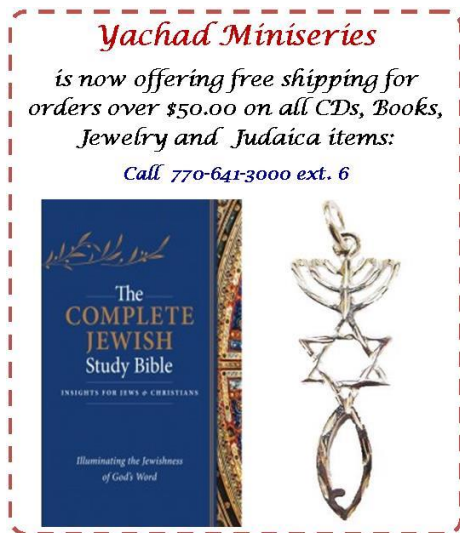


# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 4, 2021 (20<sup>th</sup> Adar, 5781)***



## **[For the Yachad Report Newsletter For March 2021](#)**

***Israel Suspends Delivery of Vaccines to Other Countries Amid Legal Uncertainty;*** Israel has halted its plan to ship surplus coronavirus vaccines to a group of friendly nations as authorities examine whether it was in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's authority to order the move, the Justice Ministry said Thursday. The announcement put a freeze on a plan that reportedly would have seen up to 100,000 vaccine doses sent to numerous countries. In a statement, Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit said he had received a number of requests to review Netanyahu's decision. One of those requests, he said, came from Netanyahu's National Security Adviser Meir Ben-Shabbat, who told Mandelblit he had been instructed, apparently by the prime minister, to "freeze any action on the matter."

***Netanyahu References Purim in Warning to Iran;*** As US president Joe Biden is expected to renew the Iran nuclear deal and remove the sanctions placed upon it, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded on Tuesday to what he says is the Islamic Republic's efforts to obtain nuclear weapons reports 0404. Invoking Jewish history, Netanyahu added: "We did not make the journey throughout the generations and over thousands of years to return to the land of Israel just to allow some basket-case regime of Ayatollahs to finish off the story of the establishment of the Jewish people. We are not sacrificing our loved ones for any agreement with an extremist dictatorship like yours." In a possible response to Netanyahu's sentiments, Israel365 reported that Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei tweeted that nuclear weapons violate Islam.

***Iran Threatens to End Deal with IAEA over US-Led Push to Criticize It;*** Iran is threatening to end a deal struck with the UN nuclear watchdog last weekend temporarily salvaging much monitoring of its activities if the agency's board endorses a US-led push to criticize Tehran next week, an Iranian position paper shows. Tehran this week scaled back cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, ending extra inspection measures introduced by its 2015 nuclear accord with major powers. It was the latest of many steps retaliating for US sanctions reimposed after the United States pulled out of that agreement in 2018. Iran and US President Joe Biden's administration are now locked in a standoff over who should move first to save the unraveling 2015 deal. Tehran says Washington should lift sanctions first. Biden wants Iran to undo its many retaliatory breaches of the deal's nuclear restrictions first.

***Israel Pleased with US Strikes in Syria: 'Biden Is Not Obama'***; Israel is highly pleased with Thursday night's US airstrikes against an Iranian-backed militia base on the Syrian-Iraqi border, Israeli officials said on Friday. Officials said they see the strikes as a positive signal about the new administration's posture toward Iran and believe it will send a message to Tehran that it must restrain itself and its proxies in the region. They said they had been concerned about growing Iranian provocations in the region, often through its proxies, and had shared this concern with the Americans.

***Iran Announces Official Start of New Restrictions on UN Nuclear Inspections***; Iran has officially begun restricting international inspections of its nuclear facilities, Iranian state TV reported Tuesday. The state TV report gave little detail beyond confirming that Iran had made good on its threat to reduce cooperation with International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors in a bid to pressure European countries and US President Joe Biden's administration to lift economic sanctions and restore the 2015 nuclear deal. Iran has said it plans to cease its implementation of the "Additional Protocol," a confidential agreement between Tehran and the IAEA reached as part of the landmark nuclear accord that grants the UN inspectors enhanced powers to visit nuclear facilities and examine Iran's program.

***Report: Israel, Saudi, Bahrain, and UAE Discuss Defense Alliance***; Israel is in talks with the kingdoms of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates on establishing a four-nation defense alliance, i24NEWS reported on Thursday. The reported defense alliance talks likely come in response to the "growing Iranian threat" in the region, specifically regarding its budding nuclear program along with its expanding influence in the Middle East with countries like Syria and Iraq. The report comes as US President Joe Biden attempts to launch talks with Iran on a return to the 2015 nuclear deal.

***Israeli Government Aids Yemenite Families***; The government on Monday officially recognized the suffering of Yemenite, Balkan and Mizrahi Jewish families who came to Israel in the 1950s and will offer them financial compensation. This injustice was "among the most painful in the history of the State of Israel," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, adding that it was time that families "who had their babies taken from them" get both recognition and compensation. What happened to them would be taught in history classes in the future, he said.

***Settlers Take on West Bank Archaeology as Ancient 'Joshua' Wall Tumbles Down***; On January 26, Shooki Levine witnessed the aftershocks of what he describes as a "terrorist attack." At an extremely rare early Iron Age archaeological site on Mount Ebal near the West Bank city of Nablus, an outer wall that had stood for over 3,000 years was repeatedly breached during Palestinian Authority roadworks, causing irreversible damage. While the interpretation of what exactly this cultic site was used for — and by whom — is still up for debate, a consensus of archaeologists date it to somewhere around the 11th century BCE, or when the Israelites evidently began to settle the land of Canaan. The site is also revered by some Christians and Jews as the place where the biblical Joshua built an altar as commanded in Deuteronomy 27, which is described in Joshua 8:31 as "an altar of unhewn stones, upon which no man had lifted up any iron." In the 1980s, Prof. Adam Zertal proposed the altar explanation after undertaking several seasons of excavations there. The scientific archaeological community has largely rejected this biblical identification, but researchers are unanimous over its significance, regardless of whether it is the site of Joshua's altar. Over three millennia later, the site has become the focal point of a campaign by settlers who want Israel to take a more active role in preserving archaeological sites in Palestinian-controlled areas, and who may have wound up doing harm via a covert attempt to "repair" the ancient wall.

***70% of Adult Israelis Have Been Vaccinated***; Health Minister Yuli Edelstein (Likud) on Tuesday morning said that 70% of Israelis over age 16 have been vaccinated. "The good news: Over 70% of Israeli citizens over age 16 have been vaccinated - 4,456,000 people, of whom 3,076,000 have received the second

dose as well," Edelstein said. "The less good news: Mass infection parties have been planned for us. Therefore, we will act to impose a night curfew and drastically reduce public transportation over the Purim holiday. "These guidelines have been written in blood - keep them!" he urged. On Monday night, the Health Ministry proposed a plan which would impose nighttime curfews from 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. between Thursday and Sunday. The plan would restore the restriction on travel, barring Israelis from going more than 1,000 meters from their homes, and would close all businesses during the curfew hours.

***Israel: Iran's Nuclear Actions Require Immediate International Response;*** With Iran moving to limit some UN inspections of its nuclear facilities, Israel on Wednesday said the Islamic Republic's actions threaten regional stability and require an immediate international response. "Iran is crushing the last vestiges of oversight by the International Atomic Energy Agency and continues to challenge and threaten regional stability," Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi said in a statement. "Iran's extreme steps necessitate an immediate international response," he said. "The Iranian policy is a statement of intentions as to its desire to continue to clandestinely develop nuclear capabilities."

***Ex-IDF Generals, Top Mossad Officials Urge Biden's Return to Iran Deal;*** A group of former top officials from Israel's Atomic Energy Commission, the IDF, and the Mossad sent a letter on Monday to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressing support for the US return to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran. Led by former IDF deputy chief of staff Matan Vilnai, Commanders for Israel's Security said in the letter that it "welcomes the American initiative to get Iran to again transparently follow the guidelines in the JCPOA, as long as it includes an Iranian commitment to abide by UN Security Council Resolution 2231" regarding the development of ballistic missiles. In addition to Vilnai, the letter was signed by former Mossad director Tamir Pardo, former IDF OC Operations Directorate Maj.-Gen. (res.) Nitzan Alon, former National Security Council head Uzi Arad, and Eli Levite, the former principal deputy director-general for policy at the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission.

***Hundreds of Israelis Stuck in Russia, Ukraine, UK Due to Airport Closure;*** Hundreds of Israelis are stranded in Russia, Ukraine, and the UK and are unable to return to Israel, despite having entry permits. There are no direct flights to Tel Aviv, and passengers face financial, health, and logistical difficulties using the only connecting flight through Frankfurt. On Monday, the government reduced the number of people who can enter the country per day from 600 to 200. There reportedly are about 90 Israelis stuck in Kiev with permission from the Transportation Ministry's Exceptions Committee to return, and another 40 are waiting for a permit. In Moscow, there are said to be some 150 Israeli citizens who have received permission to return and about 50 waiting for a permit.

***Amazon's New Anti-Sabbath Policy Sends Religious Jews into Unemployment;*** A new corporate directive is making it impossible for Sabbath-observant Jews to sell on Amazon Prime and even making it difficult to buy on the subscription service. Amazon announced in August 2020 that as of February 1, businesses that deliver from non-Amazon warehouses through Amazon Prime in their Seller Fulfilled Prime program must agree to fulfill orders six days a week. Amazon Prime is a subscription service that includes free two-day delivery. The new guidelines allow members to specify that they want their purchase to be shipped immediately, even if they order on Saturday. The sellers may choose Saturday or Sunday delivery to fulfill their six-day-a-week commitment, but shipping carriers like FedEx and UPS offer limited or no pickup on Sundays, and any carriers that do offer Sunday pickups do not typically ship until Monday. This leaves the sellers with no alternative that would allow them to fulfill the six-day requirement.

***Russian Armed Drones Used in Syria in Recent Years;*** A video and reports this week indicated that Russia deployed its stealthy Okhotnik drone to the Tiyas base in Syria near Palmyra. This may have happened several years ago but it also shows an increase in Russian drone activity in Syria. Russia's Orion drone and its S-70 Okhotnik ("Hunter") drone are seen in the video. Thomas Newdick at The Drive notes that "while part of

the purported combat sequence shows the Orion carrying four small weapons on underwing pylons, these areas have been deliberately obscured.” He notes that investigations online concluded that the “video was made sometime between December 2017 and early April 2019, which would coincide with the previously reported in-theater trials.” The video was shown on Russia’s Channel One. The Orion drone, sometimes called Inokhodets, is Moscow’s answer to US armed drones such as the Reaper. Russia has been lagging behind the US in drone production and has been trying to catch up. The deployment of the S-70 is interesting because Russia is not thought to have many of these wing-shaped stealth drones.

***Israeli NGO to Teach Israeli Smart Farming in the Caribbean;*** A local NGO is looking to share the secrets of Israel’s agricultural know-how and innovation with people in the Caribbean in a free webinar series that began on Wednesday evening. The event, organized by Volcani International Partnerships and the Caribbean Israel Leadership Coalition, will feature leading Israeli experts presenting various applications of smart farming to government officials, farmers, and entrepreneurs in the Bahamas, Anguilla, Aruba, and Barbados, the organization said. “The idea for this started when we began organizing a private webinar for the Minister of Agriculture of the Bahamas,” said Tali Gottlieb, COO of VIP. “Within a week of announcing the project, we had more than 2,300 people signed up. The CILC promoted the program very aggressively, and a lot of the registrants said that they were very eager to learn from it.”

***Israel Beaches Covered in Tar after Oil Spill;*** From Nitzanim near the Gaza Strip to the shores bordering Lebanon, 106 miles of the Mediterranean coast have been covered with tar. The pollution was noticed first on Wednesday, but stormy weather the following day carried out the oil and tar to Israel’s beaches. Thousands of volunteers organized by various Israeli environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) joined efforts to clean the beaches and save the animals that were hurt. One whale washed ashore and died; dozens of sea turtles have perished. The Ministry of Environmental Protection said on Saturday it had been informed by the European Maritime Safety Agency that an oil spill located about 30 miles off Israel’s coast was the pollution source. They had dismissed all reports that Israel had any prior knowledge of the spill before it had reached the seashores.



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