



Carnegie Shul Chatter

September 27, 2018



The Gift of Torah

This Monday evening we will begin the celebration of Simchas Torah, literally "Rejoicing With the Torah."

Simchas Torah has always been my favorite holiday. When I was a child it meant parading with Torah flags around the sanctuary, then getting a red delicious apple and a Hershey's bar after the services. As an adult it means dancing and celebrating with the Torah.

What a tremendous gift God gave the Jewish people when he gave them the Torah. Some read the Torah and see it just as a history book, telling the story of creation, the beginning of the Jewish religion, the exodus from Egypt, and the journey through the wilderness to the promised land. But it is much, much more.

The Torah is like the constitution of the Jewish people. It contains the Ten Commandments and the 613 mitzvot, the laws given to us by God that provide us with the guidelines for a life of happiness and moral righteousness.

Life Cycles

It's hard to believe that summer is gone and we will soon be busy raking leaves. Those of you who will be remaining in Pittsburgh for the winter will watch snowflakes falling and will be shoveling snow. Then the snow will melt away and the flowers will begin to bloom and we will be pulling weeds and mowing the lawn. And then we will be sweating through summer once again.

Life is a continual cycle, progressing from season to season and year to year.

And so, too, is the Torah; we finish the last chapter of Deuteronomy and immediately begin again the reading of Genesis.

But even though the words on parchment do not change from year to year, hopefully our understanding of Torah grows even as we read the same portions that we read the year before.

No matter how old we become, there is always something new to discover in this amazing document.

So come to Shul each week, or read a commentary online. You will almost assuredly find a new insight which will make your life more meaningful.

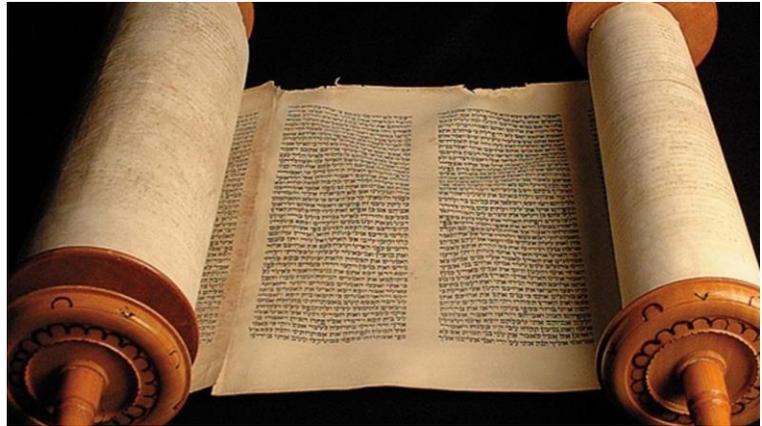
It contains a moral code unlike any that preceded it, and superior to any that has followed it.

It is an eternal gift that will lead us in straight paths all the days of our lives.

Here is what Torah.org says as a simple primer to Torah:

The Torah is the center of it all. It is the axis around which the whole of Judaism revolves. If you want to know

the Jewish approach to any issue; if you want to define who the Jewish people are; if you want to taste and smell and feel Judaism – for all of these, you look in the Torah.



But what is the Torah? How do you pin it down? How do you define its borders?

“We read the Torah in synagogue last week...”

“The Torah view of cloning is...”

“...a whole lifetime spent on Torah isn’t enough...”

You might have heard all of these things said about “Torah,” but it might not be apparent how they can all be describing the same thing. That scroll in the synagogue is big, but it can’t be big enough to require a whole lifetime of study, can it? And where does it say anything about cloning? Is there even a Hebrew word for cloning?

So now there is a confession to make: The word “Torah” is not so precise. It can be used at different times to mean different things. To be more exact, “Torah” is used to describe different parts of one big thing. That does not mean that there is no precise definition, and that the “Torah” is just some vague, murky collection of mutterings, ideals and dreams. It just means that “Torah” is a very versatile word.

“Torah” is sometimes the name given to the Five Books of Moses (also called “Chumash”, or “Pentateuch”). In traditional Judaism, these five books are considered a faithful and exact record of the word of G-d to His prophet, Moses. These books describe the creation of the world, the main events of the first 2000 years of history, the origins of the family which was to become the Jewish people, our exile and slavery in Egypt, redemption, the giving of the “Torah” at Mt. Sinai and some very limited details of the 613 mitzvos which the Jews were commanded to observe.



“Torah” sometimes also refers to the whole Bible (Old Testament; “Tanach”). This collection includes the five books of Moses, eight books of the prophets, and eleven books of the “writings.” These 24 books make up the written law.

However, that does not tell the whole story. There are times when the word “Torah” will be used to cover the whole, huge body of Jewish

teaching – both written and oral. That includes the Tanach, the Mishna, the Talmud and many other works – all studied without stop throughout the generations until this very day.

And finally, there's "Torah" used without reference to any specific book, but to the sum of all the knowledge that's to be found in all of these works together. How to apply the principles of the Torah to a world forever changing has been the work of every generation's greatest scholars. The sum total of the untiring labor of these thousands of dedicated leaders is the "Torah" in its largest meaning – one of the greatest libraries in the world.



Yahrzeit Plaques

Commemorate a loved one by dedicating a yahrzeit plaque in his or her memory at the Carnegie Shul. These beautiful plaques, mounted on the sanctuary walls, are lit on the loved one's yahrzeit, Yom Kippur, and days when Yizkor is recited. The names are also read aloud from the Bimah during services on the Sabbath of the yahrzeit and on Yom Kippur. To purchase a plaque, for only \$175, please email Mike Roteman at mrmike7777@yahoo.com.



Please consider sponsoring a Kiddush in honor or in memory of a loved one, for only \$36. Your sponsorship will be announced from the bimah and in the weekly Chatter. To sponsor a Kiddush, email mrmike7777@yahoo.com.

SOUTH HILLS Coffee and Conversation



Congressman Conor Lamb (D PA-18)
Monday, October 8 ★ 7 to 8 pm

**U.S. 17TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
ELECTION CANDIDATE**

SOUTH HILLS JCC
345 KANE BLVD, 15243



FREE AND OPEN TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY

This event is "off the record" and closed to the media; No video or audio recording

Register: southhillsjewishpittsburgh.org/lamb



South Hills

NOSH & KNOW

with Rabbi Danny Schiff, Foundation Scholar

WEDNESDAYS, OCTOBER 17 - NOVEMBER 14, 2018

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

The Artsmiths of Pittsburgh

1635 McFarland Rd., Mt. Lebanon, PA 15216

JUDAISM & THE HUMAN BODY

- 10/17 Tattooing and Piercing
- 10/24 Cosmetic Procedures & Enhancements
- 10/31 Visiting the Sick
- 11/7 Exhibiting Bodies
- 11/14 Extending Life

\$50 for all 5 sessions

Lunch provided, Dietary laws observed

Registration:

southhillsjewishpittsburgh.org
412-278-1780

Sponsoring Partners:

Beth El Congregation, The Carnegie Shul,
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