



GOOD NIGHT, LAILA TOV

Written by Laurel Snyder

Illustrated by Jui Ishida

A family car trip turns into an exploration of the natural wonders of the seashore, woods, and fields. In gratitude and to make the world a better place, the parents plant trees. As the day progresses, the family adventure is marked by the recurring refrain: “good night, laila tov.”

The Jewish people have long and powerful connections to nature. From the Biblical stories of creation onward, we are directed to be stewards of the earth, preserving and protecting all creation. The Torah (the first five books of the Bible) is filled with such examples. In Genesis Rabba, a compilation of ancient interpretations on the book of Genesis, Rebbe Shimon made clear the value of every living thing when he advised: “There is no tree without an angel in heaven tending it and whispering, ‘grow, grow.’”

BAL TASHCHIT

Jewish laws guiding us in environmentally responsible ways are arguably more significant today than ever before. *Bal tashchit* (literally, “do not waste/destroy”) is an injunction against wastefulness and a commandment to preserve our earth. Originally a prohibition against reckless cutting-down of fruit trees, *bal tashchit* includes using things for their proper purpose and avoiding thoughtless overuse.

Every day we have opportunities to safeguard nature, preserving the earth for our children—and theirs. What better way could there be to ensure a safer and healthier future than by modeling awareness and consideration for the earth?

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

In *Good Night, Laila Tov*, a family’s excursion to the ocean offers extravagant experiences with the earth, wind, sea and sky—all couched in a decidedly Jewish context with the gentle phrase “*laila tov*” (“good night”).

Children are never too young to experience nature. Even babies can enjoy the fragrance of pine, the warmth of sunshine, or the lullaby of a babbling brook. Give your children the gift of early familiarity with nature: read to your little ones while sitting outside; reuse and recycle; dig and plant and weed a garden; take a family day-trip to a sustainable farm; give reusable bags as gifts for friends—and make use of them yourself. Your children will grow with a respectful consciousness of the natural world that will become “second nature” to them. To help place environmental awareness and action in a Jewish perspective, consider websites such as www.hazon.org. Pj

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