

Source Sheet for Artists' Lab
Ruth, Megillat Hesed, The Book of Lovingkindness

1. Torah text

The Law of Peah

“When you [plural] reap the harvest of your land, you [singular] shall not reap all the way to the corner of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger; I the Lord am your God. You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another.”

--Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:9-11.

2. Mishnah Text

Specifying Pe'ah

אלו דברים שאין להם שעור. הפאה, והבכורים, והראיון, וגמילות חסדים, ותלמוד תורה. אלו דברים שאדם אוכל פרותיהן בעולם הזה והקרון קצמת לו לעולם הבא. כבוד אב ואם, וגמילות חסדים, והקבאת שלום בין אדם לחברו, ותלמוד תורה כנגד כלם: These are the things that have no measure: *Peah* [corner of the field which, while harvesting, must be left for the poor], *Bikurim* [First-fruits that must be brought to the Temple and given to the priest], the appearance-sacrifice [brought to the Temple on Pilgrimage Festivals], acts of kindness, and the study of the Torah. These are things the fruits of which a man enjoys in this world, while the principal remains for him in the World to Come: Honoring one's father and mother, acts of kindness, and bringing peace between a man and his fellow. But the study of Torah is equal to them all.

2

אין פוחתין לפאה מששים, ואף על פי שאמרו אין לפאה שעור. הכל לפי גדל השדה, ולפי רב העניים, ולפי רב העונה: One should not make the *Peah* less than one-sixtieth [of the entire crop]. And although they [the Sages] say that there is no definite amount given for *Peah*, it is all based upon the size of the field and upon the number of poor [who will be collecting it] and upon the abundance of the crop.

--Mishnah Peah 1:1, 1:2

Ruth

Living example of Pe'ah

Chapter 2

Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a man of substance, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

2 Ruth the Moabite said unto Naomi: I would like to go to the fields and glean among the ears of grain behind someone who may show me kindness. Yes, daughter, go, she [Naomi] replied; **3** and off she went., She came and gleaned in a field behind the reapers; and, as luck would have it, it was the piece of land belonging to Boaz, who was of Elimelech's family.

4 Presently Boaz arrived from Bethlehem. He greeted his reapers: "The LORD be with you." And they responded: "The LORD bless you." **5** Boaz said to the servant who was in charge of the reapers: "Whose girl is that?" **6** The servant in charge of the reapers replied, "She is a Moabite girl who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. **7** She said: 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.' She has been on her feet ever since she came this morning. She has rested but little in the hut."

8 Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen to me, daughter. Don't go to glean in another field. Don't go elsewhere, but stay here close to my girls. **9** Keep your eyes on the field they are reaping, and follow them. I have ordered the men not to molest you. And when you are thirsty, go to the jars, and drink some of [the water] that the men have drawn."

10 She prostrated herself with her face to the ground, and said to him: "Why are you so kind as to single me out, when I am a foreigner?"

11 Boaz said in reply to her: "I have been told of all that you did for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother, and the land of your birth and came to a people you had not known before. **12** May the LORD reward your deeds. May you have a full recompense from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge."

13 She answered, "You are most kind, my lord, to comfort me and to speak gently to your maidservant --though I am not so much as one of your maidservants."

14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come over here and partake of the meal and dip your morsel in the vinegar." So she sat down beside the reapers. He handed her roasted grain, and she ate her fill and had some left over.

15 When she was got up again to glean, Boaz gave orders to his workers, "You are not only to let her glean among the sheaves without interference, **16** but you must also pull some [stalks] out of the heaps, and leave them for her glean, and not scold her."

17 She gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned-- it was about an ephah of barley- **18** and carried it back with her to the town. When her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned, and when she also took out and gave her what she had left over, **19** her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be he who took such generous notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law whom she had worked with, saying, "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz."

20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law: 'Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not failed in His kindness (*hesdo*) to the living or to the dead.' For, "Naomi explained to her, 'the man is related to us; he is one of our redeeming kinsmen.'" **21** Ruth the Moabite said, "He even told me, "Stay close by my workers until all my harvest is finished.'" **22** And Naomi answered Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is best, daughter, that thou go out with his girls, and not be annoyed in some other field.'" **23** So she stayed close to the maidservants of Boaz, and gleaned until the barley harvest and the wheat harvest were finished. Then she stayed at home with her mother-in-law.

Hesed—A world of meanings

From Jastrow's dictionary: grace, kindness, love, charity

From Oxford dictionary: favor, kindness, benevolence, graciousness

From Alkalay dictionary: favor, goodness, love, grace, mercy, charity, kindness, benevolence, benefaction