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Enhancing Trust

Dear Reader,

January 2018

I begin 2018 by wishing you a productive and healthy new year. Our newsletter team hopes you've been enjoying the *Levitt Letter's* six-month study of End Times events. Zola's description of the Church's heavenly marriage (on the cover) continues Tony's series that lays out the Last Days. Classic Zola (p.11) explains why most churches worship on Sunday. If you haven't discovered levitt.com's Q&A page (under the Information tab), please peruse the dozens of frequent questions it answers.

This issue contains uplifting news about Israel — Mexico's renewed support (8), advances in science and medicine (26–29), archaeological findings (30, 32) — and a surprising connection with Saudi Arabia (21). Even IDF dogs join Israel's commitment to bless the world (31), a striking difference to the historical brainwashing of Islam's children to assault Jews (34).

Our guest teacher, Dov Schwarz, gives us a preview of his riveting series *Watch Therefore and Be Ready* that will air later this month on *Zola Levitt Presents* (4). Hebrew teacher John Parsons reassures readers that our Lord seeks a personal relationship with each of us (16). Mark's practical advice on Avoiding Tax Mistakes (14) reminds us to start gathering our tax info even while we diet (that's the joke on 35!). Todd debunks the rumor that Jews are saved just by being Jews (12) and shares experiences from leading the latest (his 43rd!) To The Jew First mission trip (13).

A word of interest: 2018 marks the 70th year of Israel's rebirth as a nation. Page 3 gives some reasons to visit this year, and page 36 lists options for doing so.



Blessings,

Margot

Margot, ZLM editor

P.S. Please consider an extra measure of support today to sustain news magazines like this one as well as our international television broadcasts. Your ongoing financial generosity enables us to feed His flock the milk and meat of the Word that they need. Thank you.

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Levitt LETTER

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

inside:
Covenant p.4

Our Marriage in Heaven

By Zola Levitt

In recent issues, Tony addressed End Times prophecies, relating them to where Israel and we Believers are in this day and age. After examining why Biblical prophecy gives Believers hope and a powerful witnessing tool, Tony guided us through [the Rapture](#) (the marriage of the Church to Messiah), how [Israel and the Tribulation](#) bring about Messiah's Second Coming, and the End Times battles of [Armageddon and Gog & Magog](#).

Zola specialized in End Times issues (eschatology), so while Tony rests between tours to Israel, let's hear from Zola, whose son Aaron skillfully condensed his father's teaching to fit in the January 2006 *Levitt Letter*. — Editor

It's fascinating to compare End Times events with Israel's wedding traditions in Christ's time. There was a seven-day honeymoon in a bridal chamber for the bride and groom preceding the marriage supper. This pertains exactly to the seven years in Heaven and

(continued p.2)

REMEMBER:

Tu B'Shvat (טו בשבט), also called "The New Year of the Trees," begins Tuesday, January 30th, at sunset. (See p. 7 for donating towards planting trees in Israel)

Iranian Wrestler Avoids Israeli Opponent

By Thomas Erdbrink
NYTimes.com

The Iranian wrestler was cruising through the match, looking like a sure bet to defeat his Russian opponent. But suddenly, as if suffering an injury, he fell to the mat and was thrown around the ring like a rag doll by the surprised Russian. Finally, the match ended and the referee pronounced the Russian the winner.

But the Iranian wrestler was not injured. As Iranian news outlets reported, he said that his coach had told him to throw the match to avoid facing an Israeli opponent in the next round of the tournament.

(continued p.9)



Marriage in Heaven *continued from cover*

the Judgment Seat of Christ, leading up to marriage with Him. ([The Jewish wedding and all of its Gospel implications are explained fully in the booklet, *A Christian Love Story*. See details below.](#))

The Marriage

John covers the marriage scene for us in two glorious verses:

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. (Rev. 19:7–8)

The white linen bridal gowns we shall wear fulfill a fascinating Bible type that reaches back to the Tabernacle of ancient Israel (Exodus 25–30). In the Tabernacle, plain white linen symbolized pure righteousness. The linen curtains around the entire Tabernacle—the tent, as it were—were pure white. Therefore, no one could enter through the sides or rear, because no one was perfectly righteous. The door of the Tabernacle was sewn with the colors of Christ—scarlet, purple, and blue threads, indicating sacrifice, royalty, and Heaven. The Israelites entered by the door, so symbolically, they were entering by means of the Messiah. Jesus said, *“I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture”* (John 10:9). Messianic colors were worn by the priests, and also appeared in the hangings of various courts and in roof coverings.

But now, the Church shall wear white! *“... the righteousness of saints.”* Our appearing in pure white testifies to our final perfection. Paul compared earthly marriage to Christ’s marrying the Church (Eph. 5:21–33). Ultimately, we will see the result of the Apostle’s exhortation of the infant Church.

After we marry the Lord, we’ll reign with Him in His Kingdom on Earth. This is exactly the way the bride returned with her groom after an Israeli marriage—to housing he had arranged for them outside his father’s house. (Some teach that the wedding will be on Earth after we return, and others place it in Heaven with the marriage supper on Earth. The locations shouldn’t concern us; the events themselves and participants should.) ★

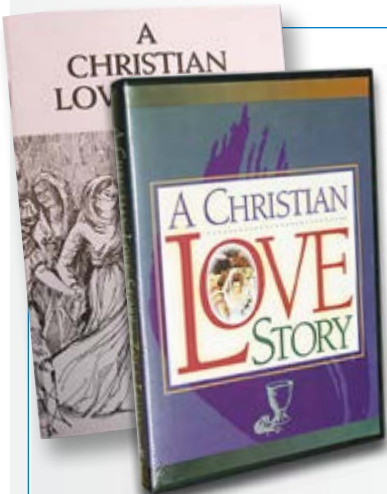
RECENT PROPHECY ARTICLES:

Sep.: [The Rapture](#)

Oct.: [The Tribulation and Israel](#)

Nov.: [The Tribulation](#)

Dec.: [Armageddon vs. Gog & Magog](#)



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.

Order online (or see pp.18 & 19)

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Israel's 70th Birthday 1948–2018

As Israel approaches its 70th anniversary of independence, the country is preparing for celebrations around the May birthday: festivals, concerts, and recreational activities in commemoration of the day that David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, read the Declaration of Independence on May 14, 1948.

Israel's tourism board states that tourists to Israel reached a record high

in 2017 and it expects 2018's numbers to exceed 2017's! For many, traveling to Israel this year will be even more meaningful due to the number 70's significance in the Biblical text. Christian pilgrims will also celebrate with the Jewish people the fulfillment of prophecy: the return of the exiled Jews back to their ancestral homeland. To travel with Zola Tours, please see tour information on p. 36. ★



Covenant—A Mountain Peak

BY DOV SCHWARZ (r)



What if the saying “Don’t make a mountain out of a molehill” was reversed to “Don’t make a molehill out of a mountain”? As disciples of Yeshua, have we forgotten our common enemy who will do anything to destroy our faith, such as deceiving us into thinking that very important things (mountains) are unimportant (molehills)?

Covenant and Prophecy are two Biblical mountains that too many consider molehills. They cannot see that the majesty of Messiah rests on these towering peaks. Sadly, many question why they should care about Bible prophecy. But without a grasp of Covenant and Prophecy, Believers* find the Bible difficult to understand. Let’s look at Covenant.

Covenants in Biblical Days

How does Covenant pertain to the Kingdom of God? In Old Testament times, Elohim (“God” in Hebrew) chose the means by which He made agreements with His people. Where the English Bible reads that Elohim “made a covenant,” the Hebrew text calls it “cutting a covenant.”

Covenants between men in Biblical days were made by cutting an animal’s throat and, often, walking through the blood. Walking through the blood indicates that covenants in Biblical times were more serious than our agreements today. The covenant makers would recite the promises of the agreement—one of which would have been “May what has happened to these animals happen to me if I break this covenant.” This agreed consequence would cause a man to think twice before making and breaking a covenant.

So, a covenant in the Bible is an unbreakable, immutable, unalterable agreement between two or more parties. The penalty for breaking such a covenant would be death. When we think about the covenants that Elohim made with and through His people, we should picture non-breakable, immutable, unalterable, and timeless agreements. (The 7-year rule of forgiveness found in Deuteronomy 15 applies to debts.)

A covenant would include not only promises, terms, and conditions of agreement, but also a *sign* of the covenant, which varied with each covenant. Here is an example of a sign: Elohim cut a covenant with Noah, and the sign of the Noachic Covenant is ... the rainbow. (Genesis 9:12–13)

Know this: While some try to change the character of the God of the Bible, He has been, is, and always will be true to His covenant promises. That is good news for Believers, because we can know for certain that our Father in Heaven will never break His covenant promises to us. Covenants are God’s promises.

The Abrahamic Covenant

Let’s look at one of the foundational covenants, the Abrahamic Covenant. The Bible calls Abraham the father of our faith.



“Abraham, look up at the sky,” engraving by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794–1872)



* “Believer” is short for believer in Yeshua/Jesus.

(continued next page)

Detail from *Abraham's Journey from Ur to Canaan*,
oil on canvas, by József Molnár (1821–1899),
Hungarian National Gallery



Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

(Galatians 3:7–9, quoting Genesis 22:18)

Abraham believed in the Gospel of Messiah (Yeshua) and is the father of faith in Messiah for both Jews and non-Jews (Romans 1:16). If you share the faith with Abraham, you are blessed!

Father Abraham received seven promises when he left everything to follow his Elohim (God). Let's listen in on a conversation between our Spiritual earthly father and the Lord:

Now the Lord had said to Abram:

"Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.

*I will **make you a great nation**;*

*I will **bless you***

*And **make your name great**;*

*And **you shall be a blessing**.*

*I will **bless those who bless you**,*

*And I will **curse him who curses you**;*

*And **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed**."*

(Genesis 12:1–3)

Because I understand Biblical covenants, I know with certainty that all seven of these promises are fulfilled by, and will be completely accomplished in, Yeshua! The promised "great nation" is Israel — the covenant passed from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob, whom God called "Israel" (Gen. 35:10).

The Curses of the Covenant

Today, the curse portion of the Abrahamic Covenant sweeps the Earth as many nations (and, sadly, some churches) curse the Covenant descendants — the Jewish people and Israel. But blessings abound for those who bless the Jews and Israel, and all the world is blessed by Israeli technology and humanitarian Jews.

I write this while sitting on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, watching the sunrise reflect on the water where our Savior walked. When I consider Elohim's promise to bless those who bless Israel, and then recognize the overwhelming grace given to me for simply believing in the Gospel of Jesus, I am overcome with hope, peace, and a desire to lead a God-honoring life!

Walking out our covenant faith as Abraham did keeps us ready for a special event that can happen at anytime — the Rapture. I am thankful that the Lord promised to return in the clouds for His people (1 Thessalonians 4:16–18). Remember, after Messiah Yeshua explained about a horrible time of tribulation coming upon the Earth, He offered us a prayer of hope:

Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. (Luke 21:36)

May we always watch therefore and be ready!

Look for our new series *Watch Therefore and Be Ready* airing in late January on *Zola Levitt Presents* and featuring Dov, former Dean of Humanities at Bar-Ilan University. ★





David and Kirsten Hart
on the Fall 2017
Zola Tour in Israel



2018: How exciting that the Lord has given us another year! The onset of a new year always causes me to pause and reflect upon the previous 12 months. David and I are amazed and humbled by the path that God opened for us to serve with *Zola Levitt Presents*. We have journeyed to new places physically, emotionally, and spiritually that we never dreamed possible. We have unique “people” — you! — in our lives, and ZLM ministry workers have become family.

Some of my greatest personal moments this past year happened in Israel. No matter how many times you travel to God’s land, you learn something new as each tour brings new insights and revelations. Just when we think we know the Bible, God surprises us by revealing ‘aha’ moments. The Word of God truly lives.

Daughters of Megiddo

Let me share a 2017 insight. While leading the Zola Tour this past fall, our group visited Tel Megiddo. (A “tel” is an archaeological mound/hill that has been built up layer-by-layer over successive civilizations. After conquering a town or village, the victors would usually build right on top of the ruins — a practice

(continued next page)





that wondrously preserves history. Our generation continues this practice when we, for example, pave over railroad tracks or fill in a swimming pool and build on top.) Tel Megiddo covers an ancient Canaanite city next to the Valley of Armageddon.

Our amazing tour guide Ilan Barkay, having led more than a dozen Zola Tours, brought us through Tel Megiddo's visitors' center and explained the findings from archaeological excavations. Standing in front of a large replica of the area, he pointed out the ancient dwellings and walls. As he indicated the area outside the city walls, he explained, "Because there were over 450 horses in ancient Megiddo, people built houses just outside the walls ... to avoid the horsey smells. Small groups of houses outside the walls were called 'daughters,' so those houses were the 'daughters of Megiddo.'"

While he kept speaking, my mind stuck on that "daughters of Megiddo" phrase. I dwelled on the verse "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion" (the lyric Handel lifted from Zechariah 9:9 for his *Messiah* oratorio). I had always thought that that use of "daughter" meant female descendant. I envisioned young girls dancing and singing when I heard that phrase. I've since researched articles about "daughters of Zion" but haven't run across any that mentions houses or people living outside the walls of a city.

To Those "Outside"

Walking with the tour group around the ancient ruins, I contemplated this new information, reasoning that *if the daughters of Megiddo were houses, then the daughters of Zion meant houses, too*. Our guide confirmed my suspicion. I'm no theologian, but this reasoning was pretty simple: **If Zechariah's "daughter" referred to residents of houses outside the walls of Zion, then they were to rejoice because salvation is available to those "outside," too.**

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O
daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to
you; righteous and having salvation is He ...*
(Zechariah 9:9)

What was simply another verse in the Bible (and a melodic aria for a soprano) has shed insight into God's heart. It's the same message that Zola Levitt taught for decades. Yes, Yeshua was sent as the Messiah for the Jewish people, but we who live "outside the walls" of Judaism also get to rejoice. He is our King and salvation, too. We should rejoice (as Zechariah instructs) *greatly!* ★



Jewish National Fund

As mentioned on [the cover](#), *Tu B'Shvat*, the New Year of the Trees, begins on January 30. Contributors to this cause sponsor tree-planting in Israel. Each tree costs only \$10. You can request a personalized certificate to reflect your donation.



Mexican Support for Israel



BY JNS.org and United with Israel



Israeli PM Netanyahu and Mexican President Peña Nieto

In an apparent show of gratitude to the Jewish state, Mexico will stop voting against Israel at the United Nations.

Mexico recently announced that it will change its voting strategy at the United Nations (UN) and other international bodies by not voting in favor of the Palestinians.

According to Israel's *Yedioth Ahronoth* daily, Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Figari contacted Israeli Ambassador to Mexico Yoni Pelad and told him of the shift in strategy for all upcoming voting procedures related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Figari indicated that Mexico will change from voting in favor of the Palestinians to abstaining or voting for Israel's interests. Mexico recently voted with Israel when the U.S and Israel withdrew from UNESCO ([Levitt Letter, December 2017 p. 30](#)).

In mid-September, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made his first official visit to Mexico during which he met with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto in Mexico City, signing several agreements that bolster co-operation between the two countries. During September, Israel provided humanitarian aid to the country following a powerful earthquake there. ([Please see related item on p. 15.](#))

Mexico will not forget the aid it received from Israel following the earthquake that left over 300 people dead and thousands injured and displaced, Mexican Ambassador to Israel Pablo Macedo Riba said as he greeted the IDF aid delegation upon their return to Israel.

(continued next page)

PAST STATE VISITS:

Presidential and Prime Ministerial visits from Israel to Mexico

- President Moshe Katsav (2002)
- President Shimon Peres (2013)
- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (2017)

Presidential visits from Mexico to Israel

- President Luis Echeverría (1975)
- President Ernesto Zedillo (2000)
- President Enrique Peña Nieto (2016)

(source: wikipedia)





“Right after the earthquake, Netanyahu dispatched this amazing delegation. It happened during Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year), and we appreciate it very much.

With the good in your hearts, you conquered the heart of the Mexican People,” the teary-eyed ambassador remarked.

The delegation — comprising nearly 70 paramedics, rescue workers, and engineers — set out on the eve of Rosh Hashanah to assist relief efforts in Mexico amid the destruction caused by a 7.1 quake. ★

Iranian Wrestler *continued from cover sidebar*

In Iran’s hardline ideology, Israel is not recognized as a state, and Iranian athletes are forbidden to compete with Israelis in any sport. They are told to forfeit their matches or to feign sickness, if necessary.

The wrestler, Alireza Karimi-Machiani, 23, competed against Russian Alikhan Zhabrailov at the U23 World Senior Wrestling Championship in Poland.

When Karimi-Machiani began easily defeating his opponent, his coach shouted, “Alireza, lose” and shouted again a few minutes later. At that point, the Iranian wrestler threw in the towel, metaphorically speaking, and not for the first time — he did the same thing in 2013.

In an interview with the Iranian Students News Agency, Karimi-Machiani explained: “I was told that the Israeli wrestler defeated his American rival, and that I must lose to avoid facing an Israeli opponent. I have trained hard for months to win a gold medal, and it was easy for me to win. I do accept that Israel is an oppressor and commits crimes. But would it not be oppression if our authorities undermine my hard work again?”

The day after the match, he posted a video on Instagram of him walking along rainy streets in Poland, listening to a depressing song. An Instagram commenter sympathized: “I don’t know what to say to calm you. Politics



photo: screen capture YouTube

Iranian wrestler Karimi-Machiani leading his match against Russia’s Alikhan Zhabrailov 3-2, when his coach can be heard from the sidelines instructing him to lose, at the World Championships in Poland, November 25, 2017.

is separated from sports; damn those who break the hearts of our athletes and people with such policies.”

The video stirred up a storm, causing Iran’s Wrestling Federation to publish a statement calling Karimi-Machiani a “hero” who “sacrificed his rights to support the oppressed people of Palestine for the second time.”

An Iranian Shiite Muslim cleric defended the decision, tweeting: “We will not step onto the mat against Israel until the army of Islam triumphantly steps onto the Holy Land of Palestine.”

In August 2017, two Iranian soccer players, stars of the national team then on the roster of a Greek club, were suspended for playing a game against an Israeli club. One player, the national team’s captain, was dishonorably discharged, and the other player was allowed to continue to play for the national team after posting an apology on Instagram. ★



Searching levitt.com

Greg Hartwig
ZLM webmaster



Most everyone knows how to search for things using Google, Bing, Yahoo, and other search engines, but how do you find something on a website with large archives of data such as levitt.com?

Say you're searching for "festival of lights." Using Google, you can tell it to search just our site by typing something like: `site:levitt.com "festival of lights"`. Using quotes around "festival of lights" tells the search engine to search for that exact phrase, rather than every appearance of the individual words "festival," "of," and "lights." Try it both ways (with and without quotation marks) to see the difference. This type of search works with Google, Bing, Yahoo, and many other websites.

However, most sites like ours provide a way for you to search their data in an easier, pared-down fashion. We provide you access to our own search function that knows where we keep everything. For example, *Levitt Letters* are stored on levitt.com while *TV shows* are kept on levitt.tv. Using our search box, you can search all of our data easily, including our online store.

But what if you want to perform a more complicated search? For example, searching for "passover" (no capital letters necessary) using our search box will return many hits that you might not want if you simply want to find our Passover TV specials.

Our levitt.tv pages also have a "Video Search" box where you can search just the TV shows. Once you click on the page for a particular program, you will find a "Caption Search" box where you can search the dialogue in the show for a particular word or phrase. You can see the entire transcript of the program by clicking on the "Transcript" link farther down the page.

The *Levitt Letter* page has a search box that lets you search just our *Levitt Letter* and *Personal Letter* newsletters.

Finally, our [Search page](http://levitt.com/search) (found under our "Home" tab and at levitt.com/search) gives you all the search options. ★



Worship on Sunday instead of Saturday?

Classic Zola
www.levitt.com
FAQs page



Following the completion of His creative work, the Lord instituted the Sabbath rest (Gen. 2:1–3). The importance of this rest was reiterated many centuries later, when God stressed to Moses, “*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*” (Ex. 20:8). The cessation of labors on the seventh day, the Sabbath, is a significant institution in the Old Testament. This fact has prompted the questions: **Why doesn’t the Church celebrate the Sabbath? Isn’t it a Biblical imperative? Why does the Church worship on Sunday instead of Saturday?**

Here are the answers

Believers in Messiah assemble together in honor of the day when the Lord rose from the dead. Our worship doesn’t follow the pattern given to the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai. Rather, we are partakers of the New Covenant, not the Old Covenant given to the children of Israel (Jer. 31:31–34). Ours is a covenant of grace, and worshipping on a prescribed day is not part of the package. The New Testament repeats nine of the original Ten Commandments, omitting only the one about the Sabbath.

We feel that there is strong Scriptural ground against selecting an elevated Sabbath day since we are saved under a covenant that has no such day! Rather than prescribe one day as superior to another, (Col. 2:16), we celebrate the Lord every day. We are to pray without ceasing, to walk with the Lord on a daily basis. (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18)

True Believers worship the Lord in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). *When we gather together corporately to worship the Lord really isn’t essential to our faith. Some make much out of*



what day we shall worship. Some stress worship on Saturday. We shouldn’t get into disputes with them, but with Christian kindness, we must pursue the things that we all have in common. (Romans 14:1–5, 19)

If some wish to worship on Saturday, fine! If others on Sunday, that’s fine, too! There really isn’t a New Testament Biblical mandate one way or the other. As a word of caution to those who insist upon a certain day as better: The New Testament contains words of rebuke against those who would trouble the Church by seeking to bring Believers under bondage to the religious practices of the Old Covenant (Gal. 2:4, 6).

The Church is not under the Old Testament legal system. It’s as simple as that. The Apostle John says it best, “*For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*” (John 1:17).

Understanding the Sabbath

How then are we, Believers in Messiah, to understand the Sabbath? We do have a Sabbath rest and the author of the Book of Hebrews has much to say about it, describing that rest as a state of being at rest with the Lord: “*For we who have believed do enter into rest...*” (Hebrews 4:3). ★



How Are Jews Saved?

Dr. Todd Baker
Zola Levitt Ministries
Staff Theologian



Q. A teaching in the Church called Dual Covenant Theology asserts that Jews can be saved either by following the Old Covenant or by being members of the Abrahamic Covenant, and they don't have to believe in Jesus for salvation. **What does Scripture say?**

A. Following the Old Covenant means being a Jewish male, being circumcised, and endeavoring to keep the whole Law of Moses. God made the Abrahamic Covenant with Abraham, wherein if you are physically born Jewish, then you are automatically chosen of God. But John the Baptist corrected the false notion of those who thought that they were saved by merely being Jewish and, thus, the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As John the Baptist explained: *"Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father:' for I say to you, that God is able to take any one of these stones to raise up children to Abraham"* (Matthew 3:8–9). God now requires all people (Jew and non-Jew) to repent and believe the Gospel. (Acts 17:30)

The Word of God is clear: The Jewish people must be saved like any other people group or individual. They must believe that Jesus is the Messiah who died and rose to give them eternal life. Jesus and the apostles exhorted their natural brothers to this end and warned of the consequences for rejecting the Gospel. (See John 8:24; Acts 4:12; 13:46) Jesus' statement in John 14:6 *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me"* applies to both Jews and gentiles (non-Jews) since God is no respecter of persons when it comes to salvation. (Romans 2:11) All are bidden to come into the Lord's eternal shelter and rest by faith in Christ alone. (Matthew 11:28–30) Jews must be saved like anyone else. Salvation is offered only through the New Covenant. (Hebrews 9–10) ★

"I AM
the Way,
the Truth,
and
the Life."

— John 14:6 —

Messianic **"Grafted-In"** **Sterling** **Necklace**

(1½" x ½", 1⅝" with bail)

A solid sterling silver rendition of a classic Messianic symbol that combines the menorah, Star of David, and the Christian fish. Stir curiosities and witnessing opportunities with this tribute to light, God, and abundant love (Malachi 3:3). Includes 18" sterling silver chain.



The Name Above Every Name

On this 43rd **To The Jew First** (TJF) Gospel outreach to Israel, the Lord led me to meet **Korin**. In Hebrew, his name means “to radiate light.” Picking up on that theme allowed me to witness to Korin, reminding him that God originally chose the Jewish nation of Israel as the light of revelation to the rest of the world so they could also know the one true God [Isaiah 42:6].



Korin

Ultimately, as I told Korin, this light shines most perfectly through Yeshua the Messiah. The Word of God describes Messiah in both Testaments of the Bible. When our outreach team showed Korin how God declares that He wants to dispel the darkness of sin and evil with the light of Messiah, **Korin started tearing up at the power of this truth**. He was so moved by the Holy Spirit that he immediately took a complete (with both Testaments) Hebrew Bible from us with Messianic tracts. When we walked by him later, Korin shouted thanks for the Bible and study materials.

About six weeks ago when I was in Jerusalem, I met with **Shaun Nathan**, the manager of the impressive Moriah Books & Judaica gift shop in

Dr. Todd Baker
ZLM Staff Theologian
TJF Team Leader



the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City. When he told me that his name was Shaun, I responded that that’s my older brother’s name! I asked if he spelled it Sean, Shawn, or Shaun and discovered that he spells it Shaun, the same as my brother (and the least common spelling). That information led me to share with Jerusalem Shaun about the Name that is above every name — Yeshua the Messiah (Philippians 2:9).

Shaun told me that he was already familiar with Jesus and the New Testament because he lived in South Africa as a boy. He was one of just a few Jews in his town, and the only schools were Catholic, which incorporate Jesus and the New Testament in their curriculum. This familiarity made him very receptive to discussing the amazing life of Yeshua. I had already distributed my supply of Bibles and did not have one for Shaun. So, on this trip, I visited Shaun to deliver a complete Bible in Hebrew (with both Testaments). He was very grateful to accept it and the study materials that detail all the Messianic prophecies that Yeshua fulfilled.

I really do believe that Shaun’s childhood exposure to the Jewish Jesus allowed our TJF team to water the Gospel seed that the nuns planted years ago. **I look forward to future visits with Shaun at the Moriah Books & Judaica store** so that we can discuss more about the Jewish Messiah. ★



Shaun



To
Index

Avoiding Tax Mistakes

Wise as a Serpent
by Mark Levitt
ZLM Director



Below are worthy stewardship ideas related to tax avoidance. By definition, tax evasion is illegal. Avoiding overpaying income taxes, however, is commendable — and increasingly complex. Tom Herman, a former *Wall Street Journal* “Tax Report” columnist, recently offered suggestions from which I excerpted my favorites below: Tax-Loss Harvesting, Donating Stock, and IRA Donations. — Mark

Despite uncertainty about changing tax laws, taxpayers still can avoid costly bloopers with the following pointers from tax professionals.

1. Tax-Loss Harvesting. Selling stocks that have declined in value allows investors to “harvest” valuable capital losses that “can be used to offset capital gains on a dollar-for-dollar basis — and if an investor’s losses exceed capital gains, the net capital loss typically can be used to offset wages and other income up to \$3,000 a year. Excess losses get carried over to future years.”

Caution: buying something “substantially identical” within 30 days before or after the sale could be deemed a “wash sale” that would disqualify the deduction. See [IRS Publication 550](#) for more on the wash-sale rules and other investment issues.

2. Donating Stock. Senior consultant, CPA, and lawyer Sidney Kess advises, “Think about donating some stock . . . owned for more than a year and that has risen in value.” This often allows deducting “the stock’s fair market value — and the donor doesn’t have to pay a capital-gains tax on the increase in value.”

If, however, the stock has declined in value, it is better to sell it, record the capital loss, and then donate cash to the charity. For more details on charitable contributions, see [IRS Publication 526](#).

3. IRA Donations. Many taxpayers over age 70½ can transfer up to \$100,000 a year from an IRA to charity and avoid income tax but must transfer *directly* from the IRA to charity, according to CPA Joe Bublé, a partner and tax practice leader at Citrin Cooperman.

“If done correctly, the transfer counts toward the taxpayer’s required minimum distribution for that year.” See [IRS Publication 590-B](#) on IRA distributions.

BONUS: Longer-term thinkers will appreciate two retirement-related websites that the Rapture will render obsolete for Believers:

1. Vanguard’s Retirement Nest Egg Calculator determines the probability of assets lasting for various horizons. Selecting the duration of retirement, initial balance, and annual withdrawal amount along with the allocation of assets yields results derived from 500 simulations.

2. SocialSecuritySolutions.com (see [Dec. 2013 Levitt Letter, p. 21](#)) uses client data to optimize benefits during their life expectancy. My wife and I are satisfied with the \$20 service option and believe that claiming at our full-retirement age of 67 is best for us.

I pray that these “Serpent” articles assist readers as a meaningful “thank you” for upholding ZLM’s ongoing ministerial efforts. ★



“I deal with tax avoidance - he deals with tax evasion.”



ZLM Bulletin Board

Only One Call Away

"Israel is only the world's 152nd biggest country, but it's always one of the first to send disaster relief all over the globe." The 3½-minute [video](#) cites Haiti's earthquake, Japan's tsunami, the Philippines' typhoon, plus 15 other examples of Israeli foreign aid. Israel's **Save a Child's Heart** brings children with life-threatening heart defects from around the world to Israel for free treatment. Israel has improved 750,000 lives with clean water and solar energy. Every Zionist should see this remarkable video. (Please see related story on p. 8.)



Multi-Sex Birth Certificates

Gender-neutral birth certificates are now available to Californians who don't identify as male or female. The state recently approved a new law that "provides nonbinary [not limited to two] and intersex people with the ability to request a new birth certificate with a third, nonbinary category." Oregon and Washington, D.C. offer gender-neutral options on drivers' licenses.



FREE ITEM

Pamphlet of the Month

American taxpayers have long been allowed to make charitable gifts of stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and other securities that are worth more than they initially cost, and take an income tax deduction based on the gift's full current value, bypassing capital gains tax that otherwise would be due upon sale. The free pamphlet **Giving Securities** explains the basics of harnessing longstanding tax benefits. To receive this pamphlet at no charge, email us at staff@levitt.com or write to our PO Box. **Note:** See "Avoiding Tax Mistakes" on p. 14.

GIVING SECURITIES

Daystar Changes:

As of January 1st, you will be able to watch *Zola Levitt Presents* on Daystar on:

	Pacific Time	Central Time
Wednesday	8:00 p.m.	10:00 p.m.
Friday	3:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.

Our Saturday afternoon broadcasts, which repeated the same programs, discontinued on December 31. **Please set your DVRs to record one of our two Daystar times above, or choose...**

Freeform (formerly ABC Family):

	Pacific Time	Central Time
Sunday	2:30 & 5:30 a.m.	4:30 a.m.

Please consult the Airing Schedule on p. 35, or visit levitt.tv to watch ZLP online and levitt.com/schedule to see our Episode Airing Schedule, station search, and broadcast schedule, including DISH and DirecTV.

"Come Home!"

Zola Tours to Israel



See [page 36](#) for details



God Calls Your Name

by John Parsons
Hebrew for Christians



אֶל-תִּירָא כִּי גִאֲלִיתִּיךָ בְּשִׁמְךָ לִי-אֶתָּה

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.” – Isa. 43:1

אֶל	תִּירָא	כִּי	גִאֲלִיתִּי	ךָ	בְּשִׁמְךָ	לִי	אֶתָּה
(3)	(2)	(1)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(3)	(2)
li-at-tah	ve-shim-kha	ka-ra-tee	ge-al-ti-kha	ki	al-ti-ra		
you are mine	by your name	I have called you	I have redeemed you	for	fear not		

The Spirit speaks to the heart of faith: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, and you are Mine.” God has *personally* redeemed you, friend; He calls you by name, and you belong to Him. The LORD loves you with an everlasting love and draws you close (Jer. 31:3). He will never leave or forsake you, even if you might face waters that seem to overwhelm or fires that seem to devour (Isa. 43:2). The will of your Heavenly Father will never lead you to a place where His love will not sustain you.

Worry is a place of exile and pain. We are commanded, *al tira*, “fear not,” because fear was behind the original sin in the garden, just as mistrust lies behind our own hiding and self-imposed exile from God. Since sin expresses a heart of fear (Rom. 14:23), the way of healing is to courageously turn back to God, despite our shameful past. We can trust God’s love for us because of the cross of Yeshua our Lord. If we haven’t received God’s love and acceptance, we are still enslaved to fear and abide in a state of exile. The love of God casts out our fear because it casts out all our sins (1 John 4:18).

It is written, “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a ‘sound mind’” (2 Tim. 1:7). The Greek word for “sound mind” means “safe” because of the restraining influence of the Spirit of God. If you sense fearful oppression within your heart, turn to the Lord and offer Him focused praise. Lift up your soul to Him and thank Him for your trouble. This gives you the double benefit of confessing your trust in God’s care, as well as vexing the enemy of your soul. Come boldly to the throne of grace to find your help (Heb. 4:16); cast all your anxiety on Him, for He cares for you (1 Pet. 5:7).

The Name of the LORD (יהוה) means “Presence” and “Love” (Exod. 3:14; 34:6–7). Yeshua said, “I go to prepare a place for you,” which means that His presence and love are waiting for you in *whatever* lies ahead (Rom. 8:35–39). To worry is to “practice the absence” of God instead of to practice His Presence. Trust the word of the Holy Spirit: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for healing peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11).

Take comfort that your Heavenly Father sees when the sparrow falls; He arrays the flower in its hidden valley; and He calls each star by name. More importantly, the LORD sees you and understands your struggle with fear. **Come to Him with your needy heart and trust Him to deliver you from the burdens of your soul** (Matthew 11:28). ★



Courtesy: The Jerusalem Connection



Called Together— Jew & Gentile, One in Messiah

Eight programs on 2 DVDs

Called Together focuses on how gentile Christians are recognizing their Messianic brothers and sisters (Jewish believers in Jesus/Yeshua) as the natural olive branch that Paul referred to in Romans 11. The Lord calls us to work together to bring the Messiah especially to the lost sheep of Israel. From the studio, David and Kirsten Hart present these eight programs of Bible teaching that feature Eitan Shishkoff joining a host of guests in Israel. Guest analyst Dr. Jeffrey Seif applies the lessons to our lives.



FRIENDLY ALLIANCE 1 Kings 5 relates the story of Jewish King Solomon and gentile King Hiram working together to build the Temple, a cooperation that models God's plan for saving the world. Guests: Chaim Malespin and Dana Feinstein.

SALVATION RETURNS Israel was the messenger of light to the gentiles, who now take the Gospel message back to where it began. Importer of humanitarian aid Jim Schutz shows how gentile Believers reflect God's love. An Israeli Jew and Polish Christian call us to support the Jewish people. Chaim's wife Deanna teaches us "Jesus" in Hebrew. Messianic Carolyn Hyde sings "Oseh Shalom."

TWO LOAVES Peter learned the mystery of gentile salvation at the house of Cornelius, welcoming gentiles into the family of God. The wall separating gentile and Jewish worlds remains a barrier to Israel's salvation.

OLIVE OIL Gentile Christians and Messianic Jews are called together into a shared priesthood.

DESERT BLOOMS Since 1948, the desert has bloomed in Israel. In the future, all nations will come here to worship. Eitan encourages Christians to help Messianic Believers restore Israel to the glory of God. Yaacov Berg explains how to refute the BDS movement.

DRY BONES Ezekiel envisioned dry bones that become physically and spiritually alive. Like the Prodigal Son's brother, some Christians resent the rise of Messianic congregations.

BLOOD ATONEMENT The Torah proclaimed that life is in the blood, and salvation comes only through blood sacrifice; both foreshadowed Jesus' sacrifice, which made Jew and gentile spiritually equal yet distinct. Together, we can celebrate the Biblical feasts in their Messianic fulfillment. Christians from diverse places show their love for the Jewish people.

INTERSECTION OF COVENANTS The intersection of God's covenants formed by Passover and Communion breaks down the wall between Jewish and gentile Believers. Our friendship leads to mutual respect and appreciation as we work as one family toward the final harvest.

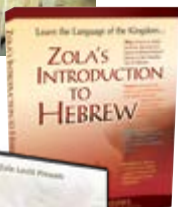
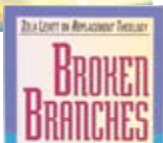
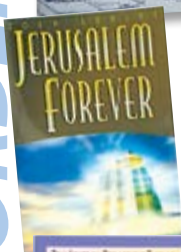


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ORDER FORM

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___	Glory! The Future of the Believers	\$3	___
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___	In My Father's House	\$3	___
___	Israel, My Promised	\$3	___
___	The Miracle of Passover	\$3	___
___	The Promised Land	\$3	___
___	The Second Coming	\$3	___
___	Seven Churches	\$3	___
___	The Seven Feasts of Israel	\$3	___
___	Spirit of Pentecost	\$3	___
___	Jerusalem Forever (pictured)	\$4	___
___	Mix or Match: 50 Classic Study Booklets (above)	\$49	___



New!

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 By phone call 24/7: 800-966-3377, or
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 Dallas TX 75225

Books

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___	The Beginning of The End	\$8	___
___	The Bible Jesus Read	\$10	___
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___	Coming: The End! Russia/Israel in Prophecy	\$10	___
___	Genesis One	\$5	___
___	The Iranian Menace	\$8	___
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___	Once Through the New Testament	\$9	___
___	Signs of the End: Millennium	\$7	___
___	Our Hands are Stained with Blood	\$16	___
___	The Passover Haggadah (Messianic)	\$6	___
___	The Prophesied Messiah	\$8	___
___	Raptured (p.23)	\$10	___
___	The Warrior King	\$12	___
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___	Zola's Introduction to Hebrew (pictured)	\$39	___

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___	AHAVA Mineral Hand Cream 3.4 oz.....	\$23	_____
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Music CDs: Hear samples at levitt.com/music

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PLEASE SEND THIS ENTIRE 2-PAGE ORDER FORM—THANKS.

Please fill out area below and send the entire page.

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up to \$15.99, add \$5
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For shipments outside the United States, please **DOUBLE** shipping. Please send U.S. funds.

(Please allow about 2-3 weeks for delivery.)

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↑
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Times of the Signs DVDs

Eight 30-minute TV programs on 2 DVDs

In this eight-program TV series, Myles and Katharine Weiss encourage Believers to look beyond the troubling prophetic signs of our day and live in growing expectation of our Messiah's return. Series guests include: Jimmy DeYoung, Jim Fletcher, Jeremy Gimpel, Rabbi Yehuda Glick, Wilfred Hahn, Bill Koenig, Tim LaHaye, Avi Lipkin, Randall Price, David Rubin, Bill Salus, Carl Teichrib, and Andy Woods.

ON THE PROPHETIC HORIZON The first program reviews the major prophetic signs that point to the return of Yeshua (Jesus) and the quickening pace of prophecy.

GOVERNMENT ON WHOSE SHOULDERS? Satan continues his push to exclude God and install a man-based government over Earth. Mankind's only hope lies in accepting Yeshua's sacrifice on the cross.

GREEN TO THE EXTREME Extreme elements in the environmental movement are moving away from Judeo-Christian teachings and toward animal rights, glorifying nature as "Mother Earth." Believers worship the Creator, not creation.
Guest: missionary Mark Musser.

BETHLEHEM REWRITTEN Present-day Bethlehem is a city of great tension, with Arab Christians there caught between God's Scriptural covenants with the Jewish people and replacement theologies powered by Islamic doctrine. Too many "peace" proposals exclude the Prince of Peace.

REBUILDING THE TEMPLE We review the history of the Temple Mount from King David's threshing floor to present-day efforts to build the Third Temple.

THE HEAVENS DECLARE The Lord uses heavenly signs to show us what He is doing, where He is going, and what He asks of us. Believers follow our Messiah, not signs.
Guest: Mark Hitchcock.

THE SWORD OF ALLAH The spiritual battle with radical Islam is wearying, but we mustn't give up; the Lord wants none to perish (2 Peter 3:9) and will return for His own.

NEW HEAVEN, NEW EARTH Signs like increased knowledge, new technology, Jewish return to Israel, and the growth of Messianic congregations point toward the return of the Messiah. Yeshua is coming for His bride, and we want no one to miss out.



Covert Israeli Contacts with Saudi Arabia



BY JEFFREY HELLER AND STEPHEN KALIN / Reuters.com

Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz revealed recently that Israel has had covert contacts with Saudi Arabia amid common concerns over Iran, a first disclosure by a senior Israeli official of such contacts.

Both Saudi Arabia and Israel view arch-foe Iran as the main threat to the Middle East, and increased tension between Tehran and Riyadh has fueled speculation that shared interests may push Saudi Arabia and Israel to work together.



photo: Sivan Fares

Yuval Steinitz

Steinitz did not characterize the contacts or give details when asked why Israel was hiding its ties with Saudi Arabia, saying, "We have ties that are indeed partly covert with many Muslim and Arab countries, and usually (we are) the party that is not ashamed. It's the other side that is interested in keeping the ties quiet. With us, usually, there is no problem, but we respect the other side's wish, when ties are developing, whether with Saudi Arabia or other Arab or Muslim countries, and there is much more ... (but) we keep it secret."

Just the week before, Israeli military chief Lieutenant General Gadi Eizenkot told an Arabic-language online news source that Israel was ready to share "intelligence information" with Saudi Arabia, saying their countries had a common interest in standing up to Iran.

Saudi Arabia has ratcheted up pressure on Iran, accusing Tehran of trying to expand its influence in Arab countries, often through proxies including Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah.

In answering what Israel could gain from contacts with Saudi Arabia, Steinitz said: "Contacts with the moderate Arab world, including with Saudi Arabia, help us stop Iran. When we fought to get a better nuclear deal with Iran, with only partial success, there was some help from moderate Arab countries vis-à-vis the United States and the Western powers to assist us in this matter. Even today, when we press the world powers not to agree to the establishment of an Iranian military base in Syria on our northern border, the Sunni Arab world is helping us." ★





Letters to ZLM

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

Comments from www.levitt.com

From D.A. (IN): *Ma Nishma* (Hebrew for What's up)? The Harts' enthusiasm to learn about Israel and its language and people is uplifting. Another generation of Believers can see their joy and love.

I got to meet Zola, but my mother never did. Since both have been promoted to Heaven, I'll bet she is enjoying meeting the man whom she inspired me to watch in the late 1980s.

I leave *Levitt Letters* in doctors' offices and other places, and enjoy watching *Zola Levitt Presents*. Thank you to all the staff who work to make these happen.

From B.McC. (TN): Love the new format. Don't listen to naysayers. Continue to bless Israel and those of us who are fortunate to know this ministry.

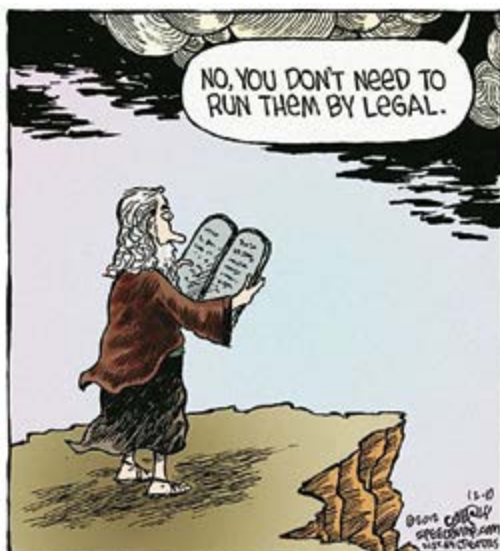
Note to D.R. (MN): Thank you for your encouraging words and contribution. I'm pleased that you find the *Levitt Letter* just the way we intend it: to keep readers up-to-date on the blessings emanating from Israel to the world, and the responses of the world to Israel, positive and negative. As the author of "Keeping the Israel Connection" noted ([Levitt Letter Dec 2017, p. 11](#)), "We are in this together." Thank you for writing. — Editor



10 Commandments Not Valid?

Dear ZLM,

It is with sadness that I am withholding contributions to you. I do not agree with Tony that the Ten Commandments should regulate my life as a Believer. Apostle Paul called the Ten Commandments the "ministry of death" (2 Cor. 3:7). The Bible seems to say that Believers should be led by the Spirit and not try to follow a law. What I believe, not necessarily what you should. — G.F. (OR)



Dear G.F. —

It's with equal sadness that I read your letter regarding God's commands. With the exception of Sabbath worship, the Commandments on Sinai have never been cancelled; in fact, their permanence is shown by God's own finger writing on stone tablets (Exodus 31:18) that were then kept in the Ark of the Covenant. God's commands formed an integral part of American civil society.

(continued next page)

Our nation’s slippery slope into a post-Christian era results in part from the removal of the Ten Commandments and prayer from schools and public places.

In the context of all of Paul’s writings, he admits the law can only instruct a person in what is right but cannot redeem! Paul’s carefully chosen words in Romans 7:12 explain it best, “Therefore the law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good.”

I agree that we are enabled to live Godly lives with the help of His Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit can only lead us in what we know is just and right; and how do we know without the directive commands of God? —Tony

Rapture Not A New Idea

Dear ZLM,

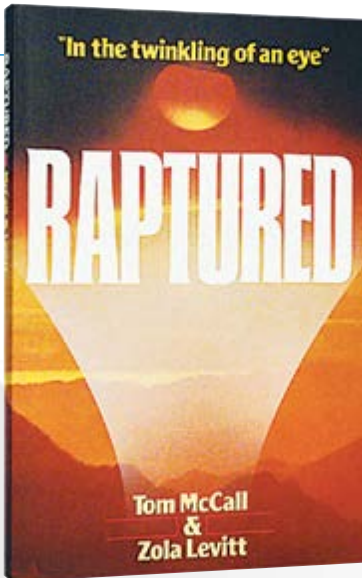
I can no longer support this ministry due to the fact that you endorse a very dangerous “false doctrine.” Rapture theory affects many people, deluding them into believing they will just “fly away” in the end. If we who “believe” “fly away,” who may I ask will be “in the field” working—speaking the truth of the Gospel? This theory started in 1832 with an evil dream of a sick teenage girl. It is just another “tradition of men” and will subject people to the deceit of the “antiChrist.” Yours in Christ, N.M. (PA)

Dear N.M. —

You are mistaken. Margaret MacDonald’s charismatic utterings did not engender talk of the Rapture (her statements appear to present a post-Tribulation scenario, anyway). The Church has been discussing and working through Daniel’s “weeks” prophecy (Daniel 9:24–27) for centuries, reconciling it to the timetable laid out in the Book of Revelation, which enumerates the 144,000 remnant of Jews (7:4–8). **It is imperative that Believers reach those Jewish souls in order for them to cry *Baruch HaShem Adonai* (Matt 23:39).**

I cannot give a clearer answer to your disagreement about the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:17) than Dr. Tom McCall and Zola Levitt give in their classic book *Raptured*, in which they present all the views. Their succinct Biblical evidence and reasoning are foundational principles to the Zola Levitt Ministries [Statement of Faith](#). —Tony

(continued next page)



***Raptured* Book**

By Tom McCall and Zola Levitt

The Rapture of the Church—discussed in full with relevant Scriptures. The various views of when it might happen are evenhandedly debated as to which seems most correct. A doctrine not always understood by the Church, but one that will affect everyone on Earth—Believer and unbeliever alike. *(Please see Tony’s response to the letter “Rapture Not A New Idea” above.)*

(This and many titles also available as eBooks.)



Donations Aren't "Votes"

Dear ZLM,

Welcome to the new hosts. (I really have loved *all* the hosts and don't think of donations as "votes.") I appreciated David Hart's "The Prodigal Son" article ([Levitt Letter Aug. 2017, p. 6](#)) as honest and a chance to know him. I love Kirsten's writing, too, and the newsletters, TV programs, and Hebrew Lessons. Any chance of interviewing John Parsons on ZLP? — C.D. (WI)

Dear C.D. —

Thank you for your donation and kind words. The "Prodigal Son" article came from my heart and I'm grateful that you felt it. Kirsten and I would also enjoy interviewing ZLM's Hebrew teacher John Parsons on the air. — David

Why Are People So Critical?

Dearest Brothers and Sisters in Yeshua,

Why are people so critical? As a longtime subscriber, I haven't noticed any change except faces and names. **Your ministry does what Yahweh called you to do. May the body of Yeshua stop whining, wake up from its slumber, and get involved.** In His Grace Covenant — Pastor W.D. (MO)

Dear Pastor W.D. —

Thank you for your support. In an age of emails and text messages, we appreciate your taking the time to write a letter. We're neighbors — Kirsten and I live just down the road from your church! We'll try to visit soon. — David



Reflecting Yeshua's Light

Dear ZLM,

David and Kirsten's love of Jesus and care for the Jewish people shines bright. Thank you for shining the light of Jesus and ministering to me for over 30 years — J.K (IN)

Dear J.K. —

We appreciate your support of Zola Levitt Ministries since the 1980s. Zola was a pioneer, and we do our best to keep his vision for this ministry strong and prominent. Blessings to you — David and Kirsten

(continued next page)

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



Just like our PHYSICAL BODIES need a balance of diet and exercise... so do our SPIRITUAL BODIES. *Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourself.* James 1:22

Young? ... We'll Take It!

Dear ZLM,

I am very happy with David and Kirsten. I pray for people to give this young couple a chance. — V.C. (MA)

Dear V.C. —

David and I thank you for those kind words. And "young"? That gets you an extra "thank you." **We're grandparents** to a wonderful 9-year-old boy and expecting our first granddaughter in March. So we are grateful for any compliment that comes close to "young"! Thank you for being a positive light. — Kirsten

Where the Heart is ...

Dear ZLM,

I love the new format. I went to the Holy Land with Zola. My body is in Pennsylvania, but the rest of me is in Israel. — S.H. (PA)

Dear S.H. —

I agree: My body is in Missouri, but my heart remains in Israel! There's nothing like God's land of milk and honey. Since our younger son, Ryan, lives there full time, half of my heart is always in Jerusalem. — Kirsten ★



Israeli Tech Startup Changed the NBA



SCIENCE: BY BEN COHEN (r) *The Wall Street Journal*



photo: NBA.com

SportVU cameras, like this one perched atop the Barclays Center rafters, revolutionized NBA statistics.

The unlikely characters behind the most crucial basketball innovation since the “3-point line” had no idea that they would play important roles in the modern NBA. One was a physicist who preferred soccer to basketball. The other, a biomedical engineer who started a tech company after leaving the military. And both were based in Israel.

Gal Oz and Miky Tamir invented SportVU — a new way to view sports — that used high-resolution tracking cameras in the catwalks of NBA arenas to capture the precise movements of players thousands of times per minute.

SportVU changed the way basketball teams make decisions, basketball players are valued, and basketball fans understand the sport. It even changed the game itself. But SportVU lasted only seven years, ending when the NBA awarded this season’s player-tracking contract to another company.

The lesson, however, is how quickly and radically the NBA became a different league in that time. At no point in history has the game transformed as much as it has in recent years. And that revolution was made possible by SportVU.

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Miky Tamir (left) and Gal Oz (right) are the Israelis behind a tech startup called SportVU that changed the NBA.



photo: David Yankin for *The Wall Street Journal*





Tamir had a Ph.D. in physics and decades of experience working for Israeli nuclear research centers and defense contractors. He'd already started one company when he founded SportVU and hired Oz in 2005. Oz was looking for a job after 10 years in the Israel Defense Forces with a unit that specialized in visual intelligence.

SportVU's goal was to apply optical recognition techniques to sports by recording the exact coordinates of the action far below the cameras. The company's progress in soccer led Stats LLC, a sports-data company in Chicago, to want to acquire SportVU. The due diligence was assigned to Brian Kopp. He flew to Tel Aviv for a tour of SportVU's office. It didn't take long: SportVU's office was one room.



It was becoming clear that player-tracking technology was about to upend professional sports. But in Israel's booming tech scene, almost nobody was paying attention. "Even the investors didn't want to invest in these projects," Tamir said.

Kopp's job was to sell their idea to a major American sports league. He tried the NFL first. Soon there were 20 cameras on the roof of Lambeau Field tracking the Green Bay Packers. When the NFL declined to make a deal, Kopp started pursuing one with the NBA.

Israel hadn't produced any NBA players when the league's top executives, including future commissioner Adam Silver, gathered in a hallway before Game 4 of the 2009 Finals for a glimpse at SportVU. Game 3 had been played under the eyes of its six cameras in the sky, and Kopp shared the results with his influential audience. "It was like the Pong version of videogames," he said. "It was very simple. But people were blown away." ★



Digital Bracelet for Injured Soldiers



MEDICINE: BY MICHAEL ORDMAN (r) UnitedWithIsrael.org



digital bracelet

What can you do in three weeks? Start learning a language? Write a book? How about building a new piece of technology that can save countless lives. In just three weeks, that's exactly what Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers did.

As part of the final stage of the IDF Technological Officers Training Course, cadets are expected to find an issue in the IDF that can be solved with an innovative technological approach, and then, in a rapid prototyping process, build a working product. The cadets developed a smart bracelet

that will keep track of life-saving data when soldiers are injured on the battlefield.

Here's how it works: When a soldier is injured, the field medic attaches a smart bracelet powered by a computer chip to his or her arm. The bracelet instantly starts tracking the soldier's pulse, blood pressure, and body temperature using its multiple sensors. The bracelet also has the ability to track who is providing care, medications and dosages prescribed, and any procedures that the wounded soldier

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Israeli Medical Corps (logo shown on right) is an Israel Defense Forces corps responsible for providing healthcare services and medical treatment and instruction to all levels of the IDF.



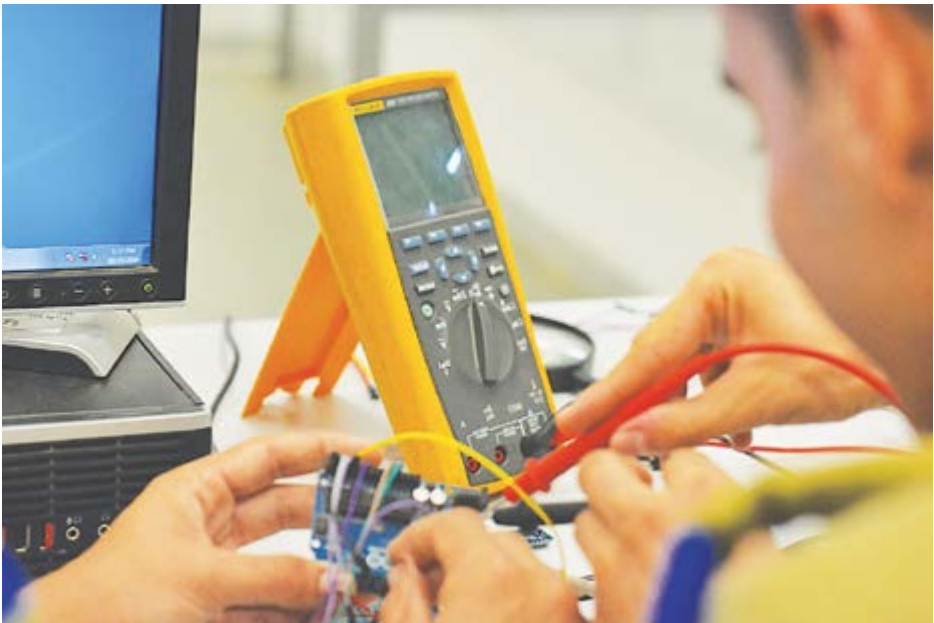
undergoes. When the soldier is evacuated to a hospital for more advanced care, all that data travels with him.

While wearable tech hasn't taken off as quickly as expected in the civilian sector, what sets this smart bracelet apart is that it fills a vital need. It solves a long-standing challenge of the IDF Medical Corps: **ensuring accurate transfer of information as wounded soldiers are moved from the battlefield to field triage centers and to civilian hospitals.**

Developing the smart bracelet took just three weeks from start to finish. This speedy process has become the norm in the IDF's C4i Division (a combat support corps of the IDF). In the past, units spent significant amounts of time on prototyping, testing, and refining followed by even more testing before implementing new technologies. This rapid development enables the IDF Technological Unit to quickly implement new advances and solve problems as they arise.

As the threats Israelis face continue to grow and evolve, our technology needs to evolve with us. Technology like the new smart bracelet, and the rapid development and coordination between the IDF C4i Division and combat units in the field, provide us with an edge that saves lives and keeps Israel safe.

The idea of assigning IDF soldiers the task of innovating real-life solutions through technology is amazing. How Israeli! — Kirsten ★





SELECT MEDIA BRIEFS

Only the best for the guests: 1,500-year-old mosaic with a Greek inscription

1,500-year-old Pilgrim Hotel Discovered

Compiled by Aviel Schneider / *Israel Today*

During work on the sewer system close to Jerusalem's Damascus Gate, a mosaic floor from the Byzantine Era was uncovered at a depth of just three feet. The mosaic, which measures 45" x 32", is almost completely preserved. It was made around 550 A.D.

David Gellman, the leader of the excavation, talks of an archaeological miracle: "The mosaic was probably part of a hostel for pilgrims. The inscription mentions Emperor Justinian and a priest called Konstantin, the founder of the building. Konstantin was the abbot of the Nea Church that, when it was completed in the year 543, was the largest church in Jerusalem.

Already by this time [decades before Islam's inception], Jews and Christians were making pilgrim-

ages to Jerusalem, a city that both considered holy.

The ongoing discoveries in the Holy Land, with new findings discovered (and uncovered) daily, truly show the news headlines catching up with the Bible. — David

Muslim Conflict with Israel is Religious *Israel Today*

Israeli and Western power brokers do their best to paint the conflict between the Jewish state and its Arab opponents as purely nationalistic. They openly reject a religious foundation to the dispute. But, in so doing, they must completely ignore what the Muslims themselves freely admit.

"Our conflict with Israel is mostly religious," insisted Egyptian-Canadian journalist Said Shoab in an interview with the Arab-Christian Al-Hayat TV.

Shoab noted that if the conflict

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NON SEQUITUR BY WILEY

GOCOMICS.COM/NONSEQUITUR





with Israel were purely nationalistic, then “we would treat Iran the same way we treat Israel. Iran is occupying the Arab region of Ahwaz and oppressing the Sunnis; and it is occupying the UAE islands. Turkey is occupying the Alexandretta province. Is one occupation *halal* [permitted] and the other *haram* [forbidden]?”

So, why is the conflict with Israel religious? “Because,” Shoaib explained, “the Prophet Mohammed engaged in a political armed and unarmed conflict [with the Jews] 1,400 years ago, and we act as if it happened today.”

[Translated by Palestinian Media Watch]

Israeli Dogs Protect Members of Indian Parliament

By Stuart Winer / *Israel Today*

Many young Israelis travel to the Far East after their army service.



They want to unwind and explore the world before life begins in earnest with study and employment. Recently, however, a different breed of army veterans has been undertaking the trip to India: dogs from the Oketz Canine Unit that were trained to sniff out explosives and weapons.

Over the last year, Indian security forces have received 30 such dogs from Israel. They are to be deployed in protecting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top politicians. *The Telegraph* (India) recently published a feature story on these unique Israeli warriors.

The dogs include Labradors, German Shepherds, and Belgian Malinois. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), who also train service dogs of this type, are working with Israel to bring the Dog Training Center Bhanu in Chandigarh up to the latest standards. ★



A Secret City Under the Barracks

ARCHAEOLOGY: *Israel Today*



Artifacts (Israel Civil Authority)

Most Israelis can still vividly recall the “Bahad 4” barracks, which during the 1970s was the Israeli army’s largest recruiting and training base. However, up until now no one was aware that this particular site has a much longer history.

Recently, staff members from the Archaeological Department of the Civil Administration that governs the West Bank arrived at the site where the barracks used to be in the small town of Beit El in Samaria. The barracks had already been demolished in 1995. When they started **digging directly beneath the square that had formerly been the parade ground, archaeologists were astonished**; they came across an ancient Jewish settlement that had been home to dozens of inhabitants during the First Temple Period. It had also been populated during the time of Persian rule in the Land, and had later been expanded during the Hellenistic and Hasmonean eras. It had remained a Jewish town until the latter part of the Roman period.



Seals like this one indicate the First Temple Period

“These findings are quite astonishing,” said Yevgeny Aharonovitch, the archaeologist who is leading the excavations. “We found door keys to residential units; we found tools that were used by the Jews, and certain types of seals that indicate the time period.”

According to the findings, this ancient town must have been abandoned for many years, and was only resettled in the Byzantine era. At that time, a Christian population lived there, probably monks, who also built a monastery adjacent to the town. The excavations revealed a church, the dining

room, and a bathhouse that were used by the monks and had been very well preserved. The Byzantine settlement existed up until the Muslim conquest. The Christians were driven out, and a Muslim population replaced them. Remains from this period were also found on the site: store rooms containing a large number of glass jars that were used for the trade in olive oil.

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In the opinion of the experts, the town was destroyed during the great earthquake in the year 748 A.D. The piles of rubble were left lying, and the town was forgotten. Today, the circle has closed. "This town gives us an insight into all the different periods that have existed here since the time of the First Temple," explains Benny Har-Even, the assistant archaeologist from the Civil Administration. The plan now is to prepare this historic town for visitors, a project that will take several years to complete. ★



Pottery shards



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Mohammed to Kids: Throw Rocks at Jews

BY ITAMAR MARCUS and NAN JACQUES ZILBERDIK / PalWatch.org

A poem in the Palestinian youth magazine *Zayzafuna* teaches children that throwing rocks at Jews is something mandated by Mohammed, Islam's prophet.

“O children of my country, sing to the occupied homeland so it will be liberated...

Sing by the order of Prophet [Mohammed] that we carry a rock that we will throw at the people of the Gharqad [tree]”

[*Zayzafuna*, October 2017]



That Jews are the intended target is clear from the reference to the Gharqad tree — “the tree of the Jews.” According to Muslim tradition, Jews will try to hide behind the Gharqad tree when the Muslims come to kill them on Judgment Day.

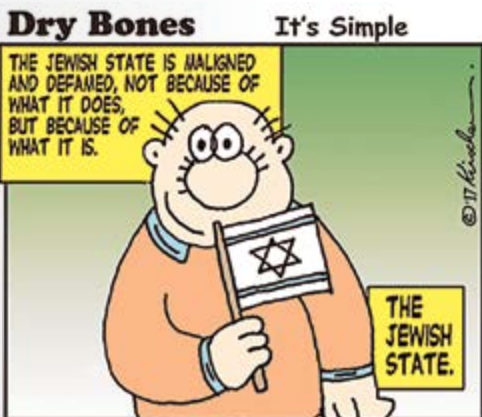
The story of a stone or tree beckoning a Muslim to kill a Jew appears in numerous Islamic texts. One example is the following *Hadith*:

“The last Hour will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them until the Jews hide behind a stone or a tree, and the stone or a tree will say: ‘Muslim, or servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him.’ But the Gharqad tree will not say [this], for it is the tree of the Jews.”

Palestinian Media Watch has documented problematic content in *Zayzafuna* before. One story, allegedly a dream by a young Palestinian girl, glorified

Hitler and presented his killing of Jews as a positive accomplishment for the benefit of humanity.

Zayzafuna is a PLO magazine for children partially funded by the Palestinian Authority. The magazine, which includes material written by both the magazine's staff and child readers, shows the kind of messages that the publishers deem suitable for youth and also provides a window into the minds of the Palestinian children submitting material to the magazine.



JEWISH HUMOR, ETC.



Post Hanukkah/Christmas Roast Beast Blues

Away with the last of the sour cream dip,
Get rid of all chocolate, each cracker and chip.

Every last bit of food that I like must be banished
Till all the additional ounces have
vanished.

I won't have a cookie — not even a lick.
I'll want to chew only a long celery stick.

I won't have hot biscuits, or corn bread, or pie,
I'll munch on a carrot and quietly cry,

"I'm hungry, I'm lonesome, and life is a bore,
But isn't that what January is for?"

Unable to giggle, no longer a riot,
Happy New Year to all, and to all
a good diet! ★

*A cheerful heart is
good medicine —
Proverbs 17:22*

The Back Pew - Jeff Larson



He must become greater, and I
must become less. JOHN 3:30



Zola Levitt Presents TV Airing Schedule

Freeform Airing Day & Time by zone

DirecTV - Channel 311 Dish - Channel 180

Zone	Pacific	Mountain	Central	Eastern
Days	2:30 AM or 5:30 AM Sun	3:30 AM or 6:30 AM Sun	4:30 AM Sun	5:30 AM Sun

Daystar Airing Day & Time by zone

DirecTV - Channel 369 Dish - Channel 263

Zone	Pacific	Mountain	Central	Eastern
Days	8 PM Wed 3 PM Fri	9 PM Wed 4 PM Fri	10 PM Wed 5 PM Fri	11 PM Wed 6 PM Fri

Our complete TV Airing Schedule includes
dozens and dozens of independent channels
and is posted at www.levitt.com/schedule

**Watch Therefore —
new series from Israel airing soon!**





“Matzoh” postcards (12-pack)

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

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

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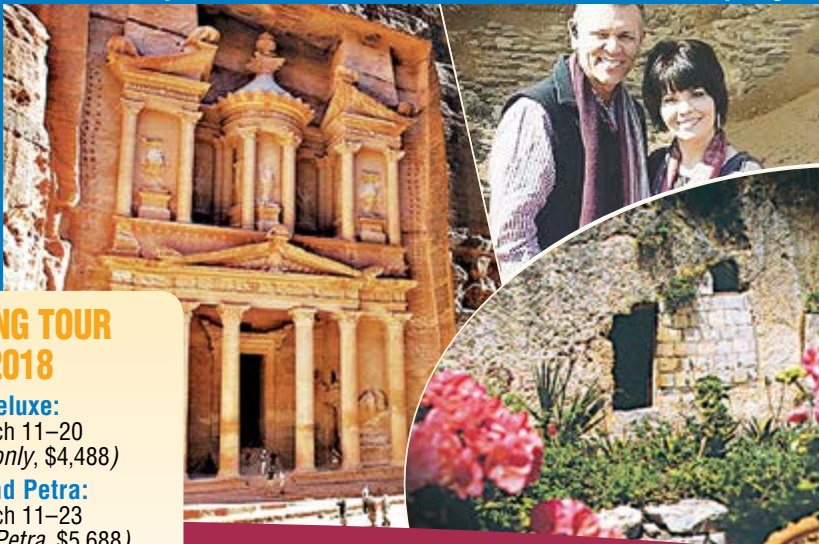


Visit Israel and Petra

Join Tony & Jane Derrick and David & Kirsten Hart this Spring!



Petra,
the Harts,
& Garden
Tomb



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