

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update December 23 , 2021 (19th Tevet, 5782)



[For the Yachad Report Newsletter For December 2021](#)

Iran's Nuclear Breakout Time is Now 'Unacceptably Short'; The United States estimates the amount of time Iran needs to churn out enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear bomb is now "very short," a Biden administration official said Friday, December 17. The official, who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity, did not specify the exact length of time Iran needs to produce enough material for a nuclear weapon. Estimates have put the breakout time at several months. "But it's really short. It is unacceptably short," the official was quoted as saying. The official also called the new assessment of the Islamic Republic's breakout time "alarming." The remarks came as Western powers reported some progress in talks to save the landmark Iran nuclear deal, but European diplomats warned that they were "rapidly reaching the end of the road." In a blow to European mediators, Iran requested a new pause in the talks in Vienna, which aim to bring the United States back into the 2015 agreement and roll back nuclear activities. The Islamic Republic publicly stepped up its nuclear projects after the US withdrawal from the deal. Donald Trump and fellow Republicans were responsible for the withdrawal. The talks had just resumed in late November after a five-month break following the election of a new hardline government in Iran. Underlying Western concerns are fears that Iran will soon have made enough progress that the 2015 accord — under which it was promised economic relief in return for drastic curbs on its nuclear work — will be obsolete. Enrique Mora, the EU official chairing the talks, called for a "sense of urgency" and for talks to resume before the end of the year. "We are not talking anymore about months, we are talking about weeks," Mora said. Former US president Donald Trump pulled out of the deal in 2018 and imposed sweeping sanctions including a unilateral US ban on Iran's oil sales, vowing to bring the US adversary to its knees. US President Joe Biden supports a return to the agreement negotiated by predecessor Barack Obama, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, but has been frustrated by the pace of resurrection efforts. "It's not going well in the sense that we do not yet have a pathway back into the JCPOA," Biden's national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, said of the talks. "We are paying the wages of the disastrous decision to leave the deal back in 2018," he said.

Protest at Bennett's House Says 'No to Green Pass, No to Coercion'; A large protest against Green Pass regulations took place Saturday night, December 18, in Ra'anana in front of Prime Minister Bennett's house. Flyers advertising the event emphasized the backing of "medical teams" and read, "No to the Green Pass, no to coercion." Reports on social media cited thousands in attendance amid a harsh police force. Senior Israeli doctor Yoav Yehezkeili, who was present, praised the turnout by medical professionals. "I was last night at a

demonstration by medical teams against discrimination and vaccine coercion in the form of the Green Pass. The awakening among medical professionals, who understand that the narrative of the epidemic being marketed to them is mistaken, is heartwarming," he wrote on his Facebook page. He noted the protest also saw the attendance of "a diverse general audience" comprising "an intelligent public, parents, teachers not opposed to vaccines, who demonstrated for principles and for the benefit of the public and not out of selfish interest, seeking the freedom of the individual and the people." "Will every variant that arrives (and it will arrive! This is the nature of a virus) entail an unnecessary aggravation of restrictions and another booster for a vaccine that does not prevent infection well?" "One has to go back to a realistic risk assessment to understand that we are not facing disaster. Even if there is a fifth wave, even if there is an omicron variant: the sickness from the infectious variant is milder, and the health system (again) will not collapse. "In fact, it is time to declare coronavirus over as an epidemic and return to relative routine: Children are naturally protected from coronavirus and there is no justification for vaccinating them. We know how to deal with fever, runny nose, and sore throat." "Last night at the demonstration I was filled with pride and hope," he added. "Professionals and the general public in Israel and around the world are waking up to understand that the existing restrictions do not contribute to public health, and the damage is enormous." "If we desire life, the time has come for the government to wake up and change direction too: abolish the Green Pass, open the skies, focus on the sick, vaccinate the at-risk groups, stop the vaccination of children, stop the unnecessary testing and isolations," he concluded.

US Holding Off on Reopening Jerusalem Consulate Amid Strong Pushback from Israel; It's been seven months since US Secretary of State Antony Blinken notified Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas of the Biden administration's plan to reopen the US Consulate in Jerusalem, but Washington has yet to even produce a timeline for when it plans to see the move through. A US diplomat, a former senior US official, and another source familiar with the matter told The Times of Israel this week that the Biden administration has effectively shelved its effort to resurrect the de facto mission to the Palestinians shuttered by former president Donald Trump in 2019. No final decision has been made, and the official State Department line remains that the Biden administration "will move forward with the process of reopening the consulate in Jerusalem," but the three sources confirmed that no such process has begun. Moreover, even the administration's more ardent advocates of reopening the consulate have shifted their focus to policies more likely to impact day-to-day life for Palestinians, the former senior US official said.

New Israeli Liquid Biopsy Detects Local Immune Activity and Helps Diagnose a Variety of Diseases; Patients who have undergone biopsies to determine whether they suffer from infectious or autoimmune diseases or growths know that they are very unpleasant and painful. Our immune systems work hard to keep us healthy and to protect us against bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites, and cancerous cells. When a patient's immune system is weakened, he is at risk for diseases and dangerous infections; when they're overactive, he is at risk for inflammation and autoimmune diseases – so accurate monitoring of immune systems' activity is vital to health. At present, the main way to test our immune system's health is a blood test that counts immune (white blood) cells in the body. If the number comes out higher than normal, it may mean there's an infection in the body that the immune system is fighting off. But these blood tests often fail to catch immune system activity in the body's remote tissues, such as those found in bone marrow, lymph nodes, and other organs. In those cases, patients must follow up with invasive measures, such as biopsies and expensive and even potentially harmful imaging devices such as PET/CT scans and MRIs. And even then, such advanced testing doesn't always detect the problem. Now, scientists led by Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI) MD/Ph.D. student Ilana Fox-Fisher and Prof. Yuval Dor at the Institute for Medical Research-Israel Canada (IMRIC) have developed a novel method to monitor remote immune processes within those remote tissues and organs. The work, just published in the journal *eLife* under the title "Remote immune processes revealed by immune-derived circulating cell-free DNA" relies on two basic biological principles. First, dying cells release fragments of DNA into the bloodstream. Second, the DNA of each cell type contains a unique chemical

pattern called methylation. This term refers to a biochemical process involved in a wide range of bodily functions that is vital to our overall well-being. When it is out of balance, it could lead to many different health problems, but certain vitamins can help to support this process to function well. In biological systems, methylation is catalyzed by enzymes; such methylation can be involved in the modification of heavy metals, regulation of gene expression, regulation of protein function, and RNA processing. When methylation is going well, the process helps repair the DNA, regulates hormones, produces energy, protects against cancer, supports detoxification, keeps the immune system healthy, supports the protective coating along your nerves, strengthens the nervous system, and more. Based on these principles, scientists can identify from which tissue the circulating fragments of DNA originated and determine the state of disease. For example, if a patient is battling breast cancer, there will be an elevation of DNA fragments deposited into the bloodstream after a cell dies that originate in breast cells and carry the methylation hallmarks of breast cells. The same is in effect for cardiac DNA fragments during heart attacks.

Transformers Toys Inventor Henry Orenstein, a Holocaust Survivor, Dies at 98; Henry Orenstein, a Holocaust survivor who went on to invent the Transformers toys and became a major donor to Jewish and Israeli causes, died Tuesday, December 14, at the age of 98. Orenstein became a best-selling toymaker with his Transformers line, which he first created in the early 1980s. He followed up on that success with numerous other inventions and over 100 patents before eventually becoming a star poker player and being inducted into the Poker Hall of Fame in 2008. Born in Poland to a Jewish family in 1923, Orenstein managed to survive the war due to a gamble he made in 1944, the first of several that would shape his life. In 1983, he got the idea for the Transformers — action figures that turn from cars into robots. He brought the idea to Hasbro, which first produced the toys in 1984. The toys would become one of the most successful action figures in history, spawning TV shows, movies, and merchandise worth billions of dollars.

Israeli Tech Exits Jump 520% to Whopping \$82.4b in 2021; Israel's tech firms saw exits jump an astonishing 520% in 2021 to an unprecedented \$81.2 billion in value, shattering all previous funding records and up from \$15.4 billion in 2020, according to an annual tech exits report published Wednesday, December 15, by consultants PwC Israel. Exits are defined as merger and acquisition deals or initial public offerings (IPO) of shares. The number of tech exits has grown in 2021 so far to 171 deals, compared to 60 last year, including 99 acquisitions totaling \$11.5 billion in value, and 72 IPOs (including SPAC — special purpose acquisition companies — mergers), 45 of which were done on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange. The PwC report recorded transactions between January and mid-December 2021. A separate report released earlier this week by Start-Up Nation Central detailed a record year for funding for Israeli tech firms, with an unprecedented \$25 billion in investments from January through November, and 33 companies entering the unicorn club of private firms valued at over \$1 billion. The numbers “are tremendous,” said Yaron Weizenbluth, partner and head of the high-tech cluster at PwC Israel. “Last year was the end of the previous decade and it was the best year on record [for the tech sector]. It was the year of COVID-19, and we started seeing this upward trend in the later quarters of 2020 [that pointed to a strong 2021]. We were optimistic, but to be honest, we couldn't have expected 2021 to be so unbelievable.” There were strong signs of the rapid adaptability and resilience of the local technology sector by mid-2020, a year in which the world was facing unprecedented economic and social struggles, Weizenbluth told The Times of Israel, but the “degree of success” was not predictable.

UN Appeals to EU over Israeli Palestinian NGO Terror Designation; Nine UN human rights special rapporteurs have appealed to the EU to pressure Israel to rescind its designation of six Palestinian NGOs as terror organizations. In a letter published over the weekend, the nine investigators asked EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell to set a time frame for Israel to provide evidence of the terrorist activity. “Demand that Israel publicly present, within a short and defined time frame, concrete and credible evidence that the six Palestinian organizations are, and operate as, terrorist organizations,” the investigators wrote. “Demand that, if

Israel fails to present such evidence... it should fully and publicly withdraw its allegations and the designations without delay.” Last week, a delegation of local diplomats from 10 EU countries visited the NGOs in Ramallah, led by EU representative Sven Kühn von Burgsdorff. Borrell and a number of EU member states have publicly expressed skepticism over the terror designation, but the EU has not taken a more active stance on the matter. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet spoke virtually about the issue at a special UN event in New York on Tuesday, December 14. She said that without such evidence the decision to target the six NGOs appears “arbitrary” and can “legitimately be viewed as an attack on human rights defenders.” The six Palestinian organizations Israel designated in October as terror organizations were: Al-Haq, Addameer, Bisan Center, Defense for Children International-Palestine, Union of Agricultural Work Committees and Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees. Those who signed the letter include Michael Lynk, special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, and Irene Khan, special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

2015 Nuclear Deal No Longer Sufficient for Reality of Iran in 2022; The head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog warned Tuesday, December 14, that the restrictions faced by his inspectors in Iran threaten to give the world only a “very blurred image” of Tehran’s program as it enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels. Speaking in a wide-ranging interview to The Associated Press, Rafael Mariano Grossi said he wanted to tell Iran that there was “no way around” his inspectors at the International Atomic Energy Agency if the Islamic Republic wanted to be “a respected country in the community of nations.” “We have to work together,” Grossi said from a luxury hotel in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, after he visited that country’s first nuclear power plant. “They must work together. I will make sure they understand that in us they will have a partner.” Grossi’s insistence that the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) remained “an auditor” for the world came as negotiations faltered in Vienna to revive Tehran’s tattered nuclear deal. Hours earlier, the chief of Iran’s civilian nuclear program insisted his country would refuse the agency access to a sensitive centrifuge assembly plant. That plant in Karaj came under what Iran describes as a sabotage attack in June. Tehran blamed the assault on Israel amid a widening regional shadow war since former United States President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from Iran’s landmark nuclear accord with world powers. Iran has since refused the IAEA access to replace cameras damaged in the incident. Grossi dismissed as “simply absurd” an Iranian allegation that saboteurs used the IAEA’s cameras in the attack on the Karaj centrifuge site. Tehran has offered no evidence to support the claim, though it’s another sign of the friction between inspectors and Iran. Since the nuclear deal’s collapse, Tehran has started enriching uranium up to 60 percent purity — a short technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90%. The deal limited enrichment to 3.67%, enough to be used in a power plant. The nation’s stockpile of enriched uranium grows every day far beyond the scope of the 2015 accord, which saw Tehran agree to limit its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. It also spins ever-more advanced centrifuges also barred by the deal. Iran’s mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Grossi’s remarks. In Vienna, however, anxiety is growing among European nations at the negotiating table. The US has remained outside of direct talks since abandoning the accord.

Enemies of Israel in Power in Berlin and Brussels; Difficult times are ahead for the relationship between Jerusalem and Berlin and Brussels. While a series of anti-Semitism scandals rock German public broadcasters and a new government with a history of opposing Israel comes to power, the European Union and Germany continue to fund NGOs related to the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas. Berlin’s Green Party’s Heinrich Böll Foundation funds a number of NGOs with ties to the PFLP, as NGO Monitor has documented extensively. Unfortunately, the Greens have shown no inclination to drop their old 1960s allies at the PFLP. In fact, when Israel recently announced it was designating six PFLP-tied NGOs as terror groups, including those with links to the murder of Rina Shnerb on Aug. 23, 2019, Green MEPs in Brussels signed a letter this week to EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell “to publicly and explicitly condemn these designations,

which are the culmination of years of smear campaigns and attacks by Israel against Palestinian civil society, aimed at silencing and undermining their critical work promoting and ensuring respect for human rights and international law in the occupied Palestinian territory.“ So reads the letter by Danish Green MP Margrete Auken. The German Social Democrat Party (SPD) of fresh-baked chancellor Olaf Scholz also has a problematic history of supporting left-wing anti-Israel NGOs. When then-Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel (SPD) visited Israel 2017, he planned his first call to radical NGOs “B’Tselem” and “Breaking the Silence”, offending Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and causing him to cancel their meeting. Gabriel had called Israel an “Apartheid State” in 2012. Like the Greens, the SPD also has a troubling record of supporting the regime in Teheran. On January 14, 2020, Foreign Ministry State Secretary Niels Annen (SPD) met with Iranian Foreign Minister Javid Zarif in New Delhi, less than a week after the January 8 downing of Ukrainian flight PS752 by the Revolutionary Guards, with 176 dead. Gabriel, Annen and the new Green Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock are all members of the European Council on Foreign Relations, which calls the presence of Jews in Judea and Samaria an “occupying power” and “apartheid state” and supports the boycott of Jews in Area C. ECFR receives EU funding (2019: €29,930) and exerts enormous influence over Israel policy in Berlin and Brussels. On Oct. 26, the SPD nominated the first Muslim vice-president of the German Bundestag in the person of former SPD co-chair Aydan Özoguz, whose brothers run an Islamist website called Muslim Market, which supports the boycott of Israel and has been under observation by the German secret service for anti-Semitism since 2004. Özoguz is close to several groups related to the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), including the “Central Council of Muslims” and “Islamic Relief”, which is banned in Israel for its ties to MB and Hamas. However, the EU and German government continue to support “Islamic Relief” even after a series of anti-Semitism scandals in 2020, which eventually caused the entire board of “Islamic Relief Worldwide” (IR-W) to step down in same week as the London Times exposed anti-Semitic posts made by IR-W head Heshmat Khalifa, the EU awarded a fresh grant of €1.25 million to IR-W in July 2020. According to the EU Financial Transparency System, IR-W has received €33.77 million in taxpayer Euros since 2007. While most German politicians were silently disappearing from the “Islamic Relief Germany” (IR-D) website, the German government’s Society for International Collaboration (GIZ) actually increased their funding, to €120,227. The city of Berlin gave IR-D €135,000 for a “Muslim Help Hotline”. IR-D called 2020 its “most successful year ever”, with donations up €5 million from €16.4 million 2019 to €21.4 million 2020.

Israeli Researchers and Physicians Have Engineered an Outer Ear Implant for Children with Birth Defects; A tiny minority of infants – 1 to 10 per 10,000 births – are born without an outer ear (auricle). For them and their parents, the congenital disfigurement called microtia is a catastrophe. The birth defect that occurs when the external ear fails to develop normally, and as a result, is small and improperly formed. Occasionally, besides the aesthetic issue, microtia also involves hearing loss. Since the “bones” of the outer ear are in fact flexible cartilage and not bone tissue, the customary technique for microtia reconstruction is to use costal cartilage harvested from the patient’s costal cartilage — which prolongs the ribs forward and contributes to the elasticity of the walls of the thorax. But this method involves pain and discomfort as well as a risk of further complications. In addition, constructing an ear that is identical to the other one depends on both the surgeon’s creativity and high-level surgical skills. But now, researchers at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa and Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer (near Tel Aviv) have developed an efficient technology for the fabrication of custom-made functional aesthetic implants for the rehabilitation of congenitally deformed ears. The Israeli researchers’ breakthrough has just been reported in the journal *Biofabrication* under the title “Human-engineered auricular reconstruction (hEAR) by 3D-printed molding with human-derived auricular and costal chondrocytes and adipose-derived mesenchymal stem cells.” It was achieved through a collaborative project between Prof. Shulamit Levenberg of the Technion’s Faculty of Biomedical Engineering and Dr. Shay Izhak Duvdevani, a senior physician in the otorhinolaryngology head and neck surgery department and head of the tissue engineering lab at Sheba Medical Center. The unique scaffold, which allows for the formation of an aesthetic and stable auricle, is 3D-printed and based on computerized tomography (CT) scan. It is biodegradable and forms chondrocytes – the cells responsible for

cartilage formation – and mesenchymal stem cells. The scaffold has pores of varying sizes, allowing for cell attachment to form stable cartilage.

Israeli Who Lost Both Hands at Age 13 Takes Gold at World Para Taekwondo Championships; Israeli competitor Assaf Yasur won a gold medal on Saturday, December 11, at the World Para Taekwondo Championships, held in Istanbul. Yasur, 19, who lost both his arms below the elbow six years ago, kicked his way to victory over a Turkish rival in the Men's under-58 kilogram weight category. He beat Qli Can Ozcan by 57-42 points to claim the medal. "I still haven't absorbed it," Yasur said after his victory, noting he had faced five different competitors in bouts during the day to win the final. In the semi-final, he defeated the European champion. "I am happy, and I am the happiest person for the path I chose, for the medal, and for this crazy day," Yasur said. Foreign Minister Yair Lapid tweeted that Yasur is "not just a source of huge national pride for our country, but he is also a reminder that willpower can take you to the loftiest peaks." Though Yasur did not qualify for the Tokyo Olympics earlier this year, his win in Istanbul sets him on the path to being a strong candidate for the Paris games in 2024. Noa Shmida, secretary-general of the Israel Taekwondo Federation, also welcomed Yasur's "amazing achievement."

Second Ancient Synagogue Found in Migdal Alters Ideas of Jewish Life 2,000 Years Ago; A 2,000-year-old synagogue from the Second Temple Period was recently uncovered at Migdal, on the northwestern edge of the Sea of Galilee, making it the second such synagogue found in the ancient community, the University of Haifa said on Sunday, December 12. It is the first time that two synagogues have been found within the same settlement from the period when the Jewish Temple was still functioning in Jerusalem, a discovery that researchers said is changing their understanding of religious life at the time. Archeologists had assumed that as long as the temple was still standing there was not such a great need for synagogues, Prof. Adi Erlich of the University of Haifa said in a statement. Dina Avshalom-Gorni of the University of Haifa, who assisted in the administration of the dig, said the discovery of a second synagogue gives insight into the daily religious life of Jews in the Galilee at the time and testifies to "the need for a dedicated building for study, reading the Torah and social gatherings." The location of the two synagogues, less than 200 meters apart, with the first in an industrial area and the second on a residential street, shows they were built "within the social fabric of the settlement," Avshalom-Gorni said. The recently discovered synagogue is of basalt and chalk, and comprises a main hall and two side rooms. A stone bench was also found. Six pillars held up the roof and the bases of two of those were also found. The walls were covered in plaster and colorfully decorated. A small room at the south end of the main hall had a shelf that may have been used to store scrolls, the statement said. The site also yielded a range of artifacts from the period, including pottery candle holders, glass bowls made from molds, rings, and stone utensils used for purification rituals.

Rare Evidence of Roman Crucifixion Unearthed in UK; Archeologists believe a skeleton of a man with a nail through his heel, unearthed during excavations in England, is the first example of crucifixion in northern Europe, it was revealed Wednesday, December 15. Experts from the Albion Archeology Heritage Services company found the skeleton in the village of Fenstanton in eastern England while excavating a roadside settlement in 2017. The site was found near a road linking the then-Roman towns of Cambridge and Godmanchester. The skeleton was found with a nail through its heel bone, which experts say is the most reliable physical evidence of crucifixion in the Roman world, the report said. "We know a reasonable amount about crucifixion, how it was practiced and where it was practiced and when and so on from historical accounts. But it's the first tangible evidence to actually see how it worked," David Ingham, project manager at Albion Archeology said. Radiocarbon dating indicated the bones were between 1,661 and 1,891 years old, or from between the years 130 CE and 360 CE, the report said. DNA analysis showed the man was not genetically related to any of the other 48 bodies found at the site, and was from the local population. Experts said more information pertaining to the man's identity, the reason for his crucifixion, and where it was conducted, would likely be never known.

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