

You shall not subjugate him through hard labor - you shall fear your G-d. (25:43)

The *Torah* admonishes us not to take undue advantage of the *eved Ivri*, Hebrew slave. He is reprehensible to demand that he perform difficult tasks that have no purpose other than destroying his self-respect. *Rashi* cites two such instances that do nothing more than destroy the slave's body and spirit: ordering him to boil water when there is no need for it; ordering him to keep digging around a tree for a long period of time for no apparent purpose. The *Rambam* says that it is prohibited to require the slave to work just to keep him busy. While the slave has no idea what is going on, Hashem is keeping tabs on the master and will punish him in due time for using a fellow Jew in a demeaning manner.

The *pasuk* ends with the words "you shall fear your G-d." This teaches us that while no one, especially the slave, may realize your real intention, Hashem, Who discerned in Egypt between the real firstborn and the one who was thought to be a firstborn, knows what you are doing. Nonetheless, if the slave does not have a clue as to what is happening, is it really morally wrong?

Horav Chaim Shmulevitz, zl, lends insight to the words of *Chazal* which open a new vista for us into understanding the *Torah's* demand regarding the dignity of man. One who purchases a Jewish slave is to treat him with the respect and dignity that befits his own brother! Indeed, *Chazal* tell us that one who purchases a Jewish slave is considered as if he actually bought a master for himself. So demanding are the *Torah's* requirements for treating the slave respectfully. That is not enough, claims *Rav Chaim*. In order to demonstrate respect, one must have respect. It is incumbent upon the master to perceive the slave as a man of dignity and importance. He must imbue in his mind his positive qualities and characteristics. Now, he cannot really do that if he takes advantage of the slave. Thus, regardless of the fact that the slave is unaware that the master's request of him has no purpose, if the master can make such a demeaning request, he demonstrates a lack of sensitivity for the slave. He obviously does not respect him.

Such respect does not merely translate into nice behavior, but rather, nice thoughts *Rav Chaim* explains the *mitzvah* of *Kibbud Av V'eim*. In this manner, one would think that this *mitzvah* demands that a child exhibit respect towards his parents, always doing their bidding and seeking ways to make life easier for them. *Rav Chaim* claims, however, that is not enough. One must delve into his parents personality, study their virtue and reflect upon their positive qualities to the point that he is inspired to respect them because of who they are. One who lacks a true appreciation of

an individual cannot possibly demonstrate true *kibbud*. Everybody has good qualities and unique characteristics. A child must endeavor to comprehend his parents positive qualities, so that he can display proper *kavod*.