

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update April 22, 2021 (10<sup>th</sup> Iyyar, 5781)***



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

***Israel Nearing Herd Immunity;*** Israel is approaching herd immunity against corona, which has allowed the country to celebrate recent holidays and gradual rounds of openings without experiencing any new outbreaks, according to the head of the immunotherapy laboratory at Bar-Ilan University. “My opinion is that we are nearing the state of herd immunity,” said Prof. Cyrille Cohen. “Why do I say it? Because even after so many openings, and Purim, and Passover, the reproduction rate of the virus in Israel has remained between 0.7 and 0.8.” The reproduction rate, or ‘R’, measures how many people each virus carrier will infect. When it is lower than 1, the disease is considered in recession.

***Israel’s Schools Return to 'Normal' on Sunday;*** The Education Ministry published on Friday the framework for returning to “normal” full-time schooling on Sunday. Studies will resume six days per week without capsules and with no restriction on the movement of teachers, aides, or students. Supplementary education classes, such as support for new immigrants, will also return in full, as will after-school programs available for youth in preschools through third grade. The opening will be done under a stricter intervention model - the “Adjusted” Defending Education program - for dealing with outbreaks, allowing for wide monitoring and prevention of spread.

***Mask Wearing Outside No Longer Required as of Sunday;*** Israel lifted the requirement to wear masks outdoors starting on Sunday, Health Minister Yuli Edelstein announced on Thursday. The requirement will remain for indoor spaces. “The masks are intended to protect us from the coronavirus,” said Edelstein. “After our health professionals came to the conclusion that they are no longer needed outdoors, I decided to allow it according to their recommendation. The level of morbidity in Israel is very low thanks to our successful vaccination campaign, and thus we can ease up further restrictions for you, citizens of Israel. I ask you to still carry a mask in order to enter closed buildings. Together we will keep the morbidity low.” The move had been under discussion for several weeks, but authorities decided to wait until the end of Remembrance Day and Independence Day, fearing that mask-less celebrations might lead to a spike in cases.

***After Lockdown, Israelis Back at Parks for Independence Day;*** Hundreds of thousands of Israelis flocked to beaches and parks across the country Thursday, barbecuing, waving flags, and craning their necks for a glimpse of the Air Force fighter jets' flyby to mark the country's 73rd Independence Day. While most wore face coverings or had masks strapped around their chins, the scenes looked nearly identical to those from the pre-coronavirus era. After an early wave of the pandemic tamed celebrations significantly last year, Israelis were allowed to celebrate freely this year, with restrictions drawn back almost entirely. As a result, families flocked to national parks and beaches, filling many to full capacity. The Israel Nature and Parks Authority issued a statement early Thursday afternoon urging civilians to avoid traveling to the Tel Ashkelon National Park in the coming hours due to overcrowding.

***Despite Covid, More than 20,000 Olim Came to Israel this Year;*** From last Independence Day to this one, 20,456 new olim came to Israel despite the difficulties caused by corona, according to data published by the Aliyah and Integration Ministry. Among them are 3,208 who work in marketing and trade, 812 in medical fields, and 517 in education. Most of the 18-35 age group work in the social sciences, a majority of them in technology. Children under the age of 18 comprised 4,748 olim, and 420 specifically came to Israel to serve in the IDF.

***Iran Natanz Bomb Could Have Been Planted 10-15 Years Ago;*** Former prime minister Ehud Olmert said Tuesday that a bomb that caused severe damage at Iran's Natanz nuclear enrichment facility was likely placed there more than a decade ago, waiting for the right time to be detonated. While specifying repeatedly that he had no direct knowledge of the operation, or who was behind it, Olmert said such an attack would have been the fruit of long-laid plans. He also slammed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, blaming him for a series of leaks to Israeli and foreign media that attributed the strike to Israel's Mossad spy agency. Iranian officials on Tuesday confirmed that the blast at the site caused significant harm, damaging or destroying thousands of centrifuges. Iran has blamed Israel, calling the attack an act of "nuclear terrorism."

***Israel 12th-Happiest Country in the World;*** On Israel's Independence Day, after a tumultuous year, Israelis are happy, the tech industry is booming, and housing prices are the lowest they've been in years (though an apartment still costs a decade in savings). Here is a look at Israel by the numbers as the country turns 73: Happiness: Israel is ranked 12th in this year's UN's annual World Happiness Report, which is based on gross domestic product per person, healthy life expectancy, and the opinions of each country's residents. Work and economy: In terms of jobs, over 10 percent of Israelis work in the high-tech industry, a number that continues to rise, Channel 12 News reported using statistics representing 2019. The high-tech industry has been crediting with saving Israel's economy from the worst of COVID-19.

***Israeli Scientists May Have Found Brain's 'Hunger Switch';*** New Israeli research may pave the way for drugs that "turn off the hunger switch" in the human brain with minimal side effects, scientists say. A receptor in the brain, melanocortin 4 (MC4), is known to control the urge to eat. It has been dubbed the "hunger switch." A genetically inherited malfunction with this receptor is believed to be the most common cause of obesity that is triggered by a single gene mutation, impacting an estimated 5 percent of early-onset childhood obesity. Now, researchers at the Weizmann Institute of Science have conducted research that they say could bring about easy manipulation of the receptor among people with such a mutation. They say it could even be used to help people who don't have a genetic condition that directly impacts the MC4 in their efforts to lose weight, by treating the receptor as an "override" switch. When "turned off," they say, it could suppress regular hunger.

***A very special greeting on the 73rd anniversary of Israel's founding!*** Ahead of its 73rd Independence Day, Israel's Population Stands at 9.3 Million. Two days before the eve of Israel's celebration of its 73rd anniversary, the population of the Jewish state stands at 9,327,000, the Central Bureau of Statistics announced

Monday. That includes nearly 6.9 million Jews, accounting for 73.9 percent of the population; 1.96 million Arabs, just over one-fifth of the population; and 467,000 people of other groups, amounting to 5% of the population. About 78% of Israel's Jews are native-born. Since last year's Independence Day, 167,000 babies were born, 50,000 people died, and 16,300 immigrated to the country, according to CBS.

***Independence Day: Technologies Making Israel Proud in 2021;*** As Israel celebrates 73 years of independence, the country has cemented its place as a global tech powerhouse, with more than 60 privately-held 'unicorns' valued at more than \$1 billion, more than 80 Israeli publicly-traded companies listed in the United States, and some of the most innovative ideas and technologies in the world. Here is a look at a couple of tech innovations that have made the startup nation proud in the past year. ***Corona Test;*** A new Israeli COVID test developed at Sheba Medical Center can detect coronavirus in a fluid sample in just 20 seconds. The handheld SpectraLIT machine received EU approval just two weeks ago and is expected to help Europe return to international air travel. The test is inexpensive and more accurate than the fast antigen tests that are beginning to be used in some airports. ***Cornea Implant;*** In January, A 78-year old blind man got his sight back with the implant of an artificial cornea, the first such operation in the world. The artificial cornea, designed by Ra'anana-based CorNeat Vision, was implanted in surgery performed at Rabin Medical Center in Petach Tikva. Upon removal of bandages, the patient was immediately able to read text and recognize family members. The test was the first of a clinical trial which will hopefully lead to a new medical process that can rehabilitate the vision of corneally blind patients with a relatively simple implantation procedure.

***Iran to Begin Enriching Uranium to 60%;*** Iran said it will begin enriching uranium to 60 percent, to its highest ever level, moving the country a step closer to the 90 percent threshold needed for military use. It comes two days after an explosion, which Iran blamed on Israel, damaged its enrichment plant in Natanz. The International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed it had received a letter from the foreign minister's political deputy Abbas Araghchi announcing Iran's plan to start 60 percent enrichment. The letter did not state when the process is due to begin. Iranian state television's English-language arm, Press TV, said Araghchi claimed Iran would also be introducing another 1,000 centrifuges at Natanz, without elaborating. Iran had been enriching up to 20 percent but Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had threatened to go to 60 percent enrichment in February if the country needed. Enriching uranium to 60 percent purity will be the highest the program ever has done before - though still short of weapons-grade.

***France, Britain and Germany: Concerned by Iran's Moves to Enrich Uranium;*** The European powers party to the Iran nuclear deal told Tehran on Wednesday that its decision to enrich uranium at 60% purity and install a further 1,000 centrifuges at its Natanz site were contrary to efforts to revive the 2015 nuclear deal. Talks between world powers, Iran and the United States are due to resume in Vienna on Thursday, but in a joint statement Britain, France and Germany said Tehran's decision to enrich at 60 percent was not based on credible civilian reasons and constituted an important step in the production of a nuclear weapon. "Iran's announcements are particularly regrettable given they come at a time when all JCPoA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) participants and the United States have started substantive discussions, with the objective of finding a rapid diplomatic solution to revitalize and restore the JCPoA," the three countries said.

***Natanz Attack Hit 50 Meters Underground, Destroyed Most of the Facility;*** The alleged Israeli attack on Iran's Natanz nuclear facility targeted an electrical substation located 40 to 50 meters underground and damaged "thousands of centrifuges," Iranian officials revealed in recent days. Fereydoon Abbasi-Davani, former head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, told Iranian media on Monday that the attack hit an electrical substation located deep underground and managed to damage both the power distribution system and the cable leading to the centrifuges in order to cut power to them. The Iranian official stressed that such an operation takes years, saying "the design of the enemy was very beautiful." Davani added that the substation

was built underground in order to protect it from air and missile strikes and that the attack was carried out either via cyber, sabotaged equipment, or sabotage committed by agents.

***TRUE FAITH. INCREDIBLE HARDSHIP;*** Ambushed and stoned by terrorists. In self-defense, he responded by shooting at the ground to drive them away. A few years later, in 2002, Boaz tragically lost his wife and 3 of their children in a separate terror attack. Still, Boaz is such an inspiration to us—having lived through tragedies that most of us will never experience, yet keeping an optimistic and positive outlook on life.

***Fewest Seriously Ill COVID Patients Since July 2020;*** A total of 199 new cases of the coronavirus were diagnosed across Israel Tuesday, according to data released by the Health Ministry Wednesday morning. Just 0.3% of tests conducted Tuesday came back positive, down from 0.4% of tests carried out Monday. That is the lowest level recorded since May 21st last year when the percentage of tests coming back positive hit 0.3%. There are now just 3,209 known active cases of the virus in Israel, down from 3,264 on Tuesday, of which 362 are being treated in hospitals. Of those 362 hospitalizations, 221 patients are in serious condition. That is down from 236 seriously ill patients on Monday and marks the lowest number since July 17th of last year, when there were 220 patients in serious condition.

***Michigan State U Jewish Students Withdraw Anti-Semitism Bill;*** Under intense pressure from anti-Israel campus groups, Jewish students at Michigan State University withdrew a bill to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism after it had already been passed by the student association general assembly. On March 18, the Associated Students of Michigan State University general assembly passed the resolution by 81 percent, stated Michigan State Hillel. Shortly, therefore, due to intense pressure by campus anti-Israel groups, student representatives started to withdraw their support for the bill claiming they hadn't read the resolution before passing it. The student assembly then released a statement attacking the IHRA definition as "silencing political thought surrounding the occupation of historic Palestine." They recommended adopting the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, a definition created by those who oppose the IHRA definition.

***800-Year-Old Toilet Reveals: British Jews Ate Herring, Chicken, No Pig;*** Jews in 13th century England enjoyed herring and chicken, did not eat pig, did not eat the hind part of cattle, and kept separate pots for meat and dairy, all as Jewish dietary laws (kashrut) require, an archaeological excavation in Oxford has revealed. Just a few years before the expulsion of all Jews from England in 1290, a Jewish man named Jacob, son of the revered scholar Rabbi Moses of London, owned an imposing property in Oxford, known as Jacob's Hall. Eight centuries later, the discovery of the building's latrine has offered an incredible glimpse into Jewish life of the time. Which, perhaps unsurprisingly, did not seem to differ much from that of today – at least regarding food. "Around three years ago, there were some plans to build in a particular site in Oxford, literally at the heart of the city," Dr. Julie Dunne from the University of Bristol said.

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