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# NEWS & VIEWS

Sustainability Issue | September 26, 2019 | 26 Elul 5779

שנה טובה  
HAPPY NEW YEAR!



## A Time of Environmental *Teshuva*

As the High Holidays approach in the wake of the [UN Climate Action Summit](#), many of us are reflecting on climate change and environmental sustainability with a new sense of urgency. And Hebrew College faculty, staff, students, and alumni are turning that sense of urgency into acts of resistance, resilience, creativity, and hope: teaching, praying, protesting, planting, composting, raising awareness, and forging partnerships within and beyond the Jewish community.

This newsletter shares some of the many things that members of the extended Hebrew College community are doing to fight climate change. We know you are doing much more! Please [share your green work with us](#) so we can share it widely.

- Many Hebrew College rabbis tell us they plan to incorporate environmental themes into their Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services and sermons (more below).
- Hebrew College Rector Rabbi Arthur Green opened the academic year with a lecture on this topic, calling it "the greatest challenge of our time," and he has inspired the Hebrew College community to renew the ancient practice of reciting daily the biblical text for the day of Creation (or [ma'amad](#)).
- Last Friday, more than 30 Hebrew College students, faculty, and staff joined the Climate Strike in Boston, part of the [Global Climate Strike](#), some marching from earth-themed morning *davening* at the Boston Synagogue.
- Led by rabbinical and cantorial students, the Sustainability Committee is organizing a number of green initiatives, including College-wide composting and carpooling.
- A group of students, faculty, and staff from throughout the College are meeting this week to launch a new committee, "Admat Kodesh" (Holy Ground), that will discuss how Hebrew College can respond to the environmental crisis, because, as rabbinical student and committee organizer Lorin Troderman says, "Sustainability is in the DNA of Hebrew College. It's deep and it's on the surface, but the middle part, the day-to-day things, those are the things that need filling in."
- Hebrew College is offering several classes that "make the natural connection between Jewish learning and the vital concern for our precious planet," says Rabbi Natan Margalit, director of Hebrew College's [Open Circle Jewish Learning](#). These include "Torah for Transformative Social Change" a rabbinical school class taught by faculty member Rabbi Shoshana Friedman, Rab`14, and "Climate Justice/Climate Equity and Judaism," a community course taught by Rabbi Katy Allen. Last spring, alumnus Rabbi Getzel Davis, Rab`13, co-taught another community course, "[Spiraling Though Time: Radically Rethinking Our Relationship to Land](#)," with Leora Mallach, founder and co-director of [Beantown Jewish Gardens](#). (Read one participant's [reflection on the course](#).) Rabbi Davis and Mallach hope to offer the class again this spring.
- As part of our newly-enhanced Year-in-Israel program for rabbinical students, funded by generous support from the Germanacos Foundation, students will be spending several days at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies on Kibbutz Ketura, learning with students from throughout the Middle East who are preparing to meet the region's environmental challenges.
- Last spring, students from the [Jewish Teen Foundation of Greater Boston](#), a Hebrew College program that teaches local high school students about fundraising, civic leadership, and grant-making, [gave \\$17,548 of the \\$60,265](#) they raised to environmental organizations "to preserve the environment for future generations."
- See below for amazing examples of the green work that our alumni are doing.

*Shana Tova Umetuka.* May we begin this new year with a renewed commitment to our planet!



## Feel the *Tekiah*: On Elul & the International Climate Strikes

By Rabbi Shoshana Meira Friedman, Rab`14 (above right)

Director of Professional Development, [Ordination Programs of Hebrew College](#)

There is something that happens when we hear a gifted *ba'al tekiah* (shofar blower) on Rosh Hashanah. We do not only hear the shofar with our ears, which is the mitzvah. We feel it, vibrating in our bones.

On Friday September 20, I joined over 30 members of the Hebrew College community in the streets of Boston for the most recent [International Climate Strike](#). Earlier that morning, a group of students had gathered for morning prayers before heading over to the rally and march. We held a colorful painted banner, designed by students, that read "Rabbis and Rabbinical Students Striking for Climate Action! The World is on Fire! Wake up!" Many of us wore *tallitot*, carried handmade signs, and brought our own shofars. And it should be noted that Hebrew College's support of the strike went further than students. Faculty rescheduled classes. Selichot were cancelled for the morning. There was a general understanding of the need to disrupt our normal routines in honor of the great disruption happening around us.

As the Strike's speakers inspired tears and cheers, our shofars sounded: *Tekiah! Sh'varim! Teruah!* Lifting our chins to blow loudly into the crowd, we could see Boston City Hall, which has not yet declared a [Climate Emergency](#), and beyond it to the [cranes building ever more high rises](#) on land that the sea will likely take back. We saw children, grandparents, teenagers, joining four million others around the world. Our shofar calls vibrated in our bodies along with the crowd's chants, and signaled to unaffiliated Jews in the crowd — many of whom came over to introduce themselves — that we were there. *Tekiah! Wake up!*

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## High Holidays 5780: Alumni Focus on Sustainability

In a recent message to alumni, Hebrew College President Sharon Cohen Anisfeld quoted Gus Speth, former dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Science:

*"I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change, but I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation... We scientists don't know how to do that."*

Rabbi Anisfeld went on to say, "If that's not our job as spiritual leaders, whose is it?" and invited alumni to share the work they are doing in their communities. The outpouring of responses was inspiring.

This High Holiday season, in particular, many Hebrew College alumni will focus their sermons on sustainability and climate change.

- Rabbi David Fainsilber, Rab`14, will bring all the children and teens in the Jewish Community of Greater Stowe, VT up to hear his Rosh Hashanah drash "*Hayeenu Kekholmim: What world do we wake up to in 70 years?*" and then they will sing *Adamah vaShamayim* and [\*Olam Chesed\*](#).
- Rabbi Lee Moore, Rab`10, will deliver "*Regenerative Creation: Relating to Aliveness*," to her Brattleboro (VT) Area Jewish Community, touching on some of the psychology of possibly being in the last generations of humanity.
- Rabbi Brian Besser, Rab`10, will speak to his Bloomington, IN Congregation, Beth Shalom, at Ne'ila about "[Our Response to Climate Change](#)."

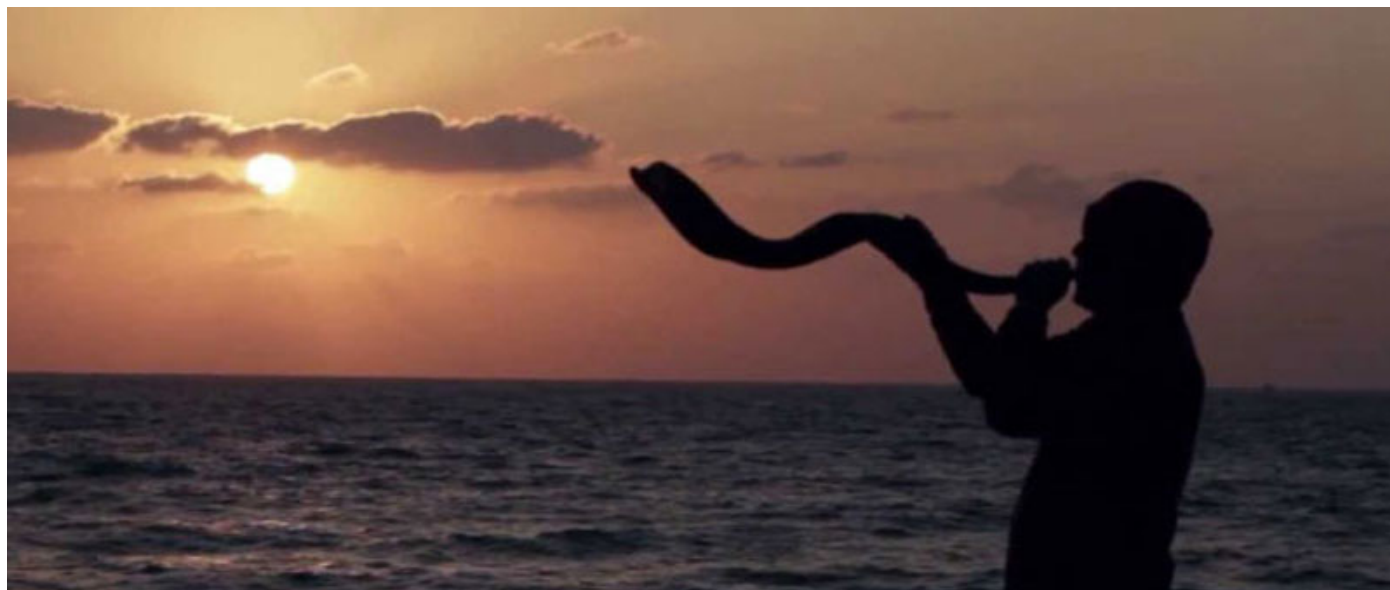
These are just a few of Hebrew College's many alumni who have sustainability and climate change on their minds this High Holiday season. [See where Hebrew College's spiritual leaders will be leading High Holiday experiences across the U.S. and the world – for more than 120 communities.](#)

Alumni also wrote about the ways in which their communities are putting their sustainability messages into action. "This is an issue on everyone's minds, and it is so overwhelming that people don't know where to start sometimes," says Rabbi Alison Adler, Rab`08, of Temple B'nai Abraham in Beverly, MA. "So we are starting right here in our own community."

- Rabbi Adler's synagogue "Green Team" focuses on sustainability, legislative action, and educating people about practices at home. "We hope to have zero waste at our major events, starting with our Kiddush on Rosh Hashanah, and a farm-to-table dinner on Sukkot. And our Pe'ah Garden (pictured above) teaches kids and members Jewish values in a hands-on way; we grow produce related to the Jewish holidays and then donate it to the community."
- Rabbi Josh Breindel, Rab`09, of Congregation Beth El in Sudbury, MA, Rabbi Shahrar Colt, Rab`16, of Congregation Dorshei Tzedek in Newton, MA, and Rabbi Susie Jacobson, Rab`15, of Temple Israel in Boston also have active Green Teams.
- Rabbi Daniel Berman, Rab`10, says his congregation, Temple Reyim in Newton, MA, invested in solar panels for the building and is now generating 50 percent of their total energy through solar power.

*Alumni and friends, keep the responses coming! Please [contact us](#) to tell us about your sustainability-related Torah commentaries and green initiatives. We'll be sharing your stories throughout the year.*





## Forbidden Fruit, Rosh HaShanah, and Our Climate Crisis

By Rabbi Natan Margalit

*Director, Hebrew College [Open Circle Jewish Learning](#)*

*Founder & President, [Organic Torah](#)*

According to Hasidic traditions, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, from the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, worked in a deeper way than we usually think about it.

It's not just that after the eating of the fruit we humans could distinguish between good and evil. The test of "to eat or not to eat" kind of assumed that we had that ability already. What kind of a test would it have been if we couldn't distinguish between good and bad? No, the real problem that came from eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was that we might know the right thing to do, but only know it in our heads: not really know it enough to change who we are and how we act. That is a curse that we are all living with daily.

This curse of the Tree of Knowledge feels very present in this moment when we stand at the brink of climate disaster. We all (or a lot of us) know that we have only a very short window of time to radically change our energy use. If we do not, we will be participating in the ruination of our planet, bringing about an era of famine, droughts, fires, mass migrations, and war. We don't even have to imagine it in our minds anymore — it's already happening, and will only get worse.

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# 70 FACES OF TORAH

Posts from this [Hebrew College-hosted blog](#) are published weekly in [Patheos](#).

## Teshuvah: Wisdom from Teachers and Children

Parashat Netzavim (Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20)

By Rabbi Or Rose

Director, [Miller Center for Interreligious Learning & Leadership](#)



On Father's Day 2015, I traveled with my children to New Haven, CT to celebrate with my father-in-law. On our way home to Boston, we stopped in Hartford because my teacher, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi (of blessed memory) had fallen gravely ill while teaching at a nearby retreat center. Knowing that my kids might not have many more opportunities to engage with Reb Zalman (as he is affectionately known), I asked them to think in advance about a question they might want to ask him.

When we arrived at his hospital room, I was surprised to see my lifelong mentor looking so fragile and connected to several machines. This was the person who held me in his arms at my circumcision, who helped me put on my prayer shawl at my bar mitzvah, and who, several years later, was one of the rabbis to ordain me.

My daughter, however, was undaunted, and walked right up to Reb Zalman's bed and told him that she had a question for him.

He smiled, adjusted his glasses, and said, "Go ahead, let's hear it."

"How did you become so smart?" she asked.

After suppressing a giggle, Reb Zalman took a deep breath and responded: "To tell you the truth, I am not so proud that I am smart. After all, God gave me my brain and my parents and teachers gave me a good education. What I am prouder of is that I have become wise."

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# EVENTS

Visit the Hebrew College website for more information on our [events](#) and [news](#).

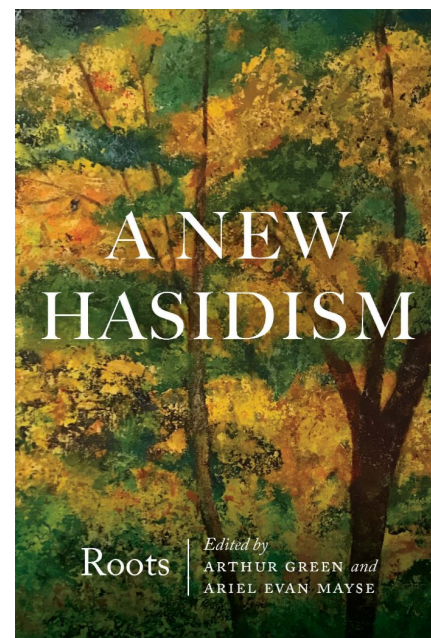
## A New Hasidism: Study, Reflection, Celebration November 3 | 2-8 pm at Hebrew College

Celebrate the publication of Hebrew College Rector Rabbi Art Green's and Dr. Ariel Mayse's new work on the history, development, and contemporary practice of Neo-Hasidism.

Speakers include Hebrew College President Sharon Cohen Anisfeld, Hebrew College faculty Rabbi Art Green, Rabbi Ebn Leader, Rabbi Nehemia Polen, and Rabbi Or Rose, Institute for Jewish Spirituality's Rabbi Nancy Flam, and Stanford University's Dr. Ariel Mayse.

Evening concert of neo-Hasidic inspired music with Rabbis Lev Friedman, Rab`18, and Shoshana Friedman, Rab`14.

Join us for an inspiring day (or part of the day) of learning, discussion, dinner, and music.



[Learn more & register](#)

## SEPTEMBER

### Azamra: Alternative Shabbat Community Minyan

*Join Rabbi Lev Friedman, Rab`18, for a morning service in the Hebrew College Beit Midrash, followed by a pot-luck vegetarian kiddush luncheon. Occurs monthly. Supported by the [Hebrew College Innovation Lab](#).*

September 28 | 10 am-12 pm  
Hebrew College  
[Learn more](#)

SEPT

## NOVEMBER

### Blossoming: The 2019 Hebrew College Jewish Education Conference

*The two-day conference will focus on the blossoming of educators, professionals, students, families, organizations, and the Jewish family. Speakers include Avraham Infeld and Hebrew College Rector Rabbi Art Green.*

November 11-12  
Hebrew College  
[Learn more](#)



## OCTOBER

### Beatrice Wool Prints Art Opening and Reception

*Celebrate the works of Hebrew College alumna Beatrice Wool z"l, who based many of her prints on Biblical themes. Prints are on display and available for purchase at Hebrew College through December 31.*

October 6 | 3-5 pm  
Hebrew College  
[Learn more](#)



### Ta Sh'ma (Come & Hear) Hebrew College Ordination Programs Open House

November 18 | 8 am  
Hebrew College  
[Learn more & register](#)



Hebrew College | 160 Herrick Road | Newton Centre, MA 02459  
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