

## **The Aura/Orah of Torah Dedicating our New Torah Covers**

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Shabbat B'ha'alotecha

*Torah Covers by Margery & Eli Langner of Custom Judaica*

To begin - let's play with the words aura and orah (Hebrew for light).

Torah is light ~ Torah orah. In fact, in Aramaic, a sister language of Hebrew, Torah is called "Oraita" (light). But Torah has an 'aura' about it.



Nonetheless, we need to decorate the Torah ... Why is it so important to have a beautiful Torah cover?

Why do we all instinctively know to treat the Torah with awe, with love and with respect? It is in our Jewish DNA — we know the Torah is special and unique among all Jewish objects. And we somehow feel that to draw close to it is to draw close to God.

Think of our ritual.

We go UP to Torah - we make an Aliyah - an ascent.

When the ark is opened, what do we do? Rise.

When we march with Torah, what do we do? Sing and march and stand and face the torah.

We reach out and touch and kiss. NOTE: touch and kiss NOT kiss and touch.

When the Torah is paraded in the sanctuary we follow the Torah — as if a royalty were in our midst.

In this week's Torah portion we learn about the Mishkan / Tabernacle being in the midst of the people — the tribes all camp around the Mishnah. So too, do we want the Torah in our midst. Many are the Jewish customs where Torah is read in the center of the room - not on an elevated platform in the front of the room - that is mainly a Reform innovation in the 19th and then into the 20th century.

We have a host of rules about how we write a torah, how we treat the Torah, how we repair the Torah, and if/when the time comes, how we bury a Torah.

A Torah is used at pivotal moments:

A bridal couple - aufruf.

Prayer for healing or yizkor.

Honor a special occasion.

Bar / Bat Mitzvah. ORIGINATED with a 13 year old boy simply being called to Torah.

Our new Torah covers feel especially important to us — because in our souls we know that honoring the Torah, taking care of the Torah is an important Jewish value.

When I proposed getting new covers for the Torahs - really simply yearlong covers as we didn't have any - the Board enthusiastically embraced the idea and immediately, our three donors stepped forward and offer to make donations so there would be no financial impact on our budget.

And so tonight, we dedicate these Torahs:

In Honor of Lily and Naomi Adler by Jay Adler;

In Loving Memory of Arthur Klaif by the Klaif Family;

In Loving Memory of Theodore J. Stone by Jeremy and Susan Stone.

Thank you.

Thank you to the Adler, Klaif, and Stone families. Your generosity is something which becomes a benefit for the entire community and please God for many years to come.

Torah for our people is a kind of security blanket, dare I say - an amulet that gives us a visual expression of our need to feel near to God, to remind ourselves what is expected of us and of our people's history.

We even have two holidays that celebrate Torah:

Shavuot celebrates that God inspired the words of Torah and gave it to our people and Simchat Torah celebrates that we read and we re-read this book because we always know we will find new meanings in this sacred text.

As we dedicate these covers may their beauty help inspire us to deeds of righteousness, holiness, beauty, mitzvot, and communal uplift!