Connections Between Taking Action for the Earth and Jewish Values

Jewish values directly call upon us to protect the planet. Learn about some of these values below:

1   **Shmita**

One Jewish tradition connected to environmentalism is Shmita, the year during which we allow the earth to rest. You can learn more about Shmita and environmentalism **here.**

2   **Tikkun Olam**

A tenet of our tradition central to our communal Jewish ethos is the idea of Tikkun Olam, which translates literally to "repairing the world". In the midst of a climate crisis, this value is incredibly relevant, taken to its most literal.

3   **Bal Tashchit**

The biblical value of *Bal Taschit* requires us to not waste or destroy. Deuteronomy 20:19 reads "When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by wielding an ax against them; for thou mayest eat of them but thou shalt not cut them down; for is the tree of the field man that it should be besieged of thee? Only the trees of which thou knowest that they are not trees for food, them thou mayest destroy and cut down..." Many interpret this passage as a prohibition of needless destruction of nature. Read more here.

4   **Torah as a Tree of Life**
Th In Jewish tradition, we teach that the Torah is a "Tree of Life," a source of spiritual growth, sustenance, and life throughout all the ages of history. Our metaphor demonstrates the value of plants and trees in Judaism--the natural world is something tremendously special and holy. Just as Jews are taught to protect the Torah by "putting a fence around" its teachings and words, so too do we protect trees and the Earth but putting a fence around it to ward off the destruction of human action and climate change. Read more about the Torah as a tree, and trees as life here.

5   **Judaism as a Land Based Practice**
From the focus of holidays of Sukkot and Tu B'Shevat, to the traditional fruits eaten during celebrations and rituals, to the seasonal cycle of the Jewish calendar, Jewish living centers around the Earth and the land on which we live. Let's share our land values as we fight for a clean and liveable future for all.

6   **Shabbat**
The theme of Shabbat is that humans need to rest from our usual activities to rejuvenate, taking a step back from production and consumption practices. As consumption is a historic driving factor causing climate change, we can apply the lessons of Shabbat--not to overwork and over-value unregulated consumerism--to our environmental activism.

7   **Shomrei Adamah**
Breishit/Genesis teaches us from the very beginnings of the Torah that humans are to act as Gaurdians of the Earth, *Shomrei Adamah*. Let us not fail this imperative.

8 **Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof**
"Justice, justice shall you pursue" –– this ubiquitous Jewish text reminds us that, in our climate activism, we must center social and environmental justice for frontline communities, combatting systemic oppression while we organize to mitigate the climate crisis.

9 **Everything in Moderation**
Through various passages of the Talmud, and many commentaries by prolific religious thinker Maimonides, Judaism advises strongly against excessive intake, in favor of moderation in consumption and activity in all aspects of our lives. Environmental abuse and climate change are catastrophes of far too much consumerism in our society. By practicing moderation, we can lessen our impact on the Earth.

10 **Pikuach Nefesh**
In Jewish tradition, we are taught that saving life supersedes all else; we must do all we can to protect life. The climate crisis is a matter of life or death––hundreds of thousands are already dying globally, and without action, the toll on the human population will be unthinkable. As we face a sixth era of mass extinction of all varieties and species of life of Earth, allow pikuach nefesh to guide you in your activism.

11 **Learn more**
Check out **this resource** created by Hazon to learn more about connections between Judiasm and the Environment.