

# **Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update September 17, 2020 (28<sup>th</sup> Elul, 5780)**



## **[For the Yachad Report Newsletter For September 2020](#)**

**Report: Israeli Classes Over-Crowded, Teachers Underpaid;** Israel has some of the most overcrowded school classes in the developed world, according to the OECD “Education at a Glance” report, issued on Tuesday. Among elementary school children, classes are 25% more crowded than the OECD average, with 26.4 children per class compared to the average of 21.1. The gap remains in high schools, with an Israeli class having on average 28.2 children compared to 23.3 for all OECD countries. Kindergarten teachers earn 3% more than their colleagues in other countries but this seems to be an exception to the rule, as elementary and high-school teachers earn 6% less. Israeli children study 958 hours per year, compared to 804 hours in the rest of the OECD. Despite the long hours, the children score poorly on international tests such as the one issued by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018, which found that Israel leads the world in gaps between the various groups that compose its society. Arab-Israeli students, the PISA study found last year, scored at the bottom of all OECD students.

**Israeli Health Officials: 'We're on the Brink of Collapse';** Israeli health officials are concerned the country’s healthcare system may be overwhelmed this winter if the coronavirus pandemic continues to worsen as the flu season begins. According to a report Monday morning, several senior health officials warned that hospitals are already having trouble handling the increased number of coronavirus patients in serious condition, and will be further strained if the pandemic continues to escalate when the flu season begins. Dr. Ze’ev Feldman, the chairman of the Irgun Rofei Ovdei HaMedina (ARAM) - which represents doctors working in the public healthcare system – and chief of Sheba Medical Center’s children’s neurosurgery department expressed concerns over the growing number of serious cases of the coronavirus and the continued increase in the number of fatalities each week. On Sunday, the Ministerial Committee for Legislation voted to impose daily 12-hour curfews on 40 cities and towns across Israel which have high coronavirus infection rates. Most of the communities in question are either Arab-majority or Haredi-majority towns.

**Fatah Party Lauds Munich Olympics Terrorists as Heroes;** Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party, the largest party of the Palestine Liberation Organization, marked the anniversary of the Munich Massacre on Sunday by lauding the terrorists who participated in the attack that murdered 11 Israelis during the 1972 Munich Olympics. In a Facebook post uploaded by the official page of Fatah's Central Region, they wrote: "On this

day, the fighters of Fatah's 'Black September' carried out the operation in Munich that embodied the meaning of heroism, courage and sacrifice of the Palestinian fighter for the Palestinian homeland." Nadav Segal, a member of the Arab Desk of the Zionist Watchdog group Im Tirtzu that reported the post, accused Fatah of promoting a two-faced policy. "Fatah, like the rest of the PLO's organizations, continues to promote a two-faced policy where on the one hand it claims to shun terrorism, and on the other hand, it lauds murderers, names schools after them, and pays them salaries."

***Tel Aviv University Using Nanotechnology to Treat Skin Cancer;*** Researchers at Tel Aviv University have designed a drug delivery system for the treatment of skin cancer melanoma that relies on nanotechnology, according to a university statement. The "nanocarrier" is made up of biocompatible and biodegradable polymer, which is comprised of "repeating units of glutamic acids" (PGA - polyglutamic acid) and packages two different families of drugs together that have both been proven to be effective in the treatment of melanoma: BRAF inhibitors (Dabrafenib) and MEK inhibitors (Selumetinib). "One of the major obstacles of the biological treatments is that after a while, the cancer cells develop resistance to the drugs," said leading researcher Prof. Ronit Satchi-Fainaro from the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology at the Sackler School of Medicine. "We assume that by precise delivery of two or more targeted drugs that will attack the cancer cells forcefully and simultaneously from different directions, we can delay or even prevent the acquisition of this drug-resistance." Their findings were published in the August 2020 issue of *Advanced Therapeutics* as the cover article.

***Dean Kremer, First Israeli Drafted to MLB, Wins Pitching Debut;*** Dean Kremer, the first Israeli baseball player to be drafted into the Major Leagues, was called up to the Baltimore Orioles and earned a victory in his debut — all in less than 24 hours. Kremer led the Orioles to a 5-1 win over the New York Yankees on Sunday, allowing just one hit and one earned run while striking out seven in six innings on Sunday afternoon. The 6'3", 185-pound right-hander pitched for the Israeli national team in the 2014 European Championships and in the 2017 World Baseball Classic. He also played for the gold-medal winning Team USA in the 2013 Maccabiah Games in Israel. Kremer says he is happy to be a role model for Israeli children who want to play professional baseball. "It's awesome to be able to hold the torch, so to speak, for guys like me," said Kremer. "There is a list and it's growing every year. We're just showing the kids over there that it's possible." He has told reporters that he takes his Jewishness seriously and would not pitch on Yom Kippur.

***Netanyahu, Gantz Pay Respects on 9/11;*** In a statement on Twitter, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu commemorated Friday those killed during the September 11 attacks on the United States. "Today we remember all those who perished in the greatest terrorist crime in history, committed on September 11, 2001." He added that "We shall always stand with the United States and free people everywhere in fighting the evil of terrorism." Alternate Prime Minister and current Defense Minister Benny Gantz also noted the solemnity of the day, saying on Twitter Friday "Thinking about our friends in the US today, who are marking 19 years since the unthinkable attack that robbed 3000 innocent people of their lives and changed the world forever. Let the strength and faith of the American people remind us that love will always prevail over hate."

***Bahrain Normalizes Relations with Israel;*** On Friday, King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman al-Khalifa of Bahrain and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu agreed to the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain, according to a White House statement. Bahrain thus becomes the second Gulf state to normalize ties with Israel, after the UAE and Israel announced they were normalizing relations on August 13. "This is a historic breakthrough to further peace in the Middle East. Opening direct dialogue and ties between these two dynamic societies and advanced economies will continue the positive transformation of the Middle East and increase stability, security, and prosperity in the region," the statement said.

***Egyptian President Hails Israel-Bahrain Normalization;*** Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi on Friday hailed the newly announced normalization deal between Israel and Bahrain. The Egyptian President also thanked "all those who helped achieve this historic step". Egypt was the first Arab country to sign a peace deal with Israel in 1979, followed by Jordan in 1994. On Friday, King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman al-Khalifa of Bahrain, and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu agreed to the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain. Bahrain thus becomes the second Gulf state to normalize ties with Israel, after the UAE and Israel announced they were normalizing relations on August 13. Prime Minister Netanyahu said that he was excited to announce a peace agreement with another Arab country - Bahrain. "This is a new era of peace. Peace for peace. Economy for economy," he added.

***Palestinians: 'Our Arab Brothers Have Abandoned Us';*** Palestinians have reacted with outrage and deep disappointment to the Arab League's refusal to condemn the normalization agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates. The refusal of the Arab League foreign ministers to endorse a Palestinian draft resolution against the Israel-UAE agreement will pave the way for other Arab states to establish relations with Israel, Palestinian officials cautioned. The officials denied a report that suggested the Palestinians were considering withdrawing from the Arab League to protest its attitude toward the Palestinians. "First we thought that the United Arab Emirates was the only country that had stabbed us in the back," a senior Palestinian official in Ramallah told The Jerusalem Post. "On Wednesday, we saw how several other Arab countries have betrayed the Palestinian people and the Palestinian issue. This is a black day in the history of the Palestinians and Arabs."

***Iranian Champion Wrestler Navid Afkari, Executed;*** Iranian wrestler Navid Afkari was executed on Saturday after being convicted of stabbing a security guard to death during anti-government protests in 2018, state media said, in a case that has sparked an international outcry. Afkari was executed "this morning after legal procedures were carried out at the insistence of the parents and the family of the victim," the media quoted the head of the justice department in southern Fars province, Kazem Mousavi, as saying. Afkari was convicted of killing Hassan Turkman, a water company security guard, and other charges. Iran's Supreme Court rejected a review of the case in late August. Afkari, a 27-year-old Greco-Roman wrestler, had said he was tortured into making a false confession, according to his family and activists, and his attorney says there is no proof of his guilt. Iran's judiciary has denied Afkari's claims. Afkari's attorney accused authorities of denying his client a family visit before the execution, as required by law. "Were you in so much hurry to execute the sentence that you also deprived Navid of a last meeting?," Hassan Younesi said on Twitter. There was no immediate reaction by Iranian officials to the attorney's accusation.

***More Fires in Beirut;*** A massive fire broke out at Beirut Port on Thursday afternoon, a month after a similar fire had led to a massive warehouse explosion that killed 190 people. Beirut is still full of shattered glass and rubble from last month's tragedy. Flames were large and analysts suggested they may be coming from oil or other stored products. While some locals take it in stride, others are fearful. They open windows so that another shock wave won't blow down the glass. Others point to contradictory officials' statements. One statement saying the fire was "planned" by authorities for some reason. It was unclear why you would burn off material in the port. Another from the army says tires caught fire. The investigation into the August 4 warehouse explosion is ongoing. Due to the political crisis in Lebanon that has seen a cabinet resign and witnessed two visits by the French president to try to pressure the country toward reforms, little has been done to find the culprits.

***Promising Israeli Alzheimer's Treatment to Launch Phase 1 Trial;*** A novel treatment for Alzheimer's, developed by one of Israel's top scientists, is preparing to launch a Phase 1 clinical trial and, if successful, it could change the course of the disease and arrest its progression. The therapy, developed by ImmunoBrain Checkpoint and based on 20 years of work by Prof. Michal Schwartz of the Weizmann Institute of Science demonstrating that the immune system is needed for the maintenance of healthy brain function and repair,

would contribute to the understanding of the biology of Alzheimer's disease. The Phase I trial will specifically test ImmunoBrain Checkpoint's proprietary antibody, IBC-Ab002, which is targeted to enhance the immune system and induce brain repair processes in individuals with Alzheimer's disease. Earlier this month, the company won a \$1 million grant from the Alzheimer's Association to help get them closer to the trial. Schwartz, who is now the company's chief scientist, is considered one of Israel's most renowned scientists. A recipient of the EMET Prize, she made revolutionary contributions to brain research, showing the role of the immune system in maintaining the brain's health, and helping mitigate its dysfunction.

***Soccer Star Lionel Messi to Rep Israeli Brand OrCam;*** Soccer star Lionel Messi is the new face of the Israeli company OrCam, which makes devices that help the visually impaired identify their surroundings. "It's a tremendous satisfaction to help improve the lives of blind and visually impaired people," Messi said Wednesday in a promotional video. "OrCam My Eye is amazing! It's magical." Messi, considered one of the best soccer players of all time, will be a brand ambassador for the Jerusalem-based company for three years. This is not Messi's first stint promoting an Israeli company. In December 2017, the Tel Aviv-based Sirin Labs hired him as its global ambassador. That company developed what it says is an ultra-secure mobile phone using blockchain technology. OrCam was co-founded in 2010 by Amnon Shashua and Zvi Aviram, who also co-founded the self-driving car technology company Mobileye. OrCam devices attach to a user's glasses frames and convert visual information into audio that is relayed to the user's ear.



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