



June 2021



FROM SARAH, OUR SABRA ON THE GROUND IN ISRAEL

Dear Friend,

Shalom (peace) from the Holy Land. Life in Israel is easing with many Covid-19-related restrictions being lifted. We have also experienced a very beautiful spring season with a lot of greenery growing everywhere you look and bountiful fields now ready for the summer harvest.

Some of you have written to me concerning Israel and the vaccination campaign. I would like to assure you that it is not mandatory to get the vaccine here. People are free to choose whether to take it or not. I would also like to assure you that the vaccine is not “the mark of the beast.” I know this because the Bible is clear on the conditions for that mark.

USING SCRIPTURE TO BUST MYTHS

Growing in sound knowledge of the Word of God is especially important as we draw closer to what many call “the End Times.” I have studied many teachings about the Book of Revelation and the events described in Daniel. I have sifted through theories on the time of the return of Christ, the supposed identity of the antiChrist, the city surrounded by seven hills, and so on.

In this regard, I love nothing more than busting myths. The most dangerous practice in terms of Bible teaching is taking verses, or even parts of verses, out of their Biblical (Old and New Testament) context. When Bible readers do this, the road to untruth is short. Several weeks ago, I happened upon evidence that contradicts another myth—the myth of Armageddon.

My husband Evan has been teaching our community Bible study for over ten years. We study one book at a time, chapter by chapter, verse by verse. We’ve also made it our tradition to take a fun trip to a location related to the book we are studying. For example, when we studied the Book of Joshua, we visited the area of Jericho; when we studied 1 Samuel, we visited Shiloh.

This past year, we have been studying the Book of Revelation. We did not undertake this study because of the pandemic, but it turned out to be a timely and important subject. It helped our community understand the current events in light of Biblical truth and kept us away from dangerous theories and conspiracies.

(over please)



The Vision of John on Patmos, woodcut for Die Bibel in Bildern (1860) by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794–1872)

ENHANCING OUR STUDY

We chose to visit Har Megiddo (Armageddon) because Revelation 16 mentions it. The battle of Armageddon is described as a massive battle where great armies come against Israel. This battle will be so fierce that at the end, the valley will be filled with blood *"up to the horses' bridles"* (Revelation 14:20).

Growing up in Israel, I have visited the area of Megiddo many times. Har Megiddo is located on one side of the Jezreel Valley (also called the Valley of Esdraelon), just under the Carmel mountain ridge. In fact, standing at the traditional site where Elijah killed the prophets of Baal offers the perfect vantage point to look out over the valley and Megiddo itself.

I remember wondering many times why this particular valley was specified as the site of this colossal and final battle. This valley is remarkably shallow and wide, making it the largest valley of fertile land for produce in Israel... and in the whole Middle East. It is known as the "breadbasket of Israel." I don't see how it would be physically possible for blood to fill this vast valley to the level of a horse's bridle.

During our visit, our Messianic tour guide Andrey took us around the site explaining the archaeological finds that had been excavated from the site. Several important facts impressed me as we toured the ruins.

- First, it is one of the largest ancient sites in existence, especially in the northern part of Israel. The site excavators found no fewer than 26 layers of evidence that the area had been inhabited during the past 5,000 years. It is interesting to note that from Roman times (the time of Yeshua/Jesus) until today, the site was never again occupied.
- Second, it is the oldest city/state found in the entire Near East region. In ancient times, Megiddo was the center crossroads of the most important trade routes. These routes connected Egypt to Mesopotamia, the most powerful and wealthy empires of the Middle East (the "known world," in Biblical terms).

Controlling Megiddo meant controlling the trade connection between these two empires, because Megiddo sits on a hill at the highest point in this large valley. Whoever controlled this site held significant financial power, and several important battles were fought over control of this hill. It is easy to assume, therefore, that Megiddo could be the site of a final deciding battle between good and evil.



The Jezreel Valley and the Kidron Valley in proximity to Jerusalem

FUTURE BATTLEGROUND OR JUST ENCAMPMENT?

However, upon closer examination, we find that the Bible only says that the kings of the Earth are **gathered** at Armageddon: *"Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon"* (Revelation 16:16). The Bible never mentions a battle taking place at this location during the End Times, but no other place is as suitable to encamp such a large number of troops.

The religious history of this site provides an important clue as to why the world's largest armies would assemble in this valley to fight a massive war against Israel. Its nature is evident from the meaning of its name. *Megiddo* comes from the Hebrew word *ma-gid*, which means "to tell." For example, the phrase *ma-gid atidot* means "future telling" (fortune telling).

Archaeologists uncovered the largest round stone altar in the world, with steps leading to the East (pointing to Sun worship). They found many artifacts of idol worship and the bones and skeletons of animals who were sacrificed at the altar. They also discovered plates with engraved instructions for liver reading. Similar to today's readings of Tarot cards or coffee grounds/tea leaves, in ancient times, idol worshipping priests used the livers of sacrificed animals to perform readings.

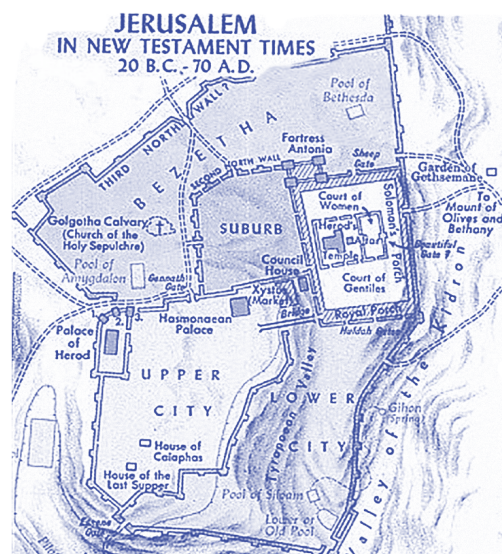
The highest levels of fortune telling and magic practices in the ancient world were available in Megiddo. Ezekiel 21:21 tells of the king of Babylon standing at Megiddo (on the crossroads of the two routes) trying to divine the outcome of his planned attack on Jerusalem: *"For the king of Babylon will stop at the fork in the road, at the junction of the two roads, to seek an omen: He will cast lots with arrows, he will consult his idols, he will examine the liver."*

In Revelation 16, the kings from the North gather at this same place to ask Satan for the green light to attack Jerusalem. Using magic and witchcraft, they receive their orders from the devil and proceed toward Jerusalem, where the final battle ensues over Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.

The Temple Mount is also the traditional site of Abraham's sacrificing of Isaac (on Mount Moriah). Evidence that the Garden of Eden began to the east of this mountain points to the Garden of Gethsemane being in the same location as the Garden of Eden.* It also suggests that the valley filled with blood (mentioned in Revelation in connection with this final battle) is the Kidron Valley. The Kidron is an extremely narrow valley, northeast of the Old City of Jerusalem and separating Mount Moriah from the Mount of Olives. (The Valley of Jehoshaphat is the section of the Kidron between the Temple Mount and Mount of Olives. *Jehoshaphat* means "God judges.")

If you were to stand at the highest point of Armageddon (Har Megiddo) and look across to the other side of the Jezreel Valley as I did, DIRECTLY opposite Megiddo, you would see Nazareth. Imagine Yeshua/Jesus as a child growing up looking out at Megiddo. God chose to have His Son, the true Light of the World, grow up opposite the most important site of idol worship and witchcraft in the region.

* See postscript to learn more about the Gardens of Eden and Gethsemane.



Jerusalem with Valley of the Kidron on right

GOD WORKS HIS OWN PURPOSES

We clearly see the juxtaposition: where Satan established an altar of idol worship, witchcraft, and lies, God establishes His Word in the form of Yeshua/Jesus. *"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14).

God's Son — the Bread of Life — would be born in the "house of bread" (Bethlehem) and grow up in the Jezreel Valley, the bread basket of Israel. The example of Megiddo and Nazareth encourages us, even today, that in the midst of the greatest darkness, God shines His Light bright and clear for all who believe to see: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"* (John 8:12).



Im tirdefu lada-at oto —

"Press on to know HIM!" (Hosea 6:3 NLT),

Sarah Liberman | *סarah ליברמן*
 ENGLISH HEBREW
 Sarah Liberman

P.S. Would you like to read about the Biblical and historical evidence that the Garden of Eden was located in the area of Jerusalem? Write to me and let me know! ★

**HELP
WANTED**

Part-Time Editor
 Write to staff@levitt.com



Zola Tours: With Great Expectation

If you would like to stand, like Sarah, at the traditional site where Elijah killed the prophets of Baal and look out over the beautiful Jezreel Valley and Megiddo, please prayerfully consider joining our Fall Tour this October or our Spring Tour next March. Sandra, our travel manager, is standing by to help you arrange this momentous journey, on which you may even have your own Biblical revelation! For more details, please contact her at **214-696-9760**, travel@levitt.com, or levitt.com/tours. A completed registration form and refundable deposit will get you started and hold your space.

Fall Tour 2021 options

| | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------|
| Deluxe — Israel | October 18–28 | \$5,288 |
| Grand Petra — Israel & Petra | October 18–31 | \$6,488 |

Uncertainty in Greece due to the coronavirus prevents us from visiting Greece on our Fall 2021 Tour.

Spring Tour 2022 options

| | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Deluxe — Israel | March 14–24 | price TBD |
| Grand Petra — Israel & Petra | March 14–27 | price TBD |

Prices include tips, taxes, and fuel surcharge (subject to change).

**NOTE:
NO price
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Production Notes from Clayton Herring

"Murphy" occasionally visits our production team. (**Murphy's Law:** "Anything that can go wrong will go wrong.") Murphy has intervened in unusual and even creative ways over the years. Longtime viewers may remember Zola teaching near Jericho (back in the 1990s) when, about halfway through, a donkey decided to "hee-haw" in full voice. There was nothing to do but laugh it off and wait for the donkey to stop.

Murphy made another appearance during the recent filming of *Joshua: More Than a Conqueror*. An unguided (at least un-shepherded) flock of sheep decided to wander directly through the area where Jeff was trying to teach.

We stopped filming, laughed at the sheep's timing, and waited for them to pass through. While other Biblical production companies tend to stay in the studio where chaos is less likely, OJR's crew takes the extra trouble of international travel and getting out on location to bring you viewers images of the Promised Land.



Uncooperative animals sometimes "photo-bomb" Jeff's teaching

Our Jewish Roots TV programs in June

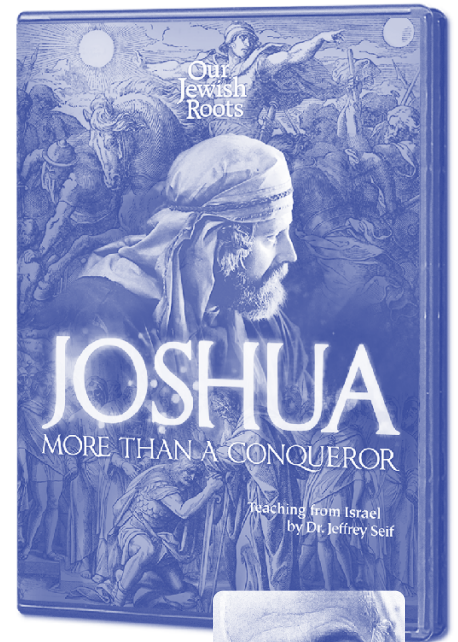
Joshua: More than a Conqueror, our eight-part series with our Bearded Bible Brother Joshua in the title role, explores Joshua's rise from Moses' dependable apprentice to faithful leader of Israel. **Dr. Jeffrey Seif** offers valuable leadership lessons from corresponding Holy Land locations. Following dramatic re-enactments from Joshua's life, David and Kirsten Hart discuss each lesson's meaning and application with Dr. Seif.

At Jericho — The first battle for the land of Canaan occurs at a fortified city. Joshua proves his faith by following God's instructions for attacking Jericho. The Lord miraculously brings down the walls, and all the Israelites join the battle.

At Ai — Disobedience after the victory at Jericho leads to Israel losing the second battle in conquering Canaan. Despite failure and disappointment, Joshua shows leadership by following God's instructions to learn from the past and focus on the future that God has planned for Israel.

The Gibeonites — Because of deception, Joshua's integrity is severely tested when he faces the decision to either break his vow or keep it under false pretenses with negative long-term consequences. Today's Believers* also face deceivers determined to trick us, and we need to pray to the Lord for discernment.

At Shiloh — The conquest for the land of Canaan is nearing its end. The Israelites have subdued the south and turn north to put down the last vestiges of resistance. The Tabernacle of the Wilderness comes to rest in Shiloh, where it will stand for over three centuries.



Jeff Seif

* "Believers" is short for "believers in Yeshua/Jesus as Messiah."

(continued p. 6)

Most of the places Joshua traveled (approximately 3,400 years ago) were in the central mountainous region of the modern State of Israel. This entire area was called Canaan in antiquity. Today the mountain area is called either “Judea and Samaria” or the “West Bank,” depending on your politics and Bible knowledge.

Driving through checkpoints in this part of the country can be tricky. Vehicles registered with the Palestinian Authority usually have white license plates with green lettering, while most Israeli license plates are yellow with black lettering. In the past, our Arab-Christian location producer has had to work through many of these details, like having the “right” license plate. To reach our destinations, we thought it best to blend in with the surroundings, so he made sure that we rented the appropriate vehicles. We hope you agree that seeing the Promised Land is worth the efforts we make and that you will continue to watch *Our Jewish Roots* and support our ministry.



Sha’alu shalom Yerushalayim! —

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!” (Psalm 122:6),

Clayton Herring

Clayton Herring, Associate Producer, Berg Productions

P.S. Residents of the arid Middle East welcome rainfall as a blessing from God. Most of the locations we chose for filming Jeff’s teaching segments in *Joshua* were outdoors, and the Lord decided to bless Israel right around that time. When the rains came, we had to make some adjustments; thankfully, we were able to get everything we needed. Your prayers and funding empower us to bring the Good News of our Savior to a world that desperately needs it. What a welcome blessing! ★



Drone’s view of Jericho ruins

In the middle of a modern town not far from the Dead Sea, a nondescript, undeveloped area holds within its excavations the story of defeat. Behold: the ruins of ancient Jericho. Little remains of the defeated Canaanite city, making it difficult to see evidence of any of the original walls in the excavated area. No television series on Joshua would be complete without visiting this site and telling the story recorded in Joshua chapters 5 and 6. *Joshua: More Than A Conqueror* found us filming at this location on a cloudy March day in 2019. Our camera crew recorded Dr. Seif teaching about the conquest of this Canaanite stronghold.



Jeff teaching amid the ruins

The Hebrew people, who had been wandering the desert for 40 years, followed the instructions of the commander of the Lord’s army as they marched around Jericho’s walls and blew their shofars. The walls came tumbling down. May the opposition that comes against each Believer fall under the God of Israel’s control. What appear to be impossible situations can become decisive victories in the hands of Almighty God.

Revelation: Unveiling the Visions DVD set

Eight 30-minute programs on two DVDs

The last book of the Bible is filled with visions that look to the end of human history. Dr. Jeffrey Seif walks viewers through each of Revelation's 22 chapters, including their glorious visions and angelic visitations, and encourages you to release your fear of the future and focus on God's plan of ultimate restoration. These eight programs include insights from David and Kirsten Hart and music by Zola Levitt.

Message to the Churches The Book of Revelation brings its readers a promise of blessing. In the first two chapters, Jesus appears to John as the great Judge and addresses the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira.

Vision of Heaven Chapters 3, 4, and 5 reveal a rare bright spot in Revelation. The message to the seven churches also includes Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. A peek behind the veil gives a glimpse of God's throne.

The Six Seals Chapters 6 and 7 turn dark as the first waves of judgment begin. The four horsemen of the Apocalypse bring pestilence, war, famine, and death. God's servants from Israel and every nation receive His seal.

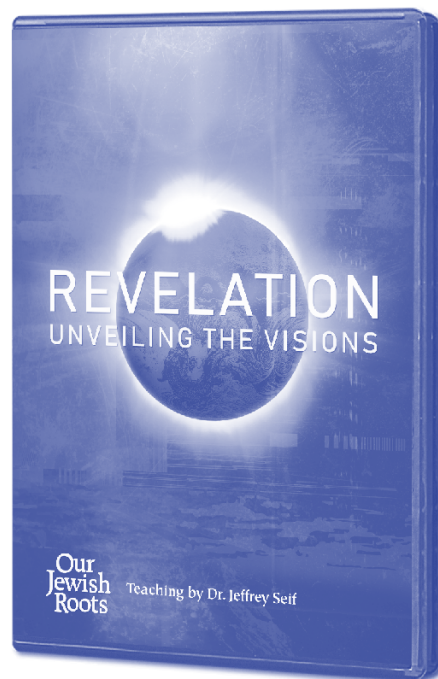
Impending Judgments Chapters 8–10 show that the Word of God is both bitter and sweet. The Seven Trumpets herald judgment for those who refuse to turn from wickedness. Believers can call on Messiah to help them persevere through difficulties.

Two Witnesses In chapters 11–13, two witnesses arrive with the sound of the seventh trumpet, bringing the Gospel during times of misery as Satan and the antiChrist exert their evil rule.

144,000 Jewish Believers Chapters 14–16 begin with a song sung by the thousands who stand up and proclaim their love for the Lamb. John gets a glimpse of the heavenly Temple before the final seven bowls of God's wrath are poured out upon the Earth.

The Greater They Fall Apostate Babylon sees its religious and commercial power destroyed in chapters 17–19. Messiah leads the armies of Heaven to victory in the Battle of Armageddon.

Ultimate Triumph The last three chapters of Revelation prophesy the Messiah reigning for 1,000 years before the Great White Throne Judgment. A new Heaven, new Earth, and New Jerusalem appear, wiping away every tear forever.



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