



JEWISH CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK NYC

2021 / 5782

HIGH HOLIDAY CLIMATE CHANGE READER

FEATURING:

ART GREEN, JENNIE ROSEN, ARNIE EISEN,
MIRELE GOLDSMITH, NIGEL SAVAGE, ACE LEVEEN,
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EDITOR'S NOTE

DR. ACE LEVEEN

To our Rabbis, climate activists, friends and families,

I admit to approaching this New Year with a lot of pain and worry. What a year we have all been through. As if the pandemic and its continued presence wasn't enough, this summer of 2021 adds to our collective angst. In New York, our air was filled with the smoke of fires in Southern Oregon, literally from the other side of the continent. Many Americans and those from around the world have been flooded or faced droughts. Many lost their lives in those floods. Strong winds and hurricanes are repeatedly upon us. In particular the Oregon fire devastated me because I realized that it was not a onetime event, but a sign of a new reality already upon us. We can no longer think that climate change is in the future. Climate change is here.

Is it already too late to act? No. But every one of us has to realize that all of us have to change, in the individual actions we take – but also as a community, a state, a nation and as a planet. Do we have the will to persist, to push harder, to build more alliances, to make sure that governments and corporations realize we are out of time? Can this Rosh Hashanah offer us the opportunity to transform despair into determination, panic into persistence among our congregants, friends and families? We are almost at the point of no return.

Therefore we ask you – the change makers, the leaders, the inspiring clergy of our community – not to shy away from this reality, to realize we ignore the climate crisis at our peril. Speak out, inspire others, take action, lead on this Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot.

There are some extraordinarily positive developments in this present moment. Wise and passionate Jewish environmental leaders, rabbis and teachers have contributed to this year's materials. We offer new kavanot from thought leaders, innovative prayers that call us individually to reckon with our sins, inspiration instigated by the sound of the shofar, thought provoking climate Torah, and a path forward into a shmita year and a year of environmental action.

The Jewish climate movement is overflowing with creative changemakers – irrepressibly creative Hazon, the powerful new and inspiring organization Dayenu, JCAN-NYC seeking climate justice in partnership with others, and Jewish Earth Alliance harnessing the power of the pen to lobby Congress – just to name a few. And don't forget the simple but significant act of planting a tree through JTREE. There is a palpable and growing interest in the Jewish community to educate and advocate about climate, with a parallel recognition among recently elected political leaders not only to recognize but to dramatically respond to the climate crisis. Learn more about what is happening in Jewish climate and environmental circles in the back pages of this packet.

Most importantly, we do this work together as a Jewish community. This year's contributors come from Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative and Orthodox circles, all concerned citizens of this one, precious planet. May their words and prayers inspire us to choose hope, not despair, blessings, not curses, and life over death for all species in this new year.



A MEDITATION ON FIRE

RABBI HODY NEMES
STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER,
JEWISH CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK NYC

A few weeks ago, I looked up at the noonday sun and saw darkness; that night, the moon turned red. הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לְדָם לַחֹשֶׁךְ וְהַיָּרֵחַ לְדָם, says the prophet; “The sun will turn to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord” (Joel 3:4).

The cause of this strange portent in the heavens? Fire. Lots of fire. Fire consuming thousands of acres in the West. Sequoias turned to ash. Whole towns erased. And, downwind, a pillar of smoke stretching two thousand miles. “North America Chokes On Smoke, Looks Like An Ashtray from Space,” read a recent headline.

That day in late July, squinting at the sun, I feared letting my children play outside: New York City’s air quality was the worst of any major city on earth, surpassing even New Delhi and Beijing, because of the fires to our west.

Fire is essential to our humanity. Our mastery of it renders us unique in the animal kingdom. The so-called “cooking hypothesis” posits that the size of our brains – our ability to invent, to dream, to gain sentience – all are thanks to fire, which allowed us to access more calories from our food, feeding our growing, energy-intensive brains.

In the modern era, fire offered tantalizing new opportunities: fossil fuels sparked the industrial revolution, connected our world, raised billions of people’s quality of life, underwrote a flowering of science and culture, and expanded our technologies, even to the very edges of our solar system.

Yet there has always been a darker story of fire and fossil fuels. Untrammelled and untameable, belching smoke that killed the vulnerable, its fuels seeping into groundwater, poisoning air and water. Even today, the WHO estimates that an astonishing 7 million people die of air pollution each year, most due to byproducts of fire and combustion.

As I write this, around 100 large wildfires are burning across more than a dozen states. California’s Dixie Fire is the largest single-origin fire in the state’s history. The Pacific Northwest bakes under record-breaking temperatures. When Lytton, British Columbia reached 121 degrees Fahrenheit in July, the city simply burst into flame. That temperature is equivalent to about 50 degrees Celsius – halfway to the boiling point of your pot of pasta water.

To top it all off, July 2021 was the hottest month *ever recorded* by modern science, topping off a decade of record-breaking heat. In its recent report, U.N.’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimated that extreme heat waves will soon happen every 5 years, instead of every 50.

In Israel, the Prime Minister interrupted a cabinet meeting today to deal with a giant fire creeping along the outskirts of Jerusalem, harbinger of a fiery future already begun.

In Parshat Beha'alotecha, we read of an encroaching fire: *“The people took to complaining bitterly before the LORD. The LORD heard and was incensed: a fire of the LORD broke out against them, ravaging the outskirts of the camp. The people cried out to Moses”* (Bemidbar 11:1-2).

Why were they “מִתְאַנְּנִים” – complaining? Why did fire break out in response? The Torah records no answers.

Ramban suggests that as the people entered the mighty wilderness for the first time, “they became upset and said: ‘What shall we do? How shall we live in this wilderness?...How shall we endure the trouble and the suffering, and when shall we come out of here?’...They behaved like people acting under duress and compulsion, murmuring and complaining about their condition.”

In short, the people were overwhelmed and cranky. They didn’t want to face a frightening, unfamiliar desert that might entail personal sacrifice. So a divine fire raced towards them from the edge of the camp. If fire catches you unawares, there is only one thing to do: run in the

other direction. Perhaps the fire, then, was a kind of equal and opposite reaction to their complaining: they turned away from the wilderness, now the fire of God forced them towards it. Standing still was not an option.

As it was for our ancestors, so it is for us. The climate that nurtured our species, our culture, our religion, is disappearing, and *we stand at the edge of a frightening wilderness*. Many of us feel understandably overwhelmed by the scale of the climate challenge facing us – Cities underwater! Refugee crises! Wildfires! Crop failure! Hundreds of millions may die! How can we not despair? Or, ignore the problem altogether? Maybe technology will save us. Some even argue that God won't allow climate change to happen. Yet the old African-American spiritual has it right: "God gave Noah the rainbow sign; no more water, the fire next time."

Despite our desperate attempts to turn away, the mercury rises and the wildfires return, stalking the edges of *our* camp, clouding our air, refusing to let us relax. We can bemoan the current state of the climate, express anger that we're facing disaster. But then we must act. Surviving the wilderness requires making personal sacrifices, banding together with those around us, trying to seek the Divine even amidst our fear.

The early Chasidish Rebbe, *Be'er Mayim Chayim*, wrote that because of Moshe's prayers, the encroaching fire in Beha'alotecha jumped from the edge of the camp into the tabernacle, where it consumed the offerings. "As the sages say, 'Whatever God uses to punish, He also uses to heal.'" That is, the fire of fear that punished the people was transformed into a fire of holiness.

But it didn't stop there. "[Moshe] asked that the fire be transformed for good," says the Rebbe, "that it would burn in their hearts – the fire of love, of God, Torah, and Mitzvot ... to kindle the fire of striving and commitment in their hearts ... For when a person commits themselves with vigor to [divine] service, they can achieve whatever they aspire to."

On Yom Kippur, we remember the constrained fire of the Temple – eternal flame burning on the altar, incense clouds pouring into the sanctuary. On this



day, we try to relight the fire of love for God, Torah, Mitzvot in our hearts; surely some of that love must lead us to climate action.

Now I cannot pretend to know the will of the Creator on the eve of Tishrei 5782. And we have no prophet today to tell us what God would say to us about climate change.

But I do know this: Climate change is likely the greatest threat to human life today. And God, through the principles encoded in the Torah, seems awfully concerned with protecting human life. In the articulation of my teacher, Rav Yitz Greenberg, "the Torah's central value—expressed in ritual and ethics—is to increase life and the quality of life in every act that we do." Thus, on the yamim noraim, as we consider how to become better people, we must grapple with climate change. The Days of Awe present an excellent opportunity to light wildfires in our hearts – fires of love for our fellow humans, for all of God's creatures, who stand today in great peril. Perhaps the fires burning outside can inspire some good, kindling fires of new commitment inside us, as encouraged by the *Be'er Mayim Chaim*.

As we gather for Kol Nidrei, there will almost certainly be fires burning somewhere in our country. I will look at them as the fires of Bemidbar, pulling me back towards sacrifice to save our climate.

The wilderness lies before us. Standing still is not an option.



CLIMATE MEDITATIONS FOR ROSH HASHANAH

KAVANOT

From Rabbi Dr. Art Green
& Professor Arnie Eisen

A Festival of Creation



**RABBI DR.
ART GREEN**

Rector of the
Rabbinical School &
Irving Brudnick
Professor of Jewish
Philosophy and
Religion at Hebrew
College

Rosh Hashanah is a great festival of Creation. It is the most universal of all Jewish holidays. On it we celebrate not an event from the history of the Jewish people, as on all the others, but the creation of the world itself.

Even if [some of us] are no longer believers in the creation narrative that opens the Book of Genesis, our faith that we live in a created world remains central to our religious lives. Faith in Creation is our way of saying that we believe this world to be filled with divine mystery.

All we have learned from science about the long evolutionary journey of which we are a part causes us ever more to open our eyes in wonder, to appreciate the magnificence of the world in which we live.

This is a season of birth and rebirth. We begin our Torah readings with the first birth story of the Torah, and we end them within the tale of Jonah, who is reborn as the great fish spews him forth to go do his task, calling for the people to

let themselves be reborn as well.

We believe in Creation as an ongoing process. We bless God who “renews every day the Act of Beginning.” So too do we need to become active participants in the work of Creation, rebirthing God’s world. Loving and protecting the fragile natural world in which we live is the great collective mitsvah of our era.

Let us rededicate ourselves to it in this season of rebirth.

**PROFESSOR
ARNIE EISEN**
Chancellor
Emeritus of the
Jewish Theological
Seminary

The Shofar's Urgent Call

The shofar will sound with special urgency this Rosh Hashana, whether or not we get to hear it live and in person. For life itself has been palpably at risk in every city and town in the world for the past year and more, and there is no escaping the fact that the future well-being of every person on the planet is threatened by the steadily worsening process of global warming. "Today is the birthday of the world," the liturgy will announce, with more solemnity than joy. "Today all the creatures of the world are called to stand in judgment."

It's an unusual way to celebrate a birthday in the best of times: not a party, though there is always much to celebrate in the year just ended and even more to hope for in the year ahead; no candles on a cake, though meals with family are an essential part of the New Year holiday; in place of pointed hats and colorful streamers, shofar blasts that call us to remembrance of God's sovereignty over the world in which we are chief stewards. We are at once servants and children to God, the liturgy declares; either way, we stand in need of God's favor and compassion. Partners in covenant to God and one another, we stand in relation and never alone. Our deep-felt birthday wish is to be responsive and responsible when called.

Face facts, the shofar urges: the world is not ours to do with as we please. Jewish morning prayers begin with thanks for a body and soul that are on loan and must not be abused. The Torah from beginning to end drives home the lesson that Earth in its entirety is a gift, and the parcel on which we reside temporarily must be used for good. Leviticus in particular prohibits exploitation of the land and of the human beings who share it with us. Deuteronomy declares that our covenant with God includes not only those here with us on earth this day, but with those who will arrive in future generations – if we do not rob them of the opportunity.

These are Days of Awe, indeed – and days of hope that we and God will together do all we can to write the Earth in the book of life.



Liturgical Prayers: "For The Sins We Have Committed"

*These confessions, written as an addition to the classic ויטוי / Vidui of Yom Kippur,
record our dismay at the changes to the planet wrought by humanity.*

Al Chet for Destroying God's Creation

from Siddur Lev Shalem for Shabbat & Festivals

Rabbi Daniel Nevins

Head of School, Gold Och Academy

Former Pearl Resnick Dean of the Rabbinical School and the Division of Religious Leadership,
The Jewish Theological Seminary

אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם אַתָּה בָּרַאת שָׁמַיִם
וְאָרֶץ בְּאַהֲבָה,
יִצְרַת צִמְחִים וְחַיּוֹת, וְנִפְחַת נְשָׁמַת
חַיִּים בְּבִנְיַי אָדָם.
נִבְרָאנוּ בְּקָרֶב עוֹלָם נָקִי וְטָהוֹר,
וְכַעַת הוּא נִהַרְס עַל־יְדֵינוּ.
לֹא עַל צְדָקוֹתֵינוּ אֲנַחְנוּ מְפִילִים
תַּחֲנוּנֵינוּ לְפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
כִּי אֲשַׁמְנוּ, בְּזָבָנוּ, וְגִרְמָנוּ נֶזֶק כְּבִיר:
עַל חֲטָא שְׁמָלָאנוּ אֶרֶץ וַיָּמִים
בְּזָבָל וּבִאֲשָׁפָה,
עַל חֲטָא שֶׁהִשְׁמַדְנוּ לְנֶצַח חַיּוֹת
נִפְלְאוֹת שֶׁהִצֵּלְתָּ מִמֵּי הַמַּבּוּל,
וְעַל חֲטָא שֶׁהִכְרַתְנוּ יַעְרֹת
עֵצִים הַמְקִימִים נֶפֶשׁ כָּל־חַי.
אָנָּה ה' פָּקַח עֵינֵינוּ וְנִרְאָה אֶת־
הוֹד יִצִּירְתֶּךָ,
אֲז נִשְׁבַּחְךָ כְּמוֹ שֶׁפָּתוּב: מִה־רַבּוֹ
מַעֲשֶׂיךָ ה' כֹּלָם בְּחִכְמָה עֲשִׂיתָ
מַלְאָה הָאָרֶץ קִנְיָנְךָ.
הִסַּר אֶת־לֵב הָאָבֶן מִבְּשָׁרֵנוּ, וְתֵן לֵב
בָּשָׂר בְּקִרְבָּנוּ.
תֵּן לָנוּ חֲכָמָה וְאַמֶּץ־לֵב לְשִׁמּוֹר עַל
הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם.

Eternal God, You created the
heavens and earth in love. You fashioned plants and
animals, breathing Your spirit into humanity.
We were created amidst a clean and pure world, but it is now
degraded in our grasp.
Not on our own merits do we beseech You, Adonai our God,
for we have sinned, we have wasted, we have caused vast damage:
For the sin of filling the sea and land with filth and garbage;
for the sin of destroying species that You saved from the flood;
and for the sin of laying bare the forests and habitats that sustain life.
Please, God, open our eyes that we might see the splendor of Your
creation. Then we shall praise You, as it is written: "How great are
Your works, Adonai! You have made them all with wisdom; the earth
is filled with Your creations" (Psalm 104:24).
Remove the heart of stone from our flesh, and give us a feeling heart.
Grant us wisdom and determination to safeguard the earth beneath
the heavens.

—DANIEL NEVINS

על חטא שחטאנו

Rabbi Janise Poticha

Temple Sinai of Massapequa

For the sins we have committed before You and in our communities by
being so preoccupied with ourselves that we ignore the larger problems of the World;
forgetting that preserving the environment is a religious and moral issue;
forgetting that as G-d's partners in Creation, human beings are stewards of the Earth;
not creating more moments of Godliness in the World.



FORGIVE, DON'T FORGET

A CLIMATE MEDITATION FOR THE HIGH HOLY DAYS

Dr. Michelle Friedman

Director, Department of Pastoral Counseling at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah
Steering Committee Member, Jewish Climate Action Network-NYC

I feel upset that climate took a back seat during the pandemic. Understandably, public interest focused on the terrifying health situation and on the race to develop and distribute vaccines. But COVID-19 also crowded out urgent concerns like clean air and water for all. I, too, got caught up in pandemic anxiety and plead guilty to personal sins like ordering from Amazon and adding to the flood of package material and shipping emissions burdening our planet.

As life hopefully recalibrates back to a semblance of normal, we need to collectively take stock of our climate sins over this past year. Reflect, not berate or obsess. Feelings like those, along with anger and guilt clog our emotional works and can lead to misguided action or no action at all. Jewish tradition understands this and designates the period from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur for reflection and return. We acknowledge our misdoings of the past year and do teshuva. We apologize, make amends and aim for a more correct course. Achieving forgiveness is a complicated process, certainly when it comes to the climate. We tend to think about rifts between people, or about the need for spiritual repair between an individual and God, but what about forgiveness for our sins against our planet?

Despite the popular adage, “forgive and forget,” Jewish tradition emphasizes the opposite, the importance of keeping history in memory. We need to keep our climate sins in the forefront of our minds so as not to repeat them in the future. Viruses, heat, and pollution increase economic disparity between the haves and have-nots. We live in a connected world. The question “Does the Flap of a Butterfly’s Wings in Brazil Set Off a Tornado in Texas?” has never been more germane. A virus originating in China spread across the globe. Gases generated from fossil fuel use in locales as distant as Shanghai, Des Moines, and Capetown continue to melt glaciers at the poles and cause record breaking temperatures. While we are blessed with Covid receding in parts of the United States, we see how less advantaged communities in our own country as well as abroad continue to suffer.

As Jews and citizens of the world, we must take stock of the present situation and look to the future. Holding on to resentment or any kind, whether towards others or ourselves, stunts our capacity for growth. Whatever climate injustices and omissions of involvement happened this past year, the High Holidays are a time for repair and resolution for affirmative climate action. Let us all commit to doing better.



TORAH & HAFTARAH READINGS

A Climate Torah for 5782

Rabbi Jennie Rosenn, Founder and CEO of Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action

*Excerpted from "Confronting the Climate Crisis with Spiritual Courage,"
Remarks to the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis*

...There are differences in how people experience the climate crisis. One of these differences is generational.

For those in the later third of their life, Boomers, many feel a sense of sadness and guilt about what they are leaving to the next generation, aware that they will not be here to bear the brunt of what's ahead.

For Millennials and Gen Z kids, this is all they have ever known. Many are understandably angry. Some feel hopeless. But Millennials and Gen Zers are also the generations that are fueling and leading the global climate movement, calling their elders to account.

And Generation X: For us the world is not as we thought it was. The narrative we grew up with, that things would keep getting better, turned out to be completely wrong. In addition to worrying about our children and grandchildren, many of us are mourning the world as we knew it.

A big part of how we live with the terrifying truth of the climate crisis is through meaningful action at the scale that justice and science demand. We also need to expand what we think of as climate torah. Yes, it is teachings about **שומרי אדמה** and **בל תשחית**, but at its core, climate torah needs to be about urgency and hope. It is about the need for courageous action; building collective power; being open to massive change; and reimagining a different future...

It is Nachson and the midwives. It is the complete transformation of Judaism and society in the wake of the destruction of the Temple – the need to re-envision and rebuild a completely different way of being. It is the torah of **לא בשמים היא**. Torah of empowerment and possibility....

Remember the Children

Rabbi Janise Poticha is the Rabbi of Temple Sinai of Massapequa and
President of Disaster Chaplaincy Services

Excerpted from a Rosh Hashanah sermon

This year, within the text I hear the cries of children and the sobbing of parents. The Torah & Haftarah readings emphasize the perils faced by Abraham's sons, Ishmael and Isaac; Ishmael during the first day of Rosh Hashanah reading in traditional synagogues and Isaac in the first day Torah reading in Reform synagogues. We can almost feel the terror experienced by the mothers: Hagar, Sarah, Hannah. To witness a child in peril or to anticipate impending doom evokes nearly universal response to rush to the rescue. If only Amber alerts or scientific research existed in the time of the Bible...

As we begin the year 5782, let's consider the children. All children entering this world deserve a world wherein they can feel safe and healthy. Don't all parents believe: children deserve to know that the world they will inherit will be better than the one we inherited?

We must see ourselves as part of nature, living beings who are part of a larger living organism: the Earth, our only planet. Since that is the case, we are part of and responsible for the environmental crisis. Since that is the case, we cannot sacrifice our children and the future...to a world of climate chaos.

The climate crisis should not be a political issue, it should not be a partisan issue; science has spoken. It is a religious issue, a moral issue, a Jewish issue – Judaism is replete with commandments and Festivals which focus our attention on our responsibility to, and stewardship of, the Earth.

Standing before God this Rosh Hashanah – this New Year: Are we thinking about our children who depend upon our responsible behavior?

Are we failing to protect them, ourselves and the Earth?

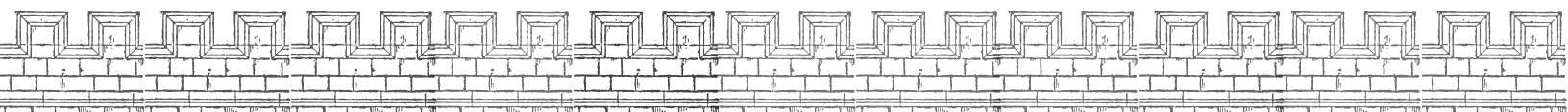
The Story of Jonah: How Change Happens

Dr. Mirele B. Goldsmith, Co-Chairperson of Jewish Earth Alliance

The story of Jonah is read in the synagogue on Yom Kippur for its inspiring message that we can always save ourselves through repentance. The city of Ninveh was filled with corruption. Yet when Jonah arrives, an amazing thing happens: the people of Ninveh immediately repent, and the king follows their lead.

It sounds like a fairy tale that could never happen in real life, but social science provides one possible explanation. Perhaps a few people in Ninveh had already realized the need for change. Because peer influence is incredibly powerful, others copied their behavior and change spread exponentially, like an epidemic. When Jonah proclaimed his message, Ninveh reached a tipping point.

Today, we have everything we need to reverse climate change — except for political will. Each of us can help to bring the tipping point closer by taking simple steps, like talking about our concerns and the positive actions we are taking. As we learn from the people of Ninveh, although our impact may not be obvious, the change we are working for can happen in an instant.



THE VOICE OF THE SHOFAR:

A SELECTION OF TEXTS FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE ON SHOFAR (שופר)

Dr. Adriane Leveen, Co-Chair, Jewish Climate Action Network NYC,
& Senior Lecturer in Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

***What is the shofar's symbolism?** Dr. Leveen presents six key biblical texts about shofar, each of which hints at a different aspect of the shofar's meaning. Each of these aspects can be directly linked to the global fight for climate justice underway in our day.*

1. Exodus 19:16, 19

A call to awareness

v. 16 “And on the third day as morning dawned there was thunder [Kolot] and lightening and a thick cloud on the Mountain and the voice [kol] of the **Shofar** very strong and all the people trembled in the camp.”

v. 19 And the voice [kol] of the **Shofar** grew stronger and stronger- Moses spoke and God answered him in a voice [kol].”

***Comment:** Three Hebrew terms in these two important verses are called קולות: thunder, shofar, and God's voice! A drash: The overwhelming noise of thunder and shofar together shield the Israelites from hearing God's voice in its fullness, retaining the mystery of God's presence. Nonetheless, God has chosen to be present when answering Moses in a voice – קול – and in so doing creates an awareness of divinity within the people.*

2. Leviticus 25:9

A call to repentance

And you shall sound the **Shofar** teruah in the 7th month, on the tenth day of the month on the day of Yom Kippur – you shall have the Shofar sound throughout your land.

3. Joshua, Judges, and Samuel

A battle cry

The sound of the **Shofar**, like the trumpet of the Romans, was an instrument to signal battle, as exemplified in the famous story of Joshua and the walls of Jericho.

4. Isaiah 18:3

A universal call to attention


All who live in the world
And inhabit the earth
When a flag is raised in the hills, take note!
And when a **shofar** is blown, give heed

5. Isaiah 58:1

A call to action

Famously, on Yom Kippur we read the following:
Cry with a full throat, without restraint;
Like a shofar raise your voice
Tell the people of their transgressions
And to the House of Jacob their sins.





Question: what does God ask of us in Isaiah and in other prophets? Is it not that we should unlock the chains of wickedness, let the oppressed go free, share our bread with the hungry, clothe the naked, and not ignore our kin [humankind]?

6. Zechariah 9:14:

A sign of salvation

And YHWH will appear to them (the people of Judah)
And out will come his lightening like a flash
And Adonai my God shall blow the **shofar**
And come in a tempest of winds...

Taken together, these texts on the Shofar serve as a wakeup call to the danger that we face on this planet created and given to us by God. Whether or not we realize it, saving the planet is the battle of our lifetimes. Hearing the shofar can renew our commitment to this urgent work!

Further Reflection – and Action:

Excerpted from Kathy DeGane, “Voices of the Shofar,” Bridges for Peace

“A ram’s horn is a completely natural musical instrument—it is not man-made, it’s God-made, and it is one of the oldest musical instruments in history—at least 5,000 years old. The shofar has been in continuous use for 3,000 years in Israel, spanning the fall of Jericho to the present day and sounded in Jewish communities all over the world.

Recent scientific studies confirm that listening to the sound of the shofar actually causes our bodies to react physically. The response to the loud, insistent sound is sometimes called “fight or flight”—the same response we would have at the sound of a siren. Our senses are immediately alerted to danger or stress. They “wake up,” are sharpened, and we are given more energy to actively respond, more clarity in our thinking, and more ability to see things we would not otherwise notice. [We are transformed into a new state of awareness]...

An Alert to Danger: The shofar was sounded by watchmen on the walls of a city to alert the people to imminent danger. One long blast during the watches of the night reassured the inhabitants of the city that all was well. But a series of sharp, staccato blasts raised the alarm that enemies were in sight and to rally to arms. ... The sound of the shofar reminds us that we are watchers on the walls, appointed to alert others...”

That danger is already here. We are indeed watchers on the walls, appointed to alert others to the climate crisis that is upon us. On these Holy days, as this survey of biblical texts on the shofar illustrates, awareness of the dangers to all life and to the planet upon which we live can lead to repentance. Repentance can lead to a cry and call to action.

*This year, when your congregants hear the **ליל** of the shofar, will you take the opportunity to invite them to hear that cry and call to action?*



LOOKING AHEAD: THE YEAR OF SHMITA

NIGEL S. SAVAGE
FOUNDER & FORMER CEO, HAZON

Shmita - the sabbatical year, in the Torah - is, on the face of it, an obscure part of contemporary Jewish life. Few diaspora Jewish organizations pay attention to it. And in Israel, every seven years, there's an argument between the orthodox and the ultra-orthodox about what vegetables you can eat. Most everyone else rolls their eyes.

This is a great shame, and an omission in contemporary Jewish life which, together, we should steadily fix.

First: shmita is central to understanding the nature of Jewishness itself. It's clear when you read the primary texts that the Torah understands shmita to be quite literally no less significant to being Jewish than shabbat itself. The language of shmita parallels the language of shabbat. Like the notion of shabbat, shmita is at once challenging, radical, humane -- and deeply relevant to the world in which we live today.

The teachings of shmita are a series of requirements which, in aggregate, seek to reduce inequality; reduce indebtedness from those who are overburdened with debt; critique our understanding of what it means to "own" land; allow land to lie fallow; and provoke us to consume less. All of these things are no less relevant to life today than they were 20 centuries ago.

So: as this new Jewish year gets underway, I encourage you to read about shmita. To think about its lessons and its values. To make decisions, for yourself, about how to consume less, or how to reduce inequality in the world. And to think about how to make this year different from those that precede or succeed it. It's a great opportunity to flesh out a vision for yourself, your family, and any institution that you are part of, to live materially more sustainably by the end of the next shmita year, in 2029.

Climate Change and Sins of Omission

Rabbi Haggai Resnikoff,
Rebbe & Director of Community Learning, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah

How do we repent for sins of omission? When we repent for doing something wrong, the feeling is enough. Aside from the feeling, there's really nothing else to do. But what about things we haven't done? Here the feeling will not suffice. There are still actions we must take – and as soon as possible. Let's apply this to the climate crisis.

Removing danger from the world is a mitzvah from the Torah. The Rambam writes, “one who leaves a dangerous obstacle and does not remove it, negates a positive commandment, and violates a negative commandment.” Simply refraining from causing danger is not sufficient. We have an obligation to remove it. Rabbi Yerucham Fishel Perlow argues that this obligation rests upon the community and on the individual. Climate change is a danger to the individual, the community, and the world. We all have a **חיוב** [obligation] from the Torah to work for its removal.

Did we work to solve the climate crisis this year? I'm not talking about driving less, I'm talking about taking positive action. The word **פשע** that we say in the Yom Kippur confession means both rebellion and negligence. We may not have rebelled against God's mitzvot, but it is likely, in the case of the climate, that we were negligent.

How do we repent? Do something now. Join an advocacy organization. Sign a petition. Write a petition. Most importantly, do not sit passively. The Torah demands action, and only action, on a massive scale, can solve the climate crisis.



Step Up & Take Action



Jewish Climate Action Network NYC (jcan-

nyc.org) is a network of New York metro area Jews working for positive, just solutions to climate change through education, advocacy, public activism and the promotion of sustainable practices. We stand upon the teachings, traditions, and prophetic voices of Judaism that compel us to protect all of our

sacred Creation.

In our climate and environmental justice work:

- We mobilize Jews to participate in public actions, meet with elected officials, and partner with local and national Jewish, interfaith and other climate and environmental justice organizations.
- We educate the Jewish community about climate change and the Jewish values that compel us to act.



What can you do?

- Like us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/JCANNYC) (facebook.com/JCANNYC) and learn more at www.jcan-nyc.org!
- [Sign up](#) for our e-newsletter for opportunities to lobby, march, advocate, and educate...and join our monthly meetings (email info@JCAN-NYC.org).





DAYENU
A Jewish Call to Climate Action

Dayenu is building a movement of American Jews confronting the climate crisis with spiritual audacity and bold political action.

We mobilize Jewish support for climate solutions, build our collective power with national and global movements, and raise up a spiritual, religious, and moral voice.

[Call your Senators.](#) On the heels of President Biden's American Jobs Plan, Congress is crafting infrastructure and jobs legislation that addresses the long-term economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform our society and our economy, helping us avoid the most harmful impacts of the climate crisis by building a clean energy future that leaves no one behind.



Jewish Earth Alliance

Engage your community in advocacy for a moral response to climate change by building relationships with your Members of Congress.

It's easy to take strong and consistent action by joining the [Jewish Earth Alliance](#) monthly letter-writing campaign. Volunteers amplify your impact, and our collective Jewish voice, by delivering your letters to Capitol Hill. Let us help you prepare to meet with your Members of Congress and make your case in person. To launch your effort, invite one of our [inspiring speakers](#) for a virtual program. Learn more by joining our monthly Network Call (third Tuesday of every month.) More information: contact@JewishEarthAlliance.org

JTREE USA



JTree is a collaborative tree-planting campaign by Jewish organizations to help our national forests recover from devastating fires and drought.

Why Plant Trees? Tree planting is particularly important after severe wildfire, an effective way to bring back healthy forests and the benefits they provide, like clean air and clean water. By planting trees in our national forests, we are lessening the effects of climate change and helping our forests adapt. How? *U.S. forests offset between 10 to 20 percent of U.S. carbon emissions each year.* For every dollar donated, one tree is planted! **Learn more about JTREE, our Jewish tree planting project in collaboration with the National Forest Foundation, at <https://hazon.org/commit-to-change/jtree/>.**

Donate directly to our national forests through JTREE [here](#).



Hazon is leading a transformative movement weaving sustainability into the fabric of Jewish life, in order to create a healthier, more sustainable, and more equitable world for all.

Go to the Hazon [website](#) to catch up on new initiatives.



The Hazon Seal of Sustainability is a 12-month program designed to support organizations and communities working to create a healthier, more equitable, and more

sustainable world for all. We do this by linking Jewish values to substantive action toward sustainability and climate-centered goals.

Receiving the Hazon Seal of Sustainability means that your organization or community has committed to and taken substantial action on 2-3 projects focused on greening initiatives or sustainability projects over the last 12 months.

[Learn more](#)



Note also Hazon's Shmita Project at hazon.org/shmita-project/overview