



Shana Tova U'metuka!
Wishing You a Sweet New Year

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with members of Nature Israel's Rabbinic Council



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In Judaism our prayers are always sent aloft collectively. Alone we cannot save the world, a task to which we are called upon to rededicate ourselves at the beginning of every new year. The earth is our Eden in which God placed humanity to work it and preserve it. But as back then, greed threatens to destroy our singular blue planet. Sorrowfully unlike Adam and Eve, we have no other place to go to.

Rabbi Ismar Schorsch
New York, NY





The first verse of our Torah asserts that before creation the world was "tohu va-vohu - an empty waste." Creation is the act of bringing order to the universe. Nature is its crown jewel. The prophet Isaiah using the urgent word of Genesis 1:1 reminds us of our responsibility to all created nature: "lo tohu v'ra'a, lashevet yitzara - not to be an empty waste did God create it, to be inhabited God created it." [Isaiah 45:18] This then is our duty.

Rabbi Bernard H. Mehlman
Brookline, MA

All humanity is interconnected and sourced from the earth. We are tied to the well-being of the planet and indeed, the planet's well-being is certainly tied to our behavior. May this new year bring us renewed opportunity and focus to care for one another by caring for the earth, and may our caring for the earth help us to heal, repair, and improve the lot of our neighbors.

Rabbi Mark Cohn,
New Milford, CT





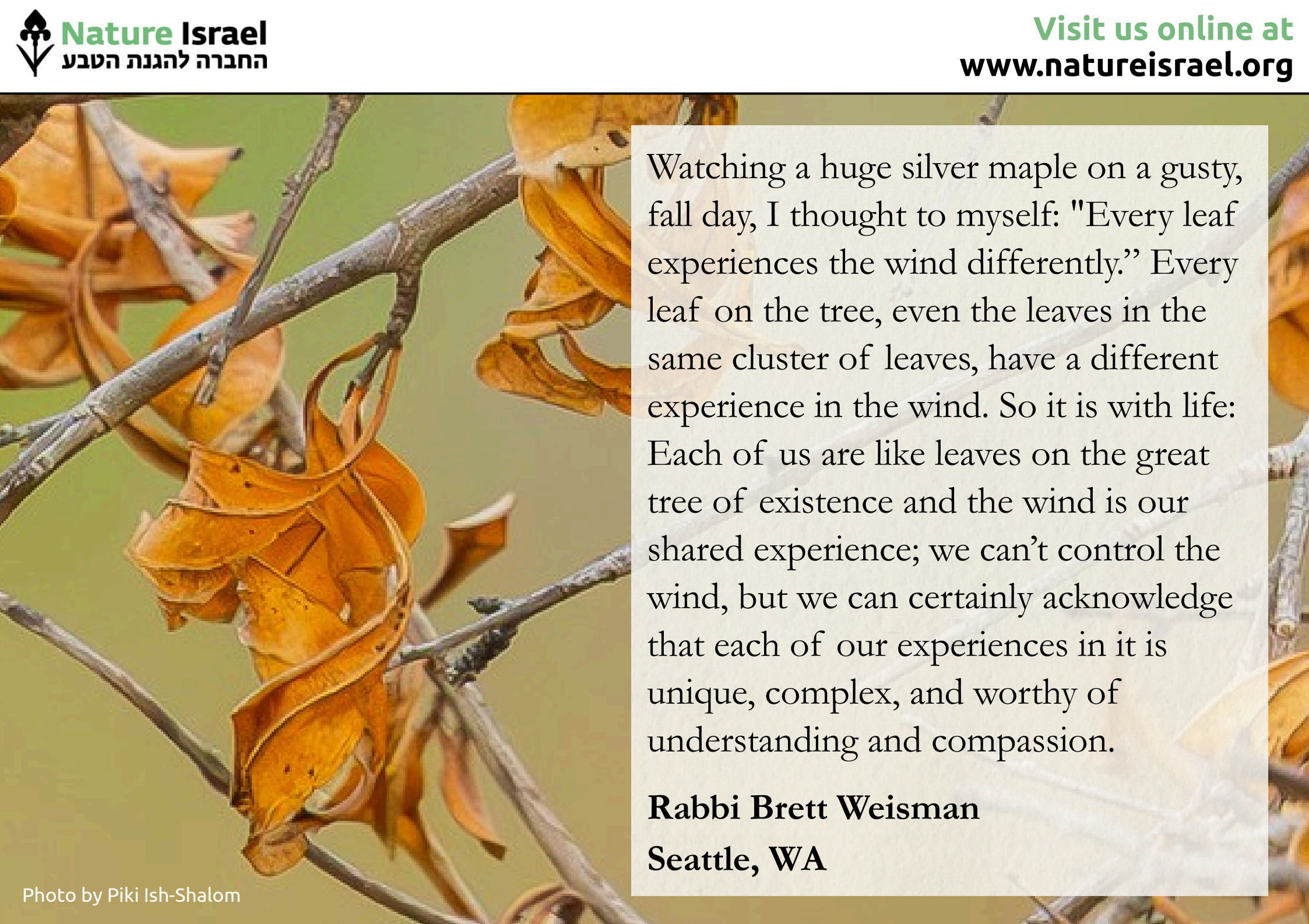
Following a day of hiking in New Mexico, I rested on a mountainside and I lost myself. For a time, all I felt was oneness, not an interconnectedness of all things, but a unity and sameness of all things. This feeling is experienced across religious traditions and by folks who would claim no religion at all, but in the Jewish mystical tradition it is called bitul hayesh, nullification of one's somethingness. That oneness and unity of all is a facet of God.

Rabbi Max Weiss
Oak Park, IL

Listen, pay attention,
Each and everyone,
As I am present,
I touch what is
 alive and present
 in all of us --
My presence is
 an expression of
 the essential vitality
That pulses eternally
through the Universe.

Rabbi Susan Freeman
San Diego, CA






Watching a huge silver maple on a gusty, fall day, I thought to myself: "Every leaf experiences the wind differently." Every leaf on the tree, even the leaves in the same cluster of leaves, have a different experience in the wind. So it is with life: Each of us are like leaves on the great tree of existence and the wind is our shared experience; we can't control the wind, but we can certainly acknowledge that each of our experiences in it is unique, complex, and worthy of understanding and compassion.

Rabbi Brett Weisman
Seattle, WA

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai used to say: "If there is a plant in your hand when they say, 'The Messiah has arrived!', go and plant the plant, and afterward greet him" (Avot d'Rabbi Natan 31). We are reminded by this saying to keep our commitment as guardians of nature and its resources. Nature Israel calls us to be down to earth, practical activists to preserve the well-being and quality of the Land of Israel.

Rabbi Paul Citrin
Albuquerque, NM



A close-up photograph of two honeybees on a vibrant pink flower. One bee is positioned on the left, partially inside the flower's petals, while the other is on the right, facing it. Both bees have distinct yellow and black stripes on their abdomens and are covered in fine hairs. The background is a soft, out-of-focus pink.

And we human beings, we are of this planet, we are this universe. We are earth and we are air, we are water and we are sunlight. And we are so closely connected to one another and to it all.

Rabbi Stacy Friedman
San Rafael, CA

In the words of Psalm 104, we are taught, "How many are Your works, O God, all of them You made with wisdom; the earth is full of Your creations." The Psalmist reminds us that every creature, from the cedars of Lebanon to the wild donkeys, is sustained by a divine hand. As we enter the new year, let us recognize our unique human responsibility to safeguard this interconnected web of life, ensuring that all of God's creations continue to thrive, and thereby joining in the sacred work of renewal.

Rabbi Josh Bennett
West Bloomfield, MI





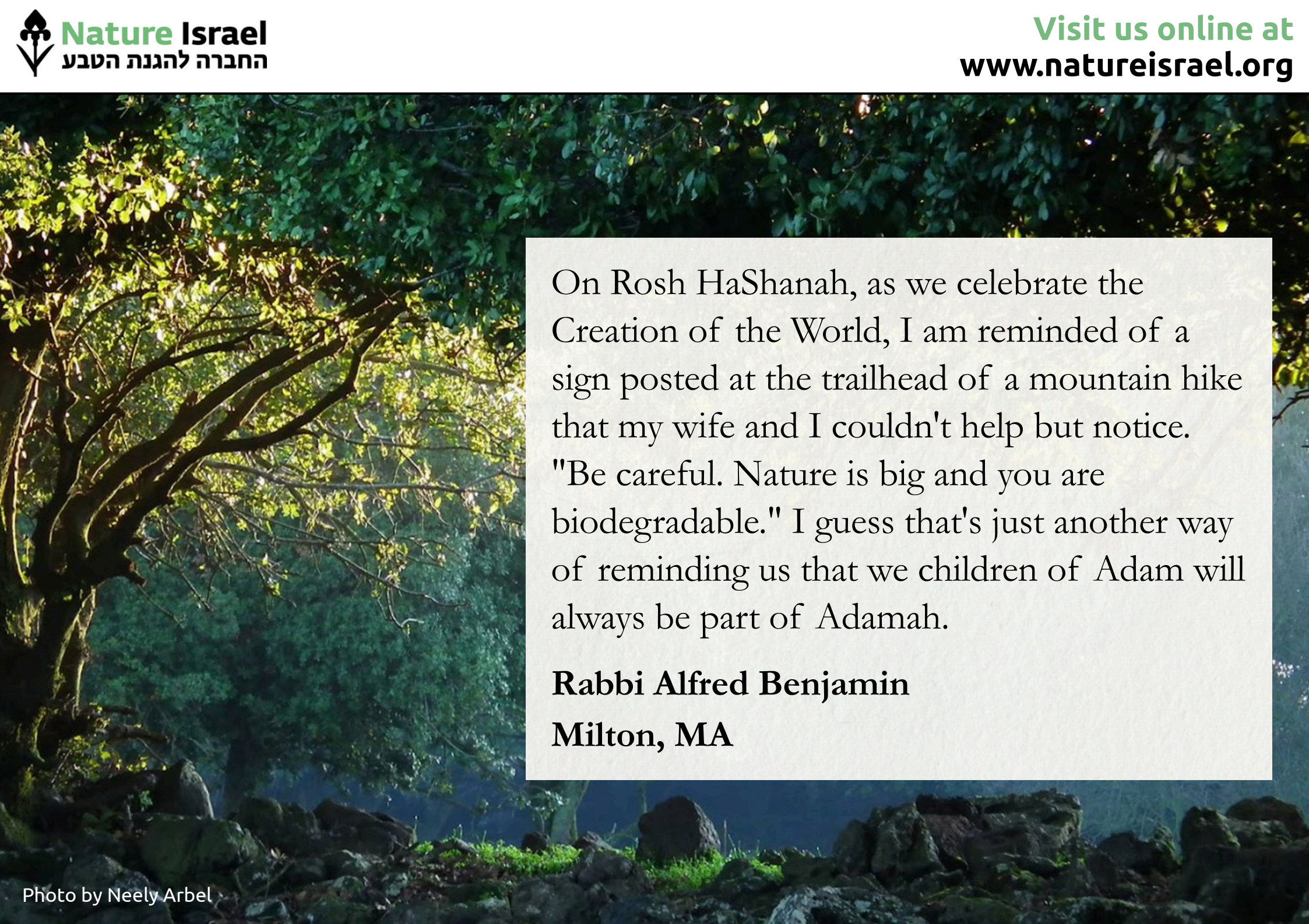
In Jewish thought, all of creation is infused with divine presence, and every living being reflects a spark of God's wisdom and care. Humanity is entrusted as shomrei adamah, guardians of the Earth, called to protect and nurture the natural world so that all life can flourish. Caring for the environment is not only an ethical duty but a sacred act that honors the Creator and sustains the delicate web of life.

Rabbi Paul Cohen
Northfield, IL

The emergence of daffodil stalks from the hard winter soil, their stubborn persistence when ice and snow fall again, and the beauty of their flowers remind us: If we believe in a better future, we will ourselves to survive, and we commit ourselves to build the tomorrow of our dreams, even if a miracle is required to make it so. Then, after the longest of winters, after the bleakest of times, and even after the apparent finality of death, life and hope may spring eternal, just like the daffodils before them. Amen.

Rabbi Barry Block
Little Rock, AR





On Rosh HaShanah, as we celebrate the Creation of the World, I am reminded of a sign posted at the trailhead of a mountain hike that my wife and I couldn't help but notice. "Be careful. Nature is big and you are biodegradable." I guess that's just another way of reminding us that we children of Adam will always be part of Adamah.

Rabbi Alfred Benjamin
Milton, MA