

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update December 10, 2020 (24th Kislev, 5781)

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The image shows two items: on the left, a book with a purple cover titled 'GOD'S APPOINTED TIMES' by BARNEY KASDAN, with Hebrew text at the top and bottom; on the right, a glass bottle of 'Anointing Oil' with a white label and a gold cap.

For the Yachad Report Newsletter For December 2020

Israel, Moderna Sign Deal for 6 million COVID Vaccine Doses; Israel has signed an expanded supply agreement with Moderna to receive an additional four million doses of the company's messenger RNA (mRNA) coronavirus vaccine candidate, the Health Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office said on Friday, bringing the total secured doses of mRNA-1273 to six million. Last week, Moderna announced that it had applied for US and European emergency authorization of its COVID-19 vaccine based on results of a late-stage study showing that it was 94.1% effective, with no serious safety concerns. The company also reported a 100% success rate in preventing severe cases. In addition, Moderna said in a statement that it has already initiated the rolling regulatory review process with Israel's Health Ministry.

Israel to Receive Pfizer Coronavirus Vaccines in Weeks; Israel could begin receiving doses of the Pfizer vaccine within the next few weeks, Health Ministry director-general Chezy Levy said Thursday during a video meeting with the country's hospital administrators. Some four million doses are expected to arrive, he said – enough to vaccinate two million people. However, even though the vaccines could enter Israel even before they are approved by the US Food and Drug Administration, no one will be inoculated before approval. The announcement comes against the backdrop of another day of spiking infection. Health Ministry officials are eager for the coronavirus cabinet to convene and begin discussing ways to reduce infection; the cabinet had not convened for 10 days as of Thursday. However, due to tensions between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz, Netanyahu opted to hold a smaller, closed-door meeting on the subject Thursday evening.

France May Shutter Dozens of Mosques Suspected of 'Separatism'; The French Interior Minister has called for an investigation into 76 mosques and plans to close those who are teaching Islamic extremism. The statement came from Gérald Darmanin, according to The Guardian. Investigations would specifically be looking for mosques that were “breeding grounds for terrorism.” Those found to be harboring such would be closed. France continues to deal with Islamic terrorism in light of recent attacks. A Tunisian man has been charged with the killing of 3 people at the Notre-Dame basilica in Nice. Samuel Paty, a teacher, was beheaded in the street by 18-year-old Abdulkh Anzorov. Paty was supposedly targeted for showing students the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad published by the Charlie Hebdo satire magazine.

NSC: Iran Plotting to Attack Israelis in Neighboring Countries; Israelis visiting countries neighboring Iran could be targets for terrorist attacks, the National Security Council warned in a rare public statement on Thursday. “In light of the threats heard recently from Iranian factors, and in light of past involvement in Iranians in terrorist attacks on various countries, there is a concern Iran will try to act in this way against Israeli destinations,” the NSC cautioned. The notice came almost a week after the assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, the scientist at the head of Iran's nuclear program and an officer in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Iranian officials have blamed Israel for the killing and have threatened to retaliate.

First Immigrants from Ethiopia Land as Part of Op. Rock of Israel; The first flight of Operation Rock of Israel brought 316 members of the Falash Mura community from Ethiopia to Israel early on Thursday together with Aliyah Minister Pnina Tamano Shata and they were greeted at Ben Gurion Airport by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz, Jewish Agency Chairman Isaac Herzog, and other dignitaries. About 100 more Falash Mura community immigrants will arrive on Friday as part of a plan to airlift some 2,000 of the group by the end of January 2021. Activists supporting Falash Mura immigration have, however, condemned Netanyahu and the government because more than 7,000 of the community remain in Addis Ababa and Gondar despite his promises before the last election that all those waiting would be brought to Israel by the end of this year. Those arriving on Thursday are the children or grandchildren of members of the community who immigrated here many years ago.

3000-Year-Old Gold Bead Found by 9-Year-Old Jerusalem Boy; The first-ever First Temple-era gold granule bead was discovered during wet sifting of earth from the Temple Mount by a nine-year-old boy, the Temple Mount Sifting Project (TMSP) announced earlier this week. While sifting through the dirt with his family in August, Jerusalem resident Binyamin Milt uncovered a perfectly preserved small, flower-shaped cylinder, created by four layers of tiny gold balls, unaware that the artifact he was holding was likely forged around 3,000 years ago. The bead was so well preserved in fact, that when the boy brought the bead to the supervising archaeologist, he initially wrote it off as likely being an unidentified modern object, not even writing down the boy's contact information before hurrying back to continue sifting. It was only while sorting through the summer's artifacts in Dr. Gabriel Barkay's backyard that he realized the bead was strikingly similar to several similar items he had found when he excavated burial systems from the First Temple period in Katef Hinnom.

English Premier League Adopts IHRA Definition of Antisemitism; The English Premier League, the highest level of soccer in England, has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, the organization said on Thursday. In a press release, the league said it had adopted the definition as a part of its “ongoing commitment to promote equality and diversity and to combat discrimination of any form in football.” Executive director Bill Bush said: “The Premier League is committed to tackling any form of discrimination in football,” adding that “our adoption of the IHRA's working definition will enable us to be more effective in dealing with any anti-Semitic behavior targeting our clubs or personnel.” Former Labour Party MP Lord John Mann, who is the UK government's independent adviser on antisemitism, said that “the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism by the Premier League will rightly be heralded by the footballing community and clubs worldwide.

Slow-Baked Yemenite Bread ‘Jachnun’ is Europe’s Next COVID craze; After Gal Graber and Tal Goldman had a disappointing experience with store-bought jachnun, the two Israelis living in Amsterdam set out to make the slow-cooked Yemenite bread on their own. “As with many Israelis, jachnun is connected in our minds with Saturday mornings, with quality time,” Graber told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. “But the frozen ones for sale here are not great. So we decided to make our own.” It turned out to be a prescient undertaking. Earlier this year, the restaurant where Graber was working — & moshik, which had two Michelin stars thanks to its Israeli chef Moshik Roth — shut down during the Netherlands' first coronavirus

lockdown. Like restaurant workers around the world, Graber and his French girlfriend, Mathilde Lair, who was head pastry chef at & moshik's, both lost their jobs.

Bahrain Will 'Make Peace with Israel a Success Story'; Israel and Bahrain are working to quickly bring the normalization of their ties to fruition, Bahraini Industry, Commerce and Tourism Minister Zayed bin Rashid Al Zayani said in Jerusalem on Wednesday. Al Zayani said, "the whole world is watching, and we are determined to make this a success story and a case study for others." The Bahraini minister led the first-ever trade delegation from his country to Israel, since normalization was announced in September. He arrived on Tuesday with 40 government officials and businesspeople. Israel and Bahrain signed agreements to cooperate in tourism and culture during Al Zayani's visit. Al Zayani met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi on Wednesday. Peace between Bahrain and Israel "leaves this world a better place for future generations than the one we inherited," he told Netanyahu.

Slovenia Declares All of Hezbollah a 'Criminal and Terrorist Organization'; Slovenia on Monday designated Hezbollah in its entirety a terrorist organization, joining a growing number of European states who have taken similar steps in recent weeks to end differentiation between the group's political and armed wings. In a statement, the small Central European state's government said that it will henceforth treat the Iranian-backed, Lebanon-based group as "a criminal and terrorist organization posing a threat to peace and security." "Hezbollah's activities are intertwined with organized crime and the conduct of terrorist or paramilitary activities on a global scale," the government in Ljubljana said in a statement. The decision followed the recommendations by the Permanent Coordination Group for Restrictive Measures, which is headed by a Slovenian Foreign Ministry official, which presented the government with a report on Hezbollah's "activities and mode of operation," according to the statement.

Israel Declines to Enforce 'Pay for Slay Law' on Tax Payments to Ramallah; The government of Israel did not deduct the amount the Palestinian Authority paid terrorists and their families from the taxes and tariffs collected for the PA and transferred to Ramallah on Wednesday. The Finance Ministry confirmed that Israel paid NIS 3.768 billion to the PA, and deducted only the cost of services provided, not the "pay for slay" funds, as the terrorist salaries have been called. Palestinian head of the General Authority on Civil Affairs Hussein al-Sheikh announced the payment on Twitter, remarking that "the Israeli government transfers all financial dues of the clearance to the account of the Palestinian Authority." The 2018 "Pay for Slay Law," which mandates the security cabinet to deduct the funds the PA pays terrorists pursuant to an annual report from the Defense Ministry, requires the freeze to be implemented immediately following the cabinet decision. However, the government did not do so this week. A Finance Ministry representative said on Wednesday that those deductions, of NIS 50 million per month for 12 months, will begin only next month.

Israel's New Missile Ship Arrives from Germany; At the conclusion of a long process of construction and extensive preparation in Germany, the new Saar 6 warship will run up the Israeli flag on Wednesday as it is officially transferred to the Israeli navy. It will then set out on a journey that will end with its renaming as INS Magen in its new home in the Haifa base. The missile ship INS Magen is one of the four new Saar 6 corvettes whose purpose includes protecting Israeli gas rigs and also more broadly to protect Israel's maritime interests and police its naval borders, an area double the landmass of Israel. Speaking on Galei Tzahal this morning, General (Res.) David Ben Besht, formerly the Navy Commander welcomed the acquisition of these new ships. "These ships are simply marvelous; they answer precisely to Israel's needs, given the existing threats from Lebanon and Syria," he said.

Study: One in Five Israelis Suffer from Depression; One out of every five Israelis reported suffering from high or very high levels of depression, according to a new study by Tel Aviv University and the Academic and Technology College of Tel-Hai. Since the start of the coronavirus crisis, symptoms of depression have increased significantly – from 14% in May 2020 to 18% in July 2020 and to 20% in October.

At the same time, the study found that at the peak of the second wave, almost one in three people in Israel (29%) suffered extreme or highly extreme symptoms of anxiety. Here, too, the data presents a sharp increase – from 23% in May to 27% in July and now 29%. In contrast, in 2018, only 12% of the population expressed high and very high anxiety levels in 2018 and only 9% expressed these levels of depression.

OECD Sees Israel Economy Grow 2.3% in 2021, Below Global Average; The OECD is projecting Israel’s economy will grow a mere 2.3% in 2021, below the global average, after contracting 4.2% this year, as increased unemployment and a likely rise in insolvencies after a second national lockdown “will weigh” on economic recovery. “The projections assume a more gradual exit from the second lockdown compared to the first one,” the OECD said in its December 2020 Economic Outlook report published Tuesday. “GDP will recover only modestly by 2.3% in 2021 before expanding by 4.2% in 2022 as an effective vaccine is rolled out. High uncertainty, increasing unemployment in the near term, and a likely rise in insolvencies once government support is withdrawn will weigh on consumer demand and investment.” The OECD forecasts world GDP to contract by 4.2% this year, with a 7.2 percent drop for the Euro area and a 3.8% decline for G20 nations. GDP in the US is expected to contract by 3.7% and in the UK by 11.2%.

Jewish Astronaut Jessica Meir May Be First Woman on the Moon; Since astronaut Jessica Meir returned to Earth in April from the International Space Station, she — like all of us — has spent a lot of time indoors and cooped up. While many of us have spent our confinement dreaming of future trips, Meir is working on her own travel plans to a singular destination: She wants to walk on the moon. It’s not just a pipe dream. Meir, the fourth Jewish woman (and 15th Jew overall) to travel to space, made the Guinness Book of World Records when she and fellow astronaut Christina Koch conducted the first all-female spacewalk — lasting 7 hours, 17 minutes — on Oct. 18, 2019. Not long afterward, the pair did it again.

Israeli Gymnast Linoy Ashram Takes Gold at European Championships; Israeli gymnast Linoy Ashram won a gold medal in the individual rhythmic category at the European Championships on Sunday, becoming the first athlete to win the prize in decades who was not from a former Soviet country or Bulgaria. Ashram edged out Alina Harnasko of Bulgaria in a nearly unprecedentedly close tiebreaker. Israel also won the group rhythmic gymnastics gold at the competition in Kyiv, Ukraine. Several highly-rated teams from Russia, Bulgaria, and Italy did not participate this year due to the logistical complications of the coronavirus pandemic. Ashram, a 21-year-old Israeli defense forces veteran born to Mizrahi and Sephardic parents, will represent Israel at the Tokyo Olympics, which has been rescheduled to summer 2021.

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