

There is No Such Place as Away- The Stones Story

Goal: To explore the implications of waste removal; to understand 'the tragedy of the commons'

Duration: 30 - 45 minutes

Materials: Copies of "The Stones" Comic below

Audience: Grades 3 -7

Procedure:

1) Have students look at the comic and answer the following questions:

- a) What is the moral of the story?
- b) What does the landowner do wrong?

2) Read aloud the original text.

- a) Again, what is the moral of the story?
- b) What does the Hasid know that the landowner does not?

3) Explain "The Tragedy of the Commons" through the images below.

Background: The Tragedy of the Commons is a dilemma in which multiple individuals acting independently in their own self-interest can ultimately destroy a shared resource even where it is clear that it is not in anyone's long term interest for this to happen.

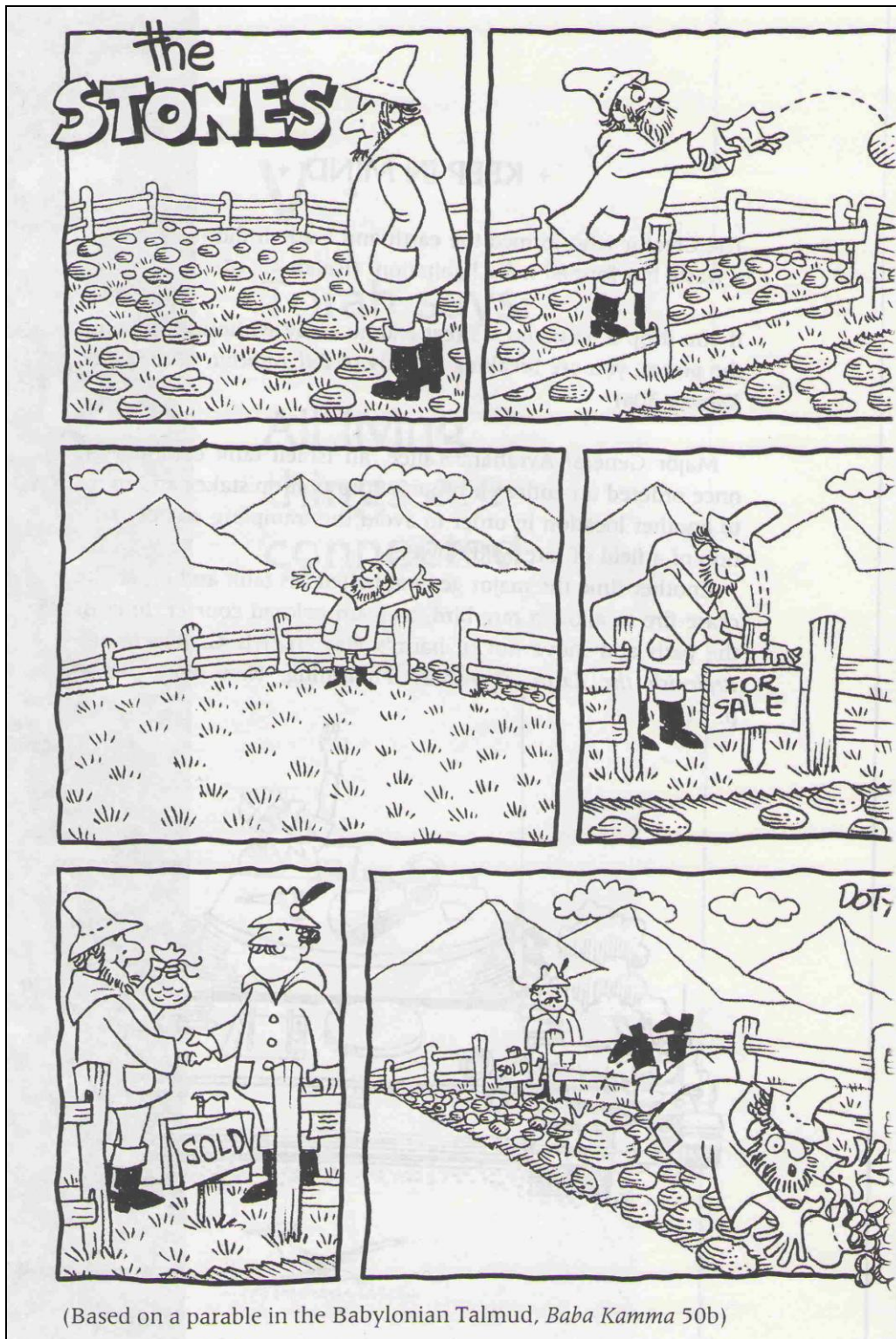
The classic example is a metaphor of herders sharing a common parcel of land "the commons" on which they are all entitled to let their sheep graze. In Hardin's view it is in each herder's interest to put as many sheep as possible onto the land even if the commons is damaged as a result. The herder receives all the benefits from the additional sheep but the damage to the commons is shared by the entire group. If all herders make this individually rational decision, however, the commons is destroyed and all herders suffer.

4) Ask the students, in small groups, to:

- a) Think of 5 examples of 'commons' in their lives
(since they are not clearing rocks or herding sheep)
- b) Think of 3 examples of where in their lives they see people acting in this way.
- c) Think of 1 example each of where they act in this way

5) Have students draw their own comic, illustrating any modern version of the stones story.

6) If appropriate, and with students permission, post the comics around the classroom or school to remind students, staff and parents of our communal responsibility.



(Based on a parable in the Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Kamma* 50b)

Note: The graphic above is copy written material and cannot be used commercially without the consent of the author.

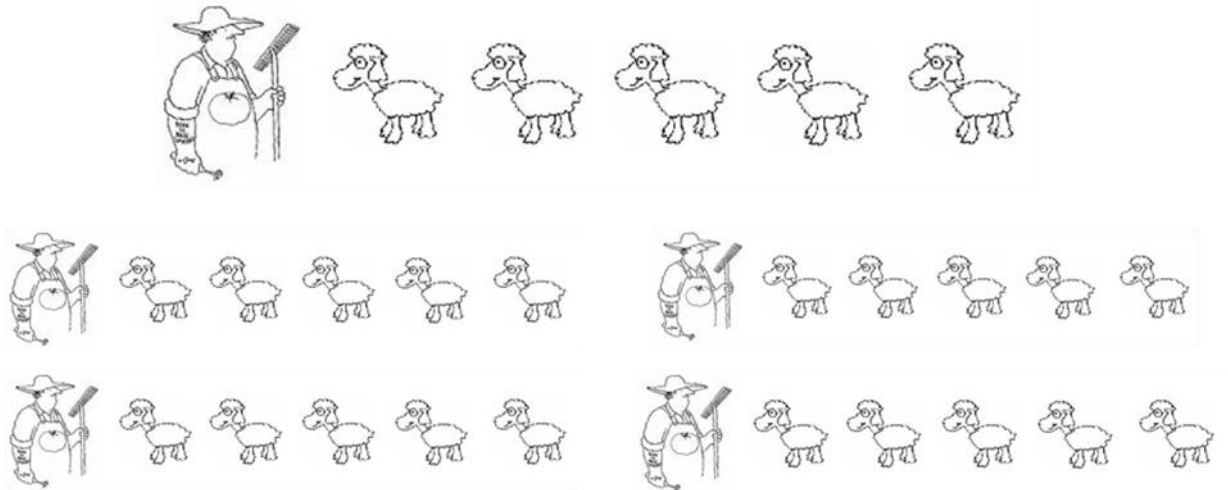
Original Text:

A landowner was clearing stones from his field to public thoroughfare. On seeing him do this, a certain Hasid (righteous person) asked him, 'Fool, why are you throwing stones from property that is **not** yours to property that **is** yours?' The landowner laughed at the Hasid. Eventually the landowner had to sell the field. While walking along the same thoroughfare, he fell on the stones he had once thrown there. 'That Hasid was right,' he said to himself, 'when he asked me why I was throwing stones from property **not** mine to property that **is** mine.'

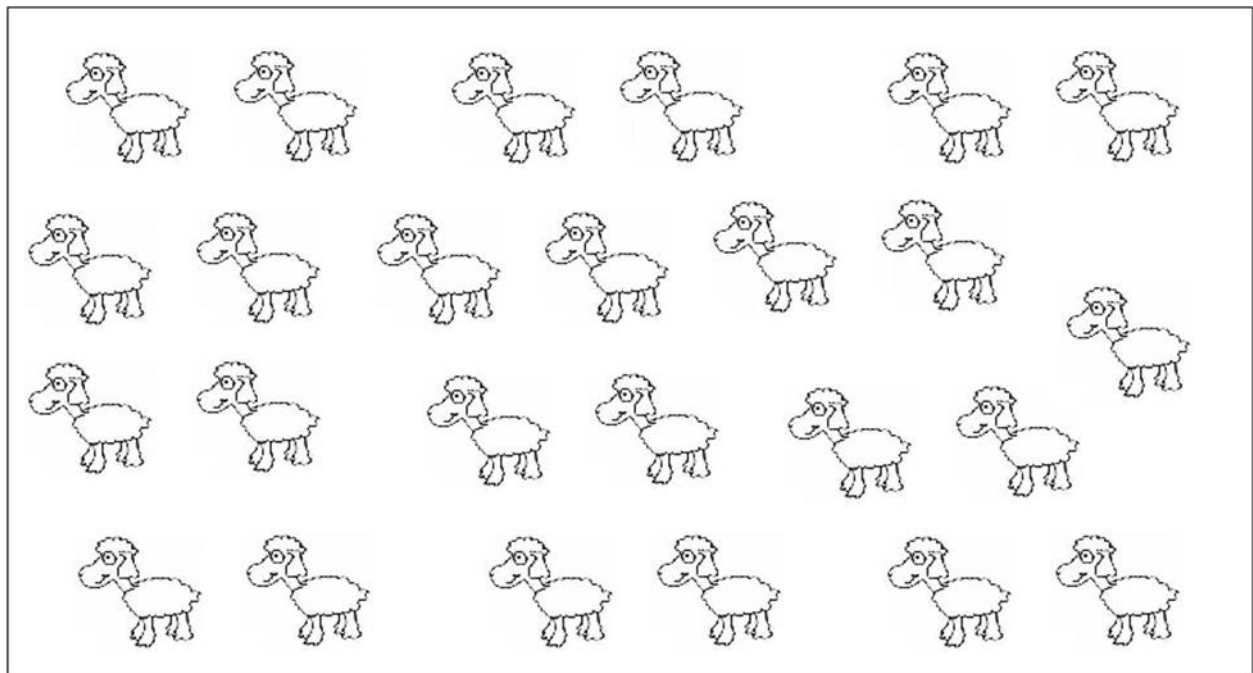
Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Kamma* 50b

The Tragedy of the Commons

5 Farmers, each with 5 Sheep, on 5 Acres

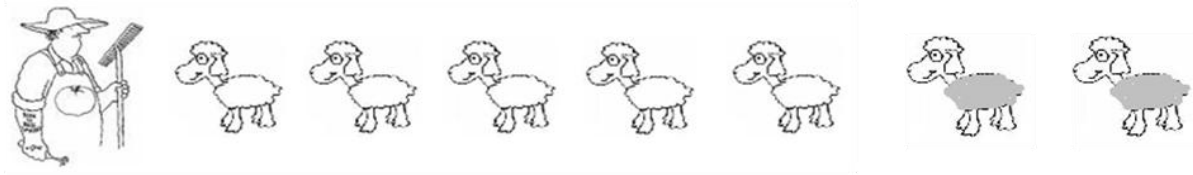


Happy Grazing



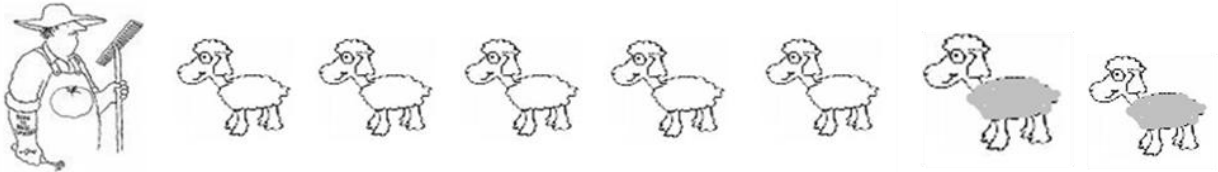
Farmer 1 realizes:

There are 25 sheep grazing on this land, 27 won't make a difference.
But 1 more sheep is 40% more for me, a huge difference!

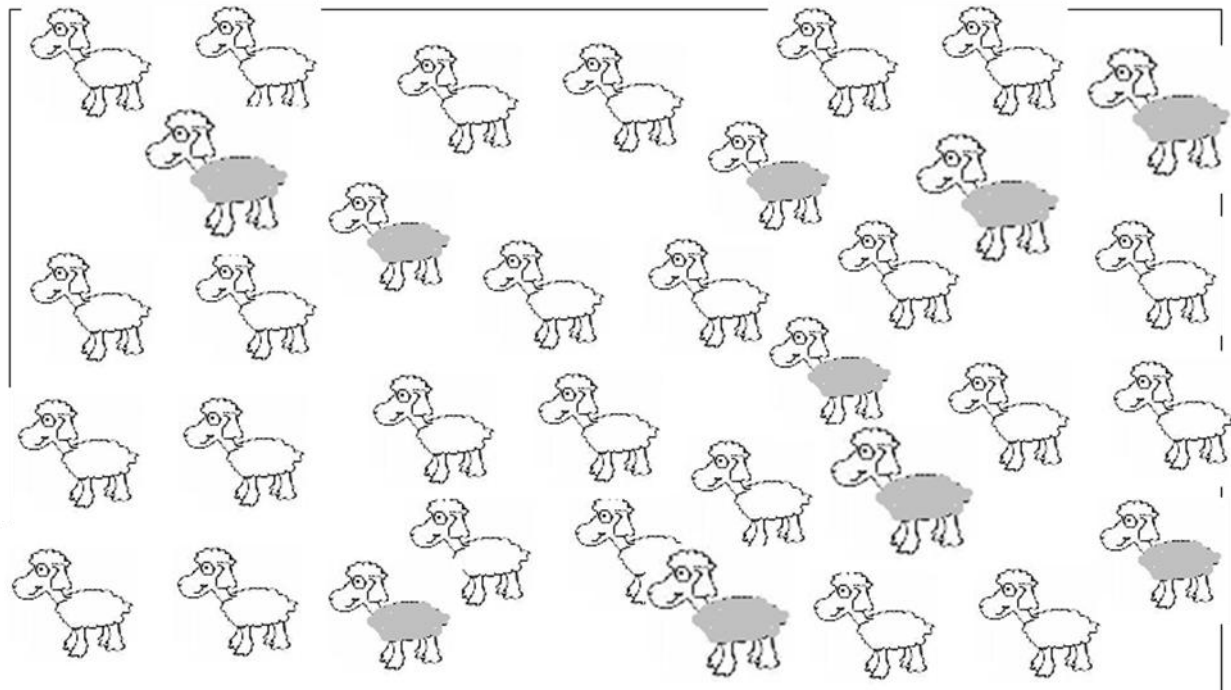


Farmer 2 realizes:

There are 25 sheep grazing on this land, 27 won't make a difference.
But 1 more sheep is 40% more for me, a huge difference!



But since they each do it, you get...



Imagine hundreds, thousands, millions or billions of people, each taking just '**a little more**' than their share. Everything is depleted and destroyed!!