



PE'AH AND LEKET: CARING FOR PEOPLE THROUGH THE LAND

A Lesson Plan on Biblical Agricultural Laws

By Liore Milgrom-Elcott

Outcomes

- Communal learning and *chevruta* study;
- Gaining a basic understanding of some biblical agricultural laws;
- Feeling inspired and renewed concerning global and local hunger.

Vocabulary

- Chevruta
- Pe'ah
- Leket
- Ma'aser

Supplies

- Bibles or copies of the attached source text
- Cutting board
- Knife

Advance preparation

Ask everyone bring a sandwich to eat at the session and secretly ask two people not to bring sandwiches and instead invent an interesting story why they don't have sandwiches.

Opening circle (5 minutes)

Ask everyone to introduce themselves, sharing their names, why they chose to come to this session and what kind of sandwich they brought. The two people without sandwiches should share their stories.



Introduction to text study (5 minutes)

One of the world's greatest problems now, as in the time of the bible, is the reality of the poor and hungry among us. Before you look at the text, frame it by asking:

What are some of the ways that we deal with hunger and poverty today?

Potential answers include charity to organizations, giving directly to those directly in need, and changing governmental policy.

Text study, part one (15 minutes)

Ask everyone to pair up into chevruta. Distribute copies of the attached text sheet, or distribute bibles and instruct everyone to read and discuss Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19-22. You can guide them by asking the following question:

In the bible, the Jewish people were part of an agricultural society. How did the Torah deal with issues of poverty?

Text study, part two (10 minutes)

Have people return to reform the group and ask them for some insights. Guided questions: Does the Torah law seem fair? Is it enough? Why are the farmers responsible for others? What are other alternatives?

Activity (10 minutes)

Ask everyone to take out their sandwiches, but before people begin to eat, note that there are those among you who don't have food. What is the group to do? Let everyone brainstorm and either accept the group decision or guide the group toward the decision of everyone giving away some of his/her sandwich. Should everyone cut off a bit from each sandwich's four corners?

Review (10 minutes)

Ask the group to review what just happened. Make sure they address the people who were hungry, those with enough food to satiate themselves, and how the community decided to help. Ask the "hungry": how did it make them feel to need and to take?

Ask the "donors": How did it make them feel to give?



Text study, part 3 (10 minutes)

Ask the group: How was our case different than that of the Torah?

Open the conversation focusing on the answer that in the Torah the hungry have to work to get their food by gathering the gleanings and harvesting from the corners.

Ask the group: Where does this system fail?

Potential answer include: When you are not a farmer you are not able to contribute to the hungry the way a farmer can. And when the hungry are not within reach of a farmer's field then they are not able to gather and harvest.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

You may not be a farmer, but even if you were a farmer, these laws have been ruled by rabbis to be applicable only to those farming the land of Israel, and even in Israel there are contemporary ways to work around having to observe these rules. Still, there are poor among us, in Israel and around the world.

Ask the group: How can we use these traditions and texts to inspire action today?

Closing circle (5 minutes)

Ask everyone in the circle to say one thing that they enjoyed about the session or one thing that they learned.



Leviticus 19:9-10

9. When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest.

ט וּבְקַצְרְכֶם אֶת-קְצִיר אֲרָצְכֶם, לֹא תִכְלֶה פְּאֵת
שְׂדֵךְ לְקִצְרֵי; וְלִקְט קְצִירָהּ, לֹא תִלְקֹט.

10. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, nor gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger, (for) I the Sovereign am your God.

י וְכִרְמֶךָ לֹא תַעֲוִיל, וּפְרֹט פְּרֹמְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט:
לְעַנִּי וְלִגֵּר תַּעֲזֹב אֹתָם, אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.

Deuteronomy 24:19-22

19. When you reap the harvest in your field and overlook a sheaf in the field, do not turn back to get it – it shall go to the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, in order for the Sovereign your God may bless you in all your undertakings.

יט כִּי תִקְצֹר קְצִירְךָ בְּשֵׂדֶךָ וְשָׁכַחְתָּ עֹמֵר בְּשֵׂדֶךָ,
לֹא תָשׁוּב לְקַחְתּוֹ--לִגֵּר לִיתוֹם וְלֹאֲלֻמְנָה, יְהִי:
לְמַעַן יְבָרְכֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ, בְּכֹל מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֶיךָ.

20. When you beat down the fruit of your olive trees, do not go over them again – that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless and the widow.

כ כִּי תַחֲבֹט זֵיתֶךָ, לֹא תִפְאַר אַחֲרָיִךָ: לִגֵּר לִיתוֹם
וְלֹאֲלֻמְנָה, יְהִי.

21. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick it over again – that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless and the widow.

כא כִּי תִבְצֹר פְּרֹמְךָ, לֹא תַעֲוִיל אַחֲרָיִךָ: לִגֵּר
לִיתוֹם וְלֹאֲלֻמְנָה, יְהִי.

22. Always remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore do I instruct you to observe this commandment.

כב וְזָכַרְתָּ, כִּי-עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם; עַל-כֵּן
אֲנִי מְצַוֶּךָ, לַעֲשׂוֹת, אֶת-הַדְּבָר, הַזֶּה.