

THE EARTH



A SACRED SERVICE

STORIES OF ADAM AND ADAMAH

Genesis 2:7-10 & 15

Then the LORD God formed Adam, [the first human being] out of the dust of Adamah [out of the earth herself], and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life; and Adam became a living soul.

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there God placed Adam, the work of God's hands.

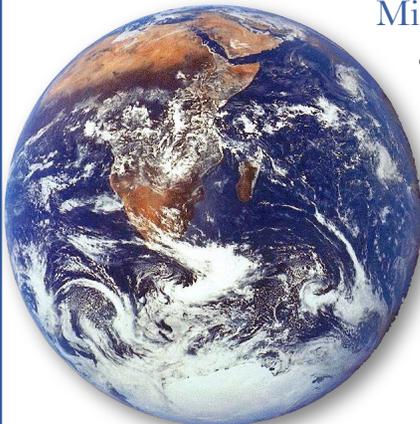
And the LORD God planted, Adamah, the earth with every tree that is pleasing to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And a river flowed forth out of Eden to ever water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became four great streams...

And the LORD God placed Adam in the garden of Eden to guard & to serve her.

Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

“God led Adam around all the trees of the Garden of Eden. And God said to Adam: ‘See My works, how good and praiseworthy they are? And all that I have created, I made for you. [But] be mindful that you do not spoil and destroy My world—for if you spoil it, there will be no one left to repair it.’”



WE ARE OF THIS EARTH

Adam, the first human being, was drawn by God's own hands from Adamah, from the earth herself and God charged us to guard and protect her.

We are of this earth, not apart from it, and whatever we do to this planet we do to ourselves.

There is but one planet we call earth and there is but one ocean upon the face of it, for all our seas are interconnected.

There is but one tree in the great Redwood forest, for beneath the surface all of its roots are intertwined. And so are ours, and so are we, One people.

THE EARTH: A SACRED SERVICE

There Are Two Trees In The Garden

In the beginning God planted two trees in Eden. *The tree of Eternal Life: a symbol of the abundance of nature, an Eternal source of sustenance for all of us who live in this garden we call the earth.* And God planted there also the tree of Knowledge of Good and of Evil and therein lies the challenge. *From knowledge we have learned to love.* From knowledge we have learned to bend the laws of nature to our will and to draw ever more valuable resources from our earth. *Through knowledge we have created a world which can provide for us in an abundance which shames Eden for its fruitfulness.*

And yet it is a forgetful knowledge which we have learned. *A knowledge unconnected to the source of these blessings which have been placed in our knowing hands.* A forgetfulness of the God who creates and sustains this earth, day by day, despite our abundant calls upon its resources. *And we have forgotten too our link to the land, our tie to this earth, and our common cause in the preservation of this source of all the blessings in our lives.*

The Tree of Knowledge bears fruit of good and of evil. Sustainable development means nothing more than eating of the fruits of goodness without tasting from the fruits of evil which spawn a forgetfulness of the source of all that is good. *The lessons we can learn from the sacred text of our people and all peoples who look out upon the stars, who feel the sands slip through their fingers, who recognize the wonder of our world in many ways, all these lessons come to teach us of our kinship with all life and our connection to the Creator who has brought us forth unto life.*

Home On The Range ~ Brewster Higley, 1872

*Oh, give me a home, where the buffalo roam,
Where the deer and the antelope play;
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word
And the skies are not cloudy all day.*

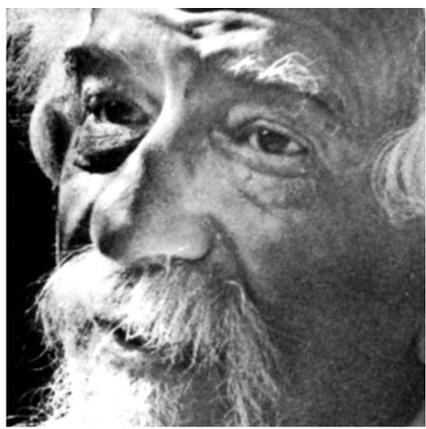
*Home, home on the range
Where the deer and the antelope play
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,
And the skies are not cloudy all day.*

*How often at night when the heavens are bright
With the lights from the glittering stars;
Have I stood there amazed and asked as I gazed
If their glory exceeds that of ours.*

*Oh, give me a land where the bright diamond sand
Flows leisurely down the stream;
Where the graceful, white swan goes gliding along,
Like a maid in a heavenly dream.*

*Oh, I love those wild flowers in this dear land of ours,
The curlew I love to hear scream,
And I love the white rocks and the antelope flocks
That graze on the mountain tops green.*

*Where the air is so pure, the zephyrs so free,
The breezes so balmy and light,
That I would not exchange my home on the range
For all of the cities so bright.*



Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

An End As Well As A Means

Our concern with environment cannot be reduced to what can be used, to what can be grasped. Environment includes not only the inkstand and the blotting paper, but also the impenetrable stillness in the air, the stars, the clouds, the quiet passing of time, the wonder of my own being.

I am an end as well as a means, and so is the world: an end as well as a means. My view of the world and my understanding of the self determine each other. Forfeit your sense of awe, let your conceit diminish your ability to revere, and the world becomes a market place for you.

The complete manipulation of the world results in the complete instrumentalization of the self.