

## RESPONSE

“One has to have lived it,” she said,  
“meaning no offence-“  
and thrust me- convert- into limbo,  
outside – looking – in,  
a threshold crossed only by a birth  
I cannot change.

Suddenly,  
Sinai slipped from under my feet,  
the Promised Land was no longer my inheritance,  
Isaiah’s burning words not mine.  
I would not die in fallen Jerusalem or  
on a dusty shtetel street.  
Those for whom I wept at Auschwitz were  
No longer my people.  
Maimonides and Judah Halevi were beyond my grasp;  
I do not have the right mother.

The pure, high concept of the one God  
Cannot be mine;  
I am tainted with shadows of Trinity  
And Salvation,  
Burdens cast aside a half century ago.

I am forever Ruth the Moabite.

“One has to have lived it,” she said.  
I turned it round about, out of context.  
“Shema Yisrael, Adonai Elohenu, Adonai echad,”  
I said,  
And the one God filled my universe  
To its farthest reaches.  
Law and mitzvot were fire and storm.  
Blessings welcomed the first fruits and bright rainbows.  
“You are a Jew,” said God,  
and all my love, my happy energy, my understanding  
rose to meet it.  
It is my Promised Land,  
My miracle at Sinai  
My eternal Shabbat!

Elijah will come to my seder some time;  
I expect him.  
Yes, Yes, I say to Maimonides.

Your people are my people.  
The Judaism I live lives in me.

**by Ruth Knott**