

Tu B'shvat Living Talmud

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai said, three things are of equal importance: earth, humans, and rain. Rabbi Levi ben Hiyata said: ... to teach that without earth, there is no rain, and without rain, the earth cannot endure, and without either, humans cannot exist (Genesis Rabbah, 13:3).

"No shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not yet sent rain upon the earth, and there were no humans to till the soil" (Genesis 2:5).

**On the fifteenth of Shevat,
When the spring comes,
An angel descends, ledger in hand.
And enters each bud, each twig, each tree
And all our garden flowers.
From town to town, from village to village
He makes his winged way.
Searching the valleys, inspecting the hills,
Flying over the desert.
And returns to heaven.
And when the ledger will be full
Of trees and blossoms and shrubs,
When the desert is turned into a meadow
And all our land is a watered garden,
The Messiah will appear.
~Shin Shalom (Israeli Poet)**

**We live on a beautiful planet,
but the state of its health will
be the deciding factor in our
own health and longevity. We
see to forget**

**that the earth is a
living organism and that when it dies, we
die. (Sheryl Crow)**

**Shimon bar Yochai taught that
"if you are holding a sapling in
your hand, and someone says
that the Messiah has drawn
near, first plant the sapling, and
then go and greet the Mes-
siah." (Avot d'Rabbi Natan 31b)**

"And God said: 'Let the earth put forth grass, herb-yielding seeds, and fruit trees bearing fruit of its kind.' 'Fruit tree' means the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which put forth blossoms and fruit. 'Bearing fruit' is the tzaddik, the basis of the world. 'Of its kind' means all the human beings who have in them the spirit of holiness, which is the blossom of that tree. This is the covenant of holiness, the covenant of peace – and the faithful enter into that kind and do not depart from it. The Tzaddik generates, and the tree conceives and brings forth fruit of its kind." ("Zohar" - commentary on Bereishit 33a)

IN ORDER TO SERVE GOD, ONE NEEDS ACCESS TO THE ENJOYMENT OF THE BEAUTIES OF NATURE - MEADOWS FULL OF FLOWERS, MAJESTIC MOUNTAINS, FLOWING RIVERS. FOR ALL THESE ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF EVEN THE HOLIEST OF PEOPLE. (RABBI ABRAHAM BEN MAIMONIDES,

We must be aware of the fragility of our environment and the interconnectedness of humanity's well-being with the earth's. As Jews, we have a responsibility to protect and sustain God's creation. ~David Saperstein

I am the Lorax, I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues. ~ Dr. Seuss

In the time that the Holy One created the first human, he took him to all the trees of Garden Eden and said to him, 'See my works, how lovely and praiseworthy they are, and all that I created, for your sake I created it. Put your mind [to this], that you don't ruin or destroy my world, for if you ruin there is no one who will repair after you.' Kohelet Rabbah on Eccl. 7:13

And G-d said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit trees yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is on the earth," and it was so. And the earth blossomed with grass, herbs and trees, and G-d saw that it was good.

~Bereshit 1:9-13

And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing. - Ezekiel 47:12

God is the experience of looking at a tree and saying, "Ah!" ~Joseph Campbell

Rabbi Simon said, "There is no plant without an angel in Heaven tending it and telling it, 'Grow!'" (Genesis Rabba 10:7).

When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you under siege? Only trees that you know to 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 destroyed. (Deut. 20:19-20)

Once, when Rav Abraham Kook was walking in the fields, lost deep in thought, the young student with him inadvertently plucked a leaf off a branch. Rav Kook was visibly shaken by this act, and turning to his companion he said gently, "Believe me when I tell you I never simply pluck a leaf or a blade of grass or any living thing, unless I have to." He explained further, "Every part of the vegetable world is singing a song and breathing forth a secret of the divine mystery of the Creation." For the first time the young student understood what it means to show compassion to all creatures. (Wisdom of the Mystics)

While the sage Choni was walking along a road, he saw a man planting a carob tree. Choni asked him: "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?" "Seventy years," replied the man. Choni then asked: "Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?" The man answered: "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise, I am planted for my children." ~Ta'anit 23a

A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people." ~Franklin Roosevelt

