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Farmer revives the Biblical Balm of Gilead and Temple Incense - Israel365 News

#bibleprophecy, #temple incense, #farmer, #frankincense

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One very special farmer in the Holy Land is raising rare and endangered plants in an effort to bring back the Biblical Balm of Gilead and the Temple incense.

In 2008, Guy Ehrlich was driven to recreate the Biblical Balm of Gilead, renowned for its healing properties. Incredibly rare even in Biblical times, growing only in the extreme heat and saline soil of the Dead Sea area, it disappeared from the region in the sixth century. A German scientist smuggled a single shoot out of Saudi Arabia, and some plants were at the Botanical Garden in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the climate of Jerusalem was too cold for the desert-loving plants. Fortunately, before they all died, the garden sent some to Dr. Elaine Solowey, director of the Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Kibbutz Ketura. She provided Ehrlich with a beginning for his six-acre Biblical farm. The plants thrived in the Dead Sea climate, and his farm now has about five thousand balsam plants.

His passion for this semi-mythical balm led him to name his farm after it: the Balm of Gilead Farm. Today, his Balm of Gilead Farm has the world's largest private collection of Biblical plants.

Its healing properties were first hinted at by the Prophet Jeremiah:

Is there no balm in Gilead? Can no physician be found? Why has healing not yet Come to my poor people? [Jeremiah 8:22](#)

But Guy insists that he is not religious.

“I am a Jew, and we know that when the Jews are in Israel, the desert blooms,” Ehrlich told Israel365 News. “The Temple just happened to be part of that. The incense was part of that.”

It is believed that the Balm of Gilead was so important that the Bible referred to it simply as generic by the generic names ‘balm,’ or, in Hebrew *zori* זֹרִי or ‘perfume’ (bosem בֹּשֶׂם). As such, it is believed by some Biblical commentators to have been carried by the caravan that received Joseph from the pit (Gen. 37:25). When Jacob dispatched his embassy into Egypt, his present to the unknown ruler included “a little balm” (Gen. 43:11). Balm was one of the commodities which Hebrew merchants carried to the market of Tyre (Ezekiel 27:17) and, according to 1 Kings 10:10, balsam was among the many precious gifts of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon.

The balm was made from the tree known scientifically as *Commiphora gileadensis*. The sap of the balsam tree is released by cutting the bark.

“I focus on plants that few other people in the world cultivate. That’s how I have a chance to succeed in the years to come,” he said. “These are also very important plants, and if they’re not cultivated, they’ll disappear.”

In the later days of Jewish history, the neighborhood of Jericho was believed to be the only spot where the true balsam grew, and the Talmud notes that its main use was medicinal rather than cosmetic. After King Josiah hid away the holy anointing oil, balsam oil was used in its stead. The Talmud (Avodah Zarah 3:1) states that in the messianic era, the righteous will “bathe in 13 rivers of balsam.”

In Roman times, it was grown only in Jericho and Ein-Gedi, and it generated much revenue both for the Hasmoneans and King Herod. The Muslim conquest brought an end to its production,

The New Testament describes Mary, the mother of Jesus, receiving gifts of frankincense, myrrh, and gold from the Three Magi. Some others argue that the gold presented is really the Balm of Gilead as it was more valuable than gold. It was significant as it was used as anointing oil by Israel’s Kings during the period of the Second Temple.

A mixture of olive oil and balsam is still used today to impart the Christian ritual of confirmation.

Ehrlich now cultivates around 60 biblical plants on his farm near Almog in the Jordan Valley, near the northwestern shores of the Dead Sea. He creates creams, perfumes, soap, and honey.

Ehrlich’s is the only farm in existence that cultivates Boswellia trees, an endangered species that is the source of the frankincense that constituted one of the eleven ingredients of the Temple incense. The Boswellia tree is in danger of extinction and has no agricultural cultivation anywhere else in the world except on Ehrlich’s farm. Top-grade frankincense can sell for hundreds of dollars per pound.

Ehrlich also cultivates myrrh.

His trees have been certified by the Temple Institute for use in the Third Temple, which want to make sure the raw materials of the incense will be available when the Temple is rebuilt.

His [online store](#) offers Myrrh and Frankincense oil, Balm of Gilead essential oil, Balm of Gilead perfume, incense to be used for the Havdalah ritual, First Temple anointing oil, Second Temple anointing oil, and even Third Temple anointing oil. It is also possible to sponsor Biblical trees. He produces premium honey from the trees that sells for \$1,000 per kilogram. He also produces a perfume he touts as “the scent used by Cleopatra”.

But his efforts to revive Biblical agriculture have been hampered by modern politics. One company that partnered with him at first pulled out after pressure from the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement.

[Israel to ink major energy deal with Cyprus and Greece - JNS.org](#)

#bibleprophecy, #energy, #israel, #natural gas

Sep 4, 2023

The plan involves linking the three countries' power grids via the world's longest and deepest underwater electricity cable.

NICOSIA, Cyprus — Israel is poised to finalize an energy deal with Greece and Cyprus which will include a mammoth electricity project connecting the power grids of the three countries, and a potential future regional natural gas pipeline between the eastern Mediterranean allies.

The expected accord comes amid burgeoning relations between Israel and both Cyprus and Greece in a variety of fields including energy, defense, tourism, high-tech and cybersecurity.

The international energy venture puts the eastern Mediterranean on the map as a key energy provider to Europe, as the war in Ukraine and sanctions on Russia fuel a global [energy crisis](#) that has hit the European Union hard, spotlighting the continent's dependence on foreign energy.

“The partnership between our three countries becomes stronger with each passing year,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday evening in Nicosia at the start of a 24-hour visit which will include a [trilateral summit](#) meeting of the three countries' leaders on Monday.

“Our strategic partnership and friendship is strong, and will solidify further,” said Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides.

The top-level government meeting in Cyprus on Monday is expected to be the final round of consultations between the leaders before a deal is formally announced.

Electricity and gas projects

The deal to link the three countries' electrical grids, referred to as an “[energy highway](#),” is expected to be inked first, Israeli National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi told *JNS*.

The 2,000-megawatt undersea cable will be the world's longest and deepest underwater electricity cable, crossing the Mediterranean seabed bridging Asia and Europe.

Netanyahu said that in the coming months a decision will also be made on how best to cooperate in the field of natural gas as part of a deepening partnership founded on the discovery of substantial offshore natural gas deposits which, he said, can serve as an energy corridor to Europe and beyond, including Arab countries in the region.

Among the options being considered are a natural gas pipeline between the three countries, known as the Eastern Mediterranean pipeline or simply EastMed; a liquefaction plant in Cyprus; a floating liquefaction plant in Israeli waters, or, pending the geostrategic situation with Ankara, a natural gas pipeline to Turkey which could pass through Cyprus as well and which will be connected to Azerbaijani gas.

Turkey has long been a regional rival to Greece, while Israel's relations with Ankara, which have improved of late, have been [unsteady](#) in the face of the volatile and intermittently hostile leadership of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Feasibility studies on the proposed 1,900 kilometer (1,300 mile), \$6 billion EastMed pipeline are still ongoing, amid [doubts](#) regarding its financial feasibility.

“There is politics and there is economics,” University of Nicosia professor Andreas Theophanous told JNS. “The EastMed is not viable for economic reasons but we must start from somewhere, and [also] see if Turkey will change its policies towards Cyprus and Israel.”

Summit delayed

The trilateral summit in Cyprus, which was originally scheduled to be held last month, was postponed until this week due to Netanyahu's hospitalization for the implantation of a cardiac pacemaker. Cyprus and Israel will also hold a full government to government (G2G) minister's meeting in Israel in the first quarter of next year, the leaders announced Sunday.

Turkey too?

In a sign of warming ties between Jerusalem and Ankara, the Israeli leader is also set to visit Turkey shortly, the first such visit in over a decade and a half.

In a further sign of a regional push to include Turkey in a future gas deal, Israeli Energy Minister Israel Katz said on Sunday that he held separate talks with his Turkish and Egyptian counterparts, as well as with the U.S. envoy for regional normalizations efforts, following talks with the Greek and Cypriot energy ministers.

Regional firefighting force promoted

Netanyahu said that Israel was also supportive of a European decision to build a regional firefighting force and emergency center based in Cyprus, and suggested that the three countries also jointly consider purchasing a supertanker fire plane.

Israel assisted both Cyprus and Greece combat major wildfires this summer, and received warm words of praise and thanks from the Cypriot president for its sign of friendship.

“The climate isn't going to get cooler, it's only going to get hotter,” said Netanyahu.

Joint history

The Israeli premier went on to state that the countries' newfound friendship over the past decade after years of cold relations, which he called an anomaly, was based on common values and a shared history. "Western civilization is a result of basically Greek culture and Judaism fused together," he said.

[Saudi funding offer to PA seen as step toward normalization with Israel - JNS.org](#)

#bibleprophecy, #israel, #saudi arabia, #normalization

Aug 30, 2023

The kingdom contributed billions to Palestinian causes until cutting off funding over corruption.

Riyadh has proposed resuming financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority, Saudi officials and former Palestinian officials say.

This is a sign the kingdom is paving the way to establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, *The Wall Street Journal* reported on Tuesday.

“Saudi officials say they are trying to secure Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas’s support for open ties with Israel, providing more legitimacy to any eventual agreement and forestalling any accusations that the kingdom would sacrifice Palestinian efforts to establish an independent state to advance its own goals,” the *Journal* reported.

Earlier this month, [Riyadh](#) appointed its first-ever non-resident envoy to the P.A., who will double as consul general to Jerusalem.

Nayef al-Sudairi, who is already the Saudi ambassador to Jordan, presented his credentials to Abbas’s diplomatic adviser Majdi al-Khalidi during a meeting at Ramallah’s mission in Amman.

Al-Sudairi is a cousin of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and is considered close to the royal family.

Saudi Arabia holds a special status among Muslim states as it is home to Islam’s holiest sites. But it must tread carefully to avoid antagonizing Muslims the world over for whom the Palestinian cause is a central issue.

Palestinian leaders are debating whether to accept Saudi-Israel normalization or to adopt the antagonistic stand that it took in 2020 when the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed the Abraham Accords with Israel, describing it as “a stab in the back of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people.”

The P.A. is sending a senior delegation to Saudi Arabia next week to discuss how the Saudis can help advance the creation of a Palestinian state, the officials said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is eager for a deal with the Saudis precisely because of its pivotal position, repeatedly saying that bringing Saudi Arabia into the Abraham Accords would constitute a “[quantum leap](#).”

“It will lead to the effective ending of the Israeli-Arab conflict—not the Israeli-Palestinian conflict [but] the Israeli-Arab conflict, and will also help normalize Israel’s relationship with a great part of the Muslim world,” Netanyahu said.

Saudi Arabia contributed billions to Palestinian causes until cutting off funding in 2016 over P.A. corruption. Aid dropped from \$174 million a year in 2019 to zero in 2021.

“Now, resumption of Saudi funding to the Palestinians could play an important role in securing their support for the kingdom’s outreach to Israel,” the *Journal* reported.

[New report: Antisemitic crimes rose 28% in 21 US cities in 2022 - Israel365 News](#)

#bibleprophecy, #antisemitism, #united states, #crimes

Sep 1, 2023

[Research](#) from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) reveals an increase in the number of hate crimes against Jews (up 28%) and other minority groups in America's most populous urban centers.

The 10 largest cities in the country [saw](#) an average increase of 22% in biased-based illegal incidents, hitting a new record of 1,889. The highest number of these crimes happened in Los Angeles—195 against black people, 98 against gay men, 91 against Jews and 88 against Latinos.

The largest percentage increase happened in Chicago, with an overall rise of 84% in hate crimes. For Jews, the increase was exponentially higher (500%), going from six crimes in 2021 to 36 in 2022. Seattle also saw a jump from one incident in 2021 to seven in 2022.

Of victims targeted on the basis of religion, Jews accounted for the lion's share with 78% of religious-centered incidents—a total of 470 hate crimes in 2022. The report identified four religion-motivated murders last year, three against Shia Muslims by a Sunni terrorist and one killing of a Catholic who the perpetrator believed was Jewish.

Of the 470 hate crimes against Jews, most of them (261) took place in New York City, which saw a 33% increase from 2021's 196.

The report identifies a key factor impacting antisemitic crimes: the intensity of conflicts in the Middle East. During the Gaza War in May 2021, for example, antisemitic crimes in cities went up 59%.

While most cities saw increases in hate crimes, notable exceptions with declines include San Diego; San Antonio; and Phoenix, Ariz.

[Hiltzik: Musk goes down the antisemitism road - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #antisemitism, #musk, #jews

Sep 5, 2023

Elon Musk has long been known for blaming everyone else but himself for the various fiascos visited upon his companies — [meddlesome bureaucrats](#) for COVID-related production slowdowns at Tesla, the Pentagon and conniving rivals for [the loss of a government contract by SpaceX](#), nasty woke advertisers for the decline of X (ex-Twitter).

So what were the chances that he would get around to blaming the Jews? Based on the evidence at hand, 100%.

Over the weekend, Musk launched a ferocious, spittle-flecked attack on the Anti-Defamation League, which describes itself (accurately enough) as “[a global leader in combating antisemitism](#), countering extremism and battling bigotry wherever and whenever it happens.”

The ADL, because they are so aggressive in their demands to ban social media accounts for even minor infractions, are ironically the biggest generators of anti-Semitism on this platform.

— Elon Musk goes after the Jews on his social media platform X

Musk decided that the ADL is responsible for (in his words) “[most of our revenue loss](#) [at X]. Giving them maximum benefit of the doubt, I don’t see any scenario where they’re responsible for less than 10% of the value destruction, so ~\$4 billion.”

He asserted that the U.S. advertising revenue at X is “down 60%, primarily due to pressure on advertisers by [@ADL](#) (that’s what advertisers tell us), so they almost succeeded in killing X/Twitter!” And he tweeted that he has “no choice but to file a defamation lawsuit against the Anti-Defamation League.”

Not to put a fine point on things, but all this shows Musk to have gone utterly off the rails and over the edge of conspiracy-mongering paranoia. It’s the most extreme outburst of antisemitism by a purportedly mainstream public figure in more than 100 years.

Musk’s hate-spasm easily outflanks the previous champion of public antisemitism, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who was caught on tape in July arguing that COVID-19 was “targeted to attack Caucasians and Black people” while leaving Ashkenazi Jews and Chinese relatively immune. It’s as if Musk challenged Kennedy’s effort to seize the antisemitism crown by saying, “Oh, yeah? Watch this.”

Musk's outburst makes the position of Linda Yaccarino, the formerly respected entertainment executive who accepted the job of X's CEO to restore the platform to the good graces of corporate advertisers, hopelessly untenable. Why she doesn't resign is a mystery. His words also should prompt the federal government to question his suitability, and that of his company SpaceX, to hold government contracts of any kind.

To clear our platform's name on the matter of anti-Semitism, it looks like we have no choice but to file a defamation lawsuit against the Anti-Defamation League ... oh the irony!

— *Elon Musk (@elonmusk)* [September 4, 2023](#)

Musk has bought into the notion — advanced by openly antisemitic X accounts — that the ADL fosters antisemitism by calling it out wherever it appears.

“The ADL, because they are so aggressive in their demands to ban social media accounts for even minor infractions, are ironically [the biggest generators of anti-Semitism](#) on this platform,” he tweeted on Sunday. He was responding to a tweet quoting the far-right conspiracy-monger Alex Jones calling the ADL [“the most pro-Hitler organization I’ve ever seen.”](#) He further implied that the ADL is “somehow complicit in creating the very thing they complain about!”

[Scientists warn invasive pests are taking a staggering toll on society \(msn.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #pests, #society, #invasion

Sep 4, 2023

Scientists warn invasive pests are taking a staggering toll on society. Invasive pests are wreaking havoc across the planet, destroying crops, disseminating pathogens, depleting fish people rely on for food and driving native plants and animals toward extinction, according to a major report backed by the United Nations.

The landmark assessment found more than 3,500 harmful invasive species cost society more than \$423 billion a year, a tally only expected to grow as the modern age of global trade and travel continues to supercharge the spread of plants and animals across continents like never before.

By hitching a ride on cargo ships and passenger jets, exotic species are bridging oceans, mountain ranges and other geographic divides otherwise insurmountable without human help. The result is a great scrambling of the planet's flora and fauna, with dire implications for humans and the ecosystems they depend on.

“One of the things that we stress that really is the tremendous threat this does pose to — and I know this is going to sound grandiose — but to human civilization,” said Peter Stoett, an Ontario Tech University professor who helped lead a group of about seven dozen experts in writing the report. The cost estimate, he added, is “extremely conservative.”

The spread of plants and animals between continents is one of the main causes of Earth's ongoing biodiversity crisis, an extinction event on par with the asteroid that killed the dinosaurs. Invasive species are playing a role in 60 percent of extinctions, according to the report.

As more harmful invasive species take hold and multiply, humanity faces profound risks, too, as pests threaten to eat through croplands and spread mosquito-borne illnesses and other diseases.

“It's normal that species move,” said Aníbal Pauchard, a professor at the University of Concepción in Chile who with Stoett co-chaired the group behind the report. But what is unprecedented, he added, is today's era of plants and animals leaping the “big barriers” between continents.

“It's not normal that a species crosses the Atlantic,” he said. “Not normal that it goes from Australia to Chile.”

More than four years in the making, the report is written by the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES), a body made

up of more than 140 countries that provides policymakers with scientific assessments to help protect Earth's biodiversity and prevent extinctions. A summary of the findings was approved over the weekend in Germany and released Monday, with full chapters slated to be published later this year.

The body concluded the threat from invasive species is “underappreciated, underestimated and often unacknowledged,” with only about a sixth of the world's nations having laws or regulations on the books addressing invasive plants and animals. With new species introduced at an “unprecedented” rate of 200 a year, the problem is expected to get worse before it gets better.

The most widespread invasive animal, according to the report, is the black rat, which spread by stowing away on ships and scurried its way not only into dense cities but onto far-flung islands as well, where it has decimated ground-nesting seabirds and other animals. The impact of land-dwelling rats on islands is so profound that even nearby [reef fish can feel it](#) after the rodents alter the flow of nutrients into the ocean.

[Land-dwelling rats are upending life for coral reef fish](#)

Remote islands are particularly prone to invasion, as they often harbor plants and animals found nowhere else.

On Guam, for instance, the voracious brown tree snake has already driven several native birds to extinction. On Maui, the destructive power of invasive vegetation was on full display last month after [introduced grasses fueled wildfires](#) that killed more than 100 people.

Many invasive species have taken hold in aquatic ecosystems, too. In the Caribbean, venomous lionfish are driving down the numbers of native fish. In the Great Lakes, zebra mussels are clogging the intake pipes of drinking water systems and power plants.

But one of the most devastating aquatic invaders is a delicate-looking flower.

[Spotted lanternfly 'stomp' season gains attention as 14 states fight the invasive pests: 'Ew' | Fox News](#)

#bibleprophecy, #pests, #lanterfly, #america

Sep 1, 2023

Social media users and government agencies speak out as people agree that lanternflies need to go

Social media users and authorities agree that it's "stomp"-the [-spotted-lanternfly season](#).

The invasive insect, [native to China](#) and parts of Taiwan, Vietnam, Japan and India, has spread and multiplied in 14 states, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Spotted lanternflies were first detected on trees and fruit in Pennsylvania in September 2014. Now they can be found in Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Virginia and West Virginia, the USDA reported.

Americans who are dealing with lanternfly infestations appear to be sharing photos and videos of the [spotted insects](#) with fascination and disgust.

"I believe I speak for millions of people when I say 'Ew,'" one Instagram user wrote under a lanternfly compilation video uploaded by "What Is New York" — a meme page that documents NYC oddities, which is often sourced from user submissions.

The compilation shows lanternflies swarming the sides of buildings, sidewalks and ledges.

Some of the bugs are even seen crawling on people.

Over 134,690 people have liked the post on Instagram and have left their thoughts in the comments section.

[BEST CARE FOR BUG BITES: DOCTORS SHARE TREATMENT TIPS FOR MINOR AND SEVERE BITES](#)

"Where's all the birds that love to eat insects?" one Instagram user questioned. "Rats need to get in on this."

"One flew down my shirt the other day," another user wrote with a "cry face" emoji.

"They've done packed up and left my area of PA ... They fit right in with y'all," another user quipped.

"Making my way downtown, crush and smash, boy they fast, and I'm homebound," another user joked, referencing the song "A Thousand Miles" by musical artist Vanessa Carlton.

While many [social media](#) users have written that they're grossed out by spotted lanternflies, government agencies are asking the public to kill the insects on sight.

[Wildlife, nature and agriculture](#) departments across the 14 states have launched public service announcements that encourage people to crush spotted lanternflies.

In August, the State of New York asked the public to "do your part" and "stomp out the spotted lanternfly."

Similarly, the State of New Jersey launched a "Stomp it Out!" campaign in 2021 in response to the pests, and officials have been reminding residents to step on lanternflies.

Other states have launched similar campaigns, but not always with a catchy slogan.

Multiple government agencies state that lanternflies should be killed because they're an invasive species that feed on more than 70 types of plants, which pose a threat to ecosystems.

The USDA says lanternflies could pose a risk to [various crops](#), including almonds, apples, apricots, cherries, grapes, hops, maple trees, nectarines, oak trees, peaches, pine trees, plums, poplar trees, sycamore trees, walnut trees and willow trees.

Plants that are infested with lanternflies can ooze, weep, develop a sticky fluid, sooty mold or a fermented odor, according to the USDA.

"If you find this pest outside of a spotted lanternfly quarantine area, please take a picture of it and note the location to report it to your State Department of Agriculture before killing it," the agency wrote in a lanternfly profile.

Lanternflies [gained national attention last year](#) when Americans apparently became more aware of the presence of the invasive species.

[More than 300 public schools nationwide will learn from the Bible this year | Fox News](#)

#bibleprophecy, #schools, #bible, #classrooms

Sep 1, 2023

LifeWise Academy now has Bible classes in more than 300 public schools in 12 states, with 35K students enrolled

As the [school year](#) begins this fall, students at more than 300 public schools nationwide will learn the Bible during school hours.

The faith-based instruction at government schools, which people may be surprised to learn is legal, is operated by LifeWise Academy, a Christian nonprofit ministry. CEO and founder Joel Penton told Fox News in an interview his group's mission is to give Christian parents hope that the next generation can receive biblical instruction in school, so long as they work to make it happen.

"Our message to the American people is that if you had lost hope in the ability to pass the word of God, the Bible, on to the next generation," Penton said. "If you thought that everything was just going in the direction of the Bible being out of the public school day, you don't need to lose hope."

The [United States Supreme Court](#), in a landmark 1962 ruling, banned state-endorsed prayer in public schools. In the decades since that decision, religious and secular forces have waged a culture war over the extent to which faith-based content is permissible in schools, if at all. However, an earlier, lesser-known Supreme Court decision made what is known today as released time religious instruction possible.

That 1952 case, *Zorach v. Clauson*, validated a New York City program that permitted public schools to release students during school hours, with parental consent, to attend religious classes. Released time laws stipulate religious programs must be off school property, privately funded and parent-permitted. Though the programs have been legal for decades, LifeWise says it is the first group to develop a replicable model parents and educators can use to introduce Biblical education where they live.

Here is how it works. First, a local Steering Committee is established to coordinate program details with school officials. The committee will appoint a program director and board to lead the released time initiative with resources and coaching support from LifeWise Support Center. When the school approves the program, LifeWise leaders will recruit qualified and vetted teachers and volunteers to chaperon students to and from the Bible classes. Local churches must participate in a LifeWise launch and will often donate or rent their spaces for the program.

Each LifeWise program is voluntary. Parents must consent to allow their children to participate. LifeWise assumes all liability for the students under their care from the moment they leave school.

It is a model that has led to rampant growth. Penton said LifeWise started in 2019 with just two programs. In just four years, the ministry has introduced released time programs at 325 public schools across 12 states, including Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Kansas, West Virginia, Illinois, Georgia, Virginia, Tennessee, Arkansas and Kentucky.

"It has been the Lord and his grace that has accomplished this. And it is people in communities that are stepping up," Penton said. "We had no idea this concept would be so intriguing or powerful."

Most of LifeWise's programs service students in 1st through 5th grade. Penton said that when kids start, they begin in Genesis and that by the time they graduate out of 5th grade, they have learned the Bible through the Book of Revelation.

"We teach through the entire Bible, and every lesson has a three-fold focus: head, heart and hands," he explained. "With the head, we just ask and answer the question: 'What is the information on the page of the Bible? What does the story say?' Heart, we ask the question: How does this connect to the bigger picture of the Gospel message? How does it point to Jesus? And hands, if we rightly understand this Bible story in the Gospel, 'How does that transform our character?'"

Penton says the benefits of LifeWise's program include better academic performance, improvements in students' mental health and moral character development that has led to decreased disciplinary actions taken against kids who are enrolled. LifeWise has found that most public schools are willing, if not eager to adopt their programs.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT WARNS AGAINST SCHOOLS ENCOURAGING PRIVATE PRAYER, OTHER RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

"We have received some opposition to our program. But I'll be honest, it has been less than we anticipated," Penton told Fox News. "I think that we're finding that schools know there's a great need in the lives of students. When you consider that it is so clearly legal, you know, the Supreme Court has ruled on this — and so there's no ambiguity about whether or not this program is illegal now."

Enrollment for LifeWise [Bible programs](#) has exceeded 35,000 students in the 2023-2024 school year, the group says. LifeWise estimates these programs can cost between \$100 and \$300 per student, with funding supported exclusively through private donations. There is no cost to public schools to facilitate the program nor for families to enroll their children.

"We get great responses from parents all the time," Penton said. "Parents have their kids in the program, I could tell you story after story of how parents themselves have been impacted by their students coming home and bringing these Bible stories. Parents

who, for whatever reason, haven't had their kids plugged into church, haven't had their kids plugged into a community of faith, but then they get plugged into LifeWise and now, all of a sudden, their family, they're becoming members of the church, they're getting baptized there."

Months ago, [New York City](#) Mayor Eric Adams, a Democrat, lamented the state of the nation's schools after the Supreme Court banned prayer.

"When we took prayers out of schools, guns came into schools," Adams said while speaking to religious leaders at the annual Interfaith Breakfast in Manhattan. "Don't tell me about no separation of church and state. State is the body. Church is the heart. You take the heart out of the body, the body dies."

Penton agrees. "I think we can see that as we look at the next generation, that it has not been a healthy thing to remove moral and worldview foundation from the lives of students," he told Fox News. "And so this is an opportunity for parents to reinstall that foundation, reinstall religious instruction, Bible education into the lives of their students."