

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update November 21, 2019 (23rd Cheshvan, 5780)

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The image shows two items: on the left, the cover of a book titled 'THE HOOD OF HIS GARMENT' by David J. Ross, with the subtitle 'TOUCHING THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD'. The cover features a close-up of a hand holding a piece of fabric. On the right is a white prayer shawl (tallit) with blue and gold stripes at the top and bottom.

For the Yachad Report Newsletter For November 2019

IT'S NOT OVER YET: CEASE-FIRE CONTINUES TO BE VIOLATED BY HAMAS, ISLAMIC JIHAD: Over the weekend, a fragile quiet was jolted between the Gaza Strip and Israel after Israel said that it had ended airstrikes on Islamic Jihad targets. On Friday 15 Nov. 2019 the IDF said it hit a military compound, a rocket-manufacturing site, and an Islamic Jihad headquarters in Khan Yunis overnight and that airstrikes would not resume as long the Palestinian group holds its fire. The Israeli attacks were in response to Islamic Jihad's launching of a barrage of rockets into Israel on Thursday night 14 Nov. 2019. The terrorist group, Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, canceled weekly protests on Friday along the territory's border with Israel, apparently to preserve calm. The Egyptian-brokered cease-fire began early Thursday after the sides exchanged fire for several days following Israel's killing of the Islamic Jihad's commander in Gaza and its targeting of an official of the Iran-backed group at his Damascus home. On Saturday 16 Nov. 2019 Palestinian terrorists fired two rockets deep into southern Israel from Gaza and the Israeli military responded with a number of airstrikes on terrorist targets, shaking an already tenuous truce. Sirens sounded in the middle of the night in Beersheba, the largest city in southern Israel, some 18 miles from the Gaza border, warning of incoming fire. The military said its missile defenses intercepted the two rockets. This is far from the first time that the terrorists who rule Gaza have broken a ceasefire. Still, it came as a complete surprise to many residents of Beersheva, where public bomb shelters had already been closed. Needless to say, the sudden rocket attack caused a lot of stress and anxiety. A few hours later, Israeli aircraft struck a number of terrorist outposts belonging to Hamas. No injuries were reported.

NETANYAHU: "WE WILL ATTACK ALL THOSE WHO ATTACK US:" PM Binyamin Netanyahu said at Sunday's 17 Nov. 2019 government meeting, concluding several days of fighting in Gaza. "I wish to, firstly, praise the security forces who took part in operation 'Black Belt.' I also would like to thank the members of the cabinet who agreed, as one, to authorize this operation. All goals were achieved. Again, I would like to stress, Israel has not obligated itself to anything. The security policy has not changed. We are keeping open all possible operational possibilities. We will attack those who try to attack us." Netanyahu

responded to the rocket fire the previous night, "on Saturday night, Hamas fired at Be'er Sheva, I directed the IDF to fire on Hamas positions. We are prepared for every situation, we will do everything to protect the state of Israel and ensure its' security."

TERRORIST LAUNCH HUNDREDS OF ROCKETS INTO ISRAEL: MAJORITY OF 2020 DEMOCRATIC CONTENDERS MAKE NO COMMENT: Over the past week Israel, America's closest ally in the Middle East, has endured a barrage of rockets from the Islamic Jihad terrorist organization in Gaza, resulting in the closing of Tel Aviv schools for the first time since 1990. Businesses and schools across the southern and middle parts of the country were also shut down, in some cases, for several days. Transportation was disrupted and hundreds of people repeatedly needed to run to nearby bomb shelters. Many of these people were later treated for light injuries and stress reactions. In the early hours of Tuesday morning 12 Nov. 2019, in Gaza City, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) assassinated Baha Abu al-Ata, a top commander of the Gaza terror group Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), a strike which has resulted in violent retaliatory measures against Israel on the part of the Iranian-backed terrorist group. Yet, despite the hundreds of rockets launched at civilian centers throughout the southern part of Israel, only four of the top ten 2020 Democratic contenders bothered to comment—former Vice President Joe Biden, Sen. Kamala Harris, Mayor Pete Buttigieg, and Sen. Amy Klobuchar. Notably absent were frontrunners Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-VT).

ISRAELI MUSICIANS ENTERTAIN THOSE STUCK IN SHELTERS NEAR GAZA: Several of Israel's most popular musicians donated their time and talent to entertaining those stuck in shelters during the recent rocket attacks by Islamic Jihad. Eurovision winner Netta Barzilai made a surprise visit to a wedding in Beersheba and sang to the couple. Singer/songwriter Natan Goshen and Eurovision contestant Harel Skaat performed in shelters in Netivot.

NO ISRAELI GOVERNMENT - EVEN TRUMP LOSES PATIENCE WITH COMRADE IN ARMS, NETANYAHU: At a number of recent public appearances, USA President Donald Trump has jokingly expressed his frustration over the fact that two national elections this year notwithstanding, Israel still doesn't have a government. "What kind of a system is it over there? They are all fighting and fighting. We have different kinds of fights. At least we know who the boss is. They keep having elections and nobody is elected," quipped the president during a rant to an Orthodox Jewish group in New York. One official told media sources that the Americans are "frustrated and in despair due to Israeli politics and the political crisis, which has been preventing them for many months from presenting the diplomatic part of the 'deal of the century.'" Not much has changed as of the beginning of this week. If Benny Gantz is unable to form a coalition government by Wed. 20 Nov 2019 he will return the mandate given to him by President Reuven Rivlin, and the Knesset will require a 61- member majority to back any other candidate. Failing that, new elections will be called, which would be most likely held in March 2020.

MASS PROTESTS IN IRAN FOLLOWING FUEL HIKES: Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei announced fuel price hikes for Iran on Friday 15 Nov. 2019 and the following day, mass protests broke out in Tehran and other Iranian cities. Official sources say one protester was killed but reports on social media claim there have been additional deaths. As a result, authorities have closed down much of the country's internet services. Videos over the weekend showed protesters burning banks across the country. Videos from Shiraz showed hundreds of men rioting. Protesters have shouted against Iranian involvement abroad, even condemning the regime for involvement in supporting Islamic Jihad in Gaza over the recent flare-up with Israel. Some protesters argue that the regime has increased prices to fund Hezbollah in Lebanon and other foreign adventures. They have also shouted "down with the dictator," in Tehran. In some areas, security forces retreated in the face of protests. In Urmia, the Kurdish region people chanted "the enemy is here," a reference to the regime. Posters of the supreme leader were torn down in other cities.

“PLEASE PUT DOWN YOUR CELL PHONE!” Transportation Minister Bezael Smotrich opened 'Road Safety Week' at a government meeting on Sunday, 17 Nov. 2019. Among other comments, Smotrich implored the citizens of Israel: "I ask and plead with the citizens of Israel, put your cell phones aside while driving, be vigilant, pay attention to the pedestrians, take a foot off the gas, keep a distance, drive carefully. These are not clichés; it is life itself, a matter of life and death." How true it is that no matter what circle of fellow travelers one may be sharing a car with, in Israel, it doesn't take long before the topic of “crazy Israeli drivers,” surfaces. It's a wonder that more instances of road-rage do not occur when habitually there's a person behind your vehicle that honks three seconds before the light turns green, or you're already going ten miles over the speed limit and the car in the rear-view mirror looks as though it's ready to climb in your trunk. The driver then flicks his brights off and on in case you're not getting the message. The modern-day road habit, however, that is of major concern to so many of us in Israel is that of texting while driving. It happens all the time. According to Rachel Tevet-Wiesel, the head of the National Road Safety Authority, when you text while driving, it increases your chances of dying in a car accident by tenfold. But people keep texting. Tragically, since the start of 2019, there have been more deaths on the roads in Israel than there were for the whole year before. Since the start of 2019, 275 people have died on Israel's roads.

When Tevet- Wiesel was asked in a media interview how does Israeli driver differ from the European driver? Her response was, “They are less disciplined, less patient, less courteous and messing with their phones constantly. When asked if the Israeli driver is dangerous, she said, “Not dangerous, but reckless. A driver needs to follow the law and take responsibility for themselves and their kids.” In finality, “dangerous” and “reckless” are synonyms when it comes to the enemies of road safety. In spite of the fact that Israel has state of the art roads; it hasn't helped decrease the number of casualties. Many of us who are praying people here have agreed that we never get into a car these days without sending up a prayer for protection on the road from the impatient, the distracted, those who text and drive and the intoxicated.

ROCKET FIRE CONTINUES AGAINST ISRAEL FROM GAZA: The Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terror groups in the Gaza Strip resumed firing rockets into southern and central Israel after dawn on Wed. 13 Nov. 2019 following a brief overnight respite in the violence. Sirens sounded in southern Israel and then later in central Israel. Another salvo from Gaza was fired toward the southern city of Netivot. Israel's targeted killing before dawn on Tues. 12 Nov. 2019 of Islamic Jihad terror chief Baha Abu Al-Ata was met by over 360 rockets launched throughout Tuesday, Wednesday and early Thursday morning by terror groups in Gaza. Since Tuesday, two people in Israel have been wounded directly by rocket fire. In addition, dozens of people were lightly wounded after falling while running to a bomb shelter. Others were taken to the hospital after suffering anxiety attacks and other “stress symptoms” due to the assaults. An eight-year-old girl collapsed suddenly, apparently from a heart attack, while hiding in a bomb shelter during a rocket attack on the city of Holon. She remained in serious condition on Wednesday. The Israel Defense Forces launched its campaign of retaliatory airstrikes on Tuesday afternoon after approximately six hours of unanswered rocket attacks on central and southern Israel from the enclave. The renewed violence came as Islamic Jihad vowed to avenge the killing of Abu Al-Ata. Senior Islamic Jihad officials said the “real response” to Abu Al-Ata's elimination had yet to come. Schools in southern Israel and as far away from Gaza as the city of Rehovot were ordered to remain closed Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, meaning hundreds of thousands of students stayed home. Hospitals and other emergency services in Israel were put on high alert in light of the ongoing rocket attacks.

NETANYAHU: ‘ISLAMIC JIHAD STARTING TO UNDERSTAND WHO THEY'RE MESSING WITH’: “We are continuing to hit Islamic Jihad after eliminating its senior commander in the Strip,” Netanyahu said during a special cabinet meeting on Wed. morning 13 Nov. 2019. “He [Islamic Jihad terror chief Baha Abu Al-Ata] was responsible for most of the terror attacks emanating from the Gaza Strip in the last year and he was planning to carry out more attacks in the very next days. It would be better for Islamic Jihad to understand that now. I believe the message is starting to get through,” Netanyahu added. “They

understand we will continue hitting them with no mercy. We are determined to fight and protect ourselves. If they thought the barrages or hits would weaken us they are wrong. They have one option. It could take time," he cautioned, calling on Israelis to remain vigilant. "We see that those who obey the Home Front commands have a very high chance of not being harmed. The orders are clear. I ask that you continue heeding them."

BENNETT'S WARNING TO GAZA: HARM US BY DAY AND YOU WON'T MAKE IT THROUGH THE NIGHT: Any terrorist who plans to attack Israel during the day will not survive the night, Defense Minister Naftali Bennett threatened on Wed. 13 Nov. 2019, mere hours after formally taking up his new role. Bennett entered the Defense Ministry the previous day at 11 a.m., shortly after Israel assassinated Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist Baha Abu Al-Ata in a targeted killing in the Gaza Strip. "Yesterday morning, the IDF and the security forces took vital action for the security of Israel," Bennett said. "Al-Ata's assassination should send a "clear message to all of our enemies: Whoever plans to hurt us during the day, cannot be sure that he will make it through the night." Bennett began his term as defense minister with less than a week to go before Blue and White leader Benny Gantz's mandate to form a government is set to expire. Netanyahu later reiterated Bennett's message, saying that Israel will respond to every Palestinian Islamic Jihad attack. The UN is working behind the scenes with Egypt to de-escalate the situation. The EU has similarly called on both sides to decrease the violence.

'USA STRONGLY AFFIRMS ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF': USA Vice President Mike Pence on Tue. 12 Nov. 2019 commented on the launching of hundreds of rockets by the Islamic Jihad terrorist organization. "The United States condemns the barrage of rockets on Israeli civilians. It's clear that Hamas & Palestinian Islamic Jihad put violence ahead of bettering the lives of the people of Gaza. America strongly affirms Israel's right to defend itself," he wrote on Twitter. Former USA Ambassador to Israel David Friedman earlier expressed his support for the Jewish State following the rocket fire on Israel. "Palestinian Islamic Jihad, an Islamist terrorist org backed by Iran, is again attacking Israel with 100's of missiles aimed at civilians. We stand with our friend & ally Israel at this critical moment & support Israel's right to defend itself & bring an end to these barbaric attacks," Friedman stated. Senior Adviser to USA President Donald Trump, Avi Berkowitz, added, "The USA fully supports our partner & ally Israel in their fight against terrorism and the terrorist group, Palestinian Islamic Jihad. The Administration strongly condemns the barrage of rockets on Israeli civilians and continues to monitor the situation. It's clear that the main obstacles holding Gazans back are Hamas and PIJ who put violence ahead of bettering the lives of the people of Gaza."

ISLAMIC JIHAD AND THE IRANIAN CONNECTION: Islamic Jihad is the smaller of the two main Palestinian terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip, and is vastly outnumbered by the ruling Hamas group. However, Islamic Jihad enjoys direct Iranian backing, both financially and militarily, and has become the driving force in rocket fire and confrontations with Israel. Hamas, which seized control of Gaza in 2007 from the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority, is often limited in its ability to carry out terrorist attacks on a large scale because it bears responsibility for running the day-to-day affairs of the Gaza Strip. Islamic Jihad has no such considerations, and has emerged as the more militant faction, occasionally even undermining Hamas' authority. The group was founded in 1981 to establish an Islamic Palestinian state in Judea & Samaria, Gaza and all of what is now Israel. It is designated a terrorist organization by the USA State Department, European Union, and other governments. This week's assassination of Abu Al-Ata was the first high-profile targeted killing of an Islamic Jihad figure by Israel since the 2014 war in the Gaza Strip. Iran supplies Islamic Jihad with training, expertise, and money. In recent years it has developed an arsenal equal to that of Hamas, with longer-range rockets capable of striking central Israel's Tel Aviv metropolitan area. Though the terrorist group's base is in Gaza, its leadership is also based in Beirut and Damascus, where it maintains close ties with Iranian officials. Another Israeli missile strike on Tues. 12 Nov. 2019 targeted Akram al-Ajouri, one of its top officials in Syria. "He is the real direct connection between Islamic Jihad and Iran, on the one hand, and the person who gives instructions to the Gaza Strip on the other hand," said Giora Eiland, a former head of Israel's National Security Council. As Iran's proxy, the terrorist group in Gaza is key

to Tehran's strategy of maintaining pressure on Israel on all fronts, said Kobi Michael, a senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv.

ABU AL-ATA'S ASSASSINATION COMES AS A SENSITIVE POLITICAL TIME FOR ISRAEL: Israel's leaders are still struggling to put together a unity government with less than a week to go for head of Blue and White, Benny Gantz, to reach a breakthrough in the ongoing political stalemate. The centrist Blue and White and secular-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu parties have reached preliminary agreements on several issues in ongoing coalition talks. The negotiating teams for the two parties reached a consensus on several economic issues, including raising income for the elderly and disability payments. Thus far, however, there has been nothing conclusive on the issue of religion and state. Yisrael Beiteinu, which won eight seats in the second round of elections in Sept. 2019, may hold the key to the establishment of any coalition government. However, party head Avigdor Lieberman has stated he will only support a unity government composed of Blue and White, PM Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party, and his own Yisrael Beiteinu. A coalition negotiation meeting between Blue and White chairman Benny Gantz and Yisrael Beiteinu chairman Avigdor Lieberman took place on Wed. 13 Nov. 2019. The session had been planned for the previous day but was canceled due to the security situation. Terrorist Abu Al-Ata's killing comes at a sensitive political time for Israel. PM Netanyahu heads a caretaker government following two inconclusive elections and after he failed twice to form a coalition.



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