



Chevy Volt: Official Car of the Maccabees

“To see what is in front of one’s nose is a constant struggle.” — George Orwell.

Every now and then, something hits you right between the eyes, and you wonder why you didn’t see it before. Thus it is that I realized this morning that Chanukah, which begins this Saturday evening, is the paradigmatic environmental holiday.

Consider the miracle that is said to be the touchstone for Chanukah: the Temple’s oil, which was only enough for one day, actually lasted for eight days. That means that the Temple Menorah was something like a hybrid automobile! You might immediately object that the “oil” in the Menorah is far different from “oil” as we think of it in energy policy. But there are two answers to that.

First, of such puns and plays on words is Torah revealed. The rabbis constantly used double meanings of words to draw meaning from the text. For example, in the story of the *Akedah*, the binding of Isaac, the Bible uses the phrase “after these things.” The rabbis note that the Hebrew word for “things,” *דברים*, also means “words.” Thus, they reasoned, the text is saying that the line is best read as “after these words,” suggesting that Abraham and Isaac actually discussed the son’s impending sacrifice.

Second — and perhaps more importantly for your average *Legal Planet* reader — the miracle represents the sustainable conservation of energy resources. The ancient world used oil for lighting, in much the same way that we currently use electricity (so to speak). To be sure, since it was a *miracle*, human beings cannot emulate it. But that goes too far. In a profound way, human beings are supposed to emulate God’s actions, even if we cannot do it to the same extent as the Creator.

Thus, in the same way, that God pursued sustainable consumption in the Temple, the festival of Chanukah commands us to do the same. Go hug a latke!

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