

## My Servant and Shabbat

By Yochanan Zaqantov

Today we have a thriving service industry. You can go most anywhere and be served. So how should we view people who serve us and should they serve us on Shabbat. How far does this go. Is it just within our control or does it cover even those we are not in contact with.

We read in Deuteronomy (Devarim) 5:13-15

<sup>13</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>14</sup>but the seventh day is a sabbath of Yehovah Eloheykha; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your **male [slave]** (ve av'dekha עֶבְדְּךָ) or **female slave** (va amatekha וְאִמְתְּךָ), your ox or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the stranger in your settlements, so that your **male [slave]** (av'dekha עֶבְדְּךָ) and **female slave** (amat'kha וְאִמְתְּךָ) may rest as you do.

<sup>15</sup>Remember that you were a **slave** (eved עֶבֶד) in the land of Egypt and Yehovah Eloheykha freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore Yehovah Eloheykha has commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

From this we see if we have slaves/servants we are to have them cease working as we cease working. What exactly is a slave/servant as referenced here? What would this male or female do for us? Are we also slaves/servants and whom do we serve? How do these verses apply to us today?

Lets start by looking at the words for Male and Female Slave and what do they mean in the Tanakh. The first word is amah (Aleph-Mem-Hey) which is reference number 519 in the BDB and is found on page 51. It is a Feminine Noun. BDB states it is translated as Maid, Handmaid. Let us see how this fits with the verses in the Tanakh. Sometimes it is also used for a young woman.

Genesis (Bereshit) 30:3

<sup>3</sup>She said, “Here is my **maid** (amatiy וְאִמְתִּי) Bilhah. Consort with her, that she may bear on my knees and that through her I too may have children.”

We know that Bilhah was the maid servant for Rachel. Here we see she was given to Yaaqov as a wife .

Exodus (Shemot) 2:5

<sup>5</sup>The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile, while her maidens walked along the Nile. She spied the basket among the reeds and sent her **slave girl (amatah אַמְתָּהּ)** to fetch it.

Here the daughter of Pharaoh send her maid servant to get the basket.

Exodus (Shemot) 20:10

<sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a sabbath of Yehovah Eloheykha: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or **female slave (amat'kha אַמְתְּךָ)**, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements.

By using the Kha ending, it denotes relationship in that they belong to the individual.

Exodus (Shemot) 21:20, 26, 27

<sup>20</sup>When a man strikes **his slave**, male or **female (et amato אֶת-אַמְתּוֹ)**, with a rod, and he dies there and then, he must be avenged.

<sup>26</sup>When a man strikes **the eye of his slave**, male or **female (o et 'eyl amato אוֹ-אֶת-עַיִן אַמְתּוֹ)**, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye.

<sup>27</sup>If he knocks out **the tooth of his slave**, male or **female (o sen amato אוֹ-שֵׁן אַמְתּוֹ)**, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth.

Here we see the linkage here with all three of these with the Male slave/servant eved with the same restrictions as one with the other. Both going free which would seem to indicate that one who is a servant of male or female they must be treated with respect and not abused.

Leviticus (Vayiqra) 25:6, 44-46

<sup>6</sup>But you may eat whatever the land during its sabbath will produce—you, your male **and female slaves (ve la'amatekha וְלִאֲמָתֶיךָ)**, the hired (ve lis'khir'kha 7916 וְלִשְׂכִירְךָ) and bound laborers (uletoshav'kha 8453 וְלִתְּשׁוּבֶיךָ) who live with you (hagarim imakh הַגֵּרִים עִמָּךְ),

Even during the Year of Release for the land every seven years you could not plant or harvest yet you could eat off the land and not just you but your servants also. Again the use of Kha denoting the relationship that indicates they belong to you. Also notice that

Eved and Amah are different that those simply hired. We also see in this verse that Toshav who is temporary resident and the Sakhiyr who is a hired one. Who is like the one who is brought in to work for you.

<sup>44</sup>Such male and **female slaves (va amat'kha וְאִמְתְּךָ)** as you may have—it is from the nations round about you that you may acquire male and **female slaves (va amah וְאִמָּה)**. <sup>45</sup>You may also buy them from among the children of aliens resident (hatoshavim hagarim הַתּוֹשְׁבִים הַגֵּרִים) among you, or from their families that are among you, whom they begot in your land. These shall become your property: <sup>46</sup>you may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit as property for all time. Such you may treat as **slaves (ta'avodu תַּעֲבֹדוּ)**.

Again we see that both Eved and Amah who are from Toshav Garim (residents who dwell) who are not necessarily Gerim may sell their slaves/servants to you and they remain servants.

Deuteronomy (Devarim) 5:18

<sup>18</sup>You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not crave your neighbor's house, or his field, or his male or **female slave (va amato וְאִמָּתוֹ)**, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

You will note we are reminded that we should not overly desire the property of our brothers or neighbors.

Genesis (Bereshit) 20:17

<sup>17</sup>Abraham then prayed to Elohim, and Elohim healed Abimelech and his wife and **his slave girls (va am'hotayv וְאִמְהֹתָיו)**, so that they bore children;

We can see from these that the word can mean a female slave (a person who is property). But it also can be used when speaking with humility or a maid (Female) servant.

I Samuel (Shemu'el Aleph) 1:11, 16

<sup>11</sup>And she made this vow: “Yehovah Tzava'ot, if You will look upon the suffering of **Your maidservant (amatekha אִמְתְּךָ)** and will remember me and not forget **Your maidservant (amatekha אִמְתְּךָ)**, and if You will grant **Your maidservant (la amat'kha לְאִמְתְּךָ)** a male child, I will dedicate him to Yehovah for all the days of his life; and no razor shall ever touch his head.”

<sup>16</sup>Do not take **your maidservant (amat'kha אַמְתְּךָ)** for a worthless woman; I have only been speaking all this time out of my great anguish and distress.”

Here Hannah is praying and referring to herself as belonging as a female servant to Yehovah which, shows she saw herself belonging to him.

Psalms (Tehillim) 116:16

<sup>16</sup>Yehovah, I am Your servant, Your servant, the son of **Your maidservant (amatekha אַמְתְּךָ)**; You have undone the cords that bound me.

What we have seen is that amah used in this fashion to denote a female servant. The Kha ending also shows us that the person belongs to that person or attached in some way.

For the Male-Slave reference in Devarim 5:13-15 the word is 'eved (Ayin-Vet-Dalet) which is found on pages 713-714 in the BDB. It is a noun masculine. Reference 5650.

Genesis (Bereshit) 39:17-19

<sup>17</sup>Then she told him the same story, saying, “The **Hebrew slave (haEved haIv'riy הַעֲבֵד הָעִבְרִי)** whom you brought into our house came to me to dally (laugh at/Mock at) with me; <sup>18</sup>but when I screamed at the top of my voice, he left his garment with me and fled outside.” <sup>19</sup>When his master heard the story that his wife told him, namely, “Thus and so **your slave (av'dekha עַבְדְּךָ)** did to me,” he was furious.

Here we see that Yosef was considered a Hebrew servant and he belonged to his master. Again, you can see with the Kha designating belonging to someone.

Genesis (Bereshit) 41:12

<sup>12</sup>A Hebrew youth was there with us, **a servant (ivriy eved עֲבֵד עִבְרִי)** of the chief steward; and when we told him our dreams, he interpreted them for us, telling each of the meaning of his dream. Again this talks of Yosef as the Hebrew Servant or slave.

Genesis (Bereshit) 50:2

<sup>2</sup>Then Joseph ordered the physicians in **his service (avadayv עַבְדָּיו)** to embalm his father, and the physicians embalmed Israel.

Later, after his elevation in position by Pharaoh even Yosef had slaves of servants.

Exodus (Shemot) 21:2

<sup>2</sup>When you acquire a Hebrew **slave** (iv'riy eved עֶבֶד עִבְרִי), he shall serve six years; in the seventh year he shall go free, without payment.

In the community of Beni Yisrael one had to treat a servant who was also Ivri differently that a slave bought from a toshav.

Exodus (Shemot) 20:10

<sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a sabbath of Yehovah Eloheykha: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, **your male [slave/servant]** (av'dekha עֶבֶדְךָ) or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements.

Like we said earlier the Kha ending shows a belonging to someone in this case it refers to you and me as Beni Yisrael.

Leviticus (Vayiqra) 25:6, 44-46

<sup>6</sup>But you may eat whatever the land during its sabbath will produce—you, **your male [slave/servant]** (uleav'dekha וְלֵעֶבְדְּךָ) and female slaves, the hired and bound laborers who live with you,

Like we looked at this verse with Amah we see that with Eved that this shows that the Eved in this case belongs to me or you.

<sup>44</sup>Such [**your**] **male [slave]** (ve av'dekha וְעֶבְדְּךָ) and female slaves as you may have—it is from the nations round about you that you may acquire **male [slave/servants]** (eved עֶבֶד) and female slaves. <sup>45</sup>You may also buy them from among the children of aliens resident among you, or from their families that are among you, whom they begot in your land. These shall become your property: <sup>46</sup>you may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit as property for all time. Such you may treat as slaves.

Just like we said before this was different than the Irvi eved Hebrew Slave/Servant in that they could be transferred as property from Father to children.

Genesis (Bereshit) 12:16

<sup>16</sup>And because of her, it went well with Abram; he acquired sheep, oxen, asses, **male [slaves]** (va avadim וְעֶבְדִּים) and female slaves, she-asses, and camels.

Here Avram collected male servants/slaves.

Genesis (Bereshit) 9:25

<sup>25</sup>he said, “Cursed be Canaan; **The lowest of slaves [slave of slaves] (eved ‘avadim עֶבְדִים עֶבֶד)** Shall he be to his brothers.”

Here Canaan was cursed to be a slave of slaves or servant of servants.

Exodus (Shemot) 13:3

<sup>3</sup>And Moses said to the people, “Remember this day, on which you went free from Egypt, the **house of bondage [house of slaves] (mibeit ‘avadim מִבֵּית עֶבְדִים)**, how Yehovah freed you from it with a mighty hand: no leavened bread shall be eaten.

Here we see that while in Mitz’raiym (Egypt) that Beni Yisrael was in a House of Slavery/Servitude. They belonged to Pharaoh and he did not want to let them go.

Exodus (Shemot) 13:14

<sup>14</sup>And when, in time to come, your son asks you, saying, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘It was with a mighty hand that Yehovah brought us out from Egypt, the **house of bondage [house of slaves] (mibeit ‘avadim מִבֵּית עֶבְדִים)**.

Here we see Yehovah brought them out and made them free from serving men but instead to serve him. Thus, they became his avadim.

Jeremiah (Yermiyahu) 25:9

<sup>9</sup>I am going to send for all the peoples of the north—declares Yehovah—and for **My servant (av’diy עֶבְדִי)**, King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, and bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all those nations roundabout. I will exterminate them and make them a desolation, an object of hissing—ruins for all time.

Even Nebuchadrezzar of Bablylon was Yehovah’s servant for the time he worked to accomplish the tasks he had for him.

Proverbs (Mishlei) 22:7

<sup>7</sup>The rich rule the poor, And the borrower is a **slave [or servant] (eved עֶבֶד)** to the lender.

If one owns money to another then we (you and I) are servants to them. How many of us have mortgages, car loans, credit cards, etc....

Genesis (Bereshit) 47:19

<sup>19</sup>Let us not perish before your eyes, both we and our land. Take us and our land in exchange for bread, and we with our land will be **serfs [slave/servants] (avadim עֲבָדִים)** to Pharaoh; provide the seed, that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become a waste.”

During the Famine in Egypt the people sold all they had for food.

Genesis (Bereshit) 26:12 –15

<sup>12</sup>Yitzchaq sowed in that land and reaped a hundredfold the same year. Yehovah blessed him, <sup>13</sup>and the man grew richer and richer until he was very wealthy: <sup>14</sup>he acquired flocks and herds, and **a large household [slaves many] (va avudah rabbah וְעַבְדָּה רַבָּה)**, so that the Philistines envied him. <sup>15</sup>And the Philistines stopped up all the wells which his father’s **servants (av’dey עֲבָדָיו)** had dug in the days of his father Abraham, filling them with earth.

Here we see that Yitzchaq (Isaac) was given many servants/slaves. They worked for him and were under his control.

Genesis (Shemot) 27:37

<sup>37</sup>Yitzchaq answered, saying to Esau (Esav), “But I have made him master over you: I have given him all his brothers for **servants (la’avadim לְעַבְדִים)**, and sustained him with grain and wine. What, then, can I still do for you, my son?”

Here Yizchaq had already given his blessing to Yaaqov and even made his borthers including Esav as Avadim (Servants/slaves).

So how do we know they were under the control or worked for someone?

Soldiers of an Army – Servants/Subjects

I Samuel (Shemuel Aleph) 17:8

<sup>8</sup>He stopped and called out to the ranks of Israel and he said to them, “Why should you come out to engage in battle? I am the Philistine [champion], and you are **Saul’s servants (avadim leSha’ul לְשָׂאוֹל עֲבָדִים)**. Choose one of your men and let him come down against me.

Here we see that those in the military belonged to the King.

I Samuel (Shemuel Aleph) 29:3

<sup>3</sup>The Philistine officers asked, “Who are those Hebrews?” “Why, that’s David, the **servant (eved עֶבֶד)** of King Saul of Israel,” Achish answered the Philistine officers. “He has been with me for a year or more, and I have found no fault in him from the day he defected until now.”

Even David was considered a servant to Sha’ul.

Servants (worshippers of Elohim)

Genesis (Bereshit) 50:17

<sup>17</sup>So shall you say to Joseph, ‘Forgive, I urge you, the offense and guilt of your brothers who treated you so harshly.’ Therefore, please forgive the offense of the **servants (av’dey עֶבְדֵי)** of the Elohey of your father.”

The Children of Yisrael/Yaaqov considered themselves servants of Yehovah.

Leviticus (Vayiqra) 25:42, 55

<sup>42</sup>For they are **My servants (avaday עֶבְדַי)**, whom I freed from the land of Egypt; they may not give themselves over into **servitude (aved עֶבֶד)**.

Here we see that we are not to give ourselves into servitude or slavery. We are only to be in that relationship with Yehovah.

<sup>55</sup>For it is to Me that the Israelites are **servants (avadim עֶבְדִים)**: they are **My servants (avaday עֶבְדַי)**, whom I freed from the land of Egypt, I Yehovah Eloheykhem.

Yehovah feels strongly that we as a people belong to him. We are his servants/slaves.

Prophets as servants

2 Kings (Melakhim Bet) 9:7

<sup>7</sup>You shall strike down the House of Ahab your master; thus will I avenge on Jezebel the blood of **My servants the prophets** (avaday haNevi'im עֲבָדַי הַנְּבִיאִים), and the blood of the other **servants** (av'dey עֲבָדַי) of Yehovah.

The Prophets and others who Yehovah sent were his servants.

2 Kings (Melakhim Bet) 17:13

<sup>13</sup>Yehovah warned Israel and Judah by every prophet [and] every seer, saying: “Turn back from your wicked ways, and observe My commandments (mitzvotay) and My laws (chuqotay), according to all the Teaching (hatorah) that I commanded your fathers and that I transmitted to you through **My servants the prophets** (avaday haNevi'im עֲבָדַי הַנְּבִיאִים).”

We see again that the Nevi'im are his servants also which, means the belong to him.

Jeremiah (Yermiyahu) 7:24-25

<sup>24</sup>Yet they did not listen or give ear; they followed their own counsels, the willfulness of their evil hearts. They have gone backward, not forward, <sup>25</sup>from the day your fathers left the land of Egypt until today. And though I kept sending all **My servants** (avaday), the prophets, to them daily and persistently,

Israel as a nation is a servant

Isaiah (Yeshayahu) 41:8-9

<sup>8</sup>But you, Israel, **My servant** (av'diy עֲבָדַי), Jacob, whom I have chosen, Seed of Abraham My friend— <sup>9</sup>You whom I drew from the ends of the earth And called from its far corners, To whom I said: You are **My servant** (ava'diy עֲבָדַי); I chose you, I have not rejected you—

Yisrael is the servant to Yehovah. He calls them “My Servant” which, means they belong to him. These are the children of Yaaqov.

Isaiah (Yeshayahu) 44:1-2

But hear, now, O Jacob **My servant** (av'diy עֲבָדַי), Israel whom I have chosen! <sup>2</sup>Thus said Yehovah, your Maker, Your Creator who has helped you since birth: Fear not, **My servant** (av'diy עֲבָדַי) Jacob, Jeshurun whom I have chosen,

So we can see from these that a servant is one who belongs to another especially one who is directed to do something. Yet, it is different than a Toshav or Sakhir, which appear to be people who are hired. Yet it also describes one as a slave /servant if they are a borrower. We can see also that this word can also describe either a servant or slave. So is there a difference in the Tanakh?

Leviticus (Vayiqra)25:39-46

<sup>39</sup>If your kinsman under you continues in straits and must give himself over to you, do not subject him to the treatment of a slave. <sup>40</sup>He shall remain with you as a hired or bound laborer; he shall serve with you only until the jubilee year. <sup>41</sup>Then he and his children with him shall be free of your authority; he shall go back to his family and return to his ancestral holding.—<sup>42</sup>For they are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt; they may not give themselves over into servitude.—<sup>43</sup>You shall not rule over him ruthlessly; you shall fear Eloheykha. <sup>44</sup>Such male and female slaves as you may have—it is **from the nations round about you that you may acquire male and female slaves.** <sup>45</sup>You may also buy them from among the children of aliens resident among you, or from their families that are among you, whom they begot in your land. **These shall become your property:** <sup>46</sup>you may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit **as property for all time.** Such you may treat as slaves. But as for your Israelite kinsmen, no one shall rule ruthlessly over the other.

Exodus (Shemot) 21:2-6

<sup>2</sup>When you acquire a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years; in the seventh year he shall go free, without payment. <sup>3</sup>If he came single, he shall leave single; if he had a wife, his wife shall leave with him. <sup>4</sup>If his master gave him a wife, and she has borne him children, the wife and her children shall belong to the master, and he shall leave alone. <sup>5</sup>But if the slave declares, “I love my master, and my wife and children: I do not wish to go free,” <sup>6</sup>his master shall take him before Elohim. He shall be brought to the door or the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall then remain his slave for life.

From these we see that a Slave is Property. In some cases it is lifetime or till the year of release (shemitah) or jubilee. Whereas, a servant is one who serves to pay a debt or serves one in service. But since the same word is used in Deuteronomy (Devarim) 5:13-15 then we must assume that both are referenced here.

What exactly does a slave or servant do that they should cease from doing it on Shabbat?

Genesis (Bereshit) 39:4-6

<sup>4</sup>he took a liking to Joseph. He made him his personal attendant and put him in charge of his household, placing in his hands all that he owned. <sup>5</sup>And from the time that the Egyptian put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, Yehovah blessed his house for Joseph's sake, so that the blessing of Yehovah was upon everything that he owned, in the house and outside. <sup>6</sup>He left all that he had in Joseph's hands and, with him

there, he paid attention to nothing save the food that he ate. Now Joseph was well built and handsome.

Yosef was in charge of the household.

Genesis (Bereshit) 24:2-4

<sup>2</sup>And Abraham said to the senior servant of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, “Put your hand under my thigh <sup>3</sup>and I will make you swear by Yehovah, Elohey of heaven and Elohey of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell, <sup>4</sup>but will go to the land of my birth and get a wife for my son Isaac.”

He was sent to fetch a wife for his master’s son.

The slave/servant could have duties that range from the very lowly to the managing of his master’s household.

Are we slaves/servants in this same sense? It does not indicate that they were paid for their services. So while we may feel we work like slaves. We don’t seem to have that same arrangement today. But what about if we borrow does not that make us slaves to those we owe. It does say in Proverbs 22:7 <sup>7</sup>The rich rule the poor, And the borrower is a slave to the lender. But is it saying that we will have to pay those we owe a mortgage, car payment, gas bill, etc... The more debt you have the less freedom you have. So today the unpaid slave as property is not a reality us, instead we have servants in one form or another is like a hired laborer.

So who is my servant today that I should have them cease serving me on Shabbat?

It is a matter of control, whom do we control and act for us by extension. If someone works on shabbat and we can not tell them to stop then they are not in our control.

So what is our sphere of control? So let us look at the word for gate.

Exodus (Shemot) 20:10

<sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a sabbath of Yehovah Eloheykha: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, **your male [slave/servant] (av’dekha)** or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements (from your gates Bish’areykha – 8179 בַּשְׁעָרֵיךָ).

Sha’ar which is the gates as translated is a noun masculine in Hebrew. The Gates designates an opening or entrance to an area. So by looking at this this will help us to see what is our span of control.

Bereshit 19:1 (gates of a city)

1 The two messengers arrived in Sodom in the evening, as Lot was sitting **in the gate of Sodom** (**basha'ar sadom** בַּשַׁעַר־סְדֹם). When Lot saw them, he rose to greet them and, bowing low with his face to the ground,

Here we see that Lot was sitting at the entrance to the city. Thus the opening to to it.

Exodus 20:10 (Gates of you dwelling)

<sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a sabbath of Yehovah eloheykha: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, **your male [slave/servant] (av'dekha)** or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is **within your settlements (bish'areykha** בְּשַׁעְרֵיךָ).

These are with in your opening to your area or property.

Duet 5:14 (Gates of your dwelling)

14 but the seventh day is a sabbath of Yehovah Eloheykha; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the stranger **in your settlements (bish'areykha** בְּשַׁעְרֵיךָ), so that your male and female slave may rest as you do.

Deut 6:9 (Figurative of your House Gates)

9 inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on **your gates (sha'areykha)**.

וְכָתַבְתֶּם עַל־מְזוּזֹת בַּיִתְּךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֵיךָ
Ukatav'tem al-mezuzot beit ubish'areykha
And write them on posts house and in gates your.

We see from this the gates or sha'ar is the opening of your area of control no matter if it's a tent on a small patch of earth or a mansion over acres of property. You control it and those who come under your control are the ones who you must direct to rest on Shabbat and not serve you.

So what about those who work for us? Today, we rarely have servants and there are no slaves at least in this country we are. What about those who serve us daily yet we don't pay them or tell them how to work for us?

We have to look around and see who serves us. The waiter or waitress at a restaurant serves us. Anyone taking money from us in a purchase serves us. A servant is one who we come into personal contact with who provides us a service. If we control whether the person serves us or not would seem to me the determination of whom our servant is today. If we cannot tell them to stop or start working then they are out of our control.

For instance, The Utility workers (lights, water, sewage, landline phone) if we call their offices and tell them because we pay them for their service then we can tell them to cease working on Shabbat. Do you think they will listen to you? Probably not, so they are outside of our influence. Therefore we can't control the service they provide and they are not servants who we control.

But how far do we take this. Do we apply this? ...to machines ...to automated services ...etc Some would argue that using a computer on Shabbat is making your computer work. But does it need rest? We have a lot of machines today that do things automated today. Even today we have a human looking robot that can walk like a human. This is not clear in the Tanakh and so I have to leave the choice up to you. In the end, like all Karaites we must study the scriptures for ourselves and make a choice.