



HARVESTING COMPASSION IN OUR LIVES

We celebrate [Shavuot](#), “the feast of weeks,” seven weeks — or 50 days — after the first night of Pesach. On [Shavuot](#), we honor the revelation and Israelite acceptance of the Torah as God’s Law given on Mount Sinai. During services on the second morning of [Shavuot](#), we read the Book of Ruth. A Moabite woman, Ruth marries an Israelite man who dies suddenly. Rather than return to her Moabite family, she follows her Israelite mother-in-law, Naomi, back to Bethlehem.

“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 God do to me if anything but death parts me from you.” (Ruth 1:16-17)

Ruth’s devotion to Naomi and the Israelite God mirrors the commitment the Israelites show to God upon receiving the Torah at Sinai. In Bethlehem, Ruth remains loyal to Naomi, continuing to care for her as long as she needs. Ruth goes on to marry another Israelite man and start a family. Five generations later comes her great-great-grandson King David, who is thought to have been born and to have died on [Shavuot](#).

Among the eight mental health middot the Blue Dove Foundation has identified, two stand out for [Shavuot](#) and are tied to Ruth.





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כל ישראל ארים זה לזה – Kol Yisrael arevim zeh la zeh –
All Jews are responsible for one another

The Talmud (Shavuot 39a) teaches that members of the Jewish community are responsible for each other. In simple terms, we are interconnected and must be invested in the mental wellness and overall well-being of everyone. We must be willing, informed and prepared to help one another, because we all benefit. Ruth was committed to caring for Naomi; recognizing that Naomi was facing hardship, Ruth dedicated herself to her care, honoring the web of interdependence woven between them and, in a similar way, among Jews everywhere.

נושא בעול עם חברו – Nosei b'ol im chaveiro –
Sharing a burden with one's friend

Beyond the idea that all Jews are responsible for one another (kol Yisrael arevim zeh la zeh), the rabbis teach the value of supporting another person (Pirkei Avot 6:6). The story of Ruth and Naomi's special friendship illustrates this. When faced with struggles, Naomi urges her daughter-in-law to turn back to their own land, their own people and their own gods. But Ruth refuses to leave her.

Together, Ruth and Naomi confront many difficulties but are able to overcome them, because they support each other – exemplifying the middah **nosei b'ol im chaveiro**.





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Activity

Ruth's story takes place during the season of the barley harvest; thus, the harvest serves as an agricultural occasion for [Shavuot](#). For this activity, consider the two mental health middot that relate to [Shavuot](#) and Ruth's story. Writing on three straws of barley below, consider the ways you show compassion for yourself and others, and how others show compassion for you. Use one straw for self-compassion, one straw for compassion for others and a third for compassion FROM others. You may wish to cut out the shape of the individual barley straws and write your reflection on the back of each.

**What do I do to
show compassion
for myself?**

**What do I do to
show compassion
for others?**

**What can others do
to show compassion
for me?**

