

## **The Jewish people have suffered injustice.**

In our lifetimes and those of our parents and grandparents, we have been the victims of individual and institutional anti-Semitism.

We have forgotten neither the atrocities of the Holocaust nor the exclusionary policies of the early twentieth century nor the individual acts of anti-Semitism that continue today.

We know that discrimination against any minority threatens all minorities.

**We have long been the go-betweens, and have experienced both the benefits and the risks of this position.**

As merchants, we moved between different places and cultures, learning new perspectives on the world, and becoming accustomed ourselves to getting along with many types of people. In the role of the court Jew, we enjoyed access to power, but also suffered when this position made us the targets of hatred.

**We share a communal narrative that reminds us of our enslavement to Pharaoh, and of our liberation from Egypt.**

Rather than use this memory as an excuse to oppress others, we have learned from the experience of oppression an obligation to protect the most vulnerable.

Time and again, the Torah reminds us that our personal experience of being strangers instills in us a responsibility toward those in our own society who are at risk for discrimination and oppression.

**We have been leaders in the major justice battles of the last century.**

We were among the leaders of the American labor movement, the civil rights movement, and the feminist movement, and we were disproportionately represented among the leaders of the Russian revolution and the early communist and socialist movements.

Our revolutionary history has taught us to aspire to be leaders in creating long-term change.

**We view *tzedakah* as a matter of justice.**

We consider ourselves not to be owners of the land, but rather stewards of the world's resources.

In that regard, we are committed to ensuring the well-being of those in need, and to redistributing the money and resources entrusted to us in a more equitable way.

**We believe that all human beings are equal, unique, and infinitely valuable creations in the divine image.**

The Talmud teaches that God created all of humanity from a single person “so that no one can say to another ‘my father was greater than yours’ . . . if a person makes many coins from one mold, they all look alike, but God fashioned every person in the stamp of the first, and yet not one of them resembles any other; therefore every single person is obliged to say, ‘the world was created for my sake.’”

(Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 4:5)

**We are the inheritors of a legal system that teaches us ethical interpersonal practices.**

From our tradition, we learn how to create equitable and mutually responsible relationships between workers and employers, landlords and tenants, buyers and sellers, and others between whom there is often an unequal distribution of power.

**We have heard from the biblical prophets a direct call to be agents of justice.**

In the Haftara read each year on Yom Kippur, Isaiah admonishes the people for pursuing business dealings while feigning piety by fasting. Instead, Isaiah says, fasting should provoke empathy with those who are suffering, and should lead to “let[ting] the oppressed go free . . . deal[ing] your bread to the hungry, and bring[ing] the homeless poor into your house.”

(Isaiah 58:6-7)

## **We believe in and work toward a perfected world.**

From our mystical tradition, we have learned that human beings have the power to return the world to its original perfection. Even in the darkest of days, we maintain faith in our own ability to contribute to the ultimate redemption of the world.

**We recognize that our own fate is bound up in the fate of others.**

During the 1960's, we joined the civil rights movement in part because we stood to gain from the dismantling of restrictive covenants and quotas. We continue to work on issues such as health care, education, and the environment that have a direct impact on our lives and on the lives of our children, and recognize that we will be most effective when we partner with other communities that share our own economic and social interests.