

Resolution to Reduce our Environmental Footprint

The Talmud tells the story of the sage Choni, who was walking along a road when he saw a man planting a carob tree. Choni asked, "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?" "Seventy years," the man replied. Choni then asked, "Are you so healthy that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?" The man answered, "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise, I am planting for my children."

Jewish tradition teaches us to care for our planet in order to preserve that which G-d has created. Psalm 24 notes, "The earth is the Eternal's and the fullness thereof," an assertion of G-d's ownership of the land. It follows, then, that any act that damages our earth is an offense against the property of G-d. In fact, tradition values this concept so much that the rabbis teach that if a man is planting a tree and the messiah appears, he should finish planting the tree before going to greet him (*Avot d'Rebbe Natan* 31b). (Taken from "Jewish Views on the Environment", ReformJudiasm.org)

In November of 1991, the URJ adopted the following resolution:

...the Union of American Hebrew Congregations resolves to:

- 1. Call upon the federal, provincial, state and local governments of the United States and Canada to protect our current wilderness areas, create new ones, and work to protect ecologically sensitive and endangered bioregions of the world.*
- 2. Call upon the federal, provincial, state, and local governments of the United States and Canada to ensure the continuation of animal and plant species.*
- 3. Call upon the federal, provincial, state and local governments of the United States and Canada to ensure the protection of our water and air environments and resources, including the provision of significant resources for the study of mitigation of global warming and destructive environmental change. We call upon the federal governments of the United States and Canada to take a leadership role in international environmental efforts, as for example the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in June 1992.*
- 4. Call upon local governments to institute comprehensive community recycling programs.*
- 5. **Call upon the appropriate commissions and departments within the UAHC and other bodies in Reform Judaism to provide specific environmental guidance to our congregations and to help our congregants consciously modify their behavior in order to preserve our planet.***
- 6. **Promote environmentally sound behavior throughout the UAHC, from office to sanctuary to classroom, including the purchasing of reusable, recycled and recyclable materials fully recognizing the possibility of some increased costs.***
- 7. Congratulate NFTY for its leadership in these areas and ask them to assist all other UAHC affiliates in instituting similar programs.*
- 8. Recognize that environmental hazards disproportionately affect poor and minority communities and that insofar as our society continues to bear environmental risks, work to ensure that the economic and health costs of the risks do not disproportionately fall upon these communities. (Bold and italics added)*

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Therefore, in recognition of the significance of environmental protection in Judaism and the goals and objectives of the URJ Resolution above (especially items 5 & 6), and to be better stewards of the environment and better neighbors, we at Agudas Israel Congregation resolve to make efforts to reduce our environmental footprint. We will look for ways to improve our current efforts; We will seek additional opportunities to reduce, reuse, and recycle in our everyday operations; We will seek opportunities to do the same for all events, meetings, and gatherings organized by Agudas Israel Congregation; the search for such opportunities will be made a regular part of our planning process for these events.

To help our progress towards these goals, a new Agudas Israel Sustainability Team will be formed. The Team will meet on a quarterly basis, or on a schedule otherwise determined by the Team. The Team will assist meeting and event planners to identify more environmentally friendly approaches to their events. The Team will research, post and/or distribute ideas and suggestions on ways to reduce our Congregation's overall environmental impact. All Congregation members are welcome to be part of the Sustainability Team. All Agudas Israel members are invited to attend and participate in Team meetings whether they are Team members or not. All Agudas members are encouraged to submit ideas and suggestions to the Team.