

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update September 26, 2019 (26<sup>th</sup> Elul, 5779)***

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## **For the Yachad Report Newsletter For September 2019**

**PRESIDENT RIVLIN: ISRAEL'S PEOPLE DESIRE A 'STABLE UNIFIED GOVERNMENT':** Over the coming days, Israel's President Reuven Rivlin will consult with representatives of all the parties elected to the Knesset according to the outcome of last week's national elections. Rivlin will decide to whom will fall the task of forming the new government. The president said on Sunday, 22 Sept. 2019 that the only way to form a stable government is to have the two large parties - Likud and Blue & White join forces. The other options for what will happen as a result of last week's vote promise to be wrought with difficulties - that of a third national election in 2019-2020 or a narrow coalition made up of the right-wing and ultra-Orthodox parties. The option considered being the most beneficial to Israel's long-term stability and wellbeing - according to pre-election opinion polls and now Israel's President – would be a unity government. Rivlin said on Sunday, "The people of Israel want a government that will be stable and capable of leading the state. As an Israeli citizen, I feel that the only way to prevent another election is the ability of the two large parties - almost equal in size - to join forces and form a government."

**INTERCEDE FOR ISRAEL'S NEW GOVERNMENT TO BE EFFECTIVELY FORMED SOON:** Please pray for the leaders of Israel's two largest political parties to arrive at workable agreements and to be able to form a new unity government between them. The second option of a narrow coalition of the right-wing and ultra-Orthodox parties would lead to more political stalemates or other highly unfavorable scenarios. While a third national election in the coming months seems unreasonable to most Israelis, the possibility could occur. The damage to the country as a result of repeated elections – for a third time this year – would be immense. The direct cost alone would be approximately 700 million shekels, a sum that equals the entire annual budget of the Science Ministry. The indirect price-tag for going back to the polls again would cost the Israeli economy more than 2 billion shekels. This would only be part of the consequences of such an outcome lengthening the current political impasse. For close to a year now Israel has been unable to carry out important procedures. Senior officials in the various ministries have said the government is "treading

water." They report that new programs cannot be approved, serious processes cannot be conducted and long-term plans cannot be adopted. The Ministry of the Economy cannot progress with reforms to lower the cost of living. The Interior Ministry is holding back major projects needed by local authorities. The appointments of senior officials – judges, the police chief – are frozen. Diplomatic processes with a direct impact on Israeli security, such as President Trump's peace plan, have been deferred. Everything is on hold. Again, please intercede in this vitally important issue that Israel's leaders will be able to form a strong and stable government and that other options, including a third national election, will be avoided.

**DANON WELCOMES NEW USA AMBASSADOR KELLY CRAFT TO THE UN:** USA ambassador to the UN, Kelly Craft, was warmly welcomed into her new position on Friday, 20 Sept. 2019 by Israel's ambassador to the UN, Danny Danon. Danon said before the UN body, "We welcome your presence here and look forward to your voice being heard on behalf of the American people". Ambassador Craft in return expressed her support for Israel. "The United States has always supported Israel in the past. The United States supports Israel today. Israel will have no better friend than Kelly Craft," she said. Danon later remarked that Ambassador Craft had made it clear that the USA remains strongly committed to Israel and Israel's security. "With her help, together we can continue to change the culture at the United Nations." In his address to the Security Council on Friday, Danon warned that Iran continues to pose the greatest danger to regional stability and security. He said that Iran must be stopped, "not with smiles and handshakes, but with economic, political, diplomatic and any other pressure as necessary. I call on the members of this esteemed Council to act against the Iranian violations and exert more pressure on Iran," he said.

**DONALD TRUMP IMPOSES HIGHEST SANCTIONS EVER ON IRANIAN BANK:** President Trump said Friday, 20 Sept. 2019 that he's imposing economic sanctions on Iran's national bank as an initial response to Tehran's role in attacking Saudi oil fields. The 14 Sep. 2019 drone attack on fields east of Riyadh disrupted the global oil supply. Trump said that while some people want him to strike Iran, others much prefer his heavy- sanctions approach. "I think the sanctions work, and the military would work, though the military would be a very severe form of winning", he said. Trump added that Iran could be a "great and rich country" were it not for its bad choices. "But they are choosing to go a different way. They will be very sorry for that choice," he said. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hailed the sanctions saying Iran must face consequences for its aggression in the Middle East. "Attacking other nations and disrupting the global economy has a price", he said. "The regime in Tehran must be held accountable through diplomatic isolation and economic pressure."

**ZARIF SAYS THERE'S NO CERTAINTY WAR CAN BE AVOIDED:** The Iranian Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif, over the weekend warned of "all-out war" in the event of USA, or Saudi military strikes. "I'm not confident that we can avoid war. I'm confident that we will not start one," Zarif said in an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation" aired on Sunday, 22 Sept 2019. "I'm confident that whoever starts one will not be the one who finishes it," he added. Explaining his comments Zarif said, "That means that there won't be a limited war." Tensions continue to rise between the USA and Tehran following drone strikes attributed to Iran earlier this month on oil facilities in Saudi Arabia. The assault disrupted about half of the kingdom's oil capacity or 5% of the daily global oil supply. On Friday 20 Sept. 2019 USA President Trump agreed to dispatch troops and missile defense equipment to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said that in doing so, the USA was responding to requests from Saudi and United Arab Emirates to help improve their air and missile defenses. Weekend comments by Zarif represented the starker warning yet by Tehran in a long summer of assaults and incidents following the collapse of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, more than a year after Trump unilaterally withdrew the USA from the accord.

**IRANIAN CONNECTIONS TO YEMEN'S HOUTHI REBELS:** Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for this month's drone-and-missile strike on the Saudi kingdom's oil industry that shook global energy markets. But both the USA and its ally Saudi Arabia - Iran's main regional rival - said the

Islamic Republic was behind them. Iran has denied that it was responsible for the Saudi assault or that it is backing the Houthis. Iranian sources have also denied Saudi Arabian accusations that Tehran provided the Houthi rebels in Yemen with ballistic capabilities. Houthi rebels are at the center of a civil war against Saudi-backed forces. Since the start of the conflict within Yemen, the Houthis have sought to punish Saudi Arabia for its major role in the conflict by launching assaults on Saudi soil. It has long been believed that Iran is planning to use the Houthis to take over Yemen and seize the key strategic port of Aden, which controls the entrance to the Red Sea and ultimately to the Israeli resort city of Eilat.

**ANTI-SEMITIC PERSECUTION ON USA COLLEGE CAMPUSES REACH HISTORIC HIGH:** Hatred towards Jews and pro-Israeli students is escalating according to a new study by the AMCHA Initiative that monitors anti-Semitism on more than 400 college campuses. AMCHA reported that there had been a major spike in students being targeted with hate speech and violence during the past year due to their open support for Israel. The findings also noted that the anti-Semitic harassment is chiefly coming from activists linked to the anti-Israel, Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions movement. Anti-Semitic acts involving the singling out of Jewish and pro-Israel students and groups for personal vilification more than doubled, according to the report, including a 147% increase in incidents being linked to "white supremacy". Attempts to exclude Jewish and pro-Israel students from campus activities more than doubled, with expressions calling for the total boycott or exclusion of pro-Israel students from campus life nearly tripling. The study shows that the endorsement of anti-Israel causes by students and professors has created an unsafe environment for Jewish students and non-Jewish students who support Israel.

**ISRAEL'S NATIONAL BASEBALL TEAM WILL BE HEADING FOR THE OLYMPICS IN 2020:** Israelis were gladdened by news on Sunday, 22 Sept. 2019 that its national baseball team beat South Africa 11-1, securing a place in Japan where it will face five other teams at the Tokyo 2020 summer games. The Israeli team defeated South Africa 11-1 at a qualifying contest in Italy between European and African nations. Israel's team moved ahead to the Europe/Africa Olympic qualifier after beating France in the European Championship on 13 Sept. 2019. There are only six national teams in the Olympic baseball event and Israel is the first to qualify for the contest. Japan, as the host nation, automatically qualifies and the other teams will earn their places during various preliminary competitions.

**ISRAELIS VOTE IN SECOND NATIONAL 2019 ELECTIONS:** Israelis proceeded to the polls on Tue. 17 Sept. 2019 for the second time in less than six months. After PM Binyamin Netanyahu failed to form a coalition following April's 2019 vote, a second national election was scheduled for 17 Sept. 2019. As pre-election polls indicated would be the outcome, Netanyahu's Likud party was closely tied with the Blue and White bloc headed by Benny Gantz and two other former army chiefs-of-staff. Israel's political system renders no direct path for either Gantz or Netanyahu to form a majority coalition requiring the support of at least 61 parliamentarians. Hence, the outcome of the second election mirrors this year's April results. A jostle for alliances with marginal parties could now develop, as could a unity government if campaign vows that passionately rejected specific alliances between parties are rescinded. Despite concerns of "election fatigue," given that Israel has held a national vote twice this year, voter turnout was slightly higher than in April 2019.

**KINGMAKER LIEBERMAN CALLS FOR STRONG UNITY GOVERNMENT AS ISRAEL FACES AN 'EMERGENCY SITUATION':** Israel's exit polls disclosed that the leader of the Yisrael Beiteinu party Avigdor Lieberman will be the kingmaker in the coalition negotiations following Israel's Tuesday 17 Sept. 2019 elections. His secular-nationalist party secured 9 seats in the next Knesset. Centrist Blue and White essentially tied with Netanyahu's Likud party at 32 and 31 seats respectively, with right-religious and center-left blocs hovering around 55 seats, giving neither side a working majority without Liberman. Liberman, in what he said was only possible in an 'emergency situation' made an intense call for a unity government made up of Blue and White, Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu. "We have always said that a unity government is possible only in an emergency situation, and I say to every citizen that the state-of-affairs now, security-wise and

economically, is an emergency situation," Lieberman said. Liberman, Israel's former Defense Minister resigned from his position last November in protest over Netanyahu's Gaza truce deal. He then blocked Netanyahu from forming a right-wing governing coalition when his calls for religious reform were not met following last April's election - forcing a Sept. 2019 round of voting.

**ILHAN OMAR SAYS NETANYAHU'S "EXISTENCE" IS A PROBLEM - HOPES ISRAELIS VOTE HIM OUT OF POWER:** Minnesota Congresswoman Ilhan Omar called Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu's "existence" a problem in an interview with CBS' Face the Nation program on Sunday 15 September 2019. Two days prior to Israel's second national election in 2019 the blatantly anti-Semitic Omar slammed what she called the Israeli leader's "existence, policies, and rhetoric" and expressed her fervent hope that the people of Israel would "make a different decision" in this week's national elections. The Democratic Congresswoman then reiterated her support for the anti-Israel BDS movement. In August 2019 Israel barred Omar and fellow Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib from entering the country. Omar came under heavy criticism earlier this year after she suggested on Twitter that Republicans were assaulting her at the behest of the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC. Omar later caused another political upheaval when she likened domestic support for Israel as "allegiance to a foreign country". This week's final election results which leave Netanyahu's Likud party and the Centrist Blue and White closely tied as winners indicate that Omar's Israeli nemesis is still in the picture and that few in the Israeli Jewish sector have time for the anti-Semitic lawmaker's hopes and fantasies.

**CHURCHES IN TEXAS VANDALIZED WITH ANTI-CHRISTIAN GRAFFITI:** Red, spray-painted graffiti with anti-Christian messages were streaked across three Dallas Texas churches last Sunday 15 Sept. 2015. The word "lie" was smeared in crimson right beneath the church steeple, said a senior pastor at Beth-Eden Baptist Church in Dallas' Oak Cliff neighborhood. Two additional churches in the same neighborhood - St. Luke Presbyterian Church and St. Phillips Missionary Baptist Church - were also vandalized with red paint. The words, "scam," "all lies," and "not coming" were written on the side of the St. Luke parish. Also the word, "Jesus" spray-painted with a slash through it was written on the building. The graffiti remained visible the following day, in spite of attempts to cover the writing at St. Luke's with trash bags. Dallas police are investigating the crimes but have not yet determined if the crimes are related. Police are also looking into reports of graffiti on three other church buildings in the neighborhood, possibly bringing the total number of religious buildings vandalized to six.

**NOW THE 'SUNDAY PEOPLE':** Persecution of Christians in the Islamic world has spiraled to epidemic proportions in the past decades. Now, it is becoming commonplace across Europe and North America even as anti-Semitism spreads and deepens its age-long roots in those same regions. Islamic terror groups have a favorite taunt: "First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people". The "Saturday People" are, of course, Jews who have been for centuries subject to unceasing persecution. Now the "Sunday people" - Christians - have become targets of global abuse including murders, rapes, beatings, extortions, the burning and desecration of houses of worship and mob violence. Such brutality mirrors that carried out for centuries against the Jews, the "Saturday people." It's easy to think Christian persecution is an issue far away from the USA. The truth is, persecution is more prevalent and geographically dispersed than any other time in history. Approximately 215 million Christians worldwide experience very high to extreme persecution. Newsweek Magazine reported months ago that "the persecution and genocide of Christians across the world is worse today than at any time in history". Such violence and harassment are not limited to that carried out by Muslim extremists.

The threat of religious persecution is rearing its head in the United States. Campuses across the nation have disclosed that up-front Christians are regularly humiliated debased and attacked for their beliefs. Academics, social groups, and college organizations regularly brand Christians as being hateful and bigoted, among other labels. Christians are being targeted in the USA for adhering to their values not only on the university front but in all walks of life. Such people are encountering increasing intolerance in America through lawsuits, jobs

lost, and public disdain. Examples of this include Christian bakers who refuse to bake cakes for same-sex weddings or those in public office who say no when asked to issue same-sex wedding certificates. Such people who stick to their Christian beliefs and values are encountering a huge amount of negative publicity, harassment, fines and even the loss of work and businesses.

**HIGH COST OF LIVING LEADS TO MANY ISRAELIS LIVING IN DEBT:** Israel is among the most expensive countries in the OECD, with food prices 19 percent higher than the OECD average, out-of-pocket preschool spending the most expensive of all OECD countries, and people typically paying out 25% of their gross adjusted disposable income on rent. Aside from Israel's profitable but limited tech sector, it is low-wage jobs that drive employment in Israel. According to a sampling of 50,000 users of a credit rating app Captain Credit, which is operated by Dun & Bradstreet and relies on the credit card database of the Bank of Israel, Israelis have on the average a whopping negative checking account balance of NIS 25,000 (approximately \$7,090). Many people opt to take out a loan to cover the negative balance until the next paycheck, as the overdraft interest is usually higher than the loan interest. But this measure easily becomes a habit according to Moshe Yadgar, Captain Credit's CEO. "We saw quite a few cases where people take out a loan to catch up with their negative account balance, but very quickly reach that situation again and take out another loan." Based on the sampling, 5% of Israelis are paying off at least five loans concurrently, he said. Dun & Bradstreet's Capitan Credit survey concludes that while half of all adult Israelis have good credit scores it does not mean they are keeping their head above water financially.

**ISRAEL'S ARCHEOLOGICAL SURPRISES CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE:** Israel is a virtual treasure chest of archeological gems often located by students on outings, hikers in the wilderness, or as in a recent case, a sharp-eyed passerby. Ahmad Nasser Yassin while driving along a dirt road in the hills in the western Galilee spotted what looked to be a dagger blade sticking out of the crumbling rocky hillside by the road. Yassin said that as he continued to drive down the road it dawned on him that he might have seen something significant. Feeling compelled to check, he went back. Upon closer inspection, he discovered what still looked to be a very old handle. He cleared some of the dirt and realized he had found a cache of vessels and a dagger that later was confirmed by the Israel Antiquities Authority to be some 4,500 years old. The items had been in a burial cave dating to the middle Bronze Age and most likely had been destroyed, during roadworks in the area about a year ago. The Authority praised Yassin's good citizenship in reporting the discovery to the authorities, rather than trying to vend the items on the black antiquities market.

**FOUR ISRAELI UNIVERSITIES RANK AMONG TOP PRODUCERS OF GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURS:** A new study by the market-data company PitchBook has placed four Israeli universities among the top 50 undergraduate programs globally that turn out the most successful entrepreneurs. Tel Aviv University came in at No. 8, making it the only non-USA university in the top 10. Also in the top 50 was Haifa's Technion-Israel Institute of Technology (No. 14), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (No. 34) and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (No. 49). Academic institutions were determined according to their performance in producing the most entrepreneurs who secure venture funding for their startups. Stanford University in California held the top spot in the rankings, with undergraduate programs producing 1,288 entrepreneurs who established 1,114 companies and raised \$37.8 billion in funding.



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