

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update September 10, 2020 (21st Elul, 5780)

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For the Yachad Report Newsletter For September 2020

Bahrain: Israel-UAE Flights Allowed to Cross Airspace; The Bahraini government announced on Thursday that it had accepted a request from the government of the United Arab Emirates to allow flights between the UAE and Israel to cross its airspace. An official source at the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications quoted by the Bahrain News Agency said the country would allow all flights coming to and departing from the United Arab Emirates to all countries to cross its airspace. The source said that the Civil Aviation Affairs at the Transportation and Telecommunications Ministry had approved the request it had received from the General Civil Aviation Authority in the United Arab Emirates in this regard. The announcement comes a day after Saudi Arabia agreed to allow United Arab Emirates flights to "all countries" to overfly the kingdom. Earlier this week, Saudi Arabia permitted the historic first flight from Israel to the UAE to cross its airspace. Bahrain's announcement follows reports that it is expected to announce the normalization of ties with Israel very soon, perhaps following the official signing of Israel's agreement with the United Arab Emirates.

Abbas: Arabs Must Stick to Arab Peace Initiative; Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on Thursday called on the Arab countries to abide by the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and refrain from normalizing their relations with Israel. Noting that the initiative calls for the Arabs to normalize their relations with Israel after the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital, Abbas said: "The Arabs must abide by their decisions. The Arab Peace Initiative was presented by Saudi Arabia in 2002 and since then it has been endorsed by the Arabs and the United Nations Security Council. The Arabs must reiterate their commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative during the upcoming meeting of the Arab League, which will be chaired by Palestine." Abbas, who was speaking during a videoconference meeting of leaders of all Palestinian factions in Ramallah and Beirut, said that the Palestinians did not and will not mandate anyone to speak on their behalf. In an implicit reference to the recent normalization agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Abbas, who was speaking from his presidential Mukata compound in Ramallah, said: "Normalization schemes with the occupation are used as a poisonous dagger to stab our people."

Israel Leads the World in New COVID Cases Per Capita; Israel's coronavirus Cabinet on Thursday approved lockdowns in 30 cities and towns categorized as "red zones," meaning they have particularly high

coronavirus infection and morbidity rates. According to per capita tabulations made by two Israeli TV news outlets, Israel's rate of new infections is the highest in the world. Using data from Johns Hopkins University in the United States, the reports said the Jewish state averaged 199.3 new cases a day per 1 million population during the seven-day period ending on September 2. The lockdowns will start on Monday, a day after National Coronavirus Project Coordinator Ronni Gamzu's "traffic light" plan takes effect, using red for the most severe restrictions and green for the least severe. The coronavirus death count for the 27 countries of the Middle East and North Africa region stood at 61,259 as of Friday, with 2,441,801 confirmed cases. More than 2,068,000 people have recovered. There are currently some 312,000 active cases. The hardest-hit Middle Eastern country remains Iran, with 380,746 cases and 21,926 deaths.

Israel's Deficit Reaches All-Time High of 26 Billion USD; The Treasury published a report of deficit spending since January, showing that the deficit has reached an all-time high of NIS 87.5 billion. The deficit is currently 8.1% of Israel's GDP.

Once in a Lifetime Discovery: Davidic Dynasty Symbol Found; A "once in a lifetime" find is how the City of David described three immaculately preserved 2,700-year-old decorated column heads, or capitals, from the First Temple period that indicate a connection to the Davidic Dynasty. Archaeologists from the City of David did not expect to find anything this special when they began digging near what is now the Armon Hanatziv Promenade. "I'm still excited," said Yaakov Billig, an archaeologist with the City of David who began exploring the Armon Hanatziv area about 30 years ago. He was working at the site when the sound of a spade scraping a stone slab surprised him. After careful excavation, archaeologists at the site uncovered the capital, whose style is found in royal and official buildings in the kingdoms of Israel and Judea during the First Temple period. "I thought, 'Yaakov, maybe you've been in the sun too long.' But I looked again, and it was still there," Billig told The Jerusalem Post.

Sea of Galilee at Highest Level in 27 Years; Israel's Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) has reached its highest peak in 27 years, according to a Tuesday report. The report noted that a contributing factor to the precipitous rise has been heavy rainfalls over the past two years, contributing to a revitalization of the freshwater lake's ecosystem. A water level rise of this type has not been seen since 2003. Since the end of winter, the Kinneret's water level has dropped by 64 centimeters, well above the previous year's average when measured during the same time of year. Meanwhile, Israelis have been visiting the Kinneret in droves throughout the summer, due to ongoing travel restrictions as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. In May, the Kinneret Urban Union announced that the 15 beaches which comprise the Kinneret Union reached full capacity, with an estimated 35,000 people, crowding the area.

Brain Disease Breakthrough from Israel's Technion; In a groundbreaking discovery, researchers from the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, in partnership with Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC), found out how to rescue functional and structural connectivity, and reduce cognitive impairments of brain diseases with drug treatment. The researchers, Prof. Itamar Kahn of the Technion's Rappaport Faculty of Medicine in Israel and Prof. Nancy Ratner of Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC), claimed that such a breakthrough demonstrates a potential new treatment for cognitive damages in the brain white matter, the areas of the central nervous system. The brain white matter, contains millions of nerve fibers, or axons, that connect other parts of the brain and spinal cord and signal your nerves to talk to one another. A fatty material called myelin protects the fibers and gives white matter its color.

Thousands of Israeli Kids Too Poor for School; Among the two million pupils who began their school year this week, from kindergarten to high school seniors, every third student faces poverty, according to a report published on Thursday. 52,830 first graders are suffering from poverty. The study found that 36% of respondents confessed that their children are skipping meals to help parents survive financially, and 26% say their children are sent to school without a packed lunch or a sandwich. Some 69% acknowledge that their

children lack basic school books and 75% think they won't be able to afford all the fees the school requires. Poverty caused by COVID-19, combined with a struggling educational program that demands families to provide computers for their children, creates a pincer effect that damages families from both sides. Lacking computers, children are being cut off from the normative society. Their chance of gaining work skills and eventually taking part in the workforce is almost zero. This will have lasting effects on Israel's poverty down the road.

Israel, UAE Start Talks to Open Embassies during Historic First Visit; Israel and the United Arab Emirates have started discussions to open embassies in each other's countries, during a high-level government meeting in Abu Dhabi on Monday. The countries' foreign ministries, along with American representatives, worked on the details of the normalization deal and other bilateral agreements between the countries. Foreign Ministry Director-General Alon Ushpiz said: "We are starting a historic process and we plan to promote the institution of full relations and opening embassies in the two countries as soon as possible to strengthen the cooperation between Israel and the UAE. "Movement of people, goods and finance is the central key to realizing the great potential in the relations," Ushpiz added. Israeli and Emirati officials in other areas like science and space, civil aviation, foreign policy and diplomacy, tourism, finance, health and more met for round-table discussions of possible opportunities for cooperation, often with an American facilitator.

UAE Serves Kosher Food to Israeli Guests; The UAE left no stone unturned as it hosted 50-plus Jewish delegates who landed in Abu Dhabi on Monday as part of a US-Israeli delegation. Rabbi Yissachar Krakowski, Director of US-based OU Kosher - the world's largest kosher certification agency - was flown down to Abu Dhabi to ensure the food served to the Jewish guests complies with the strict dietary standards of traditional Jewish law. Rabbi Krakowski said his job is to make sure that everything in the kitchen, including the food and equipment, meet kosher requirements. The rabbi also ensures that all the ingredients and vegetables used for preparing the food are secured from kosher sources. "We have partnered with a local kosher caterer, Elli's Kosher Kitchen, to ensure that all the food served meets kosher requirements." With the normalization of relations between the UAE and Israel, Rabbi Krakowski said food from both countries will bridge the cultural gap. "There are many similarities between Jewish and Arabic food. By bringing both to the table, and letting people break bread together, we will be bringing two cultures together."

'Shalom' on the Front Page of UAE Newspaper; The front page of Tuesday's Khaleej Times, the UAE's longest-running English daily newspaper, features a photo of Monday's historic meeting in Abu Dhabi between Israeli National Security Adviser Meir Ben-Shabbat, UAE National Security Advisor Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed and US Senior Presidential Advisor Jared Kushner. Above the photo is the caption "Salam, Shalom". The first-ever direct commercial flight between Israel and the Arab Gulf touched down at the United Arab Emirates Abu Dhabi International Airport on Monday afternoon. The plane, El Al Flight LY 971, landed in Abu Dhabi at 2:38 p.m. Israel time (3:38 local time), bringing the US and Israeli delegation to the UAE capital city for high-level talks with the UAE towards the finalization of a peace treaty between Israel and the UAE. The flight also made history as the first time an El Al plane is known to have flown through Saudi airspace, after Saudi Arabia permitted Israel, despite not having formal relations with the Jewish state.

Palestinians Outraged by Israeli Delegation's Visit to UAE; Palestinians from across the political spectrum on Monday reacted with fury to the first official visit of an Israeli delegation to the United Arab Emirates and again accused the Gulf state of "stabbing the Palestinian people in the back." The Palestinians were "deeply pained" to see an Israeli aircraft land in the UAE, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said. The aircraft carried the name of the "colony of Kiryat Gat, which was built on the lands of the village of Faluja, where Gamal Abdel Nasser was besieged," he said. Shtayyeh was referring to the military confrontation between the IDF and the Egyptian army during the 1948 War of Independence. Palestinians say Kiryat Gat was built on land that belonged to the villages of Faluja and Iraq al-Manshiya. The

Egyptian army occupied the area in May 1948, but was defeated by the IDF in a counteroffensive. The Egyptian troops included a young officer, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who later became president of Egypt.

Iran's Leader: Israel-UAE Deal Will Always Be Remembered as a Betrayal; Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a speech Tuesday that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) betrayed the Islamic world and Palestine by normalizing relations with Israel. "Of course, the UAE's betrayal will not last long, but this stigma will always be remembered. They allowed the Zionist regime to have a foothold in the region and forgot Palestine," Khamenei said, according to Reuters. "The Emiratis will be disgraced forever for this treachery against the Islamic world, Arab nations and Palestine." The two countries announced a plan for integrating their economies and the UAE formally ended its boycott on Israeli goods Saturday. Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, joined U.S. and Israeli officials Monday on the first official Israeli flight to the UAE, according to NPR. The delegation is set to advance the Aug. 13 deal and fully normalize diplomatic relations between the two countries. Khamenei condemned the meeting between the three countries. "The UAE along with Israelis and evil Americans like the Jewish member of Trump's family are working together against the interests of the Islamic world," Khamenei said.

IDF Sums-up: 100 Terror Targets in 19 Nights; The IDF has attacked about 100 targets of the Hamas Islamic organization for 19 nights, the IDF concluded today. The attacks were carried out in response to rocket launches, disturbances on the fence, and explosive and incendiary balloons launched from the Gaza Strip to Israeli territory. As part of the attacks, military complexes in key structures, underground infrastructure, and military positions of Hamas were attacked. "These attacks constitute significant damage to the infrastructure and military build-up of the terrorist organization Hamas. The IDF is ready for action as far as is needed to protect the residents adjacent to Gaza and the south," the IDF Spokesman said.

Amid the Profound Impact of COVID—What Lies Ahead for US Jewry?; Hundreds of synagogues have been shuttered for months. Jewish organizations are slashing budgets and staff. Jewish community centers, saddled with empty gyms and child care centers, have laid off masses of employees. Jewish camps closed this summer, Jewish day schools will hold only virtual sessions in the new term and kosher restaurants are going out of business. Trips to Israel are suspended, Birthright is on hold until further notice and AIPAC, whose annual conference every March typically draws more 15,000 Israel supporters to Washington, D.C., canceled its 2021 conference. This is what American Jewry looks like six months into a global pandemic that has killed nearly 200,000 Americans and set in motion an economic crisis of unknown scope whose impact likely will last for years. With so much in flux and no end to the crisis in sight, what lies ahead for the world's largest Jewish community? Ira Sheskin, a demographer of American Jewry at the University of Miami had this to say: "While some individual institutions undoubtedly will not survive an economic crisis that seems likely to dwarf the 2008 recession, the basic building blocks of American Jewish life will weather this storm."

Israeli Firefighters to Help Battle California Wildfires; Israeli firefighters arrived in Sacramento, California, to assist with battling a wave of wildfires sweeping through the area. It marked the first time that Israelis have been sent to the United States to help fight fires. The delegation landed Sunday and is scheduled to remain for approximately two weeks. It includes 10 officers and firefighters from the Fire and Rescue Services, rescue and forest fire experts, and a Foreign Ministry representative, according to a statement from the Foreign Ministry. Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg greeted the firefighters' arrival in the capital city with a tweet. "As a Jewish mayor, I'm particularly proud and happy to see them come to our aid," it said in part. As of Monday, 18 major fires were burning across California, with over 16,000 firefighters mobilized to battle them. The fires have burned more than 1.46 million acres since they started on Aug. 15, sparked by a siege of dry lightning.

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