, we are told with minor variations in syntax that three times a year all males must appear before Hashem 26 - In the two initial sources - Hashem is referred to as an Adon - a Master - Connoting of course that we are his slaves. Though we have not descended to a lowly state - we are nevertheless required to elevate and bring forth sparks to accompany ourselves on our ascent to experience the face of the King. Hence the verse reminds us as slaves - Velo Yera'eh Pene YHVH Reqam - We are not to ascend to the Temple Mount empty handed without the sparks. We must ascend three times a year on the Shalosh Regalim - no doubt corresponding to the three references of severance noted above that the Eved Ivri must ascend with while exiting his years of servitude.

Shabbat Shalom  
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