

SACRED SEVEN
INTO THE NIGHT/ Shavuot 5754
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"You, created only a little lower than / The angels, have crouched too long in
The bruising darkness / Have lain too long / Face down in ignorance.
Your mouths spilling words / Armed for slaughter.
The Rock cries out to us today, you may stand upon me, / But do not hide your face.
Across the wall of the world, / A River sings a beautiful song. It says,
Come, rest here by my side."
Maya Angelou

And Moses took the book of the covenant, and read so the people could hear; and they said: 'All that God has spoken we will do, we will obey.'

Rabbi Yishmael asked: From where did Moses begin to read? "When you settle the land, the land shall observe a Sabbath of God. Six years you shall sow your field...but in the Seventh Year the land shall have a complete rest." And how did he conclude? "These are the laws, statutes and teachings." They said, "We accept!" When he saw that they had received it upon themselves, he said: "Behold, you are prepared. Tomorrow come and receive all the laws upon yourselves."

Midrash Mechilta of Rabbi Yishmael, Yitro,3

"ויקח ספר הברית ויקרא באזני העם
ויאמרו כל אשר דיבר ה' נעשה ונשמע"
אבל לא שמענו מהיכן קרא באזניהם?
רבי ישמעאל אומר: בתחילת העניין מה
הוא אומר? "וידבר ה' אל משה בהר סיני
לאמר. דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם
כי תבאו אל הארץ אשר אני נותן לכם

The year of Shmita...promotes a sense of fellowship and peace...for one is not allowed to exercise over any of the seventh year produce the right of private ownership. And this is undoubtedly a primary factor in promoting peace since most dissension originates from the attitudes of 'mine is mine,' one person claiming 'it is all mine' and the other also claiming 'it is all mine.' But in the seventh year all are equal, and this is the real essence of peace.

Taken on its own, Shmita is a riddle with no answer. In order to begin to understand the intricate puzzle that is Shmita, we must first connect the 6 years to the 7th, the individual parts of the cycle to its flowering conclusion. The 6 years of the Shmita Cycle are those of cultural design, and the 7th year is the indicator year; the ultimate 'check-in' to see how we are collectively doing as a culture. Shmita itself is not an isolated moment in time, but rather a cyclical expression of a vibrant culture rooted in local food systems, economic resiliency, and community empowerment. For us today, the Shmita Cycle can take shape as a story of transition, from the isolated self towards holistic community; from perceived scarcity towards revealed abundance. It is a story so old and ancient that we have forgotten just how much we need it today, now, for our own survival, for our own evolution and growth

א. וידבר יהוה אל-משה, בהר סיני לאמר. ב דבר אל-בני ישראל, ואמרת אליהם, כי תבאו אל-הארץ, אשר אני נתן לכם--ושבתה הארץ, שבת ליהוה. ג שש שנים תזרע שדך, ושש שנים תזמר כרמך; ואספת, את-תבואתה. ד ובשנה השביעת, שבת שבתון יהיה לארץ--שבת, ליהוה: שדך לא תזרע, וכרמך לא תזמר. ה את ספוח קצירך לא תקצור, ואת-ענבי נזירך לא תבצר: שנת שבתון, יהיה לארץ. ו והיתה שבת הארץ לכם, לאכלה--לך, ולעבדך ולאמתך; ולשכירך, ולתושבך, הגרים, עמך. ז ולבהמתך--ולחיה, אשר בארצך: תהיה כל-תבואתה, לאכל.

ב. יח ועשיתם, את-חוקתי, ואת-משפטי תשמרו, ועשיתם אתם--וישבתם על-הארץ, לבטח. יט ונתנה הארץ פריה, ואכלתם לשבע; וישבתם לבטח, עליה. כ וכי תאמרו, מה-נאכל בשנה השביעת: הן לא נזרע, ולא נאסף את-תבואתנו. כא וצויתי את-ברכתי לכם, בשנה הששית; ועשת, את-התבואה, לשלש, השנים. כב וזרעתם, את השנה השמינית, ואכלתם, מן-התבואה ישן; עד

God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai: 2 Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When you enter the land that I assign to you, the land shall observe a sabbath of God. 3 Six years you may sow your field and six years you may prune your vineyard and gather in the yield. 4 But in the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath of complete rest, a sabbath of God: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. 5 You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your untrimmed vines; it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. 6 But you may eat whatever the land during its sabbath will produce—you, your male and female slaves, the hired and bound laborers who live with you, 7 and your cattle and the beasts in your land may eat all its yield.

18 You shall observe My laws and faithfully keep My rules, that you may live upon the land in security; 19 the land shall yield its fruit and you shall eat your fill, and you shall live upon it in security. 20 And should you ask, "What are we to eat in the seventh year, if we may neither sow nor gather in our crops?" 21 I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it shall yield a crop sufficient for three years. 22 When you sow in the eighth year, you will still be eating old grain of that crop; you will be eating the old until the ninth year, until its crops come in. 23 But the land must not be sold beyond reclaim, for the land is Mine; you are but strangers resident with Me.

Shmita year 5774 (September 2014 – September 2015)

7 things to think about:

- ❖ Reflecting on the last 7 years / envisioning 2022
- ❖ Visiting Israel
- ❖ Letting go ... digitally
- ❖ Eating more perennials and fewer annuals
- ❖ Creating a shmita seder plate this Rosh Hashanah
- ❖ Giving away things you have not uses in the last 6 years
- ❖ Traveling less, reflecting more



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For resources on shmita go to hazon.org/shmita.

If you sign up for Hazon's New York Ride & Retreat by June 10th with the discount code "nigel" you