

Hannukah Eco Lights 2008 / 5769

Clean up the World...and remember how many candles to light!

Compiled by Sviva Israel

On the 1st day of Hannukah, pick up 1 piece of litter and put it in the trash can / recycling container.

On the 2nd day of Hannukah, pick up 2 pieces of litter and place them in the trash can / recycling container.

On the 3rd day of Hannukah, pick up 3 items of litter and ...well, you get the idea.

In the spirit of Limud U'Maaseh, every day of Hannukah, Eco Lights participants will receive a daily Jewish Environmental teaching from incredible guest writers!

If you pick up one more item each day, then by the end of Hannukah's 8 days, you will have picked up 36 items of litter and helped make our world a better place to live (If you live in Israel, you get extra points for beautifying Israel - Mitzvat Yishuv Eretz Yisrael :)

Every 28 people who join the Hannukah Eco Lights will remove over 1000 pieces of litter from our streets! So invite your friends to join in!

** Please do not pick up the garbage while your Hannuka candles are burning. Use this time to reflect on how even a small flame (or act) can light up the darkness.**

ECO LIGHTS Night 1

Hannukah starts tonight!

Nigel Savage, Hazon, NY

Chanukah at its heart isn't merely about the miracle of the oil; it is also, more broadly, about light in the darkness.

This has been a difficult year for America, for Israel, for the Jewish community, and for the world. But the lights of chanukah come to remind us that we have faced far far worse -- and still lit the candles, and still kept the faith.

In regard to climate change, there are some people who prefer not to think about it at all,

because it's too overwhelming and because each of us seems insignificant in the face of it. And there are others who obsess about it and who become depressed at humanity's seeming inability to act both prudentially and decisively.

On Tisha B'Av, each year, we mourn the destruction of the Temple - and yet we have the tradition that mashiach was born on the afternoon of Tisha B'Av.

That's why one of the most valuable gifts of the Jewish people to the world, today, is simply lighting the candles - and remembering our faith and hope that by doing so we light the way to a better future.

Nigel Savage is the director of Hazon. www.hazon.org.

Hannukah Eco Lights - Night 2

Iris Feinberg, Atlanta

The whole point of Jewish practice is kavannah, or acting with intent. You might not do all 613 mitzvot, but the ones that you practice keep you mindful of yourself, of other people, of the earth and all of its creatures. And even if you think you're doing it just for yourself, here's some big news: your light shines for others to see and to emulate. Every action - large and small - counts. Every act of kindness - whether to other people or for the earth - lights the way for you and for others. So on this night of Chanuka, light your inner candle with strength, kindness, and kavannah.

Iris Feinberg , a member of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency for Israel, is the volunteer chair for the NextGen and Partnership committees. She is active in the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, and is a business owner and mother of four children.

Eco Lights - 3rd Night

Rabbi Charles Lebow, Jerusalem/Canada

There is a tradition that any oil or wicks that have been used for Chanuka lights should not be discarded but should be reused for another mitzvah. We keep our wicks and use them to light the fire which we use to burn Chametz the morning before Pesach. The message is that things that are used for holy purposes should not be discarded of lightly.

We see in nature, that the Creator made the world so things don't get wasted. Everything is reused several times. A leaf on a tree may be eaten by a worm. The worm is in turn eaten by a bird, the bird by a cat, etc. The energy that was produced through photosynthesis in the leaf, is then reused through an entire food chain until it is in a state

of total decomposition.

In today's disposable world it is important to extend the concept of re-use in order to protect our natural resources and to limit the degree of pollution. Consider the next time that you go shopping, that you should save the plastic bags and reuse them the next time you go to the store.

And that wrapping paper that your chanukah gifts came in, could that be used to wrap a present for someone else?

Rabbi Charles Lebow is a veteran informal Jewish educator with a degree in Biology from McMaster University. He is currently an advisor to Project Shabbat (www.projectshabbat.com) which covers the costs for students to run their own Shabbat dinners with their friends at college

Hannukah Eco Lights- 4th Night

Ehud and Tanya Zion Waldoks, Jerusalem

One of the most prominent ecological themes of Hanukkah is conservation. The oil which lasted for eight days is the most obvious example, but there is another conservation technique which is quite apt – composting.

For example, after peeling all those potatoes for latkes, don't throw the peels into the regular trash – set them aside for compost.

Composting is simple – buy a small garbage can with a lid and place it next to your regular garbage can. Put all your organic scraps into it (you can easily check the web to find exact guidelines as to proper compost content). Either start your own compost in your garden or backyard, or look around your neighborhood or city for a compost (local neighborhood gardens might have started one). Each time the small trash can fills up, take it to the compost pile. Enjoy the feeling of recycling and completing a cycle of earth to earth. See whether this changes how you think about your food, as opposed to other trash.

There is a famous debate (Shabbat 21b) whether to light all eight candles the first day and count down to one (Beit Shamai), or light one candle the first day and count up to eight as we do today (Beit Hillel). Perhaps composting can be seen as combining both those principles: Starting with the whole fruit or vegetable, using it and composting the scraps – Beit Shamai. Those puny scraps, however, become the basis for your next fruit or vegetable – Beit Hillel.

By composting, we nourish our bodies and souls as well as the Earth that feeds us. Thus, we conserve, recycle and renew – like the holiday of Hanukkah (literally: re-consecration) itself.

Ehud and Tanya Zion Waldoks are the editors and project managers for the Masorti Olami/MERCAZ Olami "Judaism and Environment" DVD. Ehud is also the environment reporter for The Jerusalem Post.

Eco Lights - 5th Night

Daniel Orenstein, Haifa

It wouldn't be stretching the Chanukah story line too egregiously by considering it as an effort to control of the political fate of the Jewish people. In response to repression from without (Antiochus) and unwanted social and religious trends within (the Hellenization of the Jews), a group of Jews took it upon themselves to re-establish a society more befitting of their values and vision.

It is befitting then, that Chanukah this year falls in the thick of the election season in Israel. And it is befitting, too, that a growing number of environmentally-inclined Israelis are engaging in politics – this time in the democratic tradition – in order to address unwanted trends degrading our contemporary Israeli society. They are the Israel Green Movement – an assemblage of environmental activists, professionals, teachers, scholars and other concerned citizens – and they are running in the next Knesset elections.

What makes the Green Movement unique is their understanding that our environmental problems are only symptoms of broader societal ills including social and economic inequity, pervasive military conflict, the failings of the market economy, a decline in communal values and the loss of mutual respect among citizens. By addressing these issues, the Green Movement posits that we will resolve not only our environmental problems, but that we will create a country that is simply a wonderful place to live.

How's that for a Chanukah light?

Daniel Orenstein is a post-doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning at the Technion and a faculty member at the Aava Institute for Environmental Studies. For more of his writings, see [\[http://greenerisrael.wordpress.com\]](http://greenerisrael.wordpress.com) <http://greenerisrael.wordpress.com>.

Eco Lights- 6th Night

Jack Reichert- Jerusalem

Ever wonder why every day of Hanukkah we add another candle?

This goes back to the great sages Hillel and Shammai. Shammai explains that we start with eight and remove a candle every day. We do this "for the days gone by," the perspective of: "in the old days things were better." In medieval times this was felt strongly. Many technologies from the ancients had been lost and the ancients were seen as the pinnacle of humanity. In Jewish terms, the receiving of the Torah had been OUR pinnacle.

Hillel explains that we add a candle every day "for the days coming, "humanity is always moving towards perfection, Judaism's messianic philosophy that one day the world will reach perfection.

Nowadays, there are more and more tips and tricks coming out every day telling you how to "green" your life. But it can all be overwhelming! Let's take a page out Hillel's book.

Take the Hanukkah challenge "for the days coming!" Take on one new thing each day. Every day incorporate one more thing into your life, like the Hanukkah candles, that will help heal our planet. You'll see that things that you didn't think that you could do seem easy when you build up.

Happy Greening Hanukkah!

Jack (Yaakov) Reichert is one of the founders of GreenProphet.com and while working towards his smirch is acting as its "Eco-Rabbi." He is also a life and career consultant at www.howtoachmygoals.com

Eco Lights – 7th Night

Rachel Kriegsman- Baltimore,MD.

Pirumei Nisa, the mitzvah of publicizing the Hannukah miracle, offers an opportunity for people to come together as a community to light the Hannukah candles. Regardless of one's background in Jewish study or practice, gathering to light the Hannukia can be filled with kavanah (intention) and significance.

Similarly, anyone, no matter their level of environmental knowledge, can perform small, yet meaningful tasks in order to create a profound relationship with our earth. Shop with reusable bags, buy minimally-packaged products and unplug the cell phone charger when it's not in use. As the lights on the Hannukia incrementally grow, each one maintains an undiminished light, and so too can our environmentally responsible actions.

Rachel Kriegsman is a student at Goucher College, peace studies major and an environmental studies minor.

Eco Lights - 8th Night

Ilana Gauss- San Francisco

Environmental Health must have been more challenging to regulate in biblical times, without having tools such as air and water quality testing equipment. So what laws could the rabbis decide upon to protect citizens from air and water pollution? In one example, the Mishnah calls for carcasses, cemeteries and tanneries to be kept at 50 cubits distance from a town (Baba Batra 24b). Carcasses may have been synonymous with garbage dumps. Tanneries could only be set up on the east side of a town, due to wind direction. So, environmental justice and pollution prevention are Jewish values. This shouldn't come as a surprise, as they relate to protecting human life. We can also apply this teaching on an individual scale. Some ways to do this are: switching to less toxic cleaning products, turning off your car if you are going to be parked for more than 30 seconds (suggested by the California Energy Commission) and not lighting wood fires.

Happy Chanukah!

Ilana Gauss is the Green Programs Specialist for the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and is Chair of EcoJews of the Bay.

Carmi Wisemon – Beit Shemesh, Israel

Protecting the environment seems like an endless and daunting task. Is public awareness enough, will renewable energy save the planet, will demonstrations and getting politically involved mitigate these issues? Maybe.

Walking through the streets of Jerusalem on Hannukah, one cannot fail to be heartened by the glowing lights of individual hannukiot in dozens of windows, that together light up the darkness, and increase in number every night.

The Midrash in Shmot Rabba 7 says “Hashem only raises a person to greatness after he has tested him in small matters”. I think herein lies the key to success or failure in our attempt to protect the environment. It is all our collective small daily actions that we do or don't do that impact on our surroundings. If our generation is to reach greatness in protecting the environment we won't be tested on whether we built the next electric car (although it may not hurt), we will be tested on whether we drove when we could have walked, or trampled a candy wrapper on the sidewalk, when we could have picked it up and placed it in the trash.

It is the small things in life that make us great.

Carmi Wisemon is the Director of Sviva Israel.