

MA'AMADOT / מעמדות **A CALL TO PROTECT CREATION**

A vital Judaism for the twenty-first century must speak to the most critical issue confronting humanity as this century progresses: the survival of our planet as a fit habitat for human and other higher forms of life. The most important task of religion will be that of helping us humans to change our relationship with the natural environment of which we are a part. Without such a change, an essential shift from a position of rapacious consumer of resources to that of responsible steward, we will simply not survive.

To underscore the centrality of this concern to our lives as Jews, the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College, a nondenominational program in Newton Centre, Massachusetts, is calling on Jews everywhere to join us in renewing an ancient practice, that of reciting the *ma'amad*, or day of Creation, each day of the week.

Each Sunday we conclude our morning prayers by reciting, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." On Monday: "God said: Let there be a firmament," and so forth through the week, leading to a renewed conclusion of the cycle with "heaven and earth were completed" as we raise our cup for *kiddush* on Friday night.

This practice was originally observed by those Israelites whose priestly neighbors were taking their weekly turn at serving in the Temple. As the priests offered sacrifices they believed sustained the cosmos, the people of their town stood up and called out the days of creation, to join them in their holy service. Later, this daily recital became a universal custom, but one that eventually fell out of use. Our call to renew it now is a call to transforming our consciousness, a reordering of our religious priorities.

We choose this venerable Jewish form as a way of saying that protecting the environment is indeed a Jewish issue, one that stands at the very heart of our universal faith. We call upon Jews, whatever their denomination or style of prayer, to join with us in this chorus of affirmation, declaring that we see this world as divine creation and commit ourselves to its loving protection.

We ask Jews who do not engage in daily prayer to consider reciting these verses, along with the *Sh'ma*, as the beginning of a daily spiritual practice. The text to be recited each day, along with a brief *kavvanah*, or direction for prayer, is contained herein.

Please share this document with your friends, family, and fellow congregants—Jew or gentile, religious or secular, observant or questioning—and encourage them to be a part of this global movement. May this new commitment to an ancient practice become *talmud ha-mevi lidey ma'aseh*, learning that leads us to renewed action.

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*Recite these biblical verses as part of your daily prayer practice.
(English translation from the New JPS Translation)*

SUNDAY

We live in a created world. How will my reverence for God's Creation affect the way I live this week?

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ. וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְהוֹמוֹ וּבְהוֹ וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹמוֹ; וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים
מְרַחֵף עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר; וַיְהִי אוֹר. וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאוֹר כִּי טוֹב; וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין
הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ. וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה; וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד.

When God began to create heaven and earth—the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day. (Gen. 1:1–5)



MONDAY

The separation of the waters, the creation of skies and seas. The seas' mighty waves calling out God's glory. How do we keep them from becoming the final home of human refuse?

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי רְקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהִי מַבְדִּיל בֵּין מַיִם לְמַיִם. וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַרְקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר
מִתַּחַת לְרְקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לְרְקִיעַ; וַיְהִי כֵן. וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְרְקִיעַ שָׁמַיִם; וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם שֵׁנִי.

God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water." God made the expanse, and it separated the water which was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse. And it was so. God called the expanse Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. (Gen. 1:6–8)

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TUESDAY

Dry land emerges, trees and grasses. A time to notice the many shades of green by which we are surrounded and so blessed. How do we assure them the clean air and water they need to live?

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקְוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל מְקוֹם אֶחָד וְתִרְאָה הַיַּבֶּשֶׁת; וַיְהִי כֵן. וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לַיַּבֶּשֶׁת אֶרֶץ
וּלְמִקְוֵה הַמַּיִם קָרָא יַמִּים; וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תִּדְשָׂא הָאֶרֶץ דָּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ וְרֹעַ עֵץ פְּרִי
עֵשֶׂה פְרִי לְמִינֵוֹ אֲשֶׁר וְרָעוּ בּוֹ עַל הָאֶרֶץ; וַיְהִי כֵן. וַתּוֹצֵא הָאֶרֶץ דָּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ וְרֹעַ לְמִינֵהוּ וְעֵץ עֵשֶׂה פְרִי
אֲשֶׁר וְרָעוּ בּוֹ לְמִינֵהוּ; וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב. וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי.

God said, "Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering of waters He called Seas. And God saw that this was good. And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that this was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day. (Gen. 1:9–13)



WEDNESDAY

Sun, moon, and stars. A day to turn our glance outward, beyond the limits of our single planet. "Raise your eyes upward and see! Who created these?" (Is. 40:26)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מְאֹרֶת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה; וַיְהִי לָאֵתוֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וּשְׁנָיִם.
וַיְהִי לְמְאֹרֶת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַאֲרִיר עַל הָאֶרֶץ; וַיְהִי כֵן. וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֶת הַגְּדֹלִים: אֶת הַמְּאֹרֶת
הַגְּדֹל לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת הַמְּאֹרֶת הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֶת הַכּוֹכָבִים. וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם
לְהַאֲרִיר עַל הָאֶרֶץ. וְלִמְשַׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה וּלְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הָאֹרֶר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ; וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב. וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי
בֹקֶר יוֹם רְבִיעִי.

God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years; and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. (Gen. 1:14–19)

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THURSDAY

Fish and birds, all that swim, swarm, and fly. Creatures descended from forms of life that existed so long before we came along on this earth. Whales and porpoises, speaking a language that we mere humans cannot understand. How do we make sure that we leave room for them to thrive?

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִשְׂרָצוּ הַמַּיִם שָׂרָץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה; וְעוֹף יַעֲוֹפֵף עַל הָאָרֶץ עַל כָּנֵי רְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם. וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַתַּנִּינִים הַגְּדֹלִים; וְאֵת כָּל נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה הַרְמֵשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר שָׂרָצוּ הַמַּיִם לְמִינֵהֶם וְאֵת כָּל עוֹף כָּנָף לְמִינֵהוּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר: פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הַמַּיִם בַּיַּמִּים וְהָעוֹף יִרֶב בָּאָרֶץ. וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם חַמִּישִׁי.

God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and birds that fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." God created the great sea monsters, and all the living creatures of every kind that creep, which the waters brought forth in swarms, and all the winged birds of every kind. And God saw that this was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile and increase, fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day. (Gen. 1:20–23)



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FRIDAY

Beasts of the earth, wild and domestic. What can I do to save a lion or an elephant today? Or a cat or dog, for that matter? What can I do to save a human life? To save a person is to save a world, we are taught. How can I save a world today?

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה לְמִינָהּ בְּהֵמָה וְרֶמֶשׂ וְחַיְתוֹ אֶרֶץ לְמִינָהּ; וַיְהִי כֵן. וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת כָּל רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינָהּ; וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ; וְיִרְדּוּ בִדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל הָאָרֶץ. וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ: זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ וּכְבֹּשְׁהָ; וְיִרְדּוּ בִדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל חַיַּת הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל הָאָרֶץ. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נֹתְתִי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת כָּל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ פְרִי עֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע: לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ. וְלִכָּל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וְלִכָּל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלִכָּל רֹמֵשׂ עַל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֶת כָּל יֶרֶק עֹשֶׂב לְאֹכְלָהּ; וַיְהִי כֵן. וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד; וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי.

God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind." And it was so. God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good. And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth."

God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food." And it was so. And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Gen. 1:24–31)



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SHABBAT KODESH/HOLY SABBATH

Friday night and/or Saturday:

Once more we have completed a week, the cycle in which our ancient tale says the world was created. We, too, affirm that we live in a created world, one that is alive with radiant holiness, waiting to be discovered. May the rest of this Shabbat allow us to open our hearts so that we see Your glory in the natural world of which we are a part, in the simple blessings of life's constant renewal and rebirth. May we rededicate ourselves on this Shabbat to do our part in working to preserve Your world, to treat Your creation with love and awe, and to make our lives, our community, and our world a dwelling place for Your holy presence.

וַיְכַל הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם. וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה; וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ: כִּי בּו שְׁבַת מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.

And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all of their array. On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. And God blessed the seventh day, and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done. (Gen. 2:1-3)

