

Lesson 25 – Perek 14:22-15:23 – Helping the Needy

Objective: For students to understand how each of the laws in this section fits into the structure of the second speech and how they all have a common theme.

Activity:

1. Instructions for students: Pair up with a neighbor, read from 14:22-15:23, and list the various topics covered. While reading, think about why are these laws here? What is their connection to the previous context and what do they have in common with each other? Look for repeating phrases.

After 10 minutes, call on one pair to tell what the first section is about and where it ends. Do the same for each section. Write the correct answers on the board but leave space for the next step.

22-27 Ma'aser Sheni

28-29 Ma'aser Ani

15:1-6 Remission of debts in seventh year

7-11: Don't refuse loans

12-18 Time limits on slavery

2. See if anyone has any suggestions for what these laws have in common and where they fit in to the structure.

Show students that the previous section about kosher animals ends with an ethical coda to give non-kosher animals away to non-Jewish immigrants so that they can eat it. The first section about Ma'aser Sheni similarly ends with an ethical coda to leave the leftovers for the poor Levites. The Ma'aser Ani section ends with both an ethical coda and a motivational phrase – “Hashem will bless you in everything you do” if you keep this law. All of the rest of the sections similarly end with a motivational section. Now go back and expand the above outline by breaking each section down into subsections making sure to mark off the law itself from the ethical or motivational endings.

14:21 End of kosher animals – Ethical coda

22-27 Ma'aser Sheni

22-24 Basic law

25-26 Law for someone who lives far

27 Ethical coda

28-29 Ma'aser Ani

28 Basic law

29 Ethical coda and motivation
15:1-11 Remission of debts in seventh year
 1-3 Basic law to forgive debt
 4-6 Motivation
 7-9: Don't refuse loans
 10-11 Motivation
12-18 Time limits on slavery
 12-14a Basic law
 14b-15 Motivation
 16-17 Extending slavery
 18 Motivation

The following handout is an excerpt of only the ethical and motivational pesukim. Notice all of the repeated words and phrases. The stranger and Levite “within your gates” connects the laws of kosher animals with the two laws about Ma’aser. The promise of Hashem’s blessing in turn connects Ma’aser with the following laws about debts, loans, and slavery.

Perek 14:22-15:23 – Helping the Needy

Outline and Repeating Codas

14:3-21 Kosher animals

21 Ethical coda

(כא) ל' א ת' אכלו כל נבלה **לגור אשר בשעריך** תתננה ואכלה או מכ' ר לנכרי פי עם קדוש אמה לי -ה' נה א-ל' ה'יך ל' א תבשל גדי בחלב אמו:

22-27 Ma'aser Sheni

22-24: Basic law

25-26: Law for someone who lives far

27 Ethical coda

(כז) **והלוי אשר בשעריך** ל' א תעזבנו פי אין לו חלק ונחלה עמך:

28-29 Ma'aser Ani

28 Basic law

29 Ethical and motivational coda

(כט) ובא **הלוי** פי אין לו חלק **ונחלה עמך והגר** והיתום והאלמנה **אשר בשעריך** ואכלו ושבעו למען **וברכך** **י-ה' נה א-ל' ה'יך בכל מעשה ידך אשר תעשה:**

15:1-11 Remission of debts in seventh year

1-3 Basic law to forgive debt

4-6 Motivational coda

(ד) אפס פי ל' א יהיה בך אביון פי **בתך וברכך י-ה' נה** בארץ אשר י-ה' נה א-ל' ה'יך נ' תו לך **נחלה** לרשתה:

7-9: Don't refuse loans

10-11 Motivational coda

(י) נתון ותן לו ול' א ירע לך בך בתוך לו פי בגלל הדבר הזה **וברכך י-ה' נה א-ל' ה'יך בכל מעשך** ובכ' ל משלה ידך:

12-18 Time limits on slavery

12-14a Basic law

14b-15 Motivation

(יד) העניק תעניק לו מצ' אנך ומגורנך ומיקבך אשר **ברכך י-ה' נה א-ל' ה'יך** תתן לו:

16-17 Extending slavery

18 Motivational coda

(יה) ל' א יקשה בעינך בשלחך א' תו חפשי מעמך פי משנה שוכר שוכר עבדך שש שנים **וברכך י-ה' נה א-ל' ה'יך** **בכ' ל אשר תעשה:**

[L25 Perek 15 - Helping the Needy - Summary Sheet.doc](#)

3. Now discuss the contents of each section (a) to get a basic understanding of each law, (b) to notice how each section does not simply state the law but also provides motivation to convince people why they should follow the law, (c) to trace the themes running through the sections.

The connecting phrases above serve to emphasize the single theme that runs throughout this entire section, which is concern for the poor. Ma'aser Sheni can be eaten by anybody (not necessarily Kohanim, unlike Ma'aser Rishon) but must be eaten in Jerusalem. For those who live far from Jerusalem, they may redeem a tenth of their produce for money and buy food with that money once they get to Jerusalem. Such a person would probably make an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem with his family for a

week or two. This means he must consume one tenth of his produce in only a couple of weeks. Since there is sure to be surplus, pasuk 27 reminds the owner to share it with the Levites who were in need of support since they did not own land.

The next paragraph also deals with ma'aser, but this one is completely directed to helping the poor. While this applies only every third year, it must be given entirely to the Levi, immigrant, orphan, and widow – all people who are not able to sustain themselves in an agricultural society. Since it is difficult for a person to give away such a large amount of his produce, pasuk 29 assures the owner that Hashem will bless such action with future abundance of crops.

Besides direct charity, the Torah here also speaks about loans. Typically a loan would be necessary for a farmer who had a bad crop and needs a loan to buy seeds and supplies for next year's crop. This is not a loan for venture capital but more like personal charity to help the farmer get back on his feet. Periodic forgiving loans gives the poor class a chance to get out of their rut so that there is not such a divide between the rich and poor. The Torah recognizes that the law of forgiving debts might cause some rich people to refuse giving loans in the first place, especially as the seventh year approaches. The law therefore commands the rich to open their hands to give loans. He should not feel badly about losing that money because Hashem gave it to him in the first place for such a purpose.

The law of slavery is similar to the law of Shemitah. The Torah wants to make sure every Jew has a chance to be free. Even if someone comes upon hard times and must sell himself into slavery, he gets a second chance after a few years. Just like we don't want a permanent poor class we don't want lifelong slaves in Jewish society. Both debts and slaves are released in the seventh year – only the former uses objective years based on a set calendar while the latter is counted separately for each person. Upon leaving, the master must also give him provisions so that he can get along on his own. Again, realizing that giving up a slave is difficult for a master, the Torah provides motivation to remember the evils of slavery in Egypt and to appreciate the six years of cheap labor that he did receive.

In sum, the Ma'aser law picks up on one detail of kashrut laws that shows concern for the needy and sparks an entire section on the topic. However, besides connecting with the ethical coda of the laws of kosher animals, Ma'aser also appears here for another, more fundamental, reason. Chapter 12 already mentioned Ma'aser as part of its centralization of all sacrifices. 12:11 says that one must bring to Jerusalem all of your olahs, sacrifices, Ma'aser, Terumah, and all donations. Now that people have to bring Ma'aser Sheni to be eaten in Jerusalem, those who live far away will have great difficulty transporting that much produce such a long distance. Perek 14 now explains how to solve that problem by redeeming the produce for money. Once Ma'aser Sheni is mentioned, the Torah continues on a tangent to Ma'aser Ani and other laws for the benefit of the needy. The connection to chapter 12 is continued in the next section about first born.

Discussion Topic:

This could be a good time to have a discussion about charity. See Shabbat Table Talks on Parahsat Re'eh ([L25 Perek 15 - Helping the Needy - Table Talks.doc](#)) by Rabbi Ralph Tawil for helpful discussion points.