

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update February 16, 2018 ***(1st of Adar, 5778)***



ISRAEL RESPONDS TO FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL MASSACRE: A 19-year-old gunman returning to a Florida high school where he had once been expelled opened fire with an assault rifle on 14 Feb. 2018 killing 17 people and wounding more than a dozen others before he was arrested, authorities said. The shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, a middle-class community with a large Jewish population, about 45 miles north of Miami, ranked as the second-deadliest act of gun violence ever on a USA public school campus. Nikolas Cruz, 19, was expelled from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. On Valentine's Day, he returned to his former school, set off the fire alarm, and opened fire at students and teachers rushing out of classrooms; present, former students remember him as a 'loner' and an 'outcast.' Authorities charged the gunman arrested following the deadly school shooting with 17 counts of premeditated murder. Israeli President Reuven Rivlin expressed his condolences via twitter after the shooting attack at the Florida high school. "The people of Israel stand with the people of Florida, and all America, in grief this morning. Our hearts go out to the victims and their families," he tweeted. (Ynet/J.Post)

FIVE JEWISH VICTIMS IDENTIFIED IN FLORIDA SCHOOL SHOOTING: At least five Jews were shot and killed during the mass shooting in a Florida high school on 14 Feb. 2018, a spokesperson for the ZAKA emergency response group reported the following day, while a sixth was wounded during the massacre. The sixth Jewish victim, Ben Wikander, was shot three times but survived the ordeal. Local Jewish leaders said they knew of at least four Jewish students who were among the wounded. One Jewish fatality was beloved coach and security guard, Aaron Feis, who stepped in front of a spray of bullets to protect his students. Aaron Feis, "selflessly shielded students from the shooter

when he was shot. He died a hero and he will forever be in our hearts and memories," said a tweet from the school's football team. (USA Today/Arutz-7)

FLORIDA SCHOOL SHOOTING'S JEWISH VICTIMS REMEMBERED FOR THEIR KINDNESS: They volunteered. They played soccer. They went to camp. They were sweet, mature and easygoing. They were just beginning their lives, or helping others on their way. Jewish students and staff were among the 17 people who were killed when a gunman entered Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on 14 Feb. 2018 and began shooting. Among the Jewish victims are first-year students Jaime Guttenberg and Alyssa Alhadeff, senior Meadow Pollack, student Alex Schachter, Aaron Feis a football coach who shielded students from bullets, and Scott Beigel, a geography teacher who saved students' lives by closing a door as he was shot. Jaime Guttenberg and her brother Jesse were students at Stoneman Douglas High School. While her brother managed to escape the school, Jaime was killed. "My heart is broken. Yesterday, Jennifer Bloom Guttenberg and I lost our baby girl to a violent shooting at her school," her father, Fred Guttenberg, wrote on Facebook. "We lost our daughter and my son Jesse Guttenberg lost his sister. I am broken as I write this trying to figure out how my family gets through this." Guttenberg and her brother were volunteers at The Friendship Initiative, a program that pairs neurotypical students like them with special needs kids.... The responses, as they are gathered, to each shooting victim's death or injury are heartbreaking. (JTA)

FLORIDA SYNAGOGUE HOLDS HEALING SERVICE AFTER MASS SCHOOL SHOOTING: The Jewish community in Parkland, Florida, held a healing service after a mass shooting at a high school attended by many of the teenagers in the community. Rabbi Bradd Boxman of Kol Tikvah, a Reform congregation said he knew of at least four Jewish high school students among the wounded, including three from his congregation. They were in area hospitals and had undergone surgery. "A huge number went to that school," Boxman said of his congregants. Health professionals who gathered at Kol Tikvah walked the high school students through the beginning stages of coping with the trauma, Boxman said. "Within our own community we have many mental health professionals to rely on, and many of them rushed to the synagogue to set up counseling services. It was a place to come for refuge. We just pulled together as a community with surrounding congregations, to be there for our kids and families, getting the kids to have an opportunity to speak of their experience and begin the healing process in the community," said Geri Pomerantz, the president of Kol Tikvah. Rabbi Jonathan Kaplan of the nearby Temple Beth Chai spent the evening at the local Marriott Hotel, where parents had gathered to reunite with their children, counseling parents whose children are still missing. One child from Kaplan's congregation is among the dead, and another is missing. "It's chaos here and devastation," Kaplan told reporters on his way to console the bereaved parents in his congregation. "Everyone is just waiting and praying. No words can describe what happened here." (JTA)

TELLTALE INTERNET MESSAGE MAY HAVE FORESHADOWED FLORIDA SCHOOL MASSACRE: The 19-year-old man accused of shooting 17 people to death at a Florida high school legally purchased the assault rifle used in the killings and may have foreshadowed the attack in a social media comment investigated by the FBI last year. New details about the troubled background and gun ownership of the suspect, Nikolas Cruz, emerged as he appeared in court to face formal charges of carrying out the second-deadliest mass shooting at a public school in USA history. Authorities also shed more light on how the suspect made a getaway by blending in with students fleeing the school, then casually spent more than an hour drifting through a Walmart store and visiting two fast-food outlets before he was arrested. The Federal Bureau of Investigation disclosed it received a tip in September about an ominous online message that read: "I'm going to be a professional school shooter."

The comment had been posted to someone else's YouTube video by a person going by the name of Nikolas Cruz, now presumed to be the same individual as the suspect in the Florida shooting. However, FBI agents had no information pointing to the "time, location or true identity" of the person behind the message, said Robert Lasky, special agent in charge of the FBI's Jacksonville office. YouTube ultimately removed the material in question, and the FBI's inquiry was dropped until the name Nikolas Cruz surfaced again in connection with Wednesday's massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. (Reuters)

MIKE HUCKABEE SAYS USA SHOULD FOLLOW ISRAEL'S LEAD TO PREVENT MASS SHOOTINGS: Mike Huckabee, the former Governor of Arkansas and current host of a cable chat show, reacted to the school shooting in Parkland, Florida by comparing Israeli gun safety policy to America's. "Just waking up in Israel to news of heartbreaking school shooting in FL," Huckabee tweeted, hours after a gunman killed 17 during a rampage at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. "Reminded that Israel pretty much eliminated [mass shootings] by placing highly trained people strategically to spot the one common thread—not the weapon, but a person with intent. Pray For Parkland." Many, including a prominent Israeli commentator, took issue with Huckabee's analysis, saying it isn't tight security that protects Israel from mass shootings but laws that carefully control who can own and carry a gun, and when. Huckabee is a strict supporter of the right to bear arms. (JTA)

AVOIDING NEXT IRANIAN ATTACK ON ISRAEL: A senior official in Israel's defense establishment warned on Sunday 11 Feb. 2018 that Iran is determined to entrench themselves in Syria and will continue to try to attack Israel. Israel's responses to these further violations, he added, will be even more forceful. "As far as we are concerned, the weekend event is over, but the next incident is only a matter of time," he said, warning that Israel does not rule out that the Islamic Republic will continue to try to strike Israel. On Saturday, 10 Feb. 2018 an Iranian drone was intercepted by an Israel Air Force Apache helicopter near the town of Beit She'an. In response, Israeli aircraft targeted the drone's launch site deep inside Syria. Two Israeli pilots were wounded after ejecting from their F-16 which crashed down in Israeli territory. "We do not know what the mission of the Iranian drone was, it is their most advanced drone and they did not expect our radar to detect its penetration into our territory," the senior official stated. "Our aerial freedom will not be harmed. We will continue to destroy targets." (J.Post)

MIRACLE IN KIBBUTZ HARDUF "BATTLE RAGING OVER OUR HEADS": Town secretary Yuval Elad of Kibbutz Harduf where the Air Force's fighter plane crashed over the weekend tells media sources about the dramatic Shabbat the residents underwent. "At a quarter-to-six on Saturday morning we woke to loud explosions and booming, terrifying noises. It wasn't clear what it was, it sounded like a battle was raging over our heads. We soon realized that something had crashed at the entrance to the kibbutz near the school." He said that "throughout the day we stayed inside the kibbutz, no one could go out, the security forces declared the area where the plane fell a closed military zone. From certain angles we could see the plane. For hours, none of the kibbutz residents was updated by an official. There was a lot of confusion about the story of the Iranian drone, it wasn't clear whether it was that or the fighter plane. People listened to the media and we began to understand what was happening. We were interested to know first when we were out of danger and to handle the incident in the best way possible."

Elad explained the magnitude of the miracle that happened to the residents of Harduf. "It was a very dramatic incident at the level of a miracle. It was a matter of a few hundred meters and if it would have crashed in the residential area, everything would look different. To our great fortune it ended without

casualties and we're all okay and we're thankful for it. I wish the pilots a full recovery and that our forces will be able to manage things in a restrained manner and that we'll have peace. We, like all the North, are aware of what is happening and hope there will be quiet here," Elad said. (INN)

USA SUPPORTS ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST SYRIAN, IRANIAN PROVOCATIONS: The White House issued a statement on Sunday 11 Feb. 2018 declaring USA support for Israeli military reprisals against Syria over the weekend, and calling on Iran to "cease provocative actions" against the Jewish state. "Israel is a staunch ally of the United States, and we support its right to defend itself from the Iranian-backed Syrian and militia forces in southern Syria," the White House said. The USA Defense Department issued a similar statement, calling Israel "our closest security partner in the region," and supporting "Israel's inherent right to defend itself against threats to its territory and its people." At approximately 4:25 a.m. on Saturday 10 Feb. 2018, an Israeli Apache attack helicopter shot down an Iranian drone controlled from Syria. Israel called the infiltration a "severe and irregular violation of Israeli sovereignty" and launched an airstrike on Syrian anti-aircraft missile targets, including the drone launch site. (Algemeiner)

RENEWED HAMAS-IRAN TIES MAKE RISK OF TWO-FRONT WAR MORE REALISTIC: Hamas' relations with Iran deteriorated in 2011 after the group refused to support the Iranian-backed Syrian President Bashar Assad when a civil war broke out in Syria. However, in the past year, Hamas has expended many efforts to restore its ties with Tehran, dispatching a number of delegations to Iran to meet with senior Iranian officials and defending it in public forums against the criticisms of its Middle Eastern rivals. In August 2017, Hamas chief in the Gaza Strip Yahya Sinwar told reporters that Iran had become the biggest supporter of Hamas's armed wing, the Izzeldin Kassam Brigades. In Dec. 2017, Deputy Hamas chief Salih al-Arouri described relations with Iran as "excellent" and praised it for supporting "the resistance" in Gaza. For all intensive purposes, it has become clear that Iran and Hamas now see each other as strategic partners. Hamas leaders have said they are not interested in a new war with Israel after engaging in three violent conflicts with the Jewish state in the past ten years. But if a war were to break out between Israel and Iranian-backed forces in Syria and northern Israel, in light of Hamas and Iran's closer ties, the possibility of Kassam Brigade fighters opening a second front against Israel is far more realistic today than a year ago. (J.Post)

PLANNED PARENTHOOD KEPT ABORTED BABIES ALIVE TO HARVEST HEART, BRAIN, SAYS EX-TECHNICIAN: In an undercover video released last week, a former technician for a tissue-harvesting company details how an aborted baby was kept alive so that its heart could be harvested at a California Planned Parenthood facility, raising more legal questions about the group's practices. Holly O'Donnell, a former blood and tissue procurement technician for the biotech startup StemExpress, also said she was asked to harvest an intact brain from the late-term, male fetus whose heart was still beating after the abortion. A StemExpress supervisor "gave me the scissors and told me that I had to cut down the middle of the face. And I can't even describe what that feels like," said Ms. O'Donnell, who has been featured in earlier videos by the Center for Medical Progress, a pro-life group that previously had released six undercover clips involving Planned Parenthood personnel and practices.

David Daleiden, the video project leader, said the undercover footage and interviews show that fetuses are sometimes delivered "intact and alive" before their organs are harvested. The federal Born-Alive Infants Protection Act of 2002 says that when a child is born alive, including having a beating heart, he or she is a legal person and has a right to lifesaving medical care. California law also prohibits any kind of experimentation on a fetus with a discernible heartbeat, said the Center for Medical Progress, which

is calling for the federal government to cease its \$500 million a year support to Planned Parenthood and for it to be investigated. "Today's video is especially gruesome, and it shows, once again, the barbarity of what takes place at Planned Parenthood clinics across the country," said Rep. Joseph R. Pitts, Pennsylvania Republican and chairman of the House Energy and Commerce subcommittee on health, one of several congressional panels investigating Planned Parenthood. (Washington Times)

DOWN'S SYNDROME ABORTIONS IN UK AND EUROPE IS LIKE 'NAZI EUGENICS': The Church of England's ruling body voted unanimously to give unbiased information to parents who are told that their unborn child has Down's syndrome. The motion put to the General Synod backed calls on the government to make sure those parents who are told their child has the condition are given the necessary support. However some synod members raised fears that it could lead to Nazi-style eugenics in which babies found to have Down's syndrome would be aborted. Andrew Gray warned: "In countries like Iceland Down's Syndrome has been virtually eliminated. What we have is a very simple situation. The UK and Europe has also begun to practice eugenics. Quite frankly, there are some stark comparisons with the Third Reich." The remarks were made during a debate about non-invasive pre-natal testing, with the Church raising concerns that abortions could lead to the condition being wiped out. The bishop of Carlisle, James Newcome, put the motion to the body and said Down's children should be welcomed. He added that "being born with disability is not a disaster". (UK Dailymail)

AFTER A WEEK OF SUMMER WEATHER, WINTER RETURNS TO ISRAEL: After a week of summer weather, Israel is set to receive additional rainfall, especially in the northern and central regions of the country. Monday's 12 Feb. 2018 weather was partly cloudy. During the afternoon, rain was expected to fall intermittently in northern Israel, later spreading to the center of the country, along with isolated thunder-storms. Temperatures will become lower than seasonal average throughout the week. Rain is expected daily, slacking to light showers on Wed. and Thurs. 14-15 Feb. 2018. Snow is anticipated on Mount Hermon. (Arutz-7)

IRAN TESTS WAR TACTICS ON ISRAEL: On Saturday morning 10 Feb. 2018 an Iranian drone took off from the T4 airbase deep in the Syrian province of Homs. The drone was spotted by Israel, and residents across the Golan Heights and the Jordan Valley were awakened by air raid sirens which sounded when the UAV was intercepted near the Israeli town of Beit She'an by an Apache attack helicopter. In response, Israeli jets took off to strike the launch site of the drone and were met by massive Syrian anti-aircraft fire. The pilots of one of the Israeli F16s recognized that one missile had locked onto their aircraft and the two pilots ejected from the jet, which crashed in the lower Galilee. The incident was viewed as a significant event by both the IDF and the state, which warned that the Iranians and Syrians were "playing with fire." The incident in and of itself is a serious event and raises questions as to whether the drone was used as bait by the Iranians to drag Israeli jets into Syria, whose air defenses were laying in wait for them. Saturday marked the first time that Israel lost an aircraft in a combat situation since 2006, when an Israeli helicopter was shot down over Lebanon.

After the jet crashed on 10 Feb. 2018 Israel carried out another wave of strikes, hitting 12 targets in Syria, including three Syrian SA5 and SA17 air defense batteries and four Iranian targets. The eight Israeli jets were met again by anti-aircraft fire, leading to another round of air-raid sirens across the Golan Heights. According to IDF Brigadier-General Ronen Manelis, between 15-20 anti-aircraft missiles were fired at Israeli jets, with several falling in open territory in the north of the country. "The Iranians are raising the stakes of the bet," Brig.-Gen. (ret.) Yossi Kuperwasser, said on Saturday. "Since the Iranians were facing Israeli efforts to prevent them from having what they want, they are

now trying to do things they haven't done before," Kuperwasser said, "including what we saw today an attempt to strike and attack inside Israel using unmanned aerial vehicles." (J.Post)

TENSIONS SPIRALING ON ISRAEL'S NORTHERN BORDER: Tensions on Israel's northern border have been increasing in recent months as Israel fears Iran is entrenching itself deeper into war-torn Syria with its presence on Israel's borders growing in strength. Israeli PM Netanyahu recently visited Moscow to reiterate Jerusalem's concerns about Iranian hegemony in the region and the risk it poses for escalations and instability. Russia views Iran as a key player in resolving the crisis in Syria, but with today's events, the message Israel passed to Tehran via Moscow was either not received or was ignored by the Islamic Republic, which is investing serious efforts in how Syria will look once the disastrous war ends. According to Yossi Kuperwasser, former director-general of the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, Moscow is "being used by the Iranians," securing Assad regime bases while Tehran continues to strengthen their hold in Syria. Russia is, in a way, becoming the useful idiot of the Iranians," he said. "We have to be careful about what Syria will look like when it is controlled by Iran. We got a taste of it this morning," Kuperwasser said. (J.Post)

HEZBOLLAH SAYS DOWNING OF ISRAELI JET MARKS 'NEW STRATEGIC PHASE': Lebanon's Hezbollah terrorist organization said on Saturday 10 Feb. 2018 that the downing of an Israeli F-16 jet by Syrian forces marks a "new strategic phase" that the group says will limit "Israeli exploitation" of Syrian airspace. "Today's developments mean the old equations have categorically ended," the heavily-armed Shi'ite Muslim movement said in a statement. Hezbollah is part of a military alliance supporting Syrian President Bashar Assad. Earlier on Saturday, Israel shot down an Iranian drone flying in its air space and launched attacks on Syrian and Iranian positions in Syria. They were met with heavy anti-aircraft fire, and an Israeli jet was shot down. According to a senior Air Force official, the attack was the "most extensive" since Israel's war with Lebanon in 1982. (J.Post)

CONDITION OF SERIOUSLY INJURED IAF PILOT IMPROVES: Rambam Medical Center Director Professor Rafael Beyar reported an improvement in the condition of the two IAF pilots whose F-16I "Sufa" fighter jet was shot down by Syrian surface-to-air missiles Saturday 10 Feb. 2018. The pilots ejected from their plane after it was hit. "The condition of the pilot who was seriously injured has stabilized, and there has been an improvement," Beyar said. "We are optimistic. The pilot who was lightly injured will probably be released tomorrow." An IDF spokesperson said the missiles were fired after the plane attacked Iranian targets in retaliation for an Iranian drone which penetrated Israeli airspace overnight. The drone did not cause any injuries or damage, but roads leading to the area were closed off. An IAF aircraft downed the Iranian drone, which entered Israeli airspace from Syria. Air raid sirens sounded in the Golan Heights and the Beit She'an Valley after Syrian anti-aircraft missiles were fired. The IDF emphasized that the Iranian aircraft were identified by the IDF's air defense systems early on, and were tracked until they were shot down. The IDF also said that they attacked Iranian targets in Syria as a response to recent events. "The IDF sees the Iranian attack and Syrian response as a severe and unusual breach of Israeli sovereignty. The IDF is closely following events and is fully ready to continue operating according to decisions and what is necessary." (Arutz-7)

ISRAEL DEMANDS UN SECURITY COUNCIL TO 'PUT AN END TO IRANIAN PROVOCATION': Israel asked the UN Security Council on 10 Feb. 2018 to condemn Iran after an Iranian drone was shot down over Israeli territory earlier in the day. The Israeli ambassador to the UN called on the panel to "put an end to Iranian provocations. This is not the first time that we have warned you of Iran's dangerous actions that undermine the situation in our region," ambassador Danny Danon

wrote in the letter. "Israel will defend its citizens and will not tolerate any violation of its sovereignty. I call on the Security Council to condemn this dangerous act and to put an immediate end to Iranian provocations. Security Council members must not stand idly by while Iran is instigating dangerous escalations and violating Security Council resolutions." Russia, a member of the Security Council, expressed serious concerns about the latest developments in Syria and called on the sides to exercise restraint and avoid an escalation of the situation. (Ha'aretz)

BRITISH GIRL UNDERGOES SPECIAL SURGERY IN ISRAEL TO KEEP HER LEG: A 6-year-old British girl has undergone special surgery in Israel that will allow her to keep her leg and her doctor called it a success. Kyra Warrell, of Brighton, located on the south coast of England, is afflicted with proximal focal femoral deficiency, which will leave her left leg about 8 inches shorter than her right if left untreated. The surgery took place on 4 Feb. 2018 at Rambam Hospital in Haifa. Dr. Dror Paley, an Israeli-born physician who is internationally recognized for his expertise in limb lengthening and reconstruction, told the London-based Jewish Chronicle that Kyra will be ready for a more difficult leg-lengthening surgery next year. (INN)

ONLY 50% OF HAREDI MEN WORK: Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) released a report showing that the percentage of haredi men in the workforce dropped over the past year to just above 50%. According to the CBS, 51.7% of haredi men were employed in 2016, whereas 50.3% were employed in 2017. The Israel Democracy Institute's Dr. Gilad Malach believes the drop is due to the fact that married yeshiva students once again qualify for welfare, and daycare subsidies for working women are no longer contingent on the husband working at least 10 hours a week. In addition, the stipend for married yeshiva students doubled. There is also a special stipend for yeshiva students whose wives do not work. He said the subsidies "allow haredi men to postpone entering the workforce" and that "when the right hand helps haredim find employment and the left hand causes them to remain in yeshiva, the result is a standstill and even a decline in the number of employed haredim." (Arutz-7) What a shame is this report regarding the integrity of haredi men who prefer to live off the government or expect their wives to support them while they "study Torah". However, because the ultra-Orthodox religious parties wield so much power in the government, such things happen on behalf of those who they represent. Meanwhile the disabled in Israel, many of who are unable to work, and who have been promised an increase in their meager monthly stipends for months have received not a single shekel towards their needs. Please intercede that this shameful situation will change quickly, that haredi men will go to work to meet their family's needs and that the poor and disabled will receive the help they need for food, housing, medical expenses and all that pertains to daily life.

RARE ROMAN MOSAIC, FEATURING TOGA-WEARING FIGURES, DISCOVERED IN ISRAEL: Archaeologists in Israel have uncovered a rare multicolored Roman mosaic featuring three toga-wearing figures during excavations in the ancient city of Caesarea. The mosaic, which dates back to the 2nd or 3rd-century A.D. measures around 11.5 feet by 26 feet. "It features three figures, multicolored geometric patterns and a long inscription in Greek," explained Dr. Peter Gendelman excavation director for the Israel Antiquities Authority. "The figures, all males, wear togas and apparently belonged to the upper class. The central figure is frontal and the two other face him on either side." The mosaic has been damaged by a building that was constructed on top of it during the Byzantine period about 1,500 years ago. The identity of the figures also remains a mystery. "If the mosaic was part of a mansion, the figures may have been the owners," explained the archaeologists, in the statement. "If this was a public building, they might have represented the donors of the mosaic or members of the city council."

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