

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 18, 2021 (5th Nisan, 5781)



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Israel's Military Says it Has Reached Herd Immunity to COVID; The Israeli military declared that it has reached herd immunity to COVID-19 after 80% of its personnel had either been vaccinated, had the disease, or both. The announcement makes the Israel Defense Forces perhaps the first military in the world to achieve immunity to the disease. “Things look a lot more like they did a year ago,” Brig. Gen. Dr. Alon Glasberg, the IDF’s chief medical officer, told reporters Thursday. “It seemed impossible, but now it’s here.” While herd immunity will allow the military to resume normal operations, soldiers will still have to wear masks and social distance for now.

Iran Says Container Ship Damaged in ‘Terrorist’ Attack in Mediterranean; An Iranian container ship traveling in the Mediterranean was damaged in an attack this week, an official said Friday, calling the incident a “terrorist act.” The ship was slightly damaged by an explosive object but no one on board was hurt, Ali Ghiasi, a spokesman for state-run shipping company IRISL told semi-official Nournews, according to Reuters. The accusation comes a day after the Wall Street Journal reported that Israel has targeted at least 12 ships bound for Syria, most of them transporting Iranian oil, with mines and other weapons.

Czech Republic Opens De Facto Embassy to Israel in West Jerusalem; The Czech Republic opened a full-fledged diplomatic mission in west Jerusalem on Thursday as a sign of its recognition that the city is Israel’s capital. “We, the Czech Republic, are opening here in Jerusalem on Washington Street our diplomatic representation,” said Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, as he inaugurated the new office together with Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi. Babiš clarified that the country’s embassy is still located in Tel Aviv, but that the new office would be a branch of that embassy. “We will have a full-fledged diplomatic mission here in Jerusalem,” Babiš said. “It will deal with a lot, ranging from politics and economic cooperation to the consular agenda and other topics. It will have its permanent staff and work under the lead of our embassy in Tel Aviv.”

German Jewish Students Raise \$40k to Keep Muslim Kebab Shop Open; Jewish students in Germany have raised more than \$40,000 to help the owner of the kebab shop in Halle that was attacked after a neo-Nazi gunman was unable to enter a nearby synagogue. The Jewish Student Union Germany started a GoFundMe

campaign last year to assist Ismet Tekin, who owns the shop with his brother, surpassing by far its original goal of 7,000 euros — about \$8,300 — Deutsche Welle reported. Tekin's business suffered massive losses and was on the verge of bankruptcy because of the COVID-19 pandemic and a drop in sales following the 2019 attack on Yom Kippur. A neo-Nazi killed a woman and a diner after failing to enter the synagogue. He has since been sentenced to life in prison.

UAE Establishes \$10 Billion Israel Investment Fund; A \$10 billion fund has been established by the United Arab Emirates, aimed at investing in specific sectors throughout Israel, including space, healthcare, water, manufacturing, energy, and agricultural technology, the Emirates News Agency (WAM) reported on Thursday. The fund is the result of a phone call between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. In an interview with Radio Haifa's Eli Levi, Netanyahu credited the establishment of the fund, the hefty promise of \$10 billion, to "the Sheikh's belief in my economic leadership." He added that this fund will help jump-start the Israeli economy as the country emerges from the economic throes of the coronavirus.

Last Ethiopian Aliyah Flight of Operation Rock of Israel Arrives; The last flight of Operation Rock of Israel, the latest effort to bring the remainder of the Falash Mura community in Ethiopia to Israel, landed Thursday morning with some 300 new immigrants disembarking at Ben-Gurion Airport. Aliyah and Integration Minister Pnina Tamano-Shata, who led the government's efforts to restart the immigration of the remaining Falash Mura in Ethiopia, was on hand to greet the new immigrants, as was Jewish Agency chairman Isaac Herzog. Activists for the community have criticized the government for failing to bring all remaining members of the Falash Mura in Ethiopia to Israel, who numbers at least another 5,500.

Israeli Technology to Save Lives of Colombian Children; Two devices that extract drinking water from the air were donated by the State of Israel to schools in rural Colombia at the beginning of this week. The devices were installed in La Guajira, a state in northeastern Colombia, which for years has been suffering from a disastrous water crisis. The donation marks a significant contribution to President Iván Duque's "Guajira Azul" program, which includes initiatives that will bring fresh clean drinking water and basic sanitation to the area, and is part of a larger social initiative for the peninsula administered by Colombia's Housing Ministry. For centuries, the indigenous Wayuu population adapted to survive by planting crops fit to the region's unique ecosystem. Seasonal rains have a large significance for the Wayuu, but over the past decade, they have become less frequent due to climate change. Prolonged droughts and rising temperatures in recent years have disrupted long-standing Wayuu planting practices and left the land with the largest amount of desertification in the country.

Exodus out of US: 17-Year-Locusts to Emerge as Passover Nears; Periodical cicada nymphs, called broods, will make their scheduled emergence from the underground this spring, just in time for the retelling of locusts' contribution to the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, a University of Maryland report detailed. The periodical cicadas will be visible in the American north-east from around mid-May to late-June, visible in the vicinity of shrubs or trees, and recognizable by the distinguishable mating "song" that the male cicadas sing to the females during daylight hours. "The reason that this is such an impressive event," UMD's professor emeritus Dr. Michael Raupp told Fox News, is that "it happens nowhere else on the planet." A UMD information site notes that though they are known as locusts, they are not actually locusts.

Iranian Defense Minister Threatens to Raze Tel Aviv and Haifa; Iran's Defense Minister Amir Hatami threatened on Sunday to "raze" the cities of Tel Aviv and Haifa "to the ground" if Israel launches a preemptive attack against the Islamic Republic. At the same time, Hatami also played down the chances of direct hostilities breaking out between the two countries, saying Israel is well aware of the potential consequences of such actions. "Sometimes, the Zionist regime [Israel] out of desperation makes big claims against the Islamic Republic of Iran to allegedly threaten it," said the Iranian Defense Minister. "It must know that if it does a

damn thing, we will raze Tel Aviv and Haifa to the ground,” he warned. Hatami added that Iran has enough resources to “maintain the stability of the country” and boasted of its regional power via “resistance groups.”

Israeli Jets Escort American B-52s During Flyby, In Show of Force to Iran; Israeli F-15 fighter jets escorted two American B-52 bombers through Israeli airspace on Sunday in a new show of force by the United States against Iran — with an Israeli element — amid rising tensions in the region. Recent weeks have seen multiple attacks on American military bases in Iraq by Iran-linked militias, including one last week that resulted in the death of an American contractor, as well as an attack on an Israeli-owned ship in the Gulf of Oman that Israel has blamed on Tehran. Late last month, the US responded to the rocket attacks on its bases with an airstrike on an Iran-linked militia in Syria, killing at least one member. Sunday’s flyby through the region by the B-52 heavy bombers was at least the seventh such maneuver in the past six months. It marked the first time that Israeli planes were photographed accompanying the US bomber, however.

Jordanian Prince Refused Entry to Israel for Violating Agreement; Jordanian Prince Hussein canceled his visit for a coordinated visit to the Temple Mount following an incident at the Allenby Crossing. The visit had been closely coordinated between Jordanian and Israeli officials, including security arrangements and the number of armed security guards to enter Israel with the prince. However, when the prince arrived with his entourage, it became clear that the Jordanians had not complied with the earlier agreement and had brought significantly greater security. Israel did not agree to the entry of additional security guards, and the entourage and prince returned to Amman.

‘MBS Ready to Meet Netanyahu in Abu Dhabi,’ Emirati Source Says; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) may meet in Abu Dhabi on Thursday, a well-placed Emirati source said on Wednesday. “MBS is ready to meet Bibi,” the source said, confirming that talks are ongoing in the three countries to arrange the meeting. Israel and Saudi Arabia do not have diplomatic relations, but ties between the countries have been warming, especially in cooperation against their shared adversary Iran. Netanyahu and MBS, as the Saudi crown prince is known, met in November of last year in the Saudi town of Neom, though neither has officially confirmed it.

Israel, Cyprus, and Greece Agree to Link Power Grids Via Subsea Cable; Cyprus, Greece, and Israel, on Monday, signed an initial agreement to build the world's longest and deepest underwater power cable that will traverse the Mediterranean seabed at a cost of about \$900 million and link their electricity grids. The project, called the Euro-Asia interconnector, will provide a back-up power source in times of emergency, said Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz, who was in Nicosia to sign a memorandum of understanding with his counterparts. Cypriot Energy Minister Natasa Pilides said it marked "a decisive step towards ending the island's energy isolation, and consequently, our dependence on heavy fuels." The cable will have a capacity of 1,000-2,000 megawatts (MW) and is expected to be completed by 2024, according to Israel's energy ministry.

Chief Rabbi: Reform Conversions 'Aren't Jewish'; The comments, made by the Sephardic Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef and published by Israeli media, come after Israel’s Supreme Court recognized Reform and Conservative conversions that take place in Israel in a decision last week. “What is Reform conversion? It isn’t Jewish,” Rabbi Yosef said, in a video. The court ruling enables those who convert to Judaism under Reform or Conservative auspices in Israel to become citizens under Israel’s Law of Return, which allows any Jew who wishes to live in the country to become a citizen. While the decision became a lightning rod in a long-standing debate over the Orthodox rabbinate’s control over matters of religion in Israel, the scope of the decision is relatively narrow as it deals exclusively with conversions taking place in Israel.

Israelis Create Cancer Drug Without Animal Tests, by Using Human-Simulating Chip; Israeli scientists have developed a cancer drug without testing it on animals by using a chip that simulates the human body. Hebrew University researchers created a chip containing human tissue with microscopic sensors to

precisely monitor the response of the human body — kidney, liver, and heart — to specific drug treatments. The idea of organ-on-chip technology is 30 years old, but the Israeli team is believed to be the first to successfully create a new treatment using a chip's capabilities in order to completely eliminate animal testing. They are so confident in their research, which paired two existing drugs in order to solve a problem of excess liver fat experienced by some cancer patients, that they are submitting the combination for a patent, for clinical trials, and for approval by the US Food and Drug Administration — all while skipping the normal animal testing.

Israel Allocates \$60 Million to Build First Quantum Computer; Israel is joining the global race in producing some of the world's most advanced technologies, as the nation is looking to build its very first quantum computer, according to a report. To fund the project, the Innovation Authority and the Defense Ministry are taking bids from multinational companies, Israeli businesses, and universities for a 198 million NIS (\$60 million) project to build the computer, said Aviv Zeevi, Vice President at the Authority's Technological Infrastructure Division. "We want to be in the game," Zeevi said. "We need to be at least at a reasonable level to be able to develop" hardware and software associated with quantum computers. Israel is investing 1.25 billion NIS in a national initiative to build up quantum proficiency, and this project in particular is part of that initiative.



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