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June 22, 2015

Blessed is the One who enables us and our spiritual sisters and brothers to dwell together in unity.

Unity, though often preached by Catholicism and Judaism alike, has been unevenly practiced over the past two millennia. Our ancestors could scarcely have imagined this moment, when from the highest leadership levels to the pews, coordination and concerted action around the world's greatest challenges is the new norm.

Our communities won't and needn't agree on everything -- within the Jewish or Catholic worlds, much less between us! But on a wide range for social teaching -- social justice, racial equality, worker's rights, human dignity -- Jewish and Catholic thought aligns closely, and our institutions work arm-in-arm to bring those values to the wider world. Nowhere is that more obvious than with the challenge of climate change.

Since the founding of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment in 1992, America's organized Jewish and Catholic communities have been working together. The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, representing the widest range of Jewish denominations and organizations, has stood alongside the US Catholic Conference of Bishops time and again, from congregations to conferences to Capitol Hill. And we have learned much from one another.

Now, Pope Francis' first encyclical (authoritative teaching) Laudato Sii, about climate change, shines unprecedented light on this central concern. The globe's billion or so Catholics, as well as the eyes of the world, are on the Vatican. A conversation about religion and the environment is unfolding in the media and the public sphere like never before. Our Catholic friends have provided their interfaith partners a holy opportunity to be heard as the encyclical is released (June 18th) in advance of the papal visit to the US (late September around Yom Kippur and Sukkot) and the critical climate negotiations in Paris (at the end of 2015).

This resource guide provides everything you need to know to take advantage of this extraordinary moment -- background on Jewish-Catholic relations and interfaith dialogue; Jewish texts and values informing a response to climate change; some of the basic climate science which has long driven both Jews and Catholics toward immediate action; and more. We hope you will use it (along with additional resources at www.coejl.org/2015 and elsewhere) as you make your and our community's voice heard alongside that of our Catholic partners.
Our key message is indeed shared -- we act with 'the fierce urgency of now' around intergenerational concern, social justice, and ecological sustainability:

* Intergenerational, or Ledor Vador, for religion is the only sphere asking not about quarterly earnings or biennial elections, but about impact on the third and fourth generation (see Ex. 20 and 34), which echoes the hundred-year presence of the carbon we put into the atmosphere from our one time use of fossil fuels.

* Social, for we can never separate our concern for the poor and vulnerable from our concern over the planet, and over our own grandchildren -- we are called to pursue justice (Deut. 16), even as the scourge of climate change falls heaviest on those who did the least to create the current crisis, and are least able to adapt to a warming world.

* And ecological, for our own survival is wrapped up in the flourishing of the rest of Creation, which we are told repeatedly (e.g. Ps. 104 and 150) has its own integrity and its own right to exist -- though uniquely created in the divine image, we are but one of millions of interconnected species (see Gen. 1-2), and we bear unique responsibility.

This Fall we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the key Second Vatican document, Nostra Aetate, which introduced a seismic shift in history: in affirming Judaism as a spiritual path, and finally quashing old notions of collective guilt for supposedly scriptural sins, the Catholic Church did a real act of tikkun olam (world repair). It does so again with the new encyclical, and this time explicitly invites the participation of people of all faiths, ours included. Let us accept this rare and necessary invitation with gusto. Let it be a centerpiece of the coming High Holy Days, and a focus of our energies going forward.

Please join us in this most sacred effort toward Sustainability, Justice, and Spirituality -- a powerful combination of values and practices, deeply shared between these great traditions, now in the public eye like never before. We have no time to lose. And we have no less than a redeemed, sustained, life-giving world to gain.

With hope and faith,

Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb
Chairperson, Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
June 22, 2015

We often speak of the importance of the Jewish value of *Tikkun Olam* (Repairing the World). Together, we confront poverty, support human rights, fight discrimination, and protect Israel and Jewish communities around the world. However, when it comes to protecting the environment, the term has a more direct meaning. The effects of global climate change surround all of us, and only together can we begin to approach the challenge that lies in front of us. Judaism, like many other faiths and traditions, has a rich set of theology, teachings, and traditions that promote environmental stewardship, and many resources are available in this guide and online. Now is the time to put our teachings into action, to do the hard work of repairing the world. And we can’t do that alone. But more importantly, we wouldn’t want to.

Empowered and motivated by our Jewish values, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) and its Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) operate on the “community relations” model. We reach out beyond our own Jewish community to former partnerships with other community stakeholders. Through our work with other faith, business, labor, community, civil society, civil rights groups -- just to name a few -- we build relationships that model the type of participatory, pluralistic, just, and engaged society we strive to build broadly. Our advocacy and activism is powerful, and so are the bonds we build through our joint work.

On June 18, Pope Francis shared his encyclical (a formal Catholic teaching) on the environment. This presents us a unique opportunity to collaborate and partner with the Catholic community. This guide includes key resources on the community relations model, Jewish-Catholic relations, and climate change and environmental issues. Over the next few months, we will continue to update this document with additional materials. We hope that it forms the platform for community engagement and relationship building.

It is no secret that we live in complicated times. Just as the sea levels rise, income inequality is growing and Israel is under threat in a volatile Middle East. Our challenges are great, and only by reaching out to our friends will be able to confront them. Together, we have a lot of repairing to do.

Sincerely,

Jared Feldman  
Vice President, and Washington Director
Spiritual Roots of the Environmental Crisis

By: Rabbi Yonatan Neril [1]

In our times we are beginning to witness the planet's ecological balance weakening due to human influence: rainforests shrinking, deserts expanding, hurricanes intensifying, the planet heating. What is driving the deterioration of the natural world? To be sure, there are physical reasons, yet to answer 'fossil fuels' or 'wood use' or even 'consumerism' would provide only partial answers. In order to truly understand a problem, we need to look under its surface to understand the root causes. In regard to the great loss of the First and Second Temples, the Jewish sages focus not on the destroying armies but on the spiritual deterioration which made way for the destruction of the physical structure.[2] For many ecological issues, the root issues beyond the physical symptoms lie in the spiritual health of human beings.

If one only sees physical causes, one may incorrectly view them as the only reason for an effect occurring. The response to the problem, then, will also be limited to the physical level alone. Yet if we neglect the underlying spiritual source, the problem will keep reemerging in different physical forms, growing out of the underlying root. On the other hand, as Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet (the Rashba, Spain, 13th century) taught, when you address the roots of a problem, the outer problems will naturally fall away.[3]

Over the last decades we have seen and at some level addressed numerous environmental challenges, from reducing the depletion of the ozone layer to decreasing garbage through recycling campaigns. Still, environmental problems continue to spring up: climate change, deforestation, water insecurity. This is because we have not addressed our environmental challenges at the root.

Our usual pattern today is to turn to scientists and politicians for technological solutions to our environmental challenges. If the problem is too much carbon in the atmosphere and too much fossil fuel use, the solution must be hybrid or electric cars, incandescent light bulbs, and other technological solutions. Yet these solutions are not sufficient to address today’s global problems. For example, a report from the McKinsey Global Institute cited how China relies on coal-burning power plants to produce as much as 85% of its electricity. The report estimated that were China to replace gasoline-powered cars with similar-size electric cars, it would only reduce the greenhouse emissions from those cars by 19 percent.[4] This is because the electric cars would draw on electricity generated by burning coal. Scientists have stated that humanity must reduce its emissions by many times that amount in order to reduce the impact of climate change.

Beyond the physical causes, the widespread degradation of the natural world indicates that our way of life is out of balance. Thus the environmental crisis also reflects a spiritual crisis. Human-caused disruptions to the natural world emerge from the inner imbalance within billions of human beings. The change required of us to correct this is, to a significant degree, of a spiritual nature. This insight may be one of the most important contributions of a Jewish environmental approach.
What are the roots of our contemporary environmental challenges? There are many. One that we can all address is learning to take responsibility for our actions. As the Torah teaches, G-d placed humans in the Garden of Eden l’ovdah uleshomra, 'to work it and protect it.' Rabbi Shlomo Riskin teaches that to be a shomer (a protector) means to be responsible. His rabbi, Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik taught this core Jewish value: I am responsible, therefore I am. Being responsible and taking responsibility is core to being human. This is very clear from Cain's response to God when asked of Abel's whereabouts: "Am I my brother's keeper?" The term used is shomer, in the same sense of “protection” mentioned in the Garden of Eden. The Bible resoundingly answers, yes!

Our failure to take responsibility for our actions on a planet of seven billion people has major environmental consequences today. We use the resources of the world – trees, mineral ores, petroleum – without sufficient attention to how these resources are produced, transported, and disposed of. We likely do not see the impacts on our air and water and on people’s health in faraway places.

To awaken the Jewish value of being responsible, we must broaden our perspective to include people we do not know, and the children of the next generation. You can try to address this root in your own life by expanding your sense of responsibility for others and your small, invisible impacts on them. Then, try to think of one specific action you can do to take on greater responsibility for how you live and consume.

We will use our resources more responsibly if we can be attentive to the broader effects of our actions. Let us live up to the challenge.

**Rabbi Yonatan Neril** founded and directs Jewish Eco Seminars, which engages and educates the Jewish community with Jewish environmental wisdom. He has worked with Canfei Nesharim for the past six years in developing educational resources relating to Judaism and the environment.

[1] The author acknowledges Evonne Marzouk for her assistance with this article.


[3] Chidushei HaRashba to Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Nida, p. 11a. See also Beit Yosef to Tur, Yoreh Deah184:6.

The Science of Climate Change

By: Dr. Daniel Ziskin

Everybody knows what weather means. What’s the temperature? Is it raining? Snowing? Just poke your head outside and you’ve got weather. Weather is the instantaneous atmospheric conditions we experience. Climate, however, is something different. Climate is the average of the weather over time and space. But taking the average of a constantly changing and location-specific phenomenon is complex. Are we talking about a monthly average? Seasonal? Yearly? Of a county? A state? The northern hemisphere, or globally? Climate depends on the temporal and spatial domain you’ve selected so there isn’t just one climate. To further complicate the issue, suppose we are talking about the global mean of annual surface temperature. If it is stated that this value is increasing by one degree, it doesn’t mean that it is increasing everywhere by that amount. Some places will be getting much warmer than other places. Some places, due to shifts in wind and precipitation patterns, might even cool a little bit. In terms of the observed climate change which will be described below, it is also quite likely that we will see colder winters even as the average temperature increases.

Basic Concepts

Climate change refers to a drift in the average temperature over time. What would cause the average temperature to change with time? A stable climate exists when heating and cooling rates are in balance. They are almost never in balance at any one time or place. It’s usually getting hotter or colder at any one place. But globally, over a long enough time span, if heating and cooling are balanced then the average temperature remains constant. Over the last 1,000 years, we have seen a somewhat stable global average temperature, but there has been a rapid increase in temperature over the last century. This observed temperature increase in climate indicates that the heating of the planet is no longer in balance with the cooling.

Climate change is more than just temperature. It also includes issues such as precipitation patterns (such as droughts or monsoons), wind, vegetation, wildlife habitat and risk of wildfires. One particular ancillary consequence of climate change is in the frequency and severity of storms. Storms are a result of instability of atmospheric conditions. For example, if a mass of cold dense air aloft is supported by warm buoyant air near the surface it can become gravitationally unstable. The heavier cold air falls and the warm surface air rises. This is called convection and usually causes massive downpours and thunderstorms. In a warming climate, where the surface air is heated beyond current rates, we can expect more of these types of storms and they are predicted to be more intense.

Heating

The fundamental heat source of the Earth is the sun. The sun’s rays arrive at the top of the Earth’s atmosphere. About a third of the sunlight hits the tops of clouds and is immediately reflected back out to space. The rest passes through the atmosphere and hits the surface. When the sunlight hits the surface, some of the light is reflected back out and the rest is absorbed. The absorbed portion is the energy that heats the Earth. The amount of sunlight that is absorbed compared to what is reflected
depends on the surface reflectivity. For example, cement is reflective so little energy is absorbed, whereas asphalt is dark and absorbs more sunlight. Test this yourself on a hot summer day. You might be able to walk barefoot on the sidewalk when the blacktop of the street is painfully hot. This happens on a global scale, too. Dark surfaces like the ocean absorb a lot of heat. Bright surfaces like snow reflect a lot.

Although there are some variations in the sun’s energy output, primarily due to the 11-year solar cycle, it is generally a constant source of heat. Solar variations cannot explain the observed climate change as is sometimes claimed. Changes in cloudiness and changes in land use have a larger effect on the heating rate of the Earth than the solar cycle. Likewise, there are temporary disruptions due to events like volcanoes or smoke from enormous fires that tend to reduce the heating rate by creating large artificial clouds that reflect light. The heating of the Earth at the top of the atmosphere is, for the scope of this article, constant. However, the amount of light that is reflected relative to the amount absorbed is changing.

Cooling

As the sun heats the planet’s surface, the Earth cools itself by sending off energy into space. The cooling has to stay in balance with the heating or the temperature will change. The surface gives off heat and the hotter the surface temperature, the more heat is given off. Of the heat that passes through the atmosphere, some of it escapes to space and some is absorbed by the atmosphere. When the energy is absorbed by the atmosphere it is re-emitted both up and down. The downward component contributes to the heating of the surface while the upward component is cooling.

How much heat is absorbed by the atmosphere? That depends on the amount of greenhouse gases. Greenhouse gases are constituents of the atmosphere that absorb and trap heat. The most common is water vapor (about 2 percent of the atmosphere). Water vapor is the cause of most of the greenhouse effect. However, there are some wavelengths of infrared light that can pass through the water vapor and escape to space, cooling the surface. These “windows” in the infrared spectrum are transparent, just like the atmosphere is transparent to visible sunlight. So if water vapor is the major greenhouse gas, what’s the big deal about carbon dioxide or methane or other greenhouse gases? Carbon dioxide exists at a much lower concentration of the atmosphere — about 0.4 percent — than water vapor, but it is a powerful greenhouse gas because it absorbs light in the window regions of the spectrum that water vapor doesn’t. So a little bit of carbon dioxide absorbs and re-emits a lot of heat. The concentration of carbon dioxide has increased from about 280 parts per million at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the mid 18th century to a 2011 value of 392 parts per million. Climate scientists are convinced that the increased concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is the major cause of the recent increase in temperature that is shown in Figure 1. Carbon dioxide is a naturally occurring gas in the atmosphere. As stated above, it existed at a concentration of about 280 parts per million prior to humanity’s decision to utilize the energy embedded in fossil fuels — coal, methane and petroleum. There are massive exchanges of this gas between the ocean and atmosphere and between the plants of the world. However, when we burn fossil fuels we add a small but significant unbalanced contribution to the atmosphere. Let’s use a bank account as an analogy. If every month you deposit about $5,000 and your monthly expenses are $4,990, every month you generate a net positive amount of $10. Even though that’s small relative to the flow of money, over time the average balance will increase. That’s what’s happening to the concentration of carbon
dioxide in the atmosphere. The concentration seems to be increasing by about 2 parts per million, or less than 1 percent, per year. Much ado is made these days about the number 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide (i.e. 350.org). This number is significant because it is believed to be the largest concentration we can sustain and still avoid catastrophic consequences of climate change (such as melting of the polar ice caps). The fact that we have significantly exceeded this number — our atmosphere stood at 393 parts per million as of 2011 — suggests that modestly reducing our emission rates will not avert severe climate change.

Predictions

It might seem as if climate science is all just basic physics, and it would be if the Earth was just a floating rock in space like the moon. But instead, the Earth is a complex and dynamic place. Positive feedback loops are ways in which small disturbances are amplified into large signals. We are all unfortunately familiar with the screech of microphone feedback. That occurs when a sound is amplified and the microphone picks up that sound and amplifies it again, and then it picks up the amplified sound and amplifies it again, and so on ad nauseam. The Earth’s climate also has similar positive feedback loops. Here are two examples:

- The sea ice that covers the Arctic Ocean is melting in the summer time. As more dark water is exposed, as compared to reflective sea ice, then more sunlight is absorbed. This leads to more heating and consequently more melting of the sea ice.
- Massive reserves of methane — a potent greenhouse gas — are frozen in the Siberian tundra. As the climate warms, some of this frozen ground thaws, releasing the methane, which increases the greenhouse effect, further warming the planet, which in turn thaws more tundra.

The magnitude of responses such as these to the initial climate change we’ve observed so far is difficult to quantify, and that is why climate scientists are uncertain about the speed and ferocity of future climate change. There also are other factors about the Earth’s climate system that confound simple predictions:

- How much heat is being stored in the deep ocean rather than increasing the surface temperature?
- Will the massive ice sheets on Greenland and Antarctica continue to melt slowly or will they slip quickly into the ocean?
- Will global cloudiness change in response to a changing climate and, if so, how?
- Will the patterns of precipitation change and, if so, how?
- Will the changes in polar ice melting change ocean circulation patterns?
- How will society respond to climate change? Will we significantly reduce our present and future emissions?

Questions such as these are the fuel for vigorous scientific research and make it challenging to provide a simple prediction about future climate change. Despite the high degree of uncertainty about
exactly what the future climate state may be, some trends are already discernible. In addition to warmer average surface temperatures, other worrisome observations include:

- A rapidly shrinking summertime arctic ice cap.
- Sea-level rise.
- An increase in the severity of Atlantic hurricanes.

**Conclusion**

There is little scientific debate about the basic physics of climate change. How the Earth’s climate system will respond to warming makes predictions of the future climate conditions uncertain.

Heating is nearly constant, but cooling is diminished due to the increased concentration of greenhouse gases. This imbalance between heating and cooling is the cause of the observed increase in temperature relative to historic (pre-Industrial Revolution) values.

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**Dr. Daniel Ziskin** is the founder and president of Jews of the Earth in Boulder, Colo., and is a transportation specialist at Boulder Climate Action Network. Previously he worked at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Geophysical Data Center, the National Center for Atmospheric Research, and the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center’s Distributed Active Archive Center. A former member of the board of directors of the Green Zionist Alliance, Ziskin earned his doctorate in physics at Johns Hopkins University, where he wrote his dissertation on climate change.
Social Justice and Climate Change

By Rabbi Jill Jacobs

The rabbis of the Talmud ask the following question: When the people of a town decide to build or repair a guard wall, how much should each resident pay? Perhaps the wealthiest residents should pay the most, as they can best afford to shoulder the burden. On the other hand, maybe the people who live closest to the wall should pay more as they will benefit most, since thieves or murderers who enter the town are likely to target the first houses they encounter. “But wait,” the residents of these wall-hugging homes may say, “we’d never have bought these homes if we could’ve afforded to live where it’s safe, in the middle of town.” “That’s true for some of you,” the wealthy residents may respond. “But some of you chose to live near the edge of the city just because you like it there.” Or: “We don’t even need the wall — we feel safe enough already.” While the Talmudic discussion (Bava Batra 7b) remains indecisive, most commentators conclude that the wealthiest residents should contribute the most, regardless of where they live. And only in the case in which two people have an identical household income should proximity to the walls be factored into the calculation of responsibility. (For example, see Rabbenu Tam, Maggid Mishnah on Rambam, Mishnah Torah Hilkhot Sh’khenim 6:4, and Joseph Caro, Beit Yosef Choshen Mishpat 163:3.) This Talmudic discussion comes to mind when I think about who bears the burden of our environmental choices.

When we think about climate change, we often think in terms of dramatic shifts in the natural world: melting glaciers, heat waves, tornadoes and earthquakes. One might think that changes in nature affect us all equally. But in fact, poor and non-white populations — both in the United States and around the world — disproportionately pay the price for our overuse of natural resources.

For example:

- People without access to air conditioning or cars are far more likely to die during heat waves, which are hotter and more frequent because of climate change;
- Decreases in crop production because of climate change may result in low-wage agricultural workers losing their jobs;
- By 2030, 17 million Bangladeshis may become homeless due to cyclones and flooding, all worsened because of climate change;
- By 2080, more than 290 million more Africans may contract malaria due to the increased mosquito breeding grounds in Africa anticipated as a result of climate change.

While the wealthiest individuals, corporations, and nations use far more than their share of our natural resources, the poorest individuals and nations will pay the price in lives, healthcare costs and a decline in their standards of living. On a local level, low-income communities in the United States already suffer physically and financially from smaller scale environmental decisions. For example, substandard housing stock and the nearby placement of waste transfer stations, bus depots, factories
and power plants all contribute to high levels of asthma among low-income children. Asthma, in turn, leads to missed days of school, missed work for parents, high medical bills — and, in some cases, death. And hazardous waste plants, chemical-producing factories and mountaintop removal mining practices all lead to high levels of cancer and other diseases in low-income communities.

Do we allow those who live “close to the wall,” as Talmudic parlance would have it, pay the cost for our over-consumption? Or will we take the rabbinic challenge, and insist that those with more resources take greater responsibility for protecting the health and safety of everyone in our communities? And how much are we willing to pay to guarantee that everyone can live in health and economic security?

Many Jewish communities already have engaged in greening projects. We have changed the light bulbs in our homes and synagogues. We have installed the solar ner tamid— eternal light — in our sanctuaries. We have stopped printing newsletters. All of these greening projects are important. But they are not enough. If we are to save lives, we also must get out of our buildings and fight for environmental legislation that protects the lives and the livelihoods of the most vulnerable. This means ensuring that low-income neighborhoods aren’t burdened with more than their fair share of waste transfer stations, incinerators, power plants and other sources of pollution — even if this means accepting that some of these structures may pop up in wealthier neighborhoods. This means working for stricter environmental controls on corporations, which use far more resources than either private households or Jewish institutions. And this means talking to our elected representatives about why we, as Jews, believe that business interests should not take priority over the health, safety and prosperity of ordinary people. You may have changed your light bulbs, but now it’s time to change the laws. The wealthiest among us — corporations and individuals — need to step up and take responsibility for the effect their decisions have on the poorest among us. Like the city dwellers of the Talmud, we need to protect the lives of everyone living in our communities.
Thou Shalt Conserve Energy

By: Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb

“Thou shalt conserve energy” is not a biblical commandment, narrowly speaking, but it’s close. After all, the Torah’s 529th (530th by some counts) commandment, *bal taschit*, has long been commonly understood to mean “thou shalt not waste,” a principle that as far back as the Talmud specifically includes not wasting energy. Other laws and ideas point in this direction as well. While of course energy conservation is not the consistently overriding consideration in such a gloriously wide ranging tradition where other values are also at play, but conserving energy is squarely within our tradition — a central concern. To understand how scholars at the time of the Talmud, more than 1,500 years ago, could mandate energy efficiency as a matter of Jewish law, we must grasp the legal category of *bal taschit* — literally “concerning destruction,” and figuratively “do not waste.” It originates with Deuteronomy 20:19, which tells us not to cut down an enemy’s trees during a siege. Tradition reasoned that if it’s forbidden even in wartime, when the military advantage gained might affect soldiers’ lives, then we surely should not cut down trees wantonly in ordinary situations. Since the law was specific to fruit trees, the economic interpretation became “fell them only when the benefit is markedly greater than the value of all the fruit they might ever yield,” a calculus that tilts toward conservation now that we know how trees impart value far beyond their fruit, such as by providing habitat, sequestering carbon, preventing erosion, offering shade, generating oxygen and bestowing beauty. As Dr. Eilon Schwartz writes in his masterful article on the subject in the book “Trees, Earth and Torah: A Tu B’Shvat Anthology,” the rabbis of the Talmud “did not understand *bal taschit* as a precept solely concerned with fruit trees, but rather as a far-reaching principle which defines our responsibilities and obligations to the Created world.” In good Talmudic fashion, some scholars were more concerned with human comfort or profit, while others saw inherent value in conservation and minimizing consumption. Though the first group approached use of Creation in a human-centered or anthropocentric way, Schwartz writes that “communitarian positions on the environment nevertheless remain within an anthropocentric view.” In other words, whether you think that nature is here for human benefit or that Creation exists for its own sake, Judaism bids us to conserve in any case. And Rav Zutra, a 4th century Babylonian scholar, specifically bade us to conserve fossil fuel. In a discussion of lamps, (Babylonian Talmud: Shabbat 67b), Zutra says simply that “whoever covers an oil lamp, or uncovers a naphtha lamp, violates *bal taschit*.” The 11th century commentator Rashi explains that such a violator “speeds up the burning process” by failing to cover or uncover the flame in the way that minimizes how much of either type of fuel is burned. By implication, according to Jewish law, consumers are responsible to understand their fuel burning appliances and their fuels, and to employ the best available technology and methods for conserving that fuel as much as possible. Beyond lamps, most modern machines are powered by far away carbon intensive coal combustion or by gasoline set internally ablaze. Though few authorities on Jewish law have fully extended Zutra’s logic to today’s fossil fuel use, it’s easy to see how Energy Star certified appliances might be mandated, gas guzzlers and sport utility vehicles forbidden, and strict regimens for heating, cooling and lighting adopted. Such conservationist steps not only adhere to the law of *bal taschit*, but also comply with larger expectations that we be enlightened stewards of Creation — from the call to “serve and guard” the land in Genesis 2:15, to the concept of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael*, making “The Land” as habitable and sustainable as possible. We are also reminded of the Torah commandment to
“put a parapet (low railing) around the roof” (Deuteronomy 22:8), the basis of what ecologists call
the Precautionary Principle, reminding us that public safety and health must come before private
profits. Such a precautionary approach certainly should guide our response to today’s climate crisis,
in which wasteful energy use drives ever more massive adverse impacts on the poor, on the planet,
and on our progeny. To aid and abet the rapid warming of Earth goes against a host of Jewish values
— from “love your neighbor” (Leviticus 19:18) to “choose life that you and your descendants may
live” (Deuteronomy 30:19), to “seek peace and pursue it” (Ps. 34). In order to defend these values,
and to limit the impact of climate change, we must return to the conservationist logic of Rav Zutra.
According to the medieval Sefer Hachinich (530), adherence to bal taschit is an ethical litmus test:
“Righteous people of good deeds are aghast at any wanton waste, and do all in their power to stop it,”
while “the wicked are not thus; they delight in destroying the world even as they destroy
themselves.” In his book, “Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances,” 19th century
German scholar Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch deemed the command to conserve “the first and most
general call of God.” Conservation is a core Jewish practice. Energy conservation is a
mitzvah. And by reducing the carbon footprint of our communities, by burning less fuel, we let the eternal light of
Torah shine ever more brightly.

Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb serves as the rabbi of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation
in Bethesda, Md., since 1997, during which time the synagogue built its U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency Energy Star Award winning building, installed a 43-kilowatt solar array and
planted an organic garden. In addition to serving on the governance committee of the Coalition on
the Environment and Jewish Life, Dobb serves as the chairperson of Greater Washington Interfaith
Power and Light and as co-chair of Religious Witness for the Earth. A co-founder of the Green
Zionist Alliance and a past president of the Washington Board of Rabbis, Dobb received his doctorate
from Wesley Theological Seminary.
Toward a Wiser Use of Energy

By: Rabbi Yonatan Neril[1]

One of the most significant sustainability challenges of our time is how we produce, use, and relate to energy. Today billions of people use fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas for energy. While use of these resources has greatly increased standards of living, it also has driven significant worldwide environmental impacts.

The Jewish tradition teaches us to use energy wisely. In some cases, wasting energy is a violation of Bal Tashchit, the prohibition not to waste excessively.[2] For example, the Talmudic Sage Mar Zutra stated, “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” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat 67b).[3]

Based on this teaching of the Talmud, the Ben Ish Chai (Rabbi Yosef Chaim ben Eliyahu, a major Iraqi nineteenth century authority on Jewish law, in Torah Lishma section 76), addressed a case in which a person lit two wicks in oil for use at night. The person left both wicks lit throughout the night in the event they woke up in the middle of the night and needed to see. In order to prevent waste, the Ben Ish Chai instructed the man to extinguish one wick before going to bed, since were he to get up at night, he would only need the light of one wick; keeping the second wick lit would be a transgression of Bal Tashchit, the prohibition not to destroy or waste. This response shows a high degree of concern for wasting energy in a case where someone does not derive benefit from an additional use of energy.

Similarly, the Ben Ish Chai discusses a case in which a person puts a large amount of oil before Shabbat in a lamp in their home in order for it to remain lit for all of Shabbat. He rejects this practice as a waste of oil and a transgression of Bal Tashchit, since the light from this lamp will not be of benefit to a person during the day in their sun-lit home. The mitzva of Bal Tashchit—do not destroy or waste—communicates a deeper Jewish message about the value of things: *there is never enough to waste even if there is plenty right now*. In this vein, Rabbi Samphson Raphael Hirsch teaches that G-d conveys through this commandment that “Only if you use the things around you for wise human purposes, sanctified by the word of My teaching, only then are you a mensch and have the right over them which I have given you as a human” (*Horeb*, sections 397, 398).

In our time, the above views may be relevant concerning leaving lights, heaters, air conditioners, or other appliances running for all of Shabbat or during the week when a person will not derive benefit from them. Another area where this may apply is in 'standby' appliance use in most homes. According to the Energy Analysis Department of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, “a surprisingly large number of electrical products—from TVs to microwave ovens to air conditioners—cannot be switched off completely without being unplugged… A typical American home has forty products constantly drawing power. Together these amount to almost 10% of residential electricity use” (http://standby.lbl.gov/ )
Energy use causes a host of serious problems such as air pollution, climate change, and mercury in fish. Studies show a correlation between air pollution and premature deaths due to lung cancer. Researchers conclude that when air pollution in a city declines, the city benefits with a directly proportional drop in death rates.[4]

Rabbi Ezra Batzri, former head of the Sephardi Rabbinical Court in Jerusalem, writes that a character trait of a righteous person (Midat Hasidut) is being careful about not damaging others even indirectly. [5] The Mishnah expresses this concern for protecting our neighbors by instructing that tanneries, which produce noxious odors, must be sufficiently distanced from human settlements so as not to negatively affect the air people breathe in the vicinity (Bava Batra 25a).

Today, we can use less energy and reduce the amount of coal and gasoline burned, diminish the health impacts from the resultant air pollution, and uphold the rabbinic advice not to damage others indirectly.[6] We might do so by driving less, eating less meat or globalized food, or taking fewer plane trips. It is in the realm of personal consumption that Jewish thought may best inform our energy and climate challenges today and empower us to change. To generate broader changes in people our people and our world, we must start with our own actions.

The prophet Isaiah repeatedly calls on the Jewish people to be a “light unto the nations.”[7] Rabbi David Kimchi (France, 1160-1235) explains that 'light' here refers to the Torah.[8] In our times, let us find inspiration and light in the profound teachings of our tradition that address our central challenges. And let the light that emerges from our example reveal to the world a new sustainable path.

Rabbi Yonatan Neril founded and directs Jewish Eco Seminars, which engages and educates the Jewish community with Jewish environmental wisdom. He has worked with Canfei Nesharim since 2006 in developing educational resources relating to Judaism and the environment.

[1] The author would like to thank Evonne Marzouk for her helpful comments in developing this article.
[2] For more on this topic, see the Jewcology resources on Bal Tashchit.
[3] Translation by Dr. Akiva Wolff based on commentary of Rashi. Rabbi Moshe Yitzhak Forehand, in Bircat Hashem p. 144, comments on the statement of Mar Zutra that the person's action is considered 'in a destructive manner' since a person does not use the portion of oil that is lit in order for it to burn faster. He also explains that Maimonides did not mention this case of wasting energy in his writing on Bal Tashchit because he may have found this case to be obvious and therefore implicated included through mention of the other cases (water, clothing, etc) In addition, Rabbi Forehand argues that the wasting of oil occurs as a direct consequence of the person's action (p. 348).
[5] Sefer Dinei Mamonot, 2nd chapter on damages
[6] For more on this topic, see the Jewcology resources on environmental damages.
[7] Isaiah 42:6 and elsewhere in the Book of Isaiah
[8] Commentary to Isaiah 42:6
Catholic Environmental Resources
**Laudato Si’ Summary**

Vatican City, 18 June 2015


“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (160). This question is at the heart of Laudato si’ (May You be praised), the anticipated Encyclical on the care of the common home by Pope Francis. “This question does not have to do with the environment alone and in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal”. This leads us to ask ourselves about the meaning of existence and its values at the basis of social life: “What is the purpose of our life in this world? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?” “Unless we struggle with these deeper issues – says the Pope – I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results”.

The Encyclical takes its name from the invocation of St. Francis, “Praise be to you, my Lord”, in his Canticle of the Creatures. It reminds us that the earth, our common home “is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us”. We have forgotten that “we ourselves are dust of the earth; our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.”

Now, this earth, mistreated and abused, is lamenting, and its groans join those of all the forsaken of the world. Pope Francis invites us to listen to them, urging each and every one – individuals, families, local communities, nations and the international community – to an “ecological conversion”, according to the expression of St. John Paul II. We are invited to “change direction” by taking on the beauty and responsibility of the task of “caring for our common home”. At the same time, Pope Francis recognises that “there is a growing sensitivity to the environment and the need to protect nature, along with a growing concern, both genuine and distressing, for what is happening to our planet”. A ray of hope flows through the entire Encyclical, which gives a clear message of hope. “Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home”. “Men and women are still capable of intervening positively”. “All is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start”.

Pope Francis certainly addresses the Catholic faithful, quoting St. John Paul II: “Christians in their turn “realise that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith””. Pope Francis proposes specially “to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home”. The dialogue runs throughout the text and in chapter 5 it becomes the instrument for addressing and solving problems. From the beginning, Pope Francis recalls that
“other Churches and Christian communities – and other religions as well – have also expressed deep concern and offered valuable reflections” on the theme of ecology. Indeed, such contributions expressly come in, starting with that of “the beloved Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew”, extensively cited in numbers 8-9. On several occasions, then, the Pope thanks the protagonists of this effort – individuals as well as associations and institutions. He acknowledges that “the reflections of numerous scientists, philosophers, theologians and civic groups, all […] have enriched the Church’s thinking on these questions”. He invites everyone to recognize “the rich contribution which the religions can make towards an integral ecology and the full development of humanity”.

The itinerary of the Encyclical is mapped out in n. 15 and divided into six chapters. It starts by presenting the current situation based on the best scientific findings available today, next, there is a review of the Bible and Judeo-Christian tradition. The root of the problems in technocracy and in an excessive self-centredness of the human being are analysed. The Encyclical proposes an “integral ecology, which clearly respects its human and social dimensions”, inextricably linked to the environmental question. In this perspective, Pope Francis proposes to initiate an honest dialogue at every level of social, economic and political life, that builds transparent decision-making processes, and recalls that no project can be effective if it is not animated by a formed and responsible conscience. Ideas are put forth to aid growth in this direction at the educational, spiritual, ecclesial, political and theological levels. The text ends with two prayers; one offered for sharing with everyone who believes in “God who is the all-powerful Creator”, and the other to those who profess faith in Jesus Christ, punctuated by the refrain “Praise be to you!” which opens and closes the Encyclical.

Several main themes run through the text that are addressed from a variety of different perspectives, traversing and unifying the text: the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policies, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle.

Chapter 1 – WHAT IS HAPPENING TO OUR COMMON HOME (Pollution and climate change; Pollution, refuse and the culture of waste; Climate as a common good; The issue of water; Loss of biodiversity; Decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society; Global inequality; Weak responses; A variety of opinions).

The chapter presents the most recent scientific findings on the environment as a way to listen to the cry of creation, “to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it”. It thus deals with “several aspects of the present ecological crisis”.

Pollution and climate change: “Climate change is a global problem with serious implications, environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods; it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day”. If “the climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all”, the greatest impact of this change falls on the poorest, but “many of those who
possess more resources and economic or political power seem mostly to be concerned with masking
the problems or concealing their symptoms”. “Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our
brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women
upon which all civil society is founded”.

The issue of water: the Pope clearly states that “access to safe drinkable water is a basic and
universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the
exercise of other human rights”. To deprive the poor of access to water means to deny “the right to a
life consistent with their inalienable dignity”.

Loss of biodiversity: “Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species
which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever”.
They are not just any exploitable “resource”, but have a value in and of themselves. In this
perspective “we must be grateful for the praiseworthy efforts being made by scientists and engineers
dedicated to finding solutions to man-made problems”, but when human intervention is at the service
of finance and consumerism, “it is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more
limited and grey”.

Decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society: in the framework of an ethics of
international relationships, the Encyclical indicates how a “true “ecological debt” exists in the world,
with the North in debt to the South. In the face of climate change, there are “differentiated
responsibilities”, and those of the developed countries are greater.

Aware of the profound differences over these issues, Pope Francis shows himself to be deeply
affected by the “weak responses” in the face of the drama of many peoples and populations. Even
though there is no lack of positive examples, there is “a complacency and a cheerful recklessness”.
An adequate culture is lacking as well as a willingness to change life style, production and
consumption, while there are efforts being made “to establish a legal framework which can set clear
boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems”.

Chapter Two – THE GOSPEL OF CREATION (The light offered by faith; The wisdom of the
Biblical accounts; The mystery of the universe; The message of each creature in the harmony of
creation; A universal communion; The common destination of goods; The gaze of Jesus).

To face the problems illustrated in the previous chapter, Pope Francis selects Biblical accounts,
offering a comprehensive view that comes from the Judeo-Christian tradition. With this he articulates
the “tremendous responsibility” of humankind for creation, the intimate connection among all
creatures and the fact that “the natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all
humanity and the responsibility of everyone”.

In the Bible, “the God who liberates and saves is the same God who created the universe, and these
two divine ways of acting are intimately and inseparably connected”. The story of creation is central
for reflecting on the relationship between human beings and other creatures and how sin breaks the
equilibrium of all creation in its entirety: “These accounts suggest that human life is grounded in
three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the
earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin”.

For this, even if “we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures”. Human beings have the responsibility to “‘till and keep’ the garden of the world”, knowing that “the ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward, with us and through us, towards a common point of arrival, which is God”.

That the human being is not the master of the universe “does not mean to put all living beings on the same level and to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails. Nor does it imply a divinisation of the earth which would prevent us from working on it and protecting it in its fragility”. In this perspective, “every act of cruelty towards any creature is contrary to human dignity”. However, “a sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings”.

What is needed is the awareness of a universal communion: “called into being by the one Father. All of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect”.

The chapter concludes with the heart of Christian revelation: “The earthly Jesus” with “his tangible and loving relationship with the world” is “risen and glorious, and is present throughout creation by his universal Lordship”.

Chapter three – THE HUMAN ROOTS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS (Technology: creativity and power; The globalisation of the technocratic paradigm; The crisis and effects of modern anthropocentrism; Practical relativism; The need to protect employment; New biological technologies).

This chapter gives an analysis of the current situation, “so as to consider not only its symptoms but also its deepest causes”, in a dialogue with philosophy and the human sciences.

Reflections on technology are an initial focus of the chapter: the great contribution to the improvement of living conditions is acknowledged with gratitude. However it gives “those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world”. It is precisely the mentality of technocratic domination that leads to the destruction of nature and the exploitation of people and the most vulnerable populations. “The technocratic paradigm also tends to dominate economics and political life”, keeping us from recognising that “by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion”.

“Modernity has been marked by an excessive anthropocentrism”: human beings no long recognise their right place with respect to the world and take on a self-centred position, focused exclusively on themselves and on their own power. This results in a “use and throw away” logic that justifies every type of waste, environmental or human, that treats both the other and nature as simple objects and
leads to a myriad of forms of domination. It is this mentality that leads to exploiting children, abandoning the elderly, forcing others into slavery and over-evaluating the capacity of the market to regulate itself, practising human trafficking, selling pelts of animals in danger of extinction and of “blood diamonds”. It is the same mentality as many mafias, of those involved in trafficking organs and drug trafficking and of throwing away unborn babies because they do not correspond to what the parents want.

In this light, the Encyclical addresses two crucial problems of today’s world. Above all work: “any approach to an integral ecology, which by definition does not exclude human beings, needs to take account of the value of labour”, because “to stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain, is bad business for society”.

The second problem regards the limitations of scientific progress, with clear reference to GMOs. This is a “complex environmental issue”. Even though “in some regions their use has brought about economic growth which has helped to resolve problems, there remain a number of significant difficulties which should not be underestimated”, starting from the “productive land being concentrated in the hands of a few owners”. Pope Francis thinks particularly of small producers and rural workers, of biodiversity, and the network of ecosystems. Therefore “a broad, responsible scientific and social debate needs to take place, one capable of considering all the available information and of calling things by their name” starting from “lines of independent, interdisciplinary research”.

Chapter four – INTEGRAL ECOLOGY (Environmental, economic and social ecology; Cultural ecology; Ecology of daily life; The principle of the common good; Justice between the generations).

The heart of what the Encyclical proposes is integral ecology as a new paradigm of justice; an ecology “which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings”. In fact, “nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live”. This is true as we are involved in various fields: in economy and politics, in different cultures particularly in those most threatened, and even in every moment of our daily lives.

The integral perspective also brings the ecology of institutions into play: “if everything is related, then the health of a society’s institutions affects the environment and the quality of human life.” “Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment”.

With many concrete examples, Pope Francis confirm his thinking that “the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts, and of how individuals relate to themselves”. “We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental”.

“Human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good”, but is to be understood in a concrete way. In today’s context, in which, “injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable”, committing oneself to the common good
means to make choices in solidarity based on “a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters”. This is also the best way to leave a sustainable world for future generations, not just by proclaiming, but by committing to care for the poor of today, as already emphasised by Benedict XVI: “In addition to a fairer sense of inter-generational solidarity there is also an urgent moral need for a renewed sense of intra-generational solidarity”.

Integral ecology also involves everyday life. The Encyclical gives specific attention to the urban environment. The human being has a great capacity for adaptation and “an admirable creativity and generosity is shown by persons and groups who respond to environmental limitations by alleviating the adverse effects of their surroundings and learning to live productively amid disorder and uncertainty”. Nevertheless, authentic development presupposes an integral improvement in the quality of human life: public space, housing, transport, etc.

Also “the acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation”.

Chapter five – LINES OF APPROACH AND ACTION (Dialogue on the environment; In the international community; Dialogue for new national and local policies; Dialogue and transparency in decision-making; Politics and economy in dialogue for human fulfilment; Religions in dialogue with science).

This chapter addresses the question of what we can and must do. Analyses are not enough: we need proposals “for dialogue and action which would involve each of us individually no less than international policy”. They will “help us to escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us”. For Pope Francis it is imperative that the developing real approaches is not done in an ideological, superficial or reductionist way. For this, dialogue is essential, a term present in the title of every section of this chapter. “There are certain environmental issues where it is not easy to achieve a broad consensus. […] the Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics. But I want to encourage an honest and open debate, so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good”.

On this basis, Pope Francis is not afraid to judge international dynamics severely: “Recent World Summits on the environment have failed to live up to expectations because, due to lack of political will, they were unable to reach truly meaningful and effective global agreements on the environment”. And he asks “What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?”. Instead, what is needed, as the Popes have repeated several times, starting with Pacem in terris, are forms and instruments for global governance: “an agreement on systems of governance for the whole range of the so-called “global commons””, seeing that “environmental protection cannot be assured solely on the basis of financial calculations of costs and benefits. The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces” (190, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church).
In this fifth chapter, Pope Francis insists on development of honest and transparent decision-making processes, in order to “discern” which policies and business initiatives can bring about “genuine integral development”. In particular, a proper environmental impact study of new “business ventures and projects demands transparent political processes involving a free exchange of views. On the other hand, the forms of corruption which conceal the actual environmental impact of a given project in exchange for favours usually produce specious agreements which fail to inform adequately and do not allow for full debate”.

The most significant appeal is addressed to those who hold political office, so that they avoid “a mentality of “efficiency” and “immediacy” that is so prevalent today: “but if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility”.

Chapter six – ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY (Towards a new lifestyle; Educating for the covenant between humanity and the environment; Ecological conversion; Joy and peace; Civic and political love; Sacramental signs and the celebration of rest; The trinity and relationships between creatures; Queen of all creation; Beyond the sun).

The final chapter invites everyone to the heart of ecological conversion. The roots of the cultural crisis are deep, and it is not easy to reshape habits and behaviour. Education and training are the key challenges: “change is impossible without motivation and a process of education” (15). All educational sectors are involved, primarily “at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere”.

The starting point is “to aim for a new lifestyle”, which also opens the possibility of “bringing healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power”. This is what happens when consumer choices are able to “change the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production”.

The importance of environmental education cannot be underestimated. It is able to affect actions and daily habits, the reduction of water consumption, the sorting of waste and even “turning off unnecessary lights”: “An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness”. Everything will be easier starting with a contemplative outlook that comes from faith: “as believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us with all beings. By developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm”.

As proposed in Evangelii Gaudium: “sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating”, just as “happiness means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us, and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer”. In this way “we must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it”.

The saints accompany us on this journey. St. Francis, cited several times, is “the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically”.

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He is the model of “the inseparable bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace”. The Encyclical also mentions St. Benedict, St. Teresa di Lisieux and Blessed Charles de Foucauld.

After Laudato si’, the regular practice of an examination of conscience, the means that the Church has always recommended to orient one’s life in light of the relationship with the Lord, should include a new dimension, considering not only how one has lived communion with God, with others and with oneself, but also with all creatures and with nature.

The full text of the encyclical in English can be consulted at:
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
Distinguished Chief Rabbis of Israel,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am particularly pleased to be here with you today. I am grateful for your warm reception and your kind words of welcome.

As you know, from the time I was Archbishop of Buenos Aires, I have counted many Jews among my friends. Today two friends who are rabbis are here with us. Together we organized rewarding occasions of encounter and dialogue; with them I also experienced significant moments of sharing on a spiritual level. In the first months of my pontificate, I was able to receive various organizations and representatives from the Jewish community worldwide. As was the case with my predecessors, there have been many requests for such meetings. Together with the numerous initiatives taking place on national and local levels, these testify to our mutual desire to know one another better, to listen to each other and to build bonds of true fraternity.

This journey of friendship represents one of the fruits of the Second Vatican Council, and particularly of the Declaration Nostra Aetate, which proved so influential and whose fiftieth
anniversary we will celebrate next year. I am convinced that the progress which has been made in recent decades in the relationship between Jews and Catholics has been a genuine gift of God, one of those great works for which we are called to bless his holy name: “Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his love endures forever; who alone has wrought marvellous works, for his love endures forever” (Ps 135/136:3-4).

A gift of God, yes, but one which would not have come about without the efforts of so many courageous and generous people, Jews and Christians alike. Here I would like to mention in particular the growing importance of the dialogue between the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Inspired by the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Holy Land, this dialogue was inaugurated in 2002 and is already in its twelfth year. I would like to think that, in terms of the Jewish tradition of the Bar Mitzvah, it is just coming of age. I am confident that it will continue and have a bright future in years to come.

We need to do more than simply establish reciprocal and respectful relations on a human level: we are also called, as Christians and Jews, to reflect deeply on the spiritual significance of the bond existing between us. It is a bond whose origins are from on high, one which transcends our own plans and projects, and one which remains intact despite all the difficulties which, sadly, have marked our relationship in the past.

On the part of Catholics, there is a clear intention to reflect deeply on the significance of the Jewish roots of our own faith. I trust that, with your help, on the part of Jews too, there will be a continued and even growing interest in knowledge of Christianity, also in this holy land to which Christians trace their origins. This is especially to be hoped for among young people.

Mutual understanding of our spiritual heritage, appreciation for what we have in common and respect in matters on which we disagree: all these can help to guide us to a closer relationship, an intention which we put in God’s hands. Together, we can make a great contribution to the cause of peace; together, we can bear witness, in this rapidly changing world, to the perennial importance of the divine plan of creation; together, we can firmly oppose every form of anti-Semitism and all other forms of discrimination. May the Lord help us to walk with confidence and strength in his ways. Shalom!
This document highlights elements of *Laudato Si*, or Praised Be, Pope Francis’s encyclical letter on ecology. Citations are included for your reference.

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The Problem
The earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor (2)

The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. (21)

Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. (53)

Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. (161)

Policy and Political Leadership
There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy. (26)

International negotiations cannot make significant progress due to positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good. Those who will have to suffer the consequences of what we are trying to hide will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility. (169)

True statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good. (178)

Reality of the Problem and Necessity to Act
Obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers, can range from denial of the problem to indifference, nonchalant resignation or blind confidence in technical solutions. We require a new and universal solidarity. (14)
Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. (217)

It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. (217)

**Your Action Matters**

Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. (13)

Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded. (13)

Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening in the world into our own personal suffering and thus discover what each of us can do about it. (19)

Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most. (169)

Truly, much can be done! (180)

A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal. (202)

**Climate Change**

The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. (23)

A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. In recent decades this warming has been accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events, even if a scientifically determinable cause cannot be assigned to each particular phenomenon. Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it. (23)
If present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us. (24)

Climate change is a global problem with serious implications, environmental, social, economic, political, and for the distribution of goods; it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. (25)

The warming caused by huge consumption on the part of some rich countries has repercussions on the poorest areas of the world, especially Africa, where a rise in temperature, together with drought, has proved devastating for farming. (51)

**Living More Sustainably**

Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. (211)

There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions (211)

Along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a “culture of care” which permeates all of society. (231)

**The Faith Perspective**

Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures. (68)

Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by a love which calls us together into universal communion. (76)

Creation is of the order of love. (77)
A fragile world, entrusted by God to human care, challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing, and limiting our power. (78)

The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains – everything is, as it were, a caress of God. (84)

All of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect. (89)

Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. (92)

Encountering God does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on nature. (235)

**Ecology and Social Justice**

We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. (49)

Every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged. (93)

We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the underprivileged, and at the same time protecting nature. (139)

**Consumerism**

The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. (204)

Obsession with a consumerist lifestyle, above all when few people are capable of maintaining it, can only lead to violence and mutual destruction. (205)
Many people know that our current progress and the mere amassing of things and pleasures are not enough to give meaning and joy to the human heart, yet they feel unable to give up what the market sets before them. (209)

**Sustainable Business**
The lessons of the global financial crisis have not been assimilated, and we are learning all too slowly the lessons of environmental deterioration. (109)

The principle of the maximization of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very nature of the economy. As long as production is increased, little concern is shown about whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment; as long as the clearing of a forest increases production, no one calculates the losses entailed in the desertification of the land, the harm done to biodiversity or the increased pollution. In a word, businesses profit by calculating and paying only a fraction of the costs involved. (195)

**Future Generations**
Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. (67)

Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. (159)
Interfaith Resources
Statement of Principles for Catholic-Jewish Dialogue

October 2, 2009

On June 18, 2009 two of our committees issued a statement on a document written in 2002 by scholars who were part of a standing consultation between the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Council of Synagogues. The “Note on Ambiguities Contained in Reflections on Covenant and Mission,” while intended as a clarification of Church teaching primarily for the benefit of Catholics, has been misinterpreted by some Catholics and some Jews and has led to misunderstanding and feelings of hurt among members of the Jewish community. Because we are dialogue partners, this hurt is ours as well. As a means of removing any doubt as to our commitment to respect Jewish self-identity in our dialogues, and to promote deeper bonds of friendship and mutual understanding between the members of our two communities, we bishops affirm the following:

1. Pope John Paul II summed up the teaching of the Catholic Church when he said that “God chose Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and made with them a covenant of eternal love, which was never revoked.” Jewish covenantal life endures till the present day as a vital witness to God’s saving will for His people Israel and for all of humanity.

2. At the same time, in the faith that comes to us from the apostles, Jesus Christ is the unique savior of all humankind, who fulfills in himself all of God’s promises and covenants with the people of Israel. Faith in him as the divine Son of God is first and foremost a gift of God, and the free human response to that gift can never be coerced.

3. Catholics have a sacred responsibility to bear witness to Christ at every moment of their lives, but lived context shapes the form of that witness to the Lord we love. Jewish-Catholic dialogue, one of the blessed fruits of the Second Vatican Council, has never been and will never be used by the Catholic Church as a means of proselytism—not is it intended as a disguised invitation to baptism. In sitting at the table, we expect to encounter Jews who are faithful to the Mosaic covenant, just as we insist that only Catholics committed to the teachings of the Church encounter them in our dialogues.

4. While the work of theologians makes an invaluable contribution to interreligious dialogue, it falls to the bishops of the Church, acting in harmony with the Pope, to represent authoritatively what Catholics believe. As our dialogue continues to move forward, we on the Catholic side have a responsibility to our Jewish partners to distinguish for them when a statement refers to Church teaching and when it is a theological opinion of scholars.

5. A catechism is a compendium of the articles of faith, and therefore contains only settled teaching. The recent change in the United States Adult Catholic Catechism, which concerned the matter of the Mosaic covenant, was made to meet the pedagogical needs of catechumens and other adult learners while reflecting the solid teaching of Vatican II on God’s fidelity to the Jewish people.
6. We remain deeply committed to dialogue and friendship with the Jewish people, who are, in the words of Pope John Paul II, "our elder brothers and sisters in the faith." Our shared witness to the faithfulness of God, and to the peaceable kingdom to which the Most High calls us, is for the sake of healing the world.

Cardinal Francis George, OMI
Archbishop of Chicago
President

Cardinal William H. Keeler
Archbishop Emeritus of Baltimore
USCCB Liaison to Jewish Community

Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory
Archbishop of Atlanta
Chairman
Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Bishop of Bridgeport
Chairman
Committee on Doctrine

Most Reverend William Murphy
Bishop of Rockville Centre
Co-chair, USCCB-OU/RCA Consultation
Pope Francis: Breaking New Ground in Jewish-Catholic Relations

The Holy Father’s friendships and strong tradition of dialogue with Jewish leaders are already having an impact, building on the foundation provided by previous popes.

By: Peter Jesserer Smith
Published: November 8, 201

NEW YORK — The bonds between Jews and Catholics have never been stronger in the Church’s 2,000-year history, but some Jewish leaders say that, with Pope Francis, the best is about to get even better.

Blessed Pope John XXIII reset Catholic-Jewish relations in the 1960s, seeking to reconcile the grievances of the past, in which Catholics had treated Jews less like beloved brothers and more like strangers — or worse, as enemies. The Church approved that outreach in 1965 at the Second Vatican Council with the document *Nostra Aetate*, and Popes Paul VI, Blessed John Paul II and Benedict XVI all continued efforts to deepen those relations.

But Pope Francis’ pontificate represents a new chapter of deeper understanding and friendship between Jews and Catholics.

“Pope Francis has very close personal friends from his days as cardinal who are rabbis, who are leaders in the Jewish community,” said Menachem Rosensaft, general counsel for the World Jewish Congress (WSJ). “The dialogue and the relationship have been unprecedented in terms of warmth and closeness.”

Rosensaft said the Pope’s relationship with Jews in Buenos Aires reveals “a totally new model that we’ve never seen before.”

“The relationship is not a formal or intellectual one. But in addition to being intellectual, or symbolic, it is also heartfelt and intuitive,” he said. “That makes a tremendous difference.”

**Rabbi Skorka**

Few things highlight Pope Francis’ relationship with the Jews more than his deep, abiding friendship with Rabbi Abraham Skorka, rector of the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary in Buenos Aires. The two men started a friendship in the late 1990s with a joke over their favorite soccer teams, and they published a book in 2010 called *On Heaven and Earth*, revealing their interreligious dialogue on 29 different topics.

“He does what he says, and he speaks what’s on his mind and what he feels in a very direct and clear way,” Rabbi Skorka told the Register in an exclusive interview. “He’s a respectful person who respects me, really, in everything he says. He’s a lovely person, very simple and highly spiritual.”
The Pope and Rabbi Skorka made history by sharing meals and praying together during Sukkot and Sabbath at the Vatican — making Pope Francis perhaps the first bishop of Rome to do so, since St. Peter himself.

Rabbi Skorka has been in the United States sharing his experiences with Pope Francis at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York on Oct. 29 and at Sacred Heart University in Connecticut, where he received an honorary degree.

The book co-written by Pope Francis and Rabbi Skorka reveals how they feel dialogue should be conducted: by becoming acquainted with the person, viewing him as having something good to say, but not compromising one’s different identity while finding common ground together.

Rabbi Skorka said he and Pope Francis have discussed that the next step in their dialogue “will be a theological one”: what a Catholic means to a Jew and what a Jew means to a Catholic.

**Francis’ Personal Touch**

Rosenstaft said that Pope Francis’ personal touch leaves the deepest impression. The Pope had surprised Rosensaft with a personal email, later published in *The Washington Post*, thanking Rosensaft for mailing him a copy of a guest sermon he had written for his synagogue about where an all-knowing and all-powerful God was present in the Holocaust.

Rosenstaft is the son of two Jewish survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, or Shoah. The Nazis had killed his mother’s first husband and her young son, his brother. Rosenstaft’s sermon, which Pope Francis said contained “the only possible hermeneutic interpretation,” concluded that God’s presence was “alongside and within the victims, those who perished and those who survived.”

“The idea that Pope Francis reached out to me and validated my approach is a tremendous gift,” Rosenstaft said. “It is very indicative of his sensitivity to be a spiritual leader and a role model for humanity as a whole.”

Father John Crossin, head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, said Pope Francis’ attitude reveals his idea of a “culture of encounter,” where a person walks with others, respects them, while “sharing with others his faith and what he believes.”

“It’s how he relates to other people with respect, love and concern,” he said.

“The bigger picture is his whole thinking that we need a culture of encounter (which is more broad than just the Jewish community) with everybody — no matter what they believe in,” Father Crossin added.

**Actions Accompany Words**

Rosenstaft said Pope Francis not only displayed this personal concern to the World Jewish Congress’ president, Ron Lauder, but has shown that actions follow his words.

He said Lauder had met with Pope Francis in September to share Jewish concerns that the Polish government was going to curtail their religious liberty by banning the kosher slaughter of animals. Rosenstaft said Pope Francis thanked Lauder for bringing this to his attention and said he would see what he could do. Within a month, the Polish bishops were speaking out against the legislation, and Poland’s government has pledged to reverse the law.

“I’m quite convinced there is a direct link between the two,” Rosenstaft said.

Pope Francis also proclaimed “a Christian cannot be anti-Semitic,” emphasizing how much Jews and Catholics have a “common root” and share much as a consequence. Rosenstaft saw Pope Francis’ commitment to these words also fulfilled in the Vatican’s refusal last month to give Nazi war criminal and Holocaust-denier Erich Priebke a public Church funeral.
Priebke — who spent nearly 50 years in the Holy Father’s native Argentina after escaping in 1946 from a British prison camp — had never publicly repented of his role in the murder of Jews and Italian civilians, following his extradition to Italy in 1996 and his subsequent conviction and sentence of life imprisonment for his war crimes. The breakaway Society of St. Pius X subsequently offered to give Priebke the requiem Mass his lawyer wanted — the day before the 70th anniversary of the Nazi roundup of 1,000 Roman Jews sent to die in Auschwitz — but an outraged mob blocked the casket from ever entering the SSPX chapel in the Albano Laziale suburb, and local authorities canceled the funeral.

Gary Krupp, a Jewish leader who runs the Pave the Way Foundation, said Pope Francis’ treatment of the unrepentant Priebke was consistent with the actions taken by Pius XII against unrepentant Nazis. “No priest was allowed to officiate at their funerals,” he said.

**Pius XII’s Legacy**

Krupp said he believed Pope Francis will also be the pope to draw Jews and Catholics even closer together by vindicating the legacy of Pope Pius XII.

The subject of Pius XII is sensitive for many Jews. Rabbi Skorka told the Register that both his mother’s and father’s families lost many family members during the Holocaust, and he himself questions why Pius XII did not publically denounce Hitler’s extermination of the Jews. However, he said that revealing the Vatican Secret Archives will be key.

“From my first perception — take into account that I lost the main part of my mother’s family and my father’s family during the Shoah — my first feeling is: How can it be that [Pius XII] did not shout out his criticisms of the Nazis’ persecution of the Jews?” Rabbi Skorka said. “But let us have the documents do the talking.”

Krupp said he himself grew up hating Pius XII intensely, until his own research convinced him 180 degrees in the opposite direction. His own organization has documented more than 76,000 pages pointing to Pius XII as the man most responsible for “saving 80% of the Jews in Italy.”

Krupp said opening the Secret Archives will be decisive and that Pope Francis — whom he described as “very pro-Pius XII” — is eager to see them opened at last. Krupp said the cataloging of the Secret Archives is in the final stages.

“Pius XII is going to wind up being the greatest hero of World War II,” Krupp predicted. “We’re going to find that the Jewish world was very lucky to have this man as pope during World War II.”

**Embracing in Israel, Forging the Future**

Pope Francis intends to visit the Holy Land next spring, and with him will be his longtime friend Rabbi Skorka. The two leaders plan to embrace each other in Jerusalem at the Wailing Wall and will go together to Bethlehem, in the Palestinian territories, to visit Jesus’ birthplace.

But the gesture could also send a very powerful message for dialogue and peace for not only Israel and Palestine, but for the whole Middle East, which has been the epicenter of so much violence and conflict.

“That will have a very positive effect on the region,” said Betty Ehrenberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, North America.

Ehrenberg said she is looking forward to the deepening of cooperation between Catholics and Jews that Pope Francis has been encouraging by word and example. She said the recent summit between Jewish and Catholic leaders in Madrid, and the joint declaration they signed, reflected that.
“We need to speak up together” in addressing common challenges, including religious freedom, she said. “Both of us are also seeing a falloff in the commitment of youth in religious traditions and religious observation.”

Ehrenberg said, “I think Pope Francis will provide leadership here and have a powerful influence, because of his openness and courageousness in addressing these realities.”

The Evolution of the Relationship Between Catholics and Jews
By: Jerome Chanes
Published: June 25, 2013

From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–1965
By John Connelly
Harvard University Press, 384 pages, $35

My definition of Catholic-Jewish relations: an unnatural act engaged in by partially consenting adults—following an opening prayer.

This one-liner tells us much that we need to know about the relationships between Christians and Jews in the second half of the 20th century. Jews and Catholics—especially Jews—are intensely conscious of the viciousness of 2,000 years of Christian history, and we need to probe the fact that there is still a relationship of any sort.

The relationship came to be in a dramatic moment indeed. The Second Vatican Council, with its watershed document Nostra Aetate (Latin for “In Our Time”), the “Declaration on the Relation of the Church With Non-Christian Religions of the Second Vatican Council” was promulgated in 1966 under the papacy of Paul VI. Nostra Aetate generated intense debate among the bishops of Vatican II. The declaration articulated a new protocol for how Catholics view Jews, and by extension changed the nature of the relationship between members of the two religious communities. The core of Nostra Aetate was a forthright condemnation of anti-Semitism and a rejection of the charge of deicide—that Jews forever were responsible for the death of Jesus Christ. In brief, it was a revision of the two-millennium official Christian teaching on the Jews. The church now formally decried “hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.”

To historian John Connelly, Nostra Aetate represented nothing less than a revolution in Catholic thinking, the most radical of the radical innovations of Vatican II. In “From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–1965,” Connelly’s proposition is that Catholic empathy toward Jews—the overturning of two millennia of Catholic teachings of contempt—did not come out of nowhere. It did not spring from Christian sources, and certainly not from Jewish ones. Connelly reminds us, repeatedly, that the early history of the church was such that anti-Jewish themes were not only incorporated into the new theology of Christianity; it was an absolute necessity that anti-Judaism be core to the contouring of Christian theology, and it was. If this were the case, then
this anti-Judaism would be impossible to root out. And it was. Even church leaders who were sympathetic to Jews and Judaism, and who battled racism, could not overcome the inertia of 2,000 years of theological anti-Judaism deeply inculcated in priesthood, practice and publications.

Among the startling revelations in “From Enemy to Brother” is Connelly’s analysis of the effect on the church of the new, virulent forms of anti-Judaism, the racist anti-Semitism that flourished in 19th-century Europe. It was in the 1930s that the Catholic Church in both Germany and Austria succumbed to an unusual species of racially tinged anti-Semitism. This version of Jew hatred, as historian George Mosse taught, combined itself with the centuries-old notion of the German Volk, the national German folk-identity that was central to Nazi ideology and informed Nazi practice. Influential German theologians extolled the “blood unity” of the German Volk, and praised Hitler as a savior who would heal the “diseased national body.” German Catholicism proved unusually susceptible to this racist syndrome, which crafted its idea of national-racial unity from the traditional idea of the church as Jesus’ mystical body.

With this as background, how did Nostra Aetate happen at all? It was not enough that Angelo Roncalli, Pope John XXIII, a rule-breaker pope if there ever was one, wanted it. The revolutionary event did not come without a struggle. Two thousand years of doctrinal inertia was almost impossible to overcome. Connelly’s detailed retelling of the story of the genesis of Nostra Aetate reveals that most of the architects of the document were themselves Jews who had converted to Christianity. The idea that any number of the Catholic leaders (not the actual drafters of the document) who shaped Nostra Aetate had themselves started out in life as Jews is singular and startling. The point: These churchmen—and their number included serious leaders—were thus naturally more sympathetic toward Jews. To Connelly, the historical context is crucial: The 1960s were but a few years after the end of the Holocaust; a new language was needed to relate to Jews; “Only [through] converts could the Catholic Church find a new language to speak to the Jews after the Holocaust.”

Connelly identifies a number of these converts (some were converts from Protestantism). Perhaps the most visible was John Oesterreicher, a Jewish-born German and convert to Catholicism who was a leading figure in shaping the pro-Jewish aspects of Vatican II.

What emerges in “From Enemy to Brother” is that the converts pressed for a new approach to thinking about covenant; that the relation between Judaism and Christianity was no longer to be understood as competitive or successive, with Judaism being a mere preparation for Christianity, but complementary. This idea of two complementary covenants was truly revolutionary and is discussed coherently and cogently in “From Enemy to Brother.” Connelly’s conceit is that the church would not
have been able to come to this conception without the “doubling” of identity—Jew and Catholic—that was brought within the sacred Vatican precincts by those who had been considered outsiders and worse.

Despite the fact that “From Enemy to Brother” was published last year, it is unusually timely in light of a new administration in the Vatican and, internally, in the Jewish community, in the ongoing discussion over the nature of interreligious relationships. This discussion, highly sensitive especially in the Modern Orthodox world, was, in fact, triggered by the convening of Vatican II and the drafting of *Nostra Aetate*.

“From Enemy to Brother” is superb in its analysis of how *Nostra Aetate* came to be, and especially in Connelly’s discussion of how the drafters of the document arrived at their view of the validity of the Jewish Covenant. Missing, however, is a treatment of the larger context of Vatican II; the reader is left scratching his head, trying to figure out how various personalities and issues fit into the setting of *Nostra Aetate*. A coherent discussion of Vatican II itself would have helped make sense of the otherwise vivid biographies of the churchmen that the author catapults at the reader.

The equally interesting story, also not addressed by Connelly, is, of course, that of how Jews viewed Christians. The Jewish community itself has been conflicted with respect to how to relate to non-Jews. Within the mainstream Modern Orthodox world, interreligious relationships were defined by Orthodox leader Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who in 1964 asserted that Jews and Christians ought to engage with each other on issues having to do with the betterment of society. But anything having to do with the nature of the faith community itself, such as theology, is untranslatable to the other community, Soloveitchik said, and is therefore off the table.

The Soloveitchik position, dominant for 50 years in the Modern Orthodox world, has long been controversial within the Orthodox arena. But in 1964, did the Jewish view impact the discussions at Vatican II? Connelly’s thoughts on this matter would have been welcomed.

Are interreligious relations “an unnatural act”? Perhaps; there is always something unnatural about going from enemy to brother. But Christians and Jews, looking at *Nostra Aetate* a half-century after its drafting, will use “From Enemy to Brother” as a guide in this fascinating — and yes, unnatural — journey.

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Timeline—Ups and Downs in Recent Catholic-Jewish Relations

By: Reuters Staff
Published: February 28, 2011

Senior officials from the Roman Catholic Church and international Jewish groups met on Monday in Paris to review relations after 40 years of sometimes difficult dialogue. Following is a timeline of the ups and downs in Catholic-Jewish relations since the first papal visit to Israel.

1964 – Pope Paul VI is the first modern pope to visit the Holy Land. During the visit he avoids using the word Israel, which the Vatican did not recognise at the time.


1971 – The International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee holds the first of its biannual meetings in Paris.

1986 – Pope John Paul II visits Rome’s synagogue, becoming the first pope in nearly 2,000 years to visit a Jewish place of worship and saying Jews are “our beloved elder brothers”.

1994 – Vatican and Israel forge full diplomatic ties after almost 2,000 years of Christian-Jewish hostility.

1998 – Vatican apologises for Catholics who failed to help Jews against Nazi persecution but also defends wartime Pope Pius XII from accusations that he ignored the Holocaust. Jews welcome the document but say it fails to account adequately for the role of Catholic teachings in promoting anti-Semitism.

2000 – Pope John Paul visits Israel and its Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial and prays at Jerusalem’s Western Wall.

2005 – Pope Benedict, who was enrolled by force into the Hitler Youth as a boy, visits a Cologne synagogue. Jewish leaders urge the Vatican to open all its wartime archives.

2008 – Pope Benedict approves a prayer for traditionalist Good Friday services that Jews say calls for their conversion.
2009 – Benedict lifts the excommunication of four traditionalist bishops, one of whom denies the Holocaust. This leads to an outcry and deep rift with Jews, with whom Benedict expresses his “full and unquestionable solidarity.”

— In a major trip to Israel and the Palestinian territories in May, Benedict visits Yad Vashem, prays at the Western Wall and distances himself from Holocaust deniers.

2010 – Benedict visits the Rome Synagogue in January and hears renewed criticism of Pius XII. In November, Jewish leaders react negatively to comments in the pontiff’s new book that his wartime predecessor Pius was a “great, righteous” man who “saved more Jews than anyone else”.

2011 – In February, Vatican and senior world Jewish officials meet in Paris to review 40 years of dialogue.

by David Cutler