



Instead of Your Mahzor

As the Jewish High Holy Days approach, it is of course time for thinking deeply about... what books you will read in shul during services. Rabbis extol [Rosh Hashanah Mussaf](#) as liturgical brilliance, but the rest of us find it to be spiritual chloroform.

Well, fortunately enough, the Jewish environmentalist literature has gotten better over the last several years, and here are a couple you can sneak into the sanctuary without feeling guilty (an important side benefit if you're Jewish).

Hava Tirosh-Samuelson's edited volume, [Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word](#) is part of the Harvard University Press series on world religions and ecology, and features some of the leading scholars in the field, such as Evan Eisenberg, Arthur Green, Jon Levenson, Lenn Goodman, and of course Tirosh-Samuelson herself. One of Tirosh-Samuelson's previous books, [Happiness in Premodern Judaism](#), is really a tour-de-force integration of theology and ancient philosophy.

Arthur Waskow's [Seasons of Our Joy](#) is less scholarly and more practical. [Waskow is one of the real stalwarts of progressive Judaism](#), whose political activism called him to the rabbinate. *Seasons* is not strictly speaking a book about environmentalism: rather, it is a book about the rhythms of the Jewish year, which to a large (although hardly exclusive) extent are natural rhythms. It's a wonderful way to begin the Jewish year because it helps you continue it after the Hi Hos.

Both books are still in print, and while it's a little under the wire, you can still get them sent to you overnight. If you live near a quality book store (alas, a rarer fact nowadays) or a university library, they should both be readily available.

So if you can't stand Mussaf anymore, go outside, into the synagogue courtyard, and learn. And don't let anyone tell that that isn't observing the holiday.