

## **Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 22, 2018 (6<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, 5778)**



**ISRAEL 11TH HAPPIEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD:** Israel is the 11th happiest country in the world, according to a report published days ago by the United Nations. The report ranks happiness based on six categories: levels of income, freedom, trust, healthy life expectancy, social support, and generosity. The ten countries which placed higher than Israel are, in order, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, and Australia. The United States ranked 18th in the report. The United Arab Emirates was the second happiest nation in the Middle East behind Israel, placing 20th in the world listings. (Arutz-7)

**ISRAEL POUNDS GAZA AFTER TERRORIST BOMB TARGETS IDF TROOPS:** Palestinian terrorists operating out of the Gaza Strip detonated a bomb against Israeli soldiers on 15 March 2018 sparking a furious Israeli response. The bomb was detonated along the Gaza security fence as an IDF patrol approached. No Israelis were injured in the explosion. Moments later, Israeli tanks opened fire on several Hamas installations. Palestinian media reported that Israeli aircraft also bombed Hamas bases in northern Gaza. Israeli officials said that while it is still unclear who planted the explosives, the IDF holds Hamas responsible as the ruling power in Gaza. (Israel Today) *Projectile and explosives attacks have been increasing from Gaza Strip terrorists at Israel's southern borders. This has always been the pattern in the past before a major outbreak occurs in the conflict between Israel and the Hamas terrorist group. Hamas steadily increases its assaults on the Jewish state's southern border*

*communities until Israel is forced to defend itself with a full scale military operation in the Gaza Strip. Please pray that the ruling Hamas terrorist group in the Gaza Strip will be forced out of power. It has impoverished its people, taught its children hatred of Israel and the West from the cradle on, glorified jihad and used vast amounts of foreign aid to build up its military against Israel rather than give the society it rules positive changes and hope for the future.*

**PALESTINIAN STABS ISRAELI TO DEATH IN JERUSALEM'S OLD CITY:** Adiel Coleman, a married father of four, was stabbed to death on 18 March, 2018 near the entrance to the Temple Mount, by Abed al-Rahman Bani Fadel, 28, from the village of Aqraba. According to eyewitnesses, Coleman tried to fend off the assailant until police forces arrived at the scene and shot and killed Bani Fadel. Coleman leaves behind children in third and second grade as well as in kindergarten and day care. His wife, Ayelet, is a social worker. The City of David said he had been with them for years and had worked on their excavations. "Adiel was a dedicated and loyal worker, a beloved staff member and a model family man," the museum said. (Ha'aretz/Ynet)

**2 SOLDIERS DEAD, 2 MORE HURT IN JUDEA & SAMARIA RAMMING ATTACK:** A Palestinian terrorist driving Friday afternoon 16 March 2018 between Mevo Dotan and Hermesh rammed into a group of IDF soldiers stationed in the area, killing two soldiers and moderately-to-seriously wounding two more. Magen David Adom medics that arrived to the scene gave the wounded first aid before announcing two dead and evacuating the others to Rabin Medical Center in Petah Tikva. The driver of the vehicle sustained light-to-moderate wounds. The Shin Bet security service identified the terrorist as 26-year-old Allah Kabha, a former security prisoner released from prison about a year ago. A Rabin Medical Center spokesperson said one of the men wounded has been anesthetized and put on life support due to suffering blunt trauma to the head. The spokesperson added he is in serious condition, while the other person wounded is in moderate condition. The IDF Spokesperson's Unit confirmed the attack was meant to hurt and kill IDF soldiers, adding the terrorist is currently under interrogation. The attack took place when the four left their military Humvee to man a nearby guard tower. They were then spotted by the terrorist, who sped up and ran them over. Gaza's two main terror groups welcomed the attack and praised its perpetrator. (Ynet)

**NETANYAHU TELLS CABINET TRUMP IS LIKELY TO EXIT IRAN DEAL BY MAY:** PM Benjamin Netanyahu has told members of his cabinet that USA President Donald Trump will likely walk away from the Iran nuclear deal this May 2018. Netanyahu made the remarks during the cabinet meeting when he relayed the details of his meeting with Trump in Washington a week earlier. According to the report, Netanyahu said his conversation with Trump about the 2015 nuclear deal was attended by Vice President Mike Pence, then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Defense Secretary James Mattis, National Security Advisor H. R. McMaster, and White House Chief of Staff John Kelly. "I believe Trump is very close to canceling the nuclear agreement," Netanyahu told his ministers. "The president spoke in the presence of his staff and senior government officials when he told me that if there is no significant change, he'll pull out of the Iran nuclear deal." (Times of Israel)

**USA DEMANDS ASSAD, RUSSIA, IRAN BE HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR SYRIAN ATROCITIES:** The USA is demanding the world hold Syria's government, Russia and Iran

responsible for "some of the worst atrocities known to man," USA national security adviser H.R. McMaster said last week at an event at the USA Holocaust Museum in Washington marking the 7th anniversary of the Syrian conflict. "The Assad regime has killed indiscriminately, tortured, starved, raped and used chemical weapons on its own people. It has attacked hospitals and schools, and countless Syrians have been arrested, abducted or simply disappeared. Assad should not have impunity from his crimes and neither should his sponsors."

McMaster continued that "Across the greater Middle East, Iran is proliferating dangerous weapons, fueling sectarian violence, and supporting terrorist proxies and militias, such as Hezbollah. This regime proudly chants 'Death to America' and 'Death to Israel.' It further offends the conscience of every human being by denying the Holocaust. Since 2012, Iran has provided over \$16 billion to the Assad regime and to other proxies in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Iran's goal is to secure a permanent military foothold in Syria, which would threaten Israel, undermine USA interests, and strengthen the terrorist and proxy forces that Iran uses to weaken Arab states and foment violence. We cannot let this happen. All responsible nations must take action to counter Iran's destabilizing activities in Syria and across the region." (VOA/White House)

**TERROR THREAT: MORE THAN 1,000 DEDICATED ISIS JIHADISTS ARE WAITING TO RETURN TO EUROPE:** More than 1,000 dedicated ISIS jihadists are "waiting to return to Europe in a radicalized state". Rob Wainwright, executive director of Europol, said of the up to 6,000 EU nationals thought to have gone to join the terrorist group a third are still unaccounted for. The head of the EU's law enforcement agency says "one of the big intelligence questions right now" is where they are now. Wainwright said security chiefs estimate around a third of those who traveled may have died in fighting, while a similar proportion have already returned to their home countries. He said that leaves a large number who are unaccounted for. Discussing possible theories he said: "Have they relocated to different areas? "Have they come back without our noticing? Maybe more have died than we thought." He added: "Then there's the final scenario which might be the most convincing, which is that maybe most of them are still there and committed to this cause of martyrdom." The former Mi5 analyst added: "We are concerned about it because it's a large number, it could still be over 1,000. They are perhaps capable of coming back and if they do come back they will do so in an even more radicalized state than when they went out, given their exposure to the conflict. It's one of those that is a top priority amongst our community." (The Sun)

**CRYPTO – JEWS RETURN TO ROOTS AFTER 500 YEARS:** Crypto-Judaism is secret adherence to Judaism while publicly professing to be of another faith; practitioners are referred to as "crypto-Jews". Today, individuals and communities in Spain and Portugal, and the places where Jews fled from there, have been discovering evidence of their Jewish ancestry and started openly practicing the faith that their ancestors were barred from keeping for centuries. Jews who converted in Spain in the 15th century were officially known as *Cristianos Nuevos* (New Christians), but were commonly called *conversos*. Spain and Portugal passed legislation restricting their rights in the mother countries and colonies; only Christians were allowed to go to the New World. The "Belmonte Jews" of Portugal dating from the 12th century maintained strong secret traditions for centuries. An entire community survived in secrecy by maintaining a tradition of endogamous marriage and hiding all external signs of

their faith. They and their practices were rediscovered only in the 20th century. Some say they are retracing their Jewish roots from the days of the Spanish Inquisition; others have adopted a new way of life, to Judaism. "Dozens of families that once belonged to a church, became Jews, unusual in one of the most Catholic of nations." (I24)

**ISRAEL'S GOVERNMENT AVOIDS SNAP ELECTIONS:** A deal brokered by PM Binyamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman Tues. evening 13 March 2018 has resolved the ongoing coalition crisis over a haredi-backed draft law, and averted the collapse of the Likud-led government. On Tuesday night, the Ministerial Committee for Legislation voted to back a bill aimed at protecting army draft deferments for yeshiva students, while also permitting each coalition partner freedom to vote against the bill. According to the committee's decision parties will vote as a bloc, with their vote determined by the party chair. Earlier on Tuesday, a senior official close to Netanyahu told Army Radio a breakthrough had been reached, and he was optimistic early elections could be avoided. As part of the agreement Defense Minister Liberman will propose a second draft law during the Knesset's summer session, based upon the recommendations of ministry officials. The bill will be brought before the Ministerial Committee for Legislation and, if approved, will be merged with the haredi-backed bill that is currently under consideration. The coalition crisis began last month, when haredi lawmakers leveled an ultimatum, threatening to block the 2019 budget bill unless the government passes legislation protecting draft deferments for full-time yeshiva students. (Arutz-7)

**AVERAGE NUMBER OF BABIES IN ISRAEL HIGHEST AMONG OECD COUNTRIES:** 181,405 babies were born in Israel in 2016, a rise of 92 percent compared to 1980, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported last week, releasing data on fertility and reproduction in Israel. The data shows that, contrary to past beliefs, there were more males than females born; 93,364 of the newborns were males (51.5%) compared with 88,041 females (48.5%). The data also shows that the average number of children born to a woman was 3.11 - higher than the OECD total. Among Jewish women, the average was even higher and stood at 3.16 per woman. 139,400 (76.8%) of the births in 2016 were to Jewish women and 42,005 (23.2%) were to Arab women. (J.Post)

**ISRAEL'S ECONOMY AMONG THE STRONGEST IN THE WORLD:** In a report released last week, the OECD cited Israel's 15 consecutive years of "economic expansion" and low unemployment as factors for its growth and standing globally. It reported "The Israeli economy continues to register remarkable performance, with strong growth, low and falling unemployment and sound public finances leading to the 15th consecutive year of economic expansion." The OECD also reported that Israel's economic growth has exceeded 3% in recent years, significantly higher than most countries with strong economies. This year, economic growth is already reported at 3.3%. According to OECD Acting Chief Economist Alvaro Pereira, "The Israeli economy has grown faster and more consistently than nearly any other in the OECD for the past 15 years. Unemployment is at historically low levels, and the rise in people with jobs has had a significant impact on the continuing convergence of living standards in Israel with those in the most advanced economies." He added "Today's outlook offers Israel a unique opportunity to prepare for the future, by taking steps to raise productivity, improve social cohesion and guarantee high quality of life for all Israelis." (Kehila News)

**TOURISM TO ISRAEL HAS NEVER BEEN HIGHER:** The Central Bureau of Statistics claimed over 3.7 million tourists visited Israel in 2017, a 25% increase from 2016. Tourism in 2018 has increased expectations, with a reported \$817 million into Israel's tourism industry this year alone. Over 556,000 tourists were reported to have visited Israel in January and February of this year, a 25% increase from last year and 56% increase from 2016. (Kehila News)

**POLL: AMERICANS REMAIN STAUNCHLY IN ISRAEL'S CORNER:** Americans' stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is as strongly pro-Israel as at any time in Gallup's three-decade trend. In a poll taken Feb. 1-10, 64% say their sympathies in the dispute lie more with the Israelis. Just 19% of Americans sympathize more with the Palestinians. Currently, 74% of USA adults view Israel favorably and 23% view it unfavorably, whereas 21% view the Palestinian Authority favorably and 71% unfavorably. This results in a strong tendency for Americans to sympathize with Israel in the conflict and to call for greater diplomatic pressure on the Palestinians. (Gallup)

**ALBERT EINSTEIN'S VIOLIN SELLS FOR OVER \$ 500,000:** A violin once owned by Albert Einstein sold for \$516,500 at the New York-based Bonhams auction house earlier this month. The instrument, which reportedly was gifted to the scientist in 1933 by Oscar Steger, a member of the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra, went for over three times its estimated price. Steger made the violin himself and inscribed it with the words "Made for the World's Greatest Scientist Professor Albert Einstein By Oscar H. Steger, Feb 1933 / Harrisburg, PA." Later, while working at Princeton University, Einstein gave the instrument to the son of Syllas Hibbs, who worked as a janitor at the school. It had remained in Hibbs' family ever since. (J.Post)

**HUNDREDS OF USA MARINES, IDF TROOPS TRAIN IN SOUTHERN ISRAEL:** Hundreds of Israeli soldiers and USA Marines trained shoulder-to-shoulder last week in southern Israel as part of Juniper Cobra 2018, drilling on close urban combat and tunnel warfare. While the two-week-long joint Israeli/American military exercise drills on various scenarios adapted to Israel's operational reality such as missile threats in various sectors simultaneously, the Marines have not directly participated in the missile drills which comprised the majority of Juniper Cobra. Instead the 650 Marines trained with Israeli troops at the Tzehelim army base in several operational scenarios, including live fire and artillery drills, in order to enhance interoperability and cooperation between the two allies. Calling the training with the Israelis "incredible," Lt. Col. Marcus Mainz, Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, said this year's Juniper Cobra is the largest that the Marine Corps and navy have participated in for the last six years.

"Both of our militaries have lots of experience, but that experience is different – from different places – and what we are able to do here is take our experiences from the last conflicts that we've been in and to share them," he said, adding that this "allows us to increase the potency of both military forces." Mainz, who spent several years fighting in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom said that the Israeli expertise differs from that of the Americans, especially in terms of tunnel warfare, which they haven't encountered since the 1970s in Vietnam. "Everyone has their expertise, so when we are here fighting in an urban environment, the IDF is as good as it gets inside this kind of environment, and we learn a lot from them about how to be effective," Mainz said. (J.Post)

**ISRAEL PREPARING FOR WAR ON SIX FRONTS:** Last week at the graduation ceremony for new Israeli naval officers, IDF Deputy Chief of Staff Gen. Aviv Kochavi said that the Jewish state was preparing for war on no fewer than six fronts. Kochavi did not list those fronts, except to say that Iran is among them. The others can be guessed at: Egyptian Sinai, where ISIS holds sway; Hamas-ruled Gaza; Lebanon; Syria; and the cyber realm. Of course, many of those other threats are being encouraged and even financed by Iran. Last week, Israel launched massive war drills together with 2,500 visiting American soldiers. As part of those drills, air raid sirens sounded throughout the country on 13 March 2018, unfortunately frightening those who were unaware it was just an exercise. (Israel Today)

**ISRAELI RESEARCHERS DISCOVER NEW CASH CROP:** Researchers in Israel said they have succeeded in cultivating commercially desert truffles whose market price reaches \$120 per pound — slightly less than the cost of silver and four times that of uranium. The researchers from the Ramat Hanegev Desert Agriculture Center in Israel's south made a breakthrough in stimulating a symbiosis between the fungus *Terfezia leonis*, which occurs rarely and unpredictably in nature, and the common desert shrub *Helianthemum sessiliflorum*. It marks the first time that the truffle, a highly sought-after delicacy across the Middle East and beyond, has been cultivated, according to Ramat Hanegev. Both the fungus and its host shrub require little water and no fertilizer, making the cultivation of *Terfezia leonis* potentially Israel's most cost-effective agricultural crop. Commercial cultivation by Israeli farmers may begin as early as next year. (Arutz-7)

**HAMAS TRIES TO ASSASSINATE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY LEADERSHIP:** Palestinian Authority PM Rami Hamdallah on Tues. 13 March 2018 survived what appeared to be an assassination attempt while entering the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. Hamdallah was traveling to Gaza for the inauguration of a new wastewater treatment facility. As his convoy passed into the Gaza Strip, a large roadside bomb was detonated, wounding several members of the Palestinian leader's entourage. Hamdallah himself was unharmed. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party, to which Hamdallah also belongs, called the incident a "terrorist attack" and blamed it on Hamas. Hamas violently seized control of Gaza in 2007 after Abbas refused to honor the outcome of Palestinian legislative elections by appointing one of its leaders as prime minister of the Palestinian Authority. Hamas had won a clear parliamentary majority in the election. (Israel Today)

**ISLAMIC JIHAD TERRORIST ACCIDENTALLY BLOWS HIMSELF UP IN GAZA:** A member of Saraya al-Quds, Islamic Jihad's armed wing, died in an "accidental explosion" in the northern Gaza Strip, said Ashraf al-Qidra, a spokesman for the ruling Hamas terrorist group on 10 March 2018. Qidra identified the deceased member of Saraya al-Quds as 27-year-old Ibrahim Frahat. Saraya al-Quds said that Frahat died "while preparing for battle," making no mention of an "accidental explosion." Maj.-Gen. Yoav Mordechai, the Defense Ministry official responsible for liaising with Palestinians, said that Frahat died while "manufacturing weapons and ammunitions for Islamic Jihad in a house in the Sheikh Zayed neighborhood in Beit Lahiya." "It is no surprise that a person who plays with fire ultimately harms himself," Mordechai said in a Facebook post. Several members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad's armed wings have died in various "accidents" since the 2014 Gaza War, according

to Qidra. Islamic Jihad is said to have thousands of members in its armed wing's ranks, who wield many weapons including rockets, mortars and guns. (J.Post)

**'RUSSIA NOT LIVING UP TO CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT:'** USA Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley criticized Russia for failing to abide by a UN ceasefire in Syria on 12 March, 2018. "Sixteen days ago, we came to an agreement. Russia cast its vote in favor of the agreement. And with that vote, Russia promised its support for a 30-day ceasefire, as did the rest of the members of the Security Council," Ambassador Haley said at a UN Security Council briefing. "Today, we know that the Russians did not keep their commitment. Today, we see their actions don't match those commitments, as bombs continue dropping on the children of eastern Ghouta. Today, we must ask whether Russia can no longer influence the Assad regime to stop the horrific destruction of hospitals, medical clinics, and ambulances and to stop dropping chemical weapons on villages. During the negotiations, the United States put all parties on notice that we needed to act if the ceasefire was not honored, and members of the Security Council agreed. And now that day has come. The ceasefire has failed. The situation of the civilians in eastern Ghouta is dire. And the United States is acting. We have drafted a new ceasefire resolution that provides no room for evasion. Haley warned that if the UN Security Council fails to act on Syria, Washington "remains prepared to act if we must," just as it did last year when it fired missiles at a Syrian government air base over a deadly chemical weapons attack. "It is not the path we prefer, but it is a path we have demonstrated we will take, and we are prepared to take again," Haley told the Security Council. (Arutz-7/J.Post)

**SYRIA WAR HAS KILLED MORE THAN 350,000 IN 7 YEARS, MONITOR SAYS:** Seven years of conflict in Syria have left more than 350,000 people dead, according to an updated overall death toll released on 12 March 2018 by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The Britain-based monitoring group, which relies on an extensive network of sources on the ground across Syria, said 353,935 people have been killed since 15 March 2011. The conflict, which is entering its eighth year on is taking a devastating toll on civilians, including in the ongoing regime assault on the rebel enclave of Eastern Ghouta, near Damascus where over 1,000 have been reported killed in the last three weeks alone. According to the head of Observatory, 106,390 civilians have been killed in seven years. (Times of Israel)

**ANTI-SEMITIC VANDALISM IN HOLLAND RISES 40% TO HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE 2007:** The number of incidents involving anti-Semitic vandalism recorded in the Netherlands last year increased by 40%, to a 10-year high of 28 cases. The increase in vandalism was part of a small overall rise in anti-Semitic incidents in 2017 over 2016, the Center for Information and Documentation on Israel wrote in its annual incidents report, which the group published on 10 March 2018. CIDI recorded 113 incidents in 2017 compared to 109 in 2016. Four incidents recorded by CIDI in 2017 involved physical violence against people. The data was published amid unprecedented developments in public debate on anti-Semitism in the Netherlands. This month, almost all of the political parties contending in the municipal elections in Amsterdam signed a document vowing tougher action against anti-Semitism. The move followed a Palestinian man's smashing the windows in Dec. 2018 of a kosher restaurant in Amsterdam. The Forum for Democracy party produced for the first time in the history of Dutch politics

an ad campaign focused exclusively on anti-Semitism ahead of the 21 March 2018 municipal elections. (J.Post)

**MUSLIM AND RIGHT-WING ANTI-SEMITISM ON THE GERMAN INTERNET:** The Office for the Security of the German Federal State of Hessen has published a report on anti-Semitism on the German internet, authored by Ann-Christin Wegener. The study focuses on the manifestations and ideological background of anti-Semitic agitation on social networks in Germany. Wegener wrote that the German authorities usually claim that 90% of anti-Semitic incidents are caused by the extreme right. She suggests that this results from the way the police report anti-Semitic incidents. As long as nothing is known about the motivation or the perpetrators, these incidents are labeled as right wing politically motivated. Hate crimes committed in the Arabic or Turkish languages lead to less complaints than those in German. One has to also take into account the fact that many anti-Semitic incidents are not reported or do not result in complaints. It is estimated that less than a quarter of Jewish victims of anti-Semitism bring complaints to the police or to the Jewish community.

The author remarks that Muslim anti-Semitism in Europe has been greatly under-researched. Many authorities have tried to keep statistical data and other information about anti-Semitic attitudes among Muslim immigrants and their descendants out of the limelight. This has occurred despite the fact that all resolved murders of Jews in Western Europe in the past decade have been committed by Muslims. The same is largely true for other extreme anti-Semitic incidents. The author investigates anti-Semitism on the German internet. She has selected several prime sources. These included the Facebook accounts of the largest German daily, Bild and of Focus, one of the three leading weeklies. She also researched Youtube channels with a greater audience than Twitter. Wegener came to the conclusion that as far as Israel and the conflict in the Middle East are concerned, the Spiegel TV website was the main outlet of anti-Semitic content. She found that Israel and the Middle East conflict were incomparably more prevalent on these internet sites than the subject of German Jews. (Arutz-7)

**WILL SECULAR ORGANIZATION DICTATE LONDON JEWISH SCHOOL'S CURRICULUM?** The organization Humanists UK, a staunchly atheistic organization which opposes the operation of religious schools in Great Britain, has called on local authorities to penalize the Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls' School in London for what the organization termed 'censorship' of subjects like homosexuality and abortion. Yesodey Hatorah, founded in 1942, is a haredi private school which receives some funding from the government while retaining a large degree of autonomy – what is termed in Britain a voluntary aided school. Humanists UK has blasted the school for censoring sections regarding modern Western society, including legalized abortion. Britain's Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) is investigating Humanists UK's charges against Yesodey Hatorah. In response, the school has accused Humanists UK of targeting the school because of an "anti-Jewish agenda". "We are concerned that OFSTED continuously jumps to the tune of small pressure groups like the humanists and the National Secular Society that have a very clear anti-Jewish agenda," a school spokesperson said. "Their current noisy campaigns against circumcision, shechita [ritual slaughter], Jewish schools, housing and respecting the dead make it clear that the humanists' idea of a modern Britain is one that is free of observant Jews." (Arutz-7)



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