



## A Year with Torah

A way for Christians to grow in their love of God's Word

By Teresa Pirola

How familiar are you with the Old Testament? Sometimes we Catholics tend to skip over it, or treat it as being of secondary interest. When we do this, however, we lose sight of the foundations upon which the New Testament depends. One Vatican document puts it this way:

*"Without the Old Testament, the New Testament would be an incomprehensible book, a plant deprived of its roots and destined to dry up and wither."*

— *The Jewish people and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*

Our Old Testament Scriptures include the Hebrew Scriptures which Jesus himself knew and loved and prayed. How vital it is for us as Christians to know these Scriptures, and to keep refreshing our experience of them. How might we do this?

**Here is something I tried over the past 12 months, which has helped me to fall in love with the Old Testament all over again...**

Commit yourself to reading the whole of the Torah (the first five books of the bible) over the course of a year! It's not as scary as it sounds, and okay, you might not read *every* word, but at least dip into Torah, week by week. One way to do this is to draw inspiration from the Jewish people and their liturgical calendar which assigns a reading or 'Torah portion' for each week of the year. Their annual cycle begins anew this week with the first chapter of Genesis.

That's right, week by week you can follow the whole saga from creation of the world to the call of Moses, to the Israelites' escape from Egypt, their adventures in the wilderness, right through to their arrival at the Promised Land. Riveting stuff!

*This week-by-week Torah reading has shown me bible passages I never knew existed, let alone contemplated. Yet they have always been right there in my own Christian bible!*

### Parish Tools

To assist your Torah journey:

- The Torah portion for the coming Saturday will be published on p.2 of our bulletin each week. (Of course, the Sunday readings from the Christian calendar will be published on the front page as usual!)
- To assist your Torah reading, take a copy of the leaflet "In the Light of Torah", at the back of the church. Initially these will be available monthly, increasing to weekly during 2009.
- For more Torah insights see [www.batkol.info](http://www.batkol.info) (click on 'Parashat Hashavuah' which is the Hebrew term for 'Torah portion of the week'). There you will find 2-page commentaries by Christians who study the scriptures with attention to Jewish as well as Christian sources.
- Purchase a Jewish-Christian calendar to inspire your Torah journey. This unique calendar, with photos of the Holy Land, has all the readings and feasts of both Jewish and Christian liturgical cycles. It can be ordered from [www.etz-hayim.com](http://www.etz-hayim.com) for around \$15. See display copy in church foyer.

**Try "a year with Torah", be persistent, and this time next year you will have worked your way through a core part of the Bible that is so precious to both Christians and Jews.**