



World Two Speaker Notes

Here are some thoughts that can be used in World 2 of your seder.

Introduction: Introduction:

- Water is the most essential of components of Hashem's creation.
- It is from which life comes forth and that which sustains life.
- We use it for drinking, cleaning, and sanitation.
- Through its use in agriculture, it is responsible for all of our food.
- It is also responsible for all clothing made from natural fibers such as cotton and wool.

What we are thankful for

- While there is no specific bracha for water, its blessing is in every part of our life. It is appropriate that we use the bracha "shehakol nihiyeh bidvaro" since water is truly created by Hashem's word.
- Without water, no human could live.
- We bathe in it, brush our teeth with it, wash our clothes with it and clean our dishes with it.
- In our own bodies, water regulates our body temperature, helps with absorption of nutrients, and carries oxygen to all parts of our body.

Where does the water go (and what goes with it)?

When your water goes down the drain, it goes through a complex cleansing process. The water needs to be cleansed of the following pollutants that have been washed down the drain:

- Soap
- Laundry Detergent
- Cleaners
- Bleach
- Pesticides
- Sewage
- Toilet paper
- Prescription drugs (ingested into our bodies)
- Fertilizers

How are our water resources threatened?

- In the year 2000, 1.1 billion people still did not have access to improved water supply and 2.4 billion people lacked access to improved sanitation.¹
- "Water stress (which, two-thirds of the world's population are likely to face by 2025), caused by climate change, uncontrolled urbanization, unplanned water withdrawal and inappropriate water policies make matters worse. Shortage of water also means shortage of food, as 80% of our water consumption is applied for irrigating crops."²
- More than half of the world's major rivers are seriously depleted and polluted.³

¹ Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, 4 December 2002 [Note from the Executive Director].

² - Note from the Executive Director Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (4 December 2002 UNEP/GC.22/INF/33).

³ World Commission on Water for the 21st Century, 1999

- Did you think this is only a problem in the developing world? Think again! The Anacostia River is so badly polluted, it has been named one of the most polluted rivers in America.⁴ (This is a Washington, DC statistic, but you might want to integrate your own.)

How do we cause this damage:

- By pouring toxic products down the drain
- By pollution that goes down storm drains, including litter, oil spills, and soap from washing our cars (the storm drains go directly to the water)
- By wasting water – dripping faucets, over-long showers
- By eating beef. Production of beef and poultry is responsible for 18% of the total water use in American society. Red meat is responsible for 3 times the amount of water use and more than 12 times the land use than poultry. Together, waste from meat and poultry is responsible for 20% of all the common water pollution in our society. Also the amount of pasturelands required to raise cows often results in forests being cleared to make way for them.

What does the Torah say?

Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 155:21:

A person must distance his outhouse from his neighbor's drinking well so that it is clear that the liquid from the outhouse is not reaching the well.

The Rama adds in his gloss there:

And some authorities disagree and maintain that one must distance one's outhouse as far as necessary to avoid damage, even if the public road separates the two houses.

The Torah is teaching us of the importance of protecting drinking water supplies, and our responsibility to protect our neighbor.

What can we do to preserve water resources?

- Reduce beef in your diet. Try to change one beef meal per week to chicken or fish. (It's better for your health, too!)
- Eliminate or reduce toxic chemicals from your household
- Reduce water consumption - consider water and energy efficient appliances
- Don't buy bottled water – if you feel that your drinking water is not safe, filter your water.

Here are some more stories you could tell or have others tell in World 2:

And when the sun became hot, it would melt- [The manna] that was left behind in the field turned into rivers, and deer and gazelle would drink from them, and the nations of the world would trap these animals, and would taste in them the taste of the manna, and they would know the praises of Israel.

Rashi to Exodus 16:21

Rashi explains that the manna did not just disappear after it was left behind; it had an effect on the water system. In this case, the effect seemed to be a positive one, at least for the Jewish people.

What we leave behind also does not disappear. What kind of effect does it have on the water system and the animals and other people who rely on it?

⁴ American Rivers

Rav Yisrael Salanter was always meticulous in his practices regarding hand washing. Once, when traveling, his students noticed that he took just the minimum of water to wash his hands. When questioned, he noted that the water he was using was carried on the back of the maid from the well at the bottom of the hill. He noted to his students – "One should not be *Mehadrin* (particularly exacting) on someone else's shoulders;" which is to say, that one should not be overzealous in a *mitzvah* when it requires someone else's toil.

From: Sheinson, Ora, "The Halachos of Netilas Yadayim and Water Conservation" in Compendium of Sources in Halacha and the Environment (Jerusalem: Canfei Nesharim Publication, 2005) pg. 46

What kind of toil does our water use entail today? Who pays and who benefits? When we consider the scarcity of water around the world, what should our responsibility be?

It's one thing to save water that's being used for a mitzvah. What about the egregious water use of ourselves and our society that has no holy purpose whatsoever?

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.