

CUT DOWN ON PACKAGING

Whoever breaks vessels, or tears garments, or destroys a building, or clogs a well, or does away with food in a destructive manner violates the negative mitzvah of bal tashchit, do not waste or destroy. (Kiddushin 32a)

Bal Tashchit is Aramaic for **do not waste**. It is an idea developed from a Biblical prohibition against cutting down fruit bearing trees during war: *“When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees. You may eat from them, but you must not cut them down”*. (Deuteronomy 20:19)

Our sages expanded this prohibition to include the careless destruction of trees at any time. If you should not cut down trees during the dire circumstances of war, then how much the more so that trees should be protected during times of peace. By Talmudic times, this concept was further expanded to include all unnecessary destruction or waste. (www.COEJ.org).

Did you know that the average American produces about 4.5 lbs of solid waste per day, about a third of this is in packaging used only to get the item to your home (www.epa.gov). ***Worldwide demand for paper consumes more than 4 billion trees a year***. The vast majority of this paper ends up in landfills. If there are 5 people in your household, how much waste are you sending to the landfill everyday?

Reduce your garbage by recycling, or by Precycling – buying products that have less packaging than more. In order to make recycling economically feasible, we have to buy recycled products and packaging. When we buy recycled products, we create an economic incentive for recyclable materials to be collected, manufactured, and marketed as new products.

When you go to the grocery store, the office supplies store, or the department store, **think twice before you buy products which have a lot of packaging**. Also, look to see if the packaging is made from recycled materials.

- Is that egg carton made from a number 1 or 2 plastic so that you can recycle it in Bergen or Passaic County?

-Does that box of cereal or cosmetic product come in a box that is made from recycled cardboard?

You can make a difference by setting an example in your home and in your community. Tell those merchants that you regularly buy from that you are happy to see that they have products made from recycled materials, or that you would like to have more choices when it comes to buying recycled paper towels, toilet paper or dishes. ***If every household in the US replaced just one package of virgin fiber napkins (250 count) with 100% recycled ones, we could save 1 million trees***. (www.NRDC.org).