

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 11, 2021 (27th Adar, 5781)



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For March 2021

Nearly 90% of Israeli Adults Vaccinated Against Coronavirus; Professor Eran Segal of the Weizmann Institute of Science on Thursday morning reported that 87% of Israelis over age 16 have received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine. A total of 349,000 (5.5%) in the general sector have recovered from coronavirus, and 2,653,000 (42%) are at least one week after the first dose of the vaccine, with 719,000 (11%) at least two weeks after the second dose and 430,000 (6.8%) up to two weeks after the second dose of the vaccine. Another 615,000 (10%) are neither recovered from nor vaccinated against coronavirus. There are 1,551,000 (25%) children under 16 among the general sector's population.

Health Ministry Said to Weigh Ankle Bracelets for Those Returning from Abroad; The Health Ministry is reportedly considering recommending a policy that would require those returning from abroad to wear electronic monitoring bracelets so that law enforcement can track whether Israelis are violating quarantine. However, the proposal is sure to receive backlash over privacy concerns and therefore is unlikely to be put in place. If it were to though, Israelis arriving from abroad would first be sent to quarantine hotels while waiting for the results of their coronavirus tests taken upon landing to return. Those who test negative would then be allowed to leave the hotel, but be required to wear the electronic monitor. The policy has been considered in places like China, Australia, and several states in the US.

Iran Responds to Attack on Israeli Ship; Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiee gave long and rambling responses to a series of questions on Tuesday. Among other topics, he addressed the Iran nuclear deal, the Israeli ship that was reportedly targeted by the Iranians, and the Islamic Republic seeking a 25-year economic agreement with China. Tehran "does not allow Israeli invasions and monitors their behavior in the region," he said. This would appear to mean that Iran is seeking to "secure the open seas," as Rabiee said, suggesting a potential threat to Israeli ships. He did not admit Iran's involvement in the attack on the MV Helios Ray, a cargo vessel bound for Singapore that was hit with an explosive device in the Gulf of Oman over the weekend.

Iran Rejects European Offer for Direct Talks with US; Iran on Sunday rejected an offer to negotiate directly with the United States, in an informal meeting proposed by Europe, to revive the 2015 nuclear deal. A

spokesman for Iran's foreign ministry, Saeed Khatibzadeh, said recent actions taken by Washington and Europeans had led Iran to conclude that the "time was not right" to hold such talks. "There has been no change in America's positions and actions," Khatibzadeh said in a statement. "The Biden administration has not set aside Trump's maximum pressure policy, nor has it announced its commitments" under the 2015 nuclear deal.

Mediterranean Oil Spill is 'Eco-Terrorism' by Iran, Israel Says; Iran intentionally polluted the Mediterranean Sea and Israel's shores in an act of ecological terrorism, causing the greatest environmental disaster in Israel's history, Environmental Protection Minister Gila Gamliel said on Wednesday. "This pollution has people who are responsible for it and have to pay the price. Our nature is damaged, our animals are harmed, thanks to merciless environmental criminals," Gamliel said. Gamliel explained that, following a two-week investigation, the Environmental Protection Ministry found that the ship that leaked the crude oil, called the Emerald, was owned by a Libyan company and sailed from Iran to Syria. It departed Iran, turning off its automatic identification system (AIS) – which transmits its location to other ships in the area. It turned the AIS on as it went through the Suez Canal, and then off again as it approached Israel's shores.

French Police Prevent Stabbing Attack at Jewish School in Marseille; French police arrested a man who tried carrying out a stabbing attack at a Jewish school in Marseille, France on Friday morning, French media reported. The attacker was turned away by the Yavne School security, made up of parents who serve as security on a volunteer basis, the Jewish Agency noted. The institution was immediately locked down with the students inside to ensure their safety. A police patrol car has been set up in front of the school building. French police forces were alerted immediately, and instructed Jewish sites throughout the city to tighten security in light of the attempted attack. After turned away from the school, the attacker tried to stab Jewish shoppers at a kosher supermarket in the city, where he was once again prevented from attacking anyone by the same security personnel.

Israel Vows to Fight ICC's 'Perversion of Justice'; Israel will fight against the International Criminal Court's decision to investigate Israel for alleged war crimes, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said a day after the probe was announced. "I think this is an outrageous decision," Netanyahu said on Fox News. "It goes against the one democracy in the Middle East. They don't put on [trial] Syria... or Iran. This is pure antisemitism... This is an affront for all democracies." Netanyahu lamented that the ICC, established to "prevent the horrors of the Holocaust," now says "if we build a house in Jerusalem, that's a war crime. I'm going to fight for the truth, fight against this perversion of justice until it is null and void."

92.6% of Israeli Kindergarten Teachers Vaccinated, Recovered from COVID; Some 92.6% of Israeli kindergarten teachers have received a coronavirus vaccine or have recovered from the virus, according to data released by the country's Kindergarten Teachers Union. The data, published Wednesday, was released in order to stop the public incitement that has recently been directed toward education personnel and kindergarten teachers in particular, in light of the gradual return of Israel's education system and growing fears among parents, according to Dorit Hazan, chairwoman of the Kindergarten Teachers Union. "We must stop the incitement against Israel's kindergarten teachers, it's a social crime," a statement issued by the union read. "Claims of teachers not getting vaccinated are completely unfounded."

Ministers Vote to Reopen Grades 7-10 and Ease other Restrictions from Sunday; Despite a slight rise in coronavirus infections, ministers on Monday backed sticking to the plan to gradually reopen Israel's economy, which will see restaurants and hotels open their doors to the vaccinated next week, and reportedly moved to reopen Ben Gurion Airport to Israeli travelers. The next stage of the government's reopening plan, scheduled for around March 7, includes allowing students in grades 7-10 to return to school in low-infection areas, reopening restaurants and cafes, permitting hotels and event venues to open in accordance with Health

Ministry guidelines, and easing limitations on gatherings. The Prime Minister's Office said following a Monday night cabinet meeting that ministers had voted in favor of implementing the plan.

COVID-19: Flights from US Already Full after Partial Reopening of Skies; With Israel getting ready to partially reopen the skies on Sunday, flights to the United States are quite full for the next two weeks, said Ziontours Jerusalem CEO Mark Feldman. "What is happening now is something I have never seen before. Israelis are booking flights to leave next week, and they don't care about coming back for Israel's March 23 elections at all," Feldman said. "All other years, Israelis have felt that they had a patriotic duty to wait until after the elections before leaving for the Passover holiday, but this year, I am hearing clients from both sides of the political spectrum say 'Enough! I don't care anymore.'" Israel will be going back to the ballots for the fourth time in two years in what seems to many to be an endless cycle of political deadlock. Many are also eager to finally travel after more than a year of limited opportunities to fly, capped by the country's recent airport closure, which has left countless individuals stranded and unable to see loved ones.

Israel Throws Out 1.5 Million Flu Vaccines Due to Lack of Demand; The 2020-2021 winter has seen zero cases of flu after Israel ordered four million doses of flu vaccine. According to Israel Hayom, the health funds are now tossing 1.5 million doses of flu vaccine, after no one requested them. The interest in flu vaccines dropped when the coronavirus vaccines arrived in Israel, and due to the lack of cases. However, a relatively high percentage - 25.6% - of Israelis received this year's flu vaccine. Last year, 24.6% of Israelis received the flu vaccine, compared to 18% and 19% during the previous two years. Israel's Health Ministry prepared for the winter, during which there were expected to be simultaneous outbreaks of both flu and coronavirus. However, data from the Israel Center for Disease Control showed that not a single lab test was positive for flu this year.

Court Rules to Recognize Reform, Conservative Conversions Done in Israel for Citizenship; An expanded nine-justice panel of the High Court of Justice ruled on Monday to recognize conversions by the Reform and Masorti (Conservative) movements in Israel for the purposes of citizenship, ending a 15-year legal saga. Eight of the nine justices agreed with all aspects of the landmark ruling, while Justice Noam Sohlberg preferred to delay applying it for 12 months from the swearing-in of a new government. The decision set off a firestorm of criticism from Orthodox political parties who vowed to pass legislation to overturn the ruling and threatened not to enter any coalition without promises to do so, while Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party also denounced the ruling.

Sheba Hospital Still one of the World's Top 10; For the 3rd consecutive year, Newsweek magazine has ranked Sheba Medical Center amongst the "Top 10 Best Hospitals in the World", placing it at #10 in 2021. The magazine's annual "World's Best Hospitals" survey, which debuted on the Newsweek.com site on Wednesday, once again cited Sheba's superior healthcare, as well as its medical innovation and cutting-edge research. It should be noted that Sheba faced stiffer global competition, as the annual Newsweek/Statista ranking featured more countries and expanded from 1,000 hospitals in 2019 to 2,000 in 2021. Despite doubling the number of participating hospitals, Sheba was still placed amongst the Top 10 in 2021. Sheba is located on a 200-acre campus and is home to 11 of Israel's national health centers, 4 hospitals, 2 institutes (Heart & Cancer), expansive research laboratories 159 medical departments and clinics, as well as diverse educational facilities.

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