Humanity’s Relationship to Nature

_Talmud Bavli Taanit 23a_
[Honi, the righteous man], was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree. He asked him, “how long does it take [for this tree] to bear fruit?” The man replied, “in 70 years.” He then further asked him: “Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?” The man replied: “I found [ready grown] carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted these for me so I too plant these for my children.”

_Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13_
“See God’s work! For who can repair what God has twisted?”
At the time when God created Adam, God took him around the trees of the Garden of Eden, and said to him, “See My works! How beautiful and praiseworthy they are. Everything that I have created, I created for you. Take care not to damage and destroy My world, for if you damage it, there is no one to repair it after you.”

_Talmud Bavli Shabbat 67b_
Rav Zutra said: “Whoever covers an oil lamp, or uncovers a naphtha lamp, transgresses the law of _bal tashchit_ (do not waste).”

GUIDING QUESTIONS:
- What do these texts suggest about humanity’s relationship to nature?
- How might these texts inform our current consumption of natural resources?
- What steps might we take, both individually and at a national level, to ensure that we do not “damage and destroy [God’s] world?”

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