

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update November 5, 2020 (18th Cheshvan, 5781)

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The image shows two items: on the left, a book cover for 'GOD'S APPOINTED TIMES' by Barney Kasdan, which is a practical guide for understanding and celebrating the biblical holidays; on the right, a glass bottle of 'Anointing Oil' from Jerusalem of Gold, featuring a label with a dove and a cross.

For the Yachad Report Newsletter For November 2020

Israel Begins Human Trials for Coronavirus Vaccine; Israel began human trials for its own coronavirus vaccine as the Jewish state's second lockdown comes to a gradual end. Two volunteers in separate hospitals – one in Tel Aviv and another in Jerusalem – have started the trials. If the two, Segev Harel and Aner Ottolenghi, feel in good health in the next two days, another 80 people will join the first phase of the trial. According to officials, each volunteer will get either a dose of the vaccine or a placebo and will be sent home, where they will be monitored for three weeks for any possible side effects or whether they develop antibodies. Harel said he is very proud to be part of such an important national mission and said he is not nervous. If the first phase is successful, the second phase is scheduled for December and will include nearly 1,000 volunteers. A final phase will be open to 30,000 volunteers and will begin in April 2021.

Crisis Hotline: Suicide Calls Have Doubled; An Israeli crisis hotline says it is receiving an unprecedented level of suicidal calls — and many of them are from people who did not have previously diagnosed mental health issues before the pandemic started. The current lockdown has doubled the normal volume of suicidal calls to ERAN, a non-profit that is supported by the Health Ministry. Since the onset of the coronavirus crisis, some 5,500 Israelis who are considering ending their lives have made contact. “The people calling with these thoughts are different to the people who called in the past as they considered suicide,” said the organization's CEO David Koren. “In the past, we were talking to people with diagnosed mental health issues, but now a lot of them don't come from this category.” Koren spoke to The Times of Israel on Thursday, as President Reuven Rivlin visited one of ERAN's call centers for a briefing on the state of mental health in Israel.

IDF Offers Aid After Earthquake in Turkey; An earthquake has struck near the Turkish city of Izmir and the Greek island of Samos. Reports say the earthquake was large, measuring 7.0 on the Richter Scale. Destruction could be seen across the skyline of the city as dust rose and buildings collapsed. Flooding then occurred after the sea briefly retreated from the harbor, leaving boats on the sea bed before the water rushed in. Soon after the disaster, Defense Minister Benny Gantz instructed the IDF to prepare emergency aid for Turkey. Gantz announced that he had instructed the IDF in a tweet, adding that a conversation was opened between IDF military representatives and the Turkish military attaché in Israel. During the conversation, the IDF representatives conveyed to Turkish authorities that Israel's defense establishment and the State of Israel

share their grief over the disaster and are ready to send a delegation immediately that will help rescue buildings destroyed in the area and deploy a field hospital to treat the many wounded.

IDF Prepares for War on Multiple Fronts; The Israel Defense Forces on Thursday completed its premier exercise of the year, a large-scale simulation of war in the north against Hezbollah and other Iranian proxies, and a smaller conflict in the Gaza Strip. The exercise, which began Sunday, was the IDF's largest of 2020, with both regular conscripted units and reservists taking part, though its size was scaled back significantly due to the coronavirus pandemic. "This exercise is a special exercise for three main reasons: one, we set for ourselves a goal of improving our attack capability; two, this is an exercise that draws a line from the level of the battalion all the way up to the General Staff, with all the coordination and cooperation [up the chain of command] and cooperation between the different branches [of the military]; and three, this exercise has several new elements that we are assimilating [into the military]," IDF Chief of Staff Aviv Kohavi said Thursday in a conversation with senior officers participating in the exercise.

Muslim Terror Attacks Rise Across France; Islamists have declared war on France, a senior leader of French Jews said following multiple assaults, including the murder of three people at a church in Nice. Gil Taieb, the vice president of the CRIF umbrella group of French Jewish communities, made the comments Thursday in reference to the fatal knife attacks outside the Notre Dame church of the Mediterranean coastal city. The perpetrator was shouting "Allahu akbar" — Arabic for Allah is the greatest — before he was shot and rushed to the hospital, Le Monde reported. Also on Thursday, another man shouting about Allah attempted to stab police officers in Avignon, another southern French city situated about 120 miles west of Nice. He was shot and died from his wounds, Europe1 reported. Initial reports did not say whether authorities believe the incidents were linked. "The Islamists are waging war against us!" Taieb wrote on Twitter. "We stand united against Islamist barbarism."

Dominican Republic to Weigh Relocating Embassy to Jerusalem; The Dominican Republic is considering relocating its embassy to Jerusalem, the country's Foreign Ministry announced over the weekend. To date only two countries have embassies in Jerusalem; the United States and Guatemala. Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital has remained a diplomatically sensitive topic and as a result, most countries have placed their embassies in Tel Aviv. But several countries have indicated that they could relocate their embassies to Jerusalem including; Honduras, Brazil, Serbia and the Czech Republic. Kosovo, which does not have an embassy in Israel, has spoken of opening one in Jerusalem. Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi thanked his Dominican Republic counterpart Roberto Alvarez during a phone conversation between the two on Friday.

2,000-Year-Old Apollo Seal Uncovered in Jerusalem; The discovery of a rare 2,000-year-old signet ring engraved with the Greek sun god Apollo gives new evidence of a pluralistic Jewry walking the streets of ancient Jerusalem during the Second Temple period, archaeologist Eli Shukron told The Times of Israel. "It allows us to see a Jerusalem that wasn't some kind of ultra-Orthodox city, it was more pluralistic," Shukron said, who is convinced the ring would have adorned a Jew's finger. The fact that a Jew chose the symbol of a Greek god, "shows the wide variety of practices in Jerusalem. Everyone was a Jew, but there were different groups and perspectives," he said. The dark brown jasper gem sealing (intaglio) was recently discovered at the Archaeological Sifting Project at Tzurim Valley National Park during the wet sifting of earth taken from the ongoing City of David excavations of the foundations of the Western Wall.

Israel's Biggest Beach Cleanup: Thousands Collect Trash from Shores and Seas; Thousands of people equipped with trash bags and disposable gloves joined an effort on Friday dubbed as Israel's biggest beach clean-up, hoping to not only clear the shores but also draw policymakers' attention to the need to better protect marine life. Organizers estimated that between three and five tons of garbage would be collected by volunteers on Israel's Mediterranean coast and at the Sea of Galilee throughout the course of the day. Volunteers were not only on the beach — some were on boats and diving teams also participated in the effort.

Some eight million tons of plastic are thrown into the sea worldwide each year. 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 on October 14. The situation is expected to be worse in 2020, with the addition of disposable masks and gloves as a result of the pandemic.

Jewish Organizations Laud Israel-Sudan Peace Deal; Jewish and pro-Israel politicians and organizations have praised the US-brokered normalization agreement between Israel and Sudan. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) called Friday's announcement "a historic milestone." "We applaud the courageous leadership of both nations for taking this step... in facilitating this significant diplomatic breakthrough," AIPAC said in a statement. "Fifty-three years ago, Arab leaders gathered in Sudan to declare 'no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with [Israel].' Today's announcement is a major breakthrough in eroding tired, old shibboleths that have led to division and conflict," the statement added. AIPAC also called on other Arab leaders, "particularly Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas," to negotiate with Israel.

Opinion: The Israel-Sudan Agreement Bad News for Hamas; Hamas is very concerned about the normalization of relations between Sudan and Israel. Sudan, a Sunni Muslim state, has for many years been a convenient setting for the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas and a vital smuggling route for weapons from Iran into the Gaza Strip because of its location along the Red Sea. The Israel-Sudan agreement is a double whammy to Iran and Hamas alike. On October 23, Hamas issued a statement condemning the agreement, calling on the Sudanese people to "fight all forms of normalization and have nothing to do with the criminal enemy." Hamas' statement warned that the agreement would not bring stability to Sudan, would not improve its situation, "and would tear up Sudan itself." Sudan was a terrorist-supporting state that hosted al-Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden and even embraced Hamas. This policy was conducted by Omar al-Bashir, who ruled Sudan from 1989 to 2019, dispersed the National Assembly and governed by martial sharia law.

US Airstrike Kills Seven Al-Qaeda Leaders in Syria; The United States believes it killed seven senior leaders of al-Qaeda in Syria in an airstrike last week as they were meeting near the Turkish border, US Central Command said Monday. A Central Command spokeswoman, Major Beth Riordan, said the strike was conducted in Idlib, in northwest Syria, on October 22. She did not identify the seven leaders by name. "The removal of these AQ-S leaders will disrupt the terrorist organization's ability to further plot and carryout global attacks threatening U.S. citizens, our partners, and innocent civilians," she said. "AQ-S takes advantage of the instability in northwest Syria to establish and maintain safe havens to coordinate terrorist activities," she added. "With our allies and partners, we will continue to target al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations." In total 17 jihadists died in the strike, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Greece, Israel Call for Investment at Regional Economic Conference; Regional Cooperation Minister Ofir Akunis met with his Greek counterpart Development and Investment Minister Adonis Georgiadis in Athens on Monday, during which they agreed upon establishing a regional economic conference between the respective governments. The conference will be attended by, Israel, Greece, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Cyprus and will rotate between being held first in Jerusalem before being held next in Athens. The goal behind establishing the conference is to promote economic ventures benefiting the entire region, in addition to promoting investments in both Israel and Greece. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs and Cooperation Kosta Fragkogiannis and Deputy Minister for Development and Investment Nikos Papathanasis.

US Sanctions Iran's Oil Sector; The US on Monday slapped fresh sanctions on Iran's oil sector including over sales to Syria and Venezuela. Under the new measures, the administration designated the National Iranian Oil Company, Iran's petroleum ministry and the National Iranian Tanker Company under a

counterterrorism authority. The Treasury Department issued the sanctions by linking the three entities to the Revolutionary Guards' elite Quds Force which was earlier designated as a terrorist organization by the United States and whose commander, Qassem Soleimani, was killed in a US attack at Baghdad airport in January. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the sanctions should send a warning to "the few remaining buyers of Iranian crude oil." "These designations are an important step in the maximum pressure campaign to limit the Iranian regime's ability to threaten its neighbors and destabilize the Middle East," Pompeo said in a statement.

Judge Throws Out Lawsuit Against Maryland's Anti-BDS Bill; A federal judge on Monday threw out a lawsuit in which a Muslim civil rights group sought to block the state of Maryland from enforcing its ban on contracting with businesses that boycott Israel. US District Judge Catherine Blake didn't reach a decision on whether the executive order that Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan signed in October 2017 is constitutional. The judge ruled that a software engineer who is named as the lawsuit's plaintiff hasn't shown he has suffered any "direct injury" giving him the legal standing to challenge the order. The order bars the state from doing business with companies that boycott Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria, and requires contractors to certify in writing that they do not boycott Israel. The order was called "Prohibiting Discriminatory Boycotts of Israel in State Procurement." The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) sued Hogan and state Attorney General Brian Frosh on behalf of software engineer Syed Saqib Ali, a former state legislator. CAIR argued the order has an unconstitutional chilling effect on First Amendment-protected political advocacy supporting Palestinian Arabs.

Nails Used to Crucify Jesus May Have Been Uncovered; Fragments of nails believed to have been used in Jesus's crucifixion have ancient wood and fragments of bone on them, according to a new study. The fragments appeared for the first time after a 1990 excavation of a burial site of Caiaphas, the high priest who organized a plot to kill Jesus according to the New Testament. Scholars at the time slammed the suggestion, denying the nails that Israeli filmmaker Simcha Jacobovici had found were the same ones from Caiaphas's tomb. Last week, Aryeh Shimron, a retired Jerusalem-based geologist who led a new study on these fragments, discovered that the nails were the same ones taken from the Caiaphas site and were also used to crucify someone. "Within the rust and sediment attached to the nails, we also identified and photographed a number of microscopic fragments of bone," he said. "I believe that the scientific evidence that the nails were used to crucify somebody is indeed powerful," Shimron said.

Grandson of Holocaust Survivor Pitches in World Series; When Ryan Sherriff took the mound for the Tampa Bay Rays in the top of the seventh inning on Friday night to face the Los Angeles Dodgers and pitched a scoreless inning, little did he know what type of exclusive group he was about to join. Sherriff added his name to a club that Sandy Koufax belongs to – a Jewish Hall of Fame pitcher featured in the World Series. And one whose maternal grandparents, Helen and Seymour Wildfeuer, were Holocaust survivors to boot. In Sunday's Game 5, Sherriff once again came on in relief and pitched a perfect eighth inning by retiring Max Muncy, Will Smith and Cody Bellinger down in order. Despite the Rays losing the game 4-2 and giving the Dodgers a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven series, Sherriff did his job with a 3-up-and-3-down inning.

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