

# **Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update June 23, 2022 (24<sup>th</sup> Sivan, 5782)**

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The image shows a book cover on the left and a bottle of oil on the right. The book cover is purple and yellow, titled 'GOD'S APPOINTED TIMES' by BARNEY KASDAN. The bottle is yellow and labeled 'Anointing Oil'.

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***Iran Building Vast New Underground Tunnels to Hold Nuclear Enrichment Facility;*** Iran is constructing a vast new network of tunnels at its Natanz nuclear site that could house a massive enrichment facility that would be impervious to bunker-busting bombs and cyberattacks, a report said Thursday, June 16. The report said that the US and Israel had been monitoring construction at the site for several months, but had refrained from commenting on it publicly, with the exception of a brief remark made last month by Defense Minister Benny Gantz. "At this very time, Iran is making an effort to complete the production and installation of 1,000 advanced IR6 centrifuges at its nuclear facilities, including a new facility being built at an underground site near Natanz," he said, speaking at a conference at Herzliya's Reichman University. Gantz's public comments surprised both US and Israeli officials, the report said. Iran did not deny the accusation, having previously said it was constructing new facilities in response to attacks at the existing Natanz site, blamed on Israel. Satellite images published recently by research groups show that the new facility is close to the old center at Natanz, but buried far deeper under a mountain, in a similar manner to the Fordow plant. Efforts to attack such a site would require the most advanced bunker-busters, which Israel does not yet possess.

***Hamas Official: We'll Fire 1,111 Rockets at Israel in Next War;*** Zaher Jabarin, one of Hamas' leaders, has threatened to fire over 1,000 rockets at Israel, Channel 12 News reported. Last year, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar referenced the number 1,111 but did not detail the context. At the time, he said, "We are confident in our ability to obtain our rights and remember the number 1,111." It was assumed then that the number was in reference to how many terrorists Hamas would demand released in the next prisoner swap. Now, Jabarin has clarified, in Sinwar's name, that 1,111 is the number of rockets which will be fired during the first barrage on Israel in the next round of fighting. "We are capable of increasing the number if necessary," Jabarin added. Though Israel does not believe Hamas is capable of firing a barrage of 1,111 rockets at once, recent barrages have been relatively heavy, with the goal of overcoming the Iron Dome missile defense system by firing more rockets than it has the capacity to intercept at once.

***Israel Ready to Respond if Iran Attacks Israelis in Turkey;*** Israel will respond to any Iranian attacks against its citizens with force, Defense Minister Benny Gantz warned amid warnings that Iran terror cells are seeking to carry out an imminent attack to kill or kidnap Israelis visiting Turkey. "I call on all Israelis in Turkey to obey the instructions of security forces," Defense Minister Benny Gantz said Saturday night, June 11. "Israel is working to thwart Iranian attempts to carry out an attack, and is preparing to respond forcefully to any attack on Israeli citizens - anywhere." The warning came as defense officials warned of concrete threats against Israelis in the Turkish city. An estimated 2,000 Israelis are believed to be visiting, down from 5,000 earlier in the week. A senior security source told The Jerusalem Post that "the event is really not behind us. A great deal of caution must still be exercised." According to the source, while there is a "significant emphasis" on Istanbul, Israelis should "avoid reaching Turkey completely." On Friday afternoon, June 17, senior defense officials including Mossad chief David Barnea and the head of the National Security Council (NSC) Eyal Haluta met for a situational assessment. The NSC later issued rare and specific warnings for Israelis in the country, telling them to lock their hotel room doors and not to open them for even housekeeping. They also warned travelers not to post on social media or go to tourist locations usually popular with Israelis and to refrain from entering cabs soliciting their business. According to Haaretz, one of the scenarios Israel is concerned about is an Iranian cell infiltrating into a hotel in order to kidnap or kill Israeli guests while another scenario was local Turkish cell members posing as tour guides to approach Israelis in order to kidnap them. Other possible scenarios include bombings.

***Russia said Preparing UN Resolution Condemning Israel for Damascus Airport Attack;*** Russia is putting together a proposal for a UN Security Council resolution condemning Israel, which it blames for a recent attack on Damascus Airport that put the site out of commission for several days, the Kan public broadcaster reported Sunday, June 19. Israeli officials confirmed to the station that Russia is working on the resolution but doubted that it would gain much support. The US also has veto power at the UNSC. A draft memo declares that the attack was carried out against international law, undermines regional stability, and violates Syrian sovereignty as well as that of "other countries," an apparent reference to the airspace from which the attack was launched, according to the report. Although Israel has not confirmed it was behind the strike and therefore the details remain unclear, Lebanon has in the past complained to the United Nations after Israeli jets allegedly violated its airspace to carry out an airstrike on targets in Syria. The memo blames the attack on Israel and says it must be held responsible. It also claims that damage to the airport was a significant blow to humanitarian assistance for Syria. However, one Israeli official noted to Kan that "Iran is continuing to use Syrian territory and the airport to smuggle weapons." Israeli officials have vowed to carry on the campaign to prevent Hezbollah and other groups on Israel's northern frontier from arming themselves with advanced and accurate weapons, regardless of Russian disapproval or apparent Iranian attempts to circumvent Israel's actions.

***German Government Reports Startling 29% Increase in Anti-Semitic Crimes;*** The German government's annual report on developments in extremism notes a nearly 29% increase in anti-Semitic crimes in 2021 over the previous year. The report, released last week by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, is based on statistics reported in May by the Federal Criminal Police Office, Germany's equivalent to the FBI. In all, 3,027 anti-Semitic incidents were registered last year, up from 2,351 in 2020. The vast majority were related to right-wing extremism, but Islamic extremist antisemitism is also up, with 122 reported incidents compared to 26 the year before. Most reported crimes relate to illegal statements and publications — Holocaust denial and other forms of hate speech are outlawed in Germany — including on the internet. But attacks on people and synagogues were also registered. As usual, the number of incidents rose when tensions between Israel and the Palestinian Authority were highest — in May 2021. The most worrying trends come in the form of burgeoning conspiracy theories relating Jews to the coronavirus pandemic and measures to curb it, leaders and watchdogs said. "Some protesters against Germany's response to the pandemic "are blaming imaginary Jews for profiting from it

and at the same time attaching Jewish stars” to their clothes, as if to say they are the new Jews, said Benjamin Steinitz, director of the Berlin-based Research and Information Center on Anti-Semitism Berlin, or RIAS. “Both anti-Semitic conspiracy myths and Shoah trivialization have been normalized. This is a worrisome development.” He added that a “dark field of anti-Semitic incidents” go unreported in government statistics. “We have to assume that... recorded incidents are only the tip of the iceberg,” he said.

***Six Months After Vaccination, Protection is 'Zero';*** With Israeli authorities holding off on recommending a fifth vaccine dose against COVID based on their observations of its limited efficacy against the Omicron variant, a new study has confirmed their findings, showing that within half a year of vaccination, protection against symptomatic Omicron-variant coronavirus drops to zero. The study was conducted in Qatar and published in the New England Journal of Medicine, based on data from the end of 2021 until the end of February 2022. The researchers also found that natural immunity derived from infection with coronavirus was still robust a year after infection, with half the number of previously-infected people contracting symptomatic COVID as compared to those with no previous infection. Furthermore, after six months passed beyond vaccination, protection against symptomatic COVID was sometimes even negative, meaning that people were more likely to contract COVID than if they had never been vaccinated. Giving a third (or booster) dose bumped protection up again, but the study only followed booster recipients for 45 days. However, recent data from the United Kingdom following booster recipients for 20 weeks (five months) shows that protection against COVID by this point is negligible.

***Cost of Consumer Goods Up 4.1% in Past Year, Housing Prices Keep Climbing;*** The cost of consumer goods in Israel rose by 0.6 percent over the course of May, with housing prices continuing to soar, data released by the Central Bureau of Statistics showed on Wednesday, June 15. The Consumer Price Index, a measure of inflation, tracks the average cost of household goods. Its rise last month fell slightly below economists’ predictions of 0.7-0.8%, although inflation has continued to climb. Inflation for the past 12 months was 4.1%, higher than the Bank of Israel’s target range of 1-3%. The bank’s interest rate is 0.75% and will be reassessed next month. Prices are up 2.8% since the start of 2022. May’s overall increase was similar to April’s, the Central Bureau of Statistics said. In May, the cost of fresh fruit jumped by 13.8%, clothing and footwear went up 2.2%, food besides fruits and vegetables rose 0.9% and culture and entertainment costs were up 0.8%. Fresh vegetables went down by 0.7%. Housing prices climbed 0.9% in May, marking a slight decrease in the rate of growth in recent months, but have surged 15.4% in the past year. Outrage over the rising cost of living has been growing, a decade after Israel last saw widespread social unrest on the matter. Data released on Tuesday showed a sharp drop in new home sales in Israel in recent months, indicating that rising interest rates and new purchase taxes could be helping to cool off the country’s overheating property market.

***Tel Aviv Stock Exchange Facing Avalanche amid Wall Street Devaluation;*** The stock market in the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE) dropped dramatically this week, in what can be defined as "mini-avalanches" to losses on Wall Street that were recorded over the weekend in the US. The declines in leading indices, including the Nasdaq, were caused by the surge in inflation. The fear is that the US Federal Reserve will raise the interest rate by 0.75% this year. All this indicates that the American economy might fall into a recession, which may be followed by world markets —as well as the Israeli economy. Against this background, the leading indices on the TASE fell by more than 3.5% yesterday. As a result, the Israeli stock market yesterday lost about 36 billion shekels of its value, especially with losses in real estate shares as well as in bank shares, which are considered "solid" but reflect the face of the economy. The bond market also experienced price declines. The bonds for periods of ten years or more traded at yields of 3% or more. Just a year ago, government bond yields stood at about half a percent. The erosion of financial assets will, of course, also adversely affect the value of long-term savings channels,

especially enrichment, provident and pension funds. In the first five months of 2022, these funds recorded negative returns of about 5%. Investors' eyes are now on the May index which will be published this week, in parallel with the US interest rate decision. Most likely, the Bank of Israel's interest rate will rise by 0.25% - 0.5%. The May index may be higher than expected (0.8%). Bank Leumi chief economist Dr. Gil Befman estimated that, following US inflation, which reached 8.6% this year, the Fed will raise interest rates this week by about 0.75%. As a result, a similar increase is expected in Israel. However, he stated that inflation will begin to moderate towards the beginning of 2023. United Mizrahi Bank economist Yoni Fanning estimated that the Bank of Israel's interest rate will rise by only 0.25% at the beginning of July. The chief economist of the Psagot Investment House, Guy Beit-Or, estimates that because of inflation and the fear of an economic slowdown, the US will raise the interest rate this week by 0.75%, and the governor of the Bank of Israel will raise the interest rate by 0.5%.

***Israel Warns Assad, Will Bomb Palaces if Iran Operations Continue;*** Israel has threatened to bomb Syrian President Bashar Assad's palaces if he does not cease or reduce military cooperation with Iran within his territory. The alleged threat comes days after Israel allegedly bombed Damascus International Airport, targeting shipments of advanced Iranian weapons transported by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps to Syria on civilian planes. ImageSat International (ISI) and Maxar Technologies published pictures of the impact of the attack on Friday night, June 10, hours after Syria's Ministry of Transport announced that the airport outside the Syrian capital was suspending flights due to technical disruptions. Syria's state-controlled SANA news agency claimed that Israel carried out strikes against targets south of Damascus around 4:20 a.m. on Friday, wounding one person and causing material damage.

***Israel Will Defend Citizens 'Anywhere in World,' Bennett Vows Amid Istanbul Jitters;*** Israel will not hesitate to act on foreign soil to protect its citizens, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said on Tuesday, June 14, amid swirling warnings of an imminent Iranian plot against Israelis. One Israeli man in the city reportedly told authorities that he had nearly been kidnapped but managed to escape, but others defiantly said they would remain in the popular tourist hotspot or refused to cancel plans to travel there. "In recent days, we have witnessed attempts to harm Israelis in various destinations abroad," Bennett said during a memorial ceremony for the victims of the First Lebanon War, in his first comments on the alleged attack plot. Israeli authorities urged citizens to leave Istanbul immediately, and reconsider non-essential travel to other parts of Turkey, warning that Iranian agents were ready to kidnap or kill Israelis there as Tehran seeks revenge for the slayings of officers blamed on Israel. "The State of Israel's security forces are doing everything [in their power] to thwart these attacks and to neutralize the attackers and their operators," the prime minister said. "We will not hesitate to use the power of the State of Israel anywhere in the world, for the protection of our citizens." Bennett spoke hours after the IDF issued a directive ordering all soldiers in Turkey to leave immediately. The army has also canceled any future permits allowing soldiers to visit or even take a connecting flight via one of Turkey's airports.

***Iranian Hackers Hijacked Emails of High-Level Israeli, US Officials;*** Iranian hackers targeted the emails of senior Israeli and American officials and executives, including former foreign minister Tzipi Livni and a former US ambassador to Israel, according to the Israeli cybersecurity firm Check Point. Check Point was alerted to the hacking attempts by Livni after she received a number of suspicious emails from an email address belonging to a well-known former major general in the IDF who served in a highly sensitive position. The emails were written in somewhat broken Hebrew. The first email contained a link to a file that the attacker asked her to open and read. When she delayed doing so, the attacker urged her several times to open the file using her email password, prompting her suspicions. After meeting with the former major general and confirming that he had never sent any such emails to her, she asked Check Point to investigate the incident. In another case found by Check Point, the Iranian hackers impersonated an American diplomat who had previously served as the US ambassador to Israel in order to target a

chairperson of one of Israel's leading security think tanks. The emails by the hackers were also written in broken English. The hackers created a fake URL shortener service called Litby.us in order to carry out their attacks. The fake service doesn't function and if you try to create a new short URL it asks you to register for the service and send an email. The shortened links sent to the targets were personalized for each target, leading to phishing pages – which pretend to be a trusted entity meant to trick targets into revealing sensitive information – also personalized for each target. The phishing pages asked users for their account ID followed by an SMS code verification page. Check Point suspects that once victims enter their account ID, the phishing backend server would send a password recovery request to Yahoo and the hackers would use the authentication code to gain access to the victim's inbox. The attackers also used the legitimate service validation.com to steal identity documents from some of the victims. Check Point's analysis found an indication that the attacker obtained the scan of the passport of a high-end target. Check Point also found that the attackers used a Gmail account to impersonate a professor from the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS). The Israeli cybersecurity firm linked the attack to an Iranian-backed entity because its primary targets were Israeli officials and because a comment in the source code of the phishing page included a domain that has been used by an Iranian hacker group called Phosphorus.

***Israel Will Help Free EU from Dependence on Russian energy;*** Working with Israel will help reduce the EU's dependence on Russia, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said during her visit to Israel on Tuesday, June 14. “The Kremlin has used our dependency on Russian fossil fuels to blackmail us,” von der Leyen said as she received an honorary doctorate from Ben-Gurion University. “Since the beginning of the war, Russia has deliberately cut off its gas supplies to Poland, Bulgaria and Finland, and Dutch and Danish companies, in retaliation for our support to Ukraine.” Von der Leyen added: “The Kremlin's behavior only strengthens our resolve to break free of our dependence on Russian fossil fuels. For instance, we are exploring ways to step up our energy cooperation with Israel.” Two ways in which Europe plans to work with Israel, she said, is to lay the EuroAsia Interconnector, the world's longest and deepest underwater power cable, connecting Israel to the EU electric grid via Cyprus and Greece, and the EastMed Pipeline, meant to be the world's longest, also from Israel to Cyprus and Greece. Neither has happened yet, but the EuroAsia Interconnector has EU funding. “Europe needs energy fast, and Israel has natural gas in its economic waters,” Bennett said. “This is good news for Israel, Italy and Europe.”

***White House Announces Biden Trip to Israel, West Bank, and Saudi Arabia;***

The White House on Tuesday, June 14, announced the dates for US President Joe Biden's highly anticipated first trip to the Middle East, which will include stops in Israel, the West Bank, and Saudi Arabia from July 13 to July 16. Biden accepted an invitation to visit Israel in late April. The trip was initially planned for late June but was later delayed to July over what the White House said were scheduling issues. According to an Israeli official, those scheduling issues related to the Saudi leg of the trip, which was a later addition that exposed the president to criticism from some Democrats, who expected him to maintain a firm stance against Riyadh over its human rights record. The trip will begin in Israel, where the president will meet with Israeli leaders, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement. An Israeli official told The Times of Israel that Biden will meet with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, President Isaac Herzog, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, and Defense Minister Benny Gantz. The official added that Biden is also slated to visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial and East Jerusalem.

***Major UK Union Passes Motion Denouncing Anti-Semitism;*** One of the largest trade unions in the UK, GMB, unanimously passed a resolution that called for anti-Semites to “face the full force of the law.” The motion also called out individuals out of its membership of 600,000 from a massive cross-section of industry who are found guilty of antisemitism. Motion 213, which was supported by the union's head Gary

Smith and its leadership, commits GMB to a zero-tolerance policy on anti-Semitic behavior. The measure said: “This congress strongly challenges the disturbing rise in antisemitism across the UK... This unacceptable behavior and the perpetrators should be subjected to the full force of the law.” It continued: “Where such behavior may be present from any member of GMB Union, including social media posts, our Union should take immediate action to investigate and apply appropriate measures to address this within rule.”

***Groundbreaking Treatment for HIV/AIDS Developed by Israeli Research Team;*** People with AIDS might soon have the option to be treated with just a single vaccine dose, according to a new study from Tel Aviv University that shows the potential impact of a new and unique AIDS/HIV treatment. The peer-reviewed study was led by Dr. Adi Barzel and Ph.D. student Alessio Nehmad, both from the TAU School of Neurobiology, Biochemistry and Biophysics, in collaboration with additional researchers from Israel and the United States. More than 36 million deaths have been attributed worldwide to AIDS since it was first identified. As of 2020, about 37 million people were living with the disease, primarily in eastern and southern Africa. While the disease is no longer always fatal, and while many HIV-positive people live full and long lives, currently available treatments do not provide a permanent cure. The research team led by Dr. Barzel aims to change that. The goal of the research team was to genetically engineer type B white blood cells inside the body of a person with AIDS. Once modified, the blood cells would be able to secrete neutralizing antibodies against the HIV virus responsible for AIDS, eradicating it from the patient’s body. Barzel said, “We are utilizing the very cause of the disease to combat it. Based on this study we can expect that over the coming years we will be able to produce in this way a medication for AIDS, for additional infectious diseases, and for certain types of cancer caused by a virus, such as cervical cancer, head and neck cancer, and more.”

***Israel Expected to Become Most Crowded Western Country by 2050;*** The Jewish State is on the way to becoming the world’s most crowded Western country in less than three decades, veteran environmental activist and current MK Alon Tal told the Special Committee on Addictions, Drugs and the Challenges Facing Young Israelis at the Knesset on Monday, June 13. The committee dealt with the impact of the loss of open spaces on the well-being of the younger generation in 2050. Statistics from a research report prepared by an environmental group called Zafuf [Crowded] — The Forum for Population, Environment, and Society, indicated that by 2050, the country’s population could grow to more than 17.5 million residents. “The State of Israel will become the most crowded Western country, with over 800 people per square kilometer,” the report said. “We are familiar with the reality and know that protecting open spaces isn’t enough. I want to know what the Israel Planning Administration and the Construction and Housing Ministry are doing to translate their statements into reality. The open spaces are disappearing at a dizzying rate of 24 square kilometers per year, and the pace will increase along with the growth in population.” Tal warned that Israel is expected to lose open spaces on a scale that is eight times the size of the city of Tel Aviv by 2050. He called upon all professional agencies to advance a strategic plan for the protection of open spaces immediately.



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