

Torah for Teens - a book worth sharing at your Friday night table

Rabbi Dr Jeffrey Cohen has retired from a career of service in the rabbinate. He was the minister of Stanmore & Canons Park Synagogue, and he was invited last Tuesday evening to launch his new book, *Torah for Teens*, at the shul's Learning Zone.

I had my first opportunity to hear the rabbi's brilliant and precise analysis of the world a teenager lives in, and his considered opinion as to how we, as parents and mentors, need to provide material that communicates Torah values that really relates to the teenager of today.

We are all used to hearing how Torah can be explained, analysed, interpreted and squeezed for different levels of meaning. This is called 'exegesis' – taking out from the text. But what about 'isogesis' – reading our lives into the text, taking the story of Jacob and Esau and relating to it on a personal level in terms of a *broiges* we may have had in the family; or Abraham and Sarah's odyssey in terms of our wanderings as globe trotters in our gap year and things we discovered along the way?

In this way, Rabbi Dr Cohen spoke straight to the heart of where we are at, as an Anglo-Jewish community. Irrespective of our degree of religious observance, or fluency in Hebrew, we parents or grandparents, uncles or aunts etc. can *all* read Torah messages that relate to our lives and those around us.

It is from our life experiences and how they compare and contrast with Torah stories that we see much more in what we read each week: Joseph's spat with his brothers, a row at work between Abraham and Lot's shepherds, the stubbornness of a control freak Pharaoh etc... Where in our lives have we seen this before? Have we been there and got the t-shirt?!

Parents who might otherwise get labelled as fuddy duddy, uncool or whatever, would do well to exercise in bonding with our teen kids than sharing the Book of Life Experience with them. In this spirit, Rabbi Dr Cohen wrote *Torah for Teens*, which has just been published by Vallentine-Mitchell from £14.95 - see our *Learning Zone page for more details or at www.vmbooks.com*

I have a copy for my Friday night table, and would recommend it for yours, too... or perhaps for your son or daughter's next birthday?... (I am NOT on commission!)

Happy reading & sharing

Rabbi Abel