

# 5 Ways

## to give thanks for our mentors

Over a meal invite each person to describe, in a spirit of thanksgiving, a person who has positively influenced his/her life, e.g., a grandparent, a teacher, an author, a coach, a mentor, a political or spiritual leader. The following quotes and questions may help to stimulate your thoughts.



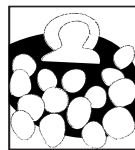
1. *“Take Joshua, a man in whom is the spirit...”* (Num. 27:18). Describe the spirit, personality and unique gifts of your mentor.



2. *“...and lay your hand upon him...”* (Num. 27:18). How has your mentor been blessed? Is fragility also somehow part of this blessing? In what way has he/she shared this blessing with you?



3. *“...like one who lights one candle with another”* (Midrash Rabbah 21, 15). Name the light that your mentor shines in the dark spots of this world, and in your own life.



4. *“...have him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation...”* (Num. 27:19). What witness has your mentor offered to the community? What has been the community's response?



5. *“...and commission him in their sight”* (Num. 27:19). For what mission/purpose would you say your mentor was ‘commissioned’? How has that mission or sense of purpose been passed to you?

The *Light of Torah* leaflet series for Catholic parishes encourages parishioners to be attentive to the gift of Torah as part of their sacred Scriptures, and to the gift of Judaism which gave us Jesus, the Living Torah. Text by Teresa Pirola. Illustrations by Francine Pirola. © The Story Source, 2010. Reproduction permitted for non-commercial church use. Further reading: [www.lightoftorah.net](http://www.lightoftorah.net); [www.batkol.info](http://www.batkol.info) and [www.etz-hayim.com](http://www.etz-hayim.com).



## Light of Torah

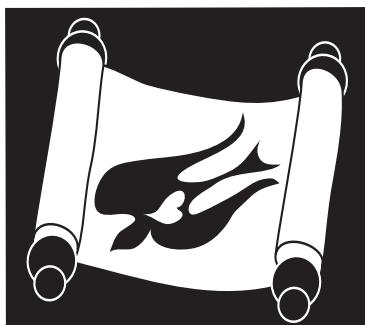
Ancient texts  
through fresh eyes,  
alive for today.

## Why reflect on Torah?

Upon visiting the Holy Land, Pope Benedict XVI spoke to Christians of the importance of this sacred land, where “the Gospel story, contemplated in its historical and geographical setting, becomes vivid and colorful, and a clearer grasp of the significance of the Lord’s words and deeds is obtained.”

In whatever place and culture on the globe we practice our Christianity, there is something special about touching the roots where it all began. Christians who have been to the Holy Land often remark that they never read the Scriptures quite the same way ever again. It was from this land that the Hebrew Scriptures (our revered ‘Old Testament’) originated through the stories, language and religious traditions of the Jewish people, our spiritual ancestors-in-faith. And, from the Christian perspective, it is upon the firm foundations of the bible of Israel that the Gospel testimony stands.

This *Light of Torah* series seeks to draw Christians into a deeper engagement with the Old Testament Scriptures by introducing them to an interpretative biblical tradition within Judaism that is ancient, enriching and ongoing. Week by week, we read a little of the Torah (the first five books of the bible) with the help of the stories and insights of the sages of ancient and living Judaism. In this way, we draw close to Jesus ‘the Living Torah,’ to the people who shaped him and the Scriptures he so loved.



## Torah Portion

From the Jewish calendar of Torah readings:

### Numbers 25:10—30:1

From today's Torah portion, we take as our focus Num. 27:12-23. God takes Moses up the mountain on the east side of the Jordan, overlooking the land into which his people will enter. There Moses is told by God of his pending death, reminded of his exclusion from the Promised Land, and told to arrange for leadership succession through the person of Joshua.

Sources: Eskenazi & Weiss, *The Torah: A Woman's Commentary* (NY, 2008); Leibowitz, *Studies in Bamidbar* (Jerusalem, 1994); *Midrash Rabbah: Numbers Vol. 2* (London/NY: Soncino, 1983); Scripture quotations: *NRSV*.

## Tasting Torah

God: "Go up this mountain of the Abarim range, and see the land that I have given to the Israelites. When you have seen it, you shall be gathered to your people [i.e. you shall die]" (27:12).

Moses: "Let the Lord appoint someone...so that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep without a shepherd" (27:17).

The God-Moses interaction on the mountain-top, with the Promised Land in sight, is filled with pathos. Read it carefully. What thoughts and emotions might Moses have at this moment?

## Touching Torah

It appears that Moses is the epitome of selflessness, his only concern being that his people not be left leaderless. Are you convinced? Are you surprised that Moses holds no sense of personal grievance, despite being excluded from the Promised Land? The Jewish sages of old were not so convinced! Reading between the lines of Scripture, they told stories (*midrash*) about Moses' human struggle at this critical point. Moses, they said, remembered that long ago God had called him to a mission which he undertook only with great reluctance. And now, God prevents him from completing his mission! The *midrash* compares Moses to a young woman relentlessly pursued by a great king for her hand in marriage, only to be divorced by the king later. Moses is understandably indignant at such treatment! Yet he manages to accept the situation, asking only that God not treat his successor the same way.

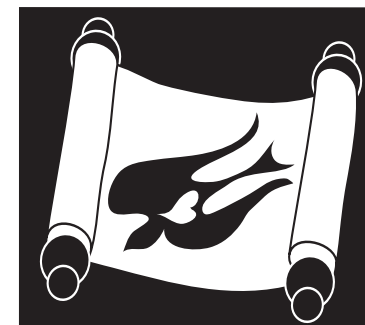
## Depthing Torah

Other issues bothered Moses too, according to the midrash; like the fact that Joshua rather than his own sons, would succeed him. Here the sages note that the passage follows on immediately after the story of the five sisters who negotiate new legislation that will allow them to inherit their father's property (27:1-11). "If daughters inherit, it is surely right that my sons inherit my glory," reasons Moses (*Midrash Rabbah* 21, 24). Instead, he faces the lesson that "Anyone who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit" (*Prov. 27:18*). Joshua is the one with the track record of faithful service and who displays the character of a faithful shepherd. The mantle of leadership passes to him.

So Moses' acceptance of God's will was not automatic; he had to wrestle with his own personal issues. But that he did, and in the way he faces this struggle the tradition sees more evidence of his integrity as a true servant of God and shepherd of Israel. Thus, when it comes to the appointment of Joshua, "he laid his hands on him and commissioned him" (27:23). He lays not one hand (as God had instructed in 27:18), but both hands. This, say the sages, indicates that he blessed Joshua with abundance and unreserved generosity of heart.

## Doing Torah

Describe a time when what God was asking of you seemed unfair, perhaps harsh and uncalled for, but you managed to 'work through' your personal grievance to a place of inner peace and acceptance. How can we teach our children to face these essential, difficult, passages in life?



## Faith & Life: Giving thanks for our mentors

"My grandparents' lives are peppered with colorful achievements and painful struggles. I can't say I 'knew' them at a deeply personal level, but through the family folklore they have taught me passion for life and determination in pursuing one's goals, especially in the face of adversity."