

Teaching Fair Trade Principles and *Masekhet Zechuyot Ha'Adam*: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights with Jewish Sources

by Ilana Schatz, Fair Trade Judaica



Fair Trade Judaica

Crafted with Jewish Values

Fair Trade Judaica promotes fair trade as a Jewish value through educating the Jewish community, and expanding the production, distribution, and sale of fair trade Judaica products.

Materials

(all included in the Human Rights Shabbat sources and found at www.rhr-na.org)

- Fair Trade Principles and *Masekhet Zechuyot Ha'Adam*: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with Jewish Sources
- Complete text of World Fair Trade Organization's Ten Principles of Fair Trade
- Complete Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), proclaimed on December 10, 1948, is an incredible, collective statement of human values. Developed on feedback from societies around the world, it is humankind's best attempt to describe the rights that we all share. It is unique in its coverage of the many types of rights: social, economic, political, civil, and cultural rights all find a place in the UDHR. Though the UDHR itself is not binding as law, its concerns have been concretized in international law and the human rights codes of many nations.

When teaching the *Masekhet Zechuyot Ha'Adam* (MZA), it is critical to recognize (and to admit to participants) that not all of these texts are perfect matches. Not only is the MZA a work in progress, but Judaism does not discuss many human rights directly. One could even argue that Judaism could be seen as being against some of these rights (such as freedom of religion or freedom of association). Moreover, Judaism tends to speak from the voice of obligation or *mitzvah* rather than the language of rights, i.e. the obligation to feed the hungry rather than the right of an individual to eat. It is easier for Judaism to identify with the universal values expressed in the Preamble to the UDHR than it is to align all of the articles of the UDHR with traditional Jewish texts. And even this identification can be problematic, since while Judaism has universalist tendencies, it also is particularistic. The traditional halachic system affords Jews more rights than non-Jews in many instances.

Teaching *Masekhet Zechuyot Ha'Adam* with Fair Trade Principles and Jewish Text

After introducing the text, divide the room into pairs of students (*chevruta*). Give each chevruta group a copy of the materials.

Chevruta is an ancient method of Jewish text study with origins in the Talmud, a fifth century compendium of Jewish oral law, rabbinic discussion, and analysis. The approach relies upon two people grappling together with a text and the essential ideas and issues it raises.

1. *Sit face to face with a partner.*
2. *Read the text out loud.* As you hear the words, mentally note anything that jumps out at you. Consider possible inconsistencies and “problems” in the text
3. *Ask questions out loud.* In *Chevruta*, thinking takes place “out loud” and questions are as important as answers. Ask questions, and explore the answers the text offers. General questions might include:
 - What values are being expressed by the UDHR, the fair trade principles, and the Jewish text?
 - What is the text about? How do you know?
 - What stands out for you? In particular, are there areas of the text that appear to convey double meanings? Are there ideas that appear not to correlate?
 - Are certain words repeated? Why?
 - What are the messages conveyed through the text? Do you agree with the authors’ perspectives? Why or why not?
 - What is the historical context behind the text? How might this affect the meaning of the text?
4. *Consider different interpretations of the text.* What is the literal meaning? Are there deeper or more metaphorical readings? What is your personal interpretation?
5. *Bring your own experience to the text.* Texts are often seen as authoritative, and therefore intimidating; however, we should never be afraid to bring our own lived experience to textual interpretation.
6. *Take responsibility for your partner’s learning.* Engage your partner with questions. Encourage your partner to share his or her ideas. It is not enough for only one person to understand the material.
7. *Come together as a class to share your insights.* If you are studying the same text as other pairs in the room, come together to share your insights. This will add additional layers to your understanding of complex texts. Some guiding questions for the larger group discussion could include:
 - What were common themes in the Jewish texts?
 - What rights were you surprised to see in the UDHR? What might be missing?
 - Are any of these rights antithetical to Jewish values?
 - What other texts could one use to describe the Jewish connection to human rights?

Additional Resources

RHR-NA’s “Teaching *Masekhet Zechuyot Ha’Adam*”, http://www.rhr-na.org/documents/MZA%20Text%20Study_0.pdf
“What’s Jewish about Fair Trade”: <http://fairtradejudaica.org/learn/whats-jewish-about-fair-trade/>

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Text Study on Fair Trade Principles and Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

“Beloved is all humankind for they were made b’tzelem Elohim (in the image of God). Doubly beloved are they, for they were told that they were made in the image of God. As it says: “In the image of God was humankind made.” *Genesis 9:6*

Text Study Questions:

1. What are the values inherent in being created in God’s image?
2. How would you define “dignity”?

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Fair Trade Principle: Commitment to Non Discrimination and Gender Equity

“God created the human in God’s image. In the image of God., God created him, male and female he created them. And God blessed them.” *Genesis 1:27-28*

Text Study Questions:

1. Do you agree with the forms of discrimination mentioned in both Article 2 and the fair trade principle? Are there other forms of discrimination that you would include?
2. How do you interpret being created in God’s image as the basis for non-discrimination?

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Fair Trade Principle: Ensuring no Child Labor and Forced Labor

“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.”

Maimonides, *Hilchot Avadim* 9:8

“The breath of school children is the reason for the world’s existence.”

Maimonides, *The Laws of Torah Study*, 2:1

Text Study Questions:

1. Does the Torah prohibit slavery? Would modern Jewish values prohibit slavery?
2. What is the relationship between child labor and forced labor/slavery?

Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association

Fair Trade Principle: Commitment to Freedom of Association and Transparency and Accountability

“You stand this day, all of you, before Adonai your God – your tribal heads, your elders and your officials, all the men of Israel, your children, our wives, even the stranger within your camp, from woodchopper to water drawer to enter into the covenant of Adonai your God, which Adonai your God is concluding with you this day...I make this covenant, with its sanctions, not with you alone but with both those standing here with us this day before Adonai our God and with those who are not here this day.” *Deuteronomy 29:9-11, 13-14*

Text Study Questions:

1. What is important about the right to choose to participate or not participate in groups?
2. What is the balance between protecting the rights of the individual vs. the group?
3. How does this relate to the Jewish people being part of a group covenant?

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of its economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Fair Trade Principle: Fair Trading Practices and Providing Capacity Building

“You are commanded to provide the needy with whatever they lack. If they lack clothing, you must clothe them. If they lack household goods, you must provide them...You are commanded to fulfill all of their needs, though not required to make them wealthy.” Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Gifts to the Poor 7:3*

Text Study Questions:

1. What are the limits of the social support network, both in Jewish law and according to Article 22?
2. Whose responsibility is it to provide social security, governments, individual tzedakah, or communal funds?
3. What does according to “the free development of his personality” mean to you?
4. How do you determine the line between providing someone with what they lack vs. making them wealthy?

Article 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worth of human dignity, and supplemented if necessary, by other means of social protection.
4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Fair Trade Principles: Payment of a Fair Price and Fair Trading Practices

“You shall not abuse a needy or destitute laborer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. You must pay his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for his needs and his life depend on it.” *Deuteronomy 24:14-15*

“It is forbidden to cheat people in buying or selling or to deceive them, whether they are Jewish or gentile – they are equal in measure.” Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Mechirah 18:1*

“Whoever withholds an employee’s wages, it is as though he had taken the person’s life from him.” *Talmud, Baba Mezia 112A*

Text Study Questions:

1. What does it mean to “deceive” one another?
2. Why is the issue of deception raised around buying and selling?
3. Why is it important to be “as careful as one can”?
4. Have you been in a situation where you interpreted someone’s behavior as suspicious?
5. How can one behave to find favor in the eyes of God and humanity?

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Fair Trade Principle: Ensuring Good Working Conditions

“It is a positive commandment to eliminate every hazard that endangers life... If one did not eliminate it, but preserved the hazards that cause danger, one has overlooked a positive commandment and transgressed “you shall not bring blood-guilt into your house.”

Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat (427:8)

“When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you do not bring blood-guilt on your house if anyone should fall from it.” *Deuteronomy 22:8*

“Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as Adonai your God has commanded you. Six days shall you labor and do work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of Adonai your God; you shall do no work – you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the stranger in your settlements, so that your male and female slave may rest as you do. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and Adonai your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore Adonai your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.” *Deuteronomy 5:11-15*

Text Study Questions:

1. What do you think “blood guilt” means?
2. Why do you think that it is a positive commandment to provide safe conditions?
3. How does the observance of Shabbat relate to labor conditions?

Article 25

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, 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.

Fair Trade Principle: Creating Opportunities for Economically Disadvantaged Producers

“There is nothing in the world more grievous than poverty – the most terrible of sufferings. Our teachers have said: if all the troubles of the world are assembled on one side and poverty on the other, poverty would outweigh them all.” *Midrash Exodus Rabbah* 31:12

“The highest level of tzedakah is when you support someone by giving a gift, or a loan, entering into partnership, or creating a job for them so that they can support themselves until no longer needing to depend upon others.” Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Gifts to the Poor 10:7

Text Study Questions:

1. What makes poverty the most grievous of all things? What are the ways that poverty affects someone’s life?
2. How does fair trade reflect Maimonides’ highest level of *tzedakah*?
3. How do you define an adequate standard of living?

Article 27

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Fair Trade Principle: Recognize, Promote and Protect Cultural Identity

“A gem in the mouths of the Rabbis of Yavneh: I am God’s creature and my fellow is God’s creature. My work is in the city and their work is in the field. I rise early for my work and they rise early for their work. Just as they do not presume to do my work, so I do not presume to do their work. Will you say, I do (learn) much and they do (learn) little? We have a tradition: One may do much or one may do little; it is all the same, provided one directs one’s heart to heaven.” *Talmud, Brachot* 17a

“Come and learn. Human dignity is so important that it supersedes even a Biblical prohibition.” *Talmud, Brachot*, 19b

Text Study Questions:

1. What does it mean to direct one’s heart to heaven? Give examples of actions directed towards heaven.
2. What does it mean to not presume to do another’s work, and how does that inform your understanding of respecting other cultural identities?
3. Have you had the experience of someone making presumptions about your work? How did that make you feel?
4. Why do you think it’s important to protect cultural identity and traditional skills?

The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) prescribes 10 Principles that Fair Trade Organizations must follow in their day-to-day work and carries out monitoring to ensure these principles are upheld:

Principle One: Creating Opportunities for Economically Disadvantaged Producers

Poverty reduction through trade forms a key part of the organization's aims. The organization supports marginalized small producers, whether these are independent family businesses, or grouped in associations or co-operatives. It seeks to enable them to move from income insecurity and poverty to economic self-sufficiency and ownership. The organization has a plan of action to carry this out.

Principle Two: Transparency and Accountability

The organization is transparent in its management and commercial relations. It is accountable to all its stakeholders and respects the sensitivity and confidentiality of commercial information supplied. The organization finds appropriate, participatory ways to involve employees, members and producers in its decision-making processes. It ensures that relevant information is provided to all its trading partners. The communication channels are good and open at all levels of the supply chain.

Principle Three: Fair Trading Practices

The organization trades with concern for the social, economic and environmental well-being of marginalized small producers and does not maximize profit at their expense. It is responsible and professional in meeting its commitments in a timely manner. Suppliers respect contracts and deliver products on time and to the desired quality and specifications.

Fair Trade buyers, recognizing the financial disadvantages producers and suppliers face, ensure orders are paid on receipt of documents and according to the attached guidelines. An interest free pre-payment of at least 50% is made if requested.

Where southern Fair Trade suppliers receive a pre payment from buyers, they ensure that this payment is passed on to the producers or farmers who make or grow their Fair Trade products.

Buyers consult with suppliers before canceling or rejecting orders. Where orders are cancelled through no fault of producers or suppliers, adequate compensation is guaranteed for work already done. Suppliers and producers consult with buyers if there is a problem with delivery, and ensure compensation is provided when delivered quantities and qualities do not match those invoiced.

The organization maintains long term relationships based on solidarity, trust and mutual respect that contribute to the promotion and growth of Fair Trade. It maintains effective communication with its trading partners. Parties involved in a trading relationship seek to increase the volume of the trade between them and the value and diversity of their product offer as a means of growing Fair Trade for the producers in order to increase their incomes. The organization works cooperatively with the other Fair Trade Organizations in country and avoids unfair competition. It avoids duplicating the designs of patterns of other organizations without permission.

Fair Trade recognizes, promotes and protects the cultural identity and traditional skills of small producers as reflected in their craft designs, food products and other related services.

Principle Four: Payment of a Fair Price

A fair price is one that has been mutually agreed by all through dialogue and participation, which provides fair pay to the producers and can also be sustained by the market. Where Fair Trade pricing structures exist, these are used as a minimum. Fair pay means provision of socially acceptable remuneration (in the local context) considered by producers themselves to be fair and which takes into account the principle of equal pay for equal work by women and men. Fair Trade marketing and importing organizations support capacity building as required to producers, to enable them to set a fair price.

Principle Five: Ensuring no Child Labor and Forced Labor

The organization adheres to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and national / local law on the employment of children. The organization ensures that there is no forced labor in its workforce and / or members or homeworkers.

Organizations who buy Fair Trade products from producer groups either directly or through intermediaries ensure that no forced labor is used in production and the producer complies with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and national / local law on the employment of children. Any involvement of children in the production of Fair Trade products (including learning a traditional art or craft) is always disclosed and monitored and does not adversely affect the children's well-being, security, educational requirements and need for play.

Principle Six: Commitment to Non Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association

The organization does not discriminate in hiring, remuneration, access to training, promotion, termination or retirement based on race, caste, national origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, union membership, political affiliation, HIV/Aids status or age. The organization provides opportunities for women and men to develop their skills and actively promotes applications from women for job vacancies and for leadership positions in the organization. The organization takes into account the special health and safety needs of pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers. Women fully participate in decisions concerning the use of benefits accruing from the production process.

The organization respects the right of all employees to form and join trade unions of their choice and to bargain collectively. Where the right to join trade unions and bargain collectively are restricted by law and/or political environment, the organization will enable means of independent and free association and bargaining for employees. The organization ensures that representatives of employees are not subject to discrimination in the workplace.

Organizations working directly with producers ensure that women are always paid for their contribution to the production process, and when women do the same work as men they are paid at the same rates as men. Organizations also seek to ensure that in production situations where women's work is valued less highly than men's work, women's work is re-valued to equalize pay rates and women are allowed to undertake work according to their capacities.

Principle Seven: Ensuring Good Working Conditions

The organization provides a safe and healthy working environment for employees and / or members. It complies, at a minimum, with national and local laws and ILO conventions on health and safety.

Working hours and conditions for employees and / or members (and any homeworkers) comply with conditions established by national and local laws and ILO conventions.

Fair Trade Organizations are aware of the health and safety conditions in the producer groups they buy from. They seek, on an ongoing basis, to raise awareness of health and safety issues and improve health and safety practices in producer groups.

Principle Eight: Providing Capacity Building

The organization seeks to increase positive developmental impacts for small, marginalized producers through Fair Trade.

The organization develops the skills and capabilities of its own employees or members. Organizations working directly with small producers develop specific activities to help these producers improve their management skills, production capabilities and access to markets - local / regional / international / Fair Trade and mainstream as appropriate. Organizations which buy Fair Trade products through Fair Trade intermediaries in the South assist these organizations to develop their capacity to support the marginalized producer groups that they work with.

Principle Nine: Promoting Fair Trade

The organization raises awareness of the aim of Fair Trade and of the need for greater justice in world trade through Fair Trade. It advocates for the objectives and activities of Fair Trade according to the scope of the organization. The organization provides its customers with information about itself, the products it markets, and the producer organizations or members that make or harvest the products. Honest advertising and marketing techniques are always used.

Principle Ten: Respect for the Environment

Organizations which produce Fair Trade products maximize the use of raw materials from sustainably managed sources in their ranges, buying locally when possible. They use production technologies that seek to reduce energy consumption and where possible use renewable energy technologies that minimize greenhouse gas emissions. They seek to minimize the impact of their waste stream on the environment. Fair Trade agricultural commodity producers minimize their environmental impacts, by using organic or low pesticide use production methods wherever possible.

Buyers and importers of Fair Trade products give priority to buying products made from raw materials that originate from sustainably managed sources, and have the least overall impact on the environment.

All organizations use recycled or easily biodegradable materials for packing to the extent possible, and goods are dispatched by sea wherever possible.

http://www.wfto.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2&Itemid=14