



Fair Trade in your Synagogue

# Share a Cup of Loving Kindness

Coffee is big business. It's one of the most heavily traded commodities in the world. But for the majority of small coffee farmers, the benefits are few. The chain of events that leads from the coffee farm to your cup is long and expensive, and often leaves the farmer with very little to live on.

Most small coffee farmers live in isolated communities in some of the world's poorest countries. They usually sell their coffee through middlemen, known to Latin American farmers as "coyotes." With world prices in constant flux and coyotes offering the lowest price possible, farmers never know how much they'll get for their crops.

Some 20 million people near the equator depend on coffee for their livelihoods. In their struggle to make a simple living, the producers of one of the world's luxury crops are often trapped in poverty.

But there is an alternative: FAIR TRADE. Fair Trade shares the bounty of the coffee trade with those who grow the crop, helping them build a better future for themselves and their communities.



## Fair Trade and Judaism

Faith communities throughout the United States are responding to the plight of small coffee, tea, and cocoa farmers by choosing to purchase Fair Trade. In 2004, over 8,000 congregations of many denominations participated in the Equal Exchange Interfaith Program. Recognizing our obligation to pursue justice and healing throughout the world, people of faith can apply religious and spiritual beliefs to our decisions as consumers. For Jews in particular, the Torah and Talmud outline specific guidelines regarding the treatment of laborers and care for the land. According to Mishna Torah 10:7-14:

“The highest level of *tzedakah*, exceeded by none, is that of the person who assists a poor person by providing him with a gift or loan or by accepting him into a business partnership or by helping him to find employment—in a word, by putting him where he can dispense with other people’s aid.”

# Fair Trade and Judaism Continued...

Fair Trade provides consumers with opportunities to participate in just business partnerships with the producers of agricultural products in some of the poorest corners of the world. Certainly this is an act of *tzedakah* worth pursuing.

“Justice, Justice thou shalt pursue.”

The Equal Exchange Interfaith Program offers products and educational resources designed specifically to enable communities of faith to get involved in Fair Trade. Please read on to see how you can join the growing number of synagogues in the Fair Trade movement!

## How to Get Involved

Choose Fair Trade whenever coffee, tea, or cocoa are served; share your *simchah* with those in need by serving fairly traded products.

Purchase Fair Trade products from Equal Exchange at wholesale prices and resell for a synagogue fundraising project.

Involve young members of the congregation in educational projects about Fair Trade.

Join an Interfaith Program delegation to the coffee lands! Every winter, dozens of program participants travel to Latin America to meet farmers like Don Wilfredo and witness the benefits of Fair Trade first hand.



Coffee Farmer, Don Wilfredo Herrera Mendoza & family  
CECOCAFEN Cooperative, Matagalpa, Nicaragua

For more educational resources or ordering information for Equal Exchange's certified Kosher fairly traded products, contact:

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Equal Exchange is a worker-owned cooperative dedicated to Fair Trade.

