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Jewish and Gentile Slaves

25: 39-46

Jewish and Gentile Slaves DIG: Why do you think God distinguishes among Jews and Gentiles with regard to slavery? If God opposes slavery for Israelites, and if He had just delivered them from slavery in Egypt, then why do you think He allows them to be slaves for 50 years?

REFLECT: Are you serving two masters today? How can you get rid of one? How do Gentiles share in the blessings of the B'rit Chadashah? What is your standing before YHVH based on? In what sense are all believers Messiah's slaves? In what sense is Yeshua your Lord?

All believers are one in Messiah.

Jewish slaves (25:39-43): Should a person that you lent money become further impoverished and unable to repay the money, it was within your rights in the ancient economy to have them work off the debt. However, if the person was a fellow **Jew**, several restrictions applied. In addition to the mitzvot of **the Hebrew slave** (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Dz - If You Buy a Hebrew Servant**), we learn here not to give a **Hebrew servant** degrading tasks like a **Gentile heathen slave**. **If a member of your people has become poor among you and sells himself to you, do not make him do the work of a slave. Rather, you are to treat him like an employee or a tenant; he will work for you until the Year of Yovel** (see **En - The Freedom of the Year of Jubilee**). A **Hebrew slave** needed to be treated like a hired laborer, not a **slave**. **His** owner was not to oppress a **Hebrew servant** with harsh labor or to perform services below **his** dignity. **His** maximum term of labor was **seven years** (see **EI - The Sabbath Year**) or **the Jubilee**, whichever came first. **Then he will leave you, he and his children with him, and return to his own family and regain possession of his ancestral land. For they are My slaves, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; therefore, they are not to be sold as slaves. Do not treat him harshly, but fear your God.**

Gentile slaves (44-46): By contrast a pagan **slave** bought from **the** surrounding **Gentile nations** was kept for life and made a permanent part of the household. **Concerning the**

men and women you may have as slaves: you are to buy men- and women-slaves from the nations surrounding you. You may also buy the children of foreigners living with you and members of their families born in your land; you may own these. You may also bequeath them to your children to own; from these groups you may take your slaves forever. After all, **they** had become part of one's household. **They** had been circumcised and brought into the covenant. They were like adopted children. They were not to be treated merely as merchandise. **But as far as your brothers the people of Isra'el are concerned, you are not to treat each other harshly.** Surprisingly, the **Gentile** foreigner in **Isra'el** also fell into this category. **He** was not released in **the Sabbath Year** or **set free** at **the Jubilee**. He could become a permanent **slave** and member of the household. The reason the **Jews** were accorded special protections from **slavery** is stated explicitly at the end of the chapter: **For to Me the people of Isra'el are slaves; they are My slaves whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; I am ADONAI (25:55).**

Those of us who are **Gentile** believers should not allow ourselves to feel disenchanting with the inequality between the native-born **Jew** and foreign-born **Gentile** in this regard. After all, aren't we grafted into **the olive tree** (see the commentary on [Romans Cz - The Illustration of Isra'el's Future](#))? Isn't it our privilege to be **slaves** to **the Kosher King**? Is it not that being a bond-**slave** allows us to share in the blessings of **the Covenant** (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Eo - The Days are Coming, declares the LORD, When I Will Make a New Covenant with the People of Isra'el](#))?



One might argue that **there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua (Galatians 3:28).** Yet these distinctions do exist. **Paul** certainly does not mean that **Gentiles** are also **Jews** and **Jews** are **Gentiles**. Or that **men** are **women** and **women** are **men**. Rather, **he** means our standing in **Messiah** is not contingent upon the status of being a **Jew** or a **Gentile**, **slave** or **free**, **male** or **female**. In **Messiah** we are all one. In the practical aspects of life, however,

we occupy different positions. **Paul** accepts the institution of **slavery** in the Roman world matter-of-factly and urges believing **slaves** to submit to **their masters** as a testimony of **their servitude** to **Messiah**.

Slaves obey your human masters in everything, not serving only when they are watching you, to win their favor, but single-heartedly, fearing the Lord. Whatever work you do, put yourself into it, as those who are serving not merely other people, but the Lord. Remember that as your reward, you will receive the inheritance from the Lord. You are slaving for the Lord, for the Messiah (Colossians 3:22-24). And all who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor . . . (First Timothy 6:1).

Yet **Paul** also encouraged **slaves** to win **their freedom** as **they** were able to do so. We are to be **Messiah's slaves**, not **the slaves** of another man. **Yeshua Himself** said: **No one can serve two masters (Mt 6:24)**. Thus, a believing **slave** is to try to achieve **freedom**. What's more, **one** who is **free** is forbidden to allow **himself** to become a **slave**. **Were you a slave when you were called? Well, don't let it bother you; although if you can gain your freedom, take advantage of the opportunity. For a person who was a slave when he was called is the Lord's freedman; likewise, someone who was a free man when he was called is a slave of the Messiah. You were bought at a price, so do not become slaves of other human beings (First Cor 7:21-23)**. In keeping with Torah's principles of **fairness** and kindness towards **slaves**, **Paul** exhorts believing **slave** owners to **grant your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven (Colossians 4:1)**.⁵¹⁸

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for **You** are the best **Master** that ever could be! It is so awesome that **You** adopt those who love you (**Ephesians 1:5**) making **You** their Heavenly **Father**! Praise **You** for being so patient and loving, kind and gracious, wise and omniscient, and yet so gentle when **Your** I need help. **You** have so many great and wonderful qualities!*

*Praise and worship to **You** for **You** are absolutely holy! **Seraphim** were standing above **Him**. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. One called out to another, and said: **Holy, holy, holy, is ADONAI-Tzva'ot! The whole earth is full of His glory (Isaiah 6:2-3)**. Your love and wisdom enable **You** to even know the future (**Daniel 2** and **7, Revelation 19-21**). This ability works together with **Your** holiness so that when you tell me to do something, whatever **You** say, I know it is the absolute wisest thing to do!*

*What a comfort it is that **You** are always with me. **I will never leave you or forsake you***

(Hebrews 13:5c). *What a joy for me to rest my problems in **Your** loving hands, seeking **You** to guide me and the entire situation to **Your** glory. Nothing is hidden from **You** (Luke 12:2) and someday **You** will reward me, I have trusted in **You** and served **You** with a loving heart (First Corinthians 3). All praise, all worship and all honor go to **You** my wonderful **Master, King of kings, Loving Savior and Fantastic Father!** In **the Name of the One at Your right hand.** Amen*