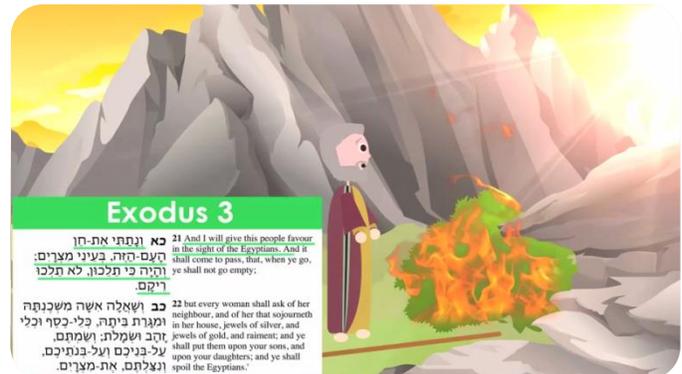


PARSHAT RE'EH: JEWISH SLAVERY

This guide corresponds to the video: [The Strange Laws Of Jewish Slavery](#)

SABBATH TABLE OUTLINE

- I. Introduction: Beginning with the Covenant Between the Pieces (yes, back in Parshat Lech Lecha!).
 - A. God tells Abraham that his children will be enslaved, but God's epilogue is very strange:
 - i. "... and your children will leave with great wealth" (Genesis 15:14).
 1. It will be a terrible 400 years, but don't worry – they will leave with wealth.
 - a. That seems like a pretty weak conciliation!
 - B. This theme is actually repeated when Moses "meets" God at the Burning Bush:
 - i. "...they will not leave [Egypt] empty-handed. A woman will ask her Egyptian neighbors for wealth, and the neighbors will gladly hand it over" (Exodus 3:21-22).
 1. This is a very strange method. If the point was to get wealth, God could've allowed the Jews to loot the Egyptians during the plague of Darkness.
 2. Instead, there's another miracle – a psychological miracle – in which the Egyptians will *happily* hand over their possessions. Why?



- II. Theory: Egypt as a Blueprint for the Future
 - A. These elements of the exodus are illuminated by a section of this week's parsha that deals with how the Israelites will interact with servants that they may have in their homes.
 - B. **Deuteronomy 15:12-15**
 - i. *If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you for six years... And when you send him forth free from you [in the seventh year], you shall not send him forth empty-handed... And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and God redeemed you.*



1. Why is it that God commands us to give our servants gifts?
 - a. The answer is *not* only "because you, too, were slaves in Egypt."
 - b. It's "because you were slaves, *and* God redeemed you."

- i. There's clearly an emphasis on the redemption.
- 2. We should give gifts because we remember how it was to be redeemed.
 - a. It seems that gifts are a kind of redemption.
 - b. We're required to give the same redemption to our own servants.

C. (cont.) **Deuteronomy 15:16-17**

- i. *And it will be, if he says to you, 'I will not leave you,' because he loves you and your household, for it is good for him with you, then you shall take an awl and put it through his ear and into the door, and he shall be a servant to you forever....*
 - 1. Piercing the ear in this way will leave some blood on the door.
 - a. When was the last time we saw blood on a door? As the Jews left Egypt.
 - 2. The servant has the same difficult choice to make: will you leave or stay?
 - a. Stockholm Syndrome – the captives develop sympathy for the captors.
 - b. The captives develop relationships with their captors, and regardless of how corrupt that relationship is, it's difficult to give it up.

D. (cont.) **Deuteronomy 15:18**

- i. *You shall not be troubled when you send him free from you....*
 - 1. This is out of order! We learned of gift-giving when the servant leaves. Then, we learned what happens if he/she wants to stay. Now, he/she is leaving again!
 - a. These verses should have appeared earlier, right after the gift-giving.
 - 2. Additionally, Why does the Torah command the master "not to be troubled"?
 - a. Since when does the Torah command a psychological state? It doesn't say "put up a mezuzah, but don't be troubled by the holes in the door!"

III. Let's bring it all together:

- A. The Torah is making it clear that it's only considered gift-giving when it's with a whole heart.
 - i. Otherwise, the gifts don't redeem the servant.
 - ii. It's all about redemption, about breaking the Stockholm Syndrome.
 - iii. Leaving means breaking the comfort of status of quo, of protection, of sustenance.
 - 1. Only one person can help provide the courage to start over: the master himself.
 - a. The gifts say: "Here – this is what you can use to start your new life!"
 - iv. Now we can understand why we had to leave Egypt with gifts – and why the Egyptians had to give us those gifts happily, even if it was only an allusion.
- B. The middle "digression" verses about the servant wanting to stay are *not* digressions.
 - i. It's a reality that the servant will want to stay. But the gifts will help him/her leave.
 - 1. A master's obligation doesn't end when the service ends. He has to make the servant great, too.
 - 2. Recalling Egypt serves as a source of empathy.

