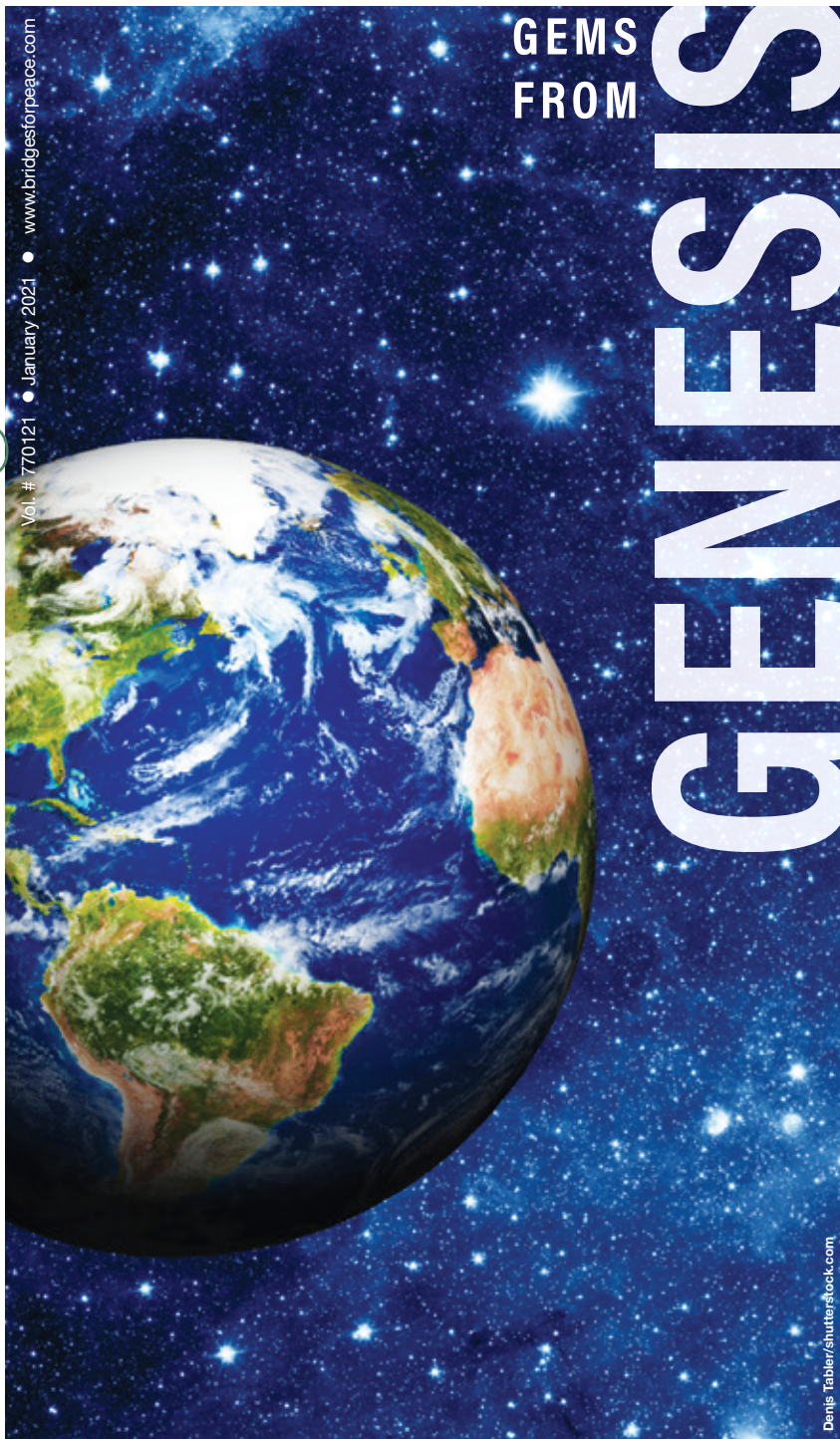


ISRAEL Teaching Letter

Vol. # 770121 • January 2021 • www.bridgesforpeace.com



GEMS
FROM

GENESIS

Denijs Tabler/shutterstock.com

By Rev. Rebecca J. Brimmer, *International President and CEO*
Bridges for Peace...Your Israel Connection®

RECENTLY I EMBARKED on what may be a lifelong project. I want to write a short devotional for every chapter in the Bible. While I think this is mainly for me personally as part of my devotional time with the Lord, I wanted to share my thoughts for the first six chapters in Genesis with you.

I encourage you to read through the Bible with us this year. The Word of God is a lamp to lighten our way (Ps. 119:105). We can't predict the future. We don't know what 2021 will bring our way. The path may take twists and turns, but the Word of God will provide us with direction. Let this year be a year with the Lord, reading the Scripture, praying, praising and worshiping. My prayer for you is that you will receive fresh revelation of the God we serve as we seek Him.



GENESIS 1

The Bible starts with the words *“In the beginning...”* (Gen. 1:1). The Hebrew word is *beresheet*. In the Hebrew Bible, the book of Genesis (which means beginnings) is called *Beresheet*. The first thing God wants us to know is that He existed from the very start.

Another book of the Bible starts with the same words. John starts with the words, *“In the beginning was the Word...”* (John 1:1). The connection surely was no coincidence. John the apostle, a Jewish follower of Jesus (Yeshua) in the first century AD, was undoubtedly well versed in the *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.). He may have even had it memorized. That wasn't uncommon. John 1:2–3 says, *“He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”* John is introducing Jesus and clearly identifying Him with the Creator.

The eternity of God is hard for humans to comprehend, as is the concept that God operates outside of time. The book of

Revelation refers to Jesus as “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8b).

From the very beginning, God the Creator had a redemptive plan.



GENESIS 2

“Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Gen. 2:3).

The word Sabbath, or *Shabbat* in Hebrew, has the same root as the word seventh. Before the Law of Moses was given at Mount Sinai, God instituted a day of rest on the seventh day (Saturday). It was a gift, not a burden. It was permission to cease from labor, to regroup and to spend time in prayer and fellowship with Him. It was a day to recharge.

After living in Israel for more than 30 years, I have come to value the rhythm of life where every *Shabbat* the merry-go-round of hectic everyday life comes to a halt. Quietness settles over the land, and time is devoted to important things—God, quiet time and family.

Jesus (Yeshua) said, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28–30).* Interestingly, Jesus attended synagogue on the *Shabbat*. *“And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read” (Luke 4:16 NASB).*

Sometimes when I express my appreciation for the *Shabbat*, Christians take offense, asking me if I am saying that Christians should worship on Saturday instead of Sunday. I always tell them

to worship on Sunday, which is a great day to gather to praise the Lord. I think true worshipers of God should worship on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday—yes, on every day of the week. Interestingly, one of the words for worship in Hebrew, *avodah*, is the same as the word for work. We should not call Sunday the Sabbath. Only one day is the *Shabbat*, a day of rest.

Consider spending a Saturday with the Lord in quietness and rest. You will find yourself refreshed and ready to face the week ahead.

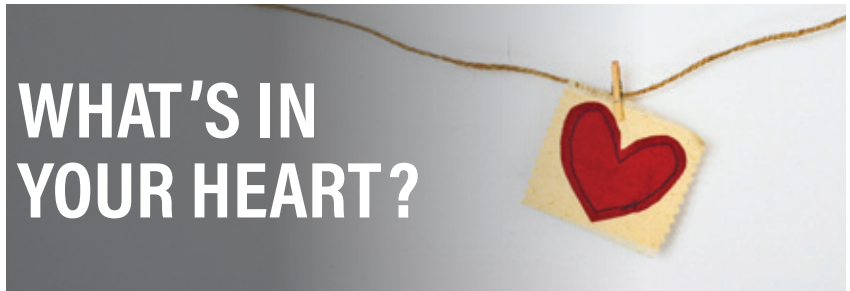


GENESIS 3

Genesis 3 is a sad tale of temptation and rebellion against God. He had placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden. He personally spent time in fellowship with them. He only gave one prohibition: don't eat from a particular tree. Temptation was not resisted, and sin entered the equation. It is in this chapter that we find the first indication that there are consequences for our actions. God didn't threaten and then not act on His words. Adam and Eve's lives drastically changed from that moment on. Shame, guilt, banishment, toil, pain and anguish all became part of their ongoing experience. It is natural when we experience these kinds of emotions to blame someone else. Adam blamed Eve; Eve blamed the serpent; and perhaps both blamed God. Thousands of years later, we still try to blame others (including God) for the pain in our lives and world. Instead, we need to realize that there are natural consequences of sin, lawlessness, giving in to lawlessness and rebellion.

It is not God's heart for us to experience the pain of sin and its consequences. It was never His desire. His desire was for humans to live in an idyllic setting, a garden of great beauty, plenty of good food, amazing animals and intimacy with Him and each other.

The Hebrew word for repentance is *teshuvah*, which literally means to turn. Today, let's turn to face our loving God who desires good for us.



GENESIS 4

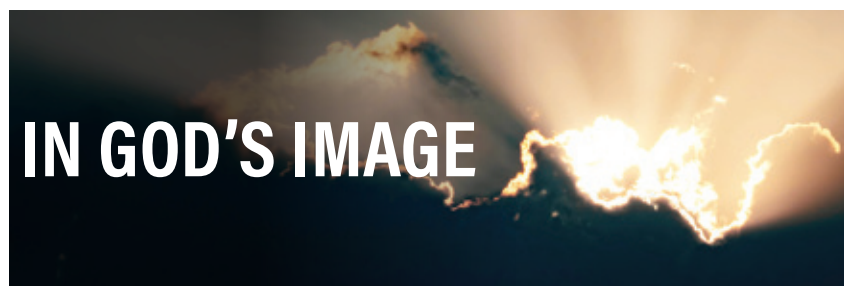
Time went by, and Adam and Eve were blessed with sons. They obviously raised their sons to respect God. Both Cain and Abel knew that they were to bring offerings to the Lord. They both brought offerings from their life work: Cain from the things he grew and Abel from the flocks he husbanded. What comes next is puzzling. Why did God respect Abel's gift but not Cain's? Some have said it was because Abel's sacrifice was an animal sacrifice. However, later in the Mosaic law, we find both grain (vegetation) and animal sacrifices, so surely that wasn't the problem here. When God confronts Cain about his emotional response, He says: *"Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it"* (Gen. 4:6–7).

It seems obvious that God, who knows the depths of our hearts, struggles and thoughts, was judging Cain's heart. Heart motivation is at the core of this story. When Cain murdered his brother, the evil already in his heart was revealed for all to see. 1 John 3:12 refers to him in this way: *"Not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous."*

God is always aware of our heart. He told the prophet Samuel: *"...Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart"* (1 Sam. 16:7).

What is your heart motivation? The Lord Jesus (Yeshua) also judges the heart. He said: *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, casts out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness”*” (Matt. 7:21–23).

Today I pray with the psalmist, *“Search me, God, and know my heart; put me to the test and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there is any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way”* (Ps. 139:23–24 NASB).



GENESIS 5

“In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created” (Gen. 5:1b–2).

How wonderful that we are made in God’s image. What does this mean? Certainly, it isn’t physical appearance, since God is a spirit. We were given characteristics that reflect the essence of God. He gave us the ability to think, reason, create, choose, appreciate beauty and feel emotions. From the beginning, even the existence of mankind was a witness for the character of God. We carry His likeness!

Astonishingly, God gave men and women the capacity to create other human beings who carry His image. This is a sacred trust. His plan was for children to be nurtured in families—man married to woman and raising children in a protected environment of marriage. This is why so many biblical laws outline how to live. Sexual boundaries were given in order to protect the individual, the family and society. Sin corrupted this divine plan, and the consequences of sin bring brokenness and pain. Although every human is made

in God's image, sin has often distorted the image of God. The resulting trauma tends to pull people farther away from God. His image is not shining through these wounded, sinful vessels.

Fortunately, God has the cure. Remember, being made in His image includes the ability to choose. As Joshua told the Children of Israel: *“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve”* (Josh. 24:15a). I am thankful for the Word of God, which teaches us the way to live, the work of Jesus (Yeshua) on the cross and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to guide believers in righteous living. I am thankful that God takes broken people who come to Him and heals them. He helps them to once again be witnesses of Him and His image to the world. My question for today: How can I reflect God's image this day?



GENESIS 6

As time went on, men used the free will God gave them to choose selfishly. They didn't make godly choices that reflected God's image within them. Wickedness increased to the point that God regretted creating mankind. Perhaps He would have destroyed everything if not for one righteous man: Noah. *“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD”* (Gen. 6:8).

When I studied Hebrew in *ulpan* (language school), we were taught this Hebrew phrase, and our teacher said in modern Hebrew it meant “He liked him.” This is the first instance in the Bible of the Hebrew word *chen*, which means grace or favor. We often think of the unmerited grace of God. God looked around in Noah's generation and saw only one family whom He graced with salvation from His judgment.

I am sure that Noah was not perfect, but the Bible says, *“Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God”* (Gen. 6:9b). As I reflect on the Garden of Eden, when

God walked with Adam and Eve, enjoying fellowship with them, this phrase “*Noah walked with God*” takes on special meaning.

Today there is much wickedness, as in the days of Noah. Just as then, God is looking for those who will walk with Him in fellowship, who will reflect His character and whose life is a witness of Him. Noah understood justice, and Noah was submitted to God. When God asked Him to do an outrageous task, Noah obeyed. Growing up, we used to sing a hymn called “Trust and Obey.” Noah understood righteousness and justice because he spent time with God. He responded to God’s voice with trust and obedience. God liked Noah! I also want to be liked by God.

IGNITE THE TRUTH

I hope you enjoyed sharing devotions with me. Again, I encourage you to join us in reading through the Bible this year. You can register at ignitethetruth.com to get the reading plan and access to videos and teachings throughout the whole year.

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.)

Bridges for Peace—Offices

Australia: Tel: 07-5479-4229, Toll free: (1) 800-000-661, bfp.au@bridgesforpeace.com

Canada: Tel: 204-489-3697, Toll free: 855-489-3697, info@bfpca.org

Japan: Tel: 03-5637-5333, bfp@bfpj.org

New Zealand: Tel: (64) 7-855-5262, emather.nz@bridgesforpeace.com

South Africa: Tel: 021-975-1941, info@bridgesforpeace.co.za

South Korea: Tel: 070-8772-2014, bfp@bfpkorea.com

Spanish: Tel: (52) 646-238-7206, intl.spanish@bridgesforpeace.com

Russia: Tel: (7) 903-309-1849, info.ru@bridgesforpeace.com

United Kingdom: Tel: 165-673-9494, ukoffice@bridgesforpeace.com

United States: Tel: 800-566-1998, Product orders: 888-669-8800, postmaster@bfpusa.org



© COPYRIGHT POLICY:

Bridges for Peace holds the copyright on this material. We encourage pastors, Bible teachers, and lay people to use these articles for preaching and teaching, and we hereby grant permission for a limited number of copies for such educational purposes. However, any other reproduction or transmittal of this material in any form—including reprinting, republishing, recording or use with any information storage and retrieval system—requires written permission from BFP International.

Bridges for Peace: Christians supporting Israel and building relationships between Christians and Jews in Israel and around the world.

International Headquarters
PO Box 1093, Jerusalem, Israel

Tel: (972) 2-624-5004

intl.office@bridgesforpeace.com

www.bridgesforpeace.com

