

“Fight for the things you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you”

“Dissents speak to a future age. It’s not simply to say, ‘My colleagues are wrong and I would do it this way.’ But the greatest dissents do become court opinions and gradually over time their views become the dominant view. So that’s the dissenter’s hope: that they are writing not for today but for tomorrow.”

“Laws which disable women from full participation in the political, business, and economic areas are often characterized as protective and beneficial. The pedestal upon which women have been placed has too often, upon closer inspection, been revealed as a cage.”

“I would like to be remembered...as someone who used whatever talent she had to do her work to the very best of her ability. And to help repair tears in her society, to make things a little better through the use of whatever ability she has.”

Ruth Messinger

President and CEO of American Jewish World Service,  
1998-2016

“I feel like I’ve been an activist my whole life. I was raised to care about social justice and to believe that problems existed, that change was possible and that we all had to do our part to help heal the world. My parents suggested that it was a fundamental Jewish obligation – and our main purpose for being on this earth.”

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s quote that ‘In a free society, where terrible wrongs exist, some are guilty, but all are responsible.’ ...speaks about the same ethic that has motivated me...I didn’t cause urban racism or bad schools. But I’m still responsible for it...As a Jew, I have to act, I have to assume responsibility for things that aren’t the way they ought to be, and I have to work to create greater justice....”

“Heed the observation of Rabbi Heschel that ‘living is not a private affair of the individual, it is what we do with God’s time, what we do with God’s world.’ Accept the challenge to do the most you can with your time in this world, constructing lives of commitment where acts of loving kindness and acts of political courage are woven into the fabric of your days.”

## Selections from “Ruth” (The Jewish Study Bible )

In the days when the chieftains ruled, there was a famine in the land; and a man of Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of Moab. Ruth 1:1

...Naomi’s husband died and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other, Ruth, and they lived there about ten years. Then those sons...also died so the woman was left without her two sons and without her husband. Ruth 1:3-5

She started out...accompanied by her daughters-in-law and set out on the road back to the land of Judah. Ruth 1:6-7

But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Turn back, each of you to her mother’s house.” ...They broke into weeping and said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.’ Ruth 1:8-10

But Ruth clung to her. So she said, “See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods...But Ruth replied, “Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Ruth 1:11-18

Thus Naomi returned from the country of Moab; she returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabite. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. Ruth 1:22

Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband’s side, a man of substance, ...whose name was Boaz.

Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “I would like to go to the fields and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone who may show me kindness.” ...She came and gleaned in a field behind the reapers, and, as luck would have it, it was the piece of land belonging to Boaz. Ruth 2:1-3

Boaz said to Ruth, "Listen to me, daughter. Don't go to glean in another field. Don't go elsewhere, but stay here close to my girls. Keep your eyes on the field they are reaping, and follow them." Ruth 2:8-9

She prostrated herself with her face to the ground, and said to him, "Why are you so kind as to single me out, when I am a foreigner?"

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Boaz said in reply, "I have been told of all that you did for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and came to a people you had not known before." ... Ruth 2:10-11

When she got up again to glean, Boaz gave orders to his workers, "You are not only to let her glean among the sheaves, without interference, but you must also pull some out of the heaps and leave them for her to glean, and not scold her." Ruth 2:15-16

Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, “Daughter, I must seek a home for you, where you may be happy” Ruth 3:1

When she got back to the town, she came to her mother-in-law, who asked, “How is it with you, daughter?” She told her all that the man had done for her; and she added, “He gave me these six measures of barley, saying to me, ‘Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty handed.’ “ Ruth 3:16-17

So Boaz married Ruth; she became his wife, and he cohabited with her. *Adonai* let her conceive and she bore a son. And the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be *Adonai*, who has not withheld a redeemer from you today! May his name be perpetuated in Israel! Ruth 4:13-14

This is the line of Perez: Perez begot Hezron, Hezron begot Ram, Ram begot Ammi-nadab, Ammi-nadab begot Nahshon, Nahshon begot Salmon, Salmon begot Boaz, Boaz begot Obed, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David. Ruth 4:18-22

## Reflection from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Ruth's message still stands. Shavuot is when we celebrate the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. The fact that we read Ruth's story at this time tells us that society cannot be made by laws alone. It needs something more – the unforced, unlegislated kindness that makes us reach out to the lonely and vulnerable, even if we are lonely and vulnerable ourselves. Then and now, society needs the kindness of strangers.