Elul 24

Seeing the Beauty

Sandra N. Daitch

I am grateful for the opportunity I had to spend a week out West with my brother and his family where I was gifted with seeing and experiencing the magnificence and beauty in nature. I saw Muir Woods, Scenic Coastal Route 1 in California, the Grand Canyon, and the red hills in Sedona, Arizona.

In those places, it was easy to feel the awe and joy of the Universe. Back home, in my Boston-area suburban apartment with all my things taking up space, I feel more challenged to stay in touch with the beauty and spaciousness of the Earth.

Looking outside my bedroom window, on a very hot humid day, I see a familiar, beautiful, large tree with leaves and branches moving in a gentle wind. I've lived here for over 15 years and always thought the tree was a maple. But in looking at the leaves now, I realize it's not. I'm not sure what it is, so I'm excited to have a chance to learn something new about this familiar lovely tree friend.

I've been away and my garden has lots of weeds. I can turn away with displeasure, or I can choose to appreciate the fertility of the soil that allows those weeds to grow. Some even have flowers. What is it about weeds that give them a bad name? They are wild, uncultivated beauty—the gifts that come without asking. Perhaps, it's just a matter of perspective?

Looking out through the window of my study, I see a number of trees and bushes in the neighborhood. I'm enjoying the variety of hues of green, and the distant tree with purple leaves—maybe a red maple? I'm also enjoying the shadows that shift under the tree closest to my view. There are also houses and several telephone wires outside the window, and I ask myself how to see the beauty in them. A thought occurs that I can use the wires to look at slices of the scenes—looking at the scene between each two wires. There are so many options, if I pause and ask what's possible in each situation. And I actually like the colors of the white and red houses within view.

There is so much beauty and good in the world, and, I get caught up in my daily chores and issues and forget to notice and appreciate the good and beautiful that's in my life. Going on vacation to beautiful spots in nature is a reminder to *t'shuvah* (return) to a practice of regularly taking a stance of gratitude, awe, and appreciation for our many gifts.

Collective Versus Personal Action in the Jewish Bible

Andy Oram

Environmental activists are constantly juggling between the personal and the political. Do we devote our efforts to using our cars less, substituting vegan meals for meat, and recycling? Or do we canvas our friends and neighbors to pressure governments and businesses to adopt more planet-friendly technologies? We know that we need to do both the personal and the political, but those who have taken the environment as our cause have found ourselves swinging between them in a way that is frustrating and distracting. And as we prepare for the High Holidays, we always look for how to do more good in the upcoming year.

Perhaps we can learn something from the historical experience of the Jews. As a *kehilah* (community), we have constantly explored the relationship between personal responsibility and communal action. Many High Holiday prayers, such as *Al Chet* and *Ashamnu*, refer to the community in the plural even though the sins must be addressed by each individual on her own. The twice-daily *V'ahavta* prayer shifts abruptly (Deuteronomy 11:13-21) from the singular "you" when prescribing behavior to the plural "you" when describing the positive or negative outcomes of this behavior: rain and food at the proper times versus drought that drives us from the land.

The grammatical shift suggests that each of us must take personal action to preserve the Earth, while the results will affect all of us irrespective of our roles in creating environmental damage. And the truth of this observation is visible throughout the world, as people with small carbon footprints get deprived of their livelihoods by climate change and leave their homes to suffer war or to deteriorate in refugee camps.

So, Jews understand that personal concerns are also communal ones. But the record becomes muddier when we look at the history of "people power" in Israel. In fact, the Bible gives us little to celebrate. Communal Israelite acts include the idolatry of the golden calf (Exodus 32:1-6), the invitation to the Benjaminite men to replenish their tribe by abducting women from a religious festival (Judges 21:20-23), and the demand for a king (I Samuel 8:4-22). The leaders of the Israelites concur in all these disastrous decisions.

To find a positive example of the relationship between policy and individual action, turn to the evil city of Nineveh in the book of Jonah. After the reluctant prophet proclaims the destruction of the city, the people of Nineveh, "from great to small," take penance on themselves (Jonah 3:5). Upon hearing of the prophecy, the king joins them and declares the spontaneous fast to be a policy. Sackcloth and ashes here represent both a

personal sacrifice and a public statement, like building a solar farm and then pressuring the government to connect other people to it for electricity.

When we want to change behavior, we should start with ourselves. But we need not be so ascetic as to hamper our beneficial efforts. For instance, environmental leader Bill McKibben has assured followers that taking an airplane to attend a climate change rally is a good expenditure of carbon—the best, in fact.

If we persuade friends and religious congregants to change their individual behavior, we can also transform them politically. After putting hours of effort into composting or taking public transportation, a person naturally starts to think, "What if another hundred million people could do what I have done?" This should lead them to investigate the structural barriers that keep others trapped in environmentally damaging lives and to demand political changes that spread the good they've done even further.

Like all deep and abiding social changes, the shift to sustainable human life will be a grassroots movement that blossoms into political action.

Circling Home

Kaya Stern-Kaufman

Turning, always turning
To every turn, a time
To every time, a spirit
To every spirit, a soul
To every soul, a home

Turn as the earth
Around your sacred truth,
Hold to your center
but move from your place.
See
from a new view, who You Are
And who you need to be

We are fiery emotions
We are waters of compassion
We are centered breath of life,
We are steady solid clay

An eternal breath wrapped in dust and light
Turning
always turning

Elul 25

Shemittah Seder

Nina Beth Cardin

Ever since the first breath of creation, time has unfolded in cycles of seven. Six days reach their crescendo in the seventh day, Shabbat—the Sabbath, the day of rest. Six years reach their crescendo in the seventh year, *Shemittah*—the sabbatical, the year of renewal. Seven cycles of seven years reach their crescendo in the Jubilee year—the ultimate enactment of re-creation.

All three call forth nostalgic images of Eden, when humanity lived in abundance, peace, equity and ease. All offer a way of partial return. But there are differences among them: Jubilee is more fantasy than experience, more vision than practice. And while it remains part of our sacred narrative, it has nonetheless fallen out of our sacred calendar.

Shabbat, on the other hand, is a constant presence. It is celebrated weekly, as time apart, 25-hours of a lived-dream dimension. We enter Shabbat by leaving the work-a-day world and cross into a domain that is edenic, "a taste of the world to come." We are at leisure, eat well, avoid strife and pretend to create one world, diminishing the boundaries that daily divide us.

Shemittah sits between these two. Neither a fantasy nor a constant presence, it is both a vision of a new reality and a practice to be lived in here-and-now. It happens in the same time and space as all other years, only we are to live this year differently, more equitably, more fully, more intentionally than the six years before. It is a year of harmony and celebration with the Earth, when the Land of Israel rests from the agricultural labors imposed upon her yet when she yields sufficient goodness for us all to thrive. It is a year of commonplace *manna*, when food is ours for the taking, but modestly, temperately, with a deep sense of gratitude and awareness; when debts are forgiven and there is equity for all; when property boundaries are suspended and all becomes once again part of the Commons. It is, in short, a year of rebooting, recalibration and realigning our assumptions about property, land use, economic justice and social equity. Not as a dream but as a reality.

This Rosh Hashanah seder is built around the seven-year cycle and incorporates the images of *shemittah*. It is modeled on the Jewish tradition of

New Year's *simanim*, symbolic foods, like the traditional apples dipped in honey, that represent the blessings we hope will be ours.[1]

The seder consists of six small cups or bowls arrayed on a decorative base plate.

This base plate represents the whole, the sweep of time, the sphere that encompasses and defines every seven-year cycle. For *shemittah* is not just one segregated year, as Shabbat is not one segregated day. It is the year that frames and gives shape to all the other years, both those just past, and those yet to come. Upon this foundation plate rest the six cups or bowls. Together they represent the six attributes that define the essence of the *shemittah* year, and a life lived in goodness, sacred striving and delight.

Slices of apples (and other perennial delicacies of your choice) are arrayed in the center of the base plate. These recall the fruits of Eden that sustained us, and the Tree of Knowledge that launched us on the irresistible human enterprise of curiosity, desire, exploration and pursuits. And it represents the perennial foods (fruits, nuts and berries) that grow on their own during the *shemittah* year and that we gratefully eat at a time when we do not plow, sow, reap or commercially harvest the produce of the field.

The cups should be numbered from one to six, with each year's seder starting with the appropriate cup.

Cup One: Honey representing Sova (Enoughness). *Sova* is the feeling of fullness without being stuffed; of contentment through what was given and not wanting anything more; of maximum satisfaction with minimum consumption and disruption. This first cup is filled with honey. Pass around the cup for all to dip the apples in the honey, say:

"This year, may we know no hunger, either spiritual or physical. May we be as readily sated with the delights of life as this cup is filled by these drops of honey."

Cup Two: Wine (consider fruit wine, including Passion Fruit Wine from Israel or homemade date wine)[2] *signifying Hodayah* (Gratefulness). *Hodayah* is the feeling of gratitude, of deep satisfaction and elusive peace with what we have received. Wine is the age-old symbol of celebration, an expression of shared gratitude. It takes years for the vineyard to grow and produce grapes and time enough

[1] The symbolic foods and their accompanying quotes and prayers may be adapted for the needs and urgencies of each year. The Biblical *shemittah* texts are: Exodus 23:10-11, Leviticus 25:1-7, Leviticus 25:20-22, and Deuteronomy 15:1-6. This seder is meant to be a template to be used and adapted as celebrants desire.

[2] Only wine that includes grapes qualifies for the Kiddush blessing: *borei pri hagafen*, who creates the fruit of the vine. The blessing *"Shehakol nihiyah bed'varo"* is said over fruit wines without a grape base. If the blessing over wine (*Kiddush*) and bread (*Hamotzi*) have already been said at the beginning of the meal, no additional blessings need to be recited over the foods of the seder plate.

for the wine to ferment. On the human side, this requires steadfastne peace, stability, and longevity; on nature's side, cool and heat and sun and ra and rich soil all in the right amounts—surely things to be grateful for. Th cup is filled to the rim with the wine. (Wine cups at everyone's place may l filled with this too.) Hold it up and say:

"May we know peace and be strangers to disappointment and disruptio May the Earth find renewal through our practices. And may gratitude fill all as the wine fills this cup."

Cup Three: Figs representing Revaya (Abundance). *Revaya* is the awareness the vast resources of a healthy world, the Earth's ancient capacity of grow and self-renewal, and our call to keep it going. Figs are not like most oth fruit crops. The fruits on one tree do not ripen all at once but one by on each in its own time. They offer abundance without surfeit. This cup is fill with figs (either whole or cut, fresh if available, though dried figs are fine toc speckled and spangled with seeds. Pass it around for all to take from and say

"May we recognize abundance and know no waste. May we celebrate th vast goodness that lies within even the most modest cache of life; may w reverently receive life's abundance and, like the continuous fruiting of the f tree, give what we can, at the time that is right."

Cup Four: Raisins representing Hesed (Goodness, Kindness, Generosity *Hesed* is a response to our gratitude for the varieties of gifts we have receive in this world. Having received we are moved to give. Such is the nature of th gift. The raisins heaped in this cup signify the sweet, satisfying substance th can be given even after other extractions of goodness have been taken. The recall the leaves, the juices, the wine, the vinegar, the shade, the wood an delight that are all gifts of the grape. In response to all that we have bee given, we are moved to give more. Pass around the cup for all to take fror and say:

"May we know no greed. May we recognize the gifts we have receive and in return realize the manifold ways of giving that lie within each of us."

Cup Five: Pomegranate representing Poriyut (Fertility). *Poriyut* is the creativity the dynamism, the fecundity that characterizes the majesty of nature. It i what allows us to eat during this year of fallowness and renewal. It is th dormancy that bursts forth, in the right conditions, inspiring the human gift of imagination, discovery and awe. This cup is filled with pomegranate seeds symbols of overflowing fertility. Pass the cup around for everyone to tast and say:

"May we know no barrenness, no emptiness. May this year of materia enoughness bring forth overflowing acts of discovery, delight and spiritua bounty."

Cup Six: Dates representing Otzar (The Commons). *Otzar* is Earth's share resources, owned by none and gifted to all. It is the storehouse of the ages the fundamentals of life that we all depend upon. It is the stuff of Earth anc

society, natural and cultural, that we share now in our lifetimes and leave behind for others. Our stories, our knowledge, our goods, our homes, our Earth. This cup holds stuffed dates, signifying all that we share in the giving to and taking from the Commons. (Another option: put a few symbolic dates in the center cup, but in addition, array dates—pitted and sliced—on the outer edge of a serving plate, surrounding a center mound of stuffing: chopped almonds, walnuts, pistachios or pine nuts that have been soaked in honey and wine. Let everyone fill a date with the sweet filling and give it to someone else at the table.) Everyone takes a date and says:

"May we know no isolation, no loneliness, no selfishness. May we recognize that we are joined in partnership to the Earth, and to one another through our common heritage, the Torah, our past and our future that bind us to one another forever, throughout the cycles of space and time."

Then wash it all down with a drink of *l'chaim*—to life.

Confession

Judith Felsen

Tonight I craved Your company
time alone with You.
I ran uphill
to see Your face
extended through the Elul sunset
drenched in colors
Bikkurim.[1]
The sky, Your temple,
quenched desires
sacred space
communion
mountains holding
context, presence.
Prayers sans words expressed
silent lips
heart happy
sky's violet feast
dessert slowly dipping
behind hills;
welcome
Elul Day
delighting Elul sunset.

[1] First fruits.

Choosing Again What Is Good

Joelle Novey

Pope Francis issued an encyclical teaching on ecology, Laudato Si, June 2015.[1] In the year and a half that followed, I had the opportunity to with good folks of many faiths to study its words.

Over that same time frame, I had many moments of feeli overwhelmed by the bad things in our world that seemed so much bigg than any one of us: the irrevocable and global suffering already being caus by our damaged climate; the harm being done to black bodies and spirits l the pernicious persistence of racism; the unrelenting meanness of tl presidential campaign rhetoric.

What gave me hope as we entered that season of reflection?

I turned to Pope Francis, and to the paragraph (#205) of his encyclic which never fails to give me a jolt of hope:

> "Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom.
>
> "No system can completely suppress our openness to what is good, true and beautiful, or our God-given ability to respond to His grace at work deep in our hearts. I appeal to everyone throughout the world not to forget this dignity which is ours. No one has the right to take it from us."

Where does the Pope find some hope for all of us? He finds it right the place where the shofar finds us, where that still, small voice is heard—h finds it in our hearts; he finds it in our own individual capacity to know wh is good and to make choices.

The world is full of terrible things much larger than any of us, but we d have the freedom to make choices—and in that freedom lies the possibility o our redemption. We can choose, and so, we can change. And so can everyor else. And so can our world.

We can choose how we get our energy, how we invest our money, wh we will buy, what food we will eat. We can choose to examine our own role i the fossil-fueled economy, the part we play in the evil of systemic racism, an come each election day, we can choose what kinds of leadership to exalt wit our votes.

[1] Pope Francis. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* [Encyclical], 2015.

That fall of 2016, I let Pope Francis set my *kavannah* for the season of repentance. He reminded me that all was not lost, because we can still decide to choose what is good.

The dignity to engage in *tikkun* this Elul is ours. It is our liberation and our highest hope in these times. And no one can take it from us.

Elul 26

Celebrating the *Shemittah* Cycle

Nina Beth Cardin

Do you know where this new year falls in the *shemittah* (seven-year) count? Or when the next *shemittah* year will be?

Even those of us who were deeply engaged in celebrating the last *shemittah* year may have difficulty remembering when exactly it was. (It was 5775, 2014-2015.) Yet *shemittah*, like Shabbat, is more than a single day, a single slice of time. It is a presence, an ever-coming moment that is in a way always with us. It is a practice, an attitude, a social, economic and spiritual ethic that guides our lives.

In the biblical era, this was evident, and the *shemittah* ethic was a constant reality. As weekdays counted up to the celebration of Shabbat, so years counted up to the celebration of *shemittah*. Years One and Two (as they were designated), as well as Years Four and Five, were years when the annual tithe (the gifts of the divine partnership between God, Earth and humans—or the monetary equivalent thereof) were taken to the Temple and enjoyed there. Not just consumed or spent but enjoyed: "Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice." (Deuteronomy 14:26)

Years Three and Six were different. In those years, the gift of the tithes was to stay in the farmer's home community—stored in a publicly accessible spot so that those in need could readily take when and what they needed. The handling of one's harvest demanded that the farmer—and the indigent—know what year it was.

Even more, given that any debts owed would have to be reconciled before, or else be forgiven in the seventh year, anyone on either side of an outstanding loan would know what year it was.

These traditions must have conjured up a deep awareness of shared time. Everyone was immersed in the collective passage of years, knowing what is expected of them this year and next, all leading to the grand pause, the reset, the leveling and renewal of the *shemittah* year itself.

I wanted to feel this presence; to be immersed in this cyclical flow of time of my people, to know what time it was, not just in hours or days, but years. So for this past *shemittah* year, I created a *shemittah* cycle Rosh Hashanah seder plate.

It is designed to be placed on the table the first night of the year, every year, as a visual mnemonic of the *shemittah* cycle. It is a circular platter with six small bowls around one central receptacle—representing the fullness of the *shemittah* cycle. Each year, the bowls are to be filled with foods symbolic of that year, with a different bowl (corresponding to the year of the cycle) being the lead each year. Ideally, the food in the bowls—and the telling that accompanies them—will heighten our awareness of the values and the tasks we are called to do, with an emphasis on our part in renewing all of God's creation.

My effort is a pale version of what I hope can eventually be developed by potters, woodworkers, sculptors and other artists, so that they might craft their own versions to inspire us all.

Resilience in the Face of Adversity

Susie Davidson

As a writaholic, I am also a readaholic. As we move toward creating communities that feed, nurture and sustain all the inhabitants of the Earth, and the Earth itself, I believe that it is also incumbent upon us to remain informed about the news of the day and the topics that affect underlying societal infrastructures.

Certainly, some of these infrastructures seem entrenched to the point of impermeability, none more so than the economic systems that govern world relations. For those of us concerned with environmental health and sustainability, there is possibly no greater challenge.

We embrace *t'shuvah* and serve G-d by returning and adhering to our highest visions. And none can be higher than safeguarding the planet that we live on.

In 2015, Pope Francis released his climate-centered encyclical Laudato Si, which translates to "May the Creator Be Praised" and is taken from a prayer of St. Francis of Assisi acknowledging Brother Sun, Sister Moon, and all other elements of Creation. To enthusiastic worldwide reception, the encyclical stated that humans were morally-bound to protect the planet for future generations and especially for the vulnerable among us.

But the next day, by one deciding vote, the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee effectively gutted the EPA's first-ever plan to implement limits on carbon pollution from existing power plants. And from then on, things only got worse, to the point where it is easy to even lose hope. But we can't. Instead, we can redouble our efforts.

"We are the first generation to feel the impacts of climate change, and the last generation to be able to do something about it," said then-President Barack Obama.[1]

Who is the Jewish counterpart to the Pope and ecologically active leaders such as President Obama? Where is our Moses, our King David, our David ben-Gurion, to lead us to victory against fossil fuel defenders and enablers?

I nominate Rabbi Arthur Waskow, founder and Director of the Shalom Center in Philadelphia.

Waskow, whose numerous books and writings include *Torah of the Earth: Exploring 4,000 Years of Ecology in Jewish Thought*, *Trees, Earth, & Torah: A Tu B'Shvat Anthology*, and "Jewish Environmental Ethics: Adam and Adamah" in the *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Ethics and Morality*, is consistently in the forefront of Jewish leadership climate actions, such as the Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis initiated in anticipation of Laudato Si.

Hundreds of rabbis signed onto the Shalom Center's statement against fossil fuel-extracting practices such as fracking, offshore Arctic drilling, and oil trains, and their disproportionate impacts on low-income communities and communities of color. "Climate Pharaohs" is the term Waskow applies to foes of the environment. "'Carbon Pharaohs'...endanger human beings and bring plagues upon the Earth," the rabbis wrote in the Letter.[2]

We can all be grateful to Pope Francis, the past efforts of President Obama, Rabbi Arthur Waskow and his staff at the Shalom Center, and all eco-defenders who act individually, as leaders, and/or as members of organizations to protect and safeguard natural life on Earth, now and for years to come. But in order to do our own *t'shuvah*, to return to G-d, we must do more than be grateful—we must all do the work of defending the Earth.

---

[1] "Step-by-Step Guide to Understanding Obama's Clean Power Plan." *Utilities | Energy Digital*, Energy Digital Staff, 5 Aug. 2015, http://www.energydigital.com/renewable-energy/step-step-guide-understanding-obamas-clean-power-plan

[2] Waskow, Arthur. "Rabbinic Letter on Climate—Torah, Pope, & Crisis Inspire 425+ Rabbis to Call for Vigorous Climate Action." 29 Oct. 2015. Retrieved from theshalomcenter.org/RabbinicLetterClimate

Elul 27

Saving the Earth to Save Our Children

Andy Oram

The traditional Torah readings on Rosh HaShanah cover two of Abraham's most difficult trials, calling on him to relinquish his two sons. The troublesome stories can tell us a lot about how to make room in our lives for our children—and also a lot about how to save the Earth from the devastation of climate change and ecological destruction.

In the first story, read traditionally on the first day of the holiday, Sarah abruptly demands that Ishmael be thrown out with his mother into the desert, and God backs her up (Genesis 21:9-14). Abraham reluctantly goes along. God's approval suggests that Sarah had an understanding not visible on the surface. Abraham is prosperous and can easily support two sons. But for some reason, keeping them in the same tent would not be a long-term solution.

The mythic aspect of this apparently cruel abandonment is revealed in details. Hagar, Ishmael's mother, handles him like a small child even though we know from previous passages that he is a teenager. The literal expulsion into the desert probably did not actually happen. What we do know is that Ishmael survived, because Abraham provisioned him for his journey and because he discovers (despite Hagar's despair) that the desert can sustain him. Ishmael becomes a great nation, returns to honor Abraham at his burial, and even furnishes a wife for one of Abraham's grandchildren.

The progression from the banishment of Ishmael to the binding of Isaac in the following chapter of Genesis illustrates some sort of evolution in the world around them. Perhaps overpopulation had complicated the process of going out to make one's fortune. Canny readers have questions about exactly what God told Abraham to do when it was time to send out Isaac into the world, but it seems that Abraham interpreted the mandate in some horribly distorted way.

My own guess is that God asked Abraham to set up Isaac so he could support himself, and that Abraham did so in a way that could destroy the environment. The modern equivalent is to set up belching factory furnaces that darken the sky with carbon emissions or to sweep down whole forests in order to plant commercial crops. These are the activities that destroy the Earth and our children's future with it. Abraham was doing something, even if done out of love and concern, that would rob Isaac of life.

God realizes Abraham's mistake, in which God may also share some of the blame. So, God gives Abraham a lesson, showing him an alternative way to meet the goal. The ram found by Abraham was on its way to death, caught in a thicket it could not escape. Instead of acting destructively, Abraham carried out what we nowadays would call recycling. He turned the doomed ram into a blessing before God, and Isaac was saved.

Thus, our High Holiday readings warn us to think of the consequences of acts we take on behalf of our children. Every decision we make has long-term effects on our environment, which return to affect future generations. We can take heart in knowing that an element of the divine resides in these seemingly unconnected choices.

Today the World Is Pregnant with Possibility, and So Are We

David Seidenberg

On Rosh Hashanah, we hear the shofar and call out in response, "*Hayom Harat Olam!*" "Today is the birthday of the world; today the world was born."

So says the liturgy, according to most prayer books. This birthday is not just one of celebration but of reflection, as the next line of the liturgy says: "*Hayom ya'amid ba-mishpat.* Today the world stands in judgment." These two motifs would give anyone pause to consider what we are doing to the planet.

But let's look more closely at these words, to see what they really mean and what else they can teach us.

'Harah' means pregnancy, conception or gestation. Not birth, but the process which leads to birth. If we wanted to say "the birth of the world," we would say "*leidat ha-olam.*" "*Olam*" can mean "a world," but if we wanted to say "the conception of the world," we would similarly say "*harat ha-olam*," not "*harat olam.*" "*Olam*" without the prefix "*ha-*" really means "eternity," from the root that means "hidden," or more precisely, the infinite that is hidden and lies beyond our limited perception. So *harat olam* literally means "pregnant with eternity," or "eternally pregnant."

The day of Rosh Hashanah is pregnant with eternity.

What deeper evocation of this wondrous moment and this miraculous Creation could one find than the image of it being "eternally pregnant"—always bringing forth new lives, new creatures, even new species? Always dynamic, growing; balanced not like a pillar on its foundation, but like a gyroscope, turning and turning. What higher praise could there be of the Creator? What greater potential could we recognize in this moment, than to say that it is "pregnant" with insights, with hopes, as great as eternity"?

But we can dig deeper still. In Tanakh, the source of the phrase "*harat olam*" is part of an expression of profound personal grief. Jeremiah says, "*Vat'hi li imi kivri v'rachmah harat olam.* Would that my mother become for me my grave, and her womb be pregnant eternally." (Jeremiah 20:17) Jeremiah was wishing he was never born. In Job, however, our planet is imagined as a womb, as it says, "*yam b'gicho meirechem yeitzei* when the sea gushed forth from the womb." (Job 38:8) When Jeremiah's lament is applied to the Earth, it becomes transformed into one of the truest and most loving sentences in the Tanakh: Let this Earth be a mother to us and our grave; let it be eternally pregnant, so that from our deaths will come new life and new lives.

What about the second line we respond with, "*Hayom ya'amid bamishpat*"? The phrase "*ya'amid bamishpat*" comes from Proverbs: "*Melekh b'mishpat ya'amid aretz.* A king through justice makes the Earth stand." (Proverbs 29:4) *Ya'amid* doesn't mean "stand" but rather, to be caused to stand, to be sustained; the prefix *ba-* can mean "in," but here it means "through, because of." So this response can mean: "This day will be sustained through Justice."

When we hear the shofar and call out, "*Hayom harat olam*!" may we find hope, may we find courage, may we find blessing, in this moment on this planet, filled with birth and death, pregnant with eternity. And may we respond with justice.

Hayom harat olam. "This day births new intentions, conceives new possibilities." This day that is our day, the day we are alive on this planet. As we say at the end of *musaf*, "*Chayim kulkhem hayom.* All of you are alive today."

Today our choices, our vows, will gestate the future, not just for our children, but for the children of every species upon the Earth. *Hayom t'amtzeinu.* "Today may we find courage." *Hayom t'varcheinu.* "Today may we be blessed." *Hayom ticht'veinu l'chayim tovim.* "Today may we be inscribed to live well"—we and all our relations, all the species who are traveling together on this planet.

Hayom im b'kolo tishma'u. "Today, if you will listen to the Voice."

Elul 28

Eco-Kaddish Blessing

Judith Felsen

Master of the Universe, Lord of All Worlds,
may I know You
when I see a tree
feel the wind
gaze at stars
touch the ground
smile at flowers

May I see You
in life's cycle

May I instill You
with every breath
footstep, touch, thought

This Elul
may I join You in
nature's presence
never to leave.

Repentance, Prayer, and Deeds of Righteous Action Will Stop Climate Change

Mirele B. Goldsmith

This year, as the sun sets on Yom Kippur, our prayers will reach pinnacle of intensity as we recite the *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer: "On Ro Hashanah it is written, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed. How many shall lea this world, and how many shall be born; who shall live and who shall die, w in the fullness of years and who before; who shall perish by fire and who water, who by sword and who by a wild beast; who by famine and who