



Institute for Jewish Spirituality™

Cultivating Mindfulness. Deepening Connection. Enlivening Jewish Life.

Ki ha'Adam eitz ha'sadeh (Because the Human Being is a Tree of the Field)

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This election year, anxiety and social divisions are higher than I can recall in my lifetime. Particularly given the prospect of a contested outcome, many fear that our society and political system may be overwhelmed. How are we to stay grounded?

When I am in need of guidance or inspiration, I often head outdoors and turn to other creatures around me. Right now, leaves of trees around me in New England are turning gorgeous shades of red, orange and yellow. As always, I am moved by their boldness and vitality, just as winter approaches.

We speak of trees “changing colors,” but actually these vivid hues have been here all along. They were simply masked by chlorophyll, which is green. It is when the tree quiets down, ceases its striving to harness energy and to grow, that its deeper and most vibrant colors emerge.

Coinciding with the High Holidays, this always moves me. It whispers that the qualities I strive to manifest in my behavior and relationships are already present within me. Latent, hidden, perhaps, but present. And that there are deep parts of me still waiting to find expression. Can I sense their yearning? What small piece of healing can I bring to a world that so desperately needs it? I invite you to sit quietly among the trees, or take a walking meditation, and see what arises for you.

Perhaps the resources we need to build a more just and loving society are already present, as well. How would it feel to trust this? Whatever the outcome of this election, may the trees inspire us to peel back the labels and fears that prevent us from seeing and hearing one another, revealing the deeper truth of all we share, and the beauty in our differences.

[Hear](#) Israeli singer Shalom Hanoch's beautiful song on this theme.