

# Gem Seeking

## LITTLE GEMS STORY

### Parent/Teacher Preparation:

Please see the [Instructions for the Little Gems Story](#) on the YMTOI website. This will help you to understand how to prepare for the story.

### The Shmitah and Yobel

Shalom children! How many of you know that your food doesn't just magically appear in the grocery store? No, of course not. It grows out of the earth, right? Has anyone helped their mom or dad plant a garden? Maybe you've eaten some juicy tomatoes, zucchini, or buttered green beans that grew right in your back yard. **(Place vegetables on board.)** Well, the people of Yisra'el had walked in the dry wilderness for 40 years, and boy, did they miss their gardens! But now Yahweh was ready to keep His promise to give them a beautiful, green land called Kena'an, where they could grow their favorite fruits, veggies, and get to eat beef and lamb. **(Place meat dishes on board.)** And best of all, they would eat fresh, homemade bread from the grain they would grow there. **(Place various breads on board.)** Yum! No more of that boring manna!

And Yahweh told Mosheh the special way the people were to care for this new land, so it would always give them the very best crops. I don't think they'd ever heard of this way of farming before. You see, Yahweh commanded that every 7<sup>th</sup> year, they were to give the soil a year off—a whole year when they were NOT allowed to do any plowing, or planting, or pruning their fruit trees! It was to be a "shmitah" year—a year of resting the land. Can you say, "shmitah?" Very good! It meant that for 6 years they could till the soil, plant their seed, and gather in a big harvest. They'd even have some left over to store up or sell to travelers.

But shmitah meant that in the 7<sup>th</sup> year they would have to really, really trust Him to provide. **(Place man sowing for 6 years and resting 7<sup>th</sup> year on board.)** Yahweh knew that after 7 years of being worked, the soil would get tired of giving everything it's got to all those plants and grains and fruit trees. If the soil didn't get its rest, everything that grew on it would just get tired right along with it. Year after year, their crops would contain less and less of the good nutrition we need to stay strong. It's just like the 7<sup>th</sup> day of rest Yahweh gives us, when we stop our regular activities every 7<sup>th</sup> day to refresh ourselves in Him. This land rest would be like a Shabbat for the soil.



In the shmitah year, Elohim promised to provide food for them all, for rich and poor alike. **(Place rich and poor man eating same dishes on board.)** He said that all kinds of plants would spring up by themselves—just enough to keep them all fed and strong, right through until the next year's planting had grown into a fresh harvest. Why, the land would be so happy to get a rest that food would be gathered for not only the Yisra'elites and their families, but enough for their hired servants, for the foreigners who lived among them, and for all the animals, too! The shmitah year was really Father's gift, showing them how to help the land to keep on yielding rich crops for their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and on and on through their future generations. **(Place 4 generations on board.)**

Now for a question: who can tell me what is 7 times 7? Did someone say 49? Very good! And what's the next number after 49? Yes, 50! **(Place #50 on board.)** You see, after 7 shmitah years had passed, Yahweh commanded a 50<sup>th</sup> year of Jubilee, called the "Yobel." At the end of the 49<sup>th</sup> year, on Yom HaKippurim, Yahweh wanted shofars to sound all throughout the land, to announce that the Year of Jubilee was about to begin. **(Place man blowing shofar on board.)** Wow, just imagine the awesome sound of shofars being blown in every city and town and village! The whole 50<sup>th</sup> year was commanded as set-apart to Yahweh—a year of release for everyone all through the land. And guess what? Right after year 49—the land rest of the 7<sup>th</sup> shmitah year, the land would get another whole year of rest—boom, boom! So, in that 8<sup>th</sup> year the people would just keep eating whatever sprang up from the ground by itself. Tell me, who created everything there is? Of course—Yahweh did! Would it be hard for Him to make enough food to keep growing to feed everyone? Easy peasy, right? So, in the 50<sup>th</sup> year of release they would just have to keep on trusting Him!

Now, what does it mean to have a year of release? Well, first of all, every master had to release all his servants to go home. **(Place master saying goodbye to servant on board.)** How many of you know that a servant was different from a slave? A slave was bought with money, and became the property of the master for the rest of their life. Foreigners could be made lifelong slaves, living far from their homeland and families. But Yahweh already owned all the Yisra'elites, because they were His servants, right? If a Yisra'elite became poor, they could sell themselves to a rich master, who would feed and shelter in exchange for work. But in the Year of Yobel, he had to set his servants and their children free to return to their homes and clans. I'll bet there were a lot of parties and cookouts when that happened! **(Place family barbecue on board.)**



Now, have you ever felt angry or disappointed because someone did something to you that was just not fair? Hmm, I wonder if any of you ever treated a brother or sister unfairly? **(Place master being unkind to servant on board.)** Yahweh wanted to make sure no Yisra'elite took advantage of his neighbor, or ruled over them with unkindness or harshness. This Jubilee year created situations that might result in unfairness, so Yahweh set up special rules about it. There were rules about selling a house that was inside a walled city, and other rules if the house was outside the city. The Lewites were special, because they served Yahweh in His Dwelling Place, so they would be given their own cities. **(Place Lewite inside walled city on board.)** In the Jubilee, anything they had sold had to be returned to them, but the open fields around a Lewite city could never be sold at all!

Wasn't it kind and fair of Yahweh to command the people never to make a profit from a poor person's misfortune? **(Place caring emoji on board.)** Instead, the people were to build up the poor, encouraging and strengthening them to do better in life. No one was to be homeless but rather taken in and helped to make a fresh start. **(Place rich man being kind to poor man on board.)** Let's be thankful for the faithful love He showed to His people, giving everyone the hope of starting over again every 50<sup>th</sup> year!

Well children, our story has come to an end for today. We'll see you next week for another exciting Little Gems story!

