



JUDAISM

HAZON

UJA Federation of New York

Background I: 70 faces of the Jewish community

The Jewish community is famously diverse and multi-vocal. We have no Pope. We do have some chief rabbis... but so many of them that no single one speaks for more than a smallish proportion of the Jewish people. The same is true for the Prime Minister of Israel, the head of the Israeli supreme court, or the heads of the myriad Jewish organizations that exist. “Two Jews, three opinions” is a well-known phrase; less known is the line in the Talmud which speaks of “shivim panim l’Torah” – seventy faces of the Torah – and today there are many, many more than 70 faces of Jewish life and opinion around the world.

So there is no “long term plan” for the Jewish people, no single organization that could sensibly claim to write one, and no obvious mechanism for implementing such a plan if it existed. “ The remainder of this document was prepared by Hazon, at the request of ARC. It represents one particular face of Torah - a summary of some of what is happening in the Jewish world and of some of what we and some of our colleagues are working on. Different staffers or board members at Hazon, different leaders in other organizations, and Jewish people around the world, would each agree with some of this, disagree with some of this, and add their own face of Torah, in addition to what is here.

Background II: A word about Israel in relation to the long-term plan

Jewish people represent about 75% of the citizens of the State of Israel. And the Israeli Jewish community recently surpassed the American Jewish community as the largest in the world. Within the next twenty years or so, academic demographers expect that more than half of all the Jewish people in the world will be living in the land of Israel, for the first time since the Roman dispersion nearly two thousand years ago. Israel, tracing back to its founding declaration, is both “a Jewish state” and a democratic state

of all its inhabitants – including significant Muslim and Christian minorities.

It is thus the case that any Jewish long-term plan is not synonymous with Israeli policy in relation to the SDGs, yet at the same time it needs to include reference not only to what Israeli Jews are doing as individuals, but also to the role of Israeli NGOs and companies, and to some extent, the state of Israel itself. Most of these latter entities include non-Jewish staff and stakeholders – but that is true for non-Israeli NGOs also. (Hazon, rooted in Jewish tradition and in the Jewish community, is a US 501(c)(3) [i.e. registered charity] and we too have non-Jewish staff, non-Jewish participants, non-Jewish stakeholders and non-Jewish partners.)

The Jewish community and social justice

In the simplest and briefest of terms, almost all of the world's Jews live in western liberal democracies. (A century ago, there were significant Jewish communities across the Middle East and North Africa. Today there is a significant Jewish community in Morocco, a tiny Jewish community in Iran, and no Jewish community at all in, for instance, Iraq [birthplace of much of the Talmud] and Afghanistan.)

Overall, fewer than two in a thousand of people in the world are Jewish, but the Jewish community continues to punch above its weight in relation to critical issues of our time. Jewish people and organizations were disproportionately involved in the fights for civil rights in the United States and against apartheid around the world. Jewish activists have been over-represented in the fight for marriage equality. Per head of population, there are more Israeli start-ups focused on clean tech and water issues than from any other country in the world.

Jewish life continues to evolve, very quickly indeed. The nature of Jewishness in the 21st century is a central focus of organized Jewish life, and of public debate, across the Jewish world. Issues that relate to the Sustainable Development Goals touch upon significant aspects of the work of a wide range of NGOs in the Jewish world, as well as a growing number of privately held or publicly-listed companies that are founded or led by Jewish and/or Israeli entrepreneurs.

The Jewish community: the SDGs in relation to the particular and the universal

In different ways, significant focus on the Jewish world is (some of us would say, sadly) focused on what we might broadly term “defensive issues.” Diaspora Jewish communities – and diaspora Jewish organizations and leaders – are focused significantly on responding to assimilation on one side, and resurgent anti-Semitism on the other

hand, including a complex set of issues relating to BDS (“Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions,” in relation to Israel.)

Within Israel itself, there is huge focus on different aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate, with significant energy and attention focused on both peace and security, and a staggeringly wide range of political views and initiatives.

Before focusing, therefore, on the relationship of Jewish communities in relation to the SDGs in the wider world, it’s important briefly to focus on central foci in organized Jewish life. Broadly speaking the following is the case:

- In Israel, government policy and of NGO and religious activity are in a significant way focused on many of the SDG issues in relation to the Israeli population itself. This is true especially in relation to poverty; gender; equality; water issues; and the sustainability and resilience of cities. Addressing each of these issues is a central part of Israeli life. On one or two of these issues (LGBT equality; gender equality; water conservation; social safety networks), Israel ranks strongly on a world scale. In at least one (social inequality) Israel has become steadily less equal since the 1950s, and the topic has in recent years become a significant part of Israeli discourse.
- In the United States, by contrast (and even more so in smaller diaspora Jewish communities) until very recently, most attention was focused on “religious issues” narrowly construed – Jewish education, the evolution of synagogues, etc. Of the “GDP” of the US and UK Jewish communities, the largest amounts have in general gone to Jewish education and/or to initiatives in relation to Israel (and sometimes both: the largest philanthropic Jewish venture of the last 15 years has been Birthright Israel, which has raised and spent approaching a billion dollars to enable more than 250,000 young diaspora Jews to visit Israel.)
- In both Israel and the diaspora, there is a very significant “U” curve in relation to poverty and wealth. Both communities have, on one side, significant minorities who are economically successful and wealthy. And both communities have, on the other side, significant and growing numbers of people living in poverty, including ultra-Orthodox communities that are growing more quickly than any other sub-sector of the Jewish community, that are significantly under-represented in the labor force, and that have extensive poverty and reliance both on governmental and non-governmental welfare. [The demographic data is extremely striking. In New York City, still the largest single Jewish community in the world, the most recent study estimated that more than 60% of all Jewish children in New York under the age of 18 are Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox.]

ADDRESSING THE SDGs IN THE WIDER WORLD

It's against this backdrop that in both Israel and diaspora Jewish communities there has been increased focus on almost all the SDGs in the last ten years – though in some cases, from a fairly small base. For the purposes of this paper we have clustered the SDGs into two broad groups.

I. Addressing poverty and inequality

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Broad trends in the last decade:

Within the Jewish community:

- Significant initiatives focused on increases in poverty
- Significant initiatives focused on equality in relation to gender and LGBTQ issues
- A significant focus on (and fights over) a wide range of issues of equity in relation to critical fault-lines in Israeli society, including ultra-orthodox vs secular and Jews vs non-Jews.
- Growth of existing NGOs; the launch of some new ones

From the Jewish community, pointed outwards:

- American Jewish World Service has grown in the last decade to become a significant force in American Jewish life. The closest Jewish equivalent to the Peace Corps, it is working on a range of these issues around the world, involving direct support, advocacy and service. It's also one of the founders of the Jewish Social Justice

Roundtable, which now includes more than 20 progressive Jewish organizations, including Bend The Arc, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the Reform Movement's Religious Action Center, Hazon and others, many of which are seeking to mobilize the American Jewish community on a range of these issues.

- There is a small but strongly growing move to engage with many of these global issues on the part of the Jewish community in relation to service. Three major foundations recently founded a new umbrella organization called “Olam” (Hebrew for “world”) in order to build coordination and capacity amongst the already 40+ NGOs that are working on direct service, around the world.

II. Addressing environmental sustainability, food sovereignty and climate change

2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (taking note of agreements made by the UNFCCC forum)
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

Within and beyond the Jewish community:

These related areas have seen significant growth in the last decade:

In the United States, the field now known as JOFEE – Jewish Outdoor, Food & Environmental Education – has grown very sharply. There are now a number of significant JOFEE-focused organizations, including Hazon, the Leichtag Foundation, Pearlstone, Urban Adamah and Wilderness Torah. There are a growing number of farming projects in the Jewish community. Mazon (no relation to Hazon) is focused on advocacy in relation to food systems. A number of groups – including Hazon, Mazon and AJWS – co-founded the Jewish Working Group on the Farm Bill. The Jewish Social

Justice Roundtable is playing a significant convening role, and has expanded to more than two dozen organizations. There are now more than 60 Jewish CSAs in Hazon's network, thought to be the largest faith-based CSA network in the United States. Organizations such as the RAC [Religious Action Center of the Union for Reform Judaism] and JCPA [Jewish Council for Public Affairs, of which COEJL [the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life], continue to advocate on a wide range of environmental issues. Rabbi Arthur Waskow's Shalom Center has played a steadily prophetic role in raising issues that have subsequently been addressed or adopted by other (often larger) organizations in subsequent years.

American Jewish organizations are increasingly speaking out about climate change and its attendant issues. Two recent examples of this include the 2014 People's Climate March, of which one in 10 of the cosponsoring organizations was Jewish; and a recent statement by rabbis calling for strong action to address climate change, timed to the Papal Encyclical on climate change, which has garnered more than 400 rabbinic signatures to date (see "*Appendix*").

In Israel there are significant NGOs focused on environmental issues, including the Arava Institute, Heschel, the Israel Union for Environmental Defence, and Teva Ivri. Chaim v'Sviva ("Life & Environment") plays a central convening role. The New Israel Fund and Shatil have been strong supporters of a wide range of social justice issues, and the diaspora Federation system is also increasingly supporting related issues.

A very considerable part of the impact that Israel is having on these issues is coming from the private sector. The VC and private equity fields have grown dramatically in the last decade in Israel, and the bestselling *Startup Nation*, by Saul Singer and Dan Senor, has given a clear sense of this. The largest arena has been software and technology, broadly construed; after this there has been significant innovation in clean tech and water-related issues. In water, in particular, Israel – one of the most water insecure countries in the world – has made enormous strides in the last decade, and Israeli companies are playing a significant role in water-parched parts of the world – not just in Africa, but also in California and parts of the American southwest.

The future

The last decade has seen not only a proliferation of projects and NGOs in these areas, but has also seen growing coordination. In the next 7-year cycle of Jewish life – which runs from 2015 to 2022 – there are a number of coalitions and networks which are striving to increase impact and to coordinate more effectively. A series of trends, presently underway, are expected to strengthen.

These include:

- the process of greening Jewish institutions
- systemic attempts to integrate sustainability into the fabric of Jewish life
- greater coordination amongst organizations variously focused on social justice, JOFEE, and public service
- stronger relationships between Israel and the diaspora (and between Israeli and diaspora organizations)
- a general interest in and desire for more interfaith programs

By 2022, we hope for – and intend to work for –

- A Jewish community that is measurably healthier and more sustainable;
- A Jewish community that is demonstrably playing a role in making the world healthier and more sustainable for all;
- A Jewish community in which Jewish life has been strengthened and renewed by the work of the Jewish environmental movement

More specifically, by 2022, we would like to see (and in most cases are working towards):

Growth of the JOFEE movement – Jewish Outdoor, Food & Environmental Education – and recognition that it is a vital discipline in strengthening Jewish life.

We aim to build a strong and growing network of JOFEE- certified educators and JOFEE program alumni, and mechanisms for JOFEE leaders to interact with each other and with other key Jewish institutional leaders. JOFEE leaders should have a significant voice at major annual or biennial gatherings of the Jewish community. There should be a growing number of JOFEE educators working with schools, synagogues, JCCs, and camps to integrate teachings about food in relation to health, ethics, Jewish tradition, and Jewish history. There should be a growing number of JOFEE educators working with schools, synagogues, JCCs, and camps to integrate teachings about food in relation to health, ethics, Jewish tradition, and Jewish history; by 2022, at least 10% of all American Jewish institutions should have used JOFEE programs or curricula. That in turn should lead to more synagogue gardens, more community supported agriculture programs, more understanding of and engagement with issues of food justice, more students conducting Food Audits at their synagogues, etc. These activities should be seen not as niche programs but as core to how we transmit Jewish values into practice. (SDG Goals 14, 15, etc.)

Deeper and more extensive interfaith work around sustainability, food, and social justice.

What we first conceived as "the Jewish food movement" has gradually taken its place in what may now be thought of as "the faith-based food movement." The next seven years offers an opportunity to build relationships with other faith communities through the prism of food, both nationally and locally, with food strengthening the relationships between different faith and ethnic communities, and with faith communities strengthening food systems in this country. Similarly, we intend that that the Jewish Outdoor, Food, & Environmental Education (JOFEE) Network, and our constituent groups and leaders, will have steadily influenced other faith communities, and that we will in turn learn from best practice elsewhere. It is our hope that by 2022, at least two or three major religious networks (Catholics; evangelicals; black Baptists; Muslims; Sikhs, etc.) will have developed one or more of their own JOFEE-style programs, translated into their own religious context. We're interested in sharing what we have learned within the Jewish community, where possible, if our experience, materials or curricula may be of use to others. (*SDG Goals 4, 11, 16, 17*)

Jews engaging seriously in issues of food security and hunger.

The Jewish Working Group on the Farm Bill could/should become a platform for a wider and more sustained and intentional push for civic advocacy and formal lobbying efforts on food security and hunger. We hope ideally to see an evolving partnership between organizations such as AJWS, Challah for Hunger, Mazon and Hazon so that American Jews are raising and donating more dollars to help people directly in need. As a community we will work with others to support those whose disadvantage is invisibly connected to our own food choices: low wage farm workers, processing/packing house workers, truckers, hospitality/restaurant/hotel workers, etc. Jewish people will also participate in secular efforts to bring about a better food system nationally and locally through innovative programs and through changes in national, state and local law. When helpful, key Jewish leaders should be present at the secular advocacy group table. (*SDG Goals 1, 2, 8, 16*)

A working roadmap / clear point-of-entry to sustainability for Jewish organizations, through the Hazon Seal of Sustainability.

Most simply, the Hazon Seal of Sustainability is intended to be a process for Jewish institutions to green themselves in the areas of facilities, food, education, and advocacy. The Hazon Seal will function as a "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval" that a Jewish organization has met a set of criteria marking it as a good world citizen with regard to

its environmental practices and impact on climate change. We will offer incentives for organizations to participate and prizes for those organizations that show the greatest levels of progress. The Seal will make it easier for Jewish organizations to get the information they want, see the range of sustainable activities they could engage in, and receive the recognition they want and deserve for their efforts to bring their operations in line with their values. The Seal will help build on the tremendous success of the Jewish Greening Fellowship and Hazon's vast library of curricula and resources and that of a growing number of partners. We hope and intend that the Seal will be a dynamic process - that over a multi-year period it will provide pathways to significant transformation and engagement in the Jewish community. We have already begun laying the groundwork for the Seal, and expect to launch a pilot in spring 2016. By 2022, we hope that several hundred Jewish organizations in the United States will have participated in the Seal program, and country-specific versions of the Seal will have spread to the UK, Canada, and Israel. (*SDG Goals 7, 9, 11, 13, etc.*)

Jewish institutions considering waste and greenhouse gas emissions in every decision they make.

Dozens, if not hundreds, of Jewish organizations have established green teams/sustainability committees over the past seven years. These committees have advocated for sustainable practices within and beyond the walls of institutions. Drawing on the experiences of these Jewish organizations, by 2022 we hope that one-third of all Jewish organizations will have established a green team. The sustainability committee can be a facilities-focused team, a climate change advocacy task force; it can be professional or volunteer. More than 10% of synagogues should produce zero waste and more than 10% should be carbon neutral. Institutions will approach capital improvement projects with an eye to environmentally-conscious infrastructure development. Hazon will continue to serve as an ally in the climate justice movement, as embodied by our participation and leadership in the People's Climate March, in which 1 in 10 of the sponsoring organizations was Jewish. Our educational materials will incorporate climate change lessons. (*SDG Goals 7, 13*)

Jewish groups investing in and advocating for renewable forms of energy

One way of addressing our own responsibility for climate change by the time of the 2022 shmita year would be for households, congregations, denominations, and federations to invest in spending that helps heal our planet. The Shalom Center and the signatories to its "Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis" have called on the Jewish community to: purchase wind-borne or solar-born rather than coal-fired electricity to light our homes, synagogues, and community centers; encourage Federations to offer

grants and loans to allow Jewish organizations to solarize buildings; shift our bank accounts from banks that invest in deadly carbon-burning to community banks and credit unions that invest in local neighborhoods, especially those of poor and minority communities; move endowment funds from supporting carbon to supporting renewables; insisting that our tax money no longer be used to subsidize fossil fuel but instead to subsidize the swift deployment of renewable energy; and mobilizing to convince our legislators to institute a legislative solution to the climate crisis. (*SDG Goals 7, 8, 13*)

A return to natural planning cycles and simple rhythms, centered around the Shmita year.

We intend to nurture a model in which we celebrate Shabbat and holidays – Jewish and secular, national and personal – with great joy, gatherings, song and wonderful feasts; but during the other six days of the week we'll eat more lightly and more simply. Furthermore, the next seven year period in American Jewish life will be the first one in which a consciousness of shmita permeates all seven years of the cycle; thus during the period from 2015 to 2021 we intend to hold an extensive conversation and planning process for how the next shmita year – in 2022 – could or should be honored across the community. (*SDG Goal 12*)

More Jewish farmers and more sharing of Jewish farming wisdom.

The Leichtig Foundation, in Encinitas, California, is playing a significant role in convening and supporting the emerging field of Jewish farming, one of the core elements of the JOFEE world. By 2022, Adamah, Urban Adamah, Pearlstone, Amir, the Jewish Farm School and other equivalent programs should continue to grow and strengthen – providing hands-on knowledge about food, farming and Jewish tradition, and equipping young adults to move on to become leaders and role models within American Jewish life and in the wider Food Movement. We will support small farmer advocacy organizations in their work, and support small farms directly through thoughtful consumer choices. (*SDG Goals 2, 15*)

Taking on sugar and its role in unhealth.

By 2022, we should have started to take on sugar as a significant issue in Jewish life. By reducing the amount of sugar, processed food, and heavily packaged food that we serve at synagogue gatherings or at our organizations' meetings, by removing bottles of soda and other sweetened beverages from our tables, and by increasing the selection of seasonal, fresh fruit and vegetables we serve at our functions, we should be making it

easier for everyone to fuel their body and minds for health and wellness. We aim to embrace and celebrate a holistic view of health and wellness as a focus for the Jewish community. (SDG Goals 3, 12)

Jews consuming fewer animal products.

We have begun a significant partnership with the Humane Society of North America, to try to rally the Jewish community to take on the issues of animal welfare in the USA. Seven years from now, we hope that the Jewish community will consume less meat, seafood, eggs, and dairy. Our motto should simply be, as Michael Pollan says, "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants." When people do choose to consume animal products, we should educate ourselves and seek out options from sources with high animal welfare standards, sustainable farming practices, outside of industrial confined animal operations. Sales of ethical, local, kosher meat should continue to grow as a proportion of kosher meat sales. Individuals should incorporate vegetarian and ethical sourcing considerations when shopping and eating at restaurants. Jewish organizations should cut in half the number of events at which meat is served, and will offer real options for vegetarian and vegan meals at non-vegetarian functions. More than 20% of synagogues ought to be hosting regular "Green Kiddushes," prioritizing vegetarian, locally-grown, organic, fair trade food. (SDG Goals 2, 12, 13, 14, 15, etc.)

Growth in Jewish service, worldwide, with and on behalf of people and communities in need.

We hope and intend that with the support of OLAM, a broad coalition of partners will be working to support the world's most vulnerable communities. (SDG Goals 1, 17, etc.)

An exemplification of celebration and inclusion in the Jewish community.

We hope and intend that our work will provide a model of inclusion for the Jewish community. We aim to do our work with joy and with good humor. We delight that people are different and legitimately make different choices in their lives. JOFEE programming is about ethics, justice and environmental sustainability. It's also about family, memory, kashrut, culture, farming, energy, animals, baking, prayer, Israel, holidays, and Jewish law. We aim to increase the number of intergenerational programs and to work across denominational lines. We hope to learn, to act and to celebrate with people of all ages, backgrounds, preferences, and abilities, including those who are sometimes marginalized. And we hope and intend that strengthening inclusion within the Jewish community will equally involve creating open and thriving relationships with people of all faith traditions and none. (SDG Goals 4, 5, 16)

Postscript: a word about Hazon

Hazon, founded in 2000, works to create a healthier and more sustainable Jewish community, and a healthier and more sustainable world for all. We effect change through transformative experiences, thought-leadership and capacity-building. In 2013, we merged with Isabella Freedman and Teva, two other organizations we had worked with for many years. Most of our staff are in New York City and at the Isabella Freedman campus in Connecticut, but we also have staff in Boulder, Denver, Detroit, Philadelphia and San Diego.

We are part of a series of significant networks and partnerships:

- We are a network agency of UJA-Federation of New York, the largest Jewish organization in the USA;
- We work in close collaboration with Pearlstone, Urban Adamah and Wilderness Torah, in a 4-way partnership intended to help to strengthen the JOFEE field in the United States;
- We're members of the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable [mentioned above].
- We have strategic partnerships in Israel with the Heschel Sustainability Center and the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies.

Appendix – “The Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis”

A broad spectrum of rabbis from a diverse array of Jewish life have come together in a “Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis,” recognizing that climate change is bringing planetary crisis upon all human communities as well as much of the web of life on Earth. The statement, a product of the Shalom Center – and signed by more than 400 rabbis to date – seek to bring Jews into fuller study, feeling, prayer, and action to heal our wounded Earth, and issues a call to Jewish communities to address climate change in the coming years. We include an excerpt:

We come as Jews and rabbis with great respect for what scientists teach us – for as we understand their teaching, it is about the unfolding mystery of God’s Presence in the unfolding universe, and especially in the history and future of our planet. Although we accept scientific accounts of earth’s history, we continue to see it as God’s creation, and we celebrate the presence of the divine hand in every earthly creature.

Yet in our generation, this wonder and this beauty have been desecrated -- not in one land alone but 'round all the Earth. So in this crisis, even as we join all Earth in celebrating the Breath of Life that interweaves us all, we know all Earth needs not only the joyful human voice but also the healing human hand.

We are especially moved when the deepest, most ancient insights of Torah about healing the relationships of Earth and human earthlings, adamah and adam, are echoed in the findings of modern science.

The texts of Torah that perhaps most directly address our present crisis are Leviticus 25-26 and Deuteronomy 15. They call for one year of every seven to be "Shabbat Shabbaton" -- a Sabbatical Year -- and shmita -- a Year of restful Release for the Earth and its workers from being made to work, and of Release for debtors from their debts.

In Leviticus 26, the Torah warns us that if we refuse to let the Earth rest, it will "rest" anyway, despite us and upon us -- through drought and famine and exile that turn entire peoples into refugees.

This ancient warning heard by one indigenous people in one slender land has now become a crisis of our planet as a whole and of the entire human species. Human behavior that overworks the Earth -- especially the overburning of fossil fuels --- crests in a systemic planetary response that endangers human communities and many other life-forms as well...

So we call for a new sense of eco-social justice -- a tikkun olam, healing of the world, that includes tikkun tevel, the healing of our planet. We urge those who have been focusing on social justice to address the climate crisis, and those who have been focusing on the climate crisis to address social justice.

As in this very year we live through a shmita year, we are especially aware that Torah calls for Hak'hey! -- assembling the whole community of the People Israel during the Sukkot after the shmita year, to hear and recommit ourselves to the Torah's central teachings.

So we encourage Jews in all our communities to gather on the Sunday of Sukkot this year, October 4, 2015, to explore together our responsibilities toward the Earth and all humankind, in this generation.