Human Rights Shabbat Resource Pack
René Cassin’s Vision
A world where everyone fully enjoys all their human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

René Cassin’s Mission
To draw upon the experiences and values of Jewish people to promote the universal human rights of all people through education and advocacy.

We are named in honour of René Cassin, the Jewish lawyer and Nobel Laureate, who co-drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Acknowledgments
René Cassin would like to thank the following for the great contributions they have made to the Human Rights Shabbat project:

- Daniel Reisel, Rabbi Johnny Solomon, Rosa Freedman and all the volunteers who helped to draft this resource
- All the communities which are taking part in Human Rights Shabbat
- Fire and Ice, the London Poverty Project, the Helen Bamber Foundation, Rabbis for Human Rights North America, the Equality Trust and all the other organisations who permitted us to use their materials in this resource
- The Shoresh Charitable Trust for funding Human Rights Shabbat
Shabbat can be seen as the soul of the Jewish people. We are commanded to keep the Shabbat as a rest because God rested, that is to imitate God’s ways: zikaron le-ma’aseh bereshit. There is also a commandment to remember that we were slaves in Egypt, that is to make Shabbat a vehicle for the continued liberation of the oppressed: zecher letziat mitzrayim.

Shabbat is the gift of the Jewish people to the world. The idea of a day of rest was first conceived in the Torah. It has since spread like wildfire across the world. Before the Jewish tradition gave the idea of a rest day to the world, people would perform back-breaking labour seven days a week with no respite.

A day of rest is vital for a life of human dignity. Shabbat is an opportunity for us to spend time with our family and friends, to look up at the sky and to remember that work is not the end of life. On Shabbat, we regain our full humanity.

Shabbat is also radical in its scope. The day of rest is binding upon everybody, regardless of social status. It includes servants, slaves, the strangers who live amongst us and even animals. Shabbat is the negation of bondage of any kind: servant or master, slave or free person, we all meet as equals on Shabbat and are reminded of our common humanity. It is the first human revolution.

Yet the revolution is incomplete. There are too many people in our world today who are not free and whose human dignity is threatened. Our work is not complete.

In this resource, we connect the themes of human rights and of Shabbat once more. We hope to awaken the powerful message of Shabbat, by bringing Jewish communities together to celebrate our freedom and to continue our work.
Equality underpins human rights – every man, woman and child is entitled to enjoy all their human rights simply by virtue of being human. Equality is not a minority interest – a fairer society benefits us all in terms of economic prosperity, quality of life, and good relations within and among communities.

Everyone should be able to do and to be those things that we consider most central and valuable in life. For example, everyone should be able to be healthy, to have opportunities for education and employment, and to be free from crime.

Equality campaigners work to ensure that all of us have the same opportunities and are treated fairly, no matter what our age, ethnicity, disability, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation or social class.

British society is becoming more diverse in many ways. However, recent reports suggest Britain is becoming more unequal: there is a growing gap between rich and poor, hate crime is rising and social mobility has decreased.

It is important to break down the barriers facing particular groups and the barriers between groups to create a fair society where we can all enjoy good relations with one another and fully enjoy all our human rights.

Equality Impact Assessment
An equality impact assessment is a great tool to ensure that all members of your community equally benefit from the services provided by your synagogue. The assessment will focus on finding solutions to any challenges you identify in involving particular groups. There is a step by step guide on conducting an equality impact assessment on www.idea.gov.uk

One Society
The Equality Trust has launched a new campaign to highlight the negative effects of income inequality and promote policies which would close the gap. Your community can join the campaign to close the gap between rich and poor and create a more equal society at www.onesociety.org.uk

Stamping Out Stereotypes
Be prepared to challenge negative stereotypes about different groups that you encounter in the media. Many media outlets – and especially the Jewish media - are sensitive to the opinions of their consumers and will respond if they receive feedback. For advice on making a complaint, see www.mentalhealth.org.uk/media/making-a-media-complaint

Further Information
Equality and Diversity Forum
www.edf.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission
www.equalityhumanrights.com

National Equality Panel Findings
www.equalities.gov.uk/national_equality_panel.aspx
All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Points to consider

1. Do you think that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should make reference to a common Divine origin of humankind?

2. What lessons do we learn from humankind being created singly?

3. What actions could a person take to attain an attitude of equality?
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SLAVERY

Millions of men, women and children around the world are forced to lead lives as slaves. Contemporary slavery takes various forms and affects people of all ages, sex and race.

Although this exploitation is often not called slavery, the conditions are the same. People are sold like objects, forced to work for little or no pay and are at the mercy of their 'employers'. Common characteristics distinguish slavery from other human rights violations. A slave is:

- forced to work -- through mental or physical threat
- owned or controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse or threatened abuse
- dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property'
- physically constrained or has restrictions placed on his/her freedom of movement.

Trafficking involves transporting people away from the communities in which they live and forcing them to work against their will using violence, deception or coercion. Human trafficking – for sexual slavery or for labour exploitation – affects countries and families on every continent.

Thousands of people are estimated to be working as slaves within the UK, in highly exploitative conditions, with no rights, and under threat of violence.

Some of the products we buy today in Britain may have been produced through the use of slave labour. Use your consumer power to show you care by becoming a Fairtrade Synagogue. You can apply for the scheme at www.fairtrade.org.uk/faiths. You can also buy kippot made with Fairtrade cotton for community events at www.fairtradekippot.org

The Helen Bamber Foundation helps survivors of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, who seek safety and refuge. Members of your community can help these survivors to improve their conversational English. This is a unique way to build relationships with the Foundation’s clients. For more information, contact volunteer@helenbamber.org

Anti-Slavery International needs your help in building support for the No Slavery, No Exceptions campaign. The campaign focuses attention on discrimination which is one of the root causes of slavery in the 21st century. Your community can sign the pledge and join the campaign network at www.antislavery.org/english/campaigns/no_slavery_no_exceptions/

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

FURTHER INFORMATION

**Fairtrade Communities**

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**Further Information**

- [Anti Slavery International](www.antislavery.org)
- [The Poppy Project](www.eaves4women.co.uk/POPPY_Project/POPPY_Project.php)
- [Israel’s Task Force on Human Trafficking](www.tfht.org)
No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

**Article 4, Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

You can work during the six weekdays and do all your tasks. But Saturday is the Sabbath to God your Lord. Do not do anything that constitutes work. This includes you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maid, your animal and the foreigner in your gates.

**Shemot 20:9-10**

It is appropriate for a person who is merciful and pursues justice, to not make their slaves carry a heavy yoke, nor cause them distress. One should allow them to partake of all food and drink one serves... Similarly it is forbidden to embarrass a slave with one’s deeds or with words, for the Torah prescribed that they perform a service and not that they be humiliated. Nor should one shout or vent anger upon them. Instead, one should speak to them gently and listen to their claims.

**Rambam, Hilchot Avadim 9:8**

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself. The Bible tells the thrilling story of how Moses stood in Pharaoh’s court centuries ago and cried, ‘Let my people go.’ This is a kind of opening chapter in a continuing story.

**Martin Luther King, Nobel Lecture 1964**

Points to consider

1. How might Shemot 20:9-10 affect our views on everyone’s entitlement to rest in contemporary society?
2. What kind of boss/worker relationship do these texts advocate?
3. How might the Jewish experience of slavery in Egypt be relevant to Rambam’s approach to those who have power over slaves?
Fair treatment before the law is a central tenet of a democratic society. The law can be used to protect and empower people throughout the world.

The right to a fair trial requires that everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing. In criminal proceedings, there should be an independent, impartial tribunal. The defendant must be presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. The suspect has the right to be informed of the charges against him or her and to have the time and resources to prepare a defence. The trial should be held within a reasonable time.

The right to no punishment without law means that no one should be punished for doing something that was not a criminal offence at the time.

Victims also have rights within the justice system. For example, a victim should be kept informed of the progress of a case. Hearings should generally be open to the public so justice can be seen to be done.

In recent years in the UK, there have been a number of high-profile challenges to ensuring everyone receives fair treatment before the law, including: pre-charge detention for terrorist suspects; cuts to legal aid; and legal challenges to police powers.

The ‘no recourse to public funds’ rule traps hundreds of women in a cycle of abuse, unable to access basic levels of protection and support, simply because of their vulnerable immigration status. Ask your community’s MP to sign Early Day Motion 214 on violence against women and the no recourse rule at www.wrc.org.uk

The Law Society is campaigning against cuts to legal aid that threaten to leave thousands without representation. You can encourage legal practitioners in your community to support their campaign to persuade the government to guarantee an adequately funded legal aid system ensuring quality representation and access to justice for all at www.lawsociety.org.uk
Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

*Article 11.1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

You shall commit no injustice in judgment; you shall not favour a poor person or respect a great person; you shall judge your fellow with righteousness.

*Vayikra 19:15*

Yehoshua Ben Perachyah used to say: Get yourself a teacher, acquire a companion, and give everyone the benefit of the doubt.

*Pirkei Avot 1:6*

The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, an **almost fanatical love of justice** and the desire for personal independence – these are the features of the Jewish tradition which makes me thank my stars that I belong to it.

*Albert Einstein, The World as I See It, p.90*

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**Points to consider**

1. In what circumstances would it be most difficult to judge your fellow with righteousness?
2. What advantages does giving everyone the benefit of the doubt have for an individual and for society?
3. Why might Einstein value a love of justice so highly?
The right to seek asylum has saved millions of lives. People who have fled their country of origin for fear of persecution on grounds of race, religion, nationality or political belief are entitled to seek safe refuge.

An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been decided. A refugee is someone whose asylum application has been successful and who is allowed to stay in another country having proved they would face persecution back home.

Britain’s asylum system is very tough – only about 20% of asylum seekers are recognised as refugees and given asylum. The asylum determination system gets a quarter of its initial decisions wrong. The vast majority of asylum seekers are not allowed to work and are forced to rely on state support, which is set at just 70% of income support.

A failed asylum seeker is someone whose asylum application has failed and who has no other protection claim awaiting a decision. Some failed asylum seekers return voluntarily home, others are forcibly returned and for some it is not safe or practical for them to return until conditions in their country change. All support is removed from failed asylum seekers in the UK, leaving thousands destitute.

The Refugee Council’s SMILE project works with refugee and asylum seeking children, both in families and in the UK on their own. Your community can directly support SMILE by hosting events and activities in your synagogue. To find out if your synagogue would be a suitable venue, see www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/volunteering.

Simple Acts is about inspiring individuals to use small, everyday actions to change perceptions of refugees. Your community can cook a dish from another country, say a prayer for refugees or sign off emails with a note about refugees to help remove the barriers between communities. Choose an action at www.refugeeweek.org.uk/simple-acts.

There are 11,000 Zimbabweans in the UK who have been refused asylum but are unable to return home because of the situation in Zimbabwe. Their skills are going to waste because they are prevented from working. You can offer a community internship to help a Zimbabwean gain skills and work experience. Register at www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk/pages/campaigns.html.

1,000 children are locked up each year in the UK’s detention centres

Adult asylum seekers are only given £5 a day to live on and are not allowed to work

4,400 supported asylum seekers live in London – 5% of the UK’s total. The UK is home to less than 2% of the world’s refugees – out of 16 million worldwide.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Making Space for SMILES

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Strategic Internships

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Asylum Rights Campaign
www.asylumrights.org.uk

Still Human Still Here – the campaign to end destitution of refused asylum seekers
www.stillhuman.org.uk

Refugee Council
www.refugeecouncil.org.uk
Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

**Article 14, Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

When a stranger lives with you in your land, do not ill treat them. The stranger who lives with you shall be treated like the native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were strangers in the Land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

**Vayikra 19:33-34**

You shall not return a slave to their master that has escaped to you from their master. They shall dwell with you in your midst, in the place which they shall choose within one of your gates, where it is good for them; you shall not wrong them.

**Devarim 25:16-17**

Among the principles behind the mitzvah is what we have mentioned that God wanted for the honour of the Land [of Israel] that whoever escapes to there will be saved from slavery, so that we will become conscious of the honour of the place and that we shall establish in our hearts when we are there the awe of God. And all this is for the benefit of God’s people and for their merits, because compassion is what God wants.

**Sefer HaChinuch 568**

“Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she, / With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

‘*The New Colossus*, Emma Lazarus, 1889, inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty, New York Harbor

**Points to consider**

1. How should the experience of being strangers in Egypt impact on the Jewish approach to asylum seekers and refugees?
2. What benefits might there be in allowing asylum seekers and refugees to dwell in our midst?
3. Do you think places that welcome refugees and asylum seekers bring ‘honour’ to their land?
Poverty is a human rights violation. Every woman, man, youth and child has the human right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, to food, clothing, housing, medical care and social services. Everyone – rich or poor, old or young – should be supported to lead a life of dignity.

The widely accepted definition of poverty is having an income which is less than 60% of the national average (excluding the wealthiest members of society). Under this definition, about 1 in 5 people in the UK live in poverty. London has the highest rate of income poverty of any region in England.

Living in poverty means not having enough money to make ends meet, or to afford the every day things that other people take for granted, like a bus fare to work or a balanced diet. Poverty is not just about income – it is also about the quality of housing and access to services that we take for granted.

Children who grow up in poverty have poor life chances – they do worse at school, have poorer health and are more likely to enter the criminal justice system. This traps young people in a cycle of poverty, which takes them from poverty in childhood, to becoming a parent of poor children.

4/10 4 in 10 children in London live in poverty – 12% above the national average

10 Families living in poverty have only £10 to spend on each person per day for everything they need

7 There is a 7-year gap in life expectancy and a 17-year gap in ‘healthy years’ – life without serious illness or disability – between the richest and poorest in the UK.
Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

*Article 25, Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

If there will be among you a needy person, from one of your fellows in one of your cities, in your land the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, and you shall not close your hand from your needy fellow. Rather, you shall open your hand to them, and you shall lend them sufficient for their needs, which they are lacking.

*Devarim 15:7 – 8*

The Rabbis have taught: "For whatever they need" (Devarim 15:8) – one is commanded to provide for them, but one is not commanded to make them rich; "all that their [former] status requires - even a horse to ride and a servant to run before them. It is told of Hillel the Elder that he provided a poor man from a good family with a horse to ride and a servant to run before him; once [Hillel] could not find a servant to run before [the poor man] so he ran before him for three miles.

*Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 67b*

If a community lacked a synagogue and a shelter for the poor, it was first obligated to build a shelter for the poor.

*Sefer Chassidim*

**Points to consider**

1. What do people today require to maintain a life of dignity? Does this differ from what is required to maintain an adequate standard of living?

2. There are many needy people in our society – how should we decide who to support?

3. Who should take on the primary responsibility for ensuring everyone enjoys an adequate standard of living?
States have a responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil our human rights. We too have a responsibility to create a culture that protects and promotes human rights.

The Human Rights Act 1998 protects 15 well-established fundamental rights and freedoms in the UK, such as the right to life and free speech. Evidence shows that the Human Rights Act has had a positive impact on people's lives, leading to many significant improvements in the way that individuals are treated throughout society.

Unfortunately, the Human Rights Act is frequently misunderstood or misrepresented. The Human Rights Act has been portrayed as only protecting the rights of villains and terrorists. In reality, the Human Rights Act has been used to uphold the rights of victims of crime.

There has been much recent discussion about the role of the Human Rights Act and the relationship between our rights and responsibilities. We have many duties that exist within our legal and ethical framework. However, our fundamental human rights cannot be made contingent upon fulfilling these responsibilities.

It is valuable to emphasise the importance of individual and communal responsibility. We must remember our responsibility to protect the rights of others and play an active role in defending the human rights of all.

In 2009, the Government began a consultation proposed creating a 'Statement of Values' for the UK, which would define the values which underpin what it means to be a member of UK society. Your community can develop your own statement or values and submit it to the Ministry of Justice, following guidance on www.governance.justice.gov.uk

Read the real life human rights stories of people in the UK on www.ourhumanrightstories.org.uk.

From older people in care homes, disabled children being a part of the school community, to women seeking safety, these stories highlight how the Human Right Act can offer something for everyone.

Support Liberty's campaign to increase understanding and respect for human rights, countering damaging myths about the Human Rights Act. Sign up on www.love.common-values.org.uk and the campaign will update your Facebook status and Twitter feed with information to reach new supporters.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Community Values
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FURTHER INFORMATION

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Jewish Volunteering Network
www.jvn.org.uk

The Green Paper on Rights and Responsibilities
www.governance.justice.gov.uk
Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of the personality is possible.  

_Article 29.1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights_  

He (Rabbi Tarfon) used to say: It is not for you to complete the task, but neither are you free to stand aside from it.  

_Pirkei Avot 2:21_  

Whoever can prevent his household from committing a sin but does not, is responsible for the sins of his household; if they can prevent the people of their city, they are responsible for the sins of their city; if the whole world, they are responsible for the sins of the whole world.  

_Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 54b_  

Where after all do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. _Yet they are the world of the individual person:_ The neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.  

_Eleanor Roosevelt, remarks at the United Nations, 1958_  

**Points to consider**  

1. How can we encourage people not to stand aside from the task?  
2. Is it more important to prevent someone from committing a sin or to help someone to do the right thing?  
3. What relationship do you think there should be between rights and responsibilities?
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