

# Exodus 21:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.

## Analysis

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**If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.**

God's first civil law addresses slavery—revealing His priority to protect the vulnerable. 'Hebrew servant' (עֶבֶד עִבְרִי, eved ivri) refers to debt-servitude (not chattel slavery)—Israelites who sold themselves to pay debts. The six-year limit prevents permanent poverty-bondage. 'In the seventh go out free' (בַּשְּׁבִיעִת יֵצֵא, bashevi'it yetze lachofshi) parallels Sabbath principle—rest after labor, release after bondage. 'For nothing' (חִנָּם, chinnam) means without payment—freedom is gift, not purchase. This revolutionizes ancient economy where debt-slavery was perpetual. God champions the oppressed; His laws limit exploitation.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern slavery was usually permanent. Israel's six-year limit was radically humane. Debt-servitude allowed poor Israelites to work off obligations while maintaining dignity and receiving eventual freedom.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does the seven-year release reflect Sabbath principles of rest and renewal?
2. What does God prioritizing slavery laws first teach about His heart for the oppressed?

## Interlinear Text

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כִּי	תִקְנֶה	עֶבֶד	יִשְׂרָאֵל	שֵׁשׁ	שָׁנִים	יַעֲבֹד
H3588	If thou buy	servant	an Hebrew	six	years	he shall serve
	H7069	H5650	H5680	H8337	H8141	H5647
וּבִשְׁבַע	תָּ	יֵצֵא	לְחֶפְזָא	חִנָּם:		
and in the seventh		he shall go out	free	for nothing		
H7637		H3318	H2670	H2600		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 12:44** (Parallel theme): But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.

**Deuteronomy 15:18** (Parallel theme): It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest.

**Nehemiah 5:8** (Parallel theme): And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer.

**Exodus 22:3** (Parallel theme): If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.

**Deuteronomy 15:1** (Parallel theme): At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release.

**Deuteronomy 31:10** (Parallel theme): And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles,

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