

Tu B'Shevat and Jewish Sustainability

Why Tu B'Shevat?

"On the First of Shevat is the New Year for the trees [according to Bait Shammai; but Bait Hillel says on the Fifteenth of Shevat]. What is the reason? Rabbi Eliezer said in the name of Rabbi Oshaya: 'Because most of the rain [days] of the year have passed [by this time], and most of the winter season is yet to come.' What does [Rabbi Oshaya] mean? This is what he means: Even though most of the [winter] season is yet to come, [the New Year for the trees is still in Shevat] because most of the rain [days] of the year have [already] passed" (Rosh Hashanah 14a).

Tu B'Shevat teaches us that Redemption is hidden until the time comes for it to be revealed. We cannot see when the sap begins to flow within the tree. We cannot see the moment when the rains are absorbed into the roots and new life begins to flow, the moment the grip of winter loosens. We cannot see it – but we know that it occurs. Only when magnificent flowers suddenly burst into bloom do we see the actualization of what was hidden.

Climate Change, Creation and the Flood

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them; and God said unto them: 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creeps upon the earth.'

Genesis 2:15 God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and protect it.

God led Adam around all the trees of the Garden of Eden. And God said to Adam: 'See My works, how good and praiseworthy they are?! And all that I have created, I made for you. [But,] be mindful then that you do not spoil and destroy My world - for if you spoil it, there is no one after you to repair it.'"

Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

Our Rabbis taught: When Adam, on the day of his creation, saw the setting of the sun he said! 'Alas, it is because I have sinned that the world around me is becoming dark; the universe will now become again void and without form — this then is the death to which I have been sentenced from Heaven!' So he sat up all night fasting and weeping and Eve was weeping opposite him. When however dawn broke, he said: 'This is the usual course of the world!'

BT Avoda Zara, 8a

וַאֲנִי, הִנְנִי מְקִים אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם, וְאֶת-זֶרְעְכֶם, אַחֲרֵיכֶם. Gen 9:9 'As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

וְאֶת כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר אִתְּכֶם, בְּעוֹף הַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ אִתְּכֶם; מִכָּל 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the fowl, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that

יֵצְאוּ הַתְּבָה, לְכָל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ. go out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.

יָא וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם, וְלֹא-יִכָּרֵת
כָּל-בָּשָׂר עוֹד מִמֵּי הַמַּבּוּל; וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה עוֹד
מַבּוּל, לְשַׁחַת הָאָרֶץ. 11 And I will establish My covenant with you; neither shall
all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood;
neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth.'

Climate Change Facts:

- 1) The global sea level rose about 6.7 inches in the last century – and the rate in the last decade is nearly double what it was for the prior century.
- 2) The 20 warmest years in recorded history all have occurred since 1981 – and all of the top 10 have occurred in the past dozen years.
- 3) Glaciers are retreating almost everywhere around the world — including in the Alps, Himalayas, Andes, Rockies, Alaska and Africa.
- 4) Both the extent and thickness of Arctic sea ice has declined rapidly over the last several decades.
- 5) A survey of over 4,000 peer-reviewed papers in scientific journals has found 97.1% agreed that climate change is caused by human activity. In a draft report just released, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change, an international, non partisan, Nobel Prize winning panel of hundreds of scientists, states: "It is extremely likely that human influence on climate caused more than half of the observed increase in global average surface temperature from 1951 to 2010. There is high confidence that this has warmed the ocean, melted snow and ice, raised global mean sea level and changed some climate extremes in the second half of the 20th century."

Sustainability and Preserving Resources

ט כִּי-תִצּוֹר אֶל-עִיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם
עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְּסָהּ, לֹא-תִשְׁחִית אֶת-עֵצָהּ
לְגִדּוֹת עָלֶיהָ גִּרְזוֹ--כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכַל, וְאֹתוֹ
לֹא תִכְרֹת: כִּי הָאָדָם עַץ הַשָּׂדֶה, לְבֹא
מִפְּנֵיךְ בְּמִצּוֹר. Deut. 20:19 When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making
war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by
wielding an axe against them; for thou mayest eat of them, but thou
shalt not cut them down; for is the tree of the field man, that it
should be besieged of thee?

כ רק עץ אֲשֶׁר-תֵּדַע, כִּי-לֹא-עֵץ מֵאֲכָל
הוּא--אֹתוֹ תִשְׁחִית, וְכָרְתָּ; וּבְנִיתָ מִצּוֹר,
עַל-הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר-הוּא עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךְ מִלְחָמָה--
עַד רִדְתָּהּ. 20 Only the trees of which thou knowest that they are not trees for
food, them thou mayest destroy and cut down, that thou mayest
build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it
fall.

One who covers an oil lamp [causing the flame to burn inefficiently] or uncovers a kerosene lamp [allowing the fuel to evaporate faster] violates the prohibition of Bal Tashchit.

B. Talmud, Shabbat 67b

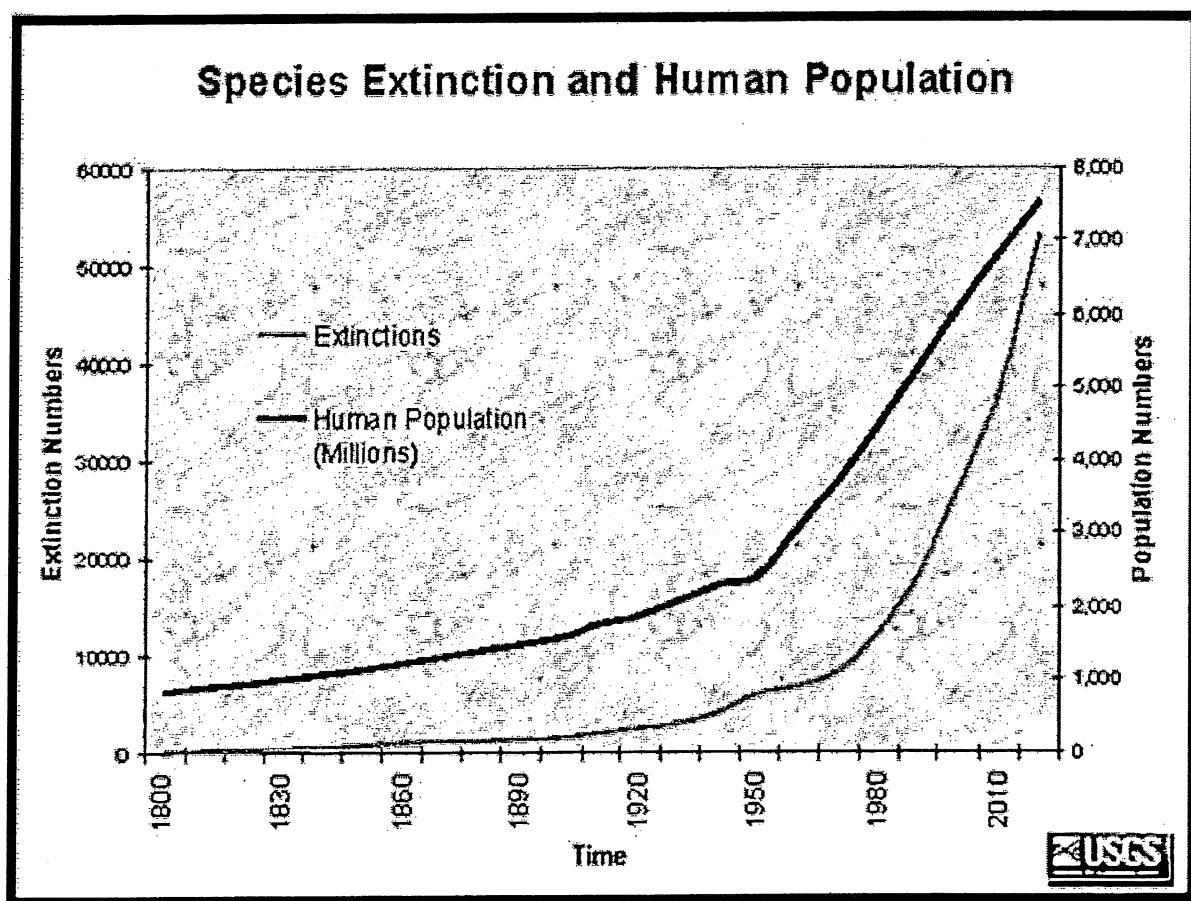
Not only one who cuts down a fruit tree, but anyone who destroys household goods, tears clothing, demolishes a building stops up a spring, or ruins food deliberately, violates the prohibition of Bal Tashchit, 'do not destroy.' - Rambam, MT, Laws of Kings 6:10

"You could argue that the Jewish people have been thinking about sustainable energy ever since God spoke to Moses out of a bush that burned but was never consumed. Moses was perhaps the first environmentalist: He recycled his staff into a snake, got Egypt to turn off all its lights for three days, and convinced an entire nation to go on a 40-year nature hike. The Maccabees took a small cruse of oil and stretched it out for eight miraculous nights." - Nigel Savage, founder of Hazon

Species Diversity

"Even those creatures you deem superfluous in the world – like flies, fleas, and gnats – nevertheless have their allotted task in the scheme of Creation." (Midrash Exodus Rabbah 10:1)

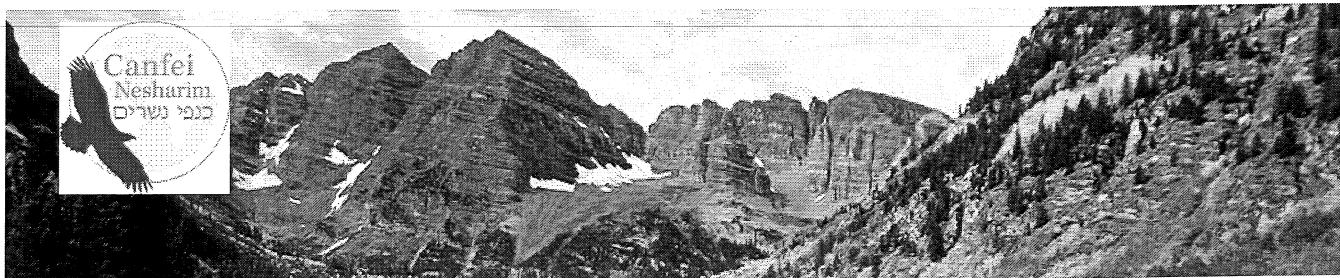
"It should not be believed that all beings exist for the sake of humanity's existence ... [rather,] all the other beings, too, have been intended for their own sakes..." (Rambam, *Guide of the Perplexed* III:13; 12th Century, Egypt)



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Canfei Nesharim

Sustainable Living Inspired by Torah



Reduce Your Carbon Emissions this Fall

Posted on May 20, 2014 by Miri

By Daniel Weber, Ph.D

Here some additional changes you can make to reduce your personal CO2 emissions. Fall is the perfect time to save energy. Leave the windows open and take longer walks, now that the heat from summer is fading. You'll save energy, save money, and reduce your impact on the environment.

WALK. By reducing the amount of time spent in your car by using your feet, bike, or mass transit you reduce CO2 emissions, as well as ozone-producing nitrous oxides and cancer-causing polyaromatic hydrocarbons. How many of us have seen members of our community drive two blocks to get to the Sunday morning minyan? If you can walk on Shabbat, you can walk on Sunday! If you need to purchase a new car, get the most gas-efficient model available. Consider hybrid cars, too.

IMPROVE YOUR HOME. This fall, leave the windows open. As the cooler days approach, prepare your windows by installing weather stripping and plastic sheets to cut cold air drafts and keeping the blinds/shades closed in the daytime will keep the house cool. Use fans. (Ceiling fans can even be used in the winter, if you change the direction of the blades to bring the cold air up to the warmer ceiling areas, and that will decrease your heating needs.) Plant trees around the house to prepare for next summer. If you live in a cold climate, use dark paints or siding to keep the heat in this winter.

USE YOUR APPLIANCES EFFICIENTLY. If you have a dishwasher, run it only when you have a full load and use any energy-saving settings when drying. A temperature of 120o F for your water heater is just fine; turn it to vacation mode when gone for a few days or more. Set your thermostats mildly, as hundreds of pounds of CO2 are used/saved each year for every 2-degree adjustment. Clean your furnace filters; the harder your furnace needs to work to circulate the air, the more energy is used. Unplug your TV, and other appliances, when not in use. Many modern appliances are really using energy even when "off" – you can tell because they are still warm even when they aren't in use.

SAVE ENERGY ON SHABBOS. On Shabbos, use warming trays and crock pots with a timer, if possible, rather than having your oven on for 25 hours. Use timers on lamps that plug into the wall. There are also now moderately-priced timers that connect into your ceiling lights and fans through your wall switch. By

Observing Tu B'Shvat

- hold or attend a *Tu B'Shvat seder*
(ask your rabbi or teacher about where to find *Haggadot*)

- make special blessings over fruit at dinner on Tu B'Shvat.

The blessing for fruit is: *Baruch ata Ado-i, Elo-nu Melech ha-Olam, borey pri ha-etz.*
Blessed are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the Universe,
Who creates the fruit of the tree.

Practicing *Bal Tashchit* • בל תשחית • Do Not Waste

RENEW: learn about which plants are native to your area and create habitat for local creatures by planting native trees, shrubs, and/or grass (contact a local arboretum, nursery, or environmental organization for more information)

REDUCE:

- use cloth napkins and towels rather than disposables
- use reusable grocery bags rather than paper
- use a lunch box and tupperware containers rather than paper and plastic bags

REUSE:

- keep computer paper for scratch or drawing
- reuse paper bags

RECYCLE:

- recycle newspaper, white paper, and cardboard. If you do not have household pickup for paper, collect the materials and take them to a local recycling center once a month. Write a letter to your city government urging establishment of a curbside recycling program for all grades of paper
- buy paper goods (tissues, toilet paper, towels, napkins, school supplies) with a high percentage of post-consumer recycled content.

Ask your local supermarket to stock environmentally responsible goods and/or purchase them directly from one of the many sources of "green" household goods (paper products, cleaning supplies, gifts, etc.).

You can obtain catalogs from the following companies:

EarthCare: (800) 347-0070

The Green Culture Catalog: (800) 547-8464

Seventh Generation: (800) 456-1177

GreenCo Products - for bulk quantities: (800) 326-2897

For a step-by-step guide to becoming an environmentally friendly household, try one of these workbooks:

EcoTeam Workbook - a six step, six month program to involve the whole family in becoming a green household. Available from Global Action Plan, 449A Route 28A, West Hurley, NY 12491. (914) 331-1312.

EarthScore: Your Personal Environmental Audit and Guide - a workbook with 107 simple questions in 14 categories to help you assess how well you are doing in your efforts to live a little greener. Available from Morning Sun Press, 1240 Quandt Road, Lafayette, GA 94549. (510) 932-1383.

Making Your Voice Heard

Join COEJL's Environmental Legislative Advocacy Network.

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COEJL Legislative Assistant c/o Religious Action Center,
2027 Massachusetts Avenue, NW.
Washington, DC 20036.



New York Jewish
Environmental
Bike Ride

h a z o n
vision | חזון

Removing the stones...

Our rabbis taught: you should not remove stones from your ground on to public ground.

A certain man was removing stones from his ground on to public ground when a pious man found him doing so and said to him, "Fool, why do you remove stones from ground which is not yours, to ground which is yours?"

The man laughed at him.

Some days later the man had to sell his field, and when he was walking on that public ground he stumbled over those stones.

א תנו רבנן: *לא יסקל אדם מרשותו לרשות הרבים.
מעשה באדם אחד שהיה מסקל מרשותו לרשות
הרבים, ומצאו חסיד אחד, אמר לו: ריקה, מפני מה
אתה מסקל מרשות שאינה שלך לרשות שלך? לגלג
עליו. לימים נצרך למכור שדהו, והיה מהלך באותו
רשות הרבים ונכשל באותן אבנים, אמר: יפה אמר
לי אותו חסיד מפני מה אתה מסקל מרשות שאינה
שלך לרשות שלך.

He then said, "How well did that pious man say to me, 'why do you remove stones from ground which is not yours to ground which is yours?'"

- Bava Kamma 50b

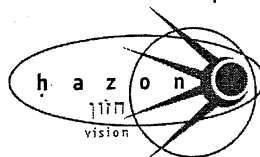
והארץ לא תמכר לעצמות כי-לו כן
הארץ כירגלים ותושבים אתם עמדי:

The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me.

Leviticus 25:23

Nigel Savage / nigel@hazon.org / Temple Beth El / Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Shvat 5764 / Jan 2004

The 2004 New York Jewish Environmental Bike Ride takes place September 3rd-6th, Labor Day weekend



www.hazon.org

Bal Tashchit

Text Study: The Law of *Bal Tashchit*

Readings

1 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 to withdraw from you into the besieged city? Only trees which 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.
—Deuteronomy 20:19-20

2 Whoever breaks vessels or rips up garments, destroys a building, stops up a fountain, or ruin food is guilty of violating the prohibition of *bal tashchit*.
—Babylonian *Talmud Kiddushin* 32a

3 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. 20:19]. 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]. The law forbids only wanton destruction.
—Maimonides, *Mishnah Torah*; Judges, Laws of Kings and Their Wars 6:8-10.

4 ...[D]estruction does not only mean making something purposelessly unfit for its designated use; it also means trying to attain a certain aim by making use of more things and more valuable things when fewer and less valuable ones would suffice; or if this aim is not really worth the means expended for its attainment. [For example] kindling something which is still fit for other purposes for the sake of light;...wearing down something more than is necessary...consuming more than is necessary...

On the other hand, if destruction is necessary for a higher and more worthy aim, then it ceases to be destruction and itself becomes wise creating. [For example] cutting down a fruit tree which is doing harm to other more valuable plants, [and] burning a vessel when there is a scarcity of wood in order to protect one's weakened self from catching cold...

—Reprinted and adapted with permission of the publisher from Hirsch, Samson Raphael, *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*, translated from the German by I. Grunfeld, (New York: Soncino Press) 1962, 1968, 1972, 1981, pp. 280-281.

What Do You Know About Waste?

Participant Worksheet

What D'you Know Quiz

1. What percentage of paper used yearly in the United States is used just for packaging?
a. 8% b. 23% c. 50%
2. If you are an average adult who weighs 150 pounds, how much garbage will you generate in your lifetime?
a. 1 ton (2,000 lbs.) b. 10 tons (20,000 lbs.) c. 45 tons (90,000 lbs.)
3. If all the aluminum thrown away in the U.S. were recycled, how long would it take to gather enough aluminum to rebuild all the commercial airliners in the U.S.?
a. 10 years. b. 2 years c. 3 months
4. How much of your garbage is packaging that you throw out immediately?
a. 10% b. 18% c. 33%
5. The paper equivalent of how many trees is used each week to supply U.S. citizens with the Sunday newspaper?
a. 10,000 trees b. 50,000 trees c. 500,000 trees
6. What is the percentage of newspapers that are thrown away and not recycled?
a. 25% b. 48% c. 71%
7. Which of the following breaks down first in a landfill?
a. paper cup b. plastic cup c. aluminum can d. none of the above
8. Which country uses half as many resources as we do in the U.S. to produce a single manufactured item?
a. Japan b. Germany c. Sweden d. all of the above