



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and Middle East News Update

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Headlines:

- **Lapid: Primaries for My Position, Not for Party List**
- **Thousands of Jews Visit Temple Mount, Palestinians Threaten Response**
- **Israeli Security Forces Arrest 10 Suspects in West Bank Raid**
- **PA Police Extract Five Israelis After Entering Joseph's Tomb**
- **Netanyahu's Government Weighs Aid to Calm Gaza**
- **Officials: US Hampering Normalization with Focus on Palestinians**
- **Israel's Defense Exports on the Rise Since 2020**
- **2 Syrian Soldiers Injured in Israeli Air Attack on Army Sites**

Commentary:

- **Yedioth Ahronoth: "The Last Two Politicians"**
 - By Nahum Barnea
- **Israel Hayom: "Biden's Jewish Tradition"**
 - By Ariel Kahana

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News Excerpts

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Israel National News

Lapid: Primaries for My Position, Not for Party List

The chairman of the Yesh Atid party, [Yair Lapid](#), clarified that the primaries in the party he announced will only be for the leadership of the list, but the members of the Knesset will continue to be elected in the existing way by a ranking committee and directed by Lapid. This is the first time that primaries will be held for the leadership of the party - 12 years after it was founded. The primaries will be held in December. Members of the Yesh Atid party were informed that the annual party conference will be held during this month. As part of the conference, the issues on the agenda will be discussed and a vote will be held on the appointment of the chairman of the party.

Jerusalem Post

Jews Visit Temple Mount, Palestinians Threaten Response

Over 1,400 Jewish pilgrims visited the Temple Mount/[Haram Al-Sharif](#), the second intermediate day of the Sukkot holiday, according to Temple Mount activists. On Sunday, 859 Jewish pilgrims visited the site. During the visits, at least one visitor managed to sneak in a lulav and etrog, according to the Hozrim Lahar movement. Jewish visitors to the Temple Mount are informed upon entry that prayer and religious items such as prayer books or prayer shawls are forbidden in the complex, although, since late 2019, Jewish visitors have been able to pray quietly, including [the Priestly Blessing](#), in certain parts of the site, relatively undisturbed. [Read More "Nasrallah: Normalization with Israel Is an Assault on Al-Aqsa" \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

I24 News

Israeli Security Forces Arrest 10 Suspects in West Bank Raid

Israeli security forces carried out an arrest raid in various localities across the West Bank, resulting in the arrest of 10 wanted suspects, and confiscation of weapons. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) stated suspects had fired upon the joint operation with the Shin Bet internal security agency and the Israel Border Police, but no casualties were sustained. The statement explained that two wanted persons were arrested in the villages of Ya`bad and Askar, another in the city of Nablus, and two more in the city of Jenin, where an M-16 weapon was also found in possession of the detainees and confiscated. In the Jalazone refugee camp, one wanted suspect was arrested during the raid. During the operation, violent disturbances occurred, and the forces responded with measures to disperse the demonstrations. In the village of Khirbet Al-Ashqar, two wanted suspects were arrested and hunting weapons, hand grenades, ammunition, and military equipment were also found and confiscated. [Read More "Court Okays Razing West Bank Home of Terrorist Who Plotted Killing of Israeli Brothers" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

PA Police Extract Five Israelis After Entering Joseph's Tomb

Palestinian Authority (PA) police extracted five tourists who illegally entered Joseph's Tomb in the West Bank city of Nablus, after they were attacked by an angry mob. One of the group was lightly injured after being hit by stones hurled by Palestinians. Initial media reports said the five were Israelis, but the military later clarified they were tourists. It was not immediately clear whether they were Jewish. Busloads of Orthodox Jews visit Joseph's Tomb under IDF protection on a monthly basis, and the pilgrimages almost always spark violent clashes with Palestinian locals. The entrance of the group was not chaperoned by the military. The IDF bars Israeli citizens from entering Palestinian cities without prior authorization and protection, and some criticize the monthly incursions as an unnecessary provocation that places Israeli soldiers at risk. The shrine, regarded by some as the final resting place of the biblical patriarch Joseph, is located inside Area A of the West Bank, which is under complete PA control.

Netanyahu's Government Weighs Aid to Calm Gaza

Israel is considering various steps to prevent an escalation in the Gaza Strip, including increasing the number of Gazans allowed to work in Israel and making it easier to bring goods into Gaza. It is also in talks with Qatar about that country resuming financial aid to Gaza's Hamas-run government. Israeli officials fear that a security escalation in Gaza in the near future could undermine the United States-mediated talks on a normalization agreement with Saudi Arabia. It seeks to preserve calm on the Palestinian front to make it easier for Riyadh to move forward. The continuation of the previous government's policy on letting Gazans work in Israel, and the possibility of additional steps to improve Gaza's economic situation, has so far encountered no opposition from the government's radical-right flank, headed by ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir.

US Hampering Normalization with Focus on Palestinians

There is growing frustration among Israeli and Saudi officials over what is perceived to be an over-emphasis by the US on having Israel make concessions to the Palestinians as a means of moving forward in the normalization process that would see a trilateral agreement between the three countries, Israel Hayom has learned. Sources familiar with the ongoing talks have told Israel Hayom that the Biden administration's focus on this matter has had the effect of hampering the potential momentum and has impeded would-be breakthroughs. The criticism of the White House among Israeli figures and Saudi elements has been voiced behind closed doors. The officials stress that Riyadh is not part of the pressure on Israel to make major diplomatic concessions to the Palestinians. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, in an interview with Fox News several weeks ago, refused to make demands from Israel on the Palestinian issue and has simply stated that his expectation was merely that Israel "improved the lives of Palestinians."

Israel's Defense Exports on the Rise Since 2020

The number of countries receiving defense exports from Israel has risen considerably in the past three years, according to data, further indicating the growth of Israel's defense sector. Israel approved the sale of drones to 56 countries in 2022, up from 41 countries in 2021 and 40 in 2020 — an increase of 40% over the three years. Israel also approved the sale of munitions to 61 countries in 2022, compared to 60 in 2021 and 42 in 2020, constituting a 45% increase over the three years. Israel approved the sale of intelligence and cyber systems to 83 countries in 2022, up from 70 in 2021 and 67 in 2020. This was an increase of 24% from 2020 to 2022, according to Israeli Defense Ministry data obtained by human rights lawyer Eitay Mack and sent to AI-Monitor. Israel made \$12.55 billion in defense exports in 2022. Defense Minister Yoav Gallant signed a letter of commitment to sell the Arrow 3 long-range anti-ballistic missile system to Germany. The increase in defense exports has been aided by the 2020 signing of the US-brokered Abraham Accords, which established full relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco. In 2022, Israeli defense exports to Arab countries were close to \$3 billion. In 2021, defense exports to the UAE and Bahrain amounted to around \$850 million. Israel is secretive about which countries buy its defense products, and neither the government nor Israeli defense companies typically disclose who buys their weapons. The Israeli defense technology firm Elbit Systems, for example, announced last week a \$115 million deal to supply tank ammunition, describing the customer as an unspecified European NATO member state. [Dig Deeper "Good Client That Pays on Time': Arms Sales a Cornerstone of Israel-Azerbaijan Ties" \(Ynet News\)](#)

2 Syrian Soldiers Injured in Israeli Air Attack on Army Sites

Two soldiers were injured following an Israeli air attack on Syrian armed forces posts in the vicinity of Syria's eastern Deir al Zor province, Syrian state media said, citing a military source. "The Israeli enemy launched an air attack on some of our armed forces' sites in the vicinity of Deir al Zor, and the aggression led to the injury of two soldiers and some material losses," the source said. Israel has for years been carrying out attacks against what it has described as Iran-linked targets in Syria, where Tehran's influence has grown since it began supporting President Bashar al-Assad in the civil war that started in 2011. Hundreds of thousands of people have died and millions have been made homeless since protests against Assad in 2011 developed into a civil war that drew in foreign powers and left Syria carved into zones of control. [Read More "Iran to Trade Hezbollah Arms to Moscow, Arab Tribes in Syria" \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

The Last Two Politicians

By Nahum Barnea

- **The Last Politician is the title of a new biography of President Biden that was published last week in the United States. The author, Franklin Foer, focused on the first two years of Biden’s presidency. The book has already produced a lot of headlines because of the questions it raises about Biden’s physical health and mental acuity. Biden rarely holds meetings before 10:00 in the morning; he forgets names and has a hard time showing any energy. Foer wrote that in the past few years, Biden has declined physically and that his mental capabilities have diminished, which no medication or training regimen can overcome. Whenever Biden messes up, his aides cover for him.**
- **The book describes the hustle and bustle around the president as if it were an episode of the West Wing television show—a bunch of marvelously talented, fast-talking and fast-acting people who are leading America and the world to a better future. They remodeled the Oval Office to reflect the image that Biden wants to sell of himself, with a huge portrait of Franklin Delano Roosevelt—a president who served until his death—hanging over the fireplace. Biden will turn 81 next month. If he is re-elected, he will have to meet the grueling demands of the job until he is 86. No president before him served in the White House at an age even close to that. According to polls, an overwhelming majority of Americans, including Democratic voters, are convinced that he isn’t fit to perform the job and that his vice president, Kamala Harris, is unworthy of succeeding him.**
- **Nevertheless, he and she have insisted on running for a second term. Like Netanyahu and like many others who hold high office, he is sure that his personal interests and the state’s interests are synonymous. Will he stay in the race until the end? Or, as his Democratic colleagues hope, will he announce within a few months’ time that he is stepping down? Foer wrote that he wouldn’t be surprised if he were to run and he wouldn’t be surprised if he were to bow out. Biden and Netanyahu: The biography reveals what happened between them in May 2021, during Operation Guardian of the Walls. Biden instructed his aides to coat Netanyahu with love and said that he would embrace him as strongly as he could.**
- **It seems to me that that encounter prefigured what would ultimately happen in their meeting in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly ten days ago. They spoke on the telephone six times while Operation Guardian of the Walls was being prosecuted. The peak moment was when the IAF bombed a high-rise building in Gaza that served international and local media. The video footage that captured the dramatic collapse of the building caused Israel tremendous PR damage in Western capitals and in media reports. One of the allegations made was that the building was bombed to give the Israelis a victory image. According to the biography, Netanyahu admitted by the bye that bombing the building hadn’t served any strategic purpose. Biden didn’t reprimand him. Instead, he held his tongue and said nothing, reports Foer.**

- **Netanyahu wanted to continue with his bombing campaign, but Biden told him it was time to stop. Netanyahu, according to the book, complied. That account casts Biden as being very much like his two Democratic predecessors, Clinton and Obama. In private conversations, they despised Netanyahu and swore they would hold him accountable. Then, in public, they embraced him with all their might. It might have been their sense of responsibility towards Israel; it might have been Netanyahu's repeated promises made in one-on-one meetings to change things and to change himself; it may have been the magic of the show that Netanyahu put on. Lior Suchard (an Israeli mentalist) could take a page out of [Netanyahu's] book of magic tricks.**
- **When push came to shove, they always decided based on what they viewed as America's interests at the time. In their hearts, they may have wanted to save Israeli democracy, but it was far simpler, safer and more worthwhile to save Netanyahu. Just three years ago, Biden called for Saudi Arabia to be ostracized in response to the Khashoggi murder. Then, as president, he began to court MBS assiduously, the man who was accused by an official American report of being responsible for the murder. Comparatively speaking, his U-turn with respect to Netanyahu is like a walk in the park. Biden believes that an embraced Netanyahu will do everything in his power to deliver to him 20 US senators or more to vote in favor of an American-Saudi defense pact and uranium enrichment under Saudi control. Maybe.**
- **The troubling fact is that immediately after that embrace White House officials whispered into journalists' ears that there were disparities between the reports about the embrace and what actually happened. Biden wisely embraced Netanyahu with his one arm while, with his other, extracted from him far-reaching concessions on the Palestinian issue and on judicial reform. That whisper fails to jibe with the second gift that Netanyahu was given a few days later, the Visa Waiver Program. When Biden embraces, he uses both arms.**

Biden's Jewish Tradition

By Ariel Kahana

- The internet is full of video clips of his guffaws. His enemies poke fun at how old he is and claim he's become senile. His supporters monitor his condition with concern and question whether or not he'll be able to lead them to victory in next year's election. In Israel too, the rumor mill is rife with suggestions he's not really with us. We'll only know what out of all that is true and what is false after Joe Biden's term is over. The way of the world is that the secrets of the Oval Office come out only after its occupant leaves. But what can already be said with certainty is that the current American president has a special relationship with the Jewish people and with Israel of a kind that hasn't been seen for many decades. We're not just talking about the kind of fondness and respect that many American citizens and leaders feel, but a deep, personal responsibility he was raised with.
- One comment he made last week to Prime Minister Netanyahu spelled out his approach: "Without Israel, no Jew in the world is safe." It was a timeless statement, full of significance, of a kind we don't hear anymore, even from Jews. The president, leader of the Democratic Party, is not only a friend of Israel; he also understands, justifies and supports the very reason for this country's existence. It was in this spirit that he repeated his long-standing statement that "if there was no Israel, one would have to be created." In other words, in contrast to the winds that are prevalent even amongst American Jews, it is as if there are two centers where Jews live that are equal—Biden understands and stresses the importance of Israel not only to the survival of the Jewish people in general but to the success of American Jewry in particular. He is certainly old enough to remember the days in which Jews were discriminated against in the United States, both before the founding of Israel and in the decades following.
- What is no less important—and Biden said this, too—is the fact that this stance vis-à-vis Israel takes precedence over any specific disagreements. The president has stressed that even when there are disagreements between Washington and Jerusalem, his support for Israel remains ironclad. Biden's stance stands in contrast to the last Democratic president, Barack Obama. Unlike Obama, who viewed Israel as an entity whose very existence created injustice, as if [Israel] stole the land of another nation, Biden feels Israel's existence is essential, as he repeated to Netanyahu last week.
- Simply put: Obama's heart leaned toward the Arab-Palestinian side of the conflict, whereas Biden's beats toward the Jewish-Israeli side. He is moved by his visits to Israel, he is filled with joy and vitality when meeting Israeli delegations, and when he gets angry with us, he does so as someone who gets angry with a member of the "family," as he once said. Like Trump, his children are married to Jews. Now to brass tacks: Biden succeeded Trump, who visited Israel during his first year in office, thus setting a kind of precedent that future presidents will have to maintain. Biden, acting on a request from President Yitzhak Herzog, allowed Israel to sell Arrow missiles to Germany.

- That is a deal that upgrades Israel's standing on diplomatic, military, economic and even historical metrics. The tight security cooperation continues. Biden was the one who ordered the State Department to add Israel to the visa waiver program; he reneged on his campaign promise to reopen the American consulate for Palestinians in Jerusalem. Given the intensity of the criticism of Israel, the tone emanating from his administration is much lower than it was during the Obama administration. Yes, he is very critical of what he has called "the most extreme government in Israel's history," but his spokespeople don't condemn us every other day the way they did from 2008-2016.
- The most important thing is his willingness to listen to Israel. There is no question that Biden preferred the Bennet-Lapid government and has had a lot of trouble coming to terms with the current one. But at the end of the day, he or his spokespeople listened; therefore, they are trying seriously to bring Israel and Saudi Arabia together. From their perspective, we are talking about a shift in outlook that is not easy to digest: Obama refused to make that shift. For that reason, he missed the opportunity to bring peace to the Middle East.
- As far back as 2015, Ron Dermer, then the Israeli ambassador to the United States and the person who can be called the number two man in the [Israeli] government, presented his vision for a rapprochement between Israel and the Gulf states. He tried at that time to convince Obama's people that there are shared interests in the Middle East to gather together under American aegis to oppose Iran and to react positively to the feelers Israel put out. Had that happened, it would have created what eventually became the Abraham Accords. But the administration at that time had no interest. Obama was certain Dermer and Netanyahu were trying to avoid the Palestinian issue right in front of his eyes, and he slapped Israel with UN Resolution 2334.
- It also took more than a little bit of time to convince Trump's staff before a breakthrough was reached with Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Sudan and Morocco in the summer. Biden entered the White House in 2021, and it was forbidden even to mention the phrase "Abraham Accords," because anything identified with Donald Trump was automatically out of bounds. Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid managed to soften that opposition and created the Negev Forum, which was intended to bolster the trend of regional rapprochement. But the jackpot was and remains Saudi Arabia.
- Biden paid a failed visit to the kingdom in the summer of 2021. Despite the slap in the face [he received from] bin Salman, his anger at Netanyahu and his "government of extremists" and the disagreements with Israel over Iran, Judea and Samaria (West Bank) and the judicial reform, today he is fully invested in trying to bring the Saudis to the table. His administration may still pester us with Palestinian issues, and may not stand strong enough vis-à-vis Iran, and that is driving the Saudis' price up. But he reversed the policy, and he deserves praise for that. It is clear that interests play a central role. Still, it is important to know that for Biden, we are not talking about some particularly large political victory.

- **The agreement would also be good for the United States' national security, particularly because it would block China. But American voters elect their presidents on the economy, not on foreign policy.**
- **And to be absolutely clear, that does not mean all is sweet. Biden is no right-winger. As vice president, he created a brouhaha in 2011 when Israel moved forward with a bureaucratic process for building housing units in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo. Of course, he boycotted Netanyahu for several months, expressed his anger publicly in a pretty humiliating fashion and got involved with the judicial reform, which sent a message of growing distance from Israel and held up the outbreak of peace as a result. Clearly, his policy of appeasement and reconciliation with Iran is disappointing and extremely dangerous. Nevertheless, Biden's legacy vis-à-vis Israel must be seen from the perspective of his advanced age. He is a leader who has accompanied Israel for 50 years. The young senator who met Golda Meir three weeks before the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War leaves behind this message: Without Israel, no Jew in the world is safe.**