

Torah Study

Talmud Torah tells us about:

God

Truth

Justice

Knowledge

Beauty

Wisdom

Wealth

Good / Evil

Do any of these really exist?

Does it matter?

Are there answers?

Study of the Torah the Mitzvah of Talmud Torah helps us to address these issues and pursue the answers. Sadly it is discussed infrequently among modern Jews. When we are told Torah was written by God, or written by Moses or orally compiled by the sages and then transcribed, some eyes glaze over and many ears tune out.

Have you noticed, the Pledge of Allegiance is recited, the Gettysburg Address is memorized, and all know about the Bill of Rights. These all are part of our heritage as Americans; but why then do we choose to know so little about our heritage as Jews? We should know more about the "source" of our heritage - at least enough to be able to communicate with those who adopted and adapted it.

Tradition tells us the Torah, or Jewish Written Law, consists of the five books of the Hebrew Bible - known more commonly to non-Jews as the "Old Testament" - were given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai and include within them all of the biblical laws of Judaism. The Torah is also known as the Chumash, Pentateuch or Five Books of Moses. There is also the oral law which contains much explanation of how we should carry out what we find in the written law. Talmud Torah covers the whole scope of Jewish history as we try to make real what was revealed.

In ancient days the Torah was often compared to fire, water, wine, oil, milk, honey, drugs, manna, the tree of life, and many other things; it was considered the source of freedom, goodness, and life. It was identified both with wisdom and with love.

Hillel summarized the entire Torah in one sentence: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow, the rest is commentary, go and learn it".

Akiva said: "The fundamental principle of the Torah is the commandment, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself .'"

The ethical and religious-intellectual beliefs imparted by the Torah are all attainable and make our lives fuller and more rewarding.

Commandments which, in addition to being "revealed", are also demanded by reason (e.g., prohibitions of murder, fornication, theft, lying). Commandments whose authority is revelation alone (e.g., Sabbath and dietary laws), are understandable in terms of some personal or social benefit attained by performance.

What else can you learn, teach and experience at the same time?