

# ***The Engineer of Chelm Educational Pack***

This pack was written by Yonatan Neril and Evonne Marzouk for Canfei Nesharim: Sustainable Living Inspired by Torah – [www.canfeinesharim.org](http://www.canfeinesharim.org).  
With additional thanks to Joel Stanley, Shana Neril, and Dina Kritz

All translations from the Book of Jonah are from Judaica Press. All other translations, unless otherwise noted, are by Yonatan Neril.

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# Introduction

## How to use this pack

This educational pack is to accompany *The Engineer of Chelm*, written by Rebecca Nesvet for The Merkavah Theatre Company, whose production was staged at the Jewish Museum in June 2010.

The materials have been designed for use by young people (age 11+) and adults; individuals, schools or community groups; Jewish or non-Jewish. Although they will be most useful for those who have seen *The Engineer of Chelm* or read the script, many of the texts, exercises and discussion points do not require familiarity with the play.

Many of the quotes and source texts are from the Book of Jonah. Please feel free to work your way through the pack in order, take one of the themes as a stand-alone session, or simply dip in and out, doing the exercises and questions that most appeal. It is however recommended to read the play quotes, extracts from Jonah, and additional commentary and texts for a particular section, before responding to the questions and trying the exercises, as these sources are there to inform and inspire your responses.

## ***The Engineer, Book of Jonah and environmental responsibility***

*The Engineer of Chelm* is based on the biblical Book of Jonah, adapted and rewritten to speak to today's environmental concerns and re-set in the mythical city of Chelm, whose citizens are known in Jewish folklore for their foolishness.

The Book of Jonah is relatively short and can be read in English in about twenty minutes. Users of this pack are encouraged to read the complete text, which can be found at the end of this pack.

Jonah lived in Israel. According to the story, God commanded Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh to prophecy its destruction. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria and is near the modern-day Iraqi city of Mosul, which is on the River Tigris. Jonah however fled in the opposite direction, towards Tarshish, most likely a city on the Mediterranean Sea (perhaps Tunis or Carthage).

The Engineer of our play lives in Chelm. The Prince, shunned by the citizens and unable to speak out herself, asks the Engineer to warn the Chelm of impending environmental disaster and encourage them to change their ways. But the Engineer, like Jonah, flees from his calling.

Many of the discussion questions and activities in this pack focus on that tension between the call to responsibility and the impulse to run away.

## **Joel Stanley, Director of The Merkavah Theatre Company**

### ***The Engineer of Chelm***

When, in the summer of 2009, I set out to commission and direct “a Jewish play about environmental sustainability” I faced a number of sizable challenges. I was inspired to address through my art the issues that I care about, that I consider to be really important. But what can you say about the environment through the medium of theatre, without sounding obvious or preachy?

And then there’s the Jewish piece. I know that Jewish texts and tradition have lots to teach us regarding human beings and their relationship to the world around them, but why complicate a task that’s already difficult? Throw religion into the mix and don’t you increase people’s resistance?

My writer Rebecca Nesvet and I have grappled with these questions throughout the development of *The Engineer of Chelm*, which will be staged at the newly reopened Jewish Museum London in the first week of June.

At first we looked to the Jewish texts which speak most obviously to environmental concerns. For example, the Talmud tells the story of Honi the Circle Maker, who happens across an old man planting a carob tree. Honi is perplexed, as a man so old will never see the fruits of his labour. The old man tells Honi he is planting not for himself but for his children.

Or, to cite another example, the Talmud tells of Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba, who claimed he can prevent the loss of Torah from the world using only flax seeds, from which he makes twine and traps deer, from which he creates Torah scrolls, from which he teaches children to spread Israel’s wisdom. It’s a tale of high ecology, a kind of rabbinic permaculture.

In the end though we settled on the Biblical Book of Jonah as our principle source text. *The Engineer of Chelm* retells the story of the reluctant prophet, chosen to relate a message of doom and prompt an entire population to change their ways. Jonah, recast for our purposes as the only engineer and wisest man in Chelm, runs away from his calling, attempts to avoid delivering his message, and then rails against the possibility of human change.

We chose the book of Jonah because it works well as a narrative and it speaks to the position many of us find ourselves in today. Knowing what we do about the environmental consequences of our society’s excesses, ecological activism and advocacy can be daunting. Sometimes it seems impossible to make a difference.

Chelm is the legendary “City of Fools” of Jewish folklore. Our play claims that even ‘fools’ can change, that – as the title of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s new book puts it – “it’s never too little, it’s never too late, it’s never enough.”

There are things we can do, whether it’s political campaigning for our leaders to effect change, or switching to 100% renewable energy, as we have in Moishe House London, the non-denominational Jewish community hub I helped set up. Using theatre and Judaism to express this message is worthwhile, because both have the power to capture the imagination, to inspire us through their stories and renew our capacity to do good in the world. Each one of us can deliver the message in his or her own particular way. When we are called upon to do so, let’s not run and hide.

# Theme 1: Personal and Societal Change and Responsibility

## Quotes from the play

1. PRINCE: He [the Aeronaut] is popular  
ENGINEER: Why?  
PRINCE: When people come to him with problems, he tells them there's nothing to worry about.  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 4)
2. ENGINEER: Chelm has a choice – between change and catastrophe. What will we choose? Are we not called the City of the Wise?  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 4)
3. PRINCE: From that day forward, in the chronicles of all the cities of the world, Chelm was called the City of the Newly Wise. All the other cities sent their wisest citizens to Chelm to learn a thing or two. Especially from Chelm's first engineer, who was known not as the one who fled his calling, but the one who first learned how to change.  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 5)

## Quotes from Jonah

4. And the people of Nineveh believed in God, and they proclaimed a fast and donned sackcloth, from their greatest to their smallest. And the word reached the king of Nineveh, whereupon he rose from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh: By the counsel of the king and his nobles, saying: Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep shall taste anything; they shall not graze, neither shall they drink water. And they shall cover themselves with sackcloth, both man and beast, and they shall call mightily to God, and everyone shall repent of his evil way and of the dishonest gain which is in their hands. Whoever knows shall repent, and God will relent, and He will return from His burning wrath, and we will not perish. And God saw their deeds, that they had repented of their evil way, and the Lord relented concerning the evil that He had spoken to do to them, and He did not do it.  
(Jonah 3:5-10)

## Commentaries and additional texts

5. *And God saw their deeds*: Scripture does not say that God saw their sackcloth and ashes, but that God saw their deeds, that they repented of their evil way (Ta'anit 2:1) The Mishnah tells us that this was one of the favorite quotations used by the elders who would address the people on public fast-days and exhort them to repent sincerely on their sins.  
(Rabbi A.J. Rosenberg, commentary to the Book of Jonah 3:10<sup>1</sup>)
6. Rabbi Yitzhak said, "Four things tear up a [negative] decree on a person, and they are: charity, crying out, change of name, and change of action... Change of action, as it is written [in Jonah 3:10]: 'And God saw their action [that they returned from their evil way]', and it is written

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1 *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Judaica Press: New York, 1991, p. 192,

[immediately following that] ‘and the Lord relented concerning the evil that he had spoken to do to them, and He did not do it.’ ”

(Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Rosh Hashana p. 16b)

7. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change declared in 2007 that greenhouse gases had reached levels not seen in 650,000 years, and were rising rapidly as a result of people burning fossil fuel. Because these gases trap the sun’s heat, they would — depending on human energy habits — heat Earth by an average of between 1.5 and 7.2 degrees Fahrenheit by century’s end. Even a midrange rise would likely disrupt the planet’s climate, producing droughts and floods, acidified oceans, altered ecosystems and coastal cities drowned by rising seas.

“If there’s no action before 2012, that’s too late. What we do in the next two to three years will determine our future,” said Rajendra Pachauri, the IPCC chairman, when the report was released. “This is the defining moment.”

(‘The Psychology of Climate Change Denial’, *Wired Science*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009)

## Discussion

- What do you imagine caused the people in Chelm to change their behavior?
- What inspired action change in Nineveh? Was the change to their behavior, their attitudes, or both? How are change in attitude and change in behaviour connected? Which is more important?
- What lessons can we learn to help us create lasting, sustainable change?
- Look at what Rabbi Yitzhak said about how we can affect our own destinies. In *your* opinion, what “four things” have the power to change what happens to people in the long term?

## Activity 1: An Exercise in Personal Change

This activity will generate awareness about the participant's own personal willingness to change their behavior.

*Day 1:* In a garbage bag, save the packaging that you would otherwise throw out and carry it around with you all day. At the end of the day, weigh the amount of waste you produced.

*Day 2:* Continue to carry around the amount of packaging you create, and try to reduce your use of packaged products.

*Bonus activity:* Have a contest among the students, participants or family members to see who can reduce the weight of their daily packaging waste the most.

## Activity 2

1. Make a list (a 'personal inventory') of your environmental behaviour and action over the last year. Include both positive and negative – this is only for you to see. It will be impossible to include everything but include as much as you can.
2. Now make a list of ways you can change for the coming year. Small actions and changes are more achievable than big jumps - but might accumulate to something big! Pick at least two small actions to take on in the next three months, and one big action that you’ll take on this year.

## Theme 2: Empowerment versus Avoidance of Responsibility

### Quotes from the play

1. PRINCE: We want to learn. Don't you?  
ENGINEER: No.  
PRINCE: Why not?  
ENGINEER: Because I'm the person who solves problems. If the sky has turned grey, that's a problem – but it's not one I can fix. Can I change the stratosphere?  
PRINCE: Can't you? ... Will you tell them that?  
ENGINEER: No!  
PRINCE: Why?  
ENGINEER: Because *it's not part of my job!*  
PRINCE: But it could save the city.  
ENGINEER: But there's a lot to lose.  
PRINCE: More than the city?  
ENGINEER: Try to think about this logically, your highness. If I tell Chelm this alarming news, and they shut down the factory and the sky remains grey, and people still become ill, then what will they think of me? Will they think me a genius anymore? Surely not! And then where will I be? Out of a job! And everyone will know, so I won't even be able to show my face in the factory again - much less the streets.  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 3)
2. ENGINEER: And worse, if we're all genii, then the others might all decide they want to be Engineers, and I'll have competition, or worse, I'll stay at my desk but have nothing to do because people won't need to go to an Engineer for solutions to their problems.  
PRINCE: Responsibility always carries risk, Engineer.  
ENGINEER: I know that. As I'm a wise man, I avoid responsibility whenever possible. And in this case, avoidance is entirely possible.  
PRINCE: Only if the city suffers.  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 3)

### Quotes from Jonah

3. And the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai saying, "Arise, Go to Nineveh, the great city, and call out against her, for their wickedness has ascended before Me." But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the Lord.  
(Jonah, 1:1-3)
4. And God saw their deeds, that they had repented of their evil way, and the Lord relented concerning the evil that He had spoken to do to them, and He did not do it.  
(Jonah, 3:10)

### Commentaries and additional texts

5. Rebbe Nachman said that, often, even just his daily religious obligations felt like a crushing burden. But the Rebbe found a way to bear the weight of his devotions by each morning saying

to himself, "I will ignore tomorrow and all future tomorrows – today is all there is!" The Rebbe understood that wears us down most on our spiritual journey is the feeling that there is too much to accomplish. Instead, he advised focusing only on the task at hand. By doing so, we can overcome even the most daunting obstacles.

(from *The Empty Chair: Finding Hope and Joy – Timeless Wisdom from a Hasidic Master, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov*, translated and adapted by Moshe Mykoff and the Breslov Research Institute)

6. Each person needs to say, "the entire world was only created for me" (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin p. 37). Then it is found, that since the world was created for me, I need to see and to focus all the time on repairing the world and to fill the deficiencies of the world and to pray on their behalf.  
(*Likutei Moharan*, Teaching 5, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov)
  
7. If the evidence is overwhelming that man-made climate change is already upon us and set to wreak planetary havoc, why do so many people refuse to believe it?  
The U.N.'s panel of climate scientists, in a landmark report, described the proof of global warming as "unequivocal." That was two years ago, and since then hundreds of other studies have pointed to an ever-bleaker future, with a potential loss of life numbering in the tens of millions, if not more.  
Yet survey after survey from around world reveals deep-seated doubt among the public. A poll published in Britain on November 14, to cite but one example, found that only 41 percent of respondents accepted as an established fact that human activity was largely responsible for current global warming...  
"It's a paradox: when it comes to disasters, people do not allow themselves to believe what they know," explained Jean-Pierre Dupuy, a professor of social philosophy at the Ecole Polytechnique in Paris.  
"Because everybody is in denial - or would like to be in denial - and would prefer to not shoulder too much of the responsibility for dealing with the problem, you have a kind of disconnect here."  
(‘The complex psychology of climate denial’, *Cosmos: The Science of Everything*, 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2009)

## Discussion

- Why does the Engineer refuse to tell people about their environmental problem? What ultimately changes his mind? Why do you think Jonah chooses to flee to Tarshish instead of delivering his prophecy in Nineveh?
- What keeps people from accepting serious problems that they know about? How can we encourage more people to listen and respond to the environmental threats we are facing today?
- Many environmental problems are caused by many individuals taking seemingly inconsequential actions. It's hard to imagine that our own action is making the difference. Think of any example of something you do which seems small but, multiplied by millions, is causing a real environmental impact.
- How can we become more aware of our own impacts?
- Even if we recognize and change our own environmental "sins," these changes will not make much difference until we can inspire others to change. What can we do to motivate and inspire others?
- How can our leaders help or hinder this effort?

## Activity 1: Incentives and Disincentives to Personal Change

What things are important for you to feel in balance, satisfied, and happy in life?

How would taking certain environmental actions affect feeling this way?

Assess how 'environmental actions' affect your quality of life. Start with the following examples and think of others if you can:

Environmental problem	Action change	Pros and cons on one's life
Car use, air pollution, and climate change	Walk or bike to school or work	Time tradeoffs: need to wake up earlier, but get exercise in morning and afternoon so don't need to go to gym -Zero carbon footprint
Buying food grown and produced far away and climate change	Buy food grown and produced locally	-Reduced variety -Improved taste
Water scarcity and water in rivers and lakes		
Toxic cleaners and water pollution		
<i>Continue the list...</i>		

## Activity 2

*Discuss:* When you hear about an environmental problem, do you feel overwhelmed, or empowered to act? Which problems make you feel more empowered?

1. In a small group, design a community-wide environmental service project. Identify the need you will address and what you will need to do to be successful.
2. What will you need to do to overcome your feelings of overwhelm, despair and denial? How will you help other people overcome these feelings?

*Bonus activity:* Each group shares their ideas with a class, and the class votes to undertake the best project in the coming year.

## Theme 3: Relating to Specific Environmental Challenges

### Quotes from the play

1. PRINCE: Engineer, why has the sky turned grey?  
ENGINEER: How should I know?  
PRINCE: If you tell the city, everyone could help to find out.  
ENGINEER: What's so great about a blue sky, anyway?  
PRINCE: People didn't used to be ill as often.  
ENGINEER: That's got nothing to do with it.  
PRINCE: How do you know?  
ENGINEER: How do *you*?  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 3)
2. PRINCE: The problems couldn't wait. More people were ill. The river got dirty. And the sky... greyer. When it rained, the rain cut lines on the cobblestones, and sickened the trees.  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 5)
3. ENGINEER: Citizens, to solve problems, a person has got to recognise them in the first place. Right?  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 5)

### Commentaries and additional texts

4. It is said, "Shall one man sin, and will you be angry with all the congregation?" (Numbers 16:22). Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai taught: This may be compared to the case of men on a ship, one of whom took a borer and began boring beneath his own place. His fellow travelers said to him: "What are you doing?" Said he to them: "What does that matter to you, am I not boring under my own place?" Said they: "Because the water will come up and flood the ship for us all."  
(Midrash Vayikra Raba 4:6, translation from Judaic Classics Library)
5. Many of the most significant changes to ecosystems have been essential to meet growing needs for food and water; these changes have helped reduce the proportion of malnourished people and improved human health. Agriculture, including fisheries and forestry, has been the mainstay of strategies for the development of countries for centuries, providing revenues that have enabled investments in industrialization and poverty alleviation... These gains have been achieved, however, at growing costs in the form of the degradation of many ecosystem services, increased risks of nonlinear changes in ecosystems, the exacerbation of poverty for some people, and growing inequities and disparities across groups of people...  
(*Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005. Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis*. Island Press, Washington DC,  
<http://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.356.aspx.pdf>)

**Activity 1: “To solve problems, a person has got to recognize them in the first place.”**

Explore reputable environmental studies such as the IPCC, the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment, and the United Nations Environment Programme, then write down one fact you did not know about the environmental challenges we are facing today. What is one action you could take, which, if multiplied by millions, could make a real difference?

**Activity 2: Prioritising Issues**

You have £50,000 (or, if you are in the United States, \$50,000) to give to two environmental causes. Make a list of causes, addressing both short and long term environmental problems, local and global issues, general (environment, sustainability) and specific (water, climate change, pollution). Explain which causes you will choose, and why.

Explore possible criteria such as:

- Most urgent
- Most long-term impact
- Affecting the most number of people
- Affecting people near where you live
- Affecting people who are most vulnerable

Which of these criteria will you prioritise, and why?

What can you personally do (besides donating money) to help address the environmental issues that you feel are the most important?

## Theme 4: Hearing the Call

### Quotes from the play

1. PRINCE: How do you know?  
ENGINEER: Because I am the Genius of Chelm! If I think a thing, it must be true.  
PRINCE: Must it?  
ENGINEER: Everyone says.  
PRINCE: Perhaps everyone is confused.  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 3)
2. ENGINEER: And worse, if we're all geni, then the others might all decide they want to be Engineers, and I'll have competition, or worse, I'll stay at my desk but have nothing to do because people won't need to go to an Engineer for solutions to their problems.  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 3)

### Quotes from Jonah

3. And the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying: "Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim against it, for their evil has come before Me."  
(Jonah, 1: 1-2)

### Commentaries and additional texts

4. The number of species on the planet is declining. Over the past few hundred years, humans have increased the species extinction rate by as much as 1,000 times over background rates typical over the planet's history (*medium certainty*). Some 10–30% of mammal, bird, and amphibian species are currently threatened with extinction (*medium to high certainty*). Freshwater ecosystems tend to have the highest proportion of species threatened with extinction. Genetic diversity has declined globally, particularly among cultivated species.  
(Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005. *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis*, Island Press, Washington DC  
<http://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.356.aspx.pdf>)
5. About one third of the world's coral reefs – the oceanic equivalent of tropical rainforests, because they are home to disproportionate fraction of the ocean's species – have already been severely damaged. If current trends continue, about half of the remaining reefs would be lost by the year 2030.  
(*Collapse*, p487)

### Discussion

- How do we react when we hear frightening environmental facts like these? How do we know we can trust the information we receive?
- In our times, who or what do we rely on for guidance and information about important issues like global environmental sustainability?

### Activity 1: sources of information and guidance

Think about your own sources of information. How do you choose who to listen to, or what information is reliable and wise? Rate the following in order:

\_\_\_ News Media

\_\_\_ Scientists

\_\_\_ Religious leaders

\_\_\_ Inner voice of conscience

\_\_\_ Parents

\_\_\_ Friends

\_\_\_ Internet

\_\_\_ Popular Culture, TV shows

\_\_\_ Business Leaders

\_\_\_ Environmental Organizations

\_\_\_ Teachers

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

- Why do you trust the people/organizations you listed highest? Do you think that's the best reason for trusting them? How could you come up with a better way to assess your trust?
- If you heard about a coming destruction from someone like Jonah, would you believe him? How about the Engineer? Who would you trust with this sort of news?

### Activity 2:

- If someone tells us something is going to happen, how do we know we can trust them? What kinds of criteria might you use to assess whether they were trustworthy? (This exercise can be carried out individually or led from the front on a blackboard.)
- Can you think of other examples of where society believes in the safety of technology concerning energy use and where that faith proves to be misguided? (Teachers: you can mention the Chernobyl accident and the recent BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico)

## Theme 5: Urban Pollution & Nineveh as a Big City

### Quotes from the play

1. PRINCE: Engineer, we think it's the cake factory that's changing the sky.  
ENGINEER: That's absurd.  
PRINCE: A hundred years ago, it didn't exist.  
ENGINEER: The sky?  
PRINCE: The factory. Will you tell them that?  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 3)
2. ENGINEER: The sky used to be blue, at least in some parts of the world. But today, it's grey. What does that tell you about the way we do things here?  
(*The Engineer of Chelm*, Scene 5)

### Quotes from Jonah

3. And the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying: "Arise, go to Nineveh, *the great city*, and proclaim against it, for their evil has come before Me."  
(Jonah, 1: 1-2)
4. Now should I not take pity on Nineveh, the great city, in which there are many more than one hundred twenty thousand people?  
(Jonah, 4:11)

### Commentaries and additional texts

5. Nineveh was a walking distance of three days, and had in it twelve markets, and each and every market had in it twelve thousand people, and each and every street had in it twelve alleys, and each alley had in it twelve courtyards, and every courtyard had twelve houses, and each and every house had twelve strong men, and each strong man had twelve children. And Jonah would announce in the market and his voice would be heard a distance of a forty day [journey], and each and every house heard his voice. At that moment the matter [Jonah's prophesy] reached Esnaper the King of Nineveh.  
(Midrash Yalkut Shimoni, Jonah, Remez 550)
6. The quality of urban air compared to the air in the deserts and forests is like thick and turbulent water compared to pure and light water. And this is because in the cities with their tall buildings and narrow roads, the pollution that comes from their residents, their waste, their corpses, and offal from their cattle, and the stench of their adulterated food, makes their entire air malodorous, turbulent, reeking and thick and the winds become accordingly so, although no one is aware of it.

And since there is no way out, because we grow up in cities and become used to them, we can at least choose a city with an open horizon... And if you cannot move out of the city, try at least to live in a suburb created to the northeast. Let the house be tall and the court wide enough to permit the northern wind and the sun to come through, because the sun thins out the pollution of

the air, and makes it light and pure.

(‘The Preservation of Youth: Essays on Health’, Maimonides (Spain, Morocco, and Egypt, 1135-1204 C.E). Translated from the original Arabic by Hirsch L. Gordon)

7. It is estimated that more than one billion people are exposed to outdoor air pollution annually. Urban air pollution is linked to up to one million premature deaths and 1 million pre-native deaths each year. Urban air pollution is estimated to cost approximately 2% of GDP in developed countries and 5% in developing countries. Rapid urbanisation has resulted in increasing urban air pollution in major cities, especially in developing countries. Over 90% of air pollution in cities in these countries is attributed to vehicle emissions brought about by a high number of older vehicles coupled with poor vehicle maintenance, inadequate infrastructure and low fuel quality.  
(United Nations Environment Programme, ‘Urban Air Pollution’,  
[http://www.unep.org/urban\\_environment/issues/urban\\_air.asp](http://www.unep.org/urban_environment/issues/urban_air.asp))

## **Discussion**

In a city especially, it is easy not to be aware of one's environmental impact, since most of the items a person consumes are produced far beyond the city. Being separate from nature can make us forget that all our food and consumer goods originally began in the land.

- What practices can a city-dweller take on to become more aware of the production processes leading to what he or she consumes? (Teachers: you may want to suggest Community Supported Agriculture and allotment schemes)

Yet people who live in modern cities often have a significantly smaller “environmental footprint” than rural or suburban dwellers. For example, people in cities drive less, live in smaller homes, etc.

- What other examples make city life more environmentally responsible?
- Based on Maimonides' description of a pre-modern city, what type of urban pollution might the residents of Nineveh faced? What type of urban pollution do city residents face today?

## **Activity**

Conduct a debate either in pairs or with teams in front of the whole class, based on the above sources and resources. Before the debate, students should research the pros and cons of urban, suburban and rural living.

# The Book of Jonah

## Translation by Judaica Press

### Chapter 1

1. And the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying: א.
2. Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim against it, for their evil has come before Me. ב.
3. And Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from before the Lord, and he went down to Joppa, found a ship going to Tarshish, paid its hire, and went down into it to come with them to Tarshish from before the Lord. ג.
4. Now the Lord cast a mighty wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, and the ship threatened to be broken up. ד.
5. And the sailors were frightened, and each one cried out to his god, and they cast the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them, and Jonah went down to the ship's hold, lay down, and fell fast asleep. ה.
6. And the captain approached him and said to him, "Why do you sleep? Get up, call out to your God, perhaps God will think about us, and we will not perish." ו.
7. And they said, each one to his fellow, "Come, let's cast lots, so that we will know because of whom this evil has befallen us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. ז.
8. And they said to him, "Tell us now, because of whom has this evil befallen us? What is your work and whence do you come? What is your land, and from what people are you?" ח.
9. And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of heaven, Who made the sea and the dry land." ט.
10. And the men were very frightened, and they said to him, "What is this that you have done?" י.
- For the men knew that he was fleeing from before the Lord, because he has told them.
11. And they said to him, "What shall we do with you, so that the sea subside from upon us, since the sea is becoming stormier?" יא.
12. And he said to them, "Pick me up and cast me into the sea, so that the sea may subside from upon you, for I know that, because of me, this mighty tempest is upon you." יב.
13. And the men rowed vigorously to return to dry land, but they could not, for the sea was becoming stormier upon them. יג.
14. And they called to the Lord and said, "Please, O Lord, let us not perish for the life of this man, and do not place upon us innocent blood, for You, O Lord, as You wish, You have done." יד.
15. And they picked Jonah up and cast him into the sea, and the sea ceased storming. טו.
16. And the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they made sacrifices to the Lord and made vows.

### Chapter 2

1. And the Lord appointed a huge fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. א.
2. And Jonah prayed to the Lord his God, from the belly of the fish. ב.
3. And he said: I called out from my distress to the Lord, and He answered me; from the belly of the grave I cried out, You heard my voice. ג.
4. And You cast me into the deep in the heart of the seas, and a river surrounded me; all Your breakers and Your waves passed over me. ד.
5. And I said, "I have been driven away from before Your eyes," Indeed, I will continue to gaze upon Your Holy Temple. ה.

6. Water has surrounded me even to the soul, the deep encompassed me; the Red Sea hangs over my head. 7.
7. To the bottom of the mountains I descended, the earth-its bars are closed on me forever; but You brought up my life from Gehinnom, O Lord, my God. 7.
8. When my soul grew faint upon me, I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came to You to Your Holy Temple. 7.
9. Those who keep worthless futilities abandon their kindness. 7.
10. But I-with a voice of thanks will I sacrifice to You; what I vowed I will pay, for the salvation of the Lord. 7.
11. And the Lord said to the fish, and it spewed Jonah onto the dry land. 7.

### Chapter 3

1. And the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying: 8.
2. Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and proclaim upon it the proclamation that I speak to you. 7.
3. And Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a walk of three days. 7.
4. And Jonah commenced to come into the city, one day's walk, and he proclaimed and said, "In another forty days Nineveh shall be overturned!" 7.
5. And the people of Nineveh believed in God, and they proclaimed a fast and donned sackcloth, from their greatest to their smallest. 7.
6. And the word reached the king of Nineveh, whereupon he rose from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes. 7.
7. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh: By the counsel of the king and his nobles, saying: Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep shall taste anything; they shall not graze, neither shall they drink water. 7.
8. And they shall cover themselves with sackcloth, both man and beast, and they shall call mightily to God, and everyone shall repent of his evil way and of the dishonest gain which is in their hands. 7.
9. Whoever knows shall repent, and God will relent, and He will return from His burning wrath, and we will not perish. 7.
10. And God saw their deeds, that they had repented of their evil way, and the Lord relented concerning the evil that He had spoken to do to them, and He did not do it. 7.

### Chapter 4

1. Now it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was grieved. 8.
2. And he prayed to the Lord and said, "Please, O Lord, was this not my contention while I was still on my land? For this reason I had hastened to flee to Tarshish, for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, with much kindness, and relenting of evil. 7.
3. And now, O Lord, take now my soul from me, for my death is better than my life." 7.
4. And the Lord said: Are you deeply grieved? 7.
5. And Jonah had gone out of the city, and had stationed himself on the east of the city, and there he made himself a hut and sat under it in the shade until he would see what would happen in the city. 7.
6. Now the Lord God appointed a kikayon, and it grew up over Jonah to be shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort, and Jonah was overjoyed with the kikayon. 7.
7. Now God appointed a worm at the rise of dawn on the morrow, and the worm attacked the 7.

kikayon, and it withered.

8. Now it came to pass when the sun shone, that God appointed a stilling east wind, and the sun beat on Jonah's head, and he fainted, and he begged to die, and he said, "My death is better than my life." 7.

9. And God said to Jonah; Are you very grieved about the kikayon? And he said, "I am very grieved even to death." 8.

10. And the Lord said: You took pity on the kikayon, for which you did not toil nor did you make it grow, which one night came into being and the next night perished. 9.

11. Now should I not take pity on Nineveh, the great city, in which there are many more than one hundred twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and many beasts as well? 10.

## Jewish Environmental Education Websites

### UK

Big Green Jewish

<http://www.biggreenjewish.org>

Tzedek

[http://www.tzedek.org.uk/go\\_learn/teachers/schools](http://www.tzedek.org.uk/go_learn/teachers/schools)

### North America

Adam V'Adamah Environmental Society

<http://www.av-a.org/>

Canfei Nesharim

<http://www.canfeinesharim.org/>

COEJL: Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life

<http://www.coejl.org/~coejlor/resources/>

Ellen Bernstein: *Let the Earth Teach You Torah*

<http://ellenbernstein.org/shomrei-lettheearthteach-intro.htm>

GreenFaith: Interfaith Partners in Action for the Earth

<http://www.greenfaith.org/about/programs.html>

Green Zionist Alliance: The Grassroots Campaign for a Sustainable Israel

<http://www.greenzionism.org/resources>

Hazon: Jewish Food Education Network

<http://www.hazon.org/go.php?q=/food/jewishFoodEducationNetwork.html>

Jewish Farm School: Alumot: A Jewish Gardening Project

<http://www.jewishfarmschool.org/store/>

Jewcy: 10 books on the Intersection of Judaism & the Environment

[http://www.jewcy.com/post/5\\_books\\_jewish\\_environmentalism](http://www.jewcy.com/post/5_books_jewish_environmentalism)

Judaism and the Environment: Masorti Olami

<http://more.masortiworld.org/environment/about.html>

Jewish National Fund: Education Department

[http://support.jnf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=edu\\_home](http://support.jnf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=edu_home)

Teva Learning Center: Resources

<http://tevalearningcenter.org/resources.php>

The Green Bubbie (and Zaida): Charting a meaningful, spiritual, creative and connected journey  
<http://www.thegreenbubbie.com>

The Shalom Center  
<http://www.theshalomcenter.org/treasury/43>

## **Israel**

Heschel Center for Environmental Learning and Leadership  
<http://www.heschel.org>

FoEME : Friends of the Earth Middle East  
<http://www.foeme.org>

Green Prophet: Environment News from the Middle East  
<http://www.greenprophet.com>

International Center of Bird Migration at Latrun  
[http://www.aspni.org/aspni\\_icsbm.html](http://www.aspni.org/aspni_icsbm.html)

JGEN: Jewish Global Environmental Network  
<http://www.jgenisrael.org//home2.html>

Sviva Israel: Environmental Education in Israel  
<http://svivaisrael.org/index.asp>

# Environmental Education Web Sites

## Support and Curriculum for Classroom or Outdoor Studies

Classroom Earth

<http://www.classroomearth.org/>

Learning Live – Environmental Educational Resources

[http://www.learninglive.co.uk/teachers/environmental\\_edu/resources/index.asp](http://www.learninglive.co.uk/teachers/environmental_edu/resources/index.asp)

Green Schools – helps schools use energy efficiently with retrofits, renewable technology, and bringing the energy efficiency message to students and the community

<http://ase.org/section/program/greenschl>

## Hands-On Activities for Youth

EcoFriendlyKids – Activities and Info for parents and kids

<http://www.ecofriendlykids.co.uk/>

Earth Force – environmental problem-solving programme through which middle-school aged youth identify local environmental issues and create lasting solutions to these problems.

<http://www.earthforce.org/>

Earth Kids: Activities and Ideas for Celebrating Earth Day

<http://www.earthskids.com/earthday.htm#activism>

Nature Journal – Make your own nature journal template

[http://www.sierraclub.org/education/nature\\_journal.asp](http://www.sierraclub.org/education/nature_journal.asp)

EarthEasy – Ideas for simple sustainable living

<http://www.eartheasy.com/homepage.htm>

National Envirothon – High school competition offering both in-class curriculum and hands-on field experiences focused around ecology, natural resource management, and current environmental issues

<http://www.envirothon.org/>

Journey for the Planet – A five-week adventure to create an Earth-friendly life

<http://www.empowermentinstitute.net/files/JFP.html#planetary>

EPA Kids Club – A great site with hands on activities for young kids

<http://www.epa.gov/kids/>

EPA Student Center – Another EPA site geared to older school pupils

<http://www.epa.gov/students/>

## **Biodiversity**

World Wildlife Fund : Windows on the Wild

<http://www.worldwildlife.org/>

National Wildlife Federation – protecting wildlife

<http://www.nwf.org/>

Wilderness Education – Wilderness Information Network

<http://www.wilderness.net/index.cfm?fuse=NWPS&sec=k12>

Global Issues – Learn about the issue of biodiversity

<http://www.globalissues.org/issue/169/biodiversity>

Conservation International – Learn about 25 of the richest and most threatened ecosystems

<http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/hotspots/Pages/default.aspx>

## **School Gardening**

Kids Gardening – Includes classroom projects, thematic explorations, parents' primer, classroom stories activities, FAQs, school greenhouse, guide, exploring hydroponics, pollinator curriculum, harvest of history and mountain adventures

<http://www.kidsgardening.com/>

Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems

<http://casfs.ucsc.edu/index.html>

National Wildlife Federation: Schoolyard Habitats

<http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Educators/Schoolyard-Habitats.aspx>

Chez Panisse Foundation: Edible Schoolyard

<http://www.edibleschoolyard.org/>

## **Community Gardening**

UK Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens

<http://www.farmgarden.org.uk>

American Community Gardening Association

<http://www.communitygarden.org/about-acga/>

## **Environmental Education Organisations**

The GLOBE Programme – A practical environmental education project linking students, teachers and scientists in 110 countries

<http://www.globe.org.uk>

Environmental Literacy Council – The Environmental Literacy Council is an independent, non-profit organization, the Council gives teachers the tools to help students develop environmental literacy: a fundamental understanding of the systems of the world, both living and non-living, along with the analytical skills needed to weigh scientific evidence and policy choices.

<http://www.enviroliteracy.org/>

Institute for Earth Education – Teacher resources

<http://www.eartheducation.org/>

Green Education Foundation – teacher resources

<http://www.greeneducationfoundation.org/>