



The Environment

An Educational Resource

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Jewish texts



Deuteronomy 20:19

יט. כִּי-תִצּוֹר אֶל-עִיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְשָׁהּ, לֹא-תִשְׁחִית אֶת-עֵצָהּ לְנִדְחַח עָלֶיהָ גְרָזָן--כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכַל, וְאֵתוּ לֹא תִכְרֹת: כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה, לִבְאֵי מִפְּנֵיהֶּ בְּמִצּוֹר

19. When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees of the field people, that you should besiege them?



Questions:

1. According to this text, what is the relationship between humans and the environment?
2. Why does it seem that trees are treated with more compassion than humans?
3. This verse has been taken as the basis for “Bal Taschit” – a commandment found in Deuteronomy 20:19-20 to not be wasteful or destructive. Why do you think this verse has become the basis for such an important rule?



Psalm 128:2

ב. יִגִּיעַ כִּפְיֶךָ, כִּי תֹאכַל; אֲשֶׁרֶיךָ, וְטוֹב לְךָ.

2. When you eat the labour of your hands, happy shall you be, and it shall be well with you.



Questions:

1. Why would eating the labour of your hands make you happy and well?
2. There has been an explosion of personal allotments and a real push to grow your own food in the last decade. Why do you think that is? (Possible reasons for this may include: more control over how food is grown – no chemicals or pesticides – fresher fruit and veg, cheaper).

Case Study:

UNICEF’s SWASTHH: India’s ‘clean school and village’ movement School Water and Sanitation Towards Health and Hygiene

This is one of a number of government initiatives aimed at changing the culture of schooling in rural India as part of the drive for ‘education for all’. This is a huge undertaking as the majority of the hundreds of thousands of village schools are poorly constructed and under-equipped.

If toilets are available, they are makeshift and there is no separate block for girls. Not having girls’ toilets is actually a huge factor in girls’ absenteeism. Girls typically avoid going to school when they are menstruating due to the poor conditions available to them and the embarrassment they feel of boys knowing they are on their period.

Schools involved in UNICEF’s SWASTHH programme, which means “health” in Hindi, elect a Child Cabinet where elected pupils hold such roles as Minister of Water, Health or Culture. These Ministers ensure that everyone at the school focuses on proper health and hygiene measures, for example using soap when washing hands, and keeping the school facilities clean.

In Kakaria, a remote village in Ranchi district in the Indian state of Jharkhand, this extends far beyond the school parameters as children perform plays based on hygiene issues for the community which they then discuss afterwards. Even at home, children will tell their mothers to wash their hands before preparing food and their mothers do what they say. Due to this raised level of awareness, it has been noted that diseases have dropped considerably and that the villages are much cleaner than before.

Source: UNICEF



Interesting websites

<http://www.biggreenjewish.org/>

up to date information on what the UK Jewish community is doing to be green

<http://www.prb.org/Publications/GraphicsBank/PopulationTrends.aspx>
lots of graphs and stats

<http://www.hivegroup.com/gallery/worldpop/>
useful statistics



Peulot & games

http://www.ecokids.ca/pub/games_activities/index.cfm
games on a number of different environmental issues

http://game.environment.uk.msn.com/recycling_game

http://www.ined.fr/en/everything_about_population/play_population/quiz/interactive_quiz

Education Director Tzedek, Jewish Social Action Hub, 152 West End Lane, London. NW6 1SD

Please get in touch with us with your thoughts and ideas, and do call if you have any questions. Contact us by phone on: 0207 443 5121 or by email at: education@tzedek.org.uk