

An Essay contributed by Justice Ruth Bader-Ginsburg
to the book,
I am Jewish: Personal Reflections Inspired by the Words of Daniel Pearl
(Jewish Light Publishing, 2004)
edited by Judea and Ruth Pearl

Former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg once said, 'My concern for justice, for peace, for enlightenment stems from my heritage.' Justice Stephen Breyer and I are fortunate to be linked to that heritage, and to live in the U.S.A. at a time when Jews residing here face few closed doors and do not fear letting the world know who they are.

For example, I say who I am in certain visible signs. The command from Deuteronomy appears in artworks, in Hebrew letters, on three walls and a table in my chambers. "*Zedek, Zedek tirdof,*" "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue," these art works proclaim; they are ever present reminders to me of what judges must do 'that they may thrive.' There is also a large silver *mezuzah* mounted on my door post. It is a gift from the super bright teenage students at the Shulamith School for girls in Brooklyn, NY, the school one of my dearest law clerks attended in her growing up years.

A question stated in various ways is indicative of what I would like to convey. What is the difference between a New York City garment district bookkeeper and a Supreme Court Justice? One generation my life bears witness, the difference between opportunities open to my mother, a bookkeeper, and those open to me.

I am a judge, born, raised, and proud of being a Jew. The demand for justice runs through the entirety of the Jewish history and Jewish tradition. I hope, in all the years I have the good fortune to serve on the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States, I will have the strength and courage to remain steadfast in the service of that demand.