

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update September 9, 2021 ***(3rd Elul, 5782)***



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For September 2021

Shanah tovah um'tukah!

Shanah tovah um'tukah! In Hebrew this means "Have a good and sweet year!" As we approach Rosh Hashanah, we wish all of our readers the blessings of joy, abundance, and the bountiful love of God and family.

Palestinian Consulate in Jerusalem Jeopardizes Israeli Government; The US plans to reopen its Jerusalem Consulate General – which directly worked with the Palestinian Authority – would jeopardize Israel's government, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid warned on Wednesday, September 1, adding that this viewpoint has been conveyed to Washington. "We have an interesting yet delicate structure of our government, and we think this might destabilize this government, and I don't think the American administration wants this to happen," Lapid said. The former Trump administration closed the Consulate General in 2019, folding its services into that of the US Embassy, which the US had relocated to Israel's capital from Tel Aviv the previous year. The United States first opened a consulate in Jerusalem's Old City in 1844, moving it to a nearby location outside the city walls on Agron Street in 1912. After the 1993 Oslo I Accord, the consulate acted as a de facto embassy to the PA, which viewed its closure as one more symbolic step the Trump administration had taken to sever the ties between them and to disconnect it from Jerusalem. "I know the history," Lapid said. "Once it was closed, reopening it will send the wrong message, not only to the region, not only to the Palestinians but also to other countries. We don't want this to happen," he said. Israel holds that Jerusalem is its united capital but has received scant recognition of that sovereignty either over the western part of the city, which has been within its borders since 1948, or over the eastern part of the city, which it annexed in the aftermath of the 1967 Six-Day War. Since then-president Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017, Israel has campaigned for other countries to follow suit. President Joe Biden, who in the past has acknowledged that Jerusalem is Israel's capital, has not taken any steps to rescind any of Trump's decisions on the status of the city. Upon taking office in January, Biden pledged to reopen the consulate but has not yet set a date for the restoration of that mission.

Nuclear Talks in Iran Won't Resume for Two to Three Months; Stalled talks aimed at reviving Iran's nuclear agreement with world powers will likely not resume for another two to three months, the Iranian Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, said on Wednesday, September 1. The negotiations were adjourned on June 20, two days after ultraconservative Ebrahim Raisi won Iran's presidential election, and no date has been set for a resumption of dialogue. "We are not seeking to flee the negotiation table and the... government considers a real negotiation is a negotiation that produces palpable results allowing the rights of the Iranian nation to be guaranteed," Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said. But "the other party knows full well that a process of two to three months is required for the new government to establish itself and to start taking decisions." Iran has gradually scaled back its compliance with the 2015 deal in response to Trump's withdrawal from the agreement in May of 2018, but current President Joe Biden wants to bring Washington back into the agreement. The talks in Vienna involve Iran and the five other remaining parties to the deal -- Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia. The United States also takes part in the talks but has no direct contact with Iran. This week, the Iranian Foreign Ministry stated that Iran will downscale its nuclear activities only if the United States fully returns to all of its commitments under the 2015 deal. He added that Vienna talks are "one of the questions on the foreign policy and government agenda."

Taliban Gives US Tanks, Military Equipment to Iran; The Taliban has begun turning over American-made military equipment to Iran, according to a report by Iran International. According to the report, images on social media show military equipment which was given to the Afghan army by the US in Tehran and other parts of Iran. Photographs also show armored tanks and Humvees being transported towards Tehran. Two of the images were posted by the acting Defense Minister of Afghanistan Bismallah Mohammadi, who called Iran a "bad neighbor" and said that the country's "bad days are not eternal." Last week, Iran offered to resume fuel shipments to Afghanistan to prevent an economic collapse. The US left behind billions of dollars' worth of equipment behind in Afghanistan when it completed its withdrawal from the country Tuesday morning.

Iran, Russia, Other Adversaries Hope US has New 'Vietnam Syndrome'—Analysis; In the wake of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United States is now charting a new course in which it will refrain from military interventions and "nation-building." That is what US President Joe Biden has said. "This decision about Afghanistan is not just about Afghanistan, it's about ending an era of major military operations to remake other countries," the president said. So what are media and commentators saying in Tehran, Moscow, and elsewhere? Since Iranian media tend to reflect the views of the regime, it is easy to know what Iran is thinking by reading its state-linked media such as Tasnim or Fars News. A recent report on Tasnim news presents a two-for-one in this respect by quoting a Russian military expert in Iranian media. According to this report, a senior member of the committee on the policy of the Federation Council in Russia analyzed the US decision. He compared the US ending military operations in Afghanistan with the withdrawal of the military forces of the United States from Vietnam. "The 20-year American military operation in Afghanistan was completely meaningless and fruitless." In this context, he argued that the withdrawal from Vietnam and the collapse of South Vietnam led to the so-called Vietnam Syndrome, which he argued "deeply affected US society and caused a rift. The United States now has the 'Afghanistan Syndrome'... The most important feature is the loss of American faith in military power and the impact of its actions. Of course, this time, the loss of confidence in US military action is not limited to the United States and is seen around the world." Alexei Pushkov in Russia argued that the US has a new geopolitical calculation to make on the world stage. It is soul-searching having wasted some \$2 trillion on the Afghan war. In fact, the real figure spent in Afghanistan and Iraq is estimated at between \$5t. and \$8t. What does this mean? It means that Iran and Russia think they will be able to do as they please for the next few years, as the US will not want to use its military.

Iranian Fuel Ship Enters Syrian Waters to Help Hezbollah; An Iranian ship carrying fuel reportedly reached Syria's territorial waters. This will be a major gamechanger for Lebanon and Hezbollah, which aims to profit off the Iranian fuel that is being shipped. The fuel will supposedly be offloaded at a Syrian port and

then transferred to Lebanon. In July 2019, UK Royal Marines temporarily seized a large tanker named the Grace 1, which was on its way to Syria. Tehran has also sent ships to Venezuela carrying gasoline. The US seized fuel from some of those ships in the summer of 2020. Hezbollah has been at odds with the US and wants to use the fuel delivery to show it can run Lebanon's economy. Hezbollah also wants closer ties with China via Iran. The terrorist group has, in the past, slammed US Ambassador to Lebanon Dorothy Shea. "As US officials, we are working hard to find ways to resolve the fuel crisis, and there is no incentive for Lebanon to rely on Iranian fuel or any other fuel being shipped from Syria," US Senator Chris Murphy said in Beirut yesterday, according to reports. The same reports note that Syria is under sanctions from the US. "Informed sources report that due to technical reasons, Iraqi oil is expected to enter Lebanon with a delay, and also in the shadow of the ambiguity of the US decision to import gas from Egypt to Lebanon, the convoy of Iranian fuel ships, which is the first that will enter Lebanon within a week. This is the only hope of the Lebanese people in the shadow of the suffocating US siege against Lebanon," Iran's Tasnim says. The news agency is close to the Iranian regime and the IRGC. Iran's Fars News has the same report on the tanker. Al-Akhbar notes that the "Iranian ship is loaded with diesel, which Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah announced on the Ashura commemoration that it set off from Iran and that its final cargo destination will be Lebanon, entered Syrian territorial waters yesterday." The involvement of Hezbollah and Nasrallah shows that the Iranian-backed group wants credit for this shipment.

Iran Sports Minister Joins 'Antisemitic' Attack against Israeli Athletes; Seyed Hamid Sajjadi Hazaveh, the newly appointed Iranian minister of sports, joined members of the Islamic Republic's parliament in August in urging Iranian athletes from competing against their Israeli counterparts. Hamid Sajjadi termed Israel a "child-killing and occupying regime," sparking criticism from a highly decorated Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler. The former head of Iran's Greco-Roman wrestling team, Sardar Pashaei, who is now an American citizen, said that "It is deeply sad for me and many other Iranian athletes such racist remarks by the Iranian authorities. Just a few days ago, members of the Iranian parliament called on the minister of sports to ban Iranian athletes from competing with Israeli athletes, and unfortunately, we now see that the minister of sports of the new Iranian government has the same message: a message of enmity and hatred." Pashaei, who helps run the United for Navid campaign in remembrance of the murdered Iranian wrestler Navid Afkari, added that "Enmity with Israel and Western values has been the fundamental policy of the regime from day one, they are alien to any peace, friendship, and humanity, and they only want to spread evil, enmity, and hatred. And sadly, they have carried out this message in the field of sports, which is supposed to be away from politics. "Iran's clerical regime executed Afkari in September 2020 for his participation in a demonstration against worsening economic conditions in the Islamic Republic. Pashaei noted that "We, the Iranian athletes, have been victims of the policy of hatred and enmity of the Iranian officials for a long time, we have been losing the opportunities of our lives for many years because of that, we complained to the International Olympic Committee about this. But nothing has been done yet by international sports officials and the International Olympic Committee to end this misguided policy, and athletes continue to fall victim." The sports outlet Inside the Games reported in May that audio obtained by the London-based Iran International news organization apparently shows Iran Judo Federation President Arash Miresmaeili urging the coach of Saeid Mollaei to notify the judoka to take a defeat in order to not compete against an Israeli judoka. "The position of the regime, myself, the minister, all of us, is that he is not allowed to compete [against the Israeli rival]," Miresmaeili reportedly said. "Make him understand that he is not allowed under any circumstances. He will be held responsible for whatever decision he makes." In April, the International Judo Federation imposed a four-year ban on Iran's regime for its discriminatory conduct toward Israel.

No Plans to Limit Settlement Construction for Now; Despite the change of administration in Washington, Israel's settlement building policies will remain largely unchanged, an Israeli government official said on Wednesday, September 1. The official said that Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's new government will operate based on the understandings his predecessor Benjamin Netanyahu reached with

former President Donald Trump, whose administration allowed for Israel to continue building in settlements across Judea and Samaria, so long as the construction did not expand beyond communities' "existing footprints." This agreement allowed settlement building to skyrocket during the Trump era, with approved projects beyond the Green Line more than doubling compared to former President Barack Obama's second term. "The (Trump-era) understanding may well be adapted, but as of now, it is still the only game in town," the official said. "President Biden only spoke generally about his opposition to settlement building, and his team has not gotten into specifics with us." The official said that Bennett is aware of the issue's sensitivity and acted to delay the convening of the Defense Ministry body that approves settlement construction in order for it not to coincide with his visit to Washington last week.

Israeli Scientists Discover how to Reverse Cell Aging; Scientists from the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology say they have found a way to rejuvenate the aging process of the body's immune system. Prof. Doron Melamed and doctoral student Reem Dowery sought to understand why the elderly population is more susceptible to severe cases of COVID-19 and why the vaccines seem to be less effective and wane faster among this population. The results of their work were published this month in the peer-reviewed, online medical journal *Blood*. The secret begins with B cells, also known as B lymphocytes. These are the cells that produce antibodies against any pathogen that enters the body. They play a key role in protecting people from viruses and diseases. "We found specific hormonal signals produced by the old B cells, the memory cells, that inhibit the bone marrow from producing new B cells," Melamed said. "This is a huge discovery. It is like finding a needle in a haystack." It also means that, over time, specific drugs or treatments can be found to inhibit one of the hormones in the signaling pathway and get the bone marrow to produce new B cells. He also suggested mixing vaccines, such as combining a shot of a Pfizer mRNA vaccine with an AstraZeneca booster given several months later, "which may generate better stimulation of the elderly immune system." At the same time, clinical trials would be needed to determine how to safely inhibit the hormones to find a longer-term solution, hopefully before the next pandemic, Melamed said.

Lapid: US Withdrawal from Afghanistan was Right Move, Done Poorly; The US withdrawal from Afghanistan was the right move but was carried out poorly, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said on Wednesday, September 1, in the first sound of criticism from a senior Israeli official about the recent withdrawal. "It was probably the right decision but wasn't performed in the right manner," Lapid told foreign reporters in Jerusalem. "We don't understand completely all the consequences of this move, of this retreat," he added. It could affect Pakistan and Iran's long border with Afghanistan that is now run by a radical Sunni organization, Lapid said. He further speculated that it could "hugely" impact the battle with al-Qaeda. "We should wait a little before we jump to conclusions about the aftermath of the US withdrawal," Lapid said. Lapid added that he does not believe that the US pullout from Afghanistan signals an American retreat from the region. "I do not think that the US is retreating from the Middle East," Lapid said. "The US is seeing new avenues of influence in the region," Lapid said, adding that Biden was updating the US method of operation and replacing policies of past administrations. "This administration is very keen on being on top of the current game, not the game that was played before," he added. Lapid said the two main challenges facing Israel in the region are from Iran and its proxy group in Lebanon, Hezbollah. "The world needs a plan B, and Iran needs to know there is a credible threat on it if they will keep on advancing their nuclear program as they do now," Lapid said.

Iranian Fuel Exported to Lebanon Without Government's Permission; The Lebanese government has received no request for fuel to be imported from Iran, the caretaker energy minister, Raymond Ghajar, said on Wednesday, September 1, appearing to confirm that the Shi'ite group Hezbollah has bypassed the state with a move to import Iranian fuel. Hezbollah, a heavily armed group founded by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in 1982, announced last month that a shipment of Iranian fuel oil was on its way to help ease crippling shortages. The group is by far the most powerful faction in Lebanon, where it has been part of the ruling system for

years. The fuel crisis, caused by a broader meltdown of Lebanon's economy and plunge in the value of its currency, has forced even essential services to shut down or scale back operations. Hezbollah's opponents say the declaration, followed by announcements of two further Iranian fuel shipments for Lebanon, has further undermined the authority of the state and exposed Lebanon to the risk of U.S. sanctions. Asked about the Iranian shipment, the caretaker energy minister Raymond Ghajar told journalists "...our role is restricted to import permits, we did not receive a request for permission." When asked if this meant the ship was coming without permits, Ghajar said: "No. We do not have information. Permission was not requested from us. This is all I am saying."

Ex-Mossad Chief Wants to Use Positive Bennett-Biden Meeting to Stop Iran; Israel should use the positive meeting last week between Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and US President Joe Biden to stop Iran's march toward hegemony in the Middle East and toward a nuclear weapon, former Mossad director Yossi Cohen wrote on Wednesday, September 1. In his first public op-ed since retiring as Mossad chief in June, Cohen wrote in Yediot Aharonot, "Especially in light of the positive relations prevailing between Jerusalem and Washington DC, between Prime Minister Bennett and President Biden, these messages [stopping Iran] could be accepted positively, in my estimation, and could be internalized by the US's policy-makers." More specifically, he hooked onto Biden's statement to prevent Iran from going nuclear at any time, and not merely during his current term, as a sign that Washington DC was in a unique position of being open to altering its policy of simply wanting to negotiate a weak nuclear deal with Tehran. Cohen warned that the speedy fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban along with the Biden administration's constant push to return to the 2015 JCPOA Iran nuclear deal is a formula for disaster and must be confronted quickly. The former Mossad chief expressed concern that the US may soon fully withdraw from Iraq, as it did in Afghanistan, which could lead to the current Iraqi regime falling and becoming completely dominated by the Islamic Republic. Cohen wrote that he is concerned that either the limited scope of this mission or any future reduction in the US physical presence in Iraq, could alter the face of the region by empowering Iranian control in the large and influential country. He discussed Iran's four-year public campaign to create a land bridge through the region and a "circle of fire" around Israel, including the presence of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps personnel and proxies in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and Gaza. Next, he said that Iran's plan to move forward with advanced centrifuges and enrich uranium in two underground nuclear facilities (which are harder to attack from the air), Fordow and Natanz, are bringing it closer to a nuclear weapon. Cohen warned that the JCPOA, without a major overhaul, would allow Iran to reach a nuclear weapon when it expires in 2030, or even earlier.

Israel-Jordan Ties Boosted by Rare Alignment in Interests on Water, Energy; As scientific warnings of dire climate change-induced drought grow, many in Israel and Jordan cast worried eyes at the river running between them and the critical but limited resources they share. This month, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change showed unequivocally that the climate is changing faster than previously feared, heaping pressure on finite water supplies even as demands grow greater than ever before. But experts say that instead of provoking an argument, Israel and Jordan could be poised for an unprecedented boom in water cooperation amid technological advancements, climate pressures, and stronger ties. Warnings about looming "water wars," including in the Middle East, were often inflated, said Duke University professor Erika Weinthal. "Water is a resource that allows for adversaries to actually find ways to cooperate," said Weinthal, a specialist in global environmental politics, who has worked extensively on Israel-Jordan issues. "If you look at the data, you see more cooperation over water than conflict, and where there is conflict, it is usually verbal," added Weinthal, a leader in the emerging academic field of environmental peace-building.

Jews Target of 58% of all Religiously-Motivated Hate Crimes in US; Jews in America are the target of 58% of all religiously motivated hate crimes in the US despite constituting a mere 2% of the population, newly released FBI statistics for 2020 have shown. The data also showed that Jews constitute the third-largest target of hate crimes out of all minorities in the entire country, more than, Hispanics, Muslims, Asians, and

virtually all other groups. Only anti-black or African-American, anti-White, and anti-LGBT attacks were more numerous than anti-Jewish ones. In total, the FBI received information of 7,759 hate crimes committed in 2020, submitted by over 15,000 law enforcement agencies around the country. Of those, 4,939 attacks were motivated by race or ethnicity, 1,174 by religion, and 1,051 by sexual orientation, with the remainder based on hatred for disability, gender, gender identity, and multiple biases. Of the religiously motivated hate crimes, fully 676 were committed against Jews, some 58% of all such attacks, and 9% of the total number of hate crimes committed across the US in 2020. Although still high, the 2020 numbers are marginally lower than those of 2019, when anti-Jewish attacks constituted 63% of all religiously motivated hate crimes and 13% of all hate crimes nationwide.

Asteroid the Size of Golden Gate Bridge to Fly by Earth in September; Another massive asteroid is set to approach Earth's orbit within the next month, with a diameter rivaling the size of San Francisco's famous Golden Gate Bridge. Dubbed 2021 NY1, the large asteroid is set to pass by the planet on September 22, according to the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory asteroid tracker. It has an estimated diameter of 130 meters to 300 meters. For comparison, the Golden Gate Bridge has a height of just 227 meters. The asteroid is one of many that are set to pass by the planet in the coming month. Another one, 2021 QC1, is set to pass by on September 1. This asteroid is smaller, with a diameter of just 71 meters to 160 meters. However, this is still huge and is around the size of the Statue of Liberty. An even bigger one is set to fly by on September 9. Dubbed 2010 RJ53, this colossal asteroid has a diameter of approximately 774 meters in size, around twice the size of the Empire State Building in New York. Despite the size of these asteroids, it is unlikely any of them will come close to impacting the Earth. Out of the three aforementioned asteroids, only 2010 RJ53 will fly closer to the Earth than the moon, its closest distance being an estimated 366,000 kilometers away from the planet. For comparison, the moon maintains a distance of 384,400 kilometers away from Earth.

Israeli AI Startup Bets on Robotic Beehives to Save Global Bee Populations; The Beehome is a solar-powered, converted container that brings together robotics, artificial intelligence, imaging, a software platform, and a mobile application to monitor and care for honeybees around the clock. The device can house up to 24 bee colonies and automatically controls for climate and humidity conditions, detects and eliminates pests and parasites, identifies when a colony is preparing to swarm, sends alerts when human intervention is needed, and even harvests the honey the bees produce. “The Beehome works with 24 colonies, 12 on each side. And in the center, there’s a robotic system that moves and monitors [the colonies] 24/7 using computer vision, machine learning, and neural networks. It dispenses food, water, medicine if there is a disease or pest, it knows if it’s too hot or cold — the robot can treat all of this,” serial Israeli entrepreneur, and co-founder of the Beehome, Saar Safra said. Controlling and monitoring all these conditions in real-time ensures that yields improve, pollination occurs more efficiently, and honeybee populations are protected, he explained. Bee populations certainly need protecting. Due to what Safra calls a “perfect storm” of climate change, habitat loss, excessive use of agricultural chemicals, parasitic mites, and various pathogens, bee populations have been declining for decades and the world “is losing about 40 percent of colonies every year.” In the US, beekeepers lost an estimated 45% of their managed honeybee colonies between April 2020 and April 2021, marking the second-highest annual loss on record according to the most recent loss and management report issued by the Bee Informed Partnership. It’s an astonishing figure given that “nearly 90% of the world’s wild flowering plant species depend, entirely, or at least in part, on animal pollination, along with more than 75% of the world’s food crops and 35% of global agricultural land,” according to the United Nations. In addition, “pollinators contribute to crops that provide biofuels (e.g., canola and palm oils), fibers (e.g., cotton), medicines, forage for livestock, and construction materials. Some species also provide materials such as beeswax for candles and musical instruments, and arts and crafts,” according to the World Bee Project, a UK-based initiative advancing the integration of various technologies to help save the bees. Indeed, technology is a much-needed solution to protect bee populations and help them thrive – at the risk of losing important processes that bees facilitate, Safra said.

Israeli Study Suggests ‘Silent Mutations’ can Help Detect Cancer and Predict Survival; Researchers at Tel Aviv University have found that “silent mutations” in cancer genomes can be used to predict both the type of cancer and a patient’s probability of surviving it, and say the method they developed may help save lives in the future. Silent mutations are mutations in DNA that don’t change the sequence of amino acids in proteins and therefore have no effect on an organism’s phenotype — the observable physical characteristics. In recent years, it has been shown that such mutations can affect gene expression, and may be associated with the development and spread of cancer cells. According to the study led by Prof. Tamir Tuller and research student Tal Gutman, silent mutations can help not only in the diagnosis of cancer but also in identifying cancer types and predicting chances of survival. Using quantitative tools never before used to explore the functionality of silent mutations, Tuller and Gutman examined some three million mutations from cancer genomes of 9,915 patients and attempted to identify the type of cancer and predict survival probability 10 years after the initial diagnosis — based on silent mutations alone. The findings show that “the predictive power of silent mutations is often similar to that of ‘ordinary,’ non-silent mutations,” the study says, and furthermore, that “by combining information from silent and non-silent mutations, classification could be improved for 68 percent of the cancer types.” Tuller said that the results of the study have “several important implications.” “First of all, there is no doubt that by using silent mutations we can improve existing diagnostic and prognostic models,” he said, noting that a 17% improvement in classification was “very significant.”



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