

How to use this leaflet series

5 Ways ...

Step 7.

The back page, titled '5 Ways,' suggests actions and insights to enrich Catholic spirituality in the home, often drawing inspiration from a Jewish saying, prayer or practice. This step, with its practical orientation, could be used as an extension of the discussion in Step 6, or it could provide the basis of a 'take-home' exercise for the group.



Further notes

The steps outlined here describe the usual pattern. Occasionally, for a practical or liturgical reason, the leaflet departs from the norm.

Each leaflet is the result of the author's own Torah reflections and *havrutah* moments inspired by Jewish sources and methods. It expresses a living Torah experience and its goal is to encourage other lively Torah experiences in homes, parishes, and small Christian community settings.

Working with the sacred text with a discussion partner or small group in *havrutah* is key to the Light of Torah experience. Even a 'solo' reader who is not part of a Torah group should seek out at least one other person with whom to share his/her reflections during the week.

Above all, read the text! Even if you read only a few verses, read and ponder them well. God's Word is exactly that: God's Word. No bible study tool can substitute for the text itself.



Light of Torah
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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.

Start-up Series: Leaflet #2



Light of
Torah

The Torah reference, and its title as it appears in the Jewish calendar of readings, are always displayed here.

How to use the 'Light of Torah' series

Why reflect on Torah?

Step 1.

A *Light of Torah* leaflet acts as a guide, leading the reader through a process of engagement with the bible text.

The leaflet is not meant to be read from start to finish without pause (although one might do this as an initial orientation), but rather slowly and thoughtfully, in conversation with the sacred text and ideally with a discussion partner.

The cover page is introductory, explaining what is meant by 'Torah,' why it is important to Christians, and how Christianity finds its historical and spiritual roots in Judaism. Although thematically repetitious (to cater for first-time readers), the cover page alters slightly each week, allowing even a regular reader to hear something 'new' each time.

Leaders' tip:

Commence by reading this page, 'Why reflect on Torah?', inviting comments from the group. In this way you will be reflecting on *Nostra Aetate* and other church documents on which the cover page information is based.



Step 2. Torah Portion

This section states the weekly Torah reference (as it appears on the Jewish liturgical calendar) and offers an introductory word about the Torah portion. You will notice that the Torah portions are quite lengthy. Although we are encouraged to read the whole portion each week, it is understandable that some weeks we may only be able to read part of the portion.

READ THE TEXT

Having introduced the Torah portion in Step 2, now read it aloud in the group, drawing on one or more voices. If not reading the entire portion, choose a substantial section of text containing the relevant verses from Step 3. Invite initial reactions to the text.

How to use this leaflet series

Tasting Torah

Step 3.

Having listened to the reading of the Torah portion and voiced some initial reactions to what we have heard, we now focus on a small section of the text, often just one or two verses. 'Tasting Torah' offers an observation or asks a question about the text and invites reactions from the group.

Leaders' tip: Don't hesitate to draw the group back to the text to read it again, or to read the surrounding verses, in order to give close attention to the comments of participants.

Touching Torah

Step 4.

Here we present one or more responses through the lens of the Jewish sages, revered interpreters of Torah from the tradition. The reader is introduced to the names of people and writings which may be unfamiliar at first. Brief footnotes and bibliographic notes help to identify commentators and sources.

Leaders' tip: Encourage the group to interact with the responses of the sages, to affirm, ponder, question, and respectfully debate them.

How to use this leaflet series

Depthing Torah

Step 5. Now we go further, either extending the previous line of enquiry or introducing an alternative interpretation of the text.

Leaders' tip: Continue to encourage the group's engagement with the sages' points of view. E.g., What is surprising or refreshing about this or that interpretation? Does it challenge or support you as a Christian? Encourage people to engage creatively and personally, but discourage any tendency to 'wander off;' always bring them back to the text. 'Yes, I hear what you're saying, but how does the Torah text we have just read support your point of view?'

Doing Torah

Step 6.

We undertake Torah study not simply out of intellectual curiosity but for transformation of life. This section continues the process of reflection, perhaps connecting our Torah insights with the practical issues of Christian living. Sometimes this section will draw out a concluding comment. Other times it will suggest a fresh angle of enquiry for further study.



Faith & Life

As part of your **Step 6** discussion, read this column. Sometimes it offers a story to stimulate ideas about faith practice in daily life.

Other times this space offers an additional insight from the tradition.

Leaders' tip:

Begin and close your Torah session with a prayer; e.g., you might base your prayer on this verse from the midrash:

'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 light.'
(Prov. 6:23)

- Numbers Rabbah 11.6