

FAQ

Torah Connects

What are “letter fill-in” visits?

Letter fill-in visits are events to learn more about Torah and sit down with the *sofer* to fill-in a letter in one of the eight Torah scrolls that we are restoring. At the Sunday letter fill-in events, there will be art and education booths leading up to scribing a letter in one of our Torah scrolls with the *sofer*.

Are we restoring every letter in all eight of our Torah scrolls?

We are restoring the letters that our *sofer* has identified as needing repair, therefore we are not restoring every letter in all eight of our Torah scrolls.

Q: Why are we repairing our scrolls? Is this about making them “kosher”?

Our congregation is blessed to have 9 Torah scrolls which we have acquired over our 160 years. Torah scrolls are “living objects” made of organic materials. Our scrolls are each likely to be over 100 years old. Over time, every Torah scrolls naturally degenerates – ink falls off, the parchment darkens, etc. Since it is costly to repair even one scroll, it is economical to repair them all at once. This work brightens up the texts, fills in missing letters and makes the scroll more readable. Doing these repairs fulfills our responsibility to keep and preserve our sacred Torah scrolls for future generations. It is true that any scroll with even a single unreadable letter is considered not kosher, however our primary concern is preserving the living legacy we are entrusted with. In particular, the “Holocaust Scroll” is owned by a Trust of the Czech community. The trust requires us to use certain authorized *sofers*, one of which we have engaged for this project.

You mention that we are repairing eight Torah scrolls, but we have nine. What are you doing with the ninth Torah scroll?

Our ninth Torah scroll is beyond repair and will be buried in lieu of making repairs.

Is this a fundraiser?

Torah Connects is intended to be a community building event, there are opportunities to financially contribute to Congregation Beth Israel (CBI) by dedicating a letter, verse, or Torah portion. Funds raised will support the cost of repairing our Torah scrolls and ensure the continuity of our community and values, therefore we welcome any contribution. However, dedications are absolutely optional and start at \$18.00.

What’s a dedication?

A dedication is an opportunity to financially contribute to CBI by dedicating a meaningful portion of the Torah for yourself, your loved ones, or those of blessed memory. Please reach out to Jackie Volkoff at jackie@bethisrael-pdx.org with any questions you may have.

How much does it cost to participate?

Participation is absolutely free-of-charge. Our goal is one hundred percent participation. If you find the experience particularly moving there will be an opportunity to dedicate a letter, verse, or Torah portion.

Do we get to fill-in a letter in one of Temple’s Torah scrolls?

You sure do!

So, what’s a *sofer*?

A *sofer* is a specially trained scribe who writes and restores Torah scrolls and other religious texts and documents.

Do I need to sign up in advance?

Yes, we are using “Sign Up Genius” to schedule families, please see www.bethisrael-pdx.org/torah-connects/ to sign up.

Why do I need to sign up in advance?

The *sofer* can meet with 4-6 families per hour. Signing up ensures that everyone has equal access to this rare experience.

We can't make it to the first letter fill-in, will there be another opportunity?

Of course. We have the following dates scheduled:

- February 24
- March 10
- May 12
- June 10

More weekday dates will be confirmed in the near future.

Can my children participate?

Absolutely! This is a wonderful opportunity to connect with Torah as a family unit.

If I don't have children, can I still participate?

Of course, we welcome and hope everyone participates in this rare experience.

During these visits can I scribe whichever portion is most meaningful to me?

For the letter fill-in visits you will be able to fill in whichever letter the *sofer* is working on next.

If I make a dedication does that mean I get to scribe the letter, verse, or Torah portion that I have selected?

Making a dedication does not mean that you will get to scribe the letter, verse, or Torah portion that you have selected. However, at certain levels of giving, we will offer our donors the option of having a meaningful verse scribed onto a parchment that can be kept and framed.

How are folks being recognized for making a dedication?

Everyone who makes a dedication will be recognized in the following ways:

- A certificate of acknowledgment
- Public donor recognition in publications that will list everyone who contributed
- A thank you note from our Director of Development, Clergy, and Executive Director

Dedications of \$7,500 and above will be honored by a gift of a personally scribed piece of parchment with the phrase they have selected.

Are there adult education events?

Absolutely! Adult education events are still being formalized and will be announced in the near future.

Can I volunteer?

We love volunteers and wouldn't be able to do this work without them. Please go to www.bethisrael-pdx.org/torah-connects/ to sign up to volunteer.