

## JEWISH ENVIRONMENTAL QUOTES

(Updated for Spring of 2002)

Dear Jewish Environmental/Nature Educator,

The following compilation of texts is the Teva Learning Center's most current resource for educators who want to incorporate "quotes" in their outdoor/environmental/nature activities for inspiration and discussion. In an effort to ensure that the information that we contribute to this field is correct and well-researched, we have recently made an effort to check on the sources and translations of all of these texts. This is a work in progress and, in many ways, we hope that it will always be an ongoing project.

We have omitted a few texts from previous versions because we found that they were either a strong misrepresentation of the original or that they, in fact, did not exist. In addition, there are a number of texts which we have kept, but have chosen to star (\*) because we have not yet been able to research them. These include: the stories of Rav Nachman of Bratslav and several other Hasidic masters which we do not have a direct source for; the words of many modern English writers which we did not have direct sources for; and the writings of several modern rabbis which we have sources for, but not exact page numbers (e.g., AJ Heschel's *God in Search of Man*). All non-starred texts have been sourced.

You will find that the majority of these texts are the basis for much deeper discussions. It is our strongest hope and recommendation that you use them as an inspiration and a starting point for further study. Our tradition's teachings on Creation are rich and deep. The more layers that we uncover, the greater our understanding will be of how to truly care for our planet and the more honor we will bring to this newly emerging field.

While many people have contributed to this resource for many years, we must thank Moshe Kornefeld (fall '01 Teva educator) for his wonderful help and the many, many hours spent in the library. We are also very interested in *your* input. Please email us at [education@tevacenter.org](mailto:education@tevacenter.org) with any corrections or new sources so that this resource continues to grow and improve.

L'Shalom,

Teva



## Awareness

### **Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 3:1-8**

For everything there is a time and a season for every experience under the heavens:

A time to birth and a time to die,  
A time to plant and a time to uproot the planted;  
A time to kill and a time to heal,  
A time to breach and a time to build;  
A time to cry and a time to laugh,  
A time to mourn and a time to dance;  
A time to throw stones and a time for gathering stones,  
A time to embrace and a time to be far from an embrace;  
A time to search and a time to let go,  
A time to guard and a time discard;  
A time to rip and a time to mend,  
A time to be silent and a time to speak;  
A time to love and a time to hate;  
A time to fight and a time to make peace.

### **Pirke Avot (Ethics of our Fathers) 3:9**

Rabbi Yaakov said: One who walks on the road while reviewing [a Torah lesson] but interrupts his review and exclaims, “How beautiful is this tree! How beautiful is this plowed field!—Scripture considers it as if he bears guilt for his soul.”

### **Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 35a**

It is forbidden to enjoy anything in this world without a bracha (blessing).

### **Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 35a**

Anyone who enjoys of the natural world without a blessing, it is as if he has enjoyed from that which is sanctified for heaven. As it is written in Psalms: “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness there of”

(Psalm 24). Rabbi Levi pointed out that this verse is contradicted by other verse in psalms that says “The heavens are G-d’s Heavens, but their earth was given to Human Kind” (Psalm 115).

However, this is not a contradiction, one verse is true before one says a blessing and the other is true after one says a blessing.

### **Babylonian Talmud, Menakhot 43b**

Rabbi Meir said: A person is obligated to say one hundred blessings every day.

### **Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 12b**

Rabbi Yossi said: Alas for people who see but know not what they see and for people who stand but know not on what they stand.

### **Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 55a**



When a person makes himself like the desert that is free for all (i.e. he teaches Torah for free) Torah knowledge is given to him as a gift.

### **Siddur (Prayer book), Amidah**

We thank You.... for Your miracles that are with us each day; and for Your wonders and favors in every season – evening, morning, and afternoon.

### **Rambam (Maimonides), Mishneh Torah, Yesodei Hatorah 2:2**

The way to come to love and fear God is by contemplating God's amazing words and creations and seeing the infinite wisdom expressed in them. This will bring one to love God and want to praise and glorify God. One will experience tremendous longing and yearning to know God's great name. In the words of David, 'My soul thirsts for Elokim, the Living Power' (Psalm 42).

As one contemplates further on these things, one will immediately recoil in fear and awe realizing that one is a tiny, lowly creature standing with flimsy wisdom before the One who has perfect knowledge.

### **Daily Prayer, Yotzer Or (Former of Light)**

Praised are You, Our God, Ruler of the universe, former of light, creator of darkness, maker of peace and the creator of all things. In Your mercy light shines over the earth and upon all who inhabit it. Through your goodness the work of the creation is daily renewed. How great are Your works, O God, in wisdom You have made all of them. The earth is filled with your creations.

### **\*Rabbi Nachman's Prayer: Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (18-19th c.)**

Master of the universe	And, there may I be alone
grant me the ability to be alone;	to enter into prayer
May it be my custom to go outdoors each day	There I may express all that is in my heart
Among the trees and the grass,	Talking to you, the one to whom I belong.
Among all growing things;	

### **A Teva story – from an unknown (Hasidic) tale**

The child of a certain rabbi used to wander in the woods. At first his father let him wander, but over time he became concerned. The woods were dangerous. The father did not know what lurked there.

He decided to discuss the matter with his child. One day he took him aside and said, "You know, I have noticed that each day you walk into the woods. I wonder, why you go there?" The boy said to his father, "I go there to find God."

"That is a very good thing," the father replied gently. "I am glad you are searching for God. But, my child, don't you know that God is the same everywhere?"

"Yes," the boy answered, "but I'm not."

### **\*Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (In the Meadow)**

It is good to pray and dialogue with God in the field amongst the grass and tress. When a person prays in the field then all the plants and animals join in the pray and help him or her giving strength to the prayer.

### **\*Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, God in Search of Man, 1976**



Human beings have indeed become primarily tool-making animals, and the world is now a gigantic tool box for the satisfaction of their needs.... Nature is a tool box in a world that does not point beyond itself. It is when nature is sensed as mystery and grandeur that it calls upon us to look beyond it.

**\*Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man is not Alone*, 1951**

As civilization advances, the sense of wonder declines. Such decline is an alarming symptom of our state of mind. We will not perish for want of information; but only for want of appreciation.

**\*Abraham Joshua Heschel (attributed to the Baal Shem Tov)**

The world is full of wonders, special radiance, and marvelous secrets, but all it takes is a small hand held over the eye to hide it all.

**\*Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook**

Know the great reality, the richness of existence that you always encounter. Contemplate its grandeur, its beauty, its precision, its harmony. Be attached to the legions of living things who are constantly bringing forth everything beautiful.

**Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, pp. 57-58**

I can contemplate a tree. I can accept it as a picture . . . I can feel it as a movement . . . I can assign it to a species and observe it as an instance . . . I can overcome its uniqueness and form so rigorously that I can recognize it only as an expression of law . . . I can dissolve it into a number, into a pure relation between numbers, and externalize it. Throughout all of this the tree, the tree remains my object and has its time span, its kind and condition. But it can also happen, if will and grace are joined, that as I contemplate the tree, I am drawn into the relation and the tree ceases to be an It.

**\*Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, *Honey From The Rock***

To be a Jew means to wake up and to keep your eyes open to the many beautiful, mysterious, and holy things that happen all around us every day.

**\*Diary of Anne Frank**

The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely, or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quite alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature. As long as this exists, and it certainly always will, I know that then there will always be comfort for every sorrow... And I firmly believe that nature brings solace in all troubles.

**\*David Ben-Gurion**

The energy contained in nature, in the earth and its waters, in the atom and the sunshine will not avail us if we fail to activate the most precious vital energy: the moral-spiritual energy inherent in humankind, in the inner recesses of our being, in our mysterious, uncompromising, unfathomable and divinely inspired soul.



**\*Eugene B. Borowitz, *A New Jewish Theology in the Making***

Modern man has made himself unnatural by training himself not to be amazed, by working hard at not responding to the world in awe. That is the root affliction of an age anxious to the point of personal paralysis and moral incapacity. What men need most today is to recapture that radical amazement which is the most basic level of faith. They need to let themselves ask once again with full force and fervor: Why is there anything at all? Why is it so wondrous, so unexpected? Why is it men can even ask the marvel?

**\*G.K. Chesteron**

The world will never starve for want of wonders, only for want of wonder.

**\*Ernest Thompson Seton**

It is not enough to take people out of doors. We must also teach them to enjoy it.

**\*Albert Einstein**

There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.

**\*Saul Tchernikovsky (Haskalah poet)**

And if you ask me of God, my God

“Where is God that in joy we may worship?”

Here on earth too God lives, not in heaven alone

A striking fir, a rich furrow, in them you will find God’s likeness, Divine image incarnate in every high mountain. Wherever the breath of life flows, you will find God embodied.

And God’s Household? All beings: the gazelle, the turtle, the shrub, the cloud pregnant with thunder . . . God-in-Creation is God’s eternal name.

**\*Yehoash (Solomon Bloomgarten--Yiddish Poet) “A Song”**

A song of grass, a song of Earth, a song of gold ore in the womb of rock, a song of tin-white brook that bathes the body of the moon, a song of famished wolves that howl upon their snow-capped steppes.



## **Interconnectedness**

### **Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 3:19**

For in respect of the fate of man and the fate of beast, they have one and the same fate: as the one dies so dies the other; all share the same breath of life.

### **Pirke Avot (Ethics of Our Fathers) 4:3**

Do not be scornful of any person and do not be disdainful of anything. For there is no person without his hour, and no thing which does not have its place.

### **Rebbe Shneour Zalman (1745-1813) Tanya 42**

All that we see –  
The heaven, the Earth, and all that fills it –  
All these things  
Are the external garments of God.

### **Daily Prayer, Yotzer Or (Former of Light)**

Praised are You, Our God, Ruler of the universe, former of light, creator of darkness, maker of peace and the creator of all things. In Your mercy light shines over the earth and upon all who inhabit it. Through your goodness the work of the creation is daily renewed. **How great are Your works, O God, in wisdom You have made all of them. The earth is filled with your creations.**

### **\*Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (19<sup>th</sup> c.)**

One glorious chain of love, of giving and receiving, unites all living things. All things exist in continuous reciprocal activity one for All, All for one. None has power, or means for itself; each receives only in order to give, and gives in order to receive, and finds therein the fulfillment of the purpose of its existence. ‘Love,’ say the Sages, ‘love that supports and is supported in turn’—that is the character of the Universe.

### **Martin Buber, *Late Masters*, p. 220**

Rabbi Yitschak Eisik said, The motto of life is ‘Give and Take’ Everyone must be both a giver and a receiver. He who is not is like a barren tree.

### **Ellen Bernstein, *Let the Earth Teach You Torah***

Our lives today are inextricably woven to life in the past, both biologically and historically. We drink the water that our ancestors waded through when they crossed the Red Sea; we look at the same sky that Abraham gazed upon. Those who grasp these links learn awe, humility, and pride.

### **\*John Muir**

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe

### **\*Ovid**

Nature has made neither sun nor air nor waves private property; they are public gifts.

### **\*Kua-Tsu 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C.**



If you think ahead one year, plant a seed.  
If you think ahead 10 years, plant a tree  
If you think ahead 100 years, educate the people.

**\*William Shakespeare**

One touch on nature makes the whole world kin.

**Psalms 96:11-13**

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth exult! Let the sea and all within it thunder, the fields and everything in them exult! Then shall all the forest trees shout for joy, at the presence of the Eternal One, who is coming to rule the Earth; God will rule the world justly and its people in faithfulness.

**Song of Songs 2:11 –13**

For now the winter is past, the rains are over and gone. The blossoms have appeared in the land. The time of the singing has come; the song of the turtledove is heard in our land. The green figs form on the fig tree, the blossoming vines give off fragrance.

--The Hebrew "*zamid*" can mean either pruning or singing

**\*Rebbe Nachman of Breslov**

A person should get into the habit of singing, for a holy melody is a great and wondrous thing. It can awaken the heart from its sleep and bring one back to the Divine Source of All.

**\* Rebbe Nachman's Prayer for Peace Rebbe Nachman of Breslov**

Lord of Peace, Divine Ruler, to whom peace belongs!

Master of Peace, Creator of all things!

May it be thy will to put an end to war and bloodshed on earth, and to spread a great and wonderful peace over the whole world, so that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Help us and save us all, and let us cling tightly to the virtue of peace. Let there be a truly great peace between every person and their fellow, and between husband and wife, and let there be no discord between people even in their hearts.

Let us never shame any person on earth, great or small. May it be granted unto us to fulfill Thy Commandment to "Love thy neighbor as thyself," with all our hearts and souls and bodies and possessions.

And let it come to pass in our time as it is written, "And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down and none shall make you afraid. I will drive the wild beasts from the land, and neither shall the sword go through your land.

God who is peace, bless us with peace !!!



## **Responsibility (Stewardship/Dominion)**

### **Breached (Genesis) 2:15**

And the Lord took Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to work it and guard it.

### **Tosefta Sanhedrin 8:3**

Why were human beings created last in the order of Creation? So that they should not grow proud – for one can say to them, ‘ Even the gnat came before you in creation!’

### **Midrash: Vayikra (Leviticus) Rabbah- 4:6**

If one Jew sins, all of Israel feels it....This can be compared to the case of men on a ship, one of whom took a drill and began drilling beneath his own place. His fellow travelers said to him: ‘what are you doing?’ He replied: ‘What does that matter to you, I am drilling only under my own place?’ They continued: ‘We care because the water will come up and flood the ship for us all.’

### **Midrash Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) Rabbah 7:20**

Upon creating the first human beings, God guided them around the Garden of Eden, saying; ‘Look at my creations! See how beautiful and perfect they are! I created everything for you. Make sure you don’t ruin or destroy My world. If you do, there will be no one after you to fix it.’

### **Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, *Liqutei Mo'HaRaN*, 1 5:1**

According to the Rabbis every person must say the entire world was created for me. If the world was created for me, it follows that I must always examine how I can rectify the world and fulfill its needs and pray for the world.

### **\*Abraham Joshua Heschel**

“There are three ways in which we may relate ourselves to the world  
- we may exploit it, we may enjoy it, we may accept it in awe.”

### **\*Adlai Stevenson**

“We travel together, passengers on a little spaceship, dependent on its vulnerable reserves of air and soil; all committed for our safety to its security and peace; preserved from annihilation only by the care, the work and the love we give our fragile craft”



## Land/Use/Soil

### **Bereshit (Genesis) 2:7-9**

And the Lord God formed man (Adam) from the dust of the earth (adamah). The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed the man whom He had formed in the garden. And from the ground the Lord God caused trees to grow that were pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden.

### **Shemot (Exodus) 3:5**

And God said, 'Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.'

### **Vayikra 25:3-4 (Leviticus)**

Six years you may sow your field and six years you may prune your vineyard and gather in the field. But in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath of the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard.

### **Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:23-24**

The land must not be sold forever: for the land is Mine: for you are strangers and residents with Me. Throughout the land you possess, you must provide for the redemption of the land.

### **Bamidbar (Numbers) 35:2-5**

The towns shall be theirs (the Levites) to dwell in, and the field shall be for their animals, for their wealth, and for all their needs. The town field that you are to assign to the Levites shall extend a thousand cubits outside the wall all around. You shall measure off two thousand cubits outside the town on the east side, two thousand on the south side, two thousand on the west side, and two thousand on the north side, with the town in the center. That shall be the pasture for their towns.

### **Commentary from Maimonides**

The first thousand cubits (approximately 500 meters) shall be left as an open field and the two thousand beyond that should be used for orchards and vineyards. And each city should have a cemetery beyond these areas as it says 'and their fields should be for their animals and their possessions.' These lands are given for life and not for death.

### **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 11:13 –17**

I will grant the rain for your land in season, the early rain and the late, that you may gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil. I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle—you will eat and be satisfied. Take care not to be lured away to serve other gods and bow to them. For the Lord's anger will flare up against you, and He will shut up the skies so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce; and you will soon perish from the good land that the Lord is giving to you.

### **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 23:13-15**

There shall be an area outside the military camp. You will have a spade among your weapons; and after you have squatted, you will dig a hole and bury your excrement.



Since the Lord your God moves about in your camp to protect you...let your camp be holy.

**Isaiah 5:7-8**

God hoped for justice, and behold, injustice; for equity, But behold, iniquity!

Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field, till there is room for no one but you to dwell in the land!

**Isaiah 45:18**

God did not create it [the earth] a wasteland, but formed it for habitation.

**Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 1:4**

One generation goes and another generation comes; but the earth remains forever.

**Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 5:8**

The advantage of land is supreme; even the king is subject to the soil.

**Vayikra Rabbah 3:1(Midrash on Leviticus)**

A person with a vegetable garden and fertilizes it and hoes it and sustains himself from it is better off than a person who rents as a sharecropper. As the proverb says: 'Who rents one patch eats birds; who rents many patches – birds eat him.'

**Mishnah Baba Batra 2:8**

Threshing floors should be kept 50 cubits away from the city. A person should not make a permanent threshing floor on his own land unless he has fifty cubits in each direction. He must place it away from his neighbor's sapling or plowed field, so as to not cause damage.

*(A threshing floor was the place where the wheat was beat out of its husk, the chaff)*

**Mishnah Baba Batra, 2:9**

Carcasses, cemeteries and tanneries must be kept at fifty cubits' distance from a town. A tannery can only be set up on the east side of town [because the east wind is gentle and will not carry the fumes to town].

**Jerusalem Talmud, Kedoshim 4:12**

It is forbidden to live in a town, which has no garden or greenery.

**Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kama 79b**

You must not raise goats or sheep in the land of Israel.

**Steinsaltz commentary:** This refers specifically to inhabited areas because there the goats or sheep would ruin the fields of others.

**Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kamma 82b**

Ten special regulations were applied to Jerusalem...[among them] that no dunghills were to be made there; that no kilns were to be kept there; that neither gardens nor orchards should be cultivated there, with the exception, however, of the garden of roses which existed from the days of the former prophets; that no chickens may be raised there; and no dead persons may be kept there....



That no kilns be kept there—on account of the smoke  
That neither gardens nor orchards—on account of the bad odor

### **Avot d' Rabbi Nathan Chapter 30**

He who buys grain in the market, to what may he be compared? To a baby whose mother has died, and although the child is taken to homes of wet nurses, the child is never satisfied. And he who buys bread in the market, to what is he compared? To a man who digs his own grave. But he who eats of his own produce is like a child reared at his mother's breast.

### **\*Chasidic Tale (Source Unknown)**

Two men were fighting over a piece of land. Each claimed ownership and bolstered his claim with proof. To resolve their differences, they agreed to put the case before the rabbi. The rabbi listened but could not come to a decision because both seemed to be right. Finally he said, "Since I cannot decide to whom this land belongs, let us ask the land." He put his ear to the ground, and after a moment straightened up. "Gentlemen, the land says that it belongs to neither of you – but that you belong to it."

### **Maimonides "The Preservation of Youth", Chapter 4**

The quality of urban air compared to the air in the deserts and the forests is like thick and turbulent water compared to pure and light water. And this is because in the cities with their tall buildings and narrow roads, the pollution that comes from their residents', their waste, their cadavers, and offal from their cattle, and the stench, of their adulterated food, makes their entire air malodorous, turbulent, reeking, and thick, and the winds become accordingly so, although no one is aware of it. And since there is no way out, because we grew up in the cities and became used to them, we can at least choose a city with an open horizon... And if you have no choice, and you cannot move out of the city, try to at least live in the suburbs situated to the northeast. Let the house be tall and the court be wide enough to permit the northern wind, and the sun to come through, because the sun thins out the pollution of the air, and makes it light and pure.

### **\*Elimelech of Lyzhansk (Hassidic Master) from Noam Elimelech**

Wherever people stand is holy ground. Whatever spot on earth you occupy can be sanctified to God.

### **\*Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, *Honey From The Rock***

The wilderness is not just a desert through which we wandered for forty years. It is a way of being. A place that demands being honest with yourself without regard to the cost in personal anxiety. A place that demands being present with all of yourself. In the wilderness your possessions cannot surround you. Your preconceptions cannot protect you.... You see the world as if for the first time.

### **\*Peter Warshall *The Whole Earth Catalogue***

Soil is the stage from which all things--good, beautiful, vicious, creative, dull, outrageous and evil--emerge. A teaspoon of living earth contains five million bacteria, twenty million fungi, one million protozoa, and two thousand algae. Amoebas slide over sand grains hunting bacteria. Bacteria swim through micro worms like soil hyenas, devouring almost anything. There are about 9,500 kinds of soil in the United States and no one has ever tried to create sanctuaries for any of them.



**\*David Rains Wallace, *The Klamath Knot***

There never seems to have been any doubt that Rocks came before living things- that they were in a sense, the first beings. In the oldest myths Rocks are tricky objects. Sometimes alive, or at least inhabited by spirits, they could move around and turn into other things. Monotheism quieted them down. They became Rocks of Ages, symbols of heavenly performance and power, eminences for saint and prophet to stand on, foundations for temples and churches. Evolution seems to have reversed this trend towards quiescence and Rocks are on the move again. Although we no longer see them as animate, we know that some of them once were alive, that many will be alive again as their elements break down into soil and there taken up by plants, and that they are constantly on the move. Rocks have regained respect in the past century or two. They are not just inert stuff to be blasted through or piled up into buildings. They have a slow life to their own. They form, mature and age, and their movement affects the lives of plants and animals enormously.



## Trees

### **Bereshit (Genesis) 2:8-9**

God planted a garden east of Eden.... And out of the ground God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the eye, and good for the food; the tree of life was in the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

### **Bereshit (Genesis) 18:1**

The Eternal appeared to Abraham at the oak trees of Mamre; and he was sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day.

### **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:19-20**

When in your war against a city you have to besiege it for a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its fruit trees, wielding an ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are the trees of the city human that it should enter the siege before you? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed; you may cut them down for constructing siege works against the city that is waging war on you, until it has been captured.

### **Midrash Sifre (Deuteronomy) 20:19**

If not for the trees, human life could not exist.

### **Psalms 92:13**

The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord, they shall flourish like the palm-tree.

### **Jerusalem Talmud, Ta'anit; 1:3**

The roots of the fig tree are soft, but they break through the hard stone.

### **Babylonian Talmud Taanit 23a**

Once Honi was walking along the road when he saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked, 'How long before it will bear fruit?' The man answered, 'seventy years.' Honi asked, 'Are you sure you will be here in seventy years to eat from its fruit?' The man replied, 'I found this world filled with carob trees. Just as my ancestors planted for me, so I will plant for my children.'

### **Pirke Avot (Ethics of Our Fathers) 3:22**

One whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, what he is likened? To a tree that has many branches and few roots, so that when the wind comes, it is uprooted and turned upon its face. As it is said, 'And he shall be like a lonely tree in the desert, and shall not see the coming of good. He shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salted land, uninhabited.'

But one whose deeds exceed his wisdom, to what is he likened? To a tree that has few branches and many roots, so that even if all the winds in the world come and blow upon it, it cannot be moved out of its place. As it is said, 'And he shall be like a tree planted by waters, that spread out its roots beside a stream. It sees not the coming of heat and its leaves shall be fresh. In a year of drought it is not troubled, nor shall it cease bearing fruit.'



**Proverbs 3:18 quoted in Siddur (Prayer Book)**

She is a Tree of Life to those who hold fast to her, and whoever holds on to her is happy.

**Avot de-Rabbi Natan 31b**

Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai used to say, ‘If you have a sapling in your hand and you are told that the Messiah has come, first plant the sapling and then go welcome the Messiah.’

**\*Rabbi Solomon ibn Gabirol**

The world is a tree and human beings its fruit.

**\*Baal Shem Tov**

Trees and plants have a language of their own.

**\*Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav**

Every blade of grass sings poetry to God without ulterior motives or alien thoughts—without consideration of reward. How good and lovely it is, then, when one is able to hear this song of the grasses. It is therefore a precious thing to conduct oneself with piety when strolling among them.

**Ziditzover, *The Hassidic Anthology*, p.335**

The Thirst of Plants and Trees: Rabbi Joseph Caro was accustomed to express a holy intention in words before doing anything. Once he arose in the night for a drink of water, but he could remember no words of holiness to utter. Finally he said: ‘As I am about to quench my thirst with this water, may it please the Lord to still the thirst of plants and trees.’ This prayer was accepted and rain which was sorely needed, came down in abundance.

**Zohar, 2:127a**

Rabbi Shimon said, ‘The shade spread over us by these trees is so pleasant! We must crown this place with words of Torah.’

**Mishna Rosh Hashanah 1:1**

There are four New Years: On the first of Nisan is the New Year for Kings and Festivals; on the first of Elul is the New Year for the tithe of animals—Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Shimon say; on the first of Tishrei is the New Year for the years, for Sabbatical years, for Jubilee years, for planting and for vegetables; and on the first of Shvat is the New Year for trees, according to the view of the school of Shammai, but the school of Hillel says on the fifteenth [of Shvat].



## **Animals/Tza'ar Ba'alei Hayyim**

### **Bereshit (Genesis) 1:30-31**

And to every beast off the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for food: and it was so. And God saw everything that he had made and behold it was very good.

### **Bereshit (Genesis) 9:3-4**

Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; like the green herb have I given you all things. You must not, however, eat flesh with its soul, its blood in it.

### **Shemot (Exodus) 23: 4-5**

When you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering, you must be sure to take it back to him. If you see the donkey of a man who hates you lying helpless under its load, you must refrain from deserting him; you must be sure to help him unburden the animal.

### **Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:19**

And my statutes you shall keep. You shall not let your cattle mate with a diverse kind; you shall not sow your field with mingled seed; a garment mingled of linen and wool shall not come upon you.

### **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 5:14**

The seventh day is the Shabbat (Sabbath) for the Eternal your God: you shall not do any work -- you, your son or your daughter, your male or female servant, your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle

### **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 22:10**

Do not plow with an ox and a donkey together.

### **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 25:4**

You shall not muzzle the ox when he threshes.

### **Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 3:19**

For in respect of the fate of man and the fate of beast, they have one and the same fate: as the one dies so dies the other; all share the same breath of life.

### **Isaiah 11:6-9**

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like cattle. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall play on the viper's nest. In all of My sacred mount nothing evil or vile shall be done: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

### **Mishlei (Proverbs) 12:10**

The righteous person knows [the needs of] his animal's soul.



### **Mishlei (Proverbs) 30:24-28**

Four are among the tiniest on Earth, yet they are the wisest of the wise: Ants are a folk without power, yet they prepare food for themselves in the summer; the Badger is a folk without strength, yet they make their home in the rock; the Locusts have no king, yet they all march forth in formation; you can catch the Lizard in your hand yet it is found in royal palaces.

### **Job 12:7-9**

You need only ask the beasts, and they will teach you;  
The birds of the sky, and they will tell you;  
Or speak with the earth, and it will teach you;  
And the fish of the sea, they will tell you.  
Among all these, who does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?

### **Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 108b**

*A parable in the Talmud recreates the scene from the ark and has the raven rebuke Noah, 'The Raven asked a great question.... you must hate me, for you did not choose [to send a scout] from the pure species of which there are seven, but from the impure species of which there are only two. If the power of the sun or the power of the cold overwhelm me, would not the world be lacking a species?'*

### **Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 100b**

If we had not received the Torah we would have learned modesty from watching a cat, honesty from the ant, and fidelity from the dove.

**Rashi's commentary:** Modesty from the cat: because it covers up its excrement; honesty from the ant: one ant does not take the food of another ant; and fidelity from the dove: doves are faithful to a single partner.

### **Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 40a**

It is forbidden to sit down to your own meal before you have fed your pets and barnyard animals. As it says 'and I will give feed to your animals' and only after that does the verse say 'and you shall eat and be satisfied' (Deuteronomy 11:15).

### **Jerusalem Talmud, Ketubot 4:8**

A person should not acquire domestic animals, wild beasts, or birds before buying food for those animals to eat.

### **Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 77b**

In all that God created in this world, the Holy One did not create a single thing without purpose: thus the snail is a remedy for the scab, the fly is an antidote for the hornet's sting, the mosquito (crushed up) for a snake bite, the snake can cure certain types of boils, and the spider as a remedy for a scorpion (sting).



**Midrash Rabbah, B'reishit (Genesis) 10:7**

The Rabbis said: Even though you may think superfluous in the world things such as fleas, gnats, and flies, even they are included in the creation of the world. The Holy One has a purpose for everything including the snakes, scorpion, gnats, and frogs.

**Devarim (Deuteronomy) Rabbah 6:1**

Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, has compassion for human beings, so does He have compassion for animals.

**Devarim (Deuteronomy) 22:6-7**

If, on your way, you happen upon a bird's nest in a tree or on the ground, with baby birds or eggs in it, do not take the mother from her young. Drive away the mother and take only the young.

**Maimonides, "Guide to the Perplexed", Part 3, Chapter 48**

It is forbidden to slaughter *'it and its young on the same day,'* this being a precaution against killing a child in front of its mother. For in these cases animals feel great pain, as there is no real distinction between the pain of humans and the pain of animals. This is because the love and compassion of the mother for her young is not reasoned intellectually, but has only to do with emotions and instincts, which are found among animals no less than among human beings.

**Ramban (Nachmanides), Devarim 22:6**

Scripture does not allow us to destroy a species altogether, although it permits slaughter for food from that species. Someone who kills a mother and her children in one day...it is considered as if he destroyed the species.

**Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Tefila (Laws of Prayer) 9:7**

One who exclaims in prayer, 'The One who has compassion on the mother birds by commanding us not to take the mother bird with her eggs, and is similarly compassionate when commanding us not to slaughter an animal and its children on the same day, should have compassion on us' and other similar statements must be silenced. Such commandments are mere decrees and are not compassionate...for if they were compassionate, it would not be permitted for us to slaughter [animals] at all.

**\*Baal Shem Tov**

A man should consider himself as a worm, and all other small animals his friends in the world, for all of them are all created.

**Tales of the Hasidim – Early Masters, p. 111**

After the Maggid's death, his disciples came together and talked about the things he had done. When it was Rabbi Schneur Zalman's turn, he asked them 'Do you know why your master went to the pond every day at dawn and stayed there for a while before coming home again?' They did not know why. Rabbi Zalman continued, 'He was learning the song with which the frogs praise G-d. It takes a very long time to learn that song.'



## Water

### **Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 1:7**

All streams flow into the sea,  
Yet the sea is never full.  
To the place from where the rivers flow,  
There they return.

### **B'reshit (Genesis) Rabbah 13:3**

Three things are of equal importance: earth, humans, and rain...each word [in Hebrew] has three letters to teach us that without earth, there is no rain, and without rain, the earth cannot endure, and without either, humanity cannot exist.

### **Newman, Hasidic Anthology, p. 459**

The Kotzker Rebbe taught:

We read: Moses said: 'My doctrine shall drop as rain.' (Deut. 32:2). We see that rain falls upon many kinds of plants, and each grows according to its own nature. In the same fashion, let instruction be accepted by all persons, and each one will profit according to his inherent ability.



## Air, Stars & Sky

### **Devarim (Deuteronomy) Rabbah 8:6**

Samuel said, 'Torah is not to be found among astrologers.' People said to Samuel, 'But you yourself are an astrologer and also a scholar of Torah.' Samuel replied, "I engage in astrology only when I am free from studying Torah.'

'When is that?'

'When I go to the bathroom.'

### **Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 59b**

The rabbis taught: He who sees the sun starting on its new cycle, the moon in its power, the planets in their orbits, and the signs of the zodiac in their orderly progress should say, 'Blessed be God who wrought the work of creation.'

### **Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kama 50b**

A landowner was clearing rocks from his field to public thoroughfare. On seeing him do this, a certain Hasid (righteous person) asked him, 'Fool, why are you throwing rocks from property that is not yours to property that is yours?' The landowner laughed at the Hasid. Eventually the landowner had to sell the field. While walking along the same thoroughfare, he fell on the rocks he had once thrown there. 'That Hasid was right,' he said to himself, 'when he asked me why I was throwing rocks from property not mine to property that is mine.'



## Bal Tashchit

### Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:19-20

When in your war against a city you have to besiege it for a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its fruit trees, wielding an ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are the trees of the city human that they should enter the siege before you? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed; you may cut them down for constructing siege works against the city that is waging war on you, until it has been captured.

### Midrash Sifre, Deuteronomy #203 (Shoftim)

You might think that this refers only to destruction by means of iron. How do we infer that it also means that you must not shift a water source from them?

Because it is stated (categorically) **you shall not destroy its trees** – that is by any means.

### Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kamma 82b

Ten special regulations were applied to Jerusalem...[among them] that no dunghills were to be made there; that no kilns were to be kept there; that neither gardens nor orchards should be cultivated there, with the exception, however, of the garden of roses which existed from the days of the former prophets; that no chickens may be raised there; and no dead persons may be kept there....

That no kilns be kept there—on account of the smoke

That neither gardens nor orchards—on account of the bad odor

### Rambam (Maimonides), Mishnah Torah, Laws of Kings and Wars 6:8–10

It is forbidden to cut down fruit-bearing trees outside a [besieged] city, nor may a water channel be deflected from them so that they wither, as it is said ‘You must not destroy its trees (Deut. 20:10).

It [a fruit bearing tree] may be cut down, however, if it causes damage to other trees or to a field belonging to another man or if its value for other purposes is greater [than that of the fruit it produces]....and this law does not only apply to trees. Whoever breaks vessels, rips up garments, destroys a building, stops up a fountain, or ruins food is guilty of violating the prohibition of Bal Tashchit.

### **\*\*Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 32a\*\***

*In previous versions of this document, both of the following quotes were attributed to Kiddushin 32a:*

Whoever destroys anything in a permanent way that could be useful to others breaks the law of Bal Tashchit.

Whoever breaks vessels, or tears garments, or destroys a building, or clogs a well, or does away with food in a destructive manner violates the negative mitzvah of Bal Tashchit.

*Neither of these is an explicit text in Kiddushin 32a, but this idea is an underlying assumption of the text. The actual text does not make a great quote, but is the talmudic source for bal tashchit.*



**\*Dr. Ismar Schorsch (Chancellor of JTS)**

[The success of the ecological movement necessitates the] cultivation of an inner life that will counter the strains and seductions of prosperity . . . To learn to live with less . . . will demand of all of us, each in his own way, a rapid expansion of our inner resources.

**Sefer Ha-Hinukh #530**

The purpose of this mitzvah [Bal Tashchit] is to teach us to love that which is good and worthwhile and to cling to it, so that good becomes a part of us and we will avoid all that is evil and destructive. This is the way of the righteous and those who improve society, who love peace and rejoice in the good in people and bring them close to Torah: that nothing, not even a grain of mustard, should be lost to the world, that they should regret any loss or destruction that they see, and if possible they will prevent any destruction that they can. Not so are the wicked, who are like demons, who rejoice in the destruction of the world, and they are destroying themselves.

**Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Mourning 14:24**

One should be trained not to be destructive. When you bury a person, do not waste garments by burying them in the grave. It is better to give them to the poor than to cast them to worms and moths. Anyone who buries the dead in an expensive garment violates the negative mitzvah of Bal Tashchit.



## Community/Achdoot

### **Amidah: High Holidays:**

And they should become one community, so that they can do Your will wholeheartedly.

### **Babylonian Talmud 6a**

The Holy Blessed One said to Israel: Just as you made me one unit in this world by saying 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.' I will make you one unit in this world as it says 'who is like your people Israel, one nation in the Land.'

### **Midrash Tanhuma: Nitzavim A**

'God shall be for you an eternal light' (Isaiah 60:19). When will this be? When you become one community.

### **Avot D'rabi Natan 8:**

How does one acquire a friend? By eating together, reading together, studying together, sleeping together and revealing one's secrets: both Torah secrets and everyday secrets.

### **Pesikta Rabati 11:**

With all kinds of fruit, one may take one without the others feeling it, but with peanuts (egoz) when you take a little bit, everyone is shaken up and feels it (gets affected)--So it is with the (People of) Israel. *Lots of other nut metaphors in this chapter.*

