

## GOD'S LOVE FOR CHILDREN



Ben White/unsplash.com

**WHAT IS THE VALUE** of a child? To any moral person of conscience, the answer is infinite value or priceless. A civilization that does not value children will fail, collapse and perish. A child holds infinite possibilities for the future. When one looks at a helpless baby, one naturally wonders what this child is going to accomplish in his or her life. That is why the horror of the Holocaust is compounded to an unimaginable degree when we consider the terrible fact that the Nazis systematically murdered 1.5 million children—simply because they were Jewish. The bloodstained hands of the Third Reich erased a universe of infinite possibilities.

The vulnerability of children will always cause people of deep conviction to act in order to suppress and eradicate suffering, save lives, restore hope to families, bring health to societies and uphold innocence.

In fact, Bridges for Peace has an entire program called Feed a Child dedicated to the provision and health of needy children in Israel. To impact the lives of children is to sow into the next generation, and as an organization, we are doing just that for 350 Israeli children from families trapped in a cycle of poverty.

The purpose of this teaching letter is not to dive into topics such as the correction of children, rebellious children, the difficult reality of barrenness or parents who experience the death of a child, subjects which are

common in the Bible (Genesis 11:30; 15:2; 29:31; Judges 13:2–3; 1 Samuel 1:2 and Luke 1:7). The topic of interest here is God's simple and yet complex love for children and what we can learn in this regard from God's relationship with Israel and the Jewish home.



## TO IMPACT

THE LIVES OF CHILDREN IS TO SOW  
INTO THE NEXT GENERATION.

As a father, I have had the delight of raising two children — with a third on the way. I have watched them develop from crawling and walking to running, and have seen them transform from a babbling infant to a speaking little human with a flurry of questions. My children, like so many others, are resilient and adaptable. Children are generally quick learners, soaking up information like sponges. I was surprised at how swiftly my own children could show affection, independence, try to manipulate a situation, demonstrate anger or frustration and begin to nurture a love for God. To see life grow in the womb, then experience birth and the transformation of growth over years is more than simple biology or natural human development; it's miraculous, mysterious and supernatural.



## WHAT DOES GOD SAY?

What is the value of a child? I would say they have absolute value from conception onward because we are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). But how would God answer this question? Let's examine several key Scriptures. After the creation of man and woman, God commands them to be *"fruitful and multiply"* (Gen. 1:28). Children are the God-given solution to the expansion and health of the human race. Children effectively conjure up the image of bountiful fruit on a healthy tree. Psalm 127:3 declares *"children are a heritage..."* while Psalm 139:13–14 describes a child as *"formed"* and *"covered"* in the *"mother's womb"* and *"wonderfully made."* Proverbs hails the generations of children as *"the crown of old men"* (17:6), teaches that a *"child is known by his deeds"* (20:11) and instructs us to *"train up a child"* (22:6). The intimate language of God forming the child in the womb—a wonderful creation, the importance of caring for and teaching children, rather than the neglect

or carelessness of parenting, reflects the obvious and infinite love God has for these little ones.


For Christians, we see John call believers in Jesus (Yeshua) “*children of God*” (1 John 3:2), which likens the individual who possesses faith to an innocent and vulnerable child before God as Father. To be described as a “child” (children) of God immediately places this passage into a family context of adoption and intimacy (Gal. 3). We also see the famous passage where Jesus lays His hands upon the children and blesses them (Matt. 19:13–15) with what many scholars believe to be the Aaronic Blessing (Num. 6:24–26). Finally, we see a warning given by Jesus against those who would cause “*one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin*” (Matt. 18:6), and that it would be better for the perpetrator to have a millstone tied around his neck and drowned in the sea than the wrathful judgment that awaits him. God’s love for children is immense and cannot truly be measured apart from Him.

## ISRAEL AS GOD’S CHILDREN

In the *Tanakh* (OT), the nation of Israel is compared to children. The title “children of Israel” occurs 577 times in the *Tanakh* and another 14 times in the Writings of the Apostles (NT), for a total of 591 times in the entire Bible. The sheer number makes it clear that God as Father views Israel as His children. We see in Scripture that God’s desire, like that of a good father, was to







protect, instruct and teach His children, provide security in the Land of Israel and provide and care for them as their Shepherd.

However, God Himself as Father upholds His own Word. It remains true that a child should be trained, known by his or her deeds, held accountable, corrected, instructed and so forth. Israel rebelled and embraced things of a nature foreign to their Father, like idols. God brought correction and discipline—but not to the extent where He would permanently cast them out and reject them as His children. What father would do such a thing? He remains the God of Israel and is faithful to His covenant (Gen. 17:7, Rom. 11:29).

Both this language of love for Israel as well as the message of tough love are found frequently in Scripture. Moses instructed the people to teach their children to fear the Lord (Deut. 4:10) and hear His words, knowing full well that the health of the nation was determined by their closeness to God. Centuries later, when the nation had strayed from the Lord and judgment was coming, the prophet Joel reminded the people to pass down instruction to their children of why judgment was approaching in order to bring the people back to God (1:3). In Moses's stirring words to Israel in Deuteronomy 32,

the nation is compared to the offspring of an eagle, likened to God, where the mother eagle stirs up the nest, hovers over her young, takes them upon her wings

and teaches them how to fly. As Jesus (Yeshua) weeps over the future destruction of Jerusalem, He compares the city's inhabitants to *“children”* and expresses His desire to gather them *“as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings”* (Matt. 23:37). These passages come from a heart of love, which complements the parent-child imagery found in Scripture for God's relationship with Israel and His everlasting covenant (Ps. 105:8–11).

## CHILDREN ARE A GIFT

FROM GOD AND ARE AN EXPRESSION OF HIS BLESSING.



In his book, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, Marvin R. Wilson writes: “Children are a gift from God and are an expression of his blessing.” He goes on to say:

“Sociologists and family counselors have long made the Jewish home an object of study and emulation...No family, Jewish or Christian, is immune to stress...But over the hundreds of years which stretch back to Bible times, the Jewish home has remained a bastion of strength.”

The Jewish home has been central to the Jewish community, especially in the Diaspora (the Jewish population outside Israel), keeping the Jewish people alive, resisting assimilation and protecting them from the eventuality of fading into oblivion over the last two millennia. The reason for their survival has been their faith, particularly modelled in the home.

The degree of importance of the nuclear family is found in Wilson’s statement: “Foundational to all theory on the biblical concept of family is the Jewish teaching that the home is more important than the synagogue.” The family is where faith begins, and the role of the parent in the life of the child cannot be taken for granted. It is vital to the health of the community. Children must honor their parents (Exod. 20:12), which leads to peace in the home, a God-honoring structure of unity and the chance for parental instruction to affect matters of life and biblical faith.

Wilson concludes: “Though hardly exempt from problems, the Jewish home has good reason for its survival. The home has had stability and permanency because the traditions and values of the home have brought self-understanding and direction to its members.” Like a ripple effect, it has cemented the Jewish people together and aided in their survival.



## THE HOME

IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE SYNAGOGUE.

It is, however, about more than simply surviving. Faith in the God of the Bible gives purpose, meaning, significance and value to the individual and the nation. When one looks at the Jewish home and how they cherish children, the chance for all other people to learn and model such behavioral truths is immense. Take the centrality of Sabbath observance, for example.

In Abraham Joshua Heschel's book, *The Sabbath*, he writes:

"The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world."

Immersed in this "holiness in time" are the children of the family. Concerning the Sabbath, Wilson remarks: "When the father arrives home from praying in synagogue he customarily blesses his sons and daughters. Putting his hands on the heads of his children, he recites this blessing for his sons: 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.' For his daughters he prays: 'May God make you like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah.'"

Following this comes the Aaronic Blessing. Every Sabbath, the father of the household physically lays his hands on the heads of his children and blesses them. Imagine how it would change our countries if fathers blessed their children on a weekly basis. Even if only 25% of parents gave such a weekly blessing, the positive effects would be astronomical. What a magnificent reflection of love poured over children every week, reminding them that they belong to God and that they have identity, value and purpose in this life.

The reality is that I have barely scraped the surface concerning God's love for children. It is profoundly deep and endlessly wide. Both faith traditions—Judaism and Christianity—have sought to



preserve a healthy home life, build up the community, raise responsible children and demonstrate the love of God to children as godly parents. The common foundational approach of shared heritage comes from the love of the Bible and how we view God as Father. Although people who reject these values are eroding them within our culture, the survival of biblical faith largely rests upon understanding God's love for children and projecting that love into the lives of the family. Let us pour into our children the blessing and legacy that God intended.

---

### Bibliography

- Edersheim, Alfred. *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. Peabody, Massachusetts, 1994.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: Essays*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, USA. 1997.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, USA. 2005.
- Wilson, Marvin R. *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids Michigan, 1989.
- Wouk, Herman. *This is My God: The Jewish Way of Life*. Little, Brown and Company, Toronto, Canada, 1987.
- 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, [bfp.au@bridgesforpeace.com](mailto:bfp.au@bridgesforpeace.com)

**Canada:** Tel: 204-489-3697, Toll free: 855-489-3697, [info@bfpkan.org](mailto:info@bfpkan.org)

**Japan:** Tel: (81)3-5969-9656, [bfp@bfpj.org](mailto:bfp@bfpj.org)

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

**South Africa:** Tel: 021-975-1941, [info@bridgesforpeace.co.za](mailto:info@bridgesforpeace.co.za)

**South Korea:** Tel: 070-8772-2014, [bfp@bfpkorea.com](mailto:bfp@bfpkorea.com)

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

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

**United Kingdom:** Tel: 165-673-9494, [ukoffice@bridgesforpeace.com](mailto:ukoffice@bridgesforpeace.com)

**United States:** Tel: 800-566-1998, Product orders: 888-669-8800, [postmaster@bfpusa.org](mailto: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](mailto:intl.office@bridgesforpeace.com)

[www.bridgesforpeace.com](http://www.bridgesforpeace.com)

