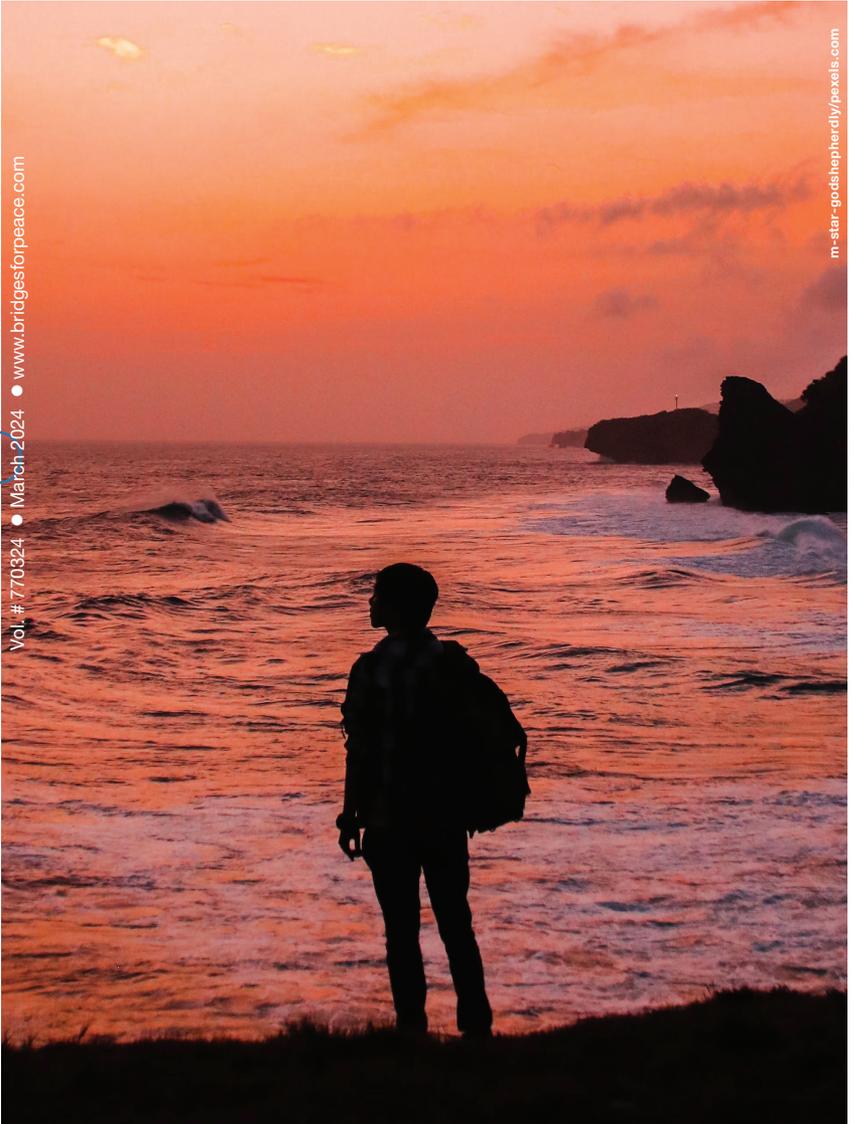


# ISRAEL Teaching Letter

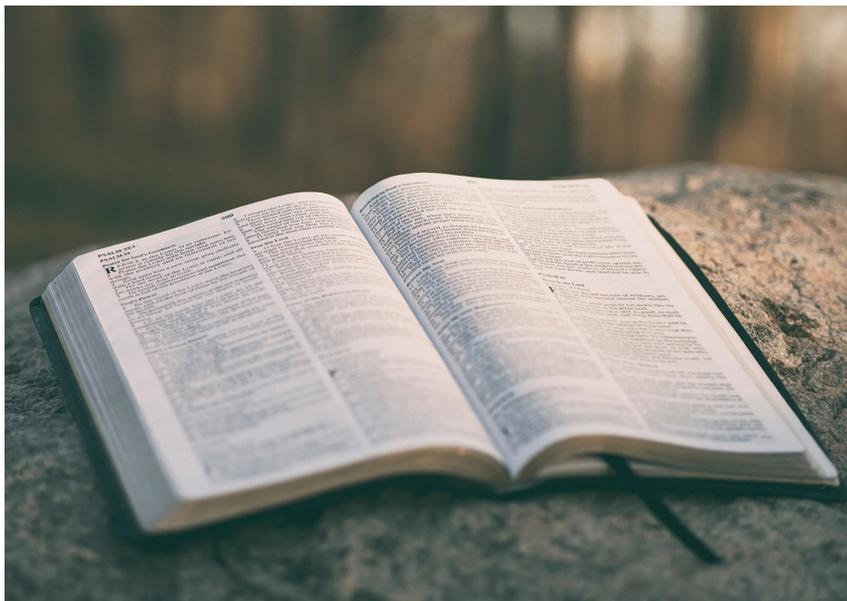
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## THAT I MIGHT KNOW HIM

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Bridges for Peace...Your Israel Connection®



**THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE** are crammed with the accounts of patriarchs, prophets, kings and ordinary men and women who played extraordinary roles in the unfolding of God’s plans for humanity. Courageous Esther; faithful Abraham; shepherd King David and his Moabite great-grandmother Ruth; the disciple “*whom Jesus loved*” (John 13:23b); Mary of Bethany with her costly perfume and tears; the list goes on. Yet despite the abundance of towering heroes of faith, hope and love, there are two in particular who continue to capture my attention as paragons of fallible humanity in the hands of an infallible God.

The prophet Moses and the apostle Paul lived millennia apart, yet the parallels between their lives and legacies bear the unmistakable fingerprints of the Master Potter. Both were handpicked before birth to fulfill a role that would alter the course of human history. Both learned at the feet of the greatest minds of their time, gleaning an education that groomed them for positions of worldly power, but then both spent years roaming the plains of a desolate wilderness with nobody but the sovereign God to train them for His purpose. Both also experienced an encounter with God so profound that it altered the trajectory of their lives and enabled them to forsake all earthly comfort, prestige and power to follow the path and purpose He had ordained for them.

And what a purpose it was! Both Moses and Paul authored significant portions of the Scriptures that today, thousands of years after they put down their pens, continue to draw the gaze of humanity heavenward by revealing the nature, character and plans of God. Through Moses and Paul, God gave and continues to give humanity a deeper revelation of Himself.

Yet in order for Moses and Paul to reveal God in such a remarkable way, they had to experience that revelation of God firsthand. In short, Moses and Paul had to know God intimately before they could make Him known.

## AS CLOSE AS IT GETS?

Both men enjoyed a depth of relationship with God that goes well beyond our frame of reference. They arguably knew God as intimately as any human can.

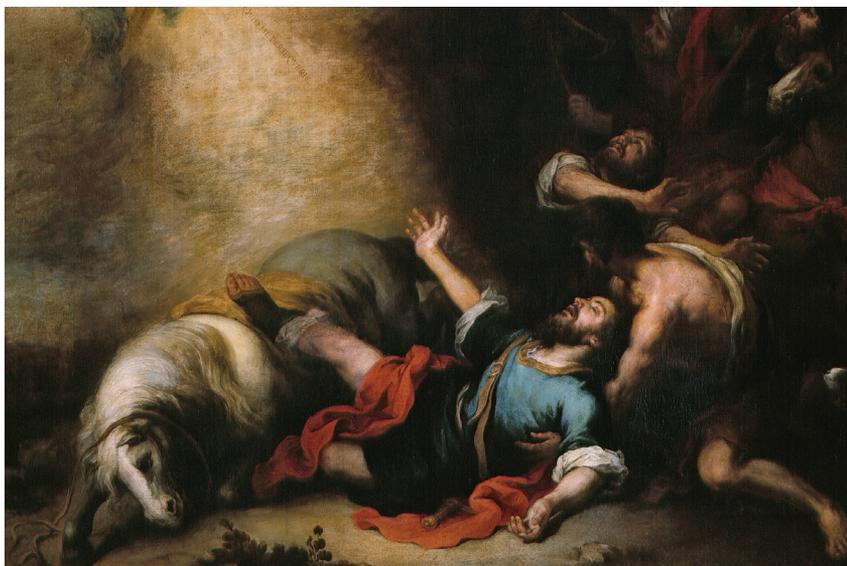
Moses met God at the scene of the burning bush (Exod. 3:2) and then saw His might and power firsthand as it was unleashed on Egypt during the plagues and the Red Sea crossing. Led by Moses, Israel walked in God's shade by day and slept tucked into the warmth of His fiery embrace by night. Together with Israel, he ate from God's hand and quenched his thirst from God's abundance. To top it off, Exodus 33:11 confirms the close bond between Creator and His created one by pointing out that God spoke to Moses "*face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.*" Oh yes. Moses *knew* God.

The same holds true for Paul. His encounter on the road to Damascus sparked a life of such intimacy with the risen Jesus (Yeshua) that he was entrusted with some of the profoundest revelations about salvation, redemption and God's plan for fallen humanity. Paul's revelation of God was so overwhelming that all that once glittered so brightly lost their value, suddenly pale in comparison to His beauty, excellence and worth. Life now meant Christ and death gain (Phil. 1:21). Oh yes. Paul *knew* God.

Yet despite this depth of relationship, intimacy and closeness, both Moses and Paul petitioned God for something that, at first glance, seems illogical. Toward the tail end of Israel's wanderings in the desert—and therefore near the end of his life—Moses beseeched God, "*Show me now Your way that I may know*

*You*” (Exod. 33:13b emphasis added). Millennia later—and some 20 years after meeting Jesus en route to Damascus—Paul echoed Moses’s desire, writing in one of his final epistles, “*Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...that I may know Him...*” (Phil. 3:8a, 10a emphasis added).

These appeals beg the question: why would the two men who probably knew God as well as any human could pray for something they already had? Why the plea to *know* God when these two men clearly *knew* Him already?



I have long since pondered the seemingly strange longing in the hearts of both Moses and Paul—only to find that the reason behind their fervent desire touched my own heart deeply. I’ve since taken their petition as my own, to be murmured consciously and often subconsciously for myself, my family, my loved ones and the perfect strangers around me: “Lord, let me know You, let us know You. Oh Lord, that we might know You!”

## BUT WAIT, THERE’S MORE...

The Bible uses the most intimate relationship a couple can share to describe the concept of knowing. The Hebrew word for “know” in Exodus 33:13 is *yada*, the same term used in

Genesis 4:1a, “Now Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived...” (emphasis added). For its part, the Greek word for “know” in Philippians 3:10 is derived from *ginōskō*, the same term used in Jesus’ terrifying warning in Matthew 7:21–23, “I never *knew* you...” (emphasis added).

By definition, both the Hebrew and Greek terms imply a relationship that goes well beyond a friendly acquaintance, head knowledge or being aware of something or someone. They communicate a sense of the deepest level of shared intimacy, of an unbreakable bond woven by strands of time, mutual love and dedication.

By nature, knowing can be an endless, lifelong endeavor. Even those who share the deepest level of intimacy agree that there is always more to learn, more to explore and more to discover. Moses and Paul experienced that firsthand. After decades of enjoying a deep sense of intimacy with God and receiving the most astounding revelations of His love, might and glory, both Moses and Paul knew enough to be convinced that what they had seen of God were mere glimpses, rays of brilliant light radiating from His splendor. These rays were but a foretaste, a dazzling promise of more to marvel at, more to delight in and more to adore. And they wanted that *more*.

As a result, they discovered the same treasure available to us today. Knowing God is like a self-perpetuating cycle: the more we know Him, the more we long to know Him. Regardless of where we are in our walk with God, the initial knowing doesn’t satisfy like a rich meal but rather whets our appetite. It awakens in us an insatiable hunger for more.

## WHAT I REALLY, REALLY WANT

But by nature, that deeper, intimate level of knowing is also optional, reserved for those who invest in it. We can always know someone better, sure—but only if we choose, often over and over again, to make that knowing our chief aim.

Theologians, teachers, experts and laymen have long debated the highest calling of the Christian life. Is it sanctification or perhaps making it to heaven? Could it be using our gifts and talents for His glory and fulfilling the call He has on our lives?

Or maybe it's loving others and thus making the world a better place? While all these are arguably worthy pursuits, Paul settled the argument millennia ago: “[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly]” (Phil. 3:10 AMPC).

There was no doubt in the mind of either Moses or Paul. Despite the critical calling to lead a fledging nation of former slaves through the desert to the Promised Land in a display of God's glory and power so profound that the tale still fills us with awe today; regardless of being chosen for the unmatched task of carrying the message of salvation to the known Gentile world; irrespective of the supreme honor of penning large portions of Scripture, knowing God stood as their reason for existence, the greatest treasure of their lives.

Yet both Moses and Paul can attest to the fact that knowing God doesn't come without a price. In fact, both were required to lay aside their dreams, ambitions, their lives as they knew them, safety, comfort, power, prestige, a reputation and in Paul's case, his life.

Sometimes, God requires an equally radical sacrifice from us. However, I believe that the hundreds of tiny choices we make daily between our selfish nature and His Spirit in us are equally important in our journey to know Him more. Will we stay snuggled under the duvet or spend the first fruits of the day with Him? Will we obey His commands, even when it feels that it will be detrimental, or will we look for loopholes or excuses? Will we allow fear to nip at our hearts or stand firm in faith regardless of our emotions? Will we entertain offense, pride and self-righteousness or walk in forgiveness, love and death to self? My way or His? Life or death? Another tiny step toward knowing Him more or another tiny step in the opposite direction?

In the end, these tiny choices made over and over each day ultimately become our life journey: a comfortable, easy and possibly prosperous stroll through an undemanding life into eternity, or a path marked with sacrifice to truly, deeply and really knowing Him in “*the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death*” (Phil. 3:10b).



At first glance, the choice seems almost logical. Who would pick sacrifice, suffering and death over comfort, ease and prosperity? Yet Paul points out a different perspective. Compared to what he received for choosing the latter, the sacrifice meant little. *“I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord”* (Phil. 3:8a).

## ALREADY, BUT NOT YET

God did answer the petition of both Moses’s and Paul’s hearts. He allocated a place for Moses beside Him, tucking Israel’s leader into the cleft of the rock and covering him with His hand. That way, Moses would be protected from the consuming holiness of God as the goodness and glory of the Almighty passed before him (Exod. 33:19–23), proclaiming His name. Every time I read this account, my heart lurches at the intimacy of that moment.

Yet God could only fulfill the plea of these two men as far as humanity’s sinful nature allowed. The same holds true for us. While our journey to know God will be a lifelong endeavor filled with the most astounding revelations of His love, might and glory, our hearts can rejoice knowing that it is a mere foretaste, a dazzling promise of more to marvel at, more to delight in and more to adore. In our fallen state, no man can come face-to-face with the

holiness of God and live (Exod. 33:20), but our fallen state will not last forever. One day—hopefully soon—the Lamb who knows all about sacrifice will return as a victorious Lion to make all things new (Rev. 21:5).

In the meantime, “*let us know...Him; let us press on to know...the [greatness of the] LORD*” (Hos. 6:3 AMP), fully aware that now, in this time of sinful imperfection, we see Him but in a mirror dimly. However, when imperfection gives way to perfection, when our faith finally turns to sight, when every longing of our hearts is fulfilled when we see Him face-to-face, then, for the first, glorious time, we will know Him fully—just as He has always fully known us (1 Cor. 13:12).

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Scripture from the New American Standard Bible

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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*, *Neviim* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

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