

Friendship

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

"Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: 'What! You too? I thought I was the only one.'" So wrote C.S. Lewis about the experience of discovering that we are not alone in the world. Others have shared our thoughts and reach out a hand to share our lives.

The Torah presents models of friendship, David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi, and also reminds us of its value: Ecclesiastes insists that, "Two are better than one... If one falls down, his friend can help him up." In a deep way the entire story of Judaism is a meditation on friendship: in rabbinic literature Abraham is known as the friend of God and we are told that morning prayers should begin at the hour that one can distinguish the face of his friend. The friend is the family you choose.

In an increasingly mobile and fractured world we need friends more than ever. Go often to the house of your friend, Emerson reminds us, for weeds choke the unused path. Friendship needs care and cultivation. Yet from ancient times until today, a true friend is a treasure who will help us with our burdens and brighten our joys.