

# Sharing bread with the poor at Pesach

*In a special message for the Jewish festival of Pesach, Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks draws a parallel between the story of the Seder and the work of Tzedek.*

The seder service begins with an invitation: "This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all that are hungry come and eat. Let all who are needy come and celebrate Pesach." Why the apparent repetition? What is the difference between the hungry and the needy, or between "Come and eat" and "Come and celebrate Pesach"?

There is a remarkable commentary by Rabbi Yaakov Emden, the eighteenth century sage of Altona. He says that the first clause applies to non-Jews, the second to Jews. Pesach is the most Jewish of festivals, the story of our people and their sufferings. The bread of affliction is about Jewish affliction, the bitter herbs are about Jewish pain. There is nothing universalist about Pesach, as there is, for example, about Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Yet, according to Rabbi Emden, we preface the story of Jewish suffering with an invitation to non-Jews who are hungry, to come and eat. Why? Rabbi Emden explains that this is



*Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks*

part of the set of obligations, articulated in the Talmud, under the rubric of darkhei shalom, the ways of peace. The rule is, "We must give sustenance to poor non-Jews as well

as poor Jews, because of the ways of peace." (Gittin 61a).

There is something profound about this teaching. Particularity should lead to universality, not to inwardness and exclusion. Because we remember our people's pain, we become sensitized to other peoples' pain. We cannot eat in comfort while others go hungry. We cannot rest content in our freedom while other people suffer slavery. That is why, historically, Jews have been among the leaders in the fight against injustice, poverty, homelessness, disease, and oppression.

The argument goes deeper still. The matzah of Pesach represents two things. At the beginning of the seder we describe it as "the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt." Ibn Ezra explains that slaves were given unleavened bread because, being hard, it takes longer to digest. It removes hunger for longer than ordinary bread.

Later in the seder, we describe it as the bread which the Israelites ate as they were leaving Egypt, in too much of a hurry to allow the dough to rise. In fact we begin by dividing the matzah to show that it has two

*Continued on page 2*

## News in Brief

Tzedek has developed a new Pesach resource pack to help you enjoy your Seder night. If you are interested, take a look at [www.tzedek.org.uk/go\\_learn](http://www.tzedek.org.uk/go_learn)

Four new overseas projects are to receive funding from Tzedek after being approved by the executive board. The projects aim to increase economic opportunities in India

and promote sustainable energy production in Central Ghana. More details in the next issue of Arevut.

Tzedek's Chanukah appeal with Divine Chocolate raised an impressive £5350. Many thanks to everyone involved who helped make this possible.

Two Tzedek volunteers ran the Adidas Half Marathon in March, raising £910 for Tzedek. More details on Page 3.

Tzedek intern David Bush has now left London for Ghana to work with overseas

coordinator Peter Ndonwie for the next six months. David has been working for Tzedek as a full-time intern since graduating from Bristol University in 2008.

Seven Jewish schools and four youth movements took part in our Fairtrade education programme, successfully reaching more than 2,000 young people, 7-16 years old. More details on Page 6.

In December, Tzedek celebrated Chanukah in conjunction with the Jewish Volunteer Network with a party at London's City Point Club to thank all its volunteers.

## Chief Rabbi's message... continued from page 1

symbolisms, not one. At first, it is the bread of affliction. Later, once we have relived the exodus, it becomes the bread of freedom.

The difference between freedom and slavery does not lie in the quality of bread we eat, but the state of mind in which we eat it. What transforms the bread of affliction into the bread of freedom is the willingness to share it with others.

Primo Levi was a survivor of Auschwitz. In his book, *If This Is a Man*, he describes his experiences there. According to Levi, the worst time of all was when the Nazis left in January 1945, fearing the Russian advance. All prisoners who could walk were taken on the brutal death marches. The only people left in the camp were those who were too ill to move. For ten days they were left alone with only scraps of food and fuel. Levi describes how he worked to light a fire and bring some warmth to his fellow prisoners, many of them dying.

He then writes: "When the broken window was repaired and the stove began to spread its heat, something seemed to relax in everyone, and at that moment Towarowski (a Franco-Pole of 23) proposed to the others that each of them offer a slice of bread to us three who had been working. And so it was agreed.

"Only a day before a similar event would have been inconceivable. The law of the Lager said: "eat your own bread, and if you can, that of your neighbour," and left no room for gratitude. It really meant that the law of the Lager was dead.

"It was the first human gesture that occurred among us. I believe that that moment can be dated as the beginning of the change by which we who had not died slowly changed from Haftlinge [prisoners] to men again."

Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free human beings. One who fears tomorrow does not offer his bread to others. But one who is willing to divide his food with a stranger has already shown himself capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born. That is why we begin the seder by inviting others to



*A participant at Relief Organisation for the Handicapped (ROH), a Tzedek project in Tamil Nadu, Southern India*

**“One who is willing to divide his food with a stranger has already shown himself capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born”**

**Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks**

join us. Bread shared is no longer the bread of affliction.

That is, I believe, what motivates Tzedek and those who work for it. They know that Jewish particularity is our gateway to human universality, that to be a Jew is to be true to our faith while being a blessing to others regardless of their faith. That is why we as

Jews must be concerned with the fate of the needy and oppressed, wherever and whoever they are. May you, inspired by the Pesach story, continue to enlarge the work of Tzedek, for it is by reaching out to others, giving help to the needy and support to those who are otherwise alone, that we bring freedom and justice into the world, and with them, God.

## Bhangra Beats

On Thursday 12th February, Tzedek supporters came out in force to enjoy a unique fundraising event; Bhangra Beats. Held at 93 Feet East in the heart of London's popular Brick Lane, Tzedek put on a fantastic showcase of Indian dance and music, including The Dhol Drummers, DJ King Toby and Bollywood dancers Sri Sarkar. This was no time to be a shrinking violet, as we were put through our paces learning a Bollywood routine. In addition, the lucky few who won the raffle prizes took home £80 of People Tree vouchers, a meal for two at Beit HaMadras, MAC cosmetics and a Chelsea football shirt signed by Joe Cole. A great time was had by all, and all proceeds went



towards Tzedek's projects in Africa and India. For more information about future Tzedek events, please visit [www.tzedek.org.uk](http://www.tzedek.org.uk). If you would like to get involved, or help organise events, contact Katie Hill for further details.

*Megan Schaffer*



## Tzedek at Limmud Conference, December 2008

Amid the discussions, the sessions, the films, the music, the comedy, the food and the bar, Tzedek set out its place in the buzz that is Limmud conference. This year was a very successful Limmud for Tzedek, in which we brought the message of global justice and social change to thousands of participants. Tzedek ran educational programmes, gave out thousands of free Fairtrade chocolates (kindly donated by Divine), and had volunteers collecting contact details throughout.

Highlights included Katie Hill (Tzedek's volunteer coordinator), Howard and Fiona Brodie, who ran a seminar about overseas

volunteering. Hannah Weisfeld and Dr Rafi Zarum (in association with the Jewish Cultural Centre for London and London School of Jewish Studies) hosted a lively discussion about Fairtrade and halacha which saw a wide spectrum of delegates engage in the topics. Tzedek, represented by Hannah Weisfeld, also teamed up with Christian Aid's Nigel Varndell and Islamic Relief's Imran Mohammed in a discussion on how to end poverty, hosted by Clive Lawton.

Tzedek also had a dynamic presence at Young Limmud where efforts were led by Vikki Rose, Tzedek's education projects

director. Activities included drama, creating passports and story-telling, which focused on children's rights. Tzedek was able to bring a Fairtrade Kosher hamper competition to the conference thanks to generous donations by Divine Chocolate, Green & Black's and Rowse Honey. The lucky winner was Sam Cohen who got to take home bundles of tasty Fairtrade fare.

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped us to make such a positive and energetic presence at Conference and we look forward to seeing you all there next year.

*David Bush*

## Silverstone Half Marathon

On Sunday 15th March, two determined runners headed up to the famous Silverstone race track to take part in the Adidas Half-Marathon on behalf of Tzedek.

Among the 10,000 competitors, David Blitz and Jason Turze – both running their first half-marathons – made admirable attempts at the race and achieved excellent times. Jason finished in two hours, 41 minutes, after a knee injury forced him to walk the last two miles, and David finished at a noble two hours and nine minutes.

Not only did Jason and David run a brilliant



Visit [www.communityfunrun.org](http://www.communityfunrun.org) to run for Tzedek in May!

race, but they also succeeded in raising a grand total of £910 for Tzedek. Thanks to both of them for their enthusiasm and dedication in running the race and raising money for Tzedek.

David and Jason have set a fantastic standard for future sponsored events. The next chance to take part and raise much-needed funds for Tzedek is coming up on Sunday 24th May 2009 at the Community Fun Run in London. Choose from 5k or 10k races, and register online at [www.communityfunrun.org](http://www.communityfunrun.org)

*Katie Hill*

# On the ground in India

**Dan Berelowitz**, Tzedek's director, spent a week in India in January, visiting the regional projects that Tzedek has supported in recent years. He reflects on his time there and tells the story of CRSD, a local organisation that Tzedek has supported for the last 12 years

I now absolutely believe that Tzedek can be highly effective in the grass-roots development it practices in India and Africa. It's not that I was unconvinced before; I have read our monitoring reports about Tzedek-funded communities shaking off the shackles of poverty. But during my recent trip to India I saw with my own eyes what Tzedek funds can do over a number of years.

The projects Tzedek supports must always be sustainable and able to continue eradicating poverty after the grant has been used. For that reason, the true sustainability of a project cannot be properly assessed until after the grant period has finished. In India, I visited a Tzedek-funded micro-credit self-help group for women, run by the Centre for Rural Systems and Development (CRSD), which we have been supporting for more than 12 years.

CRSD is run by the quietly spoken but passionate Jothi Ramalingham, who spoke at our last AGM in London. As the sun started rising in Tamil Nadu, Jothi picked me up from my hostel in Chennai and we spent the two-hour journey to the projects catching up on recent successes at CRSD, the challenges presented by the Mumbai attacks and how much I was loving the Indian food. He told me about the project we were visiting.

Over the last four years, Tzedek has enabled CRSD to put 1400 women into self-help groups. The women deposit 60 rupees (80p) per month in a group-owned bank account with about 15 other women. Once they have been saving for six months, the government makes a low-interest loan of 10,000 rupees (£140) to the group. That money is then loaned out to group members who use it to generate their own income and eventually become self-reliant. In addition to this, the women are trained in the skills needed to achieve these goals.

Through the cloud of dust thrown up by the car I saw a group of about a hundred women sitting under a tree wearing brightly coloured Saris; women of every age and skin tone. Some were old with stately wrinkles, others fresh-faced, and all adorned with gold ear-



*The child of a woman being supported by a Tzedek-funded project in Tamil Nadu, India*

rings and nose studs. These are some of the women that Tzedek has supported.

I always find it awkward when I meet people who have benefited from Tzedek funds. I feel embarrassed that I am putting them in a position where they have to show their gratitude. These women lived on under \$1 a day (the internationally agreed level below which one is considered to live in extreme poverty) before Tzedek started funding them. Helping them out of poverty is not charity; it is Tzedek – justice.

But I am here to do a job; to find out on behalf of the Jewish community if our funds are being put to good use and to bring stories of success and an honest view of the challenges back home so that we can all learn from them. For all of you who have given money to

Tzedek, CRSD embodies the highest level of Tzedakah, giving money, a loan, your time or whatever else it takes to enable an individual to become self-reliant.

The women have been gathered together by CRSD to feedback on the issues they are facing. Jothi asks me if I would like to ask any questions. After overcoming stage fright, I ask how many children each of the women has. I quickly pass over no children and one child with only five women putting their hands up. When I say two, about seventy raise their hands; very few have three or more children. I then ask how many brothers and sisters their grandmothers had. The consensus, on average, is six. One woman shouts out that it is impossible for them to have more children because they understand what their grand-



*House built with money from the housing association*

parents didn't; that a woman living close to the poverty line can't afford to educate, clothe and feed more than two children.

Falling birth rates are one of the best indicators that women are becoming empowered, educated and are escaping poverty. The reason why birth rates have fallen from six to two in two generations are many, but CRSD can take some of the credit because it regularly runs sessions on family planning for members of the self-help groups.

The first thing that every woman does when she joins a self-help group is to buy basic life insurance. After the session was over, two cheques for 30,000 rupees (£400), over a year's salary, were handed out to people in the crowd. Two women had died in the last two months and it was the husband of one of them and the two daughters of the other who were collecting the cheques. CRSD helped them open up a bank account so they could deposit the money. I asked the widowed man what he would spend the money on and he explained that he was going to build a new house so that he could find a good wife for his son. On my travels I came to realise that a good marriage for your children is everything to an Indian parent.

Next we visited a self-help group of 14 women who had been making incense. The president of the group proudly showed me the meticulous records that CRSD had trained her to keep. Each woman is required to sign her name on the minutes of each meeting to confirm their correctness. If they can't write, they sign with a thumb print.



*One of the self-help groups in action*

The president of the group was training two other women to keep the minutes in other groups to pass on the skills and opportunity she had gained. I asked the group how life had changed since they started in the group eight years ago. These were the answers I received:

- "We are very active in the community now; we have learnt many things about health, sanitation and family planning."

- "The illiterate women in the group can now all read."

- "We have access to money for medicine and doctors fees in case of an emergency."

- "In our district of 500 women, 109 children got scholarships to local schools because CRSD has taught us how to apply to the government for help. We had to help six

families in the community pay for school books and bags and there were two children with disabilities that our group has helped."

- "We have much more confidence now but we still have many things to learn."

It was the confidence of these women that struck me the most during my time in India. As much as I had read about empowerment and helping people to help themselves, I always found it a hard concept to grasp. The first president of a self-help group that Tzedek funded 12 years ago is now president of a housing association funded through tiny contributions from all the women in the groups. She is standing for the next local elections and yet when she started, she could barely read and write.

In the last twelve years, Tzedek has granted around £25,000 to 1,400 women to join self-help groups. This means families now send their two or three children to school whereas before many would have worked in the fields from a young age. That means about 5,000 lives that have been changed, and changed not just for a day but forever. That is the lasting legacy of carefully invested Tzedek funds and one we should be proud of.

Today there are approximately 1.4 billion people living on less than a dollar a day. The only way to change their lives is one at a time. I am convinced that Tzedek can play a small but incredibly important role in bringing about the end of poverty. As Tzedek continues to grow through our donors' ever-increasing gifts of time and money, we will continue to extend our reach and impact.



*A participant holds up holds up the minutes of a meeting she has taken*

# Fairtrade Fortnight

This year, Tzedek and the Jewish community took a lead role in Fairtrade Fortnight, 23rd February to 8th March 2009. **Julia Mayersohn** discusses the importance of the Fairtrade movement and its relevance to Tzedek.

*"If you sell anything to your neighbour or buy anything from your neighbour, you shall not wrong one another."*

*Leviticus, 25:14*

Judaism has long taught of the importance of maintaining a code of ethics in business relationships. While many in the community take this into account in running their own companies and dealing with their employees, every one of us is also responsible for the business ethics of the companies we engage with as consumers. The Fairtrade movement harnesses the power of globalised trade to allow consumers to use their buying power to improve the lives of people around the world.

In an increasingly interconnected world, individual farmers in developing countries often find their global bargaining power to be limited. They work small areas of land and are often unable to demand prices that will allow them to properly feed their families, grow their products without damaging the environment and maintain safe working environments for their employees. If they remain undifferentiated from their many competitors, buyers will simply go elsewhere. But by becoming Fairtrade certified, farmers improve their bargaining power and make their products more attractive to consumers.

Like many of the projects Tzedek is involved with, engaging in Fairtrade creates the opportunity to combat poverty through sustainable means. The Fairtrade symbol on food, clothing and other products signifies that the producers have met minimum standards of environmental, social and economic behaviour. By becoming Fairtrade certified, growers in some of the world's poorest countries can demand more payment for their products. The UK is one of the biggest markets for Fairtrade products, reaching an estimated total retail value of £493 million in 2007. Though prices for Fairtrade products are slightly higher



**"If you sell anything to your neighbour or buy anything from your neighbour, you shall not wrong one another"**

**Leviticus, 25:14**

than others, the certification means that the money goes directly to ensuring farmers have a sustainable livelihood.

Fairtrade was chosen as this year's focus for Jewish social action in the community, and Tzedek has been involved in several exciting initiatives. We created a Jewish Guide to Fairtrade in collaboration with several other communal organisations. We educated more than 2,000 students on equitable trading issues as part of Fairtrade Fortnight, a UK-wide event incorporating activities by many different organisations. And we incorporated Fairtrade into the annual Chanukah appeal by enclosing Fairtrade chocolates, generously donated by Divine Chocolate.

We are also now launching a number of exciting events, in collaboration with the Jewish Community Centre for London, including "Chocoholics" cooking classes using Fairtrade ingredients and a screening

of "Black Gold", a hard-hitting documentary on the behaviour of large coffee companies.

Though Fairtrade Fortnight has been and gone, social action is a year-round activity and there is plenty still to do for those interested in getting involved. You might want to make your Simcha celebrations Fairtrade. By buying your flowers, kippot or food through Fairtrade channels, you can spread the joy of your special occasion far beyond the end of the celebration.

Or you could volunteer as a speaker for Tzedek. We need to get the word out about the importance of equitable trading issues, to bring the message clearly to schools, synagogues and other groups. Tzedek will provide the training, all you need as a volunteer speaker is enthusiasm and dedication.

Contact *Katie Hill* if you are interested in more information on Fairtrade:  
*Katie@tzedek.org.uk*

## Clive's Column

Pesach is of course the festival of freedom. We eat matza in solidarity and empathy with the enslaved and we eat matza because we know that even cardboard baked in freedom is a greater joy than challah produced in oppression. Both aspects of matza chime with Tzedek's sensibilities.

But what of after Pesach? Three events punctuate the seven-week journey from Egypt to the foot of Mount Sinai for Shavuot and each of them resonates with Tzedek's concerns.

The first, but most recently instituted, is Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Day. This is the Jewish day, not to be confused with the UK national memorial day in January, when we reconsider once again this savage time in our history. Surely it must accentuate to all Jews that we are not allowed to look away when injustice steals people's lives and rights to equal op-

portunities and dignity.

Then comes Yom Ha'Atzma'ut, Israel Independence Day. It is hard now for some to see Israel as a simple, uncomplicated beacon of unalloyed optimism but none of the current issues in which the region is mired should lead us to forget how passionately the idea of Jewish self-determination was espoused and how motivating it still is for so many. Make no mistake; this was not about material well-being but about simple human dignity and emotional and psychological security. We should not lose sight in Tzedek that we do our work not least for these reasons. We do not just want to "feed the poor", but we want to ensure that their "tzelem Elohim" (image of God), shines as brightly as all human beings have a right to expect.

And finally, Lag b'Omer, the 33rd day of the Omer. This really odd little festival celebrates

the day on which a plague stopped. Given the rise of cholera in Zimbabwe,

the prevalence of malaria and HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and the extensive malnutrition in all the places in which Tzedek works, surely it is not unreasonable to ask you all, when Lag b'Omer comes round this year, to redouble your commitment to Tzedek to help make our own little contribution to the world one day being able to celebrate its own global Lag b'Omer when such plagues are eradicated.

*Clive A Lawton is chair of Tzedek's trustees*



## \*The message of envelope stuffing\*

When I re-launched the Tzedek newsletter nearly three years ago, I picked up eight heavy boxes of newsletters from a local printing shop to mail out to hundreds of loyal supporters. It took me and a friend nearly three weeks to fold them up, stuff and stamp the envelopes and get them in the post. By the time we were done, I wondered what I'd got myself into and whether Arevut would ever get beyond the launch issue.

Last time we mailed Arevut, just before Rosh Hashanah, it was a different story. A couple of emails to volunteers and suddenly we had ten people in Tzedek's offices for an evening – the whole process took just a few hours. It may seem inconsequential, but I was strangely touched by the sight of a group of people who had turned up cheerfully and given their time for the relatively mundane task of envelope stuffing. It's a sign of how far Tzedek has come over the last few years, to the extent that even just by helping with a mail-out, people know they are contributing to something far greater.

If there is one message Tzedek has always tried to encompass in everything it does, it's that no act is ever too small to make a real difference. That's why we know that small-scale development projects collectively make a significant contribution to the relief of poverty. So thank you to our merry band of envelope stuffers and to everyone who has contributed to another issue of Arevut.

Happy Pesach!

Joel Clark



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Yes I would like to combat poverty and make a monthly donation of...

- £50     £25  
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Email: info@tzedek.org.uk

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## Tzedek is...

...an overseas development and educational charity working in some of the poorest communities in Africa and Asia. Tzedek is motivated by Jewish values and teachings but works beyond the Jewish community to relieve poverty regardless of religion or race.

#### Principal Aims:

- to provide direct support to small-scale, self-help, sustainable poverty relief development projects
- to educate people, particularly in the Jewish community, about the causes and effects of poverty and the Jewish obligation to respond
- to support campaigns that aim to bring an end to global poverty
- to run an overseas volunteer programme in which Jewish volunteers can work with local development projects in Africa and Asia

#### What makes Tzedek Jewish?

In addition to drawing its support from within the Jewish community. Tzedek's work is guided by and expresses vital Jewish values. Tzedek understands tzedeka (charity) to be a form of tzedek (justice). Our work enables us to express the Jewish imperative of acting as an or 'lagoyim' (a light to the world) and our responsibility to pursue tikkun olam (repair of the world). Maimonides said that the 'highest form of charity is to take a poor person into partnership' and this is now state-of-the-art overseas development practice.

To donate to our valuable work, please send a cheque, payable to Tzedek, to the office, or visit our website.

## \*Coming up at Tzedek:\*

**Sunday 24th May:** Community Fun Run (10K or 5K). Just £10 to enter, details on Page 7

**Sunday 21st June:** Tzedek Quiz Night at The Adelaide, 43 Adelaide Road, London NW3 3NL

**Sunday 12th July:** Cycle ride from London to Southend with the JCC. More details to come.

**Sunday 6th September:** The Great British Duck Race. Tzedek supporters can adopt a duck on behalf of Tzedek. The sooner you adopt a duck, the more chances you have of winning one of the monthly cash prizes! The overall winner of the duck race will win £10,000 and all participants will be part of a world-record breaking attempt.

More information: [www.thegreatbritishduckrace.co.uk](http://www.thegreatbritishduckrace.co.uk)

