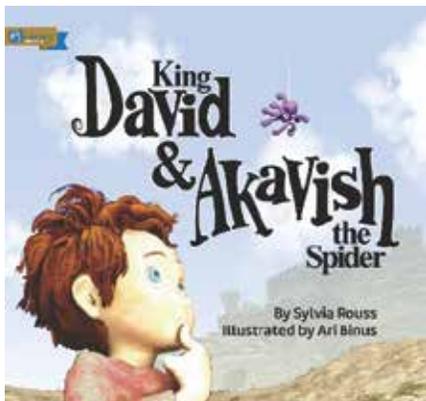




Global Day of Jewish Learning

Curriculum — Under the Same Sky: “The Earth is Full of Your Creations”



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www.theglobalday.org

A Project of the Aleph Society



ELI Talk by Rabbi Lawrence Troster, adapted by Danny Drachsler and Karen Sponder

Facilitator's note: This is a 75-minute session, or 60 minutes if you are not screening the video.

Introduction (3 minutes)

Welcome to the Global Day of Jewish Learning.

Rabbi Lawrence Troster is the Rabbi at Keshet Israel in West Chester, PA and serves as Rabbi-in-Residence at the Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue at Iona College. Today we are going to explore what Rabbi Troster calls “Green Torah Wisdom” — a path towards becoming a Jewish environmentalist.

We will start by screening an ELI Talk given by Rabbi Troster (www.elitalks.org), and then discuss the ideas he raises while delving into Jewish texts on this topic.

ELI talks are presentations on “inspired Jewish ideas”. The talks explore the central themes of Jewish literacy, religious engagement and identity, given in the context of each speaker’s own work, personal experiences, and Jewish or secular texts. The speakers’ passions result in engaging and inspired talks that teach something new or perhaps counterintuitive. You can view them at www.elitalks.org.

Part One: ELI Talk — “Green Torah Wisdom” (22 minutes)

As you watch this ELI Talk, keep these questions in mind:

1. What ideas presented in this video do you find the most inspiring? Why?
2. What concepts do you find the most challenging or surprising? Why?

➤ **Screen the video.** (16 minutes)

➤ **Ask the participants to share their responses to the above two questions.** (6 minutes)

Part Two: Scientific Knowledge and Spiritual Insight (20 minutes)

Rabbi Troster says he realized that, “Some of the greatest spiritual experiences I had ever had were in the natural world.” He mentions summer camp canoe trips that continue to inspire him.

Let’s go out into nature — right now — by reading one of the most beautiful poems about nature ever written: Psalm 104. As you read this Psalm, allow yourself to imagine the scenes it describes, and recall your experiences outside in nature.

➤ Read Text #1 aloud.

תהילים פרק קד

Text #1: Psalm 104: 1–24.

א בָּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי, אֵת-ה': ה' אֱלֹהֵי, גְדֹלַת מְאֹד; הוֹד וְהָדָר לְבָשָׁת.	1 Bless the LORD, O my soul; O LORD, my God, You are very great; You are clothed in glory and majesty,
ב עֲטֵה-אוֹר, כִּשְׁלֵמָה; נוֹטָה שָׁמַיִם, כִּפְרִיעָה.	2 wrapped in a robe of light; You spread the heavens like a tent cloth.
ג הַמְקַרֵּה בַמַּיִם, עֲלִיּוֹתָיו: הַשָּׁם-עֲבִים רְכוּבוֹ; הַמְהַלֵּךְ, עַל-כַּנְפֵי-רוּחַ.	3 He sets the rafters of His lofts in the waters, makes the clouds His chariot, moves on the wings of the wind.
ד עֲשֵׂה מְלֹאכָיו רוּחוֹת; מְשַׁרְתָּיו, אֵשׁ לֵהֵט.	4 He makes the winds His messengers, fiery flames His servants.
ה יִסַּד-אֶרֶץ, עַל-מְכוּנֶיהָ; בַּל-תִּמוּט, עוֹלָם וָעֶד.	5 He established the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never totter.
ו תְּהוֹם, כִּלְבוּשׁ כִּסְיָתוֹ; עַל-הָרִים, יַעֲמְדוּ מַיִם.	6 You made the deep cover it as a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.
ז מִן-גַּעְרָתָךְ יִגּוּסוּן; מִן-קוֹל רַעְמָךְ, יִחַפְזוּן.	7 They fled at Your blast, rushed away at the sound of Your thunder,
ח יַעֲלוּ הָרִים, יִרְדּוּ בְקַעֲוֹת — אֶל-מְקוֹם, זֶה יִסְדַּתְּ לָהֶם.	8 — mountains rising, valleys sinking — to the place You established for them.
ט גְּבוּל-שְׁמֹתָ, בַּל-יַעֲבִירוּן; בַּל-יִשְׁבּוּן, לְכַסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ.	9 You set the bounds they must not pass so that they never again cover the earth.
י הַמְשַׁלַּח מַעַיְנִים, בְּנַחְלֵים; בֵּין הָרִים, יִהְלְכוּן.	10 You make springs gush forth in torrents; they make their way between the hills,
יא יִשְׁקוּ, כָּל-חַיֹּת שָׂדֵי; יִשְׁבְּרוּ פְּרָאִים צְמָאִם.	11 giving drink to all the wild beasts; the wild asses slake their thirst.
יב עֲלִיֵּיהֶם, עוֹף-הַשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁכּוּן; מִבֵּין עֲפָאִים, יִתְנוּ-קוֹל.	12 The birds of the sky dwell beside them and sing among the foliage.
יג מִשְׁקָה הָרִים, מִעֲלִיּוֹתָיו; מִפְּרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיֶיךָ, תִּשְׁבַּע הָאָרֶץ.	13 You water the mountain from Your lofts; the earth is sated from the fruit of Your work.
יד מִצְמִיחַ חֲצִיר, לְבַהֲמָה, וְעֹשֶׁב, לְעִבְדַת הָאָדָם; לְהוֹצִיא לָהֶם, מִן-הָאָרֶץ.	14 You make the grass grow for the cattle, and herbage for man's labor that he may get food out of the earth -
טו וַיֵּן, יִשְׂמַח לִבֵּב-אֲנוּשׁ — לְהַצְהִיל פָּנִים מִשְׁמֶן; וְלָחֶם, לִבֵּב-אֲנוּשׁ יִסְעֵד.	15 wine that cheers the hearts of men oil that makes the face shine, and bread that sustains man's life.
טז יִשְׁבְּעוּ, עֲצֵי ה' — אֲרָזֵי לְבָנוֹן, אֲשֶׁר נָטַע.	16 The trees of the LORD drink their fill, the cedars of Lebanon, His own planting,
יז אֲשֶׁר-שָׁם, צִפְרִים יִקְנְנוּ; חֲסִידָה, בְּרוֹשִׁים בֵּיתָה.	17 where birds make their nests; the stork has her home in the junipers.
יח הָרִים הַגְּבוּהִים, לִיעֲלֵים; סְלַעִים, מְחֹסֶה לְשֹׁפְנִים.	18 The high mountains are for wild goats; the crags are a refuge for rock- badgers.
יט עֲשֵׂה יָרַח, לְמוֹעֲדִים; שָׁמֶשׁ, יָדַע מְבוֹאוֹ.	19 He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows when to set.
כ תִּשַׁח-חֹשֶׁךְ, וַיְהִי לַיְלָה — בּוֹ-תִרְמַשׁ, כָּל-חַיֹּת-הַיַּעַר.	20 You bring on darkness and it is night, when all the beasts of the forests stir.
כא הַכְּפִירִים, שֹׁאֲגִים לְטָרֵף; וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִקַּל, אֲכָלָם.	21 The lions roar for prey, seeking their food from God.
כב תִּזְרַח הַשָּׁמֶשׁ, יִצְאִפוּן; וְאֶל-מְעוֹנֹתָם, יִרְבְּצוּן.	22 When the sun rises, they come home and couch in their dens.
כג יֵצֵא אָדָם לְפָעֻלוֹ; וְלַעֲבֹדָתוֹ עַד-עֶרֶב.	23 Man then goes to his work, to his labor until the evening.
כד מִה-רַבּוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיֶיךָ, ה' — כָּלָם, בְּחַכְמָה עָשִׂיתָ; מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ, קִנְיָנֶךָ.	24 How many are the things You have made, O LORD; You have made them all with wisdom; the earth is full of Your creations.

➤ Ask:

1. Have you had any outdoors/nature experiences, in summer camp or elsewhere, that continue to inspire you? Briefly describe the experience.

➤ Ask participants to take one minute to write a summary of this Psalm for themselves. Then read Rabbi Steinsaltz's summary – Text #2.

In Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz's commentary on this Psalm, he offers the following summary. One of the leading scholars of this century, Rabbi Steinsaltz is best known for his commentary on the entire Talmud and for his work on Jewish mysticism.

➤ Read Text #2 aloud.

Text #2: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. *Tehilim*.

המנון על הבריאה. שירה גדולה על העולם כולו, על הדברים הגדולים והקטנים שבו: על השמים והארץ והים, על דרכי החיים של כל היצורים כולם ועל המחזור הגדול של החיים, הכולל בתוכו את המוות והתחייה.

A hymn about Creation. A great song about the whole world, about the big and the small things in it — about the sky and the earth and the sea, about the ways of life of all the creations, and about the great cycle of life, which encompasses death as well as rebirth.

Maimonides (also known as Rambam) lived in Spain and Egypt in the 12th century; he was a physician and philosopher whose extensive works have been an essential influence within Judaism. Maimonides felt that the study of the natural world was a prerequisite to spiritual life. Within Text #3, Rambam references two other Psalms to illustrate this.

Text #3: Maimonides. *Mishneh Torah, Sefer Madda, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 2:2*. English translation by Isadore Twersky in *A Maimonides Reader*.

הלכות יסודי התורה פרק שני

ב. והיאך היא הדרך לאהבתו ויראתו בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו הנפלאים הגדולים ויראה מהן חכמתו שאין לה ערך ולא קץ מיד הוא אוהב ומשבח ומפאר ומתאוה תאוה גדולה לידע השם הגדול כמו שאמר דוד צמאה נפשי לאלקים לקאל חי וכשמחשב בדברים האלו עצמן מיד הוא נרתע לאחוריו ויפחד ויודע שהוא בריה קטנה שפלה אפלה עומדת בדעת קלה מעוטה לפני תמים דעות כמו שאמר דוד כי אראה שמיך מעשה אצבעותיך מה אנוש כי תזכרנו.

And what is the way that will lead to the love of Him and the fear of Him? When a person contemplates His great and wondrous works and creatures and from them obtains a glimpse of His wisdom which is incomparable and infinite, he will straightaway love Him, praise Him, glorify Him, and long with an exceeding longing to know His great Name; even as David said, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:3). And when he ponders these matters he will recoil frightened, and realize that he is a small creature, lowly and obscure, endowed with slight and slender intelligence, standing in the presence of Him who is perfect in knowledge. And so David said "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers — what is man that You are mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:4-5).

➤ **Ask:**

1. How does Maimonides' concept of the “study of the natural world” lead us to a protective, rather than an exploitative, relationship with nature and science?
2. Maimonides believes that it is the realization of God as the source of all Creation that gives a person feelings of wonder and humility towards the natural world. Think back to your personal experience with nature/the outdoors. What was it about the experience that inspired you?

Maimonides said that by studying nature we would learn, first of all, to create feelings of wonder and love in ourselves when we observe the wisdom of God’s creation. He said it would also inspire a sense of awe and humility, so that we would understand our place in creation and not be so arrogant about it.

Part Three: Long-term Thinking (10 minutes)

What we do to the environment today will affect future generations. Rabbi Troster describes sustainability as a moral idea, that we should “meet the needs of the present generation without jeopardizing the needs of the future generation”.

The Talmud relates this story of Honi “The Circle Maker”, a Jewish scholar of the 1st century B.C.E.

Text #4: Babylonian Talmud *Ta’anit* 23a. English translation [bold text] and commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in the *Koren Talmud Bavli*.

יומא חד הוה אזל באורקא, תזייה להווא
גברא דהוה נטע חרויבא. אמר ליה: האי
עד כמה שנין טעין? אמר ליה: עד שבעין
שנין. אמר ליה: פשיטא לך דחייית שבעין
שנין? אמר ליה: האי גברא עלמא בחרויבא
אשבחתיה. כי היכי דשתלי לי אבהתי,
שתלי נמי לבראי.

One day, he was walking along the road when he saw a certain man planting a carob tree.^b Honi said to him: This tree, after how many years will it bear fruit? The man said to him: It will not produce fruit until seventy years have passed. Honi said to him: Is it obvious to you that you will live seventy years, that you expect to benefit from this tree? He said to him: That man himself found a world full of carob trees. Just as my ancestors planted for me, I too am planting for my descendants.

➤ **Ask:**

1. Consider the man planting the carob tree. Is he “meeting the needs of the present generation without jeopardizing the needs of the future generation”, what Rabbi Troster defines as sustainability? Why or why not? Is it sustainable to provide only for the future and not for the present?
2. The man planting the carob tree tells us that we are shaping the world we will bestow to our heirs. What are you doing now — what are you “planting” — that the next and future generations will inherit?

The fate in store for future generations hinges upon the actions we take today. But it is not necessary to look beyond the present to see that all humankind ultimately shares a common welfare.

Part Four: Everything is Interconnected (10 minutes)

Rabbi Troster shows us that everything is interconnected. This is more than a scientific fact or a spiritual philosophy; Rabbi Troster says it is a moral idea. What we buy, how it was made, where it came from, how the people who made it were treated, and the whole process's impact on the environment are all morally interconnected.

In our tradition the idea of interconnectedness is shown in some of our most beautiful texts — found in the book of Psalms — what the rabbis in the Talmud called the “*Seder Bereishit*” (the Order of Creation).

► Ask:

1. Thinking back to the Psalm which opened this discussion, which images in this Psalm evoke a feeling of interconnectedness for you?

Text #5 is from *Leviticus Rabbah*, a collection of sermons on the themes of Leviticus. It describes the moral importance of our connection to the world around us.

Text #5: *Leviticus Rabbah*, Margoliot Edition, Leviticus 4:6. Translation by Rabbi Troster.

תני ר' שמעון בן יוחי משל לבני אדם שהיו נתונים בספינה ונטל אחד מהן מקדח והתחיל קודח תחתיו. אמרו לו חביריו למה את עושה כן, אמר להן מה איכפת לכם, לא תחתי אני קודח. אמרו לו מפני שאתה מיציף עלינו את הספינה.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, it is to be compared to people who are traveling in a boat. And one of them took a drill and began to drill underneath him. His companions said, “What are you doing?” and he said, “What do you care? Am I not drilling under myself? It’s my seat...” And his companions said, “But you will flood the boat for us all.”

► Ask:

1. Is the boat in this Midrash a good analogy for situations in the real world? Why or why not?
2. Have you witnessed people who act like the man in the boat who drilled underneath himself? What did those people do? How did you, or your group or community, respond?

Conclusion (10 minutes)

We live and act within a world created by the Divine, a world in which the fate of all life is bound up together across time as well as through space — we are in the boat together. How can we come to terms with the responsibility we bear for this world? Rabbi Steinsaltz proposes we imagine ourselves as partners with the Divine.

Text #6: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. “Eyes to Earth, Heart to Heaven”. 17 September 2014.

The Talmud (*Yevamot* 105b) records a discussion regarding whether one who prays should focus his attention on earth or Heaven...The Talmud’s conclusion is that we turn our eyes to earth but our hearts to Heaven. Our eyes focus on earth, so that we see and deal with the world’s problems and pains. At the same time, however, we turn our hearts to Heaven, not for practical reasons but for our own betterment. God surely could have made a perfect, static world, but He did not. He created a dynamic world with lacunae of all kinds, lacunae that facilitate movement and change. God then entrusted this world to Man, a completely improbable being whose Divine soul rests in the body of a gorilla. He created Man with both the capacity for greatness and the susceptibility to sin. Then He made him a partner, albeit a very junior partner, in Creation. From that moment it became our responsibility to finish His work, to observe every aspect of our world, to take responsibility for its problems and, most of all, to care about one another.

➤ Ask:

1. Rabbi Steinsaltz speaks of “*lacunae*” (holes, gaps, voids) in the world, making “movement and change” possible. In terms of the natural world — the “environment” — what do you consider to be some of the greatest opportunities for movement and change?
2. What would it look like to “take responsibility” for those problems, as Rabbi Steinsaltz suggests we do, so that we can have a more positive effect on the world 70 years from now and beyond?

“Dealing with the world’s problems and pains” means addressing the challenges that confront all people — creating a secure place to live, building loving and supportive relationships with those around us, and caring for those less fortunate. These challenges have basic needs at their root, needs for food, clothing and shelter, which we depend on the natural world to provide.

Today we have gained some initial “Green Torah Wisdom”, as we have seen how the combination of Jewish texts and modern science offers guidance for living a sustainable and just life — one in balance with the natural world.

Part Two: Scientific Knowledge and Spiritual Insight

Text #1: Psalm 104: 1–24.

תהילים פרק קד

<p>א בָּרַכִּי נַפְשִׁי, אֶת-ה': ה' אֱלֹהֵי, גְדֹלָת מֵאֹד; הוֹד וְהָדָר לְבָשָׂת.</p> <p>ב עֹטֶה-אוֹר, כְּשִׁלְמָה; נוֹטֵה שָׁמַיִם, כַּפְרִיָּעָה.</p> <p>ג הִמְקִירָה בַמַּיִם, עֲלִיּוֹתָיו: הַשָּׁם-עֹבִיִּים רְכוּבוֹ; הִמְהִלָּה, עַל-כַּנְפֵי-רוּחַ.</p> <p>ד עָשָׂה מְלֹאכָיו רוּחוֹת; מְשַׁרְתָּיו, אֵשׁ לְהֵט.</p> <p>ה יָסַד-אֲרָץ, עַל-מְכוּנֶיהָ; בַּל-תִּמוּט, עוֹלָם וָעֶד.</p> <p>ו תְּהוֹם, כְּלָבוּשׁ כְּסִיתוֹ; עַל-הָרִים, יַעֲמְדוּ מַיִם.</p> <p>ז מִן-גִּיעָרָתָהּ יִנוּסוּן; מִן-קוֹל רַעְמָה, יִתְפַּזּוּן.</p> <p>ח יַעֲלוּ הָרִים, יִרְדּוּ בְקָעוֹת — אֶל-מְקוֹם, זֶה יִסְדָּתָהּ לָהֶם.</p> <p>ט גְּבוּל-שִׁמְתָּהּ, בַּל-יַעֲבִרוּן; בַּל-יִשְׁכּוּן, לְכִסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ.</p> <p>י הִמְשַׁלַּח מַעְיָנִים, בְּנַחְלִים; בֵּין הָרִים, הֵלְכוּן.</p> <p>יא יִשְׁקוּ, כָּל-חַיֵּיהֶם שָׁדִי; יִשְׁבְּרוּ פְּרָאִים צִמָּאִם.</p> <p>יב עֲלִיָּהֶם, עוֹף-הַשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׁכּוּן; מִבֵּין עֲפָאִים, יִתְנוּ-קוֹל.</p> <p>יג מִשְׁקָה הָרִים, מִעֲלִיּוֹתָיו; מִפְּרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיהָ, תִּשְׁבַּע הָאָרֶץ.</p> <p>יד מַצְמִיחַ חֲצִיר, לְבַהֲמָה, וְעֵשֶׂב, לְעִבְדַת הָאָדָם; לְהוֹצִיא לָחֶם, מִן-הָאָרֶץ.</p> <p>טו וַיַּיֵּן, יִשְׂמַח לִב־אָנוּשׁ — לְהַצְהִיל פָּנִים מִשְׁמֹן; וְלָחֶם, לִב־אָנוּשׁ יִסְעֵד.</p> <p>טז יִשְׁבְּעוּ, עֵצֵי ה' — אֲרָזֵי לְבָנוֹן, אֲשֶׁר נָטַע.</p> <p>יז אֲשֶׁר-שָׁם, צִפְרִים יִקְנְנוּ; תְּסִידָה, בְּרוֹשִׁים בֵּיתָהּ.</p> <p>יח הָרִים הַגְּבוּהִים, לְיַעֲלִים; סְלַעִים, מַחֲסֵה לְשִׁפְנִים.</p> <p>יט עָשָׂה יָרֵחַ, לְמוֹעֲדִים; שָׁמֶשׁ, יָדַע מְבוֹאוֹ.</p> <p>כ תִּשְׁת-חֹשֶׁךְ, וַיְהִי לַיְלָה — בּוֹ-תִרְמַשׁ, כָּל-חַיֵּיהֶם יַעֲר.</p> <p>כא הַכְּפִירִים, שֹׁאֲגִים לְטָרֶף; וּלְבָקָשׁ מִקָּל, אֶכְלָם.</p> <p>כב תִּזְרַח הַשָּׁמֶשׁ, יֵאָסְפוּן; וְאֶל-מְעוֹנֹתָם, יִרְבְּצוּן.</p> <p>כג יֵצֵא אָדָם לְפַעֲלוֹ; וְלַעֲבֹדָתוֹ עַד-יָעֵרֵב.</p> <p>כד מַה-רַּבּוּ מַעֲשֵׂיהָ, ה' — כָּלֵם, בְּתִכְמָה עֲשִׂיתָ; מִלְּאָה הָאָרֶץ, קִנְיָנָהּ.</p>	<p>1 Bless the LORD, O my soul; O LORD, my God, You are very great; You are clothed in glory and majesty,</p> <p>2 wrapped in a robe of light; You spread the heavens like a tent cloth.</p> <p>3 He sets the rafters of His lofts in the waters. makes the clouds His chariot, moves on the wings of the wind.</p> <p>4 He makes the winds His messengers, fiery flames His servants.</p> <p>5 He established the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never totter.</p> <p>6 You made the deep cover it as a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.</p> <p>7 They fled at Your blast. rushed away at the sound of Your thunder,</p> <p>8 — mountains rising, valleys sinking — to the place You established for them.</p> <p>9 You set the bounds they must not pass so that they never again cover the earth.</p> <p>10 You make springs gush forth in torrents; they make their way between the hills,</p> <p>11 giving drink to all the wild beasts; the wild asses slake their thirst.</p> <p>12 The birds of the sky dwell beside them and sing among the foliage.</p> <p>13 You water the mountain from Your lofts; the earth is sated from the fruit of Your work.</p> <p>14 You make the grass grow for the cattle, and herbage for man's labor that he may get food out of the earth —</p> <p>15 wine that cheers the hearts of men oil that makes the face shine, and bread that sustains man's life.</p> <p>16 The trees of the LORD drink their fill, the cedars of Lebanon, His own planting,</p> <p>17 where birds make their nests; the stork has her home in the junipers.</p> <p>18 The high mountains are for wild goats; the crags are a refuge for rock-badgers.</p> <p>19 He made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows when to set.</p> <p>20 You bring on darkness and it is night, when all the beasts of the forests stir.</p> <p>21 The lions roar for prey, seeking their food from God.</p> <p>22 When the sun rises, they come home and couch in their dens.</p> <p>23 Man then goes to his work, to his labor until the evening.</p> <p>24 How many are the things You have made, O LORD; You have made them all with wisdom; the earth is full of Your creations.</p>
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Text #2: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. *Tehilim*.

המנון על הבריאה. שירה גדולה על העולם כולו, על הדברים הגדולים והקטנים שבו: על השמים והארץ והים, על דרכי החיים של כל היצורים כולם ועל המחזור הגדול של החיים, הכולל בתוכו את המוות והתחייה.

A hymn about Creation. A great song about the whole world, about the big and the small things in it — about the sky and the earth and the sea, about the ways of life of all the creations, and about the great cycle of life, which encompasses death as well as rebirth.

Text #3: Maimonides. *Mishneh Torah, Sefer Madda, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 2:2*. English translation by Isadore Twersky in *A Maimonides Reader*.

הלכות יסודי התורה פרק שני

ב. והיאך היא הדרך לאהבתו ויראתו בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו הנפלאים הגדולים ויראה מהן חכמתו שאין לה ערך ולא קץ מיד הוא אוהב ומשבח ומפאר ומתאוה תאוה גדולה לידע השם הגדול כמו שאמר דוד צמאה נפשי לאלקים לקאל חי וכשמחשב בדברים האלו עצמן מיד הוא נרתע לאחוריו ויפחד ויודע שהוא בריה קטנה שפלה אפלה עומדת בדעת קלה מעוטה לפני תמים דעות כמו שאמר דוד כי אראה שמיך מעשה אצבעותיך מה אנוש כי תזכרנו.

And what is the way that will lead to the love of Him and the fear of Him? When a person contemplates His great and wondrous works and creatures and from them obtains a glimpse of His wisdom which is incomparable and infinite, he will straightaway love Him, praise Him, glorify Him, and long with an exceeding longing to know His great Name; even as David said, “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:3). And when he ponders these matters he will recoil frightened, and realize that he is a small creature, lowly and obscure, endowed with slight and slender intelligence, standing in the presence of Him who is perfect in knowledge. And so David said “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers — what is man that You are mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:4–5).

Part Three: Long-term Thinking

Text #4: Babylonian *Talmud Ta’anit 23a*. English translation [bold text] and commentary [plain text] by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz in the *Koren Talmud Bavli*.

יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא, חזייה להווא גברא דהוה נטע חרובא. אמר ליה: האי עד כמה שנין טעין? אמר ליה: עד שבעין שנין. אמר ליה: פשיטא לך דחייית שבעין שנין? אמר ליה: האי גברא עלמא בחרובא אשבחתייה. כי היכי דשתלי לי אבתי, שתלי נמי לבראי.

One day, he was walking along the road when he saw a certain man planting a carob tree.^b Honi said to him: This tree, after how many years will it bear fruit? The man said to him: It will not produce fruit until seventy years have passed. Honi said to him: Is it obvious to you that you will live seventy years, that you expect to benefit from this tree? He said to him: That man himself found a world full of carob trees. Just as my ancestors planted for me, I too am planting for my descendants.

Part Four: Everything is Interconnected

Text #5: Midrash Rabbah, Margoliot Edition, Leviticus 4:6. Translation by Rabbi Troster.

תני ר' שמעון בן יוחי משל לבני אדם שהיו נתונים בספינה ונטל אחד מהן מקדה והתחיל קודח תחתיו. אמרו לו חביריו למה את עושה כן, אמר להן מה איכפת לכם, לא תחתי אני קודח. אמרו לו מפני שאתה מיציף עלינו את הספינה.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, it is to be compared to people who are traveling in a boat. And one of them took a drill and began to drill underneath him. His companions said, "What are you doing?" and he said, "What do you care? Am I not drilling under myself? It's my seat..." And his companions said, "But you will flood the boat for us all."

Conclusion

Text # 6: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz. "Eyes to Earth, Heart to Heaven".
17 September 2014.

The Talmud (*Yevamot* 105b) records a discussion regarding whether one who prays should focus his attention on earth or Heaven...The Talmud's conclusion is that we turn our eyes to earth but our hearts to Heaven. Our eyes focus on earth, so that we see and deal with the world's problems and pains. At the same time, however, we turn our hearts to Heaven, not for practical reasons but for our own betterment. God surely could have made a perfect, static world, but He did not. He created a dynamic world with lacunae of all kinds, lacunae that facilitate movement and change. God then entrusted this world to Man, a completely improbable being whose Divine soul rests in the body of a gorilla. He created Man with both the capacity for greatness and the susceptibility to sin. Then He made him a partner, albeit a very junior partner, in Creation. From that moment it became our responsibility to finish His work, to observe every aspect of our world, to take responsibility for its problems and, most of all, to care about one another.



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