



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

Is Christmas a *Jewish* Holiday?

By David Lazarus / *Israel Today*

inside: An Uncommon
Christmas p.6

"It's not Biblical to celebrate Christmas, and Jesus wasn't born in December anyway!"

I hear some Christians, upset by the celebration of Jesus/Yeshua's birth on December 25 because that date was a pagan holiday, say "true believers" best stay away. Shouldn't Christians have a chance to celebrate the coming of the Messiah they love?

Making the date of Jesus's birth so important and calling Christmas a "pagan holiday" unnecessarily judges millions of fellow Christians around the world who love Jesus and want to celebrate the miracle of His birth in Bethlehem ... and it misses the point.

Some of the facts surrounding December 25 and Christmas traditions might surprise you in their Jewish roots!

The Bible does not mention the date of the Messiah's birth, or Christmas. Shepherds tending their flocks at night when they hear

(continued p. 2)

REMEMBER:

Hanukkah is Dec. 10 - Dec. 18 (Jewish Holidays begin and end at sunset), *Christmas* is Friday, Dec. 25

Why Do Muslims Hate Christmas?

By Rami Dabbas
IsraelToday.co.il

When Muslim Brotherhood leader Yusuf al-Qaradawi launched into a bitter sermon against the use of Christmas decorations in Doha, Qatar where he lives, he was echoing many other Muslim leaders and scholars who vehemently oppose and even issue fatwas against Muslims who participate in Christian festivals. Even wishing a Christian "happy holidays" is enough to get a Muslim condemned.

Abhorrence of Christmas is all part of a broader campaign of hate against Christians, first and foremost in the Middle East. But this loathing belies the Muslims'

(continued p. 3)



Is Christmas a Jewish Holiday? *continued from cover*

the news of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:8) suggests springtime, when the weather is warm and the ewes are lambing in the fields. On a cold and rainy December night, sheep were most likely indoors.

Early Christians didn't have much evidence to go on in determining a date for celebrating Jesus' birth. Irenaeus (c. 130–200), Tertullian (c. 160–225), and Origen of Alexandria (c. 185–254) went so far as to renounce the Roman birthday celebrations of their time. This might be a clue that the first Jewish and gentile Christians would not have celebrated Messiah's birth at all. The earliest record of a winter date for Yeshua's birth appears more than 300 years later, in a 4th century Roman calendar stating that December 25 is the day that "Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea."

The most popular theory on how the December date was chosen is that it was assimilated into Christianity from the Roman mid-winter feast celebrating the birth of the "Unconquered Sun." According to this theory, Christians chose December 25 to help spread Christianity throughout the Roman world by merging the Messiah's birth celebration into an existing holiday to make it easier for non-believers to adopt the new religion. A modern equivalent to this strategy is using upbeat music in worship to attract young people.

There is, however, another, more Jewish way to account for the December 25 dating of Christmas. The key is the date of Yeshua's death on Passover.

Around A.D. 200, Tertullian of Carthage (where early Jews received the Gospel) reported correctly that 14 Nisan (the Hebrew lunar date for Passover) was the day of the crucifixion according to the Gospel of John. In the year when Jesus died, this date was March 25 in the Roman (solar) calendar. Later, March 25 was celebrated as the Feast of the Annunciation—when the Angel Gabriel announced Jesus' conception to the Virgin Mary—and this was exactly nine months before December 25.

It is highly likely that the March 25 and December 25 dates were determined by early followers of Jesus, influenced by Jewish traditions that the Messiah had been conceived and crucified on the same date (14 Nisan). And thus, nine months later, Jesus was born . . . on December 25.

To modern Christians, the notion that Messiah's conception and crucifixion occurred on the same date may sound strange. But the concept that significant events occur on similar dates

was well-established in ancient Jewish tradition around the time of Jesus and stems from the Jewish understanding that all aspects of redemption are bound together. For example, Jews celebrate the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai on *Shavuot* (Pentecost), traditionally considered to also be the day that King David was born.

Even St. Augustine seems to have adopted this Hebrew dating concept. In his *On the Trinity* (c. 399–419) he wrote: "For he [Jesus] is believed to have been conceived on the 25th of March, upon which day also he suffered; But he was born, according to tradition, upon December the 25th."

Jewish traditions around the time of Jesus easily incorporated days, times, and seasons into their annual festival calendar when the Bible set no clear date. Early Christians did the same with Christmas.

Even if we reject the Jewish traditions surrounding the December date for Christmas, **the idea that Christians cannot celebrate because it is based on a pagan holiday seems to contradict clear Biblical testimony.** God is in the business of redeeming that which is ungodly and making it holy, right? Even the very place where God chose to manifest His presence was in Solomon's Temple, a structure built on a Jebusite "threshing floor" and a shrine to their gods of fertility (2 Sam. 24:18–25).

The fact that God has redeemed sinful men and women like you and me and put us into His service is the ultimate proof that God can make anything pure.

It appears that some aspects of Christmas may have begun with pagan traditions. It also seems likely that the December 25 date originated with ancient Jewish ideas that great things happen at the same time of year.

But when Christians cry foul and denounce other Christians as "unBiblical" (or less pure than themselves) because they choose to celebrate the miracle of Messiah on December 25, they are "straining out a gnat while swallowing a camel," as Jesus warned (Matt. 23:24). They miss the whole point.

As a Hebrew poet once declared, "For even if Messiah was born a thousand times in Bethlehem but never in my own heart, my world would surely be lost."

One day, we will know the exact date Messiah was born; but in that place and time, I doubt that it will matter at all. —David ★



- Teaching**
- 4 Wisdom's Lessons in Living Life**
(Ecclesiastes 7:15–29)
- Studio Co-hosts**
- 6 An Uncommon Christmas**
- 7 Would Jesus Wear a Mask?**
- Classic Zola**
- 8 Zola on Prophecy:
Ants on a Picture (part 2)**
- 10 Did Jesus/Yeshua
Celebrate Hanukkah?**
- Ask the Chaplain**
- 12 Did Jesus need to be
born of a virgin?**
- Zola Tours**
- 13 Taking Our Travel
Privileges for Granted**
- A Note from Mark**
- 14 More Cowbell / More Zola**
- 15 ZLM Bulletin Board**
- Parsons: Hebrew Lesson**
- 16 Vine and Branches**



- 18 ZLM Order Form**
- 21 Fun & Games**
- 21 Crossword Puzzle**
- 22 Letters to ZLM**



- Science**
- 24 Hydrogen-Fueled Future
Fires Up Israel**



- Medicine**
- 27 Jewish Scientist
Shares Nobel Prize for
Finding Hepatitis C**



- 30 Select Media Briefs**



- Archaeology**
- 32 2,000-Year-Old Mikvah
Gets Permanent Home**



- Muslim Focus**
- 34 Lies & Propaganda
in Islam**



- 35 Jewish Humor**



Why Do Muslims Hate Christmas? *continued from cover sidebar*

claims to be a “religion of peace.” Religious and ethnic minorities in the Middle East experience nothing but hostility and violence at the hands of the Muslims. Why should a Muslim cleric be upset over a colorfully decorated Christmas tree that symbolizes joy, love, and peace?

By contrast, Christians in this region readily congratulate Muslims on their Islamic festivals. Some might feel compelled to do so, but many wish our Muslim brothers and sisters a “happy holiday” because Jesus taught us to love and accept everyone.

The Muslim leaders and clerics who incite hostility toward Christians and Christmas are hypocrites when they ignore just how much local Christians do to advance and make life better in their countries. They demand respect from those they openly despise. And then they go running to the “Christian” West for medical treatment when they get sick.

Do Muslims not drive cars and make

use of other technologies developed and built in the West, which was founded on Judeo-Christian faith and ideals? Is it not part of the morality of their religion to recognize those who have provided them with the ability to live an easier, more carefree life? What Muslim achievements are bettering the lives of their own people, let alone the global community? What services rendered, unless you count the export of violence and hatred toward those who don't agree with Islam?

Christmas celebrates the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is recognized by the Koran, by the way, even though the nature of that recognition differs from Christians' viewpoint.

As the only truly democratic and free state in the Middle East, Israel deserves thanks for providing Christians a place where they can feel safe and free to celebrate their religion. Happy Hanukkah, and may God bless and prosper you! ★

Wisdom's Lessons in Living Life:

Ecclesiastes 7:15–29

Tony Derrick
Theologian for
Zola Levitt Ministries



The author of Ecclesiastes is the son of David and king of Israel. Solomon is a uniquely gifted person who influenced countless people in his lifetime and continues to positively influence those who take the time to read his sage advice.



Vanity of Vanities; All Is Vanity, illustration by Isaak Asknazy (1856–1902) for the book *Brockhaus and Efron Jewish Encyclopedia* (1908–1913)

Solomon begins this last section of chapter seven with a rather

bold statement: *“I have seen everything in my days of vanity”* (7:15a). But he doesn’t stop there; he defines what he has seen. *“There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness”* (7:15b).

Say it with me: “That’s not fair!” — exactly Solomon’s point about the days of his vanity. All of us want the “good guy” to win; but we know from observation or personal experience that justice doesn’t always prevail.

Consider the fact that our Lord was beaten and crucified because He wanted mankind to escape an eternity without God. Fair? No! But, aren’t you thankful that He was willing to take our place on that cross?

Let’s look at the remainder of this chapter and unlock more of Solomon’s pearls of wisdom.

Live Life in the Middle Ground (7:16–18)

Verse 16 warns not to be caught up in legalistic self-righteousness. Simply put: Don’t be so set in ritual that you can’t meet people (e.g., unbelievers) where they are in life. Not everyone is ready to hear the Gospel, so we must develop a more suitable approach than whacking someone on the head with a Bible. Solomon isn’t talking about actually destroying yourself, but of sabotaging your opportunity to be heard.

Remember the “woes” that Jesus pronounced on the Pharisees in Matthew 23? Take a break and read through Matthew 23. It will put an exclamation point on what Solomon is conveying to his readers.

In verses 17 and 18, Solomon warns about being foolish. Fear of God will be a guide when you get carried away in self-righteousness, or when foolishness begins to interfere with wisdom.

Live Life with Confidence (7:19–22)

In verse 19, Solomon notes that wisdom is greater than military strength. Solomon illustrates this concept in Ecclesiastes 9:13–15, *“This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed great to me: There was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great*

(continued next page)





snare around it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man."

Verse 20 reminds us of Paul's words in Romans 3:23, "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*"

Verses 21–22 advise us not to allow criticism to derail our commitment to God and the work to which we are called. I've never seen a monument erected to a critic. However, verse 22 brings a warning that we are to be strong, not arrogant, in dismissing a critic. We too have probably been guilty of criticizing others. (The term "curse" doesn't imply foul language but rather being dismissive of another's life or lifestyle.)

Live Life Admitting Limitations (7:23–26)

Verses 23–25 reiterate Solomon's life journey. He admits that wisdom cannot answer every question in life; some things are left as God's mysteries.

Verse 26 can be taken in a couple of ways. The "woman" could be a metaphor for folly. Folly (wickedness) is a snare more bitter than death. The only escape is to please God, which would mean pursuing God rather than pleasure.

Verse 26 can also be taken literally, since Solomon understood that his foolish pursuits were as much to blame as the women he was pursuing. He did have 700 wives and 300 concubines.

Live Life in the Truth (7:27–29)

In verse 27, Solomon admits that he is baffled as to why he does what he does. Does that ring a New Testament bell? In Romans 7:15, Paul writes: "*For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.*" Solomon and Paul are on the same page; neither of them understands why he does the things that he'd rather not do.

Solomon admits in verse 28 that an upright man or woman is impossible to find. (The "*one in a thousand*" is often interpreted to be the Messiah.) A very familiar story in Genesis 18 unfolds as Abraham pleads with God to spare Sodom if he can find ten righteous men. He can't, and Sodom is destroyed. God is patient and merciful, but He cannot continually ignore the sins of His people.

Solomon concludes by reminding us Bible readers that God created humans as perfect: "*God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them*" (Genesis 1:27), but people "*have sought out many schemes*" (Eccles. 7:29).

The truth of the matter is that after the fall, man became more interested in devising his own schemes than in listening to God's directives. The world hasn't changed since Solomon's days. His now familiar conclusion bears repeating:

"There's nothing new under the sun." ★



An Uncommon Christmas

David and Kirsten Hart
Studio co-hosts of
Our Jewish Roots



The Nativity, woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld for *Die Bibel in Bildern* (1860)

Recently in the television studio while taping the end-of-the-year program for *Our Jewish Roots*, we confronted the dilemma of decorating the set for the holidays. As a program about the Jewish roots of Christianity, we understand that the timing of this important celebration can stoke controversy. We put our best foot forward by simply hanging some greenery. **Please appreciate that this *Levitt Letter* observes the birth of Christ, no matter when it occurred.**

Whatever time of year you may believe the Messiah was born, we can all agree that He did, in fact, come and that His arrival didn't fulfill the grand expectations Jewish people had for their Savior's entrance. He most definitely came to this world in an uncommon fashion.

Isaiah described the Messiah's birth hundreds of years before its fulfillment. In Chapter 9, Isaiah bestowed the titles "Prince of Peace" and "Mighty God." Such a personage would certainly be born in a palace! A mighty ruler who would bring about a new kingdom should arrive with widespread celebration. However, anyone familiar with Luke's Nativity account or numerous Christmas carols knows that He arrived in the most humble way possible. Mankind's Redeemer was born in a stable — not at all what the Jews anticipated.

It would be an understatement to say that 2020 turned out differently from what we envisioned. Loss of jobs and, unfortunately, loved ones as a result of Covid-19's unexpected twists and turns leaves us realizing that this year's holiday season may simply not be what we're used to. We recently read advice not to have big holiday get-togethers this year. Family gatherings and community events that traditionally bring us joy in this season may need to be toned down this year. We'll have an uncommon Christmas.

But *uncommon* isn't necessarily a bad thing. A synonym for "uncommon" is extraordinary, and the definition for "extraordinary" is *very unusual or remarkable*. Isn't that the exact definition of our Savior? He wasn't what the Jewish people expected — He was remarkably more! More than they could ever imagine.

The Hart family's prayer this year for you and your family is that you will have an extraordinary and remarkable season celebrating Yeshua's birth. Perhaps this is the year to start new traditions. In the changes and alterations to your routine, may God show up in unexpected ways to demonstrate how incredibly much He loves you!

We love you, too, and are thankful for our supportive ZLM family. ★



Back to
Cover



To
Index

WWJD: Would Jesus Wear a Mask?



BY KARL LORENZ, M.D. (r) *The Dallas Morning News*

In my youth, the book *In His Steps* by Charles M. Sheldon challenged me to ask a simple question at the heart of Christian identity: “What would Jesus do?” Sheldon illustrates how this question can prompt reflection and a change of heart. Asking “What would Jesus do?” now seems quite useful as a way to reflect on our choices as moral, rather than political, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What would Jesus do if asked to wear a mask?

The Book of Galatians celebrates Christian freedom, declaring that it is “for freedom that Christ has set us free.” However, it offers a caution not to use that freedom for self-indulgence, but rather “to serve one another in love.” From God’s perspective, our freedom is intended to be used for others’ benefit. Might using our freedom from selfishness to love others apply to mask wearing?

Christian love is defined as putting the needs of others above our own, exemplified in an ultimate way through Jesus’ sacrifice for humanity on the cross. We can imitate Jesus’ example of love in our physical care for others.

In the Biblical parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31–46), Jesus finds fault even with what we do not do (indifference) in the face of others’ needs.

Wearing a mask is the opposite of indifference—it actively demonstrates to members of our community that we care about them.

During this pandemic, caring for others means safeguarding those who may face high health risks. Recent research shows a much higher risk of dying among older people, men, those with underlying health conditions, and people of color—but small children also have died from the infection.

It is more and more clear that wearing a mask probably helps—and wearing one doesn’t require much of a sacrifice. Basic studies of viruses and recent studies of communities that required masks support that the practice is effective. That is reason enough when the risk to some neighbors is great. Keeping your distance and wearing a mask are the most important ways to show you care.

The Bible praises examples of sacrifice that are small but done for the right reason, e.g.

the elderly widow who gave her mite out of love for God. Jesus is interested in the deeper motives behind what we do, and the motive He values most is love.

But you don’t need to be a Christian to appreciate this principle. Even secular philosophers embrace the idea that we should act to benefit others.

You might be fortunate and not get sick; but the issue isn’t about you. It’s about your freedom to serve others.

What would Jesus do? He’d wear a mask.



Detail of *Christ the Pantocrator* by Jovan Zograf (1384) (mask added)

Goodness gracious! The “Great Mask Debate of 2020.” Who thought we’d have such controversy over wearing a mask? If you disagree with this article, would you kindly agree to disagree? —David and Kirsten

Wearing N95 masks for self-protection and less substantial masks as a courtesy to others is not a one-size-fits-all debate. Many spouses, for example, never wear masks in their cars since no one else rides with them. Having chronic bronchitis or COPD exempts many from wearing masks, but they could be well advised to do so in public places. Outdoor joggers, cyclists, and tennis players who stay away from others may not need masks.

It’s probably a good idea to exhale ever-so-gently when passing others, even when outdoors. Distancing yourself from those without masks is easy enough under many circumstances, especially if you act like you’re about to sneeze or cough—ha! Staying at home, of course, is an optimal way to avoid debating the mask issue. —Mark ★



Zola on Prophecy: Ants on a Picture

PART 2

Classic Zola Levitt
from 1990
30 years ago



source: www.tbs.com/lessons/ny5/vrjpburzy/russian-revolution

The Soviet Union In Its Heyday

Dear Zola: We are aware that the old Roman Empire must be revived, but Bible scholars have generally designated East Germany as Gomer who will side with Russia in the invasion of Israel. It seems that both Daniel and Ezekiel's prophecies could have been nicely fulfilled even if Eastern Europe had remained communist and under the control of Russia. Your thoughts?

Defining the Terms

Though it is difficult to see the whole picture of global affairs —we are like ants walking on a large painting, trying to discern what it depicts —a few things are clear even in this transitory time. First, the road to democracy is overwhelmingly strewn with obstacles. We can see troubles even now in Romania, which last December provided a refreshing example of freedom seeming to spring forth from the very stones.

Now the Romanians are lambasting the new government as being too much like the old one. The entire Soviet Union itself is having enormous troubles. When Zbigniew Brzezinski was the guest of Ted Koppel on *Nightline* recently, he pictured three different futures for the U.S.S.R. Sadly, all of them involved major violence.

- If the U.S.S.R. is headed for democracy, he reasoned, there will be much resistance and many calamities over that.
- If, on the other hand, it splits off into nationalist regimes, as the Baltic governments are now trying to do, that will produce rivalry and still more trouble.
- Thirdly, if there is a reaction against the present *perestroika* (economic and political program) and a form of communism returns, then rebellion against restoration of the old order will result.

It is in this third theory —the reactionary force theory—that one could see a spiteful Russian invasion of a small country like Israel as logical in the Russian mind. I have previously suggested that a foreign adventure could be a Communist way of galvanizing the Soviet people under one flag again. And of course, the takeover of Israel would be a very profitable adventure, if only they could get the job done.

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Photo by
Anton Darius
on Unsplash

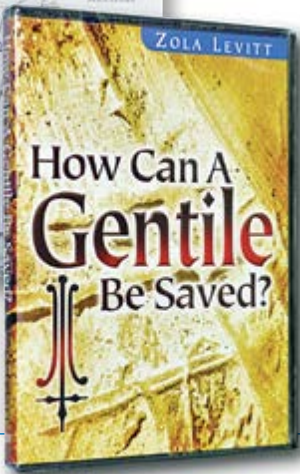
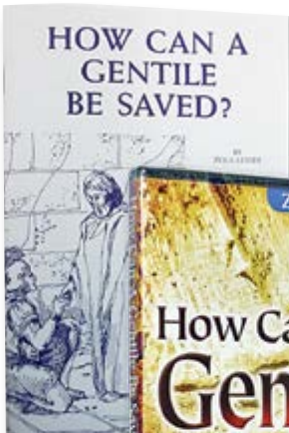
We might also look to a whole new view of what an invasion amounts to in the modern world. Until recently, whole nations attacked other whole nations. But the newest look in warfare has to do with small but extremely deadly forces using devastating weaponry out of all proportion to their numbers. In other words, **a small force of Russian and East European reactionaries could well join with terroristic forces** already well established in Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya to launch a potentially lethal invasion of Israel.

With nuclear weapons and poison gas, one could see how a relatively few people (not necessarily authorized under the central governments of their nations) could effect a death blow on a tiny nation like Israel. In fact, in the past, commentators have wondered why Russia, with all its might and fully one hundred times the size of Israel in population, would need many allies to carry out such an invasion. Perhaps the small force theory better fits the times.

All this is only an exercise in speculation, of course. I'm one of those ants on the painting, and I don't know what the whole picture is about either. But I can say this: Ezekiel's prophecy still looks imminent, and the configuration of nations that he envisioned is still reasonable for this deadly undertaking. I've never been convinced that Russia and Eastern Europe are less dangerous now than before. In fact, the desperation caused by their economic circumstances might make them behave very foolishly at some point.

In a very interesting article in *The Jerusalem Post* recently, Garry Kasparov — the Soviet chess grandmaster, World Chess Champion, and certainly a master of strategy — gave his very informed point of view on the situation. First, he chastised President George H.W. Bush and the other Western leaders for saying, "Who could have imagined it?" He continued, "Well, *he* should have imagined it for a start. You don't pay presidents of the United States to be surprised by situations they have been trying to bring about for forty years. You pay them to be ready. That is what political leaders are for."

As a chess player myself, I am deeply respectful of a grandmaster who makes a profession of outthinking his opponents day by day. In summary, I know that many of you ask about the prophetic significance of these developments, and I hope that the above thoughts help in some way. ★



[How Can a Gentile Be Saved?](#)

[study booklet & teaching CD](#)
by Zola Levitt

As a Jew, Zola was constantly asked, "How did you get saved?" — as though Jewish salvation is hard to find in Scripture. In this thought-provoking Bible study, Zola turned the tables by asking, "How Can A *Gentile* Be Saved?" An interesting and unique look at grafting non-Jews into God's plan, the study booklet is one of 12 in Zola's Classic Study Library.

(This and many titles also available as eBooks.)

Did Jesus/Yeshua Celebrate Hanukkah?



BY CHADWICK HARVEY (r) LinkedIn.com



Jesus Walks in the Portico of Solomon (depicting John 10:22–23), opaque watercolor by James Tissot (French, 1836–1902), Brooklyn Museum

Hanukkah — also called the Feast of Dedication or the Festival of Lights — is an eight-day celebration that runs from 25 Kislev (evening of December 10 this year) through Tevet 3 (December 18 this year). Most gentile Christians believe that Hanukkah is only to be celebrated by the Jewish people. However, **Hanukkah is actually a prophetic festival of God and should be observed by Jews and gentiles.**

The Origin and History of Hanukkah

Modern-day Christians often neglect the inter-Testamental period, the four centuries between OT Malachi and NT Matthew. Interestingly, during this time period, many Biblical prophecies were fulfilled. Within this time frame, we discover the origins of Hanukkah.

In 333 B.C., the Medo-Persian Empire (Iran) was overthrown by Alexander the Great and the Grecian Empire (Turkey). Shortly after Alexander's death, the Grecian Empire was divided into four regions ruled by four of his generals: Ptolemy, Seleucus, Cassandra, and Lysimachus. In 175 B.C., an evil king, Antiochus Epiphanes IV — a prophetic foreshadow to the antiChrist — rose to power from the Seleucids (Dan. 11).

During Antiochus' reign, he expanded his empire, aggressively dominating the cultures he ruled, including Jerusalem and the Jews. Because of his violent and tyrannical nature, he was in direct conflict with the Jewish people, especially traditionalists who sought to keep the Torah, the pure Jewish traditions, and the Levitical (Zola's tribe) priesthood.

In his attempt to Hellenize the Jewish people, Antiochus sold the position of High Priest to Meneleus, who was not of priestly lineage (Levi).

Antiochus attacked Jerusalem in 167 B.C., killed approximately 40,000 Jews, and sold another 40,000 into slavery. He banned upon penalty of death all the Jewish traditions, feast days, dietary laws, customs, Torah study, circumcision, and

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anything else held holy by the Jewish people. He also set up a statue of Zeus in the Temple, the first abomination of desolation, and defiled the Temple by sacrificing swine and other pagan offerings on the altar (Daniel 11). These actions gave rise to the revolt led by the five sons of the priest Mattathias and especially his son Judah “the Hammer” Maccabee. (Maccabee comes from four Hebrew words: *Mi Kamocha Ba’eilim Hashem* — Who is like You, O God?).

Following the three-year guerrilla war, these traditionalists defeated the armies of Antiochus IV and re-dedicated the Temple in 164 B.C. The festival of Hanukkah commemorates the Maccabean victory and Temple rededication.

While these amazing events are recorded in the books of the Apocrypha and Maccabees, modern Hanukkah primarily focuses on the “miracle of the oil.” This tradition proclaims that after the Temple was recaptured, the supply of holy oil was sufficient to light the menorah for only one day, but due to a miracle from God, **the oil burned for eight days!** However, the oil story account was added to the Talmud approximately 600 years later, around A.D. 450–500. The *Hanukkiah* (Hanukkah menorah) is lit for eight days in remembrance of this miracle. (*Hanukkah* (חנכה) means “dedication” in Hebrew.)

Did Yeshua (Jesus) celebrate Hanukkah?

Given this history, many gentile Christians ask whether Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday and should gentile Christians celebrate it? The simple answer is that Yeshua, our King and Messiah, celebrated Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22–30).

Clearly, Messiah is in the Temple during the Feast of Dedication. Keep in mind, He was not from Jerusalem, and for Him to travel during the winter was no small undertaking, thus showing us *the importance He placed on the festival of Hanukkah*. During this feast, Yeshua walked in the Temple, which is where the festival would have occurred, surrounded by many people. He then clearly identified Himself as one with the Father, who has ultimate authority over all of Creation.

Furthermore, if we look at the traditional celebration of Hanukkah, which centers around candle lighting, we can also see prophetic symbolism. The *Hanukkiah* is similar to a menorah, except that it has nine points instead of seven. The center point, generally higher than the rest, holds the *shamash* (servant candle). This candle is used to light all of the other eight candles, one on each evening of Hanukkah. Each night the *Hanukkiah* becomes brighter and brighter. It is not intended to illuminate any task or room, but rather set apart for reflection upon the *great miracle of God*.

Similar to the *shamash*, Yeshua/Jesus first came as the suffering servant Messiah (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22). He came not only to be a servant, but to teach us to be servants, as well.

Thinking that Hanukkah was only for Jewish people, my family missed out on this magnificent celebration of light and God’s provision of miracles for His people. —Kirsten

(Please see [The Feast of Lights on p. 20.](#)) ★



Q. Did Jesus need to be born of a virgin?

Dr. Todd Baker
Zola Levitt Ministries
Staff Theologian



A. Yes. Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 required the Messiah to be born of a virgin, because His life had to be pure and holy. The virgin birth accomplished redemptive purposes for the salvation of Israel and all humanity — only possible when God was incarnate (took on human form) in the person of Jesus Christ.

These points should help the Bible believer better understand the need for the virgin birth:

Jesus had to be born of a virgin because it is required by prophecy (Isaiah 7:14). Jesus committed no sin (1 Peter 2:22). The only way Jesus could be a sinless man was to be conceived without a sinful nature and that means without the aid of a man, through whom Adam's corrupt seed is passed. (Romans 5 teaches that all humans born after The Fall acquired a sinful nature from Adam.) As the only begotten Son of the Heavenly Father, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, endowing Him with both a human nature (from Mary) and a divine nature (from God).

Christ's conception in the virgin womb of Mary (Matthew 1:20–23), who had known no man (Lk. 1:34), left no doubt that this was a supernatural conception without the aid of a man. It would have been impossible for Jesus to say, I am the Son of God, if He were conceived from a sinful, human father. ***"For it was fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens"*** (Hebrews 7:26).

Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God. His earthly attributes and qualities were all Godlike: Jesus was born as God in the flesh, and all that God is, so is Jesus (John 1:1–2, 14). The Father and Son are both God and equal in deity (John 5:19–30). ***If Jesus were not born from a virgin, His claim to be God would be arguable.*** The virgin birth makes all the difference. If Christ had been born with human involvement — with the possibility of a human father — the entire Christian Gospel would be corrupted, destroying the meaning of Jesus Christ as a Divine Redeemer and robbing us of all hope of salvation.

Jesus had to be born sinless to be a perfect sacrifice on the cross. ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"*** (Romans 6:23). If Jesus were only human, His sacrifice on the cross would not have satisfied the justice of a holy God offended by human sin and evil. If Jesus had a human father, He could not be God in the flesh. Only the virgin birth of Christ proves for all generations that He had no earthly father. It is an absolute essential. Those who deny the virgin birth of Christ deny the Biblical Jesus.

This also explains why other self-proclaimed or chosen messiah's cannot be The Messiah. Bar Kokhba, though an amazing military leader, was not born of a virgin. Neither were the others. ★



Madonna and Child, oil painting by Giovanni Battista Salvi da Sassoferrato (1609–1685)



To
Index

Taking Our Travel Privileges for Granted

BY SANDRA LUTTRELL (r) Zola Tours Manager



What a unique time we live in. This year has given everyone the world over a huge wake-up call on taking for granted the privileges we enjoy.

For Zola Tours and our 2020 pilgrims, it was the first time ever that we had a canceled tour; and not just one, but two! Imagine planning for this trip of a lifetime, spending time, effort, and prayer only to have it ripped away just weeks before departure. That happened to our 2020 Spring Tour pilgrims. You could expect them to be devastated and flat out angry about it... but, they weren't. Everyone was amazing, and most decided just to move on in faith to the Fall 2020 tour... and then the lockdowns happened again!

For our very dear friends and partners in Israel, Jordan, Greece, and Turkey, the toll has been doubly critical, since tourism plays a substantial role in the financial stability of these countries. Our hearts and prayers go out to each of our 2020 pilgrims and to our friends and partners in the travel industry!

So, now we and our faithful pilgrims have set our sights on the Spring Tour 2021 in hope and faith that it will happen. We rely on the help, guidance, blessings, and provision of Yeshua, if that pilgrimage is His will. **Prayerfully, we anticipate finally stepping foot in the Holy Land in spring.** Our co-hosts David and Kirsten Hart look forward to returning, but for many others it will be their first time

to experience the spiritual encounters that await them.

Yeshua never fails to provide the most amazing spiritual, physical, and emotional encounters during our time in Israel and at Petra in Jordan! Our pilgrims often report that meeting Him on His "home turf" creates magnificent and truly life-changing awakenings. Many of our pilgrims cannot wait to return, this time with family and friends. Our superb land agent Immanuel Tours facilitates the accommodations for carefree travel.

Please prayerfully consider joining us for an exciting Biblical study tour in March 2021. Of course, only Yeshua knows when Holy Land tourism will resume. Meanwhile, Zola Tours and our current pilgrims stand in faith, knowing that our God can turn everything around in a moment with His perfect will and timing. We hope that you will join us in faith, too.

For tour information, please see [page 36](#) and the details at levitt.com/tours. You may also contact me at (214) 696-9760 or at travel@levitt.com. I will be glad to help in any way possible.

Let's treasure and take advantage of our privilege of traveling to Israel and other lands of the Bible.

We're always honored to experience Yeshua's neighborhood with Zola Tours pilgrims and share with you viewers in your living rooms. Kirsten and I can't wait until we can set foot again in the Promised Land. — David ★



left: An Israeli ultra-Orthodox Jewish man prays, and ... **right:** others participate in the Cohanim priestly caste blessing during the Jewish holiday of Passover at the Western Wall, in Jerusalem's Old City on April 10, 2020.



credit: AP Photo/Sebastian Schiermer

More Cowbell / More Zola

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



Will Ferrell and
Christopher Walken
on *Saturday Night Live*

*More Zola is better; definitely not less. On a regular basis, no one has compared to Zola, particularly at present — no disrespect. For me, less Zola, less giving. — Bruce Dickinson**

“More Cowbell” was a comedy sketch that aired on *Saturday Night Live (SNL)* in April 2000. It fictionalized the studio recording of Blue Öyster Cult’s hit single “[Don’t Fear] The Reaper” (1976).** Christopher Walken portrayed stone-faced music producer Bruce Dickinson while Will Ferrell hammed up his role as the fictional cowbell player Gene Frenkle.

It is key to this six-minute laugh riot that the cowbell playing was comedi-ally too loud to begin with.

shorturl.at/svxOP

SNL, love it or hate it, has been on national television for 45 years — three years longer than *Zola Levitt Presents / Our Jewish Roots*. Without fail, one generation of *SNL* viewers after another has lamented how much better the weekly variety TV series was just a few years before, thanks to supposedly superior casts and writers. Regardless, “More Cowbell” is considered one of *SNL*’s best skits of all time. In fact, “**more cowbell**” became an **American pop culture catchphrase**.

Examples of Bruce Dickinson’s persistent requests include:

- I coulda *used* a little more cowbell.
- You’re gonna *want* that cowbell on the track.
- I’ve *gotta* have more cowbell, Baby!
- Guess what: I’ve got a *fever*. And the only *prescription* is more cowbell!

Now, imagine Bruce Dickinson making the above statements while substituting *Zola* for each *cowbell*!



Some of our ministry’s most loyal supporters seem as fixated with my father Zola as Bruce Dickinson with his cowbell decibels.

Zola, of course, was a *messenger* — not a prophet. **This organization has always been a non-prophet ministry as well as non-profit.** To be sure, our television programs, *Levitt Letters*, and www.levitt.com will always be about the Bible’s message rather than any messenger *du jour*.

Here are some doses of reality:

- Zola has been composing music for heavenly angels for nearly 15 years.
- All of Zola’s film footage was shot in yesteryear’s standard-definition (SD) formats.
- Today’s national television broadcasters insist on fresh content and high-definition (HD) formats. We’re refurbishing what we can.
- All of Zola’s teaching is still available as long as you can access levitt.tv/classic_zola.
- ZLM offers dozens of television series on DVD with classic Zola Bible teaching, store.levitt.com/PZC. ★

Classic Zola Collection:

You can acquire the entire Classic Zola Collection. See p. 19 or, for a list of the \$1,598 worth of teaching materials, go to:

store.levitt.com/PZC

See a limited offer on p. 23.



To
Index



Back to
p. 23

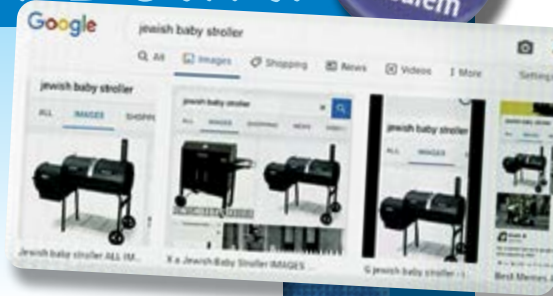
* Note: For illustration, I substituted *Bruce Dickinson*’s name for the writer’s initials J.B. (Thanks, J.B., for your sincere concern, which I’ve taken to heart.) ** Scripture reassures Believers not to fear *The Reaper*: 2 Tim. 1:10, Heb. 2:14–15, 1 Cor. 15:54–55.

ZLM Bulletin Board



Do Jewish Lives Matter? (part 3) (NOTE: see September's and October's Bulletin Boards for parts 1 & 2)

Not if you're amused by the prospect of barbecuing Jewish children. **Googling "Jewish baby stroller" yields multiple graphics for portable ovens and barbecues** — an offensive allusion to the Holocaust. Such search results may result from an extremist campaign to yield those particular images. A series of coordinated posts on a 4chan message board pairs images of cookers on wheels with the term "Jewish baby stroller." That ploy seems to have manipulated Google's search algorithm. In 2016, googling "oy vey" led to the suggested search term "Jews are evil."



Out of the Mouth of ...



... former Governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie: "I Should Have Worn a Mask." He regrets not wearing a face mask at a Rose Garden event with President Trump, who also contracted COVID-19. Wearing a mask,

Mr. Christie explains, is "not a partisan or cultural symbol, not a sign of weakness or virtue. It's simply a good method [not perfect, but proven] to contain a cough or prevent the virus from getting in your mouth or nose." (See p.7, "WWJD" article.)

FREE ITEM

Pamphlet of the Month

All women need to take control of their long-range financial and estate plans. The free pamphlet **Questions & Answers About Estate Planning for Women** answers eight core questions. Some tips include: 1) Even a married woman needs a separate plan, of which joint ownership can play a part. 2) Spouses should have separate plans that complement each other. 3) Review the will, life insurance beneficiaries, and retirement plans when marital status changes. To receive this pamphlet at no charge, email us at staff@levitt.com or write to our P.O. Box.

Request POM #7.



Finnish Air Force Drops Swastika



Despite Finland's alliance with Nazis against the Soviets during WWII, its use of the swastika preceded Nazism by two years. With Finland's founding in 1918, Count Eric von Rosen of neighboring Sweden gifted the Finnish Air Force with a plane emblazoned with a blue swastika, which he saw as a good luck charm. Two years later, the Nazi Party officially adopted the symbol. The swastika, with ancient roots in Eastern cultures, was considered a random decorative sign. Now, a century later, it's finally gone from Finnish Air Force uniforms and flags.

"Come Home!"

Zola Tours to Israel



See page 36 for details



Vine and Branches

by **John Parsons**
 Hebrew for Christians
 Hebrew4Christians.com



מִכָּל־מִשְׁמֹר נֹצֵר לִבְךָ כִּי־מִמֶּנּוּ תֹצְאוֹת חַיִּים

"Above all else guard your heart, for from it flow the springs of life." (Prov. 4:23)

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|-----|
| מִ | כָּל־ | מִשְׁ | מֹר | נֹ | צֵר | לִ | בְּ | ךָ | כִּי־ | מִ | מֶ | נֹ | נֹ | תֹ | צְ | אוֹ | ת | חַיִּים | |
| (2) | (1) | (3) | (2) | (1) | (4) | (3) | (2) | (1) | (4) | (2) | (1) | (2) | (1) | (4) | (3) | (2) | (1) | (2) | (1) |
| cha-yeem' | to-tze-oh't | kee-mee-me'-noo | lee-be'-kha | ne-tzor' | mee-kol-meesh-mar' | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| life | outflows [of] | for from it | your heart | guard | above all vigilance | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Our LORD taught us: "If anyone does not live in Me, he is cast off as a branch, and withers" (John 15:6). We find life only as we remain connected to the Source and Conduit of life, who is the Messiah, the Savior and LORD. True life grows out of a heartfelt connection with Yeshua, and without that connection, our lives become vain and yield no eternal significance (John 15:5).

The "Torah of the Vine" further teaches us that "every branch that bears fruit will be *pruned* so that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2). Note that it is the *healthy* branch that will be *cut back*—not the withered one (that will be altogether removed)—and this purging process may be *painful* at times. The heavenly Vinedresser's goal is for the fruitful branch to yield more fruit, to increasingly reveal its connection to the Heart of the Vine, so that God is glorified (see John 15:8). The result here is the beatific vision: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Note that the Greek word translated *pure* was sometimes used to describe the cleansing of a wound (catharsis), or to describe the unalloyed quality of a substance revealed through a refining fire.

Sanctification involves catharsis of the ego—the surrender of carnal desire, the death of our will, and the release of truth in the inward parts. **A faith that assumes that God will make us immune to suffering, challenges, and tribulation is immature and imperfect.** The goal of "purging" is fruitfulness and blessing, but the agency is not the will of man but the power of God. You are made "clean" through the Word of God spoken within your heart (John 15:3). Sanctification, however, depends on your communion with God, staying connected to what is real, central, and vital.

"If anyone does not live in Me, he is cast off and withers" (John 15:6). Here, Yeshua teaches that shared life is the goal of our relationship with Him; but if that does not occur, destructive consequences follow. Some call this the "dark side" of God, by which they mean that God will destroy everything in us that is not fit to exist and that does not yield true blessedness (Luke 3:9). Of course, this "destruction" (correction) is really a great blessing, since it purges us from a worthlessness that brings pain, disease, and sorrow. (This is distinct from the devil, who seeks to destroy what is healthy and good.)

The upshot here is that **we must carefully attend to our connection with God, understanding that connection to be the utmost good for our lives, seeking God's Presence in all our ways (Prov. 4:23).** ★



Courtesy, The Jerusalem Connection

Revelation: ***Unveiling the Visions***

DVD Set

Eight 30-minute programs on two DVDs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[\(Please see related article on p.8.\)](#)



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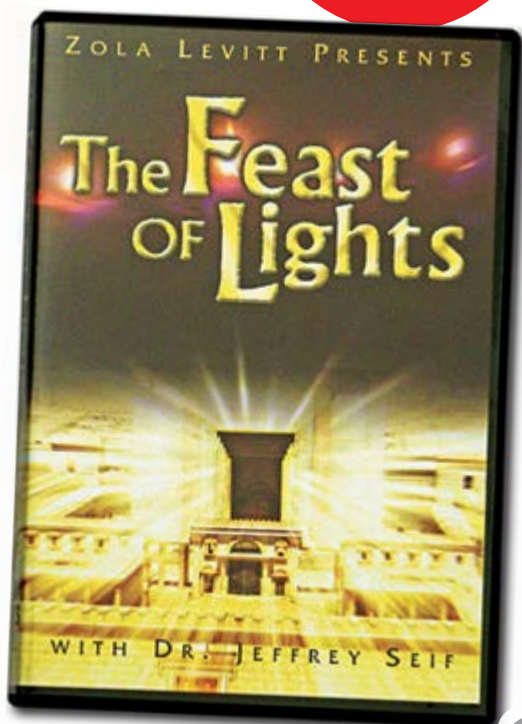
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The Feast of Lights

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Three 30-minute
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Since the dawn of time, forces of darkness have threatened the Jews with extinction. Yet, each time, God provided a leader who would shine the light of God's faithfulness. Hanukkah—the Jewish Feast of Lights—harks back to a time before Christ when an anti-Semitic dictator threatened to wipe out the Hebrews. But the Lord's deliverer arose (foreshadowing Yeshua, the Ultimate Deliverer), lit the lamp of hope, and saved Israel. In every generation, Jews have lit lamps in their homes to commemorate the victory and retell the story of the Feast of Lights.



The Story of Hanukkah

Dr. Jeffrey Seif explains the story of Hanukkah wherein Syrian dictator Antiochus Epiphanes overthrew Jerusalem and desecrated the Holy Temple. Although many have sought to destroy God's Chosen People, Jeff reassures us that "He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4). We look at harvesting olive oil and its importance to the menorah in the Holy Place.



Dr. Jeffrey Seif

light in celebrating Hanukkah, as well as its prophetic image of our Messiah. Jeff interviews Rabbi Marty Waldman about the recent increase of Messianic Jews. Zola interviews Messianic minister in Ashdod, Simcha Davidov.

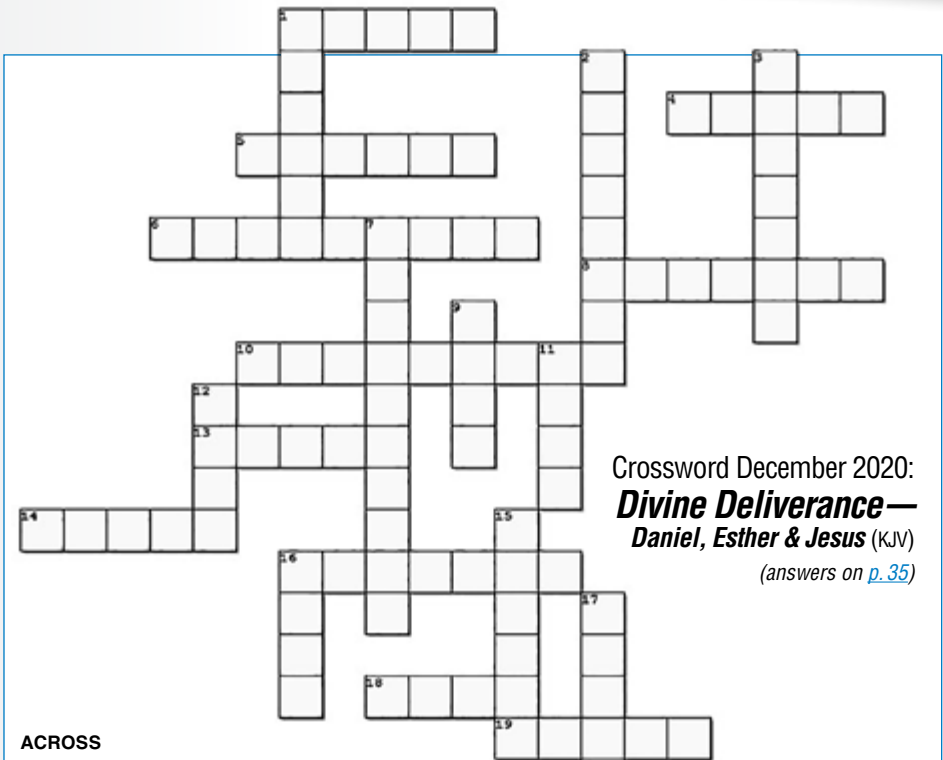
The Feast of Dedication

Jeff explores the prophecy of Daniel as fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes' desecration, and the future abomination of desolation to be committed by the antiChrist. Discover the Feast of Dedication as observed by Jesus in the Bible, and a heartfelt look by Zola and Jean Rosenberg at the celebration of Hanukkah in the home today.

(Please see article [Did Jesus/Yeshua Celebrate Hanukkah?](#) on p.10.)



Fun and Games



Crossword December 2020:
Divine Deliverance—
Daniel, Esther & Jesus (KJV)
 (answers on [p. 35](#))

ACROSS

1. And many of them that ___ in the dust... (Daniel 12:2)
4. Blessed are the pure in _____. (Matt. 5:8)
5. You shall know them by their _____. (Matt. 7:16)
6. For this is my blood of the new _____. (Matt. 26:28)
8. ...and what is thy ___?... (Esther 5:3)
10. ...that they may be _____. (Esther 3:9)
13. ...I am the ___ of the world... (John 8:12)
14. ...if any man enter in, he shall be _____. (John 10:9)
16. ...he ___ upon his knees... (Daniel 6:10)
18. ...for such a ___ as this? (Esther 4:14)
19. ... Daniel had a ___ and visions... (Daniel 7:1)

DOWN

1. Blessed are the poor in _____. (Matt. 5:3)
2. The Jews ___ themselves together... (Esther 9:2)
3. And Jesus went about all _____. (Matt. 4:23)
7. And there followed Him great _____. (Matt. 4:25)
9. ...take, eat; this is My _____. (Matt. 26:26)
11. I will lift up mine ___ unto the hills... (Psalm 121:1)
12. Rejoice and be exceeding _____. (Matt. 5:12)
15. ...the words are closed up and _____. (Daniel 12:9)
16. ...I will make thee ___ what shall be... (Daniel 8:19)
17. And the king ___ Esther above all the women... (Esth. 2:17)





Letters to ZLM

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

Bible stories are true!

Dear ZLM,

I suggest that when we refer to the Bible, we use the term *accounts* in lieu of *stories*. —T.B.

Dear T.B.,

Our editor likes your suggestion and will add “account” to “narrative” as good synonyms for “story.” Thanks for writing. —Kirsten

Jesus, Take the Wheel

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for sharing your solution for addiction in the [October Personal Letter](#). What an elegant way to emphasize God’s control over even the “smaller” things.

I suffer a lot of chronic pain and an evil environment. When I don’t have control over my life, I eat to feel better ... but I now resolve to go to God to feel better. —J.F.

Dear J.F.,

I have to agree with you about the relevance of Sarah’s message. I’ve personally been convicted regarding my own sugar intake and have cut back greatly. Thank you for sharing what Sarah’s Bible lesson meant to you. —Kirsten



Donating painlessly

Dear ZLM,

Thank you for sending me your monthly *Levitt Letter* for so long. I have been equally blessed and challenged by the articles. I have recently made you my default choice on Amazon Smile. —P.L.

Dear P.L.,

Kirsten and I also shop using Amazon Smile. Even the small percentage the ministry receives adds up over time! *Todah Rabah* (*Thanks a lot* in Hebrew). —David



Note: Amazon Smile is a simple way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. Visit smile.amazon.com on your computer’s web browser or activate it in the Amazon shopping app for iOS and Android phones. You’ll also find a link at the bottom of our [donate page](#).

(continued next page)

The Rapture

Dear ZLM,

I was disappointed that Dr. Jeffrey Seif didn't mention the Rapture in his series on the Book of Revelation. Messianic Jews DO believe in the Rapture, don't they? —R.P. (CA)

Dear R.P.,

Of course some Messianic Jews believe in the Rapture! Zola loved discussing Bible prophecy; his down-to-earth explanations about the Rapture can be found in his books (e.g., *Glory! The Future of the Believers*, *A Christian Love Story*, *In My Father's House*) and archived videos (especially *The Miracle of Passover* and *Thy Kingdom Come*).

For this ministry's teaching on the Rapture, go to levitt.com and enter "rapture" in the search field at the top right, just beneath the "Donate" button. Please note that Dr. Seif quickly covered the 22 chapters of Revelation in a matter of weeks. His stellar teaching complements what this ministry had already produced over many years. —David ★

\$100 OFF!

Limited
time offer!

The Classic Zola Collection

Now just **\$899** (was \$999) — a **\$1,598 value!**

Until April 9, 2021, the anniversary of Gene Frenkle's cowbell debut, this ministry is offering a secret discount code for **\$100 off of the Classic Zola Collection**. Using the secret discount code "**MoreCowbell**" (see p. 14) will reduce your price to **just \$899 with free s/h**—limit (3) Classic Zola Collections per ZLMer. **Mr. Frenkle's most popular cowbell hymn reminds Believers not to fear the reaper.** (2 Tim. 1:10, Heb. 2:14–15, 1 Cor. 15:54–55) The combination package of \$1,613 worth of unparalleled Bible teaching materials (with 78 collectibles!) is described in detail at <https://store.levitt.com/PZC>

25 DVD titles

14 have six to twelve 30-minute TV programs
(\$1,025 if purchased separately)

23 books and study booklets

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13 teaching CDs

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two of which are 8-album compilations
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Hydrogen-Fueled Future Fires Up Israeli Innovators



SCIENCE: BY SUE SURKES (r) TimesOfIsrael.com



credit: AP Photo/David Zalubovski

Current electric cars, like these 2020 Model 3 Teslas, use lithium-ion batteries.

During the Exodus from Egypt, God split the sea to save the Israelites. Several millennia later, many in Israel increasingly view repeating the splitting miracle on the molecular level as the key to helping save the rest of the planet.

The promise of hydrogen power, harvested by separating and reuniting the elements that make up water, is sparking a worldwide revolution in clean energy. The technology is still in its infancy. However, both the government and private sector are pumping money into developing ways to make hydrogen use more powerful, efficient, and cost effective.

The Far East, Europe, and parts of the U.S. are investing billions into creating a hydrogen infrastructure that will power trucking, heavy industry, and even homes.

Israel's Energy Ministry is focused on replacing coal with less-polluting natural gas and on shoring up the infrastructure needed to reach its target of generating 30% of the nation's energy through renewable sources, mainly solar, by 2030.

Cleaner and safer than any fossil fuel

Just one kilogram (2.2 pounds) of hydrogen supplies as much energy as 2 gallons (12.6 pounds) of gasoline. Hydrogen can be stored and transported over large distances. Safer than fossil fuels, it is totally clean. **Its only byproduct is water.** As it can be produced wherever there is water and a source of electricity, it can offer some energy independence for countries otherwise dependent on suppliers of coal, oil, and natural gas.

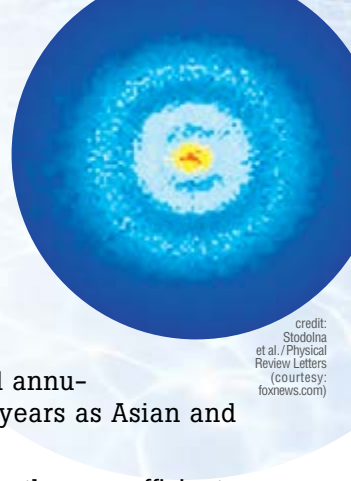
Hydrogen must be manufactured, because it occurs naturally only joined with other elements, like oxygen — which combines with hydrogen to form water — and carbon — which joins with hydrogen to make the hydrocarbons in fossil fuels. (NASA and Russia's space program have been using hydrogen in their

(continued next page)



To
Index

The first direct observation of the orbital structure of an excited hydrogen atom, made using a newly developed “quantum microscope.”



credit:
Stojiljica
et al. / Physical
Review Letters
(courtesy:
foxnews.com)

rocket fuel for decades.) But the traditional processes used are polluting, inefficient, and costly. **Today, as the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions increases, the race is on to develop hydrogen as an alternative.**

Fuel cells vs. batteries

Almost 70 million metric tons of hydrogen are produced annually. This is expected to grow tenfold over the next 30 years as Asian and European countries push to create a hydrogen economy.

Electric batteries — think: Elon Musk and Tesla — are presently more efficient than hydrogen power. This is why Israel will use them in the coming decade to store renewable energy. But batteries are expensive, bulky, and not suited to large, long-distance vehicles because of the space they occupy and the need to stop for hours to recharge. (Israeli company ElectReon is laying subterranean cables that can charge vehicles as they drive along).

Electrolyzers and fuel cells

Fuel cells are pieces of equipment within which electrolyzers use electricity to break water into hydrogen and oxygen. To date, the electric current used in electrolysis has been supplied by fossil fuels. Now these are being replaced with cheaper, less polluting, renewable sources such as solar energy.

When power is needed (to drive a car, for example), the hydrogen and oxygen are reunited within the fuel cell via a catalyst that sparks an electrochemical reaction between the two, creating energy. Fuel cell systems are clean and quiet. They do not need to be recharged like batteries and they produce electricity for as long as hydrogen is available. But fuel cells, which use platinum, are expensive to produce.

Lior Elbaz, an Israeli chemical engineer and associate professor at Bar-Ilan University, near Tel Aviv, has developed in his lab solar-energy-driven fuel cells that will hopefully be on the market for home power within the next three to five years. Elbaz says that they last three to four times longer than market competitors and have a carbon footprint that is four to five times smaller. The system will enable a house to become energy self-sufficient and channel excess power onto the national grid.

(continued next page)



credit: Moshe Shani/FLASH90

Solar panels in the desert near Eilat, Israel



To
Index

Harnessing plants

One of the most intriguing and unusual techniques for creating hydrogen has come from Prof. Iftach Yacoby of Tel Aviv University. He collaborates with Prof. Kevin Redding and his students at the University of Arizona.

In what sounds like science fiction, the team has successfully used a plant to generate electricity and create hydrogen. “Every living green thing is a chemical factory,” Yacoby explained. “Just like solar panels, plants and algae use chlorophyll to change the sun’s power into an electrical current.”

The team’s breakthrough has been to pinpoint the source of that electrical current in the cells of micro algae, and then to attach to that source, via genetic modification, the enzyme hydrogenase. Thus equipped, the algae have started to produce hydrogen in a process that is totally sustainable and clean.

Yacoby added, “Our most optimistic assessment is that hydrogen produced by plants will [one day] become as important for our energy security as grain [e.g. wheat] is for our food security.”

Storing hydrogen

Developing hydrogen-based storage for sustainable energy could be a key to resolving one of the biggest problems of renewable energy — that it is not provided when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing. Storing hydrogen is currently very costly.

At the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, a team led by Israel Prize laureate Prof. David Milstein

has found a solution for hydrogen storage that requires no pressure, uses commonly available organic liquids such as ethylene glycol (antifreeze), and employs a much cheaper metal than platinum in the catalyzer. Proof of concept is complete and future plans are to turn the scientific development into a technological reality for hydrogen storage, generation, and regeneration.

Each *Levitt Letter* offers articles regarding cutting-edge Israeli innovations. To read more reports about Israel’s life-changing contributions to modern society, you can access previous issues at levitt.com/levletter. — David ★

Two-Flag Collar Pin

With interlocking American and Israeli flags, this unique full-color pin proudly encourages the unity of the U.S.A. and the Holy Land. What a terrific way to create opportunities to witness about Israel’s importance in the Bible, the accuracy of Biblical prophecy, and God’s gift of grace!



(Pin shown actual size)



NASA moves a massive liquid hydrogen tank to Huntsville, Alabama, for testing as part of plans to eventually return to the moon, December 14, 2018.

credit: Rebecca Santana, for AP



Jewish Scientist Shares Nobel Prize for Finding Hepatitis C

MEDICINE: Associated Press and TimesOfIsrael.com



The 2020 Nobel laureates in Physiology or Medicine are announced during a news conference at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, Monday Oct. 5, 2020. The prize has been awarded jointly to Harvey J. Alter, left on screen, Michael Houghton, center, and Charles M. Rice for the discovery of the Hepatitis C virus.

credit: Claudio Bresciani/TT via AP



Americans Harvey J. Alter and Charles M. Rice and British-born scientist Michael Houghton jointly won the 2020 Nobel Prize in Medicine for their discovery of the hepatitis C virus, a major source of liver disease that affects millions worldwide.

Announcing the prize in Stockholm, the Nobel Committee noted that the trio's work identified a major source of blood-borne hepatitis that couldn't be explained by the previously discovered hepatitis A and B viruses. Their work, dating back to the 1970s and 1980s, has helped save millions of lives.

"Thanks to their discovery, highly sensitive blood tests for the virus are now available and these have essentially eliminated post-transfusion hepatitis in many parts of the world, greatly improving global health," the committee said.

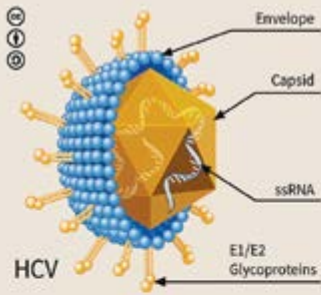
"Their discovery also allowed the rapid development of antiviral drugs directed at hepatitis C.... For the first time in history, the disease can now be cured, raising hopes of eradicating hepatitis C virus from the world population."

Alter, who is Jewish, described the 4:45 a.m. phone call he got from Stockholm as "the best alarm clock I've ever had." He said he ignored the first two times the phone rang before "angrily" answering it the third time, adding that his anger went away "in about a second."

"It's so kind of other-worldly," he said of the call. "It's something you don't think will ever happen, and sometimes you don't think you deserve it to happen and it happens. In this crazy COVID year where everything is turned upside down, this is another nice upside down for me."

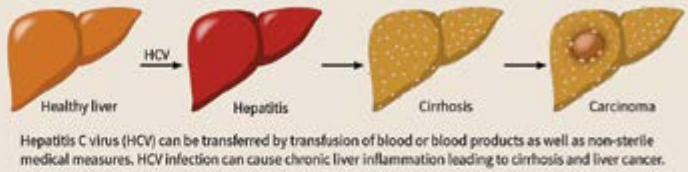
In a self-deprecating 2013 article, Alter credited his medical career to his Jewish upbringing, saying his father wanted to be a doctor but was held back by financial constraints.

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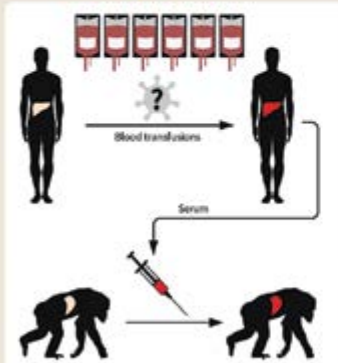


2020 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine

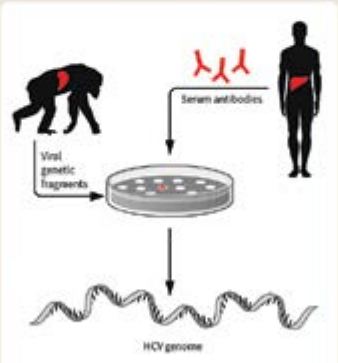
Harvey J. Alter, Michael Houghton and Charles M. Rice
for the discovery of Hepatitis C virus



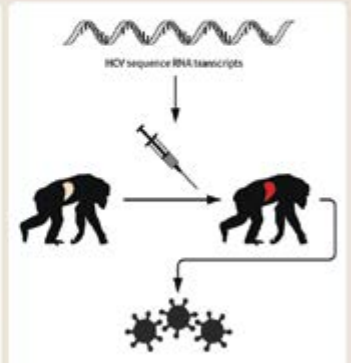
Hepatitis C virus (HCV) can be transferred by transfusion of blood or blood products as well as non-sterile medical measures. HCV infection can cause chronic liver inflammation leading to cirrhosis and liver cancer.



Harvey J. Alter and collaborators demonstrated that a large proportion of post-transfusion hepatitis was not caused by Hepatitis A or B virus, but rather by an unknown infectious agent. This agent causing non-A, non-B hepatitis (NANBH) could be transferred via patients' sera to chimpanzees and showed characteristics of an unknown virus.



Michael Houghton and collaborators identified the NANBH causing virus by discovering its genetic sequence. In a novel approach they used serum from an infected chimpanzee to construct a phage library and screened it using antibody-containing serum from a NANBH patient. After discovery of HCV, he developed together with HJ Alter and other collaborators the first diagnostic test for HCV.



Charles M. Rice and collaborators showed that RNA transcripts from a genetic HCV construct were able to lead to an HCV infection in chimpanzees when injected into the animal's liver. This experiment identified the necessary genetic elements of the virus and gave the ultimate proof that HCV alone was the causative agent of NANBH hepatitis.

Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2020: Seminal experiments by H. J. Alter, M. Houghton, and C. M. Rice leading to the discovery of HCV as the causative agent of non-A, non-B hepatitis

“Being the only son of Jewish parents in New York City, it was preordained that I would become a doctor. One of my friends, of similar background, chose not to be a doctor and has never been heard from again,” he wrote.

“In any event, my father had a strong influence on my road to medicine, though I think I would have chosen this path even without his inspiration. The biologic sciences always seemed more interesting to me than any other discipline.... except, of course, baseball. I would have dropped medicine in a millisecond to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers. There were, however, certain impediments to my becoming a professional baseball player – I couldn’t hit, and I couldn’t field. Thus, I sublimated my ‘field of dreams’ to become a doctor,” he wrote.



Dr. Harvey J. Alter in 2020

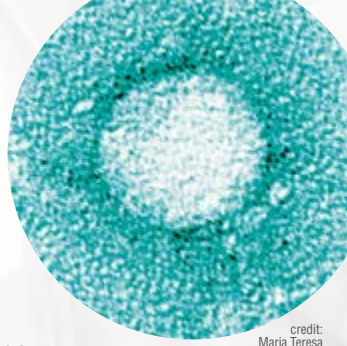
The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates over 70 million cases of hepatitis C worldwide and 400,000 deaths from it each year. The disease is chronic and a major cause of liver cancer and cirrhosis requiring liver transplants.

John McLauchlan, Professor of Viral Hepatitis at the University of Glasgow, called the three laureates “pioneers” and stated that their discovery made the global elimination of the disease possible. In 2016, the WHO issued a strategy to wipe out the disease by 2030. “That would mark the first time we might possibly control a viral infection using only drugs,” McLauchlan added.

“The only issue is getting drugs to people and places where they desperately

(continued next page)





credit:
Maria Teresa
Catanesi,
Marina Köpp,
Kunihito Uryu,
and Charles Rice

need them,” he said, adding that the disease primarily strikes stigmatized populations like drug users and the poor.

Alter, who was born in 1935 in New York City, carried out his prize-winning studies at the U.S. National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, where he remains active. Rice, born in 1952 in Sacramento, California, worked on hepatitis at Washington University in St. Louis and now teaches at Rockefeller University in NYC. Houghton, born in Britain in 1949, received his PhD at King’s College London before moving to the University of Alberta in Canada.

The medicine prize carried particular significance this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, which has highlighted the importance of medical research for societies and economies around the world.

Alter described the journey to identifying hepatitis C as a decades-long effort.

Will Irving, a virologist at the University of Nottingham, said, “After hepatitis A and B were discovered in the 1970s, it was clear there was another virus in the blood supply, because when people had blood transfusions, they would get liver damage. We didn’t know what the virus was, and we couldn’t test for it.”

Unlike hepatitis A, which is transmitted via food or water and causes an acute infection that can last a few weeks, hepatitis B and C are transmitted through blood. Jewish-American scientist Baruch Blumberg discovered the hepatitis B virus in 1967 and received the 1976 Nobel Prize in Medicine.

Alter was working at the U.S. National Institutes of Health when he discovered that plasma from patients who didn’t have hepatitis B could also transfer the disease. “The breakthrough came in 1989, when Michael Houghton and colleagues working at Chiron Corporation used a combination of molecular biology and immunology-based techniques to clone the virus,” said the Nobel Committee.

The hepatitis C virus belongs to a group known as flaviviruses that also includes West Nile virus, dengue virus, and yellow fever virus.



Thomas Perlmann, Secretary of the Nobel Assembly, announces the 2020 Nobel laureates in Physiology or Medicine in Stockholm, Sweden, October 5, 2020

Graham Foster, professor of hepatology at Queen Mary University of London, noted that the discovery of hepatitis C had prevented millions from getting sick or dying of the disease or other liver problems, and that the awarding of the Nobel to Alter, Houghton, and Rice was well deserved.

The Nobel Committee often recognizes basic science that has laid the foundations for practical applications in common use today. The prestigious Nobel award comes with a gold medal and prize money of 10 million Swedish kronor (over \$1,142,000), courtesy of a bequest left 124 years ago by the prize’s creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel. ★





SELECT MEDIA BRIEFS

President Trump
on a three-way call
with the leaders of
Sudan and Israel

Sudan And Israel Agree to Diplomatic Ties

By Lahav Harkov, Omri Nahmias, Celia Jean JPost.com

Delegations from Israel and Sudan are negotiating cooperation agreements. The announcement followed a phone conversation between U.S. President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Sudanese Chairman of the Sovereignty Council Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok.

Hours earlier, the U.S. officially removed Sudan from its state sponsors of terrorism list after Sudan paid \$335 million in compensation for American victims of terror and their families.

Agriculture will be a major focus of the new ties, as Sudan has large swaths of unused arable land and hopes Israeli agri-tech will help improve its economic situation.

The announcement mentions that the delegations will discuss “migration issues,” as thousands of Sudanese migrants have moved to Israel in the past 15 years. Asked if repatriation of migrants, which Netanyahu has sought over the past decade, was on the table, an Israeli official said “the issue is still ahead of us.” Sudanese nationals illegally entering Israel could not be deported previously, because of the humanitarian situation in their country and because Israel did not have ties with Sudan.

Sudan joins the U.A.E. and Bahrain in normalizing ties with Israel.

Facebook Bans Holocaust Denial

By Sheera Frenkel / NYTimes.com

In 2018, Facebook’s chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, famously cited Holocaust deniers in a fumbled attempt to make a point about free speech.



Mark Zuckerberg: Facebook will ban content that “denies or distorts the Holocaust.”

At the time, he said the deniers — those who reject or distort the Holocaust, a World War II genocide in which millions of Jews and others were exterminated by Nazis and their collaborators — were a key example of people whom he personally disagreed with. But, he added, he did not think Facebook should censor or remove what they posted “because I think there are things that different people get wrong.”

In mid-October, Zuckerberg announced that he was reversing his decision. Facebook, he announced, would now ban content that “denies or distorts the Holocaust,” **citing a recent survey that found that nearly a quarter of American adults ages 18–39 believe the Holocaust was either a myth or exaggerated, or weren’t sure it happened.**

(continued next page)



Facing charges that Facebook has allowed toxic speech and misinformation to flow unchecked on its site, the social network has become more proactive about removing some content, including banning the QAnon conspiracy movement and taking a stronger line against hate and vigilante groups. (QAnon has been linked to real-world harm.)

Iranian Athletes Call on I.O.C. to Ban Iranian Athletes

By Hugh Fitzgerald / JihadWatch.org

The Islamic Republic recently executed 27-year-old champion wrestler Navid Afkari. He had been tortured by the regime until he “confessed” to the murder of an Iranian intelligence officer. **The real reason for murdering Afkari was that in 2018, he had attended an anti-regime demonstration**, protesting the country’s economic breakdown.

His fame as a wrestler could have made Afkari an enormously popular figure around which to rally opponents of the regime — a danger that the mullahs did not want to risk. His execution has led prominent Iranian athletes and human rights activists to ask both the I.O.C. (International Olympic Committee) and FIFA (the International Soccer Association) to keep Iran from participating in sports competitions.

(See also [The Iranian Menace on p.33.](#))



Navid Afkari’s execution continues to result in calls for action against Iran.



credit: Warner Bros. Pictures

Gal Gadot in promotional image for *Wonder Woman 1984*

“Wonder Woman’s” Morning Prayers

By Shiryn Ghermezian / [Algemeiner.com](#)

Israeli actress Gal Gadot talked about her upbringing in Israel and the Hebrew prayer she recites every morning in a cover story interview with *Vanity Fair* for its November issue.

The star of *Wonder Woman 1984* grew up in the central Israeli city of Rosh Ha’ayin. She starts her days with the Jewish prayer *Modeh Ani*.

“In the Jewish culture there’s a prayer that you’re supposed to say every time you wake up to thank God for, you know, keeping you alive. You say ‘*modeh ani*,’ which means ‘I give thanks.’ So every morning I wake up and say, ‘Thank You for everything, thank You, thank You, thank You.’ Nothing is to be taken for granted.”

Gadot’s mother was a gym teacher who taught sports to Gal and her younger sister. Following high school, Gadot spent two years in the Israel Defense Forces as a fitness and combat readiness instructor before she went to college.

That talented, gorgeous, and served in the IDF? She is a wonder woman!
— Kirsten ★



2,000-Year-Old Mikvah Gets Permanent Home

ARCHAEOLOGY: BY YEDIDYA BEN OHR / IsraelNationalNews.com



credit: Abed Ibrahim, Israel Antiquities Authority

This aerial photo shows the 2,000-year-old mikvah (lower right) at the site of the ancient agricultural farm near Hanaton in northern Israel.

A 2,000-year-old mikvah (Jewish ritual bath) weighing 57 tons, which was exposed in the Lower Galilee, was recently hoisted by crane and transported on a heavy equipment carrier to a new permanent site in Kibbutz Hanaton.

Archaeological excavations by the Israel Antiquities Authority that began prior to constructing a central interchange at Hamovil Junction in the Lower Galilee recently revealed the remains of an agricultural farm from the Second Temple Period, including a magnificent mikvah.

This is the first Jewish agricultural farm discovered in the Galilee. The excavations were conducted with the help of workers from a nearby village, students of pre-military preparatory schools, and volunteers from the surrounding localities, including residents of the nearby Kibbutz Hanaton.

According to the directors of the excavation, Abed Ibrahim and Dr. Walid Atrash of the Israel Antiquities Authority: "The magnificent mikvah unearthed in the excavation is of an ancient type called 'Jerusalem' — with a narrow entrance and a wide staircase, covered with plaster characteristic of Second Temple Period mikvahs. The agricultural farm in which the mikvah is located existed until it was destroyed in an earthquake in A.D. 363. It was restored and rebuilt and continued to exist throughout the Byzantine period — until the 6th century A.D."

The existence of a *tahara* (purity) facility indicates that the residents of the farm were Jews who led a religious and traditional way of life and kept *tahara* as a commandment of the Torah. Mikvahs were used in daily life among the Jews before the destruction of the Temple (and especially after it) to the present day. During the Roman period, mikvahs were built in Jewish villages

(continued next page)



and farms near agricultural installations such as oil presses, workhouses, and wineries. Farmers used to immerse in the mikvah prior to handling agricultural produce, such as olive oil and wine.



According to Ibrahim and Dr. Atrash, "The discovery of this mikvah changes what we knew about the Jewish way of life during the Second Temple Period. Until now, since Jewish farms were not known in the Galilee, it was common to think that Jews in Roman times did not settle on farms outside villages or cities. The discovery of the Jewish agricultural farm away from the village of Sheikhin and the largest Jewish city at the time, Tzipori, shows that Jews also lived on agricultural farms, which may have served as the agricultural hinterland of the city of Tzipori."

Seventeen hundred years have passed since the farm was destroyed in an earthquake, and about fourteen hundred years since the place was completely abandoned and the huge bridge begun, where the mikvah was exposed.



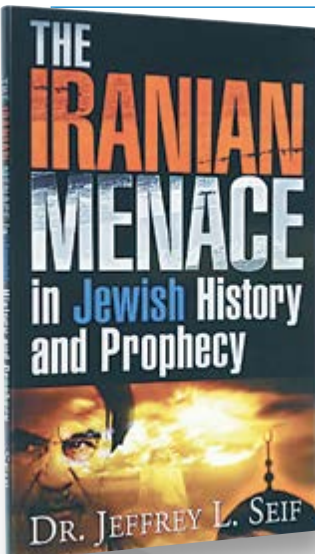
credit: Yaniv Berman, Israel Antiquities Authority

Excavation co-director Abed Elghani Ibrahim of the Israel Antiquities Authority

Since it was impossible to preserve the mikvah on the site, the idea arose to detach the installation from the rock and carry it to a protected site for public display.

The members of Kibbutz Hanaton launched a funding campaign to place the ancient mikvah next to the kibbutz's active mikvah. In cooperation with the Israel Antiquities Authority, the mikvah was first hewn on all sides, detached from its base, and surrounded by a steel cage to maintain it and allow it to be hoisted. To the cheers of the kibbutz children and residents, it was hoisted in the air and sent to its new place.

[Studying the rituals surrounding mikvah immersion helps Christians better understand water baptism.](#) —David ★



[The Iranian Menace in Jewish History and Prophecy](#) book by Dr. Jeffrey Seif

Iran is central in End Times prophecy. At a time when Iran has captured the world's attention with nuclear threats, Jeff harnesses Scriptural and secular evidence to support his case for the Iranian-Armageddon connection. After glimpsing Iran in ancient Roman and Jewish histories, you will learn the significance of prophecy in the Jewish Scriptures and apocalyptic literature. Jeff's analysis is based on sound Scriptural understanding and two decades of academic contemplation.

[\(Please see article *Iranian Athletes Call on I.O.C. to Ban Iranian Athletes* on \[p.31\]\(#\).\)](#)

Lies & Propaganda in Islam

MEMRI.ORG (Middle East Media Research Institute)

No Freedom for Women in Islam

Imam Khadar Bin Muhammad of Masjid Bilal Ibn Rabah mosque in Syracuse, New York, preached in an October sermon that the greatest danger to society is the freedoms that daughters are given, and that it is the job of the men to “straighten out” the behavior of the women in their families.



Khadar Bin Muhammad (screenshot)

He said that, according to Islam, it is impermissible for a Muslim woman to live alone, that women should not work, and that fathers should regularly “check in” on their daughters at school to make sure that they are practicing Islam properly.

Warning about the dangers of social media and technology, Muhammad further declared that fathers should always have control over the affairs of their daughters. He added: “[Women are] never free from the men of [their] family... There’s no freedom like that.” In addition, the imam said that infidel men — whom he compared to predatory wolves — cannot resist an opportunity to “filthy” Muslim women. The imam has since relocated to Bursa, Turkey.

Islamic Conspiracy Theories

In his column in the Jordanian *Al-Dustour* daily, 'Abd Al-Hamid Al-Hamshari — a member of Jordanian human rights organizations — wrote that “Jewish families” took over the global economy in order to subordinate the countries of the world to the agenda of the Zionist movement, and that the Rothschild family even ordered the assassinations of American presidents Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy because they threatened its economic interests.

Propaganda Videos

In October, an animated video posted on a channel affiliated with Iraqi Hezbollah Brigades depicted American soldiers, tanks, and aircraft protecting a caricature of U.S. President Donald Trump at the “American Dumbassy” in Baghdad from a giant Iraqi Hezbollah Brigades fighter. A similar video posted a few days later showed a U.S.



military installation being bombed. American aircraft and tanks are shown in flames, and a wounded American soldier is seen crawling on the ground before transforming into a flag-covered coffin. Both videos ended with the Koranic verse: “They see it far and we see it soon.” (Koran 70:6–7) ★



Something Really Cheap

Yitzhak decided to buy his wife a Hanukkah gift. Always frugal, he thought long and hard about what that present should be.

Unable to decide, Yitzhak entered Macy's cosmetics section and asked the clerk, "How about some perfume?"

She showed him a bottle costing \$150.

"Too expensive," Yitzhak muttered.

The young saleslady returned with a smaller bottle for \$100.

"Oh dear," Yitzhak groused. "Still far too much."

Growing frustrated by Yitzhak's stinginess, the salesclerk brought out a tiny \$50 bottle and offered it to him.

Yitzhak became flustered. "What I mean," he whined, "is I'd like to see something really cheap."

The salesclerk handed him a mirror. ★

Dry Bones

Miracle of Hanukka



Answer Key for December 2020 Crossword (p.21)

Across:

1. Sleep
4. Heart
5. Fruits
6. Testament
8. Request
10. Destroyed

Down:

1. Spirit
2. Gathered
3. Galilee
7. Multitudes
9. Body
11. Eyes
12. Glad
15. Sealed
16. Know
17. Loved



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Increase the effectiveness of your contributions by reducing our expenses to process them, plus you save time and postage. Once you enroll in our **Monthly Gift Program**, ZLM will electronically receive a monthly offering from either your checking account or credit/debit card.

If you wish to use your checking account for donations, please follow directions numbered 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 below:

1. Transfer date (please circle one): 5th 20th
2. Withdrawal amount (please circle one): \$8 \$12 \$16 Other _____
3. Enclose your check payable to Zola Levitt Ministries (ZLM) for this month's gift. Monthly transfers will begin in about 4 weeks. Make changes by calling 214-696-8844.
4. Signature _____ (required for processing)
5. Printed Name _____ Date Signed _____

For credit/debit card donations, please follow directions 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11 below. You may cancel at any time by calling 214-696-8844 or emailing staff@levitt.com.

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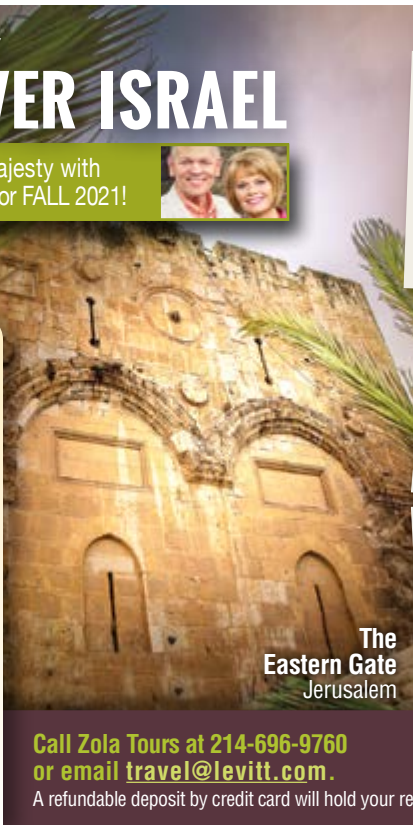
The pandemic forced El Al to cancel our flights and, thus, our Fall Tour. Now we look forward to our 2021 Spring and Fall Tours with even greater enthusiasm, anticipating a return to our beloved Israel and other lands of the Bible.

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Back to p. 13



Back to p. 15