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NEWS & VIEWS

October 24, 2019 | 25 Tishrei 5780
Blog Issue

70 FACES OF TORAH

Posts from this [Hebrew College-hosted blog](#) are published weekly in [Patheos](#).

Little Robes for the New year *Parashat B'reishit (Genesis 1:1-6:8)*

By Joey Glick
[Rabbinical School of Hebrew College](#) student



*I said to the sun
tell me about the Big Bang
The sun said, "It hurts to become."
— [Andrea Gibson, I Sing the Body Electric](#)*

On the first day of the Hebrew month of Elul, I was sitting in the lobby of the Cambridge city courthouse. The night before, I had been arrested with a group of Jews at a protest in solidarity with undocumented immigrants. My fellow protesters and I were waiting for our case to be called when an old, disheveled-looking man walked up to us. "Are you students?" he asked with a strong Boston accent. One of us snarked back, "No, we're criminal defendants." "You better listen to me," he replied, "maybe I am the voice of God." The rabbinical students present quickly perked up. "Ok, take out your phone," he said, "go to the webpage [Astronomy Picture of the Day](#). Type in your birthday. The computer will show you a picture of what the cosmos looked like on the day that you were born." He

continued, “Now send that picture to your mom as a belated Mother's Day gift. Tell her 'this is what space looked like on the day that you gave birth to me — this is the stardust that I come from, the stardust out of which I was made by the great, mighty, divine God...ess, The Godess! Because only a woman could do something so painful and loving as creating the whole world.'”

As I opened the Book of Genesis this week, the old man's diatribe came back to me. From the little he said about her, I liked his vision of God. If I followed her, I suspected this God might have something to teach me about the broken world in which we live, the world She created. I wanted to ask her:

How did it feel to give birth to creation?

Was it painful?

Were you afraid?

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COMMUNITY LEARNING



Facilitating Mussar

By Jenny Kaplan

Participant, [Hebrew College Open Circle Jewish Learning](#)



Have you ever made an impulse buy? And soon thereafter, you find yourself scratching your head, saying, what was I thinking? Almost exactly two years ago, I did the same thing when I saw a write up in *Vat's Nu*, the Temple Shir Tikva (in Wayland, Mass.) weekly newsletter, about a thing called *Mussar*. At the time, I was struggling with overwhelming personal challenges, and I knew that I needed something to hold onto, but I didn't know what.

When I read the description by Caryl Shaw for a [Hebrew College Open Circle Jewish Learning](#) class offering an opportunity to strengthen my spiritual soul by focusing awareness on our *middot*, or soul traits, I registered without thinking. It was a day or two before class started and I had no idea of the journey I was about to embark on.

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Hebrew College offers [community learning](#) and [graduate leadership programs](#) – each of which strengthens the other – within a pluralistic environment of open inquiry, depth, creativity, and compassion.

SUSTAINABILITY

Rooted in Nature

By Rabbi Nate DeGroot, Rab` 16

Associate Director, Spiritual & Program Director at [Hazon Detroit](#),
the Jewish lab for sustainability



What is the Hebrew word for nature? *Teva*.

Now, where in Jewish texts do we first see the word *teva* appear, meaning “nature?” When does it first appear as such?

How about the story of creation? “Let there be light!” A garden? Humans formed from the earth itself? Nope. Maybe Noah? The flood, the rainbow, the dove, all of nature destroyed? Nope.

What about Psalms, chock-full of references to nature everywhere you look. The trees shaking, the earth quaking, nature used as metaphors repeatedly? Nope.

In fact, the first time we see *teva* appear, meaning nature, isn’t until the 12th century of the Common Era. Originally, the Hebrew root of the word meant imprinted. Imprinted, like on a ring, or a seal. Then that came to be used later, as imprinted, like that which is imprinted on us – our unique imprint, our unique “nature.”

Then RamBam uses the parallel Arabic root, a language that he was immersed in, to mean, in addition to our human nature, nature as in the natural world - like the trees and plants and sky. Then *Guide For the Perplexed* gets translated into Hebrew and there we have the first mention of *teva* as “nature.”

So that’s fascinating and all, if you’re a linguistic lover, but then the question becomes: How could it be that Judaism didn’t have a separate word for “nature,” when we are a religion that is literally *and* mythically rooted in the natural world?

[Read more](#)

In case you missed it, read more about Hebrew College student, faculty, and alumni work in

sustainability in the recent [sustainability issue of News & Views](#) and [send us your stories](#).

EVENTS

OCTOBER

Azamra: Alternative Shabbat Community Minyan

Join Rabbi Lev Friedman, Rab`18 for a morning service in the Hebrew College Beit Midrash, followed by a pot-luck vegetarian kiddush luncheon. Occurs monthly. Supported by the [Hebrew College Innovation Lab](#).

October 26 | 10 am -12 pm
Hebrew College
[Learn more](#)⁸

NOVEMBER

Blossoming: The 2019 Hebrew College Jewish Education Conference

The conference will focus on the blossoming of educators, professionals, students, families, organizations, and the Jewish family.

November 11-12
Hebrew College
[Register](#)

Heidi Urich Annual Lecture on Jewish Genealogy with Saskia Coenen Snyder

Diamonds, Jews, and the Expansion of 19th Century Global Trade
November 17 | 3:30-5:30 pm
Hebrew College
Co-sponsored by [Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston](#) and Hebrew College

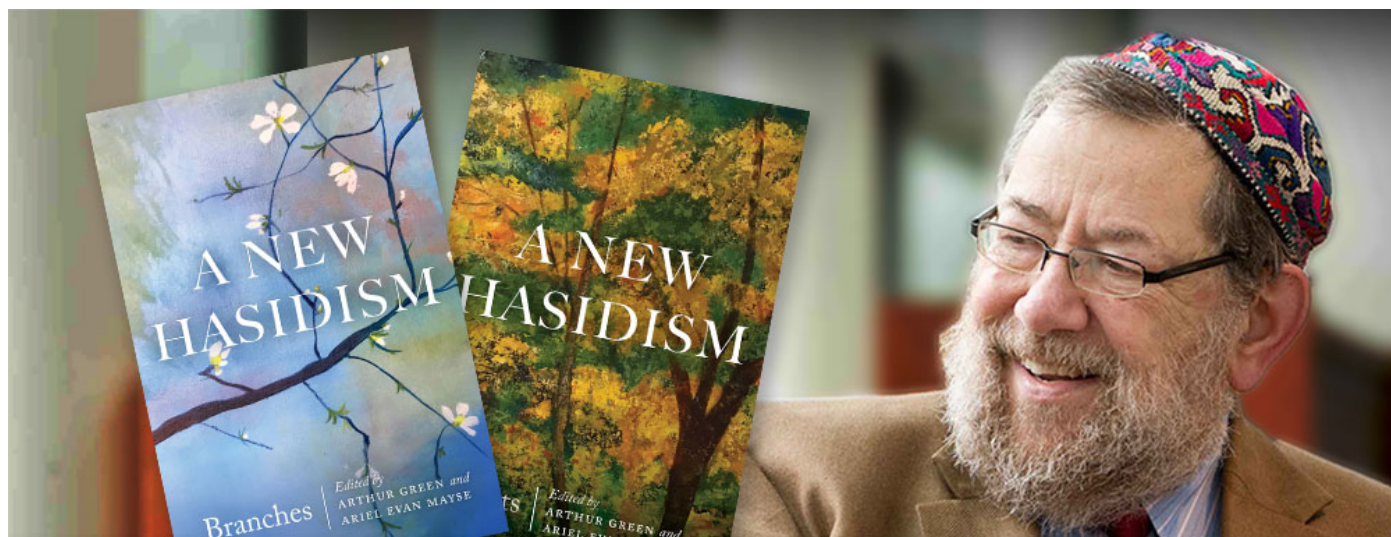
[Learn more & register](#)

DECEMBER



70th Birthday Tribute to Rabbi Allan Lehmann

December 5 | 7 pm
Hebrew College
[Learn more](#)



A New Hasidism: Study, Reflection, Celebration

November 3 | 2-8 pm at Hebrew College

Celebrate the publication of Hebrew College Rector Rabbi Art Green's and Dr. Ariel Mayse's new work on the history, development, and contemporary practice of Neo-Hasidism. Join us for all or part of this inspiring day of learning, discussion, dinner, and music.

Speakers include Hebrew College President Sharon Cohen Anisfeld, Hebrew College faculty Rabbi Art Green ([read more about Rabbi Green's work in the area of neo-Hasidism](#)), Rabbi Ebn Leader, Rabbi Nehemia Polen, and Rabbi Or Rose, Institute for Jewish Spirituality's Rabbi Nancy Flam, and Stanford University's Dr. Ariel Mayse. Rabbi Lev Friedman, Rab`18 and Rabbi Shoshana Friedman, Rab`14 will perform in an evening concert of neo-Hasidic inspired music.

Learn more & RSVP



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