



ecojudaism
OUR FAITH IN THE PLANET

D'var Torah – Choose Life

By Rabbi Mark Goldsmith

Over the summer there was a surprise hit musical at the Regents Park Open Air Theatre in London. Many people I know in the Jewish community went to enjoy it, even though they had probably seen it already a hundred times, since it was first performed sixty years ago, at the theatre, on film or in one of thousands of amateur dramatic performances at Shuls and schools. It is itself a 'tradition'.

Fiddler on the Roof's open-air revival was a smash success. There is so much of the production that delighted and moved us, especially at a tough time for the Jewish community. For me the most memorable feature of Fiddler on the Roof is its essential orientation. Whatever happens, whatever you have to cope with individually or communally say or sing 'l'chayim' - to life.

It's not just a Fiddler on the Roof song. "To life, to life l'chayim" is a Jewish principle that goes back to Torah. God offers to the Jewish people a choice (Deuteronomy 30:19-20) "I call heaven and earth to witness that I am putting a choice before you of life or death, the blessing or the curse, choose life (chayim) so that you and your descendants may live and love your Eternal God."

What does it mean to choose life? It works on all levels personally, communally, locally, nationally and globally. It means to live life with hope for the future. It means to choose that our people will continue whatever challenges we face, to keep the Shul going, to make festivals joyful even when we are close to mourning. It means that in the areas in which we live we should be part of efforts to conserve life, most recently we have participated in EcoJudaism's and our own Synagogue's reverse Taschlich's to take the life strangling rubbish out of our local waterways. It means to demand of our business, organisational and political leaders that their policies and practices are environmentally sustainable and use resources sparingly and with an eye always to the future. It means to be part of global campaigns and action to preserve the planet's beauty, diversity and natural functioning so that all can enjoy the blessings of God's earth. L'chayim means always choose life.