

# Linking to Jewish Fair Trade: The Bike Chain Menorah

By Edmon J. Rodman

Los Angeles (JTA) - When on Chanukah we say "A great miracle happened here," the "here" isn't China.

I thought it was. With bins of electric menorahs, strings of dreidel lights, and flashing LED dreidels, all "Made in China," I thought I had Chanukah covered. That is until I found a new menorah, a kind of "Made in India" magic lamp that without even a single rub (you bend it), I discovered a new way to light up my holiday - and maybe yours, too.

Over the years, celebrating the Festival of Lights with stuff made in China, what did I care? Was it my problem that workers making this stuff might be earning the equivalent of \$300 a month?

Not the least. Mostly my Chanukah paraphernalia was purchased at an affordable price at chain drug and book stores during a Christmas season when seeing a Jewish flag like these was comforting. As far as I was concerned, Made in China Chanukah *tshokes* were good for the Jews.

But perhaps not good enough. On a recent trip to New Haven, CT, I wandered into Ten Thousand Villages, a fair trade store where I was surprised to find among the international ceramics, weavings, and jewelry, a Jewish ritual object that was a different kind of "good" - a metal menorah from India made from a section of a recycled bicycle chain.

The menorah, according to the store, was a product that was made without exploitation. Created by a group of artisans, mostly women, who work with Noah's Ark International in Moradabad, India, a fair trade marketing organization, it was a menorah I could light up for Chanukah and not worry if the worker who made it earned enough to light their home as well.

Newly enlightened, I wondered if there was an organization that supported Judaica fair trade products; that led me to Ilana Schatz.

In 2007, Schatz launched the Fair Trade Judaica website, which promotes fair trade products and provides technical assistance in designing new ones. It's a way to connect marketers and retailers in the West with certified artisans and producers who support fair pay, safe work conditions, gender equality, a ban on child labor and environmental sustainability.

As Schatz saw it, the Jewish connection to fair trade was supported by Torah-based law and Talmudic interpretation that called for the paying of wages in a timely manner and not oppressing workers, as well as not committing fraud or deception.

"If Chanukah is a story of liberation, then products made for a fair wage represent a different kind of liberation," she said in a recent interview.

Schatz, who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, added that "When you buy a fair trade prod-



The bike chain menorah.

uct, it can lift that family out of poverty."

In addition to the bicycle chain menorah, Schatz also promotes a duck family menorah made in Cambodia; a 16-foot-long Papele Picado banner from Mexico with Chanukah cutouts; a soda can kipah from South Africa; and a string of colorful Jewish blessing flags, each with a *hamsa* that she designed and had made in Nepal.

Fair Trade Judaica also promotes a set of candlesticks from "Israel/Palestine."

"We would really love to promote Israel products, but there isn't a fair trade organization in Israel, though there is a fair trade store in Tel Aviv," Schatz said.

Glittering among this grouping of fair trade products are chocolate coins. Schatz spoke highly of Divine milk chocolate kosher

Chanukah gelt made from chocolate grown in Ghana by farmers who receive a fair trade price for their beans and own 45% of the company.

These are not "beans of affliction," she said, shifting to a Passover metaphor. "They are really good chocolate."

Yes, these goods are goodly, but would you want to buy them? Are they goods for the Jews?

Looking at the Jewish relationship with handmade ritual objects, the handmade bike chain menorah called to mind the intention that goes into the making of mezuzot (the handwritten parchment within), ketubot, tefillin, and the hand-tied tzitzit on a tallit.

Reflecting that intention Schatz, while working with the many international fair trade artisans who make Judaica, has seen their "deep respect" for the work and need to understand what they make.

As I turned over the menorah in my hand, I could see also adding to its value was the green beauty of an object made of material that we typically would dispose.

As to the ritual correctness of the design, the shamash holder was positioned correctly; higher than the other eight. The chain allows the design to be worked into a variety of intriguing display positions. However, for traditional users, for whom only a line of candles will be ritually correct, the menorah easily straightens to that configuration.

Unlike conventional chanukiyot, which can be bulky and large, this design is lightweight as a result of the bicycle chain base and can be folded up to fit in your pocket or purse. It's a design that will travel well, making a great companion for the story of economic freedom that is part of its design.

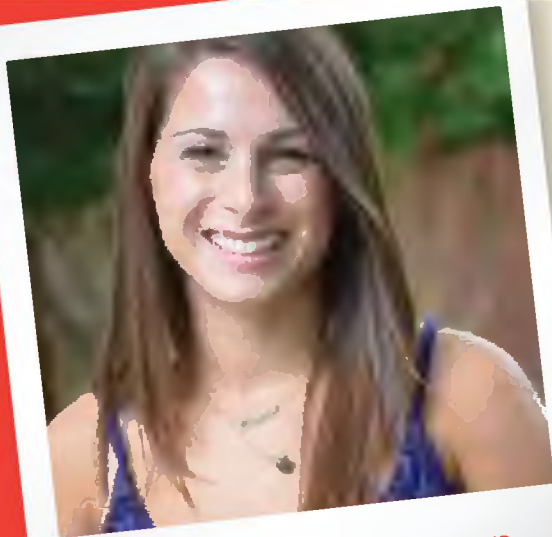
The Goods: Bicycle chain menorah: \$24. Available from Ten Thousand Villages stores; for locations see [www.tenthousandvillages.com/bicycle-chain-menorah](http://www.tenthousandvillages.com/bicycle-chain-menorah). Also available online at Modern Tribe, [www.moderntribe.com/judaica/modern\\_menorahs/bicyclechainmenorah](http://www.moderntribe.com/judaica/modern_menorahs/bicyclechainmenorah).

For more on Jewish Fair Trade: <http://fairtradejudaica.org>. ☆

Have a product that might be good for "Goods for the Jews"? Send candidates to [edmonjace@gmail.com](mailto:edmonjace@gmail.com).

Kindle the taper like the steadfast star  
 Obblaze on evening's forehead o'er the earth,  
 And add each night a lustre till afar  
 On eightfold splendor shine above thy hearth.

~Emma Lazarus,  
 "The Feast of Lights"



Abigail Ditesheim, Sophomore  
 Tulane University, Fine Arts Major

CJDS pointed me in the right direction!

My CJDS fifth grade class trip to Camp Thunderbird was the first time I went away from home.

As the trip approached, I grew more and more nervous. The thought of sleeping away from home (and outside, no less!) made me more uncomfortable than I cared to admit. Close to my home and my family was where I wanted to stay.

I returned with a sense of confidence I had never before possessed. My CJDS "family" gave me the courage to tell myself "I can do it." My fifth grade friends and teachers helped me conquer my fear and push outside my comfort zone.



With my new-found self-confidence, I decided to attend a Jewish sleep away camp, which I then enjoyed for many summers. These experiences were followed by a six week trip to Israel, and finally college.

Now I am challenged daily by the rigors of my studies and my artistic pursuits. But I owe it to CJDS for first showing me what I was capable of—on my own.

Open House  
 Parents, please join us!

Wed., October 23, 9:30 - 11am  
 Thurs., November 7, 11:30am - 1pm

Preschoolers' visit  
 Fri., November 8, 1:15 - 2pm