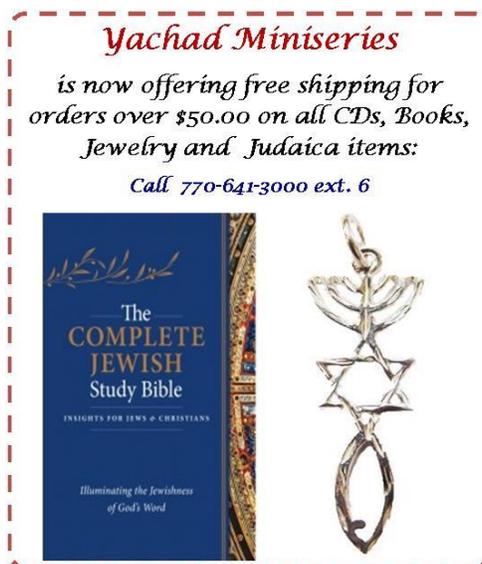


Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update July 16, 2020 ***(24th Tamuz, 5780)***



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Iran Commits to Improve Syrian Air Defenses; Syrian Defense Minister, Ali Abdullah Ayyoub, and Chief of Staff for the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mohammad Bagheri signed a military cooperation agreement on Wednesday, including a commitment by Iran to strengthen Syrian air defense systems, according to Lebanon's Al-Mayadeen news. The two officials discussed the situation in Syria and the need for "foreign forces who entered the country illegally" to withdraw. Ayyoub stated that the Caesar Act, a series of US sanctions on the Assad regime and its supporters, is fighting Syrians with their food, medicine, and children and stressed the need to confront the sanctions, according to Al-Mayadeen. The Syrian defense minister stated that the Syrian army is headed for "victory" and stressed that Israel is a strong partner in the war against Syria and that rebel groups are "part of the Israeli aggression," according to Al-Mayadeen.

Israel Launches Spy Satellite Over Iran; The launch of Israel's latest spy satellite, the Ofek 16, into the deep unknown on Monday morning marked a significant military success for the Jewish state, a country deep in crisis – both politically and socioeconomically. Taking off from Palmachim airbase in the center of the country using a Shavit launcher – which according to foreign reports is used to launch Jericho ballistic missiles – the Ofek 16 successfully made it into orbit and is expected to send back its first high-resolution pictures by next week. The successful launch comes at a time when Israel is still reeling from the coronavirus, with more than 1,000 new confirmed cases a day and close to 350 deaths, leading to a return to lockdowns—and where tensions between Israel and Iran are heading spaceward—with several mysterious explosions having targeted Tehran's missile and nuclear project, and Iran having been accused of targeting Israel's water supply in a cyberattack.

Edelman Invites Jackson to Talk about Antisemitism and Black Lives Matter; New England Patriots receiver Julian Edelman invited fellow NFL star DeSean Jackson to have "uncomfortable conversations" about antisemitism and hatred against Blacks. Edelman was responding to recent posts by Jackson attributed to Adolf Hitler, which Jackson later removed and apologized for—and the reaction to them, including calls for him to be cut by the Philadelphia Eagles. In an Instagram video, Edelman offered to accompany Jackson to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and then to join Jackson on a tour of the National Museum of African

American History and Culture, both located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. “I know he said some ugly things, but I do see an opportunity to have a conversation,” Edelman said. “I am proud of my Jewish heritage. But for me, it’s not just about religion. It’s about community and culture as well. Edelman said the controversy over Jackson’s remarks should not distract from the importance of the Black Lives Matter movement, which Jackson has been actively supporting on social media.

Hagia Sophia Museum to Become a Mosque Again; The ancient cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul – the former seat of eastern Christianity – could now be dedicated to use as a mosque after Turkey’s high court on Friday ruled its conversion into a museum in 1934 was unlawful. The court’s decision revokes that museum status and would allow Hagia Sophia to become a working mosque once more, a decision which sparked a furious response within minutes of being confirmed, with UNESCO warning, “We call upon the Turkish authorities to engage in dialogue before taking any decision that might impact the universal value of the site.” It was a decision long sought by conservative Muslims in Turkey and beyond, and especially by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose popularity is waning after 18 years atop Turkish politics, the New York Times reports.

Watchdog: China Churches Ordered to Praise Xi Jinping's Party Before Reopening; Under Chinese Communist Party (CCP) instruction, state-run churches in China say they were required to raise the national flag, sing the anthem, and praise Xi Jinping's handling of the coronavirus pandemic in order to reopen, a watchdog reports. The Lishiting Catholic Church in the Shunhe district of Kaifeng reopened on June 14 with around 20 people as a priest led the required ceremony supervised by government officials. “We solemnly raise the national flag here today after the epidemic, witnessing the fruits of all people working together under the leadership of Xi Jinping who directs the government and the Party,” the priest allegedly said. On the same day in the same district, a member of the Gangxi Christian Church said its leaders were also instructed to laud Chinese leaders for their handling of the pandemic. “...the government required us to raise the national flag and sing the national anthem, praising Xi Jinping’s ‘victory in fighting the epidemic,’” a congregant shared. The congregant added, “This is completely contrary to our belief.”

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