Resolution on Climate Change

Human-induced climate change is an existential threat. We need to do all we can to save our planet, as weather-related natural disasters have increased by nearly 500% in the last 50 years.[1]

Jewish tradition emphasizes that human dominion over nature does not provide a license to abuse the environment; rather, we are called to "till and tend" God's Earth (Genesis 2:15) and are reminded in the Midrash (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13) that if we fail to do so, there will be no one after us to repair our damage. It is our responsibility to preserve, protect, and nourish our planet. We have the power to take action to create a healthy and just future for ourselves and for generations to come.

Climate change is the long-term shift in the Earth's average temperatures and weather conditions.[2] This broad term encompasses global warming as well as other changes to the Earth's climate, including extreme weather events, such as heat, floods, storms, droughts, and wildfires.[3] Since the start of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, climate change has been caused predominantly by the burning of fossil fuels. These emit greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere. The gases blanket the Earth, trapping the sun's heat near the Earth's surface and creating a life-threatening crisis for populations and ecosystems around the world.[4]

Compared to pre-industrial levels, the global average temperature has risen by 1.2°C. Scientists have identified a threshold of 1.5 to 2°C, beyond which the likelihood of catastrophic impacts significantly increases. According to a consensus of the scientific community, "Earth is now on track to see rises of 2° to 3° by the end of the century."[5]

Climate change damage to the planet is currently irreversible. If we postpone taking action, the undeniable impact and terrible cost of this devastation will only worsen.[6]

Whereas: Women's League for Conservative Judaism (WLCJ) has adopted six environmental resolutions since 1976; and

Whereas: Melting ice, rising sea levels, and an atmosphere filled with heat-trapping gases are affecting Earth's fundamental properties, contributing to a slowing of Earth's rotation and changes in the Earth's axis/wobble;[7] and

Whereas: Ocean acidification from absorption of CO_2 adversely affects marine life;[8] and

Whereas: Global sea level rise is accelerating; it is predicted to rise another 1-6 feet by 2100;[9] and

Whereas: Ocean waters have absorbed 90% of the heat trapped by greenhouse gases; and scientific measurements have shown that every layer of the ocean is warming;[10] and

Whereas: Precipitation patterns are changing, with uneven effect; some areas have excess precipitation, while other areas are experiencing drought. Hurricanes are becoming more frequent and more intense as the climate continues to warm, while droughts and heat waves are intensifying wildfire season in the western United States, Canada, and beyond;[11] and

Whereas: Climate change significantly impacts agriculture and food supply by disrupting growing seasons, reducing crop yields, and affecting the nutritional value of food;[12] and

Whereas: Pollution from landfills, agriculture/meat production, transportation, plastics, and other petrochemicals all contribute to acceleration of greenhouse gases;[13] and

Whereas: Extreme weather events result in financial damage. "Nearly $100 billion in damages to businesses, property, and infrastructure" occurred in 2020 "compared with $18 billion per year in 1980," with the trend growing;[14] and

Whereas: Experts recognize the need for adaptation, meaning the adjustments societies make to cope with the actual or expected effects of climate change. Their action is constrained by an absence of measurable outcomes and the reluctance of governments to invest in data collection.[15]

Therefore: **Be it resolved that WLCJ, through its Regions, Sisterhood Affiliates, and all its members, encourages everyone to promote the following actions:**

1. Educate ourselves on the impact of climate change on the environment, and

2. Support legislation, regulations, and organizations that hold companies accountable for their environmental practices, and

3. Advocate for data collection showing the effect of climate change. Use this data to promote legislative, regulatory, and judicial action to protect all communities from the damaging impacts of climate change, and

4. Work with local organizations to provide relief to those affected by disasters caused by climate change events, and

5. Support research, development and increased use of non-carbon based (zero-carbon) energy sources such as solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, and nuclear for power generation, and

6. Reduce energy use and carbon output in transportation, including the use of alternative transportation, such as walking, biking, or using public transportation when one would normally drive, and

7. Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle: Identify what can be composted or recycled to reduce the amount of these products in landfills. Cut food waste by buying what you need and using what you buy. Choose reusable items including water bottles and shopping bags, and

8. Learn with your community about the benefits of forest management and its effect in fire control, and

9. Encourage research into development of “green” products as alternatives to plastics. Research strategies to safely recycle or dispose of old plastics, and

10. Recognize the environmental impact of methane emissions from animal waste and support practices that reduce meat consumption. Encourage farming practices that reduce methane gas excretions.

A Few Program Ideas for Sisterhood Affiliates

1. **“Reverse Tashlich” Program:** Clean debris from waterways.

2. **Letter-Writing or Phone-Bank Night:** Focus on specific legislation or climate funding initiatives aligned with WLCJ priorities.

3. **Climate Mitzvah Day:**
   Partner with local organizations for:
   - Tree planting
   - Urban gardening
   - Park or beach cleanups
   - Habitat restoration

   Close with a brief ritual or prayer for the Earth.

4. **Tu B'Shevat Seder:**
   A climate-focused Tu B'Shevat seder highlighting:
   - Water scarcity
   - Deforestation
   - Sustainable agriculture
   - Climate justice

   Include actionable commitments that participants can take home.

5. **Climate-Conscious Cooking Demo:**
   Host a plant-forward cooking class focusing on:
   - Reducing meat consumption
   - Using seasonal/local foods
   - Using farm-to-table program
   - Focusing on food waste reduction
   - Sharing Jewish recipes with sustainable twists

6. **Climate Advocacy 101 Workshop:**
   Teach participants how to:
   - Read climate data

- Contact elected officials
- Support accountability legislation
- Provide scripts and action toolkits

7. **Biodegradable Utensils:** Use for meals and encourage using **reusable products** where possible, including water bottles and reusable bags.
8. **Recycling Education Program:** Collect items that can be recycled, such as egg cartons, returnable cans, etc.
9. **Virtual Lobby Days**: Meet with your legislators on these days regarding climate change and other environmental issues.

Glossary: Definitions Related to Climate Change

Climate Change: The long-term shift in Earth's average temperatures and weather patterns. It's a change in typical weather for a region, like high and low temperatures and rainfall, over decades or longer. This change can be driven by both natural factors (like solar activity) and human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels. Since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas.[16]

Global Warming: The long-term warming of the planet and just one aspect of climate change. Global temperature shows a well-documented rise since the early 20th century and most notably since the late 1970s. Worldwide since 1880, the average surface temperature has risen about 1°C (about 2°F), relative to the mid-20th century baseline (of 1951-1980). This is on top of about an additional 0.15°C of warming from 1750 to 1880.[17]

Greenhouse Effect: The process through which heat is trapped near Earth's surface by substances known as *greenhouse gases.* Imagine these gases as a cozy blanket enveloping our planet, helping to maintain a warmer temperature than it would have otherwise.[18]

Greenhouse Gases: Gases in Earth's atmosphere that trap heat from the sun near Earth's surface through the *greenhouse effect.* Greenhouse gases consist of carbon dioxide, methane, ozone, nitrous oxide, chlorofluorocarbons, and water vapor. Water vapor, which reacts to temperature changes, is referred to as *feedback*, because it amplifies the effect of forces that initially caused the warming.[19]

Jewish Organizations Supporting Protection of the Environment

- Adamah (People Planet Purpose)
- Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL)
- Dayenu (A Jewish Call to Climate Action)
- Hazon
- Jewish Climate Action Network
- Jewish Earth Alliance
- Jewish Farm Network
- Jewish National Fund
- Masorti Environmental Sustainability Initiative (MESI)
- Repair the Sea

Women's League Resolutions Related to Climate Change

- 1978: Human Environment
- 1992: Environment
- 1996: Environment – Biodiversity – Social Action
- 2006: Global Warming
- 2008: Environment/Energy
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Footnotes

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