

## The Servant and The Eved

Let us attempt to present this idea and put it into perspective. The master visits the shopping mall and sees an exquisite suit - on sale, no less. He is about to make the purchase when he remembers that if he buys a suit for himself, he must do the same for his eved. The servant must be equal with his master. He has no choice but to buy two suits.

The master continues his shopping expedition. Everywhere he stops to buy, he buys double. It is more like, "Buy two; get one!" Another scenario that presents an ironic outcome is the Yamim Tovim. Chanukah is approaching, and the master has a beautiful, ornate, silver menorah. It is an expensive heirloom that he inherited from his father. Regrettably, this year he is not going to light this menorah, because if the master has only one menorah, or if he has one expensive menorah and one of lesser value, the eved gets the expensive one! This incongruity applies equally on Purim if the master has only one Megillah. He can always hope that his servant will be nice enough to share it with him!

This reverse state of affairs continues on Shabbos if the master only has one special set of clothes. He will be wearing his weekday clothes while his eved will be clothed in his expensive suit and cotton shirt. They return from shul walking through the street - the eved in his fancy Shabbos clothes and the master in his weekday garb. Imagine, the people that mistakenly wish Gut Shabbos to the servant and completely ignore the master. It may seem ironic, but that is the meaning of acquiring a "master" for oneself. The master is selfless in his generosity and benevolence. All this is to provide the Hebrew bondsman with an environment that maintains his dignity - even if it is at the expense of the master. He was aware of the repercussions when he made the decision to purchase an eved Ivri.

There is more. The master cannot have the eved perform any labor that might be below his dignity. The eved must be treated as royalty. When we take into consideration that the type of individual that was sold as a servant had been a thief who could not repay the money he stole, we understand that we are not dealing here with a member of the higher echelons of society.

Clearly, one who purchases an eved is a tzaddik of the highest order, a benevolent, generous man who feels the pain of his fellow Jew who is down and out. He wants to help, even if it is at the cost of personal convenience and degradation. All that matters is the opportunity to be of assistance to a fellow Jew.

Having digested all of this, is it any wonder that the eved wants to continue his servitude after the initial six year period? Who would not want to "work" for such a virtuous master? The man must have the middos, character traits, of a saint to make such a sacrifice.