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## Tree Planting Ceremony

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- Leader:** We have come together as partners in the joyful and sacred work of creation--the planting of trees. In our Bible, the tree is a metaphor for the righteous who trust in God and delight in God's teachings. We rejoice today in this planting, offering thanks that this opportunity is ours. The Midrash tells us that "God said to Israel: 'Even if you find the land full of all good things, you should not say, 'We will sit and not plant'; rather, be diligent in planting! Just as you came and found trees planted by others, you must plant for your children; a person must not say, 'I am old, how many years will I live? You must not excuse your self from planting. As you found trees, plant more, even if you are old.'" (*Midrash Tankhuma*, Kedoshim)  
[The story of Honi the Circle Maker, found in the program "A Discussion on Interdependence and Diversity" can also be substituted here, and is especially appropriate for younger groups.]
- Reader 1:** There is an order to this, God's universe, that is beyond our comprehension. Intricate, delicate, embracing, exquisite--an organic whole more complex than the computer, more profound than the highest tower, more lasting than the mightiest weapon.
- All:** Only when we stand inside that order can we connect with it, belong to it.
- Reader 2:** The world of nature was given to us to join with, not to conquer. We enter that world as its caretakers, not as its owners. It is our privilege to be entrusted with its care, with its safekeeping.
- All:** And only when we keep it safely are we kept in safety, for we are part of the plan, a link in the connectedness of all its seamless parts.
- Reader 3:** People can sense God's presence in nature. Where can it be found? Here, where lavish nature reminds us of the Garden. Here, where we pause in awe at nature's elegance. Here, where we remember that we stand within that elegance and not outside it. Here, where we gather to plant anew.
- Leader:** Who is Man, who is Woman?
- All:** A little lower than the angels, entrusted with keeping God's world, with completing the work of creation. The flower, the stream, the chemistry, woman, man: each a tiny part of God's intricate infinity, each connected to all others.
- Reader 4:** When God created the first human beings, God led them around the garden of Eden and said: Look at my works! See how beautiful they are, how excellent! For your sake I created them all. Take care not to spoil or destroy My world, for if you do, there will be no, one to repair it after you. (*Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 7:13)
- All:** Do not destroy it.
- Reader 5:** Do not permit oil to spill into the rivers and oceans, do not destroy the forests, do not poison the groundwater.
- Leader:** And do not wound your neighbors, for they, too, are part of the interdependent whole.
- All:** Today we have gathered to plant a tree.

**Reader 6:** Each tree absorbs a bit of our pollution, and then transforms it into oxygen, a source of life. Each tree is truly a "tree of life."

**All:** We plant in order to mend, to heal, to fix. We plant for the sake of *Tikkun Olam*, the repair of God's order, of God's universe, our home.

**Reader 7:** And each planting is a reminder of our responsibility. We did not make this world; we are its product not its producers. But it is ours to enjoy, to explore, and, most of all, to protect. We protect it by planting and by remembering and by connecting, from generation to generation.

**All:** We plant in order to remember, in order to remind, in order to keep and connect with God's Creation, our home.

**Leader:** Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakkai said: If you are in the midst of planting a tree and word reaches you that the Messiah has arrived, do not interrupt your work, first finish your planting and only then go out to welcome the Messiah. (*Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*)

**All:** It is our prayer, in the words of Jeremiah and the psalmists, that this tree shall continue to flourish. May its foliage be luxuriant, and may all that it does prosper.

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ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד  
Baruch Atah Ha-Shem, Elokeinu Melech ha'olam, oseh ma'aseh v'reshit.

*Baruch Atah Ha-Shem, Elokeinu Melech ha'olam, oseh ma'aseh v'reshit.*

**Praised are You, Eternal our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who makes the works of Creation.**

