Our Story

- Read together (as a family, as a community) Leviticus 19:18 and Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 14a. Discuss:
 - What do you think is the main message of this Talmud passage?
 - What other ways can one follow God, especially in working with people who are in poverty?
- To learn effective actions you can take, check the websites of the following organizations that have partnered in these materials: MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, www.mazon.org, 310-442-0020
 African Methodist Episcopal Women's Missionary Society, www.wmsame.org, 202-371-8886

American Baptist Churches USA, www.abc-oghs.org, 800-ABC-3USA
America's Second Harvest, www.secondharvest.org, 800-771-2303
Bread for the World Institute, www.bread.org, 800-82-BREAD
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), www.disciples.org, 317-635-3100
Christian Reformed Church, www.crcjustice.org, 616-224-0840
Church World Service, www.churchworldservice.org, 800-297-1516
Community of Christ, www.cofchrist.org, 816-833-1000
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, www.cbfonline.org, 770-220-1600
The Episcopal Church, www.episcopalchurch.org, 800-334-7626
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America World Hunger Program, www.elca.org/dcs/worldhunger.html, 800-638-3522

Franciscan Friars, www.hnp.org, 202-541-5245

Good Ground Press/Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, www.goodgroundpress.com, 800-232-5533

 $Heifer \ International, {\it www.heifer.org}, \ 800-422-0474$

Maryland Province of the Jesuits, www.jesuit.org, 410-532-1403

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., www.ncccusa.org/publicwitness/tanf.html, 212-870-2299

Presbyterian Hunger Program, PC(USA), www.pcusa.org/hunger, 800-334-0434 Reformed Church in America, www.rca.org, 800-968-3943

Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, www.bgct.org/bgctroot/clc, 888-332-5870 United Church of Christ, www.ucc.org, 216-736-3710

United Methodist Committee on Relief, gbgm-umc.org/umcor, 212-870-3816 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, www.usccb.org/sdwp, 202-541-3380 with support from Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

• Pray as a family, as a community, together three times, in English or Hebrew:

פּוֹתַחַ אֶת־יָדֶדָ וּמַשְׂבָּיִעַ לְכָל־חַיִּ רָצְוֹן:

Poteyach et Yadecha umasbiya lechol chai ratzon You open Your hand, and Your favor sustains *all* the living.



Follow the Lord Your God

God's Story

אַחֲרֵי יהוֹה אלהיכם תַּלֶכוּ

מאי דכתיב: אחרי ה' אלהיכם תלכו!
וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה!
...אלא להלך אחר מדותיו של הקב"ה,
מה הוא מלביש ערומים,...אף אתה הלבש ערומים;
הקב"ה ביקר חולים...אף אתה בקר חולים;
הקב"ה ניחם אבלים...אף אתה קבור מתים.

"Follow the Lord your God" [Deuteronomy 13:5]. What does this mean? Is it possible for a mortal to follow God's Presence? The verse means to teach us that we should follow the attributes of the Holy One, praised be He. As He clothes the naked, you should clothe the naked. The Bible teaches that the Holy One visited the sick; you should visit the sick. The Holy One comforted those who mourned; you should comfort those who mourn. The Holy One buried the dead; you should bury the dead.

- Talmud Bavli, Sotah 14a Reprinted from Siddur Sim Shalom, p. 19, edited by Rabbi Jules Harlow. Copyright by The Rabbinical Assembly, 1985.



Making a Difference

Project Ezra - New York

They were America's proud "proletariat": seamstresses, waiters, and factory workers. Today, many elderly Jews of New York's Lower East Side still inhabit the postwar apartments built by their unions, even as sections of their "shtetl"—like neighborhoods have grown more prosperous. With only meager social security checks and pensions to sustain themselves, they are too often forced to choose between paying for rent, medications or food.

"Their poverty is complex," says Misha Avramoff of Project Ezra, a longtime MAZON grantee that provides nourishment, assistance to maintain an independent lifestyle and activities for hundreds of

impoverished Jews. "They are surrounded by abundance, and do not starve. Yet they constantly deny themselves."

Even those who dutifully accumulated a small savings account are afraid to spend it.

"They purchase the worst cuts of meat and food that's cheaper because it's near its expiration date," says Avramoff. "Some are frozen in a Depression mentality. They live and die like paupers."

MAZON has granted \$43,310 to Project Ezra since 1987. These funds help maintain the freezer and food pantry for hungry people at a local synagogue, and to employ several workers who assist with laundry, housework and personal hygiene for those who would otherwise be unable to remain in their homes.

Project Ezra also conducts about 30 outings annually to help ease the loneliness and emotional frailty of more than 100 mostly elderly Jews. Choosing who fills the limited spots for outings is a burden for Avramoff. One elderly woman pleads with him to be included.

"She has a larger pension than most, but is widowed without children," says Avramoff. "She told me she sometimes looks out her window, and thinks about jumping." <www.mazon.org>

Grassroots Citizens Help Win Billions

In March 1999, Bread for the World members Pat Pelham, Elaine Van Cleave, Roger McCollough and Bobby Cardwell flew from Alabama to meet with Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL), head of the subcommittee of the House Banking Committee with jurisdiction over the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). They convinced Bachus that debt relief for the world's poorest countries should be an important

congressional priority, and Bachus became a leader on debt relief in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Their visit was part of a BFW campaign for debt relief that generated 250,000 letters to Congress, lobbying on Capitol Hill and widespread publicity in the media. Other individuals and organizations were also pressing for debt relief, from Pope John Paul II to Archbishop Desmond Tutu

to Billy Graham.

The result? Congress appropriated \$545 million for debt relief. They also authorized the IMF to sell a portion of its gold reserves to pay for its share of the debt relief plan, freeing up an additional \$2.3 billion to be used for programs to help the world's most vulnerable people. <www.bread.org>

A Head Start

After the peace accords were signed in El Salvador in 1992, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, a United Nations agency, designed a rehabilitation and development project (known as Prochalate) in collaboration with the government of El Salvador and co-financed by the European Community, other international and several nongovernmental agencies.

Aida Gutierrez, 33 years old, was born into a family of farmers and pig breeders. Aida and her parents, brothers and sisters fled from El Salvador to escape the war. They went to Nicaragua where she worked as a teacher in a rural community, but with the economic crisis, Aida decided to return to her homeland. She arrived in Chalatenango without anything. Her cousin told her about Prochalate, and the fact that the project was giving loans to women without collateral.

"I attended a meeting in Prochalate and asked them whether they could give me funds to set up a small farm to raise chickens," she said. "That same night I wrote a small project describing the farm and how much I needed for infrastructure and seed capital to buy the animals and fodder. I got the loan, and now I run a small farm with 2,500 chickens. The loan was initially to finance 1,000 chickens, but now the business has expanded and I make enough profit to buy more chickens. I feel very happy to be back in my own country and my hometown."

This project benefits 10,500 families. <www.ifad.org>