

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update April 2, 2020*** ***(8<sup>th</sup> Nisan, 5780)***



## ***For the Yachad Report Newsletter For April 2020***

***USA Now Has the Highest Number of Coronavirus Cases;*** The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the United States reached 100,040 on Friday 26 March 2020, the highest number in the world, according to a Reuters tally. The count has also showed that at least 1,546 have died of the illness across the United States, with the largest numbers so far in Washington state and New York. Italy is second with 86,498 cases and China is third with 81,340 confirmed cases, according to the tally. An all-time high of 3.3 million people filed for unemployment in the USA last week, up from the previous high of 695,000 jobless claims. The spread of the novel coronavirus has forced businesses around the country to shut down and lay off personnel. Commenting on the unemployment numbers last week President Donald Trump said the sharp rise in unemployment claims was “fully expected” and predicted the economy would quickly rebound once the United States overcomes the coronavirus outbreak. Over the weekend, the US House of Representatives passed a historic \$2 trillion coronavirus relief package, which the USA president has signed.

***Israeli Cities Hardest Hit by Coronavirus;*** Instead of Exodus, like the first Pesach in Egypt, the motto is: Don't roam, stay home. Reminiscent of World War II. Except for unfortunately some of the haredi sector, who believe themselves to be immunized by Torah study - and pay the price. Throughout March 2020, Israel has changed its lifestyle into a total lockdown. Data published over the weekend shows the distribution of cases of coronavirus in Israel by localities. The data shows that Jerusalem leads the way with 352 verified cases, followed immediately by Bnei Brak, a center of Haredi Judaism, with 267 cases. In Tel Aviv, where the number of residents is 2.5 times greater than that of Bnei Brak, there have been 211 confirmed cases. Tel Aviv is followed on the list by Ashkelon with 78 cases, Bat Yam with 51, Efrat with 44, Haifa with 44, Be'er Sheva with 43 cases, and Kiryat Yearim, a small predominantly Haredi community located in the Jerusalem area where there was a pointed outbreak and in which there were 30 cases. According to experts, the high number of cases in Bnei Brak and Jerusalem is the result of gatherings and Purim parties that took place in certain groups among the haredi sector - contrary to the guidelines of the Health Minister. However, Israel's Channel 12 noted, in the past week it appears as though the reality has changed and even these communities are now cooperating with the guidelines.

**5 Percent of UK Coronavirus Deaths are Jews;** 22 UK Jews had died after contracting the coronavirus according to figures released last week by the Board of Deputies of British Jews. The number of fatalities is close to 5% of the confirmed national death toll, while Jews make up only 0.5% of the UK's population. Meanwhile, one quarter of Israelis who have contracted the coronavirus in Israel have been infected through contact with another infected individual in a synagogue, figures released by an advisory group to the Health Ministry last week revealed. According to the newly released data, the most common place to contract COVID-19 in Israel is synagogues, where 24% of all infections to date have occurred, with another 5% contracted in yeshivas.

**God Breathed Into My Lungs and Healed Me;** A coronavirus survivor last week told his story to Fox media sources explaining how he was diagnosed with the virus and struggling to breathe as he declined in the hospital and his lungs rapidly filled with fluid. Everything changed, he said, after God came into his room and breathed into his lungs. Clay Bentley, a retired sheriff's deputy from Georgia, shared the story of his miraculous recovery after a bitter battle with the Chinese coronavirus. He believes he contracted the virus after attending a gathering at the Church at Liberty Square in Cartersville, Georgia. He rapidly declined, going to urgent care the next day after struggling to breathe. He was ultimately diagnosed with pneumonia and sent him home. However, he went back to the hospital days later after his condition worsened, and they eventually confirmed that he contracted the coronavirus. "You know I was in the hospital for about 12 days. I guess it was around the fifth or sixth day, the doctors told me we tried everything," he explained. 'You're worse today than you were when you came in the hospital,'" he continued, noting that the doctor stressed the importance of getting the fluid out of his lungs. At that point, Bentley said he heard God tell him, "You're getting better." "I'm just going to tell you, I heard the voice of the Lord tell me as he was telling me that," he says, 'You're getting better. You're getting better,'" he said. "And about I guess it was about 3 o'clock in the morning I got to the point where I couldn't even breathe, and I tell you I felt like I had a man laying on my chest and the weight of this man was so heavy that he was taking my breath," Bentley said. "I couldn't even breathe, and then all of a sudden I felt this - I felt air blown into my lungs and I know as a believer that God was there with me, and he began to blow air in my lungs and I took a deep breath. Well here's the end of the story. The doctor came in the next morning and checked me and he said, 'You hardly - yesterday you were worse than you've ever been and I come in here today and you don't have hardly any fluid in your lungs at all.' And he asked me, he said, 'I just want to ask you if you're a praying man,' and I said, 'Yes sir. I pray. I pray constantly,'" he explained. "And he said, 'Well I have found in my practice when people pray, when people pray, that positive energy causes the body to begin to heal itself.' And I said, 'You can believe that if you want to, but I'm telling you, God came in my room last night and healed me.'"

**Chinese, Israeli Team to Build COVID-19 Testing Facility;** Israeli DNA company MyHeritage announced over the weekend that they will be working with Chinese genomics giant BGI to build an emergency testing facility which will allow Israel to perform an additional ten thousand coronavirus tests per day. The lab is expected to be completed by 9 April 2020 and after a short while, is expected to double the testing output to around 20,000 tests daily. According to MyHeritage CEO Gilad Japhet, "BGI will ship to Israel in the coming days an aerial train of equipment including dozens of advanced qPCR corona testing machines – the type of equipment used to detect RNA viruses, which allows the detection of even minimal amounts of the virus. The equipment also includes RNA extraction robots and large quantities of relevant equipment."

In order for the lab to keep up with the tight schedule and start operating by 9 April, 2020 MyHeritage is preparing to recruit 110 new employees. According to Japhet, "Alongside the air train, about 25 experts from China will come to Israel to train us on how to work with the equipment." Meanwhile, researchers from over 20 labs at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology are working to combat the spread of the coronavirus. These emergency projects focus on detection and diagnostics, vaccine development, therapeutic treatments, and methods for remote care and monitoring of patients, including robotic solutions.

***Special Flights Bring Home Hundreds of Israelis;*** Foreign governments and Israeli diplomats continued last week, to bring home hundreds of Israeli backpackers who were stranded abroad. The majority, more than 600 Israelis, were returned from India. "Some 200 Arab Israeli students from Jordan, 150 Israelis from Central Europe and another 150 from Costa Rica, were flown home safely," said Foreign Minister Israel Katz. "We managed to get tourists out from all parts of Bolivia, and even those that were unable to board last week's El Al flight from Peru will return to Israel soon." Half of the 6000 Israelis that asked the Foreign Ministry for help in recent weeks have already returned, including about 1,000 from India, 1,000 from Peru, hundreds from Australia, Brazil and Mexico and about 100 each from Nepal and Myanmar. Over 1,000 Israeli students returned from Eastern Europe. The government will not be able to help Israelis abroad as much, as more borders close and flights are canceled in the wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, Foreign Minister Israel Katz warned on Thur. 26 March 2020. "The window of opportunity to return to Israel is shrinking, as is the State of Israel's ability to help Israelis who remain abroad during the coronavirus crisis," Foreign Minister Israel Katz warned. Katz called on all Israelis to make an effort to find their way back to Israel.

***900 Jews Make Aliyah During March Despite Coronavirus;*** Some 900 new immigrants have arrived in Israel since the beginning of March 2020, despite the coronavirus crisis the Jewish Agency has said, with 1,000 expected in total before Passover. The new olim have come from across the globe, including Russia, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Argentina, the USA, Canada, Brazil, France, the UK, South Africa, Australia and India. The Jewish Agency has continued to bring new olim into the country in conjunction with the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration. And in coordination with the Health Ministry, the Jewish Agency has implemented a comprehensive emergency procedure for the arrival of the new immigrants to Israel to safely absorb them in Israel. Practically, this means that every immigrant arriving for direct absorption is required to sign a commitment, prior to immigrating, that they will go into immediate quarantine for 14 days at a fixed location. During this period, the Jewish Agency, the Aliyah Ministry and local authorities are maintaining contact with the immigrants remotely to provide ongoing assistance. The Jewish Agency has also set up an immigration hotline based in Jerusalem but linked to several dozen location worldwide and staffed by multilingual professionals who are providing guidance and assistance to every immigrant, even before arrival in Israel

***New Brain Cancer Treatment Available In Israel;*** A new groundbreaking cancer treatment developed by Israeli scientists, which fights malignant brain tumors using electric pulses, has become available to patients in Israel. This FDA-approved treatment comes in the form of a device that delivers Tumor Treating Fields (TTFs) for glioblastoma (GBM), an aggressive form of brain cancer. TTF Fields use alternating electric fields specifically tuned to target cancer cells. Once electric fields enter the cancerous cell, they attract and repel charged proteins during the division process of the hostile cell, preventing the tumor's growth while causing minimal harm to nearby healthy cells. The device, a helmet-like object called Optune, is designed for adult patients who were recently diagnosed with GBM and is administered to brain cancer sufferers going through chemotherapy treatments. Optune was developed by Israeli biotech company Novocure. According to Novocure, TTF is approved in certain countries in Europe and in Canada for treating adults with glioblastoma and in the USA for mesothelioma, two of the most difficult cancer types to treat.

***Kinneret Water Levels Reach 16-Year High;*** The Sea of Galilee, located in northern Israel, is the Jewish state's largest source of freshwater. The lake's water levels are measured daily, and according to officials, reached a record high of 686.6 feet this week. This marks the highest level recorded at the lake since July 2004, nearly 16 years ago. The lake's water levels may see a further increase, due to melting snow from mountains in the Golan Heights. This could create a major flood risk for the surrounding communities, in which case, authorities plan to open an emergency dam that will divert water from the Sea of Galilee to the Jordan River. This development comes as a surprise after years of dangerously low water levels in the lake. One Water Authority official said, "We get less and less rain on average in recent years, and before last year there were five years of severe drought, mainly in the north and the Sea of Galilee." In 2018, Israel's Water

Authority was concerned about the Sea of Galilee's perilously low water levels. At that time, the lake was near the "black line," the level at which low quality, silty water begins.

***Israel's Coronavirus Count Reaches 2030;*** Some 2030 people had tested positive for coronavirus by Wed. 25 March 2020. The death toll from the virus had reached five. 37 Israelis were in serious condition as of Wednesday and over 54 were in moderate condition. An additional 63,164 Israelis are in quarantine after they were exposed to the virus. At the same time, Israel has raised the number of coronavirus tests conducted every day to 5,000. The large number of new cases in part reflects increased testing, with drive-through testing stations.

***Olympics Delayed, A Third Of The World On Lockdown;*** Despite warnings from the USA and Europe that the unparalleled lockdown on more than a third of the world's population is pushing the world economy toward collapse, more governments are opting to stop virus carriers from venturing out of their homes. Japan this week announced that the coronavirus epidemic has forced the country to postpone the Olympics. Just as China began to loosen some restrictions, neighboring India ordered its 1.3 billion people, the world's second-largest population, to stay at home.

***Coronavirus Victimized Both Rich and Poor Across Mideast;*** The new coronavirus is continuing its spread across some of the most vulnerable nations of the Middle East. The International Monetary Fund warns that a lack of medical supplies in Iraq, Sudan, and Yemen could lead to a dangerous surge in prices. The worst outbreak in the Mideast is unfolding in Iran with the number of deaths mounting daily. This week, the Islamic Republic imposed a closure on major shopping malls and centers across the country to further prevent the spreading of the virus. While most recover from the COVID-19 illness, bottoming crude oil prices have put additional strain on even the wealthiest countries of the region.

In Egypt, tourist cancellations have reached 80%, while retail and hospitality sectors have also been hard-hit in countries like the United Arab Emirates where tourism is a pillar of the economy, according to the IMF. The arrival of the global pandemic in Syria, as well as two cases in the Gaza Strip, has raised concerns the virus could run rampant in some of the most vulnerable areas in the Middle East. Lines have formed outside grocery stores, banks and gas stations across the Syrian capital, Damascus, as people brace for wider closures. The government has already shut down restaurants, cafes, and other businesses, and has halted public transportation. This week, in Jordan, authorities have begun distributing food packages to civilians under lockdown because of the Corona crisis.

***Pompeo: Iranian Officials Pocketing Coronavirus Funds;*** Iran's health ministry said this week that a person is dying of coronavirus every ten minutes as caseloads continue to rise and hospitals reach a breaking point. After weeks of skewed numbers and accusations of downplaying or covering up the coronavirus prevalence in Iran, the Tehran government is finally voicing the horrifying extent of the problem in its borders. Meanwhile, according to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Iranian regime officials have pocketed more than \$1 billion in humanitarian funds meant to be used to help the country fight the spread of coronavirus. European countries intended for more than \$1 billion cash for medical supplies to go to the Iranian people, who have been ravaged by the virus. But American officials say regime leaders instead pocketed the money and are now using it to protect themselves from the virus as it spreads throughout the population. Iran has been among the hardest hit by the virus, and its government's response has drawn international criticism, especially from the Trump administration. Secretary of State Pompeo accused Iran of mass corruption as the regime continues to spread propaganda, including accusations that the USA manufactured the coronavirus and is using its tough global sanctions campaign to prevent Iran from accessing medicine and humanitarian aid. Pompeo this week issued a series of new allegations about Tehran's mishandling of the coronavirus outbreak. "Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's fabrications regarding the Wuhan virus are dangerous and they put Iranians and people around the world at greater risk," Pompeo said.

**Natan Sharansky: Surviving Isolation;** Natan Sharansky, a former deputy prime minister, and cabinet minister served as Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel from 2009 to 2018. He is a recipient of the USA Congressional Gold Medal (1986) and the USA Presidential Medal of Freedom (2006) - the highest civilian awards in the United States, as well as the 2018 Israel Prize for his lifetime achievements. Sharansky has this to say about getting through Coronavirus isolation: "My name is Natan Sharansky. I was born in the Soviet Union and at the age of 29, I was arrested for my Zionist activity. I spent 9 years in prison, half of it in solitary confinement and 405 days in a punishment cell. So, I have some experience of spending time in solitary confinement and I want to give you 5 tips to get through the quarantine. **Tip 1:** In prison, I always had to remind myself I am part of a huge, global battle. You also should remind yourself that we are at war with a very dangerous, though invisible, enemy. And whether we will succeed in the battle depends also on your behavior.

**Tip 2:** In prison, I didn't know when I will be released or if I will be released at all. Don't build your future plans based on the hope that in the next few days, or the next few weeks, it all will be finished. It does not depend on you. So try to build plans which fully depend on you. **Tip 3:** Never give up your sense of humor. I remember how in prison I enjoyed telling anti-Soviet jokes to my prison guards. **Tip 4:** Don't give up on your hobbies. I knew how to play chess without the board and in the punishment cell, I could play thousands of games in my head. You can enjoy singing, playing music, drawing, or whatever you like to do. **Tip 5:** Feel your connection. Remember that you are not alone. Jews, for thousands of years, were scattered all over the world. But we always had this feeling that we are part of a great people, with our mutual past, with our mutual future, and with our mutual mission. Think about it. Feel your connection. Together we will succeed".



*Robert I. Solomon: Messianic Rabbi, [rabbisolomon@yachad.com](mailto:rabbisolomon@yachad.com)*

*Jeffery Blalock: Ministries Coordinator, [jeffery@yachad.com](mailto:jeffery@yachad.com)*

*Yachad Ministries, 950 Pine Grove Road, Roswell, Georgia 30075*

*E-mail: [info@yachad.com](mailto:info@yachad.com), Web Page: [www.yachad.com](http://www.yachad.com)*

*Phone: 770-641-3000 (ext. 6)*

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