

Introduction into Liberal Judaism and the Living Wage

'To be a practising Liberal Jew in the twenty-first century... is to live according to the prophetic ideal of doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God. – Affirmations of Liberal Judaism

*'...the grim truth[is] that if girls work for less than a **living wage**, in a vitiated atmosphere, they are not likely to become the strong, self-controlled women whom we desire.'* - **The girl in the background. Lily Montagu, 1904**

You shall not abuse a needy and destitute labourer, whether a fellow countryman or a stranger in one of the communities of your land. - Deuteronomy 24:14

For the last 100 years labour conditions have been improving in the UK, with Liberal Judaism heavily involved in that struggle. Around us, particularly since the financial crisis, we see food banks and shelters springing up as people are paid too little to live on. Many of our communities have been involved in these efforts. This year Liberal Judaism is engaging with the Living Wage campaign to promote the prophetic and modern values of justice, fairness and equality. Liberal Judaism's 2014 Biennial theme is '*Radical Roots, Relevant Responses / Relevant Roots, Radical Responses.*' Campaigning for a living and fair wage is a realisation of this theme and the values of Liberal Judaism.

There are four major ways in which the Living Wage campaign will enrich Liberal Judaism. They are grouped into relationships, reputation, leadership and moral.

1. There is a clear moral motivation. By becoming a Living Wage employer where we can and campaigning for the living wage together displays what our movement stands for. It continues our history of being at the forefront of social justice issues.
2. The project is a vehicle to create more Liberal Jewish leaders in our communities who have studied Liberal Jewish traditions and texts and understand how Liberal Judaism connects to their modern lives.
3. There is an opportunity to build meaningful relationships between Liberal Jewish communities and other local institutions (particularly local churches) that will help LJ gain a more prominent relationship in their local areas and this will only feed into a growing reputation nationally as a force for positive change.
4. There is also reputation building through local and national press and each success should be celebrated appropriately, which raises awareness of both Liberal Judaism and the living wage campaign.

Our communities fall into different categories and whilst all communities can engage with the topic and campaign, different communities, depending on their area, size, how many people they employ and what those people are paid will have different experiences. ALL communities can learn about the text and values connected to labour rights and ALL

communities will be able to find some expression for this learning if they so wish. It is not the case that this campaign will only affect our big communities who employ lots of staff. This is an all-inclusive project that aims to instil a reconnection to LJ history and demonstrate the relevance of Liberal Judaism today.

The campaign is already in full swing. Liberal Judaism has been represented at a protest to push Tottenham Hotspur to pay their staff a Living Wage and attended an All Party Parliamentary Group on Poverty hosted event at Westminster. The Montagu Centre (Liberal Judaism HQ) has become officially accredited and will soon be followed by our first batch of Synagogues. The pictures below demonstrate the Rabbis and leaders from LJY-Netzer who have been involved so far. There is plenty of work to be done, and multiple ways for you and your members to get involved.

This pack contains articles from our Liberal Rabbis as well as other interesting articles which demonstrate the importance of this campaign. Also attached are ways of engaging with the campaign, contacts to consult with as well as official information from Citizens UK about the Living Wage Campaign and finally the forms for official accreditation. It is up to each and every community to discuss and debate how they want to take this forward. I would hope the minimum is a discussion on the topic in each and every community. However, I hope we as movement take it much further than that and by next May we can truly claim to be the first Jewish Denominational Movement in the UK to go Living Wage.

