

Welcome to the Tu b'Shevat Seder!

Resources for Further Action

1. *Torah Resources on protecting the environment:* www.canfeinesharim.org
2. *Eco-friendly disposables:* www.treecycle.com
3. *Eco-friendly cleaning supplies:* www.gaiam.com
4. *DC Local Farmer Markets:* www.freshfarmmarket.org
5. *Kosher organic products:* www.orgfood.com
6. *Sustainable seafood:* www.oceansalive.org
7. *Practical steps for using your consumer and investor power for social change:* www.coopamerica.org
8. *Green pages with over 2,000 green companies:* www.care2.greenpages.org

Quick Facts on:

Organic Farms

Organic farms reduce water pollution and use through reduced use of pesticides and fertilizers and better soil quality.

Eating Meat

Meat and poultry are responsible for:

- 20% of common water pollution,
- 6% of toxic water pollution.
- 18% of overall water use and
- 26% of overall land use.

Sources of Air Pollution

- Home electricity use (heating, hot water, air conditioning, appliances and lighting) is responsible for 24% of the common air pollution in the US.
- Consumer use of cars and light trucks represent 22% of common air pollution and 46% of toxic air pollution.

We can't always see the blessings of the earth, but we benefit from them at every moment. In this seder, we will explore the multitude of ways that we benefit from HaShem's creation, and also consider some ways that these resources are threatened.

Every morning, we wake up into a world that HaShem created for us. We are dependent on every aspect of that world, from the clean air we breathe to the clean water we use for drinking, cooking, and sanitation. The balance of chemicals in our atmosphere creates the only hospitable climate for human beings in the universe. The food we eat comes not from the supermarket but from fields, farms, and grazing lands that require a particular balance of nutrients in the soil. The fish we eat come from oceans which, while vast, do not contain an unlimited supply.

Although we are dependent on the land, water, oceans, and atmosphere, we sometimes take it for granted. In some cases, as a society, we are directly threatening the very resources on which we depend for a healthy life. In this seder, we will explore some of the threats that our environment is facing, and the impact to our own health and well-being, and that of other human beings in the world.

To remedy some of these challenges, this seder also suggests some personal changes that we can each take to make a difference. It is not always easy to do the right thing, even for people who are committed to doing so. In the multitude of possible impacts on the environment, we must prioritize the most important choices to protect the environment. This seder lists the changes that will make the most difference.

We encourage you to take advantage of your own resources and ingenuity to take the actions that you can. If necessary, take small steps, but keep growing – *ma'alim ba-kodesh ve-ein moridin* – we must go up in holiness, not go down.

Appreciation for Nature's Blessings: Exploring the Gifts of the Earth A Tu b'Shevat Seder



Originally developed and piloted by Young Israel Shoamrei Emunah and the Kemp Mill Synagogue, in Silver Spring, MD

(Cut out and put on your fridge!)

What YOU Can Do to Appreciate the Earth

- Think twice before purchasing another car.
- Choose a fuel-efficient, low-polluting car.
- Whenever practical, walk, bicycle, or take public transportation.
- Buy organic produce when it is available.
- Eat less red meat.
- Eat sustainable seafood.
- Reduce the environmental costs of heating and hot water.
- Install efficient lighting and appliances.
- Choose and electricity supplier offering renewable energy.
- Don't leave your lights on for Shabbos. Use a timer!

*Science for this seder is from "The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices," by Dr. Michael Bower and Dr. Warren Leon, published by the Union of Concerned Scientists. www.uscusa.org

*Torah information from this seder came from Canfei Nesharim, an organization dedicated to educating the Orthodox community about the importance of protecting the environment. www.canfeinesharim.org

Second World: Good, Clean Water

He sends springs into the streams, they flow between the mountains. They water every beast of the field, they quench the wild creatures' thirst. Psalms 104:10-11

“By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept” (Psalms 137:1) Why did the Jews cry by the rivers of Babylon? Rabbi Yochanan said, “The Euphrates killed more of them than the wicked Nebukhadnetser did.” Midrash Shocher Tov 137.

The world of Yetzirah, Formation, symbolizes spring. In spring, the earth’s potential begins to blossom through water. The world of Yetzirah reminds us of the blessing of water.

Fruits with inedible cores: olives, dates, prunes

White wine with a drop of red symbolizes spring, the planting season.

Make a commitment to eat less beef. In 1995, 103 million cattle were being raised in the United States. Production of beef and poultry is responsible for 18% of the total water use in American society through the water needed to raise food to feed the animals.

Third World: Treasures from the Sea

And G-d created the great sea-giants and every living being that creeps, with which the waters teemed after their kinds...And G-d saw that it was good. Genesis 1:21

More than the roar of mighty waters, mightier than the waves of the sea – You are mighty on high, HaShem. Psalms 93:4

The world of Beriah, Creation, symbolizes summer. This is the world that reminds us that HaShem created the world and everything in it. Creation began with the separation between the oceans and the sky, and the multitude of sea life living in the ocean.

Fruits that are entirely edible: grapes, figs, apples, pears, berries, carobs

Red and white wine mixed symbolizes summer, a time of growth and full bloom.

Make a commitment to buy sustainable seafood. The oceans may seem inexhaustible, but in recent decades, the strain of keeping up with human demand is stretching many fisheries to the breaking point. See #6 in the “resources” section for a list of sustainable fish.

First World: The Blessing of the Land

And the Lord G-d took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to guard it. Genesis 2:15

“When you enter the land you shall plant” (Leviticus 19:23) Just as you came and found tress planted by others, you must plant for your children. Tanchuma, Kedoshim

...Let my Beloved come to His garden and eat its precious fruits. Song of Songs 4:16

The world of Assiyah, Action, symbolizes winter. During winter, the earth’s potential is buried in the land. We celebrate trees and farms which rely on the land and provide our food.

Fruits with inedible shells: pomegranate, pineapple, nuts

White wine represents winter’s potential – the potential buried within the land.

Make a commitment to buy more organic produce. Organic foods are gentler to the land, because they do not use pesticides and include crop rotation which keeps the soil healthy. They are also safer for farmers and consumers (i.e., you).

Fourth World: The Miracle of Clean Air

Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow upon my garden, that its perfume may waft out. Song of Songs 4:16

[Abraham] gazed down upon Sodom and Gomorrah ... and behold! The smoke of the earth rose like the smoke of a kiln. Genesis 19:28

The world of Atzilut, Emanation, symbolizes fall. In this world, we transcend physicality and appreciate the blessings of the things we cannot see – clean air and a balance in the atmosphere that makes it possible for us to live.

No fruits are eaten, because we have transcended physicality. Instead, we **smell fragrant spices,** reminding us of all the beauty our world has to offer.

Red wine symbolizes autumn’s fullness and joy.

Make a commitment to buy efficient lighting and appliances, which prevent air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Using less electricity in your home also requires fewer new power plants to be built for increased demand.