

Exodus 21:1-11: Laws Regarding Employers & Employees.

I. 1-4: The general law concerning servants.

God is now setting in a place a judicial setting for the Israeli community as they journeyed and when they get to their home. They had lived under much oppression under the Egyptians, God wants them to be different, to respect and care for their servants/employees.

There were five basic ways a Hebrew might become a servant to another Hebrew.

- i. If someone is looking for employment.
- ii. In poverty.

***Leviticus 25:39** - 'And if one of your brethren who dwells by you becomes poor, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave.*

- iii. A father might offer a daughter as a servant into a home with the intention that she would eventually marry into that family.
- iv. In the case of bankruptcy, a man might become servant to his creditors.
- v. If a thief had nothing with which to pay proper restitution.

***Exodus 22:3-4** - "If the sun has risen on him, there shall be guilt for his bloodshed. He should make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.*

The Hebrew servant worked for **six years** and then was set **free**. At the end of the six years the servant went out with what he came in with. If the master provided a wife (and therefore children), the wife and children had to stay with the master until they had fulfilled their obligations or could be redeemed (pay for their freedom).

If, after the six years of service, a servant wished to make a life-long commitment to his master – in light of the master's goodness and his blessings for the servant – he could, before the Judges, make a life-long commitment to his master.

This commitment was not motivated by debt or obligation, only by **love** for the master, and the good things that the master had provided for the servant.

II. (7-11) The rights of female servants.

The matter describes the selling of a young female as a servant to a family with the intention of marriage.

If her master did not marry her or decided not to give her to his son, the master was still obligated to respect her rights under God's law. He had to treat her well and give her the opportunity to escape the obligation of servitude.

If the girl received into the home with the expectation of future marriage did not work out, she was not to be treated poorly. She was not to be deprived the comforts of the home; instead she must be treated **according to the custom of daughters** – treated like a daughter, not a slave.

If the household failed in their obligations toward the girl received into the home with the expectation of future marriage, she was granted freedom. These were remarkable protections of ones who might be disadvantaged.

The writers of the New Testament found plenty of glory in simply being considered **bondservants** of Jesus (Paul, Peter, James, Jude...).

Mark 9:35 - *And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last **of all** and **servant of all**."*

Mark 10:45 - *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a **ransom** for many."*

This is a picture of our service to Jesus. Our motivation to serve Him is love.

John 13:12-17 - *So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. "Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*

Colossians 3:22 - *Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.*

Colossians 4:1 - *Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.*

Isaiah 52:13-15 - Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; so shall He sprinkle^[fn] many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider.