

Levitt Letter

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

MARCH 2017

abbvector.com

**Purim 2017—
from sunset on
Saturday, March 11
to sunset on
Sunday, March 12**

Purim: God's Involvement

JewsForJesus.org



At sunset on March 11, we celebrate the festival of Purim (pronounced *poor-im*) to commemorate God's saving power as recorded in the Book of Esther.

You have heard the story of Esther before. A young Jewish girl becomes queen of Persia and "happens" to be in a position to counter a villainous plot to exterminate her people.

An unusual aspect of the story is that God is nowhere mentioned. Many have pointed out that God is everywhere implied in the series of "non-coincidences" throughout the book. Esther "happens" to win the contest to become the queen; Mordecai "happens" to foil a plot to kill the king; wicked Haman "happens" to be hanged on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai, etc.

There is another clue to God's involvement

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

2017 – The Year of Being Kind

By Paula Spencer
Scott / Parade.com



Kindness is a value that transcends borders, race, faith and age.

Orly Wahba founded a nonprofit dedicated to inspiring kindness after growing up as "that kid in black who sat writing morbid poetry" and working as a middle-school teacher. **Life Vest Inside's** first effort, a video called *Kindness Boomerang*, has been seen more than 100 million times and led to her 2013 TED Talk on the magic of kindness.

"Whether you're sweeping the streets, running the company or running the country, we're all pieces of the puzzle, each as

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

Purim: God's Involvement *(continued from cover)*

throughout this book—an important clue that is mentioned less often. This clue is given twice in the fourth chapter of Esther. First, in verse 3: “And in every province where the king’s command and decree [that all the Jews, men, women, and children, would be destroyed on the thirteenth day of Adar] arrived, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.”

The second clue, also in chapter four, is found in Esther’s speech in verse 16: “Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”

We see the people responding to danger [the lethal decree] and Esther responding to equally mortal danger [the illegal appearance before the king] in the same way: Fasting.



This fasting implies the belief in and reliance on God. If the people had no hope of surviving, why would they fast? They would more likely eat, drink, and try to forget that “tomorrow we die.” As for Esther’s three-day fast, was this a crash diet to lose a few pounds before seeing the king? Not likely, since she had all of her maids and all of the Jews of the city do likewise.

The fast was a way of reaching out to God, of humbling oneself and acknowledging complete dependence upon Him. The Bible has many examples of fasting.

So while God’s providence is everywhere demonstrated throughout this book, the people’s realization that their only hope was in God is also implied in the passages on fasting.

Today, Purim is celebrated as a noisy and fun festival. Many Jewish publications print satirical stories in keeping with the festive spirit. Perhaps the humor is in keeping with the irony of how God chose to preserve His people during this time, and particularly how He elevated the humble Mordecai and Esther and brought down proud Haman.

Nevertheless, we should remember the serious danger the Jewish people faced, and we should remember the necessity of total dependence upon God’s preserving power. It may be that, one day soon, the Church will be called upon to fast and pray for God to protect the Jewish people in an equally perilous time.

Along with fasting, we do well to heed Micah (6:8) as he reminds us what the Lord requires. “...to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” — Tony Derrick ★

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2017 – The Year of Being Kind (continued from cover)

important as the other,” says Wahba, now CEO of Kindness USA. “Kindness is the tool to breaking down labels and barriers and seeing we’re all exactly the same. In a world that sometimes shows you bad, kindness shows you so much good.”

“It’s an action word,” agrees Anaheim, California Mayor Tom Tait. After a 6-year-old girl died in an accident, her doctor father celebrated her hallmark trait of kindness by informing Tait that, in medicine, you can treat the symptoms or you can stimulate the body to heal itself. Tait wondered if that medical principle applied to city life—fighting the symptoms of crime, bullying, and disconnection. “*What if a culture of kindness could stimulate the city to heal from within?*” he asked himself.

Anaheim’s Hi Neighbor program encourages neighbors to get to know one another, forming neighborhood “social infrastructure” that functions as a safety net for disasters like earthquakes or fire, since neighbors are often first responders when city resources are spread thin. Spreading similar messages: Albuquerque, New Mexico’s new ABQ-Kindness campaign, and Give a Day, a citywide service effort in Louisville, Kentucky.

“You can be empathetic, respectful, and compassionate while sitting on your couch,” observes Tait. “But to be kind, you have to get off your couch and do something.”

So here’s to a year of doing kindness and *living* kindness. It’s easy, it’s free, it feels good—and it really makes a difference. ★

Backstory to Purim

BY SANDRA TEPLINSKY (r) LightOfZion.org



Esther and Mordecai by
Aert de Gelder, c. 1675

Purim is based on the Book of Esther. The merry festival (beginning this year at sundown on March 11) recounts God's victory over His enemies' attempt to annihilate the Jews.

The holiday reflects the ongoing war of Amalek against Yahweh. In this war, God Himself battles for His people (Exodus 17:14–16). Amalek was a descendant of Esau. In the Scriptures, Amalek epitomizes the spirit of anti-Semitism and is driven by pure evil. By extension, the Amalek spirit can manifest as the spirit of antiChrist. *On Purim, God wondrously defeats Amalek, gaining sure victory for His people.*

Hundreds of years before Esther's time, God told King Saul to slay the Amalekite king, Agag (1 Samuel 15). Saul disobeyed. Later in history, when most of the Jewish people lived in the Persian Empire, it was an Agagite ruler named Haman who came close to destroying them all. Not coincidentally, it was also a descendant of Saul, named Mordecai, whom God used to defeat Haman's genocidal plan (Esther 2:5). Haman is described in Esther as a "*tsore*" (oppressor or antiChrist in the Hebrew Scriptures).

Mysteries abound in Esther. It is the only book in the Bible that does not mention God's name. Nevertheless, His lead role in the story shouts loudly from behind the scenes. Divine finger- and foot-prints appear at every turn of events. The Lord is always in control, no matter what personal, national, or global crisis His people face. *Sometimes, when we do not understand what is taking place or why, He has hidden Himself behind the scenes for a purpose greater than we're to know at the time.*

Esther (also called Hadassah) and her Uncle Mordecai lived in Persia during the reign of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes). At Mordecai's behest, Esther conceals her Jewish identity in order to marry the king and become Queen of Persia. Mordecai and Esther can be seen as shining examples of followers of Yahweh. But why were Purim's hero and heroine still living in exile and not in the Promised Land when, many years earlier, King Cyrus had decreed the Jews could return to Judea?

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



Backstory to Purim *continued*



The Jewish citizens of Persia were a prosperous lot. To a large extent, they'd assimilated into local pagan culture and enjoyed the comforts of exile. Could this have been true of Mordecai and Esther? If not, the rabbis wonder, why would Mordecai encourage his niece to marry a nonbeliever, live among those for whom the laws of Yahweh were irrelevant... and hide her Jewish identity? And why did she choose to follow his advice? Does God care if His people prefer exile? Perhaps these matters, like His role in the story, are intentionally hidden from plain view.

If, however, Esther and Mordecai were a bit more “human” than we may have thought, Purim reveals even more powerfully how God’s mercy and grace extends to His people, despite their/our disobedience, to fulfill His covenant purposes. He is faithful even when we are not.

The story: Haman, the king’s chief adviser, decrees that everyone in the empire must bow down before him. When Mordecai refuses to bow, Haman resolves to kill Mordecai—and all of Mordecai’s people. He sets the date for his genocidal campaign by casting lots, or “purim.” Then he builds special gallows on which to hang Mordecai.

When Mordecai informs Queen Esther of the plan, he tells her that the fate of the Jews might depend on her willingness to intercede on their behalf and appeal to the king. “If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14)

Under Persian law, Esther would put her life at risk by appearing unsummoned before the king. Yet she replies, “I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16).

When King Ahasuerus learns of Haman’s wicked scheme, divine turnaround follows. The king executes Haman and his sons on the very gallows Haman built to hang Mordecai. Then he authorizes the Jews to defend themselves against any who might attack them. Afraid to harm God’s people, many turn to worship Him (Esther 8:17). Revival comes to the kingdom!

Esther proved courageously willing to lay down her life for God’s purpose. **Today, you and I are called to nothing less.** The Lord of Love tells us to take up our cross and follow Him. “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me [My people] will save it” (Luke 9:24–25). As with Esther, He can use us to shift Kingdom realities on Earth.

But make no mistake: the spirit of Haman/ Amalek is still alive. Globally, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic (as well as anti-Christian) events escalate. Not long ago, Iran (ancient Persia) tested a nuclear-capable missile with a message written on it in Hebrew: “Israel must be wiped out.”



In the face of mounting threats against His people, God is raising up a company of “Esthers.” These valiant ones will stand before The King—and kings—to intercede on Israel’s behalf. If today’s Esthers keep silent, God will see that relief and deliverance for the Jews come from another source. But the Church would diminish in its full identity and destiny. Will you embrace the cross, knowing your intercessory prayers and deeds **will** lead to turnaround victory? “Who knows but that you have come to royal position in the kingdom for such a time as this?” **Chag Purim Sameach! – Happy Purim!** ★

Kindness: WWJD?

Tony Derrick, MDiv
Zola Tours Leader
ZLM Interim Spokesman



“People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” This quote may have originated with Teddy Roosevelt.

Americans have just endured a brutal political cycle that has left most of us wondering where our nation is headed. Whether you are a Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, or hold no affiliation at all, you probably will agree that the campaign season was a vitriolic circus. So, what’s next? No one can know for certain, but we can learn how to respond from a perfect example in the New Testament.

Several years ago, a popular set of initials surfaced: WWJD—What would Jesus do? Let’s look and see what Jesus did.

There are many examples we could examine, but let’s consider the exchange found in Luke 15:1–7. Jesus was continually encountering assaults by the Pharisees and Sadducees—the religious and political establishment of His time. In this instance, they were appalled that He was breaking bread with sinners. Shocking!

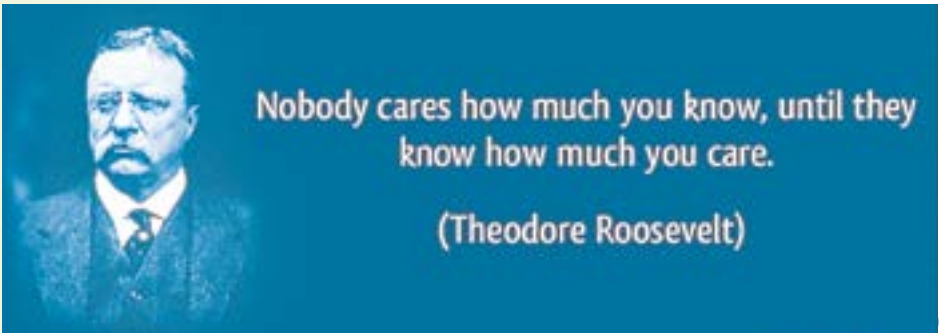


Sermon on the Mount by Carl Heinrich Bloch c. 1876

So He spoke this parable to them, saying: “What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ I [Jesus] say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”

– Luke 15:3-7

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Detail of stained glass,
by Alfred Handel
(photo by Toby Hudson)



Was Jesus unaffected by the numerous confrontations with the religious/political establishment of the day? Of course not! However, He did not address their politics, but their relationships with God. Most of us hold strong political views, but our perceptions should never cloud our judgment concerning our missionary journey on this Earth. Jesus came to break bread with sinners—to save sinners: Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, etc. People with whom we disagree need to see that we care more about their status in the Eternal Kingdom than in this soon-to-be-redeemed world!

Two notes before I close:

- 1. It is God who establishes government—Daniel 2:21, *“And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings.”*
- 2. We are responsible to pray for all our leaders—1 Timothy 2:1-2, *“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and **peaceable** [emphasis mine] life in all godliness and reverence.”*

Okay – one more note. The great theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968), while on while on a lecture tour in the U.S., was asked by a student at the University of Chicago if he could summarize his whole life’s work in theology in a sentence. His reputed reply: “Yes, I can. In the words of a song I learned at my mother’s knee: ‘Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.’”



That is the Jesus I know! That is the Jesus others should see in us as we hold high His standard, even those with whom we disagree. After all, “People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” ★



photo: Hans Lachmann / German Federal Archive

Who are the Druze Israelis?

Our Man in Haifa
Eitan Shishkoff
and wife Connie



While plenty of attention focuses on the Israeli and Palestinian Arabs living within the borders of Israel, few know about another group of Arabic-speaking citizens of Israel. They are the Druze, and they number between 800,000 and one million throughout the Middle East, with thriving communities in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Some 140,000 Druze live in Israel, primarily in the mountainous areas of the north. Two sizeable town centers lie an easy and scenic drive from Haifa, on the Carmel ridge—Isfiya and Daliyat al-Karmel (*Vine of the Carmel*).

Their remarkable commitment to serving in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) constitutes a unique facet of Druze participation in Israeli society. Many young men from Druze communities serve in the elite units of the IDF. During their time of service, a high degree of integration and close camaraderie takes place between the Jews and the Druze. During my son's full-time service, he praised the brave and skillful tracking of Druze scouts serving with him on sensitive border patrols.

The exceptional patriotism of the Druze living in Israel became evident in a 2008 survey regarding self-identification. Significantly, 94% of the young Druze surveyed preferred to describe themselves as Druze Israelis. In a nation where the choice of ethnic labels can be incendiary, this term speaks volumes. Druze also serve loyally in our Knesset and other government posts.

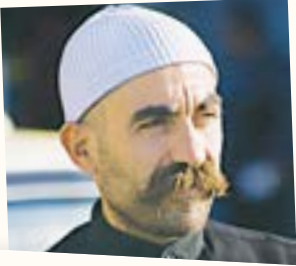
So, who are the Druze? They first appear early in 11th century Persia as a syncretistic offshoot of Islam, incorporating elements of Greek and Egyptian philosophy, Hinduism, Gnosticism, Christianity, and Judaism. Reincarnation, or transmigration of the soul, features prominently in the Druze religion. Years ago, an article in the Israeli press documented a conviction of this belief so strong that certain families claim to know which deceased relative's soul now inhabits a young person. However, most aspects of Druze religion remain secret,

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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meets with the spiritual leader of the Druze community in Israel

Who are the Druze Israelis? *continued*



known only to the initiated. Interestingly, Druze revere Jethro, the Midianite father-in-law of Moses, as a precursor to their sect. Perhaps his role as a counselor/encourager of Moses provides today's Druze with the ancient connection that inspires their strong commitment to the Jewish people and Israel.



The Druze

In the nearly quarter-century that our family has lived in the Haifa area, we've seen impressive economic development in the twin towns along the Carmel ridge. Occupying some of Israel's most beautiful terrain, this is the district where Elijah called down fire from Heaven (1 Kings 18). An industrious and friendly people, the Druze Israelis make it easy to visit their gift-laden shops and savory restaurants. Next time you're in

the Land, enjoy this little-known segment of Israel. You can even worship at an excellent Messianic congregation located right in Isfiya. [Read about Myles's Mount Carmel syndrome in the December 2016 PL.](#)

When you tour Israel with us, you will get to experience firsthand a traditional falafel sandwich at Birkat Ram—a Druze restaurant in the Golan Heights. — Tony Derrick ★

World's Tallest Solar Tower

By **NATHAN GIANNINI** / [Finance.Yahoo.com](#)

Deep in Israel's Negev Desert, construction is well underway on what will soon become the tallest solar tower in the world. Scheduled to be finished later this year at a cost of about \$570 million, the Ashalim tower will soar a staggering 820 feet into the sky.



The tower is surrounded by more than 50,000 heliostat solar mirrors, covering an area the size of 560 football fields. The mirrors reflect the sun's rays onto the giant structure, heating water stored in a boiler at the top of the tower, turning it into steam. The steam then spins a turbine and generates energy.

The tower will provide energy for about 5% of the country's population and represents a turn from fossil fuels to renewable sources. ★

The Day After The Day After...

and how to change human nature

Classic Zola
from 1983
34 years ago



One hundred million Americans tuned in to the television movie *The Day After* (about a nuclear event) and were horrified to see one of the possible futures for this generation. The presentation was certainly a stunner, and the discussion afterward pretty much supplied the fact that nothing can be done. It was remarkable that so eminent a group of fine minds came to no happy conclusion about the prospects for warding off total nuclear catastrophe.

Philosopher Elie Wiesel said it all when he commented, "If there were only a way to improve human nature." There is a way, of course. Jesus Christ declared, "I am the way," (John 14:6). It sounds simplistic to claim that the human nature of saved individuals improves, but I'm not ashamed to agree that it usually does. In any case, human beings will be profoundly improved at the coming of the King when "We shall all be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

I personally have no answer to an impending end-of-the-world by nuclear means. Ted Koppel, the moderator of the commentary after the movie, called the upcoming war "Armageddon," but that was the only reference to the Holy Scriptures in the discussion. Church denominations nationwide gathered together to watch the movie—a pristine example of "learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). Outside of John 3:16, I don't know what to suggest. If you missed that Sunday night program because you were in a Bible-teaching church, you did the right thing.

I understand that certain religious leaders were against Christians watching *The Day After*, but I don't favor that point of view. **We Believers are soldiers in a much greater spiritual battle**, and we need to keep informed about the battlefield. We have no fear of any world-ending catastrophes if we are Biblically prepared. And we simply should be up with the times in order to witness intelligently in a very nervous climate.



Be prepared to answer the unbeliever when he asks you what it's all about:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you...

—1 Peter 3:15

Every soul saved will see the day after *The Day After*. ★

2017—The Year of Being Kind?



BY IAN PAUL / Psephizo.com

A friend and colleague commented at the new year that a local school's single rule—Be kind—seemed a good approach to Christian life and ethics, and therefore would be this person's New Year's Resolution. For many people, last year did not feel kind; they'd welcome a little more kindness. When my mother was alive, she'd say this prayer:

“Lord, keep me from saying that which is not true; and from that which, being true, is only half the truth; and from that which, being the whole truth, is not kind.”

When we think of what is kind and unkind, though actions are important, it is often words that make the difference and leave their mark, in both positive and negative ways.

Kindness of actions has long been a central focus of Jewish—and therefore, Christian—ethics. From aish.com, we learn:

We have three primary relationships in life. We have to learn to live with ourself, with God, and with others.

Human beings interact with the world on three levels: thought, speech, and action. Each of these three is the key to the three basic relationships: You act on yourself through thought or will. You interact with God through speech. And you relate to others through actions.

The Sages taught that prayer should be spoken. “Speech” is the will manifested in reality. “Thought” is ephemeral and slippery. You can change your mind, but words bring ideas into concrete reality. Talk to God. It will make the relationship more real.

The word *tzedakah* is often translated as “charity.” It is anything but. Tzedakah is “righteousness”—doing the right thing.

How are you supposed to react to other people? Adherents of Ayn Rand hold that the needs of others create no obligation on your part. This is a very un-Jewish idea. Torah demands that we be other-centered.

We are required to look at other human beings, try to understand what they are lacking, and endeavor to help them. One of the worst mistakes is to turn a blind eye and become insensitive to the suffering of others.

At its highest level, *tzedakah* requires us to “understand” another human being: Who is he? What does he lack? How can I help him fulfill his role in life? Then I need to act.

Just as our worship of God and obeying His commandments cannot be separated from expression in kindness to others, our kindness to one another cannot be separated from our mutual accountability in our worship and obedience. God is kind to us to bring us to holiness and maturity, and He surely longs that we do the same thing for the same ends. Being nice to someone while undermining faith by word or deed (or colluding in such) is no kindness. ★



Ask the Chaplain

Dr. Todd Baker
Zola Levitt Ministries
Staff Theologian



Q. I've been doing Bible study through your [Institute of Jewish-Christian Studies](#) courses* and researching from the Torah, trying to learn about Messianic Jews. **Did Nimrod want to pay Terah to kill Terah's son Abram because Nimrod's pagan priests told him the stars indicated that a special child (Yeshua) would be born out of Terah and would dethrone Nimrod?** Terah sent Abram to Noah (who was still living) and Shem for safety, where he learned about God. No Bible translations or church pastors teach anything about this story. I am trying to understand as much as I can, keeping my eye on the cross and Yeshua. [* [please see p. 20](#)]

A. **I believe that the events you describe come from a Midrash—a rabbinic commentary on the Old Testament.** Nothing in the Biblical record states that Nimrod had any personal dealings with Terah or any knowledge of the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham left Ur under guidance from God (Genesis 12:1–3). Shem had nothing to do with Abraham's journey. Anything else is speculation and is not supported in the Word of God. The Midrashim, while valuable for some theological insights into ancient Jewish thinking, are not on the level of Divine authority (the canonical Scriptures, of course, are).

Q. I have a question about your answers in the [January 2017 "Ask the Chaplain"](#) column. **If we are all one in Christ Messiah, why do we test our God by observing pagan practices and the traditions of men, for example on Christmas and Easter?** More in-depth research will reveal these practices go back farther in history than Christ, and Christianity got woven into them. God warns His people (remember, we are all one in Him) not to have anything to do with pagan practices. If God does not change, that means His Word doesn't change.

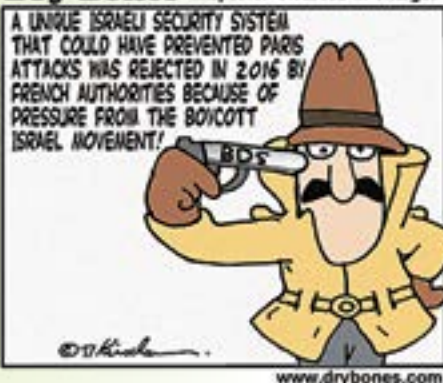
A. **Yes, pagan practices predate our Lord's incarnation.** But Romans 1:20 informs us that even in B.C. times, God was knowable: "His invisible attributes—His eternal power and His divine nature—have been clearly seen ever since the creation of the world, ... So people are without excuse."

As for research, we learned in the [March 2016 Levitt Letter](#) that further investigation has indeed revealed the error of 8th century suppositions regarding the origin of the name for Easter, which actually began as "east," "new light," and by extension, "resurrection."

The answer to any question of practice is another question: "Does it point

to Yeshua?" My concluding point in my January 2017 column was that we should use these two holidays (and Halloween, etc.) to inform people of the Gospel. **We don't need to celebrate or embrace the holidays, but rather should shine the Light during these opportunities and not curse the darkness.** Whether in positive or negative circumstances, we always should be ready to share the Gospel—even when pointing out the pagan aspects of certain holidays. ★

Dry Bones Inspector Clouseau in Charge?



Open Hearts in Eilat

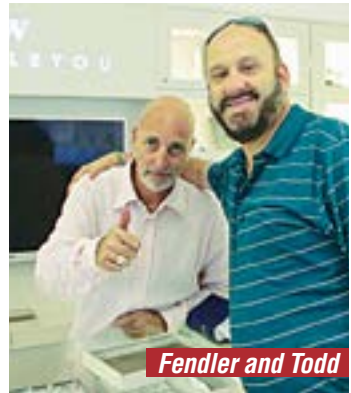
BY DR. TODD BAKER, TJF team leader



During this ministry's **To the Jew First** (TJF) Gospel outreach to Israel last fall, Robin Hopper, Kenny Gee, and I had a glorious day of ministry and Messianic witnessing in Eilat, a southern Israeli port and resort town on the Red Sea, and also a tour stop on Zola Tours itineraries. We found five people at the Ice Mall who were curious enough about our message of salvation to accept our gifts of complete Hebrew Bibles and Messianic Gospel tracts.

First was Coral, a young Jewish woman about to enter the Israel Defense Forces—who accepted the message of Yeshua! To give her hope and strength for her military service, and as confirmation of her acceptance, we left with her a Hebrew Bible and a Gospel tract that explains how **a Jewish person can accept the salvation offered by Yeshua the Messiah... and still remain Jewish.** So simple, so misunderstood. Welcome, new Believer Coral!

Shmuel and Fendler at a watch and jewelry shop warmly accepted the Hebrew Scriptures from us and laughed in agreement when we told them that we have read the final chapter of God's Word, and Israel wins in the end! Fendler, a retired journalist for CNN and CBS, laments the anti-Israel bias of today's media.



Shlomi translated for me when I ordered lunch from a waiter who did not speak English. During a fascinating conversation with Shlomi, I learned that he was conversant with rabbinic teaching. But he was very intrigued to learn about the Great Rabbi, Yeshua of Nazareth, who offered His sinless life to atone once-for-all for the sins of Jews and gentiles—and who rose from the dead

three days later to give eternal life to those who believe in Him (John 10:10–15, 18, 28).



The next day, we visited Michael for a follow-up ministry. He told us that his 86-year-old grandmother, Yadi, had also read and enjoyed the Messianic tracts we had left with him on an earlier trip. So, we gave Michael a second Hebrew Bible to deliver to Yadi.

After this, the Spirit of God led us to Jana, working at a shopping kiosk. She had immigrated to Israel from Russia at the age of seven. As with all Jewish immigrants from Russia that we meet in Israel, we shared with Jana the fact that her *aliyah* to Israel from Russia fulfilled the end-time prophecies of Jeremiah (16:15 and 31:8) that God will bring the Jewish people back to the land of Israel from the extreme "north." We are convinced that God is bringing them back to Israel to hear the Good News of Yeshua the Messiah that originated in Israel and went out to us! We're just returning the message home. The whole scenario of Jeremiah's prophecies and the Gospel's return to its place of origin awed Jana, and she accepted a Bible in Hebrew, complete with Old and New Testaments. ★

Our Ministry's Abraham Lincoln

A Note From Mark
by **Mark Levitt**
ZLM Director



Shortly after I began working as ZLM's business manager in 1988, Zola and I hired a humble shipping assistant who soon became our shipping manager. Throughout the '90s, whoever ordered teaching materials from our organization received them from Tony Derrick.

Our July 1994 *Levitt Letter* Bulletin Board announced his graduation with a Master of Divinity from Criswell College in Dallas. From 2000–2008, Tony served as the Zola Tours Travel Manager. Since 2007, he has independently arranged and led numerous pastor tours to Israel, Petra, and Greece, while continuing to serve ZLM as a consulting theologian.

In the nearly 30 years that I have witnessed Tony's steady growth in his Christian walk, he has become a theologian, pastor, praise & worship leader, and Bible teacher. He taught at many Biblical sites in Israel when Zola was filming. **At Zola's funeral in 2006, Tony gave the eulogy.**

The [July 2008 Levitt Letter](#) publicized his capabilities as a coordinator for pastors who host their own churches' Holy Land Tours. Tony continues to freelance in this capacity.

Please see for yourself the power, credibility, and lucidity with which this gentleman and scholar speaks on *Zola Levitt Presents* at levitt.tv (select [In Loving Memory](#) to watch both):

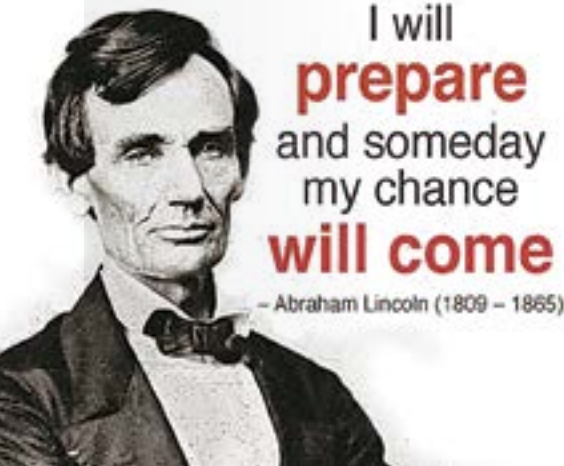
- In the [Remembering Zola](#) television series, Tony's 10-minute portion of Zola's memorial service begins shortly after the 46-minute mark.
- Our [In Loving Memory](#) programs include memories from Zola's family and friends. You can watch Tony's two-minute segment just after the 13:15 mark.

Besides the [2008 "Bragging on an Ex-Employee" article](#), another also relates to Tony's development and servant's heart: [The June 2013 Levitt Letter announced Tony's return](#) to ZLM's team as our interim Travel Manager.

Recently our staffers began sharing the following statement: "For personal reasons, Myles and Katharine Weiss are stepping down, and our ministry is transitioning to new spokespeople. We expect to announce soon whom we've selected to bring new energy to *Zola Levitt Presents* and our newsletters. We wish Myles and Katharine God's blessings in their future endeavors. Meanwhile, please rest assured that our new recruits will uphold all of this ministry's traditional values. Thanks in advance for keeping our ministry in your prayers."

Roughly 150 years ago, Abraham Lincoln vowed, "I will prepare, and some day my chance will come." **Today, Tony Derrick's opportunity has come to serve as this ministry's interim spokesperson.** You can read his article ["Kindness: WWJD?" on page 6](#) and see his insightful responses to our subscribers on [pages 23–25](#).

As always, Tony continues to serve cheerfully and capably wherever and however the Lord cares to use him. Come to think of it, his devotion and effectiveness remind me of the [Texas Rangers' slogan](#), "[One Riot, One Ranger](#)." PTL for this strong, wingless angel! ★



ZLM Bulletin Board

Coming to a town near you?



Violent crime can happen anywhere, but in certain parts of France, “sensitive urban zones” are little Moslem caliphates where whites, including police, stay away because they know they’re not welcome: One in five has been physically assaulted. Islamist riots are

devoted to establishing *sharia* (Islamic) law. People in the U.S. who can’t imagine such a situation occurring Stateside may be in for a big surprise. For a preview of what could blossom into a civil war, see the [five-minute video](#). Also, please see [January’s Levitt Letter](#) regarding Islamization (step 3) in the U.S.



ISIS Children (too sickening to watch)

While many of us focus on renewed kindness in 2017, let’s remember to model and teach kindness to our children.

[An extremely graphic Islamic State \(ISIS\) video \(titled “He Made Me Alive With His Blood”\)](#) features children as young as three years old executing ISIS prisoners from Deir Ez-Zor in Syria. The children have been “pulled away from their games” at an amusement park and sent to “do jihad” by “killing agents with their bare hands” while the camera rolls.

One youngster severs the head from a man tied to a merry-go-round. A toddler empties a small handgun into a man who is tied to a chain-link fence, then exults “*Allahu Akbar!*” before he instructs another child to slash the throat of a man who squirms during the process.

This grisly video shows the face of the next generation of jihadis and comes with extreme warning. Pray that the Rapture happens before they mature.

Free Item

Pamphlet of the Month

Questions & Answers about Estate Planning discusses embracing the future by taking time to prepare for it. After explaining what estate planning is and what occurs without an estate plan, the pamphlet suggests how to begin creating one. It also touches on ways to complement a will, such as trusts, joint ownership arrangements, powers of attorney, and beneficiary designations. Finally, it suggests ways to make charitable gifts within estate plans and enjoy immediate tax savings plus other benefits. To receive this free pamphlet, email us at staff@levitt.com or write to our P.O. Box.



“Come Home!”

Zola
Tours to
Israel



See [page 36](#)
for details



Hebrew Lesson

Torah of Mercy

John J. Parsons



כִּי חֶסֶד חָפְצָתִי וְלֹא זֶבַח וְדַעַת אֱלֹהִים מֵעֹלוֹת

“For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”
– Hosea 6:6

כִּי	חֶסֶד	חָפְצָתִי	וְלֹא	זֶבַח	וְדַעַת	אֱלֹהִים	מֵעֹלוֹת
(1)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)
ki	che-sed	cha-fatz-ti	ve-lo	za-vach	ve-da-at	e-lo-him	me-o-lot
	for	I desire	and not	sacrifice	and the	knowledge of	more than
							offerings

It has been said that *grace* is getting what you don't deserve, whereas *mercy* is not getting what you do. Yeshua said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matt. 5:7). This is not a reciprocal law like karma, i.e., getting in return what you first give, since we cannot obtain God's mercy as reward for our own supposed merit (Rom. 4:4). No, we are able to extend mercy to others only when we are made *merciful* (“full of mercy”); that is, when we first *receive* mercy as the *gift of God* (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 5:15). After all, you can't give away what you don't have, and if we have no mercy for others, it is likely that we have not received it ourselves, as the parable of the Good Samaritan reveals (Luke 10:25–28). Your forgiveness *is* your forgiveness; that is, as you forgive, so you reveal your heart. What you do comes from what you are, not the other way around. We are first transformed by God's grace and then come works of love. We are able to judge others mercifully, with the “good eye,” because we come to believe that we are beloved by God.

When Yeshua rebuked the “holier-than-thou” attitude of some Pharisees, he said: “Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matt. 9:13). The pattern therefore abides: First you realize that you are broken, impoverished of heart, and you mourn over your sinful condition (Matt. 5:3–4); then you hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, for His healing and deliverance; and finally you learn to trust the mercy of God; that is, you come to *accept that you are accepted despite your unacceptability* (Matt. 5:5–6). As you begin to “suffer yourself” and forgive your own evil, you are enabled to extend this mercy to others (Matt. 5:7). In this way, you begin to see God in your relationships and obey the heart of truth (Matt. 5:8; 1 Sam. 15:22). And though we love and honor truth, we must be careful never to use it as a weapon to judge or wound others. The failure to extend mercy, to demand your “rights” or hold on to grudges, implies that you are relating to God as *Judge* rather than as *Savior* (James 2:13).

If we condemn what we see in others, we have yet to truly see what is within our own hearts; we have yet to see our desperate need for God's mercy for our lives. If you don't own your own sin, your sin will own you. Being merciful is a response to God's love, and therefore is essential to genuine *teshuvah* (repentance). **Walking in love is the deepest expression of truth, since love heals untruth and embraces hope for what is presently broken (1 Cor. 13:7). Ask the LORD to help you let go of the pain of the past by being full of mercy toward yourself and others.** ★



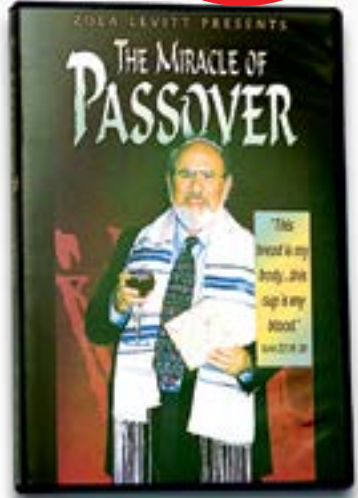
[The Miracle of Passover](#) [DVD, study booklet, CD](#)

(One of our most popular and best-selling titles!)

Passover, the crown jewel of the biblical feasts, begins this year at sundown on Monday, April 10.

In the booklet, CD, and DVD, Zola explains the origin and significance of Passover and demonstrates the feast in which Christ is revealed through its very elements. This is one of the most basic and important Bible studies, shedding clear light on the mysteries of the Lord's Supper and unearthing the Jewish roots of Christianity.

Zola Levitt demonstrates how dramatically this traditional celebration, thirty-five centuries old, typifies Christ—even in Jewish homes who don't realize that the Messiah for whom they wait has already come.



[The Messianic Passover Haggadah](#) – a Messianic Celebration book

You don't have to be Jewish to relive the Feast of Redemption—just redeemed! This 2-color, 36-page book guides you step by step through the traditional Passover Seder, the dinner Jews celebrate annually to remember the Israelites' rescue from Egyptian bondage.

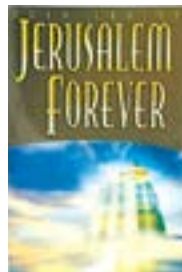
This unique Haggadah focuses on Yeshua's teaching in the Upper Room, which institutes the Lord's Supper. The theme of redemption recurs throughout the evening. You'll find words and sheet music for the songs traditionally sung on Passover. Singing them will enrich your experience.

Scripture quotations come from the popular *Complete Jewish Bible*.



Zola's Classic Study Booklet Library

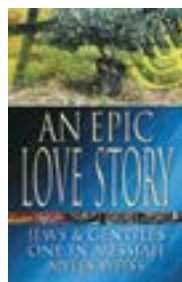
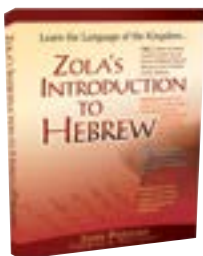
Qty.	Title	Price	Total
___	A Christian Love Story	\$3	___
▶	The Miracle of Passover	\$3	___
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___	How Can a Gentile Be Saved?	\$3	___
___	In My Father's House	\$3	___
___	Israel, My Promised	\$3	___
▶	Jerusalem Forever	\$4	___
___	The Promised Land	\$3	___
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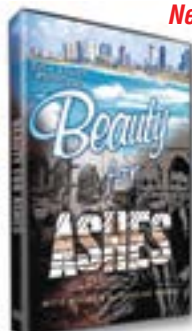
Qty.	Title	Price	Total
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▶	Broken Branches: Has the Church Replaced Israel? (Zola on Replacement Theology)	\$6	___
___	Coming: The End! Russia/Israel	\$10	___
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___	Once Through New Testament	\$9	___
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▶	The Messianic Passover Haggadah	\$6	___
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___	Secrets of the Scrolls (7 programs, 2-DVDs)	\$49	___
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New!

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ORDER FORM continued

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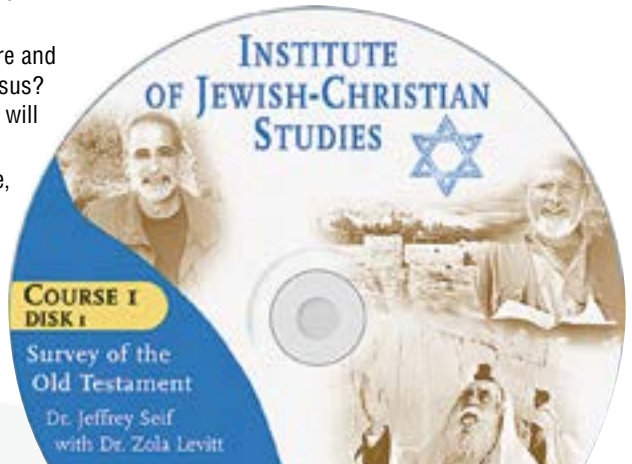


Zola Levitt, a Jewish Believer, was best known as the host of the weekly national television program Zola Levitt Presents. He was also widely published, with some fifty books in several languages, and he conducted regular tours to the Holy Land.

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Dr. Jeffrey Seif, Messianic Believer and co-host of Zola Levitt Presents for five years, is an ordained minister and an expert on subjects related to Israel, the Jewish people, and prophecy. The 12 courses include:

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Building Communities of Kindness

BY ILENE PRUSHER (r) TIME.com

When Israeli Adi Altschuler was 12 years old, she volunteered to spend time with a freckle-faced three-year-old boy with cerebral palsy. That friendship led to a youth movement she named Krembo Wings. (A Krembo is a chocolate-covered marshmallow treat popular among Israeli children.)

“In the beginning, we were just a bunch of 16-year-olds. We didn’t know how to say *vision* or *strategy* or *business plan*,” says Altschuler, now 30.

Israel is a country often in the news for conflicts with its neighbors. But there’s a less immediately visible Israel that thrives even while the conflicts continue to flare—an Israel of high-tech start-ups, a thriving cultural scene, and a burgeoning social entrepreneurship movement. Altschuler is part of that Israel. Krembo Wings became a model of the country’s volunteerism. Altschuler went on to mentor other social entrepreneurs and also founded an organization that encourages Israelis to think differently about the impact of the Holocaust.

A few years ago, Altschuler realized that she, like many other young Israelis, increasingly felt emotionally disconnected from Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Day [observed this year from sunset to sunset Sunday, April 23 to Monday, April 24]. She was unenthusiastic about the country’s marking the day with a big national ceremony, stopping for two minutes of silence, and watching Holocaust documentaries on television. She sent out an email to eight friends saying she wanted to do something different, and would be inviting a concentration camp survivor to her house.

Fifty people showed up, most of them crashers she’d never seen before. Once the Holocaust survivor had told her story and left, the group began discussing what they’d heard. “It was very intimate and inspiring,” Altschuler recalls.

Attendees of that original meeting asked for more and brought others to join. It’s now called *Zikaron B’Salon* (Memories@Home). Last year, more than 500,000 people participated in *Zikaron B’Salon* events in 150 cities in Israel and in 50 other countries, with some members of the Knesset hosting meetings in their own homes. ★



Adi Altschuler

photo credit: ADI ADAR COURTESY LAISHA MAGAZINE



Krembo Wings





Letters to ZLM

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

Breitbart News and Anti-Semitism

Dear ZLM,

While reading "[Surge in Anti-Semitism](#)" in the [January 2017 Levitt Letter](#), I got the feeling I was reading propoganda from AP reporter Rachel Zoll. Especially the paragraph with the remarks about Breitbart News.

I consider myself a Christian and conservative-news junkie. Was this some kind of satire to see if we are awake about what we read? I am a proud supporter of Israel and your ministry.

I understand that anti-Semitism is building here and much more overseas, but a brief explanation as to the use of this article would be appreciated.

With Blessing, R.A. (CA)

Dear R.A.—

The article you and others questioned was selected as a word to the wise. Conduct your own research and even monitor this and other offbeat websites in the context of end-time prophecy, fully aware that issues have risen. As long as you understand the source of your information, you can decide what to believe, what to disregard, and what to investigate further.

This March *Levitt Letter* emphasizes the need for kindness after the extreme negativity of the recent political campaign. Certainly, continue to read news from various sources, but stay aware of hidden agendas so they don't lead you off the path to Yeshua. —Editor

Anti-Semitism = Doom

Dear ZLM,

I have been thinking a lot lately about the events in Europe and all the hate and evil against the Jews throughout the centuries. I have come to one conclusion: **The only explanation for anti-Semitism is anti-Semites' efforts to find a scapegoat for their own shortcomings and failures.**

If you look at any of the groups or civilizations that persecuted the Jews, they were all losers in history. The Romans were one of the first to persecute the Jews, and the Roman Empire crumbled. The Nazis tried the same thing, and they lost everything.

Today, you see the same patterns with the European skin-

► Civilizations, Nations and Empires that tried to destroy the Jewish People

Nation	Status
Ancient Egypt	GONE
Philistines	GONE
Assyrian Empire	GONE
Persian Empire	GONE
Greek Empire	GONE
Roman Empire	GONE
Byzantine Empire	GONE
Crusaders	GONE
Spanish Empire	GONE
Nazi Germany	GONE
Soviet Union	GONE
Hamas	IN PROCESS

The Jewish People. The smallest of nations but with a friend in the highest of places!



heads, who are also total losers. The latest example is the Islamic world, and they haven't yet learned that lesson, even though they have lost every conflict with the Jews.

All groups that have officially opposed and oppressed the Jews are in the dustbin of history. But Israel and the Jews remain. Seems anyone with an IQ above room temperature could learn a lesson here.

God bless and thanks for all you do. — S.C. (AZ)



Dear S.C.—

Congratulations on your understanding of history and current events. I chuckled at your IQ statement. However, the real problem regarding anti-Semitism is that the world has been duped into believing the lies of Satan. The devil's key objective is to destroy Israel because he knows the Bible, which states that in the Day of the Lord "His [Jesus'] feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem" (Zechariah 14:4). No Israel... no Mount of Olives... no return of Jesus... no defeat of Satan. What you are seeing is spiritual warfare!

Standing firmly with Israel — Tony Derrick



Collapsible Drink Koozies

Set of two (2) neoprene insulators with pro-Israel messages.

Never be LUKEWARM again! Neither when it comes to STANDING WITH ISRAEL (note Tony's sign-off above) nor when sipping your favorite beverage. Sized to hold 12 oz. cans, our ministry's full-color koozies feature two distinctive themes:



Side 1: STAND WITH ISRAEL admonition sits next to the insignia of our Messianic decal (menorah–Star of David–fish) on a background of blended US/Israeli flags.

Side 2: DON'T BE LUKEWARM symbol displays the Bible reference Rev. 3:15–16 — "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.... So, because thou art lukewarm... I will spew thee out of My mouth." This design sits atop a rugged Western Wall background.

Offered in pairs; wonderful as gifts and conversation starters.

The Law or Grace? (again)

Dear ZLM,

I am enclosing a check to cover last year's magazine. Please remove my name from your mailing list.

You need to reread Colossians 2:16—“Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths.” These people are gentiles.

Remember, in the New Covenant, teachers will be judged more harshly.

I don't believe the Torah is done away with or that we are no longer under the law. Torah, as you know, is teachings, instructions. The New Covenant looks back at the Torah. Matt. 5:17—“I did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill.”

I always feel bad when a Jewish person assimilates into the Church. That's backward. The Church needs to come in (assimilate) to Judaism. —D.H. (MI)

Dear D.H.—

Thank you for your support of Zola Levitt Ministries. I'm very sorry that you wish to stop receiving our free newsletter. I am confused as to your reason. Your letter implies a number of things, but doesn't point to any wrong being committed by this ministry.

Of course we can agree that the majority of Paul's audience in Colossae was gentile (not Jewish). Taking the Gospel to the gentiles was Paul's calling and mission. He was adamant that the Law could not save or rescue but pointed to the “One” who could. **The passage in Paul's letter to the Colossians that**

you quote above continues in verse 17: “...which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” Paul was convinced that the Old Testament Law was only a preview of the things to come; the reality is found in Jesus Christ. **When people find Jesus, they no longer need the shadow.**

You and I can also agree that the modern-day Church does a very poor job of teaching the Jewish roots of our faith. That is one of the reasons that ZLM exists. But, I cannot imagine that any well-informed Believer thinks the Levitical Law and sacrificial system should be implemented today.

¹¹ *But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

— Hebrews 9:11–14

—Tony Derrick



Our Unchanging God

ZLM,

Your [January 2017 Personal Letter](#) concerning Israel and the Jews stated: “The very existence of the Jew points to the Holy God of the Jews, the veracity of His Word, and the uncompromising nature of His supremacy.”

How can you make such a statement when most Jews don't believe in Christ? I am amazed!

I have a different opinion, but would take too long to explain. Would like an answer from you. — C.L. (NC)

Dear C.L.—

The statement that you reference says more about the sovereign will of God than it does about the Jews! **Whether Jews (or gentiles, for that matter) believe, has nothing to do with the fact that God is holy, His Word is true, and His nature is supreme and sovereign.**

Most people in the days of Noah did not believe; did that change who God was? No. God remained true to Himself and His purpose for creation in His dealings with Noah's generation.

God made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:2–3 — “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. And I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” God does not break His covenant promises. Through a long, arduous, rebellion-filled process, Israel did become that great nation. God's handprint is all over the process (think: prophets, kings, Diaspora, aliyah).

The Abrahamic Covenant has stood through the assaults of Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Moslems, Crusaders, Mamluks, and Ottomans. In 1948, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq tried to conquer Israel. Again, in 1967's Six-Day War, Israel defeated Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Wow... when God makes a covenant, He really does keep it!

It is heartbreaking that most Jews do not believe that Yeshua is the Messiah. It broke His heart as He looked out over Jerusalem and wept, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets, and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing” (Matthew 23:37).

The fact that Israel and the Jews still exist is a testimony to a holy and sovereign God. And we might do well to remember the Apostle Paul's words, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

I'll have to admit, you've stirred a chord in my soul. We Believers must commit ourselves to working and praying for the salvation of our Jewish friends. Will you join me? — Tony Derrick ★



Computers-Turned-Spies

SCIENCE: BY LEE MATHEWS (r) Forbes.com



Want to listen to audio on your computer? You need speakers or a set of headphones. Want to record some voice notes? Normally you'd need a microphone, but it turns out that your output devices will do a pretty good job in a pinch.

Researchers from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev have demonstrated proof-of-concept malware that can turn headphones and non-powered speakers into microphones. It's been known for quite some time that this role reversal was



possible. Speakers and microphones employ similar components to process electrical signals and sound in very similar ways. The cone in a speaker? It's a lot like the diaphragm in a microphone.

There's also a feature in the Realtek audio chipset that's used in the vast majority of (Windows-based) computers that allows jacks to do double duty. All the team

from Ben-Gurion had to figure out was how to surreptitiously flip the switch on a jack and they could turn an output device into an input device. In their testing, a pair of ordinary Sennheiser earbuds worked so well as a microphone that they were able to record clear audio of the voice of a man who was standing 20 feet away from the computer.

Their clever hack might not even require something plugged into an audio jack in all cases: all-in-one computers, laptops, and tablets all have built-in speakers. Lead researcher Mordecai Guri confirmed that they're all theoretically vulnerable to the same "re-tasking" attack as long as they feature a Realtek chip, noting that "it depends on the internal design...and the speakers" that the manufacturer ships.

Frighteningly, Guri cautions that there's no easy software fix. This isn't a traditional vulnerability they're exploiting, after all. The ability to change a jack's function from input to output is a piece of core functionality in Realtek's chips.

Protecting Yourself Isn't Hard. As terrifying as it might sound that someone could potentially be listening to you through your headphones, it's quite easy to prevent that from happening. Unplugging your headphones or speakers when they're not in use will definitely do the job. Bluetooth and USB-connected devices should also be safe from this kind of attack, as should Apple's new headphones that use their Lightning connector. ★

Virtual Reality (VR)/Treadmill Training May Prevent Falls

MEDICINE: AMERICAN FRIENDS TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY / AFTAU.org



A combination of virtual reality and treadmill training may prove effective in preventing dangerous falls associated with aging, Parkinson's disease, mild cognitive impairment, or dementia, according to a new study published in *The Lancet*.

According to the study by Tel Aviv University (TAU) and Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center (TASMC), the intervention combines the physical and cognitive aspects of walking, and could be implemented in gyms, rehabilitation centers, and nursing homes to improve walking skills and prevent the falls of older adults and those with movement disorders like Parkinson's disease.

"Falls often start a vicious cycle with many negative health consequences," explained Dr. Anat Mirelman, one of the lead authors. "The ability of older people to negotiate obstacles can be impaired because of age-related decline in cognitive abilities like motor planning, divided attention, executive control, and judgment. But current interventions typically focus almost exclusively on improving muscle strength, balance, and gait.

"We found that **virtual reality plus treadmill training helped to reduce fall frequency and fall risk for at least six months after training**—significantly more than treadmill training alone."

The TAU-TASMC team, with partners across Europe, collected data from 282 participants between 2013 and 2015. The participants, all aged 60–90, were able to walk at least five minutes unassisted, were on stable medications and, critically, had reported at least two falls in the six months prior to the start of the study. Nearly half of all participants (130) had Parkinson's disease, and some (43) had mild cognitive impairment.



Participants were assigned to treadmill training with virtual reality (146) or treadmill training alone (136). The virtual reality component consisted of a camera that captured the movement of participants' feet and projected it onto a screen in front of the treadmill, so that participants could "see" their feet walking on the screen in real time.

The game-like simulation was designed to reduce the risk of falls in older adults by including real life challenges such as avoiding and stepping over obstacles like puddles or hurdles, and navigating pathways. It also provided motivation to the participants, giving them feedback on their performance and scores on the game.

While the incident rate of falls was similar in the two groups prior to the intervention, six months after training the rate of falls among those who trained with VR dropped by almost 50%. In contrast, there was no significant reduction in the fall rates among subjects who did not train with VR.

"Interestingly, participants in the virtual reality group reported higher scores on user satisfaction questionnaires and a greater desire to continue to exercise with the 'game,'" said Prof. Jeff Hausdorff, another lead author. "These findings suggest that virtual reality was also more likely to be used in the long-term. Exercise needs to be fun and effective if it is going to be used continually." ★

Acts of Kindness Only in Israel



BY JUDITH BERGMAN (r) IsraelHayom.com

A man on a train in Israel saw a young Israeli soldier crying into her cellphone as she tried to talk the Israel Electric Corporation out of disconnecting her electricity due to an outstanding debt of around 2,000 shekels (\$500). The electric company was merciless. But the man went over to the young woman and paid her bill on the spot with his credit card. Another passenger saw the incident and posted the story on Facebook.



This amazing story is not exceptional. On the contrary, acts of kindness are the heart and soul of Israel, and one of the attributes that make it so beautiful, unique, and frankly, wonderful to live in.

A bystander who witnessed last year's mass shooting in Tel Aviv tweeted: "As soon as shots were fired, everyone on the street ran toward—not away from—the scene, to help. Men jumped out of cars. Real courage."

In most cases, human instinct prompts you to run away from a scene of terror and save yourself. But not in Israel. We are all family here, and family members do not abandon each other.

In a social experiment conducted recently in Israel by StandWithUs, a man posing as a blind student asked strangers to break a 20-shekel note

that was actually a 100-shekel note. Every person stopped by the "blind" man pointed out that he was offering a 100-shekel bill. Even with a 200-shekel bill, passersby behaved the same way.

StandWithUs said they borrowed the idea from an American TV show in which an actor pretended to be blind and asked

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





strangers to break a \$5 bill that was actually \$100. Unlike in Israel, many Americans took advantage of the situation.

In an unrelated incident, a mother complained to her local newspaper that no one helped her son on the London Underground when he faced a barrage of anti-Semitic abuse from a stranger. Everyone “buried their heads in their free newspapers or peered in fascination at their laps,” she wrote. Although the victim was Jewish, there was nothing unique about the public’s failure to help.

There are countless stories in the media about bullying, harassment, and actual murders occurring in front of witnesses in the street or on public transportation without anyone helping. One atrocious incident occurred in 2015 on the Metro in Washington, D.C., when a young man was punched, kicked in the head, and stabbed repeatedly in front of 10 passengers who “huddled at both ends of the car and watched in horror,” according to *The Washington Post*.

One witness, a 52-year-old woman, said that she and the other passengers told one another that it was too dangerous to intervene. “Considering he had a knife,” she said, “I did not want him to think that he had to hurt us because we would identify him. I wanted him to think that he could walk away from this, and that’s what he did.”

It is inconceivable that 10 passengers on a train in Israel would watch a fellow Israeli being stabbed and stomped to death without intervening. It just wouldn’t happen.

I am not trying to aggrandize the moral stature of Israelis at the expense of others. I recount these stories because what we have in Israel is precious and rare, especially compared with other places in the world. What we have in our hearts and souls cannot be bought for any amount of money. This love for our fellow Jews should never be taken for granted or belittled—it is a virtue we have managed to retain throughout the centuries, and that is a cause for celebration and gratitude. **And emulation. — Editor** ★



Fake News?

Depressed, Ahmed called an Islamist suicide hotline. A volunteer answering the call enthusiastically asked, “Hey, do you know how to drive a truck?!”



SELECT MEDIA BRIEFS

From Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI.org)



"Jewish Germ"

From Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI.org)

Egyptian cleric Sheik Ali Qassem recently opined that the Jews, the "brethren of apes and pigs," were "the most base, contemptible, and despicable nation upon the Earth," adding that the "Jewish germ" was a cancer gnawing away at the body of the Islamic nation. He praised the recent fires that raged through Israel, adding that the Muslims were united in their loathing of the Jews and in their rejoicing at the harm inflicted by "divine winds and heavenly destructive fires."

Jerusalem Celebrates 50 Years Of Reunification

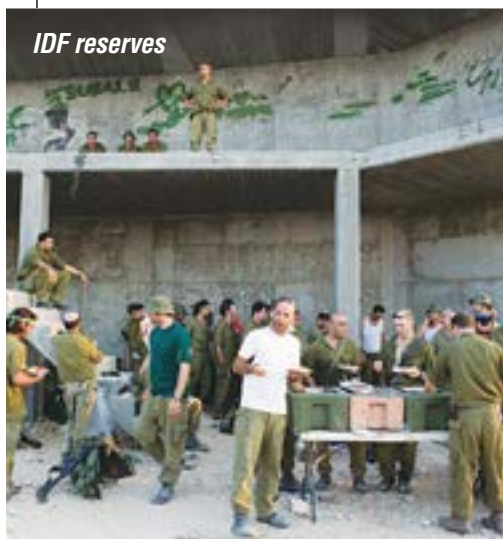
By Becca Noy / JerusalemOnline.com

The Jerusalem Municipality recently released a [new and stunning video](#)



of the city, highlighting many features of Israel's capital city: its rich culture, fine cuisine, historical meaning, impressive architecture, and more. According to the film production company, the video clip

took three pre-production days, 540 hours of shooting throughout Israel's capital, and 30 days of editing.



IDF Reserves

By David Lazarus / Israel Today

When Israeli men show up for their annual army reserve duty, their families back home have to manage alone. Kids need to get to school early, mothers must get to work on time and do the shopping, cooking, laundry...you get the picture.

Therefore, Knesset (parliament) member Eitan Kabel has proposed a new bill giving women whose husbands are in the reserves one paid hour a day off work so they can manage their households. Employers will receive compensation for the



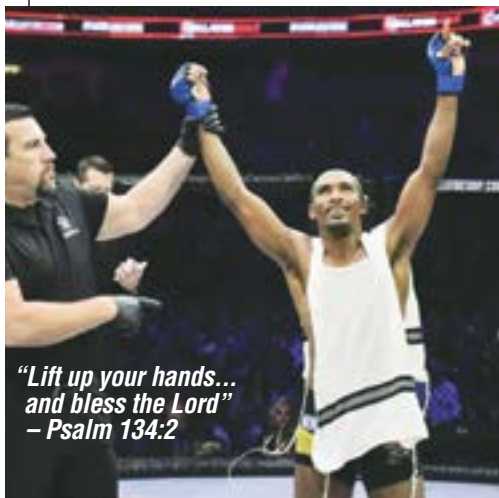
lost hour from Bituah Leumi (National Insurance). Men on reserve duty already receive compensation for their service from Bituah Leumi, and if the bill becomes law, their wives and kids will benefit too.

An Unorthodox Fight

By David Lazarus / *Israel Today*

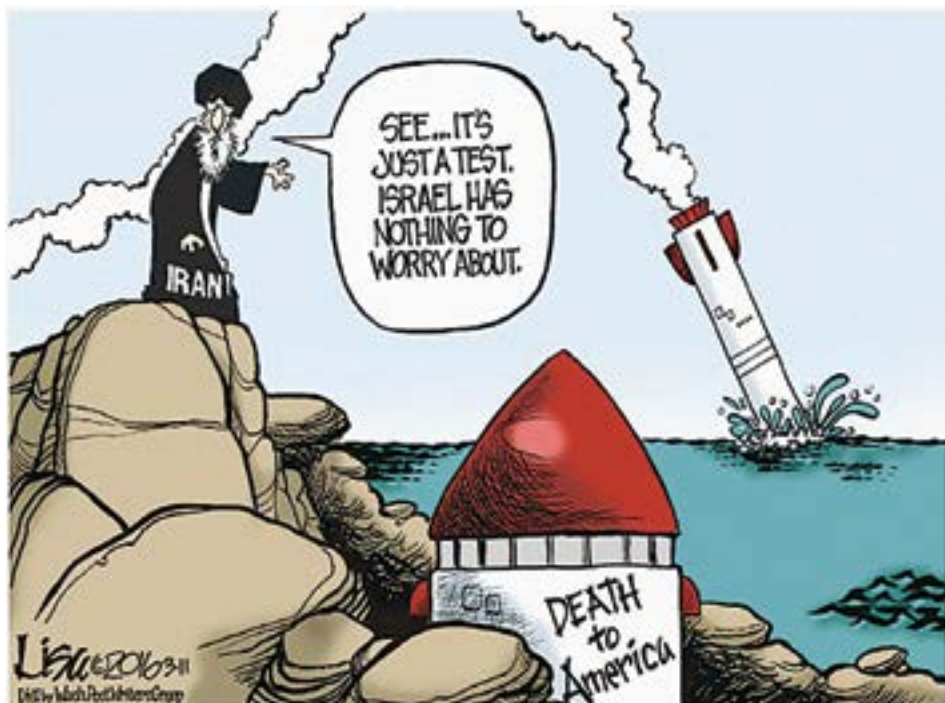
You don't see this every day: an Orthodox Jew celebrating victory at the Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) competition held in Israel. Elazar Tariku, the Israeli fighter, was so overwhelmed by his victory that he pulled off his overheated, sweaty shirt, and with only his *tzitzit* (undergarment tassels, see Numbers 15:38), ran up and shouted the *Shema Yisrael* ("Hear, O Israel") prayer over the loudspeaker!

At least in Israel he didn't need to



*"Lift up your hands...
and bless the Lord"*
– Psalm 134:2

fear anti-Semitic incidents, which are still common in many places around the world, especially during sporting events. When Elazar is not in the ring, he teaches martial arts and self-defense to the Israel Police. ★



Who Wrote the Gospel of Luke?



ARCHAEOLOGY: MIKEAL PARSONS (r) BiblicalArchaeology.org



A SEATED, CONTEMPLATIVE LUKE (pictured) writes as a winged calf floats overhead with a book between its forelegs. By the end of the seventh century, when this illumination was created, most illustrations of Luke included a calf or ox, which Christian tradition had designated as his symbol. (credit: British Library)

The answer seems obvious: a man named Luke, of course. But do we really know this, and, if so, how? The Gospel itself never reveals the author's name. The title "The Gospel According to Luke"—printed in virtually every Christian Bible today—is late: We have no evidence that it appeared on the earliest versions of the Gospel. The earliest extant copy of the Third Gospel bears Luke's name but only dates to about 175 A.D. to 225 A.D, more than a century after the Gospel is thought to have been composed.

Over the centuries, numerous traditions have evolved around this somewhat shadowy evangelist: Luke is credited with writing not only his Gospel but the New Testament Book of Acts as well;

the Book of Acts does not identify its author. He was a physician and a friend of Paul, and tradition describes Luke as a gentile writing for a gentile audience. [\[However, our own Dr. Tom McCall argues persuasively that Luke was Jewish.\]](#)

Textual evidence suggests that these stories are very early, dating to the first and second century. By the fourth century, these traditions were well enough established to be summarized by the historian Eusebius and the Church father Jerome. Still later, Luke was depicted as a portrait painter whose most famous subject was the Virgin Mary herself. These traditions—with further embellishments—continued throughout the Middle Ages. ★



Paris Peace Conference: Spectacular Failure



BY ADAM ELIAHU BERKOWITZ (r) BreakingIsraelNews.com

In what should have been an all-out Israel hate-fest with possibly disastrous consequences for the Jewish state, 70 nations gathered in Paris for a “peace” conference in mid-January—but at the end of the day, the results were lackluster and failed to accomplish anything significant against Israel.



The Paris Peace Summit did not have the effect organizers had hoped

The conference in Paris was expected to have dire repercussions for Israel, envisioned as a way of forcing Israel to accept the two-state solution. Many feared the conference would echo the UN Security Council Resolution 2334, passed in December, declaring Jewish presence in Judea, Samaria, and the Temple Mount to be illegal. But the conference in Paris stopped short of placing the blame entirely on Israel, concluding instead with a plea for direct negotiations. Though the final declaration made reference to the UN resolution 2334, it amended “illegal” language and merely referred to the resolution “which clearly condemned settlement activity,” making no mention of legal status.

Yuval Rotem, Director General of Israel’s Foreign Ministry, considered the conference to be a victory for behind-the-scenes Israeli diplomacy. “Even though we did not attend the conference, we succeeded in getting across our position.”



Perhaps the most significant reason for Israel to breathe a sigh of relief was the specific point concerning Jerusalem. The UN resolution referred to East Jerusalem as “Palestinian territory,” with Israel’s claim to the Temple Mount and the Western Wall having “no legal validity.” The Paris conference dialed that back considerably.

At least one major player experienced a change of heart. Britain, which played a major role in advancing the UN resolution, attended the Paris conference as an observer, choosing not to sign the final statement. The British government’s press statement read:

We have particular reservations about an international conference intended to advance peace between the parties that does not involve them—indeed which is taking place against the wishes of the Israelis—and which is taking place just days before the transition to a new American President when the US will be the ultimate guarantor of any agreement. There are risks therefore that this conference hardens positions at a time when we need to be encouraging the conditions for peace.

Perhaps the most telling sign that the conference was not as anti-Israel as intended was Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’s last-minute decision to cancel his meeting with French President Francois Hollande. French Authorities announced that no new date for the meeting had been scheduled. ★



Drawing the Line on Kindness



BY RACHEL BELL (r) TimesOfIsrael.com

Social media is awash with stories of Jews raising awareness and money for Syrian refugees, marching to fight against Islamophobia, and hosting interfaith meetings and community awareness programs. I see Jews transforming their traumatic and painful association with the Holocaust to make themselves finer by helping refugees.

I struggle to think well of our actions. But more and more, I have a sinking feeling that we are simply deluding ourselves—that we are helping people who only commit themselves to destroying us. I did not start out thinking this way. Sadly, participation in peace forums led me to this conclusion.

I contrast our humanitarian actions to the ongoing protests against the State of Israel; often, marches where the most popular chant seems to be Death to the Jews and others in a similar vein. Increasingly violent acts of hatred toward Jews, for example, have frightened Jews into leaving France in record numbers.

I see Jews putting enormous effort into doing what is good—effort directed at helping a huge, complex group of people with many cultures, opinions, and ideas. It would seem a good thing to do. Yet what I have read about what Muslims actually think, and seeing how far apart we are in terms of our moralities, the less sure I am that this effort makes any sense.

I recently realized something that made me aware of how dangerous our ignorance is: Revenge is considered a right by many people, yet not by us Jews. Acts of violence and murder are committed because it is a RIGHT. Considering other religions as intrinsically inferior is also a RIGHT. People who claim peaceful intent are polite about their reasons, but so many believe in these concepts as “rights” that the concept of “peace” loses meaning.

When I hear the hatred that many Muslim preachers, faith teachers, and organizations express toward other religions—and toward Jews in particular—and realize that even the most noble have moral equivalences that I can’t accept or support, I despair. I now think that I have been a fool to try to reach out, and that we are all fools to try. We are performing acts of kindness out of a madly stupid ignorance.

I wish someone could tell me something that would change my mind and renew my hope. But when the peace groups themselves make me despair, what is left? Every time I turn around, another Jewish person is stabbed or shot in a terrorist act. If these acts of revenge are a “right,” if so many people actually believe that a murder or death can justify revenge, then to struggle for the rights of such people is, on our part, an act of insanity and self-destruction.



It’s incredibly depressing to think that our moral actions are in service of such destructive people. I would love to find out differently. Sadly, that is the way reality seems to be working. But please, prove me wrong. I beg you to prove me wrong. Please.

Perhaps the Israelis and many other Jews around the world would be well advised to bear in mind Jesus’ admonition of Matt. 7:6 — “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.” —Mark ★

JEWISH HUMOR, ETC.

Give 'em an inch...

A little old Jewish lady sells pretzels on the street corner for 25 cents each. Every day, a young man leaves his office building at lunchtime, and as he passes the pretzel stand, he leaves her a quarter but never takes a pretzel. They never exchange a word. This goes on for more than three years.

One day, as the young man passes the old lady's stand and leaves his quarter as usual, the pretzel lady finally speaks to him. "Sir, I appreciate your business. You are a good customer, but I have to tell you that the pretzel price has gone up to 35 cents."

Call me day or night...

The parents at King David High School requested a meeting with the principal, Rabbi Epstein, who assured them that he was happy to hear about any problems they had. "You can call me day or night, at this number..." he added.

Suddenly, the assistant principal cried out, "Hey, that's MY number!" ★



A cheerful heart is good medicine—

Proverbs 17:22



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Imagine receiving greetings on this unique postcard made of matzoh (Jewish unleavened bread). Unfortunately, matzoh is difficult to write on and doesn't mail very well, so we've created a 6" x 6" postcard.



One side is functional—with areas for postage, an address, and a message. The other side quotes Isaiah 53:5—
He was pierced for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

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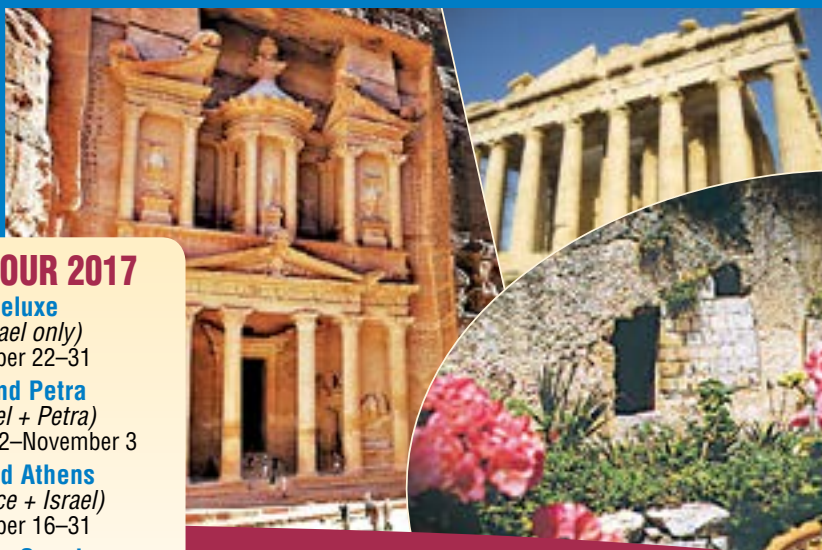
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