

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update August 20, 2026 (Elul 6, 5786)



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Israel; 'My Daughter Saw Them Spit on Me:' Why Some Israeli Artists Think Twice Before Speaking Out

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 - *Canada's Antisemitism Crisis Is More Than Just a Failure*
- *Huckabee Says American's Involvement Raises Stakes in West Bank Settler Standoff*
 - *Settlers Attack East Jerusalem Dentist and Son on Their Own Land*

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Standing with Israel!

Mecca Defense Pact Gives Rise to a Saudi-Led Sunni Bloc, Posing New Challenges for Israel;

The Mecca Joint Defense Agreement signed on Friday, August 7, by Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan, represents the first formalization of the slow emergence of a conservative Sunni Islamic bloc intended to provide a strategic counterweight against both Israel and Iran. Many Middle East analysts have taken note of this nascent development, and its implications are already more than symbolic. The bloc has its foundations in existing and growing bilateral ties among these countries in trade, economic relations, and military cooperation, and is not only a matter of declarations. The pact does not include all members of the emerging axis: Qatar and the emergent regime in Syria are both components of it, and in many ways those countries are a more natural fit for membership than Saudi Arabia. The agreement is therefore significant mainly because it indicates that Riyadh seeks at least one foot in this axis. The pact was announced with portentous language. The joint statement declares that the agreement "is intended to strengthen collective deterrence against any act of aggression, and stipulates that any armed attack against any one of the three states shall be regarded as an attack against them all," while providing for "the enhancement of all aspects of defense cooperation among the three states." Israel should be watching the slow crystallization of this bloc carefully, as Jerusalem and Islamic claims there are likely to form the symbolic element that knits the emergent group together. (JPost/VFI News)

Man Charged with Hate Crimes After Attacking Congregant and Guard at New York Shabbat Service;

A man disrupted Shabbat services and attacked a guard and a congregant at Central Synagogue in Manhattan on Friday night, August 14. As synagogue security escorted the man out of the service, he struck a congregant and damaged synagogue property, then spit at and headbutted a member of the security team, New York Police Department Commissioner Jessica Tisch said in a statement. A police officer working security at the Reform synagogue took the assailant into custody at the scene. Police identified the suspect as Larry Montes, 46, from the Bronx, and charged him with two counts of assault as a hate crime and one count of criminal mischief as a hate crime, among other charges. Additional police officers have been dispatched to the synagogue, whose chief rabbi, Angela Buchdahl, is a national leader in the American Jewish community. Tisch, who is Jewish, attended Central Synagogue growing up and was married there. She said she spoke with the synagogue's rabbi, that no one was seriously injured and that there were no known additional threats. "In joy and in sorrow, it has always been a place of comfort and peace," Tisch said of the congregation. "A place of worship should never be a crime scene." (TOI/VFI News)

Nearly Half of Britons Want Fewer or No Israeli Immigrants, Placing Israelis 22nd of 23 Nationalities;

Almost half of Britons think the United Kingdom should allow fewer Israelis, or none at all, to migrate to the country, making Israelis among Britain's most unwanted immigrants second only to Russians in a YouGov poll of attitudes toward migrants from 23 countries, published on Wednesday, August 12. Just five percent of Britons think the UK should allow more Israelis to come to the country,

while 24% think the current number is fine. Twenty-three percent think Britain should allow fewer Israelis, and 24% want none at all; the remaining 23% said they did not know. Israelis ranked 22nd out of the 23 nationalities surveyed, ahead of only Russians, who placed last on the list. The same poll was previously conducted a decade earlier, in 2016, when 36% of Britons said the UK should allow fewer or no Israelis, compared with 47% in the new survey. The shift comes amid a general surge in anti-Israel sentiment across the world since the October 7, 2023, Hamas onslaught set off wars in Gaza and across the region. (TOI/VFI News)

Survey: Three-Quarters of Young American Jews Stay Active in Jewish Life Even as Many Grow More Selective; Nearly four in ten Jewish young adults in the United States say "events affecting Jewish people in the last few years" have led them to pull back from Jewish spaces or become more selective about where they participate, with disagreements over how Israel and the Palestinians are discussed cited as a leading reason. The survey was conducted by Sense Worldwide and commissioned by the Jim Joseph Foundation. Among the 39% of respondents who said they have engaged less, engaged more selectively, or disengaged entirely, 48% pointed to conversations that often feel hostile, toxic, or unproductive, 42% said their views do not align with how Israel and the Palestinians are discussed, and 40% said they did not want to experience biased, one-sided messaging. At the same time, the study found that young Jews have hardly abandoned Jewish life. Three-quarters of Jewish young adults in the United States say they regularly do something Jewish, though most are finding their connections outside of synagogues and traditional Jewish institutions. When asked what would make Jewish experiences more appealing to them, 30% said they would be attracted to experiences that were more cultural and less religious. (JPost/VFI News)

Jerusalem Cafe Stands Firm as Protests Against Its Shabbat Opening Enter a Seventh Week; Dozens of ultra-Orthodox men demonstrated on Saturday, August 15, outside the Basimta cafe in central Jerusalem, the seventh straight week of protests against the establishment for operating on Shabbat. Counter-protesters from the Pink Front organization were also present, holding signs declaring the "Holy right to drink coffee" and "We will die rather than drink instant [coffee]," a play on a slogan used by Haredi men protesting against military conscription. Across from them, the Haredi demonstrators repeatedly cried out "Shabbos," with police officers standing between the rival groups, and there were no reports of arrests. The weekly protest came after the cafe's opening was delayed by some 40 minutes, as staff struggled to enter the premises after an individual apparently glued the lock overnight; security camera footage broadcast by Israeli media showed the culprit, who appeared to be a woman, wearing a hat and a face mask to disguise their identity. Secularist lawmakers arrived to show support for the cafe. Yesh Atid MK Vladimir Beliak visited later on Saturday, August 15, saying that Jerusalem residents have a right both to observe Shabbat and to buy a coffee on the Jewish day of rest. "We will not give up on the liberal public sphere," he wrote. MK Avigdor Liberman, who heads the secularist Yisrael Beytenu party, also expressed support, saying that Israelis have the right both to pray at synagogue and to drink coffee at a cafe on Shabbat. "Freedom of choice, without coercion," Liberman wrote. "Live and let live." (TOI/VFI News)

Rare August Thunderstorms Bring Rain and Flooding Across Israel; Unusual summer weather was recorded across Israel on Saturday, August 15, with rain falling in Jerusalem, Maaleh Adumim, and the northern Golan Heights, accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning in several areas. Maaleh Adumim recorded 18.4 millimeters of rain, while Jerusalem received 2 millimeters and Mount Bental in the northern Golan Heights measured 0.4 millimeters. The rainfall caused flooding in several neighborhoods in eastern and southern Jerusalem. Fire and Rescue Service teams worked to free several people trapped in flooded areas and urged the public to avoid entering parking garages, underground levels, and elevators during flooding, and to stay away from flowing waterways. Route 90 was closed in

both directions for about an hour due to concerns over flooding along one section of the highway, and the Israel Meteorological Service issued a yellow warning for thunderstorms and lightning across extensive areas, from the northern mountains and valleys through the central mountain region to the Judean Desert, Dead Sea, and northern Arava. Authorities also prohibited swimming at Achziv Beach in the Western Galilee due to unusual sea conditions. Additional local rainfall was expected on Sunday afternoon, August 16, primarily in eastern Israel, with concerns over flash floods in streams in the Judean Desert, northern Arava, and northeastern Negev. Temperatures were expected to fall slightly on Monday, August 17, bringing some relief from the heat, before rising again in the mountains and inland areas on Wednesday, August 19. (INN/VFI News)

Two Israeli Universities Rank Among the World's Top 100 in the 2026 Shanghai Ranking; Israeli academia was once again represented among the world's leading research institutions, with two Israeli universities earning places in the top 100 of the 2026 Shanghai ranking, published on Sunday, August 16. The Weizmann Institute of Science ranked 71st worldwide, maintaining the position it held in the previous ranking, while the Hebrew University of Jerusalem placed 89th, slipping one spot from the previous edition's 88th place. The Shanghai ranking is regarded as one of the leading international measures of academic excellence. Each year, it evaluates more than 2,500 higher education institutions worldwide based on criteria including the number of Nobel Prize and Fields Medal winners among faculty and alumni, researcher citations, and publications in leading scientific journals. The Technion, which had ranked among the world's top 100 universities over the previous two years, fell outside the top 100 in the 2026 edition. The top of the global table remained dominated by leading American universities. Harvard University retained first place, followed by Stanford University in second and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in third. The University of Cambridge ranked fourth, while the University of California, Berkeley, completed the top five. Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion congratulated the Hebrew University, saying the ranking "reinforces its standing as one of the world's leading research institutions and reflects its excellence, the innovation it leads, and its impact on the international academic arena." (INN/VFI News)

Milk from Seeds: Israeli Scientists Produce a Key Dairy Protein from the Safflower Plant; Hebrew University scientists have successfully engineered a plant to produce beta-casein, a milk protein that helps give cheese its melting properties an achievement they believe puts them on the way to beating international competition to produce plants that can literally be milked at an industrial scale. The researchers first engineered the laboratory plant *Arabidopsis thaliana*, and then a drought-tolerant, oil-producing species, safflower, to manufacture the beta-casein, which is important for bone building and also has curdling and emulsifying properties. "Milk is not produced sustainably," said Prof. Oded Shoseyov of the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment, who led the research. "Some 15 percent of global warming gases are emitted as methane by livestock. Today, with genetic modification, you can take the genes coded for milk proteins and transfer them to another organism that's more efficient, saving a lot in terms of resource input and emissions." Shoseyov noted that the global dairy industry was worth more than \$1 trillion in 2025 and is expected to reach \$1.6 trillion by 2035, thanks to population growth and rising awareness of the nutritional value of milk protein. While engineering the seeds, the team was surprised to discover that instead of reaching the expected storage compartment, the milk protein formed structures resembling those that store natural casein in milk. The best-performing plants produced beta-casein at levels of around 1.26% of total soluble seed protein, far higher than many previous reports of casein production in plants, and Shoseyov said it was easy and relatively cheap to "milk the seeds" by pressing them and separating the resulting mixture into protein-rich cream and solids with a centrifuge. (TOI/VFI News)



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