

כי האדם עץ השדה?

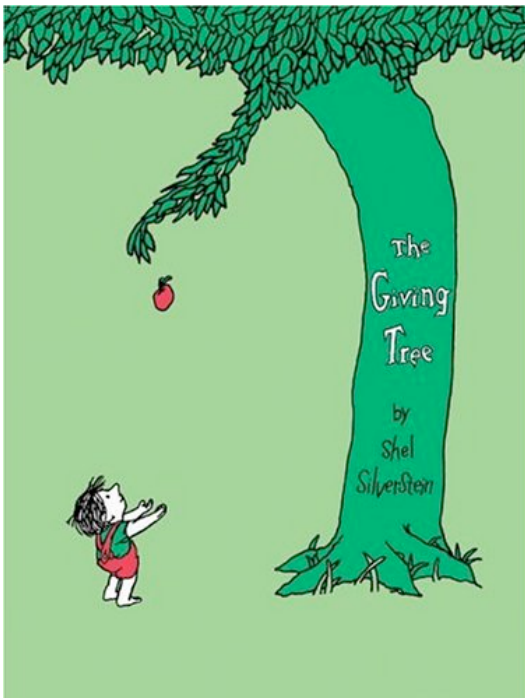
August 14, 2010

When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees of the field people, that you should besiege them?

Deuteronomy 20:19



How can ethics guide our relationship to trees?



At one point, in the midst of my undergraduate journey, I took a much-needed year-long detour...and I worked at a Jewish Day School in L.A. as a teacher's assistant in kindergarden. A wise teacher read "The Giving Tree" to the class. She helped them see why the story was so awful. Think about it. Throughout his life - from childhood through old age - the boy only knows how to take. He never gives back. He's a user. The tree lives (and dies) in order to please. "Take everything I've got, even my limbs, even my trunk. I'm content to be a stump, knowing that you enjoy sitting on me." The relationship is beyond one-sided. It is sick.

Carefully read Deuteronomy 20:19. Even when we are at war with our foes, our tradition reminds us that we may not cut down fruit-bearing trees. Ethics may not be discarded during war. Can trees run from the devouring blade? We all know the answer.