



*'Farming is the foundation of civilization. All sustenance derives from it, as well as the benefits and blessings that civilization brings.' Ibn Abdūn, Hisba, c. 1147, Seville*

*The ancestral seeds that we hold in our hands are living memories passed down from generation to generation, waiting to come alive again but today are threatened especially in regions of conflict.*

Seeds for Life is a social renewal initiative to restore threatened baladi and wild biodiversity. We are building a network of community seed banks with seed exchanges and traditional food festivals to celebrate life-nurturing seed stewardship that honors the diverse peoples on our shared land. Preserving biodiversity is a seminal act of cultural empowerment for traditional peoples.

World scientists are working feverishly to avert global famine by searching for resilient crops that can feed the world as we face climate change. Baladi seeds are at the heart of food sovereignty, bearing a Noah's Ark of resilience, flavor and nutrition urgently needed as we face climate change and conflict. Wild edible plants and indigenous knowledge of their uses are embedded in Arab and Jewish food traditions, but today are threatened due to the industrial food and seed systems, and devastating conflicts.

Restoration of ancestral seed biodiversity and celebration of traditional food arts of diverse people can transform conflicts into cooperation by solving shared problems.

# SEEDS FOR LIFE



*Arab-Jewish cooperation for  
seed stewardship that honors the  
diverse histories of our shared land*



*The heart of our work is to nourish harmony between people and Nature for a peaceful, just, sustainable future for all peoples in Palestine and Israel. Our Seed Ark and Mezze programs celebrate Arab and Jewish heritage on the Land through seed, food and gatherings rooted in the past and blossoming in the present.*

إننا نحترم الجذور التاريخية للشعبين في هذه الأرض باحترام متبادل.  
ويتمثل جوهر عملنا في تعزيز الانسجام بين الناس والطبيعة من أجل  
مستقبل سلمي وعادل ومستدام لجميع الشعوب في فلسطين وإسرائيل..

**אנו מכבדים בכבוד הדדי את השורשים ההיסטוריים של שני העמים  
בארץ. לב עבודתנו הוא להזין הרמוניה בין האנשים והטבע לעתיד  
שלי, צודק ובר-קיימא לכל העמים בפלסטין ובישראל.העמים  
בפלסטין ובישראל.**

Traditional Arab farmers pioneered ecological farming centuries ago. The 12th century 'Kitab al-Filaha Book of Agriculture - كِتَابُ الْفِلَاحَةِ' written by Ibn al'Awam documents ecological farming that is a beacon of sustainability to this day.

The Book of Filāḥa explains the art of organic soil fertility with composting, manuring and mulching combined with crop rotation with leguminous, nitrogen-fixing green manures, ie vetch, clover, lupins and fenugreek that are ploughed in to restore soil fertility. The best soil 'closely resembles well-rotted manure, friable, alive and moist', ie humus, the 'life-force' of soil. 'Feed the soil to feed the plant'

Biodiversity - The Book of Filāḥa encourages crops that are almost forgotten today such as rocket, purslane, sorrel, dandelion, alexanders, scorzonera, milk thistle, comfrey, nettle and more, that nourish sophisticated crop rotation, inter-cropping, companion planting, combining tree crops with perennials or annuals with different nutrient uptake of diverse species, avoiding the build-up of crop-specific pests and diseases. In contrast modern conventional monocrop agriculture uses artificial fertilizers that deplete soil life. To learn more: <http://www.filaha.org>

From the 12th century BCE *ancient Israelis* were organic farmers. The first book of the Mishnah, agrarian oral traditions were written down 2nd to 5th century in the 'Order of Seed - Seder Zera'im' spans blessings, farming, and food justice, later expanded to 40 volumes of Talmud from 5th century to this day.. Jewish seed-savers have a unique ancestral connection to landrace seed from the dawn of agriculture to the present day.

*'These are the things for which there is no measure: gleanings, first-fruits, the festive offering, deeds of loving-kindness and the study of Torah. These are the things whose fruits a person enjoys in this world while the capital remains in the world to come: honoring father and mother, acts of loving-kindness, and making peace between one person and another. But the study of Torah equals them all.'* Mishnah Peah 1.1

**The first book of Mishnah Seder Zariim, Order of Seeds includes:**  
**Peah - Gifts to the Poor** - To leave the corner of the field unharvested, leave the fallen stalks, leave imperfect clusters of the vineyard, not to gather the imperfect clusters of the vineyard, not gather the individual fallen grapes of the vineyard, leave forgotten sheaf, set aside a tithe for the poor, give charity according to one's ability and not to harden one's heart against the poor

**Kilayim - Diverse Varieties:** not to mate animals of different species, not to work animals of different species together;

**Tithes** - to set apart the tithe of produce every year the fields are sown and give it to the Levites.

**Shevi'it** - Sabbatical Year and Jubilee - the land rests unworked in the Sabbatical year, to not harvest what grows by itself in the manner of harvesters, open land around cities shall never be sold.

*'G-d created the world so all shall live in pleasantness, that all are equal, that one shall not lord over the other, and that all may cultivate the land. However, when warrior-minded people multiplied they began to rely on their might, and left off cultivating the land and turned to robbery.'*  
Hochmat haNefesh 22b, Rabbi Judah, 13th century

# MEZZE

## *A Festival of Culinary Diversity*

*celebrating the Indigenous Histories, Foods and Arts  
of Palestine and Israel*

'Mezze' is a program to bring together the collage of peoples that share roots in Jerusalem in ways that promote organic farming and seed-saving, traditional cuisine and creative arts to solve shared problems.

'Mezze', a Mideastern table set with tasty dishes, evolved as a way to welcome friends with a range of choices. Guests help themselves from the diversity of offerings without a formal menu of pre-served portions. *Mezze* is an apt metaphor for a program that celebrates the diversity of peoples without a pre-defined ideological menu for a complex situation. Our only agenda is to enjoy traditional cuisine and arts, share Levant landrace seed and to listen to each other.

As Arab and Jewish lives are lost due to extreme ideologies, it is critical to listen to the 'other' to understand the perspectives with intellectual acuity and compassion. Our ancient seeds are threatened, many on the verge of extinction, due to conflicts and industrial systems that displace traditional agro-biodiversity and food ways.

*Mezze* will produce resources for a replicable program with a website, a free guidebook and a Seed Ark with follow-up support for an expanding network.

## Program Modules

1. *Mezze* - A hands-on workshop preparing traditional Mideastern recipes with landrace heirloom grains and vegetables, culminating in a tasty table of freshly-baked flatbread baked from fresh-milled ancient Mideast grains, topped with zaatar spice, homemade hummus and savory dips. Foraging wild edible foods in season.

2. *Seeds for Life* - Seeds tell the story of our history in the Land. We will share almost forgotten five ancient Israeli species of chametz grains that tell the story of ancient Israel's journey, landrace drought-hardy prickly-seeded spinach, and the beloved faqous aka qishut, the fuzzy cucumber-like vegetable yearned for by the children of Israel in the Sinai desert, enjoyed by ancient Israeli sages that today a beloved staple in Palestinian cuisine - and more

3. *Sharing our Stories* - Starting with compassionate listening guidelines, participants share their diverse perspectives and experiences. We conclude with brainstorming small collaborative follow-ups, such as planting and saving seed of threatened Levant landrace seeds, sharing mezze foods and creative arts that promote multi-cultural cooperation.



## Qishut - Faqous

זָכַרְנוּ, אֶת-הַדָּגָה, אֲשֶׁר-נֹאכַל בְּמִצְרַיִם, חֹנֶם; אֶת  
הַקִּשְׁיָאִים, וְאֶת הָאֲבֹטְחִים, וְאֶת-הַחֲצִיר וְאֶת-הַבָּצָלִים,  
וְהַשּׁוּמִים.

*'We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt, and  
the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic.'* Numbers 11:5

The 'cucumber' yearned for by the children of Israel in the Sinai desert, grown in Ancient Israel, today beloved by Palestinians & Israelis alike. 'Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's table never lacked for the cucumbers that are a delicacy for kings'. Talmud Berachot 57 Seder Zeraim, Maasrot 1:5, written in Israel 2-5th CE: 'Qishut is tithed when fuzz is removed or stored in a pile' אִיזְהוּ גִרְנָן לְמַעֲשָׂרוֹת. 'The Hebrew 'הקשואים משׁיפֿקסוּ. ואם אינו מִפֿקס משׁיעמיד עֲרָמָה 'piqqus' to rub off fuzz, evolved to Arabic 'faqous' after Arab conquest 7thCE since Arabic lacks 'p' sound. The Faqous Festive, Palestine celebrates this beloved baladi food with folk dance and song. Start seeds in early spring. Plant outside after frost. Harvest young before full size. Enjoy fresh, pickle, grate or stuff & bake.

### Galilee Spinach

Ancient prickly-seeded landrace, drought/heat tolerant and delicious. Talmud Berachot, Rabbi Chisda: "Spinach is good for the heart, beneficial for the eyes, especially good for the intestines." Enjoy in salad or Sephardic pie with spinach, egg, cheddar, potato filling, or in knishes. Save Seed: Let spinach plant grow until sets seeds. Harvest when seeds are mature and dry.

**Emmer** - baked in matzah in ancient Egypt, plant early fall  
12" apart for tall, majestic plants.

**Einkorn** - Sarah baked einkorn cakes for the angels, baked  
in holy breads in the Beit HaMikdash, plant early fall

**Jaljuli** - ancient durum wheat found at Masada by Yigal Yadin,  
name may refer to 'sacred circle', plant in spring

## Fava Beans - Ful

הַמִּקְפָּה שֶׁל תְּרוּמָה וְהַשּׁוּם וְהַשְּׁמֹן שֶׁל חֲלִיו, שְׁנָגַע'

'Fava bean porridge of Trumah

*with the garlic and oil of daily life.'* Mishna Tvul Yom 2, 3

Ancient Israelis were vegetarian except on holidays. For biblical-era peoples Fava beans provided significant protein with 85% complete protein and all essential amino acids. Young favas are tasty as sprouts or pods are eaten raw from young fave plants.

## Fenugreek - Hilbah

A tangy herb especially enjoyed by Yemenite Jews. In the 1st CE [Josephus](#) writes in 'Wars of the Jews' that Hilbah was grown as a staple food by Jewish farmers. **Recipes: Hilba Hummus** Soak/rinse seeds for two days. Blend with tahini, garlic, lemon or sumac and parsley. I love to eat fenugreek sprouts especially in winter. Medicinal benefits: lowers cholesterol, increases milk production.

## Arugula

"וַיֵּצֵא אֶחָד אֶל הַשָּׂדֶה לְלֶקֶט אוֹרוֹת", תָּנָא מִשְׁמִיָּה דְּרַבִּי מֵאִיר:  
זֶה גִּרְגִּיר. אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: לָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמֹן "אוֹרוֹת" שְׁמֵאִירוֹת  
אֶת הָעֵינַיִם. אָמַר רַב הוֹנָא: הַמוֹצִיא גִּרְגִּיר, אִם יָכוֹל לֶאֱכֹל  
אוֹכְלוֹ, וְאִם לֹא. מַעֲבִירוֹ עַל גְּבִי עֵינָיו. אָמַר רַב בְּגִרְגִּירָא  
מִצְרִנְאָה "He went out to fields to collect orot" II Kings 4:39. Rabbi  
Meir: 'The plant is arugula'. Rabbi Yohanan: 'Why is arugula called  
'orot'? Because they enlighten, me'irot, the eyes.' Rav Pappa: 'Arugula  
is most effective when it grows on the border of the field, where it is  
unadulterated by other plants.' Talmud Yoma 18b

## Molokhiya aka Jew's Mallow

Robust shrub with nutrient-rich leaves full of beta carotene, iron, antioxidants. Plant each seed 18" apart. Mulch well. 'Egyptian kings drank it in broth to recover from illness'. Eat raw like spinach or in soup for silky texture. Herb tea for digestive health.