

# Israel News Desk

with BPF Secretary  
Steve LLOYD

***Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." (Psalm 91:1-2)***

I trust this newsletter finds you and your families well and trusting the LORD, for God is indeed our refuge and fortress, the One in whom we can trust in this time of trouble that has engulfed the world.

Perhaps it is to be expected that the Coronavirus COVID-19 has gripped the World News as this pandemic races around the globe affecting just about everybody. The world that we knew at the end of 2019 has changed, gone forever, as we adapt to a 'new' way of living.

The scenes of panic shopping, the pleas to stay at home being ignored by many, has meant tougher measures for the UK and many other countries.

But the people are 'wanting' the tougher measures to 'keep them safe'.

But behind the scenes of this pandemic is the NOW pushing its agenda for a cashless society, taking away our freedoms and a worldwide vaccine which will be mandatory, and if Bill Gates gets his way, will contain a digital ID.

I believe that this pandemic is a birth pain that Jesus talks of in Matthew 24, it may even be one of the last and therefore the rapture of the Church may be about to happen – Only God knows. We can only look up and keep watching.

Meanwhile, What is going on in Israel and with the Jews around the world?

**ISRAEL** - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's main rival has reportedly agreed to join a unity government, ending a year of political deadlock.

Benny Gantz's surprise election as speaker of parliament on Thursday paved the way for the deal. He will stay in the role until he is named foreign minister, Israeli media report, and will then take over the premiership in September 2021.

Mr Gantz had refused to serve under Mr Netanyahu because he is facing trial.

The Israeli leader was formally charged with bribery, fraud and breach of trust in January.

Mr Netanyahu's Likud party won the most seats in this month's general election - the third in less than a year - but more lawmakers recommended that Mr Gantz be given the mandate to form a government.

The rivals were subsequently urged to put politics aside to fight the new coronavirus pandemic, which has infected 2,600 people in Israel and claimed eight lives (at time of printing)

Benny Gantz's Blue and White alliance was forged as the anti-Netanyahu party.

It pledged to never sit in a government with a prime minister facing criminal charges, as Mr Netanyahu does.

But on Thursday night, 26<sup>th</sup> March, after a year-long political crisis and three elections, Mr Gantz's bloc had fallen apart. Its hopes of forming a government gone and its pledge not to sit with Mr Netanyahu now shattered.

Mr Gantz, without a clear path to a coalition on his own terms and under pressure due to the coronavirus outbreak, nominated himself and was elected speaker of the Knesset.

He gained the backing of a majority of MPs after pledging to join an "emergency" unity government.

The deal will reportedly see Mr Netanyahu remain as prime minister and Mr Gantz taking over late next year. In the meantime, the incumbent leader will have a corruption trial to face.

But in a moment of crisis, and despite deep polarisation over his leadership, this looks like a clear victory and another come-back from the brink for Israel's longest serving prime minister.

Mr Gantz, who had been condemned for his decision to stand by some said

*"These are not normal times and they call for unusual decisions," Therefore... I intend to examine and advance in every way the establishment of an emergency national unity government."*

Mr Netanyahu had been due in court to face corruption charges in connection with three separate cases. But the hearing has now been postponed until at least 24 May because of the coronavirus outbreak.

**Israeli scientists** are on the cusp of developing the first vaccine against the novel coronavirus, according to Science and Technology Minister Ofir Akunis.

If all goes to plan the vaccine could be ready within a few weeks and available in 90 days.

**IRAN** - Having recently celebrated Purim, Iran is said to be threatening to turn the graves of Esther and Mordechai into a Palestinian embassy. The tomb is the most important Jewish pilgrimage site in Iran. It is visited by large crowds every year as Iran remains home to the largest Middle East Jewish community after Israel.

**BELGIUM/SPAIN** – Caricatures of Jews, including some depicting them as ants, were prominently displayed at the annual parade in Aalst, Belgium and at a carnival procession in the Spanish town of Campo de Criptana participants dressed as Nazis and Jewish concentration camp prisoners whilst dancing next to a float evoking crematoria. The Belgian Mayor of Aalst defended the parade saying in context it was not anti-semitic, whilst in Spain the Israeli embassy in Madrid said “We condemn the vile and repugnant representation that disrespects the victims of the Holocaust, making fun of the murder of millions of Jews by the Nazis”.

**AFRICA** – A plague of locusts considered ‘extremely alarming’ is headed towards Africa and the Middle East – but is likely to bypass Israel. They are breeding and forming news swarms in the horn of Africa. One locust watch website stated the swarms represent “an unprecedented threat to food security”  
Among the countries likely to be hit the hardest are Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Iran, Pakistan and Sudan.

Please continue to pray, especially for the IDF and the IAF, and for the peace of Jerusalem.

Every blessing  
Maranatha  
Steve