

FEDERATION'S

Imagine ISRAEL PODCAST



MEET Joseph Gitler

Food Justice Champion

Hear his story

Learn about his impact

Discuss social change

Imagine Israel Podcast Episode 10:
shalomdc.org/imagineisraelpodcast

Host Robbie Gringras sits down with Joseph Gitler, who turned his one-man mission into Israel's largest food bank rescue network, known as Leket Israel, The National Food Bank, which provides food for over 200,000 impoverished Israelis every week.

After making aliyah (moving to Israel) from the US in 2000, Gitler began his food rescue efforts from his car by rescuing meals from catering halls and delivering them to local nonprofits that serve the needy. Eventually, Gitler founded Leket in

2003, working with 200 partners to collect and redistribute more than 28 million pounds of fresh, perishable, quality food that would otherwise be considered waste from farms, hotels, military bases and catering halls.

Terms to Know

Food Insecurity The state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

According to USDA: "Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways." More than 800 million people live every day with hunger or food insecurity as their constant companion

Hunger In the fields of politics, humanitarian aid and social science, hunger is considered a condition in which a person, for a sustained period, is unable to eat sufficient food to meet basic nutritional needs. Some 795 million people in the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy active life. That's about one in nine people on earth.

Leket, Shikhhah and Pe'ah (Heb. לֶקֶט, שִׁכְחָה, וּפְאֵה; "gleanings, forgotten produce, and the corners of the field"), talmudic designation of three portions of the harvest which the farmer was enjoined to leave for the benefit of the poor and the stranger. Pe'ah ("corners") and leket ("gleanings") are enjoined in Leviticus 19:9-10, while *shikhhah* ("forgotten produce") and leket, in Deuteronomy 24:19-21.



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Joseph Gitler and Modern Leket

Gitler took his inspiration directly from Biblical law. Ancient Israel was primarily an agrarian society, and the poor were generally those who had lost their land and were unable to farm. To avoid what we would today call 'food insecurity,' farmers were required to observe a specific set of rules that would allow the poor to gather sufficient food for their basic needs.

Leviticus Chapter 19 – Kedoshim

9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not fully reap the corner of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.

וּבִקְצֹרְכֶם אֶת־קִצִּיר

אֶרְצְכֶם לֹא תִכְלֶה פֶּאֶת שְׂדֵךְ לִקְצֹר וְלִקַּט קִצִּירֶךָ לֹא תִלְקַט

10 And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you collect the [fallen] individual grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger. I am the Lord, your God.

וּכְרַמְךָ לֹא תִעֹלֵל וּפְרֹט כְּרַמְךָ לֹא תִלְקַט לְעֹנֵי וְלִגְרֵי תַעֲזֹב אֹתָם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

Perhaps the best-known example of this system is found in the Book of Ruth:

2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor." Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter."

3 So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters.

Joseph Gitler is on a 'crusade' to eliminate food insecurity in Israel by 'harvesting' the enormous amount of excess food from a wide variety of sources that would otherwise go to waste. He sees Leket as the FedEx of food rescue!



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Robbie Gringras talks with Changemaker Joseph Gitler:

1. Bal tashchit (Hebrew: בל תשחית) ("do not destroy") is a basic ethical principle in Jewish law. The principle is rooted in the Biblical law of Deuteronomy 20:19–20. In the Bible, the command is found in the context of wartime and forbids the cutting down of fruit trees to assist in the siege of an enemy town. Explain how Leket Israel is an extension of this concept.
2. What does the overwhelmingly positive response of caterers, supermarkets, food wholesalers, the military, etc. to the requests of Leket Israel for their left-over or excess food say about Israeli society?
3. In many countries, there is tremendous food waste due primarily to concerns of 'legal exposure' in the event of any food related mishaps. Why does this seem to be of less concern in Israel? How may you mitigate against food waste in your family life (shopping, "over catering," leftovers etc.)?
4. The Torah warns us, "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be open-handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land." (Deuteronomy 15: 7-11) How can this motivate us towards sustainable approaches to food scarcity and hunger? How can you support Leket Israel and local food banks?
5. "It is clear that both today and in biblical times, food security is not enough; the goal must be 'food sovereignty,' an approach that advocates for the right of people, particularly farmers and peasants, to control their own access to and production of food... We witness the journey of the Israelites from food insecurity (Egypt) to food security (manna) and arriving at food sovereignty (farming the land). Let us support initiatives that seek to overthrow the shackles of dependency, enabling all people to exercise control over food production, distribution and consumption. This is a profound expression of freedom," from MyJewishLearning.com. Considering the goal and definition above, how may Leket Israel be considered an important form of Zionism post the establishment of the State?
6. From Joseph to Joseph – How did the biblical Joseph help create food security for the Egyptians during the famine? Can the model of Joseph Gitler's work in hunger mitigation inspire us to act on behalf of the Jewish and general population?
7. Federation's Jewish Food Experience goes beyond recipes and advocates for food justice. Go to jewishfoodexperience.com/asking-tough-questions-with-jewish-value-cards and jewishfoodexperience.com/valuecards to learn from interactive value cards.



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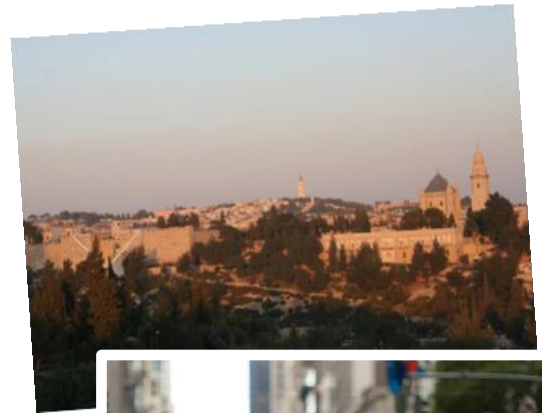
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General Questions:

1. Read the excerpt from the Israeli Declaration of Independence, below. From what you hear on the news and media, do you think the document is an actual guideline or an aspirational standard?

"THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the in gathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

2. How does this podcast episode affect your perspective of Israel? How may you explore this topic further?
3. How does the issue addressed in this episode relate to you as a Jew living in DC?
4. How would you share this aspect of Israel with others to engage them in a conversation about Israel?
5. Did you learn anything new about Israel? Did anything surprise you?
6. Based on what you heard in this podcast would you describe Israel as a Jewish, democratic or Zionist state?



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