

TORAH

Our Torah Unit rests on these foundational ideas:

I am created for a reason; I have a unique role in the Master plan.

The Torah is a guidebook; the Torah is G-d communicating with us how to best live achieve our potential.

We learn these lessons both directly (through mitzvot) and through gleaning lessons (from stories).

The Torah is condensed wisdom; we learn so much from the nuances in the words.

The Torah is our national treasure, precious to Jews throughout the world and throughout time.

The Torah is outfitted in beauty that befits its stature.

Why We Began with this Unit

Over the course of this last year, our community had the unique opportunity to write our own Torah. The Kissel family commissioned the writing of a new Torah as we all got to partake in that process. We began last September with a ceremony in the Grand Summit Hotel. Then, midwinter, we met with the scribe on a lovely Saturday evening and tracked the Torah's progress. And now, our Torah is ready to come home!

Traditionally, when a new Torah is welcomed into a synagogue, it is done so with great fanfare. Our celebration will include dinner, music, and dancing with the Torah. It is a unique opportunity and we hope all families will join us.

But What is TORAH?

Let's take a few steps back...G-d created the world and gave us all a mission: Fill this world with goodness and G-dliness. G-d says, human beings are quite powerful and have real ability in being able to elevate the world and bring meaning to it.

But, this mission is lofty; we need a 'map', a guide, to help us navigate through it and accomplish this goal.

So G-d gave the Torah. Torah, translates literally as 'teacher'; it is G-d's way of communicating with us how to best actualize our potential. It is a live document, that talks to us in contemporary times.

The first Torah scroll was handwritten by Moses, after the Jews heard the 10 Commandments on Mt Sinai. Still today, we employ the identical method as Moses. Highly trained scribes handwrite the Torah on parchment, with a feather quill, in a specific aleph-bet font. The very same words passed down over 3,321 years!

How Does the Torah Teach Us?

The Torah has 613 directives, or mitzvot. By performing the mitzvot, we can help raise ourselves from mindless behaviors, and elevate us to a state of consciousness.



Additionally, the Torah is full of stories - both of heroes and of villains. Through studying those stories, analyzing the choices they made, and the consequences to those choices, we learn lessons for our own behaviors. These ancient stories have relevance to our modern lives.

The Torah is written in a very compressed form. One would not be able to glean Jewish practice just from studying the actual text of the Torah. When G-d gave us the Torah at Mt Sinai, we were also given oral traditions. Moses was responsible to transmit those oral traditions to the Jewish leaders of the day, who, in turn, were responsible to pass it on. These oral traditions eventually were recorded into the Talmud.

Since the Torah was given to us, thousands of volumes have been written expounding and expanding the Torah's messages. We learn tremendous lessons from the nuances of the words.

READING THE TORAH

The Torah is what defines us as a people, it is what holds us together throughout time and throughout the world. It has always been the centerpiece of Jewish life. It has always helped us to remember who we are, where we come from, and how G-d wants us to make the world a better place.

The Torah is divided into 5 sections, that is why the Torah is sometimes referred to as the Five Books of Moses. Over the course of the year, we read the entire Torah; on Mondays, Thursdays and Shabbat. We also read the Torah on Holidays. The person who reads the Torah is called a Bal Korai, the Reader. He sings the Torah in special tune. Just as with many mitzvot, we recite a blessing before and after we do the mitzvah of reading the Torah.

We keep the Torah in a synagogue (although we have Torah books at home, the actual Torah scroll is only kept in a synagogue), right in the front of the room. It is stored in a special closet called an Aron Kodesh. It is dressed in a special covering and wears a silver crown. When the Torah is removed from the ark, in preparation of our reading it, we stand in respect, kiss its covering.

We pay respects to the Torah that has guided us for thousands of years and helped the Jewish nation stay together, and stay on course.