

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

An Interactive PARSHA EXPERIENCE



Parsha: Behar

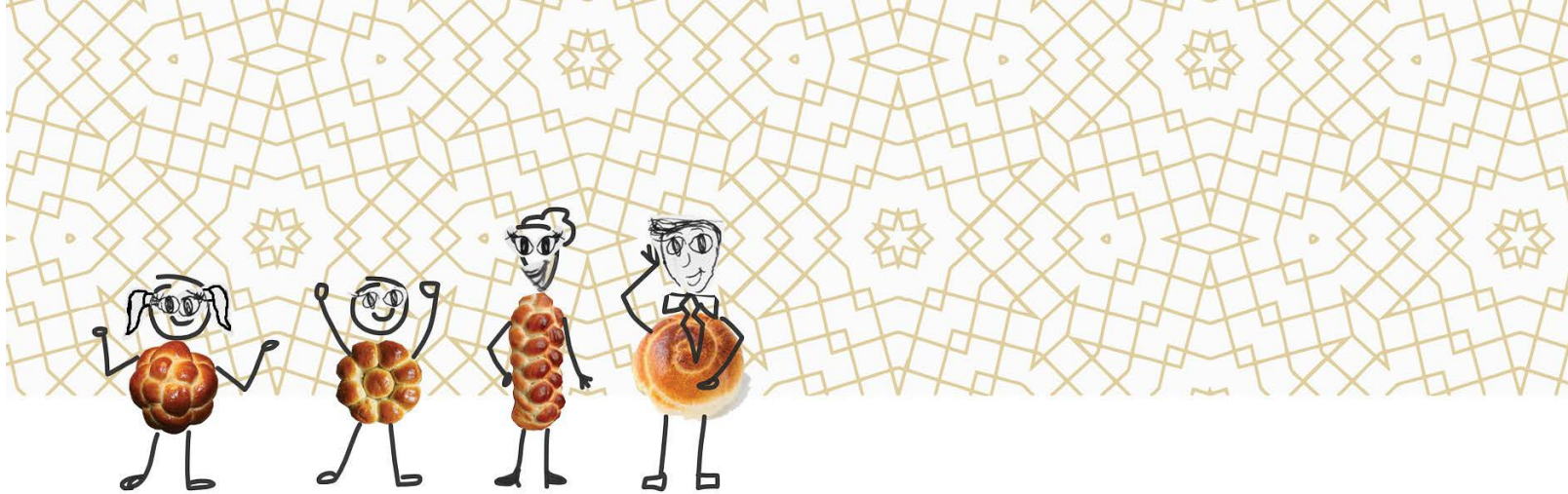
Title: Giving People a Head Start

Contributor: Penny Joel, Director of Experiential Education,
Pardes Center for Jewish Educators

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

Parshat Behar opens by telling us that all of the following laws were said to Moshe on Mount Sinai. It then goes on to focus most of the *parsha* on the concept of *shmita* (the sabbatical year). *Shmita* means that we must let the land in Israel rest every seventh year. Within the discussion of *shmita*, there are many details



about what happens during that seventh year and verses that talk about how we are supposed to treat people in business, relate to the stranger and help the needy.

Zooming In:

Within the conversation of shmita the following verse appears (Lev. 25:35):

And should your relative come to [financial] ruin and he stumbles, you shall uphold him as though a sojourning settler, and he shall live with you.	וְכִי יָמוּדָ אָחִיךָ, וַיִּמָּטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךְ, וַיִּהְיוּקָתָ בּוֹ גֵר וְתוֹשֵׁב, וְחָי עִמָּךְ.
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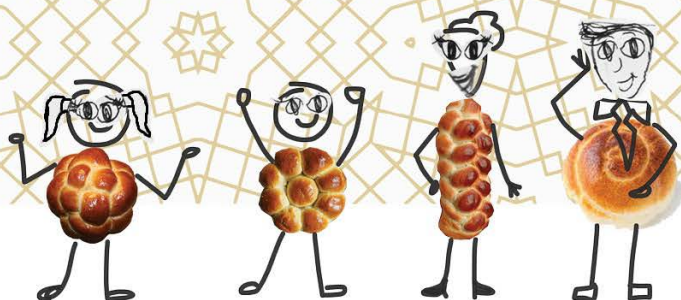
Rashi asks, what does the verse mean when it says “וַיִּהְיוּקָתָ בּוֹ” (you shall uphold him)?

Rashi answers that it is telling us the following way to behave: if we see someone start to fail, we should not wait until they have totally failed to offer help.

He provides the image of a donkey carrying an extra-large load. If someone is there to help the donkey while it starts to stumble, the donkey and its load will be okay. But if a person waits for the donkey to fall over, it will be almost impossible to get the donkey up with all it is carrying. In the same way, if someone starts to struggle financially, we should help them before they lose all of their money.

Questions for Consideration:

- What does this verse say about our responsibility to our community?
- What does it really mean for us on a day-to-day basis?
- What is the difference between this and *tzedaka*?
- This seems to be teaching us that it is important to help people before their situation gets worse. But *why* is that important?



It may teach us to be aware of people in our community and make sure they are okay; to not wait until people ask for help but to offer help before it is obviously needed; to be thoughtful and help people maintain their dignity. This highlights the importance the Torah places on creating a thoughtful and sensitive community. Not only do we let the land rest and behave thoughtfully about how we relate to the land, but we also try to create a community that is thoughtful about its people as well. We do not want to wait for someone to be in dire straits before we help them! Rather, we want people to feel noticed and supported, and in this way create a holistic community of caring.

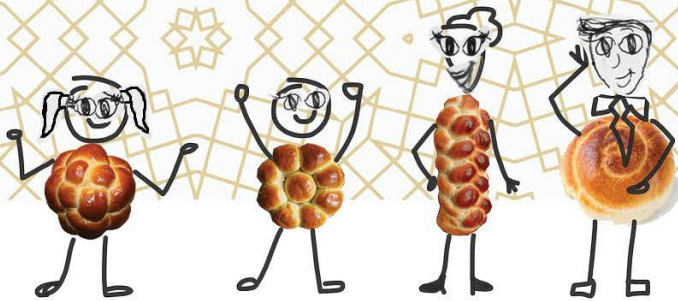
The Parsha Through Another Lens

Discussion Triggers:

Here are some triggers that can be used to generate a discussion.

Option 1: Have children help serve and clear the first course of Shabbat dinner (if this isn't normally done). Then discuss: how did it feel to help? Ask the person they were helping how they felt getting more help. Then go to the discussion questions below.

Option 2: Put a bag or box on the floor and spread out a bunch of objects near it (so that it would be difficult for one child to collect all of the objects quickly). Then ask one child to gather all the objects into the bag or box in a short, specific amount of time (say, 1-2 minutes). Once the allotted time is up, ask the child how it felt to have had to do that all by themselves. Then, ask those that "stood by" and watched how it felt to watch the child have to do this alone. Ask: If they saw that happen again would they do anything different? Then go to the discussion questions below.



Discussion questions:

- When is a time you could have used help and no one helped?
- When is a time that you helped (or you saw someone help) someone before they asked for help or before it was obvious they needed help?
- When is a time someone helped you? How did that feel?
- What is something as a family/class we can do to help people before they completely stumble and fall? (volunteer at a soup kitchen, visit a hospital or senior home, donate food, clothes or toys, etc.)

Shabbat Shalom!