

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update December 22, 2022 (28th Kislev, 5783)



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***We hope you are having a Bless Hanukkah, and we wish you Marry Christmas.
Shalom and God Bless, Rabbi Robert Solomon and Jeffery Blalock***

Hanukkah Menorah in Tel Aviv Breaks World Record for Largest Menorah Built of Legos; A Hanukkah menorah in Tel Aviv set a Guinness world record on Thursday, December 15, for the largest menorah built completely of LEGO blocks. Amnon (Marc) Applbaum, a commercial real estate developer and engineer who was appointed by the project as a measurement specialist, said, “I hereby declare that this menorah beats the current Guinness Record for the largest LEGO brick menorah, which was 4 x 4 x 0.3 meters.” “I measured it to be 4.5 meters high, which is 14.7 feet by 4.4 meters wide.” He added, “It was built out of more than 130,000 bricks with no adhesive or structural support beyond the magical power of the LEGO bricks themselves.” The holiday of Hanukkah is symbolized by the lighting of menorahs, the spinning of dreidels, the cooking of fried latkes and the exchanging of gifts. Jews in Israel and all over the world celebrate the eight nights of Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights, to commemorate the miracles performed amid the Maccabean revolt against Israel’s Greek king, who wished to limit their religious practices. Yoav Gaon, CEO of Tor Group and LEGO Israel, said, “The LEGO values of creativity, imagination, learning, fun and quality were brought to life through the incredible event of creating the largest menorah from 130,000 LEGO bricks, as hundreds of kids, parents and grandparents attempted to break the Guinness record.”

King Charles Dances with Holocaust Survivors Before Hanukkah; King Charles III visited a London Jewish community center on Friday, December 16, ahead of Hanukkah, where he was given a tour of the facilities and charitable programs, and also danced with Holocaust survivors. Arriving at the JW3 community center in North London, King Charles was introduced by the Representative Deputy Lieutenant for Camden Roxane Zand to the center’s Chair Marc Nohr, its CEO Raymond Simonson, and its founder and Life President, Dame Vivian Duffield, according to Jewish media. King Charles proceeded to lean over the entranceway to wave at kids skating on the JW3 ice rink on its ground floor. The children greeted the king by cheering and waving back. He was taken on a tour around the center where he spoke

with students who were wrapping holiday gifts that will be donated by JW3 to the local community. He also stopped to talk with students participating in a program for at risk youth. Simonson told the news outlet that King Charles, who also met with volunteers in the center's food bank kitchen, had a "really interesting conversation about their food bank work, which is inspired by Jewish values."

Iran Expelled from UN Commission on the Status of Women; Iran was expelled from the UN Commission on the Status of Women Wednesday, December 14. The vote was held as Iran faces mass protests over its treatment of women following the death of Mahsa Amini, a young Kurdish woman who was arrested by Iran's morality police in September. 29 countries voted in favor of expelling Iran at the vote at the UN's Economic and Social Council. Eight countries voted against the measure, and 16 abstained. The countries which voted to keep Iran on the commission are Bolivia, China, Kazakhstan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Russia and Zimbabwe. Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan spoke at a special meeting in the UN's Economic and Social Council before the vote. Ambassador Erdan compared the Ayatollah regime in Iran to the Nazi regime, "This resolution must receive the support of all of us, and whoever doesn't support it is complicit in the oppression and murder of women...The regime in Iran represents the embodiment of evil, just as Hitler's Nazi regime represented the embodiment of evil." Ambassador Erdan added, "Seeing as the international community refused to take action against the suffering of the Iranian people, the Iranian people decided to take their futures into their own hands. We Israelis salute their bravery and view ourselves as true allies of the Iranian people. Yet what have we, the family of nations, done to support their cause? Where is our courage? Have we taken swift and severe action? Have we all made it clear that if the regime continues to execute protesters the international community will act against it? No, no, and no. It's truly a disgrace." US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said following the vote: "Today we came together at the United Nations and stood with Iranian women, Iranian girls, and the Iranian people."

Germany Earned Over \$1 Billion from Iran Trade, Amid Tehran's Repression; German business deals with the Islamic Republic of Iran are booming amid the Iranian regime's violent crackdown on protestors who are seeking the end of the theocratic state. According to newly published statistics from the Federal Statistical Office of Germany, Germany exported €1.2 billion worth of goods to Iran from January to the end of October in 2022. The federal republic imported roughly €260 million in merchandise from Iran. The German-Iranian Chamber of Industry and Commerce boasted on its website that "Germany is still Iran's largest trade partner in Europe." Germany exported €275 million worth of machines and engineering technology to Iran in 2021. Germany's non-transparent export regulations do not permit disclosure of the nature of the goods and material sold to Iran - some of which has been used for dual-use purposes (military and civilian aims) over the decades. The Iranian-owned bank, European-Iranian Trade Bank located in Hamburg and German banks (Volksbank Konstanz and Volksbank Schwarzwald-Donau-Neckar) situated in the southwestern German state of Baden-Württemberg provide transactions for sensitive business deals between German companies and Iranian banks. The US accused the European-Iranian trade bank (EIH) of playing an illicit role in Iran's nuclear and missile programs. Germany continues to permit the EIH to operate.

Netanyahu Promises Ultra-Orthodox Parties Exclusion from Military Service – Report; Israeli Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu pledged to the leaders of the ultra-Orthodox parties on Thursday, December 15, that the next government under his leadership will follow a policy according to which "no one will go to prison for learning Torah," according to Walla. Netanyahu's pledge was made during talks with representatives of UTJ and Shas on the exemption of yeshiva students from military service in the IDF. As of Thursday morning, UTJ holds a fairly optimistic overview of the progress in the coalition negotiations. After long hours of discussions conducted in recent days by senior members of the party with Benjamin Netanyahu and other Likud members, agreements were reached regarding most of

UTJ's coalition demands. According to some of the agreements reached, the government will advance a basic law on Torah study, designating studying in a yeshiva as a core legal value, proving it difficult for the High Court of Justice to invalidate the arrangement that exempts Torah students from serving in the IDF. Although the parties have yet to reach a final agreement on the wording of the law itself, it appears that the demand that it does not include recruitment targets and sanctions will be accepted.

Israel to Host the First-Ever Abraham Accords Esports Peace Games; Tel Aviv will host the inaugural Abraham Accords Esports Peace Games in January 2023, The US Embassy in Israel announced on Wednesday, December 14. The event, organized in partnership with Israel's Foreign Ministry, philanthropist Sylvan Adams, New York-based investment banking firm LionTree and the Israeli Esports Association, will see competitors from Israel, the US, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and "special guests and leading gamers" compete against one another, with a prize of \$82,000 to be distributed among the winners. Adams, who co-chairs the games' organizing committee alongside US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides, said Israel will "witness the power of sports to bring people together in friendship in this new Middle East. "The Abraham Accords are a game changer for our region, with our new diplomatic relations fostering business, educational and scientific exchanges". Esports is growing globally, with the US estimating an international industrial value of \$1.8 billion by 2025. The event's organizers announced plans to add up to 10 nations to the peace games, which will be held at a production cost of \$1.5 million. The event, which will be held in Tel Aviv's Shlomo Group Arena, is expected to draw "thousands of people from across the country," the embassy wrote.

Jordan Eyes Tourism Bonanza, in Expansion of Jesus' Baptism Site; For centuries, thousands of pilgrims a year have made the journey to Bethany Beyond The Jordan, a site on the east bank of the Jordan River, which Christians believe to be the exact spot where Jesus was baptized. This number could swell to one million visitors a year if a proposed phased six-year estimated \$300 million project for a 'tourist city' adjacent to what is a designated UNESCO World Heritage site goes ahead. Among those who gathered at the river bank two weeks ago were Jordan's King Abdullah and Lebanon's Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rai, who joined architects, museum curators and investors to hear about the proposal from its organizers. Organizers hope that with souvenir shops and walking trails, boutique hotels and botanical gardens, the site - which lies outside the formal boundary of the baptism location - will eventually attract five times as many annual visitors than the current 200,000, and will help preserve the region's dwindling Christian presence. The project still needs funding, however, and planners are presenting their plans to Christian leaders from all denominations from the Middle East and beyond, in the hope it will help draw donors, investors and contributing churches.

12-story Scaffolding Collapses in Jerusalem area, Killing Two; Two construction workers were killed and another person was moderately injured after a 12-story building collapsed in Givat Ze'ev near Jerusalem on Monday, December 12. The three were trapped under the rubble and eventually pulled out by fire and rescue services. Among them, a 35-year-old man was found dead and brought out from under the rubble, while another man was seriously injured. After prolonged rescue efforts, medics were forced to determine the death of a 32-year-old man who was pulled out and taken to Hadassah-University Medical Center in Jerusalem's Mount Scopus. The two casualties were later identified as Haitham Mahmoud Hamamera, a resident of the Palestinian village of Husan near Bethlehem, and Muhammad Ibrahim al-Quaisi. Three suspects have already been detained for questioning on Monday evening, police said. State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman reported just a few months ago in May that the state only collected 5% of the fines for safety violations and filed only eight indictments out of 72 fatal accidents in the construction industry. According to the comptroller, the number of fatalities in work accidents in Israel is

twice the average in EU countries, a ratio of 11 per hundred thousand people in Jerusalem, compared to five fatalities in Europe.

US Against UN Blacklist of Companies Operating in Judea and Samaria; The United States expressed opposition to a United Nations blacklist of companies doing business in Judea and Samaria. A State Department spokesman said on Friday, December 9, that the US is pressing the United Nations not to update the blacklist. The United States "continues to oppose any work to update it" and has raised concerns "directly with the Office of the High Commissioner" for rights, State Department spokesman Vedant Patel was quoted by French media as having told reporters. "Our view is that this database only serves to reinforce an anti-Israel bias that too often finds traction in UN venues," he added. "Also, this database poses a genuine threat to companies doing business or considering business operations in the region," said Patel. The initial list included 112 companies which operate in Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria. The UN said that the companies, including Airbnb, Expedia, and TripAdvisor, violate international law by continuing to operate in the Jewish communities in the area.

Herzog Grants Netanyahu 10 More Days to Form Coalition, Adds a Warning; President Isaac Herzog on Friday, December 9, granted Likud leader and Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu 10 additional days to finish forming a government. He also expressed concern that the coalition Netanyahu is assembling — set to be the most right-wing in Israeli history — could potentially damage Israel's democratic checks and balances, breach the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and alienate Jews overseas. The presumed incoming prime minister formally asked Herzog for the maximal extension of two weeks on Thursday, saying that the complexity of cobbling together his coalition required extra time, but Herzog gave him only 10 days. Netanyahu's 28-day mandate to assemble a government was set to expire at midnight on Sunday night, December 11, and he will now have until December 21 to form a government. Herzog did not specify why he chose not to grant Netanyahu the maximum 14-day extension. "These are complex times for Israeli society as differences over core issues threaten to stoke violence and blind hatred," the president said in a letter addressed to Netanyahu. Therefore, Herzog told Netanyahu to form a government that "must work for the entire public in Israel."

World Cup: Second Journalist Dies in Qatar 'Unexpectedly' – Report; A second journalist has died under suspicious circumstances while covering the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Khalid al-Misslam, a Qatari photojournalist, died suddenly while covering the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, according to Qatari media. His death came into the limelight shortly after the sudden passing of Grant Wahl, a soccer journalist covering his eighth World Cup. Very few details about Misslam's death are available, with little-to-no information about his death covered by the local media. His employer only briefly mentioned the passing in their own broadcast. The 43-year-old journalist died under unclear circumstances, although foul play is currently not suspected. It is unclear if an investigation has been opened to look into his cause of death. Qatar's World Cup organizers, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC), paid tribute to Wahl's "enormous love of football" and offered condolences to his family, friends and media colleagues. His agent, Tim Scanlan, told British media that Wahl had "appeared to suffer some kind of acute distress in the start of extra time" at the quarter-final match.

Israel Welcomes Over 2 Million Tourists in 2022, Amid Steady post-COVID Recovery; Over 2 million tourists visited Israel between January and October, and the number is expected to rise to about 2.5 million by the end of 2022, according to the Tourism Ministry. Ministry figures showed some 2,078,000 tourist arrivals in Israel in the first 10 months of the year. Should these continue at the same rate, the ministry said it expects to record between 2.4 to 2.6 million arrivals by the end of the year. These figures are a far cry from 2019's figures when Israel welcomed some 4.5 million tourists, its strongest year on record, but the numbers show promising signs of recovery for inbound tourism, the ministry said. Israel

only reopened its skies in March, lifting most COVID-related travel restrictions. Hotel industry figures also point to signs of recovery. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 19.3 million hotel stays were recorded between January and October this year, compared to 21.8 million over the same period in 2019.

Evidence Unearthed in Judean Desert of Maccabean Revolt; Evidence for a dramatic moment in the history of the Jewish people was uncovered in the Judean Desert: A rare wooden box containing a small hoard of 15 silver coins, dated to the days leading up to the Maccabean Revolt. The box was hidden in Muraba‘at Cave in the Darageh Stream Nature Reserve about 2,200 years ago, and it was discovered in excavations carried out there last May. The coin hoard has since been researched, and it will be exhibited to the public over Hanukkah in the Hasmonean Museum in Modi‘in, in the context of Israel Heritage Week that takes place on Hanukkah. Among the many finds, the unique lathe-turned wooden box was discovered in a crack in the cave. When the lid was removed, it turned out that the upper part of the box was full of packed earth and small stones. Below this earth layer, a large piece of purple woolen cloth was found, covering the 15 silver coins that were arranged with pieces of sheep’s wool in the lower part of the box. The coin hoard, cleaned in the Israel Antiquities Authority metal finds laboratory, comprised a homogeneous group of silver tetradrachma coins, minted by Ptolemy VI, King of Egypt. The name “Shalmal” in Aramaic script was found secondarily incised on one of the coins. Based on the date of the latest coin in the hoard in 170 BCE, the year when the hoard was hidden can be fixed to the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt, and the war declared against Antiochos Epiphanes IV decrees against the Jewish religion, or to the events that led up to the Revolt. According to Dr Eitan Klein, who studied the coins together with Dr. Gabriela Bijovsky, Israel Antiquities Authority numismatic expert, “This is an absolutely unique find, presented the first clear archaeological evidence that the Judean Desert caves played an active role as the stage of the activities of the Jewish rebels or the fugitives in the early days of the Maccabean Revolt, or the events that led up to them.”



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