

Ruth: A Stranger in my Land

Nava Semel From *Hymn to the Bible* (2015)

[\(translated from Hebrew on her website\)](#)

Nava Semel (1954-2017) was born in Tel Aviv. She had an MA in art history from Tel Aviv University and worked as a journalist, art critic and TV, radio and recording producer. She published novels, short stories, poetry, plays, children's books and TV scripts. Her stories have been adapted for radio, film, TV and the stage in Israel, Europe and the USA. Her novel, And the Rat Laughed, has been made into an opera; it is also being made into a feature film, directed by David Fisher. Semel was a member of the Massua Institute of Holocaust Studies and was on the board of governors of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum. She was the sister of Israeli performer Shlomo Artzi.

Don't go with me Ruth,
By myself I'll cross the border
Alone I will go
Let us part now, before it's too late
I must leave, but you can regret.
On the other side a foreign land awaits
There - they'll point their fingers
Call you by names
Wherever you walk
You'll be tarnished by shame
A stranger in my land
I'm worried and scared
it is hard to forget and forgive
On your wall they will write
"Here a Foreign Woman lives".

Do not join me, Ruth
You are a widow
No bride anymore
My people, engulfed by their fears
Are banging their doors
There – Sara banished her rival Hagar
There – they reject those who come from afar
When you walk on the street
You will always be marked
"The Other" – that's what they'll call you
From morning to dark.
Though they call themselves "The Chosen People"
They are suspicious, hostile and hard
Out of fear of the unknown
Go back, Ruth, stay with your own.

Night falls, Ruth

Moabite sky is old
My people are not yours
Nor is my Lord!
Turn around, wife of my son
My beloved daughter in Law,
Stay where your own sun shines
For my home is not yours
Nor yours is mine.

Don't go with me, Ruth
Don't go with me, Ruth!