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Special Issue: NAD Year-End Meeting





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## Adventist Journey

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### My Journey

When I was growing up, I wanted to be a medical missionary; that meant being a doctor. But with my major I can help care for the whole person—and build connections with people to the church. I have this dream that our churches will be able to care for the community through health. Visit [vimeo.com/nadadventist/ajbiancaarao](https://vimeo.com/nadadventist/ajbiancaarao) for more of Arão's story.

**BIANCA LUDVIG ARÃO,**  
*global disease biology major at University of California, Davis; Adventist Christian Fellowship representative.*

*Bianca Ludvig Arao*



Cover Photo by Pieter Damsteegt

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Email: [AdventistJourney@nadadventist.org](mailto:AdventistJourney@nadadventist.org) | Web site: [nadadventist.org](http://nadadventist.org)

#### ADVENTIST JOURNEY

Editor **Kimberly Luste Maran**

Senior Editorial Assistant **Georgia Damsteegt**

Art Direction & Design **Types & Symbols**

Consultants **G. Earl Knight, Mark Johnson, Dave Weigley, Maurice Valentine, Gary Thurber, John Freedman, Ricardo Graham, Ron C. Smith, Larry Moore**

Executive Editor, *Adventist World* **Bill Knott**



# The Vision Fulfilled

Apparent and imminent defeat will be turned by God into complete victory.

BY DANIEL R. JACKSON

*This article is adapted from the November 2, 2019, NAD year-end meeting sermon entitled “The Vision Fulfilled,” given by Daniel R. Jackson. Some characteristics of the oral presentation remain.—Editors.*



Daniel R. Jackson, NAD president, preaches during the NAD Year-End Meeting worship service on Nov. 2, 2019.

Someone once made the comment “The darker the cloud, the better the rainbow.” Though only a figure of speech, the statement holds a great deal of meaning to anyone who has had a difficulty—a devastating diagnosis, loss of job, loss of loved one. . . . When a person sees the rainbow, they believe the storm is over. For Christians there is a sense that behind the rainbow is the Father of lights, with whom there is no shadow of darkness.

## Darkness in Israel

In essence, this was the statement that Isaiah made to God’s people in Isaiah 9:1-6. According to earlier chapters of Isaiah, darkness was deepening all across Israel. The dreaded Assyrians were already moving rapidly through the little states surrounding Palestine with an insatiable appetite for conquest. The shadow of captivity would shortly move across them and fall upon every home. Soon they would be herded along dusty paths to prisons worse than anything they could possibly have conceived. Home and happiness behind them; the curse of captivity ahead of them.

The book of Isaiah shows a people filled with anxiety. In chapter 7 the people curse their king, the weak and wicked Ahaz, who had betrayed them, and curse the God they

Photos by  
Pieter Damsteegt

thought had abandoned them. Isaiah tells us clearly that the people had turned on God and away from God. The result is that they began to worship and follow false spirits. Isaiah 8:20-22 reads, “Consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness” (NIV).

Does that ring any bells with you, today, when you think of your church? Not only in terms of what is happening with the family of God, but in the world in general?

We don’t have to spend a lot of time enumerating the events and trends or circumstances that demonstrate the level of anxiety that exists in the church and in the world.

Anxiety disorders are the number-one mental illness in North America. Anxiety disorders affect 40 million people a year in the United States alone, 18.1 percent of the population.<sup>1</sup> The description recorded in Isaiah 9 is not unlike our own setting in the church.

In periods of gloom and distress we come to believe that somehow God is unaware of our problems. The natural human tendency is that we decide to fix the problems ourselves, and we only make them worse. There has never been a time when human effort has succeeded in resolving spiritual issues. All that human effort does is mask the disease, mask the problem. It does not help.

## Complete Victory

God does not need our help. He was not unaware of the gloom of

His people, and He is not unaware of our circumstances today in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In Isaiah’s day, and in our time, God would not allow His people to continue on in the dark.

So Isaiah was inspired with this message of compassion: “Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, along the Jordan—The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the deep darkness a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian’s defeat, you have shattered the yolk that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior’s boots used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire” (Isa. 9:1-5).

What incredible news! The message that was timely for them is relevant for us. The nation about to be mutilated will again be multiplied. Apparent and imminent defeat will be turned by God into complete victory.

Listen to these words from Ellen White: “Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme. The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall.”<sup>2</sup>

Of course, we have failings. The church is filled with human beings with a variety of needs. We do not always do things right.

But for all the doomsayers, for all the people who write “fake news,” I have to tell you, “Focus on the positive. Get away from the negative.”

God wants two-handed Christians; He wants us to put both of our hands in His hands.

## Paradise Promise

Here’s a question: If your church burned down, would anyone miss it?

When the Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church in California burned down in November 2018, the community not only missed the church, they needed the church. They still do. When I visited the church after the fire, I was brought to a cement wall. Spigots for water stuck out of that wall with a notice to the community: “You can come and get as much water as you need.” The church was burned down, but the congregation still provided living water to the community.

When I contemplate these things and think about the ongoing, seemingly never-ending debates in the church, all taking place within the context of human, natural, and supernatural disasters, I am often



The Burman University Choral Union performs as offering is collected at the 2019 NAD Year-End Meeting Sabbath service.



shocked and disappointed—in myself and in my church. Will we be vanquished by the enemy of legalism, secularism, materialism, and pluralism?

We won't be if we focus on the promise, the message, in Isaiah 9:6: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Jesus was, He is, and He ever will be the hope for humanity's anxiety and alienation—and the hope for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In Isaiah's day people needed more than food, more than relief from the enemies around, more than a trustworthy king or a thriving kingdom. They needed something within. That is a living faith.

The solutions to the problems of the church are seldom found in more physical wealth, in tithe parity negotiations, or in strict adherence to policy. They will never be found on the basis of peaceful theological coexistence, or even in better leadership. Give it up. Human solutions only mask human disease.

The solutions to our problems will never be found by focusing upon external needs or conditions, but rather on the inner needs that

all of us possess. The renewal of our inner convictions about faith and our experience with God.

In God's intervention in human affairs we find hope and peace and a place called home, where God is eternally our Father and we are His children. There is a daily awareness of it. In conveying the totality of God's attempt to meet human needs, to bring people from despair to hope, Isaiah talks about the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, and immutable God, portraying Him from different lenses.

### Wonderful Counselor

First, God is the Wonderful Counselor. Into the darkness of humanity's inability to discover that which is best, God sends His Son to bring us His counsel.

What, specifically, does the Wonderful Counselor say to us? It's in Scripture. He tells us to believe in the demonstrated love and mercy of God (Isa. 63:9). He makes apparent the need for a childlike faith and an open spirit (Matt. 19:14). He encourages us to be vulnerable, to adopt the values of humility and teachability and inner piety (2 Cor. 10:1; Phil. 2:1, 3; Col. 2:18).

This counselor does not just lead us into an intellectual understanding of these principles. He demonstrates them in His life and



The NAD headquarters auditorium is packed during the YEM worship service on November 2.

in His provision, so that every rebel who ever walked the earth—and that includes all of us here—can see and understand. The Wonderful Counselor is our only hope for spiritual, mental, and emotional growth and happiness.

### Mighty God

We have no power, no authority, no ability, no ingenuity to withstand the forces of supernatural power. We are awed by them. Only God holds within Himself the power to control or to conquer the enemies.

Only the power of God can intervene successfully in such a way that the strength of human resistance and independence would be willingly redirected so that the miracle of genuine conversion could take place in the lives of men and women. Only His power is sufficient. It is time in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that we usher legalism to the back door, kick it in the behind, lock the door, and never let it back in.

You will not save yourself, no matter how much tofu you eat, no matter how righteous you think you are, no matter how much Ellen White you can quote—you will not save yourself. Only Jesus. Only He brings redemption full and free.

### Everlasting Father

There's a yearning in all our lives that only Jesus satisfies. He is the Everlasting Father.

Our family was living in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in May 1982, when

I received the news that my father had died. We were not all that close, but he was my father. It was shocking; it was sad. In the year 2000 my mother contracted pancreatic cancer—54 days after I noticed her turning yellow she was in the grave. It was difficult, even as an adult, to reconcile living without a parent.

We know what it is like to be orphans. It doesn't matter if you're 9, 19, or 59—there is a loneliness that emerges when we lose the ones we love. There is a loneliness when we try to live our lives disconnected.

But into humanity's inevitable loneliness comes the waiting Father, revealing Himself through human relationships. He does not come as an angel, but rather as a man (see Matt. 1:20, 21).

Now, men may be men of power, to be feared, obeyed, and served. They may play roles that affect human relationships, but Jesus came to reveal none of these. He showed us, in the qualities of His life and love, this statement: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9; see also verses 10-12).

Through His example Jesus endeavored to enable men and women to understand the unique experience of being sons and daughters of God. Listen to the words of 1 John 1:3: "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" Jesus went beyond simply describing a theory of "sonship." In the parable of the prodigal son, He painted the picture of a rebel son pressing his body against his father's—heart beating against heart. The son's heart filled with penitence, and the father's heart filled with compassion (see Luke 15:20, 21).

### Prince of Peace

He comes as Prince of Peace. John Milton, in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," wrote:

"Wherein the Son of heav'n's eternal King,  
Of wedded maid, and virgin mother born,  
Our great redemption from above did bring;  
For so the holy sages once did sing,  
That He our deadly forfeit should release,  
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace."

Within the context of modern restlessness the Prince of Peace comes. What I am urging you today is to listen to the voice of God. To come to know Him personally. He is the Wonderful Counselor, the Everlasting Father, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace.

In the church we have forgotten about that. We begin to worship the church, the rituals of the church, the writings of the church, and the leaders of the church. The solution is getting to know Him the

Jesus was, He is, and He ever will be the hope for humanity's anxiety and alienation—and the hope for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

way He is described in Isaiah 9, and making the daily commitment to stay in the relationship.

### Hold on With Both Hands

God wants to offer you and me everything in order to assure our stability and happiness throughout eternity. It's when we reach out one hand to God and we hold on to things with the other hand that we get into deep trouble. When we reach out to God and hold on to religiosity, it brings a damaging current.

God wants two-handed Christians; He wants us to put both of our hands in His hands. The victory is already His.

I'm not knocking the church. I'm not knocking religion. But if our religion consists only of the church, we're doing the wrong thing. We are God followers; not church followers.

The role of the church is not so that the church can be preeminent. The role of the church is to serve as the conduit whereby we introduce men and women to the Lord Jesus Christ and into *His* religion.

<sup>1</sup>"Understand the Facts," [adaa.org/understanding-anxiety](http://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety), accessed Nov. 12, 2019.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 2, p. 380.

*Daniel R. Jackson is president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.*



Left: Alvin Kibble, an NAD vice president, gives the call to worship on Sabbath. Right: Delegates and guests sing during the November 2 worship service.





Daniel R. Jackson, NAD president, gives his report to the division's executive committee during the 2019 Year-End Meeting on November 1, 2019. *Dan Weber*

## CHURCH TRENDS, GOD'S PROMISES, AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Officers share their annual reports at the North American Division Year-End Meeting.

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

### President's Report

"A church that does not do outreach is not a church; it's a club. A congregation that doesn't look at its world and say, 'We can find a niche, we can find a place where we can reach souls for Jesus Christ,' isn't a church," said Daniel R. Jackson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, at the start of his annual report during the second business session of the 2019 North American Division (NAD) Year-End Meeting.

On Friday morning, November 1, Jackson's report to the division's executive committee in session followed the nominating committee report and vote on Bonita J. Shields as new NAD vice president for church ministries, Judy Glass as undertreasurer, and Michael Harpe as stewardship director.

Jackson recited Romans 8:32, saying, "Based on this promise, every time we come together as Christians we ought to be high-fiving each other. The promise is that

God, along with Jesus, will give us all things. The church is not in a place of ease today. I would say some are peripheral to the gospel message that we've been tasked to give to the world. The others are right at the core and speak to the foundation of our work."

Jackson said that he is more optimistic about the church in 2019 than he was in 2010 (when he became division president). He gave details on several initiatives and institutions of the division.

In addressing expansion and growth, Jackson touched on the Plant 1,000 initiative that started in 2015. "We made a decision . . . that we would plant in this division in a five-year period 1,000 new congregations," Jackson said. "You heard what was said yesterday, 750 new congregations [have been planted] in the division in the past three and a half years. I think we're on target to make 1,000.

"But as good as that sounds, it's not enough. God has called you and me in our local congregations, in our homes, in our workplaces and classrooms, He's called us to be His witnesses. He did not call us to be couch potatoes. So friends, go out," he added.

Jackson spent the rest of his time highlighting the places on his road map that have been successfully charted, as well as places in which improvement is needed.

He specifically addressed trends in strategic planning, education, youth and young adults, women in ministry, hospitals and health systems, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Christian Record Services for the Blind, AdventSource, and Seminars Unlimited.

In his final thoughts Jackson told the executive committee: "We have nothing to fear for the future. The devil . . . wants to undermine and destroy people's confidence in Jesus and in the church that Jesus started. But there is so much evidence from our past that God does not stop. God will not give up on His church, on His people."

Telling those gathered that this would be his final year-end-meeting report, as he will retire in 2020, Jackson said, "What an honor you all have given to me to serve this division. That doesn't mean there haven't been days when I wished I was in Boston, throwing tea into the ocean to start a revolution. But I have cherished my work here. I love the people who work in this building, and I love our members throughout the North American Division. I thank you for that privilege."

### Secretary's Report

On the second day of the year-end meeting G. Alexander Bryant started the secretary's report by quoting Isaiah 40:31, telling the executive committee that whatever challenges come, even when "we scratch our heads and ask, 'What are we going to do?' We're going to stand on the promises of God."

After thanking the secretariat team, Bryant went straight into membership figures. He shared

G. Alexander Bryant delivers the 2019 NAD Year-End Meeting Secretary's Report on November 1. *Pieter Damsteegt*

"There is so much evidence from our past that God does not stop. God will not give up on His church, on His people."

that the NAD membership stands at 1,257,913 as of December 2018. There are 5,606 churches and 865 companies in the division. Five years ago, said Bryant, the NAD had about 6,000 church congregations. "Now we're closing in on 7,000. We are thankful for our church planting initiative."

According to research shared by Bryant, Christianity, in terms of numerical growth in the North American Division region (Canada and the United States), is stagnant. But the Adventist Church has shown steady

growth. He said, "To still be moving in a positive direction is a blessing of the Lord in our territory. With the exception of a couple areas, there's still been steady growth, about 2 to 3 percent." Overall growth is the largest in the Southern Union Conference, while the Southwestern Union Conference is the fastest growing in the division. The Guam-Micronesia Mission is also showing steady growth.

Bryant shared that the NAD had its most significant recent growth in 2009, the designated







Carolyn Forrest presents a report on diversity on November 1. *Dan Weber*

Year of Evangelism. He said he is excited about 2022, the year when the Ministerial Association’s division-wide initiative “Multiply” will commence. “Even though different unions designate a year of evangelism or a focus, there’s something special that happens when we do that corporately,” said Bryant. “We’re looking with great anticipation on what God is going to do in the year 2022.”

Bryant also shared membership losses. “This is the one that always breaks my heart every time I look at it, and I’m going to keep showing it until we see these numbers change,” he said. From 2013 to 2018 the total loss of membership from deaths, missing members, and those dropped from church membership was 123,593. With 214,621 accessions from baptisms and professions of faith in the same time frame, there is a net gain of 91,028. With gains and losses as they have been trending, Bryant said that “we will lose as many people as we gain. So we need to find a way. We need to find a way to stop that bleeding in the church.”

Ernest Hernandez, director of the Office of Volunteer Missions, gave the volunteer missions segment of the report. He shared that there were 50,839 in missionary service from the NAD, which includes group and individual deployments.

In regard to the number, Bryant mentioned that in a recent survey, 50 of 59 conferences reported that they were doing mission work outside the division. These were numbers from the local field and were not represented in the division figures.

“That is the power of organized missions,” said Hernandez, citing specific examples from the Pennsylvania and Chesapeake conferences. “We have missionaries in 70 to 90 countries of the world, about half the planet.”

Carolyn Forrest and Brian Ford each shared information from their respective departments within secretariat. Forrest, associate secretary-director of NAD Human Relations, Interdivision/International Service Employee Resources, and Archives and Statistics, talked about the increase in diversity and inclusion in the division with video reports from most of the nine union conferences comprising the NAD. She also shared a report from the human relations advisory.

Brian Ford, assistant director of eAdventist, the entity that maintains the church membership list, among other responsibilities, shared that eAdventist analyzes membership—and can provide data on membership for union conferences and conferences in regard to growth, gender, and age as it has birthdates for at least 70 percent of the membership in the division.

#### Treasurer’s Report

Randy Robinson introduced the 2019 treasury report with thanks to former treasurer G. Thomas Evans, his predecessor. He then read 2 Chronicles 7:14 as he opened his report on November 4.

Robinson shared highlights from the 2018 audited financial statement, including operating fund trends, working capital, and tithe. He reported that although the operating fund

Robyn Kajiura, associate director of General Conference Auditing Service assigned North America, shares information from the NAD auditing report during year-end meeting on November 4. *Dan Weber*



Randy Robinson, North American Division treasurer, discusses finances during his 2019 Year-End Meeting treasury report on November 4. *Dan Weber*

assets dipped for 2017 after the NAD purchased its headquarters building, the 2018 figures show an upward trend. Robinson reminded the executive committee that “we own this building outright. So you can see the important trend there: if we look at our whole operation, our assets are increasing modestly.”

Working capital, explained Robinson, has dipped—78 percent in 2017—but is also trending up showing 85 percent in 2018. A working capital of 100 percent is optimal.

Gross tithe in 2018, Robinson reported, was almost \$1.1 billion. He attributed some of the increase in 2018 to the stewardship emphasis in the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for the first quarter.\* “Every single union had a gain in 2018,” he reported.

In describing tithe allocation, the largest part of that is used for Adventist education, Robinson said as he showed the distribution of tithe received.

Robinson also shared where the division is currently for 2019. “Through September, our tithe is down year-to-date by about 1 percent; two of our nine unions had a gain,” Robinson reported. “I anticipate close to breakeven for 2019.” Robinson also gave the investment, remuneration, and 2020 budget reports. The executive committee voted to receive these reports.

Dave Weigley, Columbia Union Conference president and NAD audit committee chair; Robyn Kajiura, General Conference Auditing Service associate direc-



“What are we going to do? We’re going to stand on the promises of God.”

tor, North America; and Raymond Jimenez III, NAD Retirement president, then shared segments of the report. After discussion, these were voted.

At the conclusion of the report, Robinson thanked the treasury team for its hard work throughout the year and at year-end meeting. He then invited Mike Jamieson, NAD undertreasurer, to the platform for recognition of service to the division. Jamieson was congratulated by Jackson, Bryant, and Robinson for 41 years of service to the Adventist Church, with 10 years in the NAD. Jamieson retires this year.

After discussion, an up to 1.6 percent cost-of-living wage increase was voted near the end of the business session. A motion on

the floor to address the remuneration disparity in conferences and entities that may not be on scale with other conferences and entities passed. Addressing this issue would include reporting complete information on any disparity in the division.

\* John Mathews, former Stewardship Ministries director for the NAD, authored the 2018 first quarter *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*.

Visit [www.nadadventist.org/news/2019-nad-year-end-meeting-news-and-video-coverage](http://www.nadadventist.org/news/2019-nad-year-end-meeting-news-and-video-coverage) for complete coverage of the NAD year-end meeting, including session summaries, ministry reports, videos, and photos from the event.

Kimberly Luste Maran is an associate director of communication for the North American Division.



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BY ANGELINE B. DAVID

# Troubled Resolutions

It's a familiar story. Perhaps your holiday season was much like it. Christ was visiting with dear friends. There was much hustle and bustle. We don't know the size of the group that gathered, but no doubt plenty of work had to be done. Martha was busily serving and making everything just right for her guest of honor.

Then comes the gentle rebuke: "You are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed" (Luke 10:41, 42).

Like Martha, many of us become busily engaged with resolutions during this time of year: lose weight, save money, read more, eat less, take a vacation, write a book, call that estranged friend, get organized, and on and on, being "troubled" about many things.

But only 8 percent of people achieve their New Year's resolutions.<sup>1</sup> And 80 percent quit trying after just six weeks.<sup>2</sup> A simple online search will yield many tips about how to avoid becoming part of these discouraging statistics; and although much of this advice is useful, I surmise that most will still lack "one thing."

An article published in the *Journal of Nature and Science*<sup>3</sup> offers an interesting theory about why most people don't exercise regularly, though they know that physical activity is important. The author suggests that forming a new habit involves a series of mental processes in which the behavior becomes "routine and automatic with little or no conscious awareness." Good behaviors must become nonconscious for them to be lasting—to be habitual. We must change the thoughts and feelings that we don't even realize we have.

Transitioning a healthy behavior (such as exercise) into a habit can be complex. Many things can hijack our best intentions. Even if we achieve success, a single missed day, a busy week, or a tragic or stressful event can set us back. Is there hope for lasting success?

Why do we fail to do what we know we should?

It is a problem inherent to humanity, and it results from separation from God. Genesis 3 identifies these as mental, emotional, physical, relational, and spiritual brokenness.<sup>4</sup> These entered our bodies, our lives, and our world and continue to "war against" our every effort (see Rom. 7:23). Our greatest hope is found in being reconnected to "one thing"—the answer to our brokenness.

Christ told Martha what was most necessary to help with her troubles. He speaks the same message to you and me today. He reminds us that complete success comes through connection with—and submission to—Him. For this reason He voluntarily experienced separation from God. Christ offers reconciliation. He offers success.

When we realize our brokenness, we can accept the broken body of Christ as our necessity.

This is not a miracle cure. It is the strength we need to take one step at a time. Ellen White wrote: "Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on God."<sup>5</sup>

Our journey will be troubled with many things. This is not just about resolutions to start the year. We can try to resolve our problems on our own, or we can make Christ our "one thing," and let His strength be made perfect in our weakness (see 2 Cor. 12:9).

Christ offers reconciliation.  
 He offers success.

<sup>1</sup>Forbes, Jan. 1, 2013, www.forbes.com/sites/dandiamond/2013/01/01/just-8-of-people-achieve-their-new-years-resolutions-heres-how-they-did-it/#539b72ab596b, accessed Nov. 11, 2019.  
<sup>2</sup>U.S. News and World Report, Dec. 29, 2015, health.usnews.com/health-news/blogs/eat-run/articles/2015-12-29/why-80-percent-of-new-years-resolutions-fail, accessed Nov. 11, 2019.  
<sup>3</sup>Seppo E. Iso-Ahola, in *Journal of Nature and Science* 3, no. 6 (2017): e384.  
<sup>4</sup>In Angeline B. David, *Great Expectations*, available at www.nadhealth.org/health-sabbath.  
<sup>5</sup>Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1917), p. 175.

Angeline B. David, Dr.P.H., M.H.S., R.D.N., is director of North American Division Health Ministries. Learn how you can share hope and wholeness through the healing power of Christ at [www.NADHealth.org](http://www.NADHealth.org).





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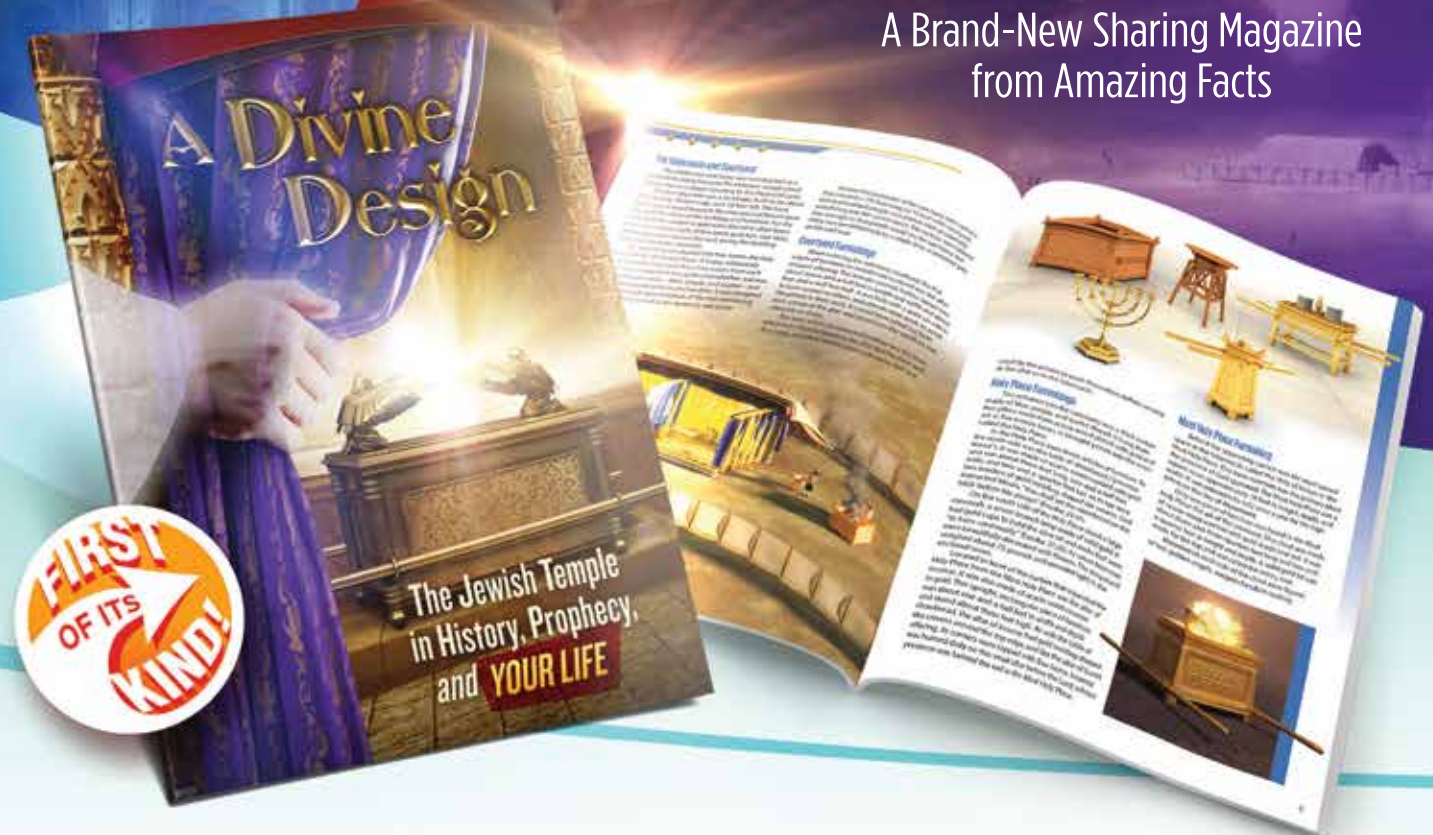
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