

ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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The Word of God A Precious Treasure



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The Word of God

A Precious Treasure



WHEN TOM AND I WERE NEWLY MARRIED, we went to visit his family in upstate New York. One day, I was sitting in the living room reading a home and garden magazine. At some point I laid the magazine down and heard my husband's grandfather gasp. I looked up to see what the problem was, only to discover that I had inadvertently offended him. I had laid my magazine down on top of the Bible. I learned that Grandpa Lent would never put anything on top of the Bible, lay the Bible on the floor or toss the Bible casually. His respect for the Word of the Lord was so great that he treated it with utmost reverence and love. Grandpa Lent's attitude didn't stop there: he read the Word, talked about it and prayed God's promises. His life was infused with godliness after years spent as a servant of the Lord. That brings up a question: How much do we love and treasure the Word of God?

When I was growing up, family devotions were a regular occurrence. Today, I wonder how many Christian families have daily devotions together. In this teaching letter I hope to ignite a desire in believers to spend more time in God's Word. Let's consider some of the things God's Word does in our lives.

God's Word is...

Protection against sin: *"Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You"* (Ps. 119:11).

Comfort and life: *"This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has given me life"* (Ps. 119:50).

Eternal: *"Forever, O LORD, Your Word is settled in heaven"* (Ps. 119:89).

Sweet: *"How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth"* (Ps. 119:103).

Direction: *"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Ps. 119:105).



Perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true and righteous: *“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than the honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward”* (Ps. 19:7–11).

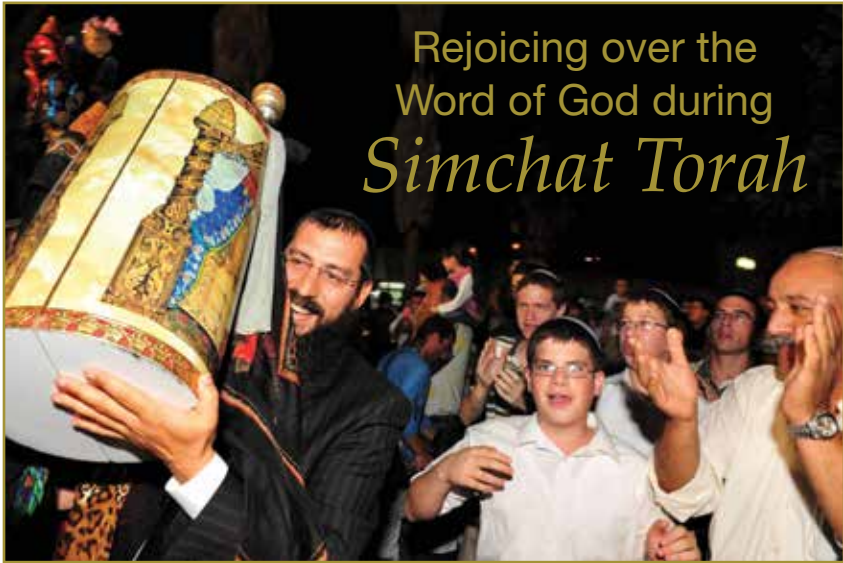
Just imagine, the Bible is more valuable than gold and sweeter than honey. It is more important than all the success we seek (gold) and pleasure we desire (honey).

Profitable: *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Israel and the Bible

Everywhere you turn in Israel, you are confronted with the Bible.

- There is an annual Bible quiz program. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s family have been big promoters of this program, which is designed to bring Bible study to young people in Israel—both secular and religious.
- Netanyahu sponsors regular Bible studies in the official residence of the prime minister.
- It is common to see Jewish people reading the Psalms as they travel by train or bus to and from work or school.
- It is also common to find streets named after biblical characters. In the neighborhood right around our office, we have Prophets Street, Isaiah Street, Tribes of Israel Street and Deborah the Prophetess Street. Zion Square is a few blocks away.
- Children in state schools—both religious and secular—study geography and history from the Bible.
- Army units are inducted into service holding the Bible in one hand and a gun in the other.
- There are numerous *yeshivot* (Bible schools) in Israel. It is not unusual for Jewish people to spend a year studying the Bible before starting their secular education.
- A new phenomenon has been noted. Increasingly those who self-identify as “secular” are attending Bible study classes. There is a fascination with the Word of God.
- Jewish children are taught from an early age to love the Bible. Three-year-old children learn to read Hebrew letters, and honey is put on the letters to make them sweet to their taste.



In Israel there is a special holiday called *Simchat Torah*. In English, this means the “Joy of the *Torah*” (Gen.–Deut.). On this day, the Jewish people rejoice over the Word of God. I have watched them treat the *Torah* as precious. The scrolls are taken out of the ark (a highly decorative storage box that is found in every synagogue) and paraded around the synagogue as people sing, dance and rejoice greatly over the Word of God. Candy is given to the children, making *Simchat Torah* special so they will recognize the sweetness of the *Torah*. I have been in public parks where thousands were singing and dancing around the *Torah* scrolls.

The biblical scrolls are treated with respect. On the Sabbath (Shabbat) when the *Torah* scroll is read, the reader uses a pointer called a *yad* (Hebrew for hand) to keep his place in the scroll. In this way the natural oils of the skin are not transferred to the *Torah* scroll. When the scrolls are read, everyone stands in reverence.

Shmuel Bowman is an Orthodox scribe who comes and shares about his work at our Institute of Israel Studies each year. As he describes the great care that is taken in copying the Bible, I am in awe. The scrolls are made of leather, and the words are inscribed using quills with special ink. The script is beautiful calligraphy. A *Torah* scroll takes about a year to make, which helps explain the high price—at least US \$50,000 per scroll.

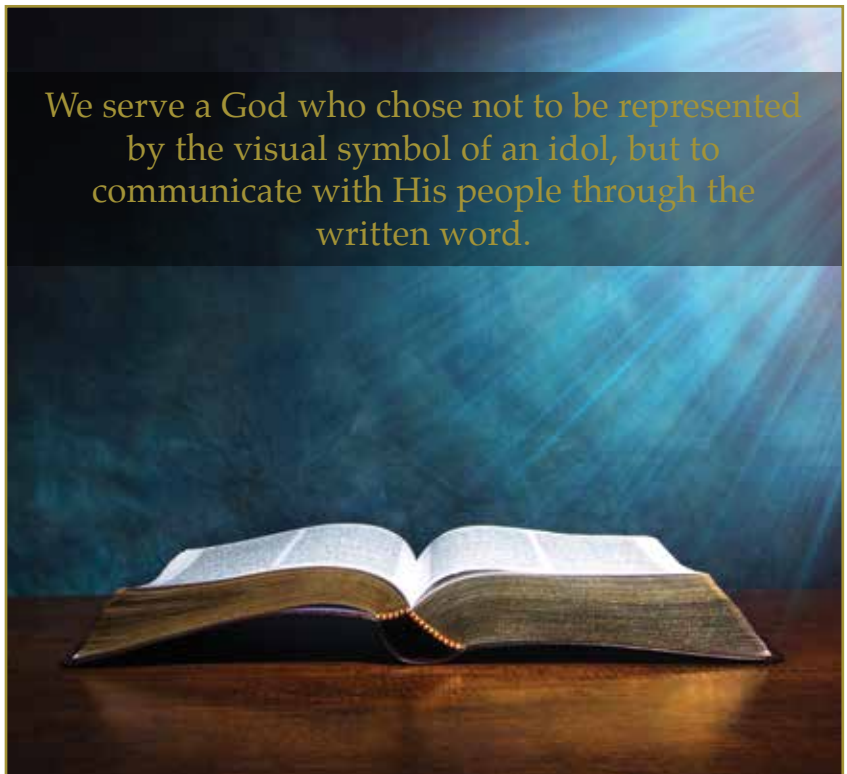
When you come to Israel, please go see the Shrine of the Book exhibit at the Israel Museum. There you will see the Dead Sea Scrolls—ancient biblical manuscripts from the time of Jesus (Yeshua). Astonishingly, they are virtually identical to their modern Hebrew counterparts.

How wonderful if our cultures could be so infused with a love and respect for God’s Word.

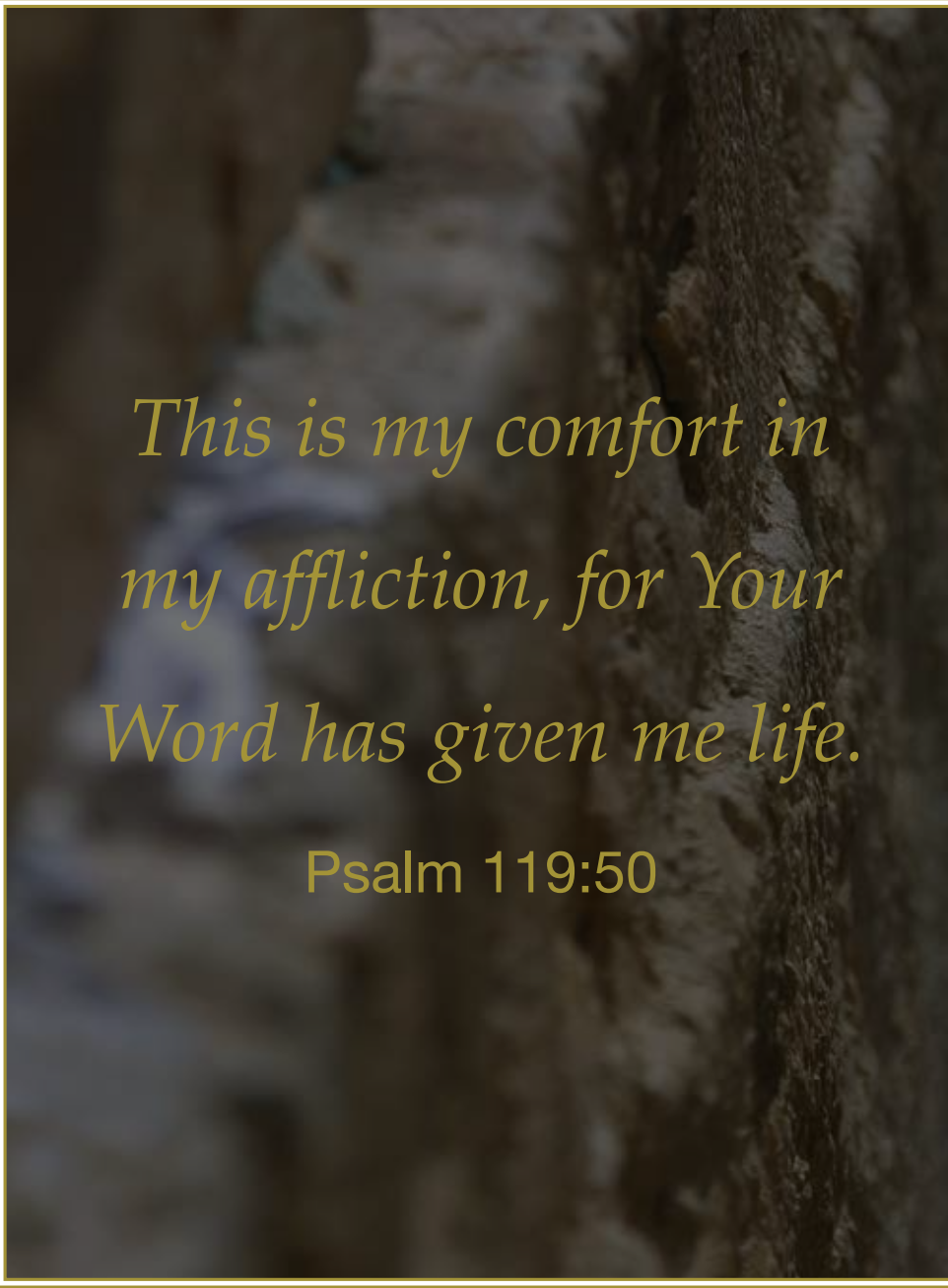
God is Revealed through the Word

We are blessed as believers to have the gift of God’s heart written in the Bible. When I learned to read as a young child, a whole world opened up to me. I was a bookworm, with a book constantly in my hand. When I was eight years old, I actually read through the King James Version of the Bible for the first time. I won’t pretend that I understood all of it, but I loved the stories of God’s interaction with His children. Genesis was one of my favorite books as a child—I read it over and over again. Since then, I have read through the Bible many times. My understanding of God has grown over a lifetime of reading His Word.

Doug Trouten, the former executive director of the Evangelical Press Association, expressed this eloquently at a convention of Christian journalists. “We serve a God who chose not to be represented by the visual symbol of an idol, but to communicate with His people through the written word. God gave the 10 Commandments to Moses as words written on stone tablets. The ministry of Jesus [Yeshua] was foretold in the writings of Moses, and the prophets and the Psalms. And the life of Jesus was recorded in writing to reach the world for generation after generation.”



We serve a God who chose not to be represented by the visual symbol of an idol, but to communicate with His people through the written word.



*This is my comfort in
my affliction, for Your
Word has given me life.*

Psalm 119:50





A Hunger for the Word of God

Becca, a young lady who works with me at Bridges for Peace, came into my office enthusiastic about the Word of God. She told me she has been praying for months that God's people would have a hunger for His Word. I wholeheartedly agree. My prayer for all believers is, "Lord give us a heart to know you and your Word, that we would deeply desire to learn more of you and grow in maturity as your followers."

I believe the Bible is the most precious treasure that believers possess. That is why it is so distressing to know that so many Christians don't read it regularly and systematically. As those who love God, we need to have a hunger for His Word. I want this kind of hunger in my own heart. I am praying for this hunger to descend on the Church of God, starting with church leaders.

When our chairman, Rev. Jess Gibson, first came to the Lord, God gave him such a hunger for His Word. Pastor Jess spent three years reading nothing but the Bible. His teaching has always been deep and infused with Scripture. A number of years ago, my husband, Tom, also had a similar experience. Suddenly, he had a deep hunger to read the Bible. He read it through seven times in one year! Cheryl Hauer, the Bridges for Peace vice president, spent two years totally immersed in the Bible. Her husband would leave for work, her son for school, and she would sit and read the Bible for hours every day.

Will you pray that God will give you a hunger for His Word?

Biblical Literacy

We recently had an unexpected meeting with a former general superintendent of the Assemblies of God (a major Pentecostal denomination) at the gate to our plane from Madrid to Israel. We had a conversation about "Biblical Illiteracy," which was the cover article on the Sept.–Oct. edition of *Influence* magazine (sent to every AG minister). He expressed his concern that many pastors don't teach their congregants with expository messages on the Scripture but rather preach on a topic using a proof text. When do their congregants learn the deep truths of God's Word if expository messages on the Scripture are rarely taught?



This great Christian leader expressed his concern that the Church is becoming shallower, without a firm foundation on the Bible.

When I was growing up, committed Christians were in church three times a week—Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday evening. Today, it is common to attend only a Sunday morning service. A current trend in some churches is to have a one-hour service with a 20–30-minute message designed to be attractive to the nonbeliever.

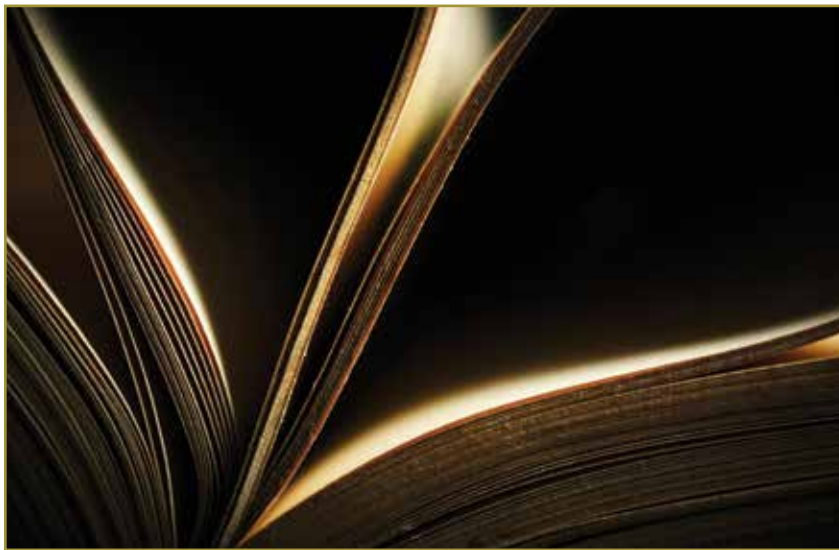
Recently a pastor of such a church told me of the many being saved. “Wonderful,” I replied, “when are they being disciplined?” The answer was in home groups. Many churches now have home groups, but how many such groups spend their time searching the Scripture and studying the holy writ? Many groups focus on marriage, parenting, financial stewardship and a host of other such subjects. Some groups don’t study at all; they are fellowship and prayer groups. All of these things are legitimate, but where are believers learning the Word of God?

The *Influence* article I read said: “In a recent survey by the American Bible Society, only 16 percent of respondents said Bible reading is part of their morning routine, while more than twice that number (37 percent) said they start their day with coffee. The lack of a Bible-first lifestyle may help explain why, according to recent findings of the Barna Group, over half of all churchgoers are now unable to identify basic biblical priorities, including the Great Commission. And it seems the Bible knowledge gap continues to widen from generation to generation.”

Read and Meditate

It is clear that God wants us to read His Word.

The apostle Paul, writing of the young minister Timothy, told him, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” (2 Tim. 2:15 KJV). In the NKJV, it says, “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.*”



Some may say, “It is hard to understand.” That is why I suggest that before starting to read, we begin with a simple prayer asking the Lord to give us a heart to understand the things He wants to communicate through the reading of the Word. Some may think they don’t have time. We have to deliberately make room in our schedule—make an appointment each day—a time devoted to spend with the Lord in prayer and Bible reading.

The great preacher Charles H. Spurgeon said, “There are times when solitude is better than society, and silence is wiser than speech. We should be better Christians if we were more alone, waiting upon God, and gathering through meditation on His Word spiritual strength for labour in his service. We ought to muse upon the things of God, because we thus get the real nutriment out of them....Why is it that some Christians, although they hear many sermons, make but slow advances in the divine life? Because they neglect their closets, and do not thoughtfully meditate on God’s Word. They love the wheat, but they do not grind it; they would have the corn, but they will not go forth into the fields to gather it; the fruit hangs upon the tree, but they will not pluck it; the water flows at their feet, but they will not stoop to drink it. From such folly deliver us, O Lord....”

Dwight Moody said, “The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation.”

Jesus (Yeshua) said, “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law [Torah or instruction] till all is fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18). Jesus quoted extensively from the Scripture, and it seems that Deuteronomy was one of His favorite books. The other writers of the New Testament (Writings of the Apostles) also revered the Scripture.

The Scripture encourages us to meditate on its words.

Do you want to be prosperous? “*This Book of the Law [Torah] shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do*

according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Josh. 1:8).

Do you have insomnia? “My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your Word.” (Ps. 119:148).

Action Plan

My heart has been grieved, and the Lord showed me that this issue is heavy on the hearts of other Christian leaders. Attention is being placed on the Bible. Christian investors have created a fantastic new exhibit—the Museum of the Bible in Washington, DC. It seems to me that the Lord is calling out to His followers to once again immerse themselves in the study of His Word.

I cried out to the Lord saying, “What can we do, what can Bridges for Peace do to help improve biblical literacy in our world?” My first excited thought was that we would have an emphasis on reading through the Bible in 2019 with our entire worldwide staff. We will be reading the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We will journal what the Lord is showing us. Our daily devotions will be taken from the passages we are all reading that week. Our Israel teaching letters will be taken from the monthly Bible readings.

I urge you to join us. If you want to go deeper in the Word this year, learning together with us, please go to www.ignitethetruth.com and register. You will receive a Bible reading plan, a downloadable journal, access to weekly fresh teaching videos and more. Let’s do more than bemoan the current situation. Let’s change the world starting in our hearts, our homes, our churches and our communities. I am excited to see what God is going to do as we commit ourselves anew to His Word, seeking His face and growing in maturity as believers.

In Service of the King,
Rebecca J. Brimmer

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Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

TERMINOLOGY:

Many of our readers are seasoned supporters of Israel while others are just beginning to understand the importance of standing with God’s chosen nation; some prefer the use of Hebrew names and terms, while others are comfortable with more traditional Christian terminology. Because we want to show respect to all of our readers while providing an enjoyable educational experience, we are making every effort to use both terms whenever possible. The following are some of the most common examples:

- Jesus (Yeshua)
- *Tanakh* (Old Testament or OT) – *Tanakh* is an acronym used in Judaism which stands for *Torah*, *Neviim* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- Writings of the Apostles (New Testament or NT)
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

HELP THOSE IN NEED



Photo by Isranet

Israel's Dangerous Borders

Last month, war exploded along Israel's border with Gaza. Hundreds of rockets were launched by Hamas. The situation on the northern border remains an existential threat to Israel's security as Hezbollah has over 130,000 rockets aimed and ready.

Bridges for Peace is committed to standing with Israel during these difficult times. Through our Crisis Fund we are providing firefighting equipment (to combat terror arson) and buying bomb shelters. Won't you consider a gift to help us do more?

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