

49 Days to a Greener and More Equitable Community

Omer Learning 2022



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Today is 1 day of the Omer

About Shemitah

The first reference to Shemitah Year is in Exodus 23:10-11:

""For six years you are to sow your land and to gather in its produce, but in the seventh, you are to let it go [tishm'tenah] and to let it be [u'nitashta], that the needy of your people may eat, and what remains, the wildlife of the field shall eat. Do thus with your vineyard, with your olive grove.""

This Mitzvah is summarized as:

""In the Shmita year, debts are to be forgiven, agricultural lands to lie fallow, private land holdings to become open to the commons, and staples such as food storage and perennial harvests to be freely redistributed and accessible to all.""

Read More at bit.ly/38Bmy7G

Today is 2 days of the Omer

About Shemitah

Shemitah can be more than an obscure Torah Mitzvah. During the Omer Learning we're looking to Shemitah as inspiration for making our communities a better place to live. This article captures the concept well:

""The Shmita year challenges us to reflect on our relationship to land, money and work.

This Rosh Hashanah marks a special moment in the flow of Jewish time, as we welcome in the Shmita year, the final year in a cycle of seven. A biblical tradition rooted in the land of Israel, Shmita is a year of "release" in which land is left fallow, debts are forgiven and other agricultural and economic adjustments are made to ensure an equitable, just and healthy society. Essentially, farmers don't farm, debts are erased, all privately owned land becomes commons. And for one year, social hierarchies are flattened.""

Read More at bit.ly/3aeQXcw

Today is 3 days of the Omer

A More Restful Shabbat

For me, it's getting outside to ride a bike, walk a few miles, go for a run, just to be out in the world, out of the house, away from my desk, phones, and screens.

Today is 4 days of the Omer

Striving for Equity

Did you know we have a "Kindness Activist" around the corner from our synagogue? Have you seen the bright and festive yellow house on the corner at 203 S. Fillmore St?

Often there are scarves and clothes hanging on the fence. There are signs in English and Spanish welcoming guests. There is also a wonderful "Little Yellow Free Pantry" that stocks nonperishable foods for anyone who needs it. Susan Thompson-Gaines is our CEH neighbor and The Kindness Activist. She stocks the little free party with donations from the community. She holds a yard sale every year that raises enough money for her to use for random small acts of kindness throughout the year. Stop by to check it out, donate something to the pantry, or take something if you need it. Know that there are a lot of huge issues in our world and huge organizations trying to tackle these problems. But there are also very small and quiet things happening all around us that make a HUGE impact. Check out Kindness Activist Facebook page and blog. See this article about our neighbor from the Washington Post.

Read More at wapo.st/3N4FvyA

Today is 5 days of the Omer

Assisting Animals

Become a foster! It may feel overwhelming at first, but lots of organizations let you foster for different lengths of time, so you can start out small. When those animals get adopted, it is so rewarding!

Read More at bit.ly/3wYRs3e

Today is 6 days of the Omer

Improving our Environment

Continue to recycle and educate people about the benefits of reusing items.

Read More at bit.ly/3wSLFee

Today is 7 days, which is 1 week of the Omer

About Shemitah

Shemitah as an idea is powerful. But was it practiced as in ancient times? Here's one perspective on this:

"There is some evidence that shmita was practiced in biblical times. In his commentary on Behar, for instance, Rabbi Joseph Hertz noted that the Roman historian Tacitus said shmita observance was proof of Jewish laziness, and that, as documented by Jewish-Roman historian Josephus, both Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar canceled taxes that otherwise would have been levied on Jews in the shmita year because they were not working their fields [19]. There is even Talmudic evidence that fences were removed during the shmita year, so as to not only allow easier field access to all but to remove symbols of private ownership [20]. Still, it is unclear to what extent shmita was practiced in biblical times, or if it, or yovel for that matter, was even ever once practiced fully. The presence of the laws within the Torah provides proof that shmita as codified was not naturally practiced, and biblical prophets chastised the people specifically for not observing shmita."

Read More at bit.ly/3N56hGS

Today is 8 days, which is 1 week and 1 day of the Omer

Striving for Equity

Hyper-local elections are particularly important when it comes to the issue of affordable housing. Often these elections can feel overwhelming as there can be a number of spots, particularly if boards are involved, etc. Something that can help is using organizations such as the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance to see if they are endorsing any candidates, as those candidates most likely are concerned with the state of housing prices in the area and making certain everyone can afford to have a clean and safe environment in which to live.

Read More at bit.ly/3M7glxL

Today is 9 days, which is 1 week and 2 days of the Omer

A More Restful Shabbat

I never have time for pleasure reading during the week, so I commit to reading at least 50 pages on Saturday. And I make sure it's a book that has nothing to do with my day job!

Today is 10 days, which is 1 week and 3 days of the Omer

Striving for Equity

Focusing on the neediest among us is so important! Food preparation and delivery to the Shelter in Arlington managed by PathForward (formerly A-SPAN) is a very effective way to do this on a regular basis.

Read More at bit.ly/38B7E1g

Today is 11 days, which is 1 week and 4 days of the Omer

A More Restful Shabbat

I won't do work-work, or school-work (including reading for school) or spend money from 6pm Friday to 6pm Saturday. To know I have that time to read what I want, or hang out with friends, without feeling guilty about not doing homework, paying bills, or working on my taxes is huge.

Today is 12 days, which is 1 week and 5 days of the Omer

Improving our Environment

Join the Arlington Tree Action group. They send out emails with easy actions like signing petitions as well as opportunities to speak at County Board meetings in support of saving historic trees and maintaining our tree canopy in Arlington.

Read More at bit.ly/3GxeJMG

Today is 13 days, which is 1 week and 6 days of the Omer

About Shemitah

Debt forgiveness is a key part of Shemitah. This article expands on that concept and ties it back to today:

"Whereas today, both the wealthy and the less well-off use credit, during the era and society where the Bible is set, loans were typically only used by the poor, said Benjamin Porat, the director of the Institute for Research in Jewish Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

"A loan is kind of a mechanism for the rich people to become richer at the expense of the poor people," Porat said.

Shmita was one of a few ways the Bible tries to correct for this imbalance, Porat said. For example, the Torah prohibits lenders from charging interest.

"Shmita is part of a complex of ideas in the Bible that essentially promote a socioeconomic vision in which people are given second chances to start over again in which they might change their economic and social position," said Suzanne Last Stone, a professor of Jewish law at Cardozo Law School, Yeshiva University. "It kind of is like a reboot economically." "

Read More at on.mktw.net/3N5tWaq

Today is 14 days, which is 2 weeks of the Omer

A More Restful Shabbat

Although it is very tempting to make Shabbat a day for errands and chores, decide that you will not do that. The reward is a day of reading, rest, spending time with family and visiting friends.

Today is 15 days, which is 2 weeks and 1 day of the Omer

Improving our Environment

In our neighborhood, less is more. Erosion from our street runs into nearby streams and water. So let the lawn be spotty, but no fertilizer, no pesticides, no leaking oil, no chemicals lying around. It's not that hard to do.

Editor's note: Look at that, my lack of lawn care has actually been an environmental statement. Whoop!

Today is 16 days, which is 2 weeks and 2 days of the Omer

Striving for Equity

Be sure that all people can share their points of view. Don't assume that everyone around you in your community or congregation shares the same worldview, beliefs, politics and values.

Today is 17 days, which is 2 weeks and 3 days of the Omer

A More Restful Shabbat

I try hard to make Shabbat a day where I don't need to set my alarm. Being able to wake up naturally is a really wonderful and fulfilling feeling.

Today is 18 days, which is 2 weeks and 4 days of the Omer

Improving our Environment

In the Shemitah year we're told we can eat produce that grows wild. We can embrace this idea and potentially remove harmful invasive species by searching out wild edible plants.

If you're new to this, searching out wild edibles may seem daunting, but it's worth it. Here's two of my favorites to track down:

Pawpaws - these are the largest edible fruit indigenous to the United States. They are super tasty, and grow right in our back yard. These are native, so cultivating them helps our environment.

Garlic Mustard - this is an easy to find 'weed' that makes for a great salad add-on and is the perfect bitter herb for Passover. It's invasive, so every plant you eat is one less plant harming the environment.

Today is 19 days, which is 2 weeks and 5 days of the Omer

A More Restful Shabbat

Shabbat is an opportunity to unplug, unwind, reconnect with G-d and be with family and friends. This is one of the most beautiful commandments in Judaism - to take a cue from G-d and rest on the seventh day to enjoy the fruits of our labor. By keeping the significance of Shabbat in mind, and being mindful of how this commandment connects us to the very story of creation - that is a great way to have a more restful Shabbat.

Today is 20 days, which is 2 weeks and 6 days of the Omer

Improving our Environment

It seems simple, but now that Virginia is charging a 5 cent bag tax, I am more mindful of bringing my reusable bags to the store. I also don't request a bag if I'm only buying a small amount of items that I can carry or put in my purse.

Today is 21 days, which is 3 weeks of the Omer

Striving for Equity

Beyond everything else, be a good neighbor. Or at least make a point not to be a bad one.

Today is 22 days, which is 3 weeks and 1 day of the Omer

Assisting Animals

Put up a little bird house or a bird feeder :)

Today is 23 days, which is 3 weeks and 2 days of the Omer

A More Restful Shabbat

Going to the Synagogue on Shabbat is what differentiates the day for me from the rest of the week. It provides an environment away from all the pressures of work and of household chores and an opportunity to focus on our Jewish identity and heritage.

Today is 24 days, which is 3 weeks and 3 days of the Omer

Assisting Animals

This time of year is often thought of, in this part of the world, as "around Easter" rather than the period of the Omer. During Easter, it's common for families to give baby rabbits as presents, not realizing that rabbits are not a starter pet.

While rabbits are litter trainable, and indeed, essentially litter train themselves, they need a decent area to roam and cannot be constantly caged. This area needs to be rabbit-proofed, e.g., free of wood and cables, both of which they will happily chew on. They require a LOT of hay, all day long, their litters will need to be cleaned regularly, and some will need vet visits for things such as molar trims on a semi-regular basis. They also require regular nail trims, which take practice, and grooming such as brushing, so that they do not go into stasis from ingesting too much fur. They like being petted, but they do not enjoy being picked up, and so kids often do not find them to be "fun" pets. Finally, their lifespans are commonly 10 - 12 years, and can be as long as 15 - 16 years.

For all these reasons, shortly after Easter, rabbits commonly get dumped at shelters or with the Friends of Rabbits that is the premier rabbit adopted network in this area, or worse, turned out into the wild, where domesticated rabbits will quickly die, either of fright or by becoming prey to a local predator. If you have friends who are considering "giving an Easter bunny" to their kids or grandkids, please educate them on the basic care and lifespan of a rabbit, and why a stuffed rabbit is a much better choice.

Read More at bit.ly/3x07xW9

Today is 25 days, which is 3 weeks and 4 days of the Omer

Striving for Equity

Participate in Social Action Committee volunteer projects, and maybe take a leadership role in the committee or on a particular project.

Read More at bit.ly/3wQvgac

Today is 26 days, which is 3 weeks and 5 days of the Omer

Assisting Animals

Don't disturb wildlife babies. They are often left by their mothers while mom looks for food. If the baby seems injured or neglected, call a wildlife rehabilitator. Area shelters can provide you with names and numbers for rehabilitators.

Read More at bit.ly/3wZ5ZvQ

Today is 27 days, which is 3 weeks and 6 days of the Omer

Striving for Equity

Use Arlington County's "My Arlington" mobile app to report issues that in our community that may be impacting those with differing abilities.

For example, see a curb that's missing a curb-cut for wheelchairs? Report it and help make our community a more accessible place.

Don't have a mobile phone? No worries, you can submit a service request from the county's website.

If you live in a county other than Arlington, find out how they accept service requests.

Read More at bit.ly/3PMsmMt

Today is 28 days, which is 4 weeks of the Omer

A More Restful Shabbat

Commit to spending time in nature on Shabbat--weather permitting, of course. Don't do household chores. (I probably shouldn't admit that I do them.)

Editor's note: I'm right there with you!

Today is 29 days, which is 4 weeks and 1 day of the Omer

Assisting Animals

We love it when local critters explore or settle in the trees around our house. During the last snow storm, a group of deer nestled in for a few days. Even had a bee hive in a back corner. Just let the bushes grow wild and leave the critters alone. They know the rest.

Today is 30 days, which is 4 weeks and 2 days of the Omer

Improving our Environment

Arlington recently started a table-top composting program. My wife and I were skeptical at first (I think my exact quote was: "ewww!"). We gave it a try. Wow, this is awesome! What used to go in the trash, now gets put to real use. I'm sold! Give the program a try if you haven't already

If your county doesn't offer composting as part of trash collection, look into what other options are available. I'm telling you, the feeling you get when you repurpose, rather than trash food, is amazing.

Read More at bit.ly/3IWxK1x

Today is 31 days, which is 4 weeks and 3 days of the Omer

Assisting Animals

Volunteer as a family at a pet shelter.

Today is 32 days, which is 4 weeks and 4 days of the Omer

A More Restful Shabbat

Offline games are great way to connect with friends and family on Shabbat. Two ways to reinvigorate your offline gaming include:

1. Visit <https://www.pagat.com/> - a massive repository of rules for different card games, and download the instructions for playing either a new or old school game. If you have a deck of 52 cards, you're all set!
2. Arlington County libraries offer board game rentals! This let's you experiment and keep things fresh while not accumulating more stuff.

Read More at bit.ly/3M1TtzO

Today is 33 days, which is 4 weeks and 5 days of the Omer

About Shemitah

Our understanding of Shemitah can be inspired by Tu B'Shvat. This article explains:

""On first blush, the Jewish environmental movement's embrace of shmita echoes the reinvention of Tu B'Shvat, the modern-day equivalent of a Jewish Earth Day. A non-biblical holiday, Tu B'Shvat became the New Year for Trees (one of five New Year days described in the Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 1:1)) during Judaism's Second Temple era, roughly the 500-year period before Christian tradition dates the birth of Jesus. While Tu B'Shvat always was connected to both trees and the land, it originally was a tax holiday—the day that determined in which year a tree's fruit would be tithed. After Jewish sovereignty was lost over the Jewish homeland (what largely constitutes modern-day Israel) in the year 70, Tu B'Shvat fell into disuse. In the mid-1500s, kabbalists in the Galilean city of Tsfat revived Tu B'Shvat observance and, inspired by Tu B'Shvat's earthy roots, reinvented the holiday as one celebrating trees and nature as manifestations of God's wonders and the abundance that God

As the kabbalists reclaimed Tu B'Shvat, most of the change in Tu B'Shvat observance from about 500 years ago to today was a reinvention of the holiday—inspired by history but newly invented. It was as if the kabbalists reclaimed Tu B'Shvat at its roots and reinvented it by growing a new and different tree than those roots had grown previously. Shmita has been a different story. Shmita's resurgence has been one of rediscovery. It is as if the modern Jewish environmental movement reclaimed shmita as a fully-grown but long-neglected tree and reinvented new ways of using its fruit.""

Read More at bit.ly/3N56hGS

Today is 34 days, which is 4 weeks and 6 days of the Omer

Improving our Environment

Help the environment by not just removing invasive species, but by putting them to use. My favorite project that highlights this effort is one that suggest weaving English Ivy into baskets.

English Ivy is a common invasive species in our area. With a bit of research, you can learn how you can harvest this plant and then make functional and beautiful baskets. A Win-Win for all.

Read More at bit.ly/3NGEfS8

Today is 35 days, which is 5 weeks of the Omer

Striving for Equity

PathForward (formerly A-SPAN) produces a laminated Street Guide that includes a list of services a person in need may benefit from. These include where to access meals, housing and even showers. PathForward encourages members of the community to hand these Street Guides out ,so those in need will have access to high quality services that can make a meaningful difference.

PathForward has provided Etz Hayim with a stack of a Street Guides. Stop by our lobby to pick up a few to share with those in need.

Read More at bit.ly/38B7E1g

Today is 36 days, which is 5 weeks and 1 day of the Omer

About Shemitah

Shemitah and the counting the Omer, while at different scales, both call on us to use the passage of time as an opportunity for growth. Shemitah, with its 7 year cycle, attempts to address both social and environmental imbalances. The counting of the omer, with its 7 weeks of 7 day cycles, is often used as an opportunity for spiritual growth.

Here's unique and especially accessible project for connecting with the counting of the Omer: The Omer Mixtape:

"Counting the Omer began as a count toward the Spring harvest, and it has evolved into a spiritual accounting. Kabbalism, Jewish mysticism, provides a framework for counting the Omer as a period for introspection and personal growth, in preparation for receiving the Torah on Shavuot (which falls at the end of the Omer).

Each week of the Omer focuses on a different one of the sephirot, elements of the Divine, as well as how the aspects of those elements are at play with each other. Many people will learn a piece of Torah (often Pirkei Avot), to aid with their introspection and forge personal connections to the spiritual content.

When thinking about what Torah I wanted to study, I wanted it to be deeply personal as well as universal, because inner spiritual growth must be connected to those around us and tethered to the world we live in.

For me, pop culture, and especially music, is a place where I find my Torah in the world.

We are always consuming that content, and I believe there is Torah (Jewish learning and values) all around us. This is an opportunity for me to make explicit connections between the Torah of the world, the music that I love, and the Torah of the Omer and Kabbalah. I can better understand the Divine elements and explore my inner self by connecting the elements to songs that already hold meaning for me."

Read More at bit.ly/3wVEgL7

Today is 37 days, which is 5 weeks and 2 days of the Omer

Striving for Equity

Support Doorways (<https://www.doorwaysva.org/>) a local Arlington, VA organization which "creates pathways out of homelessness, domestic violence, and sexual assault leading to safe, stable, and empowered lives."

These topics are overwhelming and we can feel powerless to effect change. Doorways is on the front lines and making a difference, so supporting them is taking positive action.

Read More at bit.ly/3x01qkH

Today is 38 days, which is 5 weeks and 3 days of the Omer

Improving our Environment

Give the environment a rest and forgo use of pesticides and fertilizers on your lawn. It will look green and you'll support an ecosystem in your yard while protecting drinking water supplies and the Chesapeake Bay. Dandelions are easy to get out with a simple hand tool.

Editor's Note: Andy's comment to a previous Omer Learning tip seems appropriate to include here:

Dandelions are perhaps the most widely available edible "weed." In Greece, dandelion salad is one of the most popular salads and you can get it in most restaurants.

So pull them from your yard, but don't forget to eat them!

Read More at bit.ly/3x15wcx

Today is 39 days, which is 5 weeks and 4 days of the Omer

Improving our Environment

For six years, I've been the director for geothermal technologies at the Department of Energy. Geothermal is a resource that can provide power production and heating/cooling. Communities like Arlington can look into using networked geothermal heat pumps to heat and cool houses, schools, apartment buildings, and commercial buildings.

Geothermal heating and cooling is 24/7, carbon-free, and resilient. Although the upfront cost of installing geothermal can be high, the benefits are extraordinary, and there are tax incentives that can help. More information on geothermal can be found at my office's strategic documents (www.energy.gov/geovision and www.energy.gov/eere/geothermal/geothermal-technologies-office-multi-year-program-plan) and at the website for the Geothermal Exchange Organization (www.geoexchange.org)

Read More at bit.ly/3IW1ko0

Today is 40 days, which is 5 weeks and 5 days of the Omer

Assisting Animals

Slow down while driving. Leave a water dish. Use pet-friendly products on lawns and vegetable gardens; avoid chemicals.

Today is 41 days, which is 5 weeks and 6 days of the Omer

Improving our Environment

Joining a Buy Nothing group is great for the environment because it declutters, reuses items, and keeps them out of landfills. There's an ancient talmudic teaching attributed to Rabbi Yehuda ha Nasi (known as Rebbi) not to throw away something we consider useless before giving others a chance to use it. Specifically, "a person should not spill out the extra water from his pit when others may need it." (Yavamos 44a). Rebbi would have loved the Buy Nothing group I belong to because it modernizes his teaching and takes it to a new level.

What is a Buy Nothing group? Simply, it's a hyperlocal group of people living in the same area who use Facebook to give away "gifts" of items they no longer want to others who'd like to have them. It's also a place where people can "wish" for something they'd like that may be taking up space in a neighbor's home. I'm an admin of a Buy Nothing group that covers the northwest corner of Arlington and part of Falls Church. There are similar groups throughout the DMV area so there's probably one in your neighborhood too.

Sometimes "gifted" items are small, like moving boxes or padded envelopes. Last week, a parent asked whether anyone had a tri-fold presentation board used at science fairs because her daughter needed one for school. I happened to have one of those boards in my dining room serving no useful purpose for the past several years. Within an hour the item was out of my house and being put to good use by someone else. Not only is this environmentally friendly, but it is helpful to both parties.

You can find just about anything on a Buy Nothing group. There are always toys, baby items, clothes, jewelry, dishes, furniture, puzzles, books, groceries, plants, even some Jewish items. I got a box of Passover breakfast cereal during the holiday and while I can't say it was especially tasty I can say that it was appreciated. Some people were getting rid of frog items and those were great at my seder table. And I've passed along many items I no longer need to others.

Sometimes I'm amazed that people ask for and find the craziest things. This week someone asked to borrow an adult-sized giraffe costume and received one!! Rebbi would have loved that!

There's a guy in our group who enjoys tinkering with electronics. When people offer to give away partially functioning small appliances and no one else wants them, he repairs them, and then gives the items or the proceeds to charity,

I especially love what I call "mother-in-law" gifts. A well-meaning mom purchases something for her daughter-in-law or grandkids with the best of intentions but it just isn't their taste. Sometimes it is MY taste! Then there are the wedding gifts - beautiful items used infrequently and stashed away in a closet for years until it is time to declutter. As a result, I have a lovely vase on my

dining room table. I also have some art for my home library.

If you need help finding your local Buy Nothing group, I'm happy to help. I also think it would be great to start a CEH Judaica swap if others are interested.

Here's a New York Times article about Buy Nothing. Can you believe that people in New York were offering and claiming items like dryer lint and pickle juice? Turns out that dryer lint is great in the fireplace and pickle juice kills weeds in the garden. Who knew?

https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/22/realestate/buy-nothing-facebook-group.html?fbclid=IwAR0wv7RVehAsZDZUIGI4NbgI2Agf_HDI6rImpdFgpcbqUYu1563ZNqbuZT8

Read More at bit.ly/3x1MRgF

Today is 42 days, which is 6 weeks of the Omer

A More Restful Shabbat

Don't pick up a cell phone all day.

Today is 43 days, which is 6 weeks and 1 day of the Omer

Improving our Environment

Recycling has become part of our daily routine. We recycle paper, cans and plastics by dropping them in our household bin. Here in Arlington County, it takes a bit more effort to recycle other materials, but it's worth it!

Every plastic bag or bit of plastic wrap can be recycled at a grocery store plastic bag recycling bin.

Glass can be recycled by dropping it off at special glass recycle bins located throughout the county.

Electronics and household hazardous materials can be recycled by stopping by the Arlington Water Pollution Control Plant located near Four Mile Run.

It's tempting to put your recycled items in a garbage bag, but don't do that--it will cause the bag and all the recyclables to be chucked in the trash!

Read More at bit.ly/3NOOiol

Today is 44 days, which is 6 weeks and 2 days of the Omer

Improving our Environment

I recently read about a tic bite that causes the person to develop an allergy to meat. That reminded me about the power of eating less meat! This article in Greenpeace explains how eating less meat can directly impact our environment.

""Meat is an important part of heritage and identity. It's a cultural staple in many communities across the globe. But with a rising global middle class, societies are becoming meat obsessed. Nowhere else is this more prevalent than rich nations whose appetite for beef, pork and processed chicken have reached a tipping point. The research is clear â€” a diet heavy in meat increases the risk of obesity, cancer and heart disease.

But it also makes the planet sick. The livestock sector â€” raising cows, pigs and chickens â€” generates as much greenhouse gas emissions as all cars, trucks and automobiles combined. Cattle ranchers have clear cut millions of square kilometers of forests for grazing pastures, decimating natural "carbon sinks."""

Read More at bit.ly/3wXluDk

Today is 45 days, which is 6 weeks and 3 days of the Omer

About Shemitah

I celebrated Shemitah during a year abroad in Israel. When I ate fruits or vegetables produced in Israel, I placed any leftovers in a special Shemitah box. The experience made me appreciate our planet because it reminded me about the long process it took for these fruits and vegetables to get from the ground to my plate.

Today is 46 days, which is 6 weeks and 4 days of the Omer

Striving for Equity

Consider installing an app like the 'Chromatic Vision Simulator.'

This app lets you see what people with various forms of color blindness see. Use it to confirm materials that you're preparing for the public can be viewed by all, or just to see what our neighbors see.

Read More at bit.ly/3t28T0k

Today is 47 days, which is 6 weeks and 5 days of the Omer

About Shemitah

Observing Shemitah in Israel requires the buyer to closely consider where the food has come from. This requirement, like that of keeping Kosher, can inspire us to pay more attention to the source of our food.

"Another example of what Shmita can teach us stems from the way that Shmita demands that we consider the story behind the food staring back at us from the shelves of our supermarkets. Knowing the answers to questions such as where the food was grown and how the food was grown and by whom the food was grown is essential to doing Shmita "right". This information helps concerned consumers to know how to relate with the food (specifically regarding kedushat shvi'it) and decide if they want to buy the food at all.

Imagine Jews asking these same kinds of questions during non-Shmita years to make sure they're doing other things "right" according to the laws and values of our Jewish tradition.

While there are Jews already doing so, the Shmita year should encourage and train more and more of us to inquire about our food all the time. The questions we ask during Shmita should continue to be asked even when the Shmita year is done: Where was this food grown that I am considering buying and eating, meaning how far away was the farm it was picked from and how much fuel was needed to transport it to where I live? How was this food grown, meaning was it grown using a system that cares for and is sensitive to the needs of the Earth or was only short-term human profit the guiding value? Who grew the food, meaning how were the workers in the field treated and under what conditions did they labor?"

Read More at bit.ly/3M43Ym6

Today is 48 days, which is 6 weeks and 6 days of the Omer

Improving our Environment

(Tonight we have two environmental tips for the price of one!)

I'm a big fan of my local Buy Nothing Facebook group, where members offer items they no longer need to their neighbors, for free. I've gotten quite a few baby items from the group, which both reduces the need for new items to be produced and saves money. Consider going through items you no longer need and offering them up as well.

Compost all plant material. More than one benefit. Uses less electricity (don't need a garbage disposal). You see how much food you may be wasting, And you are creating compost to help your community's efforts to diminish the use of chemical fertilizers.

Today is 49 days, which is 7 weeks of the Omer

A More Restful Shabbat

No matter how busy my Friday is, after I light the Shabbat candles I take a moment to sit on the couch and take a calming breath. This small ritual ushers in the day of rest for me.