



Sustaining the Light:
A Social Justice Program Guide for Chanukah

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Sustaining the Light:

A Social Justice Program Guide for Chanukah

In the middle of winter, we gather together around the Chanukah lights, spin the dreidle, eat latkes and jelly donuts, celebrating the festival of Chanukah. Chanukah takes its name of ‘dedication’ from the Maccabees’ rededication of the Temple after their battle against King Antiochus. By returning to and reclaiming the Temple, the Maccabees recommitted themselves to a Jewish way of life, to all that they held dear. Thus, Chanukah asks us to rededicate ourselves not only to our Judaism, but to the values we place at the center of our faith. In particular, Chanukah can be a time when we rededicate ourselves to the work of *tikkun olam*, repair of the world.

As the Maccabees had the courage to stand up for their beliefs, Chanukah encourages us to speak out about our values. The rabbis teach us to not only kindle the holiday lights in the privacy of our homes, but also to make known the miracles of Chanukah by placing our *chanukiyot* in the window. In turn, not only do we rekindle our personal commitments to social justice, but we also teach others, take action and advocate for the repair of the world.

This guide will focus on four issues connected with Chanukah: the environment, economic justice, children’s issues (including child slavery, child poverty and bullying) and religious liberty. These themes are linked by the theme of sustainability. As our ancestors worked to keep the light in the Temple burning from generation to generation, we work towards creating a just society that will endure from generation to generation – a society in which all of its members live in a dignified way, which preserves the environment and our natural resources, which protects and nurtures our children, and which continues to be a beacon of religious freedom.

Each section begins with an explanation about the connection between the social justice theme and Chanukah. After the introduction, you will find programs, projects, rituals and study topics that will connect Chanukah with the work of *tikkun olam* for families, social action committees, youth groups and other synagogue groups.

As we increase the lights of Chanukah, adding a candle each night, so too might we, by our actions, bring new light to the world: light to those living in poverty, light for our fragile ecosystems, light for all of our children and the light of religious liberty.

For information about celebrating Chanukah, visit the holidays website of the Union for Reform Judaism (Union’s) Department of Worship, Music and Religious Living, www.urj.org/holidays/chanuka.

Chanukah and the Environment

The Roman historian Josephus dubbed Chanukah, the “Festival of Lights.” Light is at the very core of our festival celebration. We sing, play dreidle and enjoy gelt in the company of the Chanukah lights. Moreover, light is at the heart of the history behind Chanukah.

In the Talmud, the rabbis ask why we celebrate Chanukah and answer with a story about light:

On the 25th day of Kislev the days of Chanukah commence... for when the Syrian-Greeks entered the sanctuary, they contaminated all the flasks of oil that were in the sanctuary, and when the royal Hasmonean house gained the upper hand and vanquished them, the Hasmoneans searched and found only one flask of oil... with the *kohen gadol*'s (high priest's) seal still intact. And it contained only enough oil to kindle the lamp for one day. However, a miracle was performed with [this oil] and they kindled the lights of the lamp with it for eight days. In the following year [these days] were established and rendered a festival (BT Shabbat 21b).

This Talmudic passage is the origin of the familiar Chanukah story, in which a single cruse of oil lasted eight days, longer than was thought possible.

According to Rabbi Arthur Waskow, the rabbis taught that this “‘conservation of oil’ was a Divine miracle. We might translate this to mean that it is a sacred act, carrying out God’s will and following God’s lead, for US to conserve oil, trees, water, air – all the strands of the earth.”¹

In particular, because of its theme of light in the midst of winter, Chanukah lends itself to thoughts of energy conservation. Energy conservation not only helps to ensure the wise use of our natural resources, it also helps to reduce pollution and slow global climate change.

Carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere when we burn gasoline, coal and oil. These ‘greenhouse’ gases trap heat from the sun’s radiation, like glass traps heat in a greenhouse. If no action is taken to reduce these greenhouse gas emissions, it is predicted that by 2100 the earth’s average temperature may rise as much as 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit, and the global sea may rise by as much as 34 inches.² Melting glaciers, severe weather patterns (such as hurricanes, tropical storms, heat waves and drought), an increase in the spread of disease and disruption of habitats and extinction of species will become a worsening problem.

¹ “Hanukkah for Grown-Ups -- and for Everyone,” November 2004,

<http://www.shalomctr.org/index.cfm/action/read/section/earth/article/article719.html>.

² *United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Third Assessment Report, 2001,*

<http://www.ipcc.ch/pub/un/syren/spm.pdf>.

In Deuteronomy 30:19 we read “Therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live.” When we learn to live in harmony with the earth, by making environmentally sustainable choices, we not only preserve life for ourselves, but we choose life for our children and our children’s children.

Moreover, by pursuing environmental sustainability, we promote justice, as those who are already poor are most likely to suffer the consequences of global climate change, pollution and environmental degradation. For instance, subsistence farmers are most vulnerable to changing rain patterns, which may make their land infertile; slum-dwellers in coastal areas are most vulnerable to chronic flooding. Because those of us in the world’s wealthiest nations are most responsible for global climate change, it is in our hands to act, to preserve life for all the earth’s children.

Chanukah thus calls us to consider, how can we conserve our natural resources, so that they, like the oil in the Chanukah story, will last a long time? How can we, as individuals and as participants in the resource-hungry western world, ensure that we are sound stewards of the earth? And how can we use “our God-given gifts to develop innovative strategies to meet the needs of all who dwell on this planet without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”?³

Program Ideas on the Environment

Green Your Chanukah

Give Green Gifts

Help cut down on waste and try some of these environmentally friendly gift ideas for Chanukah.⁴

- Save paper and send an e-card.
- Make your own gifts! Especially from children, homemade gifts are often more special than anything you can buy. Take a photo and design a frame for it, knit a scarf for the winter or make a set of beeswax candles for someone to burn in their *chanukiyah*... There are lots of great books about homemade gifts in your library; check one out today!
- Give Chanukah gelt in the form of *tzedakah* to a Jewish or environmental organization of your choice in honor of a friend or relative. ‘Adopt’ an animal, plant a tree or buy an acre of rain forest in someone’s honor.
- Food! Edible gifts are always great for holidays. Bake someone a batch of cookies in Chanukah shapes, cook *sufganiyot* (jelly doughnuts, a traditional Chanukah treat) or be more creative.
- Get something that’s both useful and reusable: a travel mug, cloth bag, linen napkins, reusable lunchbox, etc.

³ CCAR Resolution on Global Climate Change, 2000, <http://ccarnet.org/documentsandpositions/resolutions>.

⁴ From “Let There Be (Renewable) Light,” p. 6, at www.coejl.org/Hanukkah. [note that web address is case sensitive]

- Make your own gift certificate or coupon. You could give someone ‘a night at the movies,’ ‘one week of walking the dog,’ etc. This is a great way to give someone exactly what he or she wants!
- Buy someone an environmental book, subscription to an environmental magazine or a membership to a museum or zoo – a gift they can enjoy all year.
- Instead of regular gift wrap, use recycled or reusable packaging or a piece of cloth tied with ribbon.

Let There Be (Renewable) Light

The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL), has an excellent web resource on energy conservation and Chanukah. Programs for the home, congregation and religious school include readings around the Chanukah candle lighting; “8 Days and 8 Actions,” a checklist of ways to conserve energy; suggestions for “Green Gifts”; Jewish text resources on global climate change; a “Chanukah Energy Scavenger Hunt,” in which school age children learn about energy efficiency; and many other resources. Visit this useful resource for all ages at www.coejl.org/Hanukkah (please note that the web address is case sensitive).

Green Your Lifestyle

Promote Energy Conservation at Home

- When purchasing a new appliance, look for the Energy Star label, indicating certification as a highly energy efficient product, www.energystar.gov.
- Use compact florescent bulbs, which are more energy efficient.
- Make your home energy-efficient. Insulate your home, make sure that windows are well sealed and regulate the thermostat.
- Do the simple stuff: turn off the lights when you leave a room and don’t leave the water running when you brush your teeth.
- Purchase efficient, renewable energy alternatives for your home, which vary from state to state, www.eere.energy.gov/state_energy.
- Buy recycled products and items in reusable or recyclable packaging. Bring a canvas bag for shopping to avoid unnecessary plastic or paper bags.
- Invest in companies that provide clean energy and engage in shareholder advocacy to affect the environmental policy of companies in which you own stock.

Participate in the “Clean Car Campaign”

As we seek to conserve energy in our homes, we can also ensure good stewardship of the earth by the vehicles we drive. According to COEJL, “America burns 8 million barrels of oil every day just to fuel our cars, SUVs, and trucks... Much of our oil comes from the Middle East... *and our dependence on this oil helps to fuel the causes of war and terrorism.* Our dependence on imported oil also results in pressure to drill for oil in environmentally threatened places.” Moreover, the oil we burn contributes to air pollution and to global climate change. This problem is particularly acute because the average fuel economy of American vehicles is at the lowest level since 1980. During the cold winter months, our oil usage increases even more.

Ways to contribute to the “Clean Car Campaign”:

- When it comes time to buy another car, commit to purchasing either a hybrid or a fuel-efficient vehicle, or, switch to public transportation.
- Commit to carpooling. Create a congregational carpool list to promote ridesharing to and from services and religious school.
- Conduct a letter writing campaign during Chanukah, urging automobile executives to increase their vehicles’ fuel economy.

Information and resources (including a link to automatically fax a letter to auto executives) for the Clean Car Campaign are at

www.coejl.org/climatechange/cleancarcamp.php.

Green your Congregation

“Rededicate” Your Temple by Installing a Solar Powered Ner Tamid

The name Chanukah means dedication, coming from the Maccabees’ rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, symbolized by the *ner tamid* (eternal flame). Follow in this tradition of rededicating the sanctuary by installing a solar powered *ner tamid* that can demonstrate your synagogue’s commitment to energy conservation.

Temple Emanuel of the Greater Washington Area

(<http://www.templeemanuelmd.org/>) designed and installed a solar *ner tamid*. Rabbi Warren Stone explains that the solar *ner tamid* serves “to teach Jewish concern for the earth and our responsibility for using resources wisely.”

This program can be a spark for your congregation to adopt a congregational energy plan. For more resources, head to www.coejl.org/greensyn/gstoc.php, to the CCAR resolutions page ccarnet.org/documentsandpositions/resolutions (search for the 2000 energy resolution), or to “Greening of the Small Congregation” at urj.org/small/resources.

Green Your Community – Take Action

- ***Sign up To Receive RAC News and Legislative Action Alerts***
These alerts will help you keep up on current environmental news and policy. Visit www.rac.org.
- ***Green your Investments***
Invest in companies that have sound environmental practices or that provide renewable sources of energy.
- ***Join your state’s chapter of the Interfaith Climate Change Network,***
www.protectingcreation.org.

Green Resources

- View the Reform Movement’s Resolutions. The Union for Reform Judaism has passed many environmental resolutions. Visit www.urj.org/docs/reso and type “environment.” The CCAR passed a resolution on a national energy

policy in 2000 and a resolution on climate change in 2005. Search for these and other CCAR resolutions at www.ccarnet.org.

- Visit the RAC's climate change page at www.rac.org/advocacy/issues/issuecc.
- COEJL, the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, is the premier Jewish environmental organization, with great resources on global climate change (many of which are particularly geared for Chanukah), www.coejl.org.
- Sierra Club's Global Warming Campaign, www.sierraclub.org/globalwarming.
- Interfaith Climate Change Network, a joint project of COEJL and the National Council of Churches, mobilizes the religious community to curb global warming, www.protectingcreation.org.
- *CHAI: Learning for Jewish Life, Level 6 Curriculum Core* includes a lesson on global climate change. In the *G'milut Chasadim* section look for lesson three: "*Bal Tashchit: Recycling and Conserving Energy.*" For more information about the CHAI Curriculum, including how to order it, visit urj.org/chai.

Chanukah and Economic Justice

Chanukah has traditionally been a time of giving gifts and/or gelt to children. In Eastern Europe, teachers would let the children out of school early to enjoy their small bit of pocket money and have some time off during the holiday. This tradition of gift giving and receiving has magnified over the years. Nowadays it's not uncommon for families to give ever larger presents each night of the holiday.

This emphasis on lavish gifts is a product of our interaction with modern North American culture, a culture in which the "Holiday Shopping Season" has grown longer each year. As our ancestors wrestled with the extent to which they should allow Greek culture to influence their lives, North American Jews wrestle with the extent to which we should allow secular culture to influence our lives. This culture of commercialism undermines the true meaning of our celebration. Even many Christian leaders bemoan the loss of a meaningful Christmas that gets overshadowed by an emphasis on gifts.

Chanukah can be a time to reexamine what we consider to be a gift and how we go about giving and receiving gifts. Many of those in our congregations are blessed with enough to eat, a warm roof over their heads, an opportunity for education and sufficient clothing. If we look around, we see that these are truly great gifts:

- One in twenty American Jewish families live below the poverty line.
- 34.9 million American people live in households that experience hunger or the risk of hunger.
- More than 840 million people around the world suffer from hunger.
- About 24,000 people die every day from hunger or hunger-related causes.
- More than 153 million of those who are hungry are under the age of five, and six million children under the age of 5 die every year as a result of hunger.⁵

This Chanukah, and throughout the year, we can use our riches to ensure the wellbeing of all of God's children. We can become excited not only about the great gifts we'll receive, but also about the ways we can use our blessings and our gifts – by making monetary donations, material donations, volunteering, and participating in advocacy– to ensure the well-being of all of our brothers and sisters.

Program Ideas on Economic Justice

Ner Shel Tzedakah

Ner Shel Tzedakah ("Candle of Righteousness") is a project in which families and individuals devote the 6th night of Chanukah to learning about the problem of poverty. They donate the value of the gifts (or the gifts themselves) that they would otherwise exchange on that night to organizations that assist the poor. By making donations on the sixth night of Chanukah, individuals will help the candle of righteousness glow brightly

⁵ Statistics from the Poverty Fact Sheet at www.urj.org/csa/projects/poverty and http://www.mazon.org/What_You_Should_Know/Hunger_Facts/International_Hunger_Facts.asp.

for those in need. More information is available at urj.org/csa/projects/ner_shel_tzedakah.

There are many ways to incorporate *Ner Shel Tzedakah* into your Chanukah practice. The following ideas can help you get started:

Donate Your ‘Gelt’

On the sixth night of Chanukah, gather as a family to discuss ways to donate the value of your Chanukah presents. In particular, in lieu of giving Chanukah gifts, you might think about making donations in honor of your friends and family to help poor families keep the heat on during the cold winter months.

Light One Candle

Congregants at **Congregation Shir Tikvah, of Troy, MI** (www.shirtikvah.org), provide Chanukah gifts to less fortunate children, seniors and homeless adults in their community in a very personal way. Participants pick one or more candles from a large cardboard menorah, each listing the gender and age of one recipient. (Other congregations, such as **Temple Shalom of Louisville, KY** (www.ky003.urj.net), place these cards on top of an actual *chanukiyah*). They then purchase a gift for the selected person. The gifts are then collected and delivered.

Winter Warm-Up Clothing Drive

Have a collection box in which congregants can place new or lightly worn hats, gloves, coats, boots and scarves. These can then be collected and donated to a local shelter. As one aspect of your Chanukah celebration, this project can remind the community to engage in social action during the holiday.

Winter Warm-Up Knitting and Crocheting Drive

In December 2004, students at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion made and collected over 100 hand-knit and crochet hats as gifts for the guests at their in-house Soup Kitchen. A similar program could involve teenagers, seniors, the Sisterhood or anyone who loves crafts.

Religious School Gift Drive

Port Jewish Center, in Port Washington, New York (www.pjc.urj.net) sponsors a gift drive through the religious school. Noting that we each will be receiving presents, children are taught about our responsibility to share with those who might not be receiving presents. Each class is responsible for bringing in an item such as candies, lotions, magazines, sweaters, stuffed animals and other small items, which are collected into gift bags. A local bookstore donates plain brown bags, which are decorated by the K-1 class. Half of the bags are delivered to a nursing home by the fourth grade class, which studies life cycle. The class also sings some Chanukah songs with the residents. The other bags are donated to a local AIDS program.

Mitzvah Mall

Invite poverty-related organizations to set up tables at a religious school Mitzvah Mall. During religious school, students visit the Mall, learn about the organizations and allocate

their *tzedakah* money (as individuals or as a class). This activity could also be done with adults, or as a community-wide project. Contributions can be made in honor or in memory of friends and family and given as Chanukah gifts on the sixth night. At some Mitzvah Malls participants receive Chanukah cards to give to family and friends in exchange for their donations.

Tzedakah Gift Shop

Temple Beth-El in Hillsborough, NJ (www.nj022.urj.net) runs a *Tzedakah* Gift Shop in conjunction with the Sisterhood Chanukah gift shop. A display of eight colorful tubes (set up to look like candles), each of which bears the name of a charity or project, is placed in the lobby. In front of each candle is a stack of colorful description cards describing the work of the particular organization. As people shop for their Chanukah presents, they can donate money in these candle-shaped *tzedakah* boxes, and they are encouraged to use these donations in lieu of gifts (hence the colorful description cards). The *Tzedakah* Gift Shop remains in the synagogue lobby throughout Chanukah (with regular removals of cash).

Judaica for World Jewry

Collect new Judaica items to send to the World Union for Progressive Judaism to donate to developing progressive Jewish congregations around the world. Contact the WUPJ at (212) 452-6530 to find out which items are most in demand.

Make a Mitzvah Catalog

The youth group, confirmation class, social action committee or other synagogue group could compile a catalog of a variety of *tzedakah* organizations that need funding, donations or volunteers. This catalog could then be distributed to temple members, who could use it to find donations for family and friends.

Kindle the Light of Social Justice as You Kindle the Lights of Chanukah

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, encourages us to meditate upon eight social justice concepts during the eight nights of Chanukah. Its website explains:

Jews are linked to the Maccabees not just through common bloodlines, but through common purpose. While they found the courage to stand their ground and speak their minds, we continue to raise our voices against injustice. And while they discovered in oil a miracle of hope, we strive to bring this miracle to people who are most in need. Millions of Americans – each of them Maccabees, each of them struggling for their future – go hungry every day. With your help, food will be their oil, their fuel and faith on the path to a brighter tomorrow.

Visit MAZON's holiday website to download these meditations that you can use during a home, school or synagogue Chanukah celebration.

www.mazon.org/what_you_should_know/Hunger_and_Judaism/Chanukah.pdf.

Make Our Tzedakah Grow

Congregation Or Ami, of Calabasas, CA, (www.arami.org) initiated this program to “transform Chanukah from a holiday of getting presents into a festival of giving *tzedakah*.” At the community Chanukah service, the rabbi hands \$100 to 4-6 randomly chosen congregants and challenges them to use this money as a vehicle for *tikkun olam*. They are not allowed to donate the money back to the synagogue, and they are asked to let the congregation know how the money was spent.

Incorporate Tzedakah into Chanukah Parties

Donations

Give three percent of the cost of your Chanukah party to MAZON: A Jewish response to Hunger. www.mazon.org.

Collections

Collect funds and items for *Ner Shel Tzedakah* at the party.

Letter-writing Campaign

Ask guests to write letters about pertinent social action issue during the party. For instance, write letters to corporations about sweatshop labor or to elected officials about anti-poverty initiatives.

Become part of an “Out of the Cold Coalition” or Interfaith Hospitality Housing Network

As we kindle the Chanukah lights, we think about those who lack a warm place to stay during the winter. Many congregations help the homeless find a warm place to sleep by partnering with interfaith “Out of the Cold” coalitions. As a member of these coalitions, congregations take turns providing shelter for homeless men, women or families during the winter months. Often, participating congregations host guests for one-week periods. By bringing the homeless poor into our homes, we can bring light to others and raise awareness about the long-term causes and effects of hunger and homelessness.

Provide a Hot Meal to Those in Need

Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel of Elkins Park, PA (www.kenesethisrael.org) planned a Chanukah Dinner for residents of the Federation Housing Buildings in NE Philadelphia. Dinner was cooked and served by volunteers from the congregation, including the confirmation class, to approximately 250-300 guests, regardless of religion or nationality. One congregant hosted at each table and the synagogue provided professional entertainment during the meal. The congregation also provided buses to pick up all of the invited residents.

Take Action on Slavery, Child Labor and Sweatshops

The most dramatic ways in which global poverty manifests itself are through slavery, child labor and sweatshops. Over 27 million people are enslaved today, which is more than those who were enslaved in all 400 years of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade.⁶ Many of the world’s poor, including children, are forced to labor in sweatshops or on farms for

⁶ <http://www.nfty.org/resources/actiontheme/index.html>, by Mira Lyon.

minimal or no wages. They work long hours in unsafe conditions, are barred from organizing and lack access to medical care. Workers commonly face verbal and physical abuse and intimidation to keep them from speaking out, fearing job loss or deportation. During Chanukah as we read *Al HaNisim*, a prayer giving thanks for our freedoms, we can take steps to ensure the basic human rights of those around the world.

Give Gifts that Promote Fair Working Conditions

Give gifts that promote fair conditions for the working poor around the world. Many of the products we buy – from coffee to chocolate, from carpets to clothing – are made by people forced to work in sweatshops, whether in factories or on farms. As we purchase gifts for family and friends this Chanukah, we can support those who are working to end sweatshop labor and take action to ensure fair working conditions for everyone by purchasing Fair Trade products. To learn more about Fair Trade and to find out where and how to purchase Fair Trade gifts for your loved ones this Chanukah, go to www.rac.org/advocacy/issues/fairtrade.

Conduct a Fair Trade Coffee Fundraiser

High school students at **Temple Kol Ami in White Plains, New York** (www.nykolami.org), sold Fair Trade coffee at the temple's Chanukah boutique and stocked their booth with informational material about the importance of Fair Trade. Through this program, students provided a way for members of the community to purchase fairly traded gifts for Chanukah, educated the community about Fair Trade and raised over \$500 towards their service mission to El Salvador with the American Jewish World Service. You can purchase wholesale Fair Trade coffee, tea and chocolate and find informational materials at the Interfaith Coffee Program of Equal Exchange, www.equalexchange.com/interfaith-program.

Raise Awareness About Sweatshop Labor

In this season of shopping, instead of spending a day at the mall buying gifts, pursue justice instead. Let store managers and retail companies know that their customers are concerned about sweatshops, and encourage them to sell sweatshop-free products. Divide into small groups to visit different stores. Ask the manager challenging questions to raise awareness about this hidden issue. You may wish to write a letter explaining your youth group's opposition to sweatshop labor to give to the manager during your conversation. For more information, head to www.freethechildren.com and www.nfty.org/resources/actiontheme/resources.html.

Invite an Escaped Slave or Abolitionist to Speak to Your Community

This is one of the most effective ways to inform congregants about modern day slavery. Consider including a text study, informational materials, fundraising and/or a letter writing campaign as part of the event. Iabolish.com has a list of speakers you can invite to your community at www.iabolish.com/act/commu/booking/index.htm.

Make sure Program 'Giveaways' are Sweatshop Free

Research the companies you use for 'giveaways.' Try to find sweatshop-free companies instead of hiring the cheapest company for your T-shirts, hats and other gifts that are

given out at retreats, Mitzvah Days and other programs. Begin your search for union made items at www.unitehere.org, www.unionwear.com or swatch.igc.org/sweatfree.

Resources on Slavery, Child Labor, and Sweatshops

- “They Urgently Depend on It: Sweatshops, Raising Awareness in Congregations,” rac.org/pubs/packets (scroll down to “Sweatshops”)
- Visit the RAC Issues pages for Fair Trade, child soldiers, labor relations, human rights, sexual trafficking, Sudan and many others. Go to www.rac.org and click on the “Issues” section.
- www.iabolish.com has information on global slavery, information sheets and advocacy resources.
- www.freethechildren.com/youthinaction/child_labour_the_situation.htm provides a full discussion of child labor.
- During 2004-5, NFTY’s social action theme was slavery and trafficking. Its issues page, at www.nfty.org/resources/actiontheme/resources.html, has links to many helpful resources.
- www.coopamerica.org/programs/sweatshops has information on No Sweat, Co-op America’s campaign to end sweatshop labor.

Rekindling the Lamp: Chanukah and Children's Issues

At the moment of rededication, the Maccabees relit the *ner tamid*, the eternal flame in the Temple. The *ner tamid* symbolizes God's constant presence with the entire Jewish people. Because it is perpetually lit, the *ner tamid* also signifies a hope that God's presence will continue to dwell with us from generation to generation (BT Shabbat 22b).⁷ What could be a better symbol for our hopes for a sustainable future than the *ner tamid*? Thus, as we kindle the Chanukah lights, we think about how we can nurture our children and pass along a better world to them.

Chanukah has become a children's holiday. We have parties and play games, eat sweets and give gifts. Therefore, it is only natural that we consider children's issues on Chanukah. When we help all children gain the loving families, safe homes, health care and education they deserve, we help fulfill our mandate to nurture God's creation in each generation. In addition, many other issues – including global climate change, environmental sustainability, economic justice, fair trade and poverty – affect children as well as adults. When we work for social justice in these areas, we also ensure the wellbeing of future generations.

Every Jew must light the *ner tamid* in his own heart, a light of God. It must not only be lit in Tabernacle or Tent, that is, in synagogue, house of study, or during prayer. But it must also be lit 'outside the curtain' (Exodus 27:21): in the street and market place, in one's work, in profane activities, and in all matters regarding relations between one human being and another (Pardes Yosef, *Itturei Ha Torah*, vol. III, p. 229).

As we remember the *ner tamid* in the Temple, we also recall that each of us has a perpetual inner flame, a divine spark within. Like the Chanukah lights, these flames are not to be kept hidden. Rather, we are to make manifest their brightness in our everyday actions – in our studies and on the street, in our prayers and in our homes, in our synagogues and in our communities. We can light these lamps by the work of our hands – from the clothing we collect for winter warm-up campaigns to the meals we cook for hungry mouths; by the words of our mouths – from the phone calls we make to our representatives to the stories we read to disadvantaged youth; and by the meditations of our hearts – as we ever strive towards the vision of a world redeemed.

In this labor, we work towards the messianic vision of the prophet Isaiah. The midrash Pesikta Rabbati makes a connection between the dedication of Chanukah and the dedication of the world-to-come, "which also is to be celebrated with the light of lamps, as it is written, 'And the light of the moon shall become like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall become sevenfold' (Isaiah 30:26)" (Pesikta Rabbati 2:6, in *The Hanukkah Anthology*, pp.78-9).

Thus, as we kindle the Chanukah lights, we think about how we can pass along a better world to our children. We think about how we can contribute to a world that can sustain us, our children and our children's children. And we commit to working towards the repair of the world, for our day and for future generations.

Program Ideas on Children's Issues

Projects for Individuals and Families

Ner Shel Tzedakah (A Candle of Righteousness)

Ner Shel Tzedakah invites families to donate the value of the gifts (or the gifts themselves) that they would otherwise exchange on the sixth night of Chanukah to *tzedakah*. Consider donating your *Ner Shel Tzedakah* funds or items to organizations working on behalf of children. Look for charities in your community working to end child hunger, providing support for abused and neglected children, advocating for healthcare for all children or providing education and/or afterschool programs for low-income children. If you are running a Mitzvah Mall program, consider including a few children's charities. Donating to a children's charity may be an especially meaningful way for the children in your family or the religious school to connect with *Ner Shel Tzedakah*. For more information or programming ideas for *Ner Shel Tzedakah*, go to p. 7.

Become a Big Brother or a Big Sister

Make a real difference in a child's life. By becoming a friend and mentor to their Little Brothers and Sisters, Big Brothers and Sisters help foster self-esteem, confidence and life skills, while having a great time. To learn more and find out about volunteering, visit www.bbbsa.org.

Programs for Religious Schools and Youth Groups

Help Kids in Developing Countries Receive a Quality Education

Free the Children, a Canadian based organization run by and for children, sponsors a school-building campaign to ensure that all kids receive the education they deserve and to help break the cycle of poverty. Through Free the Children, you can raise money to build schools, create kits of school supplies to send to needy children, and participate in trips to developing countries to build schools and participate in community development. For more information, visit <http://www.freethechildren.org>.

For High School and College Students: Participate in SPROUT and SHOUT

Through the Student Health OUTreach project (SHOUT) and the Student Poverty Reduction OUTreach program (SPROUT), two student-run programs of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), high school and college students partner with community-based organizations to reach out and enroll all eligible children in federal health-insurance

programs and other poverty reduction programs. Information on both projects is available at www.childrendefense.org/studentoutreach.

Take Religious School Students on Social Justice Field Trips

Help religious school students learn about social justice issues by taking them on an educational field trip. For instance, students might make bag lunches to hand out during a Midnight Run, cook and serve meals at a local Soup Kitchen or visit a homeless shelter (during off hours). If you are visiting an organization, have students prepare interview questions to ask the director and/or program coordinator.

Implement Bullying Prevention Programs in Your Synagogue or School

During Chanukah, we learn about standing up for what is right, especially in a world where some people force others to live in a way that is uncomfortable or dangerous for them. For many children, bullying is one of the greatest challenges they face. In a 1998 Study, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development concluded that “30 percent of students in grades six through ten were involved in moderate to frequent bullying as perpetrators, victims or both.”⁸

Bullying can be “defined as aggressive verbal or physical behavior committed by a child or group of children to intimidate, harass or harm a child or group of children, [and is] universally reprehensible.”⁹ Bullying has harmful effects on children’s mental health and on crime prevention. Kids who are bullied are five times more likely to be depressed. And, “bullying is an early warning sign that children and youth may be headed down a path to more serious antisocial behavior.”¹⁰

As people who suffered for our religious differences, we can understand what it is like to be attacked because we are perceived to be different. By developing and implementing programs to help kids take a stand against bullying and to help prevent bullying, we can help reduce this behavior and make a positive difference for the children in our communities.

Resources for these programs include:

- Operation Respect: Don’t Laugh at Me (DLAM) helps “sensitize children to the painful effects of behaviors that too often are accepted as necessary rites of passage in childhood—ridicule, disrespect (or ‘dissing’), ostracism and bullying. DLAM is designed to inspire children, along with their teachers and other educators, to transform their classrooms and schools into ‘Ridicule Free Zones.’”(<http://www.dontlaugh.org/programs.htm>). DLAM also runs programs for camps. Information is available at www.operationrespect.org.

⁸ National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children: A World Health Organization Cross-National Study—Research Protocol for the 1997-98 Survey (1998).

⁹ “Endorsing Anti-Bullying Initiatives,” adopted by the CSA Fall 2004.

¹⁰ “Bullying Prevention is Crime Prevention,” by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, www.fightcrime.org.

- “Bullying Prevention is Crime Prevention,” a research brief by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, has statistics on bullying and information on bullying prevention programs at www.fightcrime.org.

Organize a War Toy Trade-in to Help Child Soldiers through the War Is Not a Game Campaign

Over 300,000 children around the world are being used as soldiers in conflicts around the world. Among many reasons, armies recruit or force children to fight because children may be viewed as more expendable, children will follow orders more readily than adults, children are more trusting and more easily manipulated and children cost less to maintain.

Although Chanukah celebrates a military victory, we continue to pray for a world in which swords will be turned into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. Until that time, the very least we can do is ensure that children are not placed in the front lines of combat.

Raise awareness about this issue and raise money to help these children rebuild their lives through the War is Not a Game Campaign. In this program, youth in peaceful countries (such as the United States or Canada) organize a war toy “trade in” in their schools and communities. According to the program’s website, “As they trade in their toys, youth will be making the symbolic statement that: ‘While we play war, for millions of kids around the world War Is Not a Game’” (<http://www.youthambassadors.com/projects/wng.html>).

Information on war affected children and the War Is Not a Game Campaign is at www.youthambassadors.com. (Look under “Children and War” and “Projects.”)

Raise Gun Safety Awareness in Your Community

Students at **Monmouth Reform Temple in Tinton Falls, NJ** (www.monmouth.com/~mrt) started Asking Saves Kids (A.S.K.), a program designed to educate about gun safety. Middle school students spoke at parent-teacher group meetings at local schools, raising awareness about gun violence from a nonpartisan, public health perspective. They also gave workshops at URJ Regional Biennials to help other congregations start their own A.S.K. programs.

Programs for Congregations

Sponsor An ‘Operation Crib’

Partner with a local battered women’s shelter or homeless shelter to get a ‘wish list’ of needed baby items. Place a crib in the synagogue lobby in which congregants can place their donations. Also, you may want to place a *tzedakah* box alongside the crib for monetary donations for larger items.

Support Kids Cafés to help End Child Hunger

Run by America’s Second Harvest, the Kids Café program provides free and prepared food and nutrition education to hungry children. Kids Cafes achieve this goal by utilizing

existing community resources, such as Boys and Girls Clubs or schools. Although not every city or state is home to a Kids Café, many food banks and food-rescue programs operate programs specifically for children. Become involved in a Kids Café or similar program by contacting your local food bank or food rescue program. Or, make a donation to help fund these programs through America's Second Harvest. For more information, go to www.secondharvest.org and click on "How We Work," then "National Initiatives," and then "Kid's Café."

Support Educational Programs

The word "Chanukah" shares its root (core meaning) with another Hebrew word: *chinuch*, or education. As we seek to create a sustainable future for all of our children, one of the most important things we can do is to ensure a quality education for all. A quality education can help lift a child out of the cycle of poverty, ensuring him or her a brighter future.

Partner with a Local School

Create a synagogue partnership with a local public school. There are many ways to become involved, including coordinating donations of needed goods, creating a tutoring corps, volunteering in classrooms and organizing or sponsoring school events. The CSA Guide: "For the Sake of the Children: A Synagogue Guide to Public School Partnerships" at www.rac.org/pubs/guidemanuals/partnership has many helpful suggestions for setting up a partnership program and for involving a broad spectrum of the congregational community in this important work. It also includes descriptions of congregations who have successful partnership programs.

Volunteer to Tutor at a Local School or Library

Many schools and libraries have special programs for at-risk youth. Seniors, high school students and members of sisterhood or brotherhood (among others) can make a significant difference in a child's life. Tutoring programs often require that volunteers commit to several months to ensure continuity for the children in the program. Check with your local public schools, libraries and community centers for volunteer opportunities, or visit the website of the National Jewish Coalition for Literacy, www.njcl.net.

Books for Boys: A Model of a Literacy Project

Members of **Woodlands Community Temple in Greenburgh, NY** (www.wct.org) and of **Temple Beth Abraham in Tarrytown, NY** (ny048.urj.net) partner with Children's Village, a residential school for vulnerable and abused boys from the New York City foster care system, in the Books for Boys Program. Books for Boys was founded by Pam Allyn, a member of Woodlands, as a way to bring the love and joy of reading to these troubled children. The congregations actively collect books for the boys, and they also coordinate volunteers to read aloud with the boys at bedtime, lunch and other times during the day. Contact Pam Allyn at (914) 674-2150 or pallyn@litlifeinfo.com for more information.

In conjunction with Random House, Temple Beth Abraham is sponsoring Birthday Books, in which each child in the village receives a new book for his birthday. Volunteers have also brought authors and illustrators into the community to visit with the boys.

Host a Carnival or Day Camp for Special Needs Kids

Temple Beth-El of Great Neck, NY (www.tbegreatneck.org) hosts a “Mitzvah Day Carnival” in which volunteers from the congregation provide suitable activities such as crafts and games for children between the ages of three and twelve who have special needs. These include children with cancer, Down’s Syndrome, children of recent immigrants from Latin America, and other children for whom the Carnival is a most welcome diversion. Half the Carnival volunteers are themselves between the ages of 12 and 16, and for most of them, the Carnival is an introduction to a world very different from their own. Additionally, through its work in preparing the Carnival together with the community agencies, the congregation has identified an array of needs that have been translated into other Mitzvah Day projects.

Join with the Children’s Defense Fund: Become a Congregation to Leave No Child Behind

This Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) campaign seeks “to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.” Participating congregations pledge to annually educate about the needs and concerns of children, directly serve in outreach efforts such as after-school programs, practice spiritual disciplines, such as participating in a National Observance of Children's Sabbaths, to sustain long-term participation in the Leave No Child Behind Movement, and advocate for systematic change. In addition to a certificate of commitment, participating congregations receive resources from CDF, email updates and access to a bulletin board discussion for participating congregations. More information on this program can be found at www.childrensdefense.org/religiousaction/congregations.

Resources on Children’s Issues

- Visit the RAC’s page on Children’s Issues at rac.org/advocacy/issues/issueci.
- For comprehensive resources on child poverty in the United States, including statistics and fact sheets, head to the National Center for Children in Poverty at www.nccp.org.
- For upper elementary students, the *G’milut Chasadim* component of the *CHAI: Learning for Jewish Life, Level 6 Curriculum Core* has helpful resources and lesson plans. For information on the CHAI Curriculum, see www.urj.org/chai.
- Visit www.mazon.org (“What You Should Know”) for further educational resources on kids and hunger.

Chanukah and Religious Liberty

Chanukah teaches us about the dangers of government interference with religious practice and about the importance of religious liberty. What had been a relatively peaceful coexistence between the Jewish community and the Greek government in ancient Palestine was shattered when the government began to use force to impose one official religious practice. Under King Antiochus, the government invaded the Temple, stripped it of its sacred vessels, set up statues to Greek gods and sacrificed pigs on the altar. The government forbade Jews from offering daily sacrifices (the primary form of Jewish worship at the time), banned circumcision and forcibly coerced Jews to worship pagan gods (Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 12, Chapter 5).

In response to these demands, many Jews (led by those whom we know as the Maccabees) stood up for their beliefs and fought to be able to practice their religion freely. When we recite the second blessing over the Chanukah lights, giving thanks for the miracles God performed for our ancestors, we recall the Maccabees' celebration as they were no longer subject to tyrannical rulers who prevented them from practicing their faith.

As we remember their celebration, we also give thanks that we are blessed to live in countries that treasure religious freedom, allowing Jews and people of other faiths or no faith to worship or refrain from worship as they see fit. This policy of religious liberty allows American and Canadian Jews to grow in our faith while fully participating in an open, multicultural society.

Religious freedom is guaranteed for all Americans by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This concept of separating religion and government (also known as the 'separation of church and state') has prevented the government from imposing or endorsing one specific religion as the official state faith. The right of free expression has allowed religion to flourish, unfettered by government intrusion.

Likewise, Section Two of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, enacted to ensure individual liberties not specified in the constitution, states, "Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: freedom of conscience and religion..." The rationale behind this law is very similar to the United States' "separation of church and state." In a ruling made by the Supreme Court of Canada about the constitutionality of the Lord's Day Act, which legislated restrictions on Sundays such as store openings and recreational activities, the Court decided that:

The power to compel, on religious grounds, the universal observance of the day of rest preferred by one religion is not consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multi-cultural heritage of Canadians recognized in s. 27 of the *Charter* [*R. v. Big M Drug Mart Ltd.*, [1985] 1 S.C.R. 295, 1985 CanLII 69 (S.C.C.)].

Thus in the United States and Canada, religious freedom and diversity are not only fundamental values but inextricably tied to our nations' identities. Religious liberty is our heritage.

Although we enjoy religious liberty in America and Canada, we also acknowledge that this was not always so. Although the Talmud teaches that we should publicly display the Chanukah lights (BT Shabbat 21b), it also states that "in times of danger, one may place it [the Chanukah lights] on his table and it is sufficient" (ibid.). In many times and in many places, our ancestors lived where openly practicing their religion was dangerous, even life-threatening.

Today, while we may be able to practice our religion without fear of persecution, the separation of church and state is under constant attack. As this boundary weakens, it becomes more and more possible for religious groups to legislate their religious beliefs, thus embedding religious coercion into our nation's most sacred documents. Chanukah reminds us to stand up against threats to this wall – threats such as prayer in public school, the posting of the Ten Commandments on public property and school vouchers. As we stand up for the separation of church and state, we help ensure that our countries continue to be a haven of religious liberty.

As we celebrate our religious liberty during Chanukah, let us take action to preserve and strengthen our nations' commitment to religious freedom. As individuals and congregations, we can stand up for the rights of all people to practice their religion and to be free from religious coercion of any sort. And we can raise our voices in defense of the separation between church and state and the atmosphere of liberty and tolerance fostered by this policy. The programs in this section of the guide offer a place to begin this important work.

Program Ideas on Religious Liberty

Teach about the Importance of Religious Liberty

Use the story of Chanukah as a starting point. You may also want to teach about the experience of Jewish communities under various tolerant and intolerant governments. Check out the resources at the end of this section for places to get started.

Advocate for the Protection of the First Amendment

In any given year, there are various initiatives and pieces of legislation that threaten the First Amendment. Your congregation can play a significant role in affecting public policy in this area. Issues may be in the realm of religious liberty (i.e. wearing a *kippah* to public school, missing school for a religious holiday) or in the realm of the separation of church and state (i.e. school prayer, school vouchers, posting of Ten Commandments on public property, faith-based initiatives).

In order to target your advocacy work, we suggest contacting the Legislative Assistant at the Religious Action Center in charge of church-state issues and/or religious liberty (at

(202) 387-2800) or your local Jewish Community Relations Council. These resources can tell you which issues are most pressing at the local and national level in any given year. General advocacy suggestions:

- Invite a speaker or have a panel discussion to educate congregants, youth or affiliate groups about a religious rights issue.
- Write bulletin articles or deliver a sermon.
- Let your local and national politicians know your opinions. Conduct a letter-writing campaign or craft a petition. Meet with the mayor, members of city council, or state legislators.
- Host a “latkes and letter-writing” Chanukah party.
- In the evenings (when people have unlimited cell phone minutes), set up a calling station where congregants can phone their representatives, senators or the president about an issue. Provide talking points to help people make these calls.
- Form a Congregational Church-State Committee to coordinate your advocacy work (see below for an exceptional example).

A Model of Advocacy: A Congregational Church-State Committee

In April 2003, KAM Isaiah Israel Congregation of Chicago (www.kamii.org) established a Church-State Committee, which was formed to educate the congregation and the broader community about the importance of religious liberty. In particular, the Committee was alarmed at the growing attacks on the separation of church and state. Although the work of various Church-State or Religious Liberty Committees may vary, the model provided by KAM can be a good place to begin.

The Committee issued resolutions to guide them in their work, including a resolution opposing legislation that weakens the separation of church and state. They also introduced a platform on the separation of church and state to the synagogue board, which adopted the proposal. (By adopting these sorts of platforms, temple boards can help educate the members of the congregation and facilitate advocacy work.)

Over the years, the Committee has been active in a variety of ways, from writing testimony that the temple president delivered at a congressional hearing to hosting speakers to educate the community on these issues in conjunction with other local Jewish organizations. The Committee has also conducted a scholar in residence weekend devoted to an exploration of the First Amendment of the Constitution that featured 26 scholars. The weekend included a social action Shabbat service, speakers who provided background information, a debate between Rabbi David Saperstein and an official of the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel and workshops on a variety of issues.

Church/State Issues in Public Schools

During Chanukah, we may be particularly sensitive to the intersection of religion and public education. Our children may be more aware of our identity as a religious minority when surrounded by the decorations, parties, and school music programs devoted to Christmas. Therefore, it is important to speak with public school officials throughout the

year to discuss appropriate ways to balance the mandate of the separation of church and state with the mandate for religious liberty.

Because different issues play out differently in each local community and because each community has different resources, this guide offers some places to begin. The resources at the end of this section may be helpful in understanding appropriate and inappropriate role of religion in the public schools. Once you are familiar with the issues in your community, bring your concerns to school board members and administrators. Meet with principals and superintendents to discuss scheduling of school events and provide them with Jewish calendars. Ask your PTA and administration to establish guidelines for the role of religion in your school. Your congregation could also host an education program for public school teachers and administrators to raise awareness about the challenges faced by non-Christian students during the winter holiday season.

Promote Programs that Teach about Religious Diversity and Tolerance

During the winter season, many schools are challenged to meet the diverse interests of their students within the limits imposed by the Constitution and students may confront challenges to their own faith traditions in the public arena. Encourage your local schools to teach about diversity and tolerance as the foundation for a civil society. The following organizations offer programs and resources that can be of great help to public school teachers (and also in our synagogues):

- Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, has great resources and programs for teachers, parents, kids and teens, many of which can be incorporated into public schools. Visit its website at www.tolerance.org.
- A World of Difference, a program of the Anti-Defamation League, offers workshops for teachers to help combat bias. These workshops explore ways teachers can help students explore prejudice and bigotry, improve critical thinking skills, examine diverse viewpoints and take leadership roles. More information is at www.adl.org/awod/awod_institute.asp.
- Your local Holocaust Museum may have programming on diversity and/or tolerance that may be appropriate for a school field trip.
- The National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) has a variety of programs for teaching tolerance of diversity in classrooms, workplaces, and elsewhere. Visit their national website www.nccj.org to locate the regional office near you.

Resources on Religious Liberty

General Resources

- For information on the Reform Jewish Movement and religious liberty, go to www.rac.org/advocacy/issues. Under “civil rights and civil liberties” click on “separation of church, state and charitable choice,” “school prayer,” or “vouchers.” The Religious Action Center has also published an issue packet on the separation of church and state in public schools: “Protecting the Wall: Supporting our Schools,” available at www.rac.org/pubs/packets/schools.

The packet includes information on school vouchers, a Teachers Shabbat to honor public school teachers, and creating interfaith alliance programs for public education.

- www.firstamendmentcenter.org has comprehensive information on the First Amendment as it pertains to religious liberty, including background information and frequently asked questions.
- The Anti-Defamation League's Religious Liberty page has articles on many issues, including religion in the workplace, religion in public schools, school vouchers, the separation of church and state, the "December Dilemma" in public schools, and creationism at www.adl.org/religious_freedom.
- The RAC and the American Jewish Committee teamed up with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Interfaith Alliance Foundation, and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA to publish "A Shared Vision: Religious Liberty in the 21st Century." The pamphlet includes a joint statement made by the groups and suggested guidelines for the role of religion in politics and in the public schools. You can download a copy of the pamphlet from the AJC's website at www.ajc.org/InTheMedia/PubInterreligious.asp?did=686.
- Connect with your local Jewish Community Relations Council. JCRCs are often well informed about church-state and religious liberty issues in your area, and they may be able to facilitate a dialogue with your school, school board or superintendent. To locate your local JCRC, visit the Jewish Council for Public Affairs' website at www.jewishpublicaffairs.org.

Social Action Web Resources

In each section of this Guide – the Environment, Economic Justice, Children’s Issues and Religious Liberty – you will find web resources. The following list contains general social action resources that apply to these and other issues.

Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, www.urj.org/csa

The Commission on Social Action assists congregations in applying ethical, Jewish principles to contemporary issues. The Commission’s website has useful program materials and resources for a wide variety of social action programs.

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC), www.rac.org

The RAC’s website has a plethora of background information on social justice issues, including resolutions, initiatives and a social action program bank. It also has links to other social action program guides.

Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), www.ccarnet.org

The CCAR is the association of Reform rabbis. Its web page links to CCAR resolutions and responsa, many of which are on social action issues.

Keshet: Connecting Reform Jews on Campus, www.keshetnet.com

Keshet’s site includes social action resources for college students, including links to labor, LGBT issues, women’s reproductive choice and more!

NFTY, www.nfty.org/resources/socialaction

NFTY – the North American Federation of Temple Youth – has social action information geared for temple youth groups. This link takes you directly to its social action resource page.

American Jewish World Service, www.ajws.org

The American Jewish World Service supports grassroots sustainable development throughout the world. Its goal is to “help alleviate poverty, hunger and disease among the people of the world regardless of race, religion or nationality. It breathes life into Judaism’s imperative to pursue justice and helps American Jews act upon a deeply felt obligation to improve the chances for survival, economic independence and human dignity for all people.” AJWS runs a community development fund for the Jewish community in the Ukraine, offers Jewish resources on economic justice and coordinates alternative spring breaks and service missions.

AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps, www.avodah.net

AVODAH is a year-long program combining front-line anti-poverty work, Jewish study and community building. It provides an opportunity for young adults to live out and deepen their commitments to Jewish life and social change through a year of work in low-income communities in New York City or Washington, DC. Its website has social action teachings on the Torah portion and holidays.

COEJL – The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, www.coejl.org

COEJL promotes environmental education, scholarship, advocacy and action in the American Jewish community. Its website provides environmental program ideas for congregations and individuals during Jewish holidays, resources for educators, Jewish texts and articles on Judaism and the environment.

Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Life on Campus, www.hillel.org

The Hillel website has many resources for college students and beyond. There is a section on the website dedicated to social justice, including information on grants and how to organize successful social justice events on campus.

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, www.mazon.org

MAZON offers a number of readings and resources relating to hunger, including resources for the holidays and study throughout the year.

Myjewishlearning.com,

www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/AboutJewishHolidays.htm

This is a site for general information and study on the holidays, with a link to Chanukah.

The Shalom Center, www.shalomctr.org

The Shalom Center has a number of interesting articles on social justice, environmental awareness and Chanukah. Follow the link to “Seasons of Our Joy” and then click on the link to Chanukah.

Socialaction.com, www.socialaction.com

Socialaction.com is “an online Jewish magazine dedicated to pursuing justice, building community and repairing the world.” This website has social action resources for the weekly Torah portion, holidays and lifecycle events.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Rabbi Sue Ann Wasserman and Rabbi Kim Geringer of the Union for Reform Judaism's Department of Worship, Music, and Religious Living for all of their help and support. We also thank those who reviewed this publication and offered their insightful suggestions, including Avital Weinberg, Eric Gold, Becca Fuchs and Emily Kane, Religious Action Center Eisendrath Legislative Assistants, all our colleagues and friends at the Religious Action Center, Mira Lyon, NFTY Social Action Vice President, Ethan Felson of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and Cheryl Englander of the Canadian Council of Reform Judaism. Thank you to those who helped us access resources and social action links, including Rabbi Hara Person, Editor-in-Chief, URJ Press and Michael Goldberg of the URJ Press. Many thanks to Alexis Rice and Sean Thibault, our webmasters extraordinaire, who did an amazing job getting this manual on line and to Janine Gonzalez, who offered her support and advice throughout the duration of this project.

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