

# Groundbreaking Report Reveals Orthodox Jewish Views on Climate Change, the Environment, Faith, Science, and Politics

- ***Orthodox Jewry is among the least environmentally concerned US religious groups, yet half embrace environmental stewardship as a religious value***
- ***The Modern Orthodox community has significant environmental concerns but doesn't talk about them***
- ***Wide diversity of environmental views reflects differences in communal insularity and in views on faith, science, and politics***
- ***Influence of rabbis is strong on environmental matters even among community members who are not environmentally concerned***

Orthodox Jewry is among the least green<sup>1</sup> religious groups in the United States (which is one of the least green countries in the world). Nonetheless, half of American Orthodoxy (60% of Modern Orthodox) embraces a religious obligation to steward Creation for present and future generations. And, while two thirds of Haredim (often called “ultra-Orthodox”) are Doubtful or Dismissive of climate change, half of Modern Orthodox Jews are Alarmed or Concerned about it<sup>2</sup> – yet personal and communal discourse falls short of their concern.

Most Orthodox Jews who are Alarmed, Concerned, or even Cautious about climate change have already acted to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and would consider additional such actions. Large majorities of both Haredim (87%) and Modern Orthodox Jews (74%), including those who are Dismissive about climate change, state that *halachic* (Jewish legal) rulings from senior rabbis (*poskim* and *roshei yeshiva*) would likely influence them to act to reduce their GHG emissions. Nearly half of Modern Orthodox Jews want more communal attention to climate change in their schools and media, as well as by their senior rabbis and their local, regional, and national institutions.

**These are some of the major findings of a groundbreaking report, “[American Orthodox Jewry, Climate Change, and Other Environmental Issues: Religion, Science, and Politics](#)” (July 2025).** The report is based on a survey of America’s approximately three-quarters of a million Orthodox Jews by [Nishma Research](#), Orthodoxy’s leading communal research firm, and [Meisharim](#), an educational group focused on Orthodox communities. The survey’s margin of error is  $\pm 3\text{-}4\%$ . The 97-page report includes pages of verbatim responses reflecting a wide spectrum of views. For inquiries, contact Rabbi Barry Kornblau, [bkornblau@meisharim.org](mailto:bkornblau@meisharim.org).

**Below are many of the report’s additional findings about:**

- A) Orthodox views on the environment
- B) The intersection of Orthodox environmental views with faith, insularity, science, and American politics
- C) Orthodox faith and the environment
- D) Orthodox views on science
- E) Orthodox environmental views and American politics
- F) GHG-reducing behaviors among Orthodox Jews, and what would influence them

These sections often include comparisons with similar data for other groups of Americans.

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<sup>1</sup> The report uses the common term “green” to denote a view or action that reflects environmental concern.

<sup>2</sup> The report categorizes attitudes towards climate change according to the following standard six categories, known as [Six Americas](#), of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication: Alarmed, Concerned, Cautious, Disengaged, Doubtful, and Dismissive.

## **A) Orthodox views on the environment**

### Climate change:

- Although two thirds of Orthodox Jews think climate change is happening (84% of Modern Orthodox), only 20% think human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels, is its primary cause (35% of Modern Orthodox).
  - The remaining one third think Earth is not warming, don't know if it is, or think it's a hoax – far more than other Americans.
- Only one quarter of Orthodox Jews are Alarmed or Concerned about climate change (nearly half of Modern Orthodox), while more than half are Doubtful or Dismissive (one quarter of Modern Orthodox).
  - Although 46% of Modern Orthodoxy is Alarmed or Concerned about climate change, less than half that figure (20%) discuss it with friends. This gap between their concern and their personal conversations complements their desire, noted above, for greater communal discourse about climate change. (These gaps between concern and discourse about climate change within Modern Orthodox communities are striking findings of the survey.)

### Other environmental problems:

Orthodox Jews' greatest environmental concern is air pollution. They are about half as concerned as other Americans about other major environmental problems, including freshwater pollution, tropical rainforest loss, conditions of the oceans, and extinction of species (biodiversity loss).

### Comparatively speaking...

- A great majority of Orthodox Jews consider climate change less important than other Americans do, worry about it less, and think it will harm them and future generations less.
- Haredim are among the least green Americans (such as Evangelical Christians).
- Modern Orthodox Jews are greener than Haredim.
- Religiously liberal Modern Orthodox Jews are greener than other Americans regarding climate change, but not other environmental problems.

## **B) The intersection of Orthodox environmental views with faith, insularity, science, and American politics**

Overall, the views of Orthodox Jews regarding environmental matters correlate most powerfully with their *differing approaches to faith*, and secondarily with their degree of religious and culturally insularity, views about science, and American political affiliation. These factors often reflect and reinforce one another:

- At one extreme are those who i) have non-fundamentalist religious beliefs, ii) are not religiously and culturally insular, iii) accept even religiously challenging scientific findings, iv) are politically liberal – and v) are “green”, sometimes even more so than other Americans.
- Conversely, others i) have fundamentalist beliefs, ii) are highly insular, iii) are suspicious even of scientific findings that are not religiously challenging, iv) are politically conservative – and v) are far more “anti-green” than other Americans. One in six of this group consider climate change a hoax.

In between these extremes lie the richly diverse, interlocking views of American Orthodox Jews on these issues.

## **C) Orthodox faith and the environment**

- Two-thirds of Orthodox Jews, including 40% of Modern Orthodox, think humanity can rely upon God's providence or Biblical promises to protect Earth's climate. Other intensely religious Americans agree with this far less.
  - Respondents' views about divine Providence are the single strongest, independent correlate of their environmental views.

- Half of Orthodox Jews, including one quarter of Modern Orthodox, think fulfilling religious precepts is the best way to protect the environment.

The above two beliefs are strongest among the least green, suggesting linkage between faith and environmental attitudes: If God directs the world – in general and/or in accordance with human or Jewish merit – then people and especially Jews must focus on fulfilling the divine Will and leave the environment to God. One “Yeshivish” respondent Dismissive of climate change stated his version of this view in particularly sharp terms: “Concern with ‘ruining the environment’ and existential questions shows a lack of *emunah* [faith] and possibly *k’fira* [heresy].”

- Half of Haredim consider environmentalism to be an anti-Torah secular religion that prioritizes nature and animals over people.

Nevertheless:

- Nearly half (44%) of Haredim and more than half (60%) of Modern Orthodox Jews embrace environmental stewardship as a religious value. They agree that “Being serious about Torah, mitzvot, and Jewish concerns means recognizing that the *Borei Olam* (Creator) gave us only one, beautiful world which we, as Jews, must do our share to steward, clean, and improve for ourselves and for future generations.”
  - Other highly religious Americans embrace stewardship far more than Orthodox Jewry.
- A strong majority feel closer to God when experiencing nature (62% of Modern Orthodox; 75% of Haredim.)

#### **D) Orthodox views on science**

The disagreement of Haredim with foundational views of modern science that conflict with a literal reading of Genesis’s Creation narrative (regarding cosmology and evolution) is among the most extreme in the world, and correlates powerfully with individuals’ level of education in the physical sciences. Modern Orthodox Jews agree more with contemporary scientific findings, although 20% disagree with evolution, 30% think the Universe is 5785 years old, and 40% think climate scientists don’t understand the causes of climate change well. For Haredim, these figures are all about 75%.

- Such disagreements also correlate with distrust of even an authoritative scientific statement that does *not* conflict with Genesis: i.e., approximately half of Orthodox Jewry would not trust a statement about chemistry in a science textbook without first verifying it. This suggests that doubts about science that conflicts with Genesis may contribute to skepticism of science in general. As one Yeshivish respondent dismissive of climate change put it, “If [the chemistry statement] was right next to a sentence about how humans originated from monkeys, I would wonder at the reliability of the scientists.”

#### **E) Orthodox environmental views and American politics**

While religiously liberal Modern Orthodox are a bit more green than Americans of the same political affiliation, other Orthodox groups are less green than their American political peers. This “greenness gap” is generally larger among Republicans than among Democrats. In both parties, the gap increases with religious and cultural insularity. At the extremes, for example:

- Religiously liberal Modern Orthodox Jews who are also Democrats are 7 percentage points more green<sup>3</sup> than other American Democrats. As one put it, “Climate change is no different from anything else.

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<sup>3</sup> The report calculates a group’s greenness by subtracting the percentage of its Doubtful and Dismissive respondents from the percentage of its Alarmed and Concerned respondents. A group that is all Alarmed or Concerned, for example, has a calculated greenness of +100 percentage points, while a group that is all Doubtful or Dismissive has a greenness of -100. The difference between the greenness of two groups can thus range from 0 to 200 percentage points.

Hashem [God] gave us free will. If we don't take care of each other and the planet, there will be consequences. We don't cross the street blindfolded and expect Hashem to save us.”

- Hasidim who are Republicans, by contrast, are 69 percentage points less green<sup>4</sup> than other American Republicans. One such person pithily summarized his view in Yiddish: these matters are “*shtissim MIT lokshen*” (“nonsense WITH noodles”).

#### F) **GHG-reducing behaviors among Orthodox Jews, and what would influence them**

GHG emissions of all individuals depend upon their lifestyle. Among Orthodox Jews, for example, some have low incomes, live materially modest lives in high-density urban housing, fly little, and travel locally, often by public transportation. Others, notably in suburbs, approach the opposite extreme. Although the study did not evaluate individuals’ overall GHG emissions, it did examine eleven actions that individuals can take that reduce their GHG emissions:

- The greenest respondents typically already take three or so and are willing to consider starting or increasing a similar number. For the least green, these figures are between zero and one.
- Some actions face lack of interest or opposition, including reducing red meat or dairy consumption (among Haredim), and reducing flying.

Among those willing to consider at least one action that reduces their emissions, common actions already taken include:

- Most common among such Haredim and Modern Orthodox Jews are **reducing food waste** (nearly half) and **improving home insulation** (around 30%).
- Other common actions among such Modern Orthodox Jews are **reducing red meat consumption** (around a half), **reducing solo car trips** (about one third), and **reducing flying** (one quarter).

Actions that such people would most commonly consider starting or increasing include:

- **Switching their home to renewable energy** and improving its insulation (more than half)
- Driving an **electric or hybrid car** (half)
- Reducing food waste (more than one third)
- Reducing solo car trips (one third)
- Among such Modern Orthodox Jews, around 30% or more respondents would consider:
  - Taking **environmental factors into account in their investments**
  - **Reducing dairy consumption** (red meat consumption, one quarter)
  - **Discussing climate with politicians, and with friends**

In addition to the powerful role of senior rabbis’ *halachic* pronouncements about climate change, other influences that would motivate such people to consider taking action include:

- Learning about an action’s financial and/or health benefits
- Encouragement from friends, family, and local rabbis

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<sup>4</sup> See previous footnote.