

Jewish views: Oneness of Humanity, Peace and the Environment



“The most beneficent effect of the tendency towards unity is visible in the cognition of the ‘oneness’ of God, the ‘oneness’ of the world and the ‘oneness’ of humanity.” -

The Ethics of Judaism – Moritz Lazarus, p.191

If we all followed the age-old Jewish teaching, do not waste anything, (bal tashchit), we would cease to want, want, want, and end our insatiable demands on nature and conserve and not destroy our resources.

- Aubrey Rose

Deuteronomy (20:19-20), *When in your war against a city you have to besiege it for a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy (bal tashchit) its fruit trees. . . You may eat of them but you must not destroy the fruit trees.*

The tradition I have inherited emphasizes duties as well as rights, a balance the world desperately needs. “Do not destroy fruit trees, even in times of war”, says the Bible. Trees are a form of life. It is no wonder that over a hundred years ago, the Jewish National Fund was formed to bring life back to its arid original homeland; it drained swamps, made deserts bloom, and planted hundreds of millions of trees. Mankind has a supreme challenge today. Its very existence is in doubt as our planet, our inheritance, is pillaged for every kind of natural resource by a population explosion and an economic and commercial thrust that ignores every warning, indeed maligns every warning.

- Aubrey Rose (5 November 2006)

Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah (7:13) -

When God created Adam, God led him around all of the trees in the Garden of Eden. God told him, ‘See how beautiful and praiseworthy are all of my works. Everything I have created has been created for your sake. Think of this and do not corrupt the world; for if you corrupt it, there will be no one to set it right after you.

Jews, twice a day in prayer, remind themselves to honour the land and its rhythms so that it will continue to provide for them; and if this human-divine-natural contract is violated, ‘*your land shall become a desolation and your cities a ruin*’. **(Lev. 26:33)**

