



Louis Brandeis

Have you ever heard of me? I am remembered for my brilliant mind and my service to my country, but you might know about me because I was a Justice of the United States Supreme Court – pretty impressive, huh?

I was born on November 13, 1856 in Louisville, Kentucky. How old are you? Do you think you will graduate from high school at age 14? That's what I did, and I graduated with highest honor. I later attended Harvard Law School and received the highest marks of any student ever! A friend and I started our own law practice and we were very successful.

In 1916, I was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson to serve as a justice in the United States Supreme Court and I served there until 1939. What was remarkable about my appointment was the fact that I was the very 1st Jewish person ever appointed to be a Supreme Court justice. Why do you think they appointed me? Not everyone was very happy to have me as a justice, but I had been very well respected as a lawyer. Once, before I was a justice, I argued a case to the Supreme Court about how horrible it was that working women had to work so many hours. I argued that it was bad for our country to force women to work such long hours and I got the court to agree with me. This was the first time that an argument like this had ever been made to the court and it changed the kinds of arguments that were made by other lawyers from then on.

One of my passions was protecting people's right to privacy. I wrote many opinions about this issue and am considered a real protector of that right. Another of my passions was Zionism. Although I was Jewish, my family didn't raise me with much religion. But around 1912 I became interested in Zionism and was active in the American Federation of Zionists. During World War I a new group was formed in New York called the Provisional Executive Committee for Zionist Affairs, and I was elected its first president. I spent much of 1914–1915 speaking in favor of Zionism all over the country.

I guess I made a really positive impact on this country and on Jews. There are lots of places named after me. Have you heard of Brandeis University in Boston? Also, at the University of Louisville, their law school is named after me and their legal magazine is called the Brandeis Law Journal. In Israel, there is a Kibbutz that has a name that means "Spring of the Judge" to honor my commitment to Zionism. And there is a high school in New York named after me.

I guess people liked what I had to say and thought that my sayings had a great deal of value – see if you like either of these.

- » "The most important political office is that of public citizen."
- » "Those who won our independence by revolution were not cowards. They did not fear political change."

I died in 1941 and last year people remembered me by celebrating the 150th year since my birth. I hope you will remember me, too.