

From Adat Shalom's Statement of Principles

We believe that Judaism encompasses the entire cultural legacy of the Jewish people. Religion is central; Jewish spiritual insights and religious teachings give meaning and purpose to our lives. However, our creativity—as expressed through art, music, dance, drama, languages, and literature—and our relationship with the land of Israel itself, are also integral parts of our Jewish spirituality and culture.

Drawing on the richness of historical Judaism, we seek meaningful ways to express our Jewishness and to enrich our lives.

In this search, people take precedence over doctrine, and communities over institutions.

Hanukah

חנוכה



Social and Community Responsibility

Our tradition bids us to align our values and beliefs with the ways we conduct our daily lives. Central to Judaism's codes of ethical conduct is the notion of *rodfei tzedek*, pursuers of justice in every aspect of our lives and our communities. Jewish ethics that help to create a more just world can be divided into three traditional areas: *tzedakah*, in its narrow sense of supporting good in the world through financial contributions; *gemilut chesed*, performing acts of lovingkindness for others; and *tikkun olam*, repairing the world through social action.

We fulfill the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* through *ma'aser* (tithing), the traditional obligation to withhold part of our income for the advancement of righteousness and justice. With so many demands on our financial resources, we take to heart the high priority Jewish tradition places on supporting those causes and individuals closest to us—including the support and maintenance of our own spiritual community. We also take seriously our responsibility to give financial support to the larger Jewish community here and abroad as well as to organizations working for social justice in our communities and around the world.

The *mitzvah* of *tikkun olam* obliges us to work toward the prevention of hunger, homelessness, disease, ignorance, abuse, and political oppression among all people as well as to work toward preserving the health of the global ecosystem upon which all life depends. We recognize that while charitable acts have great value, *tikkun olam* may be best achieved by empowering those who are disenfranchised. We seek to reach out to, and work in partnership with, others with whom we share a common vision.

Ultimately, the true measure of our commitment to the advancement of righteousness and justice in the world is our actions.... We emphasize that acts supporting social justice, alongside prayer and study, are an essential part of our spiritual practice.

Adat Shalom

Reconstructionist
Congregation

HANUKAH TO HAITI



OUR CHUG (GROUP) SHARES
A SPECIAL COMMITMENT TO
THE NICL SCHOOL IN LEOGANE, HAITI

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HANUKAH TO HAITI

HANUKAH PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ADAT SHALOM FAMILIES TO KINDLE CONNECTIONS WITH OUR JEWISH HISTORY AND CURRENT JEWISH JOURNEY. WITH THAT IN OUR MINDS AND SPIRITS, 18 ADAT SHALOMERS, HALF OF THEM YOUTH, ARE TRAVELING TO HAITI TO LIGHTEN A BIT OF THEIR BURDEN, BY REBUILDING AREAS FOLLOWING THE 2010 EARTHQUAKE. THE CATASTROPHIC MAGNITUDE 7.0 EPICENTER WAS NEAR THE TOWN OF LEOGANE, 16 MILES WEST OF HAITI'S CAPITAL.



TZEDAKAH GOES BEYOND THE CONCEPT OF CHARITY AND IMPLIES JUSTICE. WITH THIS IN MIND OUR GOAL IS TO PRESERVE THE DIGNITY AND SELF-RESPECT OF THE HAITIANS WE MEET. PLEASE JOIN US IN SPIRIT BY ADDRESSING THESE COMMENTS AS YOU LIGHT HANUKAH CANDLES.

In the *Mishneh Torah*, the *Rambam* [Maimonides] instructed the Jewish people to “Give with good grace and with joy, and sympathize with the plight of the poor.” [*Zeraim* (Book of Seeds) Laws of Gifts to the Poor 10:4]

Hanukkah has become one of the paradigmatic Jewish holidays. Hanukkah commemorates the victory of the Jews over the Syrian Greeks in 164 BCE, and is celebrated by lighting a Hanukiah, or menorah, for eight days, eating latkes, and playing dreidel.

However in Haiti, and too much of the global south, people celebrate holidays with limited security, happiness or even hope.

ON EACH NIGHT...

FIRST NIGHT: We have congregants who are in Haiti this December to improve the living conditions in one community. Start to connect with them by uncovering or reviewing and sharing what you know about Haiti. Now you have taken 1 step to building your understanding.

www.lonelyplanet.com/haiti

SECOND NIGHT: The earthquake in 2010 devastated a nation in *our* hemisphere where ever-present poverty means many things we take for granted (food, education, shelter, health, a future) are barely possible for some Haitians. What 2 items do each of you currently take for granted?

THIRD NIGHT: In much of the USA, we live freely as Jews, and in 1793, Haiti was the first country in the Americas to abolish slavery. What are 3 examples of our religious freedoms that you have experienced in your school, work, neighborhood or nation?

FOURTH NIGHT: The Macabees were courageous, fighting a war to ensure religious tolerance for themselves while Toussaint Louverture fought for Haiti's freedom against the French, Spanish and British. Recall 4 times this year that you have been courageous helping to ensure fairness, good will or even freedom for yourself or others.

FIFTH NIGHT: In a fascinating TED Talk entitled “The Danger of a Single Story,” Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns us that if we are exposed to only a single story, such as the tragedy of Haitians, especially following the earthquake, then we “show a people as one thing—as only one thing—over and over again, and that is what they become to us.” But she also states “Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize.” Plan to attend our special post-Oneg session on January 21 to hear at least 5 of us share our stories and broaden your understanding of Haiti.

www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html

SIXTH NIGHT: It is difficult for people to live in dignity and worship freely if they are bowed down by extreme poverty. Think about people living in poverty in our DC metro area. Can you imagine 6 similarities and 6 differences between being poor in this area and in Haiti?

SEVENTH NIGHT: Rabbi Malka Drucker (2002) states that the miracle of Hanukkah is not just about a little bit of oil lasting eight days. Hanukkah is also about the miracle of survival against all odds, a small effort making a big difference, about hope, courage and belief in one's ability to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Create a free verse, prayer or image, with 7 specific statements, that support healing and wellness for the people of Haiti.

EIGHTH NIGHT: Study Maimonides' 8 Levels of Tzedakah and see if you can generate an example of each step. The highest degree of charity is that which strengthens the hand of the poor by giving a gift or [an interest-free] loan or entering into a business partnership with the poor person. Yes, it sounds like micro-financing...or teaching someone to fish rather than providing dinner.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maimonides#Charity_.28Tzedakah.29

Over 50 households have committed to support the NICL school in Leogane. **In the spirit of *tikkun olam*, won't you join your fellow congregants and pledge \$100 each year for the next five?**

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Now is also a time to really engage with Hanukkah and pray with your feet by actively doing something for others.