

Bound to Earth

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

Rabbinic legends tell of *Adne Sne*, “man of the mountain.” His form is exactly that of a human being, but he is fastened to the ground by means of a navel string, upon which his life depends. Should that cord be snapped, he would die.

This is a powerful rabbinic image of our dependence upon the earth. It also tells us something in reverse about our own time. As the Swiss writer Max Frisch put it: “technology is the knack of arranging the world so that we need not experience it.” We live in controlled climates, travel so that we need not feel the road underfoot, appreciate the sights of nature on television, all without the messy inconvenience of creatures, drafts, and outdoor plumbing.

Yet as periodic natural disasters remind us, we are still at the whim of the world. Technology is the frail rampart we throw up against the encroachment of nature. We remain tied to earth, stewards and subjects, uneasily making our way. Our technology is often remarkable, but it should not deceive us into thinking that we have protected ourselves. Strung to the ground, we must guard our connection; should humanity allow the cord to be snapped, there would be no salvation.