

## PhiloTorah This 'n That

**THU, 15 Iyar, May 23rd** On the occasion of PhiloTorah #200, I decided to begin a feature that I will add to from time to time. Each entry will be dated, so that if you come back to this file, you will be able to find your place and skip over that which you have already read.

PhiloTorah is the successor to the website I maintained over many years - Ttidbits.com - which paralleled the printed version of Torah Tidbits.

Back in June of 1992, the then director of the OU/NCSY Israel Center (that's what it was called back then), Shai Solomon, asked me to print up a schedule of activities of the Center to be distributed in shuls with English-speakers. The idea did not sit well with me for about five minutes. Then I had an idea. How about the schedule of Center activities on one side of a sheet of paper and a D'var Torah on the other? Shai went for the idea, and Torah Tidbits was born.

Actually, it was reborn in a new form. Its real beginning was back in 1971, when I used the term Torah Tidbits to describe short Divrei Torah and Halachic review points, which I presented at NCSY Shabbatonim. At the time, I sensed that a minute to a minute and a half 'tidbit' would go over better than a 20 minute D'var Torah. Torah Tidbits began in an oral form.

Back to the early '90s. before the first

issue of TT in June of '92 for Parshat Sh'lach, there were two other Torah pages that carried the name Torah Tidbits.

When the Israel Center was at 10 Straus, there were two long tilted shelves near the entrance on which we placed flyers for the many activities taking place at the Center. People would come, peruse the dozen or so flyers and take copies of what interested them.

I came up with the idea of having a one page D'var Torah available to be taken along with the flyers. That page was named Torah Tidbits.

So too, we had a project headquartered at the Center called NITZOTZ. It was geared to English-speaking students at yeshivot, seminaries, and university, to offer volunteering and chesed opportunities to supplement and enrich their year (or more) in Israel. One of the Nitzotz projects was TOCHNIT NISAN. Kids who were staying in Israel over the Pesach-time break in their studies would go with us to Gush Katif for a work-study-enjoy program. David Katz, the director of Nitzotz (now longtime director of MMY) asked me for a printed D'var Torah to be put in the lunch boxes each day, to supplement the sandwich, fruit, and piece of cake contained therein. Torah Tidbits to Go was an A4 sheet of paper folded twice into a small A6 sized 4-pager.

These were the first three forms of Torah Tidbits.

Which brings the story back to June '92. First two weeks, TT was a single sheet of A4 paper printed on both sides. 60 copies were made and distributed 30 copies in each of two shuls - Beth Jacob in Ramot Eshkol and a shul in Nayot.

From there, things took off. Calls like: I was at my brother-in-law's for Shabbat and I saw Torah Tidbits; do you think I can get some for my shul?

The format and the number of copies and the number of shuls and other locations that received TT grew and grew and grew.

Personally, I started TT, edited it for 28 years, until my retirement in September of 2019. I continued to contribute to TT to help things along for about an additional seven months and then I was asked to stop, to allow the new editor to spread his wings (as the saying goes).

On the day that I ended my involvement with Torah Tidbits (having become its Editor Emeritus), I acquired the website that went through a couple of name changes and soon became philotorah.co - which means 'Lover of Torah' (which I am and which I hope my readers are).

PhiloTorah is website only - no printed version (except what individual readers decide to print up for themselves, their families, or their shuls).

Sometime ago, I put a counter on the website which counts unique visitors. It stands at this moment at 11,600. (Someone who accesses the site many

times is only counted once.) Torah Tidbits had always been a labor of love for me, as is PhiloTorah. Part of loving Torah is sharing it with others.

I think that's it for now. More to come - IYH/BN.