



COMMENTARY

on

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

and

THE BOOK OF RUTH

for the

DECADE OF WOMEN

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SPECIAL FOR SHAVUOT!

The TASK FORCE ON EQUALITY OF WOMEN IN JUDAISM has prepared the enclosed Torah Commentary on the Ten Commandments... from a humanist perspective which reflects the fact that women, as well as men, were present at Sinai and are included in the covenant relationship with God.

This is particularly appropriate for use by Confirmation Classes at Shavuot Services. Also included is a special commentary on the Book of Ruth which is traditionally read at this time.

A discussion of these commentaries would provide insight regarding the Jewish Women's Agenda and could be used for program purposes throughout the year, should you be interested in developing such a program.

Members of the Task Force on Equality of Women in Judaism are available to help lead such a discussion, upon request.

Have a happy holiday. Chag Sameach.

Annette Daum  
Coordinator  
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New York Federation of Reform Synagogues

May, 1978



INTRODUCTIONFIRST COMMANDMENT

I AM THE ETERNAL THY GOD, WHO BROUGHT THEE OUT OF  
THE LAND OF EGYPT, OUT OF THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE"  
- Exodus 20:2

The Giving of the Ten Commandments is the climactic event of the Exodus experience which brought the Jews out of the land of bondage to both physical and spiritual freedom.

A covenant was established between God and the Jewish people which serves as the foundation of Judaism providing us with the fundamental precepts of justice and morality which guide our relationship with God, with each other and with all humanity. Women were specifically included in that partnership (relationship) with God. Although they came next to last and after "the little ones", the important fact is that they were present at Sinai. Their place is merely reflective of the understanding of those men who prepared the Torah centuries ago. The Covenant is eternal as God is eternal - binding not only on those who were present at that time, but also on those who were not there that day - on all generations yet to come. Every generation develops new insights into the will of God, new understanding of the demands of our tradition and new interpretations of the role of women and men within that tradition.

The Task Force on Equality of Women in Judaism has prepared a commentary on the Ten Commandments for this Decade of Women, based on new insights into the traditional Soncino Commentary from a humanist perspective which reflects our determination as Jewish women of this generation that we, our children and all future generations be included as full and equal participants in the sacred and secular community.

The Ten Commandments, as the core of Torah, are traditionally read at Shavuot services to celebrate Z'MAN MATAN TORATEINU - the season of the giving of Torah.

Reform Judaism enriched the celebration by introducing the ceremony of Confirmation as a time for our young people to affirm their understanding of the basic beliefs of Judaism and their determination to remain loyal to the faith. Although Confirmation was originally developed to replace Bar Mitzvah for boys, it was quickly extended to include girls so that they, too, could receive the same religious education and participate in the same ceremony. Reform Judaism also recognized that practices designed to protect women in Biblical days actually created disadvantages for women in modern times. The custom of Levirate marriage, which is described in the Book of Ruth, is an example of just such a practice which may actually have disastrous consequences, preventing a widow from re-marrying. This and other religious customs which create special problems for women were eliminated in Reform Judaism which adopted religious equality for women as a basic principle of our movement over 100 years ago.

That principle has been expanded to include the concept of equality for women in society as well.

The Task Force on Equality of Women in Judaism has also developed a commentary on the Book of Ruth which reflects new insights into the role of Ruth as an example for modern women to follow. This Book is read at Shavuot because of the loyalty Ruth exhibited to the Jewish people and to Judaism.

Like our ancestors at Sinai, we must affirm, together as a people, our dedication to live according to the ethical principles of the covenant, to relate to each other with mutual respect, mutual caring and sharing, as women and men created by God in the image of God, still struggling toward an era of freedom and justice.

- Annette Daum, Coordinator  
Religious Action Department

## THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; . and showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love Me and keep My commandments

- Exodus 20:3-6

A young child in Hebrew school asks her teachers: What does God look like? They always reply that no one knows, for God cannot be seen. As she gets older, the answers become more philosophical -- "God is infinite" "God is inside you". "God is an essence." Her Christian friends see a picture of Jesus but the best she can do is look at the abstract art on her Temple's stained glass windows and attempt to understand the mystery of God.

All of this stems from the Second Commandment, that Commandment that forbids us to think of God as any image formed either by the human mind or by human artistry, that Commandment that demands a pure conception of God -- "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth below, or that is in the water under the earth."

If God is not to be pictured, if God is a spirit, if God must not be "worshipped under any image...which the human mind can conceive!", is it not a violation of the Second Commandment to term God male--to refer to Elohim as He, Lord, King, Master? Since both man and woman are created in the image of God is it not erroneous to call God the Father?

Although Jewish tradition does refer to God with both feminine and masculine imagery, Elohim is known to Jews through revelatory actions during Biblical

history. Both male and female and neither male nor female, God is Father and Mother, saviour and protector, both nurturing and forceful. Using exclusively male terminology misleads Jews as to the nature of God and contravenes the express mandate of the Second Commandment.

- Phyllis Kurland

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### THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain."

-Exodus 20:7

The Third Commandment reads: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." To which today's woman might comment, "What's in a name?"

The "Lord" - in Hebrew, "Adonai" - is a substitute term for "Yahweh", the personal name of God. Because of a fear of profaning that name, it became customary to use a substitute word. This substitution, which most people feel developed out of a sense of reverence, actually came about through a misunderstanding of the Third Commandment. If the Third Commandment is translated properly, it should read, "you shall not swear falsely by the name of Yahweh, your God, which presents a totally different concept.

As for "Adonai", it is a combination of the word 'adon' plus the ending 'ai'. It is probably Canaanite in origin and is related in meaning to "baal" - master, and even in Modern Hebrew, "husband". It was used as a title of respect in addressing a superior; by a subject to a king; a wife to her husband; a daughter or son to a father; and by a slave to a master. It, too, survives in Modern Hebrew as "adon" - mister, and "adoni" - sir.

There are many names for God in the Bible such as Elohim, El Shaddai, and El Elyon. Moreover, in the course of Biblical history, as our conception of God

changed, so too did the ways in which we referred to God. God was shepherd, redeemer, then king, as our understanding of God's nature developed.

Today, women continue to seek more appropriate substitute terms, not exclusively masculine, for the name of God in order to reach out, in more meaningful ways to the One who is our creator, redeemer, protector, the Eternal God.

- Frances Marder

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#### THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the Lord the God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

-Exodus 20:8-11

Notice all who were to be included in the day of rest. But where was the woman of the house mentioned? Commentary tells us that the "Thou" referred to above, is the "head of the house, responsible for all that dwell therein."

We are also told that the Sabbath was something quite new, which had never existed in any nation or religion - a standing reminder that man can emancipate himself from the slavery of his worldly cares, that man was made for spiritual freedom, peace and joy! I also quote a phrase by C. G. Montefiore who said - "The Sabbath is one of the glories of our humanity." If that is true - Is it only "man" who is to be emancipated from slavery of worldly cares? Is it only man who is to enjoy the glories of humanity? Should not woman be included in this day of rest and spiritual freedom? Are not women also human?

The prophet Isaiah teaches us that the Sabbath is to be a day of joy and delight. Accordingly, one must honor it by putting on one's best clothing and by enjoying food and drink. At least three meals should be eaten on the Sabbath Day. Women traditionally worked harder than the man because she did not have a day of rest. So there is woman, doing the Sabbath chores, because it was forbidden that man and all servants toll on the Sabbath. In addition, we are told that not only children and servants (whether Israelite or heathen) but even the beasts of burden are to share in the Sabbath day of rest. I shall not comment further on the obvious omission. Where is the equality and humanity towards women?

Today, women find themselves entering the labor market to pursue careers, largely because of economics. This should make it possible for husband and wife to share the home responsibilities. But statistics show that not only are women not receiving equality in their jobs - but they are also doing the major portion of the work at home, which is considered 'woman's work"! They work many more hours than men - even today.

This should make us stop and think of the direction in which women should travel, in this, the International Women's Year!

- Nettie W. Kaplan

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THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may  
be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth  
thee"

- Exodus 20:12

The Fifth Commandment is written in what one could call typical Biblical phraseology: an injunction is given with no reason but with a possible reward for its performance. We are told that if we honor our parents, our days will be long. But why this commandment and no other? The Rabbis say - to show the ultimate importance of the precept of honoring one's parents. In so many other instances in Torah we have the injunction phrased in the masculine, and this has posed several problems for our commentators; namely, when does the masculine mean just men, and when is it generic to include all human beings? We see that in the Fifth Commandment mother and father are mentioned, as if this problem is foreseen and avoided. Yet here we too could say, perhaps the Torah wants us to honor the father more than the mother, since he is mentioned first? The answer is no, both must receive equal respect, as we see the same commandment worded differently in Leviticus 19:3. A man (generic or specific here?) shall fear his mother and his father. Why the different ordering of words? In Torah, the placement of the words is as important as the words themselves. The Rabbis answer: One would tend to fear his/her father (the discipliner) and honor the mother (the nurturer) -so the Torah switches that tendency by placing "father" first in the commandment to "honor" and "mother" first in the commandment to "fear", thereby teaching us that it is possible, in fact it is important (hence the reward) to reverse our tendencies and to give each parent the emotional support and respect that she/he deserves. And in our modern world, where the challenge of feminists has opened our minds to possibilities of new and more open "roles" (i.e. both parents should and can nurture and discipline), the Torah speaks directly to us on this issue. I suggest that we begin to think in two new directions and use the lesson of the Fifth Commandment: (1) What is it to "honor" a parent? Specifically, what is it

to honor our mothers, who receive so much ridicule and so little support from the media and literature? We can begin to take the lessons of Ayshe Chayll in Proverbs, "A Woman of Valor". In this proverb, the woman of valor is not only the giving, caring mother, but she is also a strong woman, buying fields and surveying her property. She is praised by her husband and children, and she is a proud woman. We can begin to honor our mothers in a new way by encouraging them to be the strong, proud women that they are, and by honoring them in the outside world too; by appreciating their struggles publicly and privately, and by encouraging them to be proud of themselves, so that they too will "honor" themselves. (2) What is it to "fear", or a better translation, to "stand in awe" of our parents, and specifically our fathers? I think that our fathers often stand in awe of themselves, in the powerful role that our society has given them. Perhaps by encouraging them to follow their inner "supportiveness" that fear can blend into "honor" and therefore we have the result being not a reversal of roles; i.e. the mother being feared, the father honored (which would seem to mean the mother becoming the discipliner and the father the nurturer), but rather a softening and meshing of the solid lines that often stand between these two roles, making them on opposite poles. The lesson of the Fifth Commandment for us today is that both parents are people, both weak and both strong, both caring and giving and both teaching and disciplining, both assertive and both able to step back and survey; and most importantly, both deserving of our honor and our respect.

- Elyse Goldstein

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THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

Thou Shalt Not Murder<sup>10</sup>

-Exodus 20:13

Judaism sanctifies and cherishes human life. The infinite worth of human life stems from our belief that man and woman are created "In the image of God". Life is given to us by God; the Eternal alone can take it away. So precious is human life to the Jewish people that our Scripture teaches us that to take the life of another is as though one had caused a whole world to perish, and to save the life of one soul is as though one had saved a whole world.

Thus, the intentional killing of any human being is forbidden by Judaism. Of course, in times of war, when one must by conscience defend national or human rights, the taking of life is inevitable. But the wanton, voluntary taking of another's life is totally contrary to the Laws of Judaism. We are remiss if we do not add our voices to those which speak out against capital punishment. We must continue to fight against capital punishment with all our might.

Judaism respects life in every stage of growth and development; the life of a child is as dear as the life of a mature person or even of a very aged one. According to our tradition, in cases of difficult child-birth when a choice must be made between saving the mother or the child, Judaism teaches that the life of a mother takes precedence. The child has not really yet been given life. We also do not consider an embryo or fetus as a living person and thus Liberal Jews do not look upon abortion as an act of murder. It is often a means of saving life. The freedom to choose abortion is a right to which every woman is entitled. We must be united in maintaining the right of every woman to determine for herself whether or not to have an abortion.

Jewish ethics considers the omission of an act to save a human life as much an

act of murder as the actual taking of a life. Thus, throughout the ages Jewish women have stood in the forefront of peace movements, movements to prohibit capital punishment, and movements to permit and legalize abortion. Perhaps the fact that women are the child-bearers, the nurturers of life, makes women the defenders of life and the protectors of a faith which says life is to be cherished, life is to be dignified, and which commands "Thou Shalt Not Murder".

- Edith J. Miller

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THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

'Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery'

-Exodus 20:13

If my heart has been enticed by a woman, and I have lain in wait at my neighbors door

then let my wife grind for another and let others bow down upon her...

-Job 31:9-12

Job uses this passage to declare his intention to be free of sin. However, a close look at the opening line tells us something about Mr. Job. Notice, adultery is the result of a man being enticed by a woman. No mention is made of the man as pursuer.

The Seventh Commandment, the only one which deals with a sexual offense, sends us mixed signals. Although it seems as if adultery is equally forbidden to men and women, rabbinic interpretation has not dealt with them equally.

According to ancient law, adultery was limited to a violation of the marriage obligation by a married woman. The status of the male was irrelevant. The

woman was merely a possession of her husband. To engage in an adulterous relationship with another man's wife was tantamount to using his property illegally. Indeed, while the man could be polygamous, and therefore circumvent the adultery taboo, the woman was chattel.

If a married man had an adulterous relationship with a single woman - virgin of course - he had to make payment to her father and marry her. He obtained another wife who was now bound to him and became his property. Interestingly, if she was discovered not to be a virgin, she was stoned. The male was stoned only if his paramour was married. Why? Because he violated his neighbor's property - that is, his neighbor's wife. Eventually the sense of property violation evolved into recognition of adultery as a moral sin.

Today, civil law has, for most people, taken precedence over Jewish law. Even for those who consult a Bet Din, the decisions of the Din have had to be influenced by Civil Law. However, even if a woman is no longer stoned, the stigma of adultery is there. According to Jewish law, the husband of an adulterous wife must divorce her. She is forbidden to marry her lover. If a child results from the union, the child is considered a "mamzer" and can't marry a Jew. Rabbis, seeing the inherent cruelty in this, have gotten around it by saying since there were no witnesses, the adulterous acts can not be proven.

It seems, when reading the newspapers, that adultery is accepted and commonplace. However, Judaism is a religion of morality. Rabbi Gordis talks of "moral Consequences". Marriage vows are a public commitment.

Rather than treat interpretation of the Seventh Commandment as a long-standing injustice that cries for redress of grievances, we must now reassess the values implied - appropos of our sense of sexual equality. *HINEY MAH TOV U'MANAYIM SHEVAT ACHIM V'ACHAYOT GAM YACHAD.*

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

Thou shalt not Steal

-Exodus 20:13

Property represents the fruit of industry and labor. Women as full human beings possess a wealth of abilities, talents, personal attributes, strengths, thoughts, senses, and feelings, whose value is immeasurable. As defined above, property can be tangible or intangible. It is these intangibles of women that have been stolen throughout Jewish history. It is this most basic and subtle form of stealing against which we must work: Thou shalt not steal the stuff of which a person is made.

Certainly by minimizing the worth of a person's attributes, one diminishes the value of that person; thereby one is stealing one of the most precious treasures in the world today -- human worth. And certainly by minimizing the worth of women's contributions to the history and heritage of Judaism, we have stolen not only from our foremothers, but from the Jewish people as a whole.

-Sally Klein-Katz

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THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness Against Thy Neighbor

-Exodus 20:13

This prohibition includes all forms of slander, defamation and misrepresentation, whether of an individual, a group, a people, a race, or a faith. None have suffered so much from slander, defamation and misrepresentation as the Jew and Judaism."

In a Jewish court of law, before one could bear false witness, one would first have to be qualified to be a witness. Women, slaves, minors, dice-players, pigeon-flyers (both are considered gamblers) and usurers were excluded from giving witness. (This was not based on the same morality yardstick.)

Woman's major role in society was clearly recognized by Jewish tradition. She was an obedient daughter, wife and mother. Her limited rights in home and synagogue (which is where the courts were held) were based on her household duties and her state of ritual cleanliness. One could not ask her to appear in court to give witness unless one could first ask her, "Did you clean the house, make the beds, feed the children and kiss your husband good-bye before you came here, and, by the way, are you menstruating?" Therefore, she was excluded from the start. Less messy. (Reform Judaism eliminated this inequity over 100 years ago.)

Of course, without the technicality of a court, women were obliged in their daily lives, as were men, not to lie about other people. It is ironic that Jewish women who are also commanded not to misrepresent other people, should themselves be so misrepresented, as a group, by Jewish authors in Jewish religious educational material. Precisely because we, as Jews, have suffered so much from stereotypes, we should be diligent in avoiding such portrayals, most especially within Judaism.

This Commandment also applies to our relationship with people in the community-at-large. Here, we have a clear obligation to speak out against slanderous attempts to prevent women from gaining equality in American society. The intent and content of the Equal Rights Amendment have been distorted and ridiculed by reducing this drive for justice to the false issue of shared toilets. The Jewish Women's Agenda must include support for the aims and goals of the Women's Agenda as adopted at the National IWY Conference.

- Barbara Strongin

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THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor's House:  
Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Wife, Nor  
His Man-Servant, Nor His Maid-Servant, Nor His Ox,  
Nor His Ass, Nor Anything That is Thy Neighbor's."  
- Exodus 20:14

This Commandment clearly defines the wife as property. In Deuteronomy 5:18, a transition takes place, and the wife is now seen as the most important belonging of a man, but she is still an object. In both versions of this Commandment, the wife belongs to the husband in a sense in which the husband does not belong to the wife. This is not a statement which suggests that a wife might be in partnership with her husband, nor is it a commandment meant for women. If women were at Sinai, then why did this commandment not apply to them?

This commandment conveys to us that a woman is not a person in her own right unless she is married. How does the synagogue today view a woman who is an individual member? Is she welcome? Does she see herself as a full-functioning Jew who qualifies for membership in the Jewish community by being Jewish - and not by being married?

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's property would be the appropriate Tenth Commandment.

The Decalogue begins with those commandments which describe our obligations to God and concludes with those commandments which deal with obligations from person-to-person. In this Decade of Women, our commentary should conclude with the words "regardless of sex".

A COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF RUTH

Part of the wonder and beauty of the Bible is that it provides for each generation new insights and understanding. This is especially true in the Book of Ruth, an idyllic story set in the time of the Judges.

The Book of Ruth speaks to the modern woman of the struggle which has been going on for her rights all these thousands of years. Each era another vallant woman cries out for justice as we slowly move toward equality.

In order to understand the sturggle for survival of Naomi and Ruth, we must look back upon two momentous episodes in the Bible. In the first episode (Numbers 27: 1-9), the daughters of Zelophehad appeal to Moses: "Our father died in the wilderness ... and he had no sons. Give unto us a possession among the brethren of our father." And Moses decreed that if a man died and left no sons, his inheritance would pass to his daughter (provided that she remain unmarried or married within the tribe.).

It was only under this circumstance that a woman could own property (and not be property herself).

Since women could not own property except in the rare instance above, it was the obligation of a man to protect and care for his wife, his unmarried daughter, his brother's widow and to arrange a marriage to another son for his son's widow. If a man's brother had no children, according to the rules of the Levirate, he was obliged to marry his brother's widow to provide her with an heir who would inherit his deceased brother's portion and care for the aging widow.

This brings us to the second significant event in the Bible. (Gen. 38: 6-29) Judah, the son of Jacob had three sons. His first son Er was married to a woman called Tamar and he died leaving no heirs. Judah's second son, Onan fulfilled

the law of the levirate by marrying Tamar, but during intercourse withdrew before ejaculation to prevent the impregnation of Tamar. In this way, Er's portion would eventually pass to him instead of the child of such a union. Onan was punished for this sin and died and Judah was reluctant to marry his third son, Shelah, to Tamar (who seemed to be bad luck). Therefore he asked Tamar to return to her father's house until his third son, Shelah, became old enough to marry - and promptly forgot this promise. After years had passed, Tamar finally came up with a scheme to ensure her rights. She covered her face, dressed as a harlot and tricked Judah into having intercourse with her and impregnating her. Several months later, Tamar's pregnancy was brought to the attention of Judah and he had Tamar brought before him to have her burnt to death because of her harlotry. During this dramatic confrontation, Tamar proved to Judah that he, himself, was the father of the unborn child; and Judah said, "She is more right than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." From this union were born twins, Perez (the first-born) and Zerah.

It is with Perez that the story of Ruth really begins. Born as a result of a woman's scheme to finally achieve for herself what was her due, Perez marries and has three sons. (I Chron 2: 9-12, 18-19). The first son, Jerahmeel, has six sons; the second son, Ram, provides the geneological line for Boaz, the hero of our story. The third son, Caleb, married three times. Caleb's second wife was a woman called Ephrath who apparently was a woman of power and wealth -- a woman whose circumstances permitted her to inherit from her father.

And so our beautiful novella opens with a description of a family (Ruth 1:2):  
'The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion---Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. Ephrath was apparently a woman of such stature and ability that this group of people from Bethlehem took their name from her---a momentous event in Jewish history.

While sojourning in Moab, Mahlon and Chilion marry Ruth and Orpah. Not only does Elimelech die, but also Mahlon and Chilion, leaving Naomi with her two Moabite daughters-in-law. Naomi must return to her people in Bethlehem and urges her daughters-in-law to return home and find other husbands.

One of the most beautiful passages in the Bible occurs in the first chapter (verses 15-17) when Ruth converts to Judaism and promises to protect and care for Naomi: '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. Thus, and more may the Lord do to me if anything but death parts me from you.'

Ruth, true to her word, returns with Naomi and goes out to glean in the field in order to provide sustenance for herself and her mother-in-law. Through chance Ruth selects the field of Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi's husband. Boaz has heard of Ruth's loyalty and courage and permits her to glean under his protection.

Ruth, as well as Tamar, has to use subterfuge to attain her rights; since her husband had no living brothers, a relative of her dead father-in-law's family should have assumed the obligation of caring for Ruth as well as Naomi. Ruth seduces Boaz, the man she chooses for her second husband, and Boaz praises her for her loyalty to her mother-in-law and for selecting him - since he was an older man of Naomi's generation who did not have any children. The baby that was born of this union, Obed, could therefore be counted as heir to both Boaz's line and Elimelech's line. Obed, of course, was the grandfather of King David.

The woman of today can look to this marvelous story and gain inspiration from the women in it and their strivings to attain their right to survive.

Naomi finds joy in the child of Ruth and Boaz because, according to the law of the levirate, Obed will eventually inherit Elimelech's portion and provide a name for Naomi's family.

Ruth finds happiness and peace with a righteous man who admires her for her remarkable quality of loyalty.

And all of these people find a way into this little drama because a woman named Tamar did something quite unexpected and revolutionary for her time in order to achieve her rights.

And, perhaps, it all was made possible because of a fourth remarkable woman, Ephrath, whose clan is named for her rather than a male progenitor. One of the concluding paragraphs describes the blessing given by the elders at the gate on the forthcoming marriage of Ruth and Boaz and reads as follows (4:11-12)...

"May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your house like Leah and Rachel, both of whom built up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem! And may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah---through the offspring which the Lord will give you by this young woman."

Today we ask for more than survival. Today we ask for equality of rights and with these rights equality of obligation. An equal sharing of opportunities... an equal sharing of responsibilities...an equal partnership in Judaism in the home and in society.

- Eleanor Smiley



