

Compassion

Harvest, Food and Famine Today

Foundation

Bible passage : Leviticus 19.9-10

It is anticipated that this module will be used around the time of Harvest and can therefore be used to show a link between compassion and harvest. The three Old Testament harvest festivals were primarily about celebrating God's goodness, but God's commands also related to making sure that those without their own land, in particular widows, orphans and sojourners, would be provided for.

In Leviticus 19.9-10 & 23.22 people were told not to harvest to the corners of their field, nor to pick up stalks they dropped or grapes that had fallen off the vine in order that the poor and sojourner could find food to eat. There were also rules to ensure that all could benefit from the day of Sabbath rest (Deut 5.14) and there was to be a special tithe of food every third year which could then in part be used for the benefit of the sojourner, fatherless and widow (Deut 26.12).

An example of the first of the above is found in the Book of Ruth which will be considered in more detail in the part-module on Harvest. When Naomi returned to Israel with her daughter-in-law Ruth she had some land, but it was presumably too overgrown or too late in the season for harvest. They therefore faced an uncertain winter, and so Ruth went into the fields to try to gather in the wake of the harvesters. In God's providence she ended up in the field of Boaz who was a close relative of Naomi. When Boaz learned who Ruth was and how she had come to Israel because of her love for Naomi and

indeed for the Lord, he had compassion on her. Later it emerges that he also found Ruth attractive and no doubt this played a part in his favourable response to her!

Boaz was a godly man and not only acted to do what the Lord had said should be done but, as it were, went the extra mile. He made sure that Ruth was protected, he told his workers to drop things deliberately and he gave her extra grain.

"You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God."



*Gleaning by Arthur Hughes
1832-1915*

Though the world today is different there are many situations and different ways in which we can show compassion to those in need. It is something we

should do because God desires it, and because we desire to help others.

In modern Britain we have the welfare state but through the ages in this country there have been a succession of poor laws and the like which were introduced in response to need or weakened as people felt they were being abused. We can see the same tensions today between wanting to provide a safety net whilst making sure only those in genuine need receive help.



God wants people to show compassion to others and at Harvest time told the Israelites one way they should do this.