

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update December 19, 2019 (21<sup>st</sup> Kislev, 5780)***



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

***UK Elections: Corbyn's Defeat is Israel's Win;*** Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu congratulated his British counterpart Boris Johnson following Johnson's landslide win in last week's UK general election. "Congratulations my friend Boris Johnson on your historic victory," Netanyahu tweeted on Friday 13 Dec. 2019. "This is a great day for the people of Great Britain and for the friendship between us." UK PM Boris Johnson's Conservative Party the previous day emerged triumphant in a crushing defeat over Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party. Israel's politicians have hailed Corbyn's downfall as 'a milestone in the fight against anti-Semitism'. Corbyn, who was elected to lead the party in 2015, lost the support of many Jewish and non-Jewish voters due to his friendly connections with terror groups and his documented anti-Semitic statements and actions. Many British Jews said the elections were critical for them because they believe that the Labour Party has become institutionally anti-Semitic under Corbyn. The Labour Against Anti-Semitism group has documented thousands of cases of anti-Semitic hate speech by members since 2015. Signaling a final defeat, Jeremy Corbyn announced his resignation as leader of the Labour party early Friday morning 13 Dec. 2019.

***UK To Ban BDS;*** Landing another blow to the jaws of anti-Semitism this month, the new Conservative government in the UK has announced it will pass a law making it illegal for public bodies to engage with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement. The Conservative Party's platform in the general election last week included a commitment to "ban public bodies from imposing their own direct or indirect boycotts, disinvestment, or sanctions campaigns against foreign countries." Specifically, the move is meant to bloc local councils controlled by the Labour Party from using taxpayer funds to boycott Israel. UK Special Envoy for post-Holocaust issues Eric Pickles said over the weekend that Labour's historic defeat in last week's election showed that the British people reject anti-Semitism. "Anti-Semitism is an attack on the British way of life and British identity. Without our Jewish citizens, we would be a lesser nation. BDS is anti-Semitic and should be treated as such." The envoy continued to explain that the new law will not allow public bodies to work with those who boycott, divest from or sanction Israel in any way. The Palestinian launched and backed BDS movement, rejects Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and is among the most prominent efforts to undermine Israel's existence.

***BDS and America's New Anti-Semites;*** The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) pushes for economic measures to oppose Israel's [so-called] occupation of Judea & Samaria. The campaign's Palestinian instigators initially called for changes in Israeli policies, but numerous backers have taken it up to oppose Israel's very existence as a Jewish state. Supporters of Israel have pointed out that the boycott movement is anti-Semitism in disguise. Backing this observation, a report scheduled to be issued in full this week has exposed what it called "unprecedented similarities between the BDS movement and far-right groups to propagate anti-Semitism in the United States." The 120-page report, titled "The New Anti-Semites," is backed by 23 Jewish and Christian American non-governmental organizations. "The wide coalition behind the report illustrates the growing concern about the spike in anti-Semitism in the United States," the report's authors said. "Much of this hatred is often disguised under the veil of the delegitimization campaign (BDS) against the Jewish State of Israel." The report warned that "this bigotry does not end with the Jewish people; it threatens to dismantle American values and result in mass violence.

***Israelis Head for a Third National Election in 2020;*** The deadline passed on Wed. 11 Dec. 2019 to nominate a candidate for Israel's next prime minister, officially launching the third election in less than a year. The Knesset voted to dissolve itself late Wed. night. New elections will be held on 2 March 2020. Unable to find common ground following inconclusive election results in April 2019 and again in Sep. 2019, lawmakers from PM Binyamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud and Benny Gantz's centrist Blue and White blame each other for the impasse. Yair Lapid, Blue and White's second in command, predicted that the next few months would be "a festival of hate and violence and disgrace." According to two opinion polls, the public seems to agree with more than 40 percent of respondents blaming Netanyahu for the political deadlock. More than a quarter of the public believes Yisrael Beytenu head Avigdor Liberman is responsible, and a similar percentage says all parties are equally at fault. Another poll conducted last week revealed that the prevailing sentiment could have tangible effects, with Blue and White predicted to win 37 out of the Knesset's 120 seats in March 2020. However, neither party is expected to be in a clear position to head a minimum 61-member coalition, as the country's Right and Center-Left blocs are projected to receive about the same overall representation as they did in both April and September of this year.

***It's Not Always Sunny in Israel;*** For those who have never visited Israel, it's easy to picture it as a land of deserts and white stretches of beach with occasional rain in the winter months - but mostly sunny and warm. Actually, Israel is a country of two seasons; summer and winter with a short-lived, breathtaking spring and a brief reminder of autumn sandwiched between the hot and the cold. In the late fall and winter months, snow, freezing temperatures, storms, and blustery gales can cause chaos from Israel's well-forested north to its wind-carved deserts in the south. For example, last week turbulent weather lashed the coastline of Israel on Thur. 12 Dec. 2019 and moved inland, causing numerous injuries and damage to cars and buildings. Flash floods were predicted in the Judean Desert and the ski resort at Mount Hermon in the Golan Heights was closed down for the weekend due to weather conditions. The Magen David Adom rescue service said a number of people were hurt in weather-related incidents around the country. Among them was an 80-year-old man who was found unconscious in his apartment suffering from hypothermia. Paramedics sought to resuscitate him and then rushed him to a coastal hospital. There, he was sadly pronounced dead. While precipitation is desperately needed across the country during the rainy season, it is often a bleak and deadly time for the poor, the elderly and those in need who live alone. For such people, there is often no holiday respite with good food, company, let alone fireplaces or even a small space heater. For them, the sun is behind the clouds for weeks on end.

***Lack of Heat Fatal for too Many Elderly Israelis;*** MK Itzik Shmuli (Labor) last week wrote about the death of elderly people due to a lack of heating in their homes. In a Twitter post, he responded to the death of an elderly Israeli man who perished in his home during a severe storm and high freezing winds: "Another elderly man died of cold. Every year, thousands of houses become cold traps and some people simply freeze to death when there is no money to heat the house. Only now did I demand in the Knesset to stop the

electricity cuts and increase the heating grant, but the government does not care. I will require the urgent convening of a committee." The most recent figures revealed that thousands of elderly Israelis give up food, medicine or heating because they cannot afford to pay for them. Some 18 percent of Israeli elderly go without home heating and about 20% forego basic commodities in order to pay for heating. In need of assistance, these old men and women who have no families they can turn to, say that feeling cold to the bone is worse than feeling hungry. "I'm afraid of going to sleep because I'm not sure I will wake up," said one elderly man. At least 23% of Israel's elderly live completely alone. According to the Israeli Center for Legal guardianship (ICLG) - a public trust that helps the impoverished elderly in all walks of life - there are thousands of Israelis for whom the winter is nothing but a reoccurring nightmare.

***Over 1 Million Israeli Children Experience Food Insecurity;*** A new study released by a welfare NGO last week revealed that food insecurity currently affects more than one million children in Israel. The figures represent one-third of all children in the country, with an additional 1.3 million adults suffering from hunger. This adds up to the sad figure of more than 2.3 million Israelis live in poverty. Some 29.4% of people in this figure reported weight loss due to an inability to afford food. At least 12% admitted to rummaging through garbage bins for meals. Some 27.9% counted in the study said that their children routinely go to school without lunch, marking a 16-point increase from last year. Among the 35 countries listed as members of the OECD, Israel is ranked at the highest level of poverty.

***Trump Executive Order Aims To Combat College Anti-Semitism;*** USA President Trump on Wed. 11 December 2019 signed an executive order threatening to cut federal assistance to colleges that fail to combat anti-Semitism. The directive increases protections against discrimination under the 1964 Civil Rights Act to people subjected to anti-Semitism on college campuses. The measure warns that if an incident is anti-Semitic it could violate a Title 6 law, which prohibits discrimination based on national origin, race or color in activities receiving federal financial assistance. Classifying Jews as a protected class under existing civil rights protections for other minorities would effectively recognize Jews as an ethnic minority and not exclusively a religious minority.

***Jewish Groups Praise Trump's Measure Against Campus Anti-Semitism;*** Jewish groups this week welcomed President Donald Trump's Executive Order which will help to protect Jews on college campuses from anti-Semitism. "Jews are indeed a nationality, and Jewish students have faced increasingly-obvious bias on campus," said Rabbi Pesach Lerner, President of the Coalition for Jewish Values. "The fact that it has been thinly disguised as 'anti-Israel' activity is no excuse for bigotry, and adopting the definition of anti-Semitism used by the State Department is the correct response. The President deserves our thanks for doing what is right and just," he added. The Simon Wiesenthal Center, a leading Jewish Human Rights NGO, likewise welcomed the measure. "It will have an immediate impact on USA campuses plagued with anti-Semitic and extreme anti-Israel acts, where many University officials complained that the lack of a working definition of anti-Semitism hampered efforts to deal with anti-Semitic incidents on campus. Now, through this Executive Order, university officials and Jewish students will be better equipped to deal with hate attacks often associated with the anti-Israel BDS campaigns," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, SWC Director of Global Social Action. "More broadly, President Trump's Executive Order sends a strong message domestically and around the world against history's oldest hate at a time of surging anti-Semitism on both sides of the Atlantic," Cooper added.

***London Rally Against Anti-Semitism Draws Thousands;*** A demonstration that took place in London on Sunday 8 Dec. 2019, drew more than 3,000 participants, Jews and non-Jews who waved signs reading, "Together against anti-Semitism," "Anti-Semitism = Racism," "Solidarity with British Jews" and "racist Corbyn unfit to be PM," referring to the head of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn. The demonstration led by the Campaign Against Anti-Semitism was held four days before national elections. Corbyn has been dogged by criticism over anti-Semitism in Labour since his election as party leader in 2015. Some party members have been dismissed for anti-Semitic rhetoric, but others have been readmitted and thousands of complaints

have gone unprocessed. Corbyn himself has called Hamas and Hezbollah his “friends.” The Labour Party leader has repeatedly denied that he has anti-Semitic leanings in spite of numerous actions and quotes exposed by British media sources proving otherwise. Corbyn apologized on Tue. 10 Dec. 2019, for the anti-Semitism in his party after a television host prompted him several times to “just say sorry.” Many UK Jews have agreed that the apology wrung from Corbyn comes too late.

***Hundreds Of Thousands Of Christians Expected In Israel During Holiday Season;*** An estimated 165,000 Christians are preparing to visit Israel during the 2019 Christmas holiday season, according to Israel’s Tourism Ministry. Tourism Minister Yariv Levin will host the annual pre-Christmas reception for Israeli Christians and church leaders, which will also be attended by ambassadors, leaders of Christian organizations in Israel and other dignitaries. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the Tourism Ministry will provide free shuttle service between Jerusalem and Bethlehem for Christian pilgrims. Also scheduled is a parade through the main street of Nazareth to the city’s Basilica of the Annunciation on 24 Dec. 2019 to be followed by a fireworks display. The Tourism Ministry reported that 55% of all tourists who visited Israel in 2019 were Christian. The most popular sites they visited were the Western Wall, the Via Dolorosa and the Mount of Olives, all in Jerusalem.

***Oh No! Not Again! Mossad Spy Captured in Saudi Arabia;*** A recent Twitter post reported on a Mossad agent that was captured in northern Saudi Arabia. The official Saudi report determined that the “Mossad agent” was an Israeli vulture armed with photographic and “espionage” equipment. “Heroes” of the Saudi security forces were on their way to place him under arrest and take the bird away for interrogation. Alas, the innocent bird is merely a vulture with a tracking device attached to his body by the Veterinary Department of Tel-Aviv University. The department is exploring the migration of birds in the region. This is not the first time that a “Mossad agent” has been caught in Arab countries. In fact, a few years ago another vulture was captured in Lebanon and was immediately accused of being part of an Israeli attempt to spy on Hezbollah. Sharks, pigeons, storks and even squirrels are all animals that have been reported in recent years as being used by the Mossad. Sad but true, a turkey captured by Palestinians some years ago spent days in a Gaza Strip jail before being convicted of spying for Israel. He was executed shortly thereafter and served up for dinner among the prison staff.



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