

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update January 2, 2020 ***(5th Tevet, 5780)***

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The image shows two items: on the left, a book with a purple cover titled "GOD'S APPOINTED TIMES" by Barney Kasdan, subtitled "A Practical Guide for Understanding and Celebrating the Biblical Holidays"; on the right, a glass bottle of "Anointing Oil" with a label that also includes "Jerusalem of Gold Anointing Oil".

For the Yachad Report Newsletter For January 2020

New York Synagogue Attacker Apprehended; A machete-wielding assailant stabbed five people in a rabbi's basement synagogue in Monsey, NY during a crowded Hanukkah celebration on Saturday 28 Dec. 2019. One victim remains in critical condition with knife wounds to the head following the assault which took place at around 10 p.m. when a man walked into the basement synagogue in Monsey with a machete and began attacking congregants. Some 50 to 60 people had gathered there to light candles to mark the seventh night of Hanukkah. The attacker was forced to flee when several people hurled chairs and a small table at him. Police arrested him at around midnight, after identifying his car via the license plate number. The suspect has been identified as 37-year-old Thomas Grafton. Grafton will face five counts of attempted murder for the attack. Authorities have yet to determine the motives behind the violence, but Governor Andrew Cuomo said the stabbings were clearly an act of "domestic terrorism". This year during Hanukkah at least nine anti-Semitic attacks have been reported in New York City.

Rep. Lee Zeldin, R-N.Y. blames New York Mayor Bill de Blasio for the latest string of anti-Semitic attacks: "There's a massive leadership failure in New York City and Bill de Blasio's answer has been to have another press conference, and if it happens again, have another press conference," Zeldin said on Saturday 28 Dec. 2019, before praising the decision to increase police security. "It needs to happen more. You need to see, on all levels of government, elected officials and community leaders going all out to confront and crush this," said Zeldin. USA President Donald Trump also condemned Saturday night's terrorist attack and called for a united front to "eradicate" anti-Semitism. In a tweet published Sunday evening, the president wished the five victims of the attack a "quick and full recovery". In Israel, PM Binyamin Netanyahu said the country "strongly condemns the recent displays of anti-Semitism including the vicious attack at the home of a rabbi in Monsey, New York. We will cooperate however possible with the local authorities in order to assist in defeating this phenomenon."

Netanyahu Retains Likud Leadership After Primary Elections; Primary elections took place in Israel on Thur. 26 Dec. 2019 for the Likud party chairman. Netanyahu was again voted into Likud's leadership position by a landslide majority following a failed attempt to dethrone him by a former cabinet minister. With

all the ballots from the latest primary election tallied, Netanyahu received support from 72.5% of the party members, compared to 27.5% for challenger Gideon Sa'ar. Netanyahu was unable to form a governing coalition following an unprecedented two elections in 2019 – with a third election scheduled for March 2020. The prime minister is also facing corruption charges, bringing into question his qualifications to continue leading the party. Nevertheless, many of his critics were doubtful as to whether Sa'ar, who has never held more than a mid-level cabinet post, is qualified to lead a country facing security threats on several fronts. The September 2019 vote left the Likud in a virtual tie with the centrist Blue and White party led by former army chief of staff Benny Gantz. Neither were able to form a national unity government partly because Blue and White refused to accept an indicted prime minister. Polls indicate the March 2020 will produce a similar outcome, rounding out more than a year of uncertainty in which Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, has led a caretaker government. Israel's Supreme Court plans to meet this week to consider whether an indicted member of parliament can be prime minister.

Israel Again Falsely Targeted In ICC Accusations; The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. The ICJ comprises a panel of 15 judges elected by the General Assembly and Security Council for nine-year terms. When the ICC was created two decades ago it was already clear that Israel would be a primary target. Such has repeatedly been the case since then. Most recently, this month Fatou Bensouda, the chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, said she is prepared to begin an investigation into so-called Israeli "war crimes" during the 2014 Gaza war during which Israel was accused of using disproportionate force and willfully killing and injuring civilians. She also alleges that the IDF committed war crimes against Gazans violently attempting to breach the border into Israel in 2018 and 2019, as well as crimes in the disputed territories of Judea & Samaria. In an investigation into the 2014 Gaza war by a body of retired generals from Western armed forces and human rights experts, the group unanimously concluded that: "The IDF not only met its obligations under the Law of Armed Conflict but often exceeded these on the battlefield." Gen. Martin Dempsey, at the time Chairman of the USA Joint Chiefs of Staff, said: "Israel went to extraordinary lengths to limit collateral damage and civilian casualties. My first-hand observations during the Hamas-instigated Gaza border violence in 2018-19 echo these assessments."

The probe into the so-called "war crimes" instigated by the Palestinian Authority (PA) has been deemed by high-profile legal and political sources as just the latest evidence that the PA would rather seek to wage legal war against Israel than to negotiate with it. The PA has rejected Israeli peace offers that would have given it statehood over nearly all of Judea & Samaria, Gaza and a share of Jerusalem. It refused because doing so would require it to give up the hope of eliminating the State of Israel altogether. The PA wants to delegitimize Israel in the international courts because it is incapable of living in peace with a Jewish state, no matter where its borders are drawn. Israel has tried to persuade ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda that the tribunal has no authority to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since Israel is not a signatory to the Court's Rome Treaty and the Palestinians are not a state. Israel correctly argued that it has a strong and independent judiciary investigating every incident, and does not hesitate to prosecute and frequently convict whenever there is even the shadow of a violation of the law. As such, the ICC has no authority to act as a super-review court for the Israeli justice system. Sadly all of Israel's defensive arguments at the ICC seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

UN Has No Authority To Recognize A State; VFI editors remind readers that the United Nations is neither a state nor a government, and therefore does not possess any authority to recognize either a state or a government. As an organization of independent states, it may admit a new state to its membership or accept the credentials of the representatives of a new government. Palestinians do not have a state and are not in a position to demand the ICC rights of statehood. Internationally accepted criteria for statehood include unified territory, the capability of responsible governance and readiness to abide by international obligations. With Judea & Samaria controlled by Fatah which continues to promote and glorify terrorism – and Gaza controlled

by Hamas/Iran backed terror groups indiscriminately lobbing rockets and fire balloons into Israel's towns the Palestinians have a long way to go until they fulfill these requirements.

Dutch Lawmaker: Expel ICC Prosecutor; Geert Wilders, head of the Netherlands Party for Freedom (PVV), and a staunch supporter of Israel, is calling on his country to expel the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, who days ago announced her intention to investigate Israel for "war crimes" in the disputed territories. "The International Criminal Court has no authority at all here and behaves as a biased pro-Palestinian institution and an anti-Semitic kangaroo court," said Wilders. "The ICC prosecutor Bensouda should be declared persona non grata and be evicted out of the Netherlands," he added. Bensouda's decision has been denounced by Israeli officials, including PM Netanyahu, who said last week her decision to investigate Israel is "pure anti-Semitism".

Mossad: Iran Remains Our Chief Concern; Iran heads the list of Israel's concerns both in political circles as well as in the Israeli Intelligence Community. Late last week, the Chief of Israeli Mossad, Yossi Cohen, announced that Iran is at the top of Mossad's priorities. "All Iranian nuclear, long-range missile and precision missile activities, Iran's regional spread and its support for terrorist organizations are a challenge to the security of the state of Israel and its citizens." He added that all the bodies and "men and women" of the intelligence agency work together "as a single fist" to achieve results. Cohen's remarks were made at an annual ceremony hosted by President Reuven Rivlin, who praised the intelligence agency. "In the Mossad's dictionary, you will not find the word 'impossible,'" he said. "For the Mossad, excellence is not a luxury, it is the only way to survive in the world of the shadows." Rivlin said Israel's enemies "lay in wait" looking for an opportunity to attack. "They are frustrated by their failure to harm us, and never stop searching for a way to catch us unawares. To protect ourselves in the neighborhood we live in, we have no option but to be sharper and better."

Iran, Russia, China Hold Joint Naval Drill; These three countries deemed by Iranian Rear Admiral Gholamreza Tahani to be "the new triangle of power in the sea", began four days of naval drills in the Gulf of Oman on Friday 27 Dec. 2019, following Iran's activation of advanced centrifuges that enrich uranium at greater speeds. Iranian State news said the drills, launched from the southeastern Iranian port city of Chahbahar, were designed to show that American endeavors to strangle the regime had failed. "The effect will be to show that Iran cannot be isolated," said Tahani. State television echoed him by calling the Russian, Chinese, and Iranian alliance "the new triangle of power in the sea." Also on Friday, Russia's Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu confirmed that the Avangard, its new nuclear-capable hypersonic missile system that can travel at 27 times the speed of sound, is ready for "combat duty." President Vladimir Putin boasted that the Avangard missile can reach anywhere in the world and places Russia as the world leader in a new class of weapons.

These are ominous reports and a dangerous military alliance of nations. Continue to intercede that Israel will be exceedingly cautious in its relationship with Russia. While excellent rapport between the two powers is claimed by both Israeli and Russian leaders, Russia has its own agenda in the Middle East. This agenda has repeatedly accommodated Israel's worst enemies including Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah while claiming goodwill towards the Jewish state. Pray also for Islamist power to be toppled in Iran and every nuclear ambition which threatens Israel and the nations to be thwarted.

Israel to Seize 'Pay For Slay' Terrorist Salaries; Israel's Defense Minister, Naftali Bennet on Wed. 25 Dec. 2019 signed a seizure order for salaries from the PA received by convicted terrorists. The order freezes the monthly allowance given by Palestinian sources to them and their families. The Palestinian Authority has long made monthly payments to individuals under arrest in Israel for terrorism-related offenses. The payments range from about \$400 to \$3,400 month depending on the time served and the seriousness of the terrorist attack. The salaries are informally known as "pay for slay" payments. Among those covered under the new

order are five Arab Israelis serving life sentences. One participated in a 2003 double suicide bombing in Tel Aviv, which killed 23. Two others assisted the suicide bomber who attacked a bus at the Meron Junction in August 2002, killing nine people and injuring 38. The Defense Ministry spokesperson stated that this was the first time that Israel is actively working against terrorists' allowances coming from the Palestinian Authority – and that similar orders will soon be signed into action.

Israel's New Laser Device Tackles Incendiary Balloons; Israeli security forces on Thur. 26 Dec. 2019 introduced the new Light Blade laser system intended to shoot down incendiary balloons, kites, and drones before they enter Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip. In a series of weekly demonstrations since March 2018, along with other forms of violence, Palestinians have launched fire balloons, kites and burning rags from the Gaza Strip borders destroying thousands of acres of Israeli agricultural and forest lands. The Light Blade laser system was developed for police and the IDF by three Israeli engineers from the private sector. The laser can engage targets day or night with an effective range of 2 km. and can be installed on a small trailer or truck. Border Police chief Kobi Shabtai said that Light Blade "provides a near conclusive response to everything relating to balloons and kites, and delivers a safe and effective solution to the drone threat." The system will also be deployed along the northern border with Lebanon.

Palestinians to Limit 'Great March' Protests In 2020; A Palestinian organization representing terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip disclosed that Friday's 27 Dec. 2019 demonstration at the border fence with Israel will be the last in a series of weekly protests since March 2018. The "Great March of Return" demonstrations - falsely dubbed as "peaceful resistance" - have been viewed as an effort to revive hostility against the Jewish state. Some thirty thousand Palestinians participated in the first protest that took place on 30 March 2018, with thousands taking part each Friday since at the Israel/Gaza border. Groups consisting mainly of young men approached the border, rolling burning tires towards the fence to provide smoke screens, and also throwing stones and Molotov cocktails in the direction of Israeli troops. In April 2018, Palestinian began launching kites bearing incendiary devices over the border fence, causing wide-spread damage to property on the Israeli side. Senior Hamas official Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, admitted in a media interview, "when we talk about 'peaceful resistance', we are deceiving the public. This is a peaceful resistance bolstered by a military force and by security agencies, and enjoying tremendous popular support." The weekly demonstrations often turned violent, with upwards of 200 protesters having been killed in clashes with Israeli forces, and thousands more hurt. During one of the protests, an Israeli soldier was killed by a Palestinian sniper. The umbrella organization, calling itself the Higher National Committee, says that starting in Jan. 2020 the protests will be scaled back to once a month but would also be held on national days. Participation in the Friday demonstrations has lessened in the past few months.

Israel's Capital Rated Fastest Growing Tourist Destination; Israel has welcomed 4.5 million visitors during 2019, and the UK-based Euromonitor International this week ranked Jerusalem as the world's most popular and fastest-growing tourist destination. Jerusalem leaped forward in the 219 Top 100 City Destinations report by six places from 2018 to rank 61st while Tel Aviv ranked 79th. The cities that topped the 2019 list were Hong Kong, Bangkok, Macau, Singapore, London, and Paris.

Researchers Develop Molecule for Fighting Lupus; Over five million people globally are afflicted by Lupus, an autoimmune disease similar to Colitis and Crohn's. The long-term malady affects the immune system by making it hyperactive, attacking normal, healthy tissue. Symptoms of the disease range from swelling, inflammation, damage to either the skin, joints, kidneys, heart or lungs, severe fatigue as well as unexplained fever, pain, and rashes across the skin. Researchers Professor Varda Shoshan-Barmatz of Israel's Ben Gurion University and Dr. Jay Chung of the United States National Institute of Health have successfully shown that the mitochondrial protein VDAC1 is "critical" for the release of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). The mtDNA is linked to the composition of Lupus in patients. Also, the newly found discovery has shown results in patients to successfully relieve symptoms of the disease. "Our breakthrough is identifying a new

pathway for the exit of mitochondrial DNA that we can either trigger under controlled conditions or inhibit using our novel molecule that we specifically developed to prevent the formation of this pathway,” said Shoshan-Barmatz. “Since the results thus far with lupus have been so promising, we believe that the molecule will be beneficial with regards to other diseases such as Alzheimer’s, Crohn’s and ulcerative colitis - as our preliminary results already support.”

First Winter Storm Brings Gales, Rain, Snow to Israel; Israel saw its first snowfall of the winter season on Wed. 25 Dec. 2019 as cold fronts, rainfall, and strong gusts swept through the country. Israel was hit by widespread flooding the following day as torrential downpours and strong gusts swept through the country. In Thursday’s late hours of the morning, snow began falling on Mount Hermon, with the temperatures in the area dropping to 0 degrees Celsius. The Sea of Galilee reportedly rose by 6 cm within 24 hours. Before the current rainstorm, measurements showed that this year's annual rainfall in northern Israel stood at around 50% of the yearly average, but this number soared to over 110% of the region's expected quantity of precipitation in just 24 hours. Low temperatures, heavy showers and strong gusts of wind are expected to last until Saturday 28 Dec. 2019. Police forces remain on high alert, calling for people to prepare for road closures due to flooding and urged the residents to stay away from low lying areas.

Iran Limits Internet Prior to Renewed Protests; The Iranian regime this week limited Internet access in several provinces across the country ahead of the expected renewal of nationwide protests on Thur. 26 Dec. 2019. Iran was shaken by demonstrations in over 100 cities during Nov. 2019. Tehran imposed a total Internet shutdown for at least five days in a bid to prevent civilians from posting photos of the ensuing crackdown on social media. Media sources said that the violent repression, which killed up to 1,500 people, was ordered directly by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. An additional 7,000 people are believed to have been jailed, some of whom have been tortured according to rights groups. The internal unrest, which poses the greatest challenge to the mullahs since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, has been worsened by protests in Iraq and Lebanon partially fueled by anger over Iranian interventionism in both countries. The regime’s predicament is further compounded by the intensifying effects of USA economic sanctions.



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