

GLEANINGS

Reflections on Ruth

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It's in the Gene(alogy): Family, Storytelling, and Salvation

Rabbi Dr. Stuart W. Halpern

In 1924, the State of Virginia passed the Racial Integrity Act, criminalizing interracial marriages. There was a special dispensation built into the law, however. Through the so-called “Pocahontas exception,” Virginians proud of being descendants of Pocahontas who still wanted to be classified as “white” were able to do so instead of being classified as “Native American.”¹ Similarly politically weighted claims of ancestry have received extensive coverage in recent years, including the question of why former president Barack Obama is widely considered a black man with a white mother, rather than a white man with a black

1. For an extensive discussion of the science, politics, and history of genetics, see Carl Zimmer, *She Has Her Mother's Laugh: The Powers, Perversions, and Potential of Heredity* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2018). For a review of recent studies on Jewish genetics specifically, see Cynthia M. Baker, *Jew* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016).

father; President Trump's questioning of Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren's claimed Native American heritage (Trump has, on numerous occasions, referred to her as "Pocahontas");² and the extensive doubts recently raised about the Jewish identity of socialist New York State Senator Julia Salazar.³ As Rutgers professor Eviatar Zerubavel discusses in his *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community*,⁴ how we define or frame our ancestry, and how others define it, is of tremendous importance.

Questions of genealogy are so crucial because our ancestry is often a key element in our social structure, the axis on which many of our social interactions, obligations, loyalties, and emotional sentiments turn. Though we like to believe in meritocracy, that individuals are self-made, our identities can be deeply tied to those we descend from. As Zerubavel writes, "[o]ur psychological integrity depends very much upon ... the extent to which we feel linked to our genealogical roots ... striking a person's name from his or her family's genealogical records used to be one of the most dreaded punishments in China."⁵ And of course, biologically, heredity has a tremendous impact on our traits, personality, and self-perceptions. As Columbia University professor Robert Pollack has noted, our "genomes are a form of literature ... a library of the most ancient, precious, and deeply important books."⁶ Through studying where we come from, we learn how to tell our own story.

ARE OUR RELATIVES "RELATIVE"?

In *It's All Relative: Adventures Up and Down the World's Family Tree*,⁷ humorist and author A. J. Jacobs recounts his attempt to assemble his

2. Maggie Astor, "Why Many Native Americans Are Angry with Elizabeth Warren," *The New York Times*, October 17, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/17/us/politics/elizabeth-warren-dna-test.html>.

3. See, for example, Mijal Bitton, "Julia Salazar's Defenders Reveal the Limits of Identity Politics," *The Forward*, August 31, 2018. <https://forward.com/opinion/409391/julia-salazars-defenders-reveal-the-limits-of-identity-politics/>.

4. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. For his discussion of the Obama question, see the discussion beginning on p. 3.

5. *Ibid.*, 5, 7.

6. *Signs of Life: The Language and Meanings of DNA* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 117.

7. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017.

extended, and by that I mean *very* extended, family in the largest family reunion ever. After receiving an e-mail from a man in Israel claiming to be his twelfth cousin, part of an 80,000-person family tree which included Karl Marx and some European aristocrats, Jacobs set out to bring as many of his living relatives together as he could, figuring "people [who spend countless hours tracing their family roots] want to feel connected and anchored. They want to visit what has been called the 'Museum of Me.'"⁸ Utilizing online genealogical tools, he connected to countless celebrities, as well as former president George H. W. Bush. Through this project, Jacobs sought to make the case for people to be kinder to one another because of our shared "cousin-hood."⁹

Finding out about 79,999 relatives raised for Jacobs questions about the nature of family and the hierarchy of closeness we feel toward certain individuals. He argues that if all of humanity is one, very large, extended family, it is less important who our immediate relatives are. Maybe,

... we can sometimes make room in our hearts to love others without diminishing what we feel for those already dearest to us. Love is not a zero-sum game They tell of a seventeenth-century French missionary in Canada who tried to explain traditional monogamous marriage to a tribesman. The tribesman replied, "Thou hast no sense. You French people love only your own children, but we love all the children of our tribe." Ignorance of their kids' paternity apparently [can make] for a more compassionate society.¹⁰

8. *Ibid.*, 22.

9. Jacobs even had a column in *People* magazine in which he interviewed the "cousins" he found by tracing his extended family roots. Here's a representative exchange from an interview he conducted with *Hot in Cleveland* actress Valerie Bertinelli, available at <https://people.com/celebrity/author-a-j-jacobs-interviews-his-very-distant-cousin-valerie-bertinelli/>:

Jacobs: You are, officially, my aunt's 6th great uncle's wife's mother's husband's brother's wife's 8th great-granddaughter.

Bertinelli: So I'm practically your sister.

10. Jacobs, 180, 57. As Rabbi Dr. Ira Bedzow noted to me in private correspondence, Plato, in *The Republic*, suggests abolishing nuclear families and advocates for the communal raising of children.

Taking this line of reasoning a step further, maybe our conception of family shouldn't even be limited to biological relatives, or even people in our local community or tribe. One modern writer has even offered calling those who share your passion or worldview your "horizontal family" as opposed to your "vertical," biological family.¹¹ Though we would assume those with common interest are friends rather than family, Zerubavel gives some credence and sociological substance to this counterintuitive idea:

The family... is an inherently boundless community. Since there is no natural boundary separating recent ancestors from remote ones, there is also no such boundary separating close relatives from distant ones, or even relatives from nonrelatives. Any such boundary is therefore a product of social convention alone. Thus, although it is probably nature that determines that our obligations to others be proportional to our genealogical proximity to them, it is nevertheless unmistakably social norms that specify whose blood or honor we ought to avenge and determine the genealogical reach of family reunification policies. It is likewise social conventions that specify who can claim the share of blood money paid to relatives of homicide victims and determine who we invite to family reunions. Thus, whereas the range of other animals' kin recognition is determined by nature, it is social norms, conventions, and traditions of classification that determine how widely humans' range of kin recognition actually extends, and societies indeed often vary in where they draw the line between relatives and nonrelatives.¹²

And as the renowned astrophysicist Neil deGrassi Tyson put it in a letter to Jacobs:

11. Jacobs, 96, citing Andrew Solomon, *Far From the Tree: Parents, Children and the Search for Identity*.

12. Zerubavel, 72.

My philosophy of root-finding may be unorthodox. I just don't care. And that's not a passive, but active sense of caring. In the tree of life, any two people in the world share a common ancestor – depending only on how far you look. So the line we draw to establish family and heritage is entirely arbitrary. When I wonder what I am capable of achieving, I don't look to family lineage, I look to all human beings. That's the genetic relationship that matters to me. The genius of Isaac Newton, the courage of Gandhi and MLK, the bravery of Joan of Arc, the athletic feats of Michael Jordan, the oratorical skills of Sir Winston Churchill, the compassion of Mother Teresa. I look to the entire human race for inspiration for what I can be – because I am human. Couldn't care less if I were a descendant of kings or paupers, saints or sinners, the valorous or cowardly. My life is what I make of it.¹³

ARE YOU MY MOTHER?

The challenge to the idea above, however, is that while it might make for a sound philosophical argument, it doesn't seem to hold water empirically. There have been many experiments and contexts, including Israeli kibbutzim, in which children have been raised communally, as opposed to in a nuclear family model, only to discover it made parents and children less happy. There is social, psychological, and moral value provided by what we intuitively classify as our family, which, assuming it contains a generally positive dynamic, serves to aid in both general health and even survival, and inculcate values that an individual applies to his or her colleagues, neighbors, and friends. As the saying goes, "Men may change their clothes, their politics, their wives, their religions, their philosophies, [but] they cannot change their grandfathers."¹⁴

13. Jacobs, 163.

14. *Ibid.*, 58, 54. See also Diane Swanbrow, "Raising a Child Doesn't Take a Village, Research Shows," *Phys.org*, September 9, 2011, <https://phys.org/news/2011-09-child-doesnt-village.html>; Lars-Toralf-Storstrand, "Utopian Ideals Don't Mix Well with Child Welfare Policies," *The Sunday Guardian*, March 31, 2018, <https://www.sundayguardianlive.com/culture/utopian-ideals-dont-mix-well-child-welfare-policies>; and Rachel Epstein,

THE JEWISH FAMILY

Judaism, of course, is based upon the story of a family. The Book of Genesis is the story of chosen children, with the tales of those who were not chosen relegated to the periphery.¹⁵ Like many families, the Jewish family's "dynastic mental structure" is conceived of as a "single identity" with "particular norms of remembrance."¹⁶ Thus, while one might refer to one's country of origin as "motherland" or refer to the "founding fathers" of the United States, to the Jewish people, Israel is the land of our *actual* mothers and fathers, and our norms of family remembrance are found in the Torah. We are *Benei Yisrael*, the children of our forefather Israel.

Following the completion of the Bible, the advent of the monarchy, and the sweep of subsequent Jewish history, what has emerged within the story of the Children of Israel is the anticipated restoration of one particular line within our family. We hope and pray multiple times throughout our liturgy for the resumed authority of the Davidic line through the coming of the *Mashiah*, the ultimate redeemer.¹⁷

With this background in mind, let us examine the Book of Ruth, which ends with a genealogy culminating with the birth of David, the ancestor of the eventual Messiah. Let us examine how the ancestral story of David's family is told and how it might inform our understanding of family in our own lives.

Paula Rerer, Orna Tzischinsky, and Peretz Lavie, "Changing from Communal to Familial Sleep Arrangement in the Kibbutz: Effects on Sleep Quality," *Sleep* 20 (5): 334-339.

15. This phenomenon has been examined extensively by many. See, for recent examples, Cynthia R. Chapman, *The House of the Mother: The Social Roles of Maternal Kin in Biblical Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); and Jonathan Sacks, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (New York: Schocken Books, 2015).

16. Zerubavel, 19, 67.

17. *In God's Shadow: Politics in the Hebrew Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 66. See also Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: God in the People Israel* (London: Roman & Littlefield, 2000), 252-254.

TEN GENERATIONS

The Book of Ruth ends with a list of ten generations:

Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; and Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; and Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; and Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; and Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David. (Ruth 4:18–22)

A story that began with an Israelite family leaving Bethlehem and dwelling in Moab for around ten years (1:4), during which time a father and two sons died, now lists ten generations of progeny, a healthy and vibrant family line. The birthing of sons has replaced the death of sons.¹⁸ Beyond this portrayal of restoration, the list has a structure that serves a political function as well. The list could have started with Judah, father of Perez, or even Jacob, Judah's father, but starting with Perez puts David tenth in line, matching an earlier biblical pattern. Just as there were ten generations from Adam to Noah, and another ten from Noah to Abraham, David is listed as the culmination of ten generations. This structure suggests that the book is situating David in the pantheon of foundational biblical figures.¹⁹

The “surprise ending” of David's birth also reshapes our perception of the entire preceding narrative. Through the realization that this tale of a bereft Naomi and her former daughter-in-law, the Moabite Ruth, ends up producing the ultimate Israelite king, the reader sees how a savior is born through the acts of loyalty and kindness demonstrated by its characters. In the words of Professor André LaCocque:

18. Todd Linafelt, *Ruth: Berit Olam – Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 80.

19. See Zvi Ron, “The Genealogical List in the Book of Ruth: A Symbolic Approach,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 38:2 (2010): 85–92. As Ron notes, this is the only occurrence of the word “*toldot*” outside of the Torah. As he also points out, starting the list with Perez also places Boaz in the seventh spot on the list, another common favorable biblical number. Note, as well, that despite Boaz stating that he is marrying Ruth to preserve the name of her dead husband, it is Boaz's family memorialized in the genealogy, not Mahlon's.

The genealogy is their announcement of victory... in the West, individualism has become so excessive, so egocentric, that all devotedness to a future generation appears obsolete and even ridiculous in the eyes of some... but the facts of history do teach us that we cannot take the survival of the group for granted. After Auschwitz, the people of Naomi – who are also Ruth's people – know that they are vulnerable. It was already so in ancient Israel. The discontinuation of the name – that is, of the family, the clan – meant annihilation... what has to be assured is not the number but history, the promise, the hope. The typical modern individual does not have any history, only episodes, like the soap operas on television. But Israel has a history, a history oriented toward the coming of the kingdom of God and its regent, the Messiah... put simply, the story of Ruth is pulled from the episodic and placed, from the perspective of Israel's history, into salvation history.²⁰

Living during the troublesome era of the Book of Judges, in which each man did what was right in his own eyes because there was no ruler to unify the nation, Ruth's selfless acts bore the nation's salvific figure, the conqueror of Jerusalem and the singer of Psalms. As Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Tikva Frymer-Kensky suggest, "For an ancient audience this final genealogy would have been an exhilarating conclusion; good people have been rewarded with the high honor of illustrious progeny."²¹

THE FEMALE GENEALOGY

Like all such biblical lists, the final verses of Ruth list male progenitors.²² However, prior to those last few verses, the narratives offer what

20. *Ruth: A Continental Commentary*, trans. K. C. Hanson, Continental Commentaries Series (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 122.

21. *The JPS Bible Commentary: Ruth* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2011), 92–93.

22. Jacobs notes that this phenomenon is not exclusive to the Bible: "Even if we find the names of women from our past on various government documents, we often know little beyond that. Women are frequently ciphers, lacking stories, feelings, opinions" (p. 232). Along similar lines, in *Leveling the Playing Field: Advancing Women in Jewish Organizational Life* (St. Paul: Cambridge Leadership Associates, 2008), editors

some have suggested is a female genealogy as well, one whose allusions offer even greater insight into the story of David's birth. In this scene, in which Ruth is married to Boaz, the names of certain female biblical heroines are evoked:

And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said: "We are witnesses. May God make the woman that is coming into your house like *Rachel* and like *Leah*, those two who built the house of Israel; and be worthy in Ephrat, and be famous in Bethlehem; and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom *Tamar* bore to Judah, of the seed which God shall give you of this young woman." So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he was intimate with her, and God gave her conception, and she bore a son. And the women said unto Naomi: "Blessed be God, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and let his name be famous in Israel. And he shall be for you a restorer of life, and a nourisher for you in your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." And Naomi took the child, and embraced him, and became his nurse. And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying: "There is a son born to Naomi"; and they called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David. (4:11-17)

This is the only time in the entire Bible where characters are blessed through the invoking of female characters. Ruth is mentioned as an analogue to none other than Rachel and Leah, two foundational women, mothers and wives. In this radical acceptance of a stranger, a Moabite widow becomes an honorary biblical matriarch.²³

In the coda of Ruth, the invocation of Rachel and Leah, as well as Tamar, is more than a simple reference to memorable female biblical

Shifra Bronznick, Didi Goldenhar, and Marty Linsky suggest we "listen carefully at meetings and public events. Extract the stories and folklore from the organizational history. Are the triumphs and inspirational moments tethered only to male 'heroes'? Where have women played important roles?" (p. 88).

23. See Chapman, 220; and Rachel E. Adelman, *The Female Ruse: Women's Deception & Divine Sanction in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 91.

characters. All three of these earlier women, along with the daughters of Lot, have been subtly alluded to over the course of Ruth's tale. All of them, like Ruth, ensured the viability of their family line through personal sacrifice in the form of "bedtricks" of varying degrees of deception and morality.²⁴ After fleeing the destruction of Sodom, the daughters of Lot made their father drunk and slept with him, thereby producing Ammon and Moab, the latter of which is Ruth's ancestor (Gen. 19). Leah was switched for Rachel on Jacob's wedding night (Gen. 29:25) and the two sisters often fought over their husband, once trading a night with Jacob for mandrakes (30:16). And Tamar dressed as a veiled harlot and slept with Judah (ch. 38).²⁵ However, as contemporary scholar Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel emphasizes, Ruth and Boaz's story stands both among and beyond those earlier narratives.

24. See Adelman, 94. Noticing the usage of the masculine "shteiheim" – "the two of them" in the invocation, writers Shera Tuchman and Sandra Rapoport suggest:

It was their passionate desire for bearing and raising children that formed the dominant theme of Rachel and Leah's lives, and this driving force is the basis for the millennia-old blessing of Ruth. The elders, *invoking the names of Rachel and Leah*, were intoning the benediction of family, generational continuity, and covenantal inheritance upon Ruth... the Bible uses the masculine form with reference to these biblical women when they take equivalent action to that of their male counterparts. The elders blessed Ruth to be like Rachel and Leah because *both* these matriarchs built the "house of Israel" as partners with the patriarchs [emphasis in the original]. (*The Passion of the Matriarchs* [Jersey City: KTAV, 2004], 346)

See also Prof. Ezra Sivan, "Team of Rivals: Building Israel Like Rachel and Leah," *The Lehrhaus*, November 15, 2018, <https://www.thelehrhaus.com/scholarship/team-of-rivals-building-israel-like-rachel-and-leah/>, who similarly suggests that "shteiheim" is meant to emphasize that, like Ruth, who also transcended family challenges, "Rachel and Leah were more effective and powerful agents in 'building of the house of Israel' than we might have imagined."

25. Numerous scholars have pointed out the thematic and literary parallels between the episodes of Lot's daughters, Tamar, and Ruth, including the death of two husbands, departure from a place of residence, a father figure and daughter figure, and the root words for "knowledge" (*yada*) and "destruction" (*shahat*) appearing in each context, among others. Sivan, "Team of Rivals," lists numerous parallels between Ruth and Rachel and Leah, including displacement, leaving foreign gods, the presence of witnesses reinforcing rites, and the crucial role played by Bethlehem.

In contrast to the masculine list, which is summarily “historical,” the feminine list is portrayed as “herstory” and as part of... Boaz and Ruth’s wedding scene. This list functions as a connecting link for the formal closing of the book and a disposition to recast forbidden actions into “an expression of blessing” is prominent in it. Absent here is the unforgiving terminology found in the original story: the figure of the *qedecisha* or the prostitute at the entrance of Enaim, the problematic revelation at Boaz’s feet, and the hesitation of the redeemer to corrupt his inheritance, the threat of the world’s annihilation in the story of Lot’s daughters and their abandonment to be raped in the beginning of the story of Sodom, the poverty, calamity, and death that accompany Ruth and Tamar, the clashing of the sisters Rachel and Leah. All of these are transformed into unified harmony in the mouths of the congratulators at the city’s gate.²⁶

Through their mention in this story, these earlier women are woven into the fabric of Israel’s royal history, and their sacrifices reach an apex in Ruth’s actions. Whereas those earlier stories were tales of deceit, lack of knowledge, seduction, and trickery, Ruth’s “bedtrick” at the threshing floor was a call to action that necessitated recognition and awareness on the part of the individual actors, and that resulted in “fully legitimate, legally certified” marriage. From Lot’s daughters’ incest, to Rachel and Leah’s wedding night switch, to Tamar’s disguised harlotry, we have progressed, finally, to a public marriage ceremony at the city gates of Bethlehem.²⁷ Through Ruth, those earlier episodes are thus redeemed, affirmed, and celebrated.²⁸ Maybe this is why the male

26. *Holiness and Transgression: Mothers of the Messiah in the Jewish Myth* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2017), 14.

27. Kaniel, 35.

28. See Harold Fisch, “Ruth and the Structure of the Covenant History,” *Vetus Testamentum* 32 (1982): 425–437. He notes the episodes reflect a social development in the ancient world with Lot’s daughters representing a cave-dweller society, Tamar (and one could add Rachel and Leah) a pastoral society, and Ruth an agrarian society. See also Adelman, 95, 119–121 and Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky, 93.

genealogical list begins with the name Perez, which means "breach."²⁹ Daring to breach propriety for the sake of family, these women not only ensured the continuation of their family line, they provided national salvation.

STRUGGLES, STORYTELLING, AND SALVATION

By telling the story of King David's genealogy through the Book of Ruth, the text is offering a nuanced framework for thinking about our own history, both national and familial. As psychologist Dr. Lisa Miller has demonstrated, the ability for families to articulate their struggles and challenges builds resilience among their members.³⁰ Through the tale of a foreign, marginalized widow, whose personal risk mirrors that of other biblical mothers, we are reminded of the sacrifices that sustain the continuity of the Jewish people. We are reminded of the ability of kindness to heal. And we are reminded of the power of family, both biological and beyond. Ruth's story inspires us to meet the challenges of our own circumstances. Through the tale of communal openness to a disconnected stranger, we are given the keys to redemption.³¹ After all, it is the eventual offspring of Lot's daughter, Rachel and Leah, Tamar, and Ruth, with a family bloodline of struggle, alienation, and foreignness, coupled with selfless dedication to continuity, who is uniquely suited to lead the Children of Israel and bring the nations of the world closer to God.³² Like Moses, whose virtues and leadership abilities were

29. See Adelman, 121–122.

30. See *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving* (New York: Picador, 2015), 291.

31. Orit Avnery, "Who is in and who is out? The two voices of Ruth," *Havruta Magazine* (The Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, 2010): 77.

32. See Ruth Rabba 8:1 and Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah: An Anthology of Interpretation and Commentary on the Five Books of Moses – Bereishis* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1994), 256–257; See also, Kaniel, 20:

These women, going to the threshing floor, to the cave, and the entrance of Enaim, disguised and hidden, are figures whose essence is flexible and their "unstable" identities are a source of power, allowing them to enlarge circles and create a life outside of strict tribal boundaries. By not belonging to any place, they belong to every place. In accordance with their identification with "untamed nature," they are depicted as running wild and crafting "culture" anew.

developed through his fractured, foreign experiences in both Egypt and Midian, Ruth too embodies the marginal figure's messianic capabilities.³³

It is through our own striving to survive and flourish alongside our imperfections, struggles, and feelings of disconnectedness that we will eventually repair a fractured world. To quote Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen in his discussion of the Messiah in *Tzidkat HaTzadik* (#111), "the lowest will become the highest."

This is why Ruth is the progenitor of the Messiah, because the Messiah is the ultimate *meishiv nefesh* (Ruth 4:15), restorer of life and dignity when hope seems lost...to restore the name (Ruth 4:5) is to reach across the generations, and across interpersonal divide, and at times across the divide between aspects or periods within one's own self, in active recognition, provoking true transformation. That is what compassionate redemption means...in the end, Ruth reminds us that nothing is more beautiful than friendship, that grace begets grace, that blessing flourishes in the place between memory and hope, that light shines most from broken vessels. What else is the Messiah about?³⁴

This is the way Tamar, Ruth, and Lot's daughters are integrated into the people of Israel, and the messianic heroes are born. From an ethnic perspective, they represent the power of the weak, and their seductive manner reflects...a vital survival practice against oppressive or life denying forces.

33. See Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3:

The figure of the foreigner serves as a device that allows regimes to import from outside (and then, often, to export back to outside) some specific and much-needed but also potentially dangerous virtue, talent, perspective, practice, gift, or quality that they cannot provide for themselves (or that they cannot admit they have) ...sometimes foreignness operates as an agent of (re-)founding... Moses appears as an Egyptian prince to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and bring to them the law from the mountain. The biblical Ruth's migration from Moab to Bethlehem reanimates the alienated Israelites' affective identification with their God while also beginning the line that will lead to King David.

34. Nehemiah Polen, "Dark Ladies and Redemptive Compassion: Ruth and the Messianic Lineage in Judaism," in *Scrolls of Love: Ruth and the Song of Songs*, ed. Peter S. Hawkins and Lesleigh Cushing Stahlberg (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 69, 74.

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In our striving to embody the values inspired by Ruth, may we merit the writing of the next chapter of the Jewish story. May we, as individuals, as members of our family, and as members of the Children of Israel, bring the world compassionate redemption.