



World Three Speaker Notes

Here are some thoughts that can be used in World 3 of your seder.

Introduction:

- The oceans provide food and resources for human beings, and also are the basis of the food chain – providing food for birds, larger fish, and other mammals that keep our ecosystems thriving.

What we are thankful for

- Our ocean covers nearly 70% of the earth's surface.
- The ocean teems with life, each species interacting with a myriad of others. The swirling currents in every ocean bring nutrients and oxygen to creatures thousands of miles away. The rich upwelling that brings the cool deep waters to the surface and supports massive populations of fish along the west coast of North and South America.
- The oceans regulate the climate and weather patterns of our world.
- The oceans provide recreation and a sense of peace for the people who enjoy them.
- To continue to appreciate the beauty and strength of the ocean and subsist from its bounty, there are some important steps we must take to protect it from the numerous pressures and threats it faces.

How it is threatened

- Over-fishing. Our technology and ability to catch fish from the ocean has rapidly improved, resulting in greater catch efficiency and ultimately more fish being taken from the sea. In fact, there are too many fish being taken from the sea, leading to a rapid decline, and in many cases, depletion of fish stocks.
- Bycatch: Another concern is that many species that are not targeted by fishermen still end up on their hooks or in their nets unintentionally. This is known as bycatch. These include sea birds, sea turtles, whales, dolphins, sharks and a myriad of fish species not targeted by fishermen. Bycatch is of great concern since it leads to the major disruption of the food chain and the ocean's ability to thrive and provide a food source for all species (including humans).
- Pollution: Although the oceans may seem limitless and pure, in fact, they are being polluted.
 - The seafloor is littered with debris ranging from household trash to drums of discarded nuclear waste.
 - Discharge pipes from factories, runoff from agricultural and farm lands, residential lawn fertilizers, and of course sewage outfalls, accumulate in the ocean. In many instances, these toxics are passed up the food chain and concentrated in species that are on the top of the food chain.
 - Another concern is the mercury emitted into the air that rains down on the ocean. This mercury comes from coal fired power plants which emit tons of methyl mercury into the air – a byproduct of the coal burning process. This mercury is eaten by tiny organisms who are eaten by small fish. These small fish are then eaten by larger fish who are then eaten by even larger fish. Ultimately, the fish at the top of the food chain like TUNA, SWORDFISH and other species have rather high concentrations of mercury in their tissue. The problem is so pervasive that the EPA has issued mercury warnings for pregnant women and children.
- While there is much debate over its impact and severity, the science is becoming abundantly clear that, as a result of greenhouse gases, the ocean is warming up.

- Sea levels have already slightly risen, and if the ocean rises as predicted, many low lying coral atolls and islands will be underwater by century's end, leaving millions of island refugees.
- The 2005 Atlantic hurricane season set records for quantity and force of hurricanes; Katrina's power was fueled by warm sea surface temperatures in the gulf. Even though the data is still not conclusive, the signs suggest that warmer seas from increased global temperatures will lead to more powerful hurricanes and simply more of them.
- Scientists see signs that the gulf stream, the marvelously complex system that exports the equator's heat toward the North Pole and helps balance the planet's temperature, may be slowing.
- Japan, a voracious consumer of marine resources, is now discovering that the drastic depletion of its own fish stocks is linked to the loss of underwater seaweed colonies -- caused, in turn, by rising sea temperatures from the current warming trend.

How do we cause this damage?

- By purchasing fish species that are overfished or that use fishing methods that kill other fish in the process.
- By using toxic products that are going down the drain
- By wasting electricity, causing the need for new power plants and more mercury pollution.
- By using fossil fuels, wasting electricity, and driving inefficient cars, causing global warming.

What does the Torah say?

Talmud Bava Batra 81a. One of the ten regulations established by Joshua for settling in the Land of Israel was that non-residents of Tiberias were allowed to fish in the Kinneret with fishing rods only and not nets.

- The Torah is trying to teach us restraint so that there will be enough fish for today and for tomorrow.

What can we do to preserve ocean resources?

- Make a commitment to buy sustainable seafood. Ask your local seafood store to carry sustainably harvested seafood species. See #6 in the "resources" section for a list of sustainable fish.
- Use less toxic cleansers. They go down the drain and eventually make their way into our ocean food chain.
- Participate in a beach or river cleanup.

Here is another story you could tell in World Three (creation):

When the Bible is describing the creation of the world, on the second day, it does not write that, "it was good." Why? Our Sages give a series of answers in Bereshit Rabbah (4:6).

One of the answers is by Rebi Chanina who claims that on this day, the waters were separated. There was division introduced into the world, and not the same as dividing day and night. Rather, here was one unified entity—water—and now it has become two. For this he uses the term, makhloket (argument). Even though we have sources that praise makhloket in our tradition, we see that for Rebi Chanina, it is not the ideal state of being.

Rebi Tavyomi goes on to add in the same midrash, "if a makhloket ('argument') that is for the establishment of the world and making it habitable does not say 'and it was good', all the more so [one that does not advance the world in a positive way]"! Rebi Tavyomi is saying that argument is so damaging that it even reflects negatively on an action that is for the sake of establishing the world.

It's interesting that water is the background for this teaching. Water is one of the most flexible and pliable substances on earth. Water is the source of life. Water teaches us about humility and loving-kindness. When water is spurned or scorned, or simply wasted or mistreated, we violate all of the goodness that is possible with water.

We should always check that our actions, even for the sake of the establishment of the world, are based in humility and lovingkindness.

You could also use the source sheet on Interdependence suggested for world three. See <http://canfeinesharim.org/community/shevat.php?page=23286>

These speaking notes were created and piloted for Canfei Nesharim by the Young Israel Shomrei Emunah and the Kemp Mill Synagogue in Silver Spring, MD. They are intended as a guide for community leaders conducting Canfei Nesharim's "Appreciating Nature's Blessings" Tu b'Shevat Seder, and as a resource for community leaders conducting other Torah and environment programs. If you have questions about these notes, or need further information, please contact Evonne Marzouk at evonne@canfeinesharim.org.