LETTER BY LETTER – REVEAL 5775
Rabbi Dan Moskovitz

Before we put the Torah away, close the doors, and on some level forget about it as we move on with our service I want to share a brief story.

There is a famous debate in the Talmud between Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Hiyya (Bava Metzia 85b). The Talmud is filled with What Ifs, and the two rabbis are discussing the biggest WHAT IF they could imagine. What if - Heaven forbid – Jewish people forgot the Torah? What if we all stopped coming to synagogue, stopped studying, stopped carrying about this scroll, its stories and teachings? If that were to happen the rabbis wonder how best to restore what was lost? What's the backup plan?

R. Hanina argues that should such a situation arise, that he alone, with his erudition, his incisive analytic abilities, his scholarship, and by force of his charisma

and personality, he would singlehandedly restore Torah to the people.

While every pulpit rabbi somehow identifies with Hanina's instincts, it is not he, but Hiyya who carries the day.

Rabbi Hiyya claims that he would not need to restore Torah, because his method would prevent Torah from ever being forgotten.

He would take blank parchment (like this) and a quill (like this) and write out a new Torah letter by letter. But he wouldn't write it himself he would gather students and children and teach them to write it too. And they would each write their own scroll, letter by letter and word by word in fulfillment of the 613th commandment the last commandment in the Torah that each Jew is commanded to write a Torah. But once written he wouldn't stop there.

Each student would then take the Torah scrolls to five children and have each of them learn to teach Torah to five other children who would do the same to five more and five more –over and over – and in this manner, the Torah will never be forgotten.

Already in ancient times, the rabbis knew that the only way to sustain a message, to make it go viral, was to create the vehicle, in this case a Torah scroll, by which it could spread. To insure the future of the Jewish people you need teachers and students of Torah, but above all of that what you need first is Torah. And a Torah, to be a Torah needs letters, the letters form the words, which form the prayers which tell the story of the people. The letters come from you, from each of us. BRING ME THE LETTERS