

Then his master shall bring him to the door... and his master shall bore through his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him forever. (21:6)

The *Talmud Kiddushin* 22b explains why the ear, as opposed to the other organs of the body, is bored. Hashem said, "The ear that heard My voice at *Har Sinai*, at the moment that I said, 'For Me will *Bnei Yisrael* be slaves – and not slaves to slaves; yet, this person went ahead and acquired a (another) master for himself.'" This thief -- who either was sold by the rabbinical court to repay his debt or sold himself out of poverty-- was originally forced into servitude as a result of his predicament. He now seeks to extend his "working relationship" with his newly-acquired master. The Torah frowns upon this approach.

Horav Eliyahu Yurkansky, zl, wonders why such punishment is not meted out concerning other Biblical prohibitions. After all, they, too, were declared prohibitive at *Sinai* – and the "ear" heard those *mitzvos*, as well as *Lo Signov*, "Do not steal." Furthermore, if the original catalyst for his ear being bored was his act of theft, why was it not bored right from the beginning when he was sold into slavery?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that the *eved Ivri*, Hebrew bondsman, is not sold due to his transgression of the laws concerning theft. It is possible that when he stole money, it was during a low point in his life, when he was down and out, penniless, with a family to feed; he simply did not care about the Biblical prohibitions. The Torah understands the meaning of extenuating circumstances. It is now, when he declares his desire to leave his new home because he loves his master and his newly-acquired wife, that the Torah takes umbrage with him. He has decided to take a lifetime position of bondsman. This decision indicates that his original act of theft was not the result of an extenuating situation, but rather, a lack of respect/adherence for what his ear had heard at Sinai. If he had really "listened," he would never have wanted to continue such a lifestyle. Obviously, he has no qualms about *avdus*, servitude. For this reason, his ear is bored.