

## Kislev 5783 - Shvat 5783 (December 2022 - February 2023)

### Upcoming Events

#### December 25: [Bonfire Menorah](#)

Join us in celebrating the 8th night of Chanukah. On this holiday, it's a mitzvah to light your menorah in a place where it can be seen. We have a tradition at Yesod Farm+Kitchen of doing this by making a bonfire menorah. You're invited to join us in celebration on the last night of Chanukah. We'll kindle the fires at 5:45pm, and socialize around their light. [Sign up here.](#)

#### January 22 & February 6: [Volunteer Farming](#)

Help us transition our field from its wild shmita\* state into vegetable production. After releasing human control over the field for a full year, it's time to remove the dense, tall plants and make space for vegetables. Feel like a forensic farmer as you find evidence of which animals and plants moved into the field when humans moved out. We'll pull plants by hand, move plant matter to a compost pile, weed with hula hoes, and spread woodchips. Sign up for [January 22](#) or [February 6](#).

\*shmita = the agricultural and economic year of release in ancestral Jewish wisdom. Learn more about [shmita on Yesod's website](#) (click link and scroll down).



Image Description: Two willow trees grow in the vegetable field among other weeds. It's been joyous to see what plants (including trees!) and animals moved into the field this past shmita year.

### Shabbat and Disability Justice

We welcomed 20 new animals (goats and chickens) to Yesod this fall, and we're enjoying how it's shifting our schedules and our relationships with time, community, and Shabbat. These creatures currently give us about 4 cups of milk and 10 eggs a day. We're delighting in an abundant harvest that extends into winter.

As a Jewish land project we asked, "How do we want Shabbat to inform our animal care practices?" We've already noticed how shmita can create farming and food systems that are resilient to crop loss and decreased human capacity to farm. Similarly, we're learning that plans for Shabbat can create animal chore routines that are resilient to fluctuating capacity within our farm crew. Both cycles of 7 teach us about Disability Justice and climate resilience.

On Shabbat, Jewish practice invites us to refrain from a host of agricultural work. How do we care for our chickens and goats without carrying food or water between zones of the farm? How do we create systems that allow us to sleep in on Shabbat? Can we really create a 25-hour period without milking a goat or collecting eggs? How do we care for our animals without electricity?

Setting up systems to make Shabbat possible also gives us flexibility when it's hard to get out of bed in the morning, or to carry food and water, and when the power goes out. Shabbat teaches us to pay attention to the ways that animal care influences plant growth: by scattering seeds for the chickens to eat, tossing away ice from the top of the chicken water, or pouring out dirty water from the goats, we support plant life in our pastures. All systems of the farm are connected.

### Jewish Liberation Fund

We're excited to accept a \$12,500 grant from Jewish Liberation Fund, a fiscally sponsored project of the Proteus Fund! This was the first grant Yesod Farm+Kitchen has received. As a community project, we are grateful for the support. Thanks to everyone whose different gifts help Yesod keep going.

### Beeswax and Chanukah

We're about to enter Chanukah and light 44-46 candles over the course of 8 days. Our resident bee keeper wrote this reflection about beeswax and the connection between burning candles and sacrifices in the Temple(s) thousands of years ago:

"The more time I spend beekeeping, the closer it feels like shepherding to me. I'm learning to read the landscape to manage resources and threats. I keep an eye on the bees' health and safety, guiding them without micromanaging — letting the hive (herd) make decisions for itself within parameters that I define. It's stewarding an incredibly huge group of tiny animals — celebrating births and mourning losses, and stepping in to be the herald and even arbiter of death, when necessary.

"I also feel connected to a long line of Ashkenazi ancestors who kept bees (whether or not they thought of it as shepherding) for a thousand years in Eastern Europe, adding a host of folk customs and traditions to their relationships to bees and their roles as keepers (shepherds).

"Back in the time of the Temples, organ fat from the abdomens of prized animals (chelev in Hebrew) was a huge part of the sacrifices in the Temple. (And many sacrifices were 'given to G-d' through burning.) When the second Temple was destroyed and animal sacrifice stopped, the rabbis carried fire as a means of interacting with G-d in other rituals. These included separating and burning a portion of challah, burning chametz, and kindling ritual lights. Originally, the lights used for ritual were oil lamps, but around the Middle Ages, Jews started using candles, mostly made from animal fat tallow. Weirdly, I haven't found any teachings that directly connect burning animal tallow candles with animal fat on the Temple's altar — only indirectly as 'ritual fire' — but it feels deeply connected to me. (Side note: Did you know that during the Middle Ages, the ritual lighting of Shabbat candles was invented by women who wanted ritual for themselves in the home? This practice was only later sanctioned by the rabbis when they decided it was better to codify the practice than try to stop it.)

"Bees produce wax (made mostly of fat) from glands in their abdomen! Although we don't have to kill bees to get the fat out of their abdomens ourselves, it takes a TON of resources for bees to make the wax, and many lives' worth of labor. To make a pound of wax takes the lifetime labor of more than 7,000 bees flying 150,000 miles to visit 15 million flowers. (These numbers are rough estimates. And wax isn't made from flowers, but requires eating lots of honey to produce.)

"So when I burn beeswax for ritual, it feels very clear to me that I'm giving precious chelev from my herd to G-d through ritual fire. And in doing so, I'm connecting through my Ashkenazi heritage all the way back to a tradition from Temple and pre-Temple Judaism."

### What We're Reading

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb, a teacher who inspires us, has a new illustrated book called Hanooka Book: All of Us in the Light. It has 30 pages of art, stories, prayers, and practices for each of the eight nights, made for families to use throughout the holiday. The author says, "Hanooka Book celebrates beautiful resistance to empire and honors legacies of liberatory communal wisdom and joy."

If you live near Yesod Farm+Kitchen, there may be an opportunity to meet Rabbi Lynn next year. She has tentative plans to teach a public workshop in the Asheville area about Jewish solidarity with the Indigenous landback and reparations movement within a teshuvah framework. In the meantime, you can order a digital copy by going to [PayPal.me/RabbiLynn](#) and sending a sliding scale \$12-36 payment with the note "Hanooka Book."



Image Description: In this illustration by R' Lynn Gottlieb, a person, dove, fox, and chicken dance together.



*Yesod Farm+Kitchen seeks collective liberation with the land through Jewish agriculture, mutual aid, and growing relationships across difference.*