

# Tu Bishvat (The Jewish New year for trees)

Nature conservation in the Bible.

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The Bible presents nature as God's creation, which humans are called to steward, protect, and respect rather than exploit

. Key themes include the divine ownership of the earth (Psalm 24:1), the command to "work and take care of" the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15), and specific laws prohibiting environmental destruction (Deuteronomy 20:19-20, Leviticus 25:5).

## Key Principles of Environmental Stewardship

- **Stewardship over Ownership:** Humans are appointed as caretakers (stewards) of the earth, not owners. The earth belongs to God (Psalm 24:1, Leviticus 25:23).
- **Active Care and Protection:** In Genesis 2:15, Adam is placed in the Garden to "tend and watch over it," suggesting active, sustainable management.
- **Respect for Resources:** Biblical commands like letting the land rest every seventh year (Leviticus 25:5) and restrictions against cutting down trees during war (Deuteronomy 20:19) promote conservation and sustainable use of resources.
- **Value of Non-Human Life:** God cares for all creatures (Psalm 145:9), including wildlife (Job 12:9-10), indicating that the natural world has inherent value to the Creator.
- **Nature Praises God:** Nature is seen as declaring God's glory (Psalm 19:1) and actively rejoicing (Psalm 96:11-13), requiring it to be protected rather than defiled.

## Specific Biblical Examples

- **Animal Welfare:** Laws prohibited taking a mother bird with her eggs (Deuteronomy 22:6-7) and required resting animals (Exodus 20:10).

- **Agriculture:** The Sabbath year for the land (Leviticus 25:5) prevented over-farming, allowing the soil to recover.
- **Resource Conservation:** The prohibition against destroying fruit trees in wartime (Deuteronomy 20:19) implies a duty to protect food sources and the ecosystem, even in times of conflict.

The overall biblical message is that caring for the environment is a religious duty (Genesis 2:15), reflecting God's own care for his creation.