

## **LA4. Masters Treating Their Slaves & Bondservants Justly & Fairly.**

*Masters are to treat their slaves & bondservants justly and fairly.*

This precept is derived from His Word (blessed is He):

### **Key New Testament Scriptures**

Ephesians 6:8-9

*Remember that whoever does good work, whether he be a slave or a free man, will be rewarded by the Lord. And masters, treat your slaves the same way. Don't threaten them. Remember that in heaven both you and they have the same Master, and he has no favorites.*

Colossians 4:1

*Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly. Remember that you too have a Master in heaven.*

### **Additional New Testament Scriptures**

Mark 12:31

Colossians 3:11

1 Timothy 1:9-10

### **Related New Testament Mitzvot**

None

### **Supportive Tanakh Scriptures**

Exodus 21:2

*If you purchase a Hebrew slave, he is to work six years; but in the seventh, he is to be given his freedom without having to pay anything.*

Exodus 21:5-11

*Nevertheless, if the slave declares, 'I love my master, my wife and my children, so I don't want to go free,' then his master is to bring him before God; and there at the door or doorpost, his master is to pierce his ear with an awl; and the man will be his slave for life. If a man sells his daughter as a slave, she is not to go free like the men-slaves. If her master married her but decides she no longer pleases him, then he is to allow her to be redeemed. He is not allowed to sell her to a foreign people, because he has treated her unfairly. If he has her marry his son, then he is to treat her like a daughter. If he marries another wife, he is not to reduce her food, clothing or marital rights. If he fails to provide her with these three things, she is to be given her freedom without having to pay anything.*

Exodus 21:20

*If a person beats his male or female slave with a stick so severely that he dies, he is to be punished;*

Exodus 21:26-27

*If a person hits his male or female slave's eye and destroys it, he must let him go free in compensation for his eye. If he knocks out his male or female slave's tooth, he must let him go free in compensation for his tooth.*

Leviticus 19:13

*Do not oppress or rob your neighbor; specifically, you are not to keep back the wages of a hired worker all night until morning.*

Leviticus 25:39-43

*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. 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.*

Deuteronomy 15:12

*If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, he is to serve you for six years; but in the seventh year, you are to set him free.*

Deuteronomy 23:16(15)-17(16)

*If a slave has escaped from his master and taken refuge with you, you are not to hand him back to his master. Allow him to stay with you, in whichever place suits him best among your settlements; do not mistreat him.*

**See also:**

Exodus 12:49, 19:33-34, 21:7-11, 16, 22:21(22)-24(25), 23:12, 24:22, 25:44-46

**Comment**

This *Mitzvah* is one of several in this compilation that refer to slaves (“bondservants” in the NKJV) of the kind that we no longer have in the “civilized” world of today. It is nevertheless included here for completeness, adaptation to ordinary servanthood, and metaphorically for our obligation to serve God.

A question we might ask is “Why did our just and merciful God give Mitzvot, as part of the Mosaic Law, that allowed and even governed how slaves were to be treated?” We consider slavery today to be unjust; are we mistaken and does God think otherwise? I do not have an answer to the first question but am sure that God is not an advocate of slavery despite his having allowed it and used it at various times of history. Consider, for example, the tribes of Israel’s

enslavement in Egypt. God allowed it but leading them out of Egypt was God's best for them. Consider also, 1 Timothy 1:9-10:

*“We are aware that Torah is not for a person who is righteous, but for those who are heedless of Torah and rebellious, ungodly and sinful, wicked and worldly, for people who kill their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral- both heterosexual and homosexual- slave dealers, liars, perjurers, and anyone who acts contrary to the sound teaching ..”*

Verse 9 says “Torah is not for a person who is righteous” and verse 10 says that Torah is for “slave dealers” (“kidnappers” in the NKJV).<sup>1</sup> The implication of the two is that dealing in slavery is not righteous. As for the requirement of *Torah* for masters to treat their slaves (“bondservants”) justly and fairly, Colossians 4:1 says exactly that!

### **Related Mitzvot in Volumes 1 & 2**

- J01 Applying the Mosaic Law in a Manner Consistent with New Covenant Realities
- J02 God's Law of Justice
- M08 Being Humane in Our Dominion over God's Creatures
- N01 Loving Our Neighbor, the Stranger, and Even Our Enemy
- N18 Being Compassionate & Merciful Toward Our Neighbor

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<sup>1</sup> ἀνδραποδισταῖς can mean either.