

How we began

Light of Torah is an initiative of Teresa Pirola, a Sydney-based faith educator:

"In July 2007 and 2009 I undertook studies at Bat Kol Institute, Jerusalem. There I experienced a vibrant learning environment which broke open the Scriptures through an encounter with 'the People, the Language, the Land, the Book.'

"Upon my return to Sydney I drew together a team of creative people to pilot a grassroots strategy for awakening Catholics to the riches of their Jewish ancestry-in-faith through the love and study of Torah. We call this biblical apostolate Light of Torah.

"The genesis of this initiative was enabled in important ways by Br Jack Driscoll cfc until his death in September 2010. May our efforts always reflect his love for Torah and the Jewish people."

The value of *Light of Torah*: Torah study for Catholics

- We learn how to actively **engage** with God's Word;
- We encounter **Jewish** interpretative traditions and understand better the Jewish roots of Christianity;
- We come to know our sacred **story** in a fresh way;
- We come to know **Jesus**, and his people, in a new way;
- Our biblical and spiritual horizons are **enlarged**;
- Readings at **Mass** never sound the same again;
- We find ourselves **delighting** in bible stories which we never knew existed (and yet they've been there all along!);
- Our **homes** are sanctified by the sharing of God's Word and God's people;
- Our sense of **community** deepens;
- We learn patience with the text and the power of **verbalizing** what we read;
- We experience the benefits of '**staying with**' whole books of the bible over time;
- We experience Scripture as **joy** and nourishment.

Through weekly reflections, *Light of Torah* encourages Catholic parishes and other Christian audiences to be attentive to the gift of Torah and to learn from the interpretative traditions of Judaism. This is in the spirit of Vatican II's commitment to Jewish-Christian relations. Reproduction permitted for non-commercial parish use.



Light of Torah
www.lightoftorah.net

Text: Teresa Pirola
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Start-up Series Leaflet #1



Light of Torah

"But those who study the Torah give forth light wherever they may be.

It is like one standing in the dark with a lamp in his hand"

(Exodus Rabbah 36.3).

What is 'Light of Torah'?

Scripture tools for everyday life

Light of Torah is a network of Catholics who engage in Torah study.

[We use 'Torah' here in its specific sense to mean the first five books of the bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.]

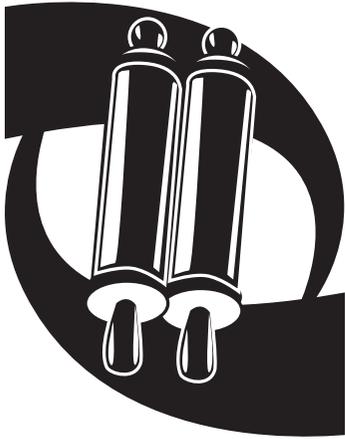
As a lay movement within the Catholic community our purpose is to facilitate a grassroots awakening to the riches of the Hebrew Scriptures ('Old Testament') through reflection on Torah in homes, parishes, small community settings.

We do so with attention to the insights, traditions and sacred writings of the Jewish people, conscious of their pivotal role in salvation history and their covenantal relationship with God which endures to this day.

It was through the Jewish people that we received Jesus, the Living Torah. We seek to draw closer to Jesus, by learning more about the Scriptures he so loved and the way in which he, as a Jew, approached them.

Our Jewish spiritual heritage is important to us. Christianity is rooted in Judaism as a plant is rooted in the earth. Vatican II recognized this in *Nostra Aetate*, a groundbreaking document that signalled a new era in Jewish-Christian relations.

Further info & resources: www.lightoftorah.net



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We experience Torah as light to the mind and joy to the spirit. Through Torah, God 'speaks' to us, drawing us into loving and intimate conversation. We want to be good conversationalists with God! And we want to draw others into this language of love.

We develop ways of sharing what we learn with our friends, families and parishes, through initiatives such as those outlined on this page.

What is 'Light of Torah'?

Publications

Our main publication is the weekly Torah-study leaflet by the same name, *Light of Torah*, authored by Teresa Pirola.

The *Light of Torah* publication follows the Jewish liturgical cycle which divides the five books of the Torah into weekly portions (the *Parashat Hashavuah*, 'Torah portion of the week'). Thus the Torah is read in synagogues in its entirety over the course of one year.

Each *Light of Torah* leaflet guides the reader through an exploration of a small section of the text. Written for a Christian (predominantly Catholic) readership, the reflection follows the interpretative lead of Jewish Torah commentary from ancient, medieval and contemporary sources. In this way, the biblical horizons of the Christian reader are expanded and enriched by Jewish perspectives.

Further resources for parish audiences, can be downloaded at our website.

Torah study groups

The central goal of the *Light of Torah* movement is to encourage Catholic households to engage in regular Torah reflection, with the help of the wisdom of the Jewish sages.

The basic tools for a group are the Old Testament and the weekly *Light of Torah* leaflets. Anyone can start a Torah study group. There are no hard and fast rules, although we provide basic guidelines and tools to assist start-up.

www.lightoftorah.net

Our ministries

Holy Land Tour

Our appreciation of God's Word is enriched when it is approached in the context of the Land in which the Word was revealed.

In April 2010, a *Light of Torah* tour of the Holy Land (19 days) was held in collaboration with MennoJerusalem Bible Land Tours and Harvest Pilgrimages.

Repeated in 2011, 2012, 2013, the tour is being established as an annual event.

This unique educational package offers:

- Biblical geography and the spirituality of the land.
- The 'text in context:' understanding the bible in its original setting.
- Rabbinic teachings and traditions, and their relevance for Christianity.
- The life of Jesus and the gospel teachings in the first-century setting.
- Issues of justice and peace in the current political climate.

A notable feature of the program is its attention to the links between Christianity and Judaism. Walking in the steps of Jesus we become very aware of his identity as a Jew and the traditions which formed him. We are sensitized to the fact that the 'bible' of Jesus was the Hebrew scriptures. As part of the tour we have the opportunity to meet and learn from Jewish residents of Jerusalem, experience the spirituality of the Shabbat, join in synagogue worship and study Torah with a rabbi.

Although the tour has a biblical rather than political focus, there are opportunities to listen to the stories of those affected by the politics of the region.



Why the name: 'Light of Torah'?

In the Hebrew Scriptures and in Jewish storytelling (midrash), the Torah is described as spiritual illumination.

The Lord make His face to shine upon you... with the light of the Torah... May he enlighten your eyes and heart in the Torah...*For the commandment is a lamp, and the Torah is light* (Prov 6:23).

- Numbers Rabbah 11,6

But those who study the Torah give forth light wherever they may be. It is like one standing in the dark with a lamp in his hand, as it says, *Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path* (Ps.119:105)

- Exodus Rabbah 36,3