

Only Here: Being locked down in the one place Jews would want to be locked down

By Daniel Gordis

blogs.timesofisrael.com

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Bringing in Shabbos individually, together in Jerusalem.

It sounded as if the voice was coming from the stones.

Every evening, as nightfall comes to Jerusalem, the buildings here, chameleon-like, change their colors. The streets in our neighborhood are quiet on Shabbat in any event, but lately, they've been almost ghostly, eerily silent. Nothing about the neighborhood has changed, but everything is different. So when Shabbat began the week before last, with that slightly golden tint coloring the buildings as the angle of the light shifted before the sun was gone, my wife and I stepped outside onto the terrace to breathe it all in.

We'd expected the usual quiet, the sound of little more than the birds and those proverbial Jerusalem cats. They were there, to be sure, but then, as we stared out over the railing towards the building next door and the street below, there was a voice. You could have mistaken it for the muezzin we often hear around here, bellowing from amplifiers and speakers in mosques closer to the Old City, but this was no muezzin. This was Hebrew.

We craned our necks, to no avail. We couldn't see where it was coming from, but as the voice grew clearer, we quickly realized – it was Kabbalat Shabbat. From a porch somewhere, or from a window, maybe even a rooftop – who knows? – someone had taken it on himself, with all the synagogues shuttered, to gather together all the neighbors who couldn't see (and maybe don't even know) each other, to sing and to pray together. It was Shabbat in Jerusalem, after all. We were in isolation, whoever-he-was was saying, but we weren't going to be isolated.

Within minutes, there were all sorts of voices, a chorus seemingly flowing from the stones. Men's voices, women's voices. Some children. A few people, secular by their looks, walked by on the street below, also looked for the source of the voice, and smiled. They might not have been participating, but they of course understood every word and were stirred by what they were witness to – this was theirs, too.

So instead of praying downstairs in my study, alone, as I've done for weeks now, we found ourselves together on the porch, singing with people whom we'll never be able to identify, our collective voices rebounding off the buildings. As we were singing, mesmerized by the strangeness but also the wonder of the moment, it struck me: those very words – those exact same words – have been rebounding off of buildings around here for thousands of years. Many of the words we were singing were debated by the rabbis of old – the Talmudic Tractate Berakhot is a record of many of their conversations about what precisely the

wording should be. And for millennia, now, we've been doing more or less what they prescribed. These neighborhoods, these hills, these stones, have been hearing those echoing words for thousands of years.

It was dark by now, and the voice had become part of the night. Whoever-he-was counted the Omer, and everyone responded, counting after him. But the Omer, it struck me out there in the dark, has a definite end – and we know what happens when it's over. What had brought us all out to our porches, of course, has no definite end. We don't know what will happen when it's over; we don't even know how we'll know it's over. That's probably why the next thing we heard was people calling out, "be-eizah sha'ah machar ba-boker?" "What time tomorrow morning?" It was over for now, but the first thought on everyone's mind was when would we get to sing together again?

We stood there for a few minutes, looking out over the quiet-once-again neighborhood, took it all in and started to make our way inside. Looking at each other, it was clear that we both were both deeply moved, literally beyond words. What could one possibly say? As is typical, Elisheva put it perfectly. Quietly, she looked at me, and barely above a whisper said, "Only here."

"Only here" is the point of this week now dawning in Israel. What struck me out on that porch was that though we were locked down for who-knows-how-long, many of us here feel that we were locked down in the one place Jews would want to be locked down. For if only those stones could speak, they'd tell you: our roots are here like they are nowhere else – literally, nowhere else. To be here is to be part of a story; to be here is to play a tiny role in writing its next chapter.

I remembered that some years ago, when the world was very different, there was a rooftop minyan in our neighborhood. The apartment building was at the top of a hill, so on clear evenings we could see the entire city: Mt. Scopus and the Mt. of Olives to the north, and Gilo to the south. When my son came home from the army one Friday and stood at my side taking in the truly extraordinary view, I said to him, "a lot of history has unfolded out there over the centuries." Without missing a beat, he turned to me, and said, "it still is."

This is the week when we essentially remind ourselves that those of us who chose to be here chose to join that never-ending story. Had we been on that rooftop some 2500 years ago, we would likely have been able to see, just east of us, a long, devastated, humiliated and defeated line of Jews beginning their trek from Jerusalem to Babylonia, with a burning Jerusalem behind them. The route they

likely took, points out Amotz Asa'el, was more or less the route of today's Jerusalem light rail, passing by the Damascus gate, heading north, out towards what is now Hebrew University, and then far, far beyond into exile.

Never again since that day have the majority of the world's Jews lived in the land of Israel. (That will apparently change very shortly.) But that long line of exiles-to-be never would ever give up on the dream that they – or those who followed them – would come home. And sure enough, if we'd been on our own porch some 2400 years later, we would have seen, just a few hundred meters away, a rail line being constructed between Jaffa and Jerusalem in the 1890's, when the Ottomans were still here, and then being rebuilt in 1920, when the British were here – train tracks that have always been to me a metaphor for that yearning to get back here. In 1948, from right where I'm sitting typing this, one could have heard through the window the six-month long battle (only partially successful) to end the siege on Jerusalem, and from that rooftop, in June 1967, one would have easily seen the lines of armored vehicles making their way eastward as Israel liberated the Old City and unified Jerusalem.

A few thousand years ago, as the sun set on Friday evening, if you listened carefully, you would have heard the shofar being blown from the apex of the south-western corner of the wall around the Temple, announcing the arrival of Shabbat. Those shofar blasts coordinated a sort of communal choreography, as the Talmud (Shabbat 35b; very loose translation) relates:

Our sages taught: They sound six blasts as Shabbat is nearing. The first blast instructs the people in the fields to stop working. The second blast is to stop those who are in the city from working, and to signal to the storeowners to shutter their shops. The third is to tell them to light the Shabbat candles. ... And he sounds a teki'ah, and sounds a teru'ah, and sounds a teki'ah, and he accepts Shabbat.

The Temple is gone, and so is that shofar, but the city's choreography remains. Anyone who's spent more than a few Fridays in Jerusalem knows the dance. The bustling shops and markets in the morning, their being shuttered in the early afternoon. The suddenly ubiquitous flower-sellers with their white buckets filled with flowers and the cars that drive by, pull over, buy a bunch or two and hurry home. And then, it's quiet. (A friend who lives in the U.S. but spends a few months in Israel each year once told me that what he loves about Jerusalem is that on Friday afternoon, as you walk down the street, even without looking inside, you know what's happening in every home.) And then, to announce that Shabbat is beginning, there's no shofar, but instead, the mournful groan of the air raid siren, meant to evoke that past, and to bring it into the present. Only here does being alive mean to be part of a choreography these hills have seen for centuries.

Of course, to be here is to be witness to the misery that this region has long seen, too. Not far from here and not that long ago, Jerusalem was out of food. There were lines of desperate, starving people in the freezing winter of 1948; even years later, that was followed by food rationing that many Israelis still recall. Now, for far too many, that misery continues in this horrific economic meltdown. Two months ago, Israel had an unemployment rate of about 3%; now, it's hovering at around 27%. One again, there is hunger, and misery, and heartbreak that has moved reporters to tears.

Even in better times, these are heart-wrenching weeks in this land of dreams. Every year, I make a point on Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Memorial Day) and on Yom HaZikaron (Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers) of being out in public for the siren. Being witness to the sudden stillness of cars and people is one of those "only in Israel" moments that most of us still find chilling. So last week, on Yom HaShoah, we went back to that terrace for the siren. But there was no one outside. No people, no moving cars. Elsewhere in the city, there were none of those now famous gatherings of survivors and their progeny to sing about life, about the future. The siren had changed nothing, and this time we came back inside depleted.

But then, during the day, we began to see those now much-discussed photographs of police officers and soldiers saluting survivors, reminding them that even if the stillness had preceded the siren, they were not forgotten. Numerous photos, and then videos – police officers and soldiers, saluting people for whom this pandemic is truly terrible – but also hardly the most horrible thing they've ever experienced. Security forces saluting the frail elderly? Only here.

This week, Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzma'ut will be similarly and troublingly different. It will feel empty, bereft for many of us, this ceremony-less season of ceremonies. But in a way, ironically, this horrific pandemic has already evoked much of the reflection that those ceremonies usually do. Like many people all across the world, we've had conversations with our friends that are different from those we used to have. Those of us who have lost parents have remarked to each other that, despite our missing them terribly, we're grateful that they didn't have to live through this. More than we used to, friends are telling each what they've always known but have rarely said – that they love them. That's everywhere, I'm sure.

But here, there's yet another layer. None of us wants this pandemic to mark the end of our lives, but the older we are, the more we know that it could. The likelihood may not be high, but it's not statistically insignificant, either. So we find ourselves talking to each other, and to friends, about what really matters, and often, about the fact that we're here. Here, and nowhere else. About the fact that if, heaven forbid, this pandemic was to exact the ultimate price, this is where we would want to be.

Despite all the changes and all the cancellations, this is still going to be a week of heartbreak – sons and daughters, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and fathers and mothers lost far too young in a conflict no one here knows how to end – and with military cemeteries locked, even their graves will be beyond reach. But Yom Ha'Atzma'ut will follow, so it will also be a week of, if not untethered celebration, then at least profound gratitude. For the privilege of being part of this story. For the blessing of having raised our children in a society brimming with a sense of purpose. For the opportunity to

be part of a society that is not merely a country, but a project.

Even in the face of the fear, the hunger, the anguish and the unknown, many people in these neighborhoods will spend this very strange week heartbroken, to be sure, but also grateful beyond words to be in it with people whose lives are statements about where they want to be, no matter what:

Only here.

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Why Mahmoud Abbas's Threats of Cancelling Agreements with Israel Are Empty

By Khaled Abu Toameh

jpost.com

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The results would be worse for Ramallah than for Jerusalem.

Palestinian officials are scheduled to hold a series of meetings in Ramallah this week amid reports that the Palestinian Authority is considering cancelling all signed agreements with Israel in response to the Israeli government's plan to apply sovereignty to parts of the West Bank.

Palestinians, however, do not seem to take seriously repeated threats by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and PLO institutions to renounce the agreements or suspend security coordination with Israel.

In the past few years, Abbas and some Palestinian officials have threatened to abandon the agreements, including the 1993 Oslo Accords, and revoke the PLO's recognition of Israel. On several occasions, Abbas has also threatened to dismantle the PA in response to Israeli and US policies and measures towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Besides boycotting the Israeli government and the administration of US President Donald Trump, Abbas has failed to carry out any of his other threats, and he has good reason not to do so.

The PA was created by the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, pursuant to 1993 Oslo Accords. The termination of the Oslo Accords will lead to the dismantlement of the PA and its institutions, with Abbas losing his status as PA president.

In addition, such a move is likely to result in a sharp decline of international financial aid to the Palestinians, who will be left without a governing body. This is a move that the Palestinians can't afford, particularly during an economic crisis resulting from the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Palestinian officials said on Sunday that terminating the agreements with Israel would have "catastrophic consequences" on the Palestinian economy. Under the terms of the Paris Protocol of 1994, the PA and Israel work together on various trade and economic projects that are significant for the Palestinian economy. If the Oslo Accords are cancelled, Israel, for its part, would no longer

be obliged to issue work permits for Palestinians and could halt the import and export of Palestinian goods.

"I don't think the PA is capable of taking such a decision," Palestinian economic expert Firas Shehadeh told The Jerusalem Post. "We are too dependent on the Israeli economy. Our leadership needs to be very careful when it come to the economy, especially during these critical times when we are facing economic hardship because of the coronavirus."

In 2014 Abbas told Israelis during a meeting in his Ramallah presidential compound that security coordination with Israel was "sacred." But he and other senior Palestinian officials have since repeatedly threatened to suspend the security coordination, which has been denounced by many Palestinians as an "act of treason."

Last year Abbas announced that a special committee has been set up to study the mechanisms for implementing previous decisions by the PLO to "halt work related to the agreements signed with the Israeli side." The announcement came after PLO and Fatah institutions recommended that the Palestinians end security coordination with Israel.

Needless to say, Abbas has refrained from halting security coordination with Israel, fearing that such a move would harm the PA more than Israel.

A PA security official told the Post that security coordination with Israel was continuing, notwithstanding the announcements and threats of PLO and Fatah institutions and officials. "I'm unaware of any decision to stop working with the Israeli side on security issues," the official said. "I'm also no sure this would be good for the Palestinians."

According to the official, security coordination with Israel has actually increased in the past two months in light of the coronavirus crisis.

When Abbas described the security coordination with Israel as "sacred," he obviously knew what he was talking about. The PA and Israel have a common enemy in the West Bank: Hamas.

"For Abbas, halting security coordination with Israel would be tantamount to suicide," said Palestinian political

analyst Abdel Jawad Burhan. “Without the security coordination, the Palestinian Authority will collapse. Without the security coordination, Abbas and most of the senior Palestinian officials would not be able to leave Ramallah because they need permission from Israel.”

For now, it appears that the threats to nix the agreements with Israel have two goals. First, to contain growing Palestinian public resentment not only towards Israel and the US, but also towards the perceived incompetence of the PA. Second, to exert pressure on the international community to force Israel to abandon the annexation plan.

Palestinian officials have expressed satisfaction with the support they have received from the Arab League, EU,

UN, Russia, China and other countries for their opposition to the annexation plan. These officials, nonetheless, are worried that the statements of condemnation won’t stop Israel from proceeding with its plan.

“We already saw that condemnations and warnings didn’t stop the Trump administration from recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital or removing the US Embassy to Jerusalem or cutting financial aid to the Palestinians,” a veteran Fatah official told the Post. “The ball is now in Abbas’s court, and we will soon see whether he has the courage or will to take historic and fateful decisions. If you talk the talk, you better walk the walk. Otherwise, you lose what’s left of your credibility.”

Iran’s Satellite Launch Brings It One Step Closer to an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile

By Behnam Ben Taleblu and Bradley Bowman

english.alarabiya.net

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A secret military program debuts in public.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is at it again. In addition to resuming its longstanding maritime belligerence that instigated the latest war of words with President Trump, Tehran recently launched its first-ever military satellite. This historic development represents a significant change in Iran’s narrative about its interest in space, as well as another step toward potentially developing an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that could target the United States and all of Europe.

Iranian outlets have heralded the launch of the satellite – dubbed the “Noor” or light – a success, claiming that the satellite sent a signal back to earth from 425 kilometers (km) away. US Space Command has tracked the satellite, which is assumed to be in orbit.

Wednesday’s apparent success follows a string of recent setbacks for Iranian space launch vehicles (SLVs). Just this February, in an attempt to celebrate the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Iran tried but failed to put a new satellite into low-earth orbit. Ironically, the satellite was named the “Zafar,” or victory.

The SLV behind the latest launch, called the “Qased” or messenger, appears to be new. Iran’s Mashregh News Agency reported that the Qased has three stages and uses

both solid- and liquid-propellant. Older Iranian SLVs rely on North Korean missile technology, specifically Nodong engines, which use liquid-propellant. Video from the Qased’s launch appears to indicate a liquid-propelled engine, at least for its first-stage.

The Commander of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Aerospace Force (IRGC-AF), Amir-Ali Hajizadeh, confirmed this assessment in a recent interview. While claiming that the Qased’s use of liquid-propellant in the first-stage was a temporary, cost-saving measure using a missile they had in “storage,” Hajizadeh said Tehran will transition to all solid-propellant SLVs in the future.

If true, this growing technical sophistication should set-off alarm bells in Washington and allied capitals. A domestically manufactured, multi-stage, solid-propellant SLV would be a game-changer for Tehran and can make longer-range ballistic missiles possible.

The semi-official Tasnim News Agency, whom Hajizadeh gave an interview to after the recent satellite launch, noted that the Salman, a solid-propellant motor first showcased this February, is used in the Qased SLV. The Salman motor represents an advancement in Iranian rocketry due to both a composite casing, making it lighter, as well as its stated ability to guide rockets through

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Video from the launch of NOOR satellite on the QASED SLV. Liquid propulsion first stage can be clearly seen.



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directional changes in the nozzle, otherwise known as thrust vectoring. The Salman is likely the first of many solid-propellant advances by Tehran.

Tasnim further reported the Qased was launched from an IRGC space launch base in Shahroud, the same city where a solid-propellant engine testing facility was discovered in the desert in 2018. Shahroud is in Iran's Semnan province, where Iran's Imam Khomeini Space Center is also located. This marked the first satellite launch from Shahroud.

The US government has long expressed concern that Tehran's SLV program could facilitate its development of an ICBM. In February 2016, then-Director of National Intelligence James Clapper summarized the assessment of the US intelligence community that Iran's SLV program provides it with the "means" to develop an ICBM.

In 2017, the US National Air and Space Intelligence Center (NASIC) concluded that "progress in Iran's space program could shorten a pathway to an ICBM because space launch vehicles (SLV) use inherently similar technologies." These concerns were echoed again the US military's 2019 Missile Defense Review.

But there is one more reason to worry. Last week's satellite launch was conducted entirely by the IRGC-AF, which has operational control of Iran's vast ballistic missile arsenal. Unlike its predecessors, the new SLV and accompanying satellite did not bear any of the logos of the Iranian Space Agency. Nor did it bear the logos of any of Iran's defense ministry subsidiaries, like Aerospace Industries Organization (AIO), or Iran Electronics Institute (IEI). This indicates that production and procurement related to the SLV was entirely outside recognized government channels.

In short, the Qased was part of a secret program now public. Iran's willingness to place this effort in the hands of the IRGC – designated a terrorist organization by the US – should end any credible assertions that Iran's interest in space is purely civilian.

For too long, the US ignored North Korea's development of satellite launchers and long-range ballistic missiles. As a result, the Pentagon has been playing catch-up, rushing to field sufficient homeland missile defense capabilities.

Washington should not make the same mistake when it comes to Iran. Admittedly, Tehran is likely years away from fielding an ICBM capability. But it also takes years to fund, test, and field missile defense systems—and there is no time to waste.

The first step in defending the US homeland against a potential Iranian ICBM is ensuring that the Pentagon has sufficient radar capability.

Existing radars in Greenland and the United Kingdom are important, but an additional persistent discrimination

radar would be needed to address the growing threat from Iran. A radar similar to the Long Range Discrimination Radar (LRDR) in Alaska could help identify ballistic missiles early in flight. It could also distinguish between decoys and actual threats, and help assess whether attempts to intercept the threat were successful. This would enable more efficient management of the finite number of US interceptors.

The location for this radar will likely need to be in a foreign country, requiring Washington to roll-up its sleeves in the quest for an agreement with a host nation. If the Iranian missile threat matures further, the US could then start construction at the new radar site.

In the meantime, if a Homeland Defense Radar-Hawaii (HDR-H) is deployed, then the Pentagon could move its Sea-Based X-Band (SBX) Radar to the Atlantic. This would buy time for construction of a new persistent radar focused on Iran.

But sufficient radar capability, of course, is not enough; the Pentagon must also have the means to intercept and destroy the incoming ballistic missile.

That's why the Department of Defense should expeditiously push forward with the development of a Next-Generation Interceptor (NGI), which will be needed as missile threats to the homeland proliferate. In fact, the US Missile Defense Agency published on Friday a classified request for proposals from industry for the NGI.

The Pentagon is also wise to conduct a flight test soon to determine whether the Standard Missile-3 Block IIA (SM-3 IIA), originally designed to intercept medium- and intermediate-range missiles, could also intercept ICBMs. If that test is successful, SM-3IIAs could provide additional layered homeland missile defense—first from Aegis ships and then from Aegis Ashore sites in the US.

Finally, another ground-based midcourse defense (GMD) site in the continental United States (CONUS) would provide much-needed additional capability against a prospective Iranian ICBM. An additional CONUS GMD site would significantly enhance Washington's ability to intercept an incoming ICBM from Iran, assess whether it was destroyed, and then shoot again if necessary.

If an Iranian ICBM were headed toward New York City or Washington, D.C., Americans would want two chances—not just one—to shoot it down.

Tehran's launch of a military satellite does not guarantee that the regime will pursue an ICBM to target the United States. But if Tehran does decide to do so, Wednesday's launch will give it a running start. Washington would be wise to start getting ready.

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Visit suburbanorthodox.org for the current issue.

Don't Let Iran Renew Its Quest for Deadly Weapons

By Benny Avni

The U.S. has a chance to employ the 2015 nuclear deal's "self-destruct button."

nysun.com

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It's time to end the awkward legal endorsement of the Iran nuclear deal. That's because the first so-called sunset clause built into the Obama-era Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action kicks in this Fall. That's per the United Nations Security Council resolution 2231, which in 2015 endorsed the deal. The D-Day is three weeks before our elections in November.

Washington is now pushing back. As the New York Times first reported Monday, Secretary of State Pompeo is circulating among allies new council resolution language that would extend the weapons ban. Doing so would further deny Tehran the luxury of arming terrorists in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Gaza, and elsewhere.

It would also ban legal sales of weapons to Iran, a country that repeatedly threatens to annihilate a, in Israel, UN member state.

Russia, which is eager to renew legal arms sales to Iran, would likely veto the US-proposed resolution — if it ever comes to a vote. China might join, and America's European allies that cling on to the JCPOA would need a lot of convincing before they agree to tweak any part of the 2015 resolution.

Prime Minister Johnson, for one, is much closer to the American position than his colleagues from France or Germany. Yet London's foreign office professionals are bound and determined to oppose anything that might harm the original Iran deal.

So Mr. Pompeo's attempt to extend the arms embargo could fail, but then America just might get even more bold, using Resolution 2231's self-destruct mechanism. Known as the "snapback" option, the resolution provided such a path to help the Obama administration sell it at home.

President Obama knew he had no way of turning his plan of action into a treaty. He couldn't muster the necessary Senate majority to approve it. Instead, he took the deal to a much more sympathetic audience, the United Nations, where he inked it despite the fact that both houses of Congress were against it — overwhelmingly so in the opinion of the New York Times.

If Iran were ever to cheat on its obligations, promised top officials in the Obama administration, we'd at any time be able to end the deal and reimpose full sanctions. Further, they added, no one at the UN could stand in our way.

Hence the "snapback" mechanism that, according to the UN resolution, allows any of the original parties to the JCPOA to "reimpose unilateral and multilateral nuclear-related sanctions in the event of Iran non-performance," as Secretary of State Kerry told the Senate at the time.

Further, and uniquely in the context of UN traditions, neither Russia nor Communist China nor any other Iran-friendly permanent member of the Security Council would be able to veto the snapback clauses, we were told.

Indeed, according to resolution 2231, the original parties to the JCPOA — Russia, Communist China, France, Britain, Germany, and America (as well as the European Union and Iran) — can unilaterally launch a process leading to reimposition of prior strict Security Council sanctions.

But can we still claim that right at the Security Council even after leaving the JCPOA?

The US "will get tremendous pushback, because the Trump administration withdrew from the agreement," one of Mr. Obama's top JCPOA negotiators, Wendy Sherman, told the Times. Yet even she acknowledges the move may succeed.

Obama administration officials may cavill, but America "has the legal right to snapback UN sanctions pursuant to a binding Security Council Resolution," says Richard Goldberg, a former Trump administration official, now with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "It's time to exercise that right to defend American national security."

The point to mark is that Mr. Trump invoked executive powers to pursue not a treaty but a deal with the executive branch. The UN resolution, the only document that turned a "plan of action" into binding law, was never amended or rescinded.

In that resolution America is still listed as one of the original parties that can "snapback" — regardless of its current position on the JCPOA. Mr. Pompeo is increasingly convinced that, one way or another, America shouldn't allow the sunset clauses in the UN resolution to turn Iran into an even more heavily armed menace than it is now.

Hence, if a new resolution fails, a snapback of all international sanctions must proceed. The 2015 UN resolution had legally bound America to a deal that the Senate wouldn't endorse. Ending the UN endorsement of the JCPOA would return the power of making such deals to the representatives of the American people. That in and of itself would be grounds for forcing a snapback.

In the Midst of a Global Pandemic, Jews Are Coming to Israel

By Ruthie Blum

There's much to be proud of this Independence Day.

jpost.com

April 30, 2020

The State of Israel turned 72 on Wednesday, and what a peculiar birthday it was. If not for television and the Internet, it might have passed by unnoticed. Indeed,

thanks to the coronavirus-spurred 27-hour curfew, the customary annual celebrations were void of participants, other than dignitaries delivering speeches and celebrities performing to venues filled with empty seats.

The sparse fireworks that were permitted in the end went off with more of a whisper than a bang. And anyone not fortunate enough to possess a balcony – or whose garden is secluded – missed out on the sense of solidarity that singing the national anthem on terraces around the nation provided.

As for the traditional barbecues, well, many took place with immediate family members, either indoors or on private patios. So, while the smell of charred meat wafting through the air was strong, the gatherings were subdued.

THIS IS NOT to say that the atmosphere was lacking in cheer, however. On the contrary, the weeks of virtual isolation leading up to the holiday, alongside the gradual reopening of shops that began a few days earlier, contributed to a sense of shared hardship on the one hand and budding optimism on the other. Nothing symbolized the latter better than the news that the beauty parlors were back in business.

Apparently, it's a lot easier to pay tribute to the Zionist enterprise – particularly in the wake of weeks spent engaging in cabin-fever sloth and gluttony – with a proper haircut and fresh manicure.

This is natural.

As deserving of awe and enthusiasm as it is, the Jewish state is not purely the realization of a dream; it is an actual country, made up of real people. As such, we do not judge the quality of our lives by the Star of David on our flag or the international acclaim received by our start-ups. Though we may take pride in those things on an intellectual, ideological or political level, they do not govern our daily grind. What does preoccupy us most of the time is family, work, bills and errands. Religion helps some of us bear the burdens more gracefully than others, through gratitude. But even Judaism doesn't deny the human condition.

Which brings us to one peculiar side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic: a spike in the desire of Israelis living abroad to return home, and an increase in the interest of Diaspora Jews to make aliyah.

According to Jewish Agency Chairman Isaac Herzog, the government should prepare for a "major wave of immigration to Israel when the coronavirus crisis ends."

In a recent interview, Herzog referred to the fact that Jewish communities around the world have been hit hard both by the virus and by the antisemitism that it has evoked. He said that the Jewish Agency has been receiving thousands of inquiries from Israelis, and hundreds from British, French and American Jews.

Two families who arrived this month – a couple from France and the Israeli parents of American-born children returning after a 14-year stint in New York – told Channel 12 on Wednesday that a major factor in the timing of their move was Israel's handling of the pandemic. Both said they felt far safer in Israel, from a health standpoint, than in the US and Europe. The now former New Yorkers pointed to all the people in Brooklyn "who are dying like flies."

The French wife stated that Israel, unlike her country of origin, does not have a shortage of surgical masks.

Two young Israeli men studying in Italy who came rushing back when the crisis struck expressed the same sentiment. One told Channel 12 that he used to take Israel for granted, but when he witnessed Italian hospital staff refusing to provide ventilators to any patient over the age of 60, he had an awakening.

"Even if Israel ran out of equipment, it would find a way to acquire the machines before letting anyone die," he said.

It's a great lesson for all the Israelis who have been whining and winging about the country's "disastrous" healthcare system in general and the Health Ministry's "poor" management of the COVID-19 crisis in particular. Sadly, it's a message most of us won't hear, especially not now, when the decreasing number of patients on ventilators has enabled us to focus the brunt of our anxiety on the decimated economy.

To grasp the depth of the catastrophe, just look at the data. While Israel's coronavirus death toll has not exceeded the low 200s, its unemployment rate jumped in the past few weeks from 3.4 to 26 percent, with more than a million citizens out of work. Even a new hairdo and painted nails cannot mask the despair that this has wrought.

Nevertheless, social media has been awash with calls on Diaspora Jews to make aliyah. Now.

For example, when a report was published on Holocaust Remembrance Day about neo-Nazis hacking into a Zoom Torah lesson given by the chief rabbis of Frankfurt, Leipzig and Dusseldorf, one commenter on Facebook admonished the Jewish leaders to "get out of Germany." Another appealed to all Jews to leave "any country you're in and come home to Israel."

The appointment of former Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) chief Dianne Lob as chairwoman-elect of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations elicited similar reactions. HIAS is a radical leftist group with ties to the anti-Israel BDS movement. Her election, then, either makes a mockery of mainstream US Jewry or reflects the conference's shift in an anti-Zionist direction.

Twitter users outraged by her appointment suggested that this was yet another sign that American Jews should immigrate to Israel. As though picking up and leaving one's country of birth and native language is as simple as singing Hatikvah on Israel Independence Day. Oh, and doing so with little-to-no prospect of landing a job. Not to mention having to spend two weeks under quarantine in a crappy coronavirus-designated hotel upon landing at Ben-Gurion Airport.

Seriously, IF anyone should be aware of the pitfalls of moving to Israel even under normal circumstances – let alone during a pandemic that's wreaking havoc on the economy – it is those of us who already live here.

Yes, we love it, even when we complain. We also appreciate its amusing paradoxes and the unbelievable accomplishments it has made in the mere 72 years since its establishment. But not every day. Not in the midst of worrying about our families, searching for jobs or commuting in traffic to work, paying endless bills or running errands.

No, you can't take Zionism to the bank. Nor should you expect it to schlep your groceries or do your laundry. You certainly mustn't view Israel solely as an escape hatch, unless you genuinely have no other choice – which is not the case for most Jews in the West, including those who get beaten up on the streets of London, Paris or New York. They have the option to change neighborhoods without relocating to a foreign country, even one that happens to be the Jewish homeland.

Telling the Story of Anne Frank by Videoconference

By Terry Teachout

wsj.com

April 30, 2020

“The most stirring staging of the play I have ever seen.”

Zoom and other videoconferencing tools that allow the participants in a discussion to see and hear one another simultaneously on a computer screen are now being taken up by performing artists of all kinds who seek to circumvent the problem of social distancing and create electronically reconstituted “ensembles.” Edward Rothstein wrote a piece for the *Journal* earlier this week that discussed how classical musicians are using Zoom and

The Diary of Anne Frank

Park Square Theatre, St. Paul, Minn.

Viewable online only through May 15, free

To watch, go to www.parksquaretheatre.org.

For more information, call 877-291-7001

similar technologies to perform choral and orchestral works. If anything, theater artists are embracing such tools in even larger numbers, webcasting everything from newly commissioned two-person plays to large-scale performances like “Take Me to the World,” the all-star celebration of Stephen Sondheim’s 90th birthday that aired on Sunday.

What I haven’t seen until now, though, is something that the theater journalist David Gordon suggested on Twitter last week: “Waiting for the first Broadway show to do a full performance on Zoom...what’s stopping like ‘Plaza Suite’ or ‘Six’ from doing eight shows a week on line? Who needs sets or costumes? It’s theater. It’s imagination.” So it is. And why, I’ve been wondering, can’t theater companies throughout America revive important small-cast plays, using Zoom to let the actors perform from their respective homes? I’m not talking about a one-shot reading but a full-fledged production—one, however, specially tailored to the unique properties of the software.

Now comes the answer, not from Broadway but from Park Square Theatre, a Minnesota troupe new to me

And make no mistake. As familiar as Israel feels to Diaspora Jews who visit, it instantly becomes a foreign country when they move here, as any newcomer having to hunt for an apartment while maneuvering bureaucracy in Hebrew can attest. As I told a close friend who was considering aliyah a few years ago, the lobby of the King David Hotel is not Israel. Nor is dancing the hora through the streets of Jerusalem. Anyone harboring either fantasy is destined for disappointment.

Those who see and adore Israel for what it is, on the other hand, can count on a successful and rewarding aliyah. Because the truth about the Jewish state – which is a breathing organism, not an ethereal concept – is that there’s no place quite like it.

whose plans to perform “The Diary of Anne Frank” for more than 12,000 students in St. Paul were sabotaged by the pandemic. Instead of abandoning the production, the members of the cast, who were already using Zoom to work on their lines, decided to move the entire show to the web. Ellen Fenster, the director, restaged the production with the technical assistance of Aaron Fiskradatz, a local theater artist and “Zoom technologist.” Billed as “a special online production created by artists in isolation,” it is far more than a mere stopgap: It is the most stirring staging of “Anne Frank” I have ever seen, a version that employs the unique properties of Zoom in a way that heightens the intrinsic drama of the play itself, subtly connecting the terrible truth of the Frank family’s desperate attempt to hide from the Nazis to the infinitely less consequential but still painful solitude in which so many of us find ourselves forced to live.

Adapted for the stage in 1955 by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, “Anne Frank” is a dramaturgically old-fashioned but nonetheless thoroughly sound stage version of the story of a Jewish teenager in Amsterdam who hid from the Nazis with her family, setting down her day-to-day experiences in a diary that she left behind when the Franks were found and imprisoned by the SS in 1944. Though Anne died in a concentration camp, her diary survived, and the stage version, which was filmed exceptionally well by George Stevens in 1959, remains a regional-theater staple. Small wonder: It tells an emotionally overwhelming story with a simplicity that brings it within reach of just about any cast imaginable, students and amateurs included.

This production, however, is in no possible way amateurish. It is acted by a very, very strong 10-person ensemble led by Sulia Rose Altenberg (Anne) and Michael Paul Levin (as her father, Otto), each member of which appears in costume in a separate Zoom box, seated in front of neutral-colored backdrops of varying shades. They

speak directly to the unseen “audience,” using simple, sparing gestures but making no attempt to suggest physical interaction until the play’s climax, when we hear the sickening sound of Nazi policemen banging on the door to their hiding place. I don’t want to give away what happens next, save to say that Ms. Fenster and her ingenious colleagues have come up with what might well be the very first Zoom-based coup de théâtre, a scene of stunning intensity whose mere memory reduces me to tears as I write these words. To watch Park Square’s “Anne Frank” is to be given an exciting preview of what Zoom will make

possible for other theater companies who are capable of using it with comparable imagination.

Because this production was to have been presented to students, it is now being webcast for free to anyone who wishes to see it, and can be viewed on the company’s website for the next two weeks (you can, however, make a voluntary donation to help offset the cost of the production). Rarely has a revival of “The Diary of Anne Frank” been so timely.

Mr. Teachout, the Journal’s drama critic, is the author of “*Satchmo at the Waldorf*.”

The Mystery of Maimonides' Puzzling Name

By Arnold E. Franklin

mosaicmagazine.com

May 5, 2020

Why would the most famous Jewish philosopher of all not have a Jewish name? Or did he?

The name of the towering religious philosopher Moses Maimonides (1138-1204) is surely one of the best-known and most resonant of all Jewish names in the annals of world culture. But, as a name, it’s surely also one of the most puzzling.

The “Moses” part is easy enough. But what about “Maimonides”? More specifically, what’s Jewish about it? The word breaks down into “Maimon” plus the Greek suffix for “son of.” So: Moses son of Maimon, or, in Hebrew, Moshe ben Maimon, and in Arabic—for he lived in the Islamic world and wrote many of his works in Arabic—Musa ibn Maymun.

But what kind of a word is Maimon? It’s not to be found anywhere else in either Hebrew or Aramaic (the other tongue spoken widely by Jews in late-antique times). Instead, it’s a borrowing from the Arabic name “Maymun.” But that only adds to the mystery: why should Maimonides’ father, himself a Jewish scholar, not have had a Hebrew name?

If he did, nobody has ever seemed either to know it or to have used it—at least until now. To the best of my knowledge, the one exception is a scribe who in 1488 penned a Hebrew colophon to his freshly finished manuscript copy in Judeo-Arabic of Maimonides’ magnum opus, *Guide of the Perplexed*. (A couple of definitions: a colophon—a manuscript’s concluding inscription—normally conveys the title and author of the work being copied, the name of the copier, the date of completion, and other flourishes of interest to later historians; as for Judeo-Arabic, it is Arabic written in Hebrew script.)

I came across this manuscript, whose formal designation is Oxford Bodleian MS Pococke 68, in the course of my work on a descendant of Maimonides, whom we’ll meet again later on. The manuscript contains the great thinker’s commentaries on two key sections of the Mishnah as well as a short series of questions and answers about the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. On the reverse of the first page of one of these commentaries, in the same scribal hand, is the final page of the copy of the *Guide*. (Evidently, the *Guide* and the commentaries were

originally part of the same manuscript and only later became separated.)

That final page of the *Guide* contains a short poem in praise of the work, followed by the scribe’s colophon with its first line in Judeo-Arabic and the rest in Hebrew:

אלנאט'רין אפצ'ל תאל'ף אלחאירין דלאלה כמלה
לאוופ העולם מאור הגדול הרב משה רבנו
יצחק 'ביר מבואו עד שמש ממזרח
ז'ק'ל הדיין הרב מימון המכנה'
בו בחמישי שבט בירח
'את'ש'צ'ט לשטרות ליצירה ה'ר'מ'ח שנת'
עושי לי ימחול במעשי שגיתי אם

Completed is the *Guide of the Perplexed*, by the most excellent investigator,
our master, Moses, the great master, the light of the world and its wonder
from the rising of the sun to its setting, the son of our master Isaac

known as Maymun, the master, the judge, may the memory of the holy one be a blessing,
in the month of Shevat, on the fifth day of the month, in the year 5248 from creation, 1799 of the Seleucid era [i.e., 1488 CE].

If, in my effort, I stumbled or erred, may my Creator forgive me.

We learn a bit more from a second colophon that appears at the end of one of the manuscript’s two commentaries. There the scribe identifies himself as Joseph son of Y’did known as Ghurawi (or perhaps Gharawi) and gives the date as 22 Shevat—that is, seventeen days after his completion of the copy of the *Guide*.

So: the author of the *Guide* did have a proper Hebrew name after all. It was Moses son of Isaac (Yitzḥak).

Mystery solved? Possibly; or possibly not. Let’s see where this leads.

I stumbled across the scribal colophon a year or so ago; it was hiding in plain sight. The manuscript containing it

had been described by the German scholar Adolf Neubauer in his 1886 Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. In his entry for it, Neubauer also helpfully reproduced the scribe's colophon; yet he either failed to notice or judged inconsequential its highly unusual reference to Maimonides' father's Hebrew name. Nor, I believe, has any scholar since Neubauer's time cited the colophon with its exciting news or ever entertained its potential implications for how we should think about the father of the "Great Eagle" (another common honorific for the one whom our scribe dubs "the light of the world").

But let's first rehearse the reasons for skepticism.

Most significantly, this is, to my knowledge, the only appearance anywhere of a name other than Maimon/Maymun for Maimonides' father. Scribes can be notoriously sloppy; might this one have slipped as well?

Next, although no signed Hebrew autograph of Maymun himself has come down to us, we do possess ample specimens bearing the signature of his famous son Moses. Many of these do not provide a patronymic—often he signed simply as "Moshe"—but many do; uniformly, he signs them as "Moses son of Maymun."

Then there is evidence from Moses' brother David. In a letter sent to Moses in 1170 from the Sudanese port of Aydhab, shortly before the fateful voyage on which he perished, David, too, identifies their father unambiguously as Maymun.

A scribal error, then? Case closed? Not really.

For one thing, the colophon doesn't present us with what would typically qualify as a scribal error. That is to say, it doesn't actually get Maimonides' father's name wrong; it merely claims to have additional information about it. The scribe knows perfectly well that Moses' father was "known as Maymun," and says so explicitly. If anything, then, I would characterize the phrase "Isaac known as Maymun" as a gloss on the father's name rather than an error. What remains to be determined—a matter to which we'll return—is whether the gloss was based on discernible fact.

For another thing, consider the time and place when our manuscript was produced: late-15th-century Aleppo. A century earlier, the precious private collection of the Maimonidean family—including autograph copies of the revered man's works, treasured books owned by the family, and works by later members of the dynasty—had been brought to Aleppo by David son of Joshua Maimuni: the fifth-generation descendant of the master whom I mentioned early on. Pococke 68, the 1488 manuscript we've been examining, was itself a byproduct of Maimuni's successful effort to place the Maimonidean corpus at the center of scholarly and intellectual life in his then-adopted city. Given the prevailing aura, with its emphasis on the expert preservation and transmission of the master's legacy, it would seem unlikely that the scribe who copied this manuscript was either ignorant or irresponsible

enough to botch the name of his and his community's cultural hero.

No less significant in this connection is another circumstance: the naming practices prevalent among Jews living in Arabic-speaking lands during the period of Maimonides' and his father's lifetime. In that milieu, Jewish men typically went by two names: one in Hebrew or Aramaic, and a second in Arabic. (Jewish women usually had names in Arabic only.) In many cases the two names were cognates; the most popular custom was to give an Arabic name that was the Quranic version of the biblical Hebrew name, as in Abraham=Ibrahim or Moses=Musa.

In other cases, the names were coordinated in slightly different ways. Thus, Arabic names sometimes merely reflected what was understood to be the meaning of the Hebrew or Aramaic name, as in the pairing of Netanel with \square ibat Allah (literally, in each case, "gift of God") or Shmaryah with Ma \square fuz ("protected"). In still other instances, the Arabic might offer an interpretation of the character of the biblical figure who bore the Hebrew name, as in the cases of Mu'afa ("delivered") for Isaac and Munajja ("saved") for Joseph.

It would thus stand to reason that Maimonides' father, too, had a Hebrew name in addition (or prior) to Maymun. And the likelihood increases all the more when we take into consideration what we know about naming practices within the Maimonidean family in particular. We're fortunate in being able not only to follow Maimonides' direct descendants for five generations but also, thanks to the genealogy provided by him at the end of his Commentary on the Mishnah, to trace his ancestors back for seven generations. Within these thirteen family generations, we have the names of twenty individual males. Of the twenty, nineteen have Hebrew names; the only male lacking a Hebrew name is Maymun.

Something else is relevant about this family tree. Like many Jews in the Middle Ages—the Cairo Genizah yields multiple examples—Maimonides' family tended to recycle names, and specifically to name boys after their grandfathers. We see this twice (from an Obadiah to an Obadiah and from a Joseph to a Joseph) in the generations before Maimonides and once in the generations after him (from an Abraham to an Abraham), plus another two times if we include instances in which boys are named after great-uncles (from a David to a David and again from an Obadiah to an Obadiah).

Another recurring name in this family tree, as it happens, is Isaac. In the generations before Maimonides, its first appearance occurs with none other than Maymun's grandfather.

In other words, if Maymun father of Moses did have a Hebrew name, Isaac would have been the likely candidate. And there is more: as it turns out, Maymun (Arabic: "fortunate") was a relatively unusual name for Jewish men in the Middle Ages. Occasionally connected with the

Arabic patronymic Abu Sa'id ("joyous"), it appears just a handful of times in the sources. But the Genizah yields at least one Maymun who would seem to offer a parallel to Maimonides' father: a trader from Mazara, Sicily, named Maymun son of Khalfa al-Qafsi. This Maymun was one of three brothers, the other two of whom are known by their Hebrew names as Judah and Joseph. And like Moses' father Maymun, this Maymun, too, had a grandfather named Isaac.

Why does this make such good sense? Dwell for another moment on the custom of pairing cross-lingual names by reference to their meaning, and the connection between Yitz'ak ("he laughs") and Maymun ("fortunate") or Abu Sa'id ("joyous") seems entirely logical.

To be sure, even if Maymun also bore the Hebrew name Yitz'ak, that only raises a further question: why should he have been known to future generations exclusively by his Arabic name? I don't have a definitive answer to that question, but I'll float a couple of suggestions, one having to do with historical circumstance, the other with religious principle.

With regard to the first, we need to recall the experience of Maimonides' family during the Almohad persecutions starting in 1148, when they along with many other Jews were forced to leave their homes in Iberia (in their case, Córdoba) and find shelter elsewhere. They ended up in Fez, Morocco, where, some scholars believe, they lived outwardly as Muslims for some years. Indeed, my first thought on seeing the colophon in Poccoke 68 was that the name Maymun may well have become attached to, or added to, Maimonides' father's given name during this period.

But on further reflection I think this line of thought is a dead end. Why would a name adopted either to mark or to feign a conversion continue to be used long after its bearer has reverted to his true identity and has been living openly as a Jew? Moreover, there's no need to invoke the Almohad persecutions in order to account for the existence of an Arabic name; as we've seen to be the case, all Jewish men in the Islamic world had one.

Next, when it comes to religious principle, I would adduce specific passages in the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides' great compendium of Jewish law, where he codifies the rules pertaining to the biblical obligation to honor and fear one's parents. Commenting on how a child ought to refer to a father, and on the respect that is owed to the father's given name, he writes:

What constitutes fear and what constitutes honor? Fear is expressed by not standing or sitting in [the father's] place, and by not contradicting his words or offering an opinion that outweighs his. One should not call him by his name, either during his lifetime or after his death. Instead one should say: "My father and teacher." If one's father or teacher has the same name as others, he should call those others by a different name. But in my view this applies only in the case of an unusual name. With regard to a

common name like Abraham, Isaac, Moses, and so forth, one may call others by that given name—in any language and at any time—outside the presence of one's father.

If, like most Jewish men in his day, Maymun had both a Hebrew name and an Arabic name, this passage may help explain why only the latter has come down to us: Maimonides and his brother, that is, may have avoided the Hebrew name as a show of respect. Bear in mind that, for personal information about the father, we're entirely dependent on these two heirs; there is no other extant source. If he is known to us exclusively as Maymun in consequence of their deliberate choice, that choice can perhaps be better understood in light of the principle laid down here.

What's the conclusion? Today, when every detail of Maimonides' life is minutely scrutinized for clues by scholars—was he born in 1135 or in 1138? what sort of snacks did he serve visitors to his home?—there would seem to be some hesitancy, or perhaps some unspoken taboo, against even inquiring into his father's name(s). But why should that be so? After all, scholars have already asked whether, for instance, the relative uniqueness of the name Moses implies something about the father's expectations for his son, or how and to what extent Moses' decision to give the name Abraham to his son says something about the weight given to that biblical patriarch in his writings.

Perhaps the real story here, then, is about a persistent reluctance on the part of many Jewish scholars to situate Maimonides fully within the Arabic-Islamic milieu in which his entire life was lived. In part, the colophon in Poccoke 68 may seem surprising simply because many have resisted or failed to appreciate the evident fact that "Maymun" is not a Hebrew (or Aramaic) name and therefore would almost certainly have been paired with one that was. Indeed, the tendency to pronounce and spell Maymun with an "o," as Maimon, itself suggests an attempt to Hebraize it, to make it equivalent to biblical names like Aharon, Shimshon, Na'shon, and Gid'on, each of which has an unmistakable Hebrew root.

In the early 20th century, under just such an impression, a family of East European Jews changed their name from Wasserman to Maimon (playing cleverly on the Hebrew word for water). One wonders whether a similarly misplaced intuition about the name and its supposedly Hebrew origins has existed—consciously or not—among scholars as well, and if that may in turn help explain why seemingly no one has bothered to inquire whether Maymun, like all of his ancestors and all of his descendants, had a Hebrew name and, if he did, what it might have been.

Again, of course, we can't know for certain. Nor can one rewrite history on the basis of a single outlier source. Nor am I about to propose that we drop the name Moses Maimonides and begin calling him Moses Isaacides. Nevertheless, I can't help speculating that this little-known

scribe in this little-known manuscript was on to something.

Which leads to a final question: could it be that the far from ignorant copyist of Pococke 68 was moved to do what he did precisely in order to correct the record? Just suppose that, sensitive to the fact that Maymun was an Arabic name, he assumed there must also have been a counterpart of some kind in Hebrew or Aramaic and it was his responsibility to provide it. Perhaps he even left a

structural clue for posterity in the intriguing syntactical parallel between how he signs his own name—Joseph son of Y'did known as Ghurawi—and how he renders Maimonides' name—Moses son of Isaac known as Maymun.

And what name would our scribe light upon in order to restore his hero's authentic Jewishness? Well, why not, say, Isaac ("he laughs")?

In major breakthrough, Israeli researchers isolate coronavirus antibody

By Abigail Klein Leichman

israel21c.org

May 6, 2020

After the monoclonal neutralizing antibody is patented, the institute will find an international manufacturer to mass produce it as a treatment.

The Israel Institute for Biological Research has isolated a key coronavirus antibody that successfully neutralized aggressive coronavirus in lab tests, Israeli Defense Minister Naftali Bennett announced after visiting the lab in Ness Ziona on May 4.

Bennett said this is a "significant breakthrough" toward a possible treatment for the Covid-19 virus.

In coordination with Magen David Adom, the IIBR has been collecting blood plasma from Israelis who recovered from Covid-19. It is expected that antibodies in the plasma can form the basis of an effective treatment.

IIBR Director Shmuel Shapira told Bennett that the antibody they isolated is monoclonal, which means it comes from a single cell and is potentially more effective at neutralizing the virus than are polyclonal antibodies derived from two or more cells.

After the monoclonal antibody is patented, an international manufacturer will be sought to mass produce it, according to Bennett's statement. To begin the regulatory approval process, the IIBR antibody will undergo several months of additional testing.

The governmental research institute, which normally works on defense projects, is now directing all its efforts toward novel coronavirus research, including developing both a treatment and a vaccine.

The IIBR is working with the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot on strategies to battle the coronavirus pandemic and is collaborating with three Israeli companies in developing a vaccine. Furthermore, it is collaborating with Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek Medical Center on a new method to detect the virus through breath analysis.

One of the IIBR's latest studies indicates that hotter temperatures this summer will neutralize any virus particles on plastic and metal surfaces within hours.

High Court Green Lights Netanyahu-Gantz Government

By Yisrael Price

hamodia.com

May 6, 2020

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Blue and White leader Benny Gantz issued a joint statement following a meeting on Wednesday night which said they have agreed to swear in the new government next Wednesday, May 13.

Shortly afterward, the High Court announced that it has rejected petitions to disqualify Netanyahu from forming a government under indictment and rejected as well petitions to strike down the coalition agreement.

The judges' criticism of certain clauses in the agreement prompted Netanyahu and Gantz to agree to revisions, some of which require enactment into law by the Knesset.

The nascent government and the opposition parties were locked in a dramatic floor fight on Wednesday night, as the latter tried to block the necessary legislation with several thousand formal amendments.

Yet, it was last reported by Channel 12 that the opposition has unexpectedly withdrawn all the amendments and called for a plenum vote. It was not immediately clear what was behind that decision, other than possibly a maneuver to pre-empt revision of the coalition agreement, and allowing its passage in a form not acceptable to the High Court.

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If you see something, send something" –editor**