Servitude, Liberation, Redemption: Can Servants of God be Free?

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Alan Krinsky works in Rhode Island as a Senior Fiscal Policy Analyst focused on poverty, taxation, economic development, and the state budget. He is also a writer who has been published in a variety of print and online outlets, and his book Running in Good Faith? Observant Judaism and Libertarian Politics was published by Academic Studies Press in November 2020. He earned a PhD in History and the History of Science from the University of Wisconsin - Madison (2001) and a Masters in Public Health from Brown University (2006). This is essay is adapted, with permission from the publisher, from the author's book Running in Good Faith? Observant Judaism and Libertarian Politics [Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2020]. This article appears in issue 40 of Conversations, the journal of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

Freedom and Redemption

At the Pesa? seder, toward the end of the Maggid section of the Haggadah, after we have recounted and, ideally, experienced for ourselves the Exodus as if we ourselves had departed from Egypt (perhaps one of the most difficult assignments in Judaism), we raise the second cup of wine and declare the following:

> Therefore it is our duty to thank, praise, laud, glorify, exalt, honor, bless, raise high, and acclaim the One who has performed all these miracles for our ancestors and for us; who has brought us out **from slavery to freedom**, from sorrow to joy, from grief to celebration; from darkness to great light and **from enslavement to redemption**; and so we shall sing a new song before God. Halleluya![1]

The responsibility of Jews to be grateful to God is not only for facts of creation and our lives, but also for our liberation. Yet why the need to provide *two* versions of what would appear to be the same idea: from slavery to freedom *and* from enslavement to redemption? Why both formulations? Are freedom and redemption the same thing?

Let My People Go

"Let My people go!" In this manner, Moses relayed God's demand of Pharaoh. The Egyptians enslaved the Hebrews, and Moses sought to secure their freedom. In this we see that liberation from slavery and tyranny and "God's identity as the liberator of slaves" rests at the foundation, the very birth, of the Jewish nation.[2] The Exodus from Egypt transformed what had been a family, and then a tribe, into a nation. This account of liberation underlies not only Jewish history, but has often served as a symbol, an example, a rallying point for enslaved and oppressed people the world over, most notably for African Americans in the struggle for civil rights in the United States. And this example remains shockingly relevant in our own days, with tens of millions of people the world over enslaved.[3]

In daily prayers, Jews recall the Exodus from Egypt, and once a year bring considerably greater focus to the event. The weeklong Pesa? holiday commemorates this departure and journey. Indeed, the prayer book refers to the holiday as *zeman ?erutenu*, the "season of our freedom." During the Passover Seder, Jews recite the text of the Haggadah, seeking not only to retell the story, but to experience it for themselves: "Generation by generation, each person must see himself as if he himself had come out of Egypt....'"[4] Indeed, from the very beginning of the Haggadah, the theme of freedom is raised: "This year we are slaves; next year, may we be free people." The language used here is the vernacular Aramaic, the common language of the people for whom the Haggadah was first written.

Let My People Go, and…?

"Let My people go!" In this manner, Moses relayed God's demand of Pharaoh. And we repeat it here—because this is *not* the complete statement. Twice, in Exodus 7:16 and 7:26, the Torah tells us that God told Moses to tell Pharaoh "Send out My people, and they will serve Me." *V'ya?avduni*, **and they will serve Me**—the same root letters as in the Hebrew word for servant or slave: ?*ayin*, *bet*, and *dalet*. As Rabbi Ezra Bick asks, "Is that merely a trading of one master for another, more exalted perhaps, but essentially the same?"[5] Did the Hebrews go from servitude to freedom, or from one servitude to another servitude? Or, is it possible to conceive of servitude to God as a kind of freedom, as redemption even? In reliving the Exodus, the Hagaddah tells us *why* we must, in each generation, see ourselves as if we had been liberated from Egypt: "It was not only our ancestors whom the Holy One redeemed; God redeemed us too along with them, as it is said: 'God took us out of there, to bring

us to the land God promised our ancestors and to give it to us.’”[6]

The Exodus is not limited to the physical liberation from Egypt. The physical liberation is intended to result in service to God and some sort of redemption. Indeed, at the Passover Seder one learns that freedom is not a simple idea, but rather a nuanced concept. A central part of the Haggadah is the elaboration of *four different* dimensions of freedom and redemption, of God leading the people to freedom: (1) “and I removed you” (*v’hotseiti*); (2) “and I rescued you” (*v’hitsalti*); (3) “and I redeemed you” (*v’ga?alti*); and (4) “and I took you” (*v’laka?ti*). There are various, overlapping explanations of these four—as stages in a single process, as a journey, as types (including physical and spiritual), as increasing closeness to God—but the point is that freedom is not a single thing. And perhaps also that freedom and redemption might not quite be the same thing.

Two Types of Liberty

To understand the notion of serving God as an act of freedom rather than one of slavery, as well as a possible means of distinguishing between freedom and redemption, we might first turn to a classic text by a renowned thinker, a Jew, though not one hailing from a traditional, religious community: “Two Concepts of Liberty” by Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997). In this landmark essay, first published in 1958, Berlin articulates a distinction between what he names “Positive Liberty” and “Negative Liberty.”[7] In brief, Negative Liberty refers to the absence of restrictions. The less others interfere in my life, the freer I am. Some describe Negative Liberty as freedom *from*, in contrast with what Berlin termed “Positive Liberty.” This latter type of freedom concerns the ability of a human to make something of his or her life and has been termed freedom *to*.

How do most of us commonly understand freedom? We generally characterize freedom as the *absence* of restrictions. If I am free, I can do absolutely anything I want. It makes sense to us, seems self-evident, to say I am *most* free when I am *least* restricted, and vice versa, that when I am most restricted, I am least free. And this sense of freedom accords with Berlin’s Negative Liberty.

Proponents of Positive Liberty might argue, however, that a person could have all the Negative Liberty one could want, an absence of any and all external restrictions, but illness or poverty or debt or depression or lack of education or something else might yet prevent this individual from acting freely, from functioning as the master of one’s own life. Some would therefore posit that by providing universal health care or subsidized education or, at an even more basic level, safe sanitation and water systems, or by otherwise helping put in place the foundations for productive living, a government can help people be free, become freer—even if in providing such foundations a government must violate the Negative Liberty of its citizens.

In a sense, Negative Liberty proposes no end goals, no aim for living freely; such is left to each individual. Positive Liberty, by contrast, implies at least some sort of ability to act in the world, to do something with one’s life, whether as an individual or as part of a community. To many, it further implies some sort of goal, some destiny even—the fulfillment of which is an achievement of living freely. Or, in other words, Negative Liberty is solely concerned with removing external constraints from living freely, whereas Positive Liberty addresses the *means* of living freely, and possibly the ends as well.

Perhaps one might fairly describe Berlin's Positive Liberty as noble and ennobling, but is it freedom? The question is difficult—mostly because, as we have noted, both positions make some sense intuitively. We think of freedom as the absence of restrictions, as not being imprisoned by others. This often seems to us what freedom really is. And yet, if we consider someone who, while free from restrictions, nonetheless does not have the capacity—the foundations, the resources, the security—to build a life, we do not necessarily think of such a person as living a truly free life.

A Free Person in Servitude?

What might be the consequences of *unlimited* Negative Liberty? If a person is totally free, is he or she free at all? To have no restrictions, no limitations, is this not an invitation for anarchy and chaos? Indeed, one might suppose that an anarchic freedom without limits would quickly become chaotic, violent, and far from free—as per Hobbes and his notion of life outside of society being "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

With no anchors or standards, the completely free person risks becoming a slave to desire and to whim. Unencumbered by morality, by societal taboos and customs, by laws, a person is free to follow desire and seek pleasure without end. I am speaking philosophically here—to make a point about freedom—and I do *not* at all mean to suggest that nonreligious individuals must be or even often are slaves to their whims and desires. None of us lives absolutely freely, and empirical evidence unambiguously demonstrates that living an ostensibly religious life provides *no* guarantee against living by whim or even immorally. Indeed, the thirteenth-century giant, Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (1194–1270; also known as Nachmanides and as the Ramban), found a need to coin the term *naval b'reshut ha-Torah*: "a scoundrel with the permission of the Torah." By this he meant, for example, someone who ate only kosher food, but to gluttonous excess. Although some might find it difficult to understand, it is possible to not break a single law of the Torah and yet not be a *mentsch*, a decent and kind human being. And likewise, to live a secular life is not at all determinative of living by whim or immorally. The point, rather, is that our commonsense notions of freedom reveal something of a paradox, or at least an irony: that although fewer restrictions means greater freedom, at some point freedom can become excessive and chaotic, undermining itself. Again, this is a philosophical point—that, in principle, an individual living under a regime of pure Negative Liberty, an apparently free individual, could live for all practical purposes as a servant, at least to his or her desires or appetites.

A Free Servant?

We still find ourselves with the inverse conundrum: even if we might agree intuitively that an ostensibly free person can be enslaved to his or her passions, how can we say that someone who is

avowedly a *servant* can be free?

And the Torah and Talmud make pretty clear that Jews are servants.

To begin, we find as one of the key themes of Rosh haShanah, the Jewish New Year the notion of *kabbalat ?ol malkhut shamayim*, the "acceptance of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven," or the "receiving of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven." The phrase is also associated with the recitation of the Shema, Judaism's central statement of faith: "Listen, Israel, Ha-Shem (The Lord) is our God, Ha-Shem (The Lord) is One."[8] The statement is meant to be recited twice daily and even a third time before going to sleep at night. The second line of the prayer refers to God's Kingdom, providing a clear link to this "yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven." We also speak of *?ol ha-mitzvot*, the "yoke of the *mitzvot*." Like oxen, we are yoked in our servitude of God and in the performance of God's commandments. A yoke achieves its basic function in constraining free movement. It would seem therefore that restriction functions as something of a basic theological principle in Judaism.

In *Pirkei Avot* 6:3, Rabbi Ne?unya ben haKanna explains that "One who takes on himself the yoke of Torah will be spared the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly responsibilities, but one who throws off [from himself] the yoke of Torah will bear the yoke of government and the yoke of worldly responsibilities."[9] In addition to the yokes of the mitzvoth and the Kingdom of Heaven, we have here the yoke of Torah, the yoke of kingship, and the yoke of the way of the land. One interpretation, perhaps the more straightforward interpretation of this teaching, has it that one who accepts the yoke of Torah will merit not being burdened by the difficulties of government and of earning a livelihood. An alternative interpretation would be that the yoke of Torah provides a spiritual or emotional freedom from government and livelihood, though not necessarily a practical or political freedom. In this sense, accepting the yoke of Torah frees us by helping us understand what is truly important.

In any case, whether the yoke of Torah, the yoke of mitzvoth, or the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven—surely, this does not sound like liberty!

Furthermore, religiously observant Jews consider themselves *?ovdei Ha-Shem*, "servants of God." And the book of Deuteronomy characterizes Judaism's greatest prophet, Moses, as an *?eved Ha-Shem*, which can be translated as either "a slave of God" or "a servant of God" (Deut. 35:4). Nowhere does the Bible describe prophets or Jews in general as "free individuals." In the times of the Temples in Jerusalem, the carrying out of animal sacrifices was known as the *?avodah*, the "service." In the understanding of the rabbis, prayer replaced sacrifice as the central means of service to God, and they called prayer *?avodat ha-lev*, the "service of the heart." Many Jews pray three times each day and thereby undertake this service of the heart. Such Jews offer up their prayers to God, just as their ancestors offered up animal and agricultural sacrifices to God. How can people who engage in such service, or servitude—and within Judaism this is an obligatory, not a voluntary servitude—be considered truly free? And given all of the other, many religious obligations—including prohibitions on performing certain activities on the Sabbath, as well as various dietary and relationship prohibitions, and also positive obligations to do certain things, such as honoring one's parents and enjoying the Sabbath— it might seem that we cannot but conclude that any ritually observant Jewish life is lacking in freedom, that it is even perhaps a sort of subjugation or enslavement.

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Having cited the evidence of our servitude, can we find an argument establishing our freedom in such servitude? There are, indeed, a few different possibilities.

1. Structure. As we have already suggested, perhaps the most basic argument or claim is this: if the complete lack of restrictions leads to anarchy, any meaningful freedom requires some degree of structure. To take the claim further, one might say that structure not only *allows for* freedom but that some structural frameworks can *facilitate or cultivate* freedom—and some frameworks more than others.

Let us take the Jewish Sabbath as an example. Who is freer? The Jew who adheres to the Sabbath laws, including the prohibitions on such activities as driving, watching television, talking on the telephone, and spending money? Or, the Jew who has no Sabbath? And what about the Jew who observes something of a Sabbath, but makes exceptions when some other demands arise?

To start, although there might not be evidence from surveys, experience suggests that the majority of those who keep the Sabbath generally experience it as freeing, especially in our days of a wired world, where many people feel naked without a charged cell phone in their hands. Instead of being enslaved to the car, the television, the telephone, and money, a person is free of these demands, perhaps even compulsions. A person is free to learn, to socialize, to spend quality time with one's family. It is time set aside, and not to be eclipsed by so many other competitors for one's attention. Furthermore, this mandated structure affects the experience of the entire week, building a rhythm, and creating a sanctuary in time, as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel described it.[10] Without the Sabbath, every day can be the same. Meaningful time spent with one's spouse or children or other relatives or friends can be put off indefinitely when there is no day of rest set in the calendar. This is not to say that living a meaningful life of freedom is impossible without the Sabbath, just that this structure can help generate meaningful freedom.

This principle could be applied well beyond the Sabbath to the broad and intricate structural framework of the mitzvoth, and of Jewish law—the halakha—which really means not "Law" but rather "Way" or "Path." Ideally, Jewish law does not merely enumerate dos and don'ts, but instead provides a pathway through life.

Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo takes such ideas one step further, arguing that the halakhic framework can engender creativity. In arguing that Judaism can provide a structure and community within which an individual can exercise great freedom, Rabbi Cardozo offers a fascinating analogy, comparing the musical genius of Beethoven and Bach. Which one, he wonders, was the greater composer?

> Bach was totally traditional in his approach to music. He adhered strictly to the rules of composing music as understood in his days. Nowhere in all his compositions do we find deviation from these rules. But what is most surprising is that Bach's musical output is not only unprecedented but, above all, astonishingly creative. . . . What we discover is that the self-imposed restrictions of Bach to keep to the traditional rules of composition forced him to become the author of such outstandingly innovative music that nobody after him was ever able to follow in his footsteps. It was within the "confinement of the law" that Bach burst out with unprecedented creativity. . . . Beethoven (in his later years) broke with all the accepted rules of composition. He was one of the founders of a whole new world of musical options. But it was his rejection of the conventional musical laws which made him less of a musical genius. To work within constraints and then to be utterly novel is the ultimate sign of unprecedented greatness.[11]

Rabbi Cardozo's understanding of Bach and Beethoven shows how freedom can be found *within* the law and not simply in its absence. Although Bach might have seemed less innovative, the fact is that he worked within a stricter framework and nonetheless exhibited great creativity. Bach found freedom within structure, within a set of rules, and Rabbi Cardozo counts this as a more masterful achievement than that of Beethoven, whose innovation took place with fewer rules and limits. Likewise, the argument continues, within the framework of Jewish law, the halakha, there is the potential for greater creativity, innovation, and even freedom than in a system without such constraints.

In this regard, the Talmud offers a telling play on words. Exodus 32:16 tells us about the first set of tablets Moses brought with him down Mount Sinai: "The tablets, they are the work of God, and the writing, it is the writing of God, engraved on the tablets." In *Pirkei Avot* 6:2, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi comments on the verse, considering the word "engraved," *?arut* in the Hebrew: "Read not *?arut* ('engraved') but *?erut* ('freedom'), for the only person who is truly free is one who occupies himself with Torah study."[12] That is, the very word we use to describe Passover as *zeman ?erutenu*, the time of our freedom, appears to share a linguistic root with the word for engraving, for carving something into stone! To carve something into stone, or into one's body, indicates a kind of permanence, a binding or sorts, the seeming antithesis of freedom. Rabbi Levi is teaching that such an engraving or binding actually generates freedom. To generalize, one might say that structure and limits can and do allow freedom to flourish.

Indeed, as John Locke—long an inspiration for generations of libertarians and others championing Negative Liberty—himself wrote, "*the end of Law* is not to abolish or restrain, but *to preserve and enlarge Freedom*: for in all the states of created beings capable of Laws, *where there is no Law, there is no Freedom*."[13]

2. Purpose. Considering the themes of Passover, one might again ask whether or not *redemption* is the same thing as *liberation*? Did God *liberate* the Jews or *redeem* them? And can one be redeemed *without* becoming free? Both terms clearly indicate removal *from* a situation of servitude or imprisonment. *To* what alternative situation, though? Liberation does not really point to any future state, it is fundamentally about shedding restrictions. To redeem someone, by contrast, suggests a reason—redeemed for or to what purpose? For example, we speak of redeeming captives or, to use a more prosaic example, redeeming coupons. We may be freeing up a little bit of money with our coupon, but redemption is not in this case liberation. In the context of the Exodus, the purpose of redemption was to serve God. On the face of it, this would seem to prove contradictory to freedom, yet in this situation, at least, redemption required freedom as a precondition, meaning that it is not

contradictory.

3. A Different Kind of Master. While we can conceive of the service of God as voluntary, certainly the Egyptian bondage of the Jews was not. Relatedly, Rabbi Bick, who raised for us the question about trading one master for another, points out what he takes to be a critical difference between servitude of God and servitude of Pharaoh or another human being: "A slave is totally dependent on his master. The basis of his life and his destiny is in the hands of his owner. Since the master is one who has needs of his own, who needs to acquire power to achieve his goals, the slave becomes an instrument in achieving the ends of the master." A servant of God, by contrast, has a very different relationship with his or her master:

> God has no needs that we can fill. The individual does not become an instrument for achieving the ends of God by being dependent on Him. The dependence on God is total, absolute. Everything we have, everything we want, everything we can possibly achieve, must come from Him. Avoda, service of God, is the recognition of total dependence. The dependence is so total, so absolute, precisely because God has everything, and THEREFORE, HE NEEDS NOTHING FROM US.[14]

That is, although earthly masters provide some sustenance to their servants or slaves, they also expect and demand and extract something, labor or otherwise, in return. Although God might command us, God needs nothing from us, and this fact cannot but alter the entire dynamic of servitude. Now, not everyone agrees on this theological point, that God needs nothing from human beings, but given this axiom, Rabbi Bick's logic does seem to follow—at least that there might be a difference between serving a master who needs things and extracts them and serving a master who requires nothing. In this sense, a person is *not* simply exchanging one master for another, though one might question whether Rabbi Bick is describing freedom in servitude or just a different kind of servitude.

4. Communal Freedom. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903–1993, also known as the Rav), the intellectual leader of Modern Orthodox Judaism in the twentieth century, presents yet another twist on the Exodus and the notion of Passover's freedom. The Paschal sacrifice was critical to the Exodus itself and to the observance of Passover through to the times of the Temples in Jerusalem. One thing distinguishing the sacrifice of the lamb is that it cannot be brought by an individual. Rather, it is brought by a *?avura*, a group of people. This joining together was integral to the experience of freedom. The Passover sacrifice figured as the centerpiece of a meal devoted to solidarity and community and mutual responsibility.[15] One must note, however, that although we might find sensible the notion of achieving at least Positive Liberty in community and in cooperation, there always remains the danger that communal "freedom" transmogrifies into a kind of fascism, and a substantial loss of freedom. This becomes amplified yet further should the members of one community come to see the freedom of other communities as threatening, as incompatible with their own freedom, in which case war or subjugation can come to be seen as a means of securing the liberty of one's own group at the expense of the liberty of another group or other groups.

5. Human Nature and the Natural World. Finally, the late Israeli scientist and thinker Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903–1994), someone with at least libertarian leanings, offers a different understanding—a challenging and possibly problematic understanding—to reconcile servitude and freedom:

> The claim that a man who accepts the authority of the Halakhah is in bondage is only too familiar. . . . If the world possesses constant regularity, man is subordinate to the entire system of natural reality, which includes not only his body but his soul. He is subject to it both physiologically and psychologically. Under these circumstances, what is man's freedom? Willing acceptance of a way of life which does not derive from human nature implies the emancipation of man from the bondage of raw nature.

Leibowitz is arguing here that to live and act in *accord* with the natural world and with human nature is to live in a kind of servitude, to the way things are "naturally." Only if one goes beyond human nature and beyond the natural world does she or he become free: "The only way man can break the bonds of nature is by cleaving to God; by acting in compliance with the divine will rather than in accordance with the human will." Human will and desire remain part of the natural world. "The true meaning of the Talmudic adage 'None but he who busies himself with the Torah is free' is that he is free from the bondage of nature because he lives a life which is contrary to nature, both nature in general and human nature in particular." In this way Leibowitz seeks to square the circle of servitude under God as freedom.[16]

6. Choice and Rationality. Returning to the question of whether or not the Hebrews merely swapped one master for another, perhaps the answer is yes *and* no. Or rather, swapped, but not merely swapped—that the Hebrews left one master to serve *the* Master, but to serve in freedom. Or maybe to serve freely, out of their own volition?

After all, although we discussed the imagery of the restraining yokes—of Torah, of mitzvoth, of the Kingdom of Heaven—we never described their wearing as involuntary. Perhaps there is no contradiction over freedom and servitude when someone accepts willingly such servitude. And neither did we say that it is impossible for someone to remove these yokes. One might reasonably argue that if you believe an infinite and omnipotent God commanded you and wishes you to place such yokes upon yourself it would be folly to refuse, yet one nonetheless remains free to do so.

Also, and in line with the thinking of Leibowitz, it is worth noting that although faith and reason are often contrasted, this is not necessarily the case in thought and practice. Submission to God need not be an abandonment of rationality. Rather, doing so can be and can be experienced by the adherent as a rational choice, perhaps in response to intellectual arguments or as a conscious commitment to a community and its traditions.

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In the end, in Judaism we seem to find praise for both freedom and, if not slavery, then *servitude*.

Rabbi Soloveitchik writes of "the awareness of a compulsory covenant, submission and acceptance of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven." And the individual seeking God "encounters the Inscrutable Will. This Will reveals itself to man, and instead of telling him the secrets of creation, it demands unlimited discipline and absolute submission."[17] Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein (1933–2015),

Rabbi Soloveitchik's son-in-law and a leader of Modern Orthodox Judaism in his own right, writes that "A Jew's life is defined by being commanded. . . . Judaism is built on the notion of nullifying your will before God's, of defining your existence as being called and commanded."[18] Like Rabbi Lichtenstein, Rabbi Shimon Gershon Rosenberg (1949–2007, known as Rav Shagar, from his initials) characterized such an orientation as central to Jewish religious observance: "As Shagar says, accepting the yoke of Heaven is 'that act around which the life of a Jew is organized.'"[19]

Taken together, the yokes and the servitude and the commandments, it might be fair to characterize traditional Judaism as fundamentally endorsing human submission to the divine will. Indeed, when God first offered the Torah to the Jews, the response was *na?aseh v'nishmah*, we will do and we will listen (Ex. 24:7). That is, the Jews agreed to submit to observance of the Torah and only then to learn and understand just what they had committed themselves to do. There is also, of course, the account of the *Akeidah*, of Abraham's bringing his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God. Now, there are a plethora of interpretations of this story, some of which argue that Abraham made a mistake, that he should have challenged the command, just as he challenged God's plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Nonetheless, Abraham's action is most frequently understood as a model of submission to the will of God.

And yet, to be clear, these very same thinkers who wrote eloquently about submission to God and God's will, elaborated their thought in quite nuanced ways, seeking to integrate individual autonomy with submission to God. In one sermon, "Shagar argues that this act of submission is actually a necessary step in enabling freedom, rather than its own form of enslavement."[20] Indeed, Rav Shagar appears to understand accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven as part of process of creating oneself. And Rabbi Soloveitchik and Rabbi Lichtenstein likewise see it, perhaps in tension with personal autonomy, as part of creating a full personality and living a complete life.[21]

Between Servitude and Freedom

The fifth teaching in the fourth chapter of the talmudic tractate *Gittin*, concerning the laws of divorce and related matters, presents us with an unusual case: what do we do with someone who is half-free and half-slave? One wonders how an individual could end up in such a position. The Talmud explains how: an individual falls into servitude to two masters, and at some point one of the masters frees the individual while the other does not. The first suggestion is that the individual alternate days, one free, one as a slave, and so on. Yet is this a tenable arrangement? The second opinion insists it is not. The male individual in this scenario has a biblical obligation to procreate—but this remains impossible to him: as he is half-slave he cannot marry a free woman, yet because he is half-free he cannot marry an enslaved woman. The conclusion is that the second master must emancipate him.

This *sugya* reveals a genuine tension between servitude and freedom. In the end, this servitude must give way to freedom—at least within the human realm. The liberation of this half-servant from this servitude makes possible fulfilling a commandment of God. It's a sort of redemption, becoming free to serve God.

Even more than a redemption. Fascinatingly, the reasoning for the conclusion that the half-servant must be freed relies upon the notion or imperative of *tikkun ?olam*, as do other teachings elsewhere in this chapter of the Talmud. *Tikkun ?olam* can be translated roughly as the fixing or repair of the world. In the context of this piece of Talmud, the very existence of a half-free and half-slave man who cannot fulfill his obligation to have children means there is something wrong in the world, something that needs to be repaired. Increasing freedom thereby helps repair what is wrong in the world, making it a better place.

[1] *The Koren Haggada*, with commentary by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2017), p. 90; emphasis added.

[2] Joshua Berman, *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 88.

[3] In truth, human slavery, in the form of sex trafficking, remains widespread in the twenty-first century, with more humans effectively enslaved than at any time in history. The estimates exceed 40 million enslaved human beings. For more information, see the website of the organization Anti-Slavery: https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/modern-slavery/, accessed June 23, 2020. See also this interactive guide from the Council on Foreign Relations: https://www.cfr.org/

interactives/modern-slavery/#!/section1/item-1, accessed June 23, 2020. For the United States specifically, please visit the website of Polaris, an organization fighting slavery and human trafficking in the United States: www.polarisproject.org; for their typology of twenty-five kinds of slavery in the United States, see www.https://polarisproject.org/typology, accessed 23 June, 2020.

[4] *Koren Haggada*, pp. 88, from the passage citing the Babylonian Talmud *Pesa?im* 116b, as well as Exodus 13:8 and Deuteronomy 6:23.

[5] Ezra Bick, “Prayer,” etzion.org, accessed June 28, 2015, http://etzion.org.il/en/prayer-1.

[6] *Koren Haggada*, pp. 88, 90.

[7] Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 166–217.

[8] *Ha-Shem* translates literally as *the Name* and is a means of referencing God without saying a name of God, often or usually the Tetragrammaton, the unpronounceable four-letter name of God, the letter *yud* followed by the letter *he* followed by the letter *vav* followed be the letter *he*. The Tetragrammaton, which appears twice in the opening verse of the Shema, is often pronounced *Adonai*, which technically means my lord and is translated as *the Lord*.

[9] *The Koren Pirkei Avot*, trans., Jonathan Sacks, commentary Rabbi Dr. Marc Angel (Jerusalem; New Milford: Koren Publishers Jerusalem, 2015), 64. From henceforth, referred to as *Pirkei Avot.*

[10] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2005).

[11] Nathan Lopes Cardozo, “Johann Sebastian Bach & Halacha,” David Cardozo Academy, accessed June 25, 2017, https://www.cardozoacademy.org/thoughts-to-ponder/johann-sebastian-bach-halacha-ttp-35/.

[12] *Pirkei Avot* 6:2.

[13] Locke, *Two Treatises*, 306.

[14] Bick, “Prayer.”

[15] Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Festival of Freedom: Essays on Pesah And the Haggadah*, ed. Joel B. Wolowelsky and Reuven Ziegler (Jersey City: KTAV Publishing House, 2006), 22–25.

[16] Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, ed. Eliezer Goldman, trans. Yoram Navon et al., rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 21–22.

[17] Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *And From There You Shall Seek* (Jersey City: KTAV Publishing House, 2009), 44, 35.

[18] Aharon Lichtenstein, *By His Light: Character and Values in the Service of God* (Jersey City: KTAV Publishing House, 2002), 49, 55.

[19] Levi Morrow, “God, Torah, Self: Accepting the Yoke of Heaven in the Writings of Rav Shagar,” *Lehrhaus*, May 26, 2017, https://thelehrhaus.com/scholarship/god-torah-self-accepting-the-yoke-of-heaven-in-the-writings-of-rav-shagar/. In recent years, with the translation into English of his essays, Rav Shagar has become increasingly well known outside of Israel as someone who sought to integrate Orthodox Judaism and postmodernism.

[20] Morrow, “God, Torah.”

[21] See, for example, Alex S. Ozar, “*Yeridah Le-?orekh Aliyyah*: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik on Autonomy and Submission,” *The Torah U-Madda Journal* 17 (2016–2017): 150–173. See also Alexander Carlebach, “Autonomy, Heteronomy and Theonomy,” *Tradition* 6, no. 1 (Fall 1963): 5–29.