



Adapted from the sefer **חמין במוצאי שבת** and **חידושי דזעיר אנפין** collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5762

In this week's *Parsha*, we find the *halachos* of an *eved kenaani* - a non-Jewish slave.

והתנחלתם אתם לבניכם אחרים לרשת אחזה לעלם בהם תעבדו ובאחיקם בני ישראל
איש באחיו לא תרדה בו בפרך.

And you shall hold on to them as an inheritance for your children after you, as acquired property, and they will serve you indefinitely. But your brothers, the children of Israel, a person should not work his brother with harsh labor.

The *Sefer Hachinuch*, (מצוה שמ"ז) explains:

“Among the roots of this *mitzva* - Because *Am Yisrael* are the chosen from among humanity, and they were created in order to recognize their Creator and to serve him. It is befitting that they should have servants to assist them. However, if they do not have servants from among the nations, they would find it necessary to have Jewish servants, who would then be unable to serve *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* to the best of their ability. This is why the *pasuk* continues **וּבְאִחִיקֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ בְּאָחִיו לֹא תִרְדֶּה בּוֹ בְּפֶרֶךְ** - In other words, (by retaining the non-Jewish servants) you will all (both Jewish masters and servants) be able to serve Hashem.

And even though these words come to warn us that we aren't allowed work our fellow Jew with harsh labor, there are **שבעים פנים לתורה** - seventy facets to each of the *pesukim*.”



[1]

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From these words of the *Sefer Hachinuch* we learn that *Am Yisrael* should preferably have only non-Jewish servants. The *pasuk* implies if they will have an *eved ivri*, they will invariably require him to do *avodas perech*, harsh tasks. They will justify this subjugation by claiming that without it, their ability to serve Hashem will be limited.

We need to understand why the Torah assumes that if a Jew has an *eved ivri*, he will eventually force him to do *avodas perech*.

It seems that the *Baal Sefer Hachinuch*, identified a subconscious urge to control others that exists in everyone to some degree. This lust for power is based on a person's arrogant assumption that he knows and understands better than anyone else, what a person needs, should do, or shouldn't do. This tendency leads him to find ways to control the lives of others. It can take the form of controlling their finances, or others aspects of their lives, even to the extent of subjugating them to *avodas perech*.

If the Torah hadn't forbidden us from subjugating our fellow Jews in this way, the lust for power would lead us to find ways to control everyone around us, and force them into *avodas perech*.

This is the meaning of the *pasuk* in *Koheles* (ט:ח):
לוּ אִשֶּׁר שָׁלַט הָאָדָם בְּאָדָם לְרַע לוֹ - that one person rules over another to his detriment. What is even worse is that the perpetrator justifies his actions by claiming that he must subjugate others in order to fully serve Hashem.

The Torah's command that we retain our non-Jewish servants is similar to the Torah allowing a soldier to marry an *אשת יפת תואר*. *Chazal* explained that *דברה תורה כנגד יצר הרע* - the Torah spoke in order to counteract the *yetzer hara* of desire that the soldier has for the non-Jewish woman. Therefore, it provided a *halachic* process that must be followed if he wants to marry her. Without it, he is likely to have relations with her in a totally forbidden manor. Similarly, because this lust for power and control of others is so strong, the Torah provided a regulated halachic framework for owning *avadim kenaanim*, and forbade us from freeing them.



[2]

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The severity of the urge to control others certainly differs from person to person. Some people have no desire for it. Some wish only to control their spouse and children. However, some wish to control everyone possible. Those who are self-aware enough to recognize their intense hunger for power, must take any steps possible to prevent themselves from controlling others.

First of all, by exerting their control over others, they commit the very severe *aveira* of **לא תרדה בו בַּפֶּרֶךְ**. However, they should also realize that their controlling behavior makes them repulsive in the eyes of those whom they try to subjugate. No one will want to maintain a relationship with them, and they will be left with no one who loves them.

Harav Shlomo Goldstof zt”l told me a story that he heard from his father in law, the Tchebiner Rav zt”l. It teaches us how meticulous we must be in our efforts to avoid the *aveira* of **לא תרדה בו בַּפֶּרֶךְ**.

The Rav told him that there was once a secret gathering of *Gedolei Yisrael*, who met in a certain location to discuss issues that had to be dealt with confidentially. When they gathered, they discovered that a certain Rav who was one of the leaders of the *Mizrachi* and had not been invited, was already seated at the table. His presence made it impossible for them to discuss those pressing issues.

One of the *Admorim* evaluated the situation. He knew that this Rav wouldn't willingly get up and leave even if asked to do so. He therefore devised a plan. He asked two very distinguished *Rabbanim* to approach that Rav and tell him that something important needs to be done immediately, and flatter him by explaining that no one is more suited to undertake this mission than he is. Of course, they would have to come up with some mission that could be assigned to him.

The plan succeeded. The Rav was delighted that such distinguished *Rabbanim* respected him, and recognized that only he could help them in their time of need. He happily went off to fulfill his assignment.



[3]

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After he had left, the *Beis Yisrael*, who knew which *Rabbanim* had been involved in this deception and understood everything that had taken place, addressed the gathering. He said that what they had done to that Rav had an aspect of the *aveira* בִּפְרֹךְ . לא תִרְדֶּה בוּ בִּפְרֹךְ . The command isn't limited to someone who is truly your *eved*. Rashi comments that it even forbids a *nasi* from subjugating his nation to *avodas perech*, or a King from making his servants perform such tasks. He also reminded them of the *Sifra* (בהר פר' ו) that defines any purposeless task as *avodas perech*.

“ לא תִרְדֶּה בוּ בִּפְרֹךְ - This means that you should not tell him to heat a cup of water if you don't need it, or tell him to keep hoeing the ground under this grapevine until I return.”

The *Beis Yisrael* concluded by pointing out that presenting this Rav with a fictional “important mission” could be classified as a form of *avodas perech*. He then got up and left the meeting. Of course, once he left, everyone followed and the meeting concluded before it even began.

This should serve as an example of how severely the Torah views the *issur* of בִּפְרֹךְ . לא תִרְדֶּה בוּ בִּפְרֹךְ . We must realize that the lust for power and the desire to control others will inevitably lead us to committing that *aveira*. Therefore, we must do all our ability to resist this destructive tendency.

לטוב לנו כל הימים אכי"ר



[4]

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