

Israel News Desk

with
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BPF Secretary

September 2021

“Shmitta”

At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD's release. Deuteronomy 15:1-2

Shalom, dear friends, and may I wish you, perhaps belatedly, a Happy Rosh Hashanah and the feast of Trumpets which took place between 6th and 8th September bringing us into the Jewish year of 5782, a Sabbatical year.

As we look back over the past year, not only has it been a bad year for the world, but a particularly bad year for Israel.

At the beginning of 5781 in September 2020 The population of Israel had grown to 9,246 million an increase of 1.6% or 170,000. 44,000 people died and 25,000 people moved to Israel. Also in September were a number of countries wanting to either move their embassies to Jerusalem or were in talks to normalise ties with Israel.

In October there were violent scenes at the funeral of a Chassidic rabbi in Ashdod, Rabbi Mordechai Yissachar Ber Leifer, aged 64, the Pittsburgh Rebbe.

There was also some good news from the then PM Benjamin Netanyahu who stated there were signs that the coronavirus was being beaten has the death toll passed the dreaded 2000 mark. In the UK, Jeremy Corbyn was suspended from the Labour party following a EHRC report in the party's handling of antisemitism.

November saw rescue flights to Greece for thousands of Israelis who were left stranded by a decision to shut down Thessaloniki and Serres due to a rise in COVID infections.

In the UK we saw the death of Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks who died aged 72 following a short battle with throat cancer.

In December, Israel's embassies throughout the world were put on alert as Iran vowed to take revenge after the assassination of its top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. He was gunned down - reports suggested it was Mossad agents. Morocco became the fourth Arab nation to seek 'normalisation.

In the UK, 19 Premier league football clubs accepted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism.

January 2021 brought the release of Jonathan Pollard, who spent 30 years in an American prison for spying for Israel. He was met at the airport by PM Netanyahu who presented him and his wife with Israel ID cards and granted them citizenship.

January also saw Israel outpacing the rest of the world in vaccinating its population against COVID, with 12% of the population being given their first jab. But despite this the country went into a third lockdown.

Europe started to introduce a ban on Kosher slaughter which had started in Belgium.

In April the whole nation came to a standstill as the nation honoured 23, 928 fallen soldiers and victims of

terror, who lost their lives in the fight for the country's existence. Sirens wailed on Yom Hazikaron - one of the most solemn days on Israel's national calendar.

In May, what was supposed to be a joyous festival of Lag b'Omer on Mount Hermon, turned into a death stampede, with 45 being crushed to death, through an overcrowded passage. The PM called it a 'heavy disaster'.

In another incident, 2 were killed and 184 injured when tiered seating collapsed at a partly built synagogue in the settlement of Givat Ze'ev at a Shavuot celebration.

Israel also lost 13 people in yet another outbreak of violence with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. 256 Palestinians were killed

June saw the 12 year run of Benjamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister come to an end, after 4 record breaking elections. He was succeeded by Naftali Bennett who managed to secure a deal with allies of the the centrist Yair Lapid party to form a Government, just half an hour before a midnight deadline.

In July, 35 Jews were reported missing after the 12 storey Champlain Towers South apartment block

collapsed in Surfside, Miami Beach, USA.

In the UK, antisemitic incidents rose to an all time high with CST stating that 628 incidents had been reported in just one month. This seemed to coincide with the escalation in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

August saw Israel recall its top diplomats from Poland and strongly criticised a new Polish law that restricts the right of Holocaust survivors to reclaim property stolen from them during the second world war.

On a celebratory note in August, Israeli gymnast Artem Dolgopyat achieved a lifelong dream when he won a Gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics, along with rhythmic gymnast Linoy Ashram who also got a Gold.

Sadly, also in August Israel started to give the third COVID vaccine to the population in an attempt to stem the spread of the Delta variant. The death toll as now reached 7000 with 500 fatalities in August alone.

The Western wall has been inundated with prayers, with thousands of Jews placing their prayers on pieces of paper and placing them in the cracks and crevices of the wall. The letters, written by people of all ages - came from many parts of the world.

But before these Rosh Hashana prayers can be placed, the old ones have to be carefully removed, collected and taken away o a local cemetery for burial.

UK - Britain's oldest synagogue fears an 'existential threat' to its future if proposals to build two high-rise office blocks nearby are approved.

Bevis Marks, a Grade 1-listed building in the City of London has just celebrated 320 years of regular services. But its rabbi, Shalom Morris, said its future is at stake if nearby towers of up to 48 storeys are given the go-ahead.

Bevis Marks is also the home of the countries Spanish and Portuguese Jewish communities and is famous for being lit by 240 candles. They were supplemented in 1928 by limited electric lighting, which cannot be enhanced because the shul is a listed building.

USA - Following the now famous meeting between President Biden and PM Bennett, where the world was flooded with a video that appeared to show Biden asleep during the meeting, Bennett found himself not being able to fly back home in time for Shabbatt as scheduled.

Following the ISIS attack on Kabul airport the meeting had to be rescheduled to the Friday which meant that Bennet would be stuck in Washington for 2 1/2 days longer than planned. So the PM held an emergency Shabbat celebration at his hotel. People from the Jewish community were mobilised and Kosher food was obtained. The meeting with Biden was at midday and then was followed by a media briefing which ended close to the start of Shabbat. But it went ahead smoothly.

Please pray for Gods chosen people, Israel, wherever they are in the world, and for the country itself and of course, for the peace of Jerusalem. Pray for those soldiers of the IDF and IAF that constantly guard the nation from so many threats.

God bless,

Maranatha.

Yours in Christ

Steve