

Dear Supporters,

I start a lot of these letters by talking about what a busy or hard year of work it's been, but for all those years there has never been a more challenging year for this ministry than 2014! As many of you already know, I personally have faced some new health complications. I had been having growing problems with my back as the new year came upon us, and in early January I sprained my back. We didn't think much about it because this was not the first time over the years this has happened. However, as the problems and pain continued to grow and the regular ways of handling my back did not work, we began to realize this was no ordinary problem. By mid January I was all but confined to a hospital bed. Later, we thought I might be recovering, but very shortly the pain sent me to the hospital for an emergency MRI. That's when we found out I have a herniated disk and another bulging disk in the very lowest part of my back. Surgical options were not advisable because of the placement and other factors. Treatment options were limited, and most made the problem worse. It was some time before we came upon a course of action that has slowly improved things. Needless to say, it has been a very long and painful year!

During the year, my thoughts were that the days of doing this ministry might be over! I remember agonizing over how I could possibly continue to write *Shaqah*, and the new incoming Q&As. Every day brought the debate about if or when we were going to have to pull the plug on most of what this ministry does. Deadlines for writings to get *Shaqah* out came and went. I could do nothing but lay in pain barely able to move at times, and too sick to do any writing even when I could move. My energy was truly poured out like water, (Ps. 22:14-15) and on April 2nd I was forced to release the news that for the first time in its almost twelve year run, *Shaqah's* March/April issue was likely to be missed altogether. However, I just felt in my spirit we couldn't let this happen; and by God's direction, on April 23rd a special issue #71 was released. As they say, better late than never, and that had to become our new thought pattern!

The May/June Issue was smaller than normal, but got back to some of the regular series. It went out the 2nd of July! The July/August issue went out at the very end of August. By the September/October issue, we were out by the end of September, and by a miracle from God, back to twelve pages. However, by then, the calendar project was pressing hard on us, and we had to get the last issue of the year more on time, to go out with the calendars for 2015! Again, there was the consideration that the calendars may just have to be something dropped. Then by another miracle, which I was in too much pain at the time to even see coming, not only did the next issue of *Shaqah* go out as much on time as they ever have been, but the calendars were ready to go as well. Pre-order calendars even went out at the first of October!

In spite of the fact this year should have been a total loss, not only did we not miss an issue of *Shaqah*, or the calendars, but many other things happened. In truth, this may have been one of our most accomplished years yet! The website has somehow expanded and there is a lot that is so close to going live, it's only a technicality we can't claim them as accomplishments of 2014. God has also confirmed, in many ways, we are doing His will. Subscriptions to *Shaqah* continue to rise, and we just don't know what the calendar numbers are going to be for 2015. We thought the projections for calendars were quite an expansion, and we're already past those! We also have received so much positive feedback this year from people thanking us and telling how much it means to get these materials when it comes to their growth in the knowledge of God and His Word. I can't tell you how much this has meant, and I cannot say THANK YOU enough to all those who have prayed for this ministry, and me personally! Much of my suffering has been relieved just knowing you were lifting me up. I only hope what I have done in this life can be found worthy of your kindness, and somehow this little ministry we do has been a blessing to you all!

In truth, there are just too many things to share about all that has been accomplished this year, but I do want to take space to point out something I eluded to in last year's letter. Many of you may know, this ministry was started as a church and, as such, automatically made your donations to it tax deductible. However, as God has made it clearer that our focus is to be completely on the publication ministry, it

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became more and more difficult to hold on to the automatic exemption an organization gets as a church, and the laws have certainly tightened over the last few years. What this organization could do without an IRS determination letter has been choked as more and more people and businesses can't or won't deal with you as tax exempt, even as a church, without a determination letter. Thus, in 2012 we decided to completely let go and let God! We started restructuring the organization to be just a ministry, which without being a church by any common definition, we would no longer be automatically tax exempt. This required us to file the official paperwork to continue our tax-exempt status. I won't go through all the legal ins and outs, but the category we were going to fall into was going to require us to file a great deal of paperwork each year. To ensure our tax-exempt status was continuous and retroactive, we actually had to start doing this as we prepared, filed, and waited for determination.

This was all a big risk because we did not have the money to hire, even for consulting purposes, a corporate lawyer to get this transition made and forms filed. If we had been rejected as falling into the best category we could hope for, we likely would have been forced to shutdown as no donations to us would have continued to be tax deductible, and we would have had to start paying corporate income tax. This would have left us with nothing, and shutting the organization down would have forced us to liquidate all our equipment and distribute it to other nonprofits. Starting over would have been next to impossible, and sending out our materials just as a personal group or new organization would have required us to change names and symbols due to the loss of our trademarks on such things. After filing, it took well over a year of just waiting and following the initial IRS correspondence. Our application was eventually turned over to a specialist, and this is not usually a good thing! When your filing status is straightforward, this shouldn't be necessary. When the initial correspondence finally came from the specialist, I was in so much pain I didn't think I could handle responding, but God gave me strength. After this, there was more very stressful waiting! Then, on September 8th the determination letter came in the mail, and when I read it I just couldn't believe it. The specialist had, in fact, rejected the status we had filed for. However, instead of a negative, he changed our status to the very best a non-profit can come under!

Now, what does all this mean for you as supporters of this ministry? Simply that nothing has changed other than the confidence of knowing your contributions to this ministry are as they always have been. They are tax deductible, and you can be assured no portion of your contribution will be lost to corporate taxation on this end! As an organization, it means we do not have to spend time filing mounds of paperwork, and can now pursue all normal avenues of fundraising that any Public Charity can, whether a church or not. I just can't tell you what an unbelievable miracle this is!

If I had to sum up this year, I could only do so by saying it was truly, "...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." Zachariah 4:6 Looking back, I just can't believe how much The Lord has proven we are only tools in His hands! I must thank all those who have worked on this ministry through this year. They worked when I was in too much pain to know what was going on, and I will never forget it; but to God be the glory, for I still can't see how work which already had too few hands to get done somehow came about with even less! So, what are our goals for 2015 you ask? They are what they really always have been. Man can set out to do many things, but yielding ourselves to be instruments of God is all that really lays in our power. All I know is the number of those receiving materials from this ministry continues to grow; and if God has allowed us the blessing to continue as He has in this last year, giving us the confirmations He has that the work we are doing is what He wants of us, then we will go forward, and let God accomplish what He wants! We also will continue lifting all of you in our prayers as I know many of you have done for us. In closing, I just want to say we all are what makes Living Springs what it is, and we are blessed and privileged to have each of you as partners in this ministry. May God bless every one of you as you seek to serve Him, and may God continue to use our lives in this new year and until that glorious day He calls us all home. Shalom!

Sincerely,
Philip E. Busby
Director
Living Springs
2014