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.”

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
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.
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.

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**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?


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?

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

http://www.icontact-archive.com/archive?c=1010158&f=11451&s=31...be52d2dadb338aff85253f2c50713da0a6474266a223cf23318b57ca770527
sustainability in the recent sustainability issue of News & Views and send us your stories.

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**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

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**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

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**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

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**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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