

"Six years you shall sow your fields and prune your vineyards... but on the seventh year there shall be a solemn Shabbos for the earth." (25:3)

This *pasuk* refers to the *mitzvah* of freeing Jewish slaves at the beginning of *Yovel*. The *Torah*, however, does not seem to address only the slaves. The enjoinder quite clearly speaks about all inhabitants. The vast majority of Jews were not slaves! The *Pnei Yehoshua* suggests the following idea. One who enslaves others is himself a slave. He is subservient to his own egotistical desire to dominate others. This is alluded to by the statement in the *Talmud Kiddushin 20a*, "*One who purchases a Jewish slave in reality acquires a master for himself.*" He who enslaves others, becomes enslaved himself. Consequently, one who emancipates his slave is, in reality, freeing himself.

One must respect the rights of others and not attempt to encroach upon their freedom. One who attempts to control others reflects his own negative self-image. The need to malign others is a desperate attempt to mask one's own insecurity. The need to obtain a feeling of superiority is manifest by those who surround themselves with individuals inferior to themselves. It is truly a sad statement about an individual, if the only way that he can maintain his self-esteem is through the subjection of others who are powerless to defend themselves.

The *Torah* teaches us that true freedom is effected only when all men are free, when the dignity of all people is respected by all, and when the underprivileged are not disdained and violated.