

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update June 4, 2020 (12<sup>th</sup> Sivan, 5780)***



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

***Netanyahu Addresses Israel After New Virus Surge;*** PM Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday night 30 May 2020 addressed the nation after a weekend that reflected a surge in coronavirus cases especially in schools. "Here is the essence of my message," said Netanyahu: "Corona is running amok in the world. It is not skipping over us. If we do not adhere to the rules, it will come back and strike us. We need to tighten discipline so that we will be able – at the same time – to open the economy. We will keep the rules and with God's help they will keep us." Netanyahu said that Israel did not reach the number of deaths seen in other countries, thanks to the timely and precautionary measures instituted by the government. He also emphasized that climate is "not a factor" where coronavirus is concerned, noting that in a number of countries with climates similar to Israel, such as Iran, Turkey, and Egypt, the death toll from coronavirus has been exceptionally high, as was the number of deaths in chilly Belgium. Netanyahu also said that the government had reopened the economy and educational system "on an experimental basis." If Israel saw another wave of coronavirus cases, the protective measures would be reinstated, warned Netanyahu.

"We have had very major successes in the fight against corona, successes on a global scale. But the pandemic is most definitely not behind us. We extinguished the greatest flames of the conflagration in the country, but we have been left with the smoldering embers which a slight breeze can fan ablaze and carry the fire to other places. Nobody is immune. As long as there is no vaccine for the virus, it will return and spread if we are not strict about being cautious. We are all called upon to continue adhering to the rules. The rules are simple: Maintain two meters; distance. Wear masks in the public sphere. Wash your hands and maintain the rules of hygiene. If we do not do this, there will be no choice but to go back to restrictions on the economy and in the public sphere. If we do this, we will be able to continue to open our economy, bring back jobs, restore growth, and restore hope."

***USA Holocaust Education Bill Becomes Law;*** President Donald Trump on Thur. 28 May 2020 signed into law a bill to allocate \$10 million in federal funding over the next five years to further Holocaust education. The Never Again Education Act directs millions of dollars toward expanding the USA Holocaust Memorial Museum's education program, supporting a website with curriculum materials for teachers and

hosting workshops in Holocaust education and awareness throughout the country. The Senate unanimously passed the legislation on 13 May 2020, and then sent it to the president's desk.

***Good Relations Increasing Between Arab States and Israel;*** Israel and the Arab world are increasing ties with each other without a peace deal. On 21 May 2020 Saudi writer Khalid Turki Aal Turki wrote "Israel is a peace-loving country. From the day of its establishment until today, we have never heard, read or seen Israel working to spread any ideology or belief in other countries or to support terrorist groups, as Iran and Turkey are doing. Israel dispatches doctors to treat the sick in impoverished African countries and elsewhere without recompense. It also treats many Palestinians, even some who tried to commit terror attacks to murder innocent Israelis! I believe that, by any logic and in view of reality, the interest of the Arab homeland lies with Israel."

Contrary to warnings from diplomats, analysts, and peaceniks who predicted Israel would become a pariah if it didn't settle up with the Palestinians, Israel seems to be making more progress toward normalization with Arab regimes without a credible peace process. Trade between Israel and the Gulf states is now estimated at \$1 billion a year. Much more on the intelligence and security side is reportedly happening behind closed doors. The rise of Iran and Sunni Islamists spewing terror across the region has created a narrow but important coincidence of interests between Israel and the Arab world. Increasing exhaustion and frustration with the never-ending Palestinian cause has opened up more space for Arab states to follow their own interests with Israel.

***Iran: No Backdown on Nuclear Work Despite More USA Sanctions;*** Iran said on Friday 29 May 2020 that its scientists would continue nuclear development activities, despite USA sanctions imposed last week. The country's nuclear department was quoted as saying the USA's decision to impose sanctions on two Iranian nuclear scientists indicates the continuation of a "hostile" attitude. It said the sanctions would make them even more "determined" to continue their nonstop nuclear efforts. The two officials who were sanctioned are involved with Iran's atomic energy organization and are participants in the development and production of centrifuges used to enrich uranium. Hours earlier, Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned the USA against its naval presence in the Gulf as they received 110 new combat vessels. "We announce today that wherever the Americans are, we are right next to them, and they will feel our presence even more in the near future," said the Guards' navy chief, Alireza Tangsiri

***Israel Faces More Iranian Cyber Attacks;*** Israel's National Cyber Directorate (INCD) chief Yigal Unna said last week that in April 2020 Israel faced a "synchronized and organized attack" targeting civilian water infrastructure. He said that when various chemicals are mixed with water in the wrong proportions - which could happen due to a hack - it "can be harmful and disastrous." The attack was "very directly aiming to cause damage in real life said ICS [Industrial Control Systems] controllers. This is the first time we can see something like that aiming to cause damage to real-life, not to data. It wasn't one or two controllers. It was a wide spectrum of attacks aiming specifically at energy and water, and the only reason it failed was our efforts, said INCD sources. We managed to mitigate it and overcome it, but I'm afraid it's only the sign of the first major attack of a new era, on humanitarian targets. The level of attacks will probably get more sophisticated and deadlier."

***Austria's Anti-Semitic Incidents Continue to Escalate;*** In a recent report released by the Jewish Community of Vienna, 550 anti-Semitic acts occurred in Austria in 2019. This is an increase of 9.5% since 2017. "Among the 550 incidents, there were six physical assaults, 18 instances of threats, 78 instances of damage and desecration of Jewish property, 209 instances of mass-produced anti-Semitic literature, and 239 instances of abusive behavior," confirmed the European Jewish Congress (EJC). The majority of crimes were carried out by "right-wing extremists," according to EJC. Other ideological motives include radical Islam and far-left extremism. Germany announced last week that its anti-Semitic crime rate was at its highest level since

2001, reporting 2,000 crimes targeting Jews in 2019. The number of crimes in 2019 was 13% higher than it was in 2018.

***Six-Year-Old Israeli Discovers Ancient Tablet;*** Young children with sharp eyes and a sense of curiosity are always finding ancient treasures buried in the dust and earth of Israel. Most recently a six-year-old Israeli boy discovered a 3,500-year-old clay tablet. The 1.1-inch by 1.1-inch tablet is engraved with a depiction of a man wearing a skirt leading a naked captive whose hands are tied behind the back. The tablet indicates ethnic differences between captor and captive; the captor's hair is curled and his face is full, while the captive is thin and his face elongated. It is the first such tablet ever found in Israel. Imri Elya from Kibbutz Nirim found the artifact at Tel Jemmah and turned it over to the Israel Antiquities Authority. Researchers estimate that the artifact dates to between the 12th and 15th centuries BC, a period during which the Egyptian empire ruled the area. (VFI News)

***Hotels in Israel Begin to Reopen;*** Israel's Ginosar View Hotel is located on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. On Wed. 27 May 2020 hotels began to reopen and at the Ginosar View Hotel, occupancy was at 100% after two and a half months of a coronavirus shutdown. "We are pleased to announce that all 245 hotel rooms will be filled today with guests arriving from across the country to enjoy the Sea of Galilee at its highest level, the gorgeous views, the swimming pool, and excellent service in accordance with the guidelines of the Ministry of Health. There is no more perfect time for an Israeli vacation on the shores of the Sea of Galilee," noted Roni Manor, CEO of Nof Ginosar.

***Shavu'ot and the Book of Ruth;*** Today, Jewish people all around the world celebrate Shavu'ot. The meaning of the word Shavu'ot is "weeks," as it's celebrated 7 weeks after the second day of Passover. In the Christian tradition, it's known as Pentecost—a Greek term which means "fiftieth," referring to the fact that it happens roughly 50 days after Easter. It is customary to read the book of Ruth at this time since the events recounted took place during the time of the spring harvest, and Ruth is a picture of the gentiles' willing acceptance of a Jewish lifestyle and embracing the God of Israel. Ruth the Moabite symbolizes the ability to create a strong and faithful connection between people, even if they are strangers, or significantly different from one another. Ruth, whose name means, "friendship," follows Naomi, her mother in law and friend, with love and uncompromising faithfulness. She chooses the warmth of dedication over the coldness of foreignness and manages to bring people together against all odds. It is a powerful legacy and an important reminder for us all.

***Dubai Jewish Community Gets First Shipment of Kosher Meat;*** A unique package recently landed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), ahead of the Shavuot (Festival of Weeks) holiday: A shipment of glatt kosher (strictly kosher) meat for the small local Jewish community. Sources in the UAE's Jewish community told Kan News that the shipment is large enough to provide meat for six weeks, and is not connected to Israel. Last year, it was reported that a new kosher catering company opened in the UAE, but the report at the time said that the food provided was mostly parve (neither meaty nor milky), since it was not possible at the time to import kosher meat. A source in the Jewish community said, "Until now, we made do like partisans. Each person found his own solution for meat... thank G-d everything changed, and for that we need to thank a number of very dear Jews, who worked hard for this."

***President Trump Pushes to Open US Churches Amid Rising Death Toll;*** This week, the United States surpassed a sobering milestone: 100,000 Coronavirus deaths. And as cases and fatalities continue to rise, so too does the urgency from the White House to reopen the economy. On Thursday, President Trump announced that CDC guidelines on reopening places of worship could be announced by Friday, claiming the country will be "broken" if they remain closed. The guidelines have yet to be released due to a disagreement between the Center for Disease Control and the Trump administration—a spat that has led the White House to revise the guidelines themselves after deeming them to be overly strict. "I think churches, to me, they are so

important in terms of the psyche of our country. ...I think churches are essential. It's wonderful to sit home and watch something on a laptop, but it can never be the same as being in a church and being with your friends. They want to have it opened and I think that's going to be happening very shortly." Trump said.

***Belgium Plans to End Army Protection for Antwerp Synagogues;*** Belgium is planning to stop providing soldiers for security around synagogues in Antwerp. The plan, which has not been finalized, would end the army's protection in the city's Jewish neighborhood in September. The redeployment is connected with budgetary and manpower issues in Belgium, where COVID-19 has severely impacted the economy, and killed more than 9,000 people. "The Jewish community needs more, not less, protection in these difficult times," the Forum of Jewish Organizations of Flemish Jews wrote in a statement published Monday about the plan. Belgian troops were first posted to guard Jewish institutions in Antwerp in May 2014 after an Islamist murdered four people in a terrorist shooting at the Jewish Museum of Belgium in Brussels, located about 40 miles south of Antwerp. Antwerp's center has about 100 Jewish institutions servicing a predominantly Haredi Orthodox population of 18,000 people.

***Professor David Kazhdan Is First Israeli to Win Prestigious Shaw Prize;*** The 2020 Shaw Prize in Mathematical Sciences is being awarded in equal shares to Professor Alexander Beilinson of the University of Chicago and David Kazhdan, Professor of Mathematics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, "for their huge influence on and profound contributions to representation theory, as well as many other areas of mathematics," The Shaw Prize's website announces. This is the first time that the prestigious award has been won by an Israeli citizen. The Shaw Prize, based in Hong Kong, was established in 2002 by media entrepreneur Sir Run Run Shaw to reward individuals who have made significant and original breakthroughs in the fields of astronomy, life science and medicine, and mathematical sciences. The prizes include a cash award of \$1.2 million, and is intended to honor scientists whose ground-breaking work contributes to "furthering societal progress, enhancing quality of life, and enriching humanity's spiritual civilization."

***Saudi, Jordanian Officials Say Moderate Arab States Back Israel's Sovereignty Plan;*** When the Trump administration's Middle East Peace plan was first unveiled on January 28th, it included a provision for Israel to apply sovereignty over the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea area, and all Israeli towns in Judea and Samaria. Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who had already vowed in September to apply Israeli sovereignty to those areas, immediately endorsed the plan, drawing opposition from many—with a number of Arab leaders issuing condemnations of or warnings against its implementation. Jordan's prime minister threatened to review his country's ties with Israel if the sovereignty plan is put into effect, while Jordan's King Abdullah II said the sovereignty plan could put Israel on a 'collision course' with the Hashemite Kingdom. However, some Saudi and Jordanian officials say that several Arab states are quietly backing Israel's plan, which would annex nearly a third of Judea and Samaria.

***Hezbollah's Nasrallah Warns of 'Great War' on All Fronts with Israel;*** Marking 20 years since Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah warned Israel of "the great war that will open all fronts at once," saying that it would be "the end of Israel." The Hezbollah leader stressed, however, that there are "no indications that Israel intends to launch a war against Lebanon." The statements were made during an interview with the Al-Nour Radio Station on Tuesday night, which was broadcast by the Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Manar TV Channel. In a possible reference to a series of airstrikes in recent years on Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria which were blamed on Israel, Nasrallah stated that while the Syrian leadership believes that it is not in the country's interest to be drawn into a war with Israel, the "patience and endurance of the Syrian leadership with Israeli aggression has limits."

***Rouhani Bans Use of Israeli Products;*** Iranian President Hassan Rouhani issued an implementation order on Tuesday of parliamentary legislation passed last week that bans the use of any Israeli products in the country. The ban includes technology, such as computer hardware and software, and was passed unanimously

by Iranian lawmakers last week. The legislation was passed "to confront the hostile acts of the Zionist regime against peace and security," and considers any cooperation with Israel an "act against god." Iran, which is known for its internet censorship, has in the past blocked Israeli technology such as Waze due to its origins.

***Colombian, Argentine Presidents Call to Congratulate Netanyahu;*** Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu spoke with Colombian President Ivan Duque and Argentine President Alberto Fernandez, who called to congratulate him on forming his new government. Prime Minister Netanyahu and Colombian President Duque discussed the upsurge in Iranian involvement in Latin America and agreed to ratify a bilateral free trade agreement. The Colombian President commended the steps the Prime Minister has decided upon to block the coronavirus and said that they greatly influenced his government's dealing with the pandemic. He added that he intends to visit Israel upon the conclusion of the corona crisis. Prime Minister Netanyahu and Argentine President Fernandez discussed steps to deepen bilateral commercial ties. The Argentine President said that he is working to broaden cooperation between Israel and the Mercosur countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay).

***More Than 2,000 Anti-Semitic Crimes in Germany in 2019, Highest Since 2001;*** German authorities announced on Wednesday that 2019 saw more than 2,000 crimes targeting Jews—the highest recorded number of anti-Semitic crime since 2001, and a 13% jump since the previous year. The Berlin paper Tagesspiegel reported that "most offenses against Jews are assigned to right-wing offenders. The most brutal attack was the attack by Stephan Balliet on the synagogue in Halle in October. Balliet tried unsuccessfully to open the door to the fully occupied synagogue and then, in his anger, killed two passersby." The neo-Nazi Balliet was wedded to an anti-Semitic world view that included the "Zionist-occupied government" theory. Germany's statistical data about the causes of antisemitism have faced criticism over the years. In 2017, the German paper Die Welt reported that an outbreak of Islamic-animating antisemitism was registered as right-wing extremism. According to Die Welt's report, "the Islamic share of anti-Semitic offenses is clearly undercounted in police statistics."

***Greece to Welcome Israelis, Germans, Cypriots In First Wave Of Visitors;*** Beginning in mid-June, Greece will allow travelers from around two dozen countries including, Germany, Cyprus, and Israel, to visit without having to be quarantined—part of a gradual easing of coronavirus lockdown restrictions. Tourism accounts for about 20% of the Greek economy, and the government sees the sector as a major engine of its recovery from a lockdown that has brought business to a virtual standstill. "There will be some 20-25 countries whose nationals will be allowed to come," a government source said, adding that the list would include Cyprus, Israel, and countries in central Europe and the Balkans. The full list would be announced this week.

***Churches in Jerusalem and Bethlehem Reopen as Coronavirus Restrictions are Lifted;*** Churches in the cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, including the sites of Jesus' birth and death, reopened Tuesday as local and church authorities lifted some of the social restrictions that were in place due to the coronavirus. Holy Land churches have been closed to the public since March, but local authorities in the Palestinian territories announced that houses of worship would become accessible again along with businesses and stores, according to Reuters. As Holy Land churches reopen, some restrictions continue to be enforced. Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity capped access to 50 people and required protective masks, while Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre announced that worshippers would have to plan their visits ahead of time. Palestinian Tourism Minister Rula Ma'ayah said in a statement Tuesday that the drop in new coronavirus cases allowed for the decision to be made and that reopening churches would "give hope to the whole world that hopefully this pandemic will end."

***Post Covid-19, One-Third of Israelis Stressed and Anxious;*** One-third of Israelis over the age of 21 are stressed and anxious as a result of the coronavirus crisis, according to a study published by the Central Bureau

of Statistics. The report, "Civil resilience during the coronavirus crisis," was the first state-run survey of its kind conducted after the lockdown was lifted., and despite a loosening of restrictions, some 18% of the population describe themselves as lonely and 16% as depressed, the report said. Feelings of depression were more acute among Arab-Israelis than Jews, 23% compared with 17%. Nearly one-third of Arab-Israelis (31%) assessed their mental state as negative, compared with 18% of Jews, the report said. Regarding the economic impact of COVID-19, the statistics bureau on Monday reported that as of late April, a total of 1,141,968 Israelis, or some 27.4% of the workforce, were recorded as claiming unemployment benefits. Fourteen percent, or 789.3 million people, said they had reduced how much food they consumed in the last week due to financial reasons



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