

Shabbat Behar-Bechukotai is Rainbow Day, May 11-12, 2018—Make it beautiful!

Celebrate Rainbow Day!

Here are prayers, lesson plans for different ages, Torah teachings and project ideas that you can use to celebrate Rainbow Day and Shabbat Behar/Shmita, and to remember God's covenant with all creation. This year Rainbow Day falls a few days after Shabbat Behar-Bechukotai, the day we read about the Shmita or Sabbatical year. Both the Rainbow covenant and Shmita teach us about our relationship with the Earth and the land. You can use these resources at other times too.

What is Rainbow Day?

On the 27th day of the second month, Noah, his family, and all the animals that were with them left the ark. (Genesis 8) Exactly one lunar year and ten days before—one complete solar year—the flood began on the 17th of the second month, the day before Lag B'Omer. When Noah and his entourage went out from the ark, God made a covenant, with the people and with all the animals, that there would never be again be a flood of water to destroy life on Earth. Rainbow Day is always the 42nd day of the Omer, the day after Yom Yerushalayim.* Shabbat Behar usually falls within a week of Rainbow Day.

Why is Rainbow Day important?

Rainbow Day is a time to celebrate the diversity of life on Earth, and to remember our role in God's covenant. It is a time to remember that the first covenant was not with human beings but with all living things, a chance to reflect on the deep spiritual and religious meaning of diversity, creation, and our role as part of creation and partners with God. This is a special time in human civilization when we need to reflect on the rainbow covenant and our place in sustaining a world where “sowing and reaping, cold and hot, summer and winter will not cease.” It's also a great occasion for fun projects, art, etc.

What is the message of Rainbow Day?

The Torah teaches that God has promised never to flood the Earth again. But that doesn't mean humanity can't “flood the Earth” and harm life. We live in a time when many species have gone extinct or are threatened with extinction. Our civilization is using so much of the world's land and resources that we don't always leave room for the other creatures. As the African-American spiritual goes, “God gave Noah the Rainbow sign, no more water, the fire next time!” The story of Noah and the Flood teaches us that we have a responsibility to care for all creation and all creatures, and that caring for all species is a mark of righteousness. The same message is part of the Shmita rules that require us to open our fields to the wild animals and to share what we eat with them.

What can you do on Rainbow Day?

This packet includes ideas for teachers and educators, rabbis and prayer leaders, gardeners and meditators, for Torah study, science study, and for action. Find a venue where you can make a difference and use one of these modules. Leave a few moments after whatever activity you use for teaching the traditional blessing for seeing a rainbow.

What about other days besides Rainbow Day/Shabbat Behar?

Incorporate these ideas as part of *Yom Yerushalayim*, or even as part of *Lag B'Omer*. Any time is a good time to celebrate the rainbow covenant. Whether you do something in a group, a synagogue, with friends or on your own, make Rainbow Day special.

* The Talmud debates whether the dates in Genesis follow the Torah's calendar or the “calendar of the nations.” The first month of the Torah's calendar is *Nissan*, the month of Passover and spring. But according to the Talmud, the calendar of the nations begins in *Tishrei* (when we celebrate Rosh Hashanah). The dates we use for Rainbow Day and Flood Day correspond to the Torah's calendar. There's one more date in the flood story: the day the ark landed on Mt. Ararat, the 17th of the seventh month. R. Arthur Waskow first suggested making Rainbow Day into a celebration in 1981.

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Acknowledgements Modules that are unattributed were created by R. David Seidenberg (rebduvid86@gmail.com). David is also the creator of neohasid.org and the author of [Kabbalah and Ecology](#). Note: URL's are spelled out in full throughout this document so people can find the same resources using a paper print out.

The Rainbow Blessing

1. Teach the rainbow blessing.

This is a great way to honor the Rainbow covenant at any time of the year. Here are two versions, easy and harder. Both “count” for doing the mitzvah:

Blessed be You, YHVH, our God, ruler of all space and time, who remembers the covenant!

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, zokher et habrit.

Blessed be You...who remembers the covenant,

who is faithful to God's covenant, and who upholds God's word!

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, zokher et habrit

ne'eman bivrito v'kayam b'ma'amaro.

You can think of the first as the blessing to say when you can't look in a *siddur*, and the second when you can (but why are you looking in a *siddur* when there's a rainbow out!)

Some commentaries imagine that seeing a rainbow is a bad sign, that it means that God had to “be reminded” not to destroy the world. But the P'ri Eitz Hadar—the source of the first Tu Bishvat seder for the Trees New Year—instead talks about our hope to “see the rainbow beautiful and rejoicing in its colors!”

Judaism has special blessings for everything: seeing the new moon, smelling a fragrant fruit, hearing sad news, for fire, for beauty in people, animals, and in Nature. And it has a special blessing for seeing a rainbow. Every Rainbow Day activity can include teaching this blessing, and you might just see a rainbow on Rainbow Day, when spring rains come to many regions. Other blessings of appreciation include the one for seeing fruit trees in flower, which is only said in Nissan and Iyyar—Go to neohasid.org/stoptheflood/birkat_hailanot to find out about this blessing. Then you can bless the rainbow colors of spring's flowers even if you don't see a rainbow.

Texts from *Tanakh*

2. The story of the flood in *Bereishit* (Genesis 9:12-17) describes the rainbow covenant as a covenant with all living creatures, and with the *aretz*, the Earth or the land:

יבִיאמַר אֱלֹהִים זֶאת אוֹת-הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֲשֶׁר אִתְּכֶם לְדֹרֹת עוֹלָם. יִגָּאֵץ קַשְׁתִּי נֹתֵמִי בְּעָנָן וְהָיְתָה לְאוֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵין הָאָרֶץ. יִדְוֶהֶנּוּ בְּעָנְנֵי עָנָן עַל הָאָרֶץ וְנִרְאָתָה הַקַּשְׁתָּ בְּעָנָן. טוֹוֹזְכְּרָתִי אֶת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכָל בְּשָׂר וְלֹא יִהְיֶה עוֹד הַמַּיִם לְמַבּוּ לְשַׁחַת כָּל-בָּשָׂר. טוֹוֹהִיְתָה הַקַּשְׁתָּ בְּעָנָן; וְרִאִיתֶיהָ לְזִכָּר בְּרִית עוֹלָם בֵּין אֱלֹהִים וּבֵין כָּל נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכָל בְּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר עַל הָאָרֶץ. יִזְוִיאמַר אֱלֹהִים אֵל נֹחַ: זֶאת אוֹת-הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר הִקְמַתִי בֵּינִי וּבֵין כָּל בְּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר עַל הָאָרֶץ.

And *Elohim* (God) said, this is the sign of the covenant which I am putting between Me and between you and between every living soul/animal which is with you, for generations, forever. My bow I have put in the cloud and she will be a sign of covenant between Me and between the Earth/the land. And it will be, when I am clouding over the Earth, and the bow will appear in the cloud, then I will remember My covenant that is between Me and between you and between all soul living in all flesh. And there will never again be the waters for a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow will be in the cloud, and I will look at her, to remember an eternal covenant between *Elohim* and between every animal/every living soul, in all flesh which is on the Earth. This is the sign of the covenant which I am establishing between Me and between all flesh which is on the Earth.

The Rainbow covenant is the first covenant mentioned in the Torah, God's promise to sustain the Earth and all life. God promises in preceding verses that “sowing and reaping and cold and hot and summer and winter and day and night will not stop.” Something you may not have noticed is that other animals are partners in the Rainbow covenant alongside humanity, and that the Earth, or land, is a partner equal to all of them put together. Learn more using the study sheets on the whole flood story on jewcology.com/resources/rainbow-day.

A Tale of Two Covenants: Rainbow and Shmitah (The Sabbatical Year)

3. As in the Rainbow Covenant, the land is a primary partner in the Sinai Covenant of the Sabbatical year or *Shmitah*, read on Shabbat Behar and described in Leviticus 25. In Lev. 26:34, God declares that the people will be exiled from the land if they don't observe Shmita, so that the land can “enjoy her sabbaths.” In other words, God's covenantal promise to the land takes precedence over God's promises to human beings. For more resources on *Shmitah*, go to hazon.org/shmita-project/.

וַיִּקְרָא כֹהֵן אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר בּוֹ דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם, כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְשָׁבַתָה הָאָרֶץ שְׁבַת לַיהוָה. ג' שָׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְרַע שְׂדֶךָ וְשִׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְמַר פְּרִמָּה וְאָסַפְתָּ אֶת תְּבוּאָתָהּ. ד'
וּבְשָׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית שְׁבַת שְׁבַתוֹן יִהְיֶה לְאָרֶץ שְׁבַת לַיהוָה שְׂדֶךָ לֹא תִזְרַע וְכַרְמְךָ לֹא תִזְמַר. ה' אֵת סְפִיחַ קִצְיֹרְךָ לֹא תִקְצוּר
וְאֶת-עֵנְבֵי גִזְיֹרְךָ לֹא תִבְצַר שְׁנַת שְׁבַתוֹן יִהְיֶה לְאָרֶץ. ו' וְהָיְתָה שְׁבַת הָאָרֶץ לָכֶם לֶאֱכֹלָהּ לָהּ וְלַעֲבָדָהּ וְלַאֲמָתָהּ וְלַשִּׁכְרִי
וְלַתּוֹשֵׁבֵי הַגְּרָם עִמָּךְ. ז' וְלִבְהֵמָתָהּ וְלַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר בְּאֶרְצָהּ תִּהְיֶה כָּל תְּבוּאָתָהּ לֶאֱכֹל

And Hashem (YHVH) spoke to Moshe in Mount Sinai, saying: Speak unto Israel's children and say unto them: You will come unto the land I am giving you, and the land will rest, a shabbat for Hashem. Six years you will sow your field...and in the seventh year, it will be a *Shabbat Shabbaton* (an ultimate shabbat) for the land, a shabbat for Hashem. You will not sow your field...And the “shabbat” of the land (what grows by itself) will be for you for eating...and for your animals and for the wild animal which is in your land...

The wild animals are also remembered in the Shmitah covenant, and what grows from the land is for them as well as for the people. In this respect, the Shmitah covenant is more like Eden, where animals and people share the food of the garden. (The rabbis took this very seriously: fields were not allowed to be completely enclosed during Shmitah, and people could only eat and store the foods that were actually growing in the field at that time.) Though animals are explicitly partners in the Rainbow covenant, in some ways this is the opposite of what happens after the flood story, when humans are first given permission to eat meat

There are only three times in Tanakh where all the other animals and human beings are described as sharing the same food supply: Eden, Noah's ark, and the *Shmitah* year. Go to jewcology.org/resources/genesis-covenant-jubilee-shmitah-and-the-land-ethic/ to explore this theme in depth.

4. The following verse from Hoshea (2:20 in Tanakh, 2:18 in some non-Jewish sources) promises a new covenant with all life:

וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא עִם-חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְעִם-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְרִמְשׁ הָאֲדָמָה וְקַשְׁתׁ וְחֶרֶב וּמִלְחָמָה אֲשַׁבֵּר מִן הָאָרֶץ
וְהַשְּׂכָבִתִּים לָבֹטָח

*V'kharati lahem brit bayom hahu im chayot hasadeh v'im of hashamayim v'remes ha'adamah v'keshet
v'cherev umilchamah eshbor min ha'aretz v'hishkavtim lavetach*

I will make a covenant for them on that day, with the wild animal of the field and with the bird of the skies and all crawling on the earth; and bow and sword and war I will break from the land, and they will lay down in safety.

In the rainbow covenant after the flood, even though the animals and human beings were equal partners, humans were given permission to kill and eat meat, and God told them that “a fear and terror of you” will be upon all the animals. Like the rainbow covenant of the flood, Hoshea foresees a covenant which will include all the creatures of the Earth. Unlike the flood story, however, Hoshea imagines a time when the not only God, but also human beings, have laid down their bow, “so that all may safely rest”! The prophetic vision of Hoshea is also reflected in the Shmita rules about sharing our food with the animals,

While the idea of covenant may be hard to teach young children, the image of a world in which the wild animals, along with all people, are safe from war, is easy to talk about. It also makes for a great art project.

Teach this song to your class or congregation!

5. This verse has been set to a song which you can learn and use for Rainbow Day.

The English translation sung by Amen is: "On that day, I will make a covenant with the beasts and the birds, with all creatures that walk on the Earth, and bow and sword and battle will disappear from the land, so that all may safely rest." Shimshai's translation is slightly different. Both are beautiful. The song is especially good for classroom settings and campfires. Here are some places you can listen to this song. Go to jewcology.com/resources/rainbow-day or neohasid.org for a video of Shimshai singing this song, or go to: gabrielmeyerhalevy.bandcamp.com/track/hoshea to listen to Amen's version.

A mystical *midrash* on the rainbow as God's image

6. Ezekiel (1:28) compared his vision of God to a vision of the rainbow:

כְּמַרְאֵה הַקִּשְׁתֵּי אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בְּעֵנָן בְּיוֹם הַגִּשְׁמִים כֵּן מַרְאֵה הַנִּבְנָה סָבִיב הוּא מַרְאֵה דְּמוּת כְּבוֹד יְהוָה וְאֶרְאָה וְאֶפְלַע עַל פְּנֵי וְאֲשַׁמַּע קוֹל מְדַבֵּר

Like the appearance of the bow which would be in the cloud on a day of rain, so was the appearance of the shining brightness around the One, the appearance of the likeness of the glory of *Hashem!*

An ancient mystical midrash understood this to mean that the rainbow is an image God:

"My Beloved is clear and ruddy / *tzach v'edom*" [Song. 5:10]—this likeness is from red, from black, from green, from white (these were the colors of the rainbow as described by the ancients); such is the likeness of the Holy One, "like the appearance of the bow in the cloud" [Ezek. 1:28]. (*Mishnat Shir Hashirim*)

We say that human beings are created in God's image. What does it mean to say that the rainbow is also God's image? How are human beings like the rainbow?

*Since the rainbow represents a covenant with all the creatures and not just humanity, does this teach us anything about the role other species might play in forming God's image? According to Kabbalah, one meaning of humanity being in God's image is that we contained the image of every other creature and being in the universe within us (based on the idea that "Adam olam katan" – "**The human being is a microcosm**"). So the rainbow can represent the diversity of the cosmos, which make up God's image, and which is found within each of us. See also module 10 below, where R. Shimshon Rafael Hirsch explains the rainbow in terms of what we call biodiversity.*

Midrashim: interpretations of the rainbow covenant in Jewish texts

7. On Noah and environmental responsibility: Who was Noah? Here are two study guides filled with *midrash* (rabbinic interpretations) about Noah, his mission, and his character.

- a. The Religious Action Center's study guide on Noah as an environmental steward
- b. neohasid.org's study guide on Noah and preserving species

You can download both from jewcology.com/resources/rainbow-day (look for RAC-Parshat Noah text study.pdf and Midrash on Noah–neohasid.pdf).

8. Flood, Ark, Rainbow: Beyond Disaster into Hope – *A Modern Midrash* (R. Arthur Waskow)

Did the gift of the Rainbow after the Flood mean that the danger is now over and done? Long ago, the Rabbis told of Abraham watching the fires that destroyed Sodom and Gomorra. "But, God," said Abraham, "You promised never again to destroy the world through such a Flood. Surely You did not mean to rule out only a Flood of water? Surely You did not mean that You might send a Flood of Fire?"

And God was silent. Or as the Southern Black song puts it, "God gave Noah the Rainbow Sign:
No more water. The fire next time!"

Rabbi Waskow's commentary: Today we are responsible to make sure that the scorching of our planet by over-burning fossil fuels does not bring upon us both a Flood of water as our ice floes melt, raising sea levels on every coast, and a Flood of fire as heat sparks droughts and forces many species into death. Suppose we see actions that cause major ecological damage—even the economic competitions often called "trade wars"—not as war at all but as falling into the category of Flood? (DS: The war/competition metaphor reflects the thinking of Sodom: "what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours." See Avot 5:13) That might change our ethical outlook in dealing with such actions. For example, those who say we must make more automobiles that fill the air with carbon dioxide to keep ahead of others who are selling automobiles, are thinking in the metaphor of economic war, not that of Flood. In a flood, any act that pours out yet more destruction is an attack on the planet as a whole, not on a competitive nation or corporation. If we can change our language, we might change our future.

*From **Godwrestling -- Round 2** (Jewish Lights, 1996), by Rabbi Arthur Waskow, pp. 234-237.*

9. The rainbow teaches about human responsibility (R. Shlomo Riskin, chief rabbi, Efrat)

The rainbow is a half-picture, lacking a second half to complete the circle of wholeness. God can pledge not to destroy humanity, but since He created humanity with freedom of choice, He cannot guarantee that humanity will not destroy itself.

How are the interpretations given by R. Riskin and R. Waskow similar? How are they different? What do both rabbis say about human responsibility?

10. The rainbow teaches about the unity of all life (R. Shimshon Rafael Hirsch)

For is the rainbow anything else but the one pure complete ray of light, broken up into seven degrees of seven colors, from the red rays, nearest to the light, to the violet תכלת, most distant from the light, losing itself into the darkness; and from the one to the other are they not all rays of light, and combined all together, do they not form the one complete pure white ray? Could not this perhaps be meant to say: the whole manifold variety of all living creatures from the "most alive" Adam, the אדם "red one", "Man", nearest to the godly, down to the lowest, humblest form of life in the humblest worm, "every living soul that is in all flesh" (Gen 9:16), God unites them all together in one common bond of peace, all fragments of one life, all refracted rays of the one spirit of God? That even the lowest, darkest, most distant one, is still a child of the light?

R. Hirsch's interpretation in this commentary on parshat Noah is that the colors of the rainbow symbolize the diversity of all living things on Earth. (See also module 12). His understanding of color may differ from ours (see module 15), and we may have different ideas about the hierarchy of being—i.e., ecologically speaking, the world needs fungus far more than human beings for life to continue.

One very interesting quirk of this teaching: in Jewish lore, the color תכלת is considered "closest" to God. As the midrash says, "T'cheilet תכלת resembles the sea, the sea resembles the sky, and the sky resembles God's throne of glory." So if we go by this model, and accept R. Hirsch's identification of תכלת with violet, the "red one" would be further from the divine light. One way of reconciling this derives from a teaching of Kabbalah: "what is lower in this world descends from a higher place in the spiritual worlds".

Here's another thought from R. Hirsch about the rainbow:

Its appearance is that of an arc joining the earth to heaven, accordingly a bond between heaven and earth. The phenomenon itself is woven of light and water. In the midst of overcast threatening clouds it announces the presence of light, [and] is accordingly a reminder that in the midst of God's threatened wrath His preserving grace is still there.

11. Rav Avraham Yitzhak Kook has a teaching about rainbows focusing on human moral development (not the environment), presented nicely on this web page: shiratdevorah.blogspot.com/2010/10/rainbow-covenant.html.

Another Rav Kook teaching that is directly related to the environment and biodiversity is “The Fourfold Song”. The text in Hebrew and English, along with a lesson plan by [Noam Dolgin](#), can be found at jewcology.org/resources/fourfold-song-discussion-art-activity/. Noam does not write about the rainbow there, but one can easily connect the four levels of communion he describes to parts of a rainbow spectrum.

12. The Rainbow and Diversity

For many people, the rainbow made up of all the colors represents human diversity – whether racial diversity, or sexual diversity, or cultural diversity. It represents the idea that wholeness is something that only emerges from bringing together the full spectrum of human possibilities. The rainbow in the Noah story can teach us the same thing about the full spectrum of animal life, or of all life.

*The Zohar has a passage about diversity that talks about wheat. Since the growth of the wheat crop is the main focus of the Omer period, when we have an opportunity to celebrate the Rainbow Covenant, this passage seems like a good subject for a Rainbow Day lesson. Here’s the text, quoted from *The Essential Kabbalah*, translated by Daniel Matt:*

There was a man who lived in the mountains. He knew nothing about those who lived in the city. He sowed wheat and ate the kernels raw.

One day he entered the city. They brought him good bread. He said, “What is this for?” They said, “Bread, to eat!” He ate, and it tasted very good. He said, “What is it made of?” They said, “Wheat.”

Later they brought him cakes kneaded in oil. He tasted them and said, “What are these made of?” They said, “Wheat.”

Finally they brought him royal pastry made with honey and oil. He said, “And what are these made of?” They said, “Wheat.” He said, “I am the master of all of these, for I eat the essence of all of these: wheat!”

Before you read the Zohar’s conclusion, ask yourself – is the master of wheat more in touch with the truth because he knows “the essence”? Is he more aware of what’s real, or at a higher spiritual level, because he lives more simply? Does he understand the significance of diversity? What would you say?

Here is what the Zohar says about this master of wheat:

Because of that view, he knew nothing of the delights of the world; they were lost to him. So it is with one who grasps the principle and does not know all those delectable delights deriving, diverging, from that principle. (Zohar 2:176a-b)

According to the Zohar, knowing truth is not about knowing the essence of the world, but knowing its diversity. The Zohar is making fun of philosophers, and maybe also people who think that you can just read the Torah and understand it, without delving into the levels and depths of its interpretation. But the Zohar is also speaking about Creation itself. The unending diversity of all the creatures, along with all their interconnections and relationships, is an image of God, the fullest image of God – an image not just of God’s unity but God’s infinity. Just the same, the rainbow covenant is with all creatures, not just with humanity.

Biodiversity

13. Learn about biodiversity.

The rainbow covenant was a covenant with every living animal, not just with people. The rainbow itself is a great teacher of diversity, both within the human community and within all life on Earth (as R. Hirsch suggests in module 10). Go to: coejl.org/resources/cosmology-and-biodiversity-the-divine-purpose-in-creating-many-species for teachings on biodiversity and Judaism. You can also find the collection of “Midrash on Noah and the Preservation of Species” on jewcology.com/resources/rainbow-day.

14. Pick a rainbow!

Don't go out and pick all the wildflowers! But you can go out into the woods with a group and ask them to find objects, plants, bark, rocks, etc. of all the colors in the rainbow and make a rainbow with them.

This activity is detailed in *Spirit in Nature: Teaching Judaism and Ecology on the Trail*, and in a lesson plan from the Teva Learning Center based on *Spirit in Nature* that you can download from jewcology.com/resources/rainbow-day.

15. Study endangered species. Here are some resources about frogs.

There are many endangered or at-risk species that will appeal to kids of any age, like panda bears, Siberian tigers, koalas, etc. We tend to focus on furry mammals because of a natural human propensity to identify with them—environmentalists call these species “charismatic”. There are also endangered species we eat like blue fin tuna that we can do something about by changing our diets. Often the effort to save one species requires saving a whole ecosystem, including other species that are less well-known but equally endangered. You can also help species more directly by finding out what local species are endangered and why.

FROGS! Here are a few suggestions for studying frogs, which are endangered world-wide, in a way that connects to the spirit of Rainbow Day.

1) Find out what people are doing or can do to “create an ark” for a particular species. Check out Amphibian Ark and especially their curricular materials and ideas for K-12 at: amphibianark.org/education/links-to-curriculum-materials.

2) One way to learn about the diversity of frogs is to look for pictures on the internet for a rainbow of frogs in different colors (frogs have extraordinarily diverse coloring) – supplement this with learning about what’s happening to frogs around the world.

3) There are many special things about frogs, but one of the most amazing is that they may have been the first kind of animal in the history of the Earth to sing songs! Listen to recordings of frog songs (you can find these at allaboutfrogs.org/weird/general/songs.html). Imitating different frog songs is a fun thing to do with little kids.

Help frogs and other aquatic life by never using anti-bacterial products containing triclosan! See module 25.

Science and Culture

16. The miracle of the color wheel: How many colors are in a rainbow?

We always think of seven colors in a rainbow: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet is the standard list. But Newton first came up with a different list of seven colors. And the Kabbalists thought about four elements of color that mixed together to create all the colors: red, green (or green-yellow), black (which violet was considered a part of), and white. And nowadays we think of generating all the colors from the three primary colors: red, blue, yellow. But true violet is literally off the chart of red to blue, at a higher frequency than both. It can't even be shown on a computer screen, which uses phosphors made of red, green and blue. It's a kind of miracle that even though the colors move in a line from red (the lowest frequency we can see) to violet (the highest frequency we can see), when we perceive these colors, we see them forming a circle, “a color wheel,” that seems whole and complete. This is truly wondrous.

17. Do other animals see colors the way we do?

Human beings, among mammals, have the finest color vision. Only a few primates and marsupials have three kinds of cone cells to see color like we do. Dogs are not color-blind, but they can only see blue, green, and yellow, not orange and red. The same goes for cats and farm animals. We may have developed our vision to find fruit, as evolutionary biology imagines, but our color vision is also something we need to see the kinds of detail that let us make our inventions and our art. But among all the living creatures, many other species can see colors that we cannot, in ranges of the spectrum that are completely dark to us. Many birds and reptiles have four cone cell types; some reptiles have five. Bees have only three; they can't see red like we can, but they do see

ultraviolet. There are some shellfish that have as many as 12 types of color receptors!

Do other animals see rainbows? What do you think a rainbow would look like to some of these other animals?

18. Colors and dyes

For this project, you will need to do a little research: what plants, minerals, and other natural sources can be used for dying and coloring in the place where you live? This is a great project for older kids and adults, and it might include plant identification, learning something about chemistry, and more. And of course it should involve going out into the field to try to find these dyes, if possible.

For younger kids, it's a great project to go out and collect one of the plants or minerals that can be used for dying in the place where you live.

Until recent times all the dyes we used came from nature. Artists sometimes had secret formulas for different colors. And we could only color things using the colors we could get from those specific dyes. This is part of what made t'cheilet, the dye used for tzitzit, so special. One of the very few times people could see all the colors is when they saw a rainbow. Imagine what a treat that was!

19. The science of rainbows

Here are three web pages that have lessons about how rainbows work. The first is for the youngest kids, the second for teaching basic science about light, and the third is advanced.

first-school.ws/activities/science/rainbow-experiment.htm

phy6.org/stargaze/Lsun4spe.htm

phy6.org/stargaze/Sun4spec.htm

You can also incorporate using prisms, round jars of water (which can also refract light in a rainbow, just like a drop of water), and diffraction gratings.

Do you know which color is on the outside of a rainbow?

*It's **RED**.*

Art and Writing

20. There's no limit to the kinds of projects you can do with art on rainbows!

Use paints, or see-through tissue papers, to create color wheels; find objects or pictures with the right colors to make a rainbow collage; do cut paper projects; color water with food dye and arrange it in the right order. Many art projects about rainbows can incorporate the science of light and color. One idea for the youngest kids is to use a prism to cast a rainbow on large piece of paper (perhaps on the floor using sunlight), and then paint have the children paint in the colors.

21. Poetry!

Here's a poem written for children by Christina Rossetti (British, 19th century) called "The Rainbow":

Boats sail on the rivers,
And ships sail on the seas;
But clouds that sail across the sky
Are prettier than these.

There are bridges on the rivers,
As pretty as you please;
But the bow that bridges heaven,
And overtops the trees,
And builds a road from earth to sky,
Is prettier far than these.

You can use a poem like this as a model to help children write their own poems about the rainbow. Some ideas about teaching the poem can be found here: annhartterlessons.blogspot.com/2008/12/rainbow-christina-rossetti.html .

Liturgy and Prayers

Rainbow Day is also part of counting the Omer, and the cycle of the grain harvest, which has many prayers and Kabbalistic meditations associated with it. See module 35.

22. Go to neohasid.org/stoptheflood/earthprayer to download a prayer for creation that talks about the rainbow, or use this short version of the prayer (you should be able to copy this image directly from this file and print it):

This prayer uses a passage about the promise of the rainbow that comes from the 17th century book P'ri Eitz Hadar, which you can read here:

neohasid.org/torah/blessing_for_tubi
You will find many more examples of Earth prayers here:
neohasid.org/resources/earthprayers/

אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים, זְכוֹר לָנוּ
בְּרִיתְךָ עִם כָּל הַחַיִּים, בְּרִית מִי נֹחַ,
וּפְרוֹשׁ סֶכֶת רַחֲמִים וְשָׁלוֹם
עַל כָּל מִינֵי הַחַיִּים וְעַלֵּינוּ,
הַקִּיף כָּלֵם יוֹחֲסִינוּ בְּזֵר הַשְּׂכִינָה
בְּנַחַל עַדְנִיךָ תִּשְׁקֵם בְּכָל מוֹשְׁבוֹתֵיהֶם
וְאֵז נְרָאֲתָהּ הַקֶּשֶׁת בְּעַנָּן
שֶׁשׁ וּמִתְפָּאֵר בְּגוֹוֶנֶיךָ,
וְיָשׁוּב עֵץ הַחַיִּים לְאֵיתָנוּ הָרְאשׁוֹן
וּתְזַכְּנוּ, אֲנַחְנוּ וְצִאֲצָאֵינוּ,
לְיֹשֵׁב יָמִים רַבִּים עַל הָאֲדָמָה
כִּימֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם עַל הָאָרֶץ

God full of compassion, remember
Your covenant with all life,
the covenant of the waters of Noah.
Spread a *Sukkah* of compassion and
peace over us, over all Life's species;
Surround all our relations,
with *Shekhinah's* radiance;
Water them with Your river of delights
in all of their habitats.
Then 'the bow will appear in the cloud',
joyful and beautified with its colors,
and the Tree of Life will return to its
original strength,
so that we and our descendants
may merit to live many days on Earth,
like days of the Skies over the Land.

בְּרוּךְ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים

Blessed be the Life of the worlds!

Based on the P'ri Eitz Hadar (17th c.), Birkat
Hachodesh, Sefardi liturgy for Sukkot, and Mal 4,
Gn 9:14; Ps 36, 78, 146; Dt 32:11, 11:12.

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And on that day I will answer, swears YHWH, I will answer the Skies,
and they will answer the Land. *Hosea 2:23*

23. Hold a “Council of All Beings”, a great ritual for older kids or adults.

Everyone takes on the identity of a species, habitat or element in Nature—they may make a mask for the part. Then all the participants gather “in council” to speak for the part of creation they are representing about what is happening to the Earth and about what they can do to reach out to the human beings. This is also a great ritual around a fire. Download directions from neohasid.org/stoptheflood/council.

24. A meditation for ritual immersion in the waters of the *mikveh*

Carol Rose in her “Introduction to Kavvanot for the Mikveh” (*Worlds of Jewish Prayer*, 1993) describes a meditation that includes, “Breathe out and go under the water again. Imagine yourself surrounded by the colors of the rainbow—the *Brit*—the sign of the covenant. See yourself entering each color of the rainbow as you submerge yourself...” The full text of this meditation is available on jewcology.com/resources/rainbow-day.

Current Issues and Advocacy

25. Global Climate Disruption, aka, “Climate Change”

Climate change is happening. Learn so much more at climate.nasa.gov and 350.org. It's not just weather, and it's not just temperature. Incredible amounts of energy added to the Earth's atmosphere equals ferocious storms and unstable weather patterns. Higher CO2 means more carbonic acid in the oceans, which are now more acidic than they have been in **300 million years** – a threat to all mollusks and phytoplankton, threatening the whole chain of life in the oceans.

There is too much to say about climate change, and thousands upon thousands of resources to help you learn and teach about it. (One big resource is offline, the U.S. government, which may have tragic consequences.) One specifically Jewish approach is to ask how we interpret climate change (or global climate disruption) in relation to the Noah story, which says “cold and hot and summer and winter...will never stop” sustaining life. See modules 7–9, which interpret God's promise in the flood story to mean God would not destroy the world again through climate disaster, but that we could still destroy it. The second paragraph of the *Sh'ma* in fact promises that an out-of-balance society will bring climate disaster upon itself. And *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* (7:3) teaches:

In the time that the Holy One created the first human, he took him to all the trees of Gan 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], so you won't ruin or destroy my world, for if you do ruin, there are none who will repair after you.

Since the flood story is fundamentally a story about weather, any teaching about climate change and what it means can fit with Rainbow Day. Find resources at the Jewish Climate Action Network, jewishclimate.org and coejl.org. See what issues the Religious Action Center is currently working on here: rac.org/climate-change-and-energy.

26. Fracking, aka hydrofracking, aka hydraulic fracturing

Fracking sets off explosions a mile or more below the Earth's surface in order to allow natural gas or oil trapped in rock formations to seep out and be collected. After fracturing the rock, huge amounts of water, chemicals and proppants (like sand) are pumped into the rock formations so petroleum or methane will flow profitably.

Fracking is known to cause earthquakes, it brings tons of toxic chemicals like strontium from deep in the earth to the surface, and whenever the fractures in the bedrock link up with already existing fissures, it can lethally poison aquifers. It wastes billions of gallons of freshwater, and even depletes a resource you may not know had a limit: sand. The wastewater from fracking can be cleaned, but half or more of the water stays below in the rock formations, removed forever from the biosphere and the processes of life. Fracking also eliminates any worries about “peak oil” and brings down the price of natural gas because of oversupply – both of which make it harder to wean ourselves off of fossil fuels.

In the U.S., fracking is highly contested, with some states like New York and Maryland banning the practice, and others like Texas, where the state government fights to prevent or overturn any city or town rules that attempt to limit or stop fracking: csg.org/pubs/capitolideas/enews/cs7_3.aspx The image of fracking is frighteningly similar to the flood story (Genesis 7:10-12)

It was at seven days and the waters of the flood were on the land. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month on day seventeen of the month, this very day, all the sources of the great abyss were cracked open, and the expanse of the skies was opened. And there was rain on the land forty days and forty nights.

Food for thought: Oil and gas service companies injected over 32 million gallons of diesel fuel or hydraulic fracturing fluids containing diesel fuel in wells in 19 states between 2005 and 2009 as part of fracking operations, according to the Congressional Committee on Energy and Commerce, even though that practice is prohibited. Diesel fuel is just an additive to the water used, so hundreds of times more gallons of fresh water were taken out of aquifers and made unusable forever by fracking. Other chemicals which the oil companies will not reveal are also used in order to create higher pressure and flow than water can create alone.

Another image: a thin film of petroleum on water is enough to poison it. But it also makes beautiful twisted rainbow colors. Is it possible to twist, bend, destroy the rainbow?

Watch “Finding Their Way” on youtube ([youtube.com/watch?v=QeRekFE29Fc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeRekFE29Fc)) or watch the movie “Gasland” and discuss it. Find out if fracking is taking place near where you live.

27. Fracking in Israel and “energy security” vs. solar

In Israel, a coalition including the Green Zionist Alliance and KKL-JNF led a fight to stop fracking. Go to aytzm.org/greenisrael/antifracking to find a collection of resources, or read the KKL-GZA report here: aytzm.org/KKL-JNF-GZA-OilShale-Report-2011-ENGLISH.pdf. At the same time, many people advocate fracking because it can make Israel energy independent. Find out about why extracting more natural gas is not the solution to energy security: jta.org/2013/03/28/news-opinion/opinion/op-ed-jews-should-work-to-reduce-fossil-fuels-not-ally-with-gas-and-oil-companies

The real question is: why in Israel isn't solar power the main source of energy, when there is the potential for solar to meet almost all the country's needs? Israel solar companies are at the forefront of global innovation, including solutions for storing energy to be used at night. (<https://www.israel21c.org/take-a-tour-of-israels-huge-new-solar-energy-valley-in-the-desert/>) They are also deeply invested in bringing solar to other countries. (timesofisrael.com/with-1b-africa-deal-israels-solar-power-exports-eclipse-local-usage/)

We have a choice: to harvest the rainbow of light through solar to power our civilization, or to harvest the remnants of ancient light in gas and oil and coal, in which the colors have disappeared.

28. Pipelines: Keystone XL, Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), and more

Some of the largest rallies on climate have been against pipelines. The Standing Rock protest camp against DAPL brought indigenous rights in the United States to international attention, and inspired Jews from across the country to join in support (ajws.org/blog/struggle-dakota-access-pipeline-represents-indigenous-people-around-globe/), including Sophia Wilansky, who was grievously injured by the military-style tactics used by the government to suppress non-violent protests. (thenation.com/article/photos-since-standing-rock-56-bills-have-been-introduced-in-30-states-to-restrict-protests/) Pres. Obama eventually denied the permit to complete DAPL, but Pres. Trump quickly reversed the decision, and the pipeline is now carrying oil, putting the water for thousands of people at risk. Keystone XL is not yet operating. It would bring billions of gallons of tar sands oil from Canada to market—a kind of oil that is especially dangerous for the climate. The problem with tar sands oil is not just the vast amount of it. A lot more energy is needed to extract it, anywhere from 15% to 2-4 times more – and the “petroleum coke” waste product of the refining process, which gets burned like coal, is dirtier than the dirtiest coal. This raises the climate change impact of tar sands oil by several times, but that's not part of government and industry assessments of environmental impact. The issue is not just political but a matter of *pikuach nefesh* (saving lives). Here is one article you can read:

scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=tar-sands-and-keystone-xl-pipeline-impact-on-global-warming.

There are local movements to stop new pipelines in many states. At the same time, some state governments have passed laws to restrict protests and unleash police violence against protesters. (See *The Nation* article.)

29. Get informed about the Farm Bill.

The Farm Bill, passed once every 5–7 years, affects every aspect of our food system, from crop subsidies to anti-hunger programs to alternative energy. Learn about the Farm Bill of 2018: theconversation.com/what-the-2018-farm-bill-means-for-urban-suburban-and-rural-america-89605. Concern about its impact on the poor is widespread among religious groups. See mazon.org/inside-mazon/2018-farm-bill-will-harm-real-people (Jewish) and [bread.org/news/bread-world-statement-2018-house-farm-bill \(Christian\)](http://bread.org/news/bread-world-statement-2018-house-farm-bill-Christian). The Farm Bill also affects foreign food aid. Learn more about past bills at: opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/24/when-food-isnt-the-answer-to-hunger/.

30. Common deadly chemicals – deadly for aquatic life: triclosan, oxybenzone, octinoxate

We need to protect the rainbow of the coral reef, and the rainbow of aquatic life. The biggest danger to many species, and especially to coral, is climate change, but there are many other ways we are damaging the oceans, including by sending into them tons of harmful chemicals that wash off our bodies.

Triclosan is an anti-bacterial agent and an endocrine disruptor that causes grave damage to some forms of aquatic life and may be contributing to the loss of frogs. Its use in consumer products may help to create antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and its longterm effects on human beings are unknown. The FDA finally banned it in many products after a lawsuit by the NRDC (nrdc.org/experts/mae-wu/what-triclosan-victory-means-and-doesnt-mean), but it can still be used in hand sanitizers. For a review of the science go to: ewg.org/news/testimony-official-correspondence/fda-needs-protect-people-and-environment-triclosan.

Oxybenzone and octinoxate are sunscreen chemicals that end up in the ocean – directly from swimmers and in wastewater from people showering. 62 parts per trillion is enough to damage coral reefs and other ocean life. Hawaii just passed a law to ban the sale of these chemicals – starting in 2021. Coral reefs can't wait that long. We need to stop using these chemicals now! Read all about it: buzzfeed.com/mbvd/toxic-ingredients-in-sunscreen-are-killing-coral-reefs-and

The FDA evaluates chemicals like triclosan and oxybenzone for safety to consumers and effectiveness, but not for environmental impact – a fundamental flaw in the U.S. system.

Action: Use natural sunscreen agents like titanium dioxide (choose products that don't use nanoparticles, which may also be harmful). Don't buy any product with triclosan. *Most importantly:* DO NOT USE TRICLOSAN-containing products in schools. Alcohol-containing products provide an anti-bacterial that is safe if you need one.

31. *Tzedakah* and justice.

Drastic climate events have had tragic and enormous consequences of late. Again, here is an area where there are great resources on the internet and thousands of ways for your community to work on local or international causes and issues. Tornadoes, floods, etc.—every event has tremendous human and environmental consequences that we can help ameliorate. One idea, from Deborah Bromberg Seltzer, head of Judaic studies for the Schechter School in Northampton MA, is to ask children to make rainbow cards and then sell them to raise money for *tzedakah* in response to one of these disasters. Beit Ahavah and the Congregational Church in Florence MA raised many thousands of dollars to buy water filters and solar lanterns for Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. American Jewish World Service ajws.org is a great resource to find way to help in the face of such events.

Seed-Saving, Harvests and Gardens

32. Seed-Saving and Na'amah, Noah's Wife

Seed saving is the ancient practice of saving the seed from the best of last year's crops to plant for next year. It was a way to improve crops, to breed crops that were uniquely suited to a particular region and climate, and to preserve biological diversity. All of this has fallen by the wayside in modern industrial agriculture, where a generic variety of seed for many climates is produced and shipped all over the world. Not only is seed saving good for the planet, preserving seed that is best for each ecosystem, requiring less pesticides and providing superior nutrition, but seed saving was also part of the Noah story, as implied by the verses:

From all the living beings from all flesh, two from all will you bring into the ark to live with you. They will be male and female...And you, take for you from everything edible that is eaten. You will gather it unto you, and it will be for you and for them for eating. Genesis 6:19-21

Midrash teaches that Noah's wife's name was Naamah נַעֲמָה, and that she was called Naamah because her deeds were pleasant נְרַעַם. A modern midrash teaches that one of the things Naamah did that expressed her righteousness was that she gathered seed from around the world to replant after the flood.

Here are four more ideas or lessons you can use for teaching about seed saving:

33. For younger children, read Sandy Eisenberg Sasso's book, *Noah's wife: The Story of Naamah*. Here's a brief description of the book:

Noah's wife is named Naamah, a play on the Hebrew word *pleasing*, because her deeds are pleasing to G-d. When G-d tells Noah to bring the animals of the world onto the ark, God also calls on Naamah, Noah's wife, to save each plant on Earth. Entrusted with this task, Naamah sets off to every corner of the world, discovering a fabulous array of growing things, and gathering seeds, bulbs, cuttings, spores, and roots. She fills a room on the ark with every type of plant—from amaryllis, soybeans, and wheat to lilies, moss, and even dandelions. Then, after 40 long days and nights on the ark, the most important part of Naamah's work begins. Sasso helps children understand the responsibility that people have to be stewards of the earth.

There's a board book version for younger kids and a version for slightly older kids. R. Sasso reported to me that one group of children after reading the story sewed a pocketed apron and filled the pockets with seeds!

34. For schools and gardens, plant a "rainbow"!

Plant a "rainbow" biodiversity sanctuary with rare Eretz Israeli grain varieties collected by Eli Rogosa in cooperation with the Israel Genebank. The kit includes the five grain species grown in Ancient Israel: *Shippon*: einkorn eaten by Abraham and Sarah, *Kusemet*: emmer used in the original matzah, *Seorah*: barley used for the Omer in Ancient Israel and *Chittim*: the variety of durum wheat found at Masada by Yigal Yadin, collected by Eli Rogosa in Wadi Fukin near Bethlehem. An \$18 kit with a seed-saving curriculum and the seeds are available for purchase on: growseed.org/seed.html.

The Omer period when Rainbow Day falls is also the time that the wheat crop is growing in Israel, and every week the ancient Israelites brought the wheat to the Temple as part of a prayer for the crops.

35. For older children or adults, discuss this story from Eli Rogosa.

The Omer period, when Rainbow Day falls, is also the time that the wheat crop is growing in Israel, and every week the ancient Israelites brought the wheat to the Temple as part of a prayer for the crops. Read and discuss the following vignette about finding wheat from Eli Rogosa (growseed.org/stories.html)

In Jerusalem's Machane Yehuda open-air market, ancient stone buildings with arched portals open up to a colorful tapestry of ethnic peoples and fragrant foods. Abraham and his wife Yehudit opened the first Ethiopian shop in Machane Yehuda after they arrived in Israel from Gonder, Ethiopia, escaping local cross-fire to return to their ancient homeland of Israel. Today, Ethiopian-Israelis number 100,000. Almost all were traditional farmers in rural mountain villages, but most have joined the ranks of Israel's low-income, under-employed populations from third world countries. Few have found ways to adapt their farming methods to compete with agri-tech farming. So they resort to shipping their ancient Ethiopia wheat, teff and other traditional foods direct from Ethiopia to family-run markets such as Abraham and Yehudit's. It was in Abraham and Yehudit's market stall that I found emmer (*Triticum dicoccum*), called "*Em Hachitah*" or Mother Wheat in Hebrew, the almost-extinct delicious wheat variety that was domesticated in the land of early Israel 12,000 - 10,000 years ago. Wild emmer (*Triticum dicoccoides*) still can be found growing in remote fields throughout Israel.

"Do you know what this is?" I asked Abraham incredulously. "Of course, it is *aja*, (Amharic for emmer)," replied Abraham, with an almost gleeful-hinting smile. "Abraham, this wheat was used for our first matzahs in Egypt." "Yes," explained Abraham, "It has been kept by our people in Ethiopia." "Why don't you grow it here to bake matzahs?" "Ah," he explained sadly, "Who of our people have farms here in holy Israel? Who would buy our simple foods?"

Questions to answer: Why is Abraham importing emmer from Ethiopia? What is the relationship between seeds and culture? Why isn't emmer grown in Israel anymore? Learn more at growseed.org/wheat.html:

The southern Fertile Crescent is the ancient center of origin for wild wheat, the mother of all cultivated wheats. Wild wheat still grows in undisturbed meadows and field edges. Indigenous Fertile Crescent wheats have been selected by generations of traditional farmers have richer flavor and complex disease resistances lacking in modern wheat bred for yield and uniformity. However today about 90% of the wheat eaten in Israel, Palestine and Jordan is imported from the US. Mideast traditional wild foods, vegetables and wheats, many of which date back to Biblical times, are in critical danger. Arab and Jewish families who were self-sufficient traditional farmers a generation ago have become marginalized in a world of rapid agri-technological advance. Last generation's family farmers are today's cheap labor. In a creative response, regional seed curators, artisan bakers and farmers are pooling our resources together to restore our ancient wheats for the common good. This harkens back to the ancient teachings of Israel, which are rooted in its agricultural heritage of decentralized small-scale farming.

36. Plant a rainbow garden!

Find plants with all the colors and plant them in a rainbow shape. If you plan it right you can get a renewing rainbow as new blossoms come in through the season. For inspiration see Kayam Farm's brochure for its rainbow garden on jewcology.com/resources/rainbow-day.

37. Count the omer! And remember the grain harvest and the rainbow promise.

Count the days until Rainbow Day, and from Rainbow Day to Shavuot. These are the days of growth of the wheat crop, which finishes coming in at Shavuot. They follow the days of the barley harvest. In ancient Israel, life revolved around the harvest and many prayers were said and rituals were performed to ask for protection for the harvest. And every harvest is a fulfillment of the rainbow covenant, as it says in Genesis 8:

Throughout all the land's days, sowing and reaping and cold and hot and summer and winter and day and night will not rest.

An omer is a measure of grain, and counting the omer is something we do from Passover to Shavuot. In the seven weeks between them, grain was brought to the Temple in prayer for a successful harvest. (In fact, one of the reasons why there is a custom not to cut one's hair during part of the omer period may be to sympathetically encourage the grain to keep growing.) Each week corresponds to a Sefirah in Kabbalah, and each week can correspond to a color of the rainbow. If you have an iPhone, you can use neohasid's Omer Counter app to count to Rainbow Day and find out the Sefirot for each day. Find it by searching under "omer count" or "omer counter" in the app store. Learn about how to count the omer at neohasid.org/omer/count_the_omer.

The Seven Noachide Laws

38. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 56b) explains seven commandments that were given to Noah and his family and are therefore commandments for all humanity. These seven laws are derived through rabbinic interpretation of God's instructions when Noah comes out of the ark. They are:

1. Set up courts and bring offenders to justice. *Dinim* – judgments
2. Do not curse God. "*Birkat Hashem*" – blasphemy, euphemistically called "blessing the name"
3. Do not worship false gods. *Avodah zara* – literally "strange worship"
4. Do not be sexually immoral. *Giluy arayot* – literally "uncovering nakedness"
5. Do not murder. *Sh'fikhut damim* – literally "spilling blood"
6. Do not steal. *Gezel* – theft
7. Do not eat any part taken from a live animal. *Ever min ha-chai* – "limb from the living thing"

Since these laws are given at the same time that the rainbow covenant is made, many people connect the seven laws with the seven colors of the rainbow. What connection do you think there is between law and beauty? Between human law and nature?

The word "covenant" or "brit" is mentioned seven times in the verses about the rainbow covenant. Some people connect this repetition to both the seven colors and the seven Noachide laws.

More study

39. Read either of the following two articles about the rainbow covenant. Both can be found on jewcology.com/resources/rainbow-day.

1) Excerpt from “A Reflection on Environment, Sentience, and Jewish Liturgy” by Rabbi Everett Gendler, in *Worlds of Jewish Prayer* (1993)

2) “Biodiversity and the Bible” by Calvin deWitt, University of Wisconsin professor and Christian environmentalist, in *Global Diversity* 6:4 (1997)

Either article would make the basis for an excellent discussion. Both can be found on the Rainbow Day page, jewcology.com/resources/rainbow-day. Special thanks to David Arfa (maggiddavid.net) for suggesting the article by Everett Gendler.

Version

This is the Rainbow Day curriculum for 2018. It is version 6.1.

These resources and the Rainbow Day web page were put together by Rabbi David Seidenberg, creator of neohasid.org. All text without attribution was written by Rabbi Seidenberg. See acknowledgments and partner organizations on the next page. You can become part of this project by helping distribute this curriculum (especially by publicizing Rainbow Day and the link for the curriculum:

jewcology.org/resources/rainbow-day

Acknowledgements

The following organizations (formerly of Green Hevra) have contributed to the Rainbow Day curriculum:

* neohasid.org neohasid.org

*Teva Learning Alliance tevalearningalliance.org

* Kayam Farm kayamfarm.org

* Aytzim/Green Zionist Alliance aytzim.org

* Religious Action Center rac.org

The following organizations have helped share information about some versions of this curriculum (you can add your organization to this list by helping):

Isabella Freedman Retreat Center hazon.org/isabella-freedman/

Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life coejl.org

Eden Village edenvillagecamp.org

Urban Adamah urbanadamah.org

Wilderness Torah wildernesstorah.org

Hazon hazon.org

Jewish Greening Fellowship hazon.org/seal/jewish-greening-fellowship/

Adamah hazon.org/adamah/

Organic Torah organictorah.org

Jewish Climate Action Network jewishclimate.org

Jewish Reconstructionist Movement jewishrecon.org

Solomon Schechter Day Schools (Prizmah) prizmah.org

Some of us are working to resurrect the Green Hevra! If you want to take part, write to Rabbi David Seidenberg, rebduvid86@gmail.com.

Thank you to all the other organizations that spread the word and encourage people to pay attention to Rainbow Day! We hope this can create something new and beautiful in the Jewish world, and bring to fruition of the vision of Rabbi Arthur Waskow, who first proposed Rainbow Day in 1981. Rabbi David Seidenberg, who initiated and compiled this project and updates it yearly. Special thanks to Nili Simhai for moral support for the first iteration of this project!

From Rabbi David: Besides the simple joy of honoring rainbows and appreciating the beauty of this creation, I also hope this project will help people think about a sustainable world, a world where humanity honors and keeps its side of the rainbow covenant, to not let the cycles of life cease. I also hope this project will feed into the conversation about finding ways to observe the Sabbatical (*Shmitah*) and Jubilee years, and using them to imagine how to re-create the world. Though Rainbow Day can be meaningful for many different reasons, we also hope it helps the Jewish community focus on the goal of sustainability as well. The midrash says that several righteous people in Tanakh were known to “feed others” and they “saw a new world”—chief among them Noah. May we also be so blessed.

Ideas? Feedback? Contributions? Contact Rabbi David Seidenberg, neohasid.org, rebduvid86@gmail.com.