

THE MINDFUL SHMITA WORKBOOK

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE SHMITA YEAR?

The Shmita Year comes every seven years on the Jewish calendar as a sabbatical and comes from the Hebrew root for release. Shmita is reminiscent of a time when the agricultural cycle was ever-present. Crop yields from year to year determine people's quality of life. During the Shmita Year, farmers are not allowed to plant new crops or do more than minimal maintenance to their fields. This has a practical purpose: during a normal growing season, soil is slowly stripped of its nutrients. If a field is left to lie fallow, the nutrients in the soil are replenished and its crops will have a greater yield the following year. Another aspect of the Shmita Year is that anything that grows naturally (without the help of humans) is considered *hefker*, or free. Owners of the land, poor people, and passerbyers have equal access and ownership over the naturally-grown produce.

Today, the practical observance of the Shmita Year doesn't affect most diasporic communities around the world. However, we can use this opportunity to find personal rest and rejuvenation; to reflect on the past seven years and look forward to the next seven; to consider how we can give as freely as the *hefker* model; to expand our understanding of ownership.

In this Mindful Shmita Workbook from The Tasman Center, we'll offer seven prompts for reflection and practice. We hope this will be a way to savor, celebrate, and mark this Shmita year. The prompts can be responded to all at once during Elul, in preparation for the new year, during Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, or answered throughout the Shmita Year. There will be options for virtual connection with participants around the world and supplemental offerings over the course of the year as well.

INTRODUCTION

WHY SEVEN?

The number seven represents a cycle of wholeness and completion in Jewish tradition. Most notably, our week cycle of seven days comes from the story of Creation: God worked for six days to create the world, and on the seventh day God saw that what God had created was good, and God rested. Similarly, the Shmita Year comes every seven years as a rest at the end of a complete cycle. With Rosh Hashanah 5782, we enter the Shmita Year, preparing for rest and rejuvenation, and to reflect on what we created in the past seven years.

The seven prompts you'll encounter in this journal aim to give a sense of wholeness as well. They span a breadth of topics related to the themes of the Shmita Year to allow the user to approach the journey from many angles.

HOW IT WORKS

Inspired by the overarching themes of the traditional Shmita observance, we've interpreted the concepts of the Shmita in a creative and meaningful way to make Shmita accessible as a spiritual and mindful practice. This journal offers prompts and activities to guide you through the year at your own pace. You can set reminders on your calendar to complete the prompts, or join our Shmita Year Facebook group to receive virtual reminders. Additional resources can also be found online at tasmancenter.org and hazon.org.

CONTENTS

REFLECT

RELEASE

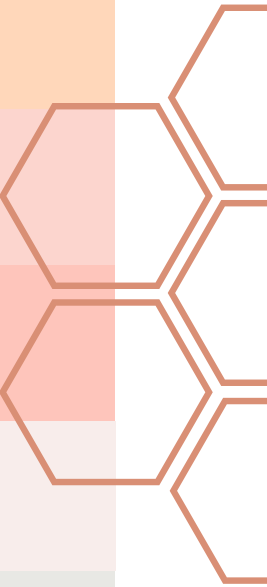
REST

CARE

CONNECT

THANK

CLOSE



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

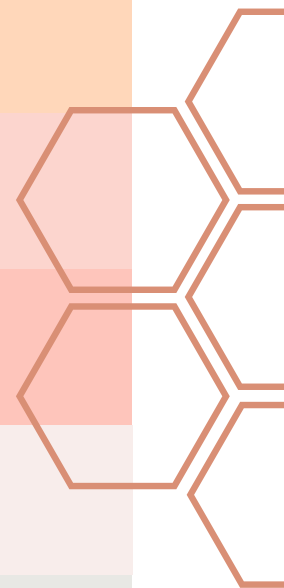
FOUND IN THE BACK OF YOUR JOURNAL

ADDED JOURNALING PAGES

THE SHMITA CAPSULE

DEEPER DIVE OPTIONS

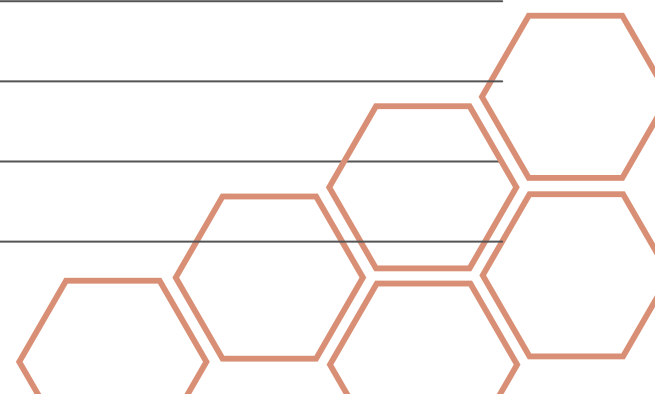
SHARING YOUR JOURNEY





To help you pull up memories from seven years ago, look for photos, journals, or social media posts from 2014-2015.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. In the bottom right corner, there is a decorative graphic element consisting of several overlapping, irregular polygons in shades of orange and red, creating a modern, abstract design.



A 12x12 grid of small gray dots on a light gray background. The dots are arranged in a regular pattern, with 12 dots per row and 12 dots per column, totaling 144 dots. The dots are small and gray, and the background is a light gray color.



TO DO

Find a small object that represents something you sowed (something you cared for, planted) in the last seven years, and one that represents something you reaped (harvested) in the last seven years. Take a moment to appreciate the object by sketching it on the facing page.

Add the items and any photos from the previous exercise to your Shmita Year Capsule. More details for the capsule are in the additional resources at the end of this workbook.

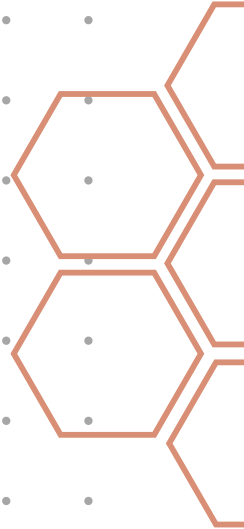
[illegible]

JOURNALING

What have you been trying to control in your life lately? Where can you let go of control?

[illegible]

A 12x12 grid of small grey dots. On the right side, two hexagons are outlined in orange. The top hexagon is formed by dots at (row, col) coordinates: (5, 11), (6, 11), (6, 12), (7, 12), (7, 11), and (8, 11). The bottom hexagon is formed by dots at: (8, 11), (9, 11), (9, 12), (10, 12), (10, 11), and (11, 11). The hexagons are adjacent, sharing the edge between (8, 11) and (9, 11).





TO DO

Consider making a commitment not to buy new things or reducing what you buy new during the Shmita year. Check out the Buy Nothing Project, Freecycle, or other gift economy groups.



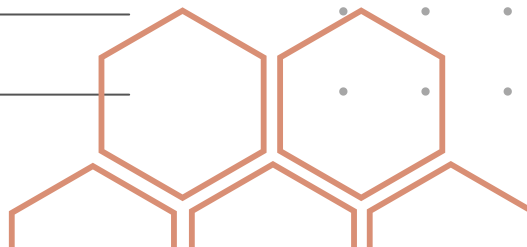


During the Shmita Year, we let fields lay fallow in order to restore nutrients to the soil and allow for more growth in the future. How could you apply the same approach in your life? Are there projects you need to step back from? What in your life needs to lie fallow in order to bloom again next year?

[illegible]

[illegible]

A 12x12 grid of dots on a light gray background. In the bottom-left corner, there is a small orange house icon. The house has a triangular roof and a rectangular base, with a small chimney on the right side of the roof. The house is positioned such that its base is aligned with the bottom row of dots, and its left side is aligned with the first column of dots.





Choose some self-care for yourself that would help with rejuvenation. Go for a walk, listen to new music, doodle or paint something with a loose style. Revisit a spot that inspires you or spend time in nature.

Date: / /





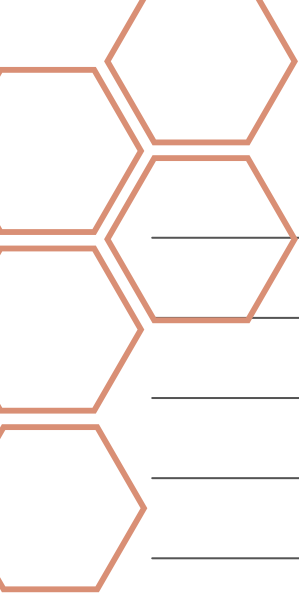
JOURNALING

The Shmita year reminds us how dependent we are on the natural cycles of our earth. Consider your personal connection to the earth and the land. When do you feel most connected to nature?

The land is a sustaining force, which also needs our care and attention. Generations after us will also need the resources provided by a healthy planet. Assess your efforts to care for our planet. Where are you doing well? What could you improve?

Date: / /

[illegible]



Date: / /

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 15 horizontal lines.

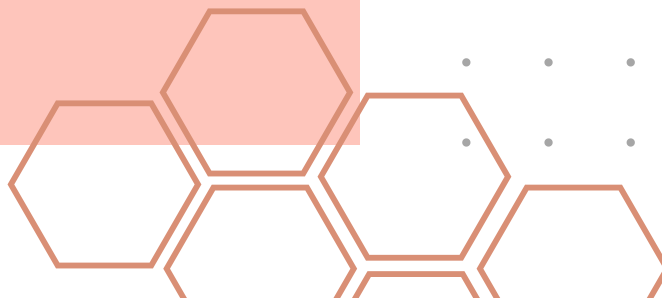
Date: / /

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 15 horizontal lines, each with a series of small dots for tracing or dot-marker practice.



TO DO

Make a specific goal for yourself this year to help care for the planet. It could be to walk or take public transportation to work once a week, cut out red meat, or sign up for a farm delivery box. Find an accountability buddy or hevruta (see our guide in the deeper dive resources on tasmancenter.org/shmita-resources) and commit to helping each other reach your goals.

A light gray background featuring a grid of small, dark gray dots. The dots are arranged in a regular pattern, with 12 columns and 12 rows. In the bottom left corner, there is a red line that starts horizontally and then turns diagonally upwards and to the right.



Shmita is one of 26 mitzvot, or commandments, that traditionally can only be performed in the land of Israel. This creates an opportunity for Jews living around the world to reflect on their relationship with the land of Israel. Does your connection to Judaism feel any different when you're in Israel? In what ways? If you haven't been to Israel, what do you imagine might feel different about being there?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. In the bottom right corner, there is a decorative graphic element consisting of several overlapping, irregular polygons in shades of orange and red, creating a modern, abstract design.



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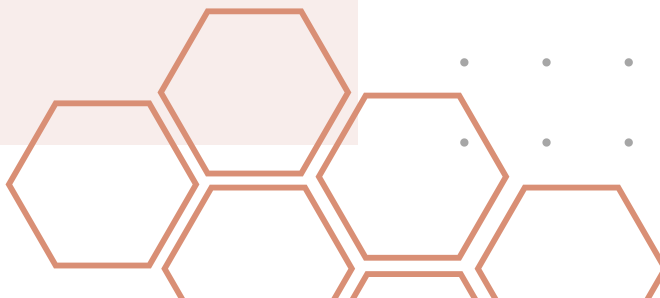
A 12x12 grid of dots on a light gray background. The dots are arranged in a regular pattern, with 12 dots per row and 12 dots per column, totaling 144 dots. The dots are small, dark gray circles. The background is a solid, light gray color.

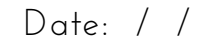


TO DO

Look up the artist Andi Arnovitz. Her work deals with a variety of topics, including politics, women, Israeli life. Choose one work and consider how or if it speaks to you. Why did you choose to focus in on this particular piece? Does it connect to your journaling from the previous prompt at all?

Bonus: ideate or create a work inspired by one of Arnovitz's pieces.





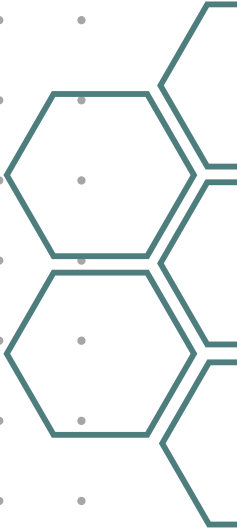
During the Shmita year, we show appreciation and gratitude by allowing the land to rest. Having a gratitude practice has been shown to help increase general happiness and satisfaction with life.

Do you have a gratitude practice? If so, how does it make you feel? If not, take some time to consider what things you have to be grateful for.

[illegible]

[illegible]

A grid of dots arranged in 12 rows and 12 columns. On the right side of the grid, two hexagons are highlighted with dark green outlines. The top hexagon is formed by dots at (row, column) coordinates (1,11), (2,11), (3,11), (3,10), (2,10), and (1,10). The bottom hexagon is formed by dots at (5,11), (6,11), (7,11), (7,10), (6,10), and (5,10). The dots are small, dark gray circles. The hexagons are outlined with a solid dark green line.

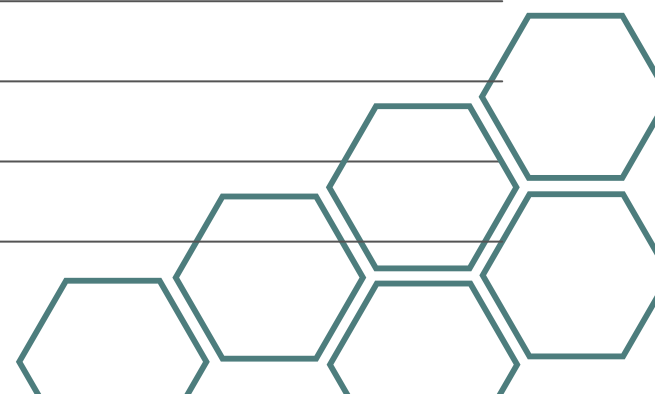




TO DO

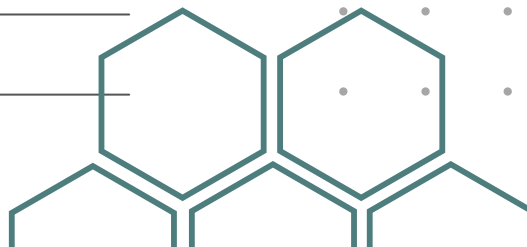
Write a note to someone who you'd like to thank - living or not. It could be a family member, a musician, a teacher, or someone else. Be specific in expressing your gratitude towards them. If you can, send the note to them.

Date: / /

[illegible]

[illegible]

A grid of 12x12 dots on a light gray background. In the bottom-left corner, there is a small icon of a house with a dark green outline and a light green roof. The house is positioned such that its base is aligned with the bottom row of dots, and its left side is aligned with the first column of dots. The house's roof extends to the second column of dots, and its base extends to the second column of dots. The house is oriented towards the right.





A decorative graphic consisting of a grid of small dots, with a stylized 'E' shape formed by the dots in the bottom left corner.

Take a moment to appreciate the time and care you've dedicated to yourself throughout this year by undertaking this project. How has it created meaning in your Shmita year?

Complete your journey by sealing this workbook and putting it away somewhere to be revisited in the next Shmita year. If you created a physical time capsule, put this journal inside it and follow the same directions as above.



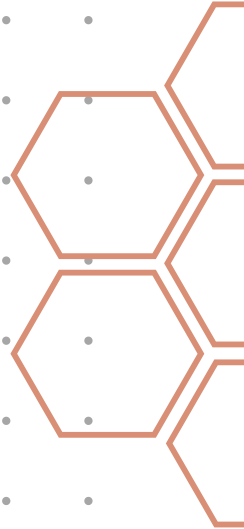


This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. On the far left edge, there is a small, solid orange tab. The rest of the page is empty, with no handwriting or other markings.

A 12x12 grid of small gray dots on a white background. The dots are arranged in a regular pattern, with 12 dots per row and 12 dots per column, totaling 144 dots.

[illegible]

A 12x12 grid of small grey dots. On the right side, two hexagons are outlined in orange. The top hexagon is formed by dots at (row, col) coordinates: (4, 11), (5, 11), (5, 12), (6, 12), (6, 11), and (5, 10). The bottom hexagon is formed by dots at: (7, 11), (8, 11), (8, 12), (9, 12), (9, 11), and (8, 10). The hexagons are adjacent, sharing the edge between (5, 11) and (7, 11).



[illegible]

A grid of 12x12 dots on a light gray background. In the bottom-left corner, there is a small orange house icon with a triangular roof and a rectangular base. The house is positioned such that its base is on the bottom row of dots, and its roof extends to the second row of dots. The house is located in the first two columns of the grid.



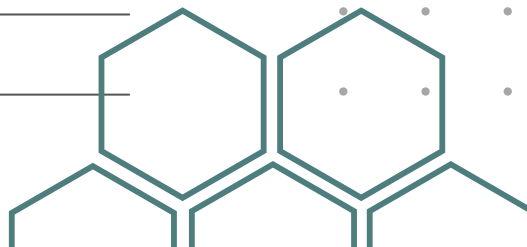
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A grid of dots arranged in 12 rows and 12 columns. On the right side of the grid, two hexagons are highlighted with dark green outlines. The top hexagon is formed by dots at (row, col) coordinates (5,11), (6,11), (6,12), (5,12), (4,11), and (4,12). The bottom hexagon is formed by dots at (7,11), (8,11), (8,12), (7,12), (6,11), and (6,12). The dots are small, dark gray circles. The hexagons are outlined with a solid dark green line.



[illegible]

A grid of 12x12 dots is shown. In the bottom-left corner, there is a small icon of a house with a green outline and a brown roof. The house is positioned such that its base is aligned with the bottom row of dots, and its left side is aligned with the first column of dots. The house's roof extends to the second column of dots.



THE SHMITA TIME CAPSULE

HOW TO CREATE A CAPSULE

In addition to the activities and prompts in this journal, you may also choose to create a physical or virtual time capsule to capture the essence of your last seven years. Some of the activity prompts throughout the journal suggested items to add; you can also choose items that speak to you, or are inspired by the prompts and activities. For a physical time capsule, we've included printable stickers on the next page so you can sustainably reuse a box or bag you have at home. For a virtual capsule, simply create a folder on your computer and save your materials and photos there - and come back to it in seven years to see how much has changed!

PRINTABLE STICKERS

Use these stickers to designate your physical shmita time capsule if you choose to create one. Rather than build a physical product, we've created these stickers in order so that you can reuse a box or bag that you already have at home.

Printing Instructions

The following page has stickers laid out for a 2x4" label sheet with 10 labels, similar to the Avery label template 5163. Use the printing instructions that come with the label to print the sheets.



DEEPER DIVE OPTIONS

MORE FROM THE TASMAN CENTER

Join our online community at tasmancenter.org and our Shmita Year Facebook group!

On tasmancenter.org/shmita-resources you'll find options to expand on the activities in this workbook. The Facebook group can be used to share art or reflections from your journey over the course of the year, and connect with people from around the world.

The Tasman Center also offers monthly teachings, a meditation library, and virtual gatherings through our Patreon. More information is available at patreon.com/thetasmancenter.

MORE FROM HAZON

Check out shmitaproject.org to learn how Hazon is working to expand awareness about *shmita* and to bring the values of this practice to life today to support healthier, more sustainable Jewish communities. The Shmita Project works across the Jewish landscape to elevate the role that *shmita* plays in today's society. Join the Shmita Project Facebook group and sign-up for Shmita Network Google group to stay up to date on Hazon's work.

You can also submit work to The Shmita Prize, which aims to harness the power of the arts to explore the intersection of the *shmita* wisdom teachings with contemporary Jewish life. The Shmita Prizes award artists and creatives – from all levels of experience and age groups – for works of art that bring into focus the relevancy and application of *shmita* values in our contemporary world.

SHARE YOUR SHMITA JOURNEY

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Designed by Valerie Brown

Edited by Rabbi Sarah Tasman

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