

## A Tree Planting Ceremony

Welcome to our tree planting!

We plant a tree in our child's honor and watch the child and the tree grow together. In this way we are able to celebrate life with life, to involve our children as well as ourselves, to cherish a living reminder of each of our children, and to mark its importance in our lives.

In ancient Israel, a tree was planted when a child was born, or during their childhood—a cedar for a boy, a cypress for a girl. As the children grew up, they cared for their own trees. When they were married, the bridegroom and bride stood under a canopy made of branches cut from the trees that had been planted in their honor years before. So Jewish tradition emphasizes a strong bond between all the stages of our lives, and helps develop a love for trees and sensitivity to the wonders of nature.

עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא לַמְחַזְקִים בָּהּ, וְתַמְכִּינָהּ מְאֹד:

We say about Torah:

“It is a tree of life to those who hold firmly to it,  
and all who support it are gladdened.”

(Proverbs 3:17)

A reading for grandparents:

While walking along a road, a sage saw a man planting a carob tree.

He asked him: “How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?”

“Seventy years,” replied the man.

The sage then asked: “Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?”

The man answered: “I found a fruitful world, because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise I am planting for my children.”

(Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 23a)

Wisdom from siblings:

“Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat the fruit of them.”

(Jeremiah 29:5)

“You shall be like a tree planted beside a river; that brings forth its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither; and whatever you do will prosper.”

(after Psalms 1:3)

A prayer by parents:

We stand before all creation and God in awe as we witness these miracles: this young tree, the honored roots of our family tree, and our growing children.

Trees and children are unique and original, unlike anything that ever was before or will be.

We pray that the roots of this tree will gain hold and spread deep, drawing nourishment from the fertile earth. So may our children draw nourishment from their own roots—family, heritage and the Jewish tradition.

We pray that the trunk will grow healthy and strong, withstanding the harsh forces of nature and able to support its canopy of branches and leaves. So may our children have and develop healthy bodies and strong moral spirits, holding steadfast to their own integrity and withstanding the tempests and temptations that could weaken or deter them.

We watch these branches bud and blossom, giving shade and beauty for all to enjoy. So, too, may we watch our children bud and blossom to be blessings and support to family, friends and community, and to make their unique contribution to the world. Help us nourish and nurture this tree and our children so that they may mature and prosper, fulfilling to the greatest extent possible the potential for which God placed them on earth.

Blessing and Planting:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁלֹא חִסַּר בְּעוֹלָמוֹ כְּלוּם

וּבְרָא בּוֹ בְּרִיּוֹת טוֹבוֹת וְאֵילָנוֹת טוֹבִים לְהַנּוֹת בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם:

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-Olam, sheh-lo chisar b'olamo kloom u'vara vo b'riyot tovot v'eelanot tovim l'hanot bahem b'nei adam.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who holds back nothing from Creation, and created good creatures and trees for the pleasure of all humanity.

[Complete the planting of the tree]

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁשִׁיחֵינוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְן הַזֶּה:

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-Olam, sheh-heh-cheh-yanu v'ki-y'manu, v'higi-yanu la-z'man ha-zeh.*

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who gives us life, who stands us up together, and who brings us to special times like this.