

# The TEL Program

Teens: Experience & Learning

**Year One:**  
***Tikkun Olam* – Repair the World**

Eight *Havayot* Lesson Plans

*Rabbi Erin Hirsh & Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer*  
*Updated by Elana Friedman*



Jewish Reconstructionist Communities  
In Association with the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

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## Guidance for Using These Materials

A “*tel*” is a hill made of and built upon an archeological site – the remains of previous experiences. The TEL program is designed to enable teens to build upon past learning as congregational communities within a community of congregations and *havurot*, the Jewish Reconstructionist Movement.

The word *havayah* comes from the Hebrew word for experience. *Havayot* are experiential learning sessions. These sessions have been written to enable groups of teens to have a meaningful set of experiences together.

Each TEL group, like each Reconstructionist congregation of which it is a part, will have its own personality and dynamics and interests. In fact, TEL groups meet for different amounts of time and with different levels of frequency. We believe that all teaching resources for teens are most effective when the group leaders feel empowered to shape the *havayot* in whatever manner best suits their personal teaching style and the particular dynamics of the TEL group. Therefore, we fully expect Group Leaders to use this material as a launch pad for the group’s TEL experience; it’s okay to skip things and to add others. (Please let us know if you change something and it works particularly well.)

Each *havayah* is written out in great detail. We have tried to write them out in such a way that a Group Leader could read the text nearly verbatim, if need be. More experienced leaders will likely find it more effective to just paraphrase the “big idea.”

Each *havayah* is listed at about two hours not including breaks. Since each group leader will be tweaking the sessions to be fitting for their teens, some sections may be expanded, shortened or even left out.

\* \* \* \* \*

Text in ~~this font~~ gives instructions for the Group Leader on what to say or how to lead a particular section of the program.

## ***Tikkun Olam – Repair the World: The Havayot***

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## *Havayah One: Tikkun Olam and Our TEL Group*

### **Materials:**

- Copies of texts (see handouts)
- CD player or Speakers
- Billy Joel song "We Didn't Start the Fire," on iPod or CD
- "We Didn't Start the Fire" lyrics sheet (see handouts)
- Pens/pencils
- Scratch paper
- Butcher paper
- Different colored markers
- Hole Punchers
- Different colored yarn (corresponding to marker colors)
- Scissors
- Masking tape or tacks
- Individual journals for use throughout the year
- "Ani V'atah" lyrics

### *Notes to the Group Leader:*

In this first *havayah*, the teens have an opportunity to focus on:

- What motivates them to do work.
- What areas of the world around them they view as broken and in need of repair.
- How to actively listen to what their peers think about these issues.

This *havayah* is the first in a series of two *havayot* that will help the teens within each TEL community identify him/herself as an active agent who can help in repairing the world and get to know the other teens in their group.

### **Introduction with Name Game (10 min)**

#### *Instructions:*

- Welcome the teens and introduce yourself along with the theme of *Tikkun Olam*. Each week we will be covering a different area and aspect of *Tikkun Olam* and learning together over eight sessions. *Tikkun Olam* or (repairing the world) work can be done in a variety of ways, including direct service/*avodah* (hands on helping); indirect service/*tzedakah* (fundraising, collections, making items to be donated); and advocacy/*tzedek* (protesting, letter writing, education campaigns).
- Take a few minutes to whip around the circle and have every teen share their name and an intro question. Two options: each teen sharing his/her name and an adjective that starts with the same letter ("My name is Elana and I am eager!"), or each teen shares his/her name and a food that he/she likes that also starts with the same letter, such as ("My name is Josh and I like Jell-O!"). Each teen should then go through and name the other teens and their food/adjective around the circle.

## Group Count and Listening (15-20 min)

### Leader introduces "Group Count":

- In all of this session's activities, teens will have a chance to both express their opinions about what things in the world need repair and to discover what their peers feel about this issue. Listening to peers without judging is a skill that we hope to cultivate in TEL members and so we'll begin our sessions with one or two exercises that challenge us to listen to each other. (Depending on how much time you have for your TEL group, you may elect to do one or both ice breakers.)

### Instructions:

- "Group Count" can be done as a large group, although if you have more than 10-12 teens, you may want to divide them into more than one group. Get the group into a circle and ask them to close their eyes. Explain that they must count up as a group from 1 to 20. There is no rule as to who should say which number. If two people say the same number, then you must begin counting again. Get the group completely quiet before starting to count.
- You can add a rule that each person may only say one number, get them to count up to the number of people in the group (so that everyone must have a turn) or get them to try it with their eyes open for comparison.

### Ask Teens:

- How did you feel during the game?
- Was it easy or hard to listen versus call out a number?

### Leader introduces "Listening Exercise":

- We are now going to try another exercise that deals with how we interact together.

### Instructions:

- Breaks the teens into pairs with someone they don't know well. Give them a conversation topic (e.g. favorite subject in school, what I want to get out of being in TEL, favorite music/TV show/film, etc.) and explain that each person has three minutes to talk to their partner about this topic. The listener may not make any comment or ask any questions. After the three minutes are up, call out that each group should switch so that the other partner now speaks.
- After each teen has spoken, come have the group sit in a circle. Each teen then gets one to two minutes to introduce the other teen from his/her pair, without comment from the teen being spoken of.

### Ask Teens:

- Was it hard to listen and then repeat your partner's story?
- What was it like to listen to your words being repeated from someone else?
- Were the different roles different? How so?
- Was it easier or harder to do this versus the group counting game?

### Say to the group:

- We will be using the listening skills that came up in the games as we do a text study, song writing activity, and creative “Talmud” so that we can both express a sense of what we feel motivated to repair in the world and hear what our peers have to say.

## Text Study: Midrash Psalms and Elie Wiesel (10 min)

### Instructions:

- Have handouts with both texts on them. You can also put both quotes on a board instead.

### Say to the group:

- We will be starting each *Havayah* with a small piece of text. Today we are looking at one from a classical Jewish source and one from a contemporary Jewish thinker, Elie Wiesel. Both texts emphasize an individual’s role in being an active agent in repairing the world.

### Invite a teen to read the first text aloud:

“(God says:) Just as I create worlds and bring the dead back to life, you human beings are also capable of doing the same.” – Midrash Psalms, 116:8

### Ask Teens:

- What do you think the text means when it says that human beings are capable of creating worlds?
- Can you think of examples of that?

### Invite a teen to read the second text aloud:

“The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference. Because of indifference, one dies before one actually dies.” – Elie Wiesel

### Ask Teens:

- How do you think indifference can be the opposite of life or cause someone to “die”?
- Why do people become indifferent?
- Have you ever felt that way?
- How can we not become indifferent?
- Does anyone know who Wiesel is? (He is a Holocaust survivor; some teens may have read *Night* in school.)
- What from his personal experience would lead him to feel this way?
- How do the two texts relate to one another?
- What can we learn from the fact that these texts were written in two extremely different times in our history yet have these points of commonality? (People/Jews have struggled with their responsibilities to one another throughout time.)

### Small Group Work: Song and Lyric Writing, *We Didn't Start the Fire* (30 min)

#### Instructions:

- Handout lyrics to "We Didn't Start the Fire," hang up blank butcher block paper, and pass out blank paper for lyric writing.

#### Leader introduces:

- The next two activities are going to help us think about the issues and events happening in the world around us. We will reflect on how we can act in response to these issues to help address them.

#### Instructions:

- As a large group, listen to Billy Joel's song "We Didn't Start the Fire" (1989). You may want to hand out lyric sheets as they listen [see handout].
- Tell the teens that today they are going to update the lyrics.
- Do a group brainstorming about major events that have occurred from the year 2000 to the present. Have one of the teens write the events on a board or large piece of butcher paper.
- Using the events listed, work as a large group to create a new stanza for the song.
- Divide the teens into groups of four to six members. Instruct the groups to create one or two new stanzas.
- Give the groups ten minutes or so to work together.
- Call everyone back together and invite each group to sing and share what they came up with.

#### Ask Teens:

- Why did you choose issue X to define the last decade?
- Which events/issues affect your lives the most?
- Which events/issues have been positive for our culture and which have been negative?
- Can an event/issue contain both positive and negative qualities? How so?

#### Say to the group:

- This activity gave us a way to think about the big issues and events that surround our culture and how they have affected us.

### Small Group or Hevruta: *Tikkun Olam* Talmud (20 min)

#### Instructions:

- Have butcher block with one word on each sheet. Some ideas are "peace," "equality," "freedom," "justice," "compassion," and "dignity." Tape these to the walls around the room. Have multiple colored markers so that groups of two to three can have a different color marker.

#### Leader introduces:

- Now we are going to do an activity that invites you to express your ideas, thoughts, and dreams about repairing the world.

### Instructions:

- Divide teens into pairs (*hevruta*) or groups of three. Give each *hevruta* or team one different color marker, so you have the blue team, red team, green team, etc.
- Hang up long pieces of butcher paper around the room. On each paper, write a word such as “peace,” “equality,” “freedom,” “justice,” “compassion,” “dignity.”
- Assign each team to begin at a different paper. On the paper, they are going to answer “this quality is necessary in the world because...” and “this quality is absent in the world when....” Write each on the board or have this printed in advance for the teens to look at. They have to work as a *hevruta* or group to come up with a response.
- When everyone has written something, groups will rotate to the next paper. This time, they first read what the previous group has written. They can now respond to what that group has written and/or respond to the opening statements.
- Rotate each group to each “Talmud Page” after a couple of minutes at each page.
- When the teens have finished, bring everyone together and read the completed Talmud pages together.

### Ask teens:

- What thoughts or ideas strike you the most?
- What was it like to “hear” others’ voices on the pages?
- How did it affect/inspire/open up your own thoughts?

## The “Interconnectedness” of *Tikkun Olam* (20 min)

### Instructions:

- You will need hole punchers, scissors and string that matches the color of the group’s marker. Take down the pages of the Talmud from the wall.
- Lay each “Talmud Page” down on the floor - ideally without the tape on the back, so it can be lifted up easily.
- Explain to the teens that each group is going to punch a hole and string their yarn at the place they made their comments from one paper to the next. When they reach their last comment, cut off their yarn and tie a knot at the last hole.
- Each group is going to be working simultaneously. Ask the teens to focus on not getting their yarn in tangles, even though they may cross over or under another team’s yarn.
- When every group had finished, invite the teens to stand back and look at the “web” they created, how all of the colors overlap. Explain that this web shows how interconnected the work of *tikkun olam* is—what every person contributes affects everyone else.

### Ask teens:

- How do the different qualities relate to each other? How is “compassion” connected to “peace”? “Freedom” connected to “dignity”? “Justice” connected to “equality”?

## Reflection, Journaling and Closing Ritual (10 min)

### Instructions:

- Hand out the teens’ Reflection Journals. Reflection Journals are a component we include with the *havayot* that some leaders rely on and other leaders skip. Use your best judgment about



how they will be received by your group. Since this is the first session of the year, if you aren't sure how your teens will feel or if they will take it seriously, this is the session to give it a try.

- Share with them that these journals are for them and that they won't have to share with the group if they don't wish to. If you as the Group Leader want to be able to look at their writings, tell them that upfront.
- You can also ask the group what they enjoyed about the session or should be done differently as listed below under "Ask teens."

#### *Say to the group:*

- At the end of every session, you will have some time to respond to the session privately in your TEL journals. Since this is the first session, I invite you to take a look through the journal and write if you wish. You can also draw in these journals as part of your reflection.

#### *Ask teens:*

- What did you most enjoy about this session?
- What would you have improved/done differently?
- What do you hope to see more of next time?

#### *Instructions:*

- Hand out lyrics to "Ani V'atah." Invite one of the teens to read the translation. To hear the music (and see a video about peace), visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNwPoqEBgyc>.

#### *Closing Ritual:*

- Each week will close the meeting with a prompt from me. This week, the prompt will also include a piece of candy/chocolate so that we can end on a sweet note. Today's prompt is "After today's first session, I am feeling \_\_\_\_\_." Go around the circle and have each teen answer the prompt and pass out candy.

“(God says:) Just as I create worlds and bring the dead back to life,  
You human beings are also capable of doing the same.”

– Midrash Psalms, 116:8

“The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.  
The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference.  
And the opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference.  
Because of indifference, one dies before one actually dies.”

– Elie Wiesel

# "We Didn't Start the Fire"

By Billy Joel

<p>Harry Truman, Doris Day, Red China, Johnnie Ray South Pacific, Walter Winchell, Joe DiMaggio</p> <p>Joe McCarthy, Richard Nixon, Studebaker, television North Korea, South Korea, Marilyn Monroe</p> <p>Rosenbergs, H-bomb, Sugar Ray, Panmunjom Brando, "The King and I" and "The Catcher in the Rye"</p> <p>Eisenhower, vaccine, England's got a new queen Marciano, Liberace, Santayana goodbye</p> <p>CHORUS</p> <p>We didn't start the fire It was always burning Since the world's been turning We didn't start the fire No we didn't light it But we tried to fight it</p> <p>Joseph Stalin, Malenkov, Nasser and Prokofiev Rockefeller, Campanella, Communist Bloc</p> <p>Roy hn, Juan Peron, Toscanini, dacron Dien Bien Phu falls, "Rock Around the Clock"</p> <p>Einstein, James Dean, Brooklyn's got a winning team Davy Crockett, Peter Pan, Elvis Presley, Disneyland</p> <p>Bardot, Budapest, Alabama, Krushchev Princess Grace, "Peyton Place", trouble in the Suez</p> <p>CHORUS</p> <p>Little Rock, Pasternak, Mickey Mantle, Kerouac Sputnik, Chou En-Lai, "Bridge on the River Kwai"</p> <p>Lebanon, Charlse de Gaulle, California baseball Starkweather, homicide, children of thalidomide</p>	<p>Buddy Holly, "Ben Hur", space monkey, Mafia Hula hoops, Castro, Edsel is a no-go</p> <p>U-2, Syngman Rhee, payola and Kennedy Chubby Checker, "Psycho", Belgians in the Congo</p> <p>CHORUS</p> <p>Hemingway, Eichmann, "Stranger in a Strange Land" Dylan, Berlin, Bay of Pigs invasion</p> <p>"Lawrence of Arabia", British Beatlemania Ole Miss, John Glenn, Liston beats Patterson</p> <p>Pope Paul, Malcolm X, British politician sex JFK, blown away, what else do I have to say</p> <p>CHORUS</p> <p>Birth control, Ho Chi Minh, Richard Nixon back again Moonshot, Woodstock, Watergate, punk rock Begin, Reagan, Palestine, terror on the airline Ayatollah's in Iran, Russians in Afghanistan</p> <p>"Wheel of Fortune", Sally Ride, heavy metal, suicide Foreign debts, homeless vets, AIDS, crack, Bernie Goetz Hypodermics on the shores, China's under martial law Rock and roller cola wars, I can't take it anymore</p> <p>CHORUS</p> <p>We didn't start the fire But when we are gone Will it still burn on, and on, and on, and on...</p>
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**"Ani V'atah"**

Written by Arik Einstein

Music by Miki Gavrielov

You and I will change the world,  
You and I, then all will follow.  
Others have said before, but that doesn't matter.  
You and I will change the world.

You and I will start at the beginning  
It will be difficult.  
But that doesn't matter. It's not so bad.  
Others have said before, but that doesn't matter.  
You and I will change the world.

*Ani v'atah n'sha-neh et ha-olam.*

*Ani v'atah az yavo-u k'var kulam*

*Am'ru et zeh kodem l'fanai*

*Zeh lo mi-sha-neh.*

*Ani v'atah n'sha-neh et ha-olam.*

*Ani v'atah n'na-she me-hat-chalah.*

*Yih'yeh lanu ra ayn davar zeh lo norah*

אני ואתה נשנה את העולם,  
אני ואתה אז יבואו כבר כולם,  
אמרו את זה קודם לפני,  
לא משנה - אני ואתה נשנה את העולם.

אני ואתה ננסה מהתחלה,  
יהיה לנו רע, אין דבר זה לא נורא,  
אמרו את זה קודם לפני,  
זה לא משנה - אני ואתה נשנה את העולם.

אני ואתה נשנה את העולם,  
אני ואתה אז יבואו כבר כולם,  
אמרו את זה קודם לפני,  
לא משנה - אני ואתה נשנה את העולם.

## *Havayah Two: Tikkun Olam – Working as a Community*

### **Materials:**

- Texts
- Markers
- Butcher paper
- Copies of Strengths, Skills & Passions worksheet
- Pens
- Magazines, newspapers, etc.
- Mod Podge
- Paintbrushes
- Digital camera or smart phone with camera
- Journals

### **Notes for the Group Leader:**

In the first TEL *havayah*, teens had an opportunity to discover what motivates them to do *Tikkun Olam* work, to reflect on what they view as broken and in need of repair in the world, and also how to actively listen to what their peers think about these issues.

In this second *havayah*, the teens have an opportunity to focus in on:

- How they can bring their individual strengths, talents and passions to the group;
- How a group of individuals can use their strengths to function as a community; and
- How small groups within the community can work together on specific areas of the *tikkun olam* project.

This second lesson continues to help the teens within each TEL community identify him/herself as an active agent who can help in repairing the world.

### **Welcome, Introductions and Ice Breakers (25 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- Take a few minutes to whip around the circle and have every teen share one cool thing that has happened in his/her life since the last TEL meeting.
- You may also want to give a quick review of the last session or even sing some of the song lyrics they created in the last session.

#### **Opening Ice Breaker(s): "Gam Ani" and "Machine":**

- "Gam Ani" is Hebrew for "me too." One teen begins by stating a true fact about him/her such as "My favorite sport/food/color/band is..." and if it's true for the other teens, they stand up and call out "Gam Ani!" Go around the circle until every teen has had a chance to make one true statement. Take a few minutes to point out what things the teens really have in common and what statements separated them as individuals.
- Some of the kids who have taken drama/improv class may know the game "Machine." In this game, the teens will work together to create a real or invented machine. You can start by picking something real, like a car, washing machine, ice cream maker, etc. Pick one teen to begin.

He/she will make a motion and repeat it. He/she can make a sound to go with the motion (no talking or conversation should go on within the machine). Tap another teen on the shoulder and he/she joins the first teen by making another repetitive sound/motion to add onto the machine. One by one, you get all of the teens playing a part in the machine. When the teens have all joined the machine, tell them the power is going out and the machine slowly comes to a halt. Once they can do a basic machine, invite the teens to pick something imaginary or invented. Finally, have them make a "*Tikkun Olam* machine" and see what they come up with.

#### Key points for Leader to touch upon:

- Wrap up your ice breakers by inviting the teens to notice the ways that in both games they could both maintain their individuality and also become part of the group. In this *havayah*, just as in the machine game, the teens will each play an individual role that will help make the group stronger as you move forward towards picking a *Tikkun Olam* project.

### Text Study: "If I am not for myself" and Margaret Mead (10-15 min)

#### Instructions:

- Hand out the text (see handouts) or you may want to write the texts on a board. Introduce the texts by sharing that one text is from a classical Jewish source called Pirkey Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) and one text is from an American cultural anthropologist named Margaret Mead.

#### Invite one of the teens to read the first text out loud:

"Hillel says, 'If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?'" – Pirkey Avot, 1:14

#### Ask Teens:

- What does Hillel mean by "If I am not for myself"? What does it mean to be a self-advocate? Can you think of moments in your own life when you had to stick up for yourself, for your beliefs? What did that experience feel like?
- In the second question, Hillel asks us to think beyond our own experience. Do you know people who are only consumed with their own experience? What are they like? What value is there in thinking beyond our own personal struggles?
- In your own life, is there any struggle between being your own person and thinking about the people/community around you? How can being involved/connected to issues in the larger world beyond your life, your family, and your school actually help you to better know yourself?
- Why does Hillel write, "If not now, when?" Why is there a sense of urgency in his message?

#### Invite one of the teens to read the second text out loud:

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever does." – Margaret Mead

#### Ask Teens:

- Mead believes that the only thing that creates change in the world is a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- What other adjectives would you add to thoughtful and committed to describe the kind of people who work for change?

- Have you ever worked with/been part of a group working for change of any kind? What was that experience like? (Examples might include working on an election, working on a fundraiser, etc.)

### **"Strengths, Skills, and Passions" Worksheet and Sharing (30 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- Tell the teens that they are going to take some time on their own to fill out a short questionnaire about their individual strengths and passions.
- Hand out questionnaires and pens and give teens ten minutes or so to work quietly.
- When they finish, have them get in partners and share their responses.
- Come back together as a large group and have partners share each other's responses. Record them on a big piece of butcher paper as the teens share.
- When everyone has had a chance to share, look at the collective strengths, skills and passions that as individuals the teens bring to the group. Point out the resources and experiences that you have within the group and how that will help with your TEL group's *Tikkun Olam* work.

### **Small group projects: Artists, Web Designers, Writers/Editors, Photographers (30-40 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- After thinking about the group's collective strengths, skills and passions, you can create an opportunity for teens to work together with peers who share some of their same interests. The following are a few ideas for breaking into small groups for projects, but you and the teens are encouraged to think of other positions and projects that resonate for your TEL group.
  - Artists can work together to create a funky tzedakah box to use for future TEL meetings or to put in your synagogue. One idea is to recycle a glass container by covering it with a decoupage design. The group cuts out images from magazines, newspapers or old books that portray what they want to repair in the world. Use Mod Podge to glue the pictures onto the glass and then paint over it with layers of Mod Podge.
  - Web Designers can create a TEL web page. If your synagogue has a web site, ask your web master if the teens can add a link for TEL on the site. Web Designers should brainstorm and lay out both content and design.
  - Writers/Editors can get on a computer and generate an article for the synagogue newsletter about the TEL program and what the TEL group has been up to. Show them examples of a press release so that when you create your *tikkun olam* project, they can write a press release to go out to the local media.
  - Photographers can use a digital camera or camera phone to document the other groups while they're working. Have them work on writing captions and creating a photo album so the year will be documented both online and with a hard copy.

#### **Return to the group for sharing:**

- After 30-35 minutes, bring the small groups together so that they can share their work with each other.

## Reflection, Journaling and Closing Ritual (10 min)

### Instructions:

- Pass out the journals and invite the teens to take some time to write about what they discovered about their own strengths, skills and passions in this session. Invite them to reflect on the Hillel and Margaret Mead quotes that opened the session.

### Ask Teens:

- What did you most enjoy about this session?
- What would you have improved/done differently?
- What do you hope to see more of next time?

### Instructions:

- Hand out lyrics to "Ani V'atah." Invite one of the teens to read the translation.

### Closing Ritual:

- Today's prompt is: "Today, I learned about my strength of \_\_\_\_\_. " Go around the circle and have each teen answer the prompt.



Hillel says, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?  
But if I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?"  
– *Pirkey Avot*, 1:14

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,  
committed citizens can change the world;  
indeed it's the only thing that ever does."

– Margaret Mead

## Teens: Experience and Learning – “Strengths, Skills, and Passions” Worksheet

What are ten things you love to do?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Check off all of the words that describe you:

- |  |                                       |                                    |                                     |
|--|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Independent     | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic     | <input type="checkbox"/> Original  | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Introverted     | <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiastic | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative  | <input type="checkbox"/> Studious   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly/Social | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual    | <input type="checkbox"/> Practical | <input type="checkbox"/> Rebellious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organized       | <input type="checkbox"/> Funny        | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive | <input type="checkbox"/> Kind       |

Add five to ten words to describe you:

Imagine that you and a group of friends are stranded on a desert island. List five to ten abilities/skills that you have that would help you survive and help the group.

Now start to think about the ways that your unique blend of strengths, skills and passions can contribute to your TEL group's *Tikkun Olam* project....

## *Havayah Three: Choosing our Tikkun Olam Theme/Project, Part 1*

### **Materials:**

- Colored yarn
- Texts
- Poster Boards
- Markers
- Computer Access (if possible)
- Articles

### *Notes for the Group Leader:*

In the first two TEL *havayot*, teens thought about the concept of *Tikkun Olam* in relation to what motivates them to want to make changes in the world and how to bring their individual strengths to their *tikkun olam* work. They also explored what it means to listen and learn from others in their group, even when their opinions and ideas may be different.

In this third *havayah*, the structure of the session will be somewhat different. The teens will have an opportunity to learn about five distinct social action issues: ending poverty; eco-kashrut and food choices; greening our synagogue/community; fair working conditions; and rights for same-sex couples. Teens will work in small groups to learn about one of the issues and then present it back to the larger group. These are five suggested areas that may be compelling to the teens—please feel free to select another topic and bring resources for your teens to read and research about that topic for this session. The teens in your TEL group may want to do a different topic and you can use time during the session to have them research that topic, as well.

### **Welcome, Introductions, Check-in (15-20 min)**

#### *Instructions:*

- Take a few minutes to whip around the circle and have every teen share something cool that has happened in his/her life since the last TEL meeting.
- You may also want to give a quick review of the last session.

#### *Opening Ice Breaker: "Million Dollar Web Game"*

- In this session, we are going to begin thinking about where we will direct our energy by choosing a specific area for a *tikkun olam* project. This ice breaker is a quick way to get teens generating causes that are important to them.
- Have teens stand in a circle and take out a ball of yarn. The first person holds the yarn and completes the sentence, "If I had a million dollars to donate, I would give it to..." and then – while holding on to a piece of the yarn, throws the remainder of the ball of yarn to another person, who answers the same question. (Note: ask the teens to use organizations/causes rather than giving it to an individual.) Throw the yarn, creating a web, until it has reached everyone. Take out another ball of yarn in a different color, and play the same game (while teens are still holding onto the first web), but this time, teens complete, "If someone gave me a million dollars, I would use it to...."
- When the webs are completed, teens can sit down and let go of the yarn.

### Ask Teens:

- What commonalities came up in terms of where people would donate their money?
- How did it feel to think of having money to donate?
- How did it feel have money given to you that would be yours to use in any way?

### Say to the group:

- In this session, we will begin to focus on several specific causes/issues. During the next two sessions, we will research these causes/issues and then decide together which issue/cause we would like to work on for our project. Fundraising may be part of the project, as well as advocacy and direct service.

## Text Study: "Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Akiva" and Eleanor Roosevelt (10-15 min)

### Instructions:

- You can hand out copies of the texts (see handouts) or you may want to write the texts on a board or butcher block.
- Introduce the texts by sharing that one text is from a classical Jewish source, from Tractate Kallah of the Babylonian Talmud, and one text is a short quote from Eleanor Roosevelt.

### Invite one of the teens to read the first text out loud:

The following story is told about Rabbi Tarfon. He was very wealthy but was not in the habit of giving substantially to the poor. Once Rabbi Akiva said to him: "Would you like me to be your agent in buying a town or two?" "Certainly," replied Rabbi Tarfon. Rabbi Tarfon then brought four thousand gold dinars which Rabbi Akiva took and distributed to the poor. Sometime later, Rabbi Tarfon sought out Rabbi Akiva and said to him: "Where are the towns that you bought for me?" Rabbi Akiva took him by the hand and brought him to the *Bet Midrash* (Study House) and brought over a child with a Book of Psalms in his hand. The child read Psalm 112 (Happy is the one who fears God, who is devoted to God's commandments...) until he got to the verse: He who gives freely to the poor, his tzedakah lasts forever (and) his horn is exalted in honor (Psalm 112:9). Rabbi Akiva said: "This is the property which I bought for you." Rabbi Tarfon hugged Rabbi Akiva and said: "You are my teacher and my leader. You are my teacher in wisdom and my leader in *derekh eretz* (proper conduct)." Then Rabbi Tarfon liberally gave more money.

### Ask Teens:

- Rabbi Tarfon is already a teacher and leader in the community before he gives tzedakah. Why wouldn't he know/understand the importance of giving tzedakah before this experience?
- How does Rabbi Akiva teach Rabbi Tarfon about tzedakah? Is he successful in his efforts? Do you agree/disagree with what he does?
- In your own life, how can/do you explain the importance of *tikkun olam* work to people who are apathetic or only concerned with their own life? How can you educate people about the importance of tzedakah/tikkun olam work?

### Invite one of the teens to read the second text out loud:

"When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?" – Eleanor Roosevelt

### Ask Teens:

- In what ways can we act to prevent human misery?
- Based on the texts we've studied so far, what does Jewish tradition teach about preventing human suffering?
- Does Rabbi Tarfon's conscience become tender in the story we read? What other adjectives could you substitute for "tender" in Roosevelt's quote?
- What else do we need to have in our conscience to bring repair to the world?

### Small Group Research (30 min)

#### Instructions:

- Divide teens into small groups and assign them one of the following topics or use topics that you choose on your own: ending poverty; food ethics; greening our synagogue/community; fair working conditions; and rights for same-sex couples.
- Each topic contains an article for the teens to read and discuss together, as well as websites that they can check out if you have computer access available.
- Spend your time checking in with each group as they work and see what questions arise for them as they read their articles together.

### Prepare Presentations (20 min)

#### Instructions:

- Each group will present back about their topic for the whole group for about four to five minutes each.
- Groups can create a poster or collage that contains a visual image to represent the cause/issue; a definition of the cause/issue; three points about why this cause/issue is important in terms of repairing the world.
- Each group should decide how they are presenting to the larger group.

### Present to Group and Feedback (20 min)

#### Instructions:

- Each group will have four to five minutes to share their posters or collages and take questions from the other groups.
- After each presentation, the teens can ask questions or share their thoughts about the issue.
- If there are a lot of questions or feedback, they can continue during the next TEL session when the teens will review the causes/issues and decide together which one to work on for their *tikkun olam* project.

### Closing Reflection and Ritual (20 min)

#### Instructions:

- Take a moment to thank the groups for their work and contributions.
- Hand out the journals and invite the teens to take a few minutes to write about which issue really moved them the most and why. At the next session, they will read what they wrote (out loud if they want) and they will get to think about whether their thoughts changed over time.

### Closing Ritual:

- Today's prompt is "Today, I was really moved by the issue of \_\_\_\_\_." Go around the circle and have each teen answer the prompt.

The following story is told about Rabbi Tarfon. He was very wealthy but was not in the habit of giving substantially to the poor. Once Rabbi Akiva said to him: "Would you like me to be your agent in buying a town or two?" "Certainly," replied Rabbi Tarfon. Rabbi Tarfon then brought four thousand gold dinars which Rabbi Akiva took and distributed to the poor. Sometime later, Rabbi Tarfon sought out Rabbi Akiva and said to him: "Where are the towns that you bought for me?" Rabbi Akiva took him by the hand and brought him to the *Bet Midrash* (Study House) and brought over a child with a Book of Psalms in his hand. The child read Psalm 112 (*Happy is the one who fears God, who is devoted to God's commandments...*) until he got to the verse: *He who gives freely to the poor, his tzedakah lasts forever (and) his horn is exalted in honor* (Psalm 112:9). Rabbi Akiva said: "This is the property which I bought for you." Rabbi Tarfon hugged Rabbi Akiva and said: "You are my teacher and my leader. You are my teacher in wisdom and my leader in *derekh erez* (proper conduct)." Then Rabbi Tarfon liberally gave more money.

– *Tractate Kallah* of the Babylonian *Talmud*

"When will our consciences grow so tender  
that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?"

– Eleanor Roosevelt

**It may seem like poverty is out there, away from us, but these statistics from the Union of Reform Judaism show the numbers of Jewish people living in poverty:**

**Poverty within the American Jewish Community**

- 1 in 20 Jews live in households that are below the poverty line
- Nearly 1 in 10 Jewish seniors live below the poverty line
- 46% of Jewish immigrants from the Former Soviet Union live in households whose incomes are less than \$15,000
- 12% of Jewish children live below the poverty line
- 8% of American Jews who are single mothers live below the poverty line
- 32% of Jews who live below the poverty line belong to a synagogue, whereas 47% of Jews who live in households above the poverty line belong to a synagogue
- Jews living below the poverty line are equally or more likely than other Jews to observe individual rituals such as lighting Shabbat and Chanukah candles and keeping kosher
- Jews living in poverty have equally strong or stronger ethnic attachments than other Jews



Mazon is a Jewish organization that helps to end hunger all over the world. Here is information from Mazon about hunger in the United States:

## Domestic Hunger



- Over 36.2 million Americans, including over 12 million children, suffer from hunger or live on the edge of hunger.
  - 17.2 % of children in the U.S. live in hungry or food insecure households.
  - 4.0 % of U.S. households experience hunger.
  - 9.4% of American 65 years of age and older live in poverty.
  - 12% of rural households in the United States face hunger every day, an estimated 2.3 million households.
- 
- 10.9 % of American households are food insecure at least some time during the year. Meaning 1 in 10 American homes are at risk of hunger.
  - Food stamp participants tend to leave the program frequently. Half of all individuals who enter the Food Stamp Program stay 8 months or less and 61% exit within 1 year.
  - The average gross income of food stamp households is \$673 per month.
  - According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food Stamp Program is the nation's single most important resource in the fight against hunger. Eligible individuals must earn a net income below 130% or less of the federal poverty line.
  - To be eligible for free school lunches, children's families must earn at or below 130% of the federal poverty line.

From [www.mazon.org](http://www.mazon.org), facts about hunger in Israel:

## Israel



Hunger is on the rise in Israel. Throughout the country, increasing numbers of Israelis are relying on emergency food programs to meet their most basic nutritional needs.

- 22% of Israeli citizens - approximately 1,100,000 people - are food insecure.
- Of those Israeli citizens who are food insecure, 60% are Jewish, 20% are Arab, and 20% are new immigrants.
- According to the National Insurance Institute, nearly 30% of Israeli children - approximately 690,000 - live below the national poverty line.
- Over 20% of Israel's elderly live below the national poverty line.

Selected Web Sites

[www.mazon.org](http://www.mazon.org): a Jewish response to hunger around the world

[www.poverty.com](http://www.poverty.com): outlines the problems of poverty and what you can do

[www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org): the website of thirteen organizations working across the world to end poverty

[www.yadezra.net](http://www.yadezra.net): an organization that works on poverty in Israel

[www.care.org](http://www.care.org): a humanitarian organization fighting global poverty

Food ethics combines many contemporary issues, including how food is raised, distributed and sold; how food production affects the environment; and how food production affects workers. For over 30 years, the *Eco-Kashrut* movement has examined the Jewish laws of keeping Kosher through an environmental lens.

### **Eco-Kashrut: Environmental Standards for What and How We Eat** **By Rabbi Arthur O. Waskow**

*In recent decades, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and others have advocated a broadening of the concept of kashrut to include restrictions on consumption based on ecological considerations. Here, one of the Jewish Renewal movement's most articulate spokespersons argues the case for eco-kashrut in the form of a commentary to the Torah portion Shemini (Leviticus 9:1-11:47).*

It reads, to modern eyes, like a cookbook. The Torah portion of *Shemini* begins by telling us to bring beef, mutton, and pancakes to the sacred altar at the transcendent moment of its dedication. It ends by making sure that on any ordinary day we do not eat whales, hawks, camels, or shrimp. For even in our ordinary lives, some foods are sacred.

And between these two celebrations of the sacredness of food, we witness the deaths of those who brought "strange fire" to the Holy One.

How did biblical Jews get in touch with God? By eating and choosing what to eat. Not by murmuring prayer; when Hannah did that (1 Samuel 1:13), the priest Eli thought she was drunk.

Why by eating? Because in the deepest origins of Jewish life, the most sacred relationship was the relationship with the earth. For shepherds, farmers, orchard-keepers, food was the nexus between *adamah*, the earth, and its closest relative, *adam*, the human. So ancient Jews got in touch with God by bringing food to the Temple. With our bodies we affirmed, "This food comes from a Unity of which we also are a part: from earth, rain, sun, seed, and our own work. It came from the Unity of Life; so we give back some of it to that great Unity."

In our most mundane moments, we affirmed through the rules of *kashrut* that what and how we ate was holy. And in our wildest poetic fantasies of the history of humankind, we thought that what went wrong was somehow wrongly eating—a mistake that brought upon us an earth that would bring forth only thorns and thistles for us to eat, as we toiled with the sweat pouring down our noses.

When the moment came for us to turn history around, we learned to rest. We learned Shabbat. Not from the thunderclap of Sinai, but from eating—from the manna—that sweet and flowing breast-milk of *El Shaddai*, the God of Breasts, All-Nourishing. From the manna, we learned that together with the earth, we rest. And rest was then extended from the seventh day to the seventh year, when the earth was entitled to rest and the human community that worked the earth was obligated to rest as well.

Today, most of us have shrugged away the bringing-near of sacred food, the sacred choice of foods we do not eat, the sacred pausing so that one-seventh of the time we do not grow our foods. We think that resting is a waste of time that could be used to make, invent, produce, do.

Indeed, in the last few hundred years, the human race has invented the most brilliant act of work in all of its history. We have affected the planet--its very biology and chemistry--in ways no species ever has before. And we have invented the Holocaust, the H-bomb, global warming. Strange fires, all of them. Fires through which a few people can now kill billions, a few corporations can now kill thousands of species.

What can we learn by renewing the ancient text? For shepherds and farmers, food was what they ate from the earth. For us, it is also coal, oil, electric power, paper, plastics, that we take from the earth. For shepherds and farmers, *kashrut* was the way of guiding their eating toward holiness. For us, eco-*kashrut* should do the same.

We should ask: Is it eco-kosher to eat vegetables and fruit that have been grown by drenching the soil with insecticides? Is it eco-kosher to drink Shabbat Kiddush wine from non-biodegradable plastic cups? Is it eco-kosher to use 100 percent unrecycled office paper and newsprint in our homes, our synagogues, our community newspapers? Might it be eco-kosher to insist on 10 percent recycled paper this year, 30 percent in two years, and 80 percent in five years?

Is it eco-kosher to destroy great forests, to ignore insulating our homes, synagogues, and nursing homes, to become addicted to automobiles so that we drunkenly pour carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, there to accelerate the heating of our globe? Strange fire indeed!

We can light a blaze to consume the earth. Or we can make a holy altar of our lives, to light up the spark of God in every human and in every species.

This article, from [www.sustainabletable.org](http://www.sustainabletable.org), explains the connection between food production and climate change:

## The Climate Crisis at the End of Your Fork

--Anna Lappé for Sustainable Table

### *Taking a Bite out of Climate Change*

On September 8, 2008 Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, chair of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, [spoke to 400 people gathered for an event](#) hosted by the animal welfare organization, Compassion in World Farming. Pachauri, an Indian economist (and vegetarian) who had just been reelected to a second term as chairman, made one of the most public and bold statements about the connection between our diet and global warming on the world stage: Choosing to eat less meat, Pachauri said, or cutting out meat entirely, is one of the most important personal choices we can make to address climate change.

"In terms of immediacy of action and the feasibility of bringing about reductions in a short period of time, it clearly is the most attractive opportunity," said Pachauri. "Give up meat for one day [a week] initially, and decrease it from there."

To many of us, Pachauri's specific prescription for addressing change might come as a surprise. When we think about the culprits behind the climate crisis, we tend to think about Big Oil or dirty coal-fired powered plants. We picture cars and industrial skylines, or imagine factories and smokestacks. It's time we start thinking about another sector of the economy that is increasingly exacerbating the climate crisis. The global food system—including deforestation to make way for crops for cattle and cars—is responsible for an estimated one-third of total greenhouse gas emissions. Livestock production alone contributes to 18 percent of the global warming effect—more than the emissions from every single car, train, and plane on the planet. Though livestock production only contributes 9 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, the sector is responsible for 37 percent of methane and 65 percent of nitrous oxide, both potent greenhouse gases.

*Move over Hummer, say hello to the hamburger.*

### *The Food and Climate Change Connection*

So how is food—supposedly life-sustaining stuff—one of the key factors in an environmental crisis that threatens the basis of life on earth? A big part of the answer is in the rapid and radical twentieth-century transformation of our food system from sustainably based, locally focused production, to a fossil-fuel addicted industrialized system. Agriculture has changed more in than the past two generations than it did in the previous 12,000 years. Unfortunately for us, almost every single aspect of our modern industrial system creates greenhouse gas emissions. And, as Dr. Pachauri says, another big reason is the rapid growth of livestock production. Indeed, to produce 2.2 pounds of beef burns enough energy to light a 100 watt bulb for twenty days Pachauri noted in his remarks earlier this month.

Main Sources of Emissions	Percent of the <i>Total</i> Global Warming Effect of Emissions
<b>On the Farm</b> Fertilizer production and distribution Methane and nitrous oxide emissions	1.5 to 2% 12%
<b>On the Land</b> Deforestation and other land use changes	18%
<b>On the Road</b> Transportation emissions from seed to plate	<i>Specific food-system data unavailable</i>
<b>Additional Sources</b> Waste and manufacturing	<i>Specific food-system data unavailable</i>
<b>Estimated Total<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>33% of the total global warming effect can be attributed to the food system.</b>

### *On the Farm*

#### **Fertilizers and On-Farm Fossil Fuel Use**

Industrial farms are fossil-fuel addicted places, from their reliance on fossil fuels for powering machinery to petroleum-based chemicals used to create artificial soil fertility, protect against pests, and stave off weeds. The use of fossil fuels on farms, as well as in the manufacture of fertilizers and agricultural chemicals, contributes to the emissions of the food sector.

With one-third of the world's cereal harvest and 90 percent of the world's soy harvest being raised for animal feed, the energy required to grow those crops is a major factor in these on-farm emissions. In the United States and Canada, half of all synthetic fertilizer is used for feed crops. In the UK, the total is nearly 70 percent.

A major reason that beef, in particular, has such a large environmental impact is because, of all livestock, cattle are among the worst converters of grain to meat. Whereas in nature cattle, which are ruminants, convert inedible-to-humans grasses into high-grade proteins, under industrial production grainfed cattle only provide about 1 pound of beef for every 10 to 16 pounds of feed they consume.

Because industrialized agriculture also relies on huge amounts of water for irrigation, these farms will be much more vulnerable as climate change increases extreme droughts. Globally, 70 percent of the world's available freshwater is being diverted to irrigation-intensive agriculture.

#### **The Livestock Liability**

The other reason that livestock production has such a big impact on climate change is because livestock are among the main sources of the world's methane emissions. (Rice cultivation is another.



According to the Stern Report, rice cultivation emits one-tenth of agricultural emissions.) Ruminant livestock, including cattle, buffalo, sheep, and goats, are the main agricultural sources of methane. They can't help it; it's in their nature. Ruminants digest through microbial, or "enteric" fermentation, which produces methane that is then released by the animals through belching and, to a lesser degree via their, er, tailpipes. While this process enables ruminants to digest fibrous grasses that we humans can't convert into digestible form, it also contributes to livestock's climate change toll. Enteric fermentation accounts for one-quarter of the total emissions from the livestock sector. (Land use changes, such as deforestation and desertification caused by over-pasturing livestock or growing feed crops, account for another 35.4%, while manure accounts for 30.5%).

There's another problem with industrial livestock: what happens with the waste. Now, in sustainable systems tapping into nature's wisdom, there is no such thing as waste: manure is part of a holistic cycle; it's fertilizer. But in [confined animal feeding operations](#) (CAFOs), this waste is not cycled through the farm, there's too much of it. Instead, waste is stored in manure "lagoons," as they're euphemistically called. Without sufficient oxygenation, waste ends up emitting methane and nitrous oxide. The United States scores at the top of the world for methane emissions from manure, and pigs are at top in terms of methane emissions, responsible for half of the globe's total.

The sheer number of animals being raised for meat on the planet is another reason livestock production accounts for nearly one-fifth of all the globe's greenhouse gas emissions. In 1965, 10 billion livestock animals were slaughtered each year; today that number is 55 billion.

#### *On the Land*

The bulk of the pressure on land around the globe, from precious wetlands in Indonesia to rainforests in Brazil, comes from the agricultural sector. These rainforests and wetlands play a vital role in climate stability because they sequester carbon, absorbing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in the soils and plants. With their destruction, carbon is released back into the atmosphere and the carbon cycle that keeps our climate in balance comes further unhinged. Because these lands play such a vital role as carbon sinks, it's no surprise that their destruction is partly responsible for the emissions from land use changes that add up to nearly 18 percent of the total global warming effect.

The biggest driver behind these "land use changes," as the climate change folks call them, is the expansion of pasture for cattle, feed crops for livestock, and oil palm for processed foods and biofuels. Most of these land use changes are concentrated in just a handful of countries. Brazil is the heart of rainforest destruction, mainly to meet demand for livestock grazing and feed. Malaysia and Indonesia are the world's main producers of oil palm production, where plantations are leading to rapid rainforest and wetland habitat destruction. Malaysia produced 43 percent and Indonesia 44 percent of the world's total palm oil last year. While data on the exact amount of land that has been converted into oil palm plantations is hard to come by, we know that demand for palm oil has soared in the last two decades, especially because of growing demand for edible vegetable oils from the world's top two importing countries, India and China, according to an assessment by the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service.

The erosion and deterioration of soils on industrial farms also releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. By destroying the natural soil fertility, and disturbing the soil through tillage, industrial farming also adds to the deterioration of soil and its carbon emissions.

#### *On the Road: The Food Miles Question*

And what about the distance food travels to get to our plates? Despite all the attention to food miles, emissions from food transport are not the biggest culprit behind the sector's impact on climate change.



While total emissions from transportation contribute to 13.1 percent of the global warming effect, this includes emissions from toting around all kinds of things—from people to pork chops. Transport emissions specifically from food are just a sliver of these emissions.

So why do food miles matter? Even though transportation isn't the main source of our morsels' emissions, reducing our food miles does make a dent in our dinner's emissions toll. Consider the fossil fuels wasted carting fresh tomatoes to New Jersey, a state with ample farmland that exports tons of tomatoes every year. Researchers at Rutgers University estimated that meeting the New Jersey demand for just one year's supply of out-of-state tomatoes for the state used up enough fossil fuel to drive an 18-wheeler around the world 249 times.

Food miles matter because so much of our food transport is unnecessary. Local food is also a better choice because it is fresher and therefore healthier for our bodies. Buying local also supports our local economies. Purchasing local foods means supporting small-scale businesses and protecting green space in our communities.

Of course, direct trade with small-scale farmers in far away places can be a critical way to support economic development half-way around the world. But most of the global food trade isn't benefiting small-scale farmers, it's benefiting the biggest grain traders, at the cost of the climate. And most of this global food trade is completely unnecessary, or redundant. Consider, for example, the fish caught off the coast of Maine, flash frozen, shipped to China for processing into filets, and shipped back to our mega-markets in the United States. Or, consider the business of beef. In 2007, the United States exported one 1.431 billion pounds of beef and veal (5.4 percent of our total beef production) and imported 3.052 billion pounds of the same, measured by commercial carcass weight. This cross-continent transport of food makes economic sense only because the *true* costs of such transport, including the big bill for its contribution to climate change, are not counted on the balance sheets of food corporations.

The main reason for sticking with the locavores is that the local food being celebrated is often a pseudonym for sustainably raised foods—and those foods will be the ones produced without the fertilizers, grown without destroying precious wetlands or rainforests, and with animals raised on pasture, not in confinement.

#### *Other Sources of Emissions*

Because the food system is connected to so many aspects of our lives, it's hard to get an exact accounting of total emissions. Here are some other places where the food system's emissions crop up.

- **Waste:** Another 4 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions comes from waste, including food waste. Where does all our uneaten food end up and the tons of food ready for harvest that never even makes it to our plates? Landfills. And landfills are a key source of methane as food and other refuse decay.
- **Manufacturing:** A further 10 percent of global emissions stems from manufacturing and construction, which includes construction for the food industry.

#### *How Can Farming Help Address the Climate Crisis?*

In nature, plants transform the sun's energy into food that provides a foundation for life. We humans are fueled by this transformation either directly (we eat the food) or indirectly (we eat the animals that have fed on this energy). It's a clever cycle; it's inherently abundant. But the industrialization of agriculture, picking up pace in the past generation, has flipped the natural abundance of farming on its head. Instead of producing energy, industrial agriculture consumes it, through the addiction to fossil fuel-powered machinery and petroleum-based agrochemicals.

Industrial farms are often considered highly efficient, but only because these wasted inputs and devastating outputs—including the impact on climate change—are not accounted for. (See [Table 3: The Core Differences between Climate-Crisis Agriculture and Climate-Friendly Farming](#)).

Unlike industrial farms, small-scale organic and sustainable farms rely on people power, not heavy machinery, and depend on nature, not manmade chemicals for soil fertility and to handle pests. As a result, small-scale sustainable farms have been found to emit between one-half and two-thirds less carbon dioxide for every acre of production.

New research is documenting that organic farms [can emit as much as half the carbon dioxide as chemical farms](#). Organic farms also use much less fossil fuel energy than their conventional counterparts, in many cases as much as one-third less, and studies are also showing that organic farming can sequester carbon, providing a potentially powerful tool to help us address climate change. In fact, [10,000 medium-sized organic farms can store as much carbon in the soil as we would save if we took one million cars off the road](#).

Yes, the very source of energy—the food consumers eat—has become one of the planet's worst contributors to climate instability, but it need not be. There is another way.

#### What You Can Do

- **Eat and Drink with the Environment in Mind**

Many of the resources at Sustainable Table can help you make climate-friendly food choices every day. Here are some of the principles of low-carbon dining, with links to more information.

- **Eat less meat and dairy:** Go cold turkey, or just trim your consumption. Try cutting out meat just one day of the week.
- **Choose organic and sustainably raised foods:** Find local food near your home.
- **Eat local:** Lower your food mile odometer, and always try to look for local sustainable food.
- **Eat whole foods:** Cut back on processed foods. Check out your "carbon foodprint" at Bon Appetit's [Low-Carbon Diet Calculator](#).
- **Take back the tap:** Kick the bottled water habit. Visit [Food & Water Watch](#) for more information about the environmental impact of bottled water, the benefits of tap water, and how you can add your voice to those of people across the country demanding better regulation of our precious public resource—water.

- **Get Involved on a Broader Scale**

Go beyond your plate to get involved with exciting campaigns that are making the food and climate connection. Here are three recommendations.

- [Rainforest Action Network's Agribusiness Campaign](#)  
Join Rainforest Action Network's agribusiness campaign and learn what you can do to help stop the deforestation of the world's precious rainforests.
- [Center for Food Safety's Cool Foods Campaign](#)  
Check out the Center's newest campaign, helping eaters and businesses around the country learn about the simple choices they can make to support a climate-friendly food system.
- [La Via Campesina's Small Farmers Cooling the Planet](#)  
Join with this international network of farmer associations across the planet to

promote small-scale farming as a key strategy for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

*Created September 2008; Adapted from a forthcoming book on food and climate change by Anna Lappé.*

*To find out more, visit: [Take a Bite out of Climate Change](#)*

Table 2: An Overview of Food System Sources of Greenhouse Gases

Gas	What's Food Got to Do With It?	Global Warming
	<i>a summary of causes</i>	<b>Potential</b> relative to carbon dioxide
<b>Carbon Dioxide</b>	Carbon dioxide is emitted by burning fossil fuels to power farm machinery, produce agricultural chemicals, and transport food. In addition, carbon dioxide is released when forests and wetlands are cleared for crop production, particularly for animal feed, pasture, or oil palm production. Finally, trapped carbon in soils is also released through soil erosion and deterioration on industrial farms.	--
<b>Methane</b>	Agricultural methane is released primarily by ruminants, such as cattle, and during rice production.	23 times the greenhouse effect of carbon dioxide over 100 years. 62 times over 20 years.
<b>Nitrous Oxide</b>	Nitrous oxide is released mainly from the use of man-made fertilizer, especially the overuse of nitrogen on crops grown for animal feed.	296 times the greenhouse effect of carbon dioxide over 100 years. 275 over 20 years.

Table 3: The Core Differences Between Climate-Crisis Agriculture and Climate-Friendly Farming

Climate-Crisis Agriculture	Climate-Friendly Farming
Input-Intensive	<b>Knowledge-Intensive</b>
Ignores Place	<b>Values Place</b>
Emits Carbon	<b>Stores Carbon</b>

Dependent on Chemicals	<b>Depends on Nature for Fertility and Pest Management</b>
Disrupts Natural Cycles	<b>Protects Nature's Cycles</b>
Squanders Energy	<b>Produces Energy</b>
Fossil-Fuel Powered	<b>People and Animal Powered</b>
Wastes Water	<b>Retains and Conserves Water</b>

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### Selected Web Sites

[www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org): a non-profit organization committed to creating a healthier, more sustainable Jewish community

[www.organic.org](http://www.organic.org): education about organic food

[www.sustainabletable.org](http://www.sustainabletable.org): lots of information about sustainable agriculture and eating

[www.coejl.org](http://www.coejl.org): web site for the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life

[www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org): The Natural Resources Defense Council; provides info about how to shop and eat for local food

*There is a rich history of Jewish communities being involved in the Labor movement, supporting workers rights. Today, there are many communities who are struggling to achieve fair working conditions for their people. What is our responsibility as Jews to make sure that all people have safe, fair working conditions?*

Below are excerpts from “Labor Rights in the Jewish Tradition” by Michael S. Perry:

The Jewish community in the United States has been supportive of worker and trade union rights for many years, even as it evolved from a predominantly working-class community in the first part of the 20th century to a predominantly professional and entrepreneurial-class community today. This support stems in part from a collective memory of an earlier period of mass Jewish immigration to the United States, when an overwhelmingly immigrant community toiled in difficult and often desperate conditions in the garment industry and other trades. This support is also consistent with Jewish religious law (“*Halacha*”). Both in spirit and in practice, religious commandments relating to the hiring of workers are imbued with respect for labor rights, and some Jewish religious laws anticipate current secular labor law by thousands of years.



## Judaism and the Dignity of Labor

Respect for the dignity of labor has been an important theme in Jewish religious writings for centuries. This attitude stems from Biblical commandments relating to work and to the relationship, as seen by rabbinic authorities, between God and humanity. A number of important passages in the Bible stress the value of work. In Exodus, the commandment to observe a day of rest is preceded by the phrase "Six days thou shalt do thy work," [1] which is interpreted to mean that "... just as Israel [*i.e.*, the Jewish people] was given the positive commandment of Sabbath, so were they given the commandment of working." [2] In Psalm 128, this is stated succinctly: "when you shall eat the labor of your hands, you will be happy and it shall be well with you," and "the *Talmud* [the compilation of Jewish Oral Law] comments 'You shall be happy in this world and it shall be well with you in the next world,' which indicates that labor is an ethical commandment even apart from its practical value." [3] Indeed, Talmudic sages interpreted this passage to mean that "he who enjoys the fruits of his own labors is greater than the man who fears G-d." [4] The Talmudic ideal of work stood in sharp contrast to other views prevailing in the ancient world at the time that Jewish oral religious law was codified. Both the ancient Greeks and ancient Romans looked down on labor, and freedom from work was considered a right of rank and privilege. According to Aristotle, "Labor stupefies both mind and body and deprives man of his natural dignity .... The title of citizen belongs only to those who need not work to live." [5] In reaction, Jewish scholars of the day countered: "Love labor and hate mastery and seek not acquaintance with the ruling power." [6] A legacy of support for worker rights also stems in part from the broad social justice imperative in the Bible and other Jewish religious sources. In these sources, God is viewed as the ultimate owner of all the earth's resources, and humankind, its temporary owners, is commanded to act ethically in the distribution of those resources.

Selected Web Sites

<http://www.truah.org/issuescampaigns/worker-justice.html>: Formerly Rabbis for Human Rights – North America, T'ruah runs campaigns for rabbis to work for worker justice.

[www.workersrights.org](http://www.workersrights.org): an independent labor rights monitoring organization

[www.humanrightsfirst.org/workers\\_rights/index.asp](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/workers_rights/index.asp): a nonprofit organization helping people at risk

[www.fairlabor.org](http://www.fairlabor.org): nonprofit dedicated to ending sweatshop labor

[www.fairtradefederation.org](http://www.fairtradefederation.org): FTF is an association of businesses committed to providing *fair* wages and good employment opportunities to economically disadvantaged artisans and farmers



Until recently, in most of the United States today, same-sex couples are denied the right to marry federally and in the majority of states. Major liberal American Jewish organizations praised the US Supreme Court for striking down the Defense of Marriage Act as unconstitutional and for demanding that federal benefits be extended to gay couples in states where their marriages are recognized. The top court also overturned California's Proposition 8 – which took away the previously granted right of gays to marry in the state by popular referendum in 2008. As of August 2013, Same-sex marriage is legal in thirteen U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

The right to marry can also include important other civil rights. In the Reconstructionist movement of Judaism (and in the Reform and Renewal movements), gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are considered to be completely equal to heterosexual people and deserving of the same rights. Reconstructionist rabbis marry GLBT people, even when they are not able to get a legal marriage through the state.

### Same-Sex Marriage

**The liberal Jewish movements are struggling to balance contemporary morality and Jewish tradition in deciding whether to ritually honor same-sex unions.**

#### By Rabbi Amber Powers

The issue of same-sex marriage has been debated in the United States for many years now, and American Jewish communities have joined in on the discussions, adding Jewish values and ethics to the conversation. For Jewish communities, there are two primary questions. First, should the United States government legalize same-sex marriage, offering homosexual couples the same legal benefits that married heterosexual couples have?

Secondly, should rabbis perform same-sex Jewish weddings, and if so, can these ceremonies be considered kiddushin (the Hebrew term for holy unions)? This would give them the same status as heterosexual marriages. The three primary liberal Jewish denominations--Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative--have been grappling with these questions for over a decade. In the Orthodox world, communities are still struggling with how to respond to members who are out of the closet, and for the most part are not engaging with the issue of same-sex marriage.

### Reconstructionist Judaism

The Reconstructionist movement expressed its support for the full inclusion of gay men and lesbians in all aspects of Jewish life in its 1992 Report of the Reconstructionist Commission on Homosexuality. The report affirmed the holiness of homosexual relationships and the need to affirm them in a Jewish context: "As we celebrate the love between heterosexual couples, so too we celebrate the love between gay or lesbian Jews." The Reconstructionist movement today also fully endorses efforts to legalize civil same-sex marriages and grant homosexual couples equal benefits.

Reconstructionist Rabbi Rebecca Alpert, author of *Like Bread on the Seder Plate: Jewish Lesbians and the Transformation of Tradition* and co-author of *Exploring Judaism: A Reconstructionist Approach*, has argued that the Jewish principle of economic justice demands support for civil gay and lesbian marriage, because the absence of legal benefits for same-gender couples can cause them significant financial harm. While not required to do so, most Reconstructionist rabbis today perform same-sex Jewish weddings, which are included in the Reconstructionist Rabbi's Manual. Many use the traditional terminology and symbols of kiddushin used for heterosexual marriages.

### **The Reform Movement**

The Reform Movement has called for civil same-sex marriage for many years. The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the professional association of Reform rabbis, passed a resolution in 1996 opposing "governmental efforts to ban gay and lesbian marriage." The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the congregational arm of the Reform movement, followed suit in 1997, resolving to, "support secular efforts to promote legislation which would provide civil marriage equal opportunity for gay men and lesbians."

In a December 1996 statement commending the decision of the Circuit Court of Hawaii to recognize same-sex marriages, the Associate Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism said: "The love that God calls us to, the love that binds two people together in a loving and devoted commitment, is accessible to all of God's children. Gay and lesbian couples should have the legal right, as heterosexual couples do, to form such lasting partnerships."

The issue of gay and lesbian Jewish weddings, however, has been more controversial in the Reform movement. In 1997, the CCAR Committee on Responsa voted by a majority of 7 to 2 that homosexual relationships do not fit within the Jewish legal category of kiddushin. It further stated that Jewish marriage does not exist apart from kiddushin. In other words, while the Reform movement supported same-sex civil marriage, it rejected the notion of same-sex Jewish marriage *per se*.

Three years later, a different conclusion was reached by a much larger body. In March 2000, the CCAR voted overwhelmingly to support colleagues who choose to perform same-sex ceremonies. Their "Resolution on Same Gender Officiation" states, "that the relationship of a Jewish, same gender couple is worthy of affirmation through appropriate Jewish ritual." However, the final text of the resolution allowed for individual rabbis to choose not to perform such ceremonies. In addition, it avoided the term kiddushin, leaving open the question of the exact form or Jewish status of the ceremonies. It also called for the development of sample ceremonies to be used as a resource for those rabbis who plan to perform same-sex Jewish weddings.

### **The Conservative Movement**

Until very recently same-sex marriage and other gay and lesbian issues met with little consensus in the Conservative movement. In December 2006 the Law Committee of the Conservative Movement voted to accept two teshuvot (positions), one stating that the Conservative Movement does not authorize same-sex marriages, and one permitting Conservative rabbis to conduct same-sex commitment ceremonies. Then, in June 2012 the Committee of Jewish Law and Standards, voted 13-0 with one abstention to formally approve gay marriage ceremonies. The committee developed two kinds of ceremonies that can be used as a guide for a rabbi marrying a same-sex couple, neither of which contain kiddushin, and also issued a guide to homosexual divorce.

### **Orthodoxy**

While same-sex marriage is commonly discussed in liberal Jewish communities, Orthodox Jewish groups have also voiced their opinions. The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (O.U.) has publicly rejected civil and Jewish same-sex marriage. A December 1999 statement explained its position. "While the Orthodox Jewish community in no way condones discrimination against individuals on the basis of their private conduct, we believe that America's moral values and traditions, of which traditional Judaism is a fountainhead, clearly assert that the unique status of marriage is reserved for the sacred union of a man and a woman in a loving relationship."

It should be noted, however, that while no major Orthodox institution has publicly endorsed same-sex marriage, there are a few voices within Orthodox communities, most notably Rabbi Steven

Greenberg, who call for new interpretations of halakhah (Jewish law) which would allow for more acceptance of homosexuality.

In November 2011 Rabbi Greenberg officiated at the wedding of two men in Washington DC's Sixth and I Historic Synagogue. The wedding marked the first time that an Orthodox rabbi had officiated a same-sex marriage that was legally recognized by the local government.

*Jewish Reconstructionist Federation Press release, November 2008*  
**JUDAISM'S RECONSTRUCTIONIST MOVEMENT CONDEMNS  
BANS ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE**

Denunciation Reflects Longstanding Leadership of Push to Liberalize Jewish  
Approaches to Homosexuality

WYNCOTE, PA: NOVEMBER 21, 2008

The leadership of the Reconstructionist movement of Judaism, one of the four main branches of American Judaism, has issued a statement condemning the passage of California's Proposition 8 and similar discriminatory initiatives recently passed in Arizona, Florida and Arkansas. The statement is a reflection of the movement's longstanding leadership of the effort to liberalize Jewish approaches to homosexuality.

In 1984 the movement's rabbinical school, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, became the first rabbinical seminary to accept openly gay and lesbian students and the first to endorse the ordination of gay and lesbian rabbis. The Reform movement followed suit six years later, in 1990, while the Conservative movement approved the ordination of openly gay students and began admitting them in 2006. Orthodox Judaism does not approve of same-sex relationships or the ordination of gay rabbis.

In 1993 the Reconstructionist movement made another pioneering decision when it sanctioned religious marriages for homosexual couples. The Reform movement passed a similar resolution seven years later, in 2000. In 2006, the Conservative movement ruled that its rabbis could perform same-sex commitment ceremonies, although not same-sex marriages.

The three arms of the Reconstructionist movement and their leaders, who joined in denouncing Proposition 8 and similar measures, are:

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA), the international association of Reconstructionist rabbis. Rabbi Toba Spitzer, President (board leader); Rabbi Richard Hirsh, Executive Director (organization leader).

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC), the movement's academic center and sole rabbinical seminary. David Roberts, Chair (board leader); Rabbi Dan Ehrenkrantz, President (organization leader).

The Jewish Reconstructionist Federation (JRF), the international association of Reconstructionist synagogues. Robert Barkin, President (board leader); Dr. Carl Sheingold, Executive Vice-President (organization leader).

Recon Movement Joint Press Release: Prop 8 Marriage November 2008 2 of 3

The statement approved by the organizations' leadership on November 14, 2008, is as follows:

"The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA), the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation (JRF), and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) deplore the passage of Proposition 8 in California and similar discriminatory initiatives recently passed in Arizona, Florida, and Arkansas. We are saddened and deeply disturbed by the denial of fundamental human rights—to marry, to adopt and care for foster children—to thousands of gay and lesbian citizens across the United States. We are particularly dismayed by the passage of initiatives that have reversed previously recognized equality for same-sex unions.

Beginning in 1993, in a series of resolutions, the Reconstructionist movement has affirmed the holiness of commitments made by same-sex couples. Religious recognition of marriages does not confer the legal and civil rights and responsibilities bestowed by the state upon married couples. We recognize the right of every religious denomination to affirm its own definition of, and limitations upon, the sacred ritual of marriage. No member of the clergy should be compelled to sanctify any union that is contrary to his or her understanding of sacred text and tradition. But neither should any gay or lesbian citizen of the United States be denied the legal rights confirmed by civil marriage.

We call upon leaders of other faith communities who share the commitment to civic equality and to the separation of church and state in the realm of marriage to speak out against bans on same-sex marriage and discrimination against GLBT people in the realm of adoption and foster care. We look forward to the day when all states will grant equal access to the rights and responsibilities of civil marriage."

Selected Web Sites

[www.glbtcjews.org](http://www.glbtcjews.org): The World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews

[www.aclu.org/lgbt](http://www.aclu.org/lgbt): The American Civil Liberties Union support for LGBT people

[www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org): The largest national LGBT grassroots organization working for human rights

[www.amnestyusa.org/lgbt-human-rights/page.do?id=1011002](http://www.amnestyusa.org/lgbt-human-rights/page.do?id=1011002): Amnesty International's support for LGBT human rights

Many communities are looking at the environmental impact of their own buildings: homes, schools, stores and even synagogues. Greening Our Synagogue/Community is a look at how communities can make their places of worship into more eco-friendly environments.

Here is an article about a JRF congregation that became a certified “green” congregation:

### Temple plans eco-friendly makeover

An Evanston congregation hopes to become the nation’s first certified ‘green’ synagogue

By Deborah Horan and Tribune Staff Reporter

October 27, 2006

By building a new home with salvaged brick, low-flow toilets and solar-powered lights, the Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation in Evanston (Illinois) hopes to become the first certified “green” synagogue in the nation.

Congregants said they drew from Jewish teachings on respecting God’s creation when they decided to construct the \$6.5 million house of worship according to U.S. Green Building Council “gold status” specifications.

“Anything we can do to help the environment is in our best interest and in our children’s best interest,” said Alan Saposnik, the synagogue’s board president.

The congregation held a groundbreaking ceremony Sunday to celebrate ambitious plans to replace an older synagogue at 303 Dodge Ave. with the new one at the same spot. The old synagogue is being demolished, and the green-friendly one is slated for completion by the end of 2007.

During a recent sermon titled “Walking the Walk: The Sacred Art of Energy Conservation,” Rabbi Brant Rosen told the congregation that God created the world to be inherently sustainable and that sustainability depends on human behavior. “To put it simply, the future of our world is up to us,” Rosen said, according to a transcript.

Saposnik said the new synagogue will feature energy-efficient boilers, heavy insulation, fluorescent lights inside the synagogue and solar ones in the parking lot—all designed to reduce energy consumption by about a third from the usual standards.

Sensors will automatically shut off lights if they detect no movement in a room. Large windows will maximize natural light, and a white roof will deflect sunlight to reduce dependency on air conditioning in the summer, Saposnik said.

The landscaping won’t require permanent irrigation, and about 80 percent of the building material will come from recycled sources, including old bricks from the demolished synagogue. Architects plan to use reclaimed cypress wood to build the facade.

“We want to use material that might have gone into a landfill,” said Michael Ross of Ross Barney Architects, which designed the new synagogue. Each element of the design that conserves energy earns points toward Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification, said Helen Kessler of HJ Kessler Associates, a consultant working with the synagogue.

A score of 39 qualifies a building for gold status; a score of 52 confers platinum status. The synagogue went for gold because many of the features that would have counted toward a platinum rating—such as a geothermal heat pump system—were too expensive, Kessler said. In January, the synagogue became the first in the nation to register with the Green Building Council to become LEED certified. Only one place of worship—the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Wooster, Ohio—has earned gold status, according to Caitlin Bennett, a council spokeswoman.

The council will not grant certification to the synagogue until it can inspect the building after completion, Bennett said. But according to the design, it is on track to earn 40-odd points, Kessler said.

Few non-profits and places of worship seek LEED certification because going green can be expensive, Saposnik said. The green-friendly features of the Evanston synagogue, for instance, will add \$650,000—roughly 10 percent of the building's total costs. The synagogue received a grant of \$105,000 from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation to help defray those costs, said Bob Romo, program officer at the foundation. The synagogue will have to raise enough money to foot the difference. The congregation expects to recoup some of the expense through lower heating, air conditioning and electricity bills.

Jesse Greenberg, a domestic affairs associate at the Jewish Community Relations Council in Chicago, said he doubted many synagogues would seek to become green enough to qualify for LEED certification. But, he said, his organization has started an environmental awareness campaign to encourage synagogues to do what they can to conserve energy by installing fluorescent lights, carpeting and new windows.

"It really comes from our sacred texts, the Torah and the Talmud," Greenberg said of his council's environmental push.

The campaign, only three months old, includes a flier with a slogan taken from Ecclesiastes to drive the point home: "See to it that you do not destroy my world, for if you do there will be no one else to repair it."

"Our Jewish values [encourage] us to take care of our environment," Greenberg said.



From *The Jewish Daily Forward*:

## **Synagogues Throw Energy Behind Green Movement**

*By Rebecca Spence*

Published August 03, 2007, issue of August 03, 2007.

When their synagogue opens in less than a year, members of the Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation in Evanston, Ill., will have to adjust to a lot more than just a new roof over their heads. For starters, they'll have showers and bike racks — just in case they want to pedal to services — and tinted glass windows, to minimize the amount of heat the building absorbs. Less obvious to synagogue-goers might be the solar-powered parking lot lights, the high-efficiency boilers and the cypress wood recycled from an old East Coast barn, all of which factor into the construction.

Those changes are among a laundry list of environmentally friendly, or “green,” design choices that the Chicago-area synagogue is implementing in its new home. When it opens in January 2008, the building will become the first synagogue to receive the second-highest possible classification — known as a LEED gold designation — from the U.S. Green Building Council, which rates buildings for sustainability. With months of construction ahead, the \$10 million model synagogue may even still manage to make a few more adjustments to attain the highest level that only some 4% or 5% of applicants receive: LEED platinum status.

While the 450-family congregation represents the most devoted end of the spectrum, it is not alone in its efforts to bring its religious ideals in line with environmentally conscious ideals. In fact, synagogues and Jewish organizations across the denominations are moving — some faster than others — toward better aligning their buildings and business practices with Mother Nature. For the most part, they're joining the wider global shift toward environmentalism for distinctly Jewish reasons.

“We're not just doing this because it's a good thing for the world,” said Rabbi Joel Baker, executive director of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism's Pacific Southwest region. “We're doing it because it's incumbent on us as Jews to do it.”

On the West Coast, Baker has pushed in recent years to make the congregational arm of the Conservative movement more sensitive to environmental concerns. Baker, who represents 65 synagogues in six states — among them New Mexico, California and Hawaii — signed on to a pilot program of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life of Southern California that brings together houses of worship and faith-based organizations to promote awareness of their ecological impact. The Conservative movement's affiliation with the program, known as Green Sanctuaries, was launched in 2005 to great fanfare at Los Angeles's Sinai Temple. Mayor Anthony Villaraigosa even showed up to trumpet the program's virtues, both moral and economic, noting that Sinai Temple could save \$40,000 a year with energy efficiency.

The city of Los Angeles has also opened its coffers to Green Sanctuaries, offering financial and tactical support, including free energy audits from the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power.

The initiative, backed by COEJLSC's Interfaith Environmental Council, began with 16 religious institutions, including mosques and churches. In fact, Los Angeles's landmark church, the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, with its more than 60-kilowatt solar panels, was the first tried-and-true “green sanctuary” to come out of it.

But since the program's initial inception in 2002, the number of Jewish groups — some three dozen — that have formally affiliated with Green Sanctuaries trumps all others. "The Jewish communal aspect of Green Sanctuaries has taken a faster move forward," said Lee Wallach, president of COEJLSC and co-chair of the Interfaith Environmental Council. Wallach attributed the Jewish community's heavy involvement to both its high level of organization and the willingness on the part of three of its denominations — the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements — to band together around the issue.

Green Sanctuaries is creating a guidebook for its participating institutions and aims to create "green teams" at individual synagogues and organizations, which will implement changes and educate members. In Los Angeles, green teams have bought reusable bags from COEJLSC at less than half the price (89 cents, vs. \$2 at market value) to distribute to their members. The University of Southern California's Hillel recently distributed energy efficient light bulbs courtesy of Green Sanctuaries.

While the West Coast may seem to be more fertile terrain for environmentally conscious institutions, the East Coast has its fair share of synagogues that are breaking new ground on green building. The national COEJL organization launched a Green Synagogues program in New Jersey, which includes, among others, Congregation Sharey Tefilo-Israel, a Reform synagogue in South Orange, N.J., and Keshet, an Orthodox congregation in Englewood, N.J.

In New York City, the Eldridge Street Project, dedicated to preserving Jewish life at the historic Lower East Side synagogue built in 1887, has been working on its 20-year restoration project from a green perspective. The restoration, scheduled for completion in December, includes using recycled blue jeans as insulation.

Jill Gotthelf, an architect and associate at Walter Sedovic Architects who has worked on the restoration since 1990, said that synagogues and Jewish organizations have caught on to green building over the past few years — even if larger businesses and government institutions may have paved the way — because it is finally a more affordable proposition.

"It used to be that it would double or triple the cost of construction," Gotthelf said. "But now that it's becoming more competitive, the cost of doing green construction has come down considerably." And then there are the gestures whose symbolic meanings far surpass their costs: A host of synagogues — including Evanston's Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation — have opted to replace the electric light above the ark where the Torah is kept, known as the ner tamid, with a solar-powered fixture.

## **Honest Prayer: the Greenest Shul in the World**

January 20, 2009 by Jewish Climate Initiative  
By Yannai Kranzler

There is officially a new standard in sustainable synagogue building: The Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation in Evanston, Illinois (JRC).

We're not talking recycling bins. We're not even talking local food for Kiddush. We're talking an Aron Kodesh, the "Holy Ark", built out of wind-fallen trees from the farm next door. Grounds decorated with native plants that don't require irrigation. Low water volume showers, installed to encourage biking to shul. We are talking an entire, top to bottom, front to back to sides model of a building whose every brick, lighting and piping has been considered in the name of eco-friendliness. (They've got the recycling bins and local food, too).

JRC's synagogue was awarded the Platinum LEED Standard, the highest standard in sustainable architecture according to the US Green Building Council (USGBC). It is the first house of worship in the world to be granted such an honor. JRC's self-declared purpose for investing in green construction, is fulfilling the biblical commandment of Bal Taschit, which prohibits Jews from being wasteful.

JRC's main sanctuary includes the aforementioned Aron Kodesh ("The vermillion (an exotic wood) for the Ark's handles was scrap from a pool cue maker in Baltimore"), as well as a solar powered Ner Tamid, the light which hangs over the ark. The phrase Ner Tamid is Hebrew for "Eternal Light"- it takes on an inspiring new significance when the light is powered by an energy source that's actually practically eternal.

Office workers can, of course, purchase fairtrade coffee at the synagogue gift shop.

JRC publicizes statistics regarding cost and energy/water savings:

47% of all the materials used in the building were manufactured within 500 miles.

Water: The combination of water efficient features in the restrooms and kitchen and drought-resistant landscaping is projected to save 41% on water consumption.

Energy: The combination of HVAC, lighting, insulation, and other energy saving features of our building is projected to save 45% on energy consumption compared to a conventional building.

Estimated up-charge for green initiatives: 3-5% of total project

Heating/Cooling: approximately \$250,000 more than conventional, but estimated to be 42-45% more efficient with a payback of 5-7 years. Water usage will bring additional savings.

My favorite component of JRC's green construction, though, a chillingly powerful way to "Stand on the shoulders of giants", is the fact that JRC built the foundation of their new building, out of crushed rubble from the old one.

When considering the construction of the new synagogue, JRC's Board voted unanimously to conform to the highest LEED standards. The word that comes to mind when I think about the effort and Kavana, intent, in building a place of worship in such a way, is "Honesty." I envision the prayers said within the walls of the synagogue, prayers for peace, for global and local well being- and it just sounds honest.

To learn more about JRC Evanston and their green synagogue, visit their website for a virtual tour:  
[http://www.jrc-evanston.org/green\\_synagogue/](http://www.jrc-evanston.org/green_synagogue/)

Selected Web Sites

[www.coejl.org/~coejlor/greensyn/index.php](http://www.coejl.org/~coejlor/greensyn/index.php): a helpful guide from COEJL about ways that synagogues can become more green

[www.coejl.org/~coejlor/greensyn/gstoc.php](http://www.coejl.org/~coejlor/greensyn/gstoc.php): simple steps for synagogues to become more green

[www.bjen.org/greening.html](http://www.bjen.org/greening.html): The Baltimore Jewish Environmental Network Green synagogue guide

[www.biggreenjewish.org](http://www.biggreenjewish.org): resources for connecting Judaism and the environment

[www.tevacenter.org](http://www.tevacenter.org): resources from a Jewish environmental education center

## *Havayah Four: Choosing our Tikkun Olam Theme/Project, Part 2*

### **Materials:**

- Construction paper islands
- Crates or boxes
- Texts
- Collages from last session
- Butcher Paper
- Markers
- Project idea sheets

### *Notes to the Group Leader:*

In the previous TEL session, teens researched and presented areas where the group may focus their *Tikkun Olam* Project. In this session, the teens will review their research and brainstorm possible projects for each topic. Then they will vote on which topic they would like to work on and take some steps towards planning a project.

We have provided possible *Tikkun Olam* project ideas, four or five for each topic, which can be adapted and used for your TEL group based on your group's needs (i.e., can you take the group to an off-site location or do you need to do a synagogue-based service project). You may want to present the project ideas to your TEL group as a place to begin your brainstorming. Again, you may wish to work on an issue/project that is not included here; please feel free to use these ideas in the way that they can best serve your group.

### **Welcome, Introductions, Check-in (15-20 min)**

### *Instructions:*

- Take a few minutes to whip around the circle and have every teen share something they remember about the *Tikkun Olam* posters or collages that were made and presented at the last TEL meeting.
- You may also want to give a quick overview of what is coming up in this session.

### *Opening Ice Breaker: "The Island Game"*

- In this game, large pieces of construction paper are laid out strategically on the floor, cut out to look like islands. Teens begin standing at the edge of the space on crates/boxes, just beyond the first island. Teens are told that they have to move from one island to the next without touching the floor in between (dangerous waters, full of vicious crocodiles). They must work together to move the entire group as one unit from the first island to the last. If someone falls in the water, they have to return to the crates and begin again.
- This "Survivor-Style" challenge can be a lot of fun and you can even add more to the challenge by tying two teens' legs together with a bandana, etc.
- When you finish the game, take some time to reflect on how the group worked together.

### Ask Teens:

- How did they manage to move from one island to the next as a group?
- What happened to cause someone to fall off?
- Who stepped up as a leader?
- What hurt/helped the group? Talk about how the same qualities can affect the group when you begin working together on your *Tikkun Olam* project.

### Text Study: "Prayer for Overcoming Indifference" and Pirkey Avot (15 min)

#### Instructions:

- Hand out copies of the texts (see handouts) or you may want to write the texts on a board.
- Introduce the texts by sharing that one text is from a contemporary rabbi and one text comes from Pirkey Avot, which we read from in *Havayah* 2. Both texts emphasize the role of our actions.

Invite one of the teens to read the first text out loud:

#### Prayer for Overcoming Indifference

I watch the news, God

I observe it from a comfortable distance.

I see people suffering, and I don't lift a finger to help them.

I condemn injustice but I do nothing to fight against it.

I am pained by the faces of starving children, but I am not moved enough to try to save them

I step over homeless people in the street, I walk past outstretched hands,

I avert my eyes, I close my heart.

Forgive me, God, for remaining aloof while others are in need of my assistance.

Wake me up, God;

ignite my passion, fill me with outrage.

Remind me that I am responsible for Your world.

Don't allow me to stand idly by.

Inspire me to act.

Teach me to believe that I can repair some corner of this world.

When I despair, fill me with hope.

When I doubt my strength, fill me with faith.

When I am weary, renew my spirit.

I lose direction,

show me the way back to meaning,

back to compassion,

back to You.

Amen.

– Rabbi Naomi Levy

#### Ask teens:

- Have you ever felt like the speaker in this prayer, as if you watch suffering on TV or in person and have closed your heart?
- What makes it difficult to take action? Why do most of us need help to overcome indifference?

- What helps you to take action? Can you think of examples from your life—doing service, giving *tzedakah*, or speaking out for what you believed in—when you overcame a feeling of indifference?

Invite one of the teens to read the second text out loud:

"Shimon, the son of Rabban Gamliel, says:

It is not what one says, but rather what one does,

That makes all the difference in the world."

– Pirkey Avot, 1:7

Ask teens:

- Why does Shimon believe that it is action, rather than your words, that makes a difference in the world? Do you agree or disagree?
- Can you think of examples from your own life when your actions made a significant difference in someone else's experience?

### Review of Issues (15 min)

Instructions:

- Take the "*Tikkun Olam*" posters from last session and distribute each of them to a different group than the one that created it. Give the groups a few minutes to look over the posters.
- Whip around the room and have each group present what they think from that particular issue is most important.

Ask teens:

- Of all the issues we researched last session, which one are you most interested in working on for a *Tikkun Olam* project?

Instructions:

- Allow time for responses and explain that you will spend time in this session coming to a consensus on an issue and a project for the group.

### Brainstorming Project Ideas (20 min)

Instructions:

- Hang up sheets of butcher paper around the room with each of the issues written on it.
- Divide the teens into pairs and give each pair a marker.
- Every pair will go to each sheet of butcher paper and write down three project ideas for each issue. Encourage each pair to think about a direct service/*avodah* project, an indirect service/*tzedakah* service project and an advocacy/*tzedek* project.
- Each pair should answer for the group: How can you educate people about this issue? How can you assist people who are directly affected by this issue? How could you raise money for this issue?
- When everyone has finished, invite them to read through each of the sheets. Invite them to put a star by their favorite projects.

- Bring the group together and point out which project ideas have the most stars. Invite the teens who “starred” them to talk about why they like that project idea(s).

### Voting and Planning (30 min)

#### Instructions:

- Bring the group together and hand out the “Planning Your Project” sheet (attached). Talk through the sheet and complete together.
- Hand out the “*Tikkun Olam* Projects” sheet and whip around the group reading through the project ideas. Notice any projects that are different from the ones that your group brainstormed. Which ideas do the teens like the most? What makes those projects sound interesting?
- Talk about how the project ideas fit into your group’s situation. Which projects match up with the time and resources that you have available? Make a list of five projects (from your brainstorming and/or the Project Ideas sheet) that your group could do and that are projects that the teens are interested in. Write them on a board or new sheet of butcher paper.
- Take a vote and choose the project that the majority of teens select.
- Divide the group into small groups based on the *Havayah 2* session: photographers, writers, web design, etc. Each group can spend some time planning how they will bring their skill set to documenting the project.

### Group Reflections and Personal Journaling (10 min)

#### Instructions:

- Pass out the journals and invite the teens to take some time to write about how they are feeling about the upcoming *Tikkun Olam* project. What are they most looking forward to? How do they imagine bringing their unique talents, energy and insights to the project? What is the most important thing that they have learned about the issue you are working on? If time allows, invite teens to share from their journal writing.

#### Ask teens:

- What did you most enjoy about this session?
- What would you have improved/done differently?

#### Closing Ritual:

- Today’s prompt is “Today, I am feeling \_\_\_\_\_ about our *Tikkun Olam* project.” Go around the circle and have each teen answer the prompt.



Prayer for Overcoming Indifference

I watch the news, God.  
I observe it from a comfortable distance.  
I see people suffering, and I don't lift a finger to help them.  
I condemn injustice but I do nothing to fight against it.  
I am pained by the faces of starving children, but I am not moved enough to try to save them.  
I step over homeless people in the street, I walk past outstretched hands,  
I avert my eyes, I close my heart.  
Forgive me, God, for remaining aloof while others are in need of my assistance.  
Wake me up, God;  
ignite my passion, fill me with outrage.  
Remind me that I am responsible for Your world.  
Don't allow me to stand idly by.  
Inspire me to act.  
Teach me to believe that I can repair some corner of this world.  
When I despair, fill me with hope.  
When I doubt my strength, fill me with faith.  
When I am weary, renew my spirit.  
When I lose direction,  
show me the way back to meaning,  
back to compassion,  
back to You.  
Amen.

— Rabbi Naomi Levy

“Shimon, the son of Rabban Gamliel, says:  
It is not what one says, but rather what one does,  
That makes all the difference in the world.”

— Pirkey Avot, 1:7

“The Whos”

Who is going to participate in the project? (TEL group members, others?)

Who is going to transport participants to and from the project (if not at the synagogue)?

Who are your partners in the project (synagogue community, other organization)?

Whom will your project benefit?

“The Whats”

What will you be doing in the project?

What supplies do you need?

What steps do you need to take to prepare?

“The Wheres”

Where will the project take place?

Where will participants meet?

Where will participants leave from?

“The Whens”

When will you do the project (dates/times)? Is the project scheduled for your regular TEL group time or a different time? Will you need to stay later than usual?

And most important...

WHY is this project meaningful to you?

### Ending Poverty

1. Making dinners to take (and possibly serve) for a homeless shelter /soup kitchen
2. Create educational presentation about Judaism and its response to poverty to share with younger grades in religious school
3. Lead canned food drive in the synagogue
4. Visit with local legislature to voice support for the living wage
5. Create a "*Mitzvah* Garden" in your congregation, with produce going to a local food bank

### Food Ethics

1. Host a locally grown/organic *Oneg Shabbat* for the community
2. Hold a screening of a film related to the food industry (such as "Supersize Me") for the community and lead introduction and post-show discussion
3. Visit a local farm/farming school and begin a relationship between the farmer and your synagogue community; find out about the farmer's challenges to growing healthy food in your local ecosystem.
4. Start a "*Mitzvah* Garden" on site in your congregation
5. Make a "healthy snack day" for your religious school; TEL members make and serve locally grown, organic food for the students

### Labor Rights

1. Create an educational video/PowerPoint presentation about current issues to screen at your congregation
2. Invite local labor leaders to your synagogue for a panel discussion about issues important to them
3. Create a pamphlet/web site/guide to local socially-responsible businesses and distribute in your community. (The Industrial Cooperative Association provides a list of more than eight hundred worker-owned cooperatives divided by geographical location; use that as a starting place).
4. Research "Fair Trade" companies and whether your synagogue uses fair trade products (such as coffee). Fundraise to purchase fair trade products for your community and educate community leaders about their importance.

## Greening Your Synagogue

1. Using the UJA Greening Guide, do an energy audit of your synagogue and share results with the synagogue board. Make recommendations for short and long term goals.
2. Lead a recycling campaign in the school (if there isn't one already). Assess if any materials that could be being recycled are being thrown out.
3. Raise money and donate compact florescent light bulbs to the synagogue. Create signage near light switches reminding people to be aware of energy conservation.
4. Find out what kinds of cleaners are being used in the synagogue and why "green" cleaners are not being used (if they are not). Lead an educational campaign about green cleaners and fundraise to donate a set of green cleaning supplies to the synagogue.
5. Create and lead a Jewish environmental education session for religious school students.

## Same-Sex Rights/Marriage

1. Invite same-sex couples from your community to talk to your *TEL* group about why they have/haven't gotten married and their feelings about it. From this discussion, your group could plan a community-wide panel and discussion.
2. Begin a petition and letter-writing campaign to your local, state and national politicians to legalize same-sex marriage in your state.
3. Create and display a banner supporting same-sex marriage to hang in your synagogue.
4. Use Amnesty International's template "Love is a basic human right" (available at [www.amnestyusa.org/pdf/Pride\\_2009\\_packet.pdf](http://www.amnestyusa.org/pdf/Pride_2009_packet.pdf)) to create an awareness campaign and make stickers and posters to distribute to your community.

For the TEL leader

If you are going to do an advocacy project, this guide from [www.socialaction.com](http://www.socialaction.com) will be very helpful:

### Advocacy Tips:

Advocacy is all about action. Speaking out on important issues — in person, on the phone, via letters, faxes, emails, or phone calls, as an individual or in a group — is part of the democratic process. Make the most of the opportunity.

- Do your homework. Learn as much as possible about the issue of concern.
- Choose the method that is most comfortable for you. There are many ways to make your opinions known. The important thing is to do it.
- Have a clear, focused purpose for your action. Address one issue at a time. And use the facts. The more prepared you are, the more persuasive you can be.
- Be specific about what you want to achieve. What do you want your senator, representative, or other public official to do?
- Communicate as a constituent. Show the legislator or official specifically how his or her constituency is affected by or concerned about the issue.
- Be courteous and reliable. Do not promise what you cannot deliver in terms of help or information. Leave your contact information. And always follow up on requests for additional materials or further clarification.

### Legislative Visits:

Visiting a member of Congress — in Washington DC or in a hometown office — is the most personal and effective way to communicate your views.

- Determine if you want to visit your legislator's Capitol or local office.
- Call for a calendar to confirm your appointment options.
- Schedule a specific appointment by phone. A written request may also be required. Tell the staff member the number of people attending and the issue(s) of interest.
- Be prompt. And if the legislator or official is late, be patient and flexible.
- Do not be disappointed if the meeting is with a staff person. There is great value in educating and building a relationship with the key staff members on issues.
- Be prepared to speak confidently on as many, but not more than, three issues.
- Bring concisely and clearly written materials outlining your position and leave them with the person you are visiting.
- Follow up the meeting with a "thank you" letter outlining what was covered and reiterating your goals.

## Letters to Legislators:

The written word is very powerful. Congressional staffers read, log, and report on input they receive especially from constituents. Letters, faxes, and emails are all valuable ways of communicating with legislators — but emails are an effective way to weigh in when time is of the essence.

- Use this website to [send an email](#) on selected Issues. Sample letters have been created, but you may adapt the message to personalize it or include additional information.
- If you are writing an [email of your own](#), clearly state your facts and your purpose. Address only one issue, keep the message concise, and if possible, include personal examples of why you support/oppose the issue.
- You may also mail a letter directly to your legislators but its delivery will be significantly slower than via email and may miss the critical window of opportunity to impact urgent decisions. Faxing is another way to get your letters to legislators quickly. Addresses, telephone, and fax numbers for your legislators are available through THOMAS.
- You may also call your legislators via the Capitol switchboard at 202 224 3121. As with letters be clear, concise, and prepared to leave your contact information.

## Letters to Editors:

Letters to the editor are an effective way to communicate a message about an issue to the general public.

- Find a "hook." Most papers prefer letters written in response to an editorial, column, or news story that recently appeared in that paper. It is also useful to link the issue to current events.
- Be timely. The quicker the response to a piece, the better.
- Be succinct. Most papers limit the length of letters. If specific limits are not mentioned in the paper or on the website, call and ask.
- Research the topic. The letter should express an opinion, but it will be much stronger with facts, particularly if it is a rebuttal to a recent piece. Personal examples are also very powerful.
- Know the audience. Read past letters to the editor and become familiar with what the paper typically prints. It is much more difficult to be published in a metropolitan daily newspaper than in a neighborhood weekly. Try to relate the letter/issue to the local community.
- Submit the letter to one newspaper. Letters to the editor should be specific. Sending the same letter to multiple outlets dilutes the message and irritates the editors.
- Identify yourself. Include your name and your affiliation with NCJW (or another organization, if appropriate) to be published with your letter. If you are writing on behalf of NCJW or another organization, make sure that you have the organization's support for your point of view and permission to speak in their name. For the editor's information only (not to be published), include your complete contact information.

From [www.socialaction.com/advocacy/advocacy.shtml](http://www.socialaction.com/advocacy/advocacy.shtml)



**Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism ([www.rac.org](http://www.rac.org))**

The official website of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism can be searched for resolutions, initiatives, and information on the social action themes. The social action program bank ([www.rac.org/social/bank.html](http://www.rac.org/social/bank.html)) contains many programming ideas.

**MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger ([www.mazon.org](http://www.mazon.org))**

MAZON offers a number of readings and resources relating to issues of hunger for use throughout the year.

**Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life ([www.coejl.org](http://www.coejl.org))**

The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) promotes environmental education, scholarship, advocacy, and action in the American Jewish community.

[www.coejl.org/celebrate/suk\\_eco.shtml](http://www.coejl.org/celebrate/suk_eco.shtml)

**Socialaction.com ([www.socialaction.com](http://www.socialaction.com))**

Socialaction.com is an online magazine dedicated to pursuing justice, building community, and repairing the world. A wealth of materials for social action-based programming, readings, and supplements can be found at the above link.

**AVODAH: the Jewish Service Corps ([www.avodah.net](http://www.avodah.net))**

AVODAH: the Jewish Service Corps is a yearlong program combining front-line anti-poverty work, Jewish study, and community-building. It provides an opportunity for young adults to live out and deepen their commitments to Jewish life and social change through a year.

## *Havayah Five: Tikkun Olam in Action, Part 1*

### **Materials:**

- Texts (if using)
- Tea candles and matches (if using)
- Markers
- Digital camera or camera phones
- Foam Core Board
- Journals

### *Notes to the Group Leader:*

*Havayot* Five and Six are different from the previous sessions in that these are the times when your teens are engaged in doing your service learning project and so these sessions will be different for each TEL group. However, below you will find ideas for opening and closing your *havayot* that can help to both ground and frame the experience for your teens.

### **Welcome/Introductions/Check-in (5 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- Because time will be tight in this session, greet teens as they enter individually and encourage them to settle in. If you are meeting at a space outside of your synagogue, orient the teens to the space (find the bathrooms, etc).
- Ask teens who like to take pictures to carry their phone or a digital camera with them to take photos throughout the project.

### **Opening Kavanah (10 mi)**

#### **Instructions:**

- Below are three ideas to set a *kavanah* (intention) for your *Tikkun Olam* project. You may want to invite your congregational rabbi to this session to lead the teens in the opening *kavanah*. These are just ideas—please feel free to create and share your own *kavanot*!
  - **Music:** Choose a favorite *Tikkun Olam* related song sing together before starting the project. If you have someone in your TEL group who plays guitar, invite him/her to bring his/her guitar and lead the song.
  - **Ritual:** Bring a tea candle for each participant. Gather everyone in a circle and invite them to get quiet. Read the following *kavanah*:

“The idea of *Tikkun Olam* comes from Jewish mystical writings. Rabbi Isaac Luria imagined that in order to create the world, God contracted God’s self into Divine vessels in order to make room for creation. With creation, some of these vessels shattered and scattered, so that sparks of divine light are contained throughout creation.



"Each of us contains this Divine light. Today the work that we will do contributes to *Tikkun Olam*, repair of the world. Although we are working as a group, we are aware of the individual lights that we bring to our *Tikkun Olam* work.

"Think about the qualities that make you a unique part of creation. What will you bring to our *Tikkun Olam* work today? Sensitivity, patience, humor? Creativity, ingenuity, common sense?

"When you are ready, light a candle to honor the divine light that is inside of you, that is part of the work we are doing to repair something that is broken in the world together.

"We will light our candles in silence."

When everyone has lit their candles, take a moment to look at them. Say the *shehekheyanu* together.

*\*Note: if you are leaving the building/space, please blow out the candles!*

- Readings: You may want to copy and share an inspirational reading, such as:

#### A Prayer for Social Action

We cannot merely pray to God to end war;  
For the world was made in such a way  
That we must find our own path of peace  
Within ourselves and with our neighbor.

We cannot merely pray to God to root out prejudice;  
For we already have eyes  
With which to see the good in all people  
If we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to God to end starvation;  
For we already have the resources  
With which to feed the entire world  
If we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to God to end despair;  
For we already have the power  
To clear away slums and to give hope  
If we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to God to end disease:  
For we already have great minds  
With which to search out cures and healings  
If we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray instead  
For strength, determination, and will power,  
To do instead of merely to pray  
To become instead of merely to wish;  
That our world may be safe,  
And that our lives may be blessed.

– Jack Riemer, adapted

Now go do great work!

### Group Reflections and Personal Journaling (10 min)

#### Instructions:

- When you have finished your *Tikkun Olam* work, find a quiet place and distribute journals and pens to the teens. Invite them to respond to the following question/statements:
  - How does the song/text/ritual that we opened our session with relate to your experience working on our *Tikkun Olam* project today?
  - Something I felt about the work we did today is....
  - I will think differently about (insert your topic) because....

#### Closing Ritual:

- While the teens are writing, put out the Foam Core Board and markers. In big letters, write “*Tikkun Olam*” on the board.
- Today, we are going to write our closing ritual words around this board to help us remember our feelings from the work we did today. “Today, our *Tikkun Olam* work made me feel\_\_\_\_\_.”
- Read the finished board together and place somewhere in the synagogue that congregants will be able to see it.
- Thank everyone for their work.

A Prayer for Social Action

We cannot merely pray to God to end war;  
For the world was made in such a way  
That we must find our own path of peace  
Within ourselves and with our neighbor.

We cannot merely pray to God to root out prejudice;  
For we already have eyes  
With which to see the good in all people  
If we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to God to end starvation;  
For we already have the resources  
With which to feed the entire world  
If we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to God to end despair;  
For we already have the power  
To clear away slums and to give hope  
If we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to God to end disease:  
For we already have great minds  
With which to search out cures and healings  
If we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray instead  
For strength, determination, and will power,  
To do instead of merely to pray  
To become instead of merely to wish;  
That our world may be safe,  
And that our lives may be blessed.

– Jack Riemer, adapted

## *Havayah Six: Tikkun Olam in Action, Part 2*

### **Materials:**

- Texts (if using)
- Tea candles and matches (if using)
- Markers
- Digital camera or camera phones
- Foam Core Board
- Photos from *Havayah 5*
- Tape or glue sticks
- Journals

### **Notes to the Group Leader:**

*Havayah* Five and Six are different from the previous sessions in that these are the times when your teens are engaged in doing your service learning project and so these sessions will be different for each TEL group. However, below you will find ideas for opening and closing your *havayah* that can help to both ground and frame the experience for your teens.

### **Welcome/Introductions/Check-in (5 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- Because time will be tight in this session, greet teens as they enter individually and encourage them to settle in. If you are meeting at a space outside of your synagogue, orient the teens to the space (find the bathrooms, etc.).
- Ask teens who like to take pictures to carry their phone or a digital camera with them to take photos throughout the project.

### **Opening Kavanah (10 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- Below are three ideas to set a *kavanah* (intention) for your *Tikkun Olam* project. You may want to invite your congregational rabbi to this session to lead the teens in the opening *kavanah*. These are just ideas—please feel free to create and share your own *kavanot*!
  - Music: Choose a favorite *Tikkun Olam* song to sing together before starting the project. If you have someone in your TEL group who plays guitar, invite him/her to bring his/her guitar and lead the song.
  - Ritual: Bring a tea candle for each participant. Gather everyone in a circle and invite them to get quiet. Read the following *kavanah*:

“Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was one of the Jewish community’s most important rabbis and teachers of the 20th century. He escaped Nazi Germany and came to America where he taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Although Rabbi Heschel wrote

many books and was a famous scholar, he was also equally devoted to being a political advocate.

"During the 1960s, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was courageously leading the Civil Rights movement in the South, Rabbi Heschel spoke about the importance of civil rights. Dr. King invited Rabbi Heschel to march with him for voting rights for African-American people in Selma, AL. White people in AL were not only hostile but openly violent towards civil rights demonstrators. Earlier marches ended because state and local police attacked the marchers with billy clubs and tear gas.

"Rabbi Heschel and other religious leaders from different faiths met Dr. King and marched with him from Selma to Montgomery, 54 miles away.

"For Heschel, the march had spiritual significance. He wrote, "For many of us the march from Selma to Montgomery was about protest and prayer. Legs are not lips and walking is not kneeling. And yet our legs uttered songs. Even without words, our march was worship. I felt my legs were praying."

"When we engage in acts of *Tikkun Olam*, large or small, we carry on the legacy of Dr. King and Rabbi Heschel. Our *Tikkun Olam* work is both service and prayer.

"When you light a candle today, light it in honor of Dr. King, Rabbi Heschel or one of your heroes who has helped to repair the world in some way. We will light our candles in silence."

When everyone has lit their candles, take a moment to look at them. Say the *shehekheyanu* together.

*\*Note: if you are leaving the building/space, please blow out the candles!*

- Readings: You may want to copy and share an inspirational reading, such as:

An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

A lot of people are waiting for Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi to come back — but they are gone. We are it. It is up to us. It is up to you.

—Marian Wright Edelman

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

—Anne Frank

If I can stop one heart from breaking,

I shall not live in vain.

If I can ease one life the aching,

Or cool one pain,

Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain.  
—Emily Dickinson

Now go do great work!

### Group Reflections and Personal Journaling (10 min)

#### Instructions:

- When you have finished your *Tikkun Olam* work, find a quiet place and distribute journal and pens to the teens. Invite them to respond to the following question/statements:
  - How does the song/text/ritual that we opened our session with relate to your experience working on our *Tikkun Olam* project today?
  - Something I felt about the work we did today is....
  - I will think differently about (insert your topic) because....

#### Closing Ritual:

- Put out a new Foam Core Board, glue sticks/tape and photos from last session's *tikkun olam* project. When teens finish journaling, invite them to look through the pictures and select one that is evocative for them.
- Ask them to glue/tape the picture to the board and to create a caption about the moment.
- Look at the board together when it is completed.
- Ask the teens which images really capture what the service experience was like for them. How do the pictures communicate the experience?
- Place them somewhere in the synagogue that congregants will be able to see them.
- Thank everyone for their work and share that in the next session we will get to process the experience more and think about next steps for communicating the social action project to the community.
- Close with prompt of "Today, our *Tikkun Olam* work made me feel \_\_\_\_\_."

An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

A lot of people are waiting for Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi to come back -- but they are gone. We are it. It is up to us. It is up to you.

– Marian Wright Edelman

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

– Anne Frank

If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain.  
If I can ease one life the aching,  
Or cool one pain,  
Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain.

– Emily Dickinson

## ***Havayah Seven: Communicating about our Tikkun Olam Project***

### **Materials:**

- Texts (if using)
- Plain M&Ms/bowl
- Paper and pens
- Computer or tablet (if available)
- Butcher paper
- Paint and brushes
- Journals

### **Notes to the Group Leader:**

Now that your TEL group had has the opportunity to spend two sessions doing hands-on *Tikkun Olam* work, you can take some time to process what the experience was like for the teens and plan on how they can communicate what they did and how they came to choose this project with the larger community. Doing so, the teens' work moves beyond your TEL sessions to make adults in the community aware of the teens' commitment to social action and abilities to plan and participate in a service learning project.

### **Welcome/Introductions/Check-in (10 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- Take a few minutes to whip around the circle and have every teen share about something that has inspired him/her or made him/her think since last TEL meeting.
- You may also want to give a quick overview of what is coming up in this session.

### **Opening Ice Breaker: M & M Game (10 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- Sit in a circle and invite the teens to take a handful of M&M candies from a large bowl and hold them without eating them yet. When everyone has his/her candy, explain that you are going to go around the circle and share something based on the M&M color(s) that he/she has chosen. You can use the following guide:
  - Red—My favorite part of the *Tikkun Olam* Project
  - Yellow—Something on my mind about the issue
  - Green—Something that happened since the last session that made me think about the project
  - Blue—Something I wish had gone differently
  - Brown—A way I want to work on this issue in the future either with the TEL group or on my own
  - Orange—Share anything you want!
- After the teens have shared, the candy can be eaten. 😊



## Text Study: Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (15 min)

### Instructions:

- Hand out copies of the texts (see handouts) or you may want to write the texts on a board.
- Introduce the texts by asking who can remember who Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel is and what his relationship to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was. Explain that we are going to read a quote from both Rabbi Heschel and Dr. King.

### Invite one of the teens to read the first text out loud:

"I would say to young people a number of things.... I would say let them remember that there is meaning beyond absurdity. Let them be sure that every little deed counts, that every word has power, and that we can, everyone, do our share to redeem the world in spite of all absurdities and all the frustrations and all disappointments."

– Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

### Ask teens:

- Remembering Rabbi Heschel's life experience and his work, why do you imagine he believes that every little deed counts? That every word has power? Can you think of examples from your own life when this has been true for you?
- What do you think he means by "meaning beyond absurdity"? What things strike you as absurd in the world? What gives meaning to your life?
- In what way does *Tikkun Olam* work help to "redeem the world"? How do you imagine that our project affected someone's life?

### Invite one of the teens to read the second text out loud:

"Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### Ask teens:

- Explain what Dr. King means by being "great." Does that line up with your idea of what greatness is? How does the idea that doing service makes a person great expand or challenge your idea?
- Why does Dr. King mention that "your subject and verb" don't have to agree. Who is he addressing with that statement? Why is it important that he is including that audience?
- What does it mean to have "a heart full of grace" and "a soul generated by love"? Do you know someone who has those things? Do you have those things? How did working on our service project expand or open your heart/soul in new ways?

### Say to the group:

- You can wrap up the discussion by sharing:
- The work of Rabbi Heschel and Dr. King was, at times, very public work—they marched to raise awareness on a local, national and international level. Although we have completed the hands-on doing part of our *Tikkun Olam* project, our service isn't finished. Today we are going to plan ways to use our learning and doing to raise awareness in our synagogue community. We will be

planning a presentation to share with the community at our next TEL session (or another arranged time).

### **Fishbowl Sharing (15 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- Divide teens into two equal groups. Each group is going to make a circle, sitting on the floor. One group sits cross-legged facing out and the other group sits cross-legged facing in so that teens are face-to-face.
- Explain that soon we will be planning a presentation to share with the community about our project. As part of the presentation, people may have questions for us. We will practice thinking about and answering questions with each other so we can get comfortable when questions come up during the presentation.
- With each question, the two people facing each other can share their responses with one another. After a few minutes, when it looks like they're done sharing, have the inside circle rotate clockwise and answer the question with a new partner. Rotate two or three times/question so that the teens get a chance to think and respond with different partners. Here are some questions to try:
  - How did you decide to work on this issue/project?
  - How did you find out/get information about this issue?
  - What did you know about the issue before doing the project? What have you learned?
  - How is your project raising awareness about this issue?
  - Where do you hope to go from here? Will you keep working on this issue?
  - What was the most meaningful part of this process for you?
  - How do you think and/or feel differently as a result of engaging in this project?
- When the fishbowl exercise is done, explain that they will use the answers and ideas that they just generated to create a presentation to share with the community. Teens will be divided to work in small groups, based on their interests and talents. Working groups may include writers, artists, web designers and photographers.

### **Small Group Work: Writing, Mural, Web Design, etc. (45-50 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

The following are ideas to generate presentation material. Based on your teens' interests and talents, you may want to choose all, some or a few of these modalities or go with another way to create your presentation altogether.

- **Writers:** This team will take the questions that were used in the fish bowl game and respond to them in written form. They can work individually, in pairs or in a small group. If you have a computer available, they can write and save their work as a document. Have them practice reading their talk out loud.
- **Artists:** Using butcher paper and paints, invite the artists to create a mural inspired by the issue/project. Encourage them to think about images that will be evocative and communicate the importance of the issue to the group. The mural can hang as a backdrop for the teens who share their talk.

- **Web Design:** Teens can create an original page, with the digital photos that were taken during the project. They can include links that you used during your research. Find out if you can link directly to your synagogue web page or create a way to have a TEL tab on the web site.
- **Photographers:** Invite the teens who took pictures throughout the process to edit the pictures and create a slideshow or make a video with the images. Include a link to it in your invitation to the community about your upcoming sharing.
- **Other ideas:** A group of teens who love theater could make a short skit based on the issue/project.... Teens who are musical could write a song and record it (perhaps the one they sang as part of your opening *kavanah*) to share or write original song lyrics based on the issue.... Teens could make a list of important facts about the issue to distribute at the sharing.

### Group Reflections and Personal Journaling (10 min)

#### Instructions:

- Pass out the journals and invite the teens to take some time to write about how they are feeling about sharing their experience with their community. What is the most important part of your project that you want to share?

#### Ask teens:

- What did you most enjoy about this session?
- What would you have improved/done differently?

#### Closing Ritual

- Today's prompt is "The one thing I want our community to know about our *Tikkun Olam* project is \_\_\_\_\_." Go around the circle and have each teen answer the prompt.
- Remind the teens that in their next session they will be sharing their presentation with the larger community. (Note: you may elect to take two sessions to work on the planning started in this session and share at another scheduled time.)

“I would say to young people a number of things...I would say let them remember that there is meaning beyond absurdity. Let them be sure that every little deed counts, that every word has power, and that we can, everyone, do our share to redeem the world in spite of all absurdities and all the frustrations and all disappointments.”

– Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

“Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## ***Havayah Eight: Sharing our Tikkun Olam Project, Culmination, and Celebration!***

### **Materials:**

- Texts
- Paper and pens
- Written Presentation (or video, etc.)
- Art work from last sessions
- Computer or tablet (if available)
- Journals

### **Notes to the Group Leader:**

This is the final *havayah* for the year. You and your teens have put in incredible efforts and now have the opportunity to share what you have learned about and contributed towards repairing the world with your project. This session is also a time to celebrate all of your efforts. Some groups will elect to make this session only for the TEL group and will plan an additional time to present to the community and other groups may choose to frame their sharing within this last session. Please do what makes the most sense for your community.

### **Welcome/Introductions/Check-in (10 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- Take a few minutes to whip around the circle and have every teen share what his/her favorite part of participating in TEL has been this year.

### **Opening Ice Breaker: "One great thing about..." (15 min)**

#### **Instructions:**

- This Ice breaker is a nice way to give closure to your group and help your teens to recognize what they have learned to appreciate about each other during the year of collaborating together.
- Invite teens to make a circle and ask for a volunteer to stand in the middle of the circle (or you can go first). Explain that everyone will get a turn in the middle. The job of the people on the outside of the circle is to pay a compliment to the person in the middle. They might want to complete the statement "One great thing about Jacob is..." or you can use another phrase like "Something I like about Jacob is...." The compliments can be about qualities that person has and has brought to the group; each person who gives should think of something original.
- You can either go around the whole circle or make a rule like three people will give a compliment for each person in the middle. When you finish, invite the teens to share how it felt to get showered with compliments and how it felt to give them.

### Text Study: Alice Walker and Elie Wiesel (15 min)

#### Instructions:

- Hand out copies of the texts (see handouts) or you may want to write the texts on a board.

#### Invite one of the teens to read the first text out loud:

"One thing that never ceases to amaze me, along with the growth of vegetation from the earth and of hair from the head, is the growth of understanding." – Alice Walker

#### Ask teens:

- Walker compares the growth of understanding to growth in nature. Think about the ways that your understanding of *Tikkun Olam* has grown this year. Where did you begin and where is your understanding now? How has a better understanding of *Tikkun Olam* and your topic specifically changed you as a person?
- What do you hope that the community will understand about your topic/project as a result of your presentation?

#### Invite one of the teens to read the second text out loud:

"This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century – solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair. It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others." – Elie Wiesel

#### Ask teens:

- In our first *Havayah*, we read a quote from Elie Wiesel. Does anyone remember the story of his life and what his life work is about?
- How do you imagine that our TEL group met the challenge that Wiesel sets up for us? In what ways have we stretched to learn about the identity of others whose life experience is very different from our own or the identity of an issue (such as the environment) that we didn't know about as deeply before?
- What else would you add to Wiesel's list of whom we should have solidarity with? What causes/issues would you also include (i.e. solidarity with nature/environment, etc.)?

Thank the teens for all of their thoughtfulness and insights during the text study sessions throughout the year!

### Presentation to the Community OR Continued Work on Presentation (1 hour)

#### Instructions:

Depending on how much work your group was able to complete last session, you may want to take the next hour for the teens to keep working in small groups on their presentations. Other groups will use the last session to invite parents, board members and/or the community at large so that the teens can present and share. You may want to end the sharing with a special potluck *Oneg* of food and drink that the TEL families can supply.

## Closing Reflection (10-15 min)

### Instructions:

- Hand out the teen journals and give the teens some time to read through their entries from the last seven sessions.
- Invite the teens to share something that they have written. It could be from any session during the year; something that captures a meaningful moment or a new insight. They can share a paragraph, a page or even a sentence.
- Ask the teens to select one of their favorite songs to close the session with.

### Closing Ritual:

- Our last prompt is "If I could summarize the TEL experience in one word, it would be \_\_\_\_\_.  
Go around the circle and have each teen answer the prompt.

*Yasher Koakh! Celebrate your learning and growth as a leader.  
Thank you for the work you've done!*

“One thing that never ceases to amaze me, along with the growth of vegetation from the earth and of hair from the head, is the growth of understanding.”

– Alice Walker

“This is the duty of our generation as we enter the twenty-first century – solidarity with the weak, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, and those in despair. It is expressed by the desire to give a noble and humanizing meaning to a community in which all members will define themselves not by their own identity but by that of others.”

– Elie Wiesel





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