



## *Parshas Yisro 2024, the most capable leader*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated by Yoram and Yael Cohen in honor of the birth of a grandson to Moshe and Ohr Miriam Pershin. May they merit to raise him with health and happiness in the ways of Torah and Mitzvahs!*

Our Parsha begins with G-d giving Moshe and the Jewish nation fifty-three new practical commandments. The laws regarding the treatment of slaves, personal injury, murder, and the requirements of a person who is a guardian of another's property. The commandment to see the Beis Hamikdash three times a year, the laws of Shemitah, sacrifices, and returning a lost object.

Moshe then tells the Jewish nation what rewards they will receive for keeping G-d's commandments. There will be no miscarriages, the borders of Israel will grow, and they will conquer the land without opposition.

The Parsha ends with G-d summoning Moshe Rabbienu back up Mt. Sinai to study the Torah for forty days and forty nights. Moshe told the seventy elders that his brother, Aaron, and his nephew, Chur, would answer any questions they had in his absence.

G-d's glory set the mountain top ablaze as Moshe began to ascend the mountain with his most faithful student, Yeshuah Ben Nun. The whole Jewish nation watched as Moshe disappeared into the clouds from afar.

However, a question comes to mind: The first Mitzvah that Moshe gives to the Jewish people is about the Eved Evri - the Jewish slave. An Eved Evri is a person who stole but doesn't have the funds to pay back what they have stolen. They are required to sell themselves into slavery until they have paid off their debt. If they wish to remain with their master beyond the initial set of years, they have their ear

pierced and may stay until the completion of the Yovel cycle. Interestingly, the Torah does not have another rule or regulation that requires an ear to be pierced. So why does the Eved Evri - the Jewish slave need to have their ear pierced to remain with their master? What is so unique about the Eved Evri, that it involves an unusual practice not found anywhere else in the Torah?!

The Ramban, Rav Moshe Ben Nachman, a leading Torah scholar in the 12th century, gives a very simple explanation. He writes that there is a seven-year limit for a Jewish slave, They go free at the end of the Shemitah cycle unless they want to extend their servitude.

The Ramban explains that whether they wish to remain a slave or go free, they invoke our liberation from Egypt. They say, *"Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and G-d redeemed you; therefore, I commanding you about this (the Jewish slave) today."* Accordingly, if they wish to remain a slave beyond the initial years, they must have their ear pierced. This serves as a reminder that we were taken out of Egypt to be enslaved to only one Master, our Father in Heaven.

The Daas Zkenim (a commentary by a collection of rabbis from France and Germany in the 12th and 13th centuries) adds that the numerical value of the letters of מרצע - doorpost equals 400, the same number of years that the Jewish nation was technically enslaved. They write that we remind the slave that G-d has redeemed us from 400 years of slavery, and it defies logic that one would voluntarily choose to continue to be enslaved to a human master.

However, the Rabbeinu Bachya, Rav Bachya Ben Asher gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He quotes the Talmud in Kiddushin (21:a) which details why a person may only be enslaved until the completion of the Yovel cycle.

According to the Talmud, this temporary period of enslavement is not only to repay and reimburse all that was stolen or destroyed. But also serves as a time for the Eved Evri to realize the error of their ways and the extent of their mistake. An Eved Evri is meant to grow and mature during his temporary enslavement and learn how to overcome his sinful desires.

The Rabbienu Bachya explains that if an Eved Evri wishes to extend their servitude, it demonstrates that they have yet to learn the lesson or recognize the scale of their wrongdoing. Even if they understand the magnitude of their actions but still desire to remain enslaved, it indicates a lack of true growth.

While they may recognize the harm they have caused and wish to repay, they should also reach a level that slavery is beneath them. We pierce their ear to symbolize the lack of internal growth meant to accompany their period of temporary enslavement.

An Eved Evri should no longer want to be enslaved to anyone but the King of all Kings, our Father in Heaven. He must realize that our lives are forever bound to the obligations and duties bestowed upon us at Mt Sinai. An Eved Evri should aspire to grow and commit to being one of G-d's ambassadors of happiness, truth, and holiness.

In our daily lives, it is imperative that we understand the one thing we can never reclaim: time. The clock is always ticking, indifferent to who we are or what we possess. Most of us take it for granted, yet time is the most finite and precious resource in the world.

The Eved Evri reminds us that the relentless march of time affects all, but especially those with a specific purpose and mission, such as the Jewish people. The time we are granted here on earth is an opportunity from G-d to grow and accomplish the mission placed upon us at Mt Sinai. To reach our goals and fulfill the intention and purpose of our creation, to share G-d's power and oneness with the world.

**"The only way to stay young, hungry, and driven is to remind ourselves of where we came from, where we are going? To what ideals are we committed? What journey are we called upon to continue? Of what story are we a part?"**

**-Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

*Have a meaningful Shabbos!  
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*