

Writing a Torah

The *Mitzvah* of the Week that we will focus on is *Sefer Torah*, the writing of a Torah. This concept comes from a verse in this week's Torah portion, *Parashat Vayelech*, Deuteronomy Chapter 31, Verse 19. In this *parasha*, we are commanded to learn/teach Torah. Moses announces that Joshua will soon take over as leader of the Israelites, hands the laws to the Levites to be placed in the ark, and really "passes the torch" of Jewish learning to the next generation.

Rambam, a great Jewish commentator, wrote, "Every Jew is commanded to write a *Sefer Torah* for his/her own use, even if s/he has inherited a *Sefer Torah*. It is a *mitzvah* to write one with his/her own hand, and it is as if s/he has received it for him/herself at Mount Sinai. If s/he does not know how, s/he should have others write it for him/her. Anyone who corrects a single letter in a *Sefer Torah* is credited with writing all of it."

While it is true that most people do not grow up to work as a *sofer* (scribe) and spend an entire year writing a Torah, we can write a Torah metaphorically by showing that our actions follow the ideals of the Torah. We treat a *Sefer Torah* as if it is a human being, counting it in a *minyan*, kissing it during the Torah service and burying it when it is beyond repair. Hopefully this week's mitzvah will remind us to follow the ethics and values inherent in the Torah and that we were given this great gift to (metaphorically) write, learn, study and pass on to each generation.

Writing a Torah Books

296.46 LEH

Lehman-Wilzig, Tami. Keeping the promise: a Torah's journey. Minneapolis, MN: Kar-Ben Pub., c2003.

A small Torah scroll passes from a Dutch rabbi, to a Bar Mitzvah boy during the Holocaust, to the first Israeli astronaut.

296.461 ROU

Rouss, Sylvia A. Reach for the stars : a little Torah's journey. New York: Pitspopany, c2004.

The story of the miniature Torah that was taken by Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon aboard the ill-fated Columbia Space Shuttle.

296.6 COW

Cowan, Paul. A Torah is written. 1st ed. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986. Describes the training, the materials, and the tools of Jewish scribes and the process used to transcribe handwritten Torah scrolls, as shown in the work of Rabbi Yehuda Clapman.

296.61 RAY

Ray, Eric. Sofer. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, c1986.

A Jewish scribe explains in detail how he shapes the Hebrew letters he uses in transcribing the Torah and how he prepares the scrolls themselves.

E BOG

Bogot, Howard. Yoni. New York, N.Y.: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, c1982.

Introduces the Torah and other symbols, customs, and objects important to the Jewish people.

E MUC

Muchnik, Michael, 1952-. The scribe who lived in a tree. Rev. color ed. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch, c1984.

E ROT

Rotenberg, Abie. The place where I belong. Lakewood, N.J.: CIS Publications, c1988.
A story of a Torah that was lost and then returned to its rightful place.

F GIN

Ginsburg, Marvell. The tattooed Torah. New York, N.Y.: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, c1983.

A small Torah stolen and desecrated by Nazi soldiers in Czechoslovakia is eventually rescued and restored to people who appreciate it.

F HER

Herman, Erwin. The Yanov Torah. Rockville, MD: Kar-Ben Copies, c1985.

Jews in a work camp in Yanov during the Nazi occupation of L'vov, Poland, smuggle in a Torah, piece by piece, despite enormous personal danger.