

MITZVAH 31: RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF AN EMPLOYEE

by Rabbi Moshe Goldberger

"When you go [to work] in the vineyard of your friend, you may eat grapes as you desire, to your fill."
(Devarim 23:25)

The Torah gives us guidelines as to when and how to allow workers to snack from the produce they are processing. The workers, however, are cautioned not to overeat, thus taking unfair advantage of their employer. They may refrain from eating until they get to that which they desire more (Rambam, Hilchos Sechirus 12:11)

The worker may not take food for his wife and children, only for himself (ibid.).

A worker may not work both during the day and at night, for then he will not be fully functioning for his employers. He may not starve himself, for then he will not be able to work energetically (ibid. 13:6).

A worker must be careful not to waste any of his employer's time. Similarly, he must work with all of his energy, as Yaakov Avinu said: "With all of my strength, I served" (Bereishis 31:6). This is why Yaakov became so fabulously wealthy (Rambam, Hilchos Sechirus 13:7).

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