

Beyond Bal Taschit and the 3 Rs

List 5 items of garbage you create regularly in your life? Be specific.

What are the 3 Rs?

Reduce: It is best to avoid creating garbage in the first place. This means avoiding packaging, plastic bags, don't purchase what you don't need, etc. Always remember, no garbage is the best garbage!!

Reuse: When waste is inevitable, the next best thing is to reuse. For example, if you had to get the shopping bag, save it and bring it back to the store next time you shop. The average shopping bag can be reused numerous times before it has to go be recycled or trashed.

Recycle: If something cannot be reduced or reused, it is time to recycle. Recycling involves the breaking down of waste and reconstructing it into something new. This process, while a much better option than the garbage, requires a lot of energy to transport and transform the products into something new. Plus to truly be effective consumers must demand products made from recycled materials.

How can you reduce / eliminated one piece of garbage you create regularly in your life? Be specific. For example: Bringing your own bag to the store.

How can you reuse one piece of garbage you create regularly in your life? Be specific.

What garbage you create regularly can be recycled or composted? Be specific.

Bal Tashit

Definition – Talmudic Encyclopedia

Bal Tashit: The Jewish law encouraging you to *reduce* your waste

Original Biblical Source of Bal Tashit, Deuteronomy 20:19-20

When in your war against a city you have to besiege it for a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its fruit trees, wielding an ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are the trees of the city human that they should enter the siege before you? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed; you may cut them down for constructing siege works against the city that is waging war on you, until it has been captured.

Rambam, Mishneh Torah Hilchot melachim 6:10

[This prohibition does not apply] to trees only. Rather, anyone who breaks utensils, tears garments, destroys buildings, stops up a stream, or ruins food with destructive intent transgresses the command 'Do not destroy.'

Sefer Ha-Chinuch Dvarim 20:19

This is the way of kindly people of piety... They will not destroy even a mustard seed in the world and they are distressed at every ruination and spoilage they see; and if they are able to do any rescuing, they will save anything from destruction, with all their power.

Questions:

Why do you think the rabbis extended a prohibition against cutting down fruit trees to prohibiting the waste of other resources?

Give examples of how Bal Tashit can be applied in modern society.

Jewish Values of Reuse and Recycle

Reuse

“We teach a person that he should not recklessly destroy property and throw it to oblivion. It is better to give it to the poor than to throw it to maggots and worms.”

Rambam - *Mishneh Torah Hilkhos Evel* 14:24

Did you know?

The wicks for the candles in the Temple were made from the worn out clothing of the priests.

Sukkah 51a

What do you do with your old clothing?

Can you think of way that other people may find a use for them after you no longer want them or grow out of them?

Recycle

Recycling captures usable resources from being wasted to be repurposed towards a new product. How does this relate to the definition of *bal taschit*?

The 4th R, Rethink

How should people **rethink** their consumption and waste choices in light of global environmental challenges?

How can *bal taschit* helps Jews to **rethink** our consumption and waste choices?
