

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update October 31, 2019 ***(2th Cheshvan, 5780)***



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For November 2019

IDF PLANS TO STRENGTHEN ISRAEL'S BORDERS: Late last week the IDF disclosed its new five-year plan of operations with its chief of staff warning, “The situation is fragile in the north and south — and may deteriorate into a confrontation.” The publication of the plan was reportedly postponed as a result of the continuing political uncertainty in Israel, with coalition talks still underway and a caretaker government in charge. The army concluded, however, that it had “no choice but to move forward” in light of recent developments. The IDF said the proposal was intended to address “the multiplicity of events and the multiplicity of activities” on the security front. The plan was formulated through a thorough assessment of the IDF’s capabilities and was intended to address and design solutions to perceived flaws. The plan also deals with what is believed to be the central threat facing Israel: A decentralized enemy in an urban space equipped with precision weapons. This description fits both the Hezbollah terrorist organization in the north and Hamas terrorist groups in the south. IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi emphasized the threat from Hezbollah, saying, “Israel’s central strategic challenge lies in the northern arena: in the entrenchment of Iranian and other forces in Syria and the precision-missile project. In both cases, it is an Iranian-led effort, using the territory of governments that are limited in their powers,” he added. “For years, Hezbollah has ‘taken Lebanon prisoner,’ established its own army there, and it is the one that actually determines Lebanon’s ‘security policy,’” Kochavi stated.

CREATORS OF ANTI-SEMITIC FLOAT DEEMED “NOT INTENTIONALLY RACIST”: The Belgian state’s watchdog on racism has come out with its verdict on a parade float from earlier this year that was slammed as anti-Semitic. While the watchdog group agreed the float was anti-Semitic, it nevertheless deemed its creators were not intentionally racist. A float in Belgian Aalst’s Carnival’s parade’s in March 2019 displayed giant figures of Orthodox Jews with hooked noses, including one with a rat on his shoulder, clutching bags of money. Revelers dressed as Orthodox Jews danced on the float to a song about money. The spectacle provoked a torrent of condemnations, including from the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization, or UNESCO, which called it racist. Aalst's mayor and parade organizers have dismissed all criticism of the parade, saying it was harmless satire and not anti-Semitic. Earlier this month, the organizers printed caricatures of Jews with golden teeth and red hooked noses on ribbons meant to be worn at the next edition of the parade. The report released last week by the Inter-Federal Equal Opportunities Center, or UNIA, recommends clearing the Aalst float creators of criminal responsibility while calling for the creators and their critics to show "more empathy." The Forum of Jewish Organizations of the Flemish Region rejected UNIA's findings and took issue particularly with a statement in the report that suggests that Jews and other critics of the Aalst float must show "empathy and more understanding" toward the float's creators. "It's a cheap cliché," the Jewish group wrote. "Jews have more than 2,000 years of experience with anti-Semitism and need no instruction about humor. Jews know better than anyone where caricatures can lead."

THOUGH I FALL, I WILL RISE AGAIN: Sunday 27 Oct. 2019 marked the first anniversary of the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, in which a gunman killed 11 people. The American Jewish Committee organized a campaign urging people to attend synagogue last Shabbat to show solidarity with Jews in light of the anniversary. The brave people of the Bridgeport Connecticut synagogue had signed up to participate in the campaign and in response were evacuated on Friday 26 Oct. 2019 after the congregation received two bomb threats. The police department said all people had been evacuated safely and that the department was looking into the threats. Just one year after a gunman killed 11 people inside Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue, congregants have outlined tentative plans to reopen the house of worship that is now the site of the deadliest anti-Semitic attack in USA history. Eleven people were killed and six were injured on 27 Oct. 2018, after a man carrying an AR-15 rifle and other weapons fired at worshippers who had gathered at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill neighborhood while shouting anti-Semitic slurs. The victims, who ranged in age from 54 to 97, included two brothers who were remembered for greeting congregants at the synagogue's doors each week and a couple who had gotten married at Tree of Life more than 60 years ago. Police charged Robert Bowers, 47, in the shooting, and federal prosecutors said in August 2019 that they will seek the death penalty against him.

AMERICAN JEWS SEE INCREASING DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-SEMITIC DANGER IN THE USA: Reports of anti-Semitic violence, graffiti, and hate speech continue to increasingly fill global headlines in proportions not seen since World War II. According to the American Jewish Committee's chief advocacy officer, Daniel Elbaum, in a recent survey of American Jews on the topic of anti-Semitism in the USA, some 88% believe anti-Semitism is a problem in America today, and 84% say it has gotten worse over the past five years. 35% say they have personally been the targets of anti-Semitism over the past five years. 31% avoid publicly wearing, carrying or displaying things that might identify them as Jews. American Jews see a connection between undue criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism, with 84% saying the statement "Israel has no right to exist" is anti-Semitic. 80% said the statement "The USA government only supports Israel because of Jewish money" is anti-Semitic. 73% said the statement "American Jews are more loyal to Israel than America" is anti-Semitic.

PROTESTANT CHURCHES SHUT DOWN IN ALGERIA, WORSHIPPERS ARRESTED: The Muslim-majority North African county of Algeria has closed down three Protestant churches since mid-Oct. 2019. Pastor Salah Chalah, head of the Protestant Church of Algeria said the authorities retaliated against the Protestant Church of the Full Gospel of Tizi Ouzou because of a sit-in that Christians organized at the Bejaia Province headquarters on 9 Oct. 2019. Human Rights Watch said Algerian police raided the Full Gospel Church on 15 Oct. 2019 and assaulted worshippers, including Chalah. The Full Gospel Church is the largest Protestant church in Algeria, with 1,000 members. Algerian authorities closed two additional churches in Tizi Ouzou, including a 500-member church in Makouda. The USA-based International Christian Concern (ICC) advocacy director Matias Perttula said, "Reports of rising levels of religious intolerance in Algeria are once again causing a great level of concern for ICC and our partners. These church closures are completely baseless and clear indicators of persecution and harassment of Algeria's Christians, who represent a significant

religious minority. ICC plans to raise this issue with members of Congress on Capitol Hill to make them aware of these human rights violations.” According to Human Rights Watch, these three closures bring the number of Protestant churches shut down by the government since Nov. 2018 to 12. Algeria's state religion is Islam. Algerian officials estimate the number of Christians at 50,000, but others say it could be twice that number.

NEWLY UNEARTHED BYZANTINE CHURCH HONORS UNNAMED MARTYR: Israeli researchers reported last week that a Byzantine-era church built in honor of an unnamed martyr has been newly unearthed near Jerusalem after a three-year excavation. Floors decorated with vast mosaics depicting birds, fruit and plants, colorful frescoes, and a peculiar Greek inscription that has baffled the researchers were discovered during the excavations carried out about ten miles west of Jerusalem. Benyamin Storchan, who directed the excavation said, “We found one inscription in the courtyard of the church which dedicates the site in the memory of a ‘glorious martyr.’ The martyr is unnamed and it’s still a mystery, ” said Storchan. He added that the lavishness of the complex indicates this person was an important figure. Another inscription showed Byzantine emperor Tiberius II Constantinus had helped fund the church’s later expansion. “We know of a few hundred churches in the Holy Land but this church by far surpasses most of them by its state of preservation and the imperial involvement which funded it,” said Storchan.

NETANYAHU UNABLE TO FORM COALITION GOVERNMENT - MANDATE PASSES TO GANTZ: Israel’s sitting prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, for the second time since April 2019, has been unable to form a coalition government. He returned his mandate to do so to President Reuven Rivlin on Monday 21 Oct. 2019. Rivlin has since called on Netanyahu’s rival, Benny Gantz, who heads the Blue and White bloc, to try and form a coalition of at least 61 seats in parliament over the next 28 days. It is widely held that Gantz will be unlikely to fare any better than Netanyahu. If he does fail to form a government, an unprecedented third election in one year will take place in 2020. The prime minister claimed in a video statement that he tried to bring Gantz to the negotiating table to “prevent another election,” but said Gantz “refused time after time.”

PRAYER REMINDER: INTERCEDE FOR ISRAEL’S NEW GOVERNMENT TO BE EFFECTIVELY FORMED SOON: Once again the call goes out for intercessors and prayer groups to intercede in this vitally important issue. Pray that Israel's leaders will be able to form a strong and stable government and that a third national election, will be avoided. The damage to Israel as a result of soon repeated elections 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.

LET IT RAIN, LET IT RAIN, LET IT RAIN: Israel’s 2019 autumn holidays came to an end this week on Monday evening, 21 Oct. Sukkot huts have been lovingly disassembled for another year and holiday decorations have been discarded or packed away. The streets of Jerusalem are not as full as they were a week ago and flights filled with visitors are leaving daily for other parts of the globe. Summer Time, as Daylight Savings Time is known in Israel will end this weekend, on the evening of Saturday night, 26 October/morning of Sunday, 27. A good time was had by all but there is a sense across the country that the quiet and return to

routine is welcome. A much-desired mid-fall is advancing with gradually cooling temperatures, and Israelis have even been told they can soon expect winter to come in full force. Several days of winter weather were promised for this week including on Friday, as scattered rainfall and thunderstorms were predicted from northern Israel to the northern Negev. There were warnings for flooding in the southern and eastern streams, as well as in the Judean Desert, in coastal cities, and in the lowlands. We put on the coffee and hot chocolate, make sure that at least some minor heating is available in the house - all in hopes that chilly nights and rain will become the cozy reality this weekend.

YOUTUBE SERIES DOCUMENTS ANTI-SEMITIC HARDSHIPS FACED BY USA JEWISH COLLEGE STUDENTS: Efforts on the part of USA colleges to grapple with the growing trend of anti-Semitic incidents on campus seem to be going nowhere as such occurrences continue to increase. A new Youtube series was recently released by the Ruderman Family Foundation which documents the challenges of Jewish college students on campuses all across the United States. Each clip shows interviews with Jewish students from different states describing their different experiences on campus with anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. One student, Elisa Caesar, shares incidents she encountered at the City College of New York stating that she received threatening letters from Palestinian activists. She additionally found swastikas painted on her door. Swastikas were also found on the dorm room door of a Jewish student at Massachusetts' Tufts University in September 2019. A Berkley University student, Nathan Bentilila, says he was rejected by Latino and other on-campus groups because he is pro-Israel. Berkley University is known as one of the main sources of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. A Jewish student at Hofstra University campus in New York described a class discussion held by a professor in which the majority of the students agreed that the shooter in the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh was not "truly evil." The new Youtube series which documents the on-campus experiences of American Jewish students challenged by prejudice, hate speech, acts of violence and other hostilities is a sad reflection of the nationwide spike in anti-Semitism.

TWICE AS MANY ANTI-SEMITIC HATE CRIMES IN ENGLAND LAST YEAR: The number of religion-oriented hate crimes rose by 31%, to 7,446 from 5,680, the Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2018-19 report shows. The details reveal the number of religion-based criminal offenses against Jews in these areas nearly doubled last year. The data from the Home Office report published earlier this week lists 1,326 anti-Semitic incidents in 2018, or 18% of the overall number of hate crimes — almost twice as many as the 672 anti-Semitic incidents recorded in the previous year.

GROUP OF IRANIAN CHRISTIANS SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS IN PRISON: Nine Iranian Christians were sentenced this week to five years in prison for their participation in a home church in Rasht between January 31st and February 23rd of this year. Matthias Haghnejad, leader of the Iranian church was arrested in late August 2019 by members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard after holding a service in February. The other eight were detained during a series of arrests that took place in early 2019. The men were accused in their preliminary hearings of “acting against national security” (spreading Christianity) but also of “promoting Zionism.” During the hearing on 23 Sept. 2019, the defendants’ lawyer was allowed to speak briefly. However, Judge Mohammed Mogisheh reportedly did not respond to his statement. The Iranian judge is known for miscarriages of justice. He insisted during the trial that the Bible is false and called the men "apostates." The nine Christians have said that they will appeal these sentences. Iran is known for its mounting persecution of Christians. The Islamic Republic is listed as number 9 among the world's top persecutors of Christians, according to Open Doors USA. Christians in Iran are forbidden to share their faith with non-Christians. Despite the Iranian government's ongoing crackdown of Christians living in Iran, the number of Muslims converting to Christianity is growing at an explosive rate, according to the persecution watchdog group Open Doors USA. There is even talk of witnessing a Christian revival, especially among young people living in the country. A house church movement within Iran is part of that revival and has triggered "many secret meetings." Mahmoud Alavi, the Islamic Republic's intelligence minister, admitted early this year that Christianity is spreading throughout his country.

JERUSALEM'S FAVORED STONES AND CHERISHED DUST: Buried under dirt and debris, beautiful paving stones from a well-traveled street and steps leading to the Temple Mount remained silent, kept their historical secrets for centuries. According to archaeologist Ari Levy, the now uncovered road excavated over the past six years follows the natural topography of the Tyropoean Valley and leads from the Pool of Siloam which is one of the largest public ritual baths in the ancient city and the site where Yeshua is said to have healed the blind man. The passageway goes north, reaching the plaza next to the Western Wall today called Robinson's Arch. " Jewish pilgrims used the walkway 2,000 years ago when ascending to Judaism's holiest site, the Temple Mount. The road is believed to have been commissioned and completed under the governance of Pontius Pilate. A recent study of coins collected at the site appears to confirm this dating. It was built over the period of a couple of decades.



*Robert I. Solomon: Messianic Rabbi, rabbisolomon@yachad.com
Jeffery Blalock: Ministries Coordinator, jeffery@yachad.com
Yachad Ministries, 950 Pine Grove Road, Roswell, Georgia 30075
E-mail: info@yachad.com, Web Page: www.yachad.com
Phone: 770-641-3000 (ext. 6)
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