



The Light Travels

Hanukkah 5783 / 2022

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Striking the Match

I only have to strike a match once
to light the candle I use
to light the candle
that is not lit
on the menorah.

The shamash
gives light
with no loss of its own.

The Holy One too
had to strike a match
just once to ignite
the *Ohr Ayn Sof*,
the Light Without End,
that just keeps lighting
everything in creation
in every moment,
one thing to the next,
one soul to the next.
one candle to the next
through every atom
in creation *I'olam va-ed*
forever and ever.

And so it is with God and us –
one strike of the match
at every moment
of this ongoing creation.

One candle lit and then we,
each of us a shamash,
continue lighting each other
with every kind word and deed,
friend to friend, lover to lover,
parent to child, *dor l'dor*,
generation to generation,
with never a loss
of that Light Without End.

Rabbi David Zaslow

Pairs

God is a gerund,
A verb and a noun,
Doing and being.

Light is from God,
Both waves and particles,
Radiation and photons.

Darkness is so full,
Many visions and none at all,
Frightening and safe.

An event from history
And the stories of rabbis,
The eight days exist and also evolve.

Hanukkah is dialectics, between
Revolution and accommodation,
Identity and assimilation.

Solstice or Hanukkah?
Let's not worry about
Somebody else's paradigm.

Light and dark are a gerund,
Seeing and not seeing.
Amen v'Amen.

Trisha Arlin

Recycling

The midrash says when the invaders left they carried off the golden lamp as loot. The absence of the lampstand was an ache – without its light, reserves of hope ran low. We had to improvise with what we had: the iron spears our enemies had dropped.

We made our *Ner Tamid* that year with trash, repurposing the implements of war for bringing sacred light. How about now? The planet is our Temple – and it burns. We can't just close our eyes. We're all indicted by the plastics in the seas.

We need to learn to sanctify what's here: weave rags to rugs, old tires into shoes, upcycle guns to instruments of song. The miracle is not that God steps in – it's that we use these remnants to rebuild: dedicate them and their sparks to God.

*The midrash says. See [Pesikta Rabbati 2:1. Ner Tamid](#). The “eternal light” that burns in every synagogue now, evoking the menorah lit in the Temple. *The plastics in the sea*. The [Great Pacific Garbage Patch](#) is one example of vast accumulation of microplastics in our oceans. *Old tires into shoes*. This is done [all over](#) the world, and is [beginning to happen](#) in the United States. *Upcycle guns*. See [Pedro Reyes Creates 6,700 Beautiful Instruments from Mexican Drug War Guns](#). *We use these remnants*. Innovators have [turned plastic waste into bricks](#). *Rededicate*. The name Chanukah means dedication. *[S]parks to God*. From the mystical teaching that creation is filled with holy sparks that it's our job to uplift.*

Rabbi Rachel Barenblat



Joanne Fink

Home

Light Hanukkah candles now,
In your home
For the homeless.

For the displaced
With no place
They can afford;

For the first peoples
Whose lands and cultures
Were stolen or degraded;

For the animals just trying to live but
Invading your backyards.
Too many bears, how dare they;

For those on islands
Swamped by the rising water,
Ocean where there once was land;

For those who survived guns,
There is no more safety,
It is lost forever;

For the addicted whose illness
Destroys their true selves
While the greedy make money;

For the houses and habitats
Burnt up in climate change's fires,
And everything gone;

For the immigrants,
Losing the old lands to violence and poverty
And so unwelcome in the new place.

Where
Will they
Light their candles, now?

This is our covenant:
Take care of the earth
And it will take care of you.

So it is upon us to
Build housing;
Make reparations;

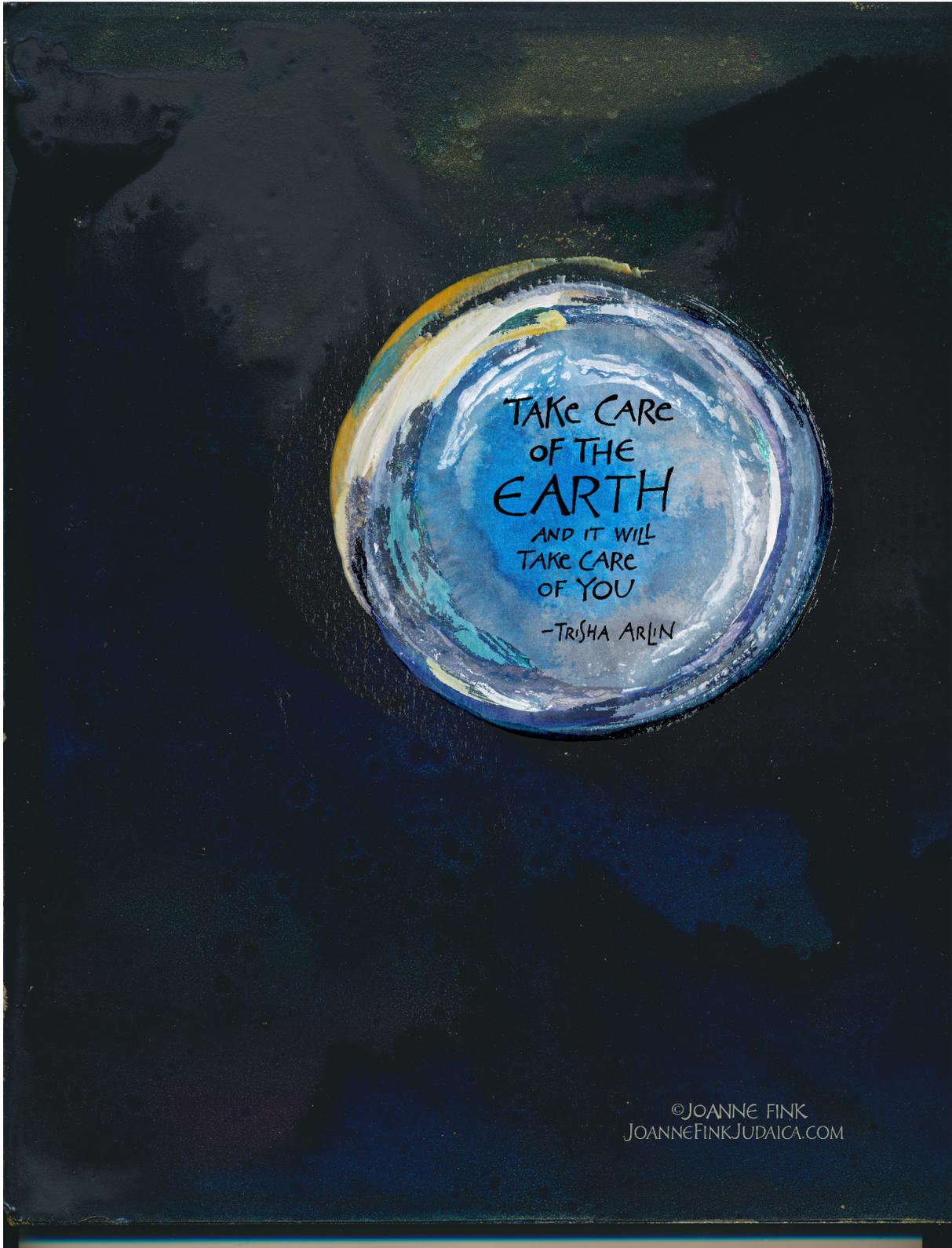
Preserve wilderness;
End fossil fuels;
Restrict guns;

Treat addiction;
Live sustainably;
Welcome immigrants.

Create new homes
And save the old ones.
Light candles, now.

Amen

Trisha Arlin



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Chanukat Bayit: Rebuilding Home

Jewish tradition asserts “The world stands on three things: On justice, on truth and on peace.” Without justice and commitment to each other, our world falters. And as our tradition also teaches, while it is not our obligation to complete the work of building a more just world, neither are we free to desist from it. These short meditations accompany the poem “Home.” May these kavanot / intentions galvanize us to help all of those for whom this prayer invites us to light.

On this first night of Chanukah may we heed the [call of the prophet Isaiah](#) to “bring the poor that are cast out to your house” and dedicate our first candle to ending homelessness.

On this second night of Chanukah may we heed the call of our sacred texts to [pursue justice, justly](#), to [love our neighbours](#), and to make restitution for things that have been stolen, as when the [foundation of a house is built](#) with a stolen beam. We dedicate our second candle to reparations and reconciliation with the Native Americans, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples whose land and languages and cultures were stolen from them.

On this third night of Chanukah may we heed the call of Torah, echoed 36 times, to help “the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the stranger” and dedicate our third candle to supporting and settling the millions of refugees, orphaned from home, strangers in new lands.

On this fourth night of Chanukah, may we care for everyone at risk and suffering from addiction, alienated from home, from community, and from themselves. [R. Nachman taught](#) that addictions sever our awareness of God, of the divinity within and around us. We dedicate our fourth candle to loving supports for those suffering from addiction, sacred scaffolding to enable healing without judgment. May they may once again find home in the at-One-ment of our tradition.

On this fifth night of Chanukah may we heed the foundational precept [not to murder](#), knowing that [to take a life is to take a world](#), and to save one is to save a world. Too many beautiful worlds are lost daily to gun violence, too many homes torn apart. We dedicate this fifth candle to fulfilling the prophet Isaiah’s exhortation for us “to beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks.” (Isaiah 2:4).



On this sixth night of Chanukah may we heed the call of our tradition to live sustainably within our means, to commit together to stop global warming and combat climate change and the damage it is wreaking particularly on the most vulnerable in the form of floods and fires and famines, droughts and deluges. May we fulfill the obligation of “bal tashchit” to not destroy We dedicate our sixth candle to global efforts to limit global warming and fix the plight of the world’s climate refugees.

On this seventh night of Chanukah may we honour our responsibility to protect our environment so that its array of flora and fauna, including us, can thrive. We dedicate our seventh candle to the preservation and protection of our earth, as [set out in Psalm 24](#), “the earth is YHVH’s and the fullness thereof.”

On this eighth night of Chanukah, the final night, may we heed the [words of the prophet Zechariah](#) “Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit” and the [teaching in Proverbs](#) that “the human spirit is YHVH’s candle.” We dedicate this final candle to the inspiration of our tradition to bring Divine light into the world, and through its love, justice, and allyship, to make it a safe and healthy home for us and for the Divine.

Rabbi Dara Lithwick



יהוה

THE HUMAN
SPIRIT IS

YHVH'S
CANDLE

-RABBI DARA LITHWICK

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A Great Miracle

Some say the sun's light
does not make its journey
in rays from there to here,
traveling at the speed of light -
186,000 miles per second
in 8 minutes and 20 seconds.
Rather, the light from the sun
ignites and lights each inch,
each micro-inch of something-or-other,
a zillion zillion micro particles
along the way creating
a semblance of rays
from the sun in waves
rather than particles of light,
lighting the next particle,
then that particle lighting the next
at the speed of light to reach our eyes
8 minutes and 20 seconds.
Not a wave from sun to here
but a local illumination in wavicles
at every particular point along the way.
When I light a candle on my menorah
and place it in a window,
the light travels and goes
to God knows where
at the speed of light
to God knows whose eyes,
lighting up every point along the way
and passing that light along
l'olam va-ed, forever and ever.
And the light I see now
has traveled far to reach my eyes,
maybe from a menorah somewhere,
merging with the light of the sun

and a million billion
other lights from other stars,
fireplaces, candles, and lamps
from many places light years in the past.
And the light I light to light
the candle on my menorah now
is lit by a spark from the *Ohr Ain Sof*,
the Light Without End,
embedded and protected somehow
in the arms of darkness,
invisible until I strike my match
and ignite the light
that will travel far
to reach your eyes
in ages and ages to come.
And you'll pause and recall,
just as I do now,
this moment in your past
that is in my future now.
Nes gadol haya po v'sham,
a great miracle is happening here and there.

Rabbi David Zaslow

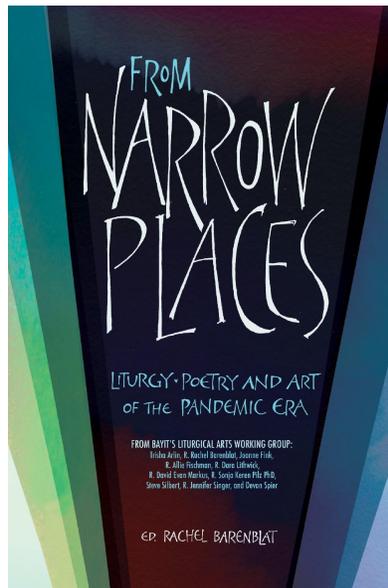
About Us

Co-created by members of Bayit's Liturgical Arts Working Group, 2022.

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Bayit, 2022