

Tu B'shvat Living Talmud

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

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,

"And the apple tree has the fragrance of Garden of Eden and the fragrance of Garden of Eden was that of a field of apples." (Ta'anit 29b)



Religious Action Center
of Reform Judaism

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

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

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 Messiah." (Avot d'Rebbe Natan 31b)

"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).

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

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 God 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 God saw that it was good.
~Bereshit 1:9-13

"The trees have borne their fruit, fig tree and vine have yielded their strength. Children of Zion be happy, rejoice in the Lord, your God." (Joel 2:22-23)

"[The Torah compares humans to trees] because, like humans, trees have the power to grow. And as humans have children, so trees bear fruit. And when a human is hurt, cries of pain are heard throughout the world, so when a tree is chopped down, its cries are heard throughout the world." (Rashi)

Wild forests also serve as refuges for the human spirit, places where we can witness the Creator's majesty, reflect upon the mystery of life, and hear the small, still voice within....Our heritage

calls on us to serve as protectors and defenders of God's magnificent creations. (From the CCAR Resolution "Protecting Ancient Forest Ecosystems")

How can a person of flesh and blood follow God? ... God, from the very beginning of creation, was occupied before all else with planting, as it is written, "And first of all [*mi-kedem*, usually translated as "in the East"], the Eternal God planted a Garden in Eden [Genesis 2:8] Therefore ... occupy yourselves first and foremost with planting (Leviticus Rabbah 25:3).

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).

We live on a beautiful planet, but the state of its health will be the deciding factor in our own health and longevity. We seem to forget that the earth is a living organism and that when it dies, we die. (Sheryl Crow)