

## **Help Protect and Save the Earth**

### **13 Tips with text and commentary**

**By Katy Z. Allen**

## Tip # 1 – Water Savings

Turn off the water while you brush your teeth.  
You can save two or three gallons a minute.  
If you want to know exactly how much water you are saving,  
let the water run one more time while you are brushing,  
but collect it in a bucket.  
Measure the water and then use it to water your plants.

**You are not required to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it. Ethics of the Fathers 2:21**

Shalom!

As we begin to move out of darkness and into light, toward spring even though the heart of winter is still with us, I feel compelled to begin sharing some thoughts and ideas about saving this precious Earth upon which we live. I began my career as a biology teacher; now I am a rabbi. For me, these seemingly disparate professions are connected: our Earth is sacred; without it and all its amazing resources, where would we be?

As humans, we need to try to understand the origins of the ground on which we stand, the stars in the sky, and everything between, and so, every culture has a Creation story. Both myths and scientific descriptions abound, and have for millenia. They provide us with explanations of what happened in the distant past -- of how the planet on which we live came to be and how we human beings came to live upon this green Earth.

But what does the future – both near and distant – hold for this Universe? We cannot know. What will happen to planet Earth? We cannot say. It is easy to see doom and gloom. Global warming feels more and more real. Peak production of worldwide fossil fuels is fast approaching.

Underground aquifers are being depleted. The ozone layer has holes in it. Pollution exists in the most remote regions of the planet. Yet, even though we cannot know what the future will bring, I cannot help but be hopeful. Hope by itself, however, is not enough. I must also do something, even if it is a very small something. And so, one of the things I am doing is starting these emails. My intention is to send them twice a month, but it is possible that they will simply be occasional.

Each will contain a tip, a practical idea about how to help conserve resources or preserve the Earth. Some of these will take little effort and no money. Others will be harder or more expensive.

However, by giving ourselves the opportunity to see these ideas one at a time, my hope is to make it easier for us to increase our efforts to live a life-style that is kinder to the natural world. We don't have to do it all at once, we can do it in steps, but neither are we free to ignore our responsibility. To help us along our way, each tip will be accompanied by a quote you will hopefully find meaningful, and a few of my own thoughts as well.

With blessings, prayers, greetings, and hopes for strides -- both large and small -- toward peace and a healthier Earth,

© Katy Z. Allen, January 27, 2006

## Tip # 2 – Cut Down on Junk Mail

Making paper requires trees -- and more.

Making any kind of paper -- even recycled paper -- requires electricity and water and chemicals, and it causes pollution.

You can cut down on your paper consumption and at the same time reduce the amount of junkmail you receive.

Go to <http://www.dmaconsumers.org/cgi/offmailinglist> and get yourself off at least a few unwanted mailing lists.(1)

I am reminded that in some valley wells they have found traces of a chemical called DBCP (dibromochloropropane) in ground water aquifers. DBCP was linked to sterility in males and is now banned in the United States. My dad used some DBCP years ago [on his farm]. It was supposed to kill nematodes, microscopic pests that chewed up roots. No one knew it would contaminate drinking water....

My dad didn't choose to pollute the water table. He did nothing illegal. He simply trusted the chemical company and the governmental regulatory agencies. He made a decision based on a recommendation from a pest control consultant, advice that turned out to be bad. Dad acknowledges his mistake and asks, "What do you want me to do now?"

*From epitaph for a peach: four seasons on my family farm, by David Mas Masumoto*

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Shalom!

For the most part, none of us is *choosing* to pollute; none of us is *choosing* to destroy our Earth; none of us is *choosing* to use the last of any of the planet's resources, but neither does one who commits involuntary manslaughter choose to kill another human being. Like Masumoto's dad, we may all be harming the Earth -- in fact, we almost certainly are. We don't have to have bad intentions to damage our planet. All we need is bad advice, or ignorance, or a lack of caring, or a lack of energy, or a lack of commitment, or a schedule that is too busy, or our mind on other things, or, or, or....

There is so much we need to know in order to preserve the Earth, so much we need to know simply to *live* in today's hectic global environment. If we don't ignore the danger to our planet, and we choose to see it, the situation can easily seem overwhelming. The only place we can start is with the first step, and then the second, and the third...By doing so, we can gradually be less and less often in the position of having to say, "What do you want me to do now?" It is a matter of acknowledging our own individual responsibility.

I welcome your help in understanding how to do our small part to keep the planet going.

Peace and blessings,

Rabbi Katy Allen

© Katy Z. Allen, February 12, 2006

(1) Thank you to Daniel Bowman Simon for this link.

## Tip # 3 – Turn Off the Lights and the Computer

Some estimates say that 5-10% of our electrical use is in lighting. So, let's remember to turn off the lights when we leave the room.

About 1/3 of the energy consumption of a computer is due to the monitor, and running the screensaver uses more electricity than normal computer use. So, let's turn off the monitor or have it go into sleep mode when we get up from our computer.

Everything I've read on the Internet says that the concern about start-up power surges, for both lights and computers, *used* to be true, but it isn't any more. And, if you're worried that turning your computer on and off is bad for it, well, you'll probably have a new computer before you've turned it on and off enough times to matter, so it really is OK to turn it off at night. [1] (I know this is more than one tip, but we can handle it, can't we?)

And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth." (Gen. 1:27-28)

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom He had formed. (Gen. 2:8)

A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and it then divides and becomes four branches. (Gen. 2:10) [2]

Shalom!

Evan Eisenberg[3] reminds us that water cannot flow uphill, so if four rivers flowed out of Eden, they must have been flowing off a mountaintop! He goes on to suggest that Eden, the Garden of God, *gan elohim*, is not a manicured garden, but a wilderness, a primal place in which we humans were an integral part of the ecosystem. But, at the point in our evolution at which we were no longer an equal player in the ebb and flow of matter and energy in the wild garden of God, we were expelled. Our inability to exist in the paradise can be evidenced today in the fact that we can comfortably remain in the wilderness for only a limited amount of time, after which "we are glad to be expelled." And any time that we *do* remain in the wilderness for very long, we change it, transform it, and destroy its wildness.

...Once, wilderness was our home...Looking back...we see a... place of harmony and plenty. We forget that the harmony, such as it was, was possible only because we were still animals, and the plenty only because we were scarce. As soon as we become fully human, we begin to "fill the earth and subdue it." We begin to destroy Eden, and thereby expel ourselves.

There is a paradox here. We are the only of God's creatures and creations who know how to pave forests, explode atomic bombs, and spill millions of gallons of fossil fuels into the oceans. We are the only ones with the capacity to destroy Eden, and the whole Earth. And yet, we were created *b'tzelem elohim*—in the image of God. We carry within us a spark of the Divine. We have the gifts of incredible intelligence, insight, understanding, and creativity. How can we be holy and have all these gifts and at the same time carry within us such ability to destroy? Perhaps it is our very intelligence and ability to create that also give us such ability to destroy; perhaps we cannot have the one without the other. But whatever answer we choose, the paradox remains. A teacher of mine once said that the closer we come to paradox, the closer we come to God.[4] We are stuck with the paradox, and the best way to deal with it is to stand in the tension it creates, to work at every

moment to let our holiness shine forth, and to remember, as Eisenberg points out, that although the word *kivshuha* means “master” or “subdue,” it also means “protect” or “preserve.” Let us choose to the greatest of our ability to be protectors rather than destroyers, that we may not be expelled from our global garden, and that we not obliterate all of the sacred creation that inhabits it.

Peace and blessings,  
Rabbi Katy Z. Allen

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[1] I'm no computer expert, but this is what I'm reading all over the Internet. See, for example, <http://energy.opp.psu.edu/awareness-conservation/computers>. Lots of colleges and universities are instructing people to turn off computers and monitors.

[2] JPS translation

[3] “The Mountain and the Tower: Wilderness and City in the Symbols of Babylon and Israel,” in *Torah of the Earth: Exploring 4,000 Years of Ecology in Jewish Thought, Vol. 1*, ed. by Arthur Waskow, pp. 38-41.

[4] Rabbi Andrea Cohen-Keiner

## Tip # 4 - Eat Less Meat

This one is for all of us meat-eaters.

The cost of meat is higher than the price tag shows.

If you are an average American meat-eater, you need more than three acres of land to provide you with a one-year food supply. If you are a pure vegetarian, you need only one-sixth acre.

Average American meat-eaters unknowingly use 4200 gallons of water for their food to reach their stomach – through watering cows, irrigation, processing, and so on. Pure vegetarians use only about 300 gallons.

One calorie of beef protein requires 78 calories of fossil fuel for its production. One calorie of grain and bean protein requires only 4 calories of fossil fuel.

The message is clear – eating lower on the food chain is good for the planet. If we feel that we can't become vegetarians (overnight anyway), the least we can do is cut down on our meat consumption by having one hamburger (or chicken leg, or whatever) instead of two (or three or four) and by eating meat one time (or two times) less per week. [1]

“Some day, perhaps in the very process of our benefactions, perhaps in the fullness of geologic time, the last [sandhill] crane will trumpet his farewell and spiral skyward from the great marsh. High out of the clouds will fall the sound of hunting horns, the baying of the phantom pack, the tinkle of little bells, and then a silence never to be broken, unless perchance in some far pasture of the Milky Way.”

*A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, by Aldo Leopold, p. 101

Shalom!

In his book published in 1949, Aldo Leopold recounts the demise of marshes once home to huge flocks of sandhill cranes. He tells how we wanted first the land around them for farming and then the marshes themselves. Draining the marshes turned out to provide relatively unproductive farmland, and before long the farmers moved on. The peat beds that were the foundation of the marsh dried out and caught fire. Eventually, only reflooding the marshes stopped the fires. So, the marshes were turned into cranberry bogs. By then few cranes remained.

Always, we want something. We want the next piece of land, the next hamburger, the next stylish shirt or blouse, the next electronic gadget, the next restaurant meal, and on and on. We are never satisfied. We need to be even *more* comfortable than we are. We need to have everything that our technological, consumer-oriented society offers. And so we buy, and we build, and we eat – whatever we want and whatever we can afford.

Who pays the price? Often, unseen people in some distant country are working in uncivilized conditions to produce the materials of our comfort. And always, the Earth is paying. No matter what it is we want next, the Earth pays a price – for everything we want and get, because ultimately it all comes out of the Earth.

It is human to always want more. It is, perhaps, Divine to control that desire. By controlling our desires, we can uncover previously unknown strength, beauty, and holiness within ourselves. And, every time we say “No” to our never-ending desire for more, we protect one little tiny corner of our planet. Despite our desire not to see it or not to acknowledge it, our planet *is* finite, and it can tolerate our abuse only to a point. We have the ability to have a positive impact as well. In Leopold’s time, only 25 nesting pairs of sandhill cranes lived in Wisconsin. Today, thanks to restoration efforts begun by Leopold, 12,000 cranes grace that state with their presence.[2] As a result, his eloquent epitaph to the crane has not yet become a reality.

Each of us *can* make a positive difference in the world, but in order to do so, we must rein in our endless desires – for meat and for other things – and think beyond ourselves. Although no one of us can do the job of preserving the planet alone, each and every one of us in each and every one of our daily acts is nevertheless responsible for ensuring the future of our world.

Peace and blessings,

Rabbi Katy Allen

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[1] “Diet for an Imperiled Planet,” by Richard Schwartz,  
<http://www.jewishveg.com/schwartz/diplanet.html>.

[2] “Leopold’s Gift,” by Kenneth Brower, in Sierra Magazine, January-February 2001, available online at <http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/200101/Leopold.asp>

## Tip # 5 – Sleep, Sleep, and More Sleep

Do you get enough sleep?

Insufficient sleep has been linked in recent years to a variety of health problems including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, to say nothing of safety issues at home, at work, and on the road. An increase in health problems means an increase in the use of medical resources, which in turn means an increase in the use of environmental resources.

In addition, if we are up and about when we should be comfortably asleep in our beds, we probably turn on the TV, computer, radio, or toaster oven, or in some other way start consuming energy, and we use up extra resources in this way, as well. When we make sure to get enough sleep, we help ourselves feel better, improve our health, and cut down the amount of our planet's resources that we consume.

*Master of the Universe, grant me the ability to be alone;  
May it be my custom to go outdoors each day  
Among the trees and grass – among all growing things  
And there may I be alone, and enter into prayer, to talk with  
the One to whom I belong.*

-- Reb Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1810)

Shalom!

Why do we think we should be going, going, going, instead of sleeping a good eight hours each night? Much of the time, we feel that we must be doing something, accomplishing something. I am as guilty of this as anyone. And yet, even as we are accomplishing something, we are also destroying something. The more we do, the more of the Earth's resources we consume.

There was a time when it was only in the Western world that we were going, going, going. In many tropical places in the world, everyone rested in the middle of the day. Many of the "primitive" peoples of the world lived at a slower pace. In his book, *Going to Extremes*, Joe McGinniss recounts the story of a principal in Barrow, Alaska, whose students could never get to school on time in the winter because the bus driver didn't wake up in time. The principal changed the schedule, starting school later in the day, but even that often didn't work. More often than not, the principal ended up driving the bus himself.

Today, many of those people are learning from us the apparent economic advantage of working more hours and resting fewer. In doing so, they are working toward catching up with us in terms of resource consumption.

We may think we know better than those of other cultures how to live in this world, but our way of living gobbles up the planet's resources. We have something to learn from those who live at a slower pace. If we slow down, get enough sleep, and take the time to be alone and commune with the trees and the flowers every day, we can enjoy life more, and help save our planet.

Shalom U'vrachah – Peace and blessings,

Rabbi Katy Allen

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## Tip # 6 – Get Rid of the Styrofoam and Plastic

You are getting ready to eat – at home or at work, take out or eat in, a picnic or a formal dinner; a cup of coffee, a three-course dinner, a dish of ice cream...

What kind of dishes-- paper?plastic?polystyrene foam?ceramic?

Chances are you won't serve a formal holiday dinner on paper plates. But what about that picnic?

It will take 500 years for a Styrofoam® cup to break down in a landfill. And according to the EPA, we throw away 25 billion polystyrene cups every year. [1] (That's *billion*, not million). That's a lot of smashed cups to be lying around half a millennium from now [2].

*Our best bet is reusable dishes, washed with earth-friendly cleaning materials and a minimum of water. In some coffee shops, you can bring your own cup and they'll fill it for you. If you really want to use throw-away dishes and utensils, try the new compostable ones, such as those from Nat-UR®[3], but remember, if they go into a landfill, they won't break down very fast; in order to compost quickly, they need to be in a compost pile.*

### *Where Go The Boats?*

Dark brown is the river, Golden is the sand. It flows along forever, With trees on either hand.  
Green leaves a-floating, Castles of the foam, Boats of mine a-boating—Where will all come home?  
On goes the river, And out past the mill, Away down the valley Away down the hill.  
Away down the river, A hundred miles or more, Other little children, Shall bring my boats ashore.  
-- Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Child's Garden of Verses*

Shalom!

When I started working at the Brigham and Women's Hospital, I couldn't buy food from the cafeteria, but it wasn't the food (not that it's so wonderful), it was the packaging: plastic containers, plastic cutlery, and Styrofoam® cups, bowls, and trays. I began bringing my lunch. I have always hated Styrofoam®. But when I began to research the issue of paper vs. plastic vs. polystyrene, I discovered that – relatively speaking – polystyrene isn't as terrible as I had thought; compared to paper or plastic, it is the most environmentally friendly option.

But rereading *A Child's Garden of Verses* had set me to dreaming, and we need to be able to dream. We need to be able to envision those little boats – the wooden ones with cloth sails as well as the ones made by inserting a stick into a leaf – we need to be able to envision them floating down the river, out of sight, to some unknown magical place where another child, unknown to us, will pull them out of the river. For that child on the riverbank, and even for the parent, there is no way to know for sure what will happen to the boat, just as there is no way for us to know for sure what will happen to our planet. But we need to believe in the seemingly unbelievable. We need to believe that another child will find the boat. We need to believe that we can make a difference. We need to believe that our planet will survive, that in some unknown magical day in the future, some other people, unknown to us, will also place little boats into rivers and dream. We need to be able to dream of a planet filled with love and caring and trees and rivers that will be there for the generations to come.

So, for me, Styrofoam® cups are symbolic. They are symbolic of what we *shouldn't* be doing to our planet, and they interfere with my ability to dream. And so, on the two days a week that I go to the hospital, I take my reusable cup with me – the one I already have, not a new one – the buying of which would be far more destructive to the planet than even a paper or a plastic cup – and afterward I wash it out and reuse it, and as a result, next year there will be 25 billion minus 100 cups in our country's landfills. This is my way of hanging on to my ability to dream, to watch the

boats dip and bob and disappear around the bend in the stream, and to imagine the magical place to which, without any sailors at the helm, they will gently but surely sail.

I encourage you, as well, to hold onto your ability to dream, for our dreams keep us sane, and our sanity makes it possible for us not only to get up each morning, but also to confront all the fear and danger that exist in our world, and to do our share to preserve all that is good about it.

May we all keep on dreaming, and may our dreams come true.

Shalom U'vrachah – Peace and blessings,

Rabbi Katy Allen

© Katy Z. Allen, April 29, 2006

[1] “The throwaway generation: 25 billion Styrofoam cups a year,” by Shauna Dineen, *E: The Environmental Magazine*, Nov-Dec, 2005.

[2] There are also health problems associated with polystyrene; the worst thing to do is to put one in the microwave with food in it. The styrene goes into the food and then into your body.

[3] Here's one source for small quantities:

[http://www.kokogm.com/Green\\_Market/TableWare.html](http://www.kokogm.com/Green_Market/TableWare.html). These can also be purchased in bulk.

## Tip # 7 - More About Mail

Here's more about how to reduce your junk mail. Yes, you can recycle some of it, but the trees have already been cut, and toxins used to make it. Better yet, stop it from ever getting to your home, and keep more trees standing in our nations' forests.

For 1st Class mail & mail marked "Address correction requested" or "Return postage guaranteed:" Ink out the barcode and write: "Return to Sender - Refused by Addressee" and "Please remove my name from your mailing list" on the front of the envelope.

For bulk mail: Sorry, it cannot be returned. Open the envelope, look for an 800# or a Business Reply envelope, and call or write asking to be removed from their list. (If writing, enclose the label with your name on it.)

Moses tended the sheep of his father-in-law Yitro, priest of Midian. He led the sheep to the edge of the wilderness, and he came to the mountain of God, in the area of Horeb. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in the heart of a fire in the midst of a thorn-bush. [Moses] looked and behold, the bush was on fire, but the bush was not being consumed. Moses said, "I must turn aside and see this great sight. Why doesn't the bush burn?" When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him from the midst of the thorn-bush and said, "Moses, Moses." He said, "Here I am." Exodus 3:1-4

Shalom!

Revelation is a religious term, but it isn't just a religious concept: revelation is about opening our eyes and seeing something we didn't see before. And once we have seen something new, we are changed. We will never be what we were before. In the moment of revelation described above, when the angel appears to Moses, Moses looks at the bush, and he sees something he has never seen before. Moses pauses – he “turns aside,” and as a result he has an encounter with the Divine. Biblical commentators discuss the verb translated as “turned aside,” [*sar*]; they want to know what Moses is doing. Is he turning toward something? Is he turning away from something? Is he getting closer to the bush? Is he getting farther away from the bush?

Guess what? The commentators don't agree. One says it means he is going away from here to get to there.[1] Another says that it can mean either getting closer or getting farther away.[2] Still another makes an analogy to the Sun. We cannot look directly at the Sun when it appears high in the sky, we can only look at it when it is far away near the horizon, [3] and in the same way, Moses has to step back, away from the bush and the angel in order to safely see the Divine, because the Divine, like the Sun, is just so incredibly powerful.[4]

I happen to think that in a moment of revelation, *both* stepping forward and stepping back are critical. The stepping forward is part of making a relationship – whether it be with God, with the Earth, or with another human being. If we don't step forward at all, we won't care. We need to step forward in order to be touched deeply enough to care. But we also need to step backward, for if we are too close, we will get burned; if we step in too far to too many problems, we will get swept up into them, and we'll be unable to act. By stepping back we are able to maintain our individuality and our sanity. And so, I believe that revelation, that incredibly powerful moment of seeing the world with new eyes, requires both stepping forward and stepping backward.

In this passage from Exodus, God appears to Moses and talks to him. Now God doesn't usually appear to people just for a friendly chat. God usually wants something from us. To me, this means that the moment of revelation, of seeing something new, brings with it responsibility. In this example, God proceeds to tell Moses that he is being appointed to bring the Israelites out of

slavery. Does Moses jump at the opportunity? Is he thrilled and excited? Positively not. In fact, he tries to find an excuse to get out of it. But it is too late. Moses' eyes have been opened, he has seen something, and he is forever after a different person. He has no choice but to take on the responsibility that follows from this moment of revelation.

As each of us sees the world more fully and more wholly, we, like Moses, may want to try every excuse in the book. We may say that we are too busy to make the phone calls to stop our junk mail. We may say that we want the comfort of a long hot shower. We may say that we really deserve yet another outfit or appliance. But if our eyes have truly been opened, if we really have turned aside to see a burning bush, then we will continue to hear that Divine voice calling out our name, and no matter how hard we try *not* to help to save the Earth, we will feel the push from within, and we will have no choice but remember that our Earth was created but once, and we ourselves – not someone else – we ourselves are responsible for its future.

Shalom U'vrachah – Peace and blessing,  
Rabbi Katy Allen

© Katy Z. Allen, June 11, 2006

[1] Rashi

[2] Ibn Ezra

[3] Remember, these guys were writing about a millennium and a half ago, and they figured the Sun was closer to them when it was high in the sky than when it was at the horizon.

[4] Klei Yakar

## Tip # 8 – Greener Cleaning

Do you just love cleaning?

Whether you love it or hate it how you do it affects the environment. You can find earth-friendly cleaning agents for hand-washing dishes, dishwashers, and laundry at the supermarket. [1]

Switch to them.

You'll still have to clean, but you won't pour harmful chemicals into the water, you'll save fossil fuels (from which regular detergents are made), and your body won't be exposed to quite so many toxins..

The young man had not said a word to anyone for over a year...[He] had managed to escape to this country [from Cambodia] in the late 1970s. Had he been brutalized by the Khmer Rouge?... Often, as a psychotherapist, half your job is just sitting quietly and respectfully in the presence of the patient's silence. And this I tried to do, month after month, with my mysteriously silent patient...Silence is a hard thing for most doctors to manage, and I'm no exception: The temptation to say or do something – anything! – is often enormous. But traumas take time to heal, and that time needs to be suffused with trust, safety, and empathy. Sometimes, even when you aren't quite sure what you're doing for the patient, those ingredients eventually work their way into the psychic wound...

One morning, about a year after our treatment began, having rushed to work in rather casual attire, I found my patient and his case manager already sitting in my office. As I sat down, I noticed the patient staring intensely at my feet. Though his eyes were, as usual, directed toward the floor, I noticed a softening at the corners of his mouth, as if some granite rock face were about to give way. Suddenly, my patient broke out into a toothy grin. "Doctor need new shoes!" he exclaimed loudly, pointing at my scuffed Hush Puppies. My patient was not only getting better, he was giving me good advice.

Dr. Ronald Pies [2]

Shalom!

Our planet has been traumatized by our presence upon it. As the doctor did for his patient, so too must we do, and give our planet time to heal – time suffused with trust, safety, and empathy. What does it mean to infuse our responses to the Earth with trust, safety, and empathy? The essence is, I believe, not so different from what we sometimes do for other human beings. Treating another with trust requires a deep faith in our own selves. Giving another a sense of safety takes courage and gentleness. Standing with another in empathy asks that we love unconditionally.

All of this we can also do for the Earth. And just as with another person, the process requires patience on our part. We must sit in silence...but not the silence of inaction. We must sit in silence in order to hear in our heart the cry of the Earth, and then we must respond.

Allowing the Earth to "feel" safe, as with helping another human being feel safe, is first and foremost about stopping the trauma. If a psychologist re-traumatizes a patient, recovery becomes more and more difficult. And so it is for the Earth. Every time we dump another chemical into the water or the air, we traumatize the Earth one more time, and it becomes that much harder for it to become clean again.

Each of us must be a physician for the Earth. Like the man from Cambodia, our Earth is still capable of recovery, even if the process is slow and even if it is never fully complete. But in order for that recovery to take place at all, we must resist the "temptation to say or do something" – we must resist the temptation to do those re-traumatizing things we've always done, and we must

begin to treat our Earth with respect, with empathy, and with trust – empathy for her pain, and trust that she will slowly recover, as we begin to give her the safety she so sorely needs.

On the day that we see “a softening at the corners” of the “mouth” of our Earth, most certainly will our planet give us good advice.

Shalom U’vrachah – Peace and blessing,

Rabbi Katy Allen

© Katy Z. Allen, June 26, 2006

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[1] Traditional detergents are made from petroleum, while environmentally friendly ones are made from various plant products. Two especially harmful ingredients to avoid are sodium hypochlorite, found in bleach, and ammonia.

[2] “The silent treatment.” Boston Globe, June 19, 2006, pp. C1, C3

## Tip # 9 – What Happens to Your Old Motor Oil?

Does the oil in your car get recycled when you change it?

Check with your mechanic.

According to the EPA, if all the car oil in the US were recycled, it would equal 120 supertankers worth –

enough to provide motor oil for 50 million cars a year.[1]

Also, whenever possible turn off the motor instead of idling.

Idling for more than 10 seconds

uses more fuel than restarting the engine. [2]

אל רחום וחנון, ארך אפים ורב חסד ואמת  
*Adonai, Adonai, El rachum v'chanun, erech alpayyim v'rav chesed v'emet.*

Adonai, Adonai, God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness... Exodus 34:6

Shalom!

Have you ever felt sorry for yourself? It is a common human feeling (one with which I am familiar). In Hebrew, the words for “I feel sorry for myself” are אני מרחמת על עצמי – *ani m'rachem al etzmi*. The three-letter root of the Hebrew word מרחמת – *m'rachemet* – is מ.ר.ח., *resh, chet, mem*, which means compassion or mercy. This is the same Hebrew root that is in some of the words that describe God and some names of God. On the High Holidays we repeat many times the verse above from the Exodus, which describes God as merciful or compassionate. The prayer said at a funeral or memorial service begins with the words אל מלא רחמים – *El malei rachamim* – God, full of mercy.

In short, the word in Hebrew to say “I feel sorry for myself” is the same word that describes God as compassionate and merciful. Yet how different the two feel!

When we feel sorry for ourselves, we are stuck. Everything in our lives and in the world is going wrong, none of it is our fault, someone else is responsible for all of it, and there is nothing we can do about it. Everything is bleak. All we can think of are the bad things in life. Nothing will ever get any better. All is lost. In this frame of mind, we are very likely to feel the need for all kinds of *things*: lots of comfort food, a new outfit, a nicer car, a vacation.

But, when God “feels sorry for us” – has mercy/compassion on us, we get UNstuck and something in our life gets better. Suddenly a window opens, and we can see a view we couldn't see before. We can see something positive in life. We can find solutions where none existed before. We can begin to reframe our situation and rebuild the part of our life or our world that is broken. We find strength where before we felt none. We have moments of courage amidst hours of being fearful. Our sense of need diminishes. With all these tools inside us, we are able to pull ourselves out of the stuck place of feeling sorry for ourselves. We are able to feel grateful for what we have and for what God has to give us, and we are once again able to act.

What does all of this have to do with saving our planet? Everything. Because what happens to our planet is about what each and every one of us does, whether we are a construction worker or the CEO of Exxon/Mobil. When we feel sorry for ourselves, we are incapable of giving up anything we like or that makes life more convenient or comfortable. We feel that we cannot possibly do the work we need to do to move forward and make a difference. Instead, we become more needy, and in our satisfying our neediness and obtaining all those extra *things*, we negatively impact the planet.

Each of us has our own tools to help us turn from feeling sorry for ourselves to being able to be constructive and productive. Each of us has our own connections to finding the strength to go on from day to day. Each of us has our own way of feeling positive and hopeful about our lives and about the world—even in the face of the darkness of the current times. And when we tap into those sources of strength and power and hope and ability to change, then we can make a difference, then we can help to heal our Earth, then we can be partners for transformation in our world.

Shalom U'vrachah – Peace and blessing,

Rabbi Katy Allen

© Katy Z. Allen, August 6, 2006

[1] *Hold Your Water*, Wyland. Andrews McMeel Publishing, LLC, 2006, p. 13.

[2] “Idle-Free You and Me,” Powerpoint presentation by Jennifer Duckworth. For more information about a program to help change school carpool waiting lines at contact Jennifer at [jenandmatthew@yahoo.com](mailto:jenandmatthew@yahoo.com).

## Tip # 10 – Get Rid of Those Bottles!

Do you buy and drink bottled water?

Switch to tap water. Keep cleaning and refilling a single bottle.

In the process, you will:

1) Save money.

The money spent on bottled water would be enough to fix the problems with the nation's water supply. [1]

2) Save natural resources.

Plastics come from fossil fuels, and it takes 500 years for one bottle to break down, into plastic polymers that never go away. [2]

3) Save energy.

The energy needed for bottling and shipping could power 190,000 homes. [3]

4) Save water.

The production of plastic for the bottles and gasoline for transportation require water!

5) Save your health, potentially.

One-third of all brands don't meet the clean water standards of tap water. [4]

This wrapping paper the assortment is numerous, and the species assort with the popular vogue synchronous, the applicability of low file product in various senior high school is expensive, deep suffer the large businessman to like!

*Consumer Reports*, "Selling it: Goofs, Glitches, Gotchas", September 2006, p. 63

Shalom!

The crazy quote above is a wonderful goof and glitch that someone sent into Consumer Reports, and they printed in this section of their magazine. It makes no sense whatsoever. I can imagine some actor reading it in a very serious voice, as though it made complete sense and contained a very important message – for after all, it does have quite a few impressive words in it – and as though we, the listeners, had something wrong with us if we didn't hear the sense in it.

So many things we do are like this quote, and make no sense whatsoever, but like the actor seriously reading the text, we don't see craziness in what we are doing. Drinking bottled water is one of those things. We live with clean, safe, almost free water. Not everyone in the world does. In fact, we are using up our clean water supply. In some places in the world, people either cannot access clean water, or are using up their resources. Saving water and other resources is one small way that we can make our lives more sensible and help to protect our planet.

We may think our tap water doesn't taste good, but often our taste in water is more a matter of what we are used to. Bottled water is mainly about image; much of it is simply municipal water that has been packaged and wrapped in myths about taste and healthiness and clear mountain streams. Keep in mind, Nestles [5] bottles Poland Springs, Coca Cola bottles Dasani, Pepsi bottles Aquafina, and so on.

If you really can't deal with the taste, buy a filter for your water. You'll notice the difference – a constant reminder about our water problems. To reduce the possibility of nasty chemicals entering your water from the bottle, it's best to use a glass or ceramic container. In situations where only plastic will work, stick to those bottles made from #2, #4, or #5 plastic, which are the least harmful. [6]

If you want to drink tap water but have a more with-it image, you can download a colorful sticker from the PBS Web site [7] to put on your bottle of tap water. It takes money and resources to print the label, but if you put it on a bottle and keep reusing the bottle, you'll use a lot less resources than if you bought a new bottle every time you needed you were thirsty. And maybe someone will see your smart-looking bottle and want to switch to your "brand"!

Shalom U'vrachah – Peace and blessing,  
Rabbi Katy Allen

© Katy Z. Allen, Setpember 6, 2006

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[1] "Not Disposable Anymore,"

[http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2004/water/water\\_disposable.html](http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2004/water/water_disposable.html)

[2] *Hold Your Water: 68 Things You Need to Know to Keep Our Planet Blue*, by Wyland, p. 27.

[3] "Bottle This!" video from [http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2004/water/water\\_bottle.html](http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2004/water/water_bottle.html).

[4] "The Right to Water is the Right to Life" by Nancy Price, Friends of the Eel River,

[http://www.eelriver.org/cgi-bin/Publications.pl?function=article&page\\_id=126](http://www.eelriver.org/cgi-bin/Publications.pl?function=article&page_id=126).

[5] Nestles, by the way, uses slave labor in harvesting cocoa for their chocolates.

[6] <http://www.grist.org/advice/ask/2005/01/10/umbra-bottles2/>

[7] [http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2004/water/pdf/bottlethis\\_labels.pdf](http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2004/water/pdf/bottlethis_labels.pdf)

## Tip # 11 – No straw, please.

Ordering a cold drink at a restaurant?

Say, “No straw, please.” [1]

Just as one is obligated to teach one’s child [2], so, too, is one obligated to teach one’s grandchild, as it says: "Make known [what you saw at Sinai] to your children and to the children of your children" (Deuteronomy 4:9). Not only [must one teach] one’s child and grandchild, rather it is a commandment upon each and every Sage in Israel to teach all of the students, even though they are not his [or her] children...[Who is a Sage?] The greatest sages of Israel included wood-cutters and water-bearers [3].

*Moses Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Torah Study, 1: 2, 9*

Shalom!

We’re all familiar with the saying, “It was the straw that broke the camel’s back.” In so many ways, we experience how the little things in life add up. But straws are not just figurative, and real straws also can break the camel’s back. Every straw is made of plastic, and plastic is made from fossil fuels. In addition, the straw is wrapped in paper, and paper made is from trees. Thus, both renewable and non-renewable resources are tied up in that convenient little sipping device we generally don’t think twice about. Do we really need a straw? Are we really unable to drink our water or soda without it? My bet is that the answer is NO!

Saying “No straw please” can go beyond our own simple action. Generally we don’t go to restaurants alone, and this unexpected little request can trigger a puzzled question. Even if you don’t feel like you are a Sage – even if you sometimes feel more like a wood-cutter or a water-carrier, you can still be a teacher to your friends, relatives, and co-workers. We are obligated to pass along what we know in our hearts and minds is important in this world. When we do, then instead of destroying our Earth one straw at a time, we can save it, one straw at a time.

Shalom U’vrachah – Peace and blessing,

Rabbi Katy Allen

© Katy Z. Allen, October 10, 2006

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[1] Thank you to Ari Shapiro for this tip and teaching.

[2] I am being loose with the translation, gender-wise.

[3] Wood-cutters and water-carriers were at the bottom of the social totem pole.

## Tip # 12 – Eat Locally

How far did your food travel to get to your table? How much carbon entered the air as a result? Eating locally is an important way to reduce our impact on global warming. Here are some ideas on how to become a “localvore”:

- ◇ Take one meal a day, or one a week, and have all the foods you eat in that meal locally grown.
- ◇ In the summer, become a regular at a farmers’ market, or join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). ◇ Put a pot of parsley by the window and use it in soups and salads. ◇ Buy cheese from a nearby dairy – instead of France or Switzerland. ◇ During cold winter months, look for locally grown root vegetables, *such as celeriac, diakon, and beets*. ◇ Read the book *Four Seasons Garden* and grow greens or other vegetables in your garden all year round. (Yes, really!)
- ◇ Buy locally grown apples and apple cider (e.g.) in place of bananas from South America and orange juice from Florida (unless you live in Florida!).
- ◇ Substitute local honey (or maple syrup if you’re a New Englander) for cane sugar.

While leaders negotiate with Israel...most of the young [Palestinian] militants oppose negotiations and want to annihilate the Jewish State. Interviews with the militants reveal a bleak insight, casting doubt on the prospects for peace as autonomous militant groups show complete disregard for political action, and their way of thinking increasingly dominates their factions’ leadership...Most of these radicalized youths...are convinced that Palestinians will only achieve statehood through force...”We are using the rockets to erect a balance of fear with the Israelis,” said...a beginning fighter...Anyone interested in attacking Israel – including hotheads considered too out-of-control for the major factions, especially Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Fatah – can join...”The Jews will not leave the land unless they are killed.” [One fighter] has trained his wife to clean and fire his gun, and expects his children to grow up to be fighters. “If I have a son and he doesn’t join the resistance, I’ll snap his neck.” ...

Boston Globe, Saturday, December 2, pp. 1, 14

Shalom!

Has someone in recent days been rude to you in a way that seemed totally unnecessary? Or (much less likely, of course!), have you found yourself being angry or rude out of proportion to a situation, without understanding why?

One key sentence in the excerpt from the Globe article is: “We are using the rockets to erect a balance of fear with the Israelis,” and another is: “The Jews will not leave the land unless they are killed.”

Try to imagine standing alone with someone who is armed and who wants to kill you – because of the national and/or religious and/or economic group to which you belong. Would you be afraid? What would you do? Could you find a peaceful way out of such a situation?

Israelis have long had the reputation of being blunt – even rude – to everyone, even strangers. Living in a state of knowing that you may be attacked at any moment by those who hate you is scary, and fear in our hearts leads to anger and to rudeness.

In the United States, we now also live with the knowledge that we are hated to the point of being the targets of violence, and without the knowledge of when an attack may occur. Unlike the Israelis – and those in Darfur, Iraq, and other places of violence around the globe – we have some

distance from those who want to instill within us fear (there is a reason that we call them terrorists). Nevertheless, some of us are noticing that we are becoming more and more rude to each other.

Do any of us want to be afraid? Probably not. Being afraid is no fun. And yet, though we may try to deny it, when we are in a fearful situation, we have a choice as to how we respond. It takes time, but instead of responding by being angry and fearful, we can learn – slowly, step by step – to go beyond our fear to a place of strength, courage, and calm. We cannot overcome our tendency to fear all at once, in one grand action – it is too big a job. Rather, we must do it one small event at a time, as our bodies and souls learn a better way to respond, until one day, we will in fact know how to respond with courage instead of fear or anger if we end up alone with someone who wants to kill us.

So, too, it is with eating locally. To eat only foods from within a 50-200 mile radius of where we live is a tremendous and overwhelming challenge. During the summer, my household gets much of its food from a CSA, and that food is wonderful in so many ways. In addition to being local and organic, it is delicious! But I really like eating salad in January, as well as in July. What do I do in Eastern Massachusetts so that I can eat at least more locally grown foods during the winter?

I know that I can't change my shopping and eating habits all at once. (If you can – more power to you!) However, I can take another step. And you can take a step, too, using one of the ideas above, or one of your own ideas. I know that becoming a "localvore" will take time; I know that this must be a learning process; but I also know that as I begin that process, my eyes will become more and more open, and that the process will continue. Like overcoming fear, learning how to eat locally takes time, because it requires a change in habits. Yet, I truly believe that learning in small bits, with small things, will help us one day with the bigger, seemingly impossible, things.

Shalom U'vrachah – Peace and blessing,

Rabbi Katy Allen

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## Tip # 13 – Billions of Batteries

Do you have a laptop, cell phone, or iPod? A camera, camcorder, or cordless phone? A flashlight or a watch? Americans use about 3 billion dry-cell batteries a year. Batteries contain mercury, silver, cadmium, lithium, or other nasty chemicals. Heavy metals and acids from batteries can pollute the land, air, and water. So, use rechargeable batteries whenever possible, and recycle your batteries. To find a place near you to recycle them, go to <http://www.rbr.org>

Inhibited or conscious suppressed anger contributes to the reservoir of rage in the unconscious. [Some] pain disorders...are the direct result of anger-rage repressed (unconscious) and suppressed (conscious). While anger that is known to a person plays a role in the genesis of [Tension Myositis Syndrome, an emotionally induced physical syndrome] when it is suppressed, it is not nearly as important as anger that is generated in the unconscious as a result of:

1. Internal conflict
2. Stresses and strains of daily life
3. The residue of anger from infancy and childhood....

The intensity of the anger, to the point of rage, determines the necessity for physical symptoms as a diversion. The threat of rage to explode into consciousness must be of sufficient magnitude to warrant the production of TMS or one of its equivalents.

*John E. Sarno, M.D., The Mindbody Prescription, p. 17*

Shalom!

Have you ever seen a corroded battery? Think of that really yucky stuff oozing out of it. The battery looks gross and disgusting – just as we do when we are irrationally angry. Our faces puff up and turn red, and “corrosion” spills out of our mouths.

Dr. John Sarno believes that the “corrosion” from our unconscious anger also spills out into other parts of our body, and can cause back pain, joint pain, and other physical problems.

There is something so totally logical in recognizing that our minds and our bodies are connected. So, too, are we connected to the environment. Even if we live in the center of a city, surrounded by buildings and streets and devoid of green plants or soil, we remain connected to the Earth. We cannot live without it. We breathe it and we eat it and we drink it and we use it to heat our homes and our water and to fuel our cars and our subways and to produce our electricity. No matter how deep and spiritual our souls may be, we are physical beings, and we need the solid, healthy Earth in order to survive.

We also need a functioning body for our soul to inhabit. Whether it is our own personal “corrosion” with which we must deal, or the corrosion of a battery, or the other myriad types of “corrosions” in our world, we cannot keep our world and our lives safe without dealing with the source of the problems. In terms of the environment, one way to do that is by using batteries responsibly. And maybe, just maybe, that will remind us to use our psyches responsibly as well, and to search for the source of whatever anger is causing us pain.

Shalom U’vrachah – Peace and blessing,

Rabbi Katy Allen © Katy Z. Allen, February 11, 2007

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[1] *Municipal Solid Waste: Batteries*, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/battery.htm>

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