

# Wrestling with “Queer” and Anti-Zionist Rabbis

By Phyllis Chesler

So many of the shameful anti-Zionist letters [were signed by Jews](#)—by rabbis, rabbinical students, community leaders, and citizens who were born to Jewish mothers. I must note that there seems to be a [preponderance of signatories](#) who are women, lesbians, and those who identify as “queer.” I’m not sure what to make of this. Is this a rebellion against a tradition that once and forever has rendered them outcasts, pariahs? Are they building a new tower of Babel? And is this “good for the Jews”?

Please understand that I am not homophobic or, for that matter, Islamophobic or transphobic, although I do have strong opinions on these subjects.

Humanity’s hubris in building the tower/ziggurat of Babel did not end well. The one universal language and conformity of thought led to our dispersal into many different languages and to far distant places. A good thing.

All right. Call me old fashioned (I am in some ways), and therefore I’m alarmed by how many educated Jews, even rabbis, feel that, like God, they’ve been empowered to create a Torah in their own image, to seek out only those [like themselves](#) in these scrolls.

[“Queer” Jews](#) say that they want to find themselves in the texts—I always thought that we were in search of revelation, holy revelation, and dare I say it, in search of God in these texts, not necessarily in search of oneself, although, of course, we do always find hidden and ever-evolving messages for each of us if we study the texts.

I'm only a Jane-come-lately to Torah study, and I can assure you that one can spend one's entire lifetime in studying the Tanach and only some of the major rabbinical interpretations, revelations, midrashim. They are magnificent in their disparate views and in the sheer volume of their writings. However, only after "receiving" most or much of this, can one render genuinely solid new views.

While I respect creative, evolving interpretations, I do not know what to make of them when they are based on wishful thinking or on outright ignorance. For example, here's what those who are creating a "Queer Tanach" have to say: They are reading "Jewish texts (like the Talmud) through a queer lens, looking for hidden or overlooked queer themes and characters."

Their goal is to challenge norms and "call attention to stories that can be read as queer-inclusive." For example, they note "The deep relationship between Ruth and Naomi (may be) interpreted by some as a form of chosen family."

Well, yes—but actually no. Who exactly is Ruth? She is a Moabite—a direct descendent of one of Lot's daughters who, arguably, got their father Lot drunk and had sex with him in order to repopulate the world after the destruction of Sdom and Amarah. And Lot? He's Avram/Avraham's nephew, the son of Avram/Avraham's brother, the very man who was Avram/Avraham's intended heir, the man whom Avram/Avraham rescued in a great war.

Thus, Ruth, the future great-grandmother of King David, was not only part of a "chosen family." She was also "chosen" by God as a way of continuing the line of the covenant. Ruth, like Avram/Avraham, was originally chosen by God. Her choice to follow Naomi back to the Holy Land was both a free choice and one that was destined.



Yes, the story of Ruth and Naomi is quite beautiful and it is a stirring and unique tale of love between two women—and between a daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law, but their love is sacred and perhaps even pre-ordained as much as it is a freely chosen family tie.

I welcome your views on this—I really do.

Here's a recent one of my own. In what way was Noach chosen by God because he was "good for his generation"? Most clearly, in Bereshit, we see that his grandfather Hanoch also "walked with God." The Torah tells us so, not once, but twice. Thus, perhaps Noach had not evolved any further than his grandfather had—or, perhaps, Noach was "good" because he upheld his grandfather's traditions.

Again, what do you think?

A sweet Shabbat to one and all—the heteronormative, the religious, the atheists, and to all those who are gay and queer—or "different" in a multitude of ways.

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