

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update January 20, 2025 (Tevet 20, 5785)

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Israel-Hamas Cease-fire Day 2 - After 471 Days of War in Gaza, Cease-fire Between Israel and Hamas Takes Effect

- **Israeli Reservist Killed in Explosion in West Bank, IDF Announces**
- **GAZA HOSTAGE DEAL: 90 Palestinian prisoners released from Israeli custody after hours of delay; Hamas releases three Israeli hostages**
 - **ISRAEL: Smotrich blasts IDF chief, says Israel 'cannot win in Gaza with him'**
 - **GAZA: UN senior official says more than 630 humanitarian aid trucks entered Strip, headed mainly to northern Gaza**
 - **GAZA: Hamas-run Health Ministry says 81 Palestinians killed, 188 wounded in last day**
 - **Israel's Justice Ministry releases names of 95 Palestinian prisoners set to be released**

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Hostage Release Plan Finalized: 33 Hostages to Be Freed in Initial Phase; After months of intense negotiations, Israel is set to implement the first phase of a hostage release agreement on Sunday, January 19, 2025. This initial phase will see the release of 33 hostages over 42 days. The hostages include women, children, elderly individuals, and those with urgent medical needs. The initial phase begins with the release of three hostages on January 19. Each week, additional hostages will be freed, with a focus on women and children. The final group in this phase is expected to include long-term captives Avera Mengistu (37), an Israeli man with mental health issues, held since crossing into Gaza in 2014, and Hisham al-Sayed (35), an Israeli Bedouin with mental health challenges, held captive since 2015. The deal includes the controversial release of approximately 1,000 Palestinian prisoners, including 200 described as having “blood on their hands.” Additional terms involve increased humanitarian aid to Gaza and a phased withdrawal of IDF troops from key positions. This is the first phase of the hostage deal. In the second phase, more hostages will be released and the IDF will withdraw further. In the third and final phase of the deal, the entirety of the hostages will be released and the IDF will withdraw fully after the hostages are received. Among the hostages set for release in the first phase are: Ariel Bibas (4) and Kfir Bibas (9 months when kidnapped), Liri Albag (19), Karina Aryev (20), Agam Berger (20), Daniela Gilboa (20), Naama Levy (20), Romi Gonen (24), Emily Demari (28), Arbel Yehud (29), Doron Steinbrecher (31), Ohad Yahalomi (50), Eli Sherabi (52), Ofer Calderon (53), Ohad Ben-Ami (55), Keith Siegel (65), Itzik Elgart (69), Gadi Moses (80), Oded Lifshitz (83) and Shlomo Mansour (86). (*JPost / VFI News*)

Hostage Deal: 30 Prisoners for Every Hostage, 50 for Every Female Soldier; Thousands Protest Against the Deal; British media on Wednesday, January 15, published parts of the hostage and ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas. According to the report, Hamas will first release the living hostages and then the bodies of the murdered hostages. Israel will release 30 terrorists for every civilian hostage and 50 for every female Israeli soldier. In addition, Israel will release all Palestinian Arab women and children under the age of 19 who have been detained since October 7th before the end of the first phase. The total number of released terrorists depends on the number of hostages who will be released and can reach between 990 and 1,650 Palestinian Arab detainees, including men, women, and children. The report also states that Qatar, Egypt, and the US will supervise the agreement's implementation. As part of the first phase, 600 trucks of humanitarian aid will enter the Gaza Strip each day; 50 of them will be carrying fuel. 300 of the trucks will go to the northern Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, thousands of Israelis demonstrated in Jerusalem on Thursday against the ceasefire deal. The protest was led by the Tikva Forum, an organization of families of hostages held in Gaza, and by the Gvura Forum of bereaved families. Tzvika Mor, chairman of the Tikva Forum, whose son Eitan was kidnapped by Hamas, said, “If the hostages are not released in the right way, then other citizens pay the price, just as I paid the price for the Shalit deal. The hostages must be released in such a way that only the enemy pays the price.” (*INN / VFI News*)

Trump Says He'll Use Gaza Ceasefire's Momentum to Expand Abraham Accords; US President-elect Donald Trump said on Wednesday, January 15, that he would use the momentum of the freshly agreed upon Gaza ceasefire deal to expand the Abraham Accords, the US-backed agreements struck during

his first term that normalized Israel's relations with several Arab countries. Trump, who repeatedly threatened Hamas to release the hostages ahead of his January 20 inauguration, said he was "thrilled American and Israeli hostages will be returning home." "With this deal in place, my National Security team, through the efforts of Special Envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, will continue to work closely with Israel and our Allies to make sure Gaza NEVER again becomes a terrorist safe haven," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. "We will continue promoting PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH throughout the region, as we build upon the momentum of this ceasefire to further expand the Historic Abraham Accords," he added, referring to the agreements that normalized Israel's ties with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco. Israeli President Isaac Herzog also endorsed the deal stating: "As the President of the State of Israel, I say in the clearest terms: This is the right move. This is an important move. This is a necessary move. There is no greater moral, human, Jewish, or Israeli obligation than to bring our sons and daughters back to us—whether to recover at home or to be laid to rest." (TOI / VFI News)

Israel Rebuffs 'Imperialist' Turkey After Erdogan Says It Must Withdraw from Syria; Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday, January 15, that Israel must withdraw its forces from Syria or it will cause "unfavorable outcomes for everyone." "The aggressive actions of the forces attacking Syrian territory, Israel, in particular, must come to an end as soon as possible," he said during a meeting of his party in Ankara. "Everyone should take their hands off Syria and we, along with our Syrian brothers, will crush the heads of Islamic State, the YPG, and other terrorist organizations in a short time." Israel in response warned Ankara against "unnecessary threats." "Israel completely rejects the Turkish president's statement," the Foreign Ministry said. "The aggressive imperialist actor in Syria (as well as in northern Cyprus, Libya, and other areas in the Middle East) is Turkey itself, and it is advisable for the Turkish president to avoid unnecessary threats. The State of Israel will continue to act to protect its borders from any threat." (TOI/VFI News)

More Than A Third of Israeli Households Spend More Than They Earn, As Living Costs Rise; More than one-third of Israeli households spend thousands of shekels more than their monthly incomes allow and cannot make ends meet, as they struggle with a series of tax and price hikes during the ongoing war, while interest rates remain high. An estimated 2.5 million Israeli households are overdrawn in their bank accounts, or about 39% of the population in Israel over the age of 18 as of April 2024, according to data by Fresh Start, an Israeli non-profit organization that assists highly indebted households and businesses. The latest Bank of Israel data released this week showed that Israeli banks charged households with accounts in overdrafts a steep 12.7% interest on average in November 2024, up from an average of 11% at the end of 2023. That compares with an average of 9% interest households were paying on consumer credit loans. Overdrafts of Israeli citizens reached NIS 9.75 billion (\$2.7 billion) as of the end of November, according to the data. Meanwhile, the average interest Israeli banks pay on shekel deposits ranges between 3.5% to 4% on average. The wide gap leads to the public paying very high interest rates on their debt, and it is deepening the personal finance troubles of households. As a result, thousands of families in Israel spend more than they earn, and fall into an economic trap of high interest rates and an inability to pay off the debt. (TOI/VFI News)

Researchers Find Structure Where Jerusalemites Reportedly Performed Rituals Before Hezekiah's Religious Reform; Researchers believe an ancient multi-room structure uncovered near Jerusalem's Old City was likely used for ritual and worship nearly 3,000 years ago, the Israel Antiquities Authority said on Tuesday, January 14, marking the first such find of a religious site practically down the street from the biblical First Temple while it still stood. The 220-square-meter (2,370-square-foot) structure, dating from the 8th century BC, "features eight rock-hewn rooms containing an altar, a standing stone, an oil press, and a winepress," the IAA said in a statement about the well-preserved site, which was

seemingly boarded up during an ancient crackdown on worship outside the Temple Mount. Standing stones are upright stones placed in the ground associated with religious ceremonies. Researchers believe the site to be the only known ritual structure dating from the period of the First Temple in Jerusalem, and one of “very few found in the land of Israel,” according to the IAA. The findings from the structure were published this week in an article, “Evidence of Worship in the Rock-Cut Rooms on the Eastern Slope of the City of David, Jerusalem,” authored by Shukron, along with Liora Freud, Helena Roth, and Reli Avisar from Tel Aviv University and Efrat Bocher from the Ancient Jerusalem Research Center. In the paper, the authors suggest that the building was used by residents of Judah for cultic or religious practices but then was walled off and abandoned during a religious reform in the 8th century BCE. “The structure ceased to function... possibly as part of King Hezekiah’s religious reform,” Shukron said. (*TOI/VFI News*)

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