



# RATNER MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY CENTER



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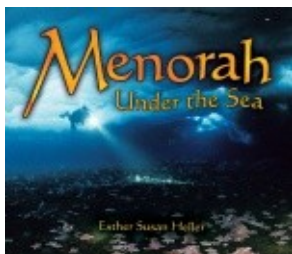
## Eco-Judaism

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. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy my world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair." *Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah*

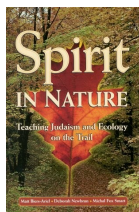
In the 1970s, a few environmental issues surfaced and the public became aware of technology's potential to damage the earth. Scientists began attacking the Biblical teaching that human beings have "dominion over the earth" - the literal interpretation led to wasteful consumption of natural resources. In response to these issues, Jewish scholars began to explore what Judaism had to say about the *Adam* (human) and *Adamah* (earth) relationship. "Eco-Judaism" resulted, exploring the Jewish people's responsibilities to "guard and keep" the earth.

Creating Jewish spaces in nature is explored in the books below:

- While on an expedition, a marine ecologist creates an underwater *menorah* with sea urchins in ***Menorah Under the Sea*** by Esther Susan Heller (Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben, 2009). This book is not solely for *Hanukkah*. (For grades 2 - 6)



- ***Spirit in Nature: Teaching Judaism and Ecology on the Trail*** by Matt Biers-Ariel, et al. (Springfield, NJ: Behrman House, 2000) features activities that link Jewish texts, prayers and blessings on nature hikes. (For grades 2 - 12)



Below are a few resources concerning "eco-Judaism":

For children:

- ***Listen to the Trees*** by Molly Cone (NY: URJ, 1995) uses *Torah* stories to teach about caring for the environment. (For grades 4 — 8)
- ***The Kid's Catalog of Animals and the Earth*** by Chaya M. Burstein (Philadelphia: JPS, 2006) is a comprehensive resource about the Bible, Israel and the Jewish perspective on the environment. (For grades 2 - 8)
- ***Canfei Nesharim***. <http://www.canfeinesharim.org/> is a *Torah*-based environmental movement geared toward Orthodox *shuls* and day schools. The site contains environmental lesson plans and programming ideas, as well as weekly *Torah* commentaries with connections to environmentalism.
- The Resources section of ***COEJL Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life*** <http://www.coejl.org/~coejlor/resources/> is a databank of environmental programs for Jewish institutions.

For adults:

- ***The Splendor of Creation: A Biblical Ecology*** (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim's Press, 2005) was written by Ellen Bernstein, the founder of the Jewish environmental organization *Shomrei Adamah*. She illuminates the ecological message found in the Book of Genesis.
- ***Torah of the Earth: Exploring 4,000 Years of Jewish Thought, Vols. 1 & 2: Biblical Israel & Rabbinic Judaism*** edited by Arthur Waskow (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Pub., 2000) contains essays from more than 30 scholars about ecological thought from four major Jewish viewpoints: Biblical Israel, rabbinic Judaism, Zionism and "eco-Judaism."
- ***Trees, Earth and Torah: A Tu B'Shvat Anthology*** edited by Ari Elon, et al. (Philadelphia: JPS, 1999) offers an interpretation of primary sources from the Biblical, rabbinic, medieval and modern times. It discusses *Tu BiSh'vat*, ecology, the centrality of trees in Israel and "eco-Judaism." There are suggestions for a *Tu BiSh'vat seder*, educational activities, recipes and songs.

The materials below examine some ecological issues in Israel:

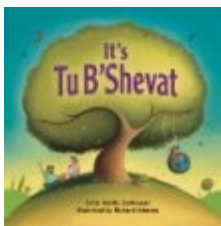
- The fact-filled and interesting book, ***The Man Who Flies With Birds*** by Carole Garbuny Vogel (Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben, 2009), describes the work of Israeli Yossi Leshem, a world-renowned bird expert. With a motorized glider, he flies with birds to determine the migrating patterns of the 500 million birds that fly over Israel each year. He also created "Migrating Birds Know No Boundaries," a joint research and educational program, involving students in Jewish-Israeli, Arab-Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian schools. (For grades 3 - 8)



- ***Wolves of the Minefields*** (The Netherlands, EO International, VHS, 52 min.) is a documentary film about the tension between Israeli ranchers and a man trying to protect the growing wolf population in the mine fields left from the 1967 war in the Golan Heights.
- In the software program, ***Israel Interactive***, there is an engaging segment about the Israeli environmentalist *Alon Tal*. For curricular support of this *Israel Interactive* segment, please contact Nachama Moskowitz [nmoskowitz@jecc.org](mailto:nmoskowitz@jecc.org).

- The **Society for Protection of Nature in Israel** (SPNI) <http://www.aspni.org/> is Israel's oldest and largest environmental organization. The group's website includes descriptions of the environmental concerns in different geographic areas of Israel and the steps taken to protect the lands.
- The website of the **Israel Ministry of Environmental Protection** [http://english.sviva.gov.il/bin/en.jsp?enPage=e\\_homePage](http://english.sviva.gov.il/bin/en.jsp?enPage=e_homePage) features environmental topics, laws and regulation and publications with links to the "Israel Environmental Bulletin" published semi-annually by the Ministry.
- The website for the **Jewish Global Environment Network** JGEN <http://www.jgenisrael.org//home2.html> shows the environmental challenges and initiatives taken by environmental leaders in Israel and the world.

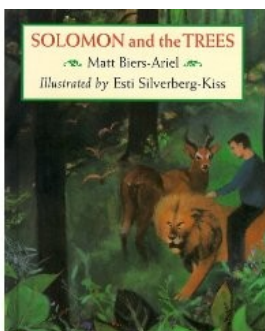
The following stories will enrich classroom discussions about the importance of preserving the environment:



- A board book with rhyming text. ***It's Tu B'Shevat*** by Edie Stoltz (Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben, 2005) encourages children to plant and celebrate the birthday of trees on *Tu BiSh'vat*. Illustrated by Richard Johnson. (For preschool)

- A message about caring for the earth for future generations can be heard in ***Honi's Circle of Trees*** by Phillis Gershator (Philadelphia: JPS, 1994). *Honi Ha Me'aggel*, Honi the Circle Maker, is a magical prophet from the *Talmud*. He talks to God when he draws circles in the earth. Honi plants carob seeds for "those to come." He wakes up seventy years after

this planting to find future generations enjoying the fruits from the trees. Illustrated by Mim Green. (For kindergarten - grade 2)



- ***Solomon and the Trees*** by Matt Biers-Ariel (NY: URJ Press, 2001) is an environmental *midrash* about King Solomon who discovers that nature must be cared for and protected. Illustrated by Esti Silverberg-Kiss. (For grades 2 - 6)

- ***Behold the Trees*** by Sue Alexander (Arthur A. Levine, 2001) contains a timeline of the destruction of trees in the land of Israel due to wars and the construction of buildings. Hundreds of years later, Israeli pioneers started reforestation of the land, which continues to this day. Includes beautiful watercolor illustrations of forests by Leonid Gore. (For grades 3-6)

- The spirit of Zionism is illuminated in ***Never-Ending Greenness*** by Neil Waldman (NY: Morrow Jr. Books, 1997). Holocaust survivors help build Israel by planting and raising trees on the barren land and defiantly defend their Homeland. (For grades 5 - 8).