

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 17, 2022 (14th Adar-B, 5782)



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Chag Purim Sameach!

Yachad Ministries wishes you a very happy Purim! May this be a joyous time full of holy celebration, good food, and reflection for you and your family.

Russia Open to Talks with Ukraine in Jerusalem; Russia has been open to holding negotiations with Ukraine in Jerusalem, a senior diplomatic source told JPost on Saturday, March 12, soon after Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke on the phone. Zelenskyy had said earlier on Saturday that “at present, it's not constructive to hold meetings in Russia, Ukraine, or Belarus. These are not the places where we can agree to stop the war... Do I consider Israel, Jerusalem in particular, to be such a place? I think the answer is yes.” Russia has not rejected the idea of negotiations in Jerusalem, the diplomatic source said, but Israel is not sure it should host the talks. “We know from our experience that negotiations that don’t have a chance lead to a worse situation on the ground,” the source told JPost, adding, “We have to see if we can really be helpful. If there can be a breakthrough, we’ll do anything.” Bennett and Zelenskyy held a lengthy phone call on Saturday evening. During the conversation, which lasted over an hour,

the two also discussed possible options for ending the fighting in Ukraine, as well as Israel's efforts on the matter. On Friday, Bennett had pushed Zelenskyy to take Putin's proposal for ending the war. An official in the Prime Minister's Office denied the claim. Bennett, who has been trying to mediate between Russia and Ukraine, last Saturday made a surprise visit to Moscow, where he met Putin to discuss the crisis in Ukraine. From Moscow, Bennett flew to Berlin where he met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz before returning to Israel. He also spoke to Zelenskyy several times on Saturday. On Sunday, March 13, Bennett spoke on the telephone with Zelenskyy, for the third time in the last 24 hours. Later in the day, Bennett held another telephone conversation with Putin.

Zelensky Slams Russia for Deploying Syria Mercenaries to Ukraine; Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said Friday, March 11, Russia was hiring "murderers" from Syria to fight in Ukraine after Moscow said fighters from the war-torn nation would be allowed to join its forces. "It's a war with a very stubborn enemy... who has decided to hire mercenaries against our citizens. Murderers from Syria, a country where everything has been destroyed... like they are doing here to us," Zelensky said in a video statement on Telegram. The Kremlin said Friday that fighters from Syria and the Middle East would be allowed to fight for Russia in Ukraine after Russian President Vladimir Putin backed a plan to send "volunteers" to battle there. "If you see that there are these people who want of their own accord, not for money, to come to help the people living in Donbas, then we need to give them what they want and help them get to the conflict zone," Putin said. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that "if the West is so enthusiastic about the arrival of mercenaries, then we also have volunteers who want to participate." According to Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, more than 16,000 volunteers — mostly from the Middle East — have applied to join the offensive in Ukraine. In addition, a group of fighters in the Central African Republic have released a video in which they said they were also preparing to join Russia's invasion of Ukraine. EU leaders have been meeting in France's Versailles since Thursday to urgently address the fallout of the Russian invasion. On Friday, they sought to double financing for military aid to Ukraine by an extra 500 million euros (around \$550 million). They also described Moscow's attack on Ukraine as a wake-up call for the 27-nation bloc to take a more muscular approach in ensuring its security.

Pope Francis: Stop This War 'In the Name of God'; Pope Francis continued his crusade against the Russian war on Ukraine Saturday, March 12, urging combatants to stop "in the name of God." "Never war!" the pontiff tweeted, attaching memes of himself with his text in Ukrainian as well as Russian. "Think first about the children, about those who are deprived of the hope for a dignified life: dead or wounded children, orphans, children who play with the remnants of war... In the name of God, stop!" he declared. On the same day, the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, released an interview with Vatican News, in which he called the Russian war on Ukraine a "barbarity" and a "folly." The position of the Holy See is "a strong 'no' to war; war is madness, it must be stopped," the cardinal declared. "We ask, appealing to the consciences of all, that the fighting cease immediately." Parolin also denounced Russian attacks on civilians, referencing the suffering of the innocent victims of the war. "We have before our eyes the terrible images coming from Ukraine," Parolin declared. "The victims among the civilians, women, elderly people, and defenseless children who have paid with their lives for the folly of war." "The anguish grows as we see cities with gutted houses, no electricity, sub-zero temperatures, lack of food and medicine, as well as millions of refugees, mostly women and children, fleeing the bombs," he said.

Iran Won't Give up 'Defensive Power, Regional Presence, Nuclear Progress'; Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Tehran will not bow to pressure to reduce its "defensive power," regional proxies, and progress in nuclear technology, he was cited as saying in Iranian state media on Thursday, March 10. "Suggestions to reduce our defensive power so as to appease the enemy are nothing more than naive and ill-advised... Over time, these flawed proposals have been rebutted, but if they weren't, Iran would have now faced great threats," Khamenei was quoted as saying. "Regional presence gives us strategic depth and more

power. Why should we give it up? Scientific progress in the nuclear field is related to our future needs, and if we give that up, will anyone help us in the future?" he added. Tehran is locked in negotiations with world powers to revive the nuclear deal that offered sanctions relief in return for curbs on its atomic program. Its arch-foe the United States, under former US President Donald Trump, unilaterally withdrew in 2018 from the accord known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Negotiators have signaled that talks had progressed into a "final phase," but pending issues were still unresolved. Israel has warned that funds from an economy freed from sanctions will enable Iran to step up support for its proxies across the Middle East, including Lebanon's Hezbollah terror group.

Islamic State Confirms Death of its Leader, Names New Chief; Islamic State confirmed on Thursday, March 10, the death of its leader Abu Ibrahim Al-hashemi Al-Quraishi and its spokesperson Abu Hamza Al-Quraishi, and announced Abu Al-Hassan Al-hashemi Al-Quraishi as its new chief. Quraishi, a religious scholar and soldier in former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's army who led IS from the shadows for a little over two years, died in a US special forces raid in northern Syria in February when he detonated a bomb that killed him and family members, the US administration said. The death of Quraishi, 45, was another crushing blow to IS two years after the violent Sunni Muslim group lost longtime leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a similar raid in 2019. The group did not deny or confirm the US narrative and the new IS spokesman, Abu Umar al Muhajir, said in a recorded speech on Thursday that Quraishi's last battle was at Ghwayran prison in the northeastern Syrian city of Hasaka. At least 200 prison inmates and militants as well as 30 security forces died in an Islamic State attack on the jail in January in a bid to free their members, officials have said.

Iranian Media Slanders Zelensky with Anti-Semitic Article; Iran's Fars News, which is a pro-government media outlet linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, ran a long article bashing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and using antisemitic tropes. In the March 10 article that appears on its website's homepage, Zelensky is accused of being a hedonist who seeks to "gain power and pleasure, using any kind of moral and financial corruption being committed." It accuses him of having made obscene works in his film career and supporting "marijuana, gambling and prostitution." The article openly refers to him as a Jew with "deep ties to Jewish officials and the rich, such as George Soros." It accuses him of being a Zionist, saying that "Zionist behavior" is duplicitous and that Israel had tossed Ukraine aside "like a handkerchief." Overall, the article is full of slander against Zelensky. What is important here is how Iranian media tries to hint at various conspiracies and takes from Turkish and other sources to weave a tale of negative stereotypes against him. This is clearly part of the Iranian regime's agenda to attack and tarnish the Ukrainian leader as part of Tehran's desire to have some closer relations with Russia. Iran's media doesn't go the full distance of claiming more wild anti-Semitic conspiracies such as the Elders of Zion, but this media dog-whistling is part of the worldview linked to the far-right Islamists that push ideologies similar to the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas and others in the Brotherhood have long pushed anti-Jewish conspiracies, such as linking Jews to the French revolution and sex crimes. In addition, those like Malaysia's former leader Mahathir Mohammed have often pushed anti-Semitic conspiracies about Jews being behind the world's conflicts.

A White Purim in Israel? Winter Weather Coming This Week; Light snowfall is expected in Jerusalem and other mountainous areas in Israel on Tuesday, March 15, when many children are set to celebrate at school ahead of Purim. This would be the first time snow fell around Purim since the 1980's. Purim is on Wednesday night and Thursday during the day in most of Israel and on Thursday night and Friday during the day in Jerusalem this year. Many schools throughout Israel conducted celebrations and encouraged students to come in costume a few days before the holiday. Temperatures on Tuesday will range between 33°F (1°C) to 36°F (2°C) in Jerusalem. Light snowfall is expected from Tuesday morning through the evening, with a very thin accumulation forecasted. Due to the expected winter weather on Tuesday, the Jerusalem Municipality, Har Hebron Regional Council and Binyamin Regional Council decided they will conduct Purim celebrations in schools on Monday instead. The Jerusalem Municipality is activating its emergency headquarters and

municipal emergency services and they will be ready to respond to any scenario. The municipality will salt the roads on the night between Monday and Tuesday and on the night between Tuesday and Wednesday. As of Sunday evening, March 13, a regular school day is expected on Tuesday. A situation assessment will be held on Monday. The municipality advised residents to avoid driving or hazardous activities.

Russian Official Says ‘Iran Got Much More Than Expected’ in Revived Nuclear Talks; A Russian diplomat taking part in renewed talks with Iran said Tehran got much more than anyone expected as it negotiated with other nations to revive the 2015 nuclear deal that then-president Donald Trump destroyed. "Iranian colleagues are fighting for [their] national interest like lions," Russian diplomat Mikhail Ulyanov said in a video interview posted online by Polaris NatSec. "They fight for every comma, every word, and as a rule, quite successfully." A nuclear agreement involving the United States, China, Russia and Iran is expected within days, officials previously told Fox News. The talks have been mired in uncertainty after Russia made last-minute demands that assure guarantees that the sanctions it faces over its invasion of Ukraine will not hurt trade with Iran. "I am absolutely sincere in this regard when I say that Iran got much more than it could expect," Ulyanov said. "Our Chinese friends were also very efficient and useful as co-negotiators." "I can recollect dozens of such cases when on rather serious, significant questions, we managed together to get positive results close to what we wanted to achieve," he added. The Biden administration has sought to revive the nuclear deal, but talks stalled after Iranian leaders demanded a significant reduction in sanctions.

Russia ‘Very Disappointed’ with Israel’s UN Vote to Condemn Invasion; Russia’s embassy in Tel Aviv has reportedly conveyed Moscow’s “disappointment” with Israel over its condemnation of Russia at the United Nations to the Foreign Ministry. In a missive sent in recent days, the embassy said Russia was “very disappointed by your position at the UN,” Channel 13 reported Monday, March 7. The UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly last week to adopt a resolution condemning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, with Israel joining 140 other countries in the 193-member body to demand that Moscow immediately withdraw its forces from the soil of its sovereign neighbor. The final tally of the vote on the resolution, entitled “Aggression against Ukraine,” was 141-5 with 35 abstentions. The only countries that voted against the resolution alongside Russia were Syria, North Korea, Belarus and Eritrea — a powerful indication of the international isolation that Russian President Vladimir Putin faces for invading his country’s smaller neighbor. Among those that abstained were China, India, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and South Africa. Ahead of the vote, Deputy UN Ambassador Noa Furman read a statement urging Russia to cease its attack on Ukraine and calling the invasion “a serious violation of the international order.” Days earlier, Israel had declined a US request to co-sponsor a resolution condemning Russia in the UN Security Council. Since tensions between Russia and Ukraine began escalating, Israel has sought to avoid aligning too closely with either side. It is one of the few countries that maintains relatively warm relations with both Ukraine, a fellow Western democracy, and Russia, which controls the airspace over Syria, in which Israel operates to target Iranian proxies. Over the past week, Israel has taken great efforts to further develop a potential role as a mediator between the Russians and Ukrainians, with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett flying to Moscow on Saturday, March 5, to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin, becoming the first Western leader to sit down with the Russian leader since he invaded Ukraine on February 24.

Zelensky Thanks Bennett for Mediation Efforts; Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Tuesday, March 8, thanked Prime Minister Naftali Bennett for his diplomatic efforts to bring an end to Russia’s war on Ukraine. Bennett and Zelensky spoke for the fourth time since the former met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Saturday, March 5. Bennett spoke with Putin again after the call with Zelensky on Tuesday. Israeli sources say Bennett has been passing messages between the sides and not bringing up a proposal of his own. Bennett has served more as an intermediary between Putin and the West than between Putin and Zelensky, according to the sources, with Western leaders looking to Bennett as someone who can report Putin’s position and state of mind to them because of good relations between Israel and Russia. More

serious negotiations are taking place directly between Russia and Ukraine, and Putin has made an offer that he considers to be final, according to reports in Hebrew media: Zelensky would have to give up on the Donbass region and agree to his country having a smaller army, as well as declare neutrality between Russia and the West and abandon his attempt to join NATO.

Israel Preparing a Field Hospital for Ukraine; Israel is preparing to set up a field hospital to help wounded Ukrainians, Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz said on Thursday, March 3. “It will be operated by civilians; preparations are underway in the Health Ministry,” Horowitz told Kan Bet. “There are many volunteers, medical professionals, and medics who want to go.” The field hospital will be managed entirely by the Health Ministry and not by the IDF Medical Corps, the minister said. “Our aid is coordinated with the Ukrainian government and we are sending it through Poland at this point,” he said. “It is part of our expression of solidarity with Ukraine.” A field hospital is something that Kyiv had specifically asked Israel to establish. Earlier this week, the Ukrainian Ambassador to Israel Yevgen Korniychuk said, following discussions with the Israeli Foreign Ministry: “I hope that they will consider this possibility to provide for medical assistance to the wounded soldiers and civilians. The discussion is ongoing whether it should be the mobile or field hospital or it should be the medical treatment provided in Israel.” The Foreign Ministry is preparing an additional humanitarian aid package for Ukraine, following the 100 tons it sent this week. Foreign Ministry Deputy Director-General for Eurasia Gary Koren said that “the Ukrainian Health Ministry and one of the central hospitals in Lviv sent organized lists.” “We are working closely with the airlines and we are in advanced preparations,” he told Army Radio. Other items expected to be in the next round of humanitarian aid are generators that Israel bought, which will be brought to Ukraine directly from Europe, Army Radio reported and a diplomatic source confirmed. In addition, Israel plans to continue to send medical equipment, medications, and bandages. Ukraine has also asked for protective gear, such as helmets and ceramic vests, which Korniychuk said Europe has run out of, and weapons. Israel condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in a statement and at the UN General Assembly but has stopped short at providing any military aid, because of Russia’s major presence in Syria. The Israeli Air Force coordinates with the Russian Army before it strikes Iranian targets in its northeastern neighbor. When asked why Israel hasn’t voiced its condemnation more robustly, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett referred to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky’s request that Israel try to mediate with Russia, telling Channel 13: “The players want us in a place where we can hold dialogue with everyone.”

Ukrainian FM Apologizes for Claiming El Al Accepts ‘Blood-Soaked’ Russian Money; Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba on Tuesday, March 8, apologized for accusing Israel’s national airline of bypassing international sanctions on Russia for invading Ukraine by accepting funds via a Russian payment system. In a tweet Monday, Kuleba charged that El Al was continuing to accept payments from Mir, sharing a screenshot of a booking page showing the Russian electronic transfer’s logo along with Visa and Mastercard. “While the world sanctions Russia for its barbaric atrocities in Ukraine, some prefer to make money soaked in Ukrainian blood,” he alleged. “Immoral and a blow to Ukrainian-Israeli relations.” El Al disputed the accusation, saying it had stopped accepting Mir on February 28, four days after Russia launched its military offensive in Ukraine. The airline lamented that Kuleba had not checked before posting his “misleading tweet” and noted that its planes have brought humanitarian aid to Ukraine and also ferried refugees to Israel. “Indeed, the ‘Mir’ payment button remained on the website, but the use of it was blocked,” Kuleba acknowledged Tuesday morning, though the system’s logo did not appear on the El Al website during attempts to book flights from the United States, Israel, and Russia on Monday. “I am grateful to El Al for its important humanitarian operations and convey my apologies,” he added in a Twitter post. El Al has faced criticism for being one of few Western airlines still operating flights to Russia. It said Monday that it was doing so at the request of Israel’s government and “will continue to get Israelis and Jews out of Russia so long as it is possible.”

‘Asking Every Christian Worldwide to Pray’: Franklin Graham Joins Ukrainian Churches in Call for Global Prayer; Samaritan’s Purse CEO Franklin Graham took to social media to support a global prayer event organized by Ukraine’s churches and pastors to seek peace from Russia’s invasion. “I’m grateful for the churches & pastors across Ukraine & how they’re ministering to their communities during these dark days. The Baptist Union of Ukraine put out this urgent request for prayer over the next 2 days. They’re asking every Christian worldwide to pray,” Graham wrote regarding the prayer event scheduled for Tuesday, March 8, and Wednesday, March 9. Graham noted that at least one church leader in Ukraine is concerned about losing his freedom of worship if Russian President Vladimir Putin is successful in taking over the nation. “Ukrainian families are hurting and in desperate need of physical aid and prayer during this difficult time,” Graham said in a statement regarding the emergency hospital. “We are deploying life-saving medical care to aid people who are suffering. We want to meet the needs of these families in their darkest moments while pointing them to the light and hope of Jesus Christ.”

‘Absolute Chaos’ in Ukraine, but God Hasn’t Forgotten Them; Monday, March 7, Samaritan’s Purse head Franklin Graham discussed his organization’s efforts to set up a field hospital in Ukraine and its challenges in delivering supplies to those in need in the wake of the Russian invasion during an appearance on Newsmax TV’s “Spicer & Co.” Graham emphasized that his organization’s mission was conducted in Jesus’ name. “Well, first of all, the city of Lviv right now is not a target, and it’s been quiet there,” he said. “But that doesn’t mean it’ll be quiet for long. I don’t know. For us, you know, we just feel this is something God has told us to do, wanted to do. I want the people of Ukraine to know that God hasn’t forgotten them, that he loves them. He cares for them very much. And so when we go, Sean, we’re going in Jesus’ name and we’re going to bring the best medical care that we possibly can. We’re going to love these people the best that we can, and we pray as we go that somehow there can be an end to this very violent conflict. But right now, we’re going to patch up people and take care of as many people as we possibly can.’ He discussed some of the logistics for Samaritan’s Purse’s efforts, noting that it had been involved in Ukraine in the past. However, he also described the current conditions as “absolute chaos.” “It is total chaos on the ground,” Graham said. “But yet we’ve had nothing but a warm welcome from everybody from government officials, church officials. Samaritan's Purse has a network of over 3,200 churches in the Ukraine. But right now, it’s just absolute chaos,” he continued. “We are setting up a clinic tomorrow down at the train station. There’s about 65-to-70,000 people a day. Come to the train station. Women are having babies on the train. You have people that are wounded. There are emergencies, all kinds of health care emergencies, and there’s nobody there at the train station to take care of them. So we’re going to put a triage center in, and those that really need help, we’re going to take him to the hospital. And so when we start tomorrow at the train station.”



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