

Eved Ivri and The Torah's Message for Employees

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Adapted from a shiur by Rav Yosef Greenwald

הגישו אדוניי אל האלוהים והגישו אל הדלת או אל המזוזה ורצע אדוניי את אזני במרצע
ועבדו לעולם

(שמות כא:ו)

Halacha recognizes

two types of workers:

- -
Employee paid by the hour, e.g., an office manager hired for a 9-5 job
- -
Employee paid by task, such as a contractor hired to build a deck
The Gemara (77b-78a)
rules that a may sometimes quit a job after beginning it due to the principle
of stated concerning — we are servants
to Hashem, and not to other humans.
- He may quit even in the middle of the
day.
- He must be paid for the work that he did
already.
- If his leaving will cause a loss (e.g. a
time sensitive job for which there is no one else to replace him), he may not
quit.
- A may generally not retract without
completing the job.
If the worker was
paid up front before he began working, may he still quit?
- Only if he has money left now to return for
the work left undone.
- Maharik/Rema (Y.D. 333:3) - Yes, and he
can repay the rest of the money later.
May one sign a
long-term contract with an employer for more than three years?
- Rema (C.M. 333) - No
- A rabbi may sign with his community for
longer as long as he may still quit in the middle.
The message for us:
- Our true job in life is to serve Hashem,
our employment is simply the means to maintain a livelihood, and should
not
control us.
- The ears are pierced when wanting to stay
because he did not heed this message heard at Har Sinai of being servants
to
Hashem
- The Brisker Rav: Our job is our

livelihood, but if we are asked who we are, we respond like Yonah (Yonah chapter 1): I fear Hashem!