

HGE - MIDDLE EAST UPDATE - WEEK OF JANUARY 5, 2018

KAFIR



YOUNG LIONS CLUB

PRA Y E R S F O R R A I N



Prayers for rain offered up by thousands of Jews at the Western Wall on Thursday had an effect as desperately needed rain fell, raising the level of the Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) one centimeter. Israel has suffered five dry years in a row, causing the worst drought in 40 years. The country has received just 45 percent of its multiyear average rainfall for September through November, and with only two light rainfalls in December.

This dire situation has led to emergency measures, both spiritual and physical. At the behest of Chief Rabbi David Lau three weeks ago, Jews and Christians around the world began adding special prayers for rain. The prayers were answered quickly.



GAZA ROCKETS



Iron Dome defense system intercepts two projectiles fired during a ceremony held near the Gaza border marking the birthday of Golani Brigade soldier Oron Shaul, killed in Gaza in 2014, whose body is still held by Hamas. At least three rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel on Friday, one of which scored a direct hit on a building in the Shaar Hanegev Regional Council. Two others were intercepted by the Iron Dome defense system. No injuries were reported.

Before the incident, Oron's mother told the crowd, "We're here to mark his birthday. We've decided to come here so we can be as close to Oron as possible. We're not here to lash out at anyone. We just want Oron returned home," *Ynet News* reported.



RUMORS OF WAR



Israel's northern frontier will be the source of greatest concern in 2018, according to the Institute for National Strategic Studies' strategic assessment for the year, submitted to President Reuven Rivlin on Monday.

The institute's report warns that Israel could find itself fighting the "first northern war" simultaneously against three adversaries: Iran, Hezbollah, and the Syrian regime. It warns that Iran is continuing to build and arm its proxies near Israel's borders and that the deepening of Iran's involvement in Syria - along with the Israeli determination to counter that activity - could lead to an escalation "which would not be limited to one actor and would lead to simultaneous fighting in both Syria and Lebanon."



USA - SYRIA



A senior administration official told Channel 10 that Israeli national security advisers Meir Ben-Shabbat wanted to know during the December 12 meeting in the White House whether the US was preparing to withdraw its forces from Syria. The Israelis, he said, were concerned as to whether the US was planning to remain involved militarily in Syria, as well as in diplomacy to end the civil war there. "We answered the Israelis clearly," the unnamed US official told Channel 10. "We are staying in Syria, both with our troops and with regards to our involvement in any future diplomatic deal in the country."



JERUSALEM



A bill requiring the support of a two-thirds Knesset majority in order to cede any part of Jerusalem has passed its last parliamentary hurdle.

"The goal of the bill is to prevent concessions as part of diplomatic deals," MK Shuli Moalem-Refaeli, who proposed the legislation, stated in November.



"Jerusalem will never be on the negotiating table. The State of Israel will not allow for the establishment of a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem. Get it into your heads that Jerusalem was the capital of the Jewish people and will remain the capital of the Jewish people for all eternity," she said.



TRUMP VS PA



THE ULTIMATE DEAL? -- Trump tweets: "We pay the Palestinians HUNDRED OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS a year and get no appreciation or respect. They don't even want to negotiate a long overdue peace treaty with Israel. We have taken Jerusalem, the toughest part of the negotiation, off the table, but Israel, for that, would have had to pay more. But with the Palestinians no longer willing to talk peace, why should we make any of these massive future payments to them?"

The US is the largest donor to both the PA and the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA); in 2016, Washington gave \$368.4 million to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) while providing around \$300 million to PA annually.



IRANIAN UPRISING



For the past several days, Iranians have demonstrated against a government that has not delivered on promised economic improvement and against a regime whose ruling clerical class they despise. The public's animosity against the existing order, as past protests indicate, is no surprise. Particular aspects of this latest series of demonstrations, however, invite a critical eye by Iran-watchers.



The regime will, of course, try to weather this latest round of protests while arresting leading agitators, to be followed by torture, "recanting" show-trials, and executions.



THE HARD TRUTH



AN ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE: Dr. Mordechai Kedar is a senior lecturer in the Department of Arabic at Bar-Ilan University. He served in IDF Military Intelligence for 25 years, specializing in Arab political discourse, Arab mass media, Islamic groups and the Syrian domestic arena.

“The Arab world doesn’t have a clue as to what peace is all about, because it is deeply mired in blood, fire and tears resulting from the murderous battles going on within its ranks – between Shiites and Sunnis, against different Arab entities (the Kurds, for example), and among tribes in Libya and Yemen. Try a peace process among yourselves first, I suggested, and when that comes about, we can consider joining it.”



WEEKLY QUOTE

" it's impossible " said pride . " it's risky " said experience . " It's pointless" said reason. " Give it a try " whispered the heart. 2018. A time to build. A time to strengthen. A time to expand. Hearts. **Lisa (Springs of Hope)**



UPCOMING TOURS

ANTHEM ISRAEL - FEB
TALMIDIM WORK TRIP - FEB
ENGAGING ISRAEL - FEB
EXPERIENCING ISRAEL - APRIL
OFF THE BEATEN PATH - FALL 2018

