

**Statesmen Journal
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As the debate about global warming rages on in state buildings and living rooms, I hear increasing concern from my congregation. People want to know, how do we make our actions regarding climate change line up with our values as people of faith? Most feel overwhelmed by the problem before us, and don't know where to begin.

Several bills are currently before the Oregon State Legislature that will be critical to the future health of our state. They include measures designed to boost our clean energy sector, low-interest loans for creating energy efficient homes, and a bill asking the State to establish rules for a cap-and-trade system to limit greenhouse gas emissions. As I ponder these important policy questions, I am grateful for my faith tradition, which provides clear guidance on our role in protecting the earth.

Our tradition teaches us of our responsibility to watch over our fragile planet. The Bible commands humanity to "keep watch over the earth, and to act in service of it." When God looks back upon the majesty of Creation at the end of each day, it says that God notes, "*Ki Tov Hu*," that everything was in balance and was well. Would God look into the world today, with our current ecological crisis and say, "yes, all is well and in balance?" I doubt it.

Consider the Talmudic (?) story of the old man planting a carob tree. A younger man asks him, 'Why are you planting a carob tree? A carob tree won't produce fruit for 70 years, and you will be dead long before that!' The old man replies, "The world was inhabited by trees when I was born, and it is my responsibility to the next generation to make sure the world still contains carob trees, after I am gone."

Like the old man and the carob tree, our individual decisions can indeed make a difference. It is my responsibility as a person of faith to speak up on this issue. My congregation is diverse and I don't claim to speak for it as a whole, but rather as one individual. But just as important are the actions we take as a society. The time has come to take dramatic action, in order to ensure that we have fruit to pass on to our children. That is why I support state legislative proposals to begin a cap-and-trade system, promote clean energy, and encourage energy efficient homes.

Jewish tradition demands that we stand up and make our voices heard. I urge everyone to call your legislators, write letters, schedule meetings – speak up! It works.

A story from the Talmud tells us of a man in the middle of the ocean who drills a hole in the bottom of his rowboat. When his companion reacts with horror, he asks, "Why do you care, the hole is not on your side!" Our fates are intertwined with one another and with the earth we all inhabit. We must proceed as if we are on that rowboat.