

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update August 6, 2020 **(16th Av, 5780)**



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For August 2020

Israel's Economy Could Take up to 5 Years to Recover; It may take four to five years for Israel's economy to recover from the coronavirus crisis, according to a new report by the Finance Ministry. The report forecasts two possible scenarios: One in which the country manages to dance with the virus and one in which there are extreme spikes in morbidity. Assuming that Israel's recovery from the coronavirus crisis is somewhere in between the dot-com crisis of the early 2000s and the 2009 economic downturn, the ministry predicts that Israel's GDP will shrink by 5.9% by the end of 2020 and grow by 5.7% in 2021. However, if there is a more extreme crisis than expected, the impact on financial growth will be more and the rate of recovery will be slower, with GDP shrinking by 7.2% in 2020 and growing by only 2.2% in 2021. More than a million Israelis have been out of work or put on furloughs since the start of the crisis. In the best-case scenario, the report predicts, 10% of Israelis will be out of work at the end of the year. In the worst-case scenario, 15%.

Holocaust Survivors to Zuckerberg: Remove Posts Denying Nazi Genocide; Holocaust survivors across the globe have joined a campaign urging Facebook and its CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, to remove posts on the platform that falsely deny the Nazi genocide of Jewish people occurred. The New York-based Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany launched the campaign Wednesday, and has used the hashtag #NoDenyingIt to amplify survivors' calls to remove groups and posts belonging to Holocaust-denying groups. #NoDenyingIt has appeared on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The calls to remove Holocaust-denying content stands in contrast with past comments made by Zuckerberg, who is Jewish, after he said in 2018 that deniers were not "intentionally" getting it wrong and that content that did not explicitly call for violence should be protected, even if it is deeply offensive. "In Germany or Austria people go to prison if they deny the Holocaust because they know it's a lie, it's libel," said Auschwitz survivor Eva Schloss. Schloss also recorded a video message for Zuckerberg that was posted to Facebook.

Twitter Rules Khamenei Speech Does Not Violate Policy; In a Knesset Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs Committee meeting on Wednesday, Twitter was accused of having a "double standard"—for censoring comments by politicians that it has deemed hate speech, while allowing Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to tweet calls to "eliminate" Israel. During the meeting, Israel Jewish Congress executive director

Arsen Ostrovsky pointed out that Twitter has been appending notices pointing out violations of their hate speech policies to tweets by US President Donald Trump, such as one where he wrote: “when the looting starts, the shooting starts.” “Why have you not flagged tweets of Iran’s Ayatollah Khamenei who’s literally called for genocide of the Jewish people?” Ostrovsky asked. Earlier this year, Khamenei tweeted calling for “the elimination of the Zionist regime” through “firm, armed resistance.” Head of Twitter Policy for the Nordics and Israel Ylwa Pettersson, categorized Khamenei’s tweets as permissible political speech. “We have an approach to world leaders that presently says direct interactions with public figures, comments on political issues of the day or foreign policy saber-rattling on military and economic issues are generally not in violation of Twitter rules,” Pettersson said.

Near-Record Anti-Semitism in UK for 1st Half of 2020; Anti-Semitic incidents in the UK have dropped by 13 percent in 2020 compared to the year before, likely due to COVID-19 lockdown regulations, but the 789 events reported between January and June still represent the third-highest number on record for that period, according to a study by a British watchdog group. The Thursday report was released by the Community Security Trust (CST), which has been keeping tabs on anti-Semitism in the UK since 1984. According to the CST, the pandemic also influenced the nature of anti-Semitic incidents in the first half of 2020. There were 10 reports of religious or educational online events being hijacked with anti-Semitic content or behavior. There were a further 26 episodes of pandemic-related anti-Semitism, including the propagation of conspiracy theories accusing Jews of inventing a coronavirus “hoax” or of creating and spreading the disease itself, or people simply expressing the hope that Jews catch the coronavirus and die.

Iran / Iraq Debate: 'Israel Will Liberate Tehran Before Iran Liberates Jerusalem'; Zagros TV (Iraqi Kurdistan) aired a heated debate about Iranian involvement in Iraq. Iraqi journalist and researcher Ghaleb Shabandar said that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey all consider parts of Iraq to be their lebensraum, and he said that Iran’s arrogance and sense of superiority have prevented it from turning Iraq into paradise on Earth, reported the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). Iraqi Sunni opposition activist Mustafa Al-Dulaimi said that “from 1979 and to this day, Iran has been giving us a headache” with its statements and slogans about Israel and the liberation of Palestine, adding that these are all “empty words” meant to “recruit poor youngsters.” Al-Dulaimi also said: “Israel is going to liberate Tehran before you liberate [Palestine].” He compared its methods of recruiting young people to the methods used by ISIS, and he added: “Leave us alone... Go liberate [Palestine].”

Experts: Hezbollah Not Looking for a War with Israel Right Now; Harsh rhetoric from Israel and Lebanon's Shi'ite terrorist organization Hezbollah appeared to threaten further conflict after border unrest this week, but experts predict both sides will try to avoid escalation. As the coronavirus pandemic has deepened Lebanon's economic turmoil and also rocked Israeli politics, the last thing either of the arch-foes wants now is a new military conflict, they argue. Tensions spiked last Monday along the UN-demarcated Blue Line after months of relative calm when Israel said it thwarted an infiltration attempt by up to five Hezbollah terrorists, a claim denied by the Iran-backed terror group. Israel reported an exchange of fire that forced the terrorists back into Lebanon and said it fired artillery across the heavily guarded border for "defensive" purposes. Hezbollah said at the time a response to the deadly Syria strike was "inevitable", heightening tensions. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu warned Monday that Hezbollah was "playing with fire" and that Israel's response to the border incursion would "be very strong".

Nearly 1,000 Jews visit Temple Mount for Tisha B'Av; Nearly 1,000 Jews visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on Thursday morning, July 30, to mark the fast day of Tisha B'Av, which mourns the destruction of the two Jewish Temples that stood at the holy site. The contested compound today houses the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and Jews are forbidden from praying there and face a host of other restrictions within the compound. About 10 were detained by police and taken out of the compound after praying in defiance of the rules at the site. Located in the heart of Jerusalem’s Old City, the compound is revered by both Jews and Muslims, who

call it Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary. Large numbers of Palestinians often gather at the site, especially for Friday prayers, and it has long been a flashpoint between Israelis and Palestinians. Some 800 Jews entered the Temple Mount Thursday morning, with police breaking them up into groups of 20, which were admitted every several minutes.

6th Century Church Uncovered Near Transfiguration Site; Remains of a 6th-century church compound — possibly a monastery — were uncovered during an Israel Antiquities Authority salvage excavation in the Galilee town of Kfar Kama. The location, adjacent to Mount Tabor, is sacred to Christians, who since the early Byzantine era have identified the area as the site of the New Testament account of the transfiguration of Jesus. Mount Tabor is noted in the books of Mark, Matthew, and Luke as the site where Jesus took his disciples Peter, James, and John when they witnessed the face and clothing of their teacher glow with dazzlingly bright light. Based on the excavation's findings, the IAA researchers and Prof. Moti Aviam of the Kinneret Academic College believe the church compound was likely a monastery that was built on the outskirts of the ancient village.

Survey: Most Israelis Worried They Can't Pay Their Bills; Increasing numbers of Israelis have reported feeling anxiety and concerns over their ability to pay their bills during the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported on Sunday, releasing the results of a poll measuring what it called "civil resilience." According to the CBS study, conducted earlier this month, 42 percent of Israelis (around 2.4 million people) reported feeling anxiety, up 9% since a previous survey conducted as the country eased its national lockdown in mid-May. Meanwhile, 21% of respondents reported experiencing a feeling of depression (up from 16% in May) while 19% of the population expressed feelings of loneliness, and 26% said that their mental health had "worsened" or "significantly worsened" during the crisis. Furthermore, 8.5% of respondents aged 21 and up said that their non-mental health had deteriorated, a figure which rose to 13% for those 65-years old and up.

Urgent Plea from Bennett: We Need to Crush the Pandemic; Yamina Party chairman and former Defense Minister MK Naftali Bennett called on the government to alter its strategy for handling the coronavirus crisis, pushing for a more proactive approach aimed at "eradicating" the pandemic. In an interview, Bennett blasted Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz, accusing them of failing to work aggressively to end the ongoing crisis. "The two prime ministers are busy fighting each other," Bennett said. The former Defense Minister said that Israel must work quickly to end the pandemic, pointing to the ongoing economic recession — possibly the worst in Israel's history. "The prime ministers are busy fighting each other, and they have put politics ahead of the State of Israel. That is very serious, but right now we need to fix it, to crush the coronavirus, and to start fixing our economy. We have no time, this is urgent."

Israel to Relaunch International Flights; Prime Minister Netanyahu has instructed Minister of Tourism Miri Regev to prepare an outline for airplane trips from Israel to Cyprus, Greece, and other "green" states with low coronavirus morbidity rates. In turn, Regev instructed the Ministry of Transportation, Civil Aviation Authority, and National Aviation Network to quickly arrange an outline for reopening the skies with the Ministry of Health and National Security Council for approval by the Coronavirus Cabinet. According to the operating plan formulated by the Ministry of Transportation, incoming passengers will be divided into those arriving from "green" and "red" countries, with those from "green" countries defined as having a low morbidity rate, required to quarantine for just five days upon landing, and those from "red," or high-risk countries, obliged to perform a virus check before boarding. The Ministry of Health is currently examining the plan and is expected to submit an expert conclusion. This will allow a final outline for operating flights during the pandemic to be drafted.

\$110 M in Funding for Israeli Med-Tech Imaging Start-Up; Israeli medical imaging technology start-up Nanox Imaging Ltd.—based in Neveh Ilan—has secured \$110 million in funding to support the roll-out of the Nanox.ARC in countries worldwide, the company announced on Tuesday. The Series B funding round was led by Israeli-based A-Labs Advisory and Finance Ltd., as lead advisors. Throughout Nanox's earlier funding rounds, the company secured around \$55 million. Nanox.ARC, in collaboration with its companion cloud-based software Nanox.Cloud, is a novel digital x-ray device intended to provide end-to-end medical imaging services—including image repository, radiologist matching, online and offline diagnostics review and annotation, and connectivity to diagnostic assistive artificial intelligence systems, as well as billing and reporting, according to Nanox founder and CEO Ran Poliakine. According to Poliakine, the Nanox System “will promote early detection of medical conditions that are discoverable by x-ray” screenings—including x-ray based imaging modalities such as CT, mammography, fluoroscopy, and angiogram.

Iran Military Drill Staged to Threaten US and Israel; On Wednesday, Iran upped the rhetoric with images of masses of missiles, which it claims are the first of their type being shot from underground areas. Iran is using the naval drill to put US forces on alert and test them, similar to what Hezbollah is doing to Israel at the same time. The second day of the 14th Great Prophet drills, an annual event for Iran on the southern coast, illustrated “one of the important and strategic achievements of the IRGC Air Force as it is firing ballistic missiles from deep underground,” the report says. This final stage of the military drills included the use of drones in areas around the Straits of Hormuz. These were IRGC drones and Tasnim News says they attacked the model aircraft carrier and damaged the bridge of the ship. In addition, 22 Sukhoi aircraft strafed targets on an island. Iran says it combined its air force and naval units as part of the drill, part of a strategy that could be used to confront enemies. Obviously, Iran’s message here is to the US and US ships in the area.

Christian, Muslim Symbols Found in 7th Century Shipwreck; About 1,300 years ago, a 25-meter-long ship sank just a few dozen meters from the coast of Israel. Most likely, nobody perished in the incident. But its plentiful cargo included 103 amphorae filled with all forms of agricultural products, numerous daily objects used by the crew, and many other unique features, such as several Greek and Arabic inscriptions. They were swallowed by the sea and the sand, which preserved their secrets for centuries. The shipwreck has been excavated by the University of Haifa’s Leon Recanati Institute for Maritime Studies since 2016. It has offered archaeologists unique insights into the life of the region at the time of the transition between Byzantine and Islamic rule, trade routes, and ship construction.

1,300-Year-Old Church Discovered in Galilee; The remains of a 1,300-year-old church featuring fine mosaic floors were uncovered in the village of Kfar Kama in the Lower Galilee, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced on Tuesday. “The church, measuring 12 × 36 m., includes a large courtyard, a narthex foyer, and a central hall,” IAA archaeologist Nurit Feig said in a press release. “This church presented three apses [prayer niches], The nave and the aisles were paved with mosaics which partially survived. Their colorful decoration stands out, incorporating geometric patterns, and blue, black, and red floral patterns. A special discovery was the small reliquary, a stone box used to preserve sacred relics.” The church was first found during the excavation ahead of the construction of a playground in the village at the initiative of the Kfar Kama Local Council and the Jewish National Fund. The researchers also uncovered several rooms adjacent to the church and additional chambers yet to be excavated were revealed by a ground-penetrating radar inspection operated by Dr. Shani Libbi.

More Uncovered: Huge Kingdom of Judah Gov’t Complex Near US Embassy in Jerusalem; One of the largest collections of royal Kingdom of Judah seal impressions has been uncovered at a massive First Temple-period public tax collection and storage complex being excavated near the new United States Embassy in Jerusalem. The main Iron Age structure is exceptional in terms of both its size and architectural style, said Israel Antiquities Authority archaeologist Neri Saper, who co-directed the excavation. Uncovered only three kilometers (1.8 miles) outside the Old City, the compound is believed by Israel Antiquities

Authority archaeologists to have served as an administrative center during the reigns of Judean kings Hezekiah and Menashe (8th century to the middle of the 7th century BCE). Over 120 jar handles stamped 2,700 years ago with ancient Hebrew script seal impressions were discovered at the site, clearly indicating the location's use as a storage and tax center, according to an IAA press release Wednesday. Prevalent among the stamped inscriptions is "LMLK," "Lamelekh," or "Belonging to the King," a way of marking that the foodstuffs stored in the jars had been tithed to the Judean ruler.



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