

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update May 21, 2020 ***(27th Lyyar, 5780)***

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The image shows two items: on the left, the cover of a book titled 'THE POWER OF HIS GARMENT' with the subtitle 'TOUCHING THE POWER IN GOD'S WORD'. The cover features a close-up of a hand touching a white fabric with blue and gold stripes. On the right is a white prayer shawl (tallit) with blue and gold stripes and fringes.

[*For the Yachad Report Newsletter For May 2020*](#)

Knesset Approves First New Israeli Gov't Since 2015; After more than 500 days of deadlock, the Thirty-Fifth Government of Israel was officially voted into power Sunday afternoon—ending nearly a year and a half of political deadlock and three successive general elections within the span of less than one year. The new unity government, led by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and alternate premier Benny Gantz, is set to last just three years—rather than the standard four years for a government—with Gantz rotating in as prime minister after eighteen months. The new unity government includes a total of 74 MKs from both the Right and Left, including 36 members of the Likud, 15 MKs from the center-left Blue and White, nine lawmakers from Shas, seven from United Torah Judaism, three from the Israeli Labor Party, two from the centrist Derech Eretz (which split off from Telem), one from the Jewish Home, and one from Gesher.

Israeli Gov't Research Center Files Patents for 8 Coronavirus Antibodies; Earlier this month, the Defense Ministry revealed that IIBR had completed a groundbreaking scientific development, identifying an antibody that neutralizes the coronavirus, a development that Bennett called “a major breakthrough.” That scientific breakthrough had three key parameters: The antibody is monoclonal, new and refined, and contains an exceptionally low proportion of harmful proteins; the institute has demonstrated the ability of the antibody to neutralize the novel coronavirus, and the antibody was specifically tested on the aggressive coronavirus. “Based on comprehensive scientific publications from around the globe, it appears that the IIBR is the first institution to achieve a scientific breakthrough that meets all three of the aforementioned parameters simultaneously,” the Defense Ministry said in a statement on behalf of the institute.

Israel and India Collaborate to Battle Covid-19; Dana Kursh, Consul General of Israel to South India, highlighted in an article Friday to New Indian Express News the shared methods and approaches both India and Israel have taken in light of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Some of the shared approaches she mentioned included solutions for respirators, an important medical device used to combat coronavirus, in addition to hand sanitation, symptom detection, antimicrobial fabrics and other instruments. Another area noted by Kursh, includes recent innovations such as telemedicine and drive-in testing centers, along with the development of a unique low cost and "open source" respirator by the Israel Air Force, in collaboration with

Microsoft Israel, Magen David Adom, and other national services and companies. India and Israel have extensive economic, scientific, military, cultural and strategic bilateral relations, which have continued to grow in recent years. Currently, India is the largest buyer of Israeli military equipment, while Israel is the second-largest defense supplier to India after Russia.

Holy Jewish Site of Esther and Mordechai Set Ablaze in Iran; The Tomb of Mordechai and Esther, located in the Iranian city of Hamadan, was reportedly set on fire overnight Thursday, according to a Friday tweet by National Director of Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Jonathan Greenblatt. "Disturbing reports from Iran that the tomb of Esther & Mordechai, a holy Jewish site, was set afire overnight. We hope that the authorities bring the perpetrators of this anti-Semitic act to justice & commit to protecting the holy sites of all religious minorities in Iran," he wrote. Prior to the arson of the tomb, one Twitter user named Mohammad Mahdi Akhyar threatened to destroy the holy site on May 14 in response to a tweet by Israel's Foreign Affairs' Farsi Twitter page. It is unclear if the arson is connected to Israel's Independence Day. US Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism Elan Carr strongly condemned the attack on the Tomb of Esther and Mordechai and said, "Iran's regime is the world's chief state sponsor of antisemitism."

Think Tank Urges US to Designate Lebanese NGO as a Terror Entity; A report published Thursday by The Washington Institute urges the US Treasury Department to add the Lebanese environmental NGO Green Without Borders (GWB) its list of Specially Designated Global Terror entities, citing their "clear and undeniable material support to Hezbollah". The authors urged the United States to place sanctions against GWB, which is not currently classified as being a terror entity. The report also cites Hezbollah's construction arm, Jihad al-Binaa, which has been designated by the US Treasury Department since 2007, as "...among GWB's closest collaborators. "By building surveillance posts, denying the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) unrestricted access in southern Lebanon, and granting Hezbollah logistical and operational platforms from which to fire rockets into Israel, GWB has effectively become part of Hezbollah's military infrastructure," it said. The IDF has accused Hezbollah of establishing GWB observation posts near the Blue Line bordering Lebanon and Israel since April 2016 in order to gather intelligence.

Israel's Pluristem Shows Promise with High Survival Rates; A Haifa-based regenerative medicine company that has been treating COVID-19 patients with its biological therapeutic products reported that 75% of those treated were off any mechanical ventilation within 28 days. Last month, Pluristem began testing its PLX cells on patients with COVID-19 in hopes of reducing the effects of the virus-induced pneumonia or pneumonitis and leading to a better prognosis. Eighteen patients were treated under a compassionate use program in Israel, and the FDA single Patient Expanded Access Program. They were all in intensive care units, on invasive mechanical ventilation and suffered from Acute Respiratory Syndrome at the time of treatment. So far, eight of the patients have completed a 28-day follow up period, with a survival rate of 87.5%. In the New York area, only 3.3% (38 out of 1,151) patients who required mechanical ventilation during April and May were discharged alive, as reported by The Journal of the American Medical Association.

Poll: Majority of Religious Americans Interpret Corona virus as a Sign From God; Nearly two-thirds of religious Americans feel the corona virus pandemic is a sign from God telling humanity to change its ways, a new online and telephone poll of 1,002 adults finds. The University of Chicago Divinity School and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that many Americans, both religious and unaffiliated, appear to see a deeper message in the pandemic. 31% of American respondents who said they believe in God said they believe the virus is a sign from God indicating that humanity needs to change, and another 31% responded that they somewhat believe that the virus is a sign. Interestingly, over half of the American believers said they feel at least somewhat that God will protect them from being infected—with Evangelical Protestants more likely than other groups to believe that. Jews and Muslims, a much smaller religious population, did not make up a large enough sample size for the survey.

Chinese Ambassador to Israel Found Dead; Du Wei, Chinese Ambassador to Israel, was found on Sunday without vital signs in his apartment in Herzliya, just three months into his position. The circumstances of his death have not been confirmed—but according to KAN, the initial assessment of teams at the scene is that the ambassador died of natural causes, never waking up from his sleep. A professional diplomat who, in his previous role, was China's ambassador to Ukraine—his death comes after he accused other countries last month of trying to make China the scapegoat of the corona virus pandemic. “That is despicable and should be condemned,” Du said. “The disease is an enemy of the entire humankind and the world should fight it together.” The ambassador, 58, leaves behind a wife and son, who were not with him in the country at the time.

Iran’s Khamenei Lashes out in Tweets Against Israel, UK; On Sunday, Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, issued a series of tweets railing against Israel and Britain. He wrote that “The Zionist regime & its criminal supporters recognize no bounds in brutality & trampling of moral norms. They consider genocide, destruction, the massacre of children & women, & any oppression permissible in Palestine. This rabid, predatory dog attacks innocent ppl.” Khamenei wrote that “Britain has always been a source of evil & catastrophe for the nations in our region. They've hurt the lives of nations in ways unparalleled in the world. In a malicious move in Palestine, they displaced a nation & destroyed a country with a history of thousands of years.” Khamenei has frequently denied the Holocaust, and in 2012 declared the need to "cut out the cancer" of Israel.

Iran Sinks One of its Own Warships; An Iranian warship early this week accidentally struck a sister ship with a missile during an exercise, killing 19 sailors and wounding 15 others. The incident took place during training in the Gulf of Oman, a sensitive waterway that connects to the Strait of Hormuz through which about a fifth of the world's oil passes. Iran regularly conducts exercises in the area. The Konarak, a support ship, which was taking part in the exercise, was too close to a target during an exercise on Sunday 10 May 2020 when the incident happened. The vessel had been putting targets out for other ships to target. The incident took place near the port of Jask, some 790 miles southeast of Tehran, in the Gulf of Oman. A local hospital admitted 12 sailors and treated another three with slight wounds. Iranian media said the Konarak had been overhauled in 2018 and was able to launch sea and anti-ship missiles. Iranian media rarely report on mishaps during its exercises, signaling the severity of the incident.

Israel: Just A Few Coronavirus Cases After Lockdown Eased; Last weekend hundreds of thousands of Israelis visited beaches, parks, and the countryside after the lockdown was eased significantly. The Ministry of Health reported Monday morning 11 May that there were 16,458 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Israel, representing a rise of just 14 since the previous morning. The number of people in Israel who have recovered from the disease is 11,384. Fatalities now number 248, with one additional fatality in the past twenty-four hours. Out of 4,826 current cases, 74 are severely ill, 65 of them on ventilators, and 52 are moderately ill with the remainder having only mild symptoms. The Ministry of Health, which had wanted a slower loosening of the lockdown, will be closely monitoring whether the end of lockdown will result in a spike in new cases in the next week or two.

No Chips Inserted into My Child, Mr. Netanyahu; Cyber experts slammed PM Netanyahu for his proposal to "microchip" children who return to schools and kindergartens as the coronavirus lockdown is lifted. "If the information with the kids' location is uploaded to the internet, a pedophile with some cyber knowledge may invade the system and stalk them," cyber expert Einat Meron said. While speaking at a press conference this week Netanyahu suggested the Health Ministry use new technology to help Israel adjust to its new routine as the state is lifting the coronavirus lockdown. "That is, a technology that has not been used before and is allowed under the legislation we shall enact," he clarified. "I spoke with our heads of technology in order to find measures Israel is good at, such as sensors. For instance, every person, every kid – I want it on

kids first – would have a sensor that would sound an alarm when you get too close, like the ones on cars," the prime minister said. "It will be hard to do it to more than a million schoolchildren who return to their educational institutions in order to ensure one student sits at a distance of two meters from another. It is fictional and dangerous," cyber resilience expert said Einat Meron. Similar to Meron's concerns many fear the state would make use of the information available from the sensors.

Jewish Losses High in French Coronavirus Outbreak; The number of French Jews who have died thus far of coronavirus is noticeably higher than their representation in the general population. Jews make up about 5% of the Covid-19 fatalities recorded in France, a death toll six times larger than their share of the population. France is home to Europe's largest Jewish community and has an estimated 500,000 members. French Jewish organizations have reported that approximately 1,500-2,000 Jews died of coronavirus, including some who were not brought to hospitals and died in nursing homes and other nursing centers. Hundreds have been flown to be buried in Israel. One reason suggested for the high rate of fatality among the French Jewish community is that most French Jews live in Paris or Strasbourg, where the rate of infection has been highest.

Fatah Gunmen Threaten Local Banks; Masked gunmen this week have taken to the streets of several Palestinian cities and neighborhoods to rally against a decision by a number of banks to close the accounts of Palestinian security prisoners held in Israeli prisons. The bank's decision came in response to new IDF legislation, which went into effect on Saturday 9 May 2020 and which declares that "any person who conducts any transaction with assets, including money, in order to facilitate, further, fund or reward a person for carrying out terror-related offenses is himself committing an offense punishable with 10 years in prison and a substantial fine." The closure of the prisoners' accounts has sparked a wave of protests by many Palestinians, including political activists, families of the prisoners, and various Palestinian factions from across the political spectrum. In the areas of Jenin and Nablus, masked gunmen took to the streets to join the protests, firing shots into the air and threatening bank managers to backtrack on their decision.

Palestinian sources said the gunmen belonged to al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the armed wing of the Fatah ruling faction, headed by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. The group has been designated a terrorist organization by Israel, the European Union, Canada, and the USA. In one town several masked gunmen carrying M-16 rifles arrived at the entrance to the branch of Bank of Jordan. After firing several warning shots in the air, one of the gunmen read from a written statement: "We will strike with an iron fist, and everyone should know that our rifles will reach all those who comply with the Israeli move. It's disgraceful to say that we that can't support our [terrorist] prisoners and martyrs."

Anti-Semitic Acts in USA Reach Record High in 2019; The American Jewish community experienced the highest level of anti-Semitic incidents in 2019 since tracking began in 1979, with 2,107 acts of assault, vandalism, and harassment reported across the USA. The 2019 ADL Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents issued Tue.12 May 2020, found that the total number of incidents in 2019 increased 12% over the previous year, with a 56% increase in assaults. Five fatalities were directly linked to anti-Semitic violence, and another 91 individuals targeted in physical assaults. Incidents were reported in every one of the 48 contiguous United States and Washington, D.C. More than half of the assaults nationwide took place in the five boroughs of New York City, including 25 in Brooklyn alone. The surge was marked by deadly attacks on a California synagogue, a Jewish grocery store in New Jersey and a rabbi's New York home, the Anti-Defamation League reported.

Coin Issued During Bar Kochba Revolt Found In Jerusalem; The Israel Antiquities Authority on Mon.11 May 2020 revealed a coin issued during the Bar Kochba revolt, an uprising against Roman rule in Judea in 132-135 A.D. The coin was discovered near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City. It includes the words "Year Two of the Freedom of Israel" and "Jerusalem." Dr. Donald Tzvi Ariel, head of the Israel

Antiquities Authority's coin department, said of the thousands of coins found in the area of the Old City, only four have been from the time of the Bar Kochba revolt, though many more have been discovered elsewhere in the country.



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