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Shavuot 2015 Sermon Slam

Because its Shavous and it's the time of the giving of the Torah I have been thinking about gifts and the giving of gifts and what makes a really good gift. I think a really good gift is one that endures – so many times we get that great new game or some other exciting new technology or maybe a fantastic new accessory, and if doesn't break or fall out of fashion in a month or a year (really – I wore that??) it might end up at the Community Council or the Swap area of the dump. The quintessential enduring gift has to be the Torah – so what is it about the Torah that makes it so enduring? Generation after generation after generation we read it from beginning to end– but not only that each of us searches for and finds our own meaning and wisdom in it - making it our own special and personal gift - and perhaps that is what makes it so enduring.

It made me start to wonder if there are other gifts that are enduring in that way.

I think one enduring gift is the time that our parents or grandparents give to us - whose own stories and life experiences help us learn more about who we are by where we came from – and guide us on how to move forward in the future. A dear friend from our Rosh Hodesh Group – that Naomi and Judy and Freddie and I belong to - died two weeks ago. After the last shiva I was walking with her daughter to one her mom's favorite spots along the Charles. Her daughter was talking about how she was feeling sad and a bit angry that she would no longer have any new words of wisdom from her mother – that she could watch the same videos of her mom over and over but the words from her mom will no longer change. I told her that I didn't think that that was quite true. That as she gets older and new questions and experiences arise she will have that enduring wisdom from her mom and in fact, she will get new answers as she needs them because her mother left her that gift.

The words do not change in the Torah – but they are so enduring and in many ways so wise that as we age as a people we continue to find the meaning we need. I was thinking about the section on gossiping – it always struck me as a more modern issue and perhaps not even worthy of mention - and yet, how interesting that from so far back this was even mentioned as a concern. But over the last few years I have come to recognize that in its most destructive and virulent form we now have something called cyber-bullying that in fact is sometimes lethal. How amazing to think about that from so long ago that piece of wisdom is carried forward to make

us stop and think today – just one example of many that we uncover or rediscover year after year.