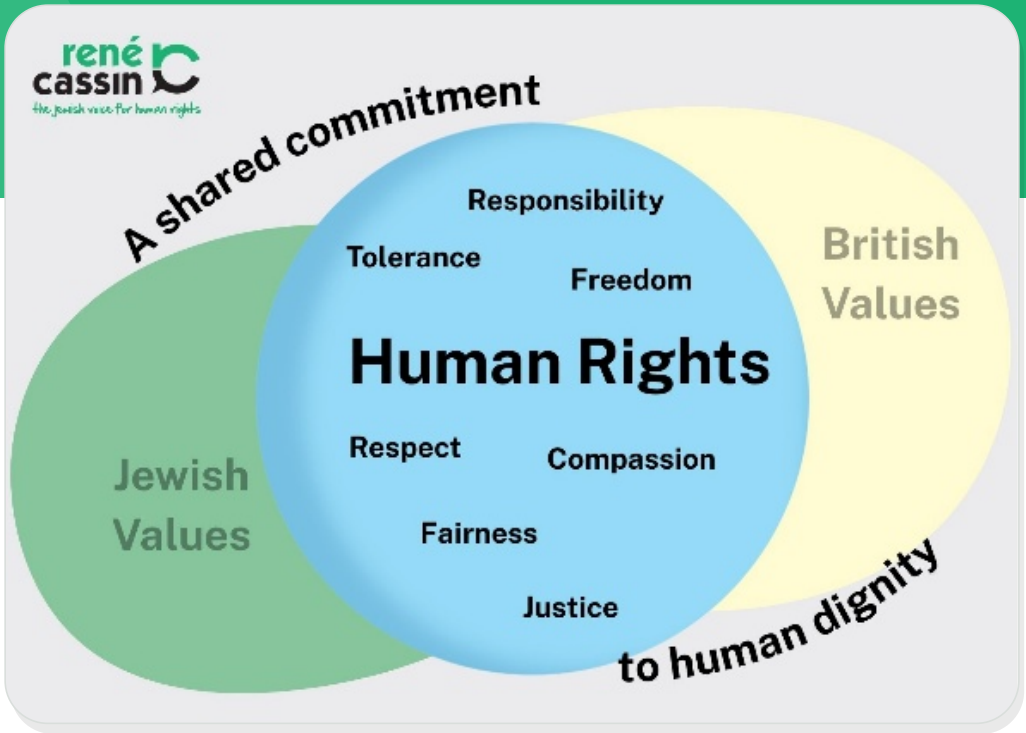
A RESOURCE FOR COMMUNITIES

Human Rights Shabbat 2026 (5787)

Jewish Values. British Values. Human Rights:
Where Values Meet



Celebrated on the closest Shabbat to International Human Rights Day

Dignity · Justice · Freedom

FOREWORD

Where our values meet

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René Cassin understood something our age is in danger of forgetting: that human rights did not drop from the sky in 1948, but grew from older soil, not least the conviction that every person is created b’tzelem Elokim, in the image of G-d. Shabbat itself is proof. A right to rest, first guaranteed to the servant and the stranger “so that your servant may rest as well as you”, was kept by one small people for millennia until the world adopted it as the weekend, and the Universal Declaration enshrined it in Article 24.

This year Human Rights Shabbat falls on the eighth night of Chanukah, as Joseph serves Pharaoh’s court without ceasing to be who he is: the British Jewish story in a sentence. Rights tell us what we are owed; Torah tells us what we owe, to G-d and to one another. I warmly commend this resource to every community.

Rabbi Alex Goldberg
Dean of Religious Life, Faith in the City; Dean Emeritus of Religious Life and Belief, University of Surrey

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How do we move from a general sympathy with the idea of human rights towards a deeper commitment that the struggle for Human Rights should be part of the fabric and design of our Jewish lives? René Cassin has helpfully given us here some of the resources and tools to start the conversation, and we will take it from there together.

Rabbi Anthony Lazarus
Mosaic Masorti

ABOUT THIS SHABBAT

Dignity, justice and freedom

Human Rights Shabbat is an annual event celebrated on the closest Shabbat to International Human Rights Day, marked on 10 December, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted on 10 December 1948.

This year's Human Rights Shabbat aims to foster conversation, understanding and reflection on our shared commitment to dignity, justice and freedom – core values that underpin Jewish tradition, British civic life and internationally recognised human rights principles.

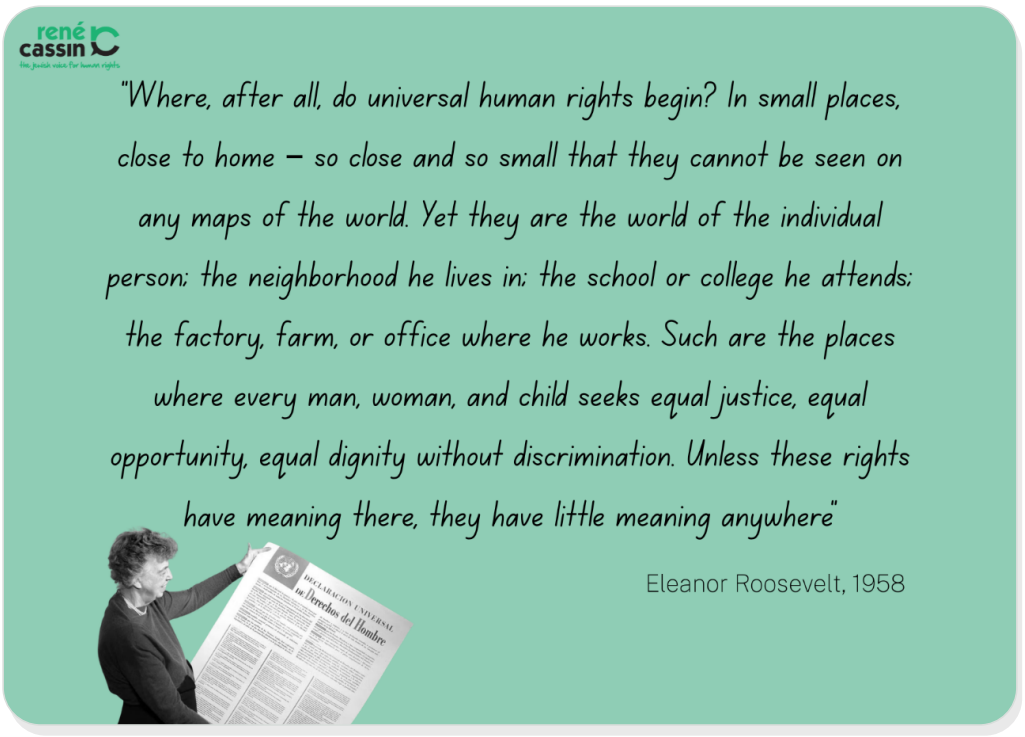
Human rights are not only a matter for institutions; they matter in everyday life too. Jewish tradition emphasises dignity and responsibility, while British civic life draws on fairness, mutual respect and service. These values call us to build communities rooted in respect, compassion and freedom, giving everyday expression to our shared humanity and our responsibility to one another.

10 December

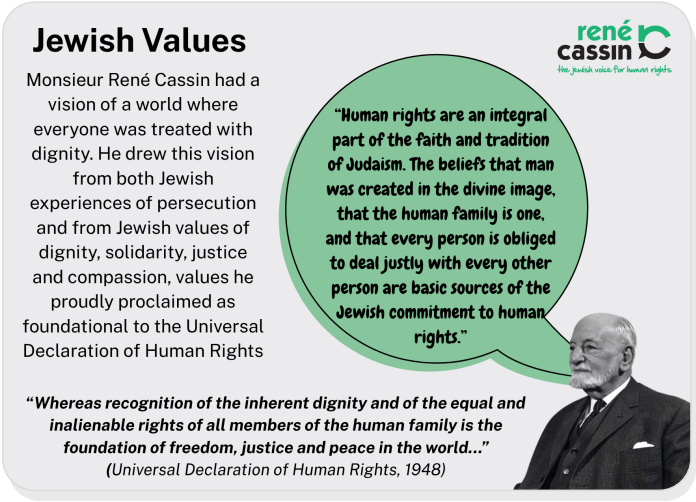
International Human Rights Day, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948

Eighth night of Chanukah

Where Human Rights Shabbat falls this year



Three images, one shared commitment



JEWISH VALUES

How Jewish values link to human rights

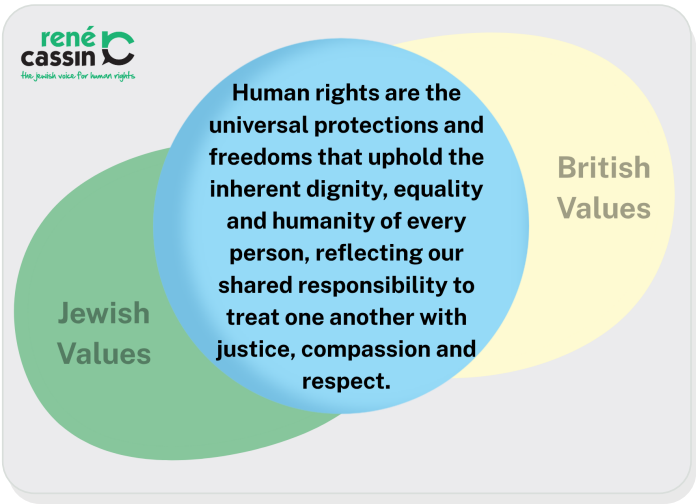
René Cassin understood human rights as deeply connected to Jewish tradition. The belief that every person is created *B'Tselem Elohim*, in the image of God, gives Jewish life a powerful language for human dignity. Jewish teachings about justice, compassion and responsibility remind us that dignity is not only something we claim for ourselves, but something we must uphold for others.



BRITISH VALUES

How British values link to human rights

British values such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance are closely linked to human rights. Human rights put these values into practice by protecting everyone's dignity, freedom and security, helping people and communities flourish. They are part of British civic life, supporting a democratic, respectful and inclusive society.



TOGETHER

Where Jewish and British values meet

Both Jewish and British traditions and values call on us to build a society rooted in dignity, justice, fairness, compassion and responsibility. Human rights give practical expression to these shared values, helping us protect the worth of every person and strengthen the communities we share. The UK's Human Rights Act protects everyone's basic rights in everyday life.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

Three images, one conversation

20–30 MINUTES PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS

Work in pairs or small groups and choose one of the three images on the next page. Work through the four prompts below; use these same prompts whichever image you choose. Finally, discuss the question accompanying your chosen image.

THE FOUR PROMPTS

1 Notice

What stands out in the image?

2 Interpret

What connection do you see with dignity or rights?

3 Discuss

Where might people see this differently?

4 Apply

What would this mean in an everyday situation?

TO FINISH

Leave five minutes at the end for each pair or group to share **one observation** and **one everyday example** with everyone.

CHOOSE AN IMAGE

Then discuss your question

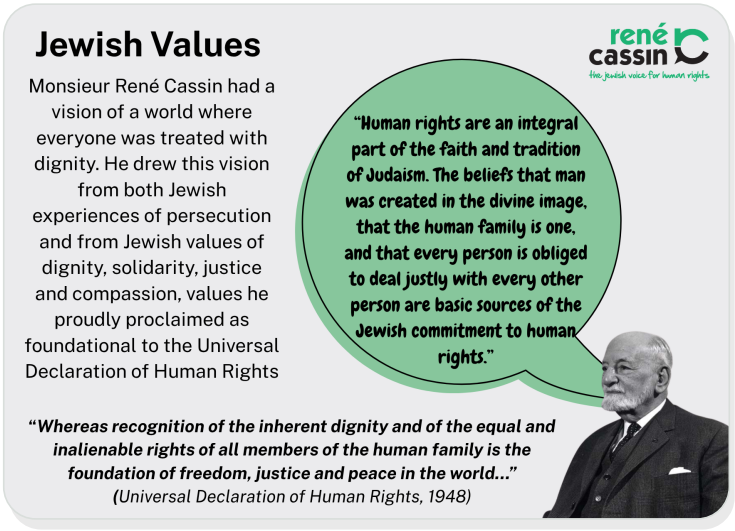


IMAGE 1

René Cassin

What do Jewish values teach us about human dignity?



IMAGE 2

The King

What do British values teach us about fairness, freedom, and respect?

Use the same four prompts as before.

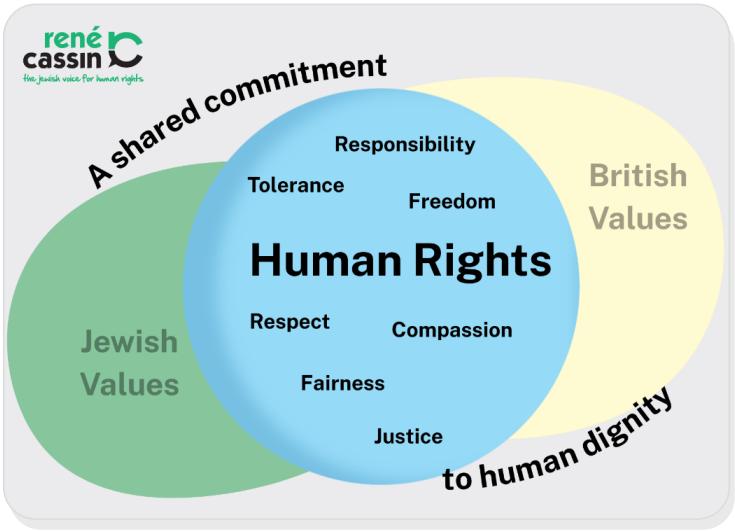


IMAGE 3

Together

Where do Jewish values and British values meet in our commitment to human rights?

Use the same four prompts as before.

A CLOSING REFLECTION

Rooted in Torah, shaped by experience

Judaism and Jewish history are profoundly connected with human rights. The Torah proclaims in its very first chapter that every person is created in God's image and that each life is sacred. The Mishnah teaches that every person is equal, but also unique, and therefore entitled to say, 'For my sake the world was created.'

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948 in response to the horrors of the Second World War and the Nazi Holocaust in which six million Jews were murdered.

Thus, both Torah and bitter experience teach us that, at the heart of Judaism, and also of British values, is the duty to uphold the dignity and basic rights of everyone, irrespective of gender, faith and ethnicity.

In our troubled world, this responsibility must be repeatedly reaffirmed, especially at a time of resurgent populism, racism, antisemitism and polarisation. That is why the work of René Cassin and their programme for Human Rights are so deeply important.

Jonathan Wittenberg
Senior Rabbi, Masorti Judaism

ABOUT

René Cassin

René Cassin is the UK's only Jewish human rights organisation. Our mission – grounded in Jewish teachings, values of dignity and justice, and historical experience – is to promote and protect human rights in the UK. René Cassin occupies a distinctive role within both the Jewish and wider human rights sector. We specialise in exploring the relationship between Jewish history, Holocaust memory and the development of the modern human rights framework.

We work within the Jewish community, building literacy, confidence and leadership in human rights, and across wider civil society, contributing a principled, historically informed voice to national debates on refugee protection, economic rights and tackling hatred.

rené cassin
the jewish voice for human rights