

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update June 14, 2018*** ***(1<sup>st</sup> of Tamuz, 5778)***



**‘THE BAND’S VISIT’ WINS 10 TONY AWARDS, INCLUDING FOR BEST MUSICAL:** “The Band’s Visit,” a jewel-box musical based on an Israeli film about an Egyptian band stranded in a hardscrabble Negev town, won the 2018 Tony Award for best musical. “The Band’s Visit” dominated its categories during the 72nd annual Tony Awards ceremony at Radio City Music Hall Sunday night, 10 June 2018. Ari’el Stachel, the California-born son of an Israeli-Yemeni father and an Ashkenazi mother from New York, won the award for best featured actor in a musical for his performance as a romantic Egyptian trumpeter in the musical. Tony Shalhoub (“Monk”) won for Best Actor in a Musical and Katrina Lenk for best actress in a musical for their roles as, respectively, the leader of the band and the Israeli cafe owner who takes him in. “The Band’s Visit” also won awards for best book (by Itamar Moses), best direction of a musical, best original score (by David Yazbek), best lighting design, best orchestration and best sound design. Stachel, 26, is making his Broadway debut in “The Band’s Visit.” The play is based on the 2007 award-winning Israeli movie directed by Eran Kolirin. In her acceptance speech, Lenk paid tribute to the late Israeli actress Ronit Elkabetz, who originated her role in the film. In his acceptance speech, Stachel acknowledged his parents, who were in the audience, saying the musical led him to again embrace an identity he had long avoided. (JTA)

**NETANYAHU: ISRAEL MOVING UP IN THE WORLD:** PM Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday afternoon 11 June 2018 that Israel is moving up the global economic ladder. "We received data from the International Monetary Fund yesterday," Netanyahu said. "According to these figures, our per-capita GDP has surpassed Japan's and is higher than the average country in the European Union. We are very close to Britain and France. Unemployment is at an all-time low using the system of measurement we have used for the last 40 years. And the average income is at an all-time high. A very big change has taken place here. Our members in the opposition say: Yes, but the rich get richer and the poor get poorer," Netanyahu said. "That's also not true because we also have the data of inequality in the Israeli economy, which show that inequality is steadily declining in a systematic and dramatic manner. This is the result of the long-standing economic policy I have been leading in recent years with our colleague Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon. I think that we will continue to do so for many years for the benefit of the State of Israel, for the benefit of the citizens of Israel, for the benefit of the Israeli economy," he added. (INN)

**NETANYAHU: THERE'S A PRICE FOR BURNING FIELDS:** Israeli PM Netanyahu on 11 June praised the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee for approving for Knesset vote his suggestion to deduct the cost of damage from Gaza-sparked fires from the payments transferred to the Palestinian Authority. Last week, Netanyahu instructed Meir Shabbat, chief of Israel's National Security Council, to deduct money from the taxes collected by Israel on behalf of the Palestinian Authority. Each month, Israel collects income tax from PA residents working in pre-1967 Israel. The funds are then transferred to the PA. At least five million shekels in damage have been caused by Gazan rioter-terrorists sending kites attached to firebombs into Israeli territory. Last week, Gazan terrorists burned 75 acres in a single day.

On Sat. 9 June 2018 alone, the terror kites sparked 17 fires. "Justice needs to be done," Netanyahu said. "Anyone who burns fields should know that there is a price." The Committee approved the suggestion as part of the bill to deduct payments made to terrorists and their families from funds transferred by Israel to the Palestinian Authority. According to the bill, the Israeli government will not have an option to cancel or freeze the deductions. MK Elazar Stern said, "This law corrects a historical injustice. This law will reduce terror. It is a law which is in line with the most basic moral values humankind holds. It's not clear why it wasn't legislated until today." Committee Chairman MK Avi Dichter said, "Today we have made history. The State of Israel will not be a pipeline to transfer terror funds to terrorists. Our mission and our job is to ensure the security of Israel's citizens, and to take whatever steps necessary to reduce the terror against us, including by deducting funding. The absurdity is over." (Arutz-7)

**GREENBLATT: AFTER FOUR DECADES OF EREKAT, PALESTINIANS DESERVE BETTER:** It is time for the Palestinians to be served by leaders other than Saeb Erekat, who for the last 40 years has voiced the same talking points and failed to deliver "anything close" to what the Palestinians want, USA Middle East negotiator Jason Greenblatt wrote on 10 June 2018. The Palestinians deserve so much more than Saeb Erekat. "Dr. Erekat – we have heard your voice for decades and it has not achieved anything close to Palestinian aspirations or anything close to a comprehensive peace agreement," he wrote. "Other Palestinian perspectives might help us finally achieve a comprehensive peace agreement where Palestinian and Israeli lives can be better. The time for leadership and responsibility is now. The time for meeting after meeting of government officials repeating the same talking points is over. The Palestinian people want real action, and they need honest, realistic and decisive solutions." Greenblatt wrote that notions that Israel is going away, or that Jerusalem is not the country's capital, or that the United States is not a critical interlocutor for Mideast peace are all simply mirages. "The reality is that there is an opportunity for peace at hand, and that President Trump and his administration are working to help facilitate a peace that will open up the future of the Palestinian people, if they and their leadership have the courage to seize it," he said. (J.Post)

**ISRAEL: ONLY REMOVAL OF HAMAS CAN SOLVE GAZA'S PROBLEMS:** PM Netanyahu on Sunday 10 June 2018 convened his cabinet to discuss proposals for easing the dire humanitarian conditions effecting many residents of the Gaza Strip. The measures discussed centered primarily on providing Gaza with more electricity, fresh water and food. But by the end of the day, the cabinet couldn't come to any agreement on the proposals, and it Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman's words of warning that echoed loudest. "Whoever thinks improving the civilian and economic situation in Gaza will halt the terror kites and the violence, is simply wrong," Liberman told Army Radio ahead of the meeting. "Enough with all sorts of illusions and delusions that improving the economy will end terror," he continued. "The opposite is true - they'll understand that with use of force and violence they can achieve political goals. To improve the reality in the Gaza Strip, the Hamas regime must be toppled. Anyone who wants more than four hours of electricity a day must topple the Hamas regime." Typically the situation is reported in the mainstream international media as Israel imposing unfair sanctions that amount to collective punishment on the people of Gaza. What's often left out of those reports is the fact that Egypt is also blockading Gaza, and for the same reasons as Israel - to prevent the coastal enclave's Hamas overlords from importing weapons and bolstering its military infrastructure. Similarly, the Palestinian Authority itself, has for years cut salaries to government workers in

Hamas-ruled Gaza and has refused to pay for most of the electricity that Israel supplies to the territory. (Israel Today)

**‘KOTEL BELONGS TO EVERYONE, EVEN CHRISTIANS’:** Labor Party Chairman Avi Gabbay spoke Monday evening 11 June 2018 at a conference of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and addressed the controversies surrounding the Western Wall. "There are haredi Jews, Orthodox, Reform, Conservatives, and also Christians here. We are all brothers, and the Kotel belongs to all of us equally," Gabbay said. "If I am chosen as Prime Minister, I will implement the Western Wall Deal as previously agreed upon." Gabbay also addressed the security situation on the Gaza border. "We know how the situation looks in the foreign media. It is not a situation that can be easily explained, but I support an aggressive response to every terrorist act, in order to prevent the next round of warfare in Israel." He added that "Palestinian incitement must stop immediately, and I believe that peace will ensure Israel's security over time and that Israel will not only be part of the Middle East, it will lead the Middle East with vision, courage and leadership." (Arutz-7)

**KURTZ VOWS VIENNA TO SUPPORT SECURITY NEEDS IN ‘TOUGH NEIGHBORHOOD’:** Israel's neighbors are not like Austria's – Liechtenstein and Switzerland – and for that reason Vienna will try to raise the awareness of Israel's security concerns inside the European Union, visiting Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said 11 June 2018 after meeting with PM Netanyahu. When Netanyahu joked that Austria and Israel should trade neighbors for a couple of weeks, Kurz – whose country will assume the rotating presidency of the EU next month – replied, "I'm not sure about that." Saying that Austria will support Israel's security needs, and acknowledging that it lives in a "tough neighborhood," Kurz said, "We will try to increase the awareness in Europe about the special situation, and the special security needs, of Israel." Kurz, who said that Israeli-Austrian ties today are excellent, and that the tourism and trade levels between the two countries have never been better, remarked that Austria "has a special responsibility to Israel and the Jewish people." Kurz, who is in a coalition government with the far-right Freedom Party which has a history of anti-Semitism and with whom Israel refuses to engage, said, "I can assure you that Austria will fight with determination against anti-Semitism in Europe," both the old and new forms of anti-Semitism. (J.Post)

**USA TO PROVIDE ISRAEL WITH MODERN WEAPONS TO ‘FACE POSSIBLE WAR WITH IRAN’:** Security sources in Tel Aviv revealed the approval by President Trump of a broad plan to strengthen the capabilities of the Israeli army to meet the "threat of a possible war with Iran." In addition, Trump reversed a decision by the previous administration and agreed to supply the Israel Air Force with additional Boeing KC 46 refueling aircraft, which would enable the Israeli army to operate longer and more flexibly against targets far from Israel. (Asharq Al-Awsat-UK)

**ISRAELI TEAM USING SPECIAL ENZYME TO TREAT VOLCANO BURNS:** An Israeli medical team dispatched to Guatemala last week to treat victims of a devastating volcano there were using a special enzyme developed at the Soroka-University Medical Center in Beersheba to treat the wounded. The enzyme was brought to the country by the team of specialists and facilitates the speedy recovery of burns and reduces the need for surgery. The team, made of 10 experts in treating burns and respiratory diseases, arrived in the Central American country Thurs. evening 8 June 2018 and began seeing patients on Friday. Guatemala's Fuego volcano erupted on 3 June killing and wounding dozens. Israel, at PM Benjamin Netanyahu's directions, immediately sent aid and dispatched the medical team. Guatemala President Jimmy Morales was in the country last month to inaugurate the opening of his country's embassy in Jerusalem. (J.Post)

**"MY UNPRECEDENTED OFFER TO IRAN:"** Israel's PM Netanyahu released a video Sunday 10 June 2018 in which he made an "unprecedented offer" to the Iranian people to help solve Iran's water crisis by creating a Farsi website with detailed plans on Israeli water conservation technologies and strategies. "The Iranian people are victims of a cruel and tyrannical regime that denies them vital water," Netanyahu stated. "Israel stands with the people of Iran, and that is why I want to help save countless Iranian lives." He noted

that "Iran's meteorological organization says that nearly 96% of Iran suffers from some level of drought" and that Iran's Environmental Minister had warned that "50 million Iranians could be forced out of their homes due to environmental damage. Millions of Iranian children are suffering due to mismanagement and incompetence, and the theft of vital resources by the Iranian regime." Netanyahu said that Israel's experience in dealing with its own water challenges puts the Jewish State in a good position to help Iran overcome its water crisis. "Israel has the know-how to prevent environmental catastrophe in Iran," he said. "I want to share this information with the people of Iran. Sadly, Iran bans Israelis from visiting, so we'll have to get creative," the Prime Minister said. He announced that the Israeli government would launch "a Farsi website with detailed plans on how Iranians can recycle their waste water." "We will show how Iranian farmers can save their crops and feed their families." (Arutz-7)

**‘TERROR KITES’ SPARK 11 FIRES IN SOUTHERN ISRAEL’:** Eleven separate fires have been sparked in the south by incendiary devices sent across the border by terrorists using kites in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of 1 June 2018. Over the last few weeks, terrorists in Gaza have attempted to set fires in Israeli territory through the flying of kites and balloons attached to incendiary devices such as firebombs. Over 4,000 dunams (approximately 1,000 acres) of Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) owned forests have been burned since the arson attacks began. Danny Ben David, director of the western Negev region at the JNF, explained to the amount of forest burned by the incendiary kites and balloons in recent weeks has exceeded the total which was burned during Operation Protective Edge in 2014, when Hamas terrorists launched over 4,500 rockets and mortars at Israel. "During Protective Edge, 3,500 dunams of forest were burned and now with the kite terror we have crossed this huge number. It's simply a scandal. I've already passed the stage of grief, now I'm just terribly angry," Ben David said. Ben-David has spent the last few months putting out the fires in the Gaza vicinity. He and others run from fire to fire and try to minimize the irreversible damage. JNF personnel have also found animal carcasses in the area: burnt turtles, bird nests, as well as destroyed eucalyptus and pine trees. The damage to entire species remains unknown. Ben-David noted that there is no end to the kite terrorism in sight. "We run from fire to fire. We do not have time to think about anything else. On 8 Friday 2018 we were here until 8 pm, and it was the same yesterday. It was crazy." Seventeen fires were caused by kite terrorism on Saturday. 10 June, 2018. (Arutz-7)

**THE HIDDEN HAND OR IRAN IN GAZA:** Former Deputy National Security Adviser for Foreign Policy and International Affairs at the Prime Minister's Office, Dr. Eran Lerman, thinks that the mortar attacks and cross-border infiltrations from Gaza should serve as a reminder that Hamas may be in charge of the Gaza Strip, but it has a junior partner that is dangerous and capricious, and that it refuses to disarm: Islamic Jihad. "There is a reason for this. While Hamas is, generally speaking, in contact with Iran, it still operates independently. But Islamic Jihad works on Iran's behalf and is largely an Iranian proxy", he said. Dr. Lerman add that "Islamic Jihad is, for all intents and purposes, an extension of the Iranian regime and serves its interests. Iran has its own agenda. It finds it easier to exert pressure on Israel and threaten it without making Hezbollah enter the fray through another war with Israel. It also prefers to avoid another confrontation with Israel on the Syrian front, which cost it dearly several weeks ago". (INN)

**“TERROR KITES” CAUSING UNPRECEDENTED DAMAGE IN SOUTHERN ISRAEL:** Hundreds of incendiary kites have caused thousands of acres of damage, as the IDF seeks to develop new technologies to thwart phenomenon. For twelve weeks, Hamas has spearheaded so-called “March of Return” protests along the Israel-Gaza Strip border which have invariably descended into deadly clashes. Thus far, more than 100 Palestinians—the majority of them belonging to terrorist groups—have been killed by Israeli forces, whose rules-of-engagement allow for the use of live-fire to disperse demonstrators posing an immediate threat through the use of explosive devices or by attempting to breach the security fence. Amid the chaos, the Palestinians have developed a new tactic; namely, flying incendiary kites into Israeli territory. In the process, the children's toy has effectively been transformed into a primitive weapon causing widespread devastation to Israeli fields, crops and nature reserves. The “terror kites” have started hundreds of wildfires within the Gaza

envelope, wreaking havoc on Israeli communities that depend primarily on agriculture and farming for their livelihoods. More than 350 of the airborne incendiary devices have been felled by drones during the last two weeks.

**MEET IDF'S NEW INCENDIARY KITE-ATTACKING DRONE:** With flaming kites from Gaza ravaging Israeli farmland, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems has provided what the IDF hopes will be an answer to the primitive weapon—the 3kg Firefly—also capable of creeping up on enemy positions and exploding. An Israeli arms company has developed a new drone to counter the threat posed by incendiary kites, hundreds of which have been flown over from Gaza to Israel's southern communities over recent weeks, causing numerous fires that have ravaged farmland and terrorized residents. The Z'vuv HaEsh (Firefly) drone, which has been developed by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, will be presented for the first time at the Eurosatory exhibition in Paris this week, where the latest land and airland defence and security gear goes on display. Its meager weight of just three kilograms does not come and the expense of its abilities to fly and operate in tough weather conditions, including rain and wind. The Firefly can also be armed with a warhead weighing up to 350g and can remain in the air for up to 15 minutes before crashing and exploding into an enemy outpost or anti-tank missiles depot. Alternatively, it can be flown through a window of an enemy building and detonated there. (Ynet)

**IN OPERATIONAL FIRST, IDF DESTROYS HAMAS UNDERWATER TERROR TUNNEL:** The IDF has neutralized, for the first time, a naval terror tunnel belonging to the Hamas terrorist organization, the IDF Spokesperson's unit announced Sunday 10 June 2018. The tunnel, which was operational but did not actually extend into Israeli waters, would have enabled terrorists who would enter from a Hamas military post in the northern Gaza Strip to exit into the sea unnoticed, making it possible to carry out terrorist acts against the State of Israel from the sea. The route of the tunnel, which reached a depth of 2-3 meters and was 3 kilometers from the border with Israel, was identified by the IDF as part of a campaign against Hamas' naval force in the past year. The tunnel was destroyed on 3 June 2018 by an air strike” According to a senior naval officer, the Navy knew about the tunnel for several months and it was decided it was the “right time” to destroy it. “The bottom line is that it was a tunnel that would allow for the departure of Hamas naval commando forces,” the officer said, adding that Hamas invested a great deal of money in it and trained forces in the tunnel. “We estimate that there may be more such naval tunnels,” the senior officer said. (J.Post)

**IDF RESERVISTS CALLED UP FOR SURPRISE DRILL ON NORTHERN BORDER:** Israeli army reservists were surprised on Sunday 10 June 2018 to receive orders to immediately leave their jobs and families and report to the northern border with Syria. The massive ground forces exercise follows a large Air Force drill conducted over the past week. Both are seen as a clear message to Iranian forces just over the border in Syria to not further test the Jewish state. Army officials, however, denied that Sunday's surprise call-up was directly tied to escalating tensions with Iran. The IDF explained that the drill had been planned for some time, but that it was kept secret, even from the participating units, to test their response to an emergency call-up in the event of an actual outbreak of war. (Israel Today)

**ISRAELI OFFICIAL: EUROPEAN LEADERS AGREE IRAN TROOPS MUST BE REMOVED FROM SYRIA:** A senior diplomatic official on 6 June 2018 said the leaders of France, Britain, and Germany have reached a “general agreement” regarding the removal of Iranian forces from Syria. Speaking as PM Benjamin Netanyahu was wrapping up a diplomatic trip to Berlin, Paris, and London, the official said there was “widespread agreement” among the three leaders — German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron, and British PM Theresa May — that Iranian troops must be entirely removed from the war-torn country. Before setting out on his trip to visit European leaders, Netanyahu indicated that Iran would be the first and only subject on his agenda. Israel fears that as the Syrian civil war winds down, Iran, whose forces have backed President Bashar Assad, will entrench militarily in the neighboring country and turn its focus on Israel. As the tour approached a close, the Israeli official said there had been “significant

progress,” on the issues. PM Netanyahu warned last week that Israel would strike against any attempt by Iran to "establish itself militarily" in Syria, "not just opposite the Golan Heights, but any place in Syria." (Times of Israel)

**SLOWLY, STEADILY PM BENJAMIN NETANYAHU IS WINNING ALLIES IN HIS STRUGGLE WITH TEHRAN:** For Israeli PM Netanyahu, Washington's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal was the culmination of years of lobbying. His efforts are also being rewarded in Russia, which is now supporting Israel's demands that Iranian forces be kept away from Israel's border on the Golan Heights and has remained silent as Israel launched air-strikes on Iranian bases deep within Syria. "With Trump's pulling out of the Iran deal and Putin supporting us now in Syria, 80% of the work has been done," said a senior cabinet minister in Jerusalem this week. "But every bit of pressure counts. We have to bring the Iranians to the point where they give up on their plans both in Syria and their nuclear program." Israeli officials believe that any European attempt to defy American sanctions on Iran by financing future business deals with the Islamic Republic will fail. In recent weeks, a growing list of European companies have announced they are winding up their dealings with Iran. (The Times-UK)

**IRAN: ADVANCED CENTRIFUGES FACILITY WILL BE READY IN A MONTH:** A facility in Iran's Natanz nuclear plant to build advanced centrifuges will be completed in a month, Iran's nuclear chief announced on 6 June 2018. "After the Supreme Leader's order we prepared this center within 48 hours. We hope the facility to be completed in a month," said Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization. The announcement came a day after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said he had ordered preparations to increase uranium enrichment capacity if the nuclear agreement with world powers collapsed. Iran's announcement follows USA President Donald Trump's withdrawal last month from the 2015 nuclear deal. Meanwhile, Tehran has demanded that Europe come up with an economic package to offset the effects of the USA withdrawal. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian warned Iran that its plan to increase its uranium enrichment capacity took it close to a "red line". Le Drian warned Tehran that Europe would not be able to stand idly by if Iran takes its nuclear program "to the next level". German foreign ministry sources also described the plan as "not helpful at this time" saying it did not "contribute to the building of trust, in which Iran should also have an interest." (Reuters/Arutz -7)

**NETANYAHU: "IRAN'S URANIUM ENRICHMENT IS PART OF A PLOT TO ANNIHILATE ISRAEL":** Iran is looking to expand its uranium enrichment program as part of a larger plan to obtain nuclear weapons and destroy Israel, PM Netanyahu said this week, adding that Israel would prevent Tehran from achieving a nuclear arms capacity. Netanyahu referenced recent threats by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei against Israel. The Iranian leader also described the Jewish state as a "tumor". Netanyahu linked Iran's recent threats with Tehran's plans to expand its enrichment of uranium. "Two days ago, the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, announced his intentions to annihilate Israel," said Netanyahu. "Yesterday, he explained how he would do so, with the unrestricted enrichment of uranium in order to build an arsenal of nuclear weapons. We're not surprised," continued Netanyahu, vowing that Israel "won't let Iran get nuclear weapons." Netanyahu said he would raise the need to continue the pressure on Iran against its nuclear program during his meetings this week with European leaders. It is possible that we won't be in full agreement in this matter right now, but I think that in the long-term, an understanding can be worked out." (Arutz-7)

**USA WARNS IRAN AFTER IT MOVES TO STEP UP URANIUM-ENRICHMENT CAPACITY:** The United States warned that Washington will not allow Iran to develop nuclear weapons after Iran announced plans to increase its uranium-enrichment capacity. USA Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued the warning on Twitter late on 6 June 2018, saying, "We're watching reports that Iran plans to increase its enrichment capacity. We won't allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon." Pompeo added that "Iran is aware of our resolve." Pompeo's statement came after Iran said a facility to build advanced centrifuges will be completed in

a month at its Natanz nuclear center as part of its plans to increase its uranium-enrichment capacity, if a landmark 2015 nuclear deal with world power collapses. (Radio Free Europe)

**ARGENTINA CANCELS ISRAEL SOCCER MATCH FOLLOWING PALESTINIAN PRESSURE:** In the face of intense Palestinian pressure, Argentina has decided to pull out of a soccer match against Israel, a senior source at Argentina's Football Federation said this week. The game was highly anticipated in Israel, with tickets selling out in 20 minutes. Following the news, PM Netanyahu called Argentine President Mauricio Macri to urge him to intercede to forestall the cancellation. Macri told Netanyahu that he had no control over the team's decision. Argentina's Clarin newspaper printed rebukes of the national team's decision to cancel its friendly game with Israel. Miguel Winazki wrote that the team should also "not play in Russia, because the Kremlin was behind the decision to launch military incursions in Syria." It should also "not play against Spain, for its colonial enclaves" on the Moroccan coast. Daniel Lagares noted that the team had "been warned that Jerusalem is dangerous." Yet Argentina's superstar striker, Lionel Messi, lives in Barcelona, where only last year 13 people were murdered in a terror attack. Other Argentine team members play in England, "where just a year ago a bomb exploded on the London Bridge," and in Paris, where the Stade de France soccer stadium was targeted in 2015. In response to the game's cancellation, the Israel Football [Soccer] Association announced it will file a complaint to FIFA accusing its Palestinian counterpart of pressuring Argentine players into cancelling a friendly match set to have taken place in Israel. (Times of Israel)

**NETANYAHU RAISES IMPASSIONED DEFENSE OF GAZA BORDER TACTICS TO EUROPE:** Israel's PM Netanyahu mounted an impassioned defense of Israel's conduct against protesters on the Israel-Gaza border in recent weeks on Thur. 7 June 2018, arguing that no country in the world has developed any non-lethal alternative against protesters seeking fatalities. "We tried tear gas, all sorts of other devices, and none have worked against this type of tactic," Netanyahu told a meeting of the Policy Exchange think tank on the final morning of a three-day European tour. " Hamas' goal was to have as many casualties as possible, our goal was to minimize casualties and avoid fatalities," explained Netanyahu. "When I talk with European leaders, I always say 'What would you do?' The last thing we want is any violence, or casualties. No country in the world has offered an alternative; I spoke to every country you can imagine." Netanyahu condemned Hamas' "unconscionable" tactics at the border protests during its eight-week "March of Return" campaign, which saw around 100 Palestinians killed and hundreds more injured during violent clashes with the IDF. The Israeli leader said he would be "the first one to use" any non-lethal solution to the violent protests on the Gaza border, but emphasized that "any country would stop a direct assault on the lives of their civilians. We are doing everything we can to both minimize casualties, and at the same time protect Israeli lives," said Netanyahu. (J.Post)

**COINS DATING TO TIME OF EZRA UNEARTHED IN JERUSALEM:** Five coins dating to the time of Ezra have been discovered in Jerusalem in what one expert has called a rare find. The coins measure about seven millimeters across and date to the fourth century B.C. Three of the five coins are intact and legible. "Throughout the 150 years of archaeological digs all across the sites of ancient Jerusalem, only five of these coins were ever found," said Zachi Dvira of the Temple Mount Sifting Project. "We have now found three whole coins, along with two eroded ones, apparently from the same series, and assume we'll find more in the future." (Koenig)

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