

## Fun facts for information station handouts:

Coffee and Tea fun facts (from "A History of the World in Six Glasses" by Tom Standage)

"Coffee, the sober drink, the mighty nourishment of the brain, which unlike other spirits, heightens purity and lucidity; coffee, which clears the clouds of the imagination and their gloomy weight; which illuminates the reality of things suddenly with the flash of truth." Jules Michelet (French historian, 1798-1874)

Coffee arrived in Europe around the 17th century during the Age of Reason. Water was often contaminated and therefore unsafe to drink, so most people drank beer and wine, even in the morning. Coffee helped people stay awake and sober, and therefore far more productive, leading to an explosion of growth in intellectual fields.

The custom of drinking coffee likely originated in Yemen in the 15th century, and quickly became widespread in the Arab world. The innovation of turning coffee berries into a drink is attributed to Muhammad al-Dhabhani, a Sufi Muslim. (For centuries prior, people would chew coffee berries for their stimulating properties.)

Some in the Muslim world saw coffee as a legal alternative to alcohol (which was forbidden), while others worried that coffee was intoxicating like alcohol, just in different ways. Ultimately, coffee triumphed and drinking it became a widespread practice in early versions of coffee houses, a culture that eventually spread westward to Europe.

European coffee houses became news and information centers, allowing new ideas to spread far and wide. (For men only- women were not permitted inside until much later.)

European colonizers sought to break the Arab world's monopoly on the coffee crop, and set up coffee plantations in colonies like Java (Indonesia), various Caribbean islands, Suriname, Venezuela, and Brazil.

Tea:

"Better to be deprived of food for three days than of tea for one." -Chinese proverb

According to Chinese legend, the first cup of tea was brewed by emperor Shen Nung around the year 2700 BCE.

The first tea was an infusion of dried leaves, buds, and flowers of the bush *camellia sinensis* from the jungles of the Himalayas on the India/China border.

People had long noticed the medicinal qualities of chewing leaves and rubbing them on wounds, before brewing them into a drink.

Tea likely migrated into China from Buddhist and Taoist monks, sometime around the 6th century BCE and 1000 years later, was firmly established as the national beverage.

Tea was considered a safe beverage when drinking water was unavailable, both because it requires boiling water, and because it contains tannic acid, which kills bacteria.

Tea leaves (packed into bricks) became an early form of currency, literally paper money for traders.

Tea spread to Japan around the 14th century, where elaborate tea ceremonies developed.

When European sea traders first arrived in China in the 16th century, they found a civilization far more advanced and established than their own. They began a trading relationship, which allowed tea to eventually make its way westward.

Most Chinese dynasties drank only green tea. Black tea is made by allowing the leaves to oxidize overnight, and is considered inferior, and therefore the only tea suitable for foreigners to drink and import to their home countries.

Tea had less of an impact on European culture than coffee, because it was much more expensive. Britain more than any other country, embraced tea (and introduced the addition of milk). Consumption exploded over the 18th century.

Twining's opened a tea house next door to their coffee house (which only men could enter) specifically for women, becoming a central gathering spot for London women. Eventually, tea became an essential part of the British diet and culture.

Right before American independence, the duty on tea imports accounted for 10% of British government revenue.

Wanting to break its reliance on China for tea, the British turned to India to start growing and harvesting tea in large quantities, leading to civil unrest in China.

Links for More:

<https://fairtradejudaica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/FairTradeJewishValuesMatrix.pdf>

<http://fairtradejudaica.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/FTJSupplementforEECurriculum.pdf>

<https://equalexchange.coop/sites/default/files/HistoryofFairTrade.pdf>

**RESOLUTION ON FAIR TRADE COFFEE: APPROVED BY THE COMMISSION ON SOCIAL ACTION, UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM, NOVEMBER 2002**

**BACKGROUND**

Coffee is world's second largest traded commodity after oil, with worldwide sales of \$55 billion. It is also the leading source of income for the developing world. Over 25 million farmers and coffee workers in over 50 countries rely on coffee sales for their livelihood. These farmers now face a crisis as coffee prices have plummeted in recent years, with many farmers forced to sell their harvest for as little as 60% of the cost of production, forcing them into a cycle of poverty and debt. With no income from their only cash crop, farmers have no money to buy enough food to feed their families, much less pay for education and health care.

Fair Trade coffee is a real solution for some of these farmers. Fair Trade certification ensures coffee farmers are paid a decent, living wage for their harvest; encourages democratically organized farming cooperatives; provides access to affordable credit, which helps farmers stay out of debt; and promotes sustainable practices, such as organic farming, which helps protect the environment.

We look to our movement's commitment to fighting hunger by supporting Mazon as an example of how we can integrate social justice into our daily spending & lifestyle choices. Whenever we celebrate we think of those less fortunate and donate a portion of our money to help feed those in need. By choosing to spend a few cents more on Fair Trade certified coffee we support a living wage for farmers, increased educational opportunities for rural children, and improved environmental standards. As Jews we have an obligation not only to assist the downtrodden but also to help those in need become self-sufficient (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah). A commitment by our community to purchase Fair Trade certified coffee is one way we can fulfill this obligation. THEREFORE, the Commission on Social Action resolves to:

1. Encourage all arms of the Reform Movement, including the URJ, the CCAR, affiliate organizations as well as individual congregations and individuals, to purchase Fair Trade coffee for all office consumption, for all events, including national and regional biennials, and for personal use.

**RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA, 2012 RESOLUTION**

Passed by the Rabbinical Assembly Plenum, May, 2012

**Background**

"And when you sell something to your fellow, or buy from the hand of your fellow, don't oppress each other" (Leviticus 25:14).

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel teaches, "To us a single act of injustice – cheating in business, exploitation of the poor—is slight; to the prophets, a disaster ... to them, it is a catastrophe, a threat to the world." (The Prophets, p. 4).

The highest level of tzedakah is for a person to assist those in need to become self-sufficient (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah 10:7-14).

**Resolution**

Whereas Fair Trade is a global movement to alleviate poverty in farming communities around the world in ways that are socially and environmentally sustainable;

Whereas Fair Trade is a movement that works with producers to set a minimum price for their goods, provide technical support, and deliver economic development aid in the poorest countries in the world;

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly has over many decades adopted resolutions in support of [environmental conservation](#), [better working conditions](#) and [poverty relief](#);

Whereas Fair Trade requires freedom of association and safe working conditions, and prohibits child labor, forced labor and discrimination;

Whereas a little extra money paid at the store will allow farmers and farm workers to invest in life-changing projects ranging from clean drinking water, education and health care services to housing, reforestation and organic certification, all of which benefit entire communities; and

Whereas Fair Trade encourages farmers to take a long-term approach to agriculture, embracing sustainable practices that conserve natural resources.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly encourage its members to educate their communities about Fair Trade;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly encourage its members to have their congregations, schools, camps, Hillels, JCCs and other institutions endorse and advocate Fair Trade, and purchase Fair Trade goods, when feasible, both individually and in their communities;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly encourage its members to contact their elected and appointed officials to advocate for Fair Trade practices; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly use Fair Trade goods when feasible.