

## The Ramah Nesiya Educational Program

The Nesiya program here at Ramah has changed a lot since last summer. A major part of that change is the education piece. Each Nesiya will have a theme and a corresponding source book. The source book will be organized according to the days of the Nesiya.

Before leaving camp, each edah's staff will be trained to help us run the programming for their Nesiya. If possible, we will also meet with the edah as a whole and do a program that will kick off the theme for their Nesiya while still at camp. While on the Nesiya, campers will study a piece of the theme each day. Each day's programming will be organized to build on what was studied the day before and help work towards a better understanding of whatever the larger theme for the Nesiya is.

Programming on the Nesiyyot will be done in two ways. First, every day there will be 40 minutes of "formal" studying. This will usually include some kind of Sichah and activity. Throughout the day, on the trails, and at T'filot, we will also facilitate small components to our educational theme. Activities might include some kind of drama activity, movement exercise, writing exercises, or visual art.

Source books will all be organized similar to this one. They will include an introduction to the overall educational theme of the Nesiya, a set of texts for each day and a series of Chevruta, study partner, questions for each day. The texts will be given in English and Hebrew when possible, and will include traditional Jewish texts as well as poetry, modern literature, and other applicable sources.

The goal of the program is to facilitate learning and understanding of themes such as inspiration, tikkun olam, prayer, b'tzelem Elohim and responsibility. We are to act as guides to help campers and staff alike discover new and creative understandings of all these things in our lives.

We are using the natural world as our classroom, and this should never be forgotten. It is not a coincidence that such themes are being looked at on an outdoor program. The natural world is an ideal classroom in many ways for the study of Jewish related topics. It is the natural wonders of this world that have endured while people have not, and it is the same natural world around us that has inspired Jewish thinkers for thousands of years. It is incumbent upon us to relate all of our studying to this world around us, and in so doing relate ourselves to the world around us.

**The Magic Touch**  
**Staff Nesiya**  
**Ramah New England**  
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The commandments of the Torah are divided in to two kinds: Positive and Negative commandments. These are known as Mitzvot Asseh and Mitzvot Lo Taasseh. The question is often asked: Why is this mitzvah given in terms of what not to do while others tell us what to do? While there is no answer for this question for every mitzvah, a careful discussion of each mitzvah in terms of this question will yield some interesting insights.

As Environmental Jewish Educators this summer, it is important for us to understand the way mitzvot work and the way we are commanded to care for the earth, each other, and ourselves. The discussions and exercises this week will be focussed around two specific mitzvot concerning the environment and the place of mitzvot in general in our lives.

Deuteronomy teaches us "When you lay seige and battle against a city for a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding an ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down." (20:19) This is the source of a law known as Bal Tashchit. Bal Tashchit means Do Not Destroy. It is a law that has been interpreted in many interesting ways. It is up to us to find how we connect to this Mitzvah Lo Taasseh. As we often do in the Jewish culture, we have taken this law and expanded it to discuss all kinds of waste and destruction. Some of the sources in this Choveret, Source Book, will help us to discuss the law of bal tashchit and how we understand it.

"And the Eternal, God, took the Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and to keep it." (Genesis 2:15) This important and often quoted line, from the book of Breishit, is a good starting point for our discussions. This line speaks about both tikkun olam, and our place in the world. In Avot d'Rabbi Nattan we are taught "He who buys grain in the market, to what is he similar? To a child who is cut off from his mother, and although it is taken to homes of wet nurses it is not satisfied. And he who buys bread in the market, to what is he compared? To a man who digs his own grave - a wretched, precarious existence. But he who eats of his own produce is like a child reared at his mother's breast." (30:6/29a) Through the general summer camp experience and the Nesiyyot we lead, we will have the chance to show campers how to connect to the Makom (place or God).

We will start our studies and exploration in the book of Breishit and study creation. The tellings of the creation of the world will help give grounding to our discussions. These two stories will set the scene and help us begin to discover our place in this world.

# The Creation of the Earth and Humans

**Activity Day 1** Have a volunteer read Genesis 1:1 - 2:3. When they are finished, ask the reader to briefly share how the text makes them feel. Have another volunteer read the same text as a “haunting” story which has dark scenes, or which speaks to the reader directly and threatens to undo itself if the text is not followed. Discuss the difference between the two readings. Have another person volunteer and do a dramatic reading in a different style that speaks to them and expresses some of his or her thoughts on the text. Discuss the different readings and how the same text offers itself to so many interpretations through style of reading, without even spending time on interpreting the words.

**Activity Day 2** Stand in a circle. One person starts by using an imaginary object that they have thought of in their mind. They should not say what it is, but rather interact with it. For example, if it were a ball, one could throw it up and down, bounce it on the ground, etc. The one who started should turn to the person on his or her right and give the object over to them. The person who receives the object should continue to use it and then actively change it in to a new object, stretching, folding, and adding as necessary. This person should, in turn, hand it over to the person on his or her right. This should go all the way around the circle once. Since it often takes a group new at this sort of thing a while to really get the hang of it, go around a second time if people seem to be ready and wanting to be more creative and if time permits. Everyone should pay attention as the object goes around. The whole exercise should be done silently.

After the exercise is complete, have a brief discussion about creating, changing, and how in the exercise each person was both creator and receiver, and the process of changing something received to something wanted.

## Chevruta Questions

The first telling of the creation of the world, Genesis (Breishit) 1:1 - 2:3 Day 1

1. Why did God create the world in the first place? Look at what God created and what the connection between all that God created might be.
2. What Logic can one find in the order of creation? What might we learn from this about God’s plan?
3. What does the text mean by “Dominion” (Yirdu) in Pasuk 26 of the first chapter? What can this piece of the text teach us about responsibility? Look at Rashi for an interesting interpretation.

The second telling of the creation of the world, Genesis (Breishit) 2:4 - 2:25, and how it relates to the first. Day 2

1. What is the difference between the creation of the human in the first and in the second version of the creation?
2. What is the relationship between the earth and the human being in the second version of the creation? How does this differ from the relationship between the earth and the human in the first version?
3. How do the two versions of creation told here compliment each other? What can we learn from this about our place in the world around us?











וְרַע לְכֶם וְהִי הָאָרֶץ לְאִשְׁכְּלָה: לְאִשְׁכְּל־חַיִּים הָאָרֶץ וְלִכְל-  
 עֹרֹת הַיָּשִׁמׁוּם וְלִכְל וְרוֹמֵשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ נִפְשׁ  
 חַיִּים אֲתֵּם-כִּלְיֵיךְ. אֲשֶׁר לְאִשְׁכְּלָה וְהִי-כֵן: לֹא וְהָאֵ-  
 אֲלֹהִים אֲתֵּם-כִּלְיֵי אֲשֶׁר אֵלֶיךָ וְהָיְתָה-טוֹב מְאֹד וְהִי-  
 עֶרֶב וְהִי-בֹקֵר יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי: פ  
 כֹּחַ וְהִכְלִי הַשְׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכֹחַ-לְבָאִם: בְּיַד-אֱלֹהִים  
 בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִלְּאֲכֵנּוּ אֲשֶׁר אֵלֶיךָ וְהַשְׁבַּח בַּיּוֹם  
 הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל-מְלָאכְתְּנוּ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים  
 אֶת-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי כֹחַ שְׂבַח מִכָּל-  
 מְלָאכְתְּנוּ אֲשֶׁר-בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת: פ

וְאֵלֶּיךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הַשְּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ כִּי-בְרָאָם בַּיּוֹם  
 ז

ל וְאֵלֶּיךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲרָעָא וְיָקַל עוֹפֵא דְשַׁמַּיָא וְיָקַל דְרֻחֵשׁ עַל אֲרָעָא וְיִי בֵּינָא נַפְשָׁא  
 הַרְמָא וְזֹה כֹחַ עֲשֵׂא לְמִכָּל יוֹמֵהּ כֵּן: לֹא וְהָיָה יוֹם הַזֶּה עֶרֶב וְהָיָה  
 סָמֹךְ לַיּוֹמָא וְהָיָה רַבֵּשׁ וְהָיָה צִפּוּר יוֹם שְׁחִיחָא: א וְאֵשְׁכְּלָה לִשְׂבָח אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ  
 יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי: ב וְשָׂעִי יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי אֵלֶיךָ וְהָיָה בְּיוֹמָא שְׂבַח עָשִׂיתָ  
 מִכָּל עֲבֻדְתְּנוּ וְיִי עֶבֶד: ג וְהָיָה יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי אֵלֶיךָ וְהָיָה בְּיוֹמָא שְׂבַח עָשִׂיתָ  
 מִכָּל עֲבֻדְתְּנוּ וְיִי עֶבֶד: ד אֵלֶּיךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֵלֶיךָ וְהָיָה בְּיוֹמָא שְׂבַח עָשִׂיתָ  
 וְיִי עֶבֶד: ה

לְאֵם וְהָאֵשֶׁר נִסְתִּי לְכֶם אֵת כֹּחַ: יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי: הַיּוֹמָה יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי בְּיַד עַמְּךָ בְּרָאשִׁית  
 לַיּוֹם: שְׁחִיחָה עֲשִׂיתָ, עַל מַחַשׁ שֶׁמְבַקֵּי עֲלֵיֶם: וְיָקַל הַמִּשָּׁה חֲתֻמָּה חֲתֻמָּה יוֹמֵהּ יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי:  
 יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי: כֹּחַ הַלֵּוִים וְהַיּוֹמִים עַד יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי: הָיָה בְּיַד הַמִּשְׁכָּח לְמַסַּח הַתּוֹרָה:  
 ב (כ) וְכֹחַ אֱלֹהִים בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי: ר שְׂמַחְנוּ אֵפְרָיִם: בְּיַד דָּם שְׂמַחְנוּ יוֹדֵעַ עַמְּךָ וְהָיָה  
 צִפּוּר לְהַתְקוֹת מִיּוֹם עַל הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה שִׁינִיעַ עֵמֶיךָ וְהָיָה יוֹמֵהּ יוֹמֵהּ יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי:  
 וְהָיָה כְּאֵלֶּיךָ כֹּחַ כֹּחַ בָּיוֹם הַזֶּה: מִה הָיָה הַמִּשָּׁה חֲתֻמָּה מִיּוֹמֵהּ יוֹמֵהּ יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי:  
 מִיּוֹמֵהּ יוֹמֵהּ הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה (ג) וְהָיָה וְהָיָה בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי: עֵמֶיךָ עֵמֶיךָ עֵמֶיךָ  
 יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עֵמֶיךָ עֵמֶיךָ הַשְּׁשִׁי (ד) כֹּחַ הַמִּשָּׁה וְהָיָה כְּאֵלֶּיךָ כֹּחַ עֵמֶיךָ עֵמֶיךָ  
 הַמִּשָּׁה כְּאֵלֶּיךָ עֵמֶיךָ הַשְּׁשִׁי: אֲשֶׁר בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים לְשִׂמְחַת הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה  
 וְהָיָה כְּאֵלֶּיךָ עֵמֶיךָ הַשְּׁשִׁי: אֲשֶׁר בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים לְשִׂמְחַת הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה  
 וְהָיָה כְּאֵלֶּיךָ עֵמֶיךָ הַשְּׁשִׁי: אֲשֶׁר בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים לְשִׂמְחַת הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה הַמִּשָּׁה

tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food. <sup>30</sup>And to every animal of the earth, and to every fowl of the heaven, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is a living soul, I have given every green herb for food: and it was so. <sup>31</sup>And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And it was evening and it was morning, day the sixth.

2. Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God had finished his work which he had made: and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created in order to make it. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that

so do "I give to you every thing". (31) יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי THE SIXTH DAY.—The letter *n*, the numerical value of which is 5, is added to the word *שש* when the work of Creation was complete, to imply that He made a stipulation with them that it endures only upon condition that Israel should accept the five books of the Torah (Sabb. 88a). Another interpretation<sup>1</sup> of יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי THE SIXTH DAY — The whole Creation (the Universe) stood in a state of suspense (moral imperfection) until the sixth day — that is, the sixth day of Sivan which was destined to be the day when the Torah would be given to Israel (Ab. Zarah 3a)<sup>1</sup>.

2. (2) יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY GOD FINISHED — R. Simeon says: A human being (lit., flesh and blood) who cannot know exactly his times and moments (who cannot accurately determine the point of time that marks the division between one period and that which follows it) must needs add from the week-day and observe it as the holy day (the Sabbath), but the Holy One, blessed be He, who knows His times and moments, began it (the seventh day) to a very hair's breadth (with extreme exactness) and it therefore appeared as though He had completed Rest! Sabbath came — Rest came: and the work was thus finished and completed<sup>2</sup> (3) וְיָקַדְּשׁ יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי AND GOD BLESSED...AND HE SANCTIFIED—He blessed it through the Manna, that on all other days of the week there should fall for them (the Israelites) an Omer for each person, whereas on the sixth day there should fall twice as much of that bread. So, too, He sanctified it through the Manna, that it should not fall at all on the Sabbath (Gen. R. 11). This verse is written here with reference to what would happen in the future. וְהָיָה כְּאֵלֶיךָ כֹּחַ אֲשֶׁר בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים לְשִׂמְחַת הַמִּשָּׁה WHICH GOD IN CREATING HAD MADE — The work which should have been done on the Sabbath He did in the double work which He executed on the sixth day, as it is explained in Bereshith Rabbah. (4) אֵלֶּיךָ THESE [ARE THE GENERATIONS] — "These" means those that are mentioned above. יוֹמֵהּ הַשְּׁשִׁי בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְהָיָה כְּאֵלֶיךָ כֹּחַ THESE ARE THE PRODUCTIONS OF THE HEAVEN AND OF THE EARTH WHEN THEY WERE CREATED, IN THE DAY THE LORD GOD MADE EARTH AND HEAVEN — The verse teaches you that all of them (the productions of heaven and earth) were created on the first day when God made earth and heaven. Another

NOTES  
 1) According to this explanation, the words "the sixth day" must be read together with the opening words of the next verse—"On the sixth day of Sivan the heavens and the earth were perfected." As a matter of fact we connect these words with one another in the introductory verses of the Friday-evening Kiddush.  
 2) See Appendix.











1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. But the earth was desolate and void, and darkness was upon the face of the murmuring deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering on the face of the waters. And God said, Be there light; and light was. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God caused a division between the light

1. (1) **IN THE BEGINNING** — Rabbi Isaac said: The Torah which is the Law book of Israel should have commenced with the verse (Exod. XII. 1) "This month shall be unto you the first of the months" which is the first commandment given to Israel. What is the reason, then, that it commences with the account of the Creation? Because of the thought expressed in the text (Ps. CXI. 6) "He declared to His people the strength of His works (i. e. He gave an account of the work of Creation), in order that He might give them the heritage of the nations." For should the peoples of the world say to Israel, "You are robbers, because you took by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan", Israel may reply to them, "All the earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it and gave it to whom He pleased." When He willed He gave it to them, and when He willed He took it from them and gave it to us" (Yalk. Exod. XII. 2).  
**THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED** — This verse calls aloud for explanation in the manner that our Rabbis explained it: God created the world for the sake of the Torah which is called (Prov. VIII. 22) "The beginning (רֵאשִׁית) of His (God's) way", and for the sake of Israel who are called (Jer. II. 3) "The beginning (רֵאשִׁית) of His (God's) increase".<sup>3</sup> If, however, you wish to explain it in its plain sense, explain it thus: At the beginning of the Creation of heaven and earth when the earth was without form and void and there was darkness, God said, "Let there be light."<sup>3</sup> The text does not intend to point out the order of the acts of Creation — to state that these (heaven and earth) were created first; for if it intended to point this out, it should have written "בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ" etc. And for this reason: Because, wherever the word רֵאשִׁית occurs in Scripture, it is in the construct state. E. g. (Jer. XXVI. 1) "In the beginning of (רֵאשִׁית) the reign of Jehoiakim" (Gen. X. 10) "The beginning of (רֵאשִׁית) his kingdom"; (Deut. XVIII. 4) "The firstfruit of (רֵאשִׁית) thy corn." Similarly here you must translate בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם, at the beginning of God's creating. A similar grammatical construction (of a noun in construct followed by a verb) is: (Hos. I. 2) בְּרֵאשִׁית דְּבַר ה' בְּרֵאשִׁית, which is as much as to say, "At the beginning of God's speaking through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea." Should you, however, insist that it does actually intend to point out that these (heaven and earth) were created first, and that the meaning is, "At the beginning of everything He created these, admitting therefore that the word בְּרֵאשִׁית is in the construct state and explaining the omission of a word signifying 'everything' by saying that you have texts which are elliptical, omitting a word, as for example (Job III. 10) "Because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb" where it does not explicitly explain who it was that closed the womb; and (Isa. VIII. 4) "He shall take away the spoil of Samaria" without explaining who shall take it away; and (Amos VI. 12) "Doth he plough with oxen," and it does not explicitly state, "Doth a man plough with oxen"; (Isa. XLVI. 10) "Declaring from the beginning the end," and it does not explicitly state, "Declaring from the beginning of a thing the end of a thing — if it is so (that you assert that this verse intends to point out that heaven and earth were created first), you should be astonished at yourself, because as a matter of fact the waters were created before heaven and earth, for, lo, it is written, (v. 2) "The Spirit of God was hovering on the face of the waters," and Scripture had not yet disclosed when the creation of the waters took place — consequently you must learn from

NOTES  
 1) See Appendix.  
 2) The Rabbis translated thus: For the sake of (ב) the Torah and Israel which bear the name of רֵאשִׁית God created the heaven and the earth.  
 3) See Appendix.

אֵת הָאָרֶץ וְהָאָרֶץ בְּרֵאשִׁית אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ:  
 ב וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-  
 פְּנֵי הַתְּהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַמְמַת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:  
 וַיֵּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים וְהָיָה אֹרֶךְ הַיּוֹם וְהָיָה אֲרָצֵהוּ אֱלֹהִים  
 אֵת הָאָרֶץ וְאֹרֶךְ הַיּוֹם וְהָיָה לַיְלָה וְהָיָה לַיְלָה וְהָיָה

א בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ וְהָאָרֶץ  
 עֲלֵמָּה רֵחַ וְהָאָרֶץ מְרַמְמַת וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַמְמַת  
 ב וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:  
 ג וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:

בראשית א  
 א בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ וְהָאָרֶץ  
 עֲלֵמָּה רֵחַ וְהָאָרֶץ מְרַמְמַת וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַמְמַת  
 ב וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:  
 ג וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:  
 ד וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:  
 ה וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:  
 ו וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:  
 ז וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:  
 ח וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:  
 ט וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:  
 י וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְוֵמָה לֵחוֹל וְלֵחַר וְלַיֶּשֶׁבַע עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:

# Tikkun Olam

## Activity

Start by introducing Tikkun Olam, Fixing the World. Ask participants to share examples of tikkun olam. Encourage participants to think of many **different types** of tikkun olam, as well as specific examples. (5 minutes)

Split the group up in to smaller groups. Send each off to their own space for 10 minutes with the following assignment: Create a Public Service Announcement for TV or radio to encourage the viewer or listener to help a specific cause. The PSA should include a slogan and all people in the group should participate. After all groups have presented their PSA, everyone should comment and say what in each PSA they thought would get them to help whatever tikkun olam cause was talked about.

## Chevruta Questions

1. There are a number of ways one is supposed to help the poor discussed in these texts. What are some of the different things we can learn from each text about the nature of tzedaka?
2. We are all familiar with the idea of city planning. How do Leviticus 25:8-12 and Mishnah Bava Batra 2:9 expand the idea? What other aspects of community are touched on here? What might these texts teach us about the connection between responsibility to each other? What do these texts have to do with responsibility to the land?
3. Which laws here protect certain social groups? Where in our modern lives do we see examples of lower classes affected more than others by “undesirable” site and facilities?
4. How does our responsibility to the earth mirror our responsibility to people?
5. How can we better serve all of God’s creations, humans and earth?



## Sources for Tikkun Olam

In 16th century Tsefat, Rabbi Isaac Luria observed that in his world, like ours, many things seemed to be wrong. People suffered from hunger, disease, hatred, and war. "Hal could God allow such terrible things to happen?" wondered Luria. "perhaps," he suggested, "it is because God needs our help." he explained his answer with a mystical story.

When first setting out to make the world, got planned to pour a Holy Light into everything in order to make it real. Guards prepared vessels to contain the Holy Light. But something went wrong. The light was so bright that the vessels burst, shattering into millions of broken pieces like dishes dropped on the floor. The Hebrew phrase which Luria used for this "breaking of the vessels" is sh'virat ha-kaylim."

Our world is a mess because it is filled with broken fragments. When people fight and hurt one another, they allow the world to remain shattered. The same can be said of people who have pantries filled with food and let others starve. According to Luria, we who live in a cosmic heap of broken pieces, and God cannot repair it alone.

That is why God created us and gave us freedom of choice. We are free to do whatever we pleased with our world. We cannot allow all things to remain broken or, as Luria urged, we can try to repair the mess. Luria's Hebrew phrase for "repairing the world" is tikkun olam. (**"Repairing the World" from Lawrence Kushner, The Book of Miracles, p. 47)**)

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? ...If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and people- all belong to the same family.

This Shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories... The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember, and teach your children, that the rivers are our

brothers and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandparents. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children... that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth. If we spit upon the ground, we spit upon ourselves.

This we know; the earth does not belong to us; we belong to the earth. All things are connected. We are kin after all... **(Ted Perry, 1970, Speech often attributed to Chief Seattle, 1851)**

And the Eternal, God, took the Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and to keep it. **(Genesis 2:15)**

Count seven weeks of years [49]... Then blow the horn loudly, on the tenth day of the seventh month - the Day of Atonement - you will sound the horn throughout your land and you will make the fiftieth year holy. You will proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It will be a jubilee for you: each of you will return to his holding and each of you will return to his family. That fiftieth year will be a jubilee for you: you will not sow, nor reap the aftergrowth or harvest the untrimmed vines. **(Leviticus 25:8-12)**

When you reap the harvest of your land, you will not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You will not pick up every last grape in your vineyard, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard. Leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Eternal One am your God. **(Leviticus 19:9-10)**

When you reap the harvest in your field and overlook a sheaf in the field, do not turn back to get it; it will go to the stranger, the orphan and the widow - in order that the Eternal, your God may bless you in all your undertakings. **(Deuteronomy 24:19)**

Do not rob the poor, because he is poor: nor oppress the afflicted in the gate: for the Lord will plead their cause, and rob life those who rob them. Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul. **(Proverbs 22:22-25)**

Carcasses, graves, and tanneries must be kept at fifty cubits' distance from a town. And a tannery may not be established except on the east side of town. Rabbi Akiva says, "One may set it up on any side, except on the west of it, but he must keep it at a distance of fifty cubits. (**Mishna Bava Batra 2:9**)

While the sage, Choni, was walking along a road, he saw a man planting a carob tree. Choni asked him: "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?"

"Seventy years," replied the man.

Choni then asked: "Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?"

The man answered: "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise I am planting for my children."  
**(Babylonian Talmud, Taanit 23a)**

# Bal Tashchit

## Activity

Split the larger group in to two groups. Have one group act as an audience and have the other group together in front of them. The group “performing” should stand in a semi circle facing their audience. One participant should go to the middle of the semi circle and get in to a pose that he or she makes up on the spot. Another person should then come in and get in to a pose relating to the first person’s presence and building on it. Then another person should do the same, relating to the first two, and so on. When they are finished the groups should switch. When the second group is finished everyone should sit in one big circle and discuss what they saw. Discuss the relationships between poses, the development of the scene, and how each pose might have seemed different as others were added to the surroundings or attached on to it.

## Chevruta Questions

1. Looking at the sources, how has the law of bal tashchit changed from its original source in Deuteronomy 20:19-20? Why do you think this expansion of the law was made?
2. The law of bal tashchit is a negative commandment... do NOT destroy. How might we phrase a positive commandment, or series of commandments that would give us more guidance? Or is the commandment against destruction better to have? Talk about why you came up with your answers.
3. How does the passage from Deuteronomy 23:13-15 (notice that the law is a mitzvah asseh, a positive commandment) relate to the idea of destruction?
4. How is the law given here related to what we have discussed in our study of tikkun olam?

## Sources for Bal Tashchit

“There will be an area beyond the military camp where you can relieve yourself. You will have a spade among your weapons; and after you have squatted, you will dig a hole and cover your excrement. For the Lord thy God walks in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thy enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that She see in you no uncleanness, and turn away from thee.” **(Deuteronomy 23:13-15)**

“When you lay siege and battle against a city for a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding an ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are the trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? Only a tree which you know does not yield food may be destroyed; you may cut them down for constructing siege works against the city that is waging war on you, until it has been captured.” **(Deuteronomy 20:19-20)**

“The root of the Mitzvah (of Bal Tashchit) is known to be for the sake of teaching our selves to love the good and beneficial, and to bond with it, and as a result of this the good will bond itself with us, and we will be distanced from every bad thing, and from every destroying thing; And this is the way of the righteous, and people of deeds love peace, and rejoice with good of the creations...”  
**(Sefer Hachinuch, Shoftim, Not to Destroy Food Trees)**

“It is forbidden to cut down fruit-bearing trees outside a [besieged] city, nor may a water channel be deflected from them so that they wither, as it is said: 'You must not destroy its trees' (Deuteronomy 20:19) It [a fruit bearing tree] may be cut down, however, if it causes damage to other trees or to a field belonging to another man or if its value for other purposes is greater [than that of the fruit it produces]. The law forbids only wanton destruction.”

**(Maimonides, Mishneh Torah; Judges, Laws of Kings and Their Wars 6:8-10)**

...[D]estruction does not only mean making something purposelessly unfit for its designated use; it also means trying to attain a certain aim by making use of more things and more valuable things when fewer and less valuable ones would suffice; or if this aim is not really worth the means expended for its attainment. [For example] kindling something which is still fit for other purposes for the sake of light;... wearing down something more than is necessary... consuming more than is necessary...

On the other hand, if destruction is necessary for a higher and more worthy aim, then it ceases to be destruction and itself becomes wise creating. [For example] cutting down a fruit tree which is doing harm to other more valuable plants, [and] burning a vessel when there is a scarcity of wood in order to protect one's weakened self from catching cold... (**Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*, adapted by Shomrei Adamah**)

## Extra sources

“Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says ‘Have you ever seen a wild beast or bird that possesses a craft? And none the less they sustain themselves without care, and were they not created to serve me? But I was created to serve my Maker. does it not follow that I should receive my maintenance without care? But I have performed my actions in evil and have forgone my support [and I have forfeited my right to support].’” (Mishna Kiddushin 4:14)

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria said, If there be no [study of the] Law there is no good conduct, if there is no good conduct, if there be no good conduct there is no [study of the] Law; if there be no wisdom there is no fear [of God], if there be no fear [of God] there is no wisdom; if there be no understanding there is no knowledge, if there be no knowledge there is no understanding; If there be no flour there is no Torah, if there is no Torah there is no flour. (Mishna Avot 3:21)

He used to say, all who’s wisdom is greater than his deeds, to what is he similar? To a tree who’s branches are many, and who’s roots are few, and the wind comes and uproots and overturns it on to its face, as it is said:(Jeremiah 17:6) “For he shall be like a juniper tree in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited.” But all who’s works are greater than her wisdom, to what is he similar? To a tree who’s branches are few, and who’s roots are many, that even if all the winds that are in the world come and blow on it, there is no moving it from its place. As it is said:(Jeremiah 17:8) “And she shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out its roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but its foliage shall be green; and shall not be anxious in the year of drought, neither shall it cease from yielding fruit.” (Mishna Avot 3:22)

He who buys grain in the market, to what is he similar? To a child who is cut off from his mother, and although it is taken to homes of wet nurses it is not satisfied. And he who buys bread in the market, to what is he compared? To a man who digs his own grave - a wretched, precarious existence. But he who eats of his own produce is like a child reared at his mother’s breast. (Avot d’Rabbi Natan 30:6/29a)

... the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there were no people to till the soil... (Genesis 2:5)

Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai said:

Three things are equal in importance: earth, Humans, and rain. Rabbi Levi said: And these three each consist of three letters (in Hebrew), to teach that without earth, there is no rain, and without rain, earth cannot endure; while without either, humans cannot exist. (Midrash Genesis Rabbah 13.3)

# EXAMINING OURSELVES AS LEADERS...

You are a leader. In your home, your family, in your community, in a business. You have responsibilities for others. All year long, you are responsible for evaluating whether those you lead are proceeding as they should. But on the morning of Yom Kippur, you have the opportunity to "self-correct," to examine yourself and how, in the past year, you might have exercised your leadership differently.

## MEDITATION

Before Aaron, the High Priest, can ask for forgiveness for the whole congregation of Israel, he is told to scrutinize himself first. He is to bathe. He is to put on sacred garments. Standing in the *ohel mo'ed*, the Tent of Meeting, he is to ask for forgiveness for himself. Only then can the circle widen—only then is he prepared to "make expiation for the whole congregation of Israel!" (*Leviticus 16*)

## RITUAL

All those who have leadership responsibilities are asked to come up to the Torah for the third *aliyah* on Yom Kippur. As you hear the words chanted, you, like Aaron, have this opportunity to ask for forgiveness for yourself before you ask for forgiveness for your community.

It is a time for introspection: where have you, as a leader, "missed the mark"? What decisions could you have made as a leader, but did not? Focus given all that you know now, given all of your dreams of a more perfect world, how might you exercise your leadership in a different way?

NOTE: If group *aliyot* are not the custom in your community, you may choose to listen to the words of *Leviticus 16* as they are chanted on Yom Kippur, and focus on these concerns of leaders.

סלח לנו, מחל לנו, כפר לנו.

*Slach lanu, m'chal lanu, kaper lanu...*

22 *Forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.*

# EXAMINING OURSELVES AS LEADERS...

(continued)

## BLESSING

(The person who is called to the Torah)

כָּבוֹד אַתָּה ה' הַמְבָרֵךְ.

*Barukh et Adonai hu'mivorabih.*

Blessed are You, source of blessing.

(The congregation responds)

בָּרֵךְ ה' הַמְבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

*Barukh Adonai hu'mivorabih. l'olam va'ed.*

Blessed are You, source of blessing forever.

בָּרֵךְ אֱתָהּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלִּקְדֵי הַעֲוֹנוֹת,

אֲשֶׁר בָּדַד בְּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים, וְתַתּוּ לָנוּ אֵת חַדְתּוֹ.

בָּרֵךְ אֱתָהּ ה' שׁוֹמֵר הַחֻדָּה.

*Barukh atah Adonai, elohейnu melech ha'olam,*

*asher bachar banu m'kol ha'amim v'natant lanu*

*et torato. Barukh atah Adonai,noten hatorah.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, sovereign of

the universe who has chosen us from among

all peoples by giving us Your Torah. Praised are

You, Lord, who gives the Torah.

(After the portion is read, the person says)

בָּרֵךְ אֱתָהּ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלִּקְדֵי הַעֲוֹנוֹת, אֲשֶׁר בָּרַךְ

בְּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים, וְתַתּוּ לָנוּ אֵת

חַדְתּוֹ. בָּרֵךְ אֱתָהּ ה' שׁוֹמֵר הַחֻדָּה.

*Barukh atah Adonai, elohейnu melech ha'olam,*

*asher natan lanu torat emet v'chayei olam*

*natah b'tocheim. Barukh atah Adonai noten*

*hatorah.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, sovereign of

the universe who has given us the Torah of

truth, planting within us life eternal. Blessed

are You, Lord, who gives the Torah.

## TEACHING

And Aaron is to bring near the bull for the sin offering that is his, so that he may effect atonement on behalf of himself and for his household. Then he is to slay the hairy goat of the sin offering that is the people's. Thus he shall purge the Shrine of the uncleanness and transgression of the Israelites, whatever their sins. (*Leviticus 16:15-16*)

Here I stand, humbly, trembling in Your presence, pleading on behalf of Your people Israel. Therefore, I plead for help as I seek mercy for myself and for those whom I represent. Accept my prayer as the prayer of one uniquely worthy and qualified for this talk. Draw Your veil of love over all our faults. (*Hinini prayer*)



# PREPARING OURSELVES TO DO SACRED WORK...

(continued)

# PREPARING OURSELVES TO DO SACRED WORK...

Just as our sages raised their consciousness before engaging in sacred acts, we too can prepare ourselves for those everyday activities which we seek to elevate, as we discover how we can accomplish sacred purposes – *avodah* – in all that we do.

## MEDITATION

Preparation, we learn, is what indicates that we want to make what we are about to do stand out. A *kavannah* is a meditative pause, an act of centering that allows us to be fully present and aware of our place, our time...to feel God's presence.

הווי מוכן ומזומן.

*Hineni mukhan v'mezuman.*

I am here, ready, prepared.

## RITUAL

Before you set out to do sacred work, pause and compose your own brief *kavannah* which names the sacred work you are about to do and reflects the kind of intention you hope to keep in mind.

For instance, if you are about to drop off cans of food at the neighborhood food pantry or soup kitchen, you might create a *kavannah* such as this: "Source of Blessing, allow me to find small and large ways that I can make a difference in people's lives."

Or, if you are about to perform a medical procedure on a patient or seek treatment for yourself, your *kavannah* might be "Creator of the world, help and guide me to marvel in the wonder of the human body and to do all I can to sustain life."

## BLESSING

Here are some ways you might begin a *kavannah* which prepares you to do the sacred work of your life.

מקור הברכות...

*Mekor habrachotot...*

Source of Blessing, allow me to...

בורא העולם...

*Borei ha'olam...*

Creator of the world, help and guide me to...

רבנו של עולם...

*Ribbono shel olam...*

Master of the Universe, make me aware of...

(As you conclude your *kavannah*)

תן בליבי להאזין ללבוש ולקמור ולקמור.  
*Ten b'libi leihaveent u'lehasakel, lishmoa u'limod u'lelamed.*

Allow my heart to understand, to enlighten, to listen, to learn, and to teach.

Blessed are You God, who allows us to be fully present.

## TEACHING

All depends on the *kavannah* of the heart (Babylonian Talmud: *Megillah 20a*)

And Jacob awoke from his sleep and he said, "Surely there is God in this place and I did not know." (Genesis 28:16).

"And to serve God (*avodah*)" (Deuteronomy 11:13); This refers here to study. Just as serving at the altar is called *avodah*, so is study called *avodah*. Another interpretation of *avodah* refers to prayer. You might say,

"Does this not refer to Temple *avodah*? The answer is no, since Scripture says, "*Avodah* do with all your heart and with all your soul." (Deuteronomy 11:13) Is there such a thing as Temple *avodah* in one's heart?

Therefore, *avodah* refers to prayer. Just as service of the altar is called *avodah*, so is prayer called *avodah*. (*Sifre Piska 41*)

I bow

My head over my typewriter

And start the ceremony

Of a prayer.

(David Ignatow from *Epilogue*)

הווי מוכן.

*Hineni mukhan.*

I am prepared.

# SEEING NATURAL WONDERS...

A story is told: I had seen spectacular mountains in the Alps and the Rockies in Colorado. I didn't think Yosemite would be much different. More mountains, maybe some waterfalls I thought, and it will all be nice – at least I'll get out of the city. Driving from San Francisco through the dry heat of the desert, we pulled into the heart of Yosemite as the sun began to set. We got out of the car and were astounded. What we saw: trees five times bigger than any we'd ever seen, spectacular rocks climbing to the heavens, waterfalls cascading into lush valleys. We were struck silent.

## MEDITATION

השתחוּוּ לַה' בְּהַרְרַת קֹדֶשׁ.

*Hishtachavu l'Adonai  
b'hadrat kodesh.*

The world is God's  
intensely holy place.

Hear God's voice in  
the waters, in the  
thunder. Hear God's  
voice in the tall trees,  
in the forest, in the  
wilderness.

קוֹל ה' בְּכֹחַ, קוֹל ה' בְּהַרְרָה.

*Kol Adonai ba'ko'ach,  
kol Adonai be'hadar.*

I hear God's voice in  
power; hear God's  
voice in beauty.

*(Psalms 29:4)*

## RITUAL

In silence, take off (or  
imagine taking off)  
your shoes, allowing  
your feet to touch the  
ground. As you wit-  
ness the majestic  
beauty of high moun-  
tains, vast deserts, sun-  
rises, lightning and  
shooting stars, take as  
much time as you  
need to acknowledge  
that you stand on  
holy ground.

## BLESSING

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה עֲשֵׂה  
מַעֲשֵׂה בְרֵאשִׁית.

*Barukh atah oseh  
ma'aseh b'reshit.*

Praised are You,  
renewer of the works  
of creation. Let me be  
attentive to the won-  
der of Your world.

הַלְלוּהוּ שֶׁמֶשׁ וּיְרֵחַ, הַלְלוּהוּ  
כָּל כִּכְבֵּי אוֹר.

*Halleluhu shemesh  
v'yarei'ach, Halleluhu  
kol kokhvei or.*

Praised is God, sun  
and moon, Praised is  
God, all bright stars.

*(Psalms 148:3)*

## TEACHING

And God called the  
dry places "earth" and  
the water-springs God  
called "seas", and God  
saw that it was good.  
*(Genesis 1:10)*

The skies will rejoice,  
the earth vibrate with  
celebration, the sea  
roar with its full  
force, the fields sing  
out, the trees of the  
forest cry out in  
ecstasy.

*(Psalms 96:11-12)*

Every blade of grass  
has a guardian above  
it. *(Zohar 1:34a)*

On seeing mountains,  
hills, seas, rivers and  
deserts, one should  
say, "Blessed is the  
One who creates."  
*(Jerusalem Talmud:  
Brakhot 9:1)*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה שֶׁכַּכָּה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ.

*Barukh atah she'kakhah lo b'olamo.*

*Praised are You who has created  
such beauty in Your world.*

*On seeing the wonders of nature:*

בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם עֲשֵׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְרָאשִׁית:  
 Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleh ha'olam  
 oseh ma'asey vereshit.

*On seeing the ocean:*

בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׁעֵשֶׂה אֶת הַיָּם הַגְּדוֹל:  
 Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleh ha'olam  
 she'asah et hayam hagadol.

*On seeing a rainbow:*

בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
 זֹכֵר הַבְּרִית וְנֶאֱמַן בְּבְרִיתוֹ וְקִים בְּמַאֲמָדוֹ:  
 Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleh ha'olam  
 zoher haberit ven'e'aman bivrito vekayam bema'amaro.

*On seeing lightning or shooting stars, or hearing thunder:*

בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׂכַחָה לּוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ:  
 עוֹלָם:  
 Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleh ha'olam  
 shekahah lo be'olamo.

*On seeing something beautiful:*

בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׂכַחָה לּוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ:  
 Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleh ha'olam  
 shekahah lo be'olamo.

*On seeing a blossoming tree:*

בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שְׂלֵא חֲסֵר בְּעוֹלָמוֹ דְּבָר  
 וְבָרָא בּוֹ בְּרִיּוֹת סוּבוֹת וְאֵילָנוֹת סוּבִים לְהוֹט בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם:  
 Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleh ha'olam  
 shelo hisar be'olamo davar uvara vo be'riyot tovot ve'ilanot  
 tovim lehanot ba'hem beney adam.

*On smelling spices or fragrances:*

בָּרַךְ אֱתָהּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיַּי קְשָׁמִים:  
 Baruh atah adonay eloheynu meleh ha'olam  
 borey miney vesamin.

AL OLAM UMLO'O / NATURE

*On seeing the wonders of nature:*

Blessed are you, SOURCE OF WONDER our God, the sovereign  
 of all worlds, author of creation.

*On seeing the ocean:*

Blessed are you, THE BOUNDLESS ONE our God, the sovereign  
 of all worlds, who made the great sea.

*On seeing a rainbow:*

Blessed are you, HARMONY our God, the sovereign of all  
 worlds, who remembers the covenant, remains faithful to it,  
 and fulfills its word.

*On seeing lightning or shooting stars, or hearing thunder:*

Blessed are you THE CELESTIAL our God, the sovereign of all  
 worlds, whose power and might fill the world.

*On seeing something beautiful:*

Blessed are you, THE RADIANCE our God, the sovereign of all  
 worlds, whose universe holds such things.

*On seeing a blossoming tree:*

Blessed are you, THE SUBLIME ONE our God, the sovereign of  
 all worlds, who has withheld nothing from your world, and  
 created beautiful creatures and goodly trees for people to  
 enjoy.

*On smelling spices or fragrances:*

Blessed are you, REVIVER our God, the sovereign of all worlds,  
 who creates various spices.

Reciting at least one hundred blessings a day is an ancient Jewish custom. There are *berahot*/blessings for almost every imaginable circumstance. In blessings resides the capacity to transform action into mitzvah and ordinary things into gifts. And is that not the Jewish way: doing mitzvot and appreciating the gift of life? Reciting *berahot* draws us into this higher vision and action.

