Wednesday March 20, 2013   Volume X1, No. 3,027   Yom Revii 9 Nisan, 5773

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Wednesday’s “News in Review” Round-Up

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Weekly Quotes

“I walk with you on the historic homeland of the Jewish people.” —US President Barack Obama, in his remarks upon his arrival at Ben Gurion Airport in Israel. Invoking the Jewish people’s 3,000-year history in the land, he referred to modern Israelis as “the sons of Abraham and the daughters of Sarah.” Obama said that his visit was "an opportunity to reaffirm the unbreakable bond between our nations, to restate America's unwavering commitment to Israel's security and to speak directly to the people of Israel and to your neighbors. We stand together because peace must come to the Holy Land. I am confident in declaring that our alliance is l'netzach, eternal, is forever." (Jerusalem Post, New York Times, Mar. 20, 2013)

“Thank you, Mr. President, for upholding the Jewish people’s right to a Jewish state in our historic homeland, and for boldly defending that right at the United Nations. And thank you for strengthening the unbreakable alliance between our two nations during your presidency….Mr. President, on this historic visit, you will have an opportunity to see a different side of Israel. You will see past, present, and future in this tiny land which has left such a huge imprint on the course of civilization. You will see the ancient Dead Sea Scrolls, the world’s oldest text of the Bible, written in Hebrew here 2,000 years ago, scrolls that bear witness to the timeless bond between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel….We extend our hand in peace to the Palestinians. Israel has proven time and again it is ready for concessions in exchange for real peace, and the situation today is no different. With a Palestinian partner, that is willing to hold negotiations in good will, Israel will be ready for a historic compromise that will end the conflict with the Palestinians once and for all.”— Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in his opening remarks upon the arrival of US President Barack Obama to Israel. (Times of Israel, National Post, Mar. 202, 2013)
“Thank you for the hopes you carry with you. In a few minutes you will be on your way to Jerusalem. Our ancient capital. The cradle of all believers, of all prayers. You will see the hills and mountains where our prophets preached. Where the soul of the Jewish People was born. Where the State of Israel was created. America and Israel are somewhat different in size. In size, not in destiny. The American dream stems from the bible. The Israeli spirit is inspired by American exceptionalism.”—Israeli President Shimon Peres, in his opening remarks upon the arrival of US President Barack Obama to Israel.” (Times of Israel, Mar. 20, 2013)

"Three American presidents have spoken on the Knesset stage, as well as [former Egyptian president Anwar] Sadat and leaders from Europe."—MK Reuven Rivlin, former Knesset Speaker (Likud Beytenu), commenting on US President Barack Obama’s decision not to address the Knesset. Rivlin asserted that "President Obama should speak to the people of Israel through its elected representatives," He maintained that Obama's decision not to speak in the Knesset is a cause for concern because it shows that he does not have faith in the representatives of the nation to which he is speaking. "Unfortunately...President Obama decided not to visit the Knesset, a decision which is in bad taste." he said. (Jerusalem Post, Mar. 18, 2013)

"It is unfortunate that the information that was first communicated [by the Foreign Ministry] to Parliament and which was based on information obtained from the PA at the time, in retrospect, is imprecise."—Foreign Ministry of Norway's statement corroborating Palestinian Media Watch’s report that Norwegian financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority is being used to pay salaries to convicted terrorists in Israeli custody. "According to the PA, the discussed support program is not a salary - but direct support for the prisoners' canteen expenses and social allowance to the families of prisoners. The social allowance compensates for the loss of income because the main breadwinner is no longer able to contribute."—Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide, in a letter to the Norwegian Parliamentary Committee on Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs. (Palestinian Media Watch, Mar. 20, 2013)

“By urging the removal of all [Jewish] settlers living beyond the green line, the report [of the UN Commission of Inquiry into Israeli Settlements] is inconsistent with Security Council Resolution 242, endorsed by the [Security] Council decision establishing this commission. It could lead to the utterly grotesque consequence that the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem should be returned to the desolate condition that existed between 1948 and 1967. I regret to say that the [UN Human rights] Council displays the same selectivity that led to the abolition of the earlier Commission. I urge you to heed the criticism by successive UN secretary-generals of this Council’s habit of singling out only one specific country, to the exclusion of virtually everything else.”—Lord David Trimble, Nobel Peace Laureate and member of the British House of Lords, in an address to the UN Human Rights Council during its debate, on Mon [Mar 18], of its report on Israeli settlements beyond the 1948 armistice line. (UN Watch, Mar. 18, 2013)

"Our history is replete with lies... [including] the lie about Al-Qaeda and the September 11 events, which asserted that Muslim terrorists committed it, and that it was not an internal American action by the Freemasons."..."Churchill and Roosevelt were alcoholics, and in their youth were questioned more than once about brawls they started in bars, while Hitler hated alcohol and was not addicted to it. He used to go to sleep early and wake up early, and was very organized. These facts have been turned upside down as well, and Satan has been dressed with angels' wings...Had Hitler won, Nazism would be an honour that people would be competing to belong to, and not a disgrace punishable by law."—Hassan Ouda Abu Zaher, from an op-ed article in the official PA daily, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, just prior to the arrival in Israel of US President Barack Obama. (Palestinian Media Watch, March 18, 2013)

“The world is talking about dividing Jerusalem — it’s in many ways churning water. What has
happened since 1967 in the Old City and around the Old City has made any discussion of dividing Jerusalem the way the Arabs see it irrelevant, because on the ground it ain’t going to happen.”—Daniel Luria, executive director of Ateret Cohanim, commenting on objections to two new private Jewish housing developments in predominantly Arab neighbourhoods of the Old City. Ateret Cohanim is an organization that is not involved in these particular projects but has led many other efforts to establish Jewish beachheads in the area. (New York Times, Mar. 17, 2013)

“If the Americans once again do not honor their commitments and keep on disobeying, then this will be considered as an occupation, and they may expect to see a reaction to their action…. As the Koran says: Almighty Allah has never paved the road for infidels to rule and govern Muslims.”—the Afghan Ulema Council, which represents all of the country’s Islamic clerics and whose members are appointed by President [Hamid] Karzai. It referred to American forces in Afghanistan as “infidels,” echoing language used by the Taliban. (New York Times, Mar. 17, 2013)

I hope to “contribute to the progress that relations between Jews and Catholics have known from the Second Vatican Council, in a spirit of renewed collaboration.”—Pope Francis I, in a message to the chief rabbi of Rome, Riccardo Di Segni, on the day of his election. (New York Times, Mar. 16, 2013)

“France must first convince its European partners. But we cannot let a people be massacred like this. So already the British and French are in favour of lifting the embargo.”—French President Francois Hollande to reporters in Brussels, where he is attending an EU summit. The British government said that it is not ruling out any options to help the [Syrian] opposition. (Globe and Mail, Mar. 15, 2013)

“In reality, the existential threat to Israel posed by Iran’s nuclear weapons program puts the Palestinian issue into the proper perspective. And despite extensive administration bluster about ‘keeping all options on the table,’ the chances of Obama actually using force against Iran’s nuclear program are as close to absolute zero as one can get except in outer space. He wants to reduce Israel’s odds of using force to the same level, and that is his trip’s highest priority. So here’s the real message to Israelis from Americans: Whatever our religious backgrounds, we do not agree with Obama’s views on Israel or the Middle East.”—John Bolton, former US Ambassador to the United Nations, in an op-ed article in the Jerusalem Post. (Jerusalem Post, Mar. 20, 2013)

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SHORT TAKES

BARACK OBAMA TO DINE WITH FIRST BLACK MISS ISRAEL—(Jerusalem) An advance party of White House officials insisted on inviting Yityish Aynaw, 22, to next Thursday's gala dinner hosted by Shimon Peres, Israel's president, after hearing how she became the first Israeli of Ethiopian origin to win the country's premier beauty queen contest last month. The mass circulation Yedioth Ahronot newspaper reported that Ms Aynaw – who emigrated to Israel from Ethiopia with her Jewish grandparents after the death of her mother when she was 12 – would have the chance to exchange pleasantries with the president. "For me, he is a role model who broke down barriers, a source of inspiration that proves that every person really can reach any height, regardless of their religion, race or gender," Ms Aynaw said. (The Telegraph, Mar. 13, 2013)

ISRAELI OFFICIAL: CHEMICAL WEAPONS USED IN SYRIA—(Jerusalem) A senior Israeli official said Wednesday that it is "apparently clear" that chemical weapons were recently used in Syria, and that the attack will be a main topic of conversation with visiting President Barack Obama. The statement by Yuval Steinitz, the newly appointed Minister of Intelligence and Strategic Affairs, conflicts with U.S. assessments that there is no evidence behind accusations traded the day before
between Syrian rebels and the Bashar Assad regime. A senior defence official told AP that he concurred chemical weapons had been used, basing that on intelligence reports. (ABC News, Mar. 20, 2013)

BAYIT YEHUDI MINISTER ARIEL TO OBAMA: PLEASE FREE POLLARD—(Ben Gurion Airport) Housing and Construction Minister Uri Ariel asked US President Barack Obama to free Israeli agent Jonathan Pollard as he shook the visiting US president's hand upon his arrival at Ben-Gurion Airport on Wednesday. "Please free Pollard," Ariel stated, noting that Obama listened, but did not respond. Obama said in a Channel 2 television interview last week that he had no plans to free Pollard in the immediate future. "After 28 years that Pollard is caged in American captivity, I felt a personal obligation to turn directly to President Obama and to ask him to pardon Jonathan out of humanitarian considerations," Ariel stated after having met Obama. (Jerusalem Post, Mar. 20, 2013)

PALESTINIANS ERECT PROTEST TENTS IN E-ONE—(Jerusalem) Dozens of Palestinians erected protest tents in the E1 region between Ma'ale Adumim and Jerusalem in the West Bank on Wednesday, Israel Radio reported. The protesters flew a large Palestinian flag and hung a photo of US President Barack Obama on one of the tents. Around 150 Palestinians came to the site and put up a number of smaller tents. The Palestinian Authority has said that E1 land is needed so the future Palestinian state will be viable and have territorial continuity. It warned that Israeli construction there imperils the two-state solution. On the other hand, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said in January that the area must be linked to Jerusalem saying, "We will not allow anyone to harm the contiguity between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim." Netanyahu made the January remarks to his cabinet after the IDF evacuated Palestinian activists from the region. (Jerusalem Post, Mar. 20, 2013)

UK: SYRIA CHEMICAL ATTACK BOOSTS CASE FOR REBELS—(London) Britain said on Wednesday reports of a chemical attack in Syria strengthened the case for relaxing a European Union arms embargo on the country, and warned that a failure to do so could lead to the kind of wartime massacres seen in Bosnia. Britain and France are pushing for the EU ban to be eased to allow a flow of arms to outgunned rebels waging a two-year-old uprising against Syrian President Bashar Assad, but several EU countries and Russia oppose the move. "The French president is concerned and I am concerned that we should not be restricted for months and months ahead when we don't know exactly what could happen in Syria, including the very worrying reports of use of chemical weapons," British Prime Minister David Cameron told parliament. (Reuters Canada, Mar. 20, 2013)

CANADIAN AMONG TERRORISTS KILLED IN ALGERIAN GAS PLANT STANDOFF—(Ottawa) Two months after an Al Qaeda splinter group attacked a gas plant in the Algerian dessert, killing almost 40 foreign workers, the RCMP has confirmed that at least one of the terrorists was a Canadian citizen. The RCMP said Monday it had identified "Canadian human remains" in Algeria. About three dozen armed Islamists led by Al Qaeda-linked Mokhtar Belmokhtar stormed the In Amenas plant on Jan. 16 and held hundreds of workers hostage for four days. All but three of the terrorists were eventually killed by Algerian troops. (National Post, Mar. 18, 2013)

LABOUR PEER SUSPENDED OVER CLAIMS HE BLAMED IMPRISONMENT ON 'JEWISH CONSPIRACY'—(London) Lord Ahmed, a Labour life peer, is alleged to have told a TV station in Pakistan that he was imprisoned in 2009 because of pressure on the courts from Jews “who own newspapers and TV channels”. Labour immediately suspended the peer “pending an investigation” and Ed Miliband, the party’s leader, described Lord Ahmed’s reported comments as “disgraceful”. In the TV broadcast it is alleged Lord Ahmed said of his jail sentence: “My case became more critical because I went to Gaza to support Palestinians. My Jewish friends who own newspapers and TV channels opposed this.” Ed Miliband, the Labour leader said: "I think that the comments reported by Lord Ahmed are disgraceful comments. There's no place for anti-Semitism in the Labour Party, and frankly anybody who makes those kinds of comments cannot be either a Labour lord or a Labour member of Parliament." (The Telegraph, Mar. 14, 2013)
HUNGARIAN JEWS SET UP ADL-INSPIRED WATCHDOG GROUP—(Budapest) The Budapest-based, nongovernmental entity was registered recently in Hungary as Action and Protection Foundation, or TEV by its Hungarian-language acronym, and is set to have six employees and about 20 volunteers by June, according to Daniel Bodnar, chairman of the organization’s board. Bodnar said TEV is made up of delegates from the major organizations representing Hungarian Jews. “We decided to create this body out of the realization that anti-Semitic statements have become more common and acrimonious as public discourse continues to deteriorate in Hungary -- a country which unfortunately has a strong par excellence neo-Nazi party in its Parliament,” Bodnar said in reference to Jobbik, the country’s third largest party. In November, a senior lawmaker for Jobbik said in Parliament that Jews needed to be listed as “security threats,” drawing international condemnations and triggering several protest rallies in Hungary. (JTA, Mar. 4, 2013)

SURGERY WITHOUT SCARS OR SCALPELS—(Tel Aviv) Surgery without scalpels and scars? It’s not science fiction. Israel’s InSightec is in the midst of transforming the operating room with its ExAblate MRI-guided high-intensity ultrasound technology. The ExAblate O.R. system uses interchangeable “cradles” set on a regular MRI treatment table. The tool allows doctors to destroy targets, such as tumors and uterine fibroid cysts, deep inside the body without incisions. ExAblate O.R. is already being used in several countries, including Europe and the United States, to treat uterine fibroids and pain caused by bone cancer. “We started with uterine fibroids, which afflict a quarter of all women sometime in their lives and usually are treated with a hysterectomy,” says InSightec president and founder Kobi Vortman. “We believe for patients looking for alternative treatment to preserve the uterus, this is effective and safe.” (Israel21C, March 19, 2013)

BOMBINGS IN IRAQ KILL 65 A DECADE AFTER INVASION—(Baghdad) Insurgents sent a bloody message on the eve of the 10th anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion, carrying out a wave of bombings across the country Tuesday that killed at least 65 people in the deadliest day in Iraq this year. The nearly 20 attacks, most of them in and around Baghdad, demonstrated in stark terms how dangerously divided Iraq remains more than a year after American troops withdrew. More than 240 people were reported wounded. It was Iraq's bloodiest day since Sept. 9, when an onslaught of bombings and shootings killed 92. Violence has ebbed sharply since the peak of Sunni-Shiite fighting. (Yahoo Daily News Mar.19, 2013)

ON TOPIC

The New Strategic Environment: Dr. Mordechai Kedar, Jewish Press, Mar. 19, 2013—The way it looks now, it seems that the regime of al-Assad will not last more than a number of days or weeks. A coalition of Sunni jihad organizations will succeed in toppling the government of an Arab state despite the state having used every weapon in its arsenal – including scud missiles – in order to survive.

The Powerful New Antioxidant Made of Sun and Algae: Abigail Klein Leichman, Israel 21C, Mar. 17, 2013—How about some astaxanthin with your tea and scones? Made from sunshine and red microalgae in Israel’s Arava Valley, the antioxidant is believed to support and protect the immune, cardiovascular and nervous system, joints and muscles.

Arab Peace Initiative and Israeli Concessions: Daniel Frank, Times of Israel, Mar. 20, 2013—Earlier today, it was reported that American Secretary of State John Kerry would try to restart the Israeli-Palestinian peace process based on the Arab Peace Initiative. For those unaware, the Arab Peace Initiative is based on a complete Israeli withdrawal from the 1949 armistice lines and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Although appalling, this is not very surprising.