



# Pope Francis: Preface to "La Bibbia dell'Amicizia"

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**On Friday, January 18, 2019, the book, *La Bibbia dell'Amicizia: Brani della Torah/Pentateuco commentati da ebrei e cristiani* ("The Bible of Friendship: Passages of the Torah / Pentateuch commented upon by Jews and Christians"), edited by Marco Cassuto Morselli and Giulio Michelini, has been published in Italy. It is the result of a project supported by the Italian Episcopal Conference.**

The cover jacket states that this

"collaboration between scholars of the two monotheistic religions that share the same Bible is a sign of friendship. This volume is born of the meeting of two realities: the love for the Word of God and the friendship between Jews and Christians. Jews and Christians have been reading and meditating on the Bible separately for thousands of years. For some decades, Jews and Christians have begun a process of dialogue to overcome hatred and misunderstanding. It is now possible to start reading the Bible together. ... Forty biblical scholars consider the first five books of the Bible (the Torah or Pentateuch) with a double reading based on their respective traditions, through new original introductions to each book and commenting on six passages chosen from the most significant of the first five books of the Bible (for a total of thirty pericopes). The aim is not to arrive at a unified reading of the Bible in which diversities are diluted to the point of annulment, but that of knowing each other better, of knowing better their respective interpretations and readings, and accepting that they may be different."

The book is introduced by prefaces by Pope Francis and Rabbi Abraham Skorka, which were also featured in the January 16, 2019 Italian edition of *L'Osservatore Romano* (p. 11). The pope's preface follows below in unofficial translation

The Bible of Friendship Bible is an attractive and very inspirational project. I am well aware that we have behind us nineteen centuries of Christian anti-Judaism and that a few decades of dialogue are very small in comparison. However, in recent times many things have changed and still others are changing. We need to work more intensely to ask for forgiveness and to repair the damage caused by misunderstanding. The values, the traditions, the great ideas that characterize Judaism and Christianity must be put at the service of humanity without ever forgetting the sacredness and authenticity of friendship. The Bible makes us understand the inviolability of these values, a necessary premise for constructive dialogue.

The best way to communicate, however, is not just talking and discussing but making plans [and] realizing them together with all those who have good will and mutual respect in friendship. There is a rich complementarity that allows us to read together the texts of the Hebrew Bible, helping one another to examine the riches of God's Word. Our common goal will be to be witnesses of the Father's love in the world. For the Jew as for the Christian there is no doubt that love of God and neighbor summarizes all the commandments. Therefore, Jews and Christians must feel like brothers and sisters, united by the same God and by a rich common spiritual heritage, on which to build and continue to build the future.

And it is vitally important for Christians to discover and promote the knowledge of Jewish tradition in order to more authentically understand themselves.

The study of the Torah is also part of this fundamental commitment. That is why I want to entrust your journey of research to the words of the invocation that every Jewish believer recites daily at the end of the Amidah prayer [according to the Italian rite]: "let the doors of the Torah, of wisdom, intelligence and knowledge, of nourishment and sustenance, of life, of grace, of love and of mercy and gratitude be open before You."

I hope everyone will continue on the journey with perseverance, and I invoke God's blessing on everyone.

/signed/Francisco

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