

## For they are my servants, whom I have taken out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold in the manner of a slave. (25:42)

The *Talmud Yevamos* 46a teaches, “You may purchase from them, but they may not purchase from you.” In other words, a Jew may not sell himself as a slave to a gentile. The **Brisker Rav, zl**, comments that this is the underlying directive of the above *pasuk*. The Jewish people are excluded from the laws of slavery. They do not apply to us, because we may no longer become slaves. We were taken out of Egypt, from servitude to freedom. We have parted ways with slavery – we serve Hashem as our only Master.

There is an emotional aspect to this freedom. The Jewish mindset no longer tolerates servitude to a gentile master. A slave lives in fear; he is afraid not only of those who have jurisdiction over him; he also fears repercussions for anything he might say that is unacceptable. He is obsequious, not his own person. Indeed, this nature is the motivating factor of his life as a slave. Once we were redeemed, we were introduced to our Headmaster, in Whom we place our total trust. We fear only Him.

A slave keeps quiet, remaining in the background, standing ready at the beck and call of his master. As a free man, he regains his power of speech and is more than willing to share his experiences with others. On *Pesach*, we commemorate our servitude and ultimate liberation with our family, so that they preserve these lessons for the future. On *Pesach* we regain our ability to express ourselves, to vocalize and articulate our feelings, our deepest emotions.

The *Brisker Rav* explains that, with the Egyptian redemption, we were not only liberated from Egypt, but we also received a new status which precludes our ever returning to servitude.

Perhaps we might add that this new status is applicable and retained only by those who have accepted the position of *avdei Hashem*, servants of the Almighty. One who has rendered himself to Hashem, who views the Almighty as his Master, cannot possibly be subjugated by mortal man. His body might be shackled, but his spirit soars in the Heavens. Emotionally and spiritually, he is a free man. He is master over himself, because he has given himself over to Hashem.

The *Brisker Rav* applies his thesis to explain the phrase at the end of the *Maggid* portion of the *Seder*, in which we express our duty to thank Hashem for all that He has done for us. Among the accolades, we say that “He took us from *avdus l’cheirus*, slavery to freedom; *mi’yagon l’simchah*, from sorrow to joy; *mei’eval l’yom tov*, from mourning to festivity.” Why is it necessary to add the state of festivity? The mere fact that we have been taken from mourning should suffice. The *Rav* explains that the redemption was not just a removal of the Jewish People from Egyptian subjugation. There is an added dimension – one of *yom tov*, festivity, which accompanies our new-found status of no longer being *avadim*, slaves. We are not just free; we are free forever!

I think the newly-acquired status of “free-man forever,” which goes hand in hand with “servant of Hashem,” was demonstrated in Egypt on the fateful night of our liberation. If we peruse history, we note the lack of moral discipline that accompanied the various liberations of slaves, serfs and peasants throughout the millennia. Upon acquiring freedom, these slaves acted like slaves who had been let out of their cages. They were cruel, ruthless, participating in violent and random acts of murder and mayhem, just to get back at their past masters. It was all about vengeance. By their actions, they demonstrated that they were first and foremost slaves who were unable to act as free men. They had been exploited, reviled castigated, afflicted and murdered. Now, they were doing the same to their masters. Is this the way a free man acts, or are these the actions of a wounded animal?

The Jews, despite suffering mercilessly for over two centuries, their blood spilled like water at the hands of the cruel Egyptians, did not act this way. The Egyptians were suffering that night, as every family experienced the death of their firstborn. The cries of pain, the moaning and grief, enveloped the people. Did the Jews take advantage? Did they vent their centuries-old anger on their cruel taskmasters? No! They did not act like the hooligans who riot when they have the opportunity to avenge themselves, who destroy city blocks because this is how they express their idea of freedom. The Jews went about their business, serving Hashem, eating the *Korban Pesach* in the privacy of their homes, surrounded by family and friends. Why is this? Because they had become true free men. They went from being slaves to Pharaoh to being servants of Hashem, a status that defies any form of subjugation either to oneself or to any other human being.