

Relative Responsibilities
International Bible Lesson
Leviticus 25:8-12, 25, 35-36, 39-40, 47-48, 55
Sunday, June 17, 2012
L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

“And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee” (Leviticus 25:35—KJV).

“If any Israelites living near you become poor and cannot support themselves, you must provide for them as you would for a hired worker, so that they can continue to live near you” (Leviticus 25:35—GNB).

“If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you, you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens” (Leviticus 25:35—NRSV).

God expects people to love and care for each other, and He commands relatives to support one another when necessary. However, God also gave rules to prevent people from taking abusive or unfair advantage of those whose hearts would move them to care for others no matter what the circumstances. For example, when the Hebrews entered the Promised Land, God established laws so everyone could work to meet their needs. Landowners hired laborers to work their fields, and they often worked beside those they hired. God commanded landowners to pay those they hired according to their agreements, often at the end of each day's labor. God also required landowners to give poor people the opportunity to work in their fields and glean the areas reserved for the poor and

unemployed. Though not employed by Boaz, because of God's law, Ruth, a resident alien, could work in his fields.

Perhaps due to illness, injury, old age, or other good reasons, some people cannot work; therefore, God commands their relatives to support them. When Ruth accepted the LORD as her God, she agreed to live according to God's laws, which required her to care for her aged mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth loved and respected Naomi; but even if she had not loved her, God's law forbade her from mistreating a needy relative and required Ruth to work for them both. In countries that have turned from God and His laws, some have refused to love and care for their needy relatives as God intended; others have refused to work—abusing and expecting others to care for them. – L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Thinking Further

1. Why do you think God established days and years of rest for people, animals, plants, and the land?

2. What are some of the possible consequences when people do not know about or disregard days of rest for themselves and/or others?

3. Why do you think the Year of Jubilee was to begin after the Day of Atonement?

4. Why do you think God gave laws for the caring of needy relatives?

5. In what ways can we make our days of rest more holy to us? What are some benefits of taking extra time and making our rest time more holy to us?

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