

# JRC Tu B'Shvat Pledge Card

Tu B'Shvat marks a time when we have finished the old year and turn towards hope for spring - planning our gardens, dreaming of summer travels and resolving to do more. This Tu B'Shvat, pledge to do more to protect and appreciate our natural resources. We encourage you to commit to one activity in each realm between now and Rosh Hashanah. At the High Holidays we'll get together and reflect on how we've done, and discuss what else we can do. Use the suggestions below as a guide. Try small steps. If we all do them, we can make a big difference.

(Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation, Evanston IL, January 2004 / Shvat 5764)

## Ruach - Spirituality

- Recite a prayer for the environment twice a week
- Read a book on Jewish Environmentalism (watch for recommended books on the JRC website).
- Spend time out of doors, exploring a natural area you haven't been to before - alone or with loved ones.

## Mishpachah - Family

- \* Energy:
  - o Buy compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). *CFLs use 25% of the energy and last ten times longer than a normal bulb. You can find them in your local hardware store.*
  - o When buying new electronics or appliances look for the ENERGY STAR symbol.
  - o Make a habit of turning off lights & appliances when not in use.
  - o Use energy saving settings when available. Set your thermostat down 1 degree in winter and up 1 degree in summer. *For every degree you adjust your thermostat you can save 3% in heating and cooling costs.*
- \* Transportation:
  - Commit to decreasing use fossil fuels by taking public transit, bicycling, walking or carpooling once more per week.
  - If you are about to buy a new vehicle think seriously about gas mileage. Consider buying a hybrid car. *Did you know that SUVs emit up to 5.5 times more air pollution per mile than cars?*
- \* Paper:
  - Buy paper with at least 30% post consumer waste for your home or office.
  - Before recycling use both sides of the paper.
  - Look for and purchase recycled toilet paper, napkins, and paper towels. *If we don't buy recycled, we aren't recycling.*
  - Use cloth towels and rags instead of paper.
  - Avoid excess packaging and disposables.

## Kehilah - Community

- \* Volunteer for stewardship of the land programs such as:
  - o Keep Evanston Beautiful, Trash-busters Day, Sunday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. Contact: Jack \_\_\_\_\_ (847) \_\_\_\_\_
  - o Evanston Interreligious Sustainability Circle -- Restoration Day, Sunday, May 18th @ Harms Woods. Contact: Dan \_\_\_\_\_, co/ JRC Youth Group.
  - o North Park Village Nature Center (312)744-5472
  - o Emily Oaks Nature Center (847) 674-1500
  - o Open Lands Project - Tree Keepers. Contact: Jim \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* Join the JRC Environmental Task Force or the JRC Gardeners
  - To join the JRC Environmental Task Force *sign up tonight* or call: Julie \_\_\_\_\_ (847) \_\_\_\_\_, email: \_\_\_\_\_
  - To join the JRC Gardeners *sign up tonight* or call Becky \_\_\_\_\_: (773) \_\_\_\_\_, email: \_\_\_\_\_.
- \* Pledge to help defray the costs for JRC to "GO GREEN" (help JRC use recycled paper, paper products, organic coffee and more). *Sign up tonight.*
- \* Learn about local sustainability issues. Attend the Sustainable Evanston Forum Series: **Energy Forum**, Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>; **Transportation Forum** Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup>; both from 7:30 to 9:30pm. The forums will be held at: Lake Street Church, 607 Lake St. in Evanston.

## Tikkun Olam- Repairing the World

- \* Join a local, national or international environmental organization. Sign up for updates or action networks. The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life or *COEJL*, [www.coejl.org](http://www.coejl.org), is a great resource.
- \* Contact your elected officials and newspaper editors when environmental issues that you care about are in the news.
- \* Reach out at your work place, other organizations you are active in and encourage them to adopt more sustainable practices.

\* One example of a prayer for the environment:

*Master of the Universe*

*Grant me the ability to be alone.*

*May it be my custom to go outdoors each day*

*Among trees and grasses*

*Among all the growing things*

*And there may I be alone and energy into prayer*

*To talk with the one that I belong to.*

*-Rabbi Nachman of Breslav*



Centuries ago, Maimonides created the Thirteen Precepts. They are still a mainstay of Jewish belief. I now propose another set of precepts -- the Thirteen Intimate Interactions with Nature that Are Key to Our Spiritual Well-Being.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to walk barefoot in the grass and occasionally roll down a soft grassy hill.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to sleep outdoors, under the canopy of heaven.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to watch the sun come up over the ocean.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to bask in the healing rays of the sun.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to stand in an open meadow on a clear starry night.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to climb a mountain.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to sit among the branches of a tree.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to swim in a lake or a river or an ocean or a bay and feel your body supported by water.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to take a great gulp of country air at night or after a rainfall.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to build sandcastles and feel the sand run through your fingers and slip between your toes.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to plant vegetables and herbs and simply dig in dirt.

I believe, with a deep and abiding faith, that it is a holy act to dance barefoot in the moonlight, see the horizon, witness a rainbow, get grass stains on your shorts, smell a barnyard, ride a horse, milk a cow, pet a cat, hug a tree, touch the sky.

-- Ellen Bernstein, Shomrei Adamah

This pledge card was printed on kenaf, a tree-free paper which is a more sustainable alternative to tree fanning.