

Torah

The Torah is the first 5 books of the Bible. They are sometimes called *The Five Books of Moses*. Many Jews believe that God wrote the Torah and gave it to Moses to give to the people. Use an English Bible and the clues (and your brain!) to help you fill in the table.



Clues:

- A *Levite* was a kind of priest in the Temple.
- The book called *Leviticus* is known in Hebrew as *Vayikra*.
- *Shemot* means *Names*.
- The Hebrew word *Boraysheet* and the English word *Genesis* have the same meaning.
- Putting *-im* on the end of a Hebrew word is the same as putting *-s* on the end of an English word.
- *Bemidbar* is the Hebrew name of the 4th book.
- *Devar* is Hebrew word that means *word*.
- Words that begin *Deutero-* mean they are the second of something.
- The word *Exodus* is similar to the word *exit*.

The 5 Books of Torah

English Name	What it means	Hebrew name	What it means
	<i>Creation</i>		<i>Creation</i>
	<i>Leaving or Going Out</i>	Shemot	
	<i>For the Priests</i>		<i>And He called</i>
	<i>Numbers</i>		<i>In the wilderness</i>
	<i>Second Law</i>	Devarim	

When you have filled the table, cut it out and stick it into your RE book.

Illustrate your page with a picture of a scroll or perhaps with Jewish symbols such as the Star of David or the Menorah, or perhaps some Hebrew letters.

When the Torah is read in a synagogue it is read from a **Torah Scroll**. Jewish people call the scroll a **Sefer Torah** (you say say-fer). *Sefer* is a Hebrew word meaning *book*. The writing in a Sefer Torah is always in **Hebrew**. A Torah scroll must be written on **parchment** (which is a kind of leather) and must be **written by hand**, with a pen that is not made of any metal that could be used to make weapons. If any mistakes are found in a scroll, it cannot be used until the mistake has been corrected. If a scroll is unrolled it is half as long as a football pitch!

Torah scrolls are very precious because they contain the word of God and also because they are very expensive. Torah scrolls are written by specially trained scribes. It usually takes a scribe more than a year to complete writing a new scroll. Jewish communities are very careful with their Torah scrolls and treat them with great respect. They are kept in a special cupboard called the **Ark**. Each scroll is "dressed" in beautiful covers and has silver ornaments and bells.

Before any of the Torah is read from a scroll, the scroll is taken in a procession around the synagogue so that everyone can see it. After its covers have been taken off and it has been unrolled to the right place, it is held up high so that people can see the writing in it.

Each week different people from the community are asked to come to the front of the synagogue and to help read from the Torah scroll. It is a great honour to be called to help read from the Torah.

Teacher's Notes

This sheet introduces the Torah as a collection of 5 books with a special importance to Jews. As well as introducing children to the Torah, it gives a chance for children who know little or nothing about the Bible to gain a little extra knowledge, and for all children to understand that Judaism's sacred texts are not completely connected to texts that are known in the wider world.

The English names of the books come mostly from Greek or Latin. The Hebrew names are taken from the first noun or verb in each of the books.

Pronunciations (Stressed syllables in bold)

Bor**ay**sheets (In the beginning)

Shem**ot** (Names)

Viy-**ik**ra (And He called)

B'**mid**bar (In the wilderness)

De-**var**im (Words)

There is good evidence that the text of the Torah has been passed down unchanged since biblical times. Scribes who write scrolls must undergo long training and are required to observe many rules that ensure care and accuracy in their text. Mistakes in writing scrolls are occasionally found and can be corrected, although a mistake in the name of God requires a whole panel to be rewritten, since that cannot be corrected. A scroll can be expected to last for hundreds of 100 years (the oldest scroll known to be still in use is nearly 800 years old). The text in a scroll will eventually fade or flake and become unclear and the parchment will wear. Minor damage can be put right but when a scroll is beyond repair it must be "retired" to a special repository. It cannot be thrown away or destroyed, since it contains the name of God, and throwing it away would break the commandment not to disrespect take God's name.