



AM I RESPONSIBLE FOR SAVING THE PLANET?

PREP FOR THE SESSION

Overview

Through exploring the value of **responsibility**, particularly: when do I prioritize addressing climate change in my everyday life?, learners will feel empowered to explore their responsibility to take action in order to address climate change within their own local communities or within our larger world.

At-a-Glance:

Catastrophic hurricanes, raging wildfires, and turbulent snow storms are just a few ways climate change is impacting our world today. The threat of climate change can feel overwhelming for some, abstract or distant to others. It can be difficult to figure out what our personal responsibilities are - especially when it can feel like nothing we do makes a difference. Using discussion questions, Jewish texts and an experiential activity, this resource is designed to help learners reflect on their responsibility to take action to address climate change.



Time Estimate:

- 60 minutes



Materials Needed:

- [Sphere of Influence](#) handout (1 per person)
- Writing materials

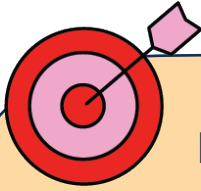


Best Uses:

- Can be adapted for both virtual and in person learning

LET'S GET STARTED

10-15
min



FRAME THE ISSUE

We all make decisions each day about what to prioritize. We click the “priority shipping” option on Amazon because we have run out of laundry detergent. Maybe we biked to work rather than driving because we wanted to get some exercise. Or we printed out an article for class because we preferred to read it off the screen.

Chabad Rebbetzin, Bracha Leah plans multiple events per week for Philadelphians of all ages. She prepares meals for new mothers, hosts Shabbat dinner, organizes kids programming every weekend. She is gifted at creating experiences for others to feel connected to Judaism and one another. And she has several children of her own to care for.

Bracha realized that after each event she was spending hours cleaning and washing dishes and was feeling completely depleted. She knew that she would have more energy to give to the people in her community if she had more hours in the day to take care of herself. So, she made the decision to provide disposable plates and silverware at her events.

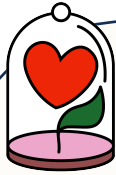
She realized while not the environmentally sustainable choice, it was what she needed to do for her own wellbeing - and for the wellbeing of the community she serves.



Facilitator prompts the group to consider the following questions:

- What did Rebbetzin Bracha Leah decide to prioritize? What did she deprioritize?
- When, if ever, have you found your responsibility to the planet conflicting with your responsibilities to yourself, or to people you care about?
- When have you specifically prioritized your responsibility toward climate change over other responsibilities? What factors motivated your decision?

Although we might want to say we can uphold all of our responsibilities - to ourselves, our family, our community, the world, the reality is no one can do everything. We are constantly making choices about what we prioritize!



EXPLORE THE VALUE: RESPONSIBILITY

30 min



Facilitator prompts the group:

- What comes to mind when I say the word responsibility?
- We are going to use the following definition to frame our time together.

Responsible: liable to be called on to answer [Merriam Webster Version]. I am curious how this definition feels for you? What else might you add to this?



Facilitator prompts the group:

- Who do you believe is responsible for addressing climate change?
- What does it look like to take responsibility to care for our climate?
- What are the roles of individuals, communities, and governments in addressing climate change? How do they differ?



JEWISH WISDOM

To explore responsibility further, let us look at five biblical women who decided to take responsibility on their own terms to impact change.

א) וַתִּקְרַבְנָה בָּנוֹת צִלְפָּחַד בְּנֵי-חֶפְרָה בֶּן-נִלְעָד בֶּן-מְכִיר בֶּן-מְנַשֶּׁה לְמִשְׁפַּחַת מְנַשֶּׁה בֶּן-יִוסֵּף וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת
בְּנֵיהֶם מַחֲלָה נֹחַ וְחֹגְלָה וּמִלְכָּה וְתִרְצָה: (ב) וַתַּעֲמִדְנָה לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה וּלִפְנֵי אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וּלִפְנֵי הַנָּשִׂאִם
וְכָל-הָעֵדָה פָּתַח אֱהֹל-מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר: (ג) אָבִינוּ מֵת בְּמִדְבָּר וְהוּא לֹא-יָהִי בְּתוֹךְ הָעֵדָה הַנוֹעָדִים עֲלֵה-
בְּעֵדֶת-קֶרֶחַ כִּי-בִחְטָאוֹ מֵת וּבָנִים לֹא-יָהִיו לוֹ: (ד) לָמָּה יִגְרַע שֵׁם-אָבִינוֹל מִתּוֹךְ מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ כִּי אֵין לוֹ בֶּן תִּהְיֶה-לּוֹ
אֲחֵזָה בְּתוֹךְ אָחִי אָבִינוּ: (ה) וַיִּקְרַב מֹשֶׁה אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטָן לִפְנֵי ה' (ו) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (ז) כֵּן בָּנוֹת
צִלְפָּחַד דִּבְרַתְנָתָן תִּתֵּן לָהֶם אֲחֵזָת נַחֲלָה בְּתוֹךְ אָחִי אֲבֵיהֶם וְהֶעֱבַרְתְּ אֶת-נַחֲלַת אֲבֵיהֶן לָהֶן:

The daughters of Zelophehad, of Manassite family—son of Hephher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh son of Joseph—came forward. The names of the daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the chieftains, and the whole assembly, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and they said,

“Our father died in the wilderness. He was not one of the faction, Korah’s faction, which banded together against GOD, but died for his own sin; and he has left no sons. Let not our father’s name be lost to his clan just because he had no son! Give us a holding among our father’s kinsmen!”

Moses brought their case before GOD, and GOD said to Moses, “The plea of Zelophehad’s daughters is just: you should give them a hereditary holding among their father’s kinsmen; transfer their father’s share to them.”



Facilitator prompts the group:

- The five daughters decided to act even though no one asked them to. What prompted them to come forward and ask for their inheritance? How if at all might their decision have been different had there just been one daughter rather than five?
- The leadership (God in this case) affirmed the daughters' claim to the land, which led to a change in the law for the daughters and future generations. How might taking responsibility for one situation help create lasting change for others now and in the future?
- When have you decided to take action to change something even when you were concerned that you would not make a difference, or you knew you might not live to see the future outcome? What helped you? How about a time when you did not take action? Why not?



ACTIVITY

Even without thinking about climate change, the various responsibilities we juggle in our lives can feel overwhelming. We might not be ready or able to begin focusing on responsibilities to the climate or the wider world around us. Or maybe we have another social justice issue that we are focusing on at the time being.

For those of us who do feel ready to take responsibility for the climate - or really any big issue, it is natural to feel unsure about where to begin. By focusing on the areas where we have the most control or influence, we can start small and build momentum toward meaningful change. Every action, no matter how small, can contribute to our larger world.

The "Sphere of Influence" framework can help us explore how we can take action around an issue that we care about. By mapping out what you can control, influence, collaborate on, and care about, we can gain clarity on your own responsibility to care for the climate, and where our actions can make the most impact.



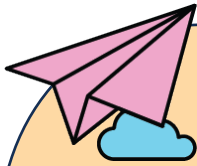
Facilitator Prompts with the following instructions:

- I want to invite you to take a look at the "Sphere of Influence" diagram.
- At the top of the diagram, you'll notice that there is a space for you to write out an issue that you are particularly passionate about (e.g; Wildfire Legislation, Recycling etc.). Go ahead and write the issue within climate change that you are most passionate about addressing:
 - **Example:** Recycle



- You'll notice that the diagram has four circles,
 - Innermost Circle- **Control:** *Actions I can take directly to support this issue (actions, choices).*
 - Second outermost circle - **Influence:** *Actions I cannot directly take but I can directly influence (opinions of peers, decisions).*
 - Third outermost circle - **Collaboration:** *Areas where you can collaborate with others in order to create an impact. (organizing)*
 - Fourth outermost circle - **Care:** *Actions I care about but cannot directly control (global issues, legislation, etc.)*
- Once you have reviewed the diagrams with the group, guide participants to complete the rest of the circles below.
 - **Control:** Within the innermost circle, what ways can you directly impact the issue at hand? What personal skills or gifts can you draw upon?
 - **Example:** Modeling what it looks like to Recycle, Forming a Recycling elective at my school
 - **Influence:** In the second innermost circle, what can you encourage others to do in support of the issue at hand?
 - **Example:** Encouraging others to Recycle.
 - **Collaboration:** In the third innermost circle, what can you accomplish by collaborating with others in or to support the issue at hand? Who might you reach out to?
 - **Example:** Organizing community initiatives around recycling
 - **Care:** What are issues that are deeply important, but beyond your ability to directly impact?
 - **Example:** Local or National Recycle Legislation
- Once you have completed your circle of influence, we invite you to share your responses with a partner and answer the following reflection questions.
- **Questions for Reflection:**
 - What did it feel like to complete this activity?
 - What did you notice about your responses?
 - Which of your responses felt empowering?
 - Which of your responses felt overwhelming?
 - What surprised you about your responses?
 - How did it feel to identify areas where you have control, influence, and an ability to collaborate with others?

5-10
min



REFLECT AND PROMPT ACTION

Now that you have had an opportunity to map out your own sphere of influence, I invite you to utilize the following prompts to explore your responsibility in taking action toward a specific climate change issue that matters most to you.



Facilitator prompts group:

Taking a look back at the Sphere of influence activity, I invite you to notice:

- In what sphere do you feel most inspired to take action? Why?
- In what sphere do you feel the greatest responsibility to act? Why?
- In what sphere do you feel the least responsibility to act? Where can you release some of your responsibility, knowing that there are limits to what we can do?
- How, if it all, has your understanding of responsibility towards climate change shifted? What do you believe contributed to that shift?