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 811 Palisade Ave., Teaneck, NJ 07666  
[www.utj.org](http://www.utj.org) 201.801.0707

Rabbi Wayne Allen

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**Commitment**

The Midrash and the classical commentators all agree that what ultimately sold Naomi on the loyalty of her daughter-in-law Ruth was her statement of faith. But this need not be so. The Book of Ruth succinctly describes what Naomi saw that changed her mind about Ruth. The text (1:18) states "when she made the effort to go with her," Naomi realized that Ruth was indeed committed. Those who make the effort convince others of their commitment.

What makes the Book of Ruth so appropriate for reading on Shavu'ot is this idea of effort, more than the agricultural events described in the narrative that were connected with the summer season. Shavu'ot is historically the time of the giving of the Torah; a reminiscence of the events at Sinai. But for Torah to have more than theoretical value, it must be embraced through considerable effort. This is what the Talmud calls *amelim ba-Torah*, literally, toiling in the Torah. The sages ordained that upon leaving the academy where sacred texts were studied, a person would recite a prayer that included the contrast between those who make every effort to learn Torah and those who waste their time in frivolous pursuits. It takes effort to really understand the Torah, to unravel its mysteries, to master its commentaries. But effort is what is required if there is true commitment.

This does not mean that only those who are scholars are worthy. Rather, it means that knowledge does not come without study, and commitment is demonstrated only through effort. All those who make the effort, like Ruth, are considered worthy. How much you know is not as important as making the effort to grow. In time, people can build up their fund of knowledge, provided they are committed to the idea.

Leonardo da Vinci is reported to have once said, "O God, you give everything for the price of an effort!" Shavu'ot is the time to renew our commitment to Torah and to revive our efforts to toil in the vineyards of God. It is the season to reinvest our lives with a sense of devotion to our tradition manifested by the efforts that we expend for our labour of love.

*Hag Same'ah!*

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*Rabbi Allen has served Beth Tikvah Synagogue in Toronto for 22 years.*

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