



RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
ASAMBLEA RABÍNICA כנסת הרבנים

2023 Climate Action Plan

Proud member of the



Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition
POWERED BY ADAMAH

Call to Action

The global climate crisis is an historic inflection point for our planet, our communities, and our people.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN body that assesses the science of climate change, estimates that we have fewer than seven years to take urgent and meaningful action to avoid locking in the most catastrophic effects of climate change.

Jewish tradition compels us to respond.

Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition

In spring of 2022, the Rabbinical Assembly signed on as a founding partner to the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition, along with twenty other national and international umbrella organizations of Jewish life.

Powered by Adamah, the Coalition is a network of Jewish community organizations who recognize the existential threat and moral urgency of climate change and commit to taking action.

Coalition members develop **Climate Action Plans** that outline our strategic priorities of our climate work. Our Climate Action Plan details action taken to-date and sets goals for both reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and mobilizing our networks around climate action in the year ahead.

Inspired by Jewish values, we are working to do the Jewish community's part to mitigate the worst effects of climate change and build a livable future together.

We invite Jewish community organizations everywhere to join us.

For more information about the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition, watch the [Coalition launch video](#) or visit Adamah's [website](#).





The Rabbinical Assembly is the international association of Conservative/Masorti rabbis. Since its founding in 1901, the Assembly has been the creative force shaping the ideology, programs, and practices of the Conservative/Masorti movement, and is committed to building and strengthening the totality of Jewish life. The Assembly publishes learned texts, prayerbooks, and works of Jewish interest; and it administers the work of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards for the Conservative movement. We also serve the professional and personal needs of our membership through publications, conferences, and benefit programs, and it coordinates the Joint Placement Commission of the Conservative movement. Rabbis of the Assembly serve congregations throughout the world, and also work as educators, officers of communal service organizations, and college, hospital, and military chaplains.

Rabbinical Assembly 2023 Climate Action Plan

Actions Taken To-Date

The concerns of Climate Change have been on our agenda for a while. In 2019 Rabbis Nina Beth Cardin and Avram Israel Reisner wrote a Teshuvah (Jewish legal Responsum) "[On the Mitzvah of Sustainability.](#)"

Relevant resolutions that have been passed are posted to our website:

<https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/tzedek/environment/resolutions>

The Rabbinical Assembly's Social Justice Commission (which has recently broadened to include more arms of the Movement), in 2020, did a sustainability survey of almost 20 of the organizations that make up the Conservative/Masorti Movement worldwide. The survey got an amazing 100% response rate and gave us helpful insight into the sustainability practices and desires of the various arms of the Movement. The survey also spurred us to create a Sustainability Roundtable comprising representatives from most of those organizations. The Roundtable has met several times over the past few years, heard from major leaders in the Jewish environmental movement, worked on sustainability plans for their organizations, and several of them have created wonderful sustainability actions, projects, and educational initiatives, including making sustainability a major theme of their conferences.

Our colleague Jonathan Wittenberg in the UK is a key leader in the <https://ecosynagogue.org/> working in partnership with The Board of Deputies of British Jews, promoting environmental sustainability and engagement across the Jewish Community.

Top Priorities

The RA's Climate Action Plan for 2023 will focus on the following areas:

- **Mobilizing Rabbis and Congregations**

There are dozens of Conservative/Masorti synagogues and rabbis who might be poised to take significant action to decarbonize their own institutions but need support to do so. We will engage in field mapping through surveying our network of rabbis to understand which synagogues are already prioritizing this topic, and which might be interested in doing so but need additional support.

- We will broadly recruit and encourage Conservative/Masorti rabbis and their synagogues/institutions to join the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition and take significant actions to reduce their primary energy use.

- We will partner with the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition, which is already developing a tool library, to provide educational support to rabbis and congregations.

- **Travel**

Through the coronavirus pandemic, we developed creative ways to meet our mission that involved reduced travel. We commit to incorporating that learning and making climate impact a factor in evaluating potential travel opportunities. This may include: Careful selection of conference location and geography, and identifying where travel can be foregone for a virtual connection.

- **Food**

We will use the resource guide being developed by Adamah along with Adamah staff support to mitigate the climate impact of our meals served at events and our conference, by choosing lower-impact foods.

In order to successfully achieve this goal, we will need to engage in education of our constituency (Conservative/Masorti rabbis) about the impacts of food choices on climate. Every event with food is also an opportunity for education and engagement. We will leverage Adamah and the Humane Society to provide robust educational resources to accompany shifts in food that we make over time. We will also implement recommendations made by the Ethical Sourcing of Animal Products subcommittee of the Social Justice Commission.

Additional Goals

In addition to the priorities outlined above, the Rabbinical Assembly commits to the following additional climate actions:

- **Primary energy use.** We will engage in an audit of our primary energy use for our office, aiming to use the year 2019 as a benchmark from which to measure future success.

Many Conservative/Masorti rabbis in our network serve institutions with building footprints. Over the next year, we will support and encourage those rabbis and congregations to reduce their primary energy.

- **Renewables.** We will resource rabbis to encourage their synagogues to begin the process of powering their buildings through renewable energy. This could take one of 3 forms:
 - Purchasing 100% renewable energy through an electric provider.
 - Installing solar panels on-site.
 - Purchasing power from an off-site solar array or other renewable energy source.

- **Transportation.** Through the coronavirus pandemic, we developed creative ways to meet our mission that involved reduced travel. We commit to incorporating that learning and making climate impact a factor in evaluating potential travel opportunities. This may include: careful selection of conference location and geography, and identifying where travel can be foregone for a virtual connection.

There are also times when travel will be critical for our mission. We will explore purchasing carbon offsets for that travel, relying on resources from Adamah to help us identify meaningful and effective options.

- **Food.** We will lift up as models the work of congregations who have already implemented serving lower impact food, reduce the amount of wasted food, and choosing utensils and other items that reduce the amount of waste produced.

We will use the resource guide being developed by Adamah along with Adamah staff support to mitigate the climate impact of our meals served at events and our conference, by choosing lower-impact foods. We are exploring reducing GHG from the food we serve by 10% annually, through participation with the Humane Society's new and free [ForwardFood](#) program.

In order to successfully achieve this goal, we will need to engage in education of our constituency (Conservative/Masorti rabbis) about the impacts of food choices on climate. Every event with food is

also an opportunity for education and engagement. We will leverage Adamah and the Humane Society (and equivalent organizations in Israel, Europe and Latin America) to provide robust educational resources to accompany shifts in food that we make over time. We will also implement recommendations made by the Ethical Sourcing of Animal Products subcommittee of the Social Justice Commission.

- **Offsets.** Using our benchmark (see above), we will explore purchasing carbon offsets to cover the greenhouse gas emissions produced from our primary energy use (electricity) as well as any fuel we burn (natural gas for cooking, for example). We will leverage Adamah's expertise and resources to understand more about reliable forms of carbon offsets.

Regarding carbon offsets for transportation, see above.

- **Education & Celebration.** Education is interwoven through every aspect of this Climate Action Plan, and it is a key resource we provide to Conservative/Masorti rabbis. We will partner with Adamah, the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition and similar international organizations to offer education to rabbis about the climate crisis and practical steps they can take to make a collective difference.
- **Finance.** The Conservative/Masorti Movement offers rabbis an opportunity to participate in a group pension fund. It is easier than ever to eliminate fossil fuels from an investment portfolio without sacrificing financial return. We commit to a learning process as an organization on the topic of fossil-free finance and other climate-smart investing. We will ask our investment committee to research options for fossil-fuel-free investing as well as investment in climate solutions that achieve market-rate return, and ways to make a difference on the organizational level as well as regarding the pension.
- **Advocacy.** According to our resolutions, we will work in partnership with Dayenu to coordinate with other groups and maximize our effectiveness to advocate for policies globally that will reduce climate impact and promote sustainability.
- **Resiliency.** The climate emergency is a significant issue of spiritual health - how do we grapple with a sense that the world is falling apart around us? Our rabbis counsel individuals and groups on these issues on a regular basis. We commit as a part of this coming year's Climate Action Plan to develop those resources and topics in a more concrete way.

For more information about our climate work, visit our [website](#).

