

ECO JUDAISM

This resource has been generously provided by [JTree](#) for EcoSynagogue to help engage communities in conservation work and store carbon.



Planting and protecting forests and their habitats

עַתָּה לְטַעַת | Let's plant

"I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise, I am planting for my children."

- Ta'anit 23a

JTree is a project in partnership with EcoJudaism and was conceived by Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg following a report by Professor Crowther, endorsed by the UN in the summer of 2019 on how many trillion trees were needed and, critically – where. It was launched at Tu B'Shevat 2020 in the UK and the US. It is led here by Rabbi Wittenberg and Angelina Doherty, and in the US by Hazon and Dr Ace Levene.

JTree is all about planting trees. It's a positive, collective, international Jewish response to the Climate Crisis. The world needs trillions of trees. Through JTree we can all help plant the right trees in the right places in the right way. JTree in the UK has **planted 21992 trees** so far!

The Jewish New Year of Trees, Tu B'Shevat, is a time when our communities remember the ongoing importance of trees as part of The Creation and their crucial role now and for future generations. Trees give life, we need them.

“The spirit that lives in the trees and all nature used to converse with people, for all life was created for companionship.”

– Midrash Bereshit Rabbah 13:2

Trees occupy a special place in Jewish thought. Their symbolic and practical importance is woven throughout traditional Jewish sources, helping us understand – and hopefully, improve – our relationship to The Creation: our world. Jewish tradition teaches us the importance of planting trees, protecting them, and using them responsibly. These teachings help us understand lessons of long-term sustainability which apply not only to trees, but to the natural environment as a whole.

“See My works, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are. And everything that I created, I created it for you. Be careful not to spoil or destroy My world – for if you do, there will be nobody after you to repair it.”

- Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

The Talmud teaches the following story: One day as Honi was walking along he saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked him “how many years will it take until it will bear fruit?” The man replied “not for seventy years”. Honi asked him, “do you really believe you’ll live another seventy years?” The man answered, “I found this world provided with carob trees, and as my ancestors planted them for me, so I too plant them for my descendants.” (Taanit 23a:15)

Planting trees is a long-term investment which may not bear fruit immediately. Thus, the instruction to plant trees is an instruction to think beyond the present moment to the needs of the future. Trees are so important in Jewish thought that the Torah itself is called “a tree of life.” Jewish wisdom about trees has much to teach us about how we relate The Creation, and to all the natural resources upon which we rely.

What Jewish wisdom teaches us about trees:

- We need to think and prepare for the future, not only our short-term needs
- We must avoid needless waste
- Trees are an important part of our life support system
- We have no right to take out our human aggression on trees or nature
- Trees are an essential piece of preparing and maintaining a good environment for human beings.
- When we use our resources in a responsible way, this brings holiness.

These teachings apply not only to trees, but to all of our resources. They apply not only to ancient Israel, but to our troubled, environmentally-stressed modern world. Tu B'Shevat brings this wisdom into our lives again each year and can help us become more aware of our precious resources, and to be more careful about how we use them. In so doing, we will take better care of our world, sanctify our daily actions, and bring joy to The Creation. Then the words every Kabbalat Shabbat will be fulfilled:

“The heavens will be glad and the earth will rejoice...then all the trees of the forest will sing with joy—before Hashem...”

- Psalms 96:12-13

At JTree we look at the best ways we can engage communities in understanding the importance of trees, learning, and getting involved in three different ways:

- 1 - [Donate](#) to plant trees through JTree's [partners](#)
- 2 - [Register](#) trees you plant
- 3 - [Get Planting!](#)

Donate To Plant Trees

As individuals or communities to have trees planted by [our experienced partners](#). Your trees will be counted in the total number of trees planted by the Jewish Community in the UK. Send the gift of a tree, donate for special occasions or life cycle events such as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah or to store carbon, and include your dedication message and you will receive a donation certificate.

Register Your Trees

As individuals or communities, register the trees you plant and add to the total trees planted by the Jewish community. We will review your registration and once approved, your story will be shared with the community through our website and pinned on our world-wide map.

Get Planting!

Make a difference with your own hands! Learn how to plant trees, join one of our planting projects as individuals and communities or for Bar/Bat Mitzvah projects. Or start your own project and invite others in the community to join!

If you have any questions, you can always contact directly info@jtree.org.uk

“If you are busy planting trees and hear that the Messiah has come, first finish planting, then go to greet him.”

– Avot de Rabbi Nathan, 31b

Resources

JTree offers a number of helpful resources which will grow further.

To understand more about how important tree planting and rewilding is, visit the [Carbon Storage resource](#) on the website.

You can also explore other resources like the [rewilding](#) and [urban planting](#) resources and make a commitment to arrange conservation work together.

Some examples of our tree planting projects:

1037 women have been trained on project planning and management and now possess the relevant skills and knowledge. 35123 tree seedlings were purchased and supplied to 357 women, helping them increase their food security, income and support their environment in the near future.

“Tree planting in my garden will support the ground and work as wind breakers. A measure to reduce soil erosion. Grow more trees, save the gardens and be free from hunger and poverty”

– Mbambu Constance, Bunyandiko Village, Uganda

The Woodland Trust’s project at Langely Vale First World War Centenary Woods will maintain existing woodlands and ensure the protection of their habitats, and transform the existing arable land into both a natural haven and a living First World War memorial.