

How Liberal Jewish Values Inspire my Work

René Cassin - Sam Grant

Sam Grant is the Campaigns and Programmes Manager at René Cassin.

There is photographic proof that I was at Kadimah Summer camp in 1990 at the age of two. I'd have to wait until 1996 to attend camp in my own right, and after that I didn't really miss a summer until I left the movement having completed movement work, and community youth co-ordinating (where I started the LAFTAs competition!) in 2013. I can say without doubt that my time in LJY-Netzer left an indelible mark on my identity and values that I carry with me today. It is the reason I studied ethics, it was the reason I became interested in human rights, and the reason I ended up combining my Jewish and human rights identities by working for a Jewish Human Rights organisation called René Cassin.



I remember, as a 15-year-old, being given a vote on how the youth movement operated practically and ideologically. The power of being told that the youth movement was mine to guide, shape and mould has never left me. I remember at 22 years old being given the responsibility of ensuring that those going through the youth movement had the same transformative experiences I had had.

Liberal Judaism and LJY-Netzer taught me that there was no distinction between my ethical beliefs and morality and my Jewish identity and practice. Indeed, one without the other left the other part the poorer. LJY-Netzer was an ideological Jewish youth movement that sought to make a difference to the world around it. The movement introduced me to concepts of equality, fairness, and justice early on in life. It taught me to ask questions: why is this like this? Why do we do that? I remember learning Jewish texts that struck me with their simplicity but also their powerful calls to action: *'If I am not for myself who will be for me, but if I am only for myself what am I, and if not now, when?'* - Rabbi Hillel, *Ethics of the Fathers* 1:14.

This interest in justice, this interest in text, this interest in asking questions led me to human rights and led me to René Cassin.

[René Cassin](#) is the Jewish Human Rights NGO. We work to get the Jewish community more engaged and mobilised with UK human rights issues. We promote and protect the universal rights of all people, drawing on Jewish experiences and values. We work on issues such as modern day slavery, asylum, discrimination and safeguarding human rights protections. We work with youth movements, schools, Rabbis, communities and MPs putting across the Jewish voice on human rights issues and taking action when we need to.

Liberal Judaism taught me that the world doesn't get improved by hoping that it does – it gets improved by standing up for values and taking action. That's why I'm involved in the work I am involved in today.