

For me in a way the of other cultures ced the Torah,

me. PETER PITZELE

my life was winning a trip to Israel through the National Bible Contest. I feel pride in my grandfather, who received *smikha* (ordination) from the Ohr Sameach. I *kvell* when my husband pores over a volume of Talmud on Shabbat afternoon. Through the years, relocation, children and trauma have diminished time for study. But the essential tools are there.

Learning takes unexpected forms. I draw bedtime stories for my daughters from the well of Torah and Jewish history. When we tell different versions of stories, we create, in a sense, our own *midrashim*. May their love of learning be even greater than their parents'.

BARBARA
TRAININ BLANK
writer

REASON AND VALUES

Alongside my parents—though not separate from them—the study of Torah has done more than anything else to shape my moral, spiritual and intellectual values. Since my youth it has brought me in touch with rabbis, teachers and others who take their Judaism seriously and are inspiring friends and role models. I particularly re-

member a teacher who—when I asked him if he believed in the Genesis Creation account literally—answered, “I don’t believe in the Torah because of the Creation account but because it says, ‘You must be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy’” (*Leviticus 19:2*). The study of the Torah’s commentators has meant constant engagement with some of the greatest minds and morally and spiritually sensitive individuals in history. I especially appreciate the commentators who explain the reasons for the commandments and find in the Bible the stimulus to discuss such questions as whether it is moral to lie in order to preserve life or family harmony, or to conduct medical experiments on animals. The study of Torah has shaped the way I view and react to the world and given my wife and me a system of values that we want to bequeath to our children.

JEFFREY H. TIGAY
rabbi, professor, author

MIRROR AND ORACLE

The commandment to study Torah is a life-long commitment. This is good, since the Torah seems to transform year by year as it is revealed in small doses. Depending on where I may be on my life journey, Torah study presents an intellectual challenge, a moral goad, a spiritual delight, a buttress to my faith. There have been times the Torah filled me with fury and anger, and still other times when it brought me sweetness and joy. The ancient words of *Pirke Avot* are as apposite today as they were two millennia ago: Turn it, turn it

round and round, in it all things may be found. Torah study not only teaches me about my ancestors, it teaches me about myself. I return daily to study for the opportunity to hear God’s still small voice. At that rare and awesome moment of revelation, my labors in Torah are richly rewarded: I stand with my people at Sinai.

BURTON L. VISOTZKY
rabbi, professor, author

NEW-AGE FIT

As I get more comfortable in our postmodernism, the almost three-century feud between *Wissenschaft* (critical Jewish studies) and *lernen* (traditional Torah study) has ended. I derive more and more satisfaction by engaging the classical sources of Jewish teaching with the insights of both our traditional Torah commentators and our academic scholars.

As I devote more and more time to *Torah lishma*, study for its own sake, I am exhilarated



by the intersection of the human spirit and the divinely inspired. The sanctity of texts is heightened as I realize how vital are the roles of rabbi and student, teacher and reader, in making them relevant to our lives. *Torah lishma* is the closest we get to prophetic inspiration but, by taking into account all

we know of the world as we struggle with the text, we are not only heirs to the Jewish romance but avid suitors and models for the generation to come. There is no enterprise that activates Jewish loyalties and commitments more than the study of Torah. While this does not necessarily lead to the unity of our fragmented community, our commitment to the study of the classical sources offers the hope that in the not so distant future Torah will serve as a factor of Jewish harmony instead of as a weapon to debase one another. When that happens the 70 faces of Torah will indeed lead us back to the pristine revelation of Sinai and to Elijah’s resolving our conundrums.

MOSHE WALDOKS
rabbi, author, lecturer

DEATH’S DEMISE

Torah comes alive for me when a great teacher encounters a great text. Forty years ago, the great teacher was the late Professor Shalom Spiegel; the text was the blessing in our *Amida* which praises God “Who resurrects the dead.”

Spiegel traced the evolution of both the doctrine and the text, then put down his spectacles and looked up at us: “Most of you probably believe that anyone who anticipates the resurrection of the dead is suffering from loss of nerve, that if we had sufficient courage, we would accept the finality of our death. Not so. The doctrine of resurrection is, in fact, the final triumphant step in the evolution of the mono-