



WHAT ARE OUR SHARED RESOURCES?

THE GEMACH

A *gemach* is a communal institution that helps ensure that everyone's needs are met. The word derives from the Hebrew words "*gemilut chasadim*," which mean "acts of loving-kindness." *Gemachs* are interest-free loan funds or places that lend things to others within the community.

The origin of *gemachs* can be traced back to the medieval period when Jewish communities faced economic and social challenges. They established *gemachs* as a way to provide interest-free loans or essential items to community members in need.

But since then, *gemachs* have significantly changed and expanded beyond just loan funds. They can also provide various items within a community - such as clothing, furniture, sporting equipment, wedding gowns, and backyard party supplies. They can also include skill sets, capacities and talents that individuals can share with one another.

Gemachs operate on a volunteer basis, relying on donations and the generosity of community members to sustain their activities. The *Gemach* as an idea highlights both independence - where we can be on our own - and interdependence - when we might need to, or choose to rely upon others.

Sometimes *Gemachs* are formal and sometimes much more informal, operating among networks, Facebook groups, WhatsApp groups and word of mouth. They serve as a vital support system within Jewish communities, fostering a sense of unity, compassion, and mutual aid.

Here are two examples of *Gemach* advertisements:

Exchange Students on Campus:

- We operate a *gemach* for all incoming exchange students on campus who are here for a short time and may need linens, pillows, shelving systems, lamps, rugs and others dorm items. Let us know what you need and we'll check our inventory. At the end of semester, if you have items you don't need anymore, bring them to the *gemach* storage room for other incoming student to use. Thanks for being part of our sharing community!

Skill Sets - Welcoming Immigrants:

- We are a group of teens on summer vacation and have a wide range of skill sets that we can offer your children as they become accustomed to their new home. We can coach basketball, give drum lessons, provide comedy evenings and cooking clubs. If you have a skill you would like to contribute to the *gemach* let us know and we'll include it on our "menu of offerings."