



Adam V'Adamah: Judaism and the Environment.

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Climate change and the pandemic

- If there's anything the climate change crisis and its attendant disasters - including pandemics - are warning us that we need to shift from the story of separation to a new (and ancient) story of interbeing. (Thomas Berry, Charles Eisenstein).
- The ego-centric or self-centric story of separation has reached the end. This story says that each one of us is alone and separate from one another.
- The new story of interbeing is one in which we understand that we are all interconnected. What happens on one side of the world impacts everyone else.

Torah and the evolution of consciousness

- Remarkably enough our Torah contains within it both these stories and gives us a road-map for the evolution of consciousness leading from one to the other:

Separation → Interbeing

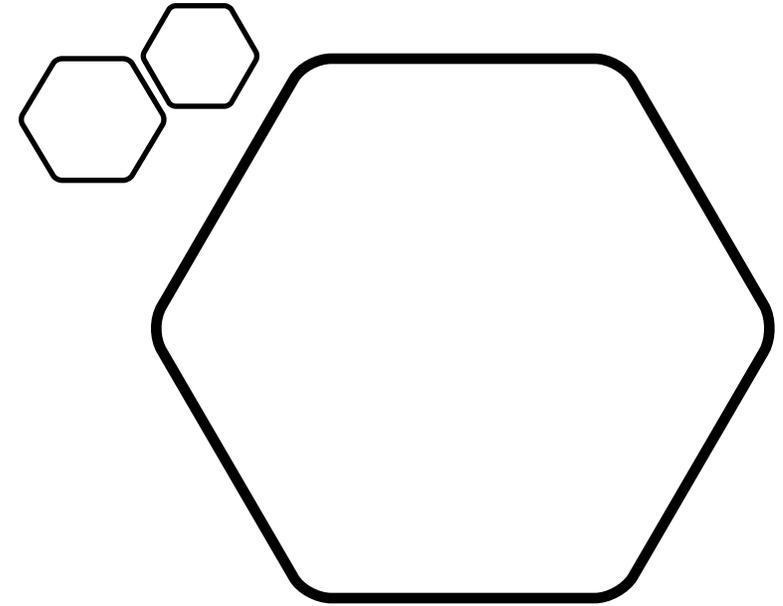
Four Torah Passages

I will present here four Torah passages that each represent a different mode of consciousness and a different kind of relationship with the Earth.

- The first represents the apex of separation;
- The second mitigates and limits the story of separation without negating it completely.
- The third tells us that the world is a web of interconnected relationships
- The fourth proclaims the universe an integrated whole which brings us once more into right relationship with our Earth.

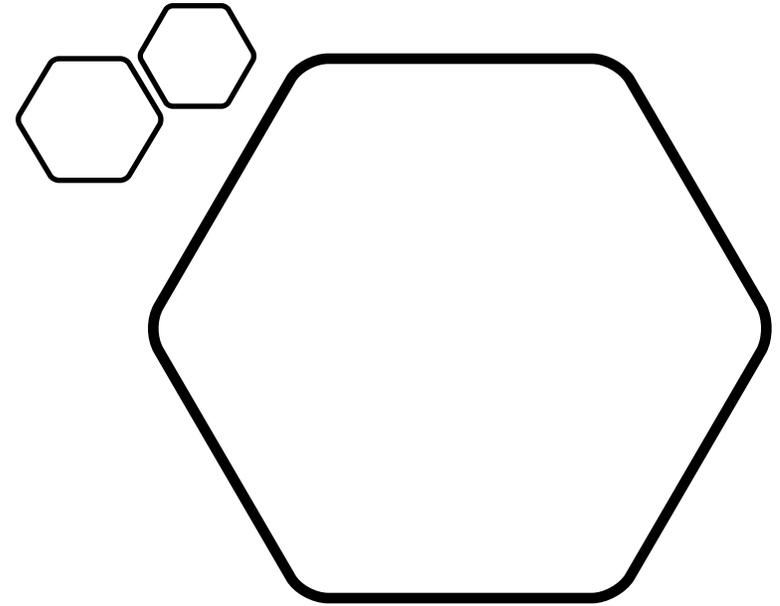
“Fill the Earth and Master it”

- It is remarkable how much of the history of our western civilization can be linked to these words (even if those who consider themselves the “masters” are not overtly conscious of it or willing to admit it).
- This verse has been interpreted to view domination as the natural right of men who fit the supposed image of the presumed hero, Adam.



Domination stage of Consciousness

- This stage asserts that we humans are the most intelligent and competitive species and therefore we have a right to continue to exploit nature for our benefit.
- Mastery and domination lead to all manner of hierarchies: men ruling over women, white people enslaving people of color, humans subjugating animals, the idea of “master races” and supremacies of all kinds.
- It is this cosmology that allows things like concentration camps and the Middle Passage, crusades and genocides.



Domination consciousness and the Earth

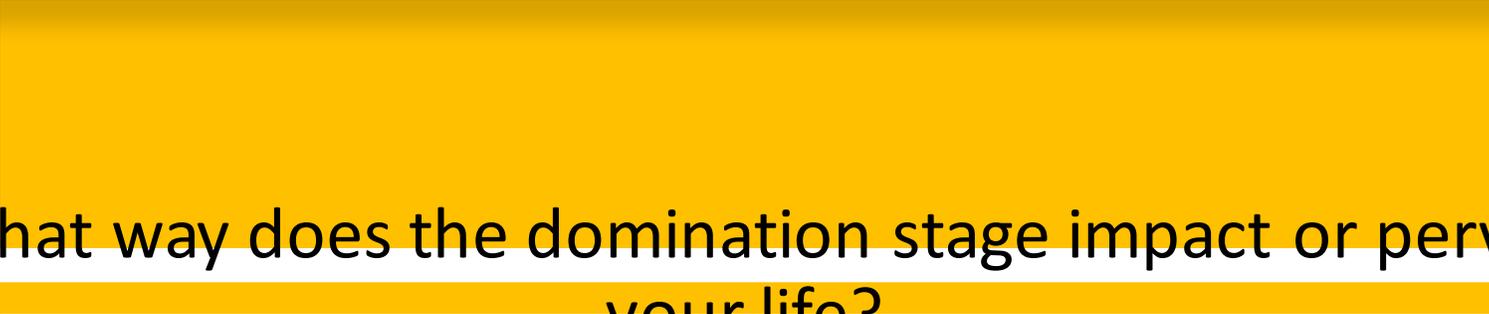
We humans have created whole industries based on and justified by this mode of consciousness:

- fossil fuel extraction and fracking which drills down into the earth and blasts subterranean shale with liquid at high pressure to extract gas and oil,
- meat packing factories which treat animals as mere units of consumption,
- the cosmetics industry which experiments on animals,
- the fashion industry which leaches chemicals and dyes from the cloth into the Earth,
- pesticides in our soil and in our food,

All justified by the careless understanding that we humans are the masters of nature.



Think about:



In what way does the domination stage impact or pervade
your life?

Not the final say

- But these words in Genesis 1 are not the final say in the Biblical texts about the relationship between humans and the Earth: Adam and Adamah.
- Just one chapter and several verses later, in Genesis 2, the Torah makes a sharp 90 degree turn and takes a different tack.
- A shift in consciousness takes place already in the first book of the Torah in the very next chapter of Genesis.

“To Work it and Protect It”

- Adam was tasked with two jobs when he was put in the Garden: "to work it and protect it."
- These are the many different translations of the Hebrew "l'avda u'l'shamra:" Tend, till, dress, keep, work, care for and watch over.
- Each of these has its own nuance but each reflects a very different consciousness than the one cited in Genesis 1.
- Rather than dominate nature, we are now commanded to become caretakers or stewards of nature.
- In the next stage on humanity's evolution journey stewardship has displaced dominion.

Some commentary

Some Torah scholars have seen working and tending of the Earth as two complementary, yet contradictory jobs:

- "... The more we work the earth - by which I mean the whole spectrum of human meddling - from tilling the grain, to setting grass fires, to splitting the atom - the more we are obliged to protect it. If we fail to do either, we fail to be fully human.
- These tasks were set us not just for our brief tenure in Eden but for the whole span of our stay on earth.
- Indeed, by setting us the first task, God set us up for expulsion. For when we work the earth we work her hard and the place we work ceases to be Eden. We move outward in waves of work - waves of improvement [of "progress"] and devastation, of fruitfulness and waste.
- By setting us the second task, God set (or tried to set) a limit to the height and reach of those waves."
- Evan Eisenberg, Torah of the Earth, p. 45.

Stewardship and Dominion are closely related

- The most obvious example of stewardship is agriculture
- Agriculture is stewardship but still contains a consciousness of separation from nature. However, it is a more benign separation than that of industrialized civilization
- Animal husbandry has led to keeping animals in cages, agriculture has led to the seeping of pesticides into the soil.
- By settling down in cities with agriculture and farming to sustain them we are separated from nature but we are conscious of needing to care for nature.

A Contraction

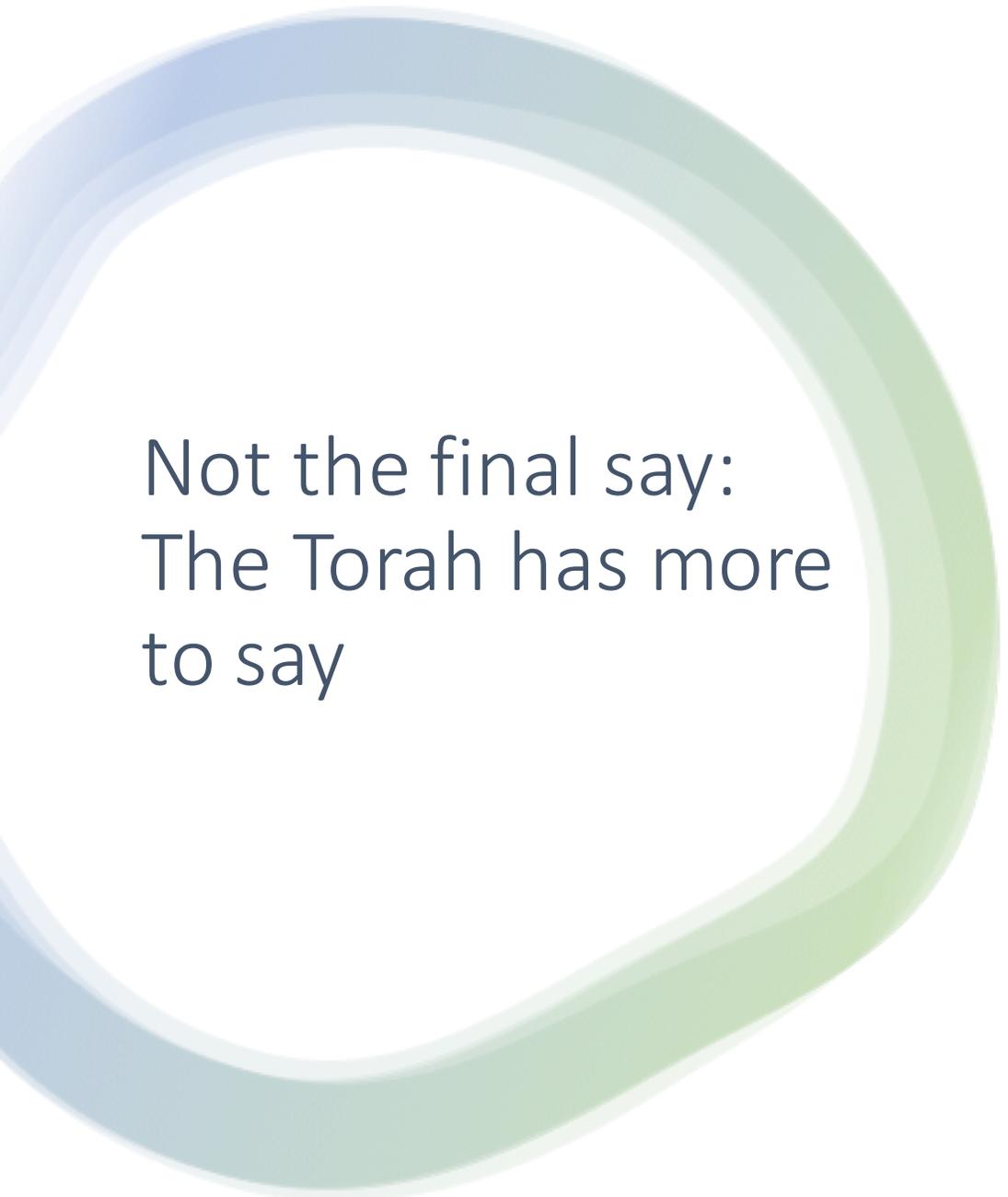
- “The development of agriculturally based civilization marked a contraction from our relation to the living earth..
- In that process we walled ourselves off from the wild with agriculture and civilization.
- We domesticated animals and plants to human purposes, that is, to anthropocentric purposes.
- We achieved progress in precision, in farming and animal husbandry, in city building and architecture, in bureaucratic organization of military, laboring, and scribal institutions, even as direct attunement to the animate earth receded.” (Halton, 2019, p. 56-7, Indigenous Sustainable Wisdom).



Think about



In what ways do YOU
care for, tend,
steward the Earth?



Not the final say:
The Torah has more
to say

- Again, not the final say that the Torah has on the relationship between Adam and Adamah: humans and earth.



Interconnection

- **Job 12:7-9**

But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach you;

And the fowls of the air, and they shall teach you;

Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach you;

And the fishes of the sea, shall declare unto you;

Who knoweth not among all these,

That the hand of the Lord has wrought this?

Job 12 4-7

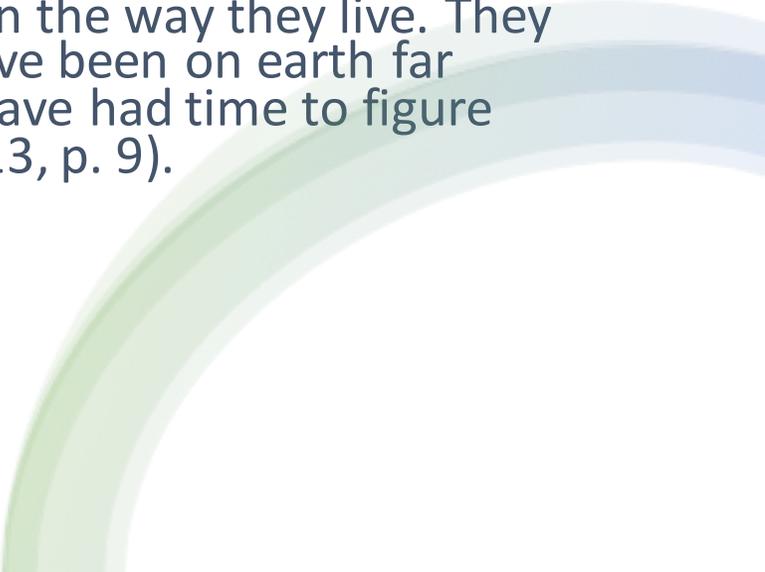
קל-דגיו ממש רעו וקרתו תמהב את-לאש מואו:

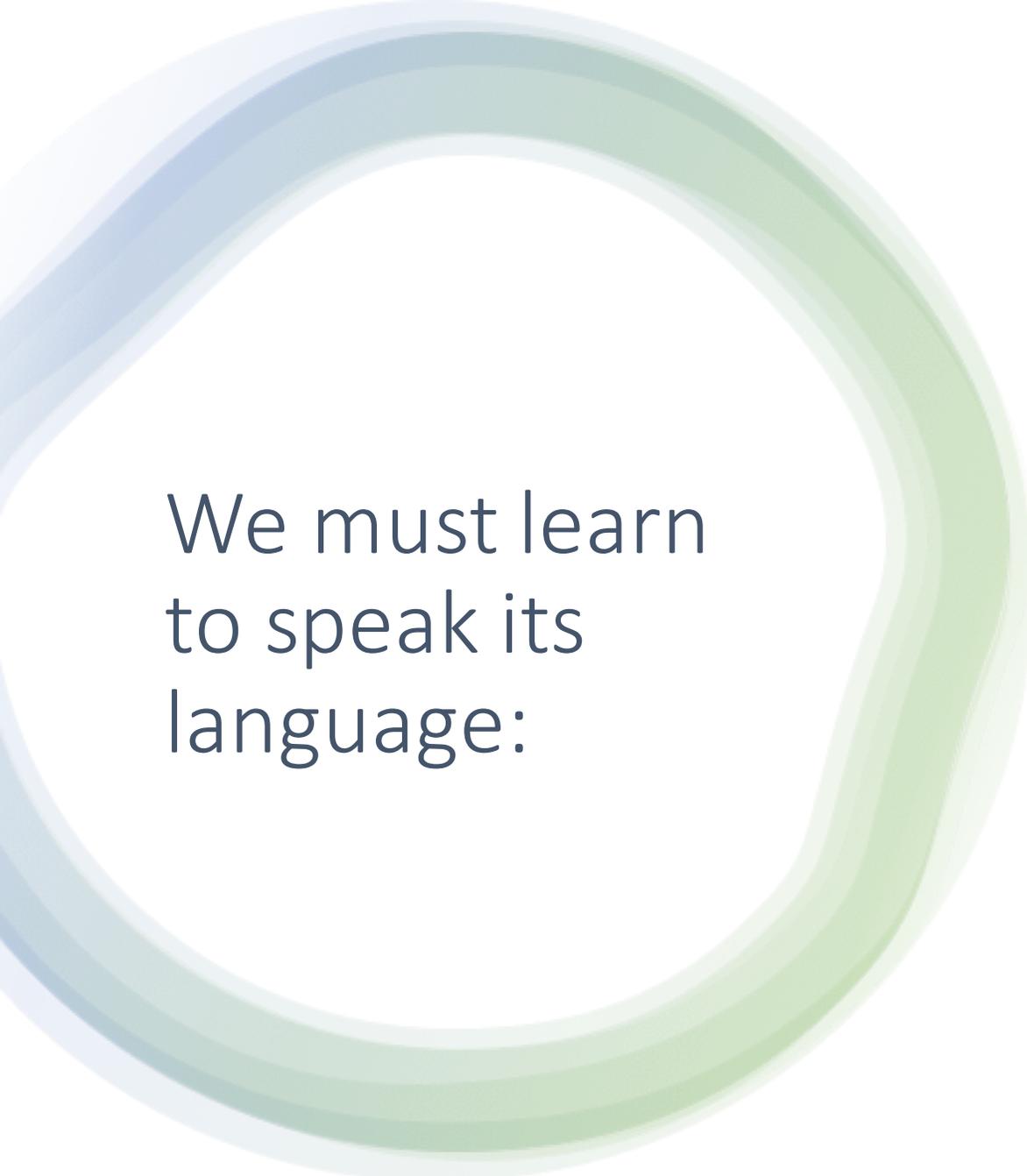
מיה גר ופסיו וקרתו על-חש א:

תאז חמש הוהי-די פ הא-לכב עי-אלמ:



Learning from Nature

- As Robin Wall Kimmerer says: “In the western tradition there is a recognized hierarchy of beings, with, of course, the human being on top... and the plants at the bottom.
 - But in Native ways of knowing, human people are often referred to as “the younger brothers of Creation.” We say that humans have the least experience with how to live and thus the most to learn – we must look to our teachers among the other species for guidance.
 - Their wisdom is apparent in the way they live. They teach us by example. They’ve been on earth far longer than we have, and have had time to figure things out.” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 9).
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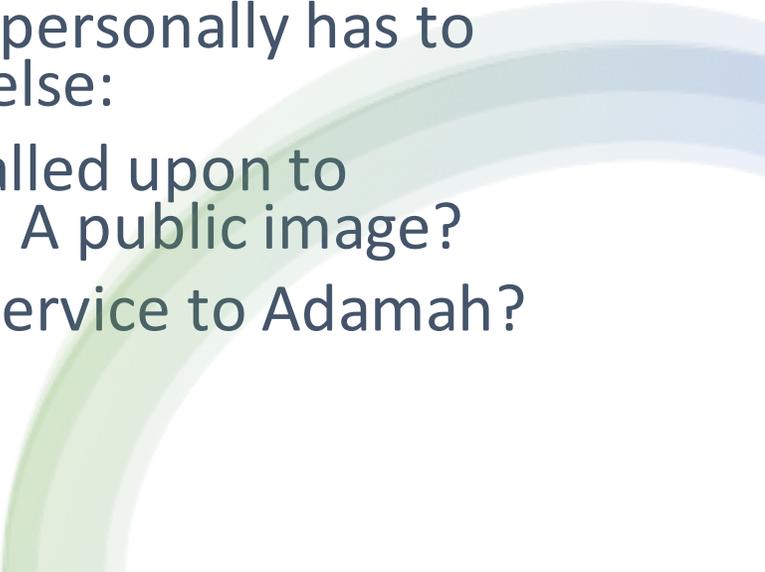


We must learn
to speak its
language:

- Learning the grammar of animacy could well be a restraint on our mindless exploitation of land... [it can] remind us of the capacity of others as our teachers, as holders of knowledge, as guides.
- Imagine walking through a richly inhabited world of birch people, bear people, rock people, beings we think of and therefore speak of as persons worthy of our respect, of inclusion in a peopled world....
- Imagine the access we would have to different perspectives, the things we might see through other eyes, the wisdom that surrounds us."
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass



The third stage of consciousness

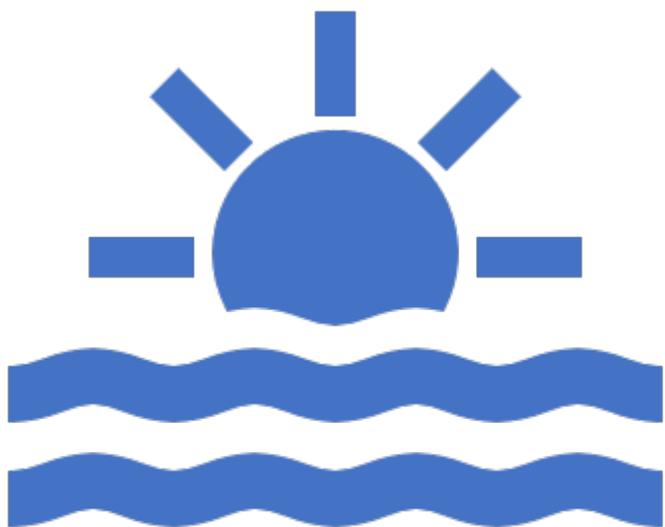
- We are currently at a watershed moment in human history. It's being called a phase transition toward a larger conception and experience of self
 - In order to reach this next phase there are things we need to let go of: a surrender of ego, a surrender of grandeur, hubris, arrogance.
 - But maybe each of us personally has to surrender something else:
 - What are you being called upon to surrender? Approval? A public image?
 - How do we lean into service to Adamah?
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Think about:

- In what way do YOU learn from the earth, from the creatures on the planet, from the plants, and any other living beings we share this earth with?
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Ecclesiastes 1:4-7



One generation goes, another comes,
But the earth remains the same forever,
The sun rises, and the sun sets –
And glides back to where it rises,
Southward blowing,
Turning northward,
Ever turning blows the wind;
On its rounds the wind returns.
All streams flow into the sea,
Yet the sea is never full;
To the place [from] which they flow
The streams flow back again.

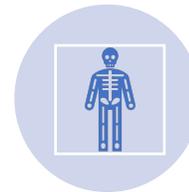
The fourth stage of consciousness: the universe is an integrated whole



In the fourth stage of consciousness the universe is an integrated whole.



Here there is no separation at all between humans and the rest of the world. In fact humans are almost not even mentioned in this passage.



Perhaps the hint of humans being here is in the first line “one generation goes, another comes” but this wholeness is such that we cannot separate the human coming and going from the rest of creation.



The web of life

This passage is in coherence with the famous quote attributed to Chief Seattle: “

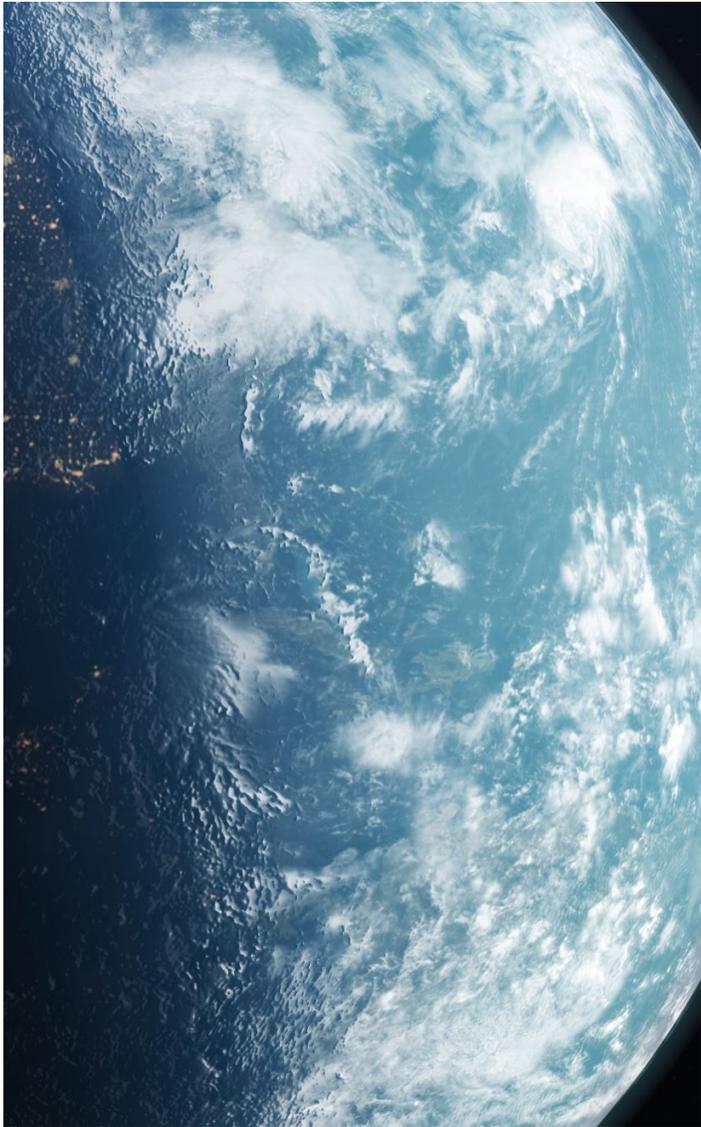
“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.”



Sacred Instructions:

“We cannot see ourselves as having dominion over the land, the water, the animals. We can’t even see ourselves as being stewards of the earth. We are only keepers of a way of life that is in harmony with the earth. Every day we must acknowledge that we are part of one living system, a unified whole.. This understanding is very different from the belief that humans are chosen above all others. That view creates countless distortions that not only elevate man inappropriately but also diminish the rest of creation....”

Sherri Mitchell Sacred Instructions, 2018, p. 191/



The Indigenous worldview

- The Indigenous view recognizes the land as kin, as part of the lineage of life that we are all connected to. Thus we have an obligation to care for the land in the same way that we care for our human relatives...it is our responsibility to speak on behalf of the natural world. Not because we are superior... but because we speak the language that other humans understand.” (Sherri Mitchell Sacred Instructions, 2018, p. 191/

- In this passage we hardly see humans at all. Perhaps only in the first line where it talks of generations coming and going but the Earth remains forever. Many scientists have said that the homeostasis of the earth is such that it will right itself. As soon as we humans are out of the way. This perhaps is the Deep Ecology consciousness which no longer puts humans in the center, but rather as only one of the many creatures and lives on earth. A part of the web of life but not the top of the pyramid, only one strand in the web of life.



Question: How are YOU indigenous?

- In what way are you indigenous? Which can be defined as earth-connected, in tune with the rhythms of the earth, close to your own local ecology?
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Indigenous Judaism

- If you are curious to learn more about Judaism as an indigenous tradition and about how we Jews have remained earth-connected throughout our history then please get in touch.
- At Lake Erie Institute are launching a course in Indigenous Judaism beginning this August.
- **Indigenous Judaism:** Readings, Reflections, Rituals with the Rhythm of the Jewish Year
- Please get in touch with me if you are interested:
- Nurete@lakeerieinstitute.org
- <http://lakeerieinstitute.org/indigenous-judaism>

Thank you!

הדות הבר

