

GREENING YOUR SIMCHA

“Giving Green,” no not Cash \$, but using your B’nai Mitzvah, Birthday, graduation or Wedding gifts to support green projects or products is an idea that deserves some thought and consideration. Having just celebrated “Earth Day” and Passover, both of which were opportunities to look at ways for us to cherish our earth and our freedoms, perhaps in the context of the changing world around us, we should lend some thought to how we can give and celebrate green, at all occasions; being more mindful of our excesses and celebrating our successes on keeping our planet healthy.

Think about the many presents you give to family and friends each year. It’s wonderful to be on the receiving end of gift giving, and equally wonderful to give and know you have made a difference in someone’s life, or just made him or her smile. How many times though are you giving a gift that might brighten someone’s moment, but not much beyond that. It’s time to think outside that gift “box” and look to how you might “green” your gift giving. As a Jew, there are many opportunities to support our environment through regular simchas.

Are you looking for just the right Bar Mitzvah, birth or special event invitation? Many companies now offer you the opportunity to print your invitation on 100% recycled paper, with soy based inks. Make sure that there is a line on the invitation that tells people the paper is recycled. What about the wrapping paper a gift comes in? Can you use a pretty gift bag or box that someone can reuse again? E-mail invites and thank you notes take the paper completely out of the equation. This is an option as well. What about centerpieces? A pretty plant or fruit or vegetable bowl could be equally as nice as cut flowers and have a life beyond that one party. Party favors seem to be a common expectation at b’nai mitzvahs and children’s birthday parties. Think creatively on this one, and consider a gift that is sustainable and will be used again and again, not discarded as soon as it gets home. What about buying carbon offsets for all your guests? Supporting a local food bank with a donation, or planting a tree in Israel on their behalf? At a b’nai mitzvah or wedding “after party” consider hiring a “party bus”, not just for the children going from Temple to the celebration after, but also for the adults whom are all going to the same simcha. Reduce everyone’s carbon footprint by ride sharing and create a celebratory feeling immediately.

Once you begin to consider the options, you will see many infinite and creative possibilities. Challenge your friends, consider how you can help clean up our planet at the same time as celebrating your own simcha, and make it a mitzvah opportunity as well.