or me in a way the
s of other cultures
ed the Torah,
. PETER PITZLE

i t usually
munity of
ially the past
and the present)
my father, who received smikva
(ordination) from the Ohr
Sameach. I kvell when my
husband ponders over a vol-
ume of Talmud on Shabbat
afternoon. Through the
years, relocation, children
and trauma have diminished
me of time for study. But the es-
ential tools are there.

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

BARBARA
TRAININ BLANK
writer

R E A S O N AND V A L U E S

A longside my parents—
though not separate
from them—the study of
Torah has done more than
anything else to shape my
moral, spiritual and intellec-
tual values. Since my youth
it has brought me in touch
with rabbis, teachers and
others who take their Jew-
 daemon seriously and are
inspiring friends and role
models. I particularly re-
member a teacher who—
when I asked him if he be-
lieved in the Genesis Cre-
ation account literally—
answered, “I don’t believe in
the Torah because of the
Creation account but be-
cause 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 spir-
itually sensitive individuals
in history. I especially
appreciate the commen-
tators who explain the
reasons for the commandments
and in the Bible the stimu-
lus to discuss such questions
as whether it is moral to lie
in order to preserve life or
family harmony, or to con-
duct 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
rabbis, professor, author

MI R R O R AND O R A C L E

T he 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 intellectu-
al challenge, a moral goal,
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 mil-
lennia 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 teach-
es me about myself. I return
daily to study for the oppor-
tunity to hear God’s still
small voice. At that rare and
awesome moment of revela-
tion, my labors in Torah are
richly rewarded: I stand with
my people at Sinai.

BURTON L. VISOTZKY
rabbis, professor, author

NE W - A G E FIT

A s I get more comfort-
able in our postmod-
erism, the almost three-
century feud between Wir-
senschaft (critical Jewish
studies) and lernen (tradi-
tional Torah study) has
ended. I derive more and
more satisfaction by engag-
ing the classical sources of
Jewish teaching with the
insights of both our tradi-
tional Torah commentators
and our academic scholars.

As I devote more and
more time to Torah
study for its own sake, I am
exhila-
rated 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 acti-
vates 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
rabbis, author, lecturer

DE A T H’S D E M I S E

T orah 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 evolu-
ion 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-