Parshat Terumah discusses the construction of the mishkan, or the Tabernacle, G-d’s dwelling place on Earth. It begins with the terumah, the gifts the Israelites supplied as construction materials. One of the gifted items is ַעֲצֵי שִׁטִּים, acacia wood.

This wood was an important feature in the building of the mishkan, forming the core of the ark, the altar, and all of the walls. Chizkuni describes this wood as light and pleasant to look at. Other commenters, like Daat Zkenim, notes that this wood must have been extremely light given how much was used and how it was transported.

The Israelites have just fled Egypt and have been traveling through the wilderness. Anything they are using to build the mishkan, a large and ornate structure, they either had to have taken from Egypt or found along the way. So, the natural question to ask is where did the Israelites get all of this acacia wood?

Rashi, quoting Midrash Tanchuma, says that Jacob foresaw that his descendants would build the mishkan in the wilderness, so when he went down to Egypt, he brought trees to plant and instructed his children to take the wood with them when they left. According to the Midrash, Jacob literally laid the foundations for the mishkan, hundreds of years before it would be built.

The resources our children’s children will need to rely on in the future depend on our actions in the present. And the beauty of the midrash is that it starts with something small, with the planting of seeds. Time took care of the rest. What small actions can we take today that will grow into something that helps future generations?