

Simchat Torah

Simchat Torah may be one of the reasons why Jews are referred to as 'the People of the Book.' At the end of the festival of Sukkot, we celebrate Simchat Torah, 'rejoicing with the Torah,' which marks the completion and rebooting of the weekly Torah reading cycle. Jewish communities have special celebrations of dancing, singing and rejoicing with their Torah scrolls as they turn them from *Devarim*,

the last portion of the Torah describing the end of wandering in the desert, to *Bereshit*, the first portion of the Torah and the essential story of new beginnings. As we read in the book of collected wisdom called *Pirkei Avot*, the Jewish people continue to 'Turn it, and turn it, for everything is in it. Reflect on it and grow old and gray with it. Don't turn from it, for nothing is better than it.'

Jewish Literacy = Jewish Empowerment!

As true in the 21st century as it was in the 1st century, the Jews who are most literate determine what our foundational texts mean for themselves and often for society. With the rapid translation and digitizing of Jewish texts online, it's easier than ever for each of us to be Jewishly knowledgeable and have a say in the meaning of our most sacred literature.

Connecting to text can be a year-round activity — you can read a book about Jewish history or Jewish values, or even just a chapter from the Torah every week.

Take time out to consider the following questions with your family and friends:

- 1** If you had to pick one book to read year after year, which would it be and why?
- 2** When was the last time you explored a Jewish book or a Jewish website?
- 3** What subject about Judaism would you like to know about? How could you build learning more about that subject into your regular routine?

