

**Our Ancestors Were Thieves In Egypt**  
**5770 – Bo**  
**Rabbi David Levin-Kruss**

**Shmot 11: 2**

Now speak to the people of Israel discreetly, and let each man request from his friend gold and silver articles. Let each woman make the same request of her friends.	דְּבַר-נָא, בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם; וַיִּשְׁאַלוּ אִישׁ מֵאֵת רֵעֵהוּ, וְאִשָּׁה מֵאֵת רֵעוּתָהּ, כָּל־כֶּסֶף, וְכָל־זָהָב.
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**Shmot 12:35**

The Israelites also did as Moses had said. They requested silver and gold articles and clothing from the Egyptians.	וּבְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשׂוּ, כְּדִבְרֵי מֹשֶׁה; וַיִּשְׁאַלוּ, מִמִּצְרַיִם, כָּל־כֶּסֶף וְכָל־זָהָב, וְשִׁמְלֹת.
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What moral problems are there with the above saga?  
 In what way do the following quotations attempt to solve the problem?

**Josephus Antiquities 2:14**

The Egyptians honored them with these gifts, in order to hasten their departure, and others out of good neighborliness and the friendship they bore them. When they went forth the Egyptians wept and suffered remorse for the way they had treated them.

**Devarim 15:12-13**

When your fellow Hebrew man or woman is sold to you, he may serve as much as six years, but in the seventh year you shall send him away free. When you send him away free, do not send him empty-handed.	כִּי-יִמְכַר לָךְ אַחֲיֶיךָ הָעִבְרִי, אִוְ הָעִבְרִיָּה--וְעַבְדְּךָ, שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים; וּבִשְׁנָה, הַשְּׁבִיעִת, תִּשְׁלַחְנוּ חֲפָשִׁי, מֵעִמְךָ. וְכִי-תִשְׁלַחְנוּ חֲפָשִׁי, מֵעִמְךָ-- לֹא תִשְׁלַחְנוּ, רִיקָם.
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**Cassuto**

They were entitled to their freedom and, therefore, at the same time, to the statutory farewell gratuity. The law or rather absolute justice demanded it. Though the latter does not exist in the world, the court on high sees to its implementation, directing the course of events accordingly.

**Sanhedrin 91a**

On another occasion the Egyptians came in a lawsuit against the Jews before Alexander of Macedon. They pleaded: "Is it not written 'They requested silver and gold articles and clothing from the Egyptians...Then return us the gold and silver which you took!'...Gebiha b. Pesisa...went and pleaded against them..."For it is written, 'The life that the Israelites endured in Egypt had thus	באו בני מצרים לדון עם ישראל לפני אלכסנדרוס מוקדון אמרו לו הרי הוא אומר וה' נתן את חן העם בעיני מצרים וישאילום תנו לנו כסף וזהב שנטלתם ממנו...גביהא בן פסיסא...הלך ודן עמהן...שנאמר ומושב בני ישראל אשר ישבו במצרים שלשים שנה וארבע מאות
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lasted 430 years' (Shmot 12:20). Pay us for the work of six hundred thousand men whom you enslaved for four hundred thirty years."	שנה תנו לנו שכר עבודה של שלשים ריבוא ששיעבדתם במצרים שלשים שנה וארבע מאות שנה
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### Midrash Chemdat Hayamim

Why was this instruction given to the women? Pharaoh had decreed that "every new-born male be thrown into the Nile." The daughters of Israel bribed Pharaoh's officials and the Egyptians with their jewelry to look the other way. The result was that they drowned some of them and let others survive. That is why the text does not read that "they threw every child." The Holy One blessed be He therefore gave instructions that "every woman shall ask her neighbor" back for what had been taken in bribes. No deception was involved. Only restitution.	למה מצוה זו נאמרה לנשים? שכיון שגזר פרעה "כל הבן הילוד היאורה תשליכוהו", היו בנות ישראל משחגות מתכשיטיהן לעבדי פרעה ומשחגות למצרים שלא יגלו, ומשליכין מבניהם קצת ומניחים מקצת. לכך לא כפל הכתוב לומר: "וישליכו כל הבן". וציווה הקב"ה "ושאלה אשה משכנתה" כדי שיחזור הדבר לישנו, להחזיר להם מה שנתנו להם, ורין בזה גניבת דעת אלא החזרת חפץ לבעליו.
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(The above quotes were taken from New Studies in Shmot by Nechama Leibowitz).

What qualities do the following three quotes share?  
What qualities do the latter two share?

### Breishit 47:23-25

Joseph announced to the people. "Today I have purchased your bodies and your lands for Pharaoh. Here is seed grain for you. Plant your fields. When it produces grain, you will have to give a fifth to Pharaoh, The other four parts will be yours, as seed grain for your fields, and as food for you, your wives and your children." "You have saved our lives," they responded, "Just let us find favor in your eyes, and we will be Pharaoh's serfs."	וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-הָעָם, הֲנִי קִנִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם וְאֶת-אֲדָמַתְכֶם לַפְּרֹעֹה; הֲאֵלֶיכֶם זֶרַע, וּזְרַעְתֶּם אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה. וְהָיָה, בְּתֵבוֹאוֹת, וּנְתַתֶּם חֲמִישִׁית, לַפְּרֹעֹה; וְאַרְבַּע הַיְדֹת יְהִיֶה לְכֶם לְזֶרַע הַשָּׂדֶה וְלֶאֱכֹלְכֶם, וְלֶאֱשֵׁר בְּבֵתֵיכֶם--וְלֶאֱכֹל לְטֶפְכֶם. וַיֹּאמְרוּ, הֲחַיִּיתֵנוּ; נִמְצָא-חַן בְּעֵינֵי אֲדֹנָי, וְהָיִינוּ עֲבָדִים לַפְּרֹעֹה.
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### Shmot 2:11-12

When Moses was grown he began to go out to his own people, and he saw their hard labor. One day he saw an Egyptian beating one of his fellow Hebrews. Moses looked all around and when he saw that no one was about he beat the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.	וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָהֵם וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אַחֵיו וַיִּרְא בְּסַבְלַתָּם וַיִּרְא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מַכֵּה אִישׁ עִבְרִי מֵאַחֵיו: וַיִּפֶן כֹּה וְכֹה וַיִּרְא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ וַיַּךְ אֶת הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ בַחֹל
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