

This year, Earth Day falls on the first night of Passover, a joining of celebrations old and new that together remind us how much our lives depend on the acts of God and nature.

Passover, *Pesah*, tells the story of the plagues, and how the disordering of nature disrupted and upended the mightiest nation on earth. We are not strangers to this reality. Many of us today are witness to extreme weather and climate events and have seen firsthand how destructive and disruptive they can be. When nature's cycles get out of sync, chaos runs rampant throughout the land, wreaking havoc.

Earth Day invites us to appreciate the world's order, its synchrony, the regularity of the seasons, each one following after the other, just as God promised Noah after the flood: "Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." (Genesis 8:22) For during the period of the flood, the midrash tells us, nature's systems stopped. "All those twelve months the cycles of time ceased," Rabbi Yoḥanan taught. "The cycles continued," countered Rabbi Yonatan, "but their effect was imperceptible." (Genesis Rabbah 34) Either way, the midrash tells us, all of nature was disrupted and the world suffered, for we can flourish only within the orderly flow of the seasons.

During the period of the Omer, the seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot, the Conservative/Masorti Movement will be highlighting its commitment to caring for the earth. Each week, ExploringJudaism.org will send out teachings to deepen our collective actions, enabling us to live well within the bounds of nature's needs. These teachings will be disciplines that speak to the head, heart and hand, corresponding to the three pillars on which the world stands: Torah (learning), *avodah* (service) and *gemilut hasadim* (lovingkindness) (*Pirkei Avot* 1:2). Take these teachings, share them, teach them, adapt them as you see fit.

During the weeks of the Omer we will also be reaching out to you with an array of webinars sponsored by various arms of the Masorti/Conservative movement that will explore Judaism's ways of living sustainably.

To kick the whole thing off, we offer you the prayer below. It was designed to serve as a daily expression of the Movement's commitment to the mitzvah of *Yishuv Ha'olam*, the imperative to preserve a habitable world. It will be printed in the movement's forthcoming edition of the weekday prayer book, *Lev Shalem*, added to the end of the morning (*shaharit*) service.

Your synagogue can show its commitment to protecting the earth by joining our partner Adamah's Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition. Joining the Coalition is a meaningful way for your congregation to receive the information and support it needs to do its part to care for the earth – in sync with your community's visions and capacity. Fifty Conservative congregations have already signed up. Join them.

For more information about these initiatives and The Masorti Environmental Sustainability Initiative, contact ssiegel@rabbinicalassembly.org.