

# Israel News Desk

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with David Hoyle

The news from Israel is currently dominated by Donald Trump's victory in the American election and what it might mean for Israel in both the long and short terms. Many statements were made by Mr Trump during the lengthy campaign which might, or might not, come to fruition.

On the positive side it might well be that the promise to move Israel's Embassy to Jerusalem will be one of his first promise fulfilments, however it appears that his advisors are divided about this. Many Presidents have committed to do this but none have followed it through despite the decision having already passed through Congress and the House of Representatives.

The promise was made by Ivanka Trump that her father would move the Embassy and David Friedman told the Jerusalem Post that the new administration's first move would be "*to follow through on this campaign promise*". Jerusalem's Mayor Nir Barkat states he is confident that Mr Trump will affirm Jerusalem's sovereignty by moving the Embassy from Tel Aviv.

However, Mr Trump has now added a caveat, "*that it would be done in consensus*". It would seem that the Jury is out on this decision and we must wait and see.

Speaking in general on Sky TV the Palestinian Ambassador to the UK said that in all matters relating to Mr Trump and the Middle East we should await his taking office and give him 100 days before criticising. He went on to say, Mr Obama had been bad for Israel and the Palestinians and he hoped and anticipated for an improvement with Mr Trump's presidency

**Palestinian Peace Deal** - Mr Trump states he would like to end the Israel - Palestinian conflict after taking office in January. He told the Wall Street Journal "*As a deal maker I would like to do this deal for humanity's sake*". He called the conflict the "*war that never ends*". He did however refer to the Jewish state as a "*beacon of hope*". He further said that any peace must be negotiated by the parties and not imposed by others. One hopes Mr Obama and Mr Hollande are taking note as they plot to go to the U.N. prior to Mr Obama's departure and put a time limited peace initiative to the vote which would ultimately force a peace treaty on both Israel and the Palestinians. In fact France are inviting "*interested*" parties to a Middle East Conference in Paris in December without participation by Israel and probably the Palestinians. Already America and France are at odds as both vie for the lime light. Colouring this is Mr Obama's desire to leave office on a high note!

Since Mr Trump has stated that "*settlements are not a hindrance to peace and are not illegal*" and Mr Abbas has stated they have to go, it would seem that the gap in understanding is too wide to close. In any event the statement that settlements are against international law is proven to be false. Additionally Mr Abbas has stated categorically that the Palestinians will never recognise a Jewish State and that is one of Mr Netanyahu's red lines. The question of Palestinian refugees is also yet to be solved and another of Mr Netanyahu's red lines is that they cannot all return to Israel. No one ever talks about Jewish refugees who are assimilated in the countries they went to whereas Palestinian refugees are held in refugee camps all over the Middle East and used as political pawns.

**Mosques** – The Palestinian leadership says that an Israeli bill to silence mosques will be a catastrophe. The Knesset passed a bill last week to muffle Muezzin's loudspeakers calls to prayer 5 times a day.

**The Dead Sea** – Continues to shrink and is subject to environmental degradation. Swimmers from all over the world recently visited it to swim as a way of attracting attention to the problem. Tourists normally float and an 11 mile swim was a real battle because of the salt content of the water.

**Dead Sea Scrolls** – Israel is embarking on a major expedition to find more scrolls. They aim to survey the hundreds of desert caves. Interestingly the Palestinians are laying claim to the 1947 scrolls at the U.N.

**Steve Bannon** – Donald Trump's choice of Mr Bannon as his chief strategist has caused outrage in Israel. He has been described as a white nationalist. His wife swore an affidavit to the effect that he resisted sending their daughters to a private school because he "*didn't want their daughters going to school with Jews*". Jack Rosen of the American Jewish Congress was however optimistic and said "*he has a point of view, but we respect him, he is a solid individual*".

**Mike Huckabee** – A respected and well known Evangelical Christian and supporter of Israel has been mentioned as a possible Ambassador to Israel in the new administration. However I stress, that this is not authenticated.

**Jonathan Pollard** – The victory of Donald Trump has given Mr Pollard, released from prison in America in 2015, new hope of reaching his dream of moving to Israel. He served 30 years of a life sentence for spying for Israel and under his parole conditions was restricted from moving anywhere for 5 years. He cannot leave his New York home between 7pm and 7am and must submit any computer he uses for inspection. He must also wear a monitoring device that forces him to violate the Sabbath. His treatment that can only be described as viscous, is an ongoing strain on America's justice system.

**Settlements** – The Knesset has given preliminary approval to a proposal that would legalise hundreds of homes built in Judea and Samaria. The bill has still to pass three more votes.

**Russia** - The Prime Ministers of Russia and Israel visited the Western Wall where Dmitry Medvedev sympathised with Israel's threat from terrorism and said they should fight it together. Mr Netanyahu said the two countries, along with America and other nations were in a struggle against ISIS and radical Islam. Israel he said would “*not allow Iran to turn Syria into a military base for its operations*”.

**Turkey** – Israel has restored its relations with Turkey by appointing an Ambassador.

**Railway** - Mr and Mrs Netanyahu were passengers on the inaugural train journey on the new line from Haifa to Beit Shean. The cost was a billion dollars and it has 3 tunnels and 26 bridges.

**Diamonds** – An Israeli company has invented a machine that can instantly grade polished diamonds. Israel's high tech industry heads the world. Truly the Jewish people are specially gifted by God.

**Cyprus** – The country's Defence Minister unveiled a memorial at a Cypriot army camp that formally held a British military hospital where 800 Jewish infants were born. 52,000 holocaust survivors were held in detention by Britain. Crammed on unseaworthy boats these survivors of the death camps were intercepted on the way to Israel from Europe and interned on the island of Cyprus. A stain on our history. Ernest Bevan and other members of the Atlee government were no friends of Israel.

**Jeremy Corbyn** will “probably” visit Israel next year. Former Foreign Secretary David Miliband has spoken of his horror of hearing ‘Labour and anti Semitism in the same sentence’.

**Liverpool** Remembrance Sunday in Liverpool was marred by stickers around the Jewish area of Shilel-Wall which promoted a far right group. These stated ‘*Nazi controlled zone*’!

**North London** On the same day as above Jewish schools were daubed with swastikas.

**Liverpool F.C.** A potential deal with the Israel Government Tourist office has led to a backlash from some fans. The Friends of Al-Aqsa have launched a petition to ‘*stop Israel from sponsoring the club*’.

All the above is to be seen as background to the news. Anti Semitism, the line up of nations, and Jerusalem are all high on today's agenda and require constantly searching the scriptures, notably the last chapters of Zechariah. Prayer for Israel and world leaders is paramount as is that of strength for America's Vice president elect Mike Pence, an evangelical Christian who could have great influence.

God bless

David Hoyle