

## Jewish Sources Related to Environmental Stewardship

### Ethics of Responsibility

And the Lord took Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden, to work it and guard it.  
(L'Ovdah U'Lshomerah)

Breshit (Genesis) 2:15

Rabbi Yitschak Eisik said, The motto of life is 'Give and Take' Everyone must be both a giver and a receiver. He who is not is like a barren tree.

Martin Buber, *Late Masters*, p. 220

Upon creating the first human beings, God guided them around the Garden of Eden, saying; 'Look at my creations! See how beautiful and perfect they are! I created everything for you. Make sure you don't ruin or destroy My world. If you do, there will be no one after you to fix it.'

*Midrash Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) Rabbah 7:20*

There are three ways in which we may relate ourselves to the world  
- we may exploit it, we may enjoy it, we may accept it in awe.

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Every blade of grass sings poetry to God without ulterior motives or alien thoughts, without consideration of reward. How good and lovely it is, then, when one is able to hear this song of the grasses. It is therefore a precious thing to conduct oneself with piety when strolling among them.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav

### Laws of Responsibility

It is forbidden to sit down to your own meal before you have fed your pets and barnyard animals. As is says 'and I will give feed to your animals' and only after that does the verse say 'and you shall eat and be satisfied' (Deuteronomy 11:15).

Babylonian Talmud, *Berachot* 40a

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. 20:10). 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]...and this law does not only apply to trees. Whoever breaks vessels, rips up garments, destroys a building, stops up a fountain, or ruins food is guilty of violating the prohibition of Bal Tashchit.

*Rambam (Maimonides), Mishnah Torah, Laws of Kings and Wars 6:8–10*

I will grant the rain for your land in season, the early rain and the late, that you may gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil. I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle—you will eat and be satisfied. Take care not to be lured away to serve other Gods and bow to them. For the Lord's anger will flare up against you, and He will shut up the skies so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce; and you will soon perish from the good land that the Lord is giving to you.

*Devarim (Deuteronomy) 11:13 –17*

## **Secular and Non-Jewish Sources Related to Environmental Stewardship**

"It's a question of discipline," the little prince told me later on. "When you've finished washing and dressing each morning, you must tend your planet."

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

Even when we know what is right, too often we fail to act. More often we grab greedily for the day, letting tomorrow bring what it will, putting off the unpleasant and unpopular.

Bernard M. Baruch

Action springs not from thought, but from a readiness for responsibility.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Let everyone sweep in front of his own door, and the whole world will be clean.

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Be the change you want to see in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi

There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed.

Mahatma Gandhi

Whenever a warrior decides to do something, he must go all the way, but he must take responsibility for what he does. No matter what he does, he must know first why he is doing it, and then he must proceed with his actions without having doubts or remorse about them.

Carlos Castaneda

I'm not perfect, I'm not an angel, but I try to live a certain way because it brings honor and respect to my mother. I tell people that when they look at me, they're looking at nothing but a big, overgrown, tough mama's boy. That's who I am.

Mr. T

There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth. We are all crew.

Marshall McLuhan, 1964

The activist is not the man who says the river is dirty. The activist is the man who cleans up the river.

Ross Perot

All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.

Edmund Burke

It's a job that's never started that takes the longest to finish.

J.R.R. Tolkien

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not.

Dr. Seuss, from *The Lorax*