

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update August 13, 2020*** ***(23<sup>rd</sup> Av, 5780)***



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

***Beirut: More Funerals, Massive Protest over Blast;*** Beirut braced for another grim day Saturday, one filled with yet more mourning for those left dead by Lebanon's deadliest explosion and long-simmering anger that brought out tens of thousands to protest the government's mishandling of the massive blast. A stockpile of explosive chemicals is being blamed for Tuesday's explosion, which killed at least 220, injured more than 7,000 and left 300,000 homeless. The cache was being kept at a port in the capital city's center despite at least 10 warnings over a half-dozen years from Lebanon's customs, military, security agencies and judiciary, the Associated Press reported, citing government documents that surfaced on social media. President Michel Aoun only learned of the 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate three weeks ago, although he has been in office for four years. He told reporters he had acted immediately, ordering the military and security officials to do "what was needed." "Do you know how many problems have been accumulating?" Aoun replied, defending himself. For millions in Lebanon, the blast showcased the failure of the country's oppressive government to provide even something so basic as security. On Saturday, tens of thousands across the country were streaming into Beirut to show their disgust.

***Lebanon: Protesters Storm Ministry Buildings after Blast;*** Lebanese protesters stormed government ministries in Beirut and trashed the offices of the Association of Lebanese Banks on Saturday as shots rang out in increasingly angry demonstrations over this week's devastating explosion. The protesters said their politicians should resign and be punished for negligence they say led to Tuesday's blast, the biggest ever to hit Beirut, that killed 220 people and injured more than 7,000, compounding months of political and economic meltdown. The Red Cross said it had treated 117 people for injuries on the scene while another 55 were taken to hospital. Policemen wounded by stones were treated by ambulance workers. A fire broke out in central Martyrs' Square. Dozens of protesters broke into the foreign ministry where they burnt a portrait of President Michel Aoun, a representative for many of a political class that has ruled Lebanon for decades and that they say is to blame for its current mess. "We are staying here. We call on the Lebanese people to occupy all the ministries," a demonstrator said by megaphone. A policeman at the scene said the officer died when he fell into an elevator shaft in a nearby building after being chased by protesters.

***Lebanese Drone Shot Down in Israeli Airspace;*** The IDF downed an unmanned aircraft overnight, after it crossed into Israeli airspace from Lebanon, an Israeli military spokesperson said Friday afternoon. The drone was shot down after it flew over the Mount Hermon area in the Golan Heights, the spokesperson said. IDF forces tracked the unmanned aircraft as it entered Israeli airspace and shot the drone down. There are searches currently underway at the scene for debris from the drone. “The IDF is on high alert on the northern front, and will not permit any violation of the sovereignty of the State of Israel,” the IDF said. A source in the IDF said that there is no connection between the incident last night and a false alarm of a drone intrusion, when warning sirens were mistakenly sounded in northern Israel Friday morning.

***Danon: Lebanon Should Oust Hezbollah;*** The international community should pressure the Lebanese government to oust the militant group Hezbollah from Lebanon in the aftermath of the explosion in the port of Beirut, outgoing Israeli Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon told the Jewish group B’nai B’rith on Thursday. “We should all demand more from the Lebanese government to push Hezbollah out of the government out of the border with Israel,” said Danon. He spoke with B’nai B’rith in a virtual interview that was posted on YouTube on Thursday in the aftermath of the massive explosion at the Beirut Port that killed at least 158 people. The cause of the explosion has yet to be determined, but Danon told B’nai B’rith that while he was UN ambassador he warned the UN Security Council that Hezbollah was storing weapons at the port. “We got the intelligence and I spoke about it publicly, that [Hezbollah is] actually using the airports and the ports to transport the weapons and other things that are dangerous,” Danon said.

***COVID Comm'r: 'Israel Must Drop to Hundreds of Daily Coronavirus Patients by September';*** Coronavirus commissioner Prof. Ronni Gamzu said that no closure is planned for the State of Israel at this stage but that if the rate of infection does not trend downwards within the next two weeks, new restrictions could be possible. Addressing the press against the backdrop of approval of his plans – including his new “traffic light” program – by the coronavirus cabinet, Gamzu stressed that rather than “closures from above, I want order – a bottom-up partnership for all of us.” “We are in a situation where a morbidity of 1,600 patients a day constantly creates a burden on the health system,” he said, noting that while the system can currently handle the situation now, Israel cannot go on this way for long. The goal of the government is to reduce the morbidity to the level of hundreds of new patients per day by September, Gamzu said. “My message to the cabinet was fully received,” he said. “Everyone understood that we want another opportunity to reduce the rate of infection even further.”

***Israel's Sight Diagnostics Raises \$71 million for its Blood Analyzer;*** Israel’s Sight Diagnostics said on Wednesday it raised \$71 million in private funding to expand sales of its finger-prick blood analyzer and support research and development. Koch Disruptive Technologies, Longliv Ventures, which is part of the CK Hutchison Group, and Israel’s OurCrowd participated in the round, which brings Sight’s total funding to more than \$124 million. The funds will support the expansion of commercial operations and advance R&D into the detection of new diseases as well as the blood factors affecting COVID-19 severity. Sight is also working with pharmaceutical companies, including Pfizer, to provide support for different treatment and therapy. Since early in the pandemic, Sight has deployed its analyzer in healthcare facilities fighting COVID-19, including Israel’s Sheba Tel Hashomer.

***Israel's Early Education Ranks Low Among OECD Countries;*** Walking down the street in Israel, you see mothers with multiple children almost everywhere you go. It's no secret that Israel has a higher fertility rate than other countries, in fact, a 2019 study done by the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel proved it. Included in the study were topics such as the quality of maternity leave, percentage of working mothers with young children, the percentage of young children in Israel who attended early education facilities, and the quality of their environment while they were there. Beginning with the ratio of children to caregivers, Israel ranks the lowest in terms of quality, as the ratio is high both in Hebrew and Arabic-speaking facilities and is measured at 50% more children to 23% fewer staff members compared to the countries who

participated in the TALIS survey. However, despite this low ranking, 95% of caregivers in Israel have higher education, while 70% of care-giving staff assistants hold a higher education certificate compared to 25% of assistant staff in other OCED countries.

***Scholars Trace Changes in Earth's Magnetic Field Since 586 BCE through Jerusalem's Ruins;*** A team of Israeli researchers from the Tel Aviv University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Antiquities Authority have been able to measure the Earth's magnetic field on the day Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, shaping a groundbreaking contribution by the Jewish people's long memory to preserve and reveal traces of the planet's past. When objects containing magnetic minerals burn at a very high temperature, those minerals are re-magnetized and therefore record the direction and the magnitude of the field in that precise moment. Artifacts like pottery, bricks and tiles, which are fired in furnaces, ovens and kilns, can all provide these records. However, as precise as their dating can be, it usually spans of at least a few decades. On the contrary, if documented by historical records, destruction layers can be pinned down to a very specific moment – in the case of Jerusalem in 586 almost to the date - providing a unique opportunity. Among the most notable remains of the building, the archaeologists noticed several fragments of a sophisticated plaster floor. Those pieces, left in the same position for millennia, proved to be essential for measuring the intensity and direction of the Earth's magnetic field in those precise moments.

***Beirut Explosion Result of Years of Government Corruption;*** In Lebanon, citizens are accustomed to fury at the government, with the crumbling economy, hours-long electricity cuts, and an armed group dominating much of the country's politics. But the shock and horror following Tuesday night's explosion at the Beirut port, which has claimed over 135 lives so far and left thousands wounded, marked a new low for an already demoralized public. In the midst of one of the worst crises in Lebanon's history, the catastrophe marked what many called a new, painful nadir. Though the source of the blast remains unconfirmed, most of the evidence so far points to government negligence, and many Lebanese seem to agree. The official government account indicates that 2,750 metric tons (about 3,000 tons) of highly explosive ammonium nitrate ignited Tuesday night, according to Lebanese Public Security Director Abbas Ibrahim. The explosive material had been idling in the harbor since 2013. An investigation by Al-Jazeera found repeated letters from Customs Director Badri Daher asking for the cache of ammonium nitrate to be removed. No action was ever taken by authorities.

***Tel Aviv City Hall Lit Up as Lebanese Flag in Solidarity;*** Tel Aviv's city hall lit up in the colors of the Lebanese flag in solidarity on Wednesday night, following the deadly explosion in Beirut the day before. "This evening we will light up the city hall with the flag of Lebanon. Humanity comes before any conflict, and our heart is with the Lebanese people following the terrible disaster that befell them," Tel Aviv Mayor Huldai wrote on Twitter. Many Israelis have expressed horror over the disaster that struck Beirut and sympathy with the Lebanese people, despite past enmity between the countries. Tel Aviv resident Russel told AFP he was "very proud" to live in the city. "Innocent people were killed and our hearts go out to them. This has nothing to do with politics. This has nothing to do with borders," he said. "This has to do with people to people and Tel Aviv is a city that loves people." Tel Aviv has in the past lit up its City Hall with the colors of other countries going through disasters, including the US after a mass shooting in Las Vegas in October 2017, Spain after a deadly attack in Barcelona in August 2017, and twice for Egypt following terror attacks in 2017.

***Israel Offers Assistance to Lebanon Following Beirut Blast;*** Under the direction of Defense Minister Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, Israel on Tuesday turned to Lebanon through international elements and offered the Lebanese government medical humanitarian assistance in the wake of the blast in Beirut which killed 137 people and injured thousands of others. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who approved the provision of humanitarian and medical assistance to Lebanon, instructed the head of the National Security Council, Meir Ben-Shabbat, to speak to UN envoy Nickolay Mladenov in order to find out what else Israel can do to help Lebanon. Foreign Minister Ashkenazi commented on the explosion

in Lebanon in an interview with Channel 12 News and said, "We are following the developments tonight in Lebanon. I see no reason not to believe the reports from Beirut that this was an accident that caused the fire." President Reuven Rivlin offered assistance to the Lebanese government as well, writing on Facebook, "We share the pain of the Lebanese people and sincerely reach out to offer our aid at this difficult time."

***Report: Israelis Near Borders Don't Have Access to Shelters;*** Four years after the state comptroller first reported on the readiness of the home front for missiles and rocket attacks, millions of Israeli citizens still do not have the means for basic protection near their homes, and plans for population evacuations have yet to be completed, a new Comptroller's Report has found. According to the report, some 21,000 mortars and rockets have been fired toward Israel from September 2000 until September 2019, and tens of thousands of missiles and rockets are expected to be launched in any coming war. But despite the dire assessment, the report found that 2.6 million residents of Israel (28%) still do not have basic protection from rocket attacks near their homes, and 2,494 of 12,601 public bomb shelters (20%) have been found to be inadequate. The report revealed shortcomings regarding the protection of vital infrastructure and facilities by the defense establishment. A work plan for their protection must be prepared, and sources for its financing should be found, the report said.

***Hundreds of British Musicians Condemn Anti-Semitism;*** Hundreds of British musicians and music industry leaders have signed an open letter condemning anti-Semitism and other forms of hate in the wake of the scandal involving English rapper Wiley, who was banned from Twitter for posting anti-Semitic tweets. Among the letter's signers are former One Direction member Niall Horan, pop-rockers The 1975, Lily Allen, Rita Ora, Lewis Capaldi, and James Blunt, in addition to Universal Music, Warner Music, and Sony Music. "From slavery to the Holocaust we have painful collective memories. All forms of racism have the same roots — ignorance, lack of education, and scapegoating." The display of solidarity from prominent British pop stars, songwriters, producers, managers, record labels, and publishers, most of them not Jewish, comes a week after Wiley's Twitter spree drew widespread attention. Many British Jews boycotted Twitter for 48 hours last week to protest the platform, which allowed the tweets to remain up for days before deleting them and then banning Wiley entirely. The rapper said he had been lashing out because of his anger at his Jewish manager.

***Israel Wins 1st Gold Medal in a Decade at Int'l Chemistry Olympiads;*** Israeli students won their first gold medal in a decade at the International Chemistry Olympiads this year, along with two silver medals and a bronze medal. "Israel's education system is recording another impressive achievement in the sciences," said Director-General of the Education Ministry Amit Adiri. "The students' victories at the International Chemistry Olympiads and the European Physics Competition place Israel at the forefront of the world of science." Adiri added that he would like to see "a broader representation of female students in the future. Given the importance of the issue, I intend to advance this important goal." Israel has participated in the Olympiads since 2006. The Olympiads this year was run by Turkey but took place over Zoom due to the coronavirus pandemic.

***Kinneret's August Water Level Highest in 27 Years;*** The Kinneret's (Sea of Galilee) water level at the beginning of August is the highest since August 1993, Israel's Water Authority reported. The Kinneret currently stands at -209.39, and 59 centimeters below the upper red line signaling that the lake is full. It has lost 25 centimeters since last month. At the beginning of August 1993, it measured at -209.01 below sea level. Israel Hayom noted that the Dead Sea's level was -434.72, after dropping 13 centimeters since last month and 55 centimeters since the beginning of the hydrological year. During the same period last year, the Dead Sea dropped 16 centimeters during July. In April, the Kinneret came within 20 centimeters of maximum capacity, and there was talk of opening the Degania Dam.

***Plague to Protein: Israeli Firm Puts Locusts on the Menu;*** At Hargol Foodtech's farm in the Israeli Golan Heights, a rectangular enclosure that once served as a chicken coop is filled with thousands of locusts, a

grasshopper species that has a highly destructive swarming phase. Contained in a series of meticulously stacked, climate-controlled mesh cages, the insects are served wheatgrass through their three-month life-cycle, before being cooled, killed and baked. Hargol's chief executive Dror Tamir told AFP that he grew up hearing stories of how locusts destroyed the fields of his kibbutz in the 1950s. Yet the Yemenite Jews in the area did not view locusts as crop-ruining pests, but as an edible source of nutrients, Tamir recalled. Tamir said he founded Hargol—Hebrew for grasshopper—six and a half years ago after realizing the insects were the solution. The company's goal is to be "the first in the world to grow grasshoppers on a commercial scale, and provide the world with a healthier and more sustainable source of protein."



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