

Shavuot Yizkor 5783 - I Carry Your Heart With(in) Me  
Rabbi Heath Watenmaker  
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i carry your heart with me(i carry it in  
my heart)i am never without it(anywhere  
i go you go,my dear;and whatever is done  
by only me is your doing,my darling)  
i fear  
no fate(for you are my fate,my sweet)i want  
no world(for beautiful you are my world,my true)  
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant  
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows  
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud  
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows  
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)  
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart(i carry it in my heart)<sup>1</sup>  
- e.e. cummings

“Anywhere i go you go, my dear.” These beautiful words of love written by e.e. cummings a little over 70 years ago suggest that those we love and those we have loved are always with us, become part of us. It’s unclear here, whether cummings is speaking of a love living or lost. As we gather today for Yizkor, to remember our dear ones whom we have lost, they are here with us - they will always be with us - for anywhere we go, they go. We carry them in our hearts.

On Shavuot, we read the book of Ruth. It's a powerful story about the love and care between two women who form an unlikely, but deep bond. On this day on which we celebrate the revelation of Torah on Sinai, the deepening of the relationship between God and Israel, through the giving of law, we read this story of Ruth, a story about the redemptive power of a deep, committed relationship. As the Book of Ruth begins, we read about Naomi, a woman who has lost everything and everyone dear to her: her husband and their two sons have all died from a terrible famine that swept the land of Moab. And so, in her pain and desperation, she sets off on a journey back to her home, to Judea, with her two daughters-in-law. But as they are about to leave, Naomi says to them, "Turn back, each of you to her mother's house. May the Eternal deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me" (1:8). After some protest, one daughter-in-law, Orpah, acquiesces to Naomi's pleas and bids farewell to her mother-in-law. But, we read,

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1952,  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/49493/i-carry-your-heart-with-me-i-carry-it-in>

<sup>14</sup> ...Ruth clung to her. <sup>15</sup> So [Naomi] said, "See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods. Go follow your sister-in-law." <sup>16</sup> 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 spend the night, I will spend the night; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. <sup>17</sup> Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus and more may the Eternal do to me if anything but death parts me from you." <sup>18</sup> When [Naomi] saw how determined she was to go with her, she ceased to argue with her; <sup>19</sup> and the two went on until they reached Bethlehem.

"Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you spend the night, I will spend the night; your people shall be my people, and your God my God." It is a powerful statement, and a deep commitment to make to someone, in the midst of most desperate times. As I learned from my teacher, Dr. Tamara Eskenazi, part of the power of Ruth's statement is that first and foremost, she makes a commitment to Naomi, to the person, before pledging her allegiance to her people or her God.

Throughout our lives, if we are really lucky, we encounter someone to whom we are willing to tie our fates, or those whose future becomes linked to ours. To see where the journey of life takes us. We are willing to go where they go. They make a life where we make our lives. Dear friends, spouses, life partners, children. We build a life together built on love, trust, care, and curiosity. As the Bible scholar Phyllis Trible explains, the relationship between Ruth and Naomi is a beautiful example of an "elaborate 'dance' of empathy,"<sup>2</sup> a story of mutual caring in which "Ruth holds fast in the relationship that she has freely chosen."<sup>3</sup> Sometimes, the relationships that involve a bit of risk, that we invest care and effort in, can yield the richest rewards. In the Book of Ruth, we see that the care these two women develop for each other affects each of them and their futures. As Trible explains, they demonstrate the "healing power of proper bonding between women...a model of a mutual, nonjudgmental, accepting, caring, devoted relationship between people who might be expected to quarrel, compete, and find conflict."<sup>4</sup> In the end, "Ruth's love heals Naomi's bitterness." Her love, her *chesed*, is a love and care that redeems.

What are the relationships in our lives that have provided that healing care? When the ground slips out from under us, what are the memories that prop us up? How do we share those stories and those memories of those we may have lost, with the people around us now? How do we carry the memory of a loving touch, a knowing smile, a compassionate ear, the knowledge that someone would support you, no matter what, who would still have a hug and a word of encouragement after a hard day? We carry all of it with us.

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<sup>2</sup>Mona DeKoven Fishbane, quoted in Phyllis Trible, "Ruth: A Text in Therapy," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, vol. 51 (1997), 33-42.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Apfel & Grondahl, quoted in Trible.

This morning as we gather, we remember. We carry these relationships, the imprints and memories - the joys and the sorrows, the laughter and the tears - we carry them all with us, within us. For where we go, they go, when we rest our heads at night, they are with us.