

For it is good for him with you. (15:16)

The *Talmud Kiddushin* 20a teaches that the *eved Ivri*, Jewish bondsman, enjoys the same standard of living as does his owner. *Imcha b'maachal u'b'mishteh*, "With you in food and drink. You should neither eat white bread while the *eved* eats black bread, nor should you sleep on cushions while he sleeps on straw." This teaches us that one who purchases an *eved* is actually purchasing an *adon*, a master, for himself. *Tosfos* question why the bondsman becomes the master, on a higher level than the owner. Why does the owner not simply have equal status with the *eved*? Why would the *eved* be better? They explain that, as long as the master has two equal pillows, they both have equality. (If he only has one, if neither uses it, it is a *middas Sodom* (a designation used to describe a very evil, heartless person.) Therefore, the master gives the pillow to the *eved*. Now, the *eved* has a pillow and the master has nothing. This is why *Chazal* consider it as if the master now has a master over him. The *Maharit* wonders why Rabbi Akiva's rule of *Chayecha kodmin*, "Your life precedes his." *V'chai achicha imach*, "So that your brother can live with you" (*Vayikra* 25:36). Why should the master be relegated to giving up his pillow, if it means that he will not have a pillow upon which to sleep?

Horav Leib Lopian, zl, offers a powerful insight into the emotions of people and how the Torah is concerned and sensitive to each person's individual feelings. When the owner, who always sleeps on a soft pillow, must give it up, so that his *eved* is comfortable, the owner will (as a result of sleeping on a pillow of straw) feel the pangs of poverty. He now knows what a poor man who cannot afford a soft pillow must endure in a night's sleep. When the *eved* must sleep on a straw pillow, however, his pain goes deeper. He senses more than poverty. He realizes that he has the straw because he is the *eved*, and, since there is only one soft pillow, it goes to the master. Thus, the Torah demands that we delve into the mind of the *eved*, feel what he feels. It is one thing to be poor – and feel it; it is entirely another feeling to feel that one is a slave.

Horav Avraham Gurwitz, Shlita, relates that his father-in-law (*Rav Leib Lopian*) once traveled with an orphaned student to arrange for him (the student) to be able to continue learning in the *yeshivah*. They stopped for the night at a home which had only one bed and a couch for sleeping. *Rav Leib* insisted that the young man use the bed while he (the *Rosh Yeshivah* of Gateshead) slept on the couch. His son-in-law felt that his rationale was based on the above. If the young man would sleep on the couch, it would awaken within him a sense of sadness over being an orphan. To put it in contemporary vernacular, when someone has a problem, hang-ups, issues which weigh heavily on his mind, if he feels stigmatized because he senses that he is different, any change in his life will exacerbate his feelings of dejection. An orphan carries considerable baggage on his shoulders. When a situation arises in which that weight increases (or, at least, he thinks it did), he will be aware of it.