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Cleantech and Green Living from the Land of the Prophets

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## [Green Prophets Start at Home and Tackle the Wardrobe](#)

May 7th, 2008 by [Karin Kloosterman](#)



*There is no beauty in the finest cloth if it makes hunger and unhappiness*

-Mahatma Gandhi

It was my **first** year of university and I had just settled into city life. There were lots of friends, parties - a great social scene. Burdened by the cost of having to **support** myself, I eyed the fancy clothes of my **girlfriends** who had wealthy parents to support them.

Unlike my peers, I couldn't afford to **shop** at the trendy and **expensive** shops Uptown. And since I had gone to **school** where I wore a uniform, I hadn't built up a stock of clothes. Raised to be industrious, I understood the only way to define myself clothing-wise, in a way I could afford, would be to shop second hand.

I went to scope out one of the most exciting rumors a 19 year old girl could have heard: there was a shop off of Jarvis Street in Toronto that sold clothes by the pound!

As I walked through the **door** of the Salvation Army clothing depot, I was handed a large plastic bag; and facing mountains upon mountains of clothes, I was debriefed that I could stuff anything into the bag and it would cost a mere \$1 per pound. After a couple of hours, I emerged dusty and triumphant. Taking my treasures back home and after a good wash in hot water, they were ready to wear.

One of the best finds from the hunt that Saturday was what would be known among my girlfriends as the mythological red shirt. There was really nothing fancy about it: a short-sleeved tee from the '70s, somewhat worn and with a white-trimmed collar. But for some reason, every time I wore it, it gave me special powers.

Joking with my friends, I suggested to them that its previous owner left her karma in the sleeves of the shirt - maybe she was a sex goddess or model because every time I wore the red shirt, I attracted an unusual amount of male attention! My friends understood that I was onto something.

"That shirt, you know the red one? Do you think I could borrow it tomorrow night for a concert I am going to? I want to look extra good and test its powers," asked my friend Nancy. Happy to oblige and to promote clothes sharing, I lent Nancy the shirt. Sure enough, she came back from the concert convinced and glowing.

"Oh this shirt," she whispered with satisfaction. "It works!"

The story of the red shirt is one I like to tell when I meet people who don't like the idea of wearing second hand clothing. There are plenty of good reasons why keeping clothes circling through a chain of wearers is beneficial to the environment.

The production of clothes is costly. Cotton grown in a conventional manner is chemically intensive and contributes to about one-quarter of the insecticides used in agriculture.

One simple tee, like the mythological red shirt, requires about a 1/3 of a pound of pesticides and fertilizer, explains Health Goods, an organic cotton store. As the wave of being healthy, green and environmentally friendly catches on, it only makes sense that people look deeper into the way we impact the earth. That's why we can find words on the catwalk today such as eco-couture and eco-fashion.

But since the cost of organic and fair trade fashion is not attainable for most of us, we should stick with some of the old-fashioned methods for keeping our planet green. For instance, making use of an [environmentally friendly dry-cleaner](#) can help rid your closet and planet of pollutants.

Working to keep clothing in fashion and out of landfill is the mission of Swap-O-Rama-Rama, a global fashion event that attempts to repurpose old clothing into artsy or practical finds. There is a [branch active here in Israel as well](#). ([There is also Project Dlaat](#)) I emailed the founder Wendy Tremaine and this is what she wrote:

"The fashion industry is perpetuated, in part, by the fashion industry, which encourages the purchase of new goods through a constantly changing vision of what is in style. Through advertising we are asked to view shopping as a creative endeavor, when in actuality it is only the designers who play a creative role in the process."

To participate in one of the regular events, you have to bring a bag or two of unused clothing to a meet, pay a few dollars,

and interact with designers, arts and crafts folks and seamstresses who can help you take old clothes from the pile of donations and turn them into something that is new and fashionable.

“Swap-O-Rama-Rama utilizes the existing surplus of clothing to **create** new-recycled goods, without consuming raw materials. In do-it-yourself spirit, through workshops and the collectivizing of ideas,” says Tremaine.

She continues, “Through hands-on experience it invites the discovery that the making of things is not an activity to be avoided in order to attain leisure, but rather a playful and leisurely endeavor unto itself.

Repurposed garments are far less likely to be kicked to the curb as garbage and so ultimately Swap-O-Rama-Rama not only reuses would be trash but sets in motion a way of living that reduces textile waste.”

Buying and selling clothes at second hand boutiques and markets are also important ways to keep your wardrobe fresh and green; a number of giveaway sites for clothing are emerging on the net: [Freecycle.org](http://Freecycle.org) and [Clothing Swap](http://Clothing Swap) are both worth checking out.

Upon taking your first step - the simplest way to weed the good from the bad is to look at each item in your closet and if you can't remember wearing it within the cycle of one year, pass it on! You never know, it might, like my mythological red shirt, bring an enormous amount of good clothing karma to any number of people in the future.

And if you're interested to know what happened with the red shirt - one day before leaving Toronto, I understood it was time to pass it on. Folded and sitting on some books by the curb, I imagine some lucky woman picked it up and is enjoying it. Maybe it is you?

Want to explore more ways of greening your life? See:

[Green Prophet on the Living Room](#)

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*(This story was original published by EOLife.org)*

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## 2 Responses to “Green Prophets Start at Home and Tackle the Wardrobe”

1. on 09 May 2008 at 1:42 pm [Yonina](#)

There is a lovely 2nd hand shop on Kibbutz Netiv Halamed Hey. It has stylish clothing, shoes, books and household item for great prices. The hours are Sunday+Tues 9-13 and 16:00-18:00, Tues 9-13, Thur 9-12:30 and Fri 9-13:00. You can contact Ronit, the manager, at: phone: 02-9900221, 052-3742844, email: [usher@netiv.org.il](mailto:usher@netiv.org.il)

2. on 11 May 2008 at 12:46 am [Susan Perel](#)

Several settlements in my area have second hand shops. Everyone donates their used clothing, shoes,utensils, books, toys, housewares, etc and we sell everything for one or two shekels only. The workers are all volunteers and all the money earned goes to charity.

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