

# ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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**‘Behold, How Good  
and How Pleasant it Is’**

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**THE HEBREW WORD** for brother is *ach*. In everyday Hebrew, you will often hear the word *achi*, which is a contraction of *ach* and *sheli*, and means “my brother.” Often, this term doesn’t only refer to blood relatives but also to close friends who have forged a tight bond. According to the *King James Bible Dictionary*, the word brother is used 367 times in Scripture. Given the frequency of use, it seems clear that God values the bonds of brotherhood and unity.

However, those bonds are often under attack from the enemy. We find the first issues between brothers early on in the Bible. Genesis 4:3–9 gives the account of Cain murdering his brother, Abel. Genesis 25:22–34 introduces us to Jacob and Esau contending for the birthright position even inside the womb. And from Genesis 37 onward, we read about Joseph and the sibling rivalry among the sons of Jacob.



The Jewish people are often described as a family. October 7 demonstrated an important thing to the world. When Israel comes under attack, the Jewish family unites and brothers come together. The enemies of Israel soon discovered—and continue to do so—that they are not at war with a nation or a band of individuals. They are fighting God’s chosen family. He will fight for them.

This sense of unity and brotherhood is evident throughout Israeli society. I have recently listened to an audiobook version of the memoir *Bibi: My Story*, where Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shares about his family, military service and his service to the nation of Israel through politics. One part that stood out to me was that the three Netanyahu brothers, Yonatan, Benjamin and Iddo, joined elite special forces units in the Israel Defense Forces. Yonatan was killed at Entebbe International Airport during a heroic mission to free Israeli hostages. Benjamin’s service to his country could be considered no less heroic, but from a different perspective. Nevertheless, these brothers were united in their service to their nation, Israel, and its continued struggle to survive. Benjamin knows the cost of losing family to terrorism and war. This can be a strength and a comfort to the Israeli people during times of hardship and loss. Israel has fought seven major wars since its rebirth in 1948. It is no wonder that Israel longs for peace, a key point in the prime minister’s address at the United Nations General Assembly on September 27.

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## Regathering the Family —

The ministry of Bridges for Peace has many projects. It has allowed many of us to experience life in the Land in times of peace and war, seeing prophecy being fulfilled firsthand. Isaiah 11:11–12 states, *“It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”*

When God talks about gathering His people from the four corners of the earth, this is the regathering of brothers from many



diverse backgrounds, unified by bonds that transcend what seems to divide. Walking down the main streets of Jerusalem on any given day, you will see Jewish people hailing from Russia, Ethiopia, India, China, South American, North American, Morocco and a number of Arab nations, many sharing the common Hebrew language and faith. Like all families, there are times of unity and disputes. However, despite the differences, there are familiar aspects that unite them: keeping the *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.), *Shabbat*, the festivals and sadly, also facing terrorism war and antisemitic persecution.

Psalm 133:1, “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*” was David’s prayer against division and disharmony, something he may have experienced in his early years. His own brothers might have dismissed him until the great moment of victory over Goliath. David fought like a lion and perhaps gained respect from his brothers. David understood the importance of unity and brotherhood. He also knew that God’s blessing would rest on the people of Israel as they stood as one before Him. “*It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forevermore*” (Ps. 133:2–3).

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## A Bond of Brotherhood

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Growing up, being the only son could be lonely sometimes, as I longed for someone to share my interests outside of usual school and church friendships. However, there came a shocking moment when I was 18. My father announced he had been married before and had a son he had never met.

Fast forward to 2004. My father knew his time on earth was short due to health issues and asked me to find his son from the previous marriage. After doing some research, we learned that he had moved to New Zealand when he was 18 years old. Using technology, we looked up every person with his name living in New Zealand and then sent countless letters and emails. Our efforts appeared fruitless. Then, one day in 2018, I had a surprise phone call. I had found my half brother. We arranged a meeting and finally met each other for the first time after 50 years.



During the meeting, we asked many questions and uncovered many answers as we got to know each other. It soon became clear that he was a believer. The Scripture from Psalm 133:1, “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*” took on a different meaning that day. The sense of brotherhood and unity I experienced with my half brother was tremendous. Having not met him before and having no knowledge of each other’s lives, the conversation became very interesting as we discovered that our salvation stories were very similar, they just happened in different locations. Our ministries, such as youth work, street preaching and practical and personal endeavors were also very similar. We then discussed Israel and biblical authority, only to find we had much in common in these areas too, an astounding miracle, considering we lived on opposite sides of the world.

Although we regretted the years we spent not knowing each other, I can also see the Lord’s hand in that. My father was a staunch atheist and did not agree with my faith, refusing to attend my baptism and other milestones in my walk with the Lord. To have two sons walking with the Lord would have been difficult for him. Moreover, being apart from my half brother as young boys probably saved us from the disagreements that can happen between siblings, such as having to share certain things or

lending and never receiving items back again. He was raised as an only child and never knew he had a half brother or two half sisters along with a number of nieces and nephews.

God had a plan for my brother and me. He was watching over us. So too with the Jewish people. He has been watching over them for thousands of years. He has established His word in their hearts, called them, began to bring them back to Israel and unified them. Of course, that unity is not perfected yet and there remain a number of things on which the people of Israel differ. However, when it comes to the things that matter, like standing against enemies like Hamas and Hezbollah, the Jewish state is of one heart and mind. Let's pray that this unity will continue to grow and flourish so that God's name will be praised and glorified in the nation—and the nations of the world.

### Unity in Times of Trouble

Another aspect that unites the people of Israel in close bonds of brotherhood is the Word of God. Joshua 1:8–9 has been a major factor in keeping the Jewish identity: *“This Book of the Law 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. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*







Joshua received this instruction as he was about to enter a hostile land with many difficult challenges and hostile inhabitants. However, the Children of Israel entered as one people, united, though they were many. They defeated enemies and took hold of their inheritance. Israel has defeated many hostile armies since its rebirth in 1948. Moreover, in the aftermath of October 7, many Israelis have acknowledged the miracles they have observed.

David also wrote about the importance of unity in Psalm 122:1–9, describing the 12 tribes coming up for the feasts of the Lord each year, *“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD.’ Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together, where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, to the Testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. For thrones are set there for judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, prosperity within your palaces.’ For the sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, ‘Peace be within you.’ Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good.”*

When the tribes all went up together to enter Jerusalem, it was unruly to say the least. Can you imagine the multitude of people all streaming into Jerusalem? This was the perfect breeding ground for division and strife. Moreover, this was an opportunity to settle disagreements and disputes at the seats of judgment, such as land disputes and animal sales gone wrong, on both a local and tribal level. That is why we find David praying for literal peace, calm and focus on the real reason to be there: appearing before the presence of the Lord in the house of God, a house of prayer and redemption.

I believe that 1 Peter 3:8–9 echoes Psalm 122:1–9, *“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”*

The focus in Israeli society has shifted since the beginning of the war on October 7. Many have started reading Scripture and keeping *Torah* and *Shabbat* as the battle in Gaza and the northern front intensified. The war has been tremendously taxing. Let us pray for a focus on spiritual things. Let us also pray for the protection of the people of Israel and the wisdom of the decision-makers, who are also at war against opinion and propaganda around the world, as witnessed at the UN in September. Finally, let us pray that in the midst of turmoil and trouble, the Lord will continue to knit together the close bonds of brotherhood and unity, because it is there that He commands His blessing.

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Scripture from the New King James Version

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#### 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*, *Nevi'im* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

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