



Start the Solar Year with a Mitzvah

On the first day of creation, God commanded light into existence and separated light from darkness. In these short winter days, when darkness comes early, bring light into the world by doing any—or all—of these mitzvot on the first day, during the first week or even the first month of the secular new year.

Note that most of the *mitzvot* included here are appropriate even in places that have warm winters or where January 1 falls during summer months. Use this sheet as a companion piece to JTeach.org's [Marvelous Mitzvot for Winter Break](#) and [Gift Card Holders for Disaster Relief Donations](#).

Kibud Av v'Em—Honoring Your Father and Mother

כבוד אב ואם

כְּבֹד אֶת־אָבִיךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ...—שמות כ"ב

“Honor your father and mother...”—Exodus 20:12

- Allow grown-ups in your home to sleep late; get breakfast for yourself and/or your brothers and sisters. In the meantime, make breakfast in bed for the grown-ups.
- Write a letter to a parent expressing why you appreciate them.
- Do something before you are asked, like putting the laundry in the hamper or clearing the dishes from the table.

Shemirat HaTeva—Taking Care of the Earth

שמירת הטבע

בְּשִׁעָה שִׁבְרָא הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן, נָטְלוֹ וְהִחְזִירוֹ עַל כָּל אֵילָנֵי גֶן עֵדֶן, וְאָמַר לוֹ, רְאֵה מַעֲשֵׂי כַּמָּה נְאִים וּמְשֻׁבְּחִין הֵן, וְכָל מֵה שִׁבְרָתִי בְּשִׁבְלֶךָ בְּרָאתִי, תֵּן דַּעְתְּךָ שְׁלֵא תִקְלַקֵּל וְתַחְרִיב אֶת עוֹלָמִי, שְׂאֵם קִלְקֵלֶת אֵין מִי שְׂיִתְקַן אַחֲרָיֶךָ...—קהלת רבה ז"ג

“When God created the first person, God took him and took him and showed him all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to him, ‘See My works, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are. All that I created, I created for you. Take care not to spoil or destroy My world; for, if you destroy it, there will be no one to fix it after you.’”—Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13

- With a parent, check the thermostats in your home and see if they can be set to use less energy. Similarly, with a parent, check the settings on your family’s hot water heater and turn it down so that the hottest water is comfortable for a shower or bath. This uses less energy too.
- Take a walk around your neighborhood and pick up garbage and recycling. (Remember to wear gloves.) This activity falls under the category of loving your neighbor as well.
- Make or purchase a bird-feeder and set out bird seed.

V'ahavta L'rei'acha Kamocha—Loving One’s Neighbor

ואהבת לרעך כמוך

וְאַהֲבַת לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ...—ויקרא יט"ח

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” – Leviticus 19:18

- Check on neighbors; make sure they have essential supplies like milk and toilet paper.
- Did it snow in your area? Shovel snow off your neighbors’ sidewalks and cars.
- Listen to someone who might be feeling lonely.



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Lo Tachmod—Not Coveting (aka Appreciating What You Have) לא תחמד

"לא תחמד בית רֵעֶךָ לֹא-תחמד אֶשֶׁת רֵעֶךָ וְעַבְדוֹ וְאִמְתּוֹ וְשׂוֹרוֹ וְחִמְרוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ"—שמות כ:יד
"Do not covet your neighbor's house... or anything that belongs to your neighbor."—Exodus 20:14

- With big sales happening at this time of year, it can be easy to focus on the exciting things that others have. Take some time to go through your own possessions and reflect on why they are special to you.
- Not coveting what others have could also mean helping others feel good about what they have. Go out of your way to compliment someone about something that you know is particularly special to them.

La'azor l're'eicha—Helping others (especially when it turns cold) לעזור לרֵעֶךָ

"עלו ומצאו עליו רום שלש אמות שלג פרקוהו והרחיצוהו וסיכוהו והושיבוהו כנגד המדורה"—מסכת יומא לה:
They ascended and found him covered with snow three cubits high. They extricated him [from the snow], and they washed him and smeared oil on him, and they sat him opposite the bonfire [to warm him]. —Tractate Yoma 35b

- Donate warm clothes; hats, scarves, gloves, boots and warm coats, thermal underwear, and warm socks to a local shelter. You can donate blankets and sheets too.
- Serve as a greeter or server at a warming center. Volunteer at a shelter or kitchen.
- With a parent's permission, take a warm drink to someone who works outside. (If you live someplace warm, take a cold drink to someone.)

Mahkirim et YHVH—Recognizing God מכירים את יי

"וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת-יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל-הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן-לְךָ"—דברים ח:י
"You shall eat, you shall be satisfied, and you shall bless YHVH your God for the good land that God gave you."—Deuteronomy 8:10

- Add an extra prayer to your day. Take the time to show appreciation for your food before and/or after you eat. Say the *Shema* when you get up in the morning and/or before you go to sleep at night.
- Over the course of the day, take a step back and consider everything that went into making five things that you use.

Kibud Zekeinim—Honoring the Elderly כיבוד זקנים

"מִפְּנֵי שִׁיבָה תִּקְוֹם וְהִדַּרְתָּ פְּנֵי זָקֵן... וְיִקְרָא יֵט:לֵב
"Rise before the aged. Show your deference to the old..." – Leviticus 19:32

- Help a senior citizen connect to their family using technology.
- Do you have a special talent? With a parent's help, arrange to sing, play piano, juggle or whatever your specialty is at a nursing home or assisted living center.
- Ask an older person to teach you something. Suggestions include: a card game, a recipe, a story about a historical event through their eyes. They will feel valued and you just might learn something new.