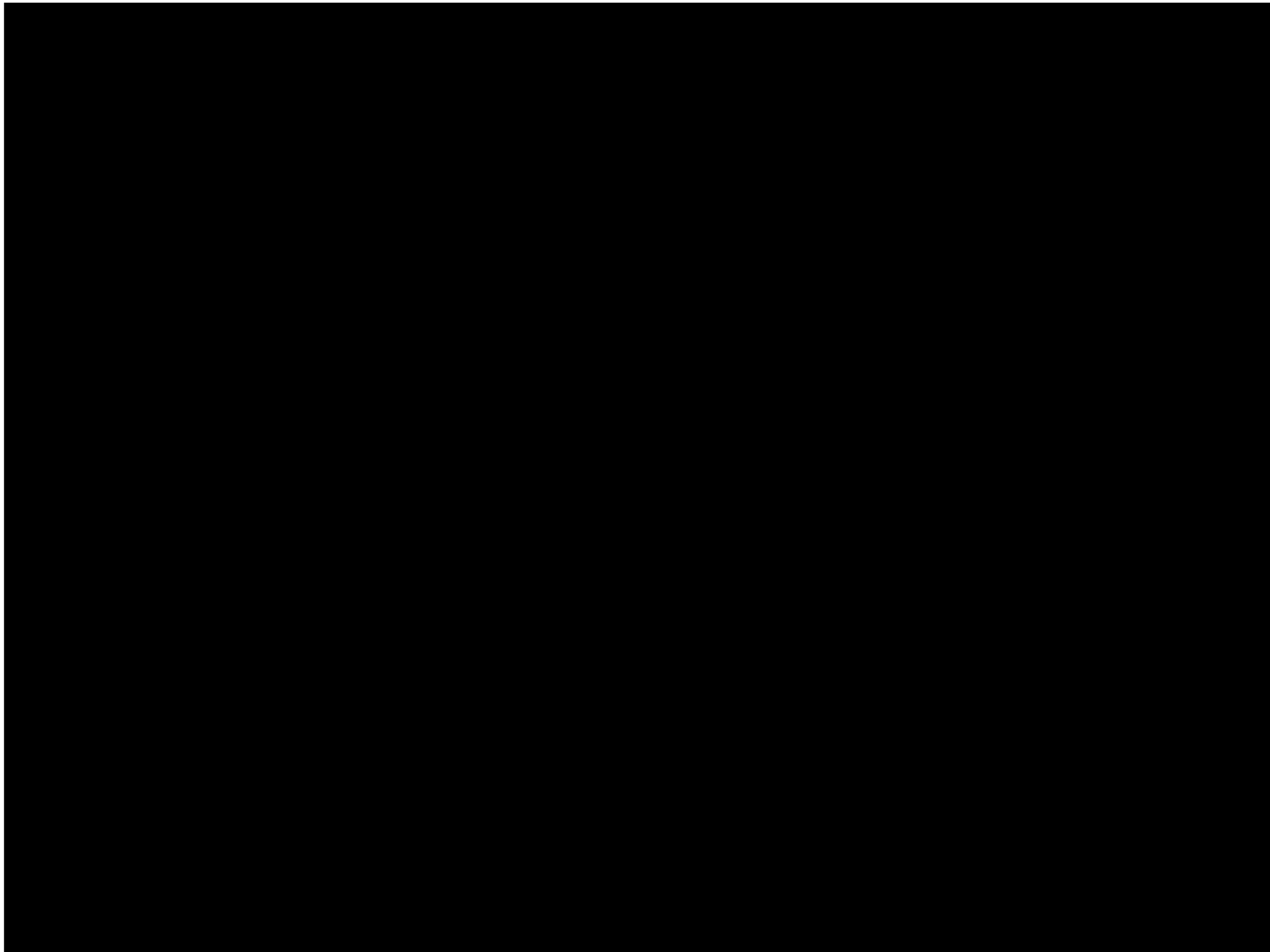




# The Role of Judaism in the Environmental Movement

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Theories in Action ♦ April 27, 2012



# Telling a Story

## Framing Social Movements

1960s: Anti-War  
Movement

1950-80s: Civil Rights Movement

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1949: Aldo  
Leopold's  
Land Ethic

"A land ethic  
changes the role  
of *Homo sapiens*  
from conqueror  
... to plain  
member"

1962: Rachel  
Carson's  
*Silent Spring*

2004: "Death of  
Environmentalism"

Authors call on  
environmental movement  
to identify and target  
people's "core values and  
beliefs"

# Research Motivation (The Problem)

## RELIGION

Community, Balance,  
Beliefs, Tradition, Laws,  
Values, Spirituality,  
God

## ENVIRONMENT

Nature, Biodiversity, Air,  
Life, Ecosystem Services,  
Climate Change, Env.  
Movement

# Relevance

Religions offer:

- Traditions
- Community
- Moral voice
- Organizing capacity

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The modern  
environmental  
movement lacks  
a cohesive moral  
frame

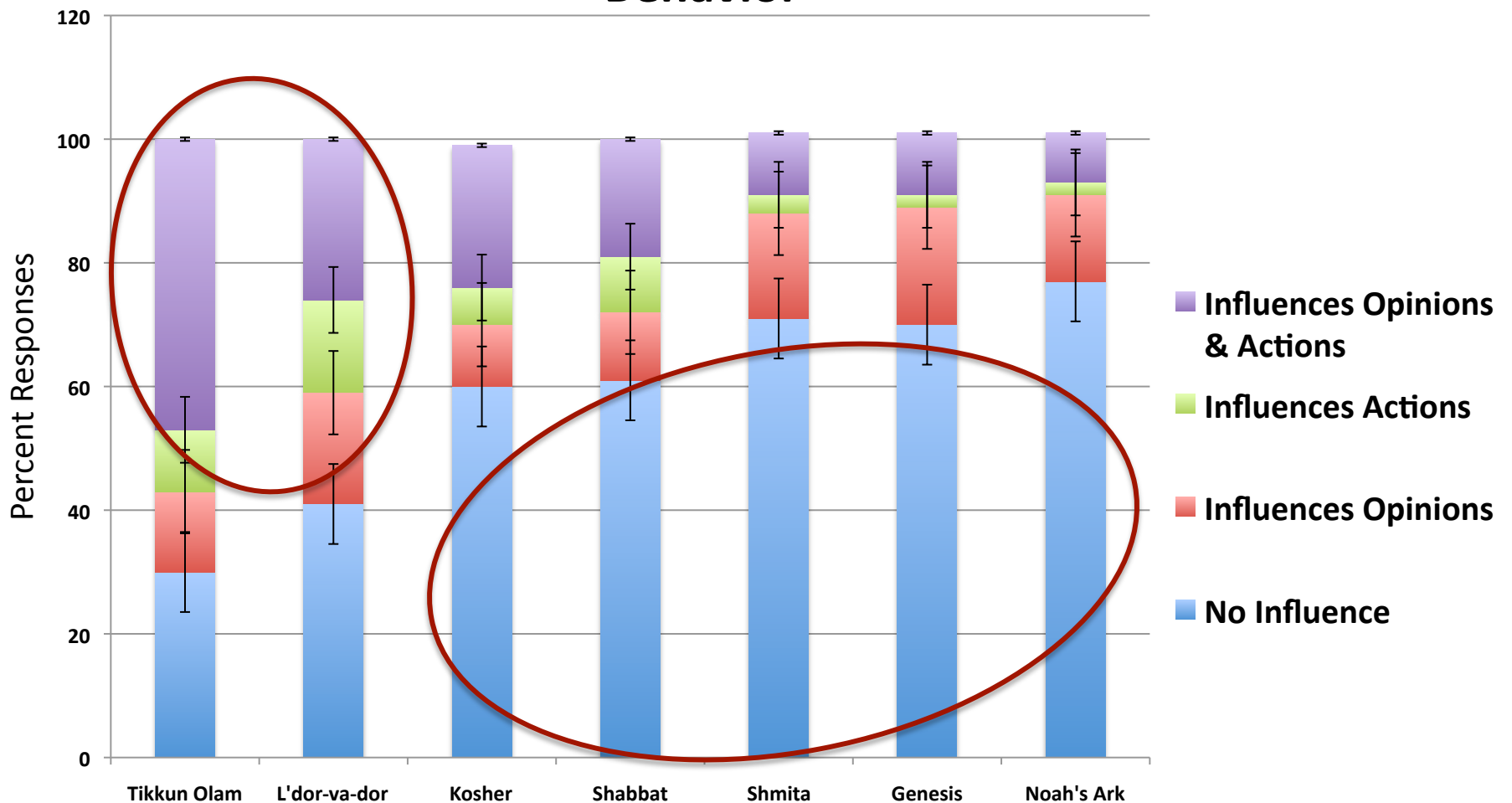
# Research Questions

1. How do Jewish texts, customs, and holidays influence Jewish people's perceptions of the natural world? (Do they at all?)
2. How can Jewish and environmental organizations work more closely together toward mutual benefit?

# Survey Results

## Question 1: Jewish Customs & Texts

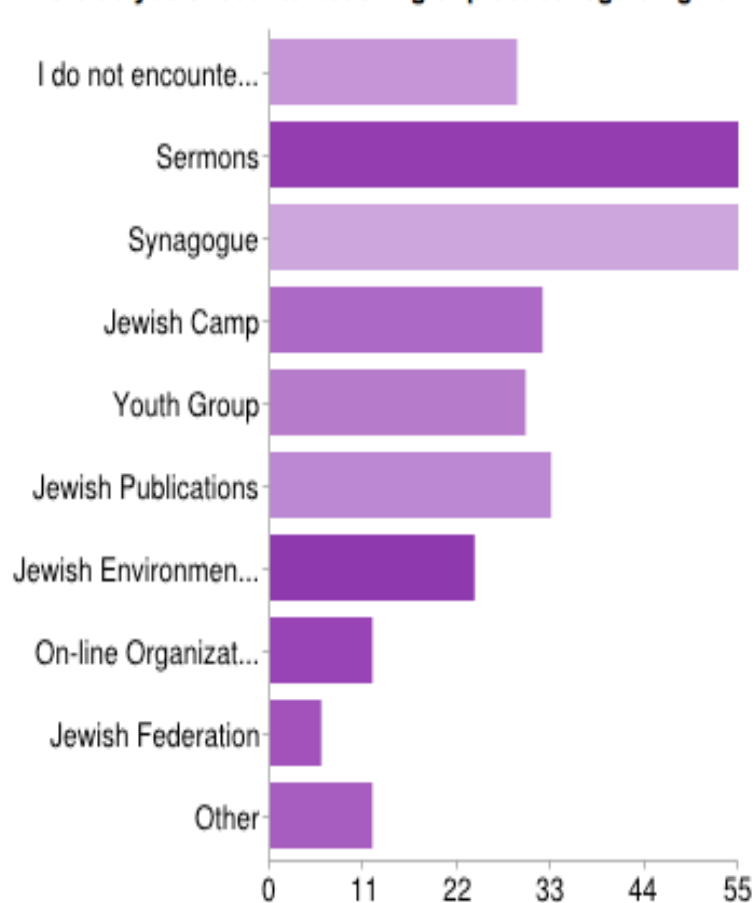
### Jewish Customs and Texts' Influence on Environmental Behavior



# Survey Results

## Sources of Jewish Environmentalism

Where do you encounter teaching or practice regarding human-environment interactions in a Jewish context?



I do not encounter environmental concerns in a Jewish context	29	25%
Sermons	55	48%
Synagogue	55	48%
Jewish Camp	32	28%
Youth Group	30	26%
Jewish Publications	33	29%
Jewish Environmental Organizations	24	21%
On-line Organizations	12	10%
Jewish Federation	6	5%
Other	12	10%

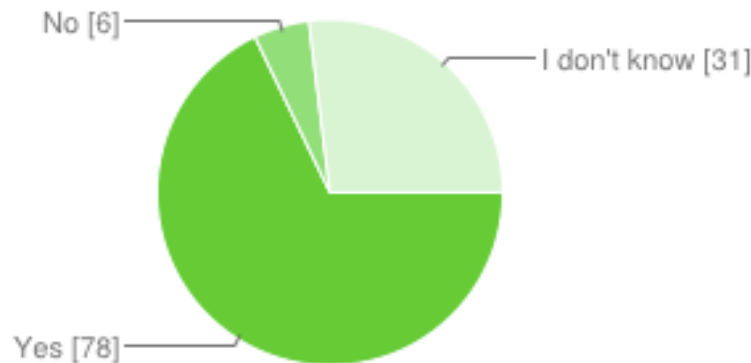
People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.



# Survey Results

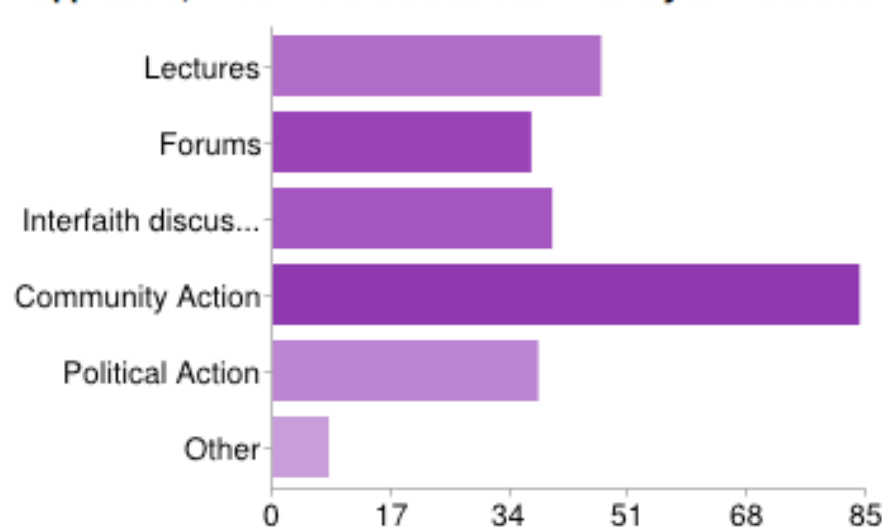
## Question 2: Collaboration with Environmental Groups

Do you feel there are opportunities available for increased collaboration between Jewish and environmental organizations?



Yes	78	68%
No	6	5%
I don't know	31	27%

If applicable, what kind of collaboration would you like to see between Jewish and environmental organizations?



Lectures	47	48%
Forums	37	38%
Interfaith discussion about environmental concerns	40	41%
Community Action	84	87%
Political Action	38	39%
Other	8	8%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

# Testimonials (Rhode Island)

“I have **never considered** that Judaism and the environment could have **any connection at all.**”

“Shabbat—makes me think about **‘unplugging.’**”

“I can remember being in Hebrew School as young as **6 years old and singing songs about planting trees.**”

“Judaism's focus on respecting ourselves by respecting the Earth we live on is my **primary basis for environmental action.**”

“Every single thing in the world **has a soul.**” (Community Rabbi)

# Are We Missing a Key Opportunity?

## Biblical and Rabbinic Laws

***Bal Tashchit***  
**("do not destroy")**

**Sabbatical for the land**

**Wait 3 years before  
eating fruit**

**Kosher Laws**

## Modern Environmental Issues

**Recycle**

**Restore ecosystem  
services**

**Limit our consumption**

**Be mindful of our  
food**

# Key Recommendations

## When appropriate:

- Frame issues like climate change in moral terms
- Engage in dialogue about religions environmental ethics
- Partner with religious groups
- Embrace the ethical dimensions of climate change

This way to our GARDEN

Thank You!

