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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

FROM RAGS TO RICHES! SEEING IS REMEMBERING!

PARSHAS V'ESCHANAN

I remember reading the following story: A Jewish man was poverty-stricken. Through an incident, his wisdom was brought to the attention of the Sultan. The Sultan made the Jew one of his advisors. As time went on, the Sultan appreciated the wisdom of his new, Jewish advisor, more and more. Soon, the Jew became his chief advisor. The Sultan's former advisors were jealous and plotted against the Jew. They told the Sultan that the Jew was stealing from the Sultan's treasury. The Sultan was unable to find any truth to the matter. However, following the urging of his other advisors, he went to search the house of his Jewish advisor. He went from room to room but did not find anything. Finally, he came to a locked door. His Jewish advisor asked him to please not try to enter. That request made the other advisors very happy. They were certain that the missing money would be found behind that locked door. At the advisors' strong suggestion, the Sultan demanded that the Jew unlock the door. He did so. The sight of what was inside the room shocked the onlookers. There was a simple table and chair. On the table was a set of old clothes, the type of clothes worn by a poverty-stricken man. The Sultan was perplexed and asked the Jewish advisor for an explanation. The Jew said that these were his own clothes that he had worn before being appointed as an advisor to the Sultan. He explained that every so often, he entered the room and put on the clothes, to remind himself of his past poverty. That visual aid prompted him to appreciate and be thankful of his rise to power and wealth. It helped him remain humble and not get haughty in his new, powerful position. Needless to say, the Sultan was very impressed and the plot against the Jewish advisor failed.

The **Torah** tells us (Devarim 5:14) that on Shabbos, we may not do work, our children may not do work, and our slaves may not do work. The pasuk ends by saying that the reason why our servants should not do work on Shabbos is, "In order that your servants shall rest, like you". What kind of reason is this? **Rabbeinu Bachya** says that Shabbos was not legislated to give the slaves a rest, but the rest enjoyed by the slaves is merely a by-product of their owners' rest. In other words, seeing that Hashem had pity on us and said that we only must

"But the seventh day, Shabbos for Hashem, your G-d, do not perform any labor—you, your son and your daughter, your male slave and your female slave, your ox and your donkey and all your animals, and the non-Jew who dwells in your cities—in order that your male slave will rest—and your female slave—like you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and Hashem freed you from there..."
(Devarim 5:14-15)

work for six days and not seven, we in turn should display the same kind of consideration for our own servants and not assign them tasks on the days when we rest. This consideration could cost the owner a substantial sum of money in lost work, especially if he has many slaves. Yet that is what the Torah dictates.

This is an important lesson for us. We must treat everyone with kindness and consideration,

especially if we, ourselves, received similar consideration from someone else.

The **Ramban** says a similar idea to **Rabbeinu Bachya**. Since we were servants and Hashem gave us rest from servitude, we, too, should allow our servant to rest. The **Ramban** adds that “When your manservant and your maidservant will rest as well as you, then you will remember that you were servants in Egypt.” (Devarim 5:15). The **Chasam Sofer** states that it is understandable why our servants may not do any work for us, on Shabbos. However, the **Chasam Sofer** questions why the Torah forbids our servants from working for **themselves**? After all, Shabbos was a special gift given exclusively to the Jewish People. And a non-Jew is not permitted to keep Shabbos! That is why the Torah says, “In order that your servants shall rest, like you”. The reason why the servant may not

work is for our benefit. It is to help **us** remember that we were slaves in Egypt and then Hashem redeemed us. As the very next pasuk says, “And you will remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt”.

Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt”l points out that when we see our servants refraining from doing any work on Shabbos, it will help us **visualize and feel** that we, too, used to be slaves and Hashem freed us. This will be a visual aid to help us remember that Hashem freed us from slavery and took us out of Egypt, with great miracles. Seeing our slaves remain idle on Shabbos will help us better appreciate Hashem’s love for us!

This is also a very important lesson for us. **The use of visual aids can greatly enhance our service of Hashem.**

We can use visual aids to help increase our faith in Hashem and our love of Hashem.

We can write a list of things for which we can thank Hashem and then place the list where we can notice it. Whenever we pass by the list, just by seeing it, we will be reminded of the many kindnesses that Hashem does for us.

Wearing tzitzis is an excellent example of a visual aid.

When we see them, they remind us to fulfill the mitzvos.

We can also use visual aids in our interpersonal relations, in a similar manner. For example, if we are upset at a friend, we can write a list of acts of kindness that our friend has done for us. Then we can place the list where we can notice it. Whenever we notice the list, we will remember what we wrote.

This will help us to remove the ill-feelings that we may have in our heart.

May our closeness to Hashem and to each other speedily bring the coming of Mashiach!

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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