

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update October 22, 2020*** ***(4<sup>th</sup> Cheshvan, 5781)***



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

***UN Arms Embargo on Tehran has Ended;*** A longstanding UN embargo on arms sales to and from Iran expired early Sunday in line with a 2015 landmark nuclear deal, the Iranian foreign ministry said. “As of today, all restrictions on the transfer of arms, related activities and financial services to and from the Islamic Republic of Iran are all automatically terminated,” the ministry said in a statement. The embargo on the sale of arms to Iran was due to start expiring progressively from Sunday, October 18, under the terms of the UN resolution that blessed the 2015 nuclear deal between the Islamic republic and world powers. “As of today, the Islamic Republic may procure any necessary arms and equipment from any source without any legal restrictions, and solely based on its defensive needs,” the ministry added in the statement sent out on Twitter. It insisted that under the terms of the deal, struck with the United States, China, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the European Union, “the lifting of arms restrictions and the travel ban were designed to be automatic with no other action required.”

***Coronavirus Cases Declining;*** The number of newly diagnosed cases of the coronavirus in Israel continues to decline, along with the percentage of tests that are coming back positive, according to data released Friday morning by Israel’s Health Ministry. A total of 1,608 new cases of the coronavirus were diagnosed across Israel on Thursday, the lowest number since Saturday. While the decline can be explained in part by the decrease in the number of tests – which fell from 38,831 on Wednesday to 35,466 on Thursday – the percentage of tests which returned positive also fell Thursday to its lowest level in weeks, falling to less than a third of the peak rate. Since the pandemic began, 301,289 cases of the virus have been reported in Israel, including 260,803 which ended in recovery. The death toll rose by 14 on Thursday, with an additional coronavirus-related fatality reported Friday morning, pushing the death toll to 2,128.

***Israel, Bahrain Sign Peace Statement in Manama;*** Israel and Bahrain signed a “joint communique on establishing peaceful and diplomatic relations,” during a high-level Israeli government delegation’s visit to Manama on Sunday. The countries signed seven memoranda of understanding, with the peace and normalization as the central document. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke to Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani before the signing, saying: “We are making giant steps to promote peace...This is the start of a breakthrough towards peace.” On Sunday morning, the first El Al flight to

Manama took off from Ben-Gurion Airport with American and Israeli officials aboard. It was flight number 973, like Bahrain's country code for phone calls. Pilot Bobby Lavi, addressed the passengers, saying: "We wish you a pleasant flight, and are looking forward for a new era of peace, salaam and shalom for the whole region. Thank you."

***Nearly 80% of Saudis Favor Normalization with Israel;*** Nearly 80% of Saudis are in favor of working towards normalizing ties with Israel within the next five years, with 71% even thinking it likely that other Arab states will normalize ties without a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians, according to a new poll. The study surveyed attitudes among Israelis and Arabs from five different countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Palestine and Jordan) from the period spanning June 24 and July 5. This was over a month before the landmark peace deals between Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain were announced, which had resulted in the annexation of 30% of the West Bank being pulled off the table. As such, annexation remained a real possibility at the time. What is notable, however, is that the survey still showed that many Arabs were being in favor of normalizing ties with Israel at the time, provided steps were taken to achieve peace with the Palestinians.

***Paris Attacker Murders Teacher for Using Drawings of Prophet Muhammad;*** A middle school history teacher in France was knifed to death near the school where earlier this month he had shown his pupils cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad, considered blasphemous by Muslims, French officials said on Friday. The attacker was shot dead by a police patrol a few streets away from the scene of the attack late on Friday afternoon, in a residential suburb northwest of Paris. "One of our fellow citizens was assassinated today because he was teaching; he was teaching pupils about freedom of expression," French President Emmanuel Macron told reporters at the scene of the attack. "Our compatriot was flagrantly attacked, was the victim of an Islamist terrorist attack," Macron said. "They won't win... We will act – firmly and quickly. You can count on my determination."

### ***Hydrogen Future Shows Promise for Israeli Innovators***

Around the world, the promise of hydrogen power, harvested by separating and reuniting the elements that make up water, is sparking the next revolution in clean energy. The technology is still in its infancy, but both the government and private sector are pumping money into developing ways to make hydrogen use more powerful, efficient, and cost-effective. The Far East, Europe, and parts of the US are investing billions into creating a hydrogen infrastructure that will power trucking, heavy industry, and even homes. Tiny Israel neither builds vehicles nor has much heavy industry. Furthermore, the Energy Ministry is focused on replacing coal with less-polluting natural gas and on shoring up the infrastructure needed to reach its target of generating 30 percent of the nation's energy through renewable sources, mainly solar, by 2030.

***Plastic Bags & Containers Make Up 70% of Israel's Med, Red Sea Trash;*** Nearly three-quarters of the trash found in Israeli waters in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea consists of bits of plastic bags and plastic containers, according to the National Marine Waste Monitoring Report for 2019, published Wednesday. The survey was released just a day after the Knesset Interior Affairs and Environmental Protection committees heard that targets for plastic bag reduction in the coming years, which should have been embedded in Knesset regulations by 2018, have not advanced beyond the desk of two Environmental Protection ministers, in violation of the law. Despite pleas from ministry officials to step up activity, no public awareness campaigns to cut plastic bags have been run since 2016 because they were "not ministerial priorities."

***Jewish Family's Painting Returned to its Heirs;*** A painting of two young, 19th-century skaters that was looted by Nazis from a Jewish family in 1933 and recently discovered at a small museum in upstate New York was returned Thursday after 87 years. The painting "Winter," by American artist Gari Melchers, was part of a cache of more than 1,000 pieces of art and artifacts seized from the Mosse family, prominent and well-off Jewish residents of Berlin who became early targets of the Nazi Party. Heirs have been tenaciously seeking to

recover the lost pieces for the past decade. “The Mosse family lost nearly everything because they were Jews. But they did not lose hope,” acting US Attorney for the Northern District of New York Antoinette Bacon said at a repatriation ceremony at the Albany FBI office. “While this certainly does not take away the pain that the Mosses endured, I hope it provides the family with some measure of justice.”

***Ben Gurion Airport Opens Oct 15<sup>th</sup>***; Health Minister Yuli Edelstein and Transportation Minister Miri Regev have agreed to return to the "open skies" outline starting Oct 15th. The Attorney General clarified in the internal discussions that there is a problem in the continued closure of Ben Gurion Airport because the airlines are threatening lawsuits following the damages caused to them. From the beginning of the closure, there has been a restriction on flights from Ben Gurion Airport and only passengers who purchased a ticket before the closure took effect have been allowed to fly. Transportation Minister Miri Regev yesterday called on ministers to open Ben Gurion airport as early as Thursday, even if another easing of restrictions only take effect on Sunday.

***Israeli Tourism Decimated due to COVID-19***; The Israeli tourism industry has lost NIS 12.1 billion (USD 3.6 billion) since the start of 2020 due to COVID-19 health regulations that have kept visitors out of the country and events and other tourist attractions closed, the Tourism Ministry reported Wednesday. September alone saw a 96% drop in the number of tourists entering the country – 15,100 vs 405,000 the year before. The ministry warned that the crisis in the tourism industry is ongoing. Newly-appointed Tourism Minister Orit Farkash-Hacohen said that “tourism isn’t just nice to have,” and that reopening the industry quickly could be part of a solution to the current economic and emotional challenges. Farkash-Hacohen said she is working to implement two reforms. The first would allow domestic and international tourists to enter selected cities in Israel, such as Eilat. The second would reopen family-operated guest houses, which serve smaller audiences and at which visitors are less likely to be infected in comparison to larger chain hotels.

***Israel Deficit: NIS 14.9 Billion Compared to 1.9 Last September***; The Finance Ministry released information about the current budget, the deficit, and the expenses of the current government during the COVID-19 pandemic on Monday. The deficit for September was NIS 14.9 billion; in September 2019 it was NIS 1.9 billion. The state reports a loss of income from collected taxes and an increase in its spending. Hence the rapid growth of the deficit which is 9.1% of the GDP (NIS 123.5 b.) when calculated based on the previous 12 months. The state spent NIS 336.1 b. from the beginning of 2020, of which NIS 42.9 b. (12.8%) was spent by various ministries to deal with COVID-19. Only 74% of the state’s authorized COVID-19 total sum of NIS 57.9 b. was spent. While civic ministries and offices reported a 21.6% increase in spending, Israeli security-related expenses decreased by 0.5%. Israel is making less money from taxes – minus 9.9% compared to 2019 – and reported an income of NIS 230 b. since the beginning of 2020.

***Iranian Economy Collapsing Due to Pandemic, American Sanctions***; The Islamic Republic has seen a surge in coronavirus infections; its Health Ministry puts the death toll at more than 29,000, making Iran the hardest-hit country in the Middle East. Even before the health crisis, the Iranian economy had been battered by low oil prices and crippling US sanctions reimposed by Washington. Iran’s unemployment rate has skyrocketed in 2020, and on Monday, its rial currency plunged to its lowest point ever against the US dollar, having losing more than 60% of its value in two years. Consumer prices have risen by 37% in 2020. The fragile economy has also been battered by a temporary shutdown designed to contain the pandemic, border closures, and a halt in non-oil exports.

***Erdan Slams UN Human Rights Council after Russia, China, Pakistan, Cuba Elected***; Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan assailed the international body on Tuesday after its members elected several countries widely criticized for their human rights records to the premier UN body tasked with defending human rights. China, Russia, Cuba, and Pakistan were among the 15 countries that won seats in a secret-ballot vote carried out by the 193-member General Assembly. Saudi Arabia failed to make the cut.

“Today’s Human Rights Council elections prove once again that this council has nothing to do with protecting human rights and everything to do with violating them,” Erdan said in a video statement. Last month, the UN envoy penned an op-ed in which he claimed the international body was at risk of “losing its right to exist” over its unfair treatment of the Jewish state and predicted it could be defunct by the end of the century.

***Israeli Company Brings Optical Aid to Portuguese Nursing Homes;*** The Israeli consulate in Portugal and optics company "Shamir" decided to pool their resources. The result? A mobile lab test van, designated specifically for nursing homes in Portugal. According to Rafi Gamzu, Israel's ambassador to Portugal, the van is expected to reach hundreds of old-age homes. "Old-age home residents are the most at-risk population group right now," he said. The van would provide checkups, appointments, and glasses – all for free. It premiered on October 8, which was World Sight Day. "The quarantines and lockdowns have been a continuous policy for nursing homes since the outbreak of the pandemic, and they've since been presented with unprecedented challenges, ones that make their lives extremely difficult," Gamzu added. "What we're doing with Shamir will provide much-needed attention and, hopefully, a solution."

***72 Georgian Immigrants Fulfill Dream; Make Aliyah;*** Seventy-two new immigrants from Georgia fulfilled their dream of making aliyah after landing in Israel this week. They arrived on the first flight from Georgia arranged by the Jewish Agency and the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ) since the outbreak of the coronavirus. Since the beginning of the High Holy Days lockdown, more than 800 olim have landed in Israel coming from more than 25 different countries per coronavirus regulations. "Immigration to Israel has never stopped and it continues now, even in the shadow of the coronavirus. The Jewish Agency works to bring olim under the global constraints of the coronavirus, and helps them fulfill their Zionist dream," Jewish Agency Chairman Isaac Herzog said in a statement. Among the olim were singles, young families and 17 children. Among them are doctors, engineers, scientists, teachers, and students. About a third of the immigrants requested to live in the city of Bat Yam and the rest in other locations throughout the country, from Eilat to Nahariya.

***Ancient Two-Shekel Weight Discovered Near Western Wall;*** An ancient limestone-made weight, dating to the Iron age – the First Temple period, was discovered in an archaeological excavation conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority in conjunction with the Western Wall Heritage Foundation beneath Wilson’s Arch. Adjacent to the Western Wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The weight, corresponding to the known measurement unit of two shekalim, was retrieved during the sifting of earthen fills by the City of David sifting project. The excavation is nearing its completion, unearthing fascinating discoveries soon to be included in the tour of the Western Wall Tunnels. Mordechai (Suli) Eliav, director of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation responded to the discovery, saying: “How exciting, in the month of Tishrei, whose symbol is the scales of justice, to find a souvenir from the First Temple period.



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