

Environment 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).

"The land shall not be sold forever; for the land is Mine; you are strangers and sojourners with me." (Leviticus 25:23)

It is forbidden to live in a city that does not have a green garden (Kiddushin 4:12)

We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children. ~Native American Proverb

The earth is Adonai's and the fullness thereof; the settled world and all that inhabit it (Psalm 24:1).

All that (we) see...the heaven, the earth, and all that fills it...all these things are the external Garments of God. (Shneour Zalmon of Lyady)

In any case the terms avodah and shmira include not only the direct work and care of the ground, but also the whole moral behavior of Man in acting and refraining from acting in accordance with his duty. Indeed, as already indicated, Nature itself finds its appointed purpose promoted, as well as the necessary condition for its continuance. Samson Raphael Hirsch

When God created the first human beings, God led them around the garden of Eden and said: look at my works! See how beautiful they are. how excellent! for your sake I created them all. Take care not to spoil or destroy My world, for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you.

Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah

7:13

It should not be believed that all the beings exist for the sake of the existence of humanity. On the contrary, all the other beings too have been intended for their own sakes, and not for the sake of something else." — Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, 456

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

God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to till (L'aved) it and tend (L'shmreh) it." (Genesis 2:15).

25:3).

Our sages, reading into this expression

also a moral/ethical teaching, understand the word l'avo-dah as the dedication to study of God's commandments, whereas the expression l'shm-rah refers to the carrying out of these commandments in practices. (Sifre Eykev 21)

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)

Behold, I establish my Covenant with you, with your children after you, and with every living creature that is with you, of the birds, of the cattle, and of every wild animal of the earth with you." —Genesis 9:9-10

"In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create, but by what we refuse to destroy." - John C. Sawhill

IN INTERPRETING THE PHRASE: "LET THE EARTH SPROUT VEGETATION..." ADERET ELIYAHU EXPLAINS THAT GOD PLACED THE POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH IN THE EARTH. IT IS UP TO HUMAN BEINGS TO SOW THE SEEDS. (GENESIS 1:11)

'And the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to work it and watch of it' (Genesis 2:15). The undefiled world was given over to man 'to work it' to apply to it his creative resources in order that it yield up to him its riches. But alongside the mandate to work and subdue it, he was appointed its watchman to guard over it, to keep it safe to protect it even from his own rapaciousness and greed. Man is not only an *aved*, a worker and fabricator: his is also a *shomer*, a trustee who according to halachah, is obligated to keep the world whole for its true Owner. Norman Lamm

