

Earth Etudes for Elul

*Spiritual Reflections
for the Season*

Edited by Katy Z. Allen



StrongVoices

Medfield, MA

Elul 5

Gratitude

Katy Z. Allen

Elul: The Month for Climate Action

David Krantz

Tekiah In Elul, we hear the call for the quintessential sound of the shofar every morning. It's meant as a daily wake-up call to action. Perhaps

appropriately, the word *Tekiah* itself also means "disaster." Day after day in Elul, the shofar shouts: "Disaster! Act now!"

Just as an alarm clock gives us notice that we have to get to work, the shofar reminds us that time marches onward and that our mistakes won't correct themselves. We must actively engage with the world to repair it and our relationships with each other. The process of repentance and repair starts with recognition, and it's time that we recognize that with human-induced climate change threatening the Earth as we know it. Our relationship with our environment is greatly in need of repair in order to avert disaster. But how can we repent and repair our relationship with the Earth? Every day of Elul, we can take one step forward to mitigate and abate climate change.

You can start small, with reducing your energy consumption at home; walking, biking and taking more public transportation instead of private cars; and most simply and effectively by simply reducing your consumption of meat. Yes, that's right, eating less meat may very well be one of the most impactful ways that you can reduce carbon emissions, since meat production and consumption—more than transportation or home-energy use—is, according to the United Nations, the single largest contributor of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. Collectively, changing our diet can help change the climate.

And think bigger! Next election, vote green by supporting the politicians with strong climate policies—and hold them accountable if they take office. Call your elected representatives and tell them to take action on climate change. You can magnify your impact by joining with others and becoming more involved with the Jewish-environmental movement, including organizations such as the one I run, Aytzim: Ecological Judaism.

People say, "Think global, act local," but that may not be enough in the era of the Anthropocene, the time when we humans have become the greatest force on the Earth's systems. We need to both think and act locally, nationally and globally. It is time for us to approach wicked problems such as climate change with multiple solutions that work across multiple levels. Each of us needs to work both within our own communities as well as in cooperation with others.

As Jews, we have a religious obligation to serve and guard the Earth (Genesis 2:15)—a responsibility we have neglected for too long. Elul is the designated time in our calendar for us to repent for our sins, but repentance in Judaism includes more than mere recognition or apology: Repentance also means being confronted with the opportunity to make the same mistake again and choosing differently. In Judaism, repentance means behavior change. And when it comes to upholding our responsibility to serve as stewards of the Earth, stewards of God's Creation, we are given a new opportunity to choose more wisely with the dawn of every new day. But unlike when we as

individuals sin against our friends, our repentance with the Earth is societal, and our success is dependent on collective action.

Each of us needs to act in concert. So, both change your individual behavior and spread the word! Start climate-action conversations with your friends and relatives, and discuss climate action at synagogues, JCCs and schools. Listen to the imperative of the shofar's daily blast: "Act now!" "Act now!" "Act now!" And heed the shofar's call to action to avoid disaster. Elul is the month for our repentance, and as such it is, more than any other month, also the month of climate action. *Tekiah!*

Three Levels of Holiness

David Seidenberg