



Service readings for
“Just Action”
Fairtrade Campaign



Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that the Eternal One your God is giving you.

- Deuteronomy 16:20

Justice, along with love and compassion, is chief among God’s moral attributes, and therefore chief among the qualities God demands of human beings in their conduct towards one another. There is no contradiction between the two principles. Justice, it has been said, requires that human rights should be respected, love, that human needs should be satisfied. But the converse is also true; and it is a matter of justice that we should love our neighbour no less that we love ourselves.

- Siddur Lev Chadash, p. 341

And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Eternal One, that it may be well with you....

- Deuteronomy 6:18

If you sell anything to your neighbour, or buy anything from your neighbour’s hand, you shall not wrong one another.

- Leviticus 25:14

Who is our neighbour? The rabbinic sages understood this term to mean only other Jews, reflecting the social reality of their time. In this era of the global village, however, we cannot simply adopt their reading. All peoples of the world are our neighbours. Moreover, it is also written:

You shall have one manner of law, as well as for the stranger as for the home-born, for I am the Eternal One your God.

- Leviticus 24:22

What you can do to support Liberal Judaism’s “Just Action” Fairtrade campaign:

- Buy Fairtrade – Support your synagogue’s Fairtrade stall, if you have one. Look for the Fairtrade Mark in local retail outlets. Product choice is growing all the time. Currently tea, coffee, cocoa, chocolate, sugar, honey, biscuits, cakes, fresh fruit (bananas, mangos pineapples) and juices are available.
- Encourage your synagogue to learn about Fairtrade, buy the products and use the educational materials available from www.fairtrade.org.uk.
- Choose Fairtrade at work – choose Fairtrade tea and coffee for your meetings and buy fairtrade products for your tea breaks.
- Take a fairtrade cappuccino break – request Fairtrade from your coffee maker – Fairtrade is now on offer at many of the high street coffee shops.
- Lobby at your local supermarket – if you don’t see Fairtrade foods on the shelf – ask!
- Share Fairtrade with your friends and family – buy Fairtrade food gifts for them!



This leaflet has been produced for Liberal Judaism by Rabbi Janet Burden, using material from traditional sources and from the Camden Fairtrade Network.

One can always find warm hearts who in a glow of emotion would like to make the whole world happy but who have never attempted the sober experiment of bringing a real blessing to a single human being. It is easy to revel enthusiastically in one's love of man, but it is more difficult to do good to someone solely because he is a human being. When we are approached by a human being demanding his right, we cannot replace definite ethical action by mere vague good will. How often has the mere love of one's neighbour been able to compromise and hold its peace!

All love of man, if it is not to be mere unfruitful sentimentality, must have its roots in the ethical and social will, in the inner recognition of man, in the vital respect of his right – in what is meant by *Tzedakah*. That is primary and fundamental, alone making a clear and irrefutable demand which admits of no evasion.

- Rabbi Leo Baeck



What is Fairtrade?

Fair Trade goods include products like Café Direct, Tea Direct and Traidcraft brands, where the producer is guaranteed a fair and stable price, and any surplus is invested back in the developing world producer communities. Fair Trade is helping tens of thousands of small farmers in poor countries to build a better life for themselves, their families and communities, and helping build links of friendship and solidarity across the world.

The Fairtrade mark independently guarantees:

- Decent wages
- Minimum health and safety standards
- A fair minimum price and a social premium for the community
- A longer term trading relationship
- A commitment to better environmental standards and working towards sustainable production
- The right for workers to join trade unions.

You shall not cheat in measuring length, weight, or quantity. You shall have honest balances, honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin: I am the Eternal One your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

- Leviticus 19:35-36

We are expected both to charge and to pay fair prices. Cheating another in business was viewed as a grievous offence. The 4th century scholar Rava even asserted that the first question one would be asked at the gate of heaven would be:

"Have you conducted all your business dealings justly?"

The Torah tells us that 'Just weights and measures shall you have.' Even though this is included in the general commandment not to cheat one another, the Torah mentions each type of weight and measure separately in order to emphasize the enormity of the crime.

- Sefer Hachinuch

The verse states "Happy is the one who considers the poor" (Psalms 41:2). Said Rabbi Yonah: Note that it is not written, "happy is he that gives to the poor" but "that considers the poor". Consider well how to help him without offending his dignity.

- Leviticus Rabbah



(This picture, and others in this leaflet by Julia Powell, have been used with permission from the Fairtrade Foundation website: www.fairtrade.org)

Our rabbis taught "Give sustenance to the poor of the non-Jews along with the poor of Israel. Visit the sick of the non-Jews along with the sick of Israel. Bury the dead of non-Jews along with the dead of Israel. [Do all these things] because of the ways of peace."

- *Babylonian Talmud,
Gittin 61a*

We rarely consider the means by which the food that we eat and the clothes that we wear reach us. Supporting trade justice is one way we can ensure that the challenge of the prophet Amos could not be levelled at us today:

"They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes."

- *Amos 2:6*

We don't **think** that we do this sort of thing – but if our trainers are made in sweatshops, aren't we selling the poor for a pair of shoes? We owe it to ourselves to at least ask the question: What would our patterns of trade look like from God's perspective?

For God looked for justice, but behold: Violence! For righteousness, but behold: An outcry! Shame on those who add house to house, and join field to field, until there is room for none but you to live in the land.

- *Isaiah 5:7-8*



We are not the first generation to take things for granted, but the scale on which we do this is astonishing. To counter this growing trend in ourselves and in our children, we would do well to cultivate the attitude of our ancestors, who wrote:

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end war;
For we know that You have made the world in a way
That individuals must find their own paths to peace
Within themselves and with their neighbours.

*We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To end starvation;
For You have already given us the resources
With which to feed the entire world,
If only we would use them wisely.*

We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To root out prejudice;
For You have already given us eyes
With which to see the good in all people,
If only we would use them rightly.

*We cannot merely pray to You, O God,
To end despair;
For You have already given us the power
To clear away slums and to give hope,
If only we would use our power justly.*

We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end disease;
For You have already given us great minds
With which to search out cures and healings,
If only we would use them constructively.

*Therefore, we pray to You instead, O God,
For strength, determination and willpower
To do instead of just to pray,
To become instead of merely to wish.*

For Your sake and for ours, speedily and soon,
That our land may be safe,
And that our lives may be blessed.

*May the words that we pray, and the deeds that we do
Be acceptable before You, O Eternal One,
Our Rock and our Redeemer.*

- adapted from Jack Riemer
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Appreciating how blessed we are should also inspire us to accept our responsibility in relation to those who are less fortunate. If we are to enjoy products from the developing world, we have a duty to inform ourselves about the conditions under which the producers live. Does the price we pay enable them to live decent lives? The rabbis of the Babylonian Talmud took a dim view of those who would undercut the prices of the poor:

A poor man was offering a cake for sale; he who offers a lower price [than him] is called an evil one. - *Kiddushin 29a*

Save the Children's John Hilary once commented that the so-called "free trade" system could best be likened to throwing an average person into a boxing ring with Mike Tyson. Ostensibly, the fight would be fair (one-on-one), but there would be no doubt as to the outcome. With our considerable economic power, we could make choices that would help smaller producers to compete, and in so doing, reassert our commitment to that which is best in our Liberal Jewish heritage.

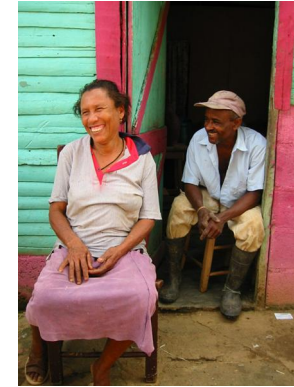
A MEDITATION

Social action is not politics or sociology or economics, though it involves all of them. It is of the essence of religion, certainly of the Jewish religion. It involves not only stirring sermons from the rabbis but effective grassroots action by the men and women who make up the congregation. Far from being an extraneous area of synagogue life, social action is an integral and essential part of synagogue activity. A synagogue which isolates itself from the fundamental issues of social justice confronting the community and the nation is false to the deepest traditions and values of the Jewish heritage. By working through synagogues for the advancement of social justice, we bridge the gap between confession and commitment, between word and deed; we bring a sense of greater reality to our faith; and we fulfil ourselves as Jews.

- *Albert Vorspan, in Justice and Judaism*, pp. 23-24.

How hard the first human being must have laboured! They had to plough and plant, cut and bind sheaves, thresh and winnow grain, grind and sift flour, and knead and bake, before they could eat a piece of bread. They had to shear, wash and shake out wool, dye and spin and weave and sew before they could wear clothes. But I rise in the morning, and find everything ready for me!

- *Talmud Yerushalmi Berachot 8:2*



Cultivating gratitude and an awareness of our dependence on others is also one of the paths to a heightened spirituality, as Albert Einstein came to understand:

Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: that we are here for the sake of others; above all, for those on whose smile and well-being our happiness depends; and also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day I realise how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labours of others, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received and am still receiving.

- adapted by Chaim Stern in *Siddur Lev Chadash*