

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 13, 2025 (Adar 13, 5785)

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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 with yellow and red text, titled 'GOD'S APPOINTED TIMES' by Barney Kasdan. The bottle is yellow with a white label, titled 'Anointing Oil'.

[For the Yachad Report Newsletter For March 2025](#)

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Israel-Hamas War 524 Days, Israel Strikes Palestinian Islamic Jihad Compound in Syrian Capital

- **ISRAEL:** IDF says it conducted airstrike on Palestinian Islamic Jihad HQ in Damascus
- **U.S.:** Mideast envoy Witkoff discusses Gaza reconstruction plan with Arab leaders in Doha; U.S. rejected Iraqi offer to return Israeli-Russian hostage Elizabeth Tsurkov, report says
 - **SYRIA:** Israel's FM orders to transfer aid to the Druze minority in Syria
 - **GAZA:** Knesset members slam UN report claiming Israel carried out genocidal acts
 - **SYRIA:** Israel prepares for prolonged stay in Syria, setting up new IDF outposts; Syria's interim government signs cease-fire with Kurdish-led forces
 - **U.S.:** Trump says 'we ought to get them the hell out, you can have him' regarding pro-Palestinian activist's arrest
 - **Yemen's Houthis** renew naval blockade until Israel unfreezes Gaza aid
 - **LEBANON:** Israel releases five prisoners ahead of new border talks

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If you are interested in having Yachad Ministries to come your church and share about what is going on in Israel and the Middle East, and how the Bible is unfolding right in front of our eyes.

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The Special Fast of Esther

Why Some Jews Fast In Honor of Queen Esther & Where the Tradition Comes From

The day of March 13, 2025, until nightfall is the Fast of Esther on the Jewish calendar in preparation for the holiday of Purim, which starts that evening. Read about this special tradition, why some Jews fast in honor of Queen Esther, and why it's an especially meaningful and spiritual day for some Jewish women!

The Fast of Esther

The Fast of Esther, or Ta'anit Esther in Hebrew, is a minor Jewish fast that takes place on the day preceding the holiday of Purim, on the 13th of the Hebrew month of Adar (except for years it would fall on shabbat, when it's held on the preceding Thursday instead). This year, the Fast of Esther will occur on Thursday, March 13, 2025, during the day - before the Purim festivities start after nightfall.

As with other minor fasts, the Fast of Esther traditionally involves abstaining from food and drink from sunrise to sunset. However, since it's not a major fast day like Yom Kippur or Tisha B'Av, not all Jews follow all of the traditional fasting prohibitions; some may only fast until midday, or only abstain from food, or not at all.

Whether one is actually fasting or not, there are also other ways of marking this special day. This may include prayer, self-reflection, giving to charity, reading the Book of Esther or other Biblical texts, and general spiritual preparations for Purim.

The Spiritual Significance of the Fast of Esther

This special fast is dedicated to Queen Esther, the heroine of the Purim story. It commemorates the fast called for by Esther and undertaken by the Persian Jewish community in response to Haman's evil decree, as part of the Jews' prayer for salvation and Esther's preparations to approach King Ahasuerus and attempt to save her people.

The fast serves as a time of reflection, repentance, and prayer in preparation for the celebration of Purim. After this solemn spiritual day, Purim will be celebrated with joyous festivities such as festive meals, dressing up in costumes or silly outfits, interactive and rowdy readings of the Book of Esther (Megillah), and giving gifts of food to friends and neighbors.

The quiet contemplation and fasting beforehand therefore lays the spiritual groundwork for the joy of the holiday. In addition, the Fast of Esther also holds an extra-special significance among some observant Jewish women.

Some religious authorities consider women to be exempt from minor fasts, but even women who don't observe the others are more likely to keep the Fast of Esther, whether through abstaining from food and drink or with extra prayer and reflection. As far as Jewish commemorative days this one is unique for honoring, and having been started by, a woman.

Queen Esther is also an inspiring heroine for many Jewish women, having been responsible for saving the Jewish people from genocide, making both Purim and the Fast of Esther particularly meaningful days!

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***More than 1,000 Dead in Syria After Islamist Terrorists Who Toppled Assad Clash with Alawite Loyalists;*** More than 1,000 people, including women and children, have been killed in Syria as its new Islamist rulers clash with loyalists of the toppled Assad regime, marking one of the country's most violent episodes since the conflict began there 14 years ago. About 745 civilians from the Alawite minority have reportedly been killed since Thursday, March 6, when violence broke out between security forces for the ruling Sunni Islamist insurgent group and supporters of ex-President Bashar al-Assad, an Alawite himself. The government said it was responding to attacks from remnants of the ousted president's forces and blamed "individual actions" for the rampant violence. It responded with a major counter-operation, attacking with helicopter gunships, drones, and artillery, and resulting in what Alawites have called "revenge killings" that included hundreds of civilians, according to reports. An estimated 148 pro-Assad fighters and 125 security forces members were among the casualties, according to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights watchdog group. Alawite people told American media that, in addition to the killings, many of their homes were looted and set on fire in different neighborhoods near the western coast of Syria. (NYP/VFI News)

***Defense Minister Katz: We Will Soon Allow Druze Laborers to Work in Israel;*** Minister of Defense Israel Katz promised on Sunday, March 9, that he would soon allow Druze from Syria to enter Israel for work. "The government just approved an unprecedented aid program for the Druze and Circassian communities in Israel led by Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Finance Minister." He further stated: "As Minister of Defense, I salute them for their loyalty and bravery and their contribution to Israel's security in difficult and decisive times - we will continue to support them and we will defend their brothers in Syria from any threat." "Soon, we will also allow Druze laborers from Syria to come work in the Golan Heights communities in Israel." Katz pledged: "We will protect the Druze in Syria - from any threat." (INN/VFI News)

***Israel to Stop Supplying Gaza with Electricity;*** Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Eli Cohen signed an order on Sunday, March 9, instructing the Electric Company to stop supplying electricity to the Gaza Strip immediately. "We will use all our means so all the hostages return and we will make sure that Hamas won't be in Gaza the day after the war," Cohen stated. Leading up to the Minister's order to stop the sale of electricity, Israel would only transfer electricity directly to the water desalination plant in the central Gaza Strip. The rest of the power in the Gaza Strip currently comes from generators and fuel. Since Israel stopped the flow of humanitarian aid last week, no fuel has been entering the Gaza Strip. (INN/VFI News)

***Parent of Woman Killed at Nova Festival Commits Suicide After Devastating Loss;*** Vladislav Bongart had been emotionally and mentally deteriorating after his daughter's murder. Sofia Bongart loved red roses. She once told her family: "After I die, make me a white grave and bring me a red rose." She had just completed her military service and was beginning her adult life – a joyful and optimistic young woman. On October 7, she traveled with a close friend to the Nova music festival, where both were murdered. Every week, her father, Vladislav, visited her white grave and placed red roses on it. He carried the pain inside, withdrawing and deteriorating. About 15 days ago, he ended his life at 48 years old. Now, in their apartment in Karmiel, Anna, his wife, and their younger daughter, Evelina, remain. Ten days after this second devastating blow, Anna spoke about the beautiful life their family once had and her attempt to rebuild while bearing immense grief. "Vladislav's dream was for us to have our own apartment so the girls would have their own space, something to hold onto after we were no longer here," said Anna. The young couple worked hard, saved every shekel, and eventually bought an apartment. Sofia was educated in Karmiel's school system, attending Ort Psagot High School. "She was a quiet and well-mannered girl. She always respected those around her and was very sociable," wrote Adi Alon, her middle school homeroom teacher. (JPost /VFI News)

#SupportIsrael #VisionForIsrael #NeverForget #holocaustsurvivors

***King's College: Jewish Student Forced to Hide in Room As Mob Tries to Break Through Door;*** A Jewish student at King's College in London was forced to lock himself in a room on campus to protect himself from an anti-Israel mob that was attempting to force its way through the door to get at him, Jewish media reported. The student who was attacked had organized a conflict resolution event titled "From Conflict to Connection: Israelis and Iranians in Dialogue." During the event, when Iranian researcher Faezeh Alavi was speaking, an anti-Israel activist stood up and interrupted her, demanding that she explain how she could sit next to an Israeli person given the war in Gaza. The mob of anti-Israel protesters that had gathered then began to chant "Free Palestine." Alavi, who left Iran at the age of 25 partly due to the regime's oppressive policies, had to be ushered out of the room by security. The event organizer summoned security and advised her to leave for her safety. His own safety remained at risk, however. He fled into a nearby chaplaincy room and locked the door. About five of the protesters followed and began banging on the door, attempting to get in. "I felt extremely unsafe. I was just distressed. I went into the room to get away from it all, but when I saw them trying to get in, I went into another room inside that room, to hide. That's when I knew that something was going to happen and there was malicious intent," he added. (INN/VFI News)

***Arizona Synagogue Badly Damaged in Arson Attack;*** A synagogue in Casa Grande, Arizona was badly damaged in an arson attack last week, American media reported. The "Kahal Hasidim" Jewish Community Center was set ablaze at about 2 am last Monday, March 3. The fire spread to the entire building, causing extensive damage throughout the structure and the destruction of much of what was inside. The fire was brought under control at about 6 am, four hours after it was set. A 30-year-old man was arrested on Thursday on suspicion of causing the fire. The building also contained a grocery store allowing Jewish residents to purchase kosher food, a library, and classrooms. (INN/VFI News)

***Worrying: Number of Americans Who Support Israel Falls to 25-Year Low;*** Fewer than half of Americans sympathize more with Israelis than with Palestinians, according to a new Gallup poll, the lowest figure for Israelis since at least 2001. The poll, published Thursday, March 6, found that 46% of respondents sympathize more with Israelis while 33% sympathize more with Palestinians. The 13-point gap is also the smallest since at least 2001. Sympathy for Israelis has dropped in the past few years, as Israel has been led by a hardline right-wing government and, since the Hamas attack on Oct. 7, 2023, fought a war against the terror group in Gaza. Thursday's poll was taken in February, spanning the time when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Washington, D.C. and President Donald Trump

proposed a U.S. takeover of the Gaza Strip, which Netanyahu endorsed. A decade ago, 62% of respondents sympathized more with Israelis, compared to 16% with the Palestinians. In 2022, the gap was 55% to 26%. (INN/VFI News)

***Bessent Signals Trump to Crush Iran, Russia with Energy Sanctions;*** Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent signaled on Thursday, March 6, that President Donald Trump will use sanctions to cripple Iran's Islamic regime and to bring Russia to the negotiating table to end its illegal war of aggression in Ukraine. Bessent, who made the remarks while speaking to the Economic Club of New York, said that Trump was deploying aggressive sanctions against Iran for "immediate maximum impact." "We are going to shut down Iran's oil sector and drone manufacturing capabilities," Bessent said, adding that the administration also will cut off the regime's access to the international financial system. "Making Iran broke again will mark the beginning of our updated sanctions policy," he added. "If I were an Iranian, I would get all my money out of the rial now." His remarks come after the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism allegedly tried on multiple occasions to assassinate Trump last year, including reports that they smuggled shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles into the U.S. (DW/VFI News)



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