

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update August 27, 2020 (7<sup>th</sup> Elul, 5780)***

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The image shows two items side-by-side. On the left is a book with a purple cover titled 'GOD'S APPOINTED TIMES' by Barney Kasdan. The cover also mentions 'A Practical Guide for Understanding and Celebrating the Biblical Holidays'. On the right is a glass bottle of 'Anointing Oil' with a white label and a gold cap. The label includes the text 'Anointing Oil' and 'Jerusalem of Gold Anointing Oil'.

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

***US to Lebanon: No Financial Assistance Without Meaningful Change;*** A top State Department official said that the United States will not provide funds directly to the Lebanese government until it undergoes major reforms. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale said that the U.S. will continue to provide humanitarian assistance directly related to the explosion in Beirut, but it will not provide the government with assistance unless it roots out rampant corruption and mismanagement. Hale, on Wednesday, described his recent visit to Lebanon and said that some in Beirut told him: "Please no bailout of the government of Lebanon." Hale said that Lebanon hit "rock bottom" after the blast earlier in August, which killed more than 170, injured 6,000, and left up to 300,000 people homeless. Hale said that "for the kind of substantial assistance that the Lebanese are asking for in order to restructure their finances and their economy, it's going to take leadership that's committed to these deep reforms that we've been talking to the Lebanese about for years now."

***Palestinian Authority's Grand Mufti Banning Muslims from Prayer at Al-Aqsa;*** The Palestinian Authority's Grand Mufti has issued a fatwa banning Muslims from praying at al-Aqsa Mosque within the framework of the UAE-Israel peace deal. Muslims from outside Israel and the Palestinian territories are now able to visit the mosque to pray, under the conditions of the recent deal normalizing relations between Israel and the UAE. However, the Palestinian Authority considers the deal a betrayal of its cause, and religious leaders have declared that any Muslim visiting the site, considered the third holiest in Islam, is a traitor. "We absolutely won't accept the [UAE's] treason. One grain of sand from the soil of pure Palestine and from the soil of Al-Aqsa Mosque is more precious than our blood and our lives," Supreme Sharia Judge Mahmoud al-Habbash said on official PA TV on Saturday, according to a translation by Palestinian Media Watch. He continued: "Whoever wants to come visit the Aqsa Mosque through the gate of Palestine: Welcome, and we will rejoice over him. But whoever wants to come through the Israeli gate is unwanted, and he will find nothing but the shoes of the people of Jerusalem and the spit of the people of Jerusalem in his face."

***Following UAE-Israel Deal, Hebrew to be Taught in Gulf;*** Coming off the heels of the announced peace deal between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, a new groundbreaking initiative has been launched to bring virtual ulpan programs to teach Hebrew to Arabic-speakers in the Gulf states. Announced Thursday by

the World Center for Jewish Education (WCJE), an organization that specializes in training educators and designing curriculum plans in Hebrew language and Jewish studies, it was first launched in June 2020, but the geopolitical reality at the time prevented it from really going public. The UAE-Israel normalization, however, changes things. Not only is it now possible to make it public, but with the Economy Ministry estimating Emirati investment in the Jewish state to reach up to \$350 million, interest is growing in learning Hebrew among the Gulf's business, tourism and academic sectors. And, in addition, there is much speculation in Israel and abroad regarding which Gulf states could soon follow suit.

***Israel Opens Cooperation Office in Honduras;*** Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi on Thursday inaugurated an Israeli office of cooperation in Honduras. Through a video call, Ashkenazi attended the inauguration of the office, along with his Honduran counterpart Lisandro Rosales and Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez. The Israeli office in Honduras will focus on promoting joint projects in the fields of economics and development. The Foreign Minister thanked senior Honduran officials for their support of Israel in the international arena and promised to deepen friendly relations and cooperation in the various fields. The office in Honduras was inaugurated after Honduras recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and opened a trade office in Jerusalem about a year ago. The opening of offices in the two capitals is another step towards the opening of a Honduran Embassy in Jerusalem and the reopening of the Israeli Embassy in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras.

***Turkey Reconverts Another Church Into Mosque;*** Turkey is turning another church into a mosque a month after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ordered the Hagia Sophia to also be reconverted, numerous sources reported. Istanbul's Church of St. Saviour in Chora, a Byzantine church dating back to the 4th century, was handed to Turkey's religious authority to be turned into a mosque Friday. The church served as a mosque during the Ottoman Empire before it was turned into a museum in 1945. The church was built near the ancient city walls of Constantinople, and contains 14th century Byzantine mosaics depicting biblical stories that were plastered over by the Muslim Ottomans in 1453, but then recovered when the building was turned into a museum. A court decision in 2019 to cancel the building's status as a museum, making its fate similar to that of the Hagia Sophia, which was turned into a mosque in July, a move that created a rift between Christians and Islamists.

***Survey: Nearly Half of Israelis Pessimistic Israel Can Beat COVID;*** Close to half of Israelis are not optimistic about the country's ability to overcome the coronavirus pandemic, but a majority still plan to send their children to schools on September 1 if they are opened, according to a survey conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI). According to the study, some 45% of Israelis expressed pessimism regarding the ability of Israeli society to overcome the ongoing crisis. Comparing to data from earlier studies, this shows a significant drop in public optimism. Also, trust in the leadership is still low, with 61% of Israelis claiming to not trust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to properly manage the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. By contrast, coronavirus coordinator Prof. Ronni Gamzu was viewed more favorably, with 59% of Israelis placing their trust in him. Despite the low amount of trust in Netanyahu, over half (57%) of Israelis claim political opposition to the prime minister is the main motivation for the ongoing nationwide protests, with only a third crediting the state of the economy.

***Incendiary Balloons Spark 35 Fires in Southern Israel;*** Incendiary balloons were launched throughout Saturday, sparking 35 fires in Israeli towns surrounding the Gaza Strip, according to Israeli media. Experts from the Fire and Rescue Services determined after examining the sites that all 35 fires were caused by incendiary balloons. On Friday, which saw a similar number of fires, teams of volunteers and members from various authorities spread out to contain the fires and prevent them from spreading to nearby towns. The teams operating to contain the fires include members from the Fire and Rescue Services, the Jewish National Fund, the Nature and Parks Authority and the IDF. Also, on Friday, a bundle of balloons with a suspicious item attached to it was located in Kiryat Gat's industrial area. During efforts by police sappers to neutralize the

item, which turned out to be an explosive device, a nearby residential building was slightly damaged. Later that day, another explosive device attached to balloons was located on a residential rooftop in Beersheba. Police said its personnel dismantled the device without causing any injuries.

***World's First Robot Employment Agency;*** Musashi AI, which bills itself the world's first robot employment agency, believes that it can revolutionize manufacturing with its artificial intelligence (AI)-powered robots. A joint venture between Japan's Musashi Seimitsu – a Honda Motor Corporation Affiliate Company – and Israeli company SixAI, MusashiAI treats robots as a service that companies can lease on a flexible basis. “Basically, if you are a company that has a need for a robotic solution, you partner with us like with any [staffing] agency,” Fenig said. According to Fenig, the cost of leasing the technology varies according to a business's specific needs but generally ranges anywhere from \$1,500 to \$3,000 per month. At the moment MusashiAI is focusing their products on automating the manufacturing floor and offer two AI solutions: a forklift, and a quality control visual inspector. The firm has also developed a proprietary kit that can transform any traditional forklift into a fully autonomous mobile robot.

***Israeli Business with the UAE Nothing New;*** Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are working out official diplomatic ties, but, unofficially, an extensive financial relationship between the two is an open secret. According to the Manufacturers Association of Israel, about 200 Israeli companies are already exporting products to the UAE. These companies come from different industries, most prominently in the fields of medical equipment, telecommunications, and national security. The trade between the two countries is done through subsidiaries that emerge in a third country, normally in the U.S. or Europe, making it difficult to get an accurate picture of the extent of Israeli export to the UAE. The goods exported are finished products that need no routine maintenance—which could not be provided without direct ties between the countries—or such that can be fully maintained by the client, once purchased. Once ties are established, under the agreement to establish a diplomatic relationship between the two countries, the Manufacturers Association of Israel believes that it will be easier for Israeli companies to export directly to the UAE.

***Israel, Sudan Close to Peace Agreement;*** Israel and Sudan on Tuesday said they are close to reaching a peace agreement — setting the stage for a second dramatic diplomatic breakthrough for Israel with its Arab neighbors in a matter of days. A Sudanese Foreign Ministry official announced that his government is “looking forward to concluding a peace agreement with Israel,” drawing a promise from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to “do all that's needed” to wrap up a deal. The announcements came days after Israel and the United Arab Emirates announced an agreement to establish formal diplomatic ties. While Sudan does not have the resources and influence of the UAE, it has a far more hostile history toward Israel. Sudan hosted the landmark Arab conference after the 1967 Mideast war where eight Arab countries approved the “three no's: no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel and no negotiations. In 1993, the U.S. designated Sudan a state sponsor of terrorism for its support of a number of anti-Israel Islamic terror groups, including Hamas and Hezbollah. But in recent years those hostilities have softened, and both countries have expressed readiness to normalize relations.

***REPORT: Iran Claims to have New Cruise Missiles and Advanced Drones;*** Iran claimed to unveil new missiles and drones this week. A ballistic missile named for former IRGC Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani was shown off in the presence of the President of Iran Hassan Rouhani. The new exhibit also included drones and a cruise missile named Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the former head of Kataib Hezbollah. The new weapons are named for the two men the US killed in January in Baghdad. Muhandis, a key Iraqi militia leader and ally of Iran, and Soleimani, were architects of Iran's regional policy. The new cruise missile has a turbocharged lightweight engine, according to Iranian media. Rouhani also told Fars News that drones are increasingly important. He noted that UAVs play a larger role today on the battlefield. Iran has pioneered drones since the 1980s and now has an array of weapons. Some are copied directly from US

***Pastor, Wife to Prison in Iran for Crime of 'Evangelism';*** Iranian courts have sentenced Pastor Victor Bet-Tamraz to 10 years in prison for "conducting Evangelism" and "illegal house church activities," while his wife Shamiram Isavi was given a five-year sentence for "membership of a group with the purpose of disrupting national security" and "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security." Though the couple had been summoned numerous times for appeal hearings, each of the hearings was canceled for a variety of different reasons. The last hearing, which was initially scheduled for June 1, was canceled without any reason being provided. On July 19, Bet-Tamraz was told by his lawyer that his appeal had been rejected, with no further appeals being possible, according to Article 18, a nonprofit that seeks to protect and promote freedom of religion in the Islamic Republic. On August 11, Isavi was told that she had to report to Evin prison in Tehran by Sunday, August 16.

***Jewish Yemen is Disappearing;*** Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels have ordered at least some of the country's remaining Jews to leave, according to sources in the Amran Governorate, north of the capital Sanaa. According to Ali Qudair, a tribal chief in the governorate, soldiers surrounded a village in mid-July to question members of at least one Jewish family living there about its contacts with people abroad. "A group of military vehicles arrived in the area, taking up positions at the entrances to the village and establishing checkpoints," Qudair told The Media Line. "The soldiers entered the house of a Jewish family in the village and questioned members about their correspondence with the State of Israel, their property in the village and other areas, and whether or not they were in contact with relatives residing in other countries." Qudair added that some of those questioned were taken to an unknown location and held for 48 hours.

***REPORT: Hezbollah Received Ammonium Nitrate from Iran;*** The report casts a doubt over the denial by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah that his group had any connection to the blast in Beirut and, quoting anonymous intelligence sources from western countries, stated that documentation exists which proves that Hezbollah had ammonium at its disposal. Hezbollah ordered similar amounts to those that blew up on August 4 from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force, under the command of General Qassem Soleimani, who was eliminated by the US in Iraq at the start of the year, according to Die Welt. Ammonium nitrate is also used in the construction industry and fertilization, but terror groups have been known to use it for making bombs. While most Lebanese authorities say the explosion was triggered by a fire in a port warehouse, Lebanese President Michel Aoun has hinted that the blast may have been caused by a bomb or other "external interference." Earlier this week, the head of Lebanon's customs authority was formally arrested after being questioned over the massive explosion.

***DOJ Targets Hamas, Al Qaeda, and ISIS in 'Largest Ever' Terror-Related Crypto Seizure;*** The Justice Department announced the seizure of terrorism-related cryptocurrency on Thursday following the successful takedown of cyber-enabled finance networks operated by the Islamic State, Hamas's al Qassam Brigades, and al Qaeda. "These three terror finance campaigns all relied on sophisticated cyber-tools, including the solicitation of cryptocurrency donations from around the world," the Justice Department said in a statement. "The action demonstrates how different terrorist groups have similarly adapted their terror finance activities to the cyber age." "Each group used cryptocurrency and social media to garner attention and raise funds for their terror campaigns. Pursuant to judicially-authorized warrants, U.S. authorities seized millions of dollars, over 300 cryptocurrency accounts, four websites, and four Facebook pages all related to the criminal enterprise." The Justice Department, which has billed it the "largest-ever seizure of terrorist organizations' cryptocurrency accounts," also unsealed three civil forfeiture complaints totaling 87 pages detailing efforts by Homeland Security Investigations, the IRS Criminal Investigations, and the FBI to take down a host of terrorist websites and to seize numerous bank accounts and hundreds of cryptocurrency accounts.

***Guy Niv to be First Israeli Cyclist in Tour de France;*** Guy Niv, 26, will make history and become the first-ever Israeli rider to compete in the biggest professional cycling race of all, the Tour de France. His

selection by Team Israel Start-Up Nation represents a remarkable accomplishment for a cyclist who, until three years ago, was primarily a mountain biker and had little experience in road racing. Team Israel Start-Up Nation, which is also making history as the first Israel based and owned team to race in the Tour de France, has picked the climber Niv over his fellow Israeli compatriots in a hotly contested competition for the slot. The team also announced slots for Israeli riders in the two other Grand Tour races later this year. Guy Sagiv, the first Israeli to ever finish a Grand Tour, will race in the Giro d'Italia, while Omer Goldstein will race in the Vuelta a Espana.



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