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Enhancing Trust

God's blessings to you for a Happy New Year 2017!

January 2017

As our cover proclaims, 2017 presents some significant anniversaries:

- 50 years since the Six-Day War and the liberation and reunification of Jerusalem (1967).
- 500 years since the Reformation (1517).
- 100 years since the Battle of Be'er Sheva and the Balfour Declaration, both in 1917.
- 70 years since the UN Partition Resolution (1947).

All in all, a meaningful year to visit Israel (see p. 36).

This January issue also signals the retirement of our artistic director after 25 years. Please note his use of color, balanced layout, and general appeal. (Well done, Don!) Content-wise, this edition provides examples of the UN's hypocrisy in simultaneously reviling Israel (p. 21) while praising its humanitarian efforts (25) and military proficiency (30). We link you to a satirical video that explains how hating Israel galvanizes the not-so-United Nations (15).

The Dead Sea Scrolls feature large this month as technological advances unveil more about them (32). See the video that virtually un-scrolls a "charred stick." Myles says that their discovery in 1947 was God's birthday present to the newly reborn Israel, verifying Jewish history in the land (UNESCO resolutions notwithstanding, p. 21).

Other pages display Arab-Jewish cooperation (13, 28), reactions to the incoming U.S. administration (6, 7, 11), and status reports on our embassy in Israel (1) and a Third Temple (10). What would the holidays be without discussing Epiphany (1) and how the Lord exploits the world's willingness to ponder holy subjects (12, 22)? Our regular features of medicine, science, and humor are also in place.

Mark encapsulates ZLM's frugal mission (14) and a guide to help navigate www.levitt.com.



Shalom,
Margot, ZLM editor

Margot

P.S. Please consider sending us the equivalent of a cup of boutique coffee each week (\$20 per month or a one-time gift of \$240). Your ongoing loyalty to our cause emboldens us to continue the good fight (1 Timothy 6:12-16).

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Levitt Letter

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.—Rom. 10:1

Magi Visited House, Not Manger

50th Year of Reunification Jerusalem 1967-2017

From King David's purchase, make that 3,050 years!
II Samuel 24:24-25

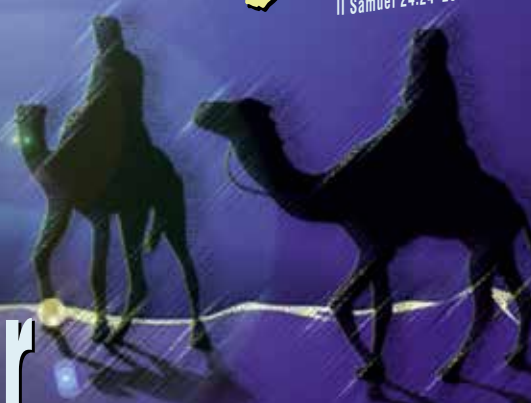


Photo: ©Vladis Chern | Dreamstime.com



By Gordon Mellish / BibleArchaeology.org

According to Jewish law, every male had to be circumcised on the eighth day; Mary and Joseph had their baby circumcised and named him Yeshua/Jesus. The law also prescribed 33 days for the mother's purification after the circumcision, and a burnt offering and a sin offering (Lev. 12:3-8). Rather than make the long trip back to Nazareth and then return a few days later, Mary and Joseph stayed on in Bethlehem, planning to proceed to the Temple in Jerusalem to make their sacrifice (Luke 2:22-24).

Meanwhile, an unusual star appeared in the east. To people familiar with astronomy, this was a sign that an important king would be born to the Jews (Matt. 2:1-2). These wise men (Magi) decided to make a courtesy call on this new king.

[\(continued p.2\)](#)

U.S. Embassy in Israel

(Compiled from various sources)



Photo U.S. Embassy, Tel Aviv

Like most countries that have diplomatic missions in Israel, the United States maintains its embassy in Tel Aviv. (No international embassy is located in Jerusalem.) The U.S. also maintains a Consulate General in Jerusalem as part of the "Consular Corps of the *Corpus Separatum*" (*corpus separatum* refers to a city or region that is separated legally and politically from its surroundings, but without sovereignty).

Under the U.S. Constitution, the president has exclusive authority to recognize foreign sovereignty. Nevertheless, Congress adopted

[\(continued p.3\)](#)

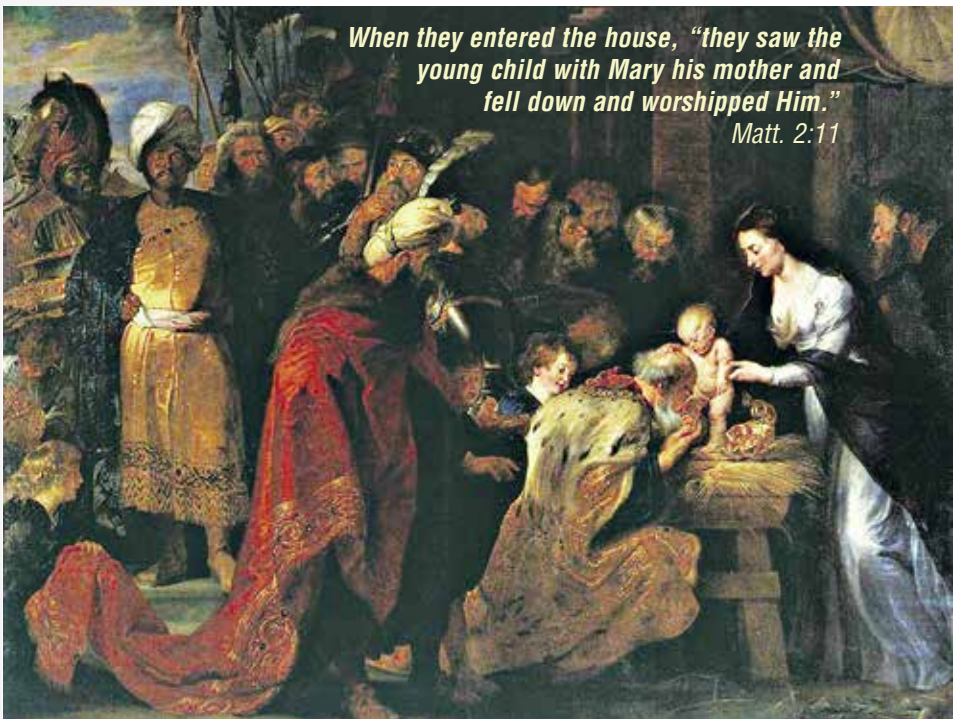
Magi Visited House, Not Manger *(cont. from cover)*

Their homeland was about 1,000 miles east of Jerusalem by direct flight. But as this was across barren desert and formidable terrain, they undoubtedly made a more circuitous route of 1,200 to 1,500 miles, requiring a large caravan to carry hay for the animals and food for themselves, their servants, and their guards.

Traveling 30 miles per day, it would have taken them 40–50 days to make the journey to Jerusalem. Some contend they arrived days after His birth, on Epiphany. Unless the star appeared a month before Jesus' birth, this doesn't seem reasonable: camels just don't move that fast. Nor did they arrive on the night He was born, because Matt. 2:1 says that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the Wise Men arrived in Jerusalem, inquiring where they could find the newborn king. Herod's priests and scribes said, "Bethlehem of Judea" (Matt. 2:1–6). Herod had already killed his wife and three of his sons (plus many others) because he feared they were trying to usurp him: He had no desire for another king to arise. He asked the Wise Men when this star had appeared and then sent them to Bethlehem to search for the child and report back. He planned to kill this new king.

By the time the star led the Wise Men to Jesus, He was in a house and not a manger. "When they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother and fell down and worshipped Him. They opened their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh" (Matt. 2:11). In a dream, they learned that they should not return to Herod, so they returned to their own country by a different route (Matt. 2:12).

After they left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, "Arise and take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt and stay there until I bring you word, because Herod will seek the young Child to kill Him" (Matt. 2:13). Because the family fled to Egypt immediately following the Magi's visit, Jesus was likely at least 8 days old and circumcised. ★



*When they entered the house, "they saw the young child with Mary his mother and fell down and worshipped Him."
Matt. 2:11*

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U.S. Embassy in Israel *(cont. from p. 1 sidebar)*

a number of concurrent resolutions that support recognizing a united Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and urging Jerusalem as the site of the U.S. embassy. The resolutions expressed the “sense” of the House or Senate but had no binding effect.



The Jerusalem Embassy Act, passed by Congress in 1995, requires that the United States establish its embassy in Jerusalem by May 31, 1999 and recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The Act was challenged as unconstitutional because it invades those exclusive presidential authorities in foreign policy. But the embassy also remains in Tel Aviv because the Act allows for the president to “delay the implementation of the law indefinitely if the move presents national security concerns.” Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama have regularly invoked the clause, delaying the move of the embassy to Jerusalem.

The fact that a U.S. embassy is located in a particular city, like Tel Aviv, does not legally mean that the U.S. recognizes that city as a capital. Experts in the field of foreign relations law have conjectured that, faced with congressional *force majeure* (superior force), the State Department could simply construct another embassy in Jerusalem while continuing to argue that the U.S. does not recognize Jerusalem as the capital. The U.S. Consulate did relocate to the southeastern Jerusalem neighborhood of Talpiot to provide visa and other consular services to residents of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Territories. ★

As in The Days of Noah

Myles To Go
By Myles Weiss
ZLP Host



“The Times, They Are A-Changin’” wrote the modern-day prophetic and Nobel Laureate poet, Bob Dylan. America is certainly in a season of radical change. Yeshua warned us about the time leading up to His return. He told us that modern events and circumstances would be similar to events and circumstances in ancient days:

For just as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For in those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. —Matthew 24:37–38

Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

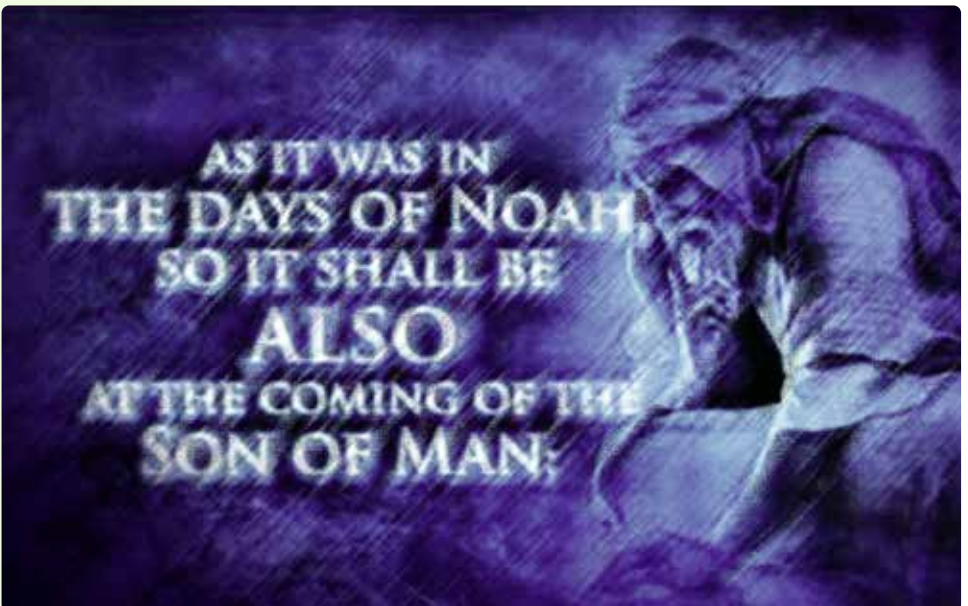
—Genesis 6:11–12

The Hebrew word that is translated “corrupt” speaks of a dullness of heart and lack of spiritual vision. It applies to people who are unaware of the things that pertain to God. People in that state (then and today) are spiritually “flat”—no longer tuned in to God’s vision and His priorities. Does that sound familiar, like the day in which we live?

God chose to flood the Earth in ancient times, but He made a provision for a future restoration, and He promised it to Noah. After the flood, the Lord provided a sign for Noah:

And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the land.” —Genesis 9:12–13

(continued next page)





After a season on the ark (which pictures salvation through Yeshua), Noah sent out a raven and then a dove to look for dry land. The dove came back empty-beaked, and was dispatched a second time, returning to Noah with an olive branch:

He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf.

—Genesis 8:10–11

I find interesting that the dove (Holy Spirit) did not return with the olive branch the first time out—just as Israel, in general, missed Yeshua—but the second time, the dove made a direct connection and returned with the olive branch. As Israel today connects with the “Jewishness” of the Gospel, we Believers await Yeshua’s *second* appearance!

The story of Noah employs three symbols that we see the Lord deploying again in our time—the rainbow, the dove, and the olive branch.

Olive Branch—restoration of physical Israel and the Messianic remnant

Rainbow—glorification of the international Church, as harvest comes to the Earth

Dove—indwelling of the Holy Spirit to energize His end-time plan

Those three—Israel, the Church, and the Holy Spirit—represent God’s eternal destiny for us: past, present, and future. God will “gather all things together in Yeshua” (Ephesians 1:10).

Israel is one of the colors in the rainbow of nations

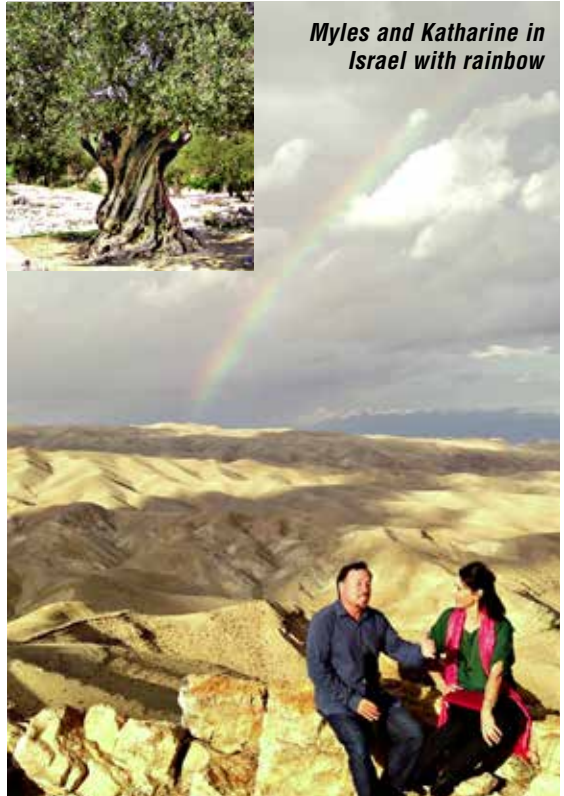
The Church is grafted into the Olive Tree

The Holy Spirit is being poured out on all flesh

What was hidden since the beginning as a mystery in Scriptures is being openly revealed to our generation today (Acts 2:17), especially to those who walk His Land. Come with Katharine and me on a study tour to Israel. See page 36 to learn more. Make history while you participate in God’s unveiling of His truth.



Myles and Katharine in Israel with rainbow



Rethinking 2-State Solution

By Isabel Kershner
NYTimes.com



Emboldened by the Republican sweep of November's American elections, right-wing members of the Israeli government called anew for the abandonment of a two-state solution to the conflict with the Palestinians.

Naftali Bennett, Israel's education minister and the leader of the pro-settlement Jewish Home party, advocates annexing 60% of the "West Bank" [Judea and Samaria] to Israel, and exulted upon Donald Trump's election: "The era of a Palestinian state is over." Jason Greenblatt, co-chairman of Trump's Israel Advisory Committee, stated that Trump does not consider West Bank settlements an obstacle to peace.

Members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party and other rightist politicians jumped to make hay of the change, calling for the expansion of Israeli sovereignty into the West Bank. Aryeh Deri, the ultra-Orthodox interior minister, asserted: "We must truly be in Messianic times when everything will turn out favorably for the people of Israel."

Netanyahu, whose previous three terms in office all coincided with Democratic administrations in the U.S., has been more cautious. He warmly called Trump "a true friend" of Israel. But he also instructed his ministers and legislators to be discreet, saying that the incoming administration should be allowed "to formulate—together with us—its policy vis-à-vis Israel and the region through accepted and quiet channels, and not via interviews and statements."

Netanyahu endorsed the principle of a Palestinian state in 2009. Since then, he has tried to balance between world opinion and his right-wing constituency by declaring support for a solution based on two states for two peoples without going out of his way to advance it.

[\(continued next page\)](#)



*Donald Trump meets with Benjamin Netanyahu
September 2016 in NYC*



Israeli analysts point out that the Trump campaign has spread contradictory messages. While many in Israel assume that he will have more pressing priorities than the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Trump declared recently that he would like to seal an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, calling it the “ultimate deal.”

“Israel has its own interest in reaching a negotiated solution with its neighbors,” remarked Dore Gold, a longtime Netanyahu adviser. “Netanyahu has made it clear that this is his goal.”

But Gold also suggested that a Trump administration was likely to roll back the demand that Israel withdraw to the 1967 lines and support borders that are more accommodating to Israel. “Trump’s policy paper spoke about Israel having defensible borders, which are clearly different from the 1967 lines,” he observed.

Michael B. Oren, a deputy minister in the prime minister’s office and a former Israeli ambassador to the U.S., said: “The interest of the Israelis and, in my view, the government, is to achieve peace with the Palestinians through direct negotiations, without preconditions at any time, in order to get to a solution of two states for two peoples.”

Gilead Sher, an Israeli former peace negotiator under presidents Ehud Barak and Yitzhak Rabin, noted that although most of Israel’s governments over the past four decades have been right-leaning, “never has one of them annexed one square inch of the West Bank.” ★



Prime Minister Netanyahu Offers Congrats/Thanks

Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs mfa.gov.il/mfa



Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** spoke by telephone on Wednesday, 9 November 2016 with United States President-elect Donald Trump.

Prime Minister Netanyahu congratulated President-elect Trump on his victory and told him that the United States has no better ally than Israel. The two leaders, who have known each other for many years, had a warm and heartfelt conversation. They also discussed regional issues. President-elect Trump invited Prime Minister Netanyahu to a meeting in the United States at the first opportunity.

Prime Minister Netanyahu told President-elect Trump that both he and his wife Sara are looking forward to meeting him and his wife Melania.

Also:

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also spoke by telephone with former U.S. Secretary of State and presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and thanked her for supporting Israel. He told her that she has an open invitation to visit Israel. ★

Sound of the Shofar

(ram's horn bugle)

Our Man in Haifa
Eitan Shishkoff
and wife Connie



You don't have to be inside the BarSheshet–Ribak *shofar* factory in South Tel Aviv to smell it. The word “pungent” doesn't begin to capture the rankness of a shofar's insides. This factory carries an Israeli fairy tale involving two families that competed for decades in the shofar business. The Ribaks arrived from Poland in 1927 and began in the building still occupied by the factory. In 1947, the Bar-Sheshet clan, who had migrated from Spain to Morocco in 1492, made their way to Israel and set up shop in Haifa. Finally, in the 1980s they decided to merge. It is somehow appropriate that the holy work of cutting and polishing *shofarot* (plural) should be done jointly by Ashkenazi and Sephardi families—overcoming one of our country's basic cultural divides.

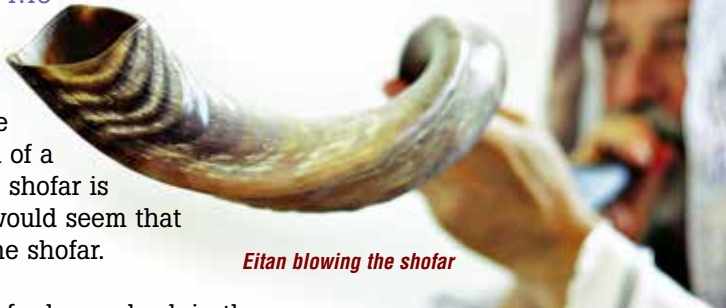
Throughout Israel's history one of the most compelling and enduring symbols has been the shofar. The shofar is an instrument with a primitive and poignant sound unlike any other. It seems to come out of the distant past—like the voice of God carried through the Ages into the present moment.

Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire... And when the blast of the shofar sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. —Exodus 19:18,19

So the people shouted when the priests blew the shofarot... When the people heard the sound of the shofar, and the people shouted with a great shout... the wall fell down flat. —Joshua 6:20

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the shofar of God. —1 Thessalonians 4:16

This small sample of Bible references points to three momentous events that are accompanied by the sound of a shofar. In two of them, the shofar is sounded from Heaven. It would seem that God Himself is sounding the shofar.



Eitan blowing the shofar

My love affair with the shofar began back in the 1970s when I was given my first horn. Having played trumpet as an aspiring grade-school musician, I knew the physics of getting a sound out of it. At my first Rosh Hashanah (Feast of Trumpets—Leviticus 23:24) as a member of a Messianic synagogue, I was asked to sound the 100 traditional notes. What a privilege to sound the shofar, calling God's people back to His heart.

This message of repentance (*tshuvah* —“turning” in Hebrew) is found in the concise eloquence of the prophet Joel. “*Blow the shofar in Zion, sound an alarm on My holy mountain!*” (Joel 2:15, 1). Even hearing these words—spoken perhaps 28 centuries ago—causes me to sober up and turn to God in preparation for “*the great and awesome day of the Lord*” (Joel 2:31, Acts 2:20). Let us listen attentively for the sound of the shofar. ★

30 [now 65] AND COUNTING

Classic Zola
from 1981:
36 years ago



I just had a birthday on which I turned 43. This wouldn't be a landmark in most peoples' lives, but as I was reflecting on it, I realized that it is an anniversary of sorts. In December of 1951 I had turned 13, and on Jan. 12 I had my bar mitzvah. On that day, then, I became a man.

The bar mitzvah service, of course, makes the Jewish boy a "Son of the Commandments." The Jewish people consider that the male has reached his maturity, or at least his responsibility under the law, at age 13. During each Jewish youngster's 13th year (while he is age 12), he studies the Torah (the Pentateuch) very assiduously and prepares to do his first public reading from it shortly after his 13th birthday. Thus, we see Jesus in the Temple, in the Book of Luke, being cited as a particularly brilliant student at the age of 12. It was perfectly logical for Him to be studying Bible during that particular year in order to fulfill this custom.

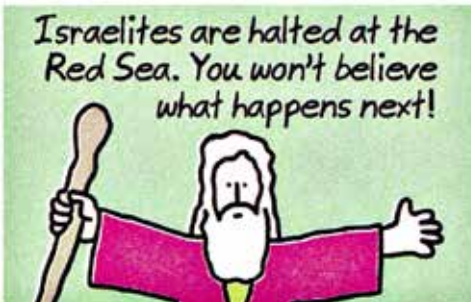
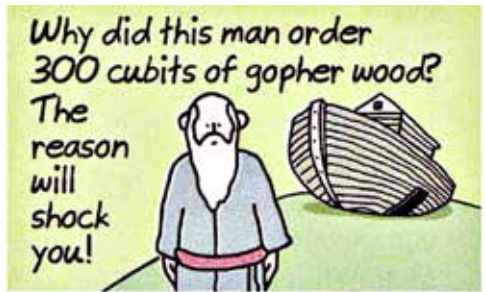
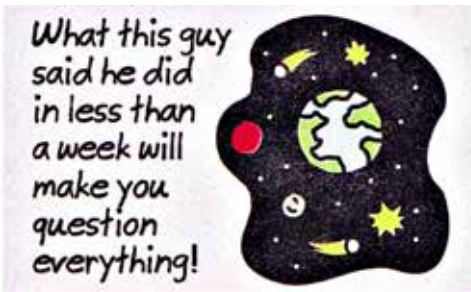
Therefore, on Jan. 12, 1982, I will have been a man for 30 years. Frankly, that span feels longer than that at this point, but they have been very interesting years.

If I could change one thing, it would be to bring the Church around earlier in my life. I didn't meet the Messiah until I was 32 because there was very little witnessing to the Jews. I knew many Christian people, but no one ever "offended" me by telling me about the Messiah. Well, I would change all that for me, and I hope it will change in your lifetime. Witness to your Jewish friends now so that they won't have to wait 32 years to find the truth.

The fact is, they might not have that much time left. ★



Old Testament click bait



JOHN ATKINSON, WRONG HANDS

Creators of fake news get paid each time an Internet user "clicks" a headline to read the story, however untrue or harmful it is. The cartoon above imagines similar headline bait in Bible times.

Preparing for the Third Temple

Jewish Telegraphic Agency / JTA.org

The Temple Institute, dedicated to re-establishing the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, recently announced the opening of a school for training Levitical priests for eventual service in a new Temple.

The Institute ran several pilot programs in recent years and now “is embarking on a mission to teach Kohanim all the practical skills required to serve in the Third Holy Temple,” it reported in a statement. The institute advocates a new Jewish Holy Temple. Moslem fears that Israel will change the status quo of the Temple Mount, now controlled by the Jordanian *Waqf*, have led to repeated clashes over the years and inspired a recent wave of terrorist attacks aimed at Israelis.

The Institute has reconstructed nearly all of the sacred vessels needed to perform the services in a rebuilt Temple (The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.), including the High Priest’s breastplate with 12 precious stones representing the Tribes of Israel, the half-ton golden menorah, and the musical instruments of the Levitical choir.

The curriculum at the **Nezer HaKodesh Institute for Kohanic Studies** will include courses on Temple service theory and practice, and the role and application of modern technology in the Third Temple.

“We are extremely excited to announce this new step toward the restoration of the Holy Temple service. We call first and foremost upon *Kohanim* (priests)

worldwide to support this special project, which signifies a return to their birthright,” Rabbi Chaim Richman (*above*) International Director of the Temple Institute, said.

Many Christians refer excitedly to rebuilding the Temple, convinced that it is a key to the return of Yeshua, and therefore worthy of financial backing—as if it’s the most important happening in Israel.

This attitude concerns me. First, those initiating and carrying out this rebuilding are members of an extreme group that has little credibility even among the Orthodox Jews in Israel. Second, from my perspective, it siphons energy, prayer, relationship, and finances away from the indigenous movement for Yeshua in Israel. He said that we would not see Him until we proclaim (from Jerusalem) “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” He did not point to the re-created Temple as the release point for His return. Rebuilding the Temple is a superficial step within the Israeli religious scene, and not promoted by the local believers in Yeshua. —Eitan Shishkoff (voicing a sentiment shared by Zola) ★

Simulation of a rebuilt Holy Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem



Surge in Anti-Semitism

By Rachel Zoll (r) Associated Press

American Jews gathered recently to wrestle with how to confront an election-year surge in anti-Semitism, a level of bias not seen in the U.S. for decades.

At a national meeting of the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish civil rights group, about 1,000 people listened to talks expressing shock at the hatred expressed during the presidential campaign and questioned what they thought was a high level of acceptance by other Americans.

"I'm struggling right now in this American moment," said Yehuda Kurtzer, president of the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America, an education and research organization, in his talk at the event. "I wonder whether I have been — and I think the answer is probably yes — a little bit naive."

During this past year, anti-Semitic imagery proliferated on social media, Jewish journalists were targeted, and

longstanding anti-Jewish conspiracy theories got a fresh airing. Much of the bias originated with the alt-right (alternative right), often associated with far-right efforts to preserve "white identity" and oppose multiculturalism.

Alt-right views have been propagated by the website Breitbart News under the direction of Stephen K. Bannon, whom Donald Trump has picked to be a top White House advisor.

Jonathan Sarna, a Brandeis University professor and historian of American Judaism, said it would be wrong to attribute the criticisms of Trump appointments or his supporters to partisanship. "I don't know anybody who says nothing has changed," he said in regard to the surge of anti-Semitism.

"American Jews assumed that anti-Semitism had largely been overcome," he added. "And then all of a sudden, unexpectedly, anti-Semitism of a virulent kind came roaring back." ★



Jonathan Greenblatt, left, incoming national director for the Anti-Defamation League, talks with Abe Foxman, outgoing director of the ADL, on June 17, 2015. (credit: Julie Jacobson / AP)



Philadelphia graffiti

Ask the Chaplain

By Dr. Todd Baker
Zola Levitt Ministries
Staff Theologian



Q After our Bible study watched a portion of *The Holy Days of Our Lord*, we have a few questions. **1. How do you feel about Christmas and Easter?** Should followers of Jesus celebrate these manmade holidays? **2. I understand that Halloween originated with remembering saints. Should followers of Jesus celebrate Halloween?** **3. The Bible says that we should celebrate Passover as a feast to the Lord: "... throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance" (Exodus 12:14). It sounds like Passover should still be observed.**

We feel that the purpose of observance is to keep god [sic] in our hearts. God is removed from much of our lives today, but if we would observe these feasts, we wouldn't be so far from him because we would be reminded constantly of our obligation to be holy.

A. As with all worship "rules," remember **Colossians 2:16** — "Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon, or Sabbaths."

1. Many people believe that the name **Easter** derives from various pagan goddesses of fertility—Eostre/Eastre (Teutonic) or Astarte (Phoenician) or Ishtar (Babylonian-Assyrian)—and has nothing to do with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. As discussed in our [March 2016 Levitt Letter](#), this notion seems to have originated with the eighth-century English monk, Bede, and was expanded on by Alexander Hislop in the early 1800s. However, etymologists (those who study word origins) have cast doubt on the pagan origin and suggest that "Easter" is of Saxon origin and equivalent to the German "Ostern" ("east" or "dawn," "new light," and by extension "resurrection"). The Church celebrates the Lord's resurrection with every Lord's Supper. "Easter" assumes its most authentic observance as Resurrection Sunday when it coincides with the Levitical Feast of First Fruits, the day on which the Lord rose. **Christmas** is man made. However, Believers can use the birth of Messiah, whenever He was born, to share the Gospel.

2. "Halloween" is a contraction of All Hallows' Eve, the evening before All Hallows' Day or All Saints' Day, the Church calendar's time for, as you were informed, remembering the saints (hallows) and the faithful departed. Christians would hold vigil on All Hallows' Eve for worshippers to prepare themselves with prayer and fasting before the November 1 feast day. In 835, Pope Gregory IV moved the celebration from May to November, claiming that Rome could not accommodate the great number of pilgrims who flocked there in summer. The move to a colder month more likely occurred due to Roman Fever, a particularly deadly strain of malaria that killed a number of pilgrims during the region's sultry summers.



Halloween is sometimes thought to stem from the Celtic festival of Samhain (Old Irish for "summer's end" and pronounced **sah-win**) that marked the fall-to-winter transition when the boundary between this world and the "otherworld" thinned, allowing spirits and fairies to more easily cross between. Instead of ceding the day to Satan, [ExWitchMinistries.com](#) prefers to pray for each child who knocks for a treat. "After all, how often does the mission field come to the door?" asks one former witch. ([See October 2009 Levitt Letter.](#)) "It may be the only time all year anyone prays for that child." **And the Reformation occurred on October 31, 1517**—a good celebration of the day.

3. Passover was fulfilled in the atoning death of Jesus Christ and is celebrated by the Church as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup (1 Corinthians 11:25–26). If Believers choose to observe Passover and the Feasts, they should celebrate from a Messianic perspective. ★





Bearing Witness for Yeshua in Jerusalem and Haifa

By Dr. Todd Baker

Shopping areas provide fertile ground for this ministry's **To The Jew First** team members to meet unbelievers and strike up conversations that we can steer into witnessing opportunities. At the Castro (Israeli clothing) store in Jerusalem,

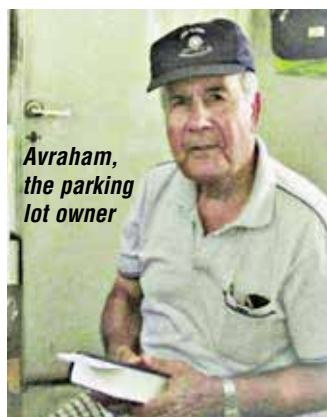


Jewish girl on left, Arab girl on right

I met an Arab Believer in Yeshua. As she had an Arabic Bible, she declined my offer of a Hebrew Bible but surprised me by asking her Jewish co-worker if *she* would like the Hebrew Bible I offered. The young Jewish woman was more than happy to receive God's Word that she noted included the *B'rit Hadashah* (New Testament).

I briefly explained to her how Yeshua the Messiah is the bridge that links both Testaments and is the only One who can unite and complete Jew and gentile. **I was touched by this Arab Christian's thoughtfulness in reaching out to secure her Jewish co-worker's access to God's revelation** of His Son through the Hebrew Scriptures.

Before leaving Jerusalem, I talked with **Avraham** in an excellent opportunity to match for him the Messiah prophesied in the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) with those prophecies fulfilled by Yeshua in the *B'rit Hadashah*. Avraham, who owns the hotel parking lot, warmly accepted an Old Covenant-New Covenant Hebrew Bible from me.



Avraham, the parking lot owner

In Haifa, I saw a perfect conversation opener when I met **Neti** and could share with her that my Jewish great-grandmother had the same first name, but with a different spelling. Neti and I talked about God's plan for Israel that centers on the First and Second Comings of Messiah Jesus. The Jewish Bible details the plan and describes the Messiah so the Jewish people will recognize Him.



Neti holding new Hebrew Bible

Amazingly, Neti already was aware of this subject because her best friend is a Messianic Jew! I perceived my meeting with Neti as a "divine appointment" to reinforce her friend's testimony. I built on the information her friend had given her and offered Neti a Hebrew Bible and Messianic literature.

With guidance from the Holy Spirit and her believing friend, Neti can find the Biblical proof for Yeshua being the Messiah. She's already on her way to acknowledging that her Jewish people need to believe in Him for salvation and eternal life. Please pray with me that Neti will accept Yeshua's supreme gift as she delves into these truths on a deeper level directly from the Word of God. ★

A NOTE FROM MARK / By Mark Levitt

Our Cup Runneth Over (Ps. 23:5)



Do you believe Donald Trump, president-elect, recently accepted Yeshua as his Savior? Dr. James Dobson recently posited that opinion in an interview posted at GodFactor.com: "I believe he really made a commitment, but he's a baby Christian. We all need to be praying for him."

Is President-elect Trump pro-Israel? In November, Jason Greenblatt, Executive VP at The Trump Organization, told Israel's Army Radio that his boss "doesn't think Israeli settlements should be condemned, and they don't pose an 'obstacle to peace.'" www.usnews.com

Our ministry's readers and viewers have plenty to celebrate despite today's many startling headlines. End-times prophecy unfolds routinely as time marches toward the Rapture, Armageddon, Jesus' thousand-year reign, and Judgment Day. Savvy Believers embrace our calling to share the Gospel's Good News with those who suppose modern life is a pointless rat race; hence, our mission.

ZLM is devoted to amplifying and broadcasting the Word of God to the most souls possible. Our multi-faceted teaching benefits a wide spectrum of whoever needs Godly inspiration and Biblical education. We deliver ongoing edification regarding:

- **The milk of the Word** for those who have yet to accept Yeshua as their Savior
- **The meat of the Word** for Believers who seek to deepen their Christian faith
- **The Jewish roots of Christianity** for the many who hunger to grasp the continuing significance of the Old Testament and their faith's rich heritage
- **The continuing importance of Israel**, fulfilling God's Abrahamic Covenant to Abraham's descendants (Gen. 15:18-21)
- **Israel's modern fruition**, not only as fulfillment of God's promise and its founders' vision, but also a celebration of God's Chosen People
- **Hebrew**, the tongue of our Lord, as a mechanism for becoming more intimately acquainted with the Bible, Israel, and God Himself

- **Current news events'** implications to inspire Biblical watchmen to keep their candles burning in anticipation of Jesus' return (Isaiah 62:6)

Most of this ministry's teachings are available for free at www.levitt.com. Browsing our eight dropdown menus leads you to *volumes* of worthwhile resources:

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Regarding stewardship, we expend 17% of our revenue on administration and less than 1% for fundraising. Then we harness the incredible efficiencies of television, the Internet, and bulk mail to deliver solid, accurate, Biblical resources to whoever is receptive. **Will you kindly stay with us prayerfully and financially as we plan a new year of glorifying God?** ★

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



ZLM Bulletin Board

What Does the UN Do?

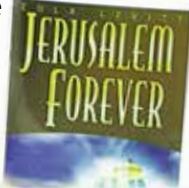
In the time-honored style of the BBC's *Yes, Minister*, [a brief skit discusses the United Nations' purpose](#). A UN spokesperson explains that they primarily host cocktail parties with "the right canapés" in order to keep the world at peace. For example, he disclosed, "The Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty was saved by the deployment of mushroom vol-au-vents." **The UN's preventing anything from getting done allows its member nations to let off steam.** "With so many countries, you'll appreciate that it's very hard to agree on anything. But a motion to censure Israel will bring everyone together." Case in point, 20 of the 25 motions that the UN's Human Rights Council passed since 2006 have been against Israel. No wonder, with 56 Moslem nations and just one Jewish.

*No.
Laughing
Matter!*



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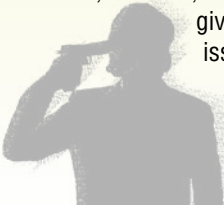


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Suicide Lives Matter

America suffers more than 33,000 gun deaths per year, nearly two-thirds of which are suicides; that means that of **42,700 suicides nationwide**, roughly 22,000 result from gunfire. According to the BBC, the nearly 1,000 U.S. citizens shot and killed by police in 2015 were: **494 – White, 258 – Black, 172 – Hispanic, 66 – Other/Unknown.**

Suicides by firearm outnumber police shooting deaths by more than 22 to 1. Though suicides overall dwarf police killing of Blacks by 165 to 1, our news media pay comparatively little attention to suicides. Not nearly as disproportionate, however, as the massive coverage given to Palestinian rights issues versus those of the nearly 400 million Arabs who are far more down-trodden in the Moslem world than in Israel.



"Come Home!"

Zola
Tours to
Israel



See [page 36](#)
for details



Hebrew Lesson

The Way of Perfect Peace

John J. Parsons



בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ יְיָשֵׁר וְהוּא יַשְׁרֵךְ אֶרְחֻבְךָ

“In all your ways know Him, and He will make your paths upright” (Prov. 3:6)

בְּ	כָל־	דְּ	רָכֶיךָ	יְיָ	שֵׁר	וְ	הוּא	יַ	שְׁרֵךְ	אֶרְ	חֻבְךָ
(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(3)	(2)	(1)
or-cho	tey-kha	ye-ya	sher	ve-hu	da-ei	hu	de-ra	khey-kha	be-khol		
your	paths	will	make	and	he	know	Him	your	ways	in	all
		make	upright								

When we lose sight of the truth that God is in complete control of all things, we tend to grow anxious. Feeling worried comes from focusing on ourselves, a perspective that can make us feel alone, forgotten, and even victimized in this world. Worry moves us to defend ourselves, to seek refuge in our own devices, and to forfeit the will of God according to the dictates of lesser fears. The sages say it is not permitted to worry: “To worry is a sin; only one sort of worry is permissible; to worry *because* one worries.” We should worry *that* we worry because worrying indicates our hardness of heart and our unbelief. God’s name YHWH (יהוה) means “Presence,” “Breath,” “Life,” and “Love.” So why be anxious for “tomorrow”? We really only have this moment, but this moment is entirely sufficient when we walk in the light of God and seek to know Him in all our ways.

The first part of the “Shema” (i.e., Deut. 6:4-9) admonishes us to remember the truth of God “when you sit in your house, when you walk in your ways, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” “In all your ways know Him” (Prov. 3:6), that is, in all that you put your hand to do, look for God’s Presence and guidance (1 Cor. 10:31). This is something *you* must do: As King David stated, “I have set the Lord *always* before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Psalm 16:8). “Let the peace of God rule in you” (Col. 3:15).

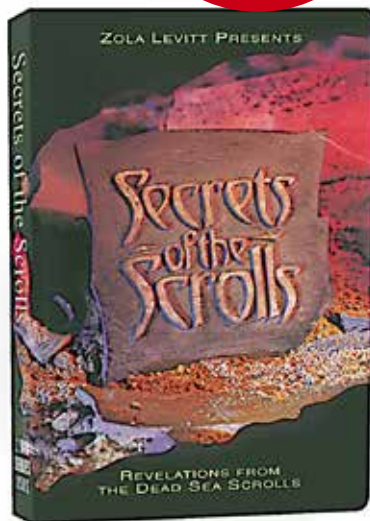
The Name of the LORD is “I-AM-WITH-YOU-ALWAYS,” which implies that we always live within His Presence and care, even if we are sometimes unconscious of this truth (Matt. 28:20). As it is written in the prophets, *hen al kapayim hachotikh*: “Behold I have engraved you on the palms of My hands” (Isa. 49:16). Remember the One who stretched out His hands and died for your healing; remember that He said, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow... sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matt. 6:34). Again, “do not be anxious for any reason, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the healing peace of God—the very shalom of heaven—which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Yeshua the Messiah” (Phil. 4:6-7). **“He’s got the whole world in His hand” (Ps. 95:4), and we experience inner peace when our minds are settled on Him (Isaiah 26:3).** ★



Secrets of the Scrolls DVDs

7 half-hour TV programs on two DVDs

In 1947, a Bedouin boy in search of a lost goat threw a stone through the narrow opening of a cave. Hearing the sound of breaking pottery, he entered the cave and happened upon a 2,000-year-old treasure. He had discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls. *Secrets of the Scrolls* gives an historical account of these treasured manuscripts and presents some remarkable revelations. The authors of the Scrolls were intensely Messianic and appear to have documented the actual fulfillment of prophecy in the person of the Messiah. Such terms as "son of God," "branch of David," "stripes or piercings," "being put to death," and "raising the dead" all strike a familiar chord. Quite possibly, these incredible Scrolls represent the first extra-biblical revelation of Jesus Christ in history.



The Scrolls — A New Revelation We quickly produced this half-hour program when the DSS first became widely accessible for study. Zola quotes from the Associated Press news release and emphasizes the significance of access.

The Scrolls: Part 2 Within days of our first program's broadcast, Dr. James Tabor phoned Zola to initiate a series of interviews that would unveil one of the 20th century's most dramatic revelations. This program is the first of these interviews. A professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Dr. Tabor delivers an incredible lesson.

The Scrolls: Part 3 During this interview, Dr. Tabor refers to several books about the Dead Sea Scrolls, including *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* by Vermes (Penguin Press), *The Dead Sea Scriptures* by Gaster (Anchor Doubleday), and *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2 Volumes) by Robert Eisenman and James Robinson.

The Scrolls Special This program consolidates the first three programs and delivers their powerful message in only thirty minutes. Later discoveries in Scrolls research inspired the three following programs.

The Wilderness Group Michael Baigent, an English author, lectures in Qumran about the Scrolls. Dr. Tabor describes various approaches to excavation and how they pertain to the Scrolls. Dr. Robert Eisenman, a professor of Middle East religions at California State University at Long Beach, discusses the fascinating history of the Scrolls.

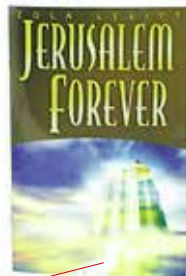
In Search of Answers Dr. Eisenman discusses his quest to gain access to the Scrolls. Dr. Tabor describes his archaeological team and how they map the caves in Qumran.

Prof. Michael Wise An in-depth interview with a professor of Aramaic, the language of Yeshua. Prof. Wise, from the University of Chicago, helped translate the fragments when they were first released. The New Jerusalem text, telling how the future will be, is discussed enthusiastically. (*See related articles pp. 32–33*)



Zola's Classic Study Booklet Library

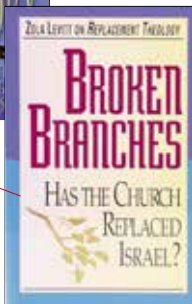
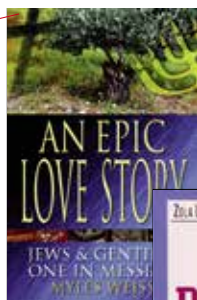
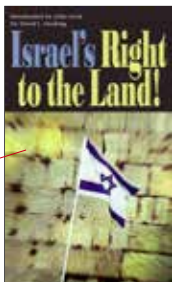
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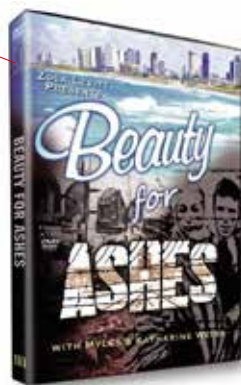
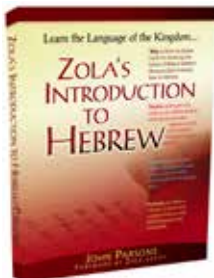
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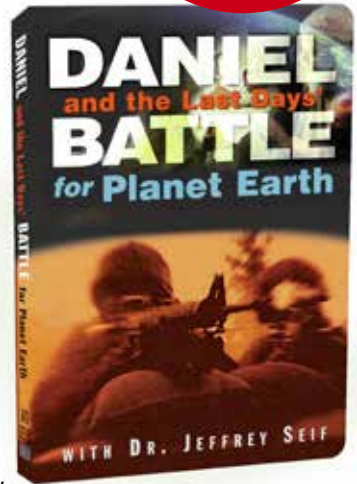


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Daniel and the Last Days *Battle for Planet Earth* DVDs

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Jeffrey Seif compares today's news to yesterday's prophecies, demonstrating that we live in ominous times. Co-host Sandra Levitt gives key insights to world events with a Word-inspired perspective. Zola contributes with classic teaching episodes, interview segments, and his timeless music.



The Personal Battle

Focuses on Daniel's personal faith and piety, and underscores the importance of individuals being "ready" at day's end. Considers what was on Daniel's mind and in his heart.

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The Spiritual Battle

That we "wrestle not with flesh and blood" becomes apparent as we consider the emergence and naming of "archangels"—both Gabriel and Michael. Here we discuss the roles and functions of angels, particularly their service in helping Believers personally and Israel politically.

The Leader of the Evil Empire

Characteristics of the antiChrist's person and administration are considered in this segment, along with a brief description of his limits and eventual demise.

The Battle Plan

This program considers the antiChrist's temporary dominion and his displacement when Messiah returns. Daniel notes the devil's influence over the world, informing us that his day will come—at the end.

The Battle Royal, I

The dreaded "Battle of Armageddon" is explored as we examine Daniel's prophetic assessment of the world's final countdown and conflict.

The Battle Royal, II

Here we follow Christ's triumphant entrance onto the stage of the human drama and witness the consequent displacement of wickedness. After we explore the prophetic words of John and Zechariah, viewers' hearts will warm as we say, "He is coming soon—and we must be ready!"



Christians Not Mobilized Ahead of UNESCO Vote

BY SAM SOKOL / JNS.org

Israel could have done a better job of enlisting Christian allies in its efforts to prevent the United Nations from passing a resolution erasing the Jewish connection to the Temple Mount and Western Wall, one South African legislator claims.

MP Kenneth Meshoe (*below right*), of the African Christian Democratic Party, alleged that Jerusalem was slow in mobilizing its allies across the world, which prevented organizing a grass roots campaign on its behalf.

“If many of these countries knew beforehand what was going to happen, their members on the ground, their population would have said, ‘Our position is we need to defend the right of Israel to be recognized as having a legitimate right to be in Jerusalem,’” he stated. “It was a mistake for the Israeli government to be slow in informing the Christian population what was happening.”

In October, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) passed a resolution condemning Israeli actions on the Temple Mount. The resolution was condemned by the United States and other countries and caused Israel to cease cooperation with the international body because it effectively erased history, e.g. naming Rachel’s Tomb specifically as a mosque. (For a full report, see [December 2016 Levitt Letter](#).)

While Israel reached out to the Vatican, attempting to gain support in lobbying UNESCO members, and to evangelical groups, the efforts were not effective, according to Israeli media reports.

Said Meshoe, “They need to inform their Christian allies in time so they can organize themselves.”

Several years ago, Israel began reaching out to Christians, establishing a Knesset caucus, its director Josh Reinstein recalled. Israel formed similar caucuses in 35 parliaments around the world.



(credit: Sam Sokol)

“We don’t have oil, so people who put an economic agenda first won’t stand with us,” Reinstein observed. “Those who put belief ahead of politics will stand with us, and that means we have to reach out to the Christian world.” Asked about Israel’s outreach efforts, a spokesman for Israel’s Foreign Ministry noted that Jerusalem was “in contact with the Christian communities on UNESCO and will keep on working together until the dishonest and hypocritical resolution is no more.”

Mobilizing Christian allies may not be sufficient in overcoming entrenched diplomatic habits and national perceptions of self-interest in the UN. “I believe it was [former Israeli UN Ambassador and statesman Abba] Eban who stated that a resolution that the earth is flat, if proposed by the Arab/Muslim bloc, is guaranteed to pass,” said Rabbi David Rosen, international director of Interreligious Affairs of the American Jewish Committee.

“The UNESCO resolution was condemned by both the UN Secretary-General and UNESCO’s Director-General,” Rosen said. “This is political theatre. The real hypocrites are China and Russia, who supported the resolution. Christians don’t count in China, and only the [Russian] Orthodox count in Russia.” ★



Letters to ZLM

For ministry products and TV programs, visit the [web store](#) and [video archives](#).

Seasons Greetings

Dear ZLM,

Seriously? You are twisting scripture to tell people to celebrate a heathen holiday? ([December Levitt Letter](#)) I am very disappointed. Zola is probably rolling in his grave. You *know* that "Christmas" is of pagan origins, but I will rebuke my brethren for it is written in Matthew 18:

¹⁵If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; **and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.**

And Deuteronomy 13:

⁶If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods" (gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, ⁷gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other), ⁸do not yield to them or listen to them. **Show them no pity. Do not spare them or shield them.** ⁹You must certainly put them to death. Your hand must be the first in putting them to death, and then the hands of all the people. ¹⁰Stone them to death, because they tried to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹¹Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and no one among you will do such an evil thing again.

I beg of you, repent of this blasphemy and set yourself right with God and those who were affected by this sin, before His wrath pours out on you. Thanks, J.P.

Shalom *shalom shalom*, J.P! —

We wish a great measure of peace to you, especially in light of your inaccurate accusations of this ministry. Perhaps you are familiar with the idea of "winning a battle, but losing the war"? The phrase *Pyrrhic victory* stems from King Pyrrhus of Epirus, whose army suffered irreplaceable casualties defeating the Romans in battles in the third century B.C. during the Pyrrhic War. However, Rome could simply replace its fallen soldiers due to the size of Rome's army-age population. The cost of these temporary victories led to the wry observations, "Another such victory and I come back to Epirus alone," and "If we are victorious in one more battle with the Romans, we shall be utterly ruined."



"Well, yes. I am happy. but I could be happier."

“Winning the battle and losing the war” applies to your view of Messianic ministries’ ongoing efforts to win over Christians to a Hebraic view of the Bible and the life of Yeshua. We thank God that more people every day look into the Jewish roots of Christianity and adjust their lives and worship to the Hebraic calendar.

Katharine and I have been at this task for decades, as was Zola, and we advise our congregation members to go “low and slow” apropos expunging cherished traditions from the culture of faith-oriented Believers. There are too many anecdotes of zealous (and often self-righteous, J.P.) “Messianic gentiles” who approach these matters with the force of a recently converted non-smoker. The genuine health benefit they promote is compromised by the discomfort they cause to everyone within fume range.

Regarding Christmas, we at ZLM don’t “twist scripture to tell people to celebrate a heathen holiday,” as you accuse. We teach the [powerful history of Hanukkah](#), which preserved the Jewish people so there could be a (Jewish) Messiah! We teach about the appearance of Yeshua at the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) in John 10:22, underscoring His very observant, Jewish lifestyle. We investigate the possibility that the Master was born in spring or fall, and not on December 25th. (By the way, our upcoming TV series [Close Encounters with Yeshua](#) includes teaching about His likely birthdate—stay tuned!)

Here’s the stumbling block for you, I think: We teach that Christmas is as good a day as any to thank God for Jesus, and in fact it may be a time when friends and family are most open to hearing the Gospel of salvation *because* they are soft-hearted due to years of cultural association with “the Reason for the Season.”

I do not believe that the above line of reasoning and approach to a treasured holiday (for many, but not me, by the way) will bring God’s wrath upon me. However, I do not question your wrath, for it is quite clear. I suggest a hearty round of “Joy to the World” with a stiff cup of chamomile tea. Merry Messiahmas —Myles

Dear J.P.—

You consider it a *sin* to celebrate Christ’s birth? Did you even read the reasons to observe Christmas that Sandra Teplinsky enumerated in her [article](#)? On [page 12](#), Todd reaffirms Myles: “Believers can use the birth of Messiah, whenever He was born, to share the Gospel.” Please also consider Colossians 2:16 — “Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon, or Sabbaths.”—Editor ★



HAPPY New Year

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face
shine upon you, And be gracious to you...



Island Prison Ministry

Aloha ZLM,

Thank you so much for your generous donations of Bible-teaching resources. The [audio CDs](#) take us—as if in person—to the Holy Land, and we love them. [The Israel and Jerusalem maps](#) now hang in our library and look fantastic! One of our chapel workers is studying Hebrew, now with [Zola's Introduction to Hebrew](#) donated by your ministry.

We, as the Body of Christ, need to keep abreast with current and truthful facts about what is happening in Israel and the surrounding, now persecuted, Christian communities. Thank you for stepping into the gap and keeping us connected with our heritage in the Holy Land of Israel.

The support and interesting materials that ZLM provides are unique and well received by our flock. These resources help keep our convicts informed and growing in the broader aspects of Christian culture, which brings about a fuller loving relationship with our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus.

Warmest Aloha, Chaplain C.N. (Halawa Correctional Facility, Hawaii)

Shalom Chaplain C.N.—

What a delightful opening for a letter to our ministry. We rarely hear about *our* donations to the many prisoners that we support through our limited resources, and we thank you for your gratitude and understanding of the heartbeat of ZLM. We align with God, who promises that He is “not willing that any perish, but that all come to everlasting life” (2 Peter 3:9).

Our desire is that your flock of prisoners leave their time of incarceration with renewed hope and new faith in the One who alone can help them change their lives. Thanks to donors who give to ZLM, we have the ability to extend our assistance to shepherds like you who obviously care for those souls entrusted to you. Thank you for serving the prisoners in your sphere of influence.

God sees your labor of love, and we are standing with you in prayer AND practical applications. It is our joy to supply you with the materials you need to accomplish your mission. Our hope is that others in the ZLM community would step up and donate generously so that together we can accomplish all that God wants us to do. —Blessings, Myles ★



UN Praises Israeli Disaster Relief



BY JAMEY KEATEN / Associated Press

The UN health agency has given Israel top marks for its disaster relief capabilities, lauding its unparalleled ability to deploy full medical teams to treat the injured and the sick after natural disasters or outbreaks of viruses.

The WHO certification program of emergency medical teams (EMT) sets standards of care for international response to health emergencies such as the Ebola virus in West Africa, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013, or Haiti's earthquake in 2010.

In November, the World Health Organization program gave Israel's team the top grade for its ability to deploy field hospitals, provide medical services, and be self-sufficient in a crisis zone. Dr. Ian Norton, who heads the EMT initiative, said Israel scored best among the 75 national and non-governmental group teams. The teams are judged on their ability to act self-sufficiently in devastated communities and provide the most adequate treatment.

Israel's team is "probably two to three times the size of any other team that we have currently," Norton said. "They literally bring 220 people to the field, they weigh 100 tons—they are enormous—they provide at least 90 to 100 beds, including a 12-bed intensive care unit, which is really expensive and difficult to run. Disaster emergencies can bring people together—a way to put politics aside for a moment and just concentrate on saving lives."

About half of the 75 teams are government-led, and the others are from non-governmental groups such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Dr. Ofer Merin, a lieutenant-colonel in the Israeli reserves who commands the Medical Corps field hospital, said gaining WHO recognition was a point of pride for Israel. Merin said a team that arrives in a disaster zone without the right equipment or protocols risks turning into a "burden" on the affected country.

"There's no question that all of us will be able to deploy better to each one of our missions in the future," he said. "It's not just that we got the stamp that says 'we're the best team.' We gained a lot from this process, which means our future patients will gain a lot." ★

UN Ranks Israel's Field Hospital as Best in the World



Bad Robot

SCIENCE:
By Simona Weinglass
TimesOfIsrael.com



A mysterious commercial on YouTube showed a typical Israeli kindergarten, and announced with fanfare that the “first digital kindergarten” in Israel had opened on a *moshav* (agricultural cooperative) in the Sharon region. Everything about the kindergarten was ordinary, except that **the preschool teacher was actually a tele-presence robot**. In one scene, a boy tried to give his teacher a hug, and knocked the robot over. In another scene, a girl asked the teacher to help her wipe herself in the bathroom, and the teacher replied, “Wipe yourself!”

“We believe in the child’s intuitive ability to independently navigate the digital space,” explained the teacher, **Tzila**. “After 30 years in the conventional education system, educating from home is a refreshing change!” But then Tzila’s battery ran out. The children were stunned. One five-year-old child who watched the commercial with this reporter concluded, “It’s better to have a teacher who is a real person and not a machine.” The digital kindergarten commercial was launched on YouTube with no explanation. A few days later, Mizrahi Tefahot, Israel’s third-largest bank, took credit, with the caption: “Presented as food for thought from Mizrahi Tefahot.”

“The commercial generated a lot of discussion, with about a million views,” noted a source at the bank. “Some people declared, ‘This is terrible.’ Others suggested, ‘Great idea.’ **Not everyone understood that it was in jest.**” But the source revealed that the commercial underscored a disturbing trend.

In 2014–2015, of more than 1,000 bank branches in Israel, 77 closed, mostly by the two largest banks, Leumi and Hapoalim. With the philosophy that digital will replace the human, they are closing branches and laying off workers. According to the Bank of Israel, 17% of all personal banking transactions are conducted over the Internet, and this percentage is expected to rise. Israel’s Supervisor of the Banks instructed each of Israel’s banks to present a plan for making themselves more efficient, and these plans are almost certain to include closing more branches and laying off more staff.

Mizrahi Tefahot has closed almost no branches in recent years and is going in the opposite direction. Said the bank’s source, “We believe that for investment advice, mortgage counseling, and tips on how to manage your bank accounts, there is no replacement for a human banker.”

Bank digitization, a global trend, can be seen at the corner of Nordau and Ibn Gabirol Streets in Tel Aviv. Three years ago, the three banks there all closed and were replaced by Bank Hapoalim’s single flagship “digital branch”—no tellers and only a handful of employees. Visitors to the sleek branch, which resembles an Apple Store, conduct all their transactions on tablets, with employees approaching customers who need help. People in the neighborhood complain that the branch is often empty. “Who needs a digital branch when you can do the same thing at home over the Internet?” remarked Noa Zlotnik, a spokeswoman for the labor union of Israel’s First International Bank.



Digital kindergarten teacher

Metabolic Way To Resist Viruses

MEDICINE: BY SHOSHANNA SOLOMON / TimesOfIsrael.com



Viral infection—like the recent outbreaks of the Zika and Ebola viruses—is one of the leading medical challenges of the 21st century. New research led by The Hebrew University of Jerusalem indicates there may be a new way to resist virus infections: by targeting the genetic regulation of metabolic processes on which viruses rely to replicate.

Participating in the research were The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Harvard Medical School, Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Tel Aviv University, University of Duisburg-Essen, and the University of Düsseldorf.

Viruses are parasites that lack the basic metabolic machinery needed to replicate. To get around this problem, they hijack the metabolic machinery of their hosts in order to complete their life cycle and propagate. However, scientists have never had a good understanding of the metabolic interplay between viruses and the organisms they infect.

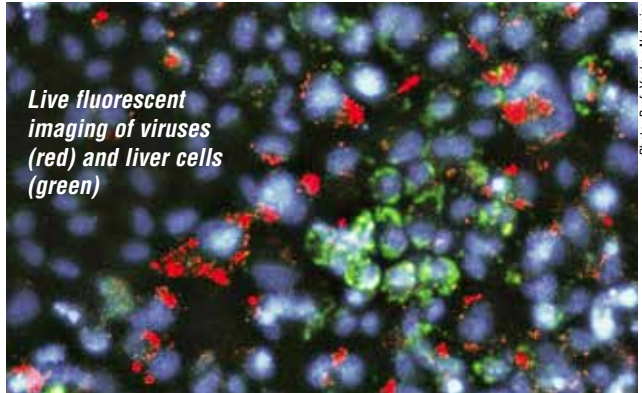


Photo: Prof. Yaakov Nahmias

In the new research, which appears in the journal *Nature Chemical Biology*, the international team systematically identified a number of genetic switches that control the metabolic response to the Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection. By carefully selecting drugs that target these genetic switches, the researchers were able to show how these genes control metabolic processes, such as glucose and lipid metabolism, and to establish how these processes affect the virus life cycle. Surprisingly, while some metabolic processes were beneficial for the virus, for example by providing it with genetic building blocks allowing it to replicate faster, other metabolic processes were surprisingly anti-viral, disturbing the virus's life cycle.

“This is the first indication that our cells can block replication of *Flaviviridae* viruses like HCV and Zika by denying them critical building blocks the viruses need to survive,” said Prof. Yaakov Nahmias, director of the Alexander Grass Center for Bioengineering at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who led the study. “Our results present a new approach to treating virus infection by targeting the genetic regulation of metabolic processes on which the virus relies.” When viruses interfere with metabolic regulation, it affects the liver. Researchers mapped the metabolism of both infected liver cells and normal liver cells, and were able to identify the switches responsible for their dysregulation. Then they blocked each switch using pharmaceuticals, and studied the effects of this inhibition on the virus. While blocking glucose metabolism was detrimental to the virus, blocking lipid metabolism had the reverse effect, actually increasing replication.

The authors pointed out that the *Flaviviridae* family of viruses, which includes Hepatitis C, dengue, West Nile, yellow fever, and Zika viruses, were previously considered to be expert metabolic engineers that optimized the hijacking of host metabolic machinery to create more viruses. “It was quite surprising to see that human liver cells could use metabolic processes to resist viral infection,” noted Prof. Jörg Timm, a co-author from the Institute of Virology at the University of Düsseldorf. “It went against our common understanding of viruses, suggesting new avenues to target virus infection.” ★



Israel's Multicultural First-Responders

BY ABIGAIL KLEIN LEICHMAN (r) Israel21c.org



An unusual hug caused thunderous applause at a recent Knesset ceremony saluting Israel's emergency medical first-responders and search-and-rescue personnel.

Parliamentarian **Yehudah Glick**, who survived an Arab shooting attack two years ago, spontaneously climbed onto the podium to embrace **Kabahah Muawhiya**, an Arab-Israeli volunteer EMT with United Hatzalah of Israel, a national volunteer emergency medical services organization.



"United Hatzalah is not just about emergency first response and medical rescuing; it is literally uniting people from different walks of life and different religions," Muawhiya told Israeli lawmakers. "It is a uniting of peoples and a unity of hearts."

Many people are surprised to learn that Arab citizens volunteer and work for the Israeli emergency response organizations Magen David Adom (MDA) and United Hatzalah.

For the first-responders, it's only natural that representatives of all Israel's population groups would cooperate to save lives.

"I am there to treat people who are hurt, and it doesn't matter if they are Jewish or Arab," United Hatzalah volunteer medic Khaled Rishkek says. Rishkek and Muawhiya are among about 300 Moslem, Druze, and Christian United Hatzalah volunteer EMTs, paramedics, and doctors out of about 3,000 who race to calls in their own neighborhoods.

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Magen David Adom senior paramedic Ziad Dawiyat. Photo courtesy of MDA

First-Responders... *continued*

United Hatzalah badge



After 10 years in United Hatzalah, Rishkek is friends with many of the Jewish volunteers in Jerusalem. He lives on a street with Arabs on one side and Jews on the other, along the former border between Jordan and Israel.

Eli Beer and Murad Alyan (r) are united by their passion for saving lives.

"Khaled is one of our most active volunteers," observes United Hatzalah founder **Eli Beer**, who shared a \$10,000 peace prize with his Arab coordinator, **Murad Alyan**, in 2013. (The Victor J. Goldberg IIE Prize for Peace in the Middle East promotes the international exchange of people and ideas toward achieving lasting peace.)



Photo courtesy of United Hatzalah of Israel

During a spate of recent terror attacks, an MDA crew comprising ultra-Orthodox Jews Yisrael Arbus and Haggai Bar-Tov, and Fadi Dikdik (from a Moslem neighborhood of Jerusalem) told a news reporter, "We are like brothers."

Dikdik is responsible for the whole East Jerusalem area for MDA and speaks Arabic, Hebrew, English, Yiddish, and Russian. He has worked with MDA for 12 years and recruits teens from his Moslem neighborhood to take MDA's first-aid course.

In August 2015, MDA senior paramedic Ziad Dawiyat, an Arab-Israeli, went to assist a mother in labor in Jerusalem—the same woman whose fatally injured infant he had transported to the hospital the previous October following a terror attack.

"Natural disasters do not differentiate between peoples; they affect everyone," said Dr. Akram Amro, director of Palestinian volunteer organization Green Land Society for Health Development (GLSHD). "Therefore, we too, as residents in this region, must unite in order to be able to help each other, regardless of religion or nationality." ★



From left, ultra-Orthodox, secular Jewish, and Arab volunteers from United Hatzalah working together.



Protected by his Israeli bodyguard, Ban meets President Reuven Rivlin in Jerusalem



SELECT MEDIA BRIEFS

As the saying goes, **you can't have it both ways.**

Either Israelis are treacherous racists, or they are reliable enough for dignitaries, regardless of race or creed, to trust with their lives. No one ever decried Nazi racism and then turned around and hired Nazi bodyguards.

Even UN Chief Uses Israeli Security

By Yossi Aloni & Ryan Jones / *Israel Today*

Much was made of Israeli security protecting Rio's 2016 Olympic Games. But even UN Secretary-General **Ban Ki-moon** has an Israeli bodyguard. Meet **Medad Ashkenazi**, who during his service in the Israeli army handled contacts with the United Nations.

For the past eight years, Ashkenazi has been working as a security guard at the UN, and for two years now, he has been a personal guard of the secretary-general. Ashkenazi was offered his current position after another Israeli guard was promoted to a more senior position within the UN's security apparatus.

Nor was Ashkenazi the only Israeli considered for the job. Another guard, a former agent in the Shin Bet security service, was also considered for Ban's personal bodyguard. The UN chief seems proud of his Israeli security and frequently mentions his bodyguards during talks with government officials.

Critics, especially at the UN, routinely portray Israel as a racist and hostile nation. And yet many who support such claims, tacitly or otherwise, seek out Israeli security for themselves, thereby acknowledging that Israelis are trustworthy.

Woman Ordered Raped in Honor Case

ClarionProject.org

After a man was accused of attempting to molest a young girl in Pakistan, the village council ordered that the girl's father rape the man's married daughter. In October, the woman, who was close to five month's pregnant from the rape, set herself on fire.

After her father was arrested for the attempted assault, he was booked by the police but subsequently released and then brought to the local *panchayat* (village council), who ordered the retaliatory rape.

The daughter of the accused molester was living in her father's house while her husband was working abroad. Before she died in the hospital, the victim of the "justice"—due to a crime committed by her father—gave birth to a stillborn baby.

Where is the outcry from whatever moderate Moslems oppose such barbaric applications of sharia (Islamic) law? Sharia law has reached "Penetration" (phase 3 of a [5-step takeover strategy](#)) in the U.S. Very precarious for Texas, Michigan, Florida, Minnesota, and California.

—Mark



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Tel Aviv's Four-Legged Citizens

By Caterina Lani / JPost.com

I am a young Italian who moved to Israel two years ago to take up “the next job.” To this non-Jew, Tel Aviv offered many new and surprising discoveries, but the best was the love Tel Avivians have for their dogs. I had never encountered many people who love animals as much as I do.

In Italy people buy dogs, frequently turning them into fashion accessories. I am confident one could study this trend and identify the most fashionable breed in any given year. Here, though, restaurants and cafés are dog-friendly and always happy to accommodate our four-legged friends, providing them with water and sometimes even tasty treats. In Italy, things are rather different; establishments often turn away customers with dogs. Customers themselves will sometimes complain about the presence of dogs at a venue (they complain about children, too).

But there are other striking differences. **The infrastructure in Tel Aviv to care for dogs and keep them happy never ceases to amaze me.** I had never seen a dog park with such a well-kept fence, seats, and even a water fountain. The level of care (by both the people and government) is astonishing; the dog park I use most often was recently refurbished to improve its functionality. I also find incredible the organization and professionalism of dog trainers/walkers here, who routinely assist dog owners in building better relationships with their dogs, and in co-existing in this “urban jungle.” Their service is not a luxury, but rather a widely used resource.

All these elements show strong evidence for the important role dogs play in the lives of Tel-Avivians. The people of this city not only opt to adopt four-legged friends, providing them with warm and deserved homes, but also invest time and money in bettering their lives. Through this support system, dogs become life companions for their owners and families, and ascend to a level higher than elsewhere.

Thanks to Tel Aviv's dog-friendly infrastructure, I was able to adopt **Chuku**, making her my friend for life and a source of endless affection. I worry about how we will cope when we both leave Tel Aviv, chasing my next job. For the time being, however, I can say that in Tel Aviv, my love for dogs is the norm, no longer an exception. ★



*Chuku at Palmahim Beach
(credit: Dov Greenblat)*

Search For Dead Sea Scrolls Renewed



ARCHAEOLOGY: By **Daniel Estrin** (r) Associated Press

Israel is embarking on a major archaeological expedition to find yet undiscovered Dead Sea Scrolls, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced recently.

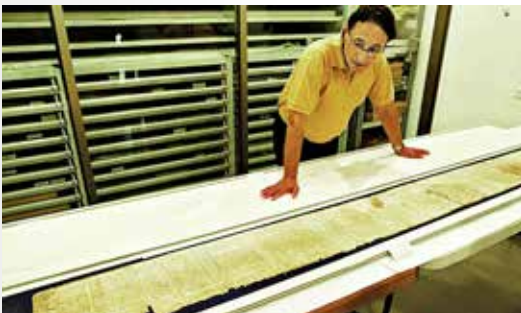
A government research team will spend the next three years surveying hundreds of caves in the Judean Desert near the Dead Sea, the arid region where the Dead Sea Scrolls, the world's oldest Biblical manuscripts and now the crown jewel of Israeli antiquities, were preserved for thousands of years and discovered in 1947. Archaeologists also hope to find other antiquities dating back 5,000 years ago, as well as from the 1st-century Jewish-Roman war and the 2nd-century Bar Kokhba revolt, when Jewish fighters battling the Roman army sought refuge in the desert.

In recent years, ancient manuscripts have trickled onto the local antiquities market, and looters are believed to have plundered them from Dead Sea-area caves, prompting the government initiative. "We know there are more," an IAA spokesman said of undiscovered scrolls. "Most of the places haven't been reached."

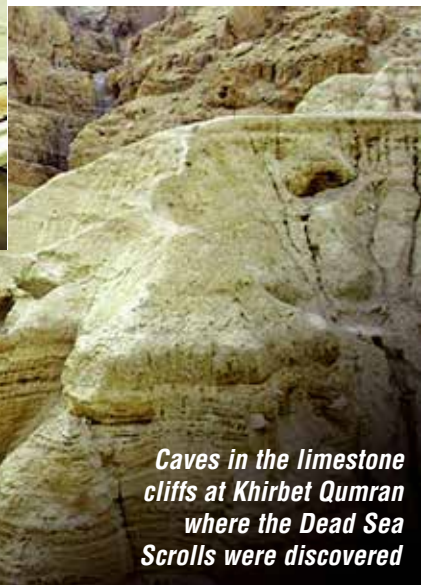
Discovered between 1947 and 1956, the Dead Sea Scrolls comprise a collection of 972 ancient manuscripts containing parts of the Hebrew Bible, as well as a range of extra-Biblical documents. They were found by shepherd Muhammed Edh-Dhib as he searched for a stray among the limestone cliffs at Khirbet Qumran on the shores of the Dead Sea. Muhammed hurled a stone into the dark interior of a cave in the crevice of a steep rocky hillside and was startled to hear the sound of breaking pots. Venturing inside, the young Bedouin found a collection of large clay jars, in some of which he found old scrolls, some wrapped in linen and blackened with age.

The texts are of monumental historical and religious significance. They include the earliest known surviving copies of Biblical and extra-Biblical documents, and also preserve evidence of diversity in late Second Temple Period Judaism.

(continued next page)



Dr. Adolfo Roitman presents a part of the Isaiah Scroll



Caves in the limestone cliffs at Khirbet Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered

© Etti Schwetzer/Wikimedia Commons



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Archaeology... continued



Dated to various ranges between 408 B.C. and 318 A.D., they are written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Nabataean, some on papyrus and bronze but mostly on parchment. The scrolls traditionally divide into three groups:

- ▶ “Biblical” manuscripts—**copies of texts from the Hebrew Bible**—make up 40% of the haul.
- ▶ Other religious manuscripts—including **known documents** from the Second Temple Period like the books of Enoch, Jubilees, Tobit, and Sirach, that were not included in the Bible—make up 30% of the identified scrolls.
- ▶ “Sectarian” manuscripts—**previously unknown documents** that shed light on the beliefs of Jewish groups of the time, like the Community Rule, War Scroll, Peshar on Habakkuk, and the Rule of the Blessing—make up the remaining 30%.

While some of the writings have survived as nearly intact scrolls, most of the archive consists of thousands of parchment and papyrus fragments. ★

(Zola discusses the Scrolls’ importance in [Secrets of the Scrolls](#). p.17)

The Dead Sea Scrolls: Greatest Find of the 20th Century

By Traci Watson / USA Today.com

In 1970, while excavating Ein-Gedi, a Jewish village on the western shore of the Dead Sea that was destroyed by fire around 600 A.D., archaeologists found the community’s synagogue. Inside the synagogue, they discovered a Holy Ark, the cabinet where Torahs are stored. The Ein-Gedi ark held charred debris that had once been sacred scrolls.



Scroll fragments

The Ein-Gedi manuscript—a burned, 1,500-year-old Hebrew scroll—required a new digital analysis technique. Previous studies had identified text within ancient artifacts, but the Ein-Gedi manuscript represented the first severely damaged scroll to be virtually unrolled and non-invasively read, line by line. (See the [video](#).) To scholars’ astonishment, the newly divulged text matched exactly both the letters and format of text found in modern Torah scrolls read by most Jews today.

The scroll showed two distinct columns of Hebrew writing that contain lines, words, letters, and spacing that revealed the phrases:

- “If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, a male”
- “without blemish he shall offer; to the entrance of the tent of meeting, he shall bring”
- “it is for acceptance on his behalf before the Lord. ‘He shall lay his hand upon the head ...”

Further analysis revealed the scroll’s writings to be the Book of Leviticus, which makes it the earliest copy of a Pentateuchal book ever found in a synagogue. ★

At Qumran, I love reminding our pilgrims that the Scrolls are a brilliant birthday present from God to the Jewish people. Isaiah 66:8 speaks of a nation being born in day, and when Israel was reborn, God verified the Jews’ historical relationship to the land with the preserved Bible as a gift! —Myles



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China Cracks Down On House Churches



Reported in Chinese by Qiao Nong. Translated by Carolyn Song.

Written in English by Brynne Lawrence. / ChinaAid.org

In an unprecedented move, administrative offices in China's central Henan province convened a meeting at summer's end to target China's rapidly growing network of Catholic and Protestant house churches and force unauthorized churches to comply with Communist Party regulations.

According to government department head Tai Xuchen, the meeting's purpose was to divide the responsibility of regulating house churches, disposing of "illegal" religious institutions in order to protect people who take part in "legal" religious activities and maintain the stability and order of religions.

To accomplish this, these departments set forth a four-step series of objectives, each to be met within a specified time frame.

- **Local government departments identify Catholic and Protestant house churches and submit a list of them to their superiors.**
- **Village departments assist as religious affairs bureaus issue notices demanding that specified churches make personalized changes within a certain time period.**
- **Government personnel close all churches that refuse to comply.**
- **Officials compile success rates, figures to be included in their year-end review.**

This campaign echoes the new political trend in China's Regulations on Religious Affairs, introduced in early September specifying tighter control on peaceful religious activities, such as punishing house church meetings by imprisoning Christians or heavily fining church leaders, forbidding religious adherents from attending conferences or trainings abroad, and barring minors from receiving religious education.

These measures violate China's own constitution, which claims to guarantee religious liberty and condemns discriminating against religious and non-religious citizens. The campaign also breaches the country's pledges to adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.



In response, a group of human rights lawyers mailed a document to Wang Zuo'an, bureau chief of the National Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau, pointing out contradictions to constitutionally sanctioned rights to religious freedom and offering suggestions.

Christians in Henan report: "Since Wang Zuo'an became bureau chief, no major actions occurred. But, it is apparent that he has been gathering a network and using these many years to investigate, using every government department to experiment in the Zhejiang province, like demolishing crosses. These new religious regulations formally enact his experiments and extend them nationwide." ★

China Aid exposes abuses, such as those enacted against unofficial Protestant and Catholic house churches, in order to stand in solidarity with Chinese Christians and promote religious freedom in China.

Jewish humor, etc.

One-liners

Did you hear about the thieves that broke into the synagogue offices? They got away with over \$2,000 in pledges.

Seen in the University of Texas student newspaper: Sweet, little old Jewish lady wishes to correspond with UT undergraduate. Prefers six-foot male with brown eyes answering to initials: J.D.B.

Signed, His Mother.



A cheerful heart is good medicine —
Proverbs 17:22



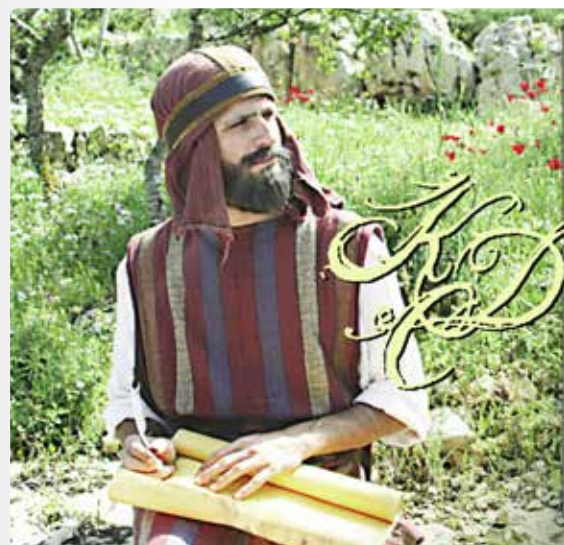
Jewish Telegram: Begin worrying. Details to follow.

The president of the congregation went to the hospital to visit the rabbi who had just suffered a mild heart attack. "Rabbi," he said, "the board just voted 12 to 8 to wish you a speedy recovery."

Why do Jewish mothers make effective parole officers? They never let anyone finish a sentence.



"Daddy said 'Happy New Year,' but I don't think he really meant it!"



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2. One \$500 discount on each of up to four (4) of our tours to Israel.
3. One-on-one telephone conference with Myles to discuss this ministry's goals and visions.

Jewish Heritage Calendar



With the Seven Feasts of Israel in mind, imagine the usefulness of our delightful and inexpensive Jewish Heritage Calendar. This beautiful calendar began in September and spans 13 months, through September 2017. It provides the dates of all the Biblical feasts and Sabbaths plus the names of the months, the Holy Days, and all the rest through English phonetics like those in our monthly Hebrew Lesson in the *Levitt Letter*. Enjoy Biblical feast graphics, Hebraic regalia pictures, and inspiration.

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