

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update February 6, 2020 ***(11th Shvat, 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 includes 'Jerusalem of Gold Anointing Oil'.

For the Yachad Report Newsletter For February 2020

Arab Leaders Grow Weary of Palestinian Attitude; Following last week's dramatic unveiling of USA President Donald Trump's peace plan for the Middle East, much of the world is mulling the pros and cons of the "Deal of the Century" and wondering if it can bear fruit in the troubled Middle East region. Many world government officials have responded with openness to the initiative, others including leaders in Iran, Turkey, the Palestinian Authority and the USA Democratic Party have deemed it to be everything from a political scam to outright theft of what they claim is due to the Palestinian people. For the most part, Palestinians on the street have displayed a great deal of apathy to Trump's proposal. In PA and Hamas leadership circles the response to the initiative has been one of fury. Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas on Saturday 1 Feb. 2020 said he is cutting all security ties with Israel and the USA in reaction to the plan.

Meanwhile, revealing a shift in attitude towards the Jewish state, many officials in Arab capitals have been frustrated by the habitual refusal on the part of Palestinian leaders to compromise their unreasonable demands on Israel for a return to the peace table. The USA and Israel for some time have courted officials from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Bahrain, and other nations in the region hoping to overcome political impasses. As a result, trade and diplomatic ties are strengthening. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have both urged Palestinian chiefs to consider the USA plan as a basis for new talks with Israel. "It's the first time, I think since the start of the conflict that the Arab position has not been a replica of the Palestinian position," said David Makovsky, director of the Project on Arab-Israel Relations at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "That speaks to a wider sense of regional priorities that Arab countries are developing." The modified tone in Arab capitals reflects the shifting relationships in the region, where nations officially at war with Israel are strengthening ties with its companies and leading figures.

New Report: 800,000 Jews Reside in Judea & Samaria; A new population report of Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria was released last week. The report finds there are 463,353 Jews living in Judea and Samaria. The precise number of Jews residing in the eastern neighborhoods of Jerusalem has not been officially ascertained but is predicted to be between 325,000-350,000, thus making the total figure of Jews living the areas liberated in 1967 about 800,000. The numbers in the report confirm the operating assumption

of the teams working on Trump's newly released peace deal that the Israeli presence in Judea & Samaria is irreversible, and that, unlike previous USA plans for peace, no Jewish homes will be uprooted as part of the current proposal. The growth rate of the "settlement population" is well ahead of the general population, driven in part by the relatively affordable housing prices found in Judea and Samaria, as well as the higher birthrate among their many religious families. The report includes the breakdown of every town in Judea and Samaria and shows population growth as compared to last year and 5 years ago.

Peace Plan Triggers New Tension on Israel's Southern Border; Israel's air force staged "wide-scale" attacks against targets in the Gaza Strip overnight between Thursday and Friday of last week. The military action was in response to three rockets that were launched from the Palestinian enclave. Two of the rockets were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome air defense system. The third landed in an open area. Again, on Saturday night 1 Feb. 2020 Palestinian terrorists fired at least one rocket at Israeli communities east of the Gaza Strip. There were no reports of deaths or injuries in the exchange of fire. Rocket launches against Israel had abated somewhat since a heated exchange of fire followed Israel's targeted killing of an Islamic Jihad leader in the Gaza Strip in Nov. 2019. Yet there has been an upsurge of balloon-borne explosive devices launched into Israel. Palestinians terrorist factions have called for increased hostility against Israel in response to Donald Trump's peace plan released last week, which they see as biased in favor of the Jewish state.

Israel Suspends Beijing Flights Due to Coronavirus; El Al Israel Airlines will not be flying to China until further notice because of the outbreak of coronavirus that continues to spread in China and further afield. Airline officials made the announcement on Thur. 30 Jan. 2020. El Al normally operates three flights a week from Tel Aviv to Beijing and back. That same day, Health Minister Yaakov Litzman announced that Israel had also banned flights from China from entering the country due to the spreading of the coronavirus. With over 12,000 cases and more than 260 fatalities reported as of the weekend, numerous world airlines have canceled China flights, including British Airways, United, American, Air Asia, Cathay Pacific, Air India, Lufthansa, and Finnair. In a further measure to prevent the spread of the virus locally, Interior Minister Aryeh Deri on Friday 31 Jan. 2020 ordered the closure of all land and border crossings to those who are not citizens and residents of Israel who recently spent time in China. Residents returning from China have been instructed to stay in their homes for two weeks. The World Health Organization declared days ago that the coronavirus epidemic in China now constitutes a public health emergency of international concern. The declaration of a global emergency triggers recommendations to all countries aimed at preventing or reducing the cross-border spread of disease.

Nightmare Locust Swarms Devouring East Africa Crops; A plague of locust with swarms up to 40 miles wide is destroying crops and livestock pastureland across east Africa. The condition threatens to trigger a humanitarian crisis, the UN has warned. The horde of 360 billion insects has laid waste to farmland across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, posing an unprecedented threat to food security. It is the worst to hit Kenya for 70 years, and the worst to affect Ethiopia and Somalia for 25 years. The next generation of desert locusts, a million of which can eat enough food for 35,000 people in just one day is expected to swarm in April 2020. The locust information service describes the current situation as 'extremely alarming' and likely to be further exacerbated by new infestations. When rains arrive in March 2020 and bring fresh vegetation across much of the region, the numbers of the fast-breeding locusts could grow 500 times before drier weather in June curbs their spread, the UN says.

400 Ethiopians Set to Rejoin Families in Israel; Ethiopians representing 60 families hope to be brought to Israel before 2 March 2020. The groups are part of the Falash Mura community, who claim links to descendants of Jews who converted to Christianity generations ago under duress but now seek a return to Judaism. Some 8,000 Falash Mura in Ethiopia are awaiting permission to immigrate to the Jewish state, most of whom have relatives in Israel. A Cabinet resolution in 2015 committed to bringing all 8,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel by 2020, but not enough funds have been allocated in successive budgets to obtain that goal. In

October 2018, the Cabinet approved a plan for the immigration of 1,000 candidates in the following year who met the criterion of having first-degree relatives in Israel, but in 2019 only about 600 arrived. Approximately 140,000 Ethiopians live in Israel.

USA Ready to Supply Belarus With 100% of Gas, Oil; USA Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Saturday 1 Feb. 2020 that the United States is willing and able to provide Belarus with 100% of its oil and gas needs, taking aim at Russia which recently cut off supplies. Pompeo, the first secretary of state to visit Belarus in 26 years, arrived in Minsk last week amid new tensions between Minsk and Moscow over energy. In a meeting with President Alexander Lukashenko, Pompeo said, "The United States wants to help Belarus build its own sovereign country. Our energy producers stand ready to deliver 100% of the oil you need at competitive prices. We're the biggest energy producer in the world and all you have to do is call us." Belarus fears Russia is trying to absorb it and last month began purchasing gas from Norway after Russian supplies were cut off. Pompeo said the USA wants to help fill the vacuum and will continue to boost staffing at its embassy in Minsk, which was severely reduced 12 years ago when the USA imposed significant sanctions on the country over human rights abuses. The two countries agreed in September 2019 to exchange ambassadors for the first time since 2008. Pompeo said a new USA ambassador would be named soon.

White House Unveils Mideast Peace Plan; President Donald Trump released the USA Mideast peace plan on Tues. 28 Jan. 2020. The White House statement said, "This vision is just the first step and provides the basis for historic progress toward peace. If the Palestinians have concerns with this vision, they should bring them forth in the context of good-faith negotiations with the Israelis and help make progress for the region. Mere opposition to this vision is simply a declaration of support for the hopeless status quo that is the product of decades of stale thinking. The vision aims to achieve mutual recognition of the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people and the future State of Palestine as the nation-state of the Palestinian people, with equal civil rights for all citizens within each state. The vision creates a path for the Palestinian people to realize their legitimate aspirations for independence, self-governance, and national dignity. Under this vision, neither Palestinians nor Israelis will be uprooted from their homes. The vision fully addresses Israel's security requirements, does not ask Israel to take additional security risks, and enables Israel to defend itself by itself against any threats. The vision provides for a demilitarized Palestinian state living peacefully alongside Israel, with Israel retaining security responsibility west of the Jordan River." PM Netanyahu said the plan recognizes Israel's need for a buffer along the Jordan River, giving it strategic depth against enemies to the east and the ability to prevent the smuggling of weapons to the Palestinians. The Palestinian capital would be in eastern Jerusalem neighborhoods cut off by the Israeli security barrier. The plan also contemplates land swaps giving the Palestinians parts of what is now Israel including some areas of Israel that are heavily populated by Arab citizens.

Palestinians Scorn Trump Deal; Palestinian Authority leaders have rejected Trump's peace proposal outright without so much as a few moments to give the plan some thought. "After the nonsense that we heard today, we say a thousand times no to the deal of the century," Abbas said at a press conference in the city of Ramallah, where the Palestinian Authority is headquartered. A day after USA President Donald Trump announced his Middle East plan to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; calls for mobilization by various Palestinian factions have gone mostly unheeded. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas vowed popular mobilizations against the deal, as groups including the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Hamas, which has governed the occupied Gaza Strip since 2007, called for mass protests. For the last 70 years, the cause of Palestine stirred the Arab street. Wars were fought and lost in their name. By the time Iran became the preoccupation of the USA and its allies in the region, the Palestinians were cast into the unfamiliar role of playing second fiddle. The unveiling of the USA peace plan has generated neither enthusiasm nor anger amongst Palestinians on the street - only apathy.

World Leaders Respond to USA Peace Plan; British Foreign Minister Dominic Raab said Tues. 28 Jan. 2020 that the USA peace plan "is clearly a serious proposal, reflecting extensive time and effort. We encourage the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian territories to give these plans genuine and fair consideration and explore whether they might prove a first step on the road back to negotiations." France said it welcomes President Trump's efforts and will carefully study the peace plan he presented. Australia likewise has welcomed Trump's "Vision for Peace" as a first step towards a two-state solution to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said the UN supports two states living in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders.

Ambassadors from Oman, Bahrain, and the UAE were present when Trump unveiled the plan in the White House, marking a very public endorsement. Saudi Arabia which once drew much of its regional clout from defending the Palestinians was mute. The Palestinians had become a burden, financially and politically, and were no longer worth the investment, the Saudi crown prince had concluded. The United Arab Emirates' ambassador to Washington, Yousef al-Otaiba, said the plan "offers an important starting point for a return to negotiations within a USA-led international framework. Egypt's foreign ministry said that the plan favors a solution that restores all the "legitimate rights" of the Palestinian people through establishing an "independent and sovereign state on the Palestinian territories". Egypt, which along with Jordan is the only Arab country to have made peace with Israel, said it appreciates the USA administration's efforts to try to resolve the decades-old conflict. Iran, of course, has immediately dismissed Trump's Deal of the Century: Hesameddin Ashena, an adviser to Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, said on Twitter: "The shameful peace plan imposed by America on the Palestinians is the treason of the century and doomed to fail."

Israel's PM: Palestinians Will Have No Better Deal; Israel's PM Netanyahu urged the Palestinian Authority to accept the peace plan presented by the Trump Administration on Tues. 28 Jan. 2020, warning that they would "not get a better deal." Netanyahu said: "President Trump provides a peace plan that will allow a deal that will give Israel and the Palestinians peace and security. We can move forward together. It's a concrete plan that can work. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The president offers a great vision for economic development for the Palestinians, which will give hope to the youth, for the future. It is a plan that will change the Middle East," the prime minister claimed. "I hope the Palestinians accept the agreement, the \$50 billion to help them, and give up the dream of destroying Israel and living with us in peace." Netanyahu noted that "compromise is needed from each side, but I am ready for these compromises. Netanyahu said that under Trump's plan the Palestinians will have to disarm Hamas, demilitarize Gaza, recognize Israel as the Jewish state and accept Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem and 30% of Judea & Samaria before they are granted statehood. They also must stop paying salaries to terrorists and their families, cease "incitement against Israel," and withdraw all complaints against Israel at the International Criminal Court. Netanyahu further commented saying, "This is a revolutionary change from previous peace proposals. Instead of pressuring Israel into making concessions, the USA is now making demands of the Palestinians."

Nikki Haley: Palestinians Have One Last Chance; Former USA ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley spoke on Mon. 27 Jan. 2020 at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Haley addressed USA President Donald Trump's peace plan, which was unveiled the following day. "The number one priority" of the deal is "the national security of Israel," she said. "We knew we would not do anything to compromise security, and there would be no deal if either party disagreed," Haley added. "The goal is to get to a place where we can help the Palestinians be in better condition - without harming Israel. The USA will not try to push either side. At the end of the day, it should be a decision between Israel and the Palestinians," she stressed. "It is a plan that is doable, and I hope everyone will keep an open mind. My hope is that Arab society will want to push the matter forward. I think we'll see a direction of openness, and that may signal to the Palestinians that this is perhaps their last chance."

Palestinians Must Face Reality in Mideast; Twice in 2000 and once in 2008, Israel offered Palestinians a state in exchange for a declaration of peace. In 2005, Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Palestinian territory of Gaza and left it to the Gazans to rule themselves. The Palestinians met both the offers and the withdrawal with multiple wars, thus giving the lie to the fantasy that all you need to achieve peace is an outstretched hand. Now the USA proposes a plan that takes account of Israel's security needs and Palestinian aspirations for sovereignty and statehood. What's different here is that the USA is no longer demanding that Israel place itself in existential jeopardy by giving up vital security territory alongside the Jordan River - or that it unilaterally surrender part of Jerusalem, just to be nice. Nor does it make the preposterous demand that the Jewish state cedes the towns and neighborhoods they have built over the past 53 years to help the Palestinians make Judea and Samaria effectively Jew-free. It says that no Palestinians and no Israelis will be uprooted from their homes.

Kushner: USA Plan Will Double the Size of PA; Senior White House adviser Jared Kushner on Tues. 28 Jan. 2020 said that the Palestinians "have a perfect track record of missing opportunities. If they screw this up, I think that they will have a very hard time looking at the international community in the face saying they're the victim, saying they have rights. This is a great deal for them. If they come to the table and negotiate, I think they can get something excellent." Kushner stressed that the plan would double the size of the territory of the Palestinians. He added that the Palestinians are not going to get a state "by doing a day of rage. All doing a day of rage shows is that they're not ready to have a state. Whole-hearted rejections will show the world that they are not interested in peace, they have never been interested in peace and, quite frankly, in the Palestinian areas you have a lot of people that are much vested in the status quo." Kushner also said on Tuesday that the USA Mideast plan "is the first time that Israel has ever agreed to a Palestinian state and it's the first time Israel has agreed to a map, so this is an amazing opportunity for the Palestinian leadership. If they truly want to create a good opportunity for their people, they'd be wise to pursue it."

Knowing Why Palestinians Will Reject USA Peace Deal; The Palestinian rejection of the USA peace deal will not come as a surprise to anyone familiar with their consistently expressed demands regarding any future peace deal. Cumulatively, these demands require the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state. Any suggested peace deal that does not meet these demands will be rejected by the Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority was created as a function of the 1993 Oslo agreement. While the Palestinians were happy to assume the control and jurisdiction in Judea, Samaria and Gaza afforded to them by the accords, they had no intention whatsoever to negotiate any settlement regarding the other issues. The PLO/PA stance on Jerusalem is that the city is Islamic territory that no earthly body has the right to forfeit to non-Islamic rule. Any peace deal that suggests leaving any part of Jerusalem under non-PA/Islamic jurisdiction will be rejected. Moreover, any peace accord that does not ensure the dismantling of every "settlement," including multiple neighborhoods in Jerusalem, and the expulsion of every Israeli from those areas, will be rejected. Any peace plan must ensure the right of every Palestinian refugee to return to the area in which he, or most likely his father/grandfather, lived in 1948. There are 5,545,540 Palestinian "refugees" registered with UNRWA. The PLO/PA understands that the influx of these refugees would signal the end of the democratic Jewish state. For years the Palestinians have consistently expressed their demands regarding any potential peace plan. Any peace plan, offered by any person, at any time, that does not capitulate, in full, to the PLO/PA's demands, will be rejected. The PLO/PA is still living in 1947 and still rejects the very existence of Israel. No appeasing of them, short of offering the destruction of Israel, will ever suffice.

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