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"Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him." Tozer

As Israel Marks Independence Day, Hamas Issues New and Threatening Charter



BYJPOST.COM STAFF, REUTERS MAY 1, 2017

The terror group ruling in the Gaza Strip released its new policy paper on Monday night in a move Israeli officials have perceived as a deceitful publicity stunt.

The Palestinian Islamist group Hamas on Monday dropped its longstanding call for Israel's destruction, but said it still rejected the country's right to exist and backs "armed struggle" against it.

Hamas supports the establishment of a transitional Palestinian state along the borders from 1967, its leader Khaled Meshaal said on Monday in Doha while announcing the group's new policy document.

Happy Birthday Israel!

The proposed plan was released on the same day as Israel prepared to celebrate 69 years of Independence Monday evening.

"The charter stresses that the occupation has no right over Al-Aqsa, that belongs to our nation," Mashal said before adding that "we do not recognize the Zionist entity, and there is no limitation over our rights."

Mashal also said that Hamas's struggle was not against all Jews but was rather against "the Zionist project." He also claimed that the terror organization ruling in the Gaza Strip "rejected extremism on a religious, ethnic or racial background."

Israel responded to the announcement by accusing Hamas of trying to "fool the world," while the group's main Palestinian political rival, the Fatah faction of President Mahmoud Abbas, also reacted coolly to the policy shift.

The publication of the policy document comes two days before Abbas is due to visit Washington, and days after President Donald Trump told Reuters he may travel to Israel this month and sees no reason why there should not be peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

"Hamas is attempting to fool the world but it will not succeed," said David Keyes, a spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"They build terror tunnels and have launched thousands upon thousands of missiles at Israeli civilians," he said. "This is the real Hamas."

Echoing Keyes's words, Internal Security Minister Gilad Erdan said on Monday that Hamas's soon-to-published policy paper was a "a false display and a PR stunt only, whose single purpose is to recruit legitimacy for international action."

Erdan continued by stating: "In practice, Hamas consistently continues to promote terror attacks and wild incitement calling for the murder of Israelis and continues to refuse to acknowledge Israel's right to exist."

Erdan cautioned that the world should not view Hamas's renewed charter as an actual change in the terror organization's policy.

"The international community should not treat Hamas's charter as a change in the movement's policy, which acts every day for the murder of Jews and Israelis indiscriminately, while exploiting its population in Gaza as human shields," he added.

Hamas, which has controlled the Gaza Strip since 2007, said in the document it agreed to a transitional Palestinian state within the borders of 1967, when Israel captured Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem in a war with Arab states. Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005.

"Hamas advocates the liberation of all of Palestine but is ready to support the state on 1967 borders without recognizing Israel or ceding any rights," said Meshaal, in a shift that brings Hamas more into line with the position of Fatah. Analysts say the revised document could allow Hamas to mend relations with Western countries and pave the way for a reconciliation agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization, headed by Abbas.

US-allied Arab states including Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia classify the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization. The 89-year-old Brotherhood held power in Egypt for a year after a popular uprising in 2011.

The Brotherhood denies links with Islamist militants and advocates Islamist political parties winning power through elections, which Saudi Arabia considers a threat to its system of absolute power through inherited rule.

Cashless society getting closer, survey finds

By Jeremy Gaunt | LONDON

reuters.com

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More than a third of Europeans and Americans would be happy to go without cash and rely on electronic forms of payment if they could, and at least 20 percent already pretty much do so, a study showed on Wednesday.

The study, which was conducted in 13 European countries, the United States and Australia, also found that in many places where cash is most used, people are among the keenest to ditch it.



Overall, 34 percent of respondents in Europe and 38 percent in the United States said they would be willing to go cash-free, according to the survey conducted by Ipsos for the ING bank website eZonomics.

Twenty-one percent and 34 percent in Europe and the United States, respectively, said they already rarely use cash.

FILE PHOTO: Samsung's new Samsung Pay mobile wallet system is demonstrated at its Australian launch in Sydney, June 15, 2016. REUTERS/Matt Siegel/File Photo

The trend was also clear. More than half of the European respondents said they had used less cash in the past 12 months than previously and 78 percent said they expected to use it even less over the coming 12 months.

Ian Bright, managing director of group research for ING wholesale banking, said he did not believe people would quit cash entirely, but the direction was obvious.

"More and more people will end up with a situation where they can quite comfortably get by for two days, three days, four days, even a week, without ever using cash," he told Reuters Television.

Payment systems such as contactless cards and mobile-phone digital wallets have become so prevalent the issue has become political in some countries.

Cash-loving Germans, for example, have been concerned that a move by the European Central Bank to phase out the 500 euro note by the end of next year is the start of a slippery slope.

The survey also showed that, in general, countries where cash is much in use were most likely to want to go cashless.

Only 19 percent of Italians said they rarely used cash but 41 percent said they would be willing to go cash. There was a similar trend in Turkey, Romania, the Czech Republic, Spain and even Germany.

Internet of Things (IoT) is the Glue Holding our Smart Cities Together

By Paul Carter Apr 24, 2017

(A bit of backstory first: The "Internet of Things" is something I have been watching for 10 years now and I try to keep you up on it via Newsbytes. IoT is a fascinating cyber place where RFID chips in every manufactured item communicate with each other to monitor and track every item (and farm animal) in real time. This has been in the works for a long time, and does serve to remind us that being "off the grid" is a concept that has utterly lost all meaning. In a nutshell, very item and part in the world, now containing an RFID chips, can be tracked for the life of the product; the date it went into market, the date it was destroyed, any recalls, etc.— all are traceable on the internet. Add to that something called "smart dust" which is simply RFID chips as small as the period at the end of a sentence, and there is literally no place to hide. Smart dust can be used to make homes and offices completely automated, from starting your coffee maker and your computer in the morning to allowing a company to track your every move. It's not sci-fi, it's here. While the article below is a bit of a techie paper, it's still plenty interesting with just this bit of background. On to the article — Mare D.)

The modern-day space race for metropolitan areas to earn the title of "smart city" is in full swing. Among the world's top contenders are Barcelona, Singapore, Seoul, London and New York, which are leading the way in the introduction of smart technologies and applications to improve sustainability, system automation, quality of life and other key areas critical to urban centers and communities.

It's predicted that 60 percent of the world's population will live in a metropolis by 2030, prompting much conversation on smart technologies and the roles they'll play in these growing urban centers. The media paints exciting images of futuristic concepts and cities that are deploying smart city apps today. What's glossed over, however, is the internet of things "glue" holding these smart cities together: in particular, the robust, compatible networks specifically designed to enable communication across a myriad of sensors embedded in nearly everything.

Along with IoT networks, benchmarking (read: performance measurement) is necessary to check status, monitor upgrades and ensure IoT stability and performance. Routine testing and monitoring of these networks are critical to catching faults before they impact any service that a municipality provides to residents and businesses. In addition to measuring the health of the current networks, benchmarking also tracks performance

before and after new component additions and software upgrades.

New, modern cities will apply technological innovation across energy, transportation, social, environmental and other key sectors. For example, smart cities, vendors and service providers are bringing to life the latest transportation systems with electric powered transit and autonomous vehicles. Cities such as Columbus have received funding to integrate smart technologies (i.e., driverless shuttles, connected vehicles and smart sensors) into their transportation networks to better manage traffic flow, connect communities and increase overall efficiency of moving around town -- which, in turn, fuels social and economic growth.

Today's mobile-first society depends on wireless connectivity. In smart city, networks are integrated and always communicating; as a result, reliable connectivity plays a significant role in the efficiency and effectiveness of various systems that make up such cities. The accumulation and analysis of information collected from the networks -- from end-user behavior, sensors and other telemetry sources -- facilitates business and residential solutions, as well as public policy.

Reliability is critical to success and the delivery of what smart cities have to offer. Take the previous example on mass transit; integrated machine-to-machine communication with a stable connection is a key operational component. Connected trains must seamlessly transmit signals about status, delays, schedule changes or closings to deliver the core service of moving people and goods. Further, reliable M2M will be a cornerstone of the autonomous vehicle revolution where cars will require constant, always-on guidance to prevent congestion and ultimately ensure road safety.

The IoT will play an important role in how smart cities manage their energy consumption. IoT systems can very effectively monitor and control heating and air-conditioning systems, lighting and other energy consuming systems. For example, many cities are installing connected LED lighting fixtures with sensors activated based on pedestrian presence, further demonstrating how IoT connectivity can reduce power consumption and cost.

The definition of a smart city is constantly evolving; it's been a much discussed, futuristic concept that is now approaching critical mass. The continued evolution and deployment of smart city technology are very much dependent on the growth and integration of the many systems and networks that connect all the elements of a smart city. These transmission paths must be reliable and robust, must interconnect between networks and must be monitored. Systematic evaluation and benchmarking of the smart city's connectivity will ensure that these metropolises are effectively providing public services. In the race to outfit cities across America with such technologies, it's imperative that such an important system of checks and balances isn't forgotten in the fervor of municipal advancement.

About the Author

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Building a Shack

By Jim Fletcher May 1, 2017

Remember when Sundays were sacred in America? I do.

Besides solid Bible teaching in Sunday school and from the pulpit, Sundays were for rest. That actually was the norm in America at one time.

No more.

I am outraged that TBN airs a program by William Paul Young on Sunday evenings at 7. The bestselling author of *The Shack* (now a staggering 19 million copies in print, helped in no small part by those identifying as evangelical Christians), Young was and is a straight-up universalist, believing that "in the end," all will be redeemed.

This worldview makes the Cross unnecessary. Do you understand that?

I interviewed Young several years ago, when he was being coy about his universalist predilections. Today, now that he has successfully infiltrated the evangelical community, Young has no such desire to mask his true motives. He is pandering to the same itching-ears community targeted by others in the evangelical community, like Jen Hatmaker and Ann Voskamp and Jonathan Merritt.

And let me relate this to Israel. The erosion of Bible teaching and study in this country is directly affecting support for Israel. As people move farther from a biblical worldview, they will logically abandon Israel. Israel's title deed to the land, future promises, and specialness come from the very Word of God. Teachings like Young's take people far away from that reality, so let me make that point in this space this week.

TBN of course is the empire of the Crouch family. I do not think the late Paul and Jan Crouch were biblical, but I'd be surprised if they'd have allowed a pagan like Young to appear on the network. Of course, the Christian Booksellers Association hosted and fawned-over Young in 2007 at their annual summer convention.

Lighthouse Trails Research has plenty on Young and The Shack; I encourage you to check out the research already done to expose Young as anything but Christian.

I watched his show this past Sunday and his obvious anger at the "old-time religion" was palpable. He panders to those who have hurt feelings from church, or who have "low" self-esteem. I recognize that people are sometimes legitimately hurt by others. I get that. But a wholesale program based on that, while eliminating any talk about sin, repentance and holy living, is flat-out dangerous.

What is TBN thinking, you ask? They are thinking about cash and expanding the audience. Period.

Further, what do Charles Stanley and Jack Graham think about these things? They have programs on TBN. How do they justify participating in this flow of philosophical sewage?

You likely will never find out, because they won't comment. If they did, it would be along the lines of "we must take the Gospel wherever we can, using any means we can."

Okay. Associate with blasphemers and apostates if you choose.

The deck is currently stacked against Christians who look to Scripture as their Final Authority. The Spirit of the Age is against us and will be for some time. This comes at a time when evangelical leadership in America is at an all-time low.

The Evangelical community is bursting with "leaders" who will not call-out TBN, or Steven Furtick, or Hatmaker, or...etc. They won't do it.

T.T. Shields, a Canadian pastor a couple generations back, once said that liberal New York City pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick was an enemy of the Cross of Christ. Fosdick was every bit of that and more. Shields knew what Fosdick was, and he called him out. In those days, many more people had discernment and the country was strong.

Today, we are weak because the leadership cowers and is cowardly. In some cases, the leadership itself is debased. Worst of all, the shepherds allow the sheep to be devoured by wolves. It is unconscionable that TBN allows Young a slot on its network. It is not possible to be a Bible-believer and allow this to happen. It's that simple.

Many TBN types love to talk about earthly mansions and heavenly mansions. They'd better enjoy the ones on Earth. Any heavenly digs they might inherit will be decidedly less glamorous.

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Israel strikes arms depot near Damascus airport

Reuters

April 27

- * Israel shoots down target over Golan Heights-army
- * Air strikes target weapons supplies at Damascus airport
- * Israeli intelligence minister hints at Israeli involvement
- * Rebel sources say airport used by Iran to resupply Hezbollah (Adds Israeli anti-aircraft missiles shoot down target)

By Suleiman Al-Khalidi and Angus McDowall

AMMAN/BEIRUT, April 27 (Reuters) - Israeli warplanes struck a weapons supply hub operated by Lebanese group Hezbollah near Damascus airport on Thursday, targeting arms sent from Iran in commercial and military cargo aircraft, Syrian rebel and regional intelligence sources said.

The Israeli military said later that one of its Patriot anti-aircraft missile batteries intercepted a target over the Golan Heights that Israeli media described as an unmanned drone. It was the second Israeli interception of a target coming from Syria in the past few weeks.

Video carried on Arab TV and shared on social media showed the pre-dawn air strikes caused a fire around the airport east of the Syrian capital, suggesting fuel sources or weapons containing explosives were hit.

Syrian state media said Israeli missiles hit a military position southwest of the airport, but did not mention arms or fuel. It said "Israeli aggression" had caused explosions and some material losses, but did not expand on the damage. In a sign of the heightened tensions surrounding a conflict that has already caught up regional and international powers, Damascus' ally Russia criticised the Israeli strike and said Syrian sovereignty should be respected.

Israel does not usually comment on action it takes in Syria. But Intelligence Minister Israel Katz, speaking to Army Radio from the United States, appeared to confirm involvement. "The incident in Syria corresponds completely with Israel's policy to act to prevent Iran's smuggling of advanced weapons via Syria to Hezbollah," he said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had "said that whenever we receive intelligence that indicates an intention to transfer advanced weapons to Hezbollah, we will act", he added.

An Israeli military spokeswoman said: "We can't comment on such reports."

Two senior rebel sources in the Damascus area, citing monitors in the eastern outskirts of the capital, said there were five strikes on an ammunition depot used by Iran-backed militias.

Lebanon's al-Manar television, which is affiliated with Hezbollah, said early indications were that the strikes targeted warehouses and fuel tanks. It said there no casualties.

RUSSIA AND IRAN BACK ASSAD

President Bashar al-Assad is backed in Syria's six-year-old civil war by Russia, Iran and regional Shi'ite Muslim militias. These include Hezbollah, a close ally of Tehran and enemy of Israel, which describes the group as the biggest threat it faces on its borders. The two fought a month-long war in 2006.

In comments in an interview with Venezuelan television carried by the Syrian state news agency SANA, Assad said Israel was supporting terrorists with military strikes in Syria, but he made no direct mention of Thursday's

attack. SANA did not say when the interview was recorded.

Syrian military defectors familiar with the functioning of the airport during the war said on Thursday that it plays a major role as a conduit for arms from Tehran. Alongside military planes, a number of commercial cargo aircraft fly from Iran to resupply arms to Hezbollah and other groups, passing through Iraqi airspace, the defectors said.

As well as weapons, hundreds of Shi'ite militia fighters from Iraq and Iran have been flown to Damascus international airport, they said.

Intelligence sources put their numbers at 10,000 to 20,000 and say they play a significant role in military campaigns launched by the Syrian army. Israel has largely kept out the war in Syria, but officials have consistently referred to two red lines that have prompted a military response in the past - any supply of advanced weaponry to Hezbollah, and the establishment of "launch sites" for attacks on Israel from the Golan Heights region.

Speaking in Moscow on Wednesday, where he was attending a security conference, Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman reiterated that Israel "will not allow Iranian and Hezbollah forces to be amassed on the Golan Heights border".

Lieberman held talks with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, as part of efforts by Israel to coordinate with Moscow on actions in Syria and avoid the risk of confrontation.

A Defence Ministry statement said Lieberman had expressed concern to Russian ministers over "Iranian activity in Syria and the Iranian use of Syrian soil as a base for arms smuggling to Hezbollah in Lebanon". A Western diplomat said the air strikes sent a clear political message to Iran, effectively saying it could no longer use Iraqi and Syrian airspace to resupply proxies with impunity.

Speaking to Reuters in Washington on Wednesday, Intelligence Minister Katz said he was seeking an understanding with the Trump administration that Iran not be allowed to establish a permanent military foothold in Syria. Israeli officials estimate that Iran commands about 25,000 fighters in Syria, including members of its own Revolutionary Guard, Shi'ite militants from Iraq and recruits from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Israel has also said that Hezbollah has built up an arsenal of more than 100,000 rockets, many of which would be capable of striking anywhere within Israeli territory. The last conflict between the two left 1,300 people dead and uprooted more than a million Lebanese and 300,000 to 500,000 Israelis. (Additional reporting by Luke Baker and Ori Lewis in Jerusalem and Omar Fahmy in Cairo; Writing by Luke Baker, Editing by Angus MacSwan and Ralph Boulton)

Record Numbers of Jews Ascend Temple Mount in Jerusalem During Passover 2017

algemeiner.com



Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

JNS.org – A record number of Jews — approximately 1,600 — visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem during the seven-day Passover holiday this year, breaking last year's record of 1,015 during the same time, according to non-profit organization Yirah.

Additionally, a record number of Jewish visits to the Temple Mount in a single day — 495 — also occurred during the

Passover holiday. That exceeded the previous record of 448 visits set during last year's Sukkot festivities.

The highest number of Jewish visits to the Temple Mount was also set during Sukkot 2016, with 1,611 recorded visits to the site.

The Jordanian Islamic Waqf tightly controls access to the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site, under an arrangement established following the 1967 Six-Day War, when Israel gained control of the area. Non-Muslim visitors are only allowed to ascend during very specific times during the week and the entrance may be closed without notice, even when scheduled to be open.

The status quo currently maintained at the sensitive hilltop compound forbids non-Muslim prayer and open demonstrations of worship.