



Statement of Faith Against Modern Slavery

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2 December 2015

Maimonides the 12th Century philosopher, Joseph Caro, the author of the *Shulchan Aruch* (codification of Jewish law) in the 14th century, and modern day philosophers have maintained throughout history that slavery is not a Jewish attribute, and that fair treatment of all workers is mandated due to the fact that we are created *b'tzelem Elokim*, in the image of God.

Rabbi Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine, transposed the ethics taught in the rules surrounding slavery, as an opportunity to educate the industrial hierarchy of their responsibilities to their works. Kook, realising that each of us works for someone, describes these laws as a way to ensure that each of us should be granted rights to combat injustices.

The Jewish people are commanded numerous times to remember that we were slaves in Egypt, strangers in a strange land. These principles govern much of our interactions between our fellow human beings. It is why Jewish communities have been seen linking arms in various civil rights movements and actions.

At this time, when the Australian Freedom Network is launching, at the centre of our democratic institution, that the Rabbinic Council of Australia and New Zealand stand with our entire Jewish community, and faith leaders from around the country, to decry human trafficking, the exploitation of men women and children, and the very concept of slavery.

For too long, we have seen reports and the impacts of human trafficking, and for too long the world has sat idly by doing too little. Now is the time to stand up and make our voices heard, joining a global network of faiths and organisations to bring an end to the destructive consequences of slavery!

In the Ethics of our Fathers (Pirkei Avot 1:14) we read of Hillel, the great Mishnaic Sage where he said, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?"

We have to make sure we look after ourselves and our people, but if we are only for ourselves what is the point of being here. If we do not act, we are part of the problem, and we are giving up parts of our very humanity. If we don't act now. then we will never act.

