

Save the Date!

Parsha Behar, May 3-4, 2013: A Global Day of Shmita Learning

The parsha (weekly Torah reading) of Behar introduces the detailed, visionary teachings of Shmita. It is read typically a few weeks before Shavuot. The Shmita Project invites Jewish communities across North America, Israel and Europe to host events, teachings, and activities all focused on the gift and riddle that is the Shmita tradition during the week leading up to, and including, Shabbat Behar, May 3-4, 2013. Events will unfold on a micro-local level, throughout communities involved with the Shmita Network, creating a widespread mosaic of Shmita in action.

Learn more and join the Shmita Network at hazon.org/shmitaproject

What could happen on Parsha Behar in my community?

Whether you represent an organization, community or simply yourself, we invite you to join the Shmita Network and explore the possibilities for bringing Shmita awareness into your community:

SHMITA LEARNINGS:

- **Host a Shmita Beit Midrash**, from a full day in length to a shorter hour-long class. Use the Shmita Project curriculum to support such a learning event.
- **Share a Shmita D'var Torah**. Ask your Rabbi to give a teaching on that Shabbat, or ask to be invited to come and give a guest teaching to the community.
- **Write an article on Shmita** for your community newsletter/blog or post resources/blog posts from the Shmita project to your community.

SHMITA VISIONING:

- **Host a Lecture Panel** with local community leaders on subjects relating to Shmita (food justice, local economy, debt disparity and ethical lending, land stewardship & role of the commons, etc).
- **Host a Movie Screening** about a subject relating to Shmita principles and then follow the movie with a facilitated discussion event.
- **Host a Community Visioning Circle** guided by the question "Imagine what this community will look like 7 years from now following Shmita values?" What are your dreams, visions, creative imaginations? We cannot create change unless we have a collective vision we are working towards. Share your impressions through conversation, art, movement.
- **Host a Shmita Gathering** for local community organizers, educators, Rabbis, and business/non-profit leaders to come together and explore how to integrate Shmita values/practices into your community beyond this particular Shabbat.

SHMITA ACTIONS:

- **Host a Fruit Tree Planting** on unused land at local schools, synagogues and community centers. A Shmita food system is dependent upon perennial plant choices, so the more fruit trees, the happier our bellies will be during the Shmita year.
- **Organize a Local Farm Tour.** Shmita is all about food accessibility...Get to know your local foodshed and the farmers who are living/working in your area. Learn what each farm grows, and where they need help. Volunteer at each site. If you live in an area with intensive gardening, plan the tour as a bike ride!
- **Organize A Wild Food Walk.** Shmita is a year of leaving agricultural lands fallow, but wildlands are not affected by such laws. Learn about the wild edible and medicinal plants growing in your local wildlands / parklands and deepen your relationship with their gifts. Learn how to ethically harvest, about their healing and nutritious qualities, how to best prepare and store them.
- **Host A Crop Swap/Food Barter.** On the Shmita year, the food economy shuts down, as foods cannot be sold in the marketplace. This is a perfect opportunity to get comfortable with sharing & bartering. So gardeners, please unite, and bring along your abundance. Bring harvests and seeds and homemade preserves to share and exchange with other gardeners/foodies.
- **Host A Free Exchange Market.** Do you have perfectly usable items lying around your house that you have no desire or need for? Rather than keeping them in storage or throwing them away, bring them to an exchange market. Let other community members in need enjoy these items, and find other items you are in need of.
- **Host A Re-Skilling Fair.** We are all teachers/students. We all have a skill to learn and share, and the more skills in homegrown resiliency we can have, the more empowered we will be. Volunteer to share your skills in food preservation, crafting, building, etc. These are the heirloom village skills at the heart of the Shmita tradition.
- **Host A Community Crowdfunding Gathering.** While the economic focus of the Shmita year might be on debt release, there is also an inherent celebration of the generosity of those giving loans. Crowdfunding is a form of grassroots fundraising that makes it easy to directly support local community initiatives. Host a dinner and charge \$5-\$50 per plate, sliding scale. Invite 3 community members to present their vision and masterplan. After the presentations, divide the pot between the presenters.
- **Host A Gift Circle.** The Shmita paradigm works to realign the sensitive balance between giving & receiving. We all have needs and offerings. The gift circle is a communication structure designed to connect needs with solutions. Let others in the group know your offerings (skills, time, items) and do the same with your own personal needs. Network together.
- **Host a Community Potluck Feast.** Shmita is a year-long practice in raising awareness about the foods we eat. Celebrate the food culture you come from. Focus on a menu rich with perennial plant ingredients (nuts, fruits, seeds, herbs), as well as wild foraged foods. Prepare dishes whose recipes come rich with personal story. Through the meal, enjoy conversation and celebration of the rich food culture presented on the table.