



Is Christmas a Pagan Holiday?

By Rabbi Jason Sobel / FusionGlobal.org

In recent years, many Believers* have come to understand the history of their faith better. This development is worth celebrating. After all, Christianity emerged as a Jewish sect in the Roman Empire. Eventually, the movement (known initially as “the Way,” Acts 9:2) included more gentiles than Jews — a historical fact that certainly complicated matters.

This fact brings us to the subject of Christmas. In the midst of this discovery (recovery?) of the history of Christianity, many Believers have learned that the December 25 holiday has “pagan origins.” In contrast to the joy many feel when they discover that *Rosh Hashanah* isn’t merely a “Jewish holiday” but a Feast of the Lord, **Believers can feel scandalized** when they hear that a holiday

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

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REMEMBER:

Hanukkah: Sunset Sun. Dec. 14 to sunset Mon. Dec. 22

Christmas: Thursday, Dec. 25

Released Hostages Describe Torment in Gaza

By Etgar Lefkovits / JNS.org

One was held in a deep Gaza tunnel, shackled in darkness for nearly two years. Another who endured total isolation and a process of deliberate starvation lost nearly 40% of his body weight.

These were two of the gruesome stories told by the 20 living hostages released in October, over two years after terrorists seized them during Hamas’s invasion of southern Israel.

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Released Hostages Describe Torment in Gaza

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Elkana Bohbot, 36, one of the organizers of the Supernova music festival, was chained in a deep tunnel for nearly two years, losing all sense of time and space. During his captivity, he saw images of his family at rallies, appealing for his release. Then, in the days before his release, his Hamas captors overfed Bohbot, despite Israeli warnings that this could prove fatal after prolonged starvation.

Avinatan Or, 32, who was abducted from the music festival alongside his girlfriend, Noa Argamani, was held alone for nearly two years, handcuffed to a cage for a year after he tried to escape his captivity. (Argamani was freed in an IDF rescue operation on June 7, 2024, along with three other hostages.) Footage of the pair being kidnapped became one of the most well-known videos from the massacre on October 7, 2023. A medical examination found that Or lost between 30% and 40% of his body weight.

Matan Angrest, 22, an IDF soldier who was kidnapped from his tank on October 7, was confined in a small dark tunnel for the last four months. His mother, Anat, explained that Matan underwent “very severe torture” during the first months of his captivity. “He remembers being beaten so badly that he lost consciousness,” she noted. “They covered him with black sacks and dragged him away.”

Guy Gilboa-Dalal, 24, was reunited with fellow hostage **Evyatar David**, 24, upon their release, having been separated in September after enduring daily physical and psychological torture. The childhood friends were forced to watch a group of hostages being released in February, in a Hamas propaganda video that was widely panned as psychological torture.

David, who was subsequently filmed digging his own grave in a separate video



Released hostage Evyatar David arriving at Beilinson Hospital on October 13, 2025

showing him skeletally thin, was among those “fattened up” by their captors before their release.

Twin brothers Gali and Ziv Berman, 28, who were abducted from Kibbutz Kfar Aza, were held separately and completely cut off from the outside world during their time in the Gaza Strip, although they could hear Israeli soldiers near them.

Omri Miran, a 48-year-old father of two, was moved around in nearly two dozen places in Gaza — above ground and in tunnels. According to his brother. “He told us that at first there were five hostages in a cage just 1.8 meters by 1.6 meters [5.9 feet by 5.2 feet]. You couldn’t stand up — you had to crouch. Gradually, they began taking people out until only he and one other hostage were left. There was also a period when he was bound for three weeks.”

Hostage survivor Eitan Mor, 25, was also abducted from the music festival. His family refused to participate in the rallies calling for the release of the hostages. Mor said that a Hamas leader told him he would be released first since his family was not protesting for him. ★





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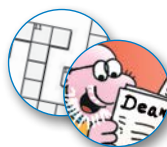
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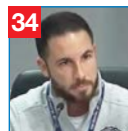
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NEW MINISTRY STAFF



Rachel, our administrative assistant, has been married for a year. Originally from the Brownwood, Texas area, Rachel moved to Dallas two years ago to pursue a master's degree at Dallas Theological Seminary. She has an undergraduate degree in elementary education with a minor in music. Rachel enjoys playing board and video games, cooking, traveling, and crocheting. She also has a 13-year-old dog, Mya.

Donna, our mail processor, is from south Mississippi but has lived in Dallas for 45 years. She joins ZLM with many years of ministry experience. Donna has two adult children and a cat, Ember. She enjoys reading, traveling, hiking, antiquing, and gardening. She's especially serious about growing African Violets.



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like Christmas, with its precious family memories, was originally a pagan celebration (Saturnalia) of the winter solstice (or the Roman god of agriculture, Saturn). Clearly then, modern Believers have no business decorating a tree or exchanging gifts on December 25th ... right?

It's worth considering that summary dismissal of celebrating Christmas due to its "pagan origins" is what's known in philosophy as a "genetic fallacy." This term **refers to faulty logic** that insists that "the origins of a person, idea, institute, or theory determine its character, nature, or worth." Pagan cultures indeed had long-standing traditions of celebrating at this time of the year. Still, it is also true that **followers of Yeshua sought to repurpose those celebrations** in His honor. A school of thought would argue for redeeming and sanctifying cultural artifacts like this because, as Psalm 24:1 asserts, "the

Earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness" (see Rabbi Paul's fuller argument in 1 Cor. 10:14–33, which seems relevant to this discussion).

Let's consider a specific "artifact" from Israel's history: the Temple. God authorized the construction of this holy edifice and marked its dedication by a profound manifestation of His glory (see 2 Chron. 5:11–14). Yeshua was presented at the Second Temple and taught in its courts. He even revealed that it symbolized His physical body, which would be torn down on the Cross and raised again three days later. Yet the design of this Temple was based on temples in the Ancient Near East, where people worshiped false gods. The message, it would seem, is that **God has always been in the business of taking what is meant for evil and using it for good.**

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Before we conclude, perhaps you've heard someone cite Jeremiah 10 as a reason to condemn the practice of having a Christmas tree in your home:

"The customs of the peoples are useless: it is just a tree cut from the forest, the work of the hands of a craftsman with a chisel. They decorate it with silver and gold, and fasten it with hammer and nails so it won't totter" (Jer. 10:3-4).

One of the most critical disciplines for accurately and faithfully studying Scripture is context. **What is the context of Jeremiah 10?** The pagan custom of making and worshiping lifeless idols contrasts with worshiping the one true and *living* God who was not fashioned by human hands (He *is* the Creator!).

God mentioned the tree in Jeremiah's prophetic utterance because humans used trees as the raw materials to create idols. Jeremiah 10 doesn't reference the practice of setting up a tree in one's house; instead, **it refers to setting up an idol made from that tree** in the house. The "silver and gold" refers not to ornaments but to the gilding process — covering the carved wood. The

reference to a "scarecrow" in verse 5 and the craftsmen in verse 9 clarifies this understanding (of a skillfully-crafted idol). Jeremiah 10 addresses many issues, but Christmas trees aren't one of them.

Should this content be viewed as a call to celebrate Christmas or decorate a tree? No. Certainly, Yeshua's birth is highly significant to our faith — the *"Word became flesh and tabernacled among us"* (John 1:14). It's not as if there's no reason for His followers to celebrate. But frankly, we *do* have a reason to be concerned.

The issue isn't so much the pagan origins of Christmas as it is the contemporary secularization of Christmas! Our energy and focus need to **express the valid "reason for the season"** and resist our culture's obsession with material things.

We sing with Mary, *"For the Mighty One has done a great thing for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation to generation to the ones who fear Him"* (Luke 1:49-50). ☆

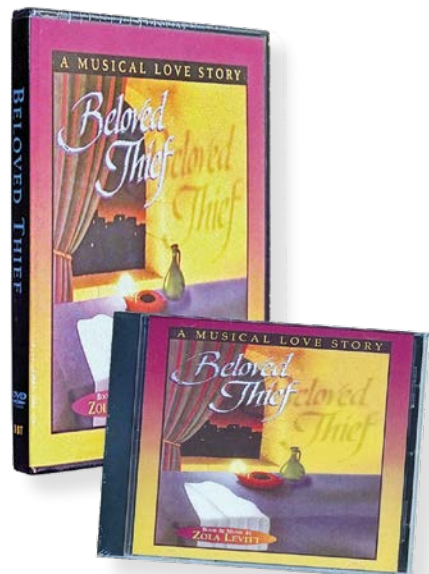


Beloved Thief

musical DVD and CD

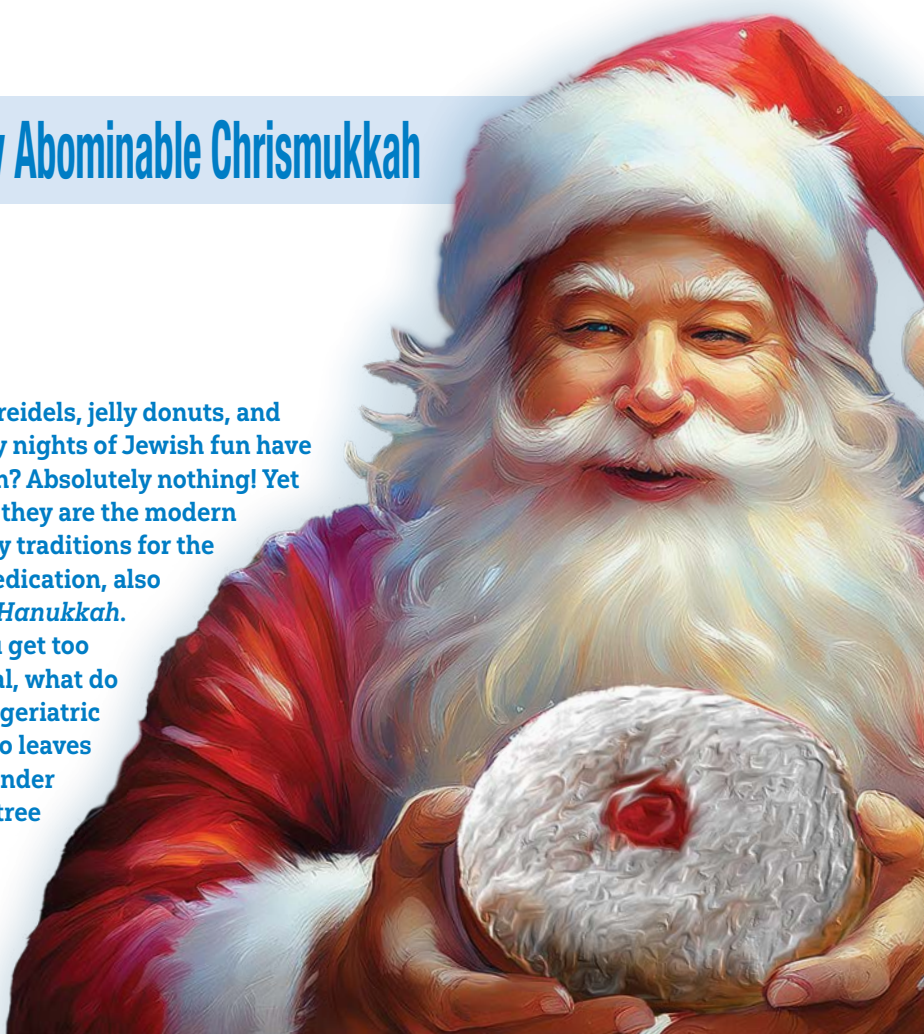
(available as a 64-minute DVD or a CD of the complete soundtrack)

The ancient Israeli wedding customs, as they parallel the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom, are portrayed in exciting Israeli music and drama. A fully staged musical show with fine actors and singers in period costumes of first-century Israel. An enchanting and inspiring hour, worthy of many repeated viewings. (Romantic secret: The leading actor and actress met on the set and married in real life!)



A Very Abominable Chrismukkah

What do dreidels, jelly donuts, and eight crazy nights of Jewish fun have in common? Absolutely nothing! Yet somehow, they are the modern celebratory traditions for the Feast of Dedication, also known as *Hanukkah*. Before you get too judgmental, what do a red-clad geriatric stalker who leaves presents under an indoor tree and Baby Yeshua have in common? Also nothing!



Since the Festival of Lights is not one of the Seven Feasts of the Lord, present-day protocols have become lax. But we won't complain about ever-evolving traditions. That's because we finally get a feast of reflection that doesn't involve fasting, self-affliction, or eating terribly bland foods. Everything is deep-fried! Oil is the name of the game because God supernaturally extended the Temple oil for eight days to keep the menorah lit. Thus, for *Hanukkah*, jelly donuts, latkes, and dumplings are just the beginning! And if you're a child with a gentile parent, you might get more than the ceremonial eight gifts.

For those familiar with Caleb's grim *Hanukkah* interpretation, a year does not pass without his customary holiday teaching on the Abomination of Desolation. "Worst *Hanukkah* Ever" could aptly describe the bummer of a future antiChrist who sits on the Ark of the Covenant while declaring his divinity.

"Debbie Downer" is upbeat compared to a giant, golden image of the Beast in the Holy Temple that demands worship ... or death. Honestly, no Grinch can steal your *Hanukkah* joy like the thought of being beheaded for not receiving the Mark of the Beast.

On the 25th of Kislev in 167 B.C., Antiochus IV Epiphanes desecrated the Second Temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar. This timing is verified in 1 Maccabees 1:59. Surprisingly, *Hanukkah begins on the 25th of Kislev every year*. But this date doesn't commemorate the Abomination; instead, it was *the same day that the Jews defeated the Greeks and discovered the last jar of oil in the Temple*. That led to the lighting of the menorah, followed by God's supernatural extension of the oil.

If the Tribulation begins and ends on *Yom Kippur*, as Zola Levitt asserted, then we can also calculate the exact day of the future Abomination. God utilizes a 360-day calendar in the Books of Daniel



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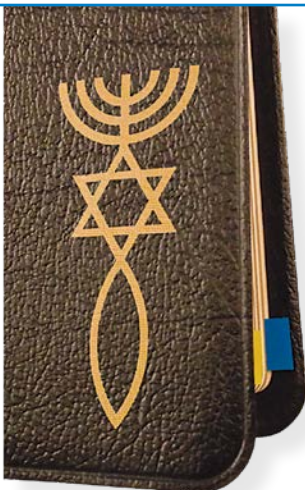
and Revelation. Daniel 9:27 details the Abomination occurring in the middle of the Seven Year Covenant — exactly 1,260 days from the first *Yom Kippur*, the 10th of Tishri. Revelation 11:2–3 and 12:6 also confirm this specific event timing that triggers the last half of the Tribulation. Adding those 1,260 days from *Yom Kippur* gives us Satan's grand resurrection and desecration on the 10th of Nisan.

Also on this date, Yeshua prophetically fulfilled His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey. Likewise, this was the specific date when the sacrificial lamb was selected for the Feast of Passover. Not surprisingly, Satan will again counterfeit the true Messiah's defining prophetic moment that was prophesied in Zechariah 9:9.

Yeshua's only recorded *Hanukkah* celebration, noted in John 10:22–39, ended in a downer as well. A mob of angry Pharisees tried to stone Him — again! We choose not to focus on the Abomination for the sake of its heretical moment, but for the redemption that will occur afterward. Exactly 1,260 days after the Beast's Abomination is the final day of the Tribulation. This is the moment of our Messiah's glorious Second Coming and the defeat of Satan's armies. You can't get to the good news until you first go through the bad news.

This *Hanukkah* season, focus on the final destination — the redemption of the world and the salvation of the whole House of Israel. May the Light of the World shine brightly in your life and in the lives of your families this season. Happy *Hanukkah* from the Bearded Bible Brothers! ☆

Love, Joshua and Caleb



Grafted-In decal

This ancient Messianic symbol combines the menorah, Star of David, and Christian fish. Whether you put our unique golden decal on your Bible, car window, doorpost, or purse, you can be sure it will stir curiosities and witnessing opportunities with this tribute to light, God, and abundant love. The delicate, hand-cut decal measures 1.2" x 3".



Classic Zola

Merry Christmas

by Zola Levitt
from 1979 • 46 years ago



credit: FotoMaximum / iStock

Dear Family,

I don't mean to be facetious when I address you that way, brothers and sisters. However, this is a Christmas letter, and I wouldn't be able to send that to my real family since they don't celebrate Christmas. While growing up in our Jewish home, I watched with wonder as my gentile friends received their presents. Some of the gifts were purchased at my father's store, and I must say that I envied my friends. "What a friend we have in Jesus," my father used to proclaim in all good humor as we counted up the store's register on Christmas Eve!

Now I can say with deepest sincerity, "What a friend we have in Jesus, indeed." He doesn't just give us an eternal life to come, but also wonderful and important things to do in this life. All of you know what I do. You've seen the TV show, and you've written to us for the Bible teaching that we offer. *Zola Levitt Live* [the original name of our television program] is a success because of you. You understand that we exist because of your gifts; there is no church or evangelistic association backing my ministry. The television program, its crew, the office staff, and everyone who brings you *Zola Levitt Live* are as dependent on

the gifts of strangers as were Jesus and His Apostles at the beginning of all this.

So first let me say thank you and Merry Christmas. The best Christmas present I can give you will be in the form of a special Christmas show, featuring Bob Bruenig of the Dallas Cowboys, Ethel Barrett and her wonderful Christmas storytelling, and yet another appearance of our new baby, Aaron Michael Levitt. This will be shown locally on Christmas night and nationally during the following week. Be sure to watch this Christmas program and let us know how you like it.

Now I am not ashamed to ask you for a gift, *"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16)*. I'm sure that I don't have to go into rapturous explanations about how powerful a national television ministry can be for the Lord's service, nor how lacking the sort of teaching we do has been in the Church. Jewish and gentile people are being reached powerfully in enormous numbers by *Zola Levitt Live* and we desperately want to go on producing new television programs.

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A new show costs \$3,000, while a rerun is about \$600; that's the long and short of it. We have borne tremendous losses through the Fall because we brought you some new programs. You saw the film footage from Israel, the improved set, the extra camera, etc. Many of you were kind enough to write to us and say that you certainly noticed the improvement in the show. As we go into the Spring, we have a most difficult decision to make. We can rerun the older shows, or we can take the plunge and continue to produce new material.

We certainly would rather do the latter. America needs to be informed about the situation in Iran, for example — the true spiritual situation. The unbeliever has to see professional, expertly done, Christian television to believe in us at all. We need your help. Your gift at the end of the year may provide you a tax deduction, which is an advantage to you. Likewise, it will greatly further our work of winning souls. Believe me when I tell you that we talk to more people in 30 minutes on *Zola Levitt Live* than the Apostles talked to in the entire first century! If you

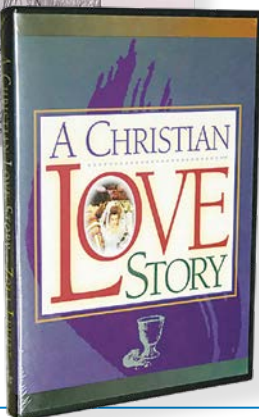
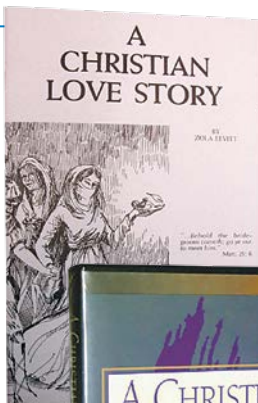
cannot afford a gift, I certainly understand.

As you know from watching the program, **we do not ask the poor to give. In fact, we give to them** — they never have to pay for their newsletters. But if you can see your way clear to add just one more Christmas present to your list, please make it a check to *Zola Levitt Live*. I promise you that I'll put it to the best of all possible uses. On a secular television show a blowhard often exclaimed, "God will get you for this." May I tell you, with all certainty, that "God will bless you for this." God told my ancestor Abraham, **"I will bless them that bless thee"** (Gen. 12:3).

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for whatever you are able to do at this time, and again, have a most joyous and very Merry Christmas.

Yours in His love,
Zola ☆

[Please see *Mine Eyes Have Seen...* DVD on p. 31.](#)



[A Christian Love Story](#) **[study booklet](#) and [CD](#)** By Zola Levitt

The beautiful story of Israel's wedding customs in Messiah's time and how He fulfilled these traditions in calling out His Bride, the Church. A striking and inspiring example of Scriptural logic and elegance.

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Regarding August's Yellow Alert

Below are excerpts from a letter that I sent last month to this ministry's most generous donors. It complements my "Yellow Alert #4" Note in the August *Levitt Letter* (pp. 10–11) and "Our Pack of Wolves" on pages 10–11 of our October *Levitt Letter*. —Mark

Joshua and Caleb are gentle giants — humble, lovable, and kind. Both are multi-talented. They graciously yoke themselves with varied responsibilities, from teaching in front of our television cameras to working behind the scenes. There they edit footage to produce finished programs for broadcast. They also book their own travel arrangements and manage their crew, which brings *Bearded Bible Brothers*® (BBB) programs from inception to completion.

Gifted writers, Joshua and Caleb communicate from the heart in ways that relate to several generations — and continents. Shortly after my father, Zola, graduated to Heaven in 2006, Moishe Rosen, founder of Jews for Jesus (may God rest his soul), candidly commented on Zola's popularity. Moishe opined that ZLMers forgave Zola's occasional theological imperfections because he was so likable. **Now it seems that Joshua and Caleb are well received, and not only because of their worthy Bible teaching. Their hearts are pure, and they consistently bring their best to the airwaves, the Internet, and your mailbox.**

Days after Charlie Kirk's assassination, a BBB *Lobstermen* broadcast happened to feature Joshua and Caleb firing paintballs at one another as well as their fellow TV crew members. Some viewers likely missed the subtext. "Subtext?" you ask.

Beneath the surface of the BBBs' recreational activities — including catching lobsters and "hunting" for men — curious, bored, and often young viewers identify with our program's jubilant male bonding. As progressively more Americans isolate

at home, our program offers vicarious fellowship with our boys-at-heart, who've matured into lighthearted adults who revel in each other's company.

Grownups playing like adolescents is an infotainment or "sugar," if you will, that helps the medicine of Bible teaching go down. Generations X, Y, and Z tend to prefer and stay tuned into jocularity dosed with elements of rowdiness rather than sedate, talking-head, studio TV programs. Just as Israeli soldiers must use real, and not paintball guns to survive, Joshua and Caleb find that visual variety grabs and holds channel hoppers' attention.

Nonetheless, the brothers need your constructive criticism. What specifically do you like and dislike about our *Lobstermen* series and stand-alone TV programs? Is the teaching well-paced, or should the BBBs slow down a notch or two? Does the contemporary music complement the overall appeal? Would you suggest we have 10% or 20% less humor and playful mischief? Consider responding on behalf of generations X, Y, and Z, who typically have had less Bible teaching than boomers and the silent generation, and have shorter attention spans.

Speaking of us older generations, I've been contemplating what you and I will leave behind if the Lord tarries. Imagine in the next few years, there were no Zola Levitt Ministries. Imagine no *Levitt Letter* or *Bearded Bible Brothers* broadcasts. Suppose that **levitt.com** ceased to offer its vast archive of 40+ years' worth of Bible teaching. Such a dire prospect is likely unless our income increases. Let me share the income-minus-expenses particulars from this ministry's 2024 tax return:

	2024	2023
Income	\$2,834,686	\$2,816,546
Expenses	3,354,762	3,256,844
Net Loss	- 520,076	- 440,298

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In 2024, ZLM ran more than \$520,000 in the red. In 2023, our deficit surpassed \$440,000 — even with a couple of major bequests. It has become increasingly urgent for this ministry to focus less on conventional broadcasting (one of our greatest expenses) and transition toward Bible teaching on the Internet. Now, you and I must cultivate Joshua and Caleb to shape them into the mighty teachers who will carry Zola's vision for Gospel teaching well into the future.

I can't ask Joshua and Caleb to do more fundraising without acknowledging that I have delayed alerting you to this ministry's need for helpful, insightful, and even critical feedback on what we should improve, just as I have put off relaying the extent of our struggles to balance the books. Better late than never, I hope.

Now, here is a letter from a couple who wrote to me in response to "Our Pack of Wolves."

Dear Mark,

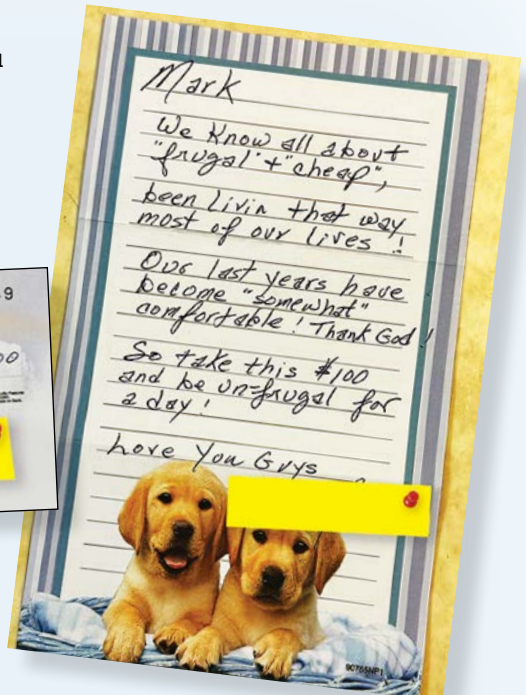
We know all about "frugal & cheap" — been living that way most of our lives! Our last years have become somewhat comfortable — thank God! So, take this \$100 and be unfrugal for a day! Love you guys. — P&J, Galena, MO

Dear P&J [who enclosed a \$100 check made out to me personally]:

In the early '80s, a donor sent my father Zola a \$300 check and suggested that he buy a decent suit. Zola gave the check to me, explaining that if he ever paid \$300 for a suit, his hand would fall off!

Following Zola's example of paying it forward, I'm relaying your \$100 to Caleb for his eldest child. The next check made out to me personally will go to Joshua for one of his kids, and so on, back and forth. Their children routinely live on the frugality of the brothers' modest ministry incomes. It is with sheer joy that I will relay personal gifts from ZLMers' abundance to these younger men who have such remarkable potential.

Thank you for your heartfelt affirmation. Now, please consider designating this ministry as a beneficiary of your retirement and/or other accounts, as the Lord may lead you. And remember: Bequeathing before-tax IRA and 401(k) distributions is a legal way to avoid income taxes, as we're a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. —Mark ☆



What is the Evidence of Being Born Again? Part 2

Dr. Todd Baker
Zola Levitt Ministries
Staff Theologian
staff@levitt.com



The phrases “born of God” or “born/begotten of Him” occur nine times in six verses in the Book of 1 John (2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). Throughout his first letter, the Apostle John noted five evidences of new birth — traits that every born-again Believer will display. **In the November 2025 Levitt Letter, we noted three attributes; here, we will focus on two additional characteristics.**

A love for God and fellow Believers is the **fourth** evidence of the new birth. *“Everyone who loves is born of God...”* (1 John 4:7). Anyone who experiences new life in Christ will have and show an ongoing love for the triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One way we demonstrate our love for God is by obeying His Word. Jesus declared in John 14:15: *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”*

Loving others is also an essential part of the new life: *“Everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him”* (1 John 5:1). In other words, born-again Christians will love other born-again Christians in the family of God. Jesus declared that our love for one another is proof that we have love for Him and are thus truly born again. *“By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another”* (John 13:35).

A life of victory is the **fifth** evidence of the new birth. *“Whatever is born of God*

overcomes the world...” (1 John 5:4). The born-again life is an ongoing process of overcoming God’s adversaries who also oppose the Christian faith. Through an unbreakable union with Christ and His Spirit, the new birth empowers Believers to experience victory over indwelling sin (1 John 3:6).

Belief in Jesus, the Son of God, also gives born-again Believers victory over the world’s sinful thinking. This mindset is characterized by hatred for and rebellion against God, which stems from the devil, who opposes God and His ways. *“... And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”* (1 John 5:4–5).

Those who are born again have been given victory over the devil because Jesus Christ, who is infinitely greater, lives inside every Believer (1 John 2:14; 4:4). In addition, born-again Believers have victory over false teachers and antiChrists because the indwelling Spirit of truth enables them to discern truth from error (1 John 4:6).

A life of victory is a clear sign of the new birth that God has ordained for His people through Jesus Christ. This is also affirmed by the Apostle Paul, who stated that *“...we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”* (Rom. 8:37). ☆



“... And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

1 JOHN 5:4-5



ShaliachReport

Fear and Faith in Netanya

Dr. Todd Baker
ZLM Staff Theologian
TJF Team Leader

Another Gospel Outreach to Israel took place in September 2025. While in Netanya, August Rosado and I had the providential opportunity to share the Jewish roots of the Gospel with **Moshe**. He was very polite and happy to receive the Word of God in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

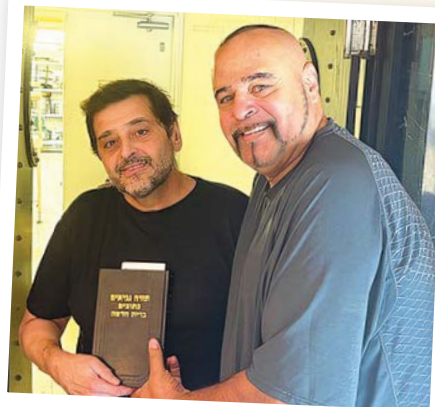
He so cherished the Bible we gave him that he immediately showed it to his coworkers.

Later, at the Ir Yamim Shopping Mall, we met **Shiraz**, an Ethiopian Jew. She was concerned about traveling abroad and identifying as a Jew from Israel because of increasing anti-Semitism. August and I calmed her fears about being Jewish, as we explained God's noble, holy, and blessed calling of Israel as revealed in both Testaments of the Bible.

We added that **the most important thing for a Jewish person to do is to search the Scriptures, discover that Yeshua is the prophesied Messiah, and believe on Him to receive eternal life** (John 5:39; 6:40). Shiraz joyfully took a complete Hebrew Bible from us and said that she would read the Scriptures to find Yeshua in them. As she does, we pray that her fear will be turned into saving faith in the One who says, *"Fear not, for I have redeemed you"* (Isa. 43:1).

Amazingly, the Lord directed us to a young Israeli woman named **Michal**. After hearing that I was from Dallas, Texas, she excitedly told us that she had recently visited her sister who lives in Dallas. This opened the door for us to share God's will for the people of Israel — to recognize that Yeshua His Son is the Messiah of Israel.

We gave her a pamphlet and a complete Hebrew Study Bible. Then, we noted several Messianic prophecies revealed in Scripture. Now, she can read these prophecies to see and believe God's Word for salvation. Michal was nearly



Moshe and August



Shiraz



Michal

moved to tears as we shared several essential truths about the Messiah.

Our Gospel ministry to Israel cannot continue without you. Thank you for your prayers for us and for the people we providentially encounter. With your continued contributions, both Jewish and Muslim people in Israel can hear that Yeshua is Savior and Lord. ✨



Don't Skip this Important Holiday Tradition

By Yael Eckstein
ChristianPost.com



During this season, a spirit of generosity ignites us and highlights the best of humanity. Those of us in the Jewish community celebrate *Hanukkah* by lighting the menorah and giving gifts. Likewise, my Christian friends celebrate Christmas by lighting trees and giving gifts of their own.

This season of generosity and gift-giving is an excellent opportunity to live out our faith to a watching world. Blessing others spreads God's light and love on Earth. That blessing can take many forms — including giving to charities, helping a neighbor, or simply calling or visiting people who are alone. Even those who don't worship our God benefit from His blessings through us. God instructed us, just as He did Abraham, not only to receive His blessing, but also to be a blessing.

Both *Hanukkah* and Christmas illuminate the darkest days of the year with this spirit of generosity. The holiday season isn't simply a materialistic adventure; it's a time for modeling the ways God has blessed us by blessing others. This is the core of our shared values between the Jewish and Christian faiths — loving others and bringing God's light to the world.

Our blessing to others lights up what could otherwise be a dark world. I've met many families this year who could use a blessing: elderly women wondering where their next meal will come from, families fleeing anti-Semitism, and children without enough clothing to keep warm in the winter.

In Psalm 112:4, the psalmist wrote, *"Even in darkness, light dawns for the*

upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous."

The writer, believed to be David, faced tremendous struggles. Yet even in dark times, he knew that generosity would bring blessings to the world. The gift blesses the receiver. God blesses the giver.

"Good will come to those who are generous..." (Ps. 112:5). That blessing includes God's presence during tough times. *"[The generous] will have no fear of bad news. Their hearts are steadfast,*

trusting in the LORD" (Ps. 112:7).

God promises to bless those who are generous. David added, *"[Those who] have freely scattered their gifts to the poor ... their horn will be lifted high in honor" (Ps. 112:9).*

If you see others struggling, I

encourage you to "scatter your gifts" freely and shine a light through compassion and generosity. You can find many reasons right now to scale back your benevolence. Inflation might make heating your home more expensive, medical bills may be piling up, and your business may be short-staffed. But we must remember what God asks of us, even if the mountains seem steeper this year.

If you are generous in times of want and times of plenty, know that God will not overlook your faithfulness. He is the ultimate gift-giver who can't be outdone. Don't skip this vital part of your holiday to-do list. And don't skip generosity during the rest of the year either. God has been good to us; it's paramount that we reflect that to a world in need. ✨

credit: Viktoriia Hrybas / iStock



ZLM Bulletin Board



Top Scores from Three Watchdogs

Once again, **MinistryWatch.com** has awarded our ministry the highest possible Give with Confidence Score — their strongest endorsement. Our 100% score means that we have the highest level of transparency, accountability, and good governance among the Christian ministries they review — a perfect rating based on their criteria. MinistryWatch.com bases its score on 20 key questions regarding: 1) Transparency and Accountability, 2) Governance and Board Oversight, and 3) Financial Health and Compensation. They agree that we meet all the equivalent standards from the **Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA)**, of which we've been a member for nearly 14 years. We're also a four out of four-star charity with **Charity Navigator**, which has awarded us 100% for Accountability & Finance and Leadership & Adaptability.



Do Israeli Lives Matter?

During the massacre on October 7, 2023, Hamas killed 22-year-old German-Israeli **Shani Nicole Louk**.

Shortly after the attack, a social media video showed Hamas terrorists parading her partially clad body through the streets of Gaza City in the back of a pickup truck. By the end of October 2023, Israel confirmed Louk's death based on a skull fragment found on the road near the Nova music festival grounds. Seven months later, they recovered her body from a tunnel in Gaza.



Shani Nicole Louk

credit: Screenshot / X

FREE ITEM

YOUR GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE GIVING

Pamphlet of the Month

Your Guide to Effective Giving

provides guidance for giving the right gift at the right time in the right way. After touching on cash, securities, and other property, this guide delves into retirement funds, life insurance, and ways to donate while retaining income. The pamphlet concludes with a helpful summary of federal tax considerations for charitable giving. To receive this pamphlet at no charge, email us at staff@levitt.com or write to our P.O. Box.

Request POM #1

"Free Palestine = Heil Hitler"

According to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, pro-Gaza radicals are continuing the genocidal Nazi ideology of Jew hatred. The violence of these neo-Nazi activists is part of the movement that Hamas spearheads to kill Israelis and all Jews. Thus, "Free Palestine" is today's version of "Heil Hitler." There's a reason that the Nazis and Muslims were allied during WWII. Note: Islamists like Hamas also hate Christians.



Benjamin Netanyahu

credit: GPO Israel

"COME HOME!"

Zola Tours to Israel



See page 36 for details





Courtesy:
The Jerusalem
Connection

HebrewLesson

"Immanuel" — Faith Establishes the Sign

by John Parsons
Hebrew for Christians
Hebrew4Christians.com



אִם לֹא תֵאֱמִינוּ כִּי לֹא תֵאֱמָנוּ

"If you will not believe, you will not be established."

Isaiah 7:9b

נֹו	מֵי	אֵי	תֵי	לֹא	כִּי	נֹו	מֵי	אֵי	תֵי	לֹא	אִם
(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(1)
tei-a-mei'- noo				loh'	kee'	ta'- a mee'-noo				loh'	eem'
you will be established				not	then	you will believe				not	if

Read Hebrew right to left!



In the days of the Divided Kingdom, faithless King Ahaz of Judah fearfully anticipated an invasion by Syria and the northern tribes of Israel (Isa. 7:1–2). All of Judah trembled with him. **Was Judah done for? How could this happen?** What about the Lord's covenant with King David and God's promise (2 Sam. 7:16) that David's house and kingdom would be *made sure* forever?

Interestingly, the qualifier *made sure* (וַאֲמָן) comes from the Hebrew verb 'aman (from which the word "amen" is derived), which means "to be reliable, to support." The passive inflection of this verb indicates that the House of David was made secure by the power and truth of the Lord.

In response to this crisis, the Lord sent the Prophet Isaiah and his son to King Ahaz to proclaim the message of deliverance (Isa. 7:3–9). The phrase *im lo ta'aminu, ki lo tei'ameinu* employs a play on the Hebrew verb 'aman. The House of David will indeed be established ('aman), but only through faith (*emunah*, the noun form of 'aman) in the Lord's promise. That is, the House of David will be established only *by faith*.

Ahaz's faith was tested. The Lord offered the king a sign to establish His word, but Ahaz balked at the offer. Therefore, the Lord gave a sign of His own accord: A young woman would bear a child and call his name *Immanu 'El* ("God with us"). Before the boy would know how to tell good from evil, however, the enemies of David — both Syria and Samaria (the Northern Kingdom) — would be taken captive by Assyria. Therefore, the covenant made with King David was indeed sure ('aman). God Himself would establish the throne of David through the giving of a Child of Promise.

Yeshua the Messiah is the promised "Son of David" whom the earthly Immanuel merely foreshadowed (Matt. 1:23). As the rightful King of Judah, Yeshua's house and kingdom will never end (Luke 1:31–33). As *Immanu 'El*, Yeshua is indeed the true Presence of God among His people. The Kingdom of God is established within you when you put your faith in Him. ✨



Revelation: Unveiling the Visions DVD set

Eight 30-minute TV 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. He encourages you to release your fear of the future and focus on God's plan of ultimate restoration. These eight programs include insights from David and Kirsten Hart and music by Zola Levitt.

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

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

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

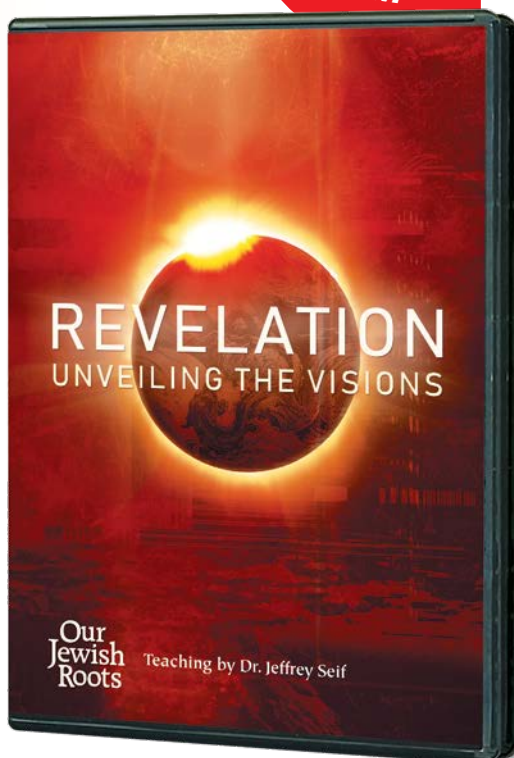
Impending Judgments Chapters 8–10 show that the Word of God is both bitter and sweet. The Seven Trumpets herald judgment for those who refuse to turn from wickedness. Believers can call on Messiah to help them persevere through difficulties.

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

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

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

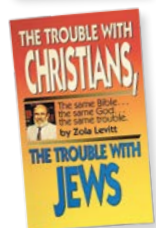
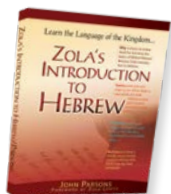
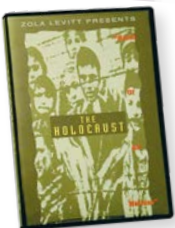
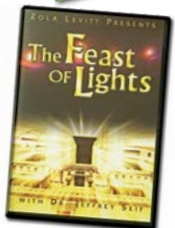
Ultimate Triumph The last three chapters of Revelation prophesy the Messiah reigning for 1,000 years before the Great White Throne Judgment. A new Heaven, new Earth, and New Jerusalem appear, wiping away every tear forever.





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p.31



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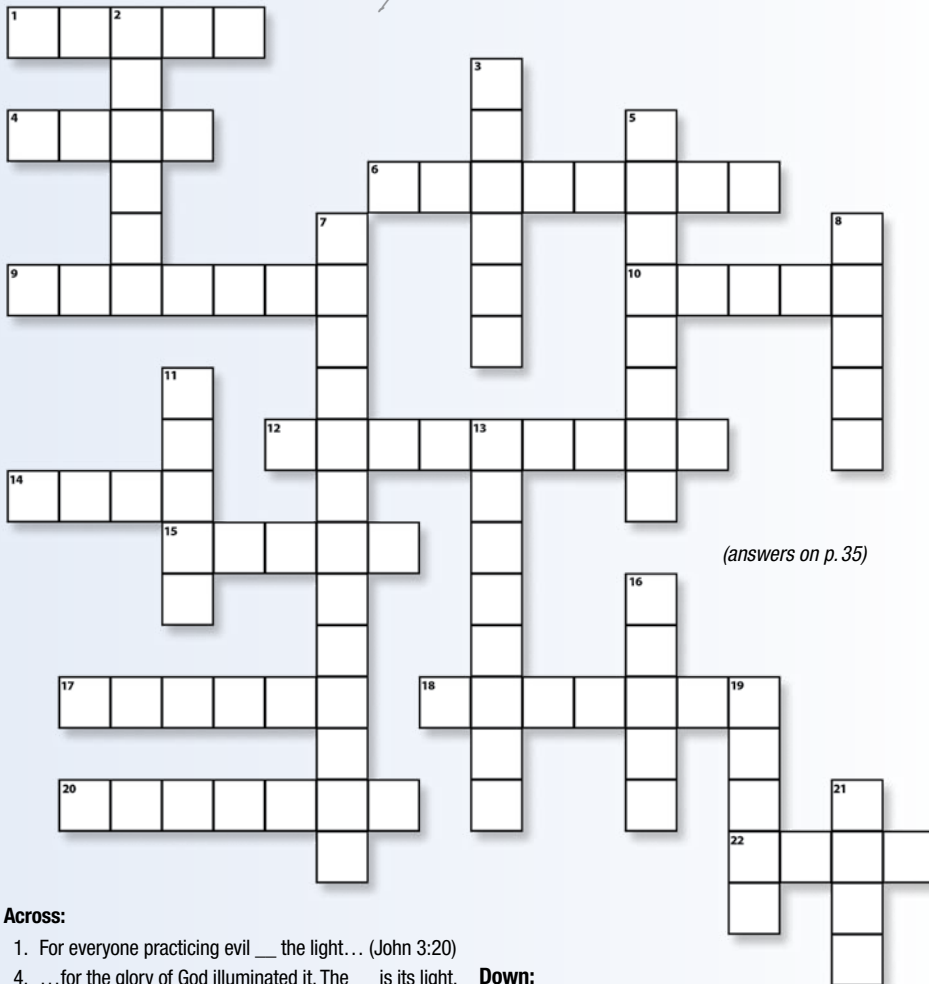




Crossword December 2025:

"I Am the Light of the World" (NKJV)

by Andrea Davis



(answers on p. 35)

Across:

1. For everyone practicing evil ___ the light... (John 3:20)
4. ...for the glory of God illuminated it. The ___ is its light. (Rev. 21:23)
6. ...whoever believes in Me should not abide in ___. (John 12:46)
9. Yet I say to you that in this place there is One ___ than the temple. (Matt. 12:6)
10. But he who does the ___ comes to the light... (John 3:21)
12. Now it was the Feast of Dedication in ___, and it was winter. (John 10:22)
14. That was the ___ Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. (John 1:9)
15. As long as I am in the world, I am the ___ of the world. (John 9:5)
17. I and My ___ are one. (John 10:30)
18. ...He who ___ Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. (John 8:12)
20. ...proclaim the ___ of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9)
22. ...and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were ___. (John 3:19)

Down:

2. Do you not know that you are the ___ of God... (1 Cor. 3:16)
3. ...How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the ___, tell us plainly. (John 10:24)
5. ...I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the ___. (Isa. 42:6)
7. ...He has sent Me to heal the ___, To proclaim liberty to the captives... (Luke 4:18)
8. Let your light so ___ before men... (Matt. 5:16)
11. ...I will ___ in them And walk among them... (2 Cor. 6:16)
13. And Jesus walked in the temple, in ___ porch. (John 10:23)
16. ...to give the light of the knowledge of the ___ of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6)
19. My ___ hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. (John 10:27)
21. You are the light of the world. A ___ that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. (Matt. 5:14)





Letters to ZLM

Some letters have been edited for space. For ministry products and TV programs, visit levitt.com. Access the web store and free video archives by clicking on the headings "Store" and "Watch."

This month, we begin with a few questions and comments from December 2024 and January 2025 related to Christmas. —Editor

Displaying a Nativity

From C.H.: Is it wrong to have a Nativity? Is that a graven image concern?

Dear C.H.,

We don't believe so, but that decision is still between you and the Holy Spirit. In Islam, you can't even depict Muhammad, which would be a form of idolatry. Yet, we have actors portray Yeshua, because it's an outstanding way to witness His love. **A nativity scene is also a visual reminder of God's love.** That's the same reason people wear cross necklaces — to show the world that this symbol of a curse and death became the vehicle to bring us life! —Blessings, Joshua and Caleb

A Hanukkah Hoedown on YouTube

From B.B.: Why the stockings? Are you really celebrating Xmas?

Dear B.B.,

We celebrate the birth of our Savior at this time of year, because it's the only time the world recognizes Yeshua's birth. That's why we make these amusing videos to connect to the lost, not necessarily the Pharisee. It would be different if we knew the exact day of Yeshua's birth, but we don't. **Our Jewish mother is an orphan.** We don't know the precise day that she was born. Still, we choose to celebrate her birthday on a predetermined day, even if it's not the actual day.

There's always a possibility that, sometime in history, Satan selected that specific day to honor a demon. But that could be true for literally every day on the calendar, if you look far enough. Although we personally don't hang stockings, we don't judge those who do. In our eyes, Satan cannot pervert socks, trees, or rainbows. —Blessings, Joshua and Caleb

Dear B.B.,

Please see the cover article, "[Is Christmas a Pagan Holiday?](#)" —Editor



(continued on next page)

Say Merry Christmas?

From C.T.: Am I allowed to wish you Merry Christmas? Besides all of the craziness, commercialism, and paganism, it's my very favorite time of the year. A Son was given to us.

Dear C.T.,

Of course you can. **We're not your typical legalistic Jews.** Any time of the year that we focus on Yeshua is a good time! —Blessings, Joshua and Caleb

Fun and Serious

From P.F.: Dear Joshua and Caleb, my son and I really enjoy your spiritual teachings that are presented in both a fun and serious manner. Laughter is a good medicine. Please continue sharing true and relevant messages from God.

We so enjoyed and appreciated the recent teaching about the Mobile Church. This is such a needed topic in the times in which we live. Unfortunately, some churches today are more full of the world than the world is.



Israel Hanna

We also appreciate Israel Hanna's words of wisdom. My father was a Baptist minister who walked the talk and did not try to tickle ears. People so need to hear the truth; please continue spreading the truth! May God give you both fresh anointing and may you continue to grow in His love, grace, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

Shalom, P.F.,

We are overjoyed to hear that *The Lobstermen* programs reach young and old alike. We don't discount the wisdom of our elders like Israel Hanna. And we also don't reject the voice that God gives younger leaders like Ryan Economy. **Bringing together an ensemble of Jews and gentiles ensured that we could reach as many demographics as possible with the truth of Yeshua.** May the Lord bless and keep your family in His love. —Blessings, Joshua and Caleb

The Lobstermen #8: Apostasy! on YouTube

From M.I.R.: *"For they are not all Israel who are of Israel"* (Rom. 9:6). What are your thoughts, please?

Dear M.I.R.,

Most people take this reference in Romans 9:6 out of context. Paul is talking about Israelites accepting their spiritual call from God, or noting those who have rejected it even though they are of the bloodline of Abraham. In Romans 2:25–29, Paul is explaining that circumcision, or being set apart, is a matter of the heart.

Yeshua taught that it is not what you put into your mouth that makes you unclean, but what comes out of your mouth (Matt. 15:11). Paul wrote to the Romans to explain how they are now grafted into the commonwealth of Israel, becoming spiritual Jews in a sense.

In Romans 11, Paul makes it very clear that God has not rejected national Israel. Nor has God rejected the true bloodline of the Israelites merely because they rejected Yeshua. There is still the eternal Abrahamic Covenant that God made with the Jewish people that can never be revoked. —Blessings, Joshua and Caleb

(continued on next page)



Sacred Name?

From R.K.: There's a movement that I've noticed on Facebook that is scaring people. They say that you must call God Yahweh. And you must call Jesus Yeshua, or you're going to be sent to hell. Who are these people and why are they scaring others like this?

Dear R.K.,

We meet quite a few of **these judgmental people**. Though they won't declare it publicly, they **are part of the "Sacred Name Movement."** They are no different from the Pharisees, elevating the laws of man over the laws of God. And their "science" or understanding behind the paleo-Hebrew is inaccurate. Just block and ignore these individuals. Don't give them the fight that they are seeking. —Blessings, Joshua and Caleb

The Rapture

From J.K.: I'm confused. If Jesus is the Father, and the Trinity are all three one and the same, how can Jesus not know the date [of His return]? Also, the word *rapture* doesn't even exist in Bible references to this event. And no one is to add to the Bible. Who gave permission to use the word *rapture*?

Dear J.K.,

Yeshua said, *"I and My Father are one"* (John 10:30). Still, He willingly came to Earth and was separated physically from the Father. At one time on the Cross, Yeshua was spiritually separated from the Father when He took on all our sins (Matt. 27:46). Regarding Yeshua not knowing the date, He said so Himself in Matthew 24:36.

While the word *rapture* does not appear in the Bible, neither does the word *Trinity*. But these topics are found throughout Scripture. The word *harpazo* is that rapture description you are seeking in the Greek. Just as the Father spared Noah and his family from the flood's devastation, and Lot from Sodom's destruction, He plans to spare us from His wrath, according to 2 Peter 2:5–9.

God is not a man that He should lie (Num. 23:19). Yeshua now sits at the right hand of the Father, as two separate beings, even though they are One. Even Stephen saw this reality, as recorded in Acts 7:55–56. Yeshua chose to be obedient, in full submission to the Father, in order to fulfill the prophetic Word. Since Yeshua is the Word, and spoke it in Matthew 24:36, it is prophecy. —Blessings, Joshua and Caleb

Why, God?

From V.M.: I need an answer from God. Why? I fully expected You to miraculously heal Charlie Kirk for Your glory. You needed him to continue the work that You gave him. He was bringing lost sheep to you for salvation. However, Your will be done.

Dear V.M.,

Consider Charlie to be a modern-day Stephen, who was martyred for the Gospel of Yeshua. The event noted in Acts 7 rallied the Church to go forth in boldness and power. We believe that many will now come to faith because of Charlie's witness. —Blessings, Joshua and Caleb ☆





Israel's Online Archaeological Database

Millions of artifacts and archaeological discoveries from Israel are now just a click away, thanks to the new Israel National Archaeological Database.

Designed for both scholars and archaeology enthusiasts, the platform brings together an unprecedented wealth of material about the land's ancient past. **The database includes over 3.9 million records, nearly a million artifacts, more than 1.2 million images, and more than 15,000 3D models of sites and finds.** According to the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), this is one of the largest archaeological online repositories in the world.

"Israel is the most excavated country in the world. This immense trove of data will now be readily accessible to researchers both here and abroad," stated IAA Chief Scientist **Dr. Débora Sandhaus.**

Visit <https://discover.iaa.org.il> for the digital archive that is available in Hebrew and English.

Users can explore a "Selected 3D Models" section and navigate an interactive map of Israel that highlights major archaeological sites. Anyone who registers for a free account can dive deeper into the database, searching by site, artifact, historical period, and more.

"Until now, those who were looking for this kind of information would need



to sit in our archives for months. Now they can just look for, let's say, Byzantine churches, and find thousands of entries," Sandhaus noted. "It will help advance research immensely."

Alby Malka, head of the IAA's Technologies Division, expressed hope that the portal would also serve as a valuable resource for educators teaching the history of Israel both locally and abroad. "Teachers could really benefit from using the database, especially the 3D models, with their students — alongside scholars and people passionate about archaeology."

The database is still a work in progress. "We're going to add a lot more data, 3D models, and more," Malka stated. ✨



credit: Yoli Schwartz / IAA

Dr. Débora Sandhaus



Israeli Innovation Turns Apple Waste into Food Ingredient

YNetNews.com



Dr. Asaad Safadi (left) and Prof. Ofir Benjamin

Workers pick Pink Lady apples in Kibbutz Malkia, on the Israeli border with Lebanon, November 10, 2024.

Israeli researchers have developed an innovative method to transform apple industry waste. This includes transforming blemished or undersized fruit into a nutrient-rich powder packed with fiber, antioxidants, and vitamins. The breakthrough opens new possibilities for the food industry with a natural ingredient for healthier products.

The global apple industry has grown by 48% over the past two decades, but 15-20% of the harvest is discarded due to cosmetic defects, size, bruises, or fruit falling prematurely. Despite apples' popularity and nutritional benefits, much of this surplus ends up in landfills or as animal feed. In Israel alone, nearly 20,000 tons of apples are wasted annually.

Prof. Ofir Benjamin of Tel-Hai College's Department of Food Sciences began addressing this challenge with Dr. Asaad Safadi. He is CEO of the Alsharq packing house in Majdal Shams, a Druze town in Israel's Golan Heights. These men and others developed a unique process to produce high-quality apple powder from discarded fruit. The juice is used to make

apple cider vinegar, while the powder retains essential nutrients.

"This innovation has several key aspects," Benjamin noted. "First, sustainability — addressing food waste by maximizing the use of the fruit. Second, health — the powder is rich in essential nutrients and offers a natural alternative to synthetic additives used in the food industry. Third, innovation — the process preserves the fruit's nutritional value. Finally, the economic potential is enormous, creating new opportunities for the global food sector. We already have interest from international companies."

The discovery could significantly impact farmers struggling with climate change and rising crop losses. "This solution encourages sustainable farming, minimizing waste and economic losses," Safadi added. "Our collaboration with academia has opened the door to new possibilities for apples and, later, other crops."

The team now plans to establish a production facility, aiming to position Israel as a global leader in food-waste utilization. ☆

credit: Ayal Margolin / Flash90



Gene Therapy May Cure Genetic Hearing Loss

By Pesach Benson, TPS
WorldsIsraelNews.com



Israeli and U.S. scientists have developed a new gene therapy that could one day help millions of people with genetic inner ear disorders. The therapy prevents the degeneration of sensory cells in the ear. This offers hope for a condition that currently has no cure.

"This treatment represents an improvement over existing strategies. It holds promise for treating a wide range of mutations that cause hearing loss," noted **Prof. Karen Avraham** of Tel Aviv University (TAU), lead author of the study. The research was co-led by TAU PhD student **Roni Hahn**. They collaborated with Prof. Jeffrey Holt and Dr. Gwenaëlle Géléoc from Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School.



Roni Hahn (left) and Prof. Karen Avraham

Genetic mutations cause about half of all congenital hearing loss. This affects millions of children and adults worldwide. Currently, genetic hearing problems are addressed through management and compensation rather than cures.

The inner ear contains two critical systems — the auditory system, which allows people to hear, and the vestibular system, which controls balance. "Genetic

variants can disrupt these systems, leading to hearing loss and balance problems," Avraham stated.

The new therapy targets the **CLIC5 gene**, which is essential for tiny sensory cells in the inner ear called hair cells. These cells detect sound and maintain balance. Faulty CLIC5 genes cause hair cells to gradually degenerate, first leading to hearing loss and later to balance difficulties.

The researchers used a special viral vector — a harmless virus engineered to deliver a healthy copy of the gene directly into hair cells. "Gene therapy has become a powerful tool for treating genetic disorders," noted Hahn. "Our self-complementary viral vector works faster and more efficiently than older methods, requiring lower doses.

In animal tests, this therapy prevented hair cell loss and preserved normal hearing and balance."

By demonstrating that hair cells in the inner ear can be effectively targeted by gene therapy, the research potentially paves the way for therapies for other genetic hearing disorders.

The techniques could also inform gene therapies for other sensory or neurological disorders requiring precise delivery to small, delicate cells. Examples include Parkinson's disease, spinal muscular atrophy, and retinal disorders.

The findings were featured in the peer-reviewed journal *EMBO Molecular Medicine*. ☆

credit: Tel Aviv University



Where are the Christians of Bethlehem?

In 1991, while a radio talk show host on WMCA-New York, I interviewed the mayor of Bethlehem, Elias Freij. We met at the city hall in Bethlehem — a stone's throw away from the Church of the Nativity. A jovial man, Freij clearly had to have a thick skin, as a Christian surrounded by a majority of Muslims in his city. Despite not being formally part of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), he fully identified with the PLO out of necessity and self-preservation.

Following my questions about Arafat and the terror campaigns waged by the PLO against Israelis, which he largely defended, I asked, "Where are the Christians in this, the birth city of Jesus?" He hesitated for a moment and then pointed his finger westward, toward the Mediterranean Sea, and responded, "In Santiago de Chile!"

In 1950, two years after Israel's independence, there were **36,000 Christians** in Israel. Today, there are **187,900 Christians** in Israel. As of 2021, the Christians in Israel were the only growing Christian community in the Middle East.

Whereas the number of Christians in the Jewish state continues to grow, a different story occurs in the areas controlled by the Palestinian Arabs. Earlier this year, the Greek Orthodox Church declared that "terrorist attacks against Christians, assaults on churches, cemeteries, and Christian properties in the Palestinian Authority [PA] ... have become daily occurrences, and their severity clearly intensifies during Christian holidays."

The demographic tendencies of Christians and the rate of emigration have drastically reduced the Christian population in the Middle East. In 1914, they represented 26.4% of the population throughout the Near East (what today is known as Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and PA-controlled areas). Today, they are estimated at about 1–2% in the "West Bank" and Gaza, and

9.2% throughout the region (a 1998 estimate by demography expert Philippe Fargues).

There are conflicting statistics regarding the extent to which Christians have left their ancestral residences in what is now PA-administered territory. One reason for differing figures is that some provide overly optimistic estimates of the remaining Christian population in order to retain whatever residual political and economic clout that the various communities enjoy.

All informed opinions, however, agree that the Christian population has declined — both in numbers and as a percentage of the total population. Palestinian Christian relocation occurred during the First Intifada and increased rapidly at the onset of the Second Intifada. Between October 2000 and November 2001, 2,766 Christians left the "West Bank"; 1,640 left the Bethlehem area.

Bethlehem, long considered a Christian city, exemplifies the demographic and cultural decline. According to the Christian Information Center, Christians made up 86% of Bethlehem's population in 1950. Until the Oslo Accords, Bethlehem had the largest Christian majority of any city in the area. Since the PA took control, however, the Christian population has decreased precipitously.

In Gaza, the situation is even worse. Since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in 2007, the Christian population decreased from 5,000 to approximately 600 today. Testimonies from Christians in Gaza, collected by Christian organizations, describe a constant threat to their lives.

Many Westerners don't understand that in the Muslim world, religion is the primary form of self-identification. In the "West Bank," Gaza, and the greater Middle East — all governed by some form of sharia Islamic law — **Christians and Jews carry the status of *dhimmi*.** These "protected

(continued on next page)





people” must pay a special tax known as *jizya*, which is intended to compel Christians and Jews to convert to Islam.

Salafi Muslims, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, seek to emulate Muhammad’s successors. They are known as the *Rashidun* — the first four caliphs of the Islamic community following Muhammad’s death. These caliphs, who colonized the Middle East, used the sword and economic pressure to compel the mass conversion of Christians and some Jews to Islam. Thus, it’s not surprising that they still oppress the Christian minority in Gaza.

Whenever the opportunity presented itself, Palestinian Islamists desecrated the Christians’ holiest sites. On March 29, 2002, IDF Infantry Brigade 310 and Tank Battalion 445 rolled into Bethlehem as part of Operation Defensive Shield. These reserve units were on a mission to retake the city, two days after a suicide bomber killed 30 Israelis and injured 160 during a Passover seder dinner at the Park

Hotel in Netanya. The Palestinian terrorist perpetrators fled to Bethlehem’s holiest Christian site: the Church of the Nativity.

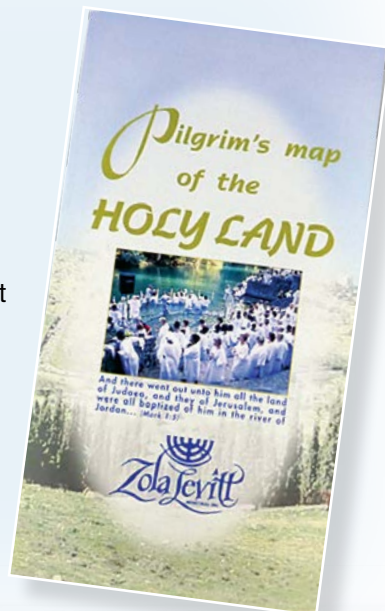
The priests who remained in the church during the siege reported the theft of valuable icons and the use of pages from prayer books as toilet paper. One Christian resident of Bethlehem noted that some gunmen defecated inside the grotto of the Nativity.

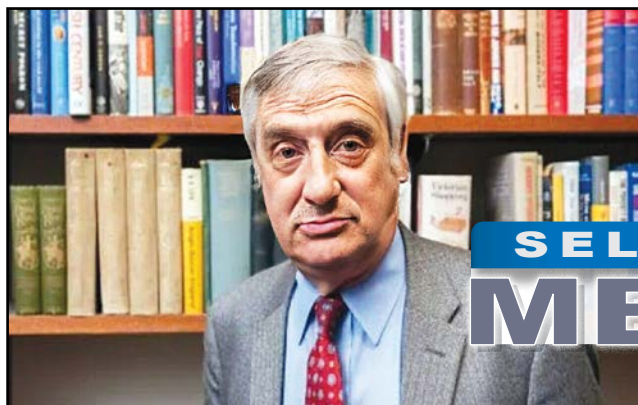
Western societies, particularly Western Europeans, have mostly discarded God and religion. Yet they reverence Islam, which is slowly conquering Europe after a failed attempt in the eighth century. **The Europeans murdered their Jews** — who gave them culture and Nobel Prizes — **and replaced them with millions of Muslims** who eventually will end their “good life.” In the meantime, most Western Christians are silent about the Muslim oppression of their co-religionists, and about the fate of the Christians in the birthplace of Jesus. ☆



Pilgrim’s Map of the Holy Land

A very special map of modern Israel that also provides sites of Biblical importance. Scriptures are given right on the map so that the reader can locate the cities and towns of Biblical significance. Delivers hours of spiritual pleasure.





credit: Tel Aviv University

SELECT MEDIA BRIEFS

Prof. Joel Mokyr

Israeli-American Economist Wins Nobel Prize

By Canaan Lidor / JNS.org

Joel Mokyr, a dual citizen of Israel and the United States, shared the 2025 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences awarded half the \$1.1 million prize to Mokyr. The other half will be split between Philippe Aghion [also Jewish] of the College de France and the INSEAD business school, and Peter Howitt, a professor emeritus of economics at Brown University.

The three economists researched the relationship between technological progress and sustained economic growth, which has improved living conditions. Their work would help ensure that growth is maintained and can be steered in the direction to support humankind.

"Sustained economic growth, driven by a continuous stream of technological innovations and improvements, has replaced stagnation," explained John Hassler, the chair of the prize committee, during an October ceremony announcing the award.

Mokyr, who teaches at Tel Aviv University, explained how sustained economic growth became the norm. His work has emphasized the importance of society being open to new ideas and allowing change, including in his book, *A Culture of Growth: The Origins of the Modern Economy*.

Mokyr stated that he was optimistic about the prospects for more economic growth because of the "human capability of manipulating and harnessing the forces of nature to its own needs."

Aghion and Howitt shared the award for what the committee described as "the theory of sustained growth through creative destruction." They built a mathematical growth model, with creative destruction as a core element. ☆



credit: Luke Tress / Times of Israel

Anti-Israel protesters in New York City, August 16, 2025

Socialists Denounce Gaza Ceasefire Deal

By Matthew Xiao / FreeBeacon.com

After two years of demanding a ceasefire in Gaza, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) released a statement denouncing President Donald Trump's ceasefire deal and calling for more Palestinian "resistance" against Israel.

The statement, titled "Until Palestinian Liberation," indicates that the DSA's goal is "to end U.S. complicity in Israel's genocide and

(continued on next page)

apartheid at every level — in our communities, our government, our workplaces — with every economic and political tool at our disposal.”

The DSA vowed to continue supporting anti-Israel campaigns. These include the anti-Semitic Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) and Labor for an Arms Embargo movements — to “effectively isolate Israel economically, culturally, and academically.”

Israel and Hamas agreed to stop fighting under Trump’s peace deal. Hamas freed all 20 living Israeli hostages on October 13 and Israel released nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees in return. World leaders have praised Trump for brokering the agreement, calling it a rare diplomatic breakthrough in the region.

In October 2023, Democratic Socialist members of Congress introduced a resolution titled “Ceasefire NOW.” The DSA

repeated its ceasefire demand in January 2024 and earlier this year. [★](#)

Three members of the U.S. House of Representatives are also members of DSA: Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), and Rep. Greg Casar (D-TX). Zohran Mamdani, a Democratic mayoral candidate in New York City, is another DSA member. —Editor



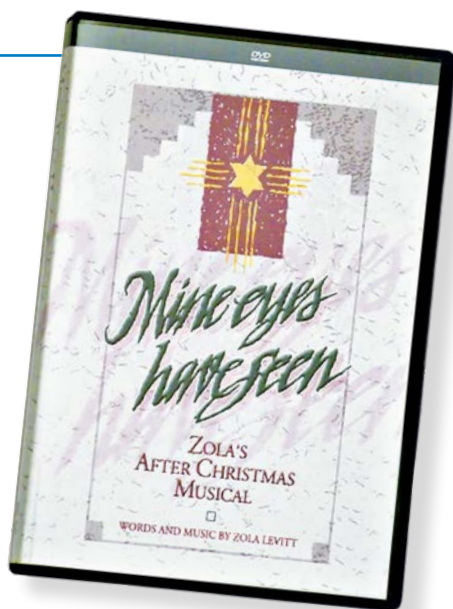
[Mine Eyes Have Seen](#)

[Zola's After-Christmas Musical DVD](#)
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In this “after-Christmas musical,” Zola narrates the moving story of Simeon, the aged-but-faithful servant who waited to see the Messiah face to face. This beautifully staged half-hour presentation will have you singing along with Simeon and Anna about the arrival of the King of kings, the Holy One of Israel.

The soundtrack is available on [The Works II CD \(p.19\)](#) and in MP3 format from iTunes and Amazon.

Please see the Classic Zola article “Merry Christmas” [on p. 8.](#)



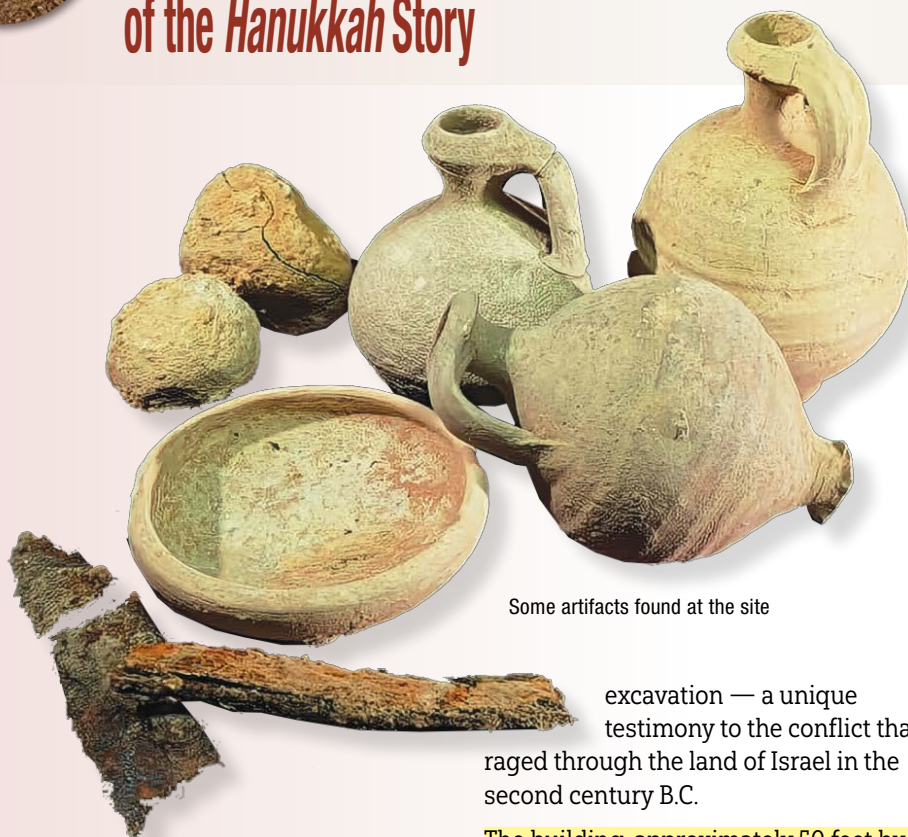
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Archaeology

Charred Ruins of Ancient Fortress are Evidence of the *Hanukkah* Story



Some artifacts found at the site

credit: Davida Eisenberg-Degen / IAA

Some 2,100 years ago, the Hasmonean army marched toward the Hellenistic city of Maresha in the Judean foothills. Leading them was John Hyrcanus, a high priest and the ruler of Judea. He was a nephew of the *Hanukkah* hero Judah Maccabee, who several decades earlier had led the victorious revolt against the Seleucids in the region.

Seleucid soldiers in a fortress on a hill overlooking the city first spotted the Judean army. "Our theory is that the Seleucids blocked the entrance of the fortress and fled to the city as their enemies approached," noted archaeologist Ahinoam Montagu, one of the excavation directors for the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA). "As the Hasmoneans reached the structure, they set it on fire."

Some two millennia later, the structure was uncovered in an archaeological

excavation — a unique testimony to the conflict that raged through the land of Israel in the second century B.C.

The building, approximately 50 feet by 50 feet, featured seven rooms. Steps that likely led to a second floor are still visible and well preserved. Burnt beams offer dramatic insight into its last moments.

"The structure presents a clear destruc-



Workers at the excavation site

credit: Emil Aladjem / IAA

tion layer, which was preserved because the area was not resettled," Montagu explained. "Likely the roof collapsed first and then the highest parts of the wall followed."

The archaeologists found hundreds of pottery shards and several coins that allowed them to date the building with precision.





credit: Emil Aladjem / IAA

An aerial view of workers at the excavation site

Also among the artifacts were a few well-preserved small jugs, often used to store expensive liquids. According to Jewish tradition, a similar container was instrumental in the *Hanukkah* miracle — a small jug of olive oil did not run out, allowing the menorah in the Temple in Jerusalem to remain illuminated for eight days.



credit: Saar Ganor / IAA

A blade found at the site

Apparently, no fighting occurred in the fortress. “We uncovered only a few animal bones and a fragment of a sword,” Montagu added. “If a battle was fought here, there would have been a lot more remains, including human remains and artifacts.

The archaeologists believe that the building was not the only fortified structure guarding Maresha. More might have been built on the other hills surrounding the city.

Maresha was conquered by John Hyrcanus around 112 B.C.

The newly-revealed fortress was first uncovered several years ago and has been excavated since 2020.

“The stories of the Maccabees are coming to life before our eyes. This is the most fascinating part of the Israel Antiquities



credit: Emil Aladjem / IAA

The fortress was constructed of stone walls nine feet thick.

Authority’s work, when dedicated, hardworking archaeologists breathe life into the historical annals of the people who passed through this land,” said IAA Director Eli Escusido. ☆



Michigan Mayor tells Christian: "Not Welcome" in this City

By Jasmine Baehr
FoxNews.com



During a September city council meeting in Dearborn, Michigan, Mayor **Abdullah Hammoud** told a local Christian resident that he was "not welcome" in the city.

At the meeting, the man introduced himself as "**Ted Barham**, Dearborn resident," and objected to new streets being renamed for Osama Siblani, publisher of *The Arab American News*. "He's a promoter of Hezbollah and Hamas," Barham noted. "[Siblani] talks about how the blood of the martyrs irrigates the land of Palestine ... Whether we are in Michigan [or] whether we are in Jenin. Believe me, everyone should fight within his means. They will fight with stones, others will fight with guns, others fight with planes, drones, and rockets."

Barham compared the signs to naming a road "**Hezbollah Street or Hamas Street**," adding that the move was "provocative." He added that as a Christian, he wanted to encourage peace. Then, Barham quoted Jesus: "**Blessed are the peacemakers**" (Matt. 5:9).



Edward "Ted" Barham addressing the Dearborn City Council on September 9, 2025

credit: City of Dearborn

Council members interjected, warning Barham against "personal attacks" and stating that the city had no control over the county's decision. One added, "The sign that was placed on Warren Avenue, which is a county road, and that was done by the Wayne County Executive." Barham, however, maintained that it mattered to Dearborn residents because the signs stood in their city.

Hammoud, a Muslim, then said to Barham: "The best suggestion I have for you is to not drive on Warren Avenue or to close your eyes while you're doing it. His name is up there, and I spoke at a ceremony celebrating it because he's done a lot for this community."

After calling Barham a bigot, a racist, and an Islamophobe, Hammoud added: "Although you live here, I want you to know as mayor, **you are not welcome here**. And the day you move out of the city will be the day that I launch a parade celebrating the fact that you moved out of this city." ☆



Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammoud at the meeting

credit: City of Dearborn





No Hanukkah Tree

Admiring the Christmas tree displayed in their Christian neighbor's window, a child asked her father, "Abba, can we have a *Hanukkah* tree?"

"What? No, of course not," replied her father.

"Why not?" the child responded.

Bewildered, the father replied, "Because the last time our people had dealings with a lighted bush, we spent 40 years in the wilderness."



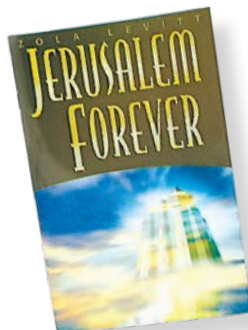
Answer Key for December 2025 Crossword (p. 21)

Across:

1. Hates
4. Lamb
6. Darkness
9. Greater
10. Truth
12. Jerusalem
14. True
15. Light
17. Father
18. Follows
20. Praises
22. Evil

Down:

2. Temple
3. Christ
5. Gentiles
7. Brokenhearted
8. Shine
11. Dwell
13. Solomon's
16. Glory
19. Sheep
21. City



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