

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update April 23, 2020 (29th Nisan, 5780)



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For April 2020

Israel's Economy to Gradually Reopen; Israel's government has decided to adopt a proposal that would see trade, services and manufacturing at 100% capacity if they're able to adhere to health orders; people will be able to venture 500 meters from home; those over 65 and those in risk groups are to remain in quarantine. The current proposal to open the economy, which began to take effect on Sunday 19 April 2020, was presented by Defense Minister Naftali Bennett, who claimed it is vital to begin lifting the current lockdown as soon as possible. According to the proposal, trade, services and manufacturing will be operated at 100 percent capacity as soon as next week if they are able to adhere to health directives. Under Bennett's proposal, all businesses will operate under a string of health and safety requirements: 1. Temperatures will be checked at the entrance of each venue. 2. Workers showing coronavirus symptoms will remain at home. 3. Wearing protective face masks is required. 4. A two-meter distance must be maintained from one another. 5. Public Spaces must be disinfected every two hours. 6. For workers between age 50-65, a sterile area must be created. Places such as shopping centers, beauty salons and schools will remain closed. In addition, people over 65 and those at risk of complications from COVID-19 will remain in self-quarantine for the time being and will be eligible for unemployment benefits.

Israel, an Ark in the Sea of Coronavirus; In a study of 60 countries published in Forbes magazine, Israel has ranked first in terms of being the safest country in the world against the coronavirus. The study rated the Jewish state's quarantine measures as highly effective in slowing the spread of the coronavirus. Israel was followed by Germany, South Korea, Australia, and China according to factors, including safety, risk level, and treatment efficiency. In the risk index, Italy was ranked as the most dangerous, followed by the USA, UK, Spain, and France. Health Minister Yaacov Litzman expressed satisfaction with the data, "We have reached the goal of setting ourselves at least 10,000 tests per day. This is a great opportunity to praise the medical staff working around the clock in simple conditions for Israeli citizens. We will continue with this trend with all our might. Litzman added that he was "deeply honored and appreciative" of the citizens of Israel, who struggle with pride and courage during a very difficult time. "The vast majority of you obey the instructions and keep the Ministry of Health's directives aimed at preventing the spread of morbidity and saving lives", he said.

Hungarian Official Honors Holocaust Amid Corona Crisis; With much of Hungary in lockdown, a minister attended a quite ceremony to remember the 600,000 Hungarian Jews killed in the Holocaust. Justice Minister Judit Varga made clear those who died should never be forgotten. Dressed in black, she placed pebbles, flowers, and candles at the Shoes on the Danube embankment monument in Budapest, the capital. She did so at a time when much attention focuses on the coronavirus pandemic.

Turkey's Coronavirus Cases Now Highest in the Middle East; Turkey's Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said on Saturday 18 April 2020 that Turkey's confirmed coronavirus cases have risen to 82,329, overtaking neighboring Iran for the first time to register the highest total in the Middle East. An increase of 3,783 cases in 24 hours also pushed Turkey's confirmed tally within a few hundred of China, where the novel coronavirus first emerged. Koca said 121 more people have died, taking the death toll to 1,890. A total of 10,453 people had recovered from coronavirus so far. The Interior Ministry also said over the weekend that it was extending restrictions on travel between 31 cities for a further 15 days.

Pakistan Christians: Convert to Islam or Starve; Christians and other minorities in Pakistan face starvation as they are denied food aid for refusing to convert to Islam, aid workers say. International Christian Concern (ICC) reports Pakistani Christians were denied food aid amid the COVID-19 crisis in the fourth incident ICC has documented since Pakistan was placed on lockdown by authorities seeking to combat the pandemic. In the Facebook video, a young Christian man claims that a local mosque committee distributed food on 2 April 2020, however, village Christians were told to leave the mosque compound because the food aid was meant for only Muslims. Three other such incidents have been reported since the beginning of April 2020. On 11 April 2020 an incident took place in which Christians were forced to make the Islamic profession of faith to get food aid. "Denying food aid and discriminating among citizens is a crime," Aftab Hayat, a Pakistani NGO leader, told ICC. "Christians often face discrimination and are victims of religious hatred. However, the situation for Christians amid the COVID-19 crisis is alarming and becoming worse. Therefore, the authorities must take note of the developing situation

Israel: New Canal to Flow Waters from Kinneret to Jordan River; Israel's Water Authority last week, decided to open a new canal to flow water from the Sea of Galilee to the southern Jordan River. The strategy bypasses the Degania Dam and prevents its opening this year. The canal has already been dug and will open within days, according to reports. The Water Authority decided as the Kinneret reached just 16 cm under the level at which it would begin overflowing its banks. The canal will flow 5 billion liters of water from the Kinneret to the Jordan River and will avoid the Degania Dam to avoid negatively affecting pumping stations in the area and the financial costs required to open the dam. The opening of the dam would also impact the water supply for agriculture in the area. The canal will allow for the Kinneret to be kept from overflowing without causing floods and waves. The lake is currently at the highest level it's been since 2004.

Wild Boars Pillage Haifa Neighborhoods; Haifa residents under coronavirus lockdown say they are scared to leave their houses even to throw out their garbage. Wild boars traveling in family packs have been trotting through Haifa in increasing numbers. Their once-nocturnal visitations now take place throughout the day, as they root through refuse, spook domestic pets and even block roads. "They come here and turn over our garbage dumpsters. We actually feel defenseless", said one Haifa resident. For now, residents must turn to "pig patrols" made up of volunteer animal-rights activists who can be summoned at all hours to shoo the boars away. "I'm scared that after the coronavirus passes, the boars will have gotten used to coming every day, every night, every hour," said Yaron Hanan, 63, who runs a public campaign that has been calling for a municipal crackdown on the animals. Likewise, jackals have been roaming the parks and streets of Tel Aviv looking for food. Worldwide, with the coronavirus keeping humans inside, many wild animals have taken to the cities to have their own play. People in New Delhi have spotted monkeys looking for food in an alleyway lined with closed shops. In Venice, Italy, clear blue canals have lured swans and fish before tourists return in gondolas. In the north of Wales, herds of wild mountain goats have claimed the empty streets of Llandudno as their own.

Known as the Great Orme Kashmiri goats, they typically live on a nearby hill that looks over the town, rarely heading into it. North Wales police said the agency received calls about the wandering herd - which has been grazing on people's hedges and gardens.

A Full Kinneret - Waters of History and Hope; The Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) is mentioned for the first time in the Bible, in both the books of Numbers and Joshua. According to Christian history, many essential moments of the life and ministry of Yeshua took place on its shores. Now, after many years of drought and an unusually wet winter, Israel's Sea of Galilee is full for the first time in decades. Following an abundant rainfall earlier this week, the Water Authority announced that the level of its waters reached its full capacity, marking a record since 2004. Located in northern Israel, the Kinneret is the lowest fresh-water lake in the world, around 210 meters below sea level. For many years, scarcity of water represented one of Israel's major challenges. This is no longer true, however, thanks to rapid advancement in water-related technologies that have been able to turn previously unusable resources – sea and wastewaters – into major supplies. Yet, most Israelis have been rejoicing in the fact that during the past two winters the Sea of Galilee level has been on the rise. It is due to its religious and cultural as well as political significance, and not merely because of the hydrogeological implications, that the Kinneret is such a central part of Israel's life and identity, said Avner Adin Chairman of Israel Institute of Standards' Central Water Committee.

UK Prime Minister Wins Battle Against Coronavirus; UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson was released on Sunday 12 April 2020 after battling the coronavirus for nearly a week. Johnson, 55, was admitted to St. Thomas' Hospital in London a week prior to the date of his release, because of worsening COVID-19 symptoms. On the second day of his stay in the facility, he was moved into intensive care. Downing Street said throughout his time in the hospital that Johnson was "in good spirits," and assured the public that he was conscious and not on a ventilator - although he was receiving oxygen assistance. The British leader will not immediately return to work and will instead recuperate at Chequers, his official country retreat in Buckinghamshire. On Sunday 12 April 2020 Johnson said in his first public statement since he was moved out of intensive care that he owes his life to the National Health Service staff who treated him for COVID-19. "I can't thank them enough," Johnson said. "I owe them my life."

Pope: "Self-Centeredness" Must be Banished in Coronavirus War; Pope Francis' Easter "Urbi et Orbi" (message to the city and the world) delivered from an empty St. Peter's Basilica instead of to the usual crowd of tens of thousands in the square outside, was by far his most urgent and political since his election in 2013. Saying the focus of this year's "Easter of solitude" should be a "contagion of hope". He lavished praise on doctors, nurses and others risking their lives to save others and hailed those working to keep essential services running. "This is not a time for indifference, because the whole world is suffering and needs to be united in facing the pandemic," he said in the message, almost entirely dedicated to the pandemic's effects on personal and international relations. "Indifference, self-centredness, division, and forgetfulness are not the words we want to hear at this time. We want to ban these words forever!" he said. Pope Francis on Sunday 12 April 2020 called for global solidarity in fighting the coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout, urging the relaxation of international sanctions, debt relief for poor nations and ceasefires in all conflicts. Francis expressed sympathy for those not able to bid farewell to their loved ones because of restrictions and for all those worried about an uncertain future. The pope said now was the time for politicians and governments to avoid "self-centredness" and take decisive, concerted action to help each others' populations live through the crisis and eventually resume a normal life.

Pure Alcohol is Not a Cure for COVID-19; Despite alcohol being banned in the Islamic Republic, the wild rumor has taken hold in the nation that has seen 75,000 confirmed coronavirus cases and 4683 deaths that alcohol can cure the disease. The death toll from Iranians drinking pure alcohol in the tragic misbelief that it can cure the coronavirus has reached about 600, with thousands more hospitalized, according to recent reports "The numbers are very high and are beyond our expectations," Iranian judicial spokesman Gholam Hossein

Esmaili told a state-run news service. The officials said there had been a number of arrests over the bootleg booze, warning that they will be dealt with decisively. "They must be held accountable for their criminal acts, for causing death and damage to citizens," he said of the most lethal of the numerous rumored cures for the contagion. Actual figures of those who have died or been infected with the virus are said to be far higher than those officially published by the Iranian government.

Royalty No Deterrent To Coronavirus; As many as 150 members of the Saudi royal family are now believed to have contracted the coronavirus, according to a person close to the family. The royal family includes thousands of princes, many of whom travel routinely to Europe. Several doctors in Saudi Arabia said the kingdom's biggest current outbreaks were in the slums around Mecca and Medina, home to hundreds of thousands of African or Southeast Asian Muslims. Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the governor of Riyadh, is in intensive care. King Salman, 84, has quarantined himself in an island palace near Jeddah.

Israel Producing Multi-Use Masks for Residents; The Health Ministry has introduced a project to produce high-quality masks that are not only washable so they can be re-used, but are also suitable for all of Israel's dynamic population to use. The project took off on Monday morning 13 April 2020 with the initial production of 300,000 masks. The product line is 100% made in Israel and employs over a thousand Israeli seamstresses. "Thanks to the important venture of locally produced masks, we are able to help our economy which is in dire need of support during these complicated times," said Health Minister Ya'acov Litzman. To further prevent the spread of the virus, the masks will be distributed to residents living in areas with a high concentration of the virus by their local authorities together with the Home Front Command. "A mask can be used as personal protection against the spread disease and infection," Litzman said. To make mask-wearing a norm, residents of these areas will be instructed by the authorities on how to properly wear the masks. Recipients of the mask will receive a kit including three masks paired with an instructional leaflet printed in a variety of languages such as Arabic, English, and Hebrew. The project is being led by defense systems and the Mossad in cooperation with textile experts, and industries that make products for the Defense Ministry. The Mossad has obtained over 10 million masks for Israel, as well as other medical equipment and hundreds of thousands of test kits.

Baptismal On the Jordan River Now Mine-Free; Following a massive explosion that triggered more than 500 landmines in a controlled explosion in March 2020, the Qasr al-Yahud site where Yeshua is believed to have been baptized on the Jordan River is free of landmines for the first time in 53 years. Nearly all the major sects of Christianity have monasteries, churches, and chapels at the site, 10 km. east of Jericho. In 1968, after the Six-Day War, Israel made the site a closed military zone, fearing terrorists could use the churches as a staging ground for attacks. The Jordan River is only a few meters wide at that point and easily crossable on foot. The site is also holy to some Jews. Qasr al-Yahud translates as "The Castle of the Jews," and some believe it was the spot where the Jewish people crossed into Israel for the first time after leaving Egypt. It is also believed to be the site of Elijah the Prophet's ascent to heaven in a "chariot of fire" and the place where his disciple Elisha performed miracles.

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