

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update September 6, 2018 (26th of Elul, 5778)



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For September 2018

RECORD TRAFFIC IN AND OUT OF ISRAEL: Data from the Population and Immigration Authority indicate that over five million people – 5,324,713, to be exact – passed through the border control terminals in July and August 2018. This is a record number, compared to the past few years. About 59% of the travelers made use of the self-service option at the border control terminals.

ISRAEL TO DISTRIBUTE FOUR SPECIES TO BEN GURION AIRPORT: Israel is keeping plants used to celebrate Succot (the Festival of Tabernacles) from coming into the country. A task force charged with implementing the ban on three of the four species used to celebrate the holiday will begin working in the coming days at Ben Gurion Airport. The Agriculture Ministry said the ban on the lulav, a frond from a date palm tree, leaves from the myrtle tree, and willow branches is rooted in the need to prevent the spread of plant diseases and pests rather than any protectionist policy. All four plants are either cultivated in Israel or occur there naturally, and one of a handful where the lemon-like etrog, the fourth of the species, is grown commercially. All are used in rituals connected with Sukkot, which this year begins on the evening of 23 Sept. 2018. Those caught bringing in the proscribed plants will be subject to fines. But the ministry task force also has purchased thousands of sets of four species deemed kosher for Sukkot rites that will be distributed for free at the airport to those who wish to have one.

ISRAEL WELCOMES USA DEFUNDING OF UNRWA AS STEP FOR PEACE: Israel supports the American move to cut its funding to UNRWA as a positive step forward in the peace process, PM Benjamin Netanyahu's office stated on 2 Sep. 2018. It said UNRWA's determination of who is a Palestinian refugee is "one of the main problems perpetuating the conflict. It is worth giving the money to other parties that will make good use of it for the welfare of the population and not for the perpetuation of the refugees. Former Israeli ambassador to the USA Michael Oren said: "The USA's government's decision to end its aid to the Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA is crucial for any future peace agreement. UNRWA eternalizes the Israeli-Arab conflict by artificially inflating the number of refugees, teaching young Palestinians to deny Israel's right to exist; also demanding the right of return, while providing shelter to terrorists and concealing their weapons. UNRWA is in fact a roadblock on the path to peace."

ISRAELI FARMERS TRAVEL TO HAGUE, FILE WAR CRIMES COMPLAINT AGAINST HAMAS: A group of Israeli farmers traveled to The Hague on 3 September 2018 and filed a war crimes complaint with the International Criminal Court (“ICC”) against top Hamas officials for what they called fire kite terror during the Gaza border crisis. They called on the ICC prosecutors to investigate alleged war crimes committed by Hamas leaders Khaled Mashal, Saleh Arouri, and Zaher Jabarin. More specifically, they requested a probe of their alleged orders to use fire kites and other terror to breach Israel’s border and murder civilians as well as torching thousands of acres of agricultural fields. An ICC probe would likely find “blatant violation of the Rome Statute (Articles 8 (2) (c) (viii) and 28), which prohibits the murder of non-combatants, the destruction of civilian property for unlawful purposes, and the use of civilians as human shields.” Moreover, the complaint said that, “Hamas transported civilians to the border for the purpose of burning 10,000 tires and throwing gasoline bombs as well as openly issued propaganda videos advising civilians that the purpose of burning tires was to mask the movements of its terrorists, who had been directed to murder Israeli civilians.” The complaint also details several individual incidents in which armed Hamas combatants with explosives, breached or tried to breach the border and set fire to fields or sought to attack civilian villages. Israeli experts have argued that attempts to purposely target civilians, whether with rockets or other weapons are war crimes. Besides the fire kites, since May 2018 Hamas and other Gazans have fired 250 rockets or mortars into Israel targeting civilians.

CORBYN MUST ‘REPENT AND RECANT’ SAYS FORMER UK CHIEF RABBI SACKS: Former UK Chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks has called on Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn to “repent and recant” his comments about Zionists and for his and his party’s treatment of the Jewish community. The highly respected rabbi said the Jewish community in the UK sees the possibility of Corbyn becoming prime minister as an existential threat to Jewish life in the country, and that his attitude to terrorist groups and his past rhetoric could ignite “the flames of hatred.” Corbyn and the Labour Party have been caught up in a maelstrom of anti-Semitism accusations, following its refusal to adopt in full the internationally accepted definition of anti-Semitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, along with several revelations of comments and actions made by Corbyn himself. Sacks said Corbyn’s leadership of Labour and the possibility it could win the next general election has generated serious anxiety within the local Jewish community. “When people hear the kind of language coming out of Labour that’s been brought to the surface among Jeremy Corbyn’s earlier speeches, they cannot but feel an existential threat,” he said. “Anyone who befriends Hamas and Hezbollah, and anyone who uses the term ‘Zionist’ loosely without great care is in danger of engulfing Britain in the kind of flames of hatred that have reappeared throughout Europe and is massively irresponsible.

“Until he expresses clear remorse for what he has said and what his party has done to its Jewish sympathizers and MPs, he is as great a danger.” Meanwhile, on 3 Sep. 2018, former British PM Tony Blair said anti-Semitism in the Labour party is a “truly shameful episode”. He accused Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party of doing a “terrible thing” by alienating the Jewish community. He blamed Corbyn's “statements” for contributing to the problem and said there was “an element to his leadership” that was at odds with the party's anti-racist principles.

JAPANESE COMPANIES TO STOP IMPORTING OIL FROM IRAN: Japan's oil companies plan to stop importing oil from Iran following the imposition of USA sanctions. On 5 Nov. 2018 another wave of USA sanctions are expected to come into effect. These new sanctions will target the Iranian oil industry. According to reports, Japan has hoped to be exempt from these sanctions, but has not succeeded so far.

ALMOST HALF OF ISRAELI ADULTS OVERWEIGHT: Over half of Israeli adults over 20 are overweight according to data released this week by the Central Bureau of Statistics. The study found that 55 percent of men and 41% of women are overweight, and that 24% of women dieted regularly compared to 18% of men. A higher percentage of Arabs, 54%, are overweight compared to Jews (46%), and 60% of those over

the age of 45 are overweight compared with 37% among those aged 20-44. Over half of women, 58%, said they wanted to lose weight, while 46% of men said they wanted to lose weight.

ISRAELI SCHOOLS 'SIDELINE' THEORY OF EVOLUTION: The story that follows quotes an Israel Channel 10 television news report saying that Israel's Education Ministry "is quietly encouraging teachers to focus on other topics besides evolution in biology." It says beginning with kindergarten and continuing through elementary school, biology teachers don't mention Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, which purports that "all life evolved from common ancestors." And middle schoolers only hear it alluded to in "general discussions." According to the report, many religious fundamentalists believe evolution contradicts a literal reading of the Bible, which says that God created all life fully formed." In response to the story, the Education Ministry clarified that middle schoolers are required to study "the principles of adaptation to the environment," while high school students have the option of taking a class on the theory of evolution.

SITE OF YESHUA'S FIRST MIRACLE UNCOVERED BY EXPERTS: Mystery has surrounded the site of Yeshua's 'first miracle' for centuries, but an answer may finally be at hand. According to the Gospel of John, Yeshua changed water into wine during the Wedding at Cana. For hundreds of years, pilgrims have believed the site of the miracle to be Kafr Kanna, a town in northern Israel. But the true location has long been debated – and now archaeologists believe the Cana of biblical times may be a dusty hillside five miles further north. Excavations there have revealed a network of tunnels used for Christian worship. It's the former site of Khirbet Qana, a Jewish village between the years of 323 BC and AD 324, where archaeologists have discovered a number of compelling clues. Excavations there have revealed a network of tunnels marked with crosses and references to Kyrie Iesou, a Greek phrase meaning Lord Yeshua. There was also an altar and a shelf with the remains of a stone vessel, plus room for five more. Six stone jars like this held the wine in the biblical account of the miracle. Dr. Tom McCollough, who directs excavations at the site, said there were three other locations with a credible claim to being the Cana of scripture. 'But none has the ensemble of evidence that makes such a persuasive case for Khirbet Qana,' he said.

WARSAW JEWISH THEATER GETS \$41 MILLION FROM CITY FOR NEW HOME: On Thurs. 30 August 2018 the Warsaw City Council approved the proposal by Mayor Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz to adapt a five-story tenement building. The building from the late 19th century is one of the few remnants of the former Jewish Warsaw. It is located where the original theater building stood before its demolition in 2017. The Warsaw Jewish Theater was closed in 2016, when the building's owner decided to empty the building before authorizing its demolition. Its director and actors protested the decision. Malgorzata Zakrzewska, a Warsaw City Council member, called the Jewish theater "one of the most important guardians of Jewish culture in Warsaw, and all over Poland. It is our commitment, but also our responsibility for culture, which was a permanent element of the Warsaw landscape before the war," Zakrzewska said. The \$41 million will be used to hold an architectural competition and for design documentation in order to restore the splendor of the former Jewish tenement house. There will be two stages along with facilities for the activities and promotion of Yiddish culture.

NO SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES LAW TO TAKE EFFECT: A Health Ministry order passed into law by the Knesset which prohibits smoking in many public places – indoors and out – took place on Saturday 1 Sep. 2018. Smoking is now prohibited in places where outdoor events are held and attended by more than 50 people: in zoos, parks, swimming pools, sports fields, playgrounds, facilities where physical activity takes place such as basketball courts and gyms; and inside and outside hospitals and clinics, kindergartens and nursery schools, covered or underground parking lots, government offices, courts and religious councils. Municipal clerks will be authorized to give fines of NIS 1,000 to individuals who break the law and NIS 5,000 to violators who are owners of public places where violations take place.

NEARLY HALF OF USA JEWS DON'T IDENTIFY WITH ORGANIZED RELIGION, STUDY FINDS: Jews are the only religious group in America found to have substantial contingents on both the very religious and not at all religious ends of the spectrum. More than one in five, however, are considered "Sunday stalwarts" (or Saturday): those who "actively practice their faith, but they also are deeply involved in their religious congregations." The study published last week defines how people practice their religion. It only includes Jews who define their religion as Judaism. The study of more than 4,700 respondents has a margin of error of 2.3%. Among the seven categories, 45% of American Jews are listed in the two for the least religious: "religion resisters," who believe in a higher power but have negative views of organized religion, or "solidly secular," those who don't believe in God and do not self-define as religious. The breakdown is 28% as "solidly secular" and 17% as "religion resisters." On the other end of the spectrum, 21% of Jews are "Sunday stalwarts." Eight percent are "God-and-country believers," who express their religion through political and social conservatism, and 5% are "diversely devout," who follow the Bible but also believe in things like animism and reincarnation.

IRAN SENTENCES 4 CHRISTIANS TO 45 YEARS IN JAIL: Iran's mullah-led Islamic regime has sentenced four Christians to harsh prison terms for practicing their faith. Pastor Victor Bet-Tamraz and his wife Shamiram Issavi, who are ethnic Assyrian Christians, and Amin Afshar Naderi and Hadi Asgari, who are Christian converts from Islam, were sentenced to a combined total of 45 years in prison, reported CBN News. The charges were conducting illegal church activities and spreading propaganda that threaten national security. "These Christians were arrested solely for practicing their Christian faith, including attending Christmas gatherings and organizing house churches," Mike Ansari of the group Heart4Iran told CBN News. Bet-Tamraz was arrested in 2014 when plain-clothed security forces raided his home during a Christmas party. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2017 by an Iranian Revolutionary Court along with Asgari for "forming a group," meaning their church activity, "composed of more than two people with the purpose of disrupting national security." The court also sentenced Naderi to five years in prison for allegedly insulting Islam.

Issavi was sentenced this year to five years in prison for "membership of a group with the purpose of disrupting national security" and another five years for "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security." Amnesty International, says Christians in Iran "have been a target of harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, unfair trials, and imprisonment on national security-related charges solely because of their faith." The human-rights group said that in the past year alone, "dozens of Christians, mostly Christian converts, have been targeted." The four Christians, currently free on bail, are awaiting the verdict of their appeal. "If they are imprisoned, they will be prisoners of conscience," Ansari told CBN News. "We ask you to continue to pray for the Iranian Christians that are highly persecuted." Amnesty International has launched an "urgent action" appeal urging supporters to write to Iranian authorities, asking them to "stop harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, and imprisonment of Christians, including converts, in Iran." Human Rights Watch also blasted the Iranian regime for the crackdown on Christians. "Since May 2018, revolutionary courts have sentenced at least 208 members of the religious minority to prison terms and other punishments in trials that violate their basic rights," the group said in a statement.

AMERICAN STUDENTS GO BACK TO SCHOOL WITH BULLETPROOF BACKPACKS: With at least 28 school shootings in the USA in 2018, hundreds of parents have bought their children a made-in-Israel switchblade, bulletproof backpack. In addition to protecting the wearer's back, a rip cord releases a protective bulletproof vest to slide over the wearer's head for frontal protection.

ISRAELI SMART SOFTWARE FLAGS PATIENTS AT RISK FOR COLON CANCER: Medial EarlySign, an Israeli startup, has developed machine learning-based software that analyzes standard blood test results to identify patients at high risk of colon cancer. Medial EarlySign taps into the databases of healthcare organizations to analyze the blood patterns of patients afflicted with colon cancer. The company is working on finding blood patterns for other illnesses including flu, diabetes and hypertension.

ISRAEL IS ENTERING ITS SIXTH YEAR OF DROUGHT: Many of Israel's lakes, riverbeds and aquifers are at unprecedented 100-year lows, with the Sea of Galilee dangerously close to its "black line," the level below the intake pipes of the water pumps that send the lake's water to nearby towns. Israelis have not felt the current drought as acutely as past dry spells because Israel in recent years constructed five massive desalination plants on the Mediterranean coast that now provide some 70% of the country's drinking water directly from the sea. The state also recycles some 86% of its waste water for agriculture. Two more desalination plants are in the planning stages. But all these efforts may not be enough to keep the water flowing. In May 2018 the Water Authority rolled out a public ad campaign entitled "Israel is drying out" aimed at reminding Israelis that saving water at home is still important. To emphasize the point, the authority said if the drought continues for another year, it would start imposing limits on Israelis' water consumption. According to Water Authority estimates, some 2.5 billion cubic meters of water are missing from the source reservoirs of the country's natural water supply. The drought of the past six years has driven these reservoirs, and the streams that flow from them, to 98-year lows.

ISRAELI PM: NO PLACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST FOR THE WEAK: The Middle East, is no place for the weak," Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu declared on Wed, 29 2018. "The weak crumble, are slaughtered and are erased from history while the strong survive. The strong are respected, alliances are made with the strong, and in the end peace is made with the strong". Speaking at a recent ceremony Netanyahu continued: "We are working to prevent Iran from establishing a military presence in Syria," the prime minister said. "We will not relent in pursuit of this goal just as we did not relent in bringing about the cancellation of the bad nuclear agreement with Iran, a goal which was seen as impossible when I put it on the international agenda for the first time several years ago. In the diplomatic sphere, we will continue to apply pressure on the dangerous, extremist regime in Iran," he continued.

"In the military sphere," Netanyahu added, "the IDF will continue to take strong and determined action against Iran's attempts to station forces and advanced weapons systems in Syria. No agreement between Syria and Iran will deter us; neither will any threat deter us. Whoever threatens us with destruction puts himself in similar danger, and in any case will not achieve his goal," he emphasized. Referring to his country's growing behind-the-scenes ties with a number of its neighbors, Netanyahu said, "This process, of normalization by leading countries in the Arab world with the strong State of Israel, is happening before our eyes on a scale that would have been impossible to imagine a few years ago. But it is impossible to deny the fact that there are yet many enemies in this region and beyond. These enemies, he went on to say, "know very well what Israel is capable of doing. They are familiar with our policy. Whoever tries to hurt us - we will hurt them. I am not spouting slogans," Netanyahu stated. "I am describing a persistent and determined policy, backed by appropriate deployment, equipment, preparedness and in the hour of need, appropriate orders."

DONALD TRUMP WARNS EVANGELICALS OF DEMOCRATS 'VIOLENTLY' OVERTURNING HIS AGENDA: USA President Trump has urged Evangelical leaders to get their followers to the polls in November 2018 or face Democrats overturning his conservative agenda "violently." "You're one election away from losing everything that you've obtained," Trump told the group at a White House dinner. "It's not a question of like or dislike, it's a question that they will overturn everything that we've done and they will do it quickly and violently. There is violence. When you look at Antifa and you look at some of these groups - these are violent people." The president said the 6 Nov. 2018 election "is very much a referendum on not only me, it's a referendum on your religion, it's a referendum on free speech and the First Amendment. The level of hatred, the level of anger is unbelievable," he said of the administration's opponents. "Part of it is because of some of the things I've done for you and for me and for my family." At his public rallies, Trump often predicts a "red wave" in November, although he said last week that he believes it will be difficult for the GOP not to lose seats in the House. He said evangelical leaders could help by galvanizing their congregations to vote. "I just ask you to make sure all of your people vote on Nov. 6. Because if they don't vote, we're going to have a miserable two years and we're going to have, frankly, a very hard period of time," he said.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION SET TO END UNRWA FUNDING ALTOGETHER: The Trump administration is set to cut off funding altogether to UNRWA, the United Nations (UN) agency that administers relief for Palestinian Authority and Gaza “refugees” and their descendants. The United States has so far this year disbursed \$60 million to UNRWA. It sent \$364 million to UNRWA last year, by far the largest contribution of any entity and a third of the agency’s budget. Quoting anonymous sources, Foreign Policy reported on 25 August 2018 that this month Trump, after consulting with his secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, and his son-in-law Jared Kushner, would contribute nothing further. At a conference this week at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, USA Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley suggested that absent reforms no further USA money would go to UNRWA. “We will be a donor if it reforms what it does,” she said of UNRWA. “If they actually change the number of refugees to an accurate account, we will look back at partnering them.” UNRWA provides relief to some 5 million Arabs in Gaza, Judea & Samaria, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. It uniquely among refugee agencies identifies multiple generations of descent as refugees; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees extends such recognition only to the second generation. The Trump administration also reportedly wants to slash the number of Arabs eligible for UNRWA assistance to 500,000.

UNRWA is notorious for its anti-Israel activities. During the 2014 counterterrorism Operation Protective Edge, Hamas rockets were discovered inside a school building run by UNRWA. Likewise, a booby-trapped UNRWA clinic was detonated, killing three IDF soldiers. Aside from the massive amounts of explosives hidden in the walls of the clinic, it was revealed that it stood on top of dozens of terror tunnels, showing how UNRWA is closely embedded with Hamas. More recently, the director of UNRWA operations in Gaza expressed his support for the anti-Israel marches along the Israel-Gaza border and pledged that the organization’s medical centers will provide care for “Palestinian refugees” who might sustain injuries during them.

“ABUSIVE ANTI-ISRAEL BIAS AT UN IS PATHETIC”: USA Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley spoke on Wed. night 29 August, 2018 at a Foundation for the Defense of Democracies conference. In her speech, Haley reiterated the Trump administration's stance on the number of Palestinian Authority (PA) and Gaza "refugees" receiving aid from UNRWA, and said their "right of return" to Israel is not on the negotiating table. Haley also said that the USA needs to investigate whether the countries receiving USA funding are interested in cooperation. "We should do is ask the countries that we give money to, if they believe what we believe?" she said. "Do they still want to be our partner and work with us? If they're not and they're shouting, 'Death to America,' why would we give them a single penny? And so you are seeing the efforts of de-funding those things that are not helpful to us and that aren't in the United States' interest." Regarding the UN bias against Israel, Haley said, "I knew that there was a bias against Israel, but I hadn't really put a lot of thought into it, until I attended the first session. And when I saw literally how abusive all of those countries were being to Israel, in a way that was pathetic - really I had no choice but to get up and say this is completely wrong. I came out and said, 'We are not going to condone this anti-Israel bias'. And so now we're actually making them talk about other areas in the Middle East.

HALEY: “PALESTINIANS CONTINUE TO BASH AMERICA,” YET “HAVE THEIR HAND OUT WANTING UNRWA MONEY”: Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley on 28 August 2018 told the Foundation for Defense of Democracies she believed that Palestinian claims over a "right of return" to modern Israel should be taken "off the table." Regarding aid cuts to UNRWA, the UN agency responsible for Palestinian refugees, she said, "We will be a donor if it reforms what it does, if they actually change the number of refugees to an accurate account, we will look back at partnering with them." Haley added that "the Palestinians continue to bash America" and yet "they have their hand out wanting UNRWA money. We have to have them come to the table for a peace agreement," Haley said. "That's only going to happen if the region pushes them for that to happen."

DAVID FRIEDMAN SAYS GAZA STRIP UNFIXABLE: USA Ambassador to Israel David Friedman said on 28 August 2018 that the chances of a stable settlement in the Gaza Strip are "very low". He said that the situation in Gaza "is a disease without a cure, at this juncture Israel can only manage it, and not provide a long-term solution because circumstances do not allow it. Until there is an internal Palestinian reconciliation that will bring the Palestinian Authority back into the Gaza Strip - the most you can aspire to is a cease-fire," said Friedman. "From Israel's point of view there is no reason to go to war in Gaza, because the only way to change the result is ground entry, and this creates a huge risk to human life, and that makes no sense."



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