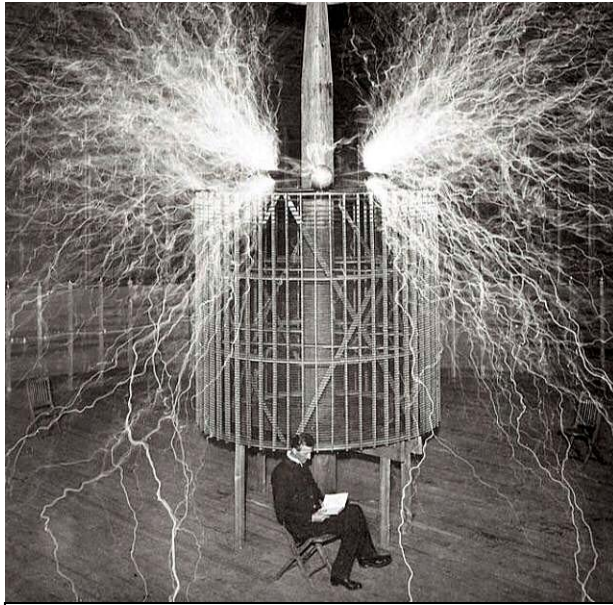


Sounds Like ‘Mir’



After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” “Sorry to disappoint you chaps,” replied Ernie, looking up from his crossword puzzle, “but this here device is obviously no star, risin’ or otherwise. Nope, it’s a Wimshurst influence machine. What *you* probably saw was electrostatic sparks jumpin’ the gap, like they’re doin’ now. And please don’t get any closer ’cause ...” “*Ai-yi-yi!*” shrieked one of the men as a spark promptly landed onto his robe, catching it on fire. Ernie felt a frisson of serendipity as the three compadres dashed pell-mell out the door, for one of the gifts they dropped matched the clue for 36 Across: “Resin extracted from the Boswellia tree that’s a homonym for a former Russian space station.”