



Likkutei Sichos Poem

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Chelek 11 | Mishpatim | Sicha 1

A Hebrew slave who does not wish to be freed in the seventh year,
With an awl, his master shall pierce his ear.
"This refers to his right ear," Rashi learns from an analogy,
"Or perhaps this refers to his left ear," seems unnecessary.

1. Rashi implies that he is forced to say,
That piercing the right ear is the correct way.
Why would Rashi prefer specifically,
To interpret that the verse refers to the left ear, initially?

Rashi continues by asking a question in his commentary,
And why was the ear chosen over any other organ of the body?
Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai says because at Mt. Sinai he did hear,
Not to steal or acquire a master therefore he deserves a piercing in his ear.

Why is the piercing done at the doorpost over any other room,
The explanation is like a string of pearls or a pouch of perfume.
Since the door and doorpost were witnesses in the Egyptian land,
Therefore in their presence he does stand.

2. Hashem passed over the Jewish doorposts on Pesach night,
Therefore to be His servants it is only right.
This is Rabbi Shimon's expanded explanation but it isn't clear,
How is it relevant to the discussion about the RIGHT ear?

3. To Rashi's earlier interpretation it is seemingly not related,

So under its own heading why isn't it separated?
 On the earlier words "door or doorpost" why doesn't this explanation appear?
 There has got to be a connection between Rashi's two parts, it is clear.

4. Why isn't the slave's ear pierced immediately,
 Why is it pierced only after six years of slavery?
5. Why does piercing only apply to a thief that stole and can't pay,
 Why doesn't it apply to a thief that could repay?
6. If the piercing is because they heard about it at Mount Sinai,
 Then to all the commandments why doesn't the same apply?
7. If the reason for the piercing is because he doesn't want to go free,
 Then to mention the theft why is it necessary?
8. Why doesn't Rashi say regarding one who sells himself into slavery,
 That he gets pierced for saying that he doesn't want to go free?
 Why talk about acquiring a master which he did in the beginning,
 And not focus on the ending and the verse's plain meaning?
9. Only words to explain the simple meaning are quoted by Rashi,
 So why are the words "on Mount Sinai" necessary?
 For Rabbi Shimon's explanation,
 Why does it speak of pearls or perfume as an introduction?
10. When Rashi notes the name of the author of a teaching,
 He does so to clarify the text's simple understanding.
 What issue led Rashi to mention Rabban Yochanan's name?
 What lesson can a seasoned student gain?

Rashi is not required to explain why the ear is chosen specifically,
 Rather what bothers Rashi is another difficulty.
 Why does this slave deserve a punishment that is so humiliating,
 If he stole only because he was starving?

The same applies to one who sells himself into slavery,
 As a result of extreme poverty.
 He goes against his nature to accept the authority of a master,
 This shows how severely he does suffer.

He should not be punished harshly,
 Because now he has a reason to want to remain in slavery.
 He doesn't want to leave the wife that he was given,
 Nor does he want to part from his children.

Seemingly, the ear was chosen to lessen the punishment,
 So logically the left ear should be pierced because it's less important.
 Since it is the right ear, there must be another reason,
 Why the ear was specifically chosen.

The punishment is specifically on the superior ear,
 Because from the fact that he doesn't yearn for freedom it's clear,
 That in his eyes the sin was never shameful and severe,
 He didn't take seriously what on Mount Sinai his ear did hear.

A sharp student will ask why a person who has no malicious intent,
 Should receive such a harsh punishment.
 It doesn't seem just to punish him for stealing as a result of poverty,
 Or for desiring to stay a slave because he loves his family.

Therefore Rabban Yochanan is quoted deliberately,
 Because he represents Torah and ensured the survival of Torah study.
 "Give me Yavneh and its scholars," he requested from Vespasian,
 He taught that by learning Torah we fulfill the purpose of creation.

In spite of Torah's command to love one's wife and family,
 The Torah commands that after six years he should go free.
 The Torah also teaches that there will never cease to be needy,
 But the Torah instructs us not to steal despite poverty.

Rabban Yochanan was also known for his kindness to the needy,
 To support the poor by lending them money is obligatory.
 His punishment is just because Torah gives a way out of poverty,
 He should have taken advantage of the community's philanthropy.

Rashi includes Rabbi Shimon's teaching to shed light,
 Like a string of pearls that makes the whole room bright.

"For onto Me the children of Israel are slaves," at Sinai Hashem did say,
The door and doorpost testify to this even today.

There are those who are so busy with business affairs,
That they become like a person who enslaves himself for six years.
When Shabbos comes they don't wish to go free,
And release themselves from their love for materiality.

Since Hashem gives life to all of creation,
He certainly gives every Jew the power to fulfill his mission.
For Hashem his profession he should utilize,
He must elevate himself above the mundane when Shabbos arrives.

When a person conducts himself in the manner above,
And learns Torah and does Mitzvos with love,
Not only does the Torah free the individual, but it also does liberate,
The entire nation from an exile state!