

Educator's Guide to Using



An Apples & Honey Press Book
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How It's Made: Torah Scroll will help students explore Torah on many levels: as a sacred ritual object, as the Five Books of Moses, the source of the mitzvot that guide us on how to live, a repository of stories about our ancestors, and as the connective thread among Jews all over the world.

Educators can use *How It's Made: Torah Scroll* with students of all ages, whether as an introduction to Torah or as part of units on Hebrew, Shabbat and holidays, mitzvot, or values. The simple language and vibrant photographs make it particularly accessible to new readers and visual learners.

Here are some ideas for when and how to use *How It's Made: Torah Scroll* to complement your students' learning. The target audience for the activities here is K-3; however, any of these techniques can easily be adapted for older grades.

Subject: Introduction to Torah

Goal: Develop awareness that the Torah is different from other types of books.

Activity Ideas:

1. Ask students what they know about the Torah:
 - What is it? (*something delicate, a big book*)
 - What's in it? (*stories, holidays, Hebrew*)
 - When is it used? (*Shabbat, holidays*)



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Write all the responses on a white board or flip chart. Then show students a mass-produced Hebrew Bible or Tanach. Turn to page 6 of *How It's Made: Torah Scroll* and do the matching game that shows the differences between a Torah scroll and a printed Bible.

2. Ask students to think about their favorite or special books at home. Discuss what makes those books important to them.

Where do they keep their books? How do they take care of them?

Draw connections between how they feel about their books and how the Torah is the most important book to Jews. We value the Torah so much that we keep it in a special place. Visit the synagogue sanctuary and show students the Holy Ark that holds the Torah, its cover or mantle, and the silver ornaments and decorations.

Subject: Hebrew Writing

Goal: Recognize the care that goes into writing a Torah.

Activity Ideas:

1. Invite a *sofer*, a Torah scribe, to visit your school and demonstrate the process for writing Torah scrolls and other holy Jewish texts, as described in *How It's Made: Torah Scroll*. Prepare for the visit with some of the following writing activities.
2. Measuring lines – Write a sentence on a blank, unlined piece of paper. With a ruler, mark lines one inch apart. Write the sentence again on the lines. Ask students to compare the two sentences, in terms of aesthetics and readability. Look at page 12-13 of *How It's Made: Torah Scroll* to learn how a *sofer* ensures straight lines.
3. Writing with ink – Divide students into groups of two or three. Give each group its own copy of *How It's Made: Torah Scroll* as a guide for how to plan out projects, such as making their own feather quill pen (page 15 of *How It's Made: Torah Scroll*) or writing Hebrew letters with berry ink they made themselves (page 21). Use tracing paper and have students trace Hebrew letters and words with their ink. They should check for consistency in spacing the letters and words.
4. Writing styles – Show different styles of *sofer* writing (use samples from page 11 of *How It's Made: Torah Scroll*). Choose a Hebrew word and have all the students write (or trace) the word on a piece of paper. Encourage them to be stylish and creative as they write – crowns on top, squiggly lines, thicker lettering, etc. Post on bulletin board, and compare how the styles are different.



Subject: Yom Kippur

Goal: Recognize that everyone makes mistakes, even adults.

Activity Ideas:

1. Have students tell (or write or draw) about a time they made a mistake, and how they fixed it. Learn how people who write Torah scrolls fix their mistakes (pages 16-17 of *How It's Made: Torah Scroll*). Tie this into the concept of t'shuvah and trying to make things right when we make mistakes. How do they know when they've made a mistake? How do they try to correct mistakes? Do they do anything differently the next time a similar situation arises to avoid making a mistake again?
2. Practice proofreading. Give students a written page of text (English, most likely, but try it with Hebrew if students have strong language skills) with intentional mistakes on it and see how many they can find.

Subject: Simchat Torah or Shabbat

Goal: Explain the meaning of a scroll and a *yad* (pointer).

Activity Ideas:

1. Invite the rabbi, cantor, or prayer leader to give students the experience of seeing and touching the Torah themselves. They may unroll the Torah for the children and read a line or two using a *yad*. Explain to students that they cannot touch it with their hands. Leading up to such an experience, students can make a clay *yad* (directions on page 27 of *How It's Made: Torah Scroll*) and then practice reading from a book (*or their own book, see next activity*), pointing to each word with their *yad*.
2. Have students write (or draw) their own stories with a beginning, middle, and end, each section on its own page. Staple the pages together and roll it up, securing it with a string or ribbon around the middle. Connect this activity with the idea of the Torah as a long story with many parts, too lengthy to read all at once. We start reading the Torah on Simchat Torah, and read one portion each week over the course of one year, finishing it up on Simchat Torah next year. Then we start all over again.



Subject: Shavuot

Goal: How we treat each other matters

Activity Ideas:

1. The Ten Commandments are rules that help us live together happily. What rules do we follow? What would the world be like without any rules? Create 10 class rules and post in the room. Explain that there are even rules for making a Torah. Read *How It's Made: Torah Scroll*, and discuss the rules that the people who make Torahs follow.
2. There are 613 mitzvot in the Torah. Writing a Torah is a mitzvah (*see what it looks like in How It's Made: Torah Scroll*), as is giving tzedakah and visiting people who are sick. A mitzvah is not simply a good deed, but something we are required to do. Mitzvot are "God's rules." Another mitzvah is keeping your promises (*nedarim*).

Ask students if they've ever made a promise they knew they could not keep. Did they make a promise they wanted to keep, but couldn't? How did that feel? What happened to the others involved?

Individually or in small groups, have students make a list of promises they might make. (*I promise to always tell the truth. I promise to be kind to animals. I promise to keep my hands to myself, even when I'm mad.*) Read the lists out loud and discuss how Jewish people are asked only to make promises they can keep. Which of the promises on the list are easy to keep, and which might be more challenging?

We often speak about bringing the Torah to life for our students. *How It's Made: Torah Scroll* truly does that in showing how a Torah comes into being. It can be used as a jumping off point for conversations, lessons, and activities about the Torah in a variety of ways, and is not just for classroom use. The book works well with family programs around any of these subjects, or for hands-on learning at every age.

How It's Made: Torah Scroll, ISBN 978-1-68115-516-6, is available on Amazon or from Behrman House



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