



Canfei Nesharim
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Jewcology™



Year of Engagement: Talking about Climate Change and Energy Security

The Jewish community has a diverse set of views about climate change and energy. In some communities, most members agree that climate change is an urgent problem to be addressed with sustainable energy choices. In other communities, more explanation is needed. These points may help you explore this topic in more depth with your community. Please choose your approach based on the politics and commitments of your community.

- For additional information about the science of climate change, view the [“Statement on Climate Change”](#) prepared by Canfei Nesharim’s Science & Technology Advisory Board.
- For additional information about energy and environment policy priorities for the Jewish community, view [COEJL’s 2014 Policy Priorities](#).

Justice and Health

- Climate change has a particularly devastating impact on some of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable populations, who have often done the least to contribute to the problem.
- Climate change is a public health issue, which is linked to an increase in heat-induced heart attacks, asthma and respiratory ailments, infectious diseases, and other health problems. The burning of fossil fuels also contributes to air pollution, which is a major cause of respiratory ailments and premature deaths.
- Social factors including wealth, age, race, gender, and ethnicity influence a population’s ability to respond to and recover from heat waves and climate-related disasters. This is a problem in the United States as well as in the developing world.

National and International Security

- Our reliance on fossil fuels, including oil and coal, contributes to climate change. According to defense, intelligence, and national security experts, climate change is one of the world’s greatest security threats. ⁱ
- Climate change is linked to depletion of resources and an increasing number of extreme weather events. Changes in climate have been proven to exacerbate conflicts and violence around the world. Climate change is also linked to an increase in refugees as populations relocate in search of food, water, shelter and safety.
- A large percentage of the earth’s oil reserves are located in the hands of governments that sponsor terrorism. ⁱⁱ
- OPEC, an oil-exporting cartel which includes some of the most threatening regimes in the world controls the price of oil on the global market. Its members rake in billions of dollars each year from oil sales.
- Our dependence on oil threatens the safety of our troops. The military must transport fuel to remote power stations in warzones, and needs oil to power its vehicles. According to the Truman Project, one in 24 fuel-convoys in Iraq and Afghanistan included a casualty. When generators run out of fuel, our troops are in severe danger.

Safety and Security of Israel

- Our reliance on oil financially supports nondemocratic regimes which are hostile to the U.S. and Israel and are located in volatile regions of the world.
- As the only stable democracy in the Middle East, Israel is particularly vulnerable to terrorism sponsored through oil dollars.
- The warming climate in Israel is predicted to contribute to desertification and decrease access to fresh water, thus posing major security risks in addition to threatening the land and ecology. Politically unstable regions such as the Middle East are particularly vulnerable to conflicts due to a scarcity of resources.

Jewish values

Jewish principles encourage environmental protection and responsible use of natural resources:

- Many Jewish principles and laws stress the importance of caring for G-d's Creation and being good stewards of the Earth. The Midrash teaches, "Look at my works! See how beautiful they are, how excellent. Do not destroy my world, for if you do, there will be nobody to replace it after you." (Kohelet Rabbah).
- Jewish law includes the mitzvah of *bal tashchit*, "do not destroy." The basis of this mitzvah is the Torah lesson that even in times of war, we should not destroy the fruit trees of our enemies. (Deuteronomy 20:19-20).
- This principle is expanded in Jewish tradition to include all types of wasteful destruction, and applies specifically to energy consumption. According to the Babylonian Talmud, "One who covers an oil lamp [causing the flame to burn inefficiently] or uncovers a kerosene lamp [allowing the fuel to evaporate faster] violates the prohibition of *bal tashchit* [do not destroy]." ⁱⁱⁱ

Solutions

What can we do to promote sustainable energy and prevent climate change? We can advocate for *renewable energy* and *energy efficient technologies* in order to promote national security and slow the flow of funds to hostile nations.

- A system based on **renewable energy** instead of finite fossil fuels will be far more secure than our current system, which is more vulnerable to security threats, emboldens Israel's enemies, and is contributing to climate-related security concerns.
- We can greatly reduce our energy consumption through **efficient technologies**.
 - For example, current fuel economy standards are expected to save half a million barrels of oil per day by 2035. This number can be greatly increased based on available technologies.
 - The development of clean energy technologies will also create jobs and lead to other major economic benefits. In particular, Israel is a hub of clean energy innovation.

ⁱ See Forward article by J.J. Goldberg: "Climate Change Poses Threat to National Security": <http://forward.com/articles/172509/climate-change-poses-threat-to-national-security/>.

ⁱⁱ There is debate regarding the amount because of differences between actual and potential percentages (based on new technologies and oil reserves).

ⁱⁱⁱ Tractate Shabbat, p. 67b, translated by Dr. Akiva Wolff. To learn more about Jewish views related to energy, visit <http://www.canfeinesharim.org/coreteaching15/>.