

Human Rights Shabbat, 2008

*Celebrating 60 years of the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights*

A Sourcebook for Celebration and Reflection

Edited by Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster

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Rabbis for Human Rights-North America

K'vod Habriot: A Jewish Human Rights Network

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Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948

On December 10, 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the full text of which appears in the following pages. Following this historic act, the Assembly called upon all Member countries to publicize the text of the Declaration and "to cause it to be disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions, without distinction based on the political status of countries or territories."

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,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1.

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 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.

Article 3.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4.

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

Article 5.

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6.

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7.

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8.

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10.

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11.

(1) 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.

(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13.

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14.

(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

(2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15.

(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16.

(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17.

(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

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.

Article 21.

(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

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 the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

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 favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy 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.

Article 24.

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

Article 25.

- (1) 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.
- (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26.

- (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
- (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

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.

Article 28.

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29.

(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30.

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

***The Universal Declaration of Human Rights can also be printed at:
<http://un.org/Overview/rights.html>***

A Prayer for International Human Rights Day

Rabbi Brant Rosen

Ruach Kol Chai - Spirit of All that Lives:

Help us.

Help us to uphold the values that are so central to whom we are: human beings created *B'tzelem Elohim*- in the image of God. Help us to recognize that the inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. 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. May we find the strength to protect and plead the cause of the stranger among us, to ensure just treatment for all who dwell in our land.

Guide us.

Guide us toward one law. One justice. One human standard of behavior toward all. Move us away from the equivocation that honors the divine image in some but not in others. Let us forever affirm that the justice we purport to hold dear is nothing but a sham if it does not uphold the value of *K'vod Habriot* - basic human dignity for all who dwell in our midst.

Forgive us.

Forgive us for the inhumane manner that in which we too often treat the other. We know, or should, that when it comes to crimes against humanity, some of us may be guilty, but all of us are responsible. Grant us *kapparah* - atonement for the misdeeds of exclusion we invariably commit against the most vulnerable members of society: the unwanted, the unhoused, the uninsured, the undocumented.

Strengthen us.

Strengthen us to find the wherewithal to shine your light into the dark places of our world. Give us ability to uncover those who are hidden from view, locked away, forgotten. Let us never forget that nothing is hidden and no one lost from before you. Embolden us in the knowledge that *neshamot* - human souls are neither disposable nor replaceable; that we can never, try as we might, lock away the humanity of another.

Remind us.

Remind us of our duty to create a just society right here, right now, in our day. Give us the vision of purpose to guard against the complacency of the comfortable - and the resolve in knowing that we cannot put off the cause of justice and freedom for another day. Remind us that the time is now. Now is the moment to create your kingdom here on earth.

Ken Yehi Ratzon. May it be your will. And may it be ours. And let us say, *Amen.*

Human Rights Themes for Divrei Torah:

Parashat Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4-36:40)

Rabbi Brant Rosen

1) The word “*panim*” is used repeatedly in the story of Jacob and Esau’s reconciliation:

Genesis 32:21:

For (Jacob) reasoned, “If I propitiate (Esau) with presents in advance, and then face him (“*achaprah fanav*”), perhaps he will show me favor (“*yisa fanai*”).”

Genesis 32:30:

So Jacob named the place Peniel, meaning, “I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved.”

Genesis 33:10:

But Jacob said, “No, I pray you; if you would do me this favor, accept from me this gift; for to see your face is like seeing the face of God (“*ra’iti fanecha kir’ot p’nai elohim*”) and you have received me favorably.

The word *panim* – particularly the use of *Peniel* or *p’nai elohim* – recalls Torah’s central value that humanity was created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26). Jacob’s story here suggests that we find the face of God whenever we face another in respect and dignity – even (or especially) when we assume the other is our enemy.

2) The story of the rape of Dinah and the subsequent violence unleashed by her brothers Shimon and Levi offers a powerful polemic against unmitigated violence (34:25-29) religious cynicism (34:22-24) and zealous attachment to family honor (34:31).

It is particularly notable that Jacob, at the end of his life, understands that the effect of their abuse was so extreme that he has no choice but to disassociate himself from his own sons entirely: “*Let not my person be included in their council/Let not my being be counted in their assembly.*” (Genesis 49:6)

Among the most powerful Divrei Torah ever given on these verses was a speech delivered by the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on February 28, 1994. Four days earlier, a Jewish settler, Baruch Goldstein, had murdered thirty Muslim worshippers in the Cave of Machpelah. In a speech before the Knesset, Rabin quoted Jacob’s words to Simeon and Levi. After reciting Jacob’s disavowal of his two children, Rabin continued, addressing the late Goldstein, who was already becoming viewed as a martyr in the eyes of his zealous followers:

To him and to those like him we say: You are not part of the community of Israel. You are not part of the national democratic camp to which we in this house all belong, and many of the people despise you. You are not partners in the Zionist enterprise. You are a foreign implant.

You are an errant weed. Sensible Judaism spits you out. You placed yourself outside the wall of Jewish Law. You are a shame on Zionism and an embarrassment to Judaism.

The legacy of Simeon and Levi remains with us still: only one year after delivering these remarks, Rabin was murdered by a religious extremist. More than anything else, this story reminds us to recognize the sacrilegious effect of violence, to resist its power in ourselves and disavow it when it is manifest in the actions of others, particularly when - it emanates from within our own communities.

3. In Genesis 35:19-20 we read:

Thus Rachel died. She was buried on the road to Efratah – now Beit Lechem. Over her grave Jacob set up a pillar; it is the pillar at Rachel's grave to this day.

These verses introduce the tragic, iconic image of Rachel's tomb on the road to Beit Lechem. Jeremiah accentuates this image yet further, imagining Rachel weeping over the exiled children of Israel:

Thus said the Lord: A cry is heard in Ramah – wailing, bitter weeping – Rachel weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted/For her children, who are gone. Thus said the Lord: restrain your voice from weeping/Your eyes from shedding tears; for there is a reward for your labor – declares the Lord: They shall return from the enemy's land. And there is hope for your future – declares the Lord. Your children shall return to their country. (Jeremiah 31:15-17)

These powerful verses have been a comfort to the exiled Jewish people for centuries. Nevertheless, we are not the only people to suffer exile. Given the global realities of our 21st century world, might we apply these sacred words to *all* those who have been forcibly dislocated from their homes and their lands?

What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and why do we celebrate it?

Rabbi Margaret Holub and Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster

"The UDHR is based on an idea that came into its own during World War II: the idea that there are a few common standards of decency that can and should be accepted by people of all nations and cultures." (Mary Ann Glendon 2004)

The United Nations' Charter was adopted in 1945. It "reaffirmed faith in fundamental human rights, and dignity and worth of the human person" and committed all member states to promote "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion".

However, when the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany became apparent after the Second World War, the international consensus developed that the Charter did not sufficiently define the rights it referenced. A universal declaration that specified the rights of individuals was necessary to give effect to the Charter's provisions on human rights.

Between January 1947 and December 1948, under the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt, the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations labored to come to a statement of fundamental freedoms and rights that could be accepted by all the nations of the world. Their statement was then presented to the UN General Assembly, which, in turn, scrutinized the document, with the 58 Member States voting a total of 1,400 times on practically every word and every clause of the text. **On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, with eight abstentions. Since then, December 10 is celebrated every year worldwide as Human Rights Day.

The UDHR calls for universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the principles of non-discrimination and civil and political rights, as well as social, cultural and economic rights. The foundations of these freedoms are laid out in Articles 1 and 2 with their principles of dignity, liberty, equality and brotherhood. Articles 3-11 constitute the rights of the individual, such as the prohibitions on torture and slavery. Articles 12-17 detail the rights of the individual within civil and political society. Articles 18-21 are concerned with collective freedoms such as freedom of religion and articles 22-27 contain social, economic, and cultural rights. The final three articles, 28-30, relate to the duty of the individual to society at large and prohibit the use of rights in contravention of the purposes of the United Nations

Even though not formally legally binding upon UN members, the Declaration has been adopted in or influenced most national constitutions since 1948. It serves as the foundation for a growing number of international treaties and national laws and international, regional, national and sub-national institutions protecting and promoting human rights.

How is the UDHR enforced?

- The UN Human Rights Council is charged by the General Assembly with investigating violations of human rights.
- The Council engages independent rapporteurs to investigate and report on alleged human rights violations.
- The Human Rights Council ranks below the UN Security Council but is authorized to call on the UN Security Council to take action.

The UN Security Council can, in turn,

- Recommend measures for dispute resolution.
- Call upon other member nations to impose sanctions.
- Enforce its decision militarily.

The UDHR is also a foundational document in international law and can be enforced through international criminal proceedings. And finally, the UDHR provides language for human rights protection in the legal systems of individual countries.

What are some of the Jewish values related to the UDHR?

- Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel teaches in *Pirkei Avot* that the world is founded on Truth, Justice, and Peace, core values of universal human society.
- We uphold the value of *K'vod Habriot*, inherent human dignity, based on the idea found in Genesis that we are all created in God's image. This ensures that no human is worth more than another.
- We read in prophets such as Isaiah that what God wants from us is to feed the hungry and to free the oppressed. We have an obligation to create a just society.
- In Judaism, as in the UDHR, each human being has a unique destiny. The Chassidic teacher the Netivot Shalom teaches that no person is like another. From the day of the creation of Adam and onward, no person can fix in this world what it is the responsibility of another to fix. Everyone has his or her destiny and assignment in life.

Why should we as Jews celebrate the UDHR?

- Because we are human, with rights and obligations as human beings.
- Because the UDHR emerged, in large measure, as a worldwide response to the holocaust.
- Because as Jews our human rights are sometimes infringed upon by others with power over us; and because at times we are in power over others and must safeguard their rights.
- Because the UDHR emerged as a reaction to the Holocaust and the support for universal human rights is part of our pledge as a community to prevent genocide.

Human Rights Shabbat Lunch and Learn

Rabbi Margaret Holub

This outline is intended for a 90-minute session. Variations are included for those who do not wish to write on Shabbat.

Goals:

- To introduce the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) to Jews.
- To explore conceptual issues raised for Jews by the UDHR.
- To note points of congruence with and divergence from major Jewish thought categories.
- To give *kavod* to the UDHR and find ways to bring it into Jewish life and practice.

Materials:

- Blank index cards (not needed for Shabbat version)
- Handout on UDHR background from this booklet
- Copies of UDHR for each participant (download from web or use one included in booklet)
- Source sheet (see below)
- Tanakh (Jewish bible)
- Pop Quiz sheet (see below)
- Copies of *kaddish derabbanan* (*check your siddur*)

Introduction (15 minutes):

Distribute blank index cards. Ask each participant to write on a card: What are three fundamental rights that you depend on in your life? Hold on to your card (*On Shabbat, this can be done verbally. Ask each participant to turn to a neighbor and tell him/her*)

Hand out background sheet -- read or summarize the following points:

"The UDHR is based on an idea that came into its own during World War II: the idea that there are a few common standards of decency that can and should be accepted by people of all nations and cultures." (Mary Ann Glendon 2004)

UDHR drafted in aftermath of WW II, unanimously adopted (after 1,400 revisions!) by UN on December 10, 1948.

The UDHR can be seen as defining four kinds of rights:

- Rights of an individual as a person, such as the right to due process;
- Rights of individuals in groups, such as non-discrimination against racial, ethnic, tribal, religious and national groupings;
- Spiritual and political rights, such a freedom of religion and political affiliation;
- Economic, social and cultural rights, such as the right to adequate employment.

Hand out the UDHR and Ask people to read it. Instruct each person to go back to his or her card with its three indispensable rights. Did you find your three rights listed in the UDHR? Were there others that seem equally crucial to you? Are there other rights that you are surprised to see included? Rights that don't seem like fundamental and universal rights at all?

We are going to try to understand what the UDHR is by studying the four words of the title. For each word, we will pose a question and look at some of the thinking that went into the formation of the UDHR and then at some Jewish sources that hopefully open the questions still wider. In each of the following four sections, you might wish to work in your small group or *hevruta* (study partner). There are no right or wrong answers here.

Now divide people into hevruta of 2-4 people. They will stay with their hevruta for the remainder of the session and be given several texts and questions to reflect on together.

1. "UNIVERSAL" (15 minutes)

Core question: **Are there universal ethical norms which apply to every person in the world, regardless of ethnic, national or tribal affiliation?**

Hand out the source sheet.

Read or summarize: Jewish tradition can be seen as being ambivalent about universal claims. Recognizing that the following sources just touch on a complex set of issues in Jewish law and values, consider the following source and its contradictory explications:

Sources #1

*** *V-ger lo toneh v-lo tilkhatznu ki gerim heyitem b-eretz mitzrayim* -- You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Ex. 22:20)

What is a *ger*? Maimonides defines the "stranger" in narrow terms, as a person who converts to Judaism. Samson Rafael Hirsch, by contrast, defines the "stranger" as the non-Jew.

Maimonides comments: "To love the proselyte [*ger*] **who comes to take refuge under the wings of the Shechinah** is the fulfillment of two affirmative precepts. First, because he is included among neighbors [*re'im*] (whom we are commanded to love.) And secondly, because he is a stranger [*ger*], and the Torah said, "Love you therefore the stranger." (Deut. 10:19)

SR Hirsch comments: "The fact that a man is a stranger should in no way justify treatment other than that enjoyed by brethren in race. "This law of shielding the alien from all wrong is of vital significance in the history of religion. With it alone true Religion begins. The alien was to be protected, not because he was a member of one's family, clan, religious community or people; but because he was a human being. *In the alien, therefore, man discovered the idea of humanity.*" (Hermann Cohen)

? Are Jews required to uphold the claims of non-Jews with the same rigor that we ensure the rights of fellow Jews? (Discuss 10 minutes)

II. "DECLARATION" (15 minutes)

Core question: **Is the UDHR a *brit* (covenant), a prophetic vision or something else?**

One of the questions that arises as soon as you read the UDHR is, 'Is this just a set of lofty goals, or can it really be implemented and enforced?' See the UDHR background sheet for some information about models for enforcing the UDHR.

One might ask the same question of certain statements of core Jewish values. Consider the following passage (Yevamot 79a):

Sources #2

Thereupon he said to them: This nation [Israel] is distinguished by three characteristics: They are merciful, bashful and benevolent. 'Merciful', for it is written, And shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee. (Deut. 13:8) 'Bashful', for it is written, That His fear may be before you. (Ex. 20:17) 'Benevolent', for it is written, That he may command his children and his household etc. (Genesis 18:19) Only he who cultivates these three characteristics is fit to join this nation.

Is it true that only an individual who displays these three qualities is permitted to be part of the nation of Israel? For that matter, consider the "Ten commandments" (Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5.)

? 'Are these just a set of lofty goals, or can they really be implemented and enforced?' How, if at all, do you see these values made actionable and enforceable in the Jewish and human communities?

? What kinds of social mechanisms need to be in place for a "declaration" to actually result in human rights "on the ground?" (Discuss 10 minutes)

III. "HUMAN" (15 minutes)

Core question: **Do human beings really have special standing just because we are human?**

Consider the following verses from *Tanakh* about the role of human beings in the hierarchy of existence: (Sources #3)

"And God created the human in God's image, in the image of God God created him; male and female God created them. God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth

and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky and all the living things that creep on earth." (Gen. 1:27-28)

"Adonai, what is a man that You should care about him, mortal man that You should think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow." (Ps. 144:3-4)

Read or summarize: The UDHR begins with the presupposition of "the inherent dignity and ... equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family." It may be that our ethical perspective has shifted somewhat in the past fifty years, now recognizing the problematics of assigning special value or supremacy to human beings. Environmental philosophy and politics often describes life as a web, an ecosystem, in which human beings are just one element. From this perspective one may question why human beings have special rights at all. Several current social movements raise questions about human entitlement from different angles. On the one hand there are movements to ascribe rights and in some cases legal standing to animals and plants as well as to human beings. On the other hand, today we are particularly cognizant of the threat to the whole ecosystem caused by unchecked human entitlement.

? Does the animal rights movement cause you to revalue the concept of "universal human rights" in any way?

? The world community is in the process of trying to come to consensus on enforceable limitations on human activity and enterprise to forestall global environmental damage, such as the Kyoto Protocol. Does the present international dialogue on global climate change cause you to revalue the concept of "universal human rights" in any way?

? Should the notion of "human" in the UDHR be enlarged, contracted or changed in any way?
(Discuss 10 minutes.)

IV. "RIGHTS" (15 minutes)

Core question: **Is there a difference between a right and a mitzvah?**

Read or summarize: The fourth set of rights defined in the UDHR includes the right to economic security, employment with adequate pay and a "standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family..."

Eleanor Roosevelt spoke for the United States, saying that the US "favored the inclusion of economic and social rights in the Declaration, for no personal liberty could exist without economic security and independence." But the United States did not consider these rights to "imply an obligation on governments to assure the enjoyment of these rights by direct governmental action." The Soviet

Bloc nations, on the other hand, considered economic "rights" to be meaningless without a strong central state to provide health care, economic sustenance and education.

Take a vote here by show of hands: Is a decent standard of living an enforceable right or a social goal to be met if possible? YES or NO (no discussion if possible...)

The Jewish language of *mitzvah* -- commandment -- tends to place the moral emphasis on human obligation over human entitlement. But this is itself more complex than it sounds. If the community is obligated to support the widow and the orphan, does the widow or the orphan have a corresponding right to sustenance? If the employer is obligated to pay a fair wage, does the worker have a right to that wage?

The UDHR, by using the language of rights rather than of obligations, defines the claim of the disadvantaged and the powerless *vis a vis* the person or state with power and resource. Jewish law, by contrast, tends to address the entity with the power to perform mitzvot (described by R. Abraham Joshua Heschel as "every act done in agreement with the will of God. ")

? How would the UDHR change if it used the language of mitzvah rather than that of rights? Take a few of the rights that you have chosen at the beginning of this lesson as especially central and re-articulate them in the language of obligation rather than that of right. Upon whom is the mitzvah incumbent of realizing human rights? (Discuss 10 minutes)

IN CONCLUSION: GIVING DUE KAVOD (HONOR) TO THE UDHR (15 minutes)

"Pop quiz!" Give everyone handout #2. Ask everyone to work on their own to fill out their answers. After each item on the "quiz," ask them to note an article number or the first few words of the sentence. (On Shabbat this can be done verbally in *hevruta*.)

Instructions: Look for a moment at the text of the UDHR as a series of *kavvanot* (intentions) that can be used to bring focus and intention to various Jewish experiences and activities. Looking at its preamble and its thirty articles, choose a section of the UDHR that would provide an appropriate *kavvanah* with which to:

- Light the hanukkah.
- Bentsch birkat ha-mazon.
- Affix a mezuzah.
- Name a baby.
- Travel to eretz yisrael.
- Give tzedaka.
- Put on your tallit in the morning.
- Sound the shofar during Elul.

- Make kiddush on Shabbat.
- Take down your sukkah at the end of Sukkot.

If the UDHR were a *megillah* (like Esther for Purim, Song of Songs for Pesach, Ruth for Shavuot etc.), on which holiday would it be read? (10 minutes for pop quiz.)

When people are finished, do a quick call-out to compare people's answers.

? Now that you have become acquainted with the UDHR, how would you like to see it related to in Jewish life? Have everyone write an answer of a sentence or two on the back of their original index cards. Ask everyone who is willing to read what they have written.

Conclude with *kaddish derabbanan*.

SOURCES FOR UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

JEWISH PERSPECTIVES

SOURCE #1:

V-ger lo toneh v-lo tilkhatznu ki gerim heyitem b-eretz mitzrayim -- You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Ex. 22:20)

What is a *ger*? Maimonides defines the "stranger" in narrow terms, as a person who converts to Judaism. Samson Rafael Hirsch, by contrast, defines the "stranger" as the non-Jew. **Maimonides comments:** "To love the proselyte [*ger*] **who comes to take refuge under the wings of the Shechinah** is the fulfillment of two affirmative precepts. First, because he is included among neighbors [*re'im*] (whom we are commanded to love.) And secondly, because he is a stranger [*ger*], and the Torah said, "Love you therefore the stranger." (Deut. 10:19)

SR Hirsch comments: "The fact that a man is a stranger should in no way justify treatment other than that enjoyed by brethren in race. "This law of shielding the alien from all wrong is of vital significance in the history of religion. With it alone true Religion begins. The alien was to be protected, not because he was a member of one's family, clan, religious community or people; but because he was a human being. *In the alien, therefore, man discovered the idea of humanity.*" (Hermann Cohen)

SOURCE #2:

Thereupon he said to them: This nation [Israel] is distinguished by three characteristics: They are merciful, bashful and benevolent. 'Merciful', for it is written, And shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee. (Deut. 13:8) 'Bashful', for it is written, That His fear may be before you. (Ex. 20:17) 'Benevolent', for it is written, That he may command his children and his household etc. (Genesis 18:19) Only he who cultivates these three characteristics is fit to join this nation. (Yevamot 79a)

SOURCE #3:

And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky and all the living things that creep on earth. (Gen. 1:27-28)

O LORD, what is man that You should care about him, mortal man that You should think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow. (Ps. 144:3-4)

UDHR POP QUIZ!

Instructions: Look for a moment at the text of the UDHR as a series of *kavvanot* (intentions) that can be used to bring focus and intention to various Jewish experiences and activities. Looking at its preamble and its thirty articles, choose a section of the UDHR (and note below an article number or the first few words of the article) that would provide an appropriate *kavvanah* with which to:

- Light the hanukkah.
- Bensch birkat ha-mazon.
- Affix a mezuzah.
- Name a baby.
- Travel to *Eretz Yisrael* (Israel)
- Give *tzedakah* (charity)
- Put on your tallit in the morning.
- Sound the shofar during Elul.
- Make *kiddush* on Shabbat.
- Take down your sukkah at the end of Sukkot.

If the UDHR were a *megillah* (like Esther for Purim, Song of Songs for Pesach, Ruth for Shavuot etc.), on which holiday would it be read?

Ideas for a Human Rights Service

Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster

Goals:

- To celebrate 60 years since the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- To have congregation understand the connection between Judaism and Human Rights.

The following pages contain a number of readings and reflections on Human Rights. Please use them wherever you think would be most appropriate in your service. The Prayer for Human Rights Day and the D'var Torah themes found in this booklet are also intended for use in this service.

Reflection before lighting Shabbat candles

Shabbat is sacred time, a taste of a world when all live together in freedom and peace. As we celebrate 60 years since the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we pray for a day when its ideals become reality for every citizen of the world. This Shabbat, we will rejoice. When it is over, we commit to ensuring the human rights of all. May we all be sources of light in the world, not darkness.

A Reflection on Universal Human Rights

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads: "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." This reminds me of the famous statement of the rabbis in Mishnah Sanhedrin:

Therefore, Adam was created alone, to teach us that anyone who wastes one life in this world, the Torah treats them as though they had wasted a full world, and anyone who saves a life, the Torah treats them as though they had saved an entire world. And also for peace among creation, so that no person could say to another, "My ancestor was greater than yours," and to demonstrate God's greatness. When a person stamps coins, how many coins does he make from one mold and yet all are alike. And God stamps every person with the mold of the first person, and none are alike! Therefore, everyone is required to say, "For my sake the world was created."

Every other citizen of this world—the world was created for them. We are all stamped from a mold fashioned after God's image. Human equality is a radical concept in human history!

Thoughts on the Prayer for Our Country

What do we pray for our government? We ask God to teach our leaders insights of God's Torah: ruling fairly, creating of universal harmony, and ending hatred and bigotry. We ask that our country be influential in bringing the ideals of peace and freedom to the entire world. In today's global village, we must be willing to stand up for what is right and lead by example how to behave morally as a country. The Torah teaches: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Our government must act towards other countries as we would hope they would treat us. This is what it means to be a leader in human rights.

But we must also ask God to teach our leaders insights from their own "Torah" of human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." No one should be enslaved and tortured. Everyone has a right to be recognized as a person before the law. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. There is a right to an education, and to an adequate standard of living.

May our leaders continue to be inspired by both of these sources of wisdom, as we build our world's foundations of freedom, justice, and peace.

Let's celebrate! Saying *Hallel* on Human Rights Shabbat

Hallel is a series of psalms originally recited to celebrate the Festivals. In recent years, they have been used for other days of significant celebration. The Reconstructionist *siddur* even includes an abbreviated *Hallel* for use at night. Please consider saying some of *Hallel* during your Human Rights Shabbat service, with the goal of creating a festive mood. Some appropriate selections might include Psalm 117 and Psalm 118. Another appropriate psalm (not traditionally used in *Hallel*) would be Psalm 100, which you might consider using with the following *kavannah* (itself based on a prayer used in the *Pesach seder*):

60 years ago, the United Nations affirmed the rights of every citizen of this earth to freedom, justice, and peace, and recognized the dignity and worth of the human person. It is incumbent upon each person and every nation to "strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance." Coming so soon after the devastation of the Holocaust, International Human Rights Day should be a day of celebration in every Jewish community, for every generation. Therefore, we are bound to thank, praise, laud, glorify, extol, honor, bless, exalt, and revere the Source of Life who created every person in the divine image and who demanded that we pursue justice so that humankind might thrive. Let us sing a new song in God's praise. Halleluyah!

Jewish values and Human Rights

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,

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.

Whereas ...the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Then shall your light burst through like the dawn and your healing shall spring up quickly; Your Vindicator shall march before you, the presence of God shall be your rear guard. Then, when you call, God will answer. When you cry, God will say, "Here I am."

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Thus God will judge among the nations and arbitrate for the many peoples. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their swords into pruning hooks. Nation shall not take up sword against nation; They shall never again know war.

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Ben Azzai taught: "This is the line of Adam" (Genesis 5:1) is the most important concept in the Torah. Rabbi Akiva taught: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18) is a greater concept, so that no one should say: "Because I have been dishonored, let my fellow person be dishonored." Rabbi Tanhuma taught, "If you do thus, know that the person you have dishonored was created in the image of God."

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel taught: The world rests on three things: On Justice, on Truth, and on Peace, as it is written: "With truth, justice, and peace shall you judge in your gates." (Zech. 8:16)

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Have we not all one Parent? Has not one God created us? Why should we be faithless to each other, profaning the covenant of our ancestors?

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

May it be your will, Source of Life, that every one of your creations strive to fulfill your vision of peace and create a world in which everyone lives in freedom, free from fear. May we work to learn about these rights, educate others, and reinforce them daily in our lives. If there are those who do not live in freedom, then none of us truly is free. If there are those who live without basic dignity, then all of our dignity is compromised. We ask for your blessing on our leaders, who work to enshrine these rights in law. Give them the gift of true understanding and may we never experience war and devastation as human beings again.

Kavannot ideas:

- What is your personal connection between Shabbat and human rights?
- What is the difference between a right and a *mitzvah*?
- Is there a human rights leader that inspires you?
- The Torah teaches that we must do what is right and just. How do we live out those values or the values of the UDHR?

What human rights mean to all of us: A communal l'chayim for Human Rights Shabbat

Human rights mean something different to every member of your community. After the service, take a moment to reflect together. At *Kiddush*, ask people to volunteer what is the most important right to them, what right they expected to find in the UDHR but didn't, what Jewish values they think support the idea of human rights, and what they hope to do in the next year to promote human rights in their community. Ask someone (maybe in advance) to give a toast and say *l'chayim*. Then recite the *shehechyanu* before saying *Kiddush*.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלקינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Barukh atah adonay eloheynu melekh ha'olam shehecheyanu vekiyemanu vehigi'anu lazeman hazeh.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe, for keeping us in life, for sustaining us, and for helping us to reach this day.

Created in the Image of God: A lesson plan for children and teenagers

Rabbi Margaret Holub

The following lesson plan was originally written to provide a program on human rights and human rights abuses for students who were too young to view the film "Ghosts of Abu Ghraib" during the *Spotlight on Torture* week in October 2007. The age range goes from elementary through high school. The portion for younger students (elementary school students) focuses more on dealing with conflict and respect for others, even in hard situations, while the section for middle and high school students is more directly related on the issues related to torture and abuse. We hope it will continue to be used in all communities discussing U.S.-sponsored torture and the importance of human rights.

For younger students:

Goals:

- Learn the term *tzelem Elohim* (image of God) and its connection to the Creation story.
- Explore the connection between *tzelem Elohim* and human rights
- Reflect on the implications of *tzelem Elohim* theology for people you don't like or you disagree with.

Materials:

- 8-1/2" by 11" sheet with Genesis 1:26-27 in Hebrew and English on one side, very simple outline of a head and shoulders on the other.
- Small sheets of pretty paper.
- Colored pens.
- Tape.
- A blackboard or butcher paper and pen.

1. Hand out paper with Genesis passage on it. Read aloud in Hebrew and English. Have the students who know some Hebrew find the phrase *tzelem Elohim* (in v. 27) and help every student circle it.
2. Ask everyone to close their eyes and look within. Where is *tzelem Elohim* within yourself? Is it in a particular place in your body? What does it feel like? How might another person see *tzelem Elohim* within you? Take a quiet moment and feel the tselem in yourself, then open your eyes.
3. Hand out small pieces of pretty paper and ask each person to copy the word *ELOHIM* from the Torah text onto their paper. They can decorate it a bit with colored pens if you want. When they are finished, ask each person to tape the paper to some part of their body where they feel the *tzelem* is

(or, if this seems too literal and physical, have them tape the paper to their foreheads...) When finished, ask everyone to mill about in silence for about one minute, looking at each person and trying to see *tzelem Elohim* in that person.

4. Ask the group the following questions and record their answers on the blackboard:

-- What happens to *tzelem Elohim* when you hit a person?

-- ... when you let a person go hungry?

-- ... when you put a person in prison? (For this last one, ask further, "Does it matter if the person did something wrong?")

-- Are there some things that you can't do to another person even if they did something wrong? (If students don't come up with these, you can prompt for violence, starvation, humiliation...)

5. Take this list and ask the group to rephrase each item in positive language. E.g. "freedom from violence, meeting basic physical needs, dignity..." We might say that these are "human rights." They come from the teaching that every person, by virtue of being human and bearing the divine image, has to be treated with respect.

6. Ask the students to each privately think of the worst person they know or know of, someone they really do not like, do not think is a good person. Turn the text paper over to the outline of a human head. Don't write the name of the person you are thinking of or say it aloud! (That would be terrible *lashon ha-ra!*) But just think about that person's face. Take the *ELOHIM* sticker from your own forehead or body and stick it to that outline of a head. Think quietly: Does that person bear *tzelem Elohim*? Are there things that you can't do to that person, no matter how bad you think he or she is? Are there things you must do for him or her? Does this person have human rights? Reminding students not to reveal any information about the particular person they are thinking of, ask for responses to this question.

For high school students:

Goals:

-- To consider ethical questions about torture and formulate a personal position.

-- To become acquainted with the work of Rabbis for Human Rights-North America against torture.

Materials:

-- Copies for each student of "Six Questions to Clarify Your Position Regarding US-Sponsored Torture" (see: http://www.rhr-na.org/clarify_your_position_on_torture)

-- Copies for each student of the "Jewish Statement Against Torture" (see: <http://www.rhr-na.org/torture/statement>)

-- Copies of RHR-NA anti-torture brochure (Available at the RHR-NA website and from the office. See: http://www.rhr-na.org/files/rhr_brochure.pdf)

-- An egg timer.

1. Speed-dating about torture. Divide the class in half and have students form two lines facing one another. Set the timer for six minutes (or have a timekeeper keep time in six-minute increments.) Have students bring their copies of "Is This Statement for You?" Each pair will have six minutes to discuss the first question. Partners don't have to come to agreement, but they should help each other answer the question. When the timer rings, students should take a moment to thank their *hevruta* partners and mark their sheet with their own answer to the question they have just discussed. When this is done (one minute or so at max) have one line move one to the left and the last person in line partner with the person at the end of the other line and go on to question two. Repeat this pattern until students have discussed all six questions with a different partner each time and marked their page.

2. Give the students a copy of the "Jewish Statement Against Torture" and ask them to review it. Do they feel comfortable signing it? Why or why not? Take some comments from the students. If they are comfortable, ask them to sign the statement and submit it to RHR-NA. If they are not comfortable, ask them what they would need for a statement about torture to say.

3. Tell everyone that RHR-NA has as its first domestic project a campaign to engage the Jewish community in organizing against US-sponsored torture. Give out RHR-NA pamphlets (and NRCAT pamphlet if you have it as well.) What do students think that Jews need to hear to mobilize to oppose US-sponsored torture? Have someone take notes and promise to pass them on to RHR-NA.

Online Resources and Further Reading

A comprehensive list of websites, books, articles, and anti-torture organizations can be found at:

<http://www.rhr-na.org/links>

The organization Human Rights Education Associates has a large number of curricula and study guides related to many areas of human rights. They are particularly useful for descriptions of various international treaties:

<http://www.hrea.org/>

The United Nations has a special website for the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

<http://www.un.org/events/humanrights/udhr60/>

Samantha Powers, author of the gripping book about genocide *A Problem from Hell*, has co-edited an excellent volume called *Realizing Human Rights*:

http://www.amazon.com/Realizing-Human-Rights-Moving-Inspiration/dp/1403973113/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1227151535&sr=8-1

The founding principles of Rabbis for Human Rights-Israel:

<http://rhr.israel.net/principles-of-faith>

The RHR-NA/Kvod Habriot Statement of Principles:

<http://www.rhr-na.org/about/principles>

This prayer was written for International Human Rights Day, 2007, which fell during Hanukkah, and can be adapted as a candle lighting blessing for this year:

<http://www.rhr-na.org/resources/prayercard.pdf>

A British Jewish human rights network:

<http://www.renecassin.org/>