

# NEWSBYTES

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Since 2001

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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

## Welcome to our 1000<sup>th</sup> Newzbytes Newsletter.

When I started this weekly back in 2001, it was the result of a simple prayer on my part, desiring a weekly prophecy newsletter in written form that could be sent to anyone who wanted to be kept informed about the times. When I was approached a couple months later to put these together without my even mentioning it to anyone, I was thrilled to see the Lord’s hand. I had no idea I would still be putting these together 20 years later. At the time, I had an old Pentium computer and continuous news headlines was a new thing in the frontier of digital news. Hence the name, “News – bytes”, referring to streaming digital information.

So here we are, so many days, months, weeks and years later, still watching and waiting and truly hoping you are as well. The hour is late! I have never been more convinced of that than ever. I do not include political articles because I expect so little of a world that is under the sway of the evil one and headed for judgement. You can find political spins anywhere but I am going to continue to simply present prophecy and apologetics. So, prophecy, lots of prophecy, and nothing but prophecy is my goal and always has been. If even one person finds these helpful and encouraging, then we have more than reached our goal. Maranatha!

*Mare*

# Will China be the world's first cashless society?

02 November 2020

**China is well on its way to become the world's first cashless economy, with mobile payments already accounting for four out of every five payments, according to a study by the South China Morning Post.**

The figures come from the broadsheet's inaugural China Fintech report, which tracks the latest trends and future trajectory of the world's largest financial technology ecosystem.

The report states that China's massive domestic financial market has an estimated 87% of consumers using fintech services, a US\$29 trillion mobile payment market in 2019, and the largest global market for online securities trading.

As the country opens its financial system to foreign players and prepares to launch the world's first national virtual currency, its fintech sector is poised to make a major impact on the global financial market, states the SCMP.

With the People's Bank of China conducting extensive tests of Digital Currency Electronic Payment (DCEP) ahead of a planned launch later this year - and as Ant Group and the all-conquering Alipay brand prepares for the world's largest ever IPO - the report leads with a prediction that China is set to become the first country to abandon the use of cash.

In 2018, annual Chinese mobile payments (business and consumer) hit US\$ 41 trillion and now account for more than half the value of all non-cash retail payments in China.

"The shift will be mobile-first," predicts the SCMP, pointing to figures that show mobile payments already accounting for four out of every five transactions.

The report also see massive growth potential for online wealth management, with personable investable assets in China growing at an estimated compound rate of 10% from US\$23 trillion in 2019 to US\$42 trillion by 2025. Of this, as much as US\$10 trillion is expected to be invested via online platforms by 2025.

The country is also set for a boom in InsurTech. Onnline insurance premiums currently account for less than 8% of total market value and the sector has a long way to grow as China overtakes the US to become the world's biggest insurance market by the mid-2030s.

"The fintech companies of China, which are already pushing boundaries and setting the bar higher than any other company anywhere else, are expected to expand beyond Chinese shores into the broader world," says SCMP's business editor Eugene Tang. "The coronavirus pandemic, which has led to paradigm shifts in the way humans earn and pay, will only accelerate the rise of fintech, with increased investor and consumer appetite for online financial services."

# 7 Ways Governments Used the Coronavirus Pandemic to Crush Human Rights

*Human rights activists were generally downbeat about the global state of affairs in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, often pointing to 2020 as one of the worst years in memory for declining civil liberties.*

**Freedom of Speech:** The United Nations was among many agencies and advocacy groups to worry about the damage inflicted on freedom of speech during the pandemic, which included both rampant disinformation and ham-handed restrictions on speech in the name of controlling “disinformation.” “People have died because governments have lied, hidden information, detained reporters, failed to level with people about the nature of the threat, and criminalized individuals under the guise of ‘spreading false information. People have suffered because some governments would rather protect themselves from criticism than allow people to share information, learn about the outbreak, know what officials are or are not doing to protect them,” U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression David Kaye [said](#) in July.

“In the past three months, numerous governments have used the COVID [Chinese coronavirus] - pandemic to repress expression in violation of their obligations under human rights law,” Kaye continued, citing Belarus, Cambodia, China, Iran, Egypt, India, Myanmar, and Turkey as nations of particular concern.

“I am further concerned about efforts to repress disinformation using tools of criminal law, which are likely to hamper the free flow of information, such as in Brazil and Malaysia,” Kaye added.

The International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), an international education and development nonprofit, [published a report](#) in September called *Freedom of Expression During Covid-19* that took a detailed look at how 20 different governments used the pandemic to curtail freedom of speech. Many of these restrictions were justified as efforts to control disinformation. Governments often cited the pandemic as an excuse to dramatically tighten existing restrictions on speech. Few examples of effective resistance to the new “emergency” restrictions were cited.

**Press freedom:** Related to the free speech issue, but distinct enough to consider the subject on its own, is the damage inflicted upon journalism by the pandemic. In a year-end report published last week, the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#) (CPJ) found more reporters imprisoned around the world than ever before, many arrested for coverage of the pandemic that contradicted official narratives. Unsurprisingly, Communist China was especially brutal about arresting reporters for pandemic coverage that challenged the government.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) published a similar report, finding over 130 members of the press jailed for reporting on the pandemic, including citizen journalists. “Behind every single one of these cases is the fate of a person who faces criminal trials, long imprisonment and often mistreatment because he did not submit to censorship and repression,” said RSF’s director in Germany, Katja Gloger.

**Religious freedom:** Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito [warned](#) in November that the pandemic imposed “previously unimaginable restrictions on individual liberty, from freedom of speech down to the right to a speedy trial, since almost every activity involving human contact has been restricted.”

“The COVID crisis has served as a sort of constitutional stress test, and in doing so, it has highlighted disturbing trends that were already present before the virus struck,” Alito said.

Justice Alito highlighted the danger to religious liberty, as houses of worship have been forced to obey extremely tight social distancing restrictions – often much tighter than activities involving more people and much greater risk of coronavirus transmission. He pointed to Nevada orders imposing much lower attendance caps on churches than casinos as an example.

“Take a quick look at the Constitution. You will see the free exercise clause of the First Amendment, which protects religious liberty. You will not find a craps clause or a blackjack clause or a slot machine clause,” he said.

Alito suggested – and some other religious freedom activists have [explicitly asserted](#) – that statist ideologues are using the coronavirus as an excuse to stamp out the freedom to congregate and worship, while giving free pandemic passes to activities they favor for ideological reasons, like mass protests. This hypocrisy and hostility to religion became especially obvious in New York, where the Supreme Court [sided](#) with religious groups against Governor Andrew Cuomo in November.

**Freedom of movement:** Quarantines, travel bans, lockdowns, and similar restrictions are obviously difficult to square with the freedom of citizens to travel as they desire, which in turn compromises other human rights that involve the movement of people and goods. Human Rights Watch (HRW) listed this conflict near the top of its [dissertation](#) on human rights during the coronavirus crisis:

Restrictions such as mandatory quarantine or isolation of symptomatic people must, at a minimum, be carried out in accordance with the law. They must be strictly necessary to achieve a legitimate objective, based on scientific evidence, proportionate to achieve that objective, neither arbitrary nor discriminatory in application, of limited duration, respectful of human dignity, and subject to review. Broad quarantines and lockdowns of indeterminate length rarely meet these criteria and are often imposed precipitously, without ensuring the protection of those under quarantine – especially at-risk populations. Because such quarantines and lockdowns are difficult to impose and enforce uniformly, they are often arbitrary or discriminatory in application.

HRW noted that China’s quarantines were exceptionally brutal, listing cases of people killed by them, including children. In the darkest days of the outbreak in China, the government was [locking](#) infected people in their homes and welding bars over the doors and windows. Somewhat less horrifying, but still disturbing, was the recent [emergency lockdown](#) in South Australia that forbade imprisoned citizens from getting fresh air and exercise outside, or even walking their dogs.

**Surveillance vs. privacy rights:** The coronavirus heightened concerns about intensive government surveillance, everywhere from dystopian China to the free world. There are good reasons to fear more governments will [adopt China’s tools](#) for monitoring citizens in the name of disease prevention, including versions of the [mandatory smartphone app](#) Beijing uses to color-code citizens for their infection status.

Less draconian systems than China’s have been criticized for endangering privacy rights, such as the [coronavirus alert program](#) in South Korea, which had a habit of blasting out ostensibly “anonymous” alerts about infection that could easily be used to identify the individuals in question. Big Data solutions to the pandemic tend to create [massive databases](#) of sensitive information that could be employed by governments for other purposes, or compromised by hackers. Legal protections for privacy in the digital era are still evolving, and those protections can be all too easily shredded in a time of pandemic crisis, or perhaps other “crises” the political class decides are the moral or practical equivalent of the coronavirus pandemic.

**Political freedom:** For better or worse, justified or otherwise, the pandemic led to a sizable number of delayed or canceled elections around the world. Opposition candidates frequently accused the governments in power of using the pandemic as an excuse to stave off elections that might have knocked them out of office. On the other hand, Iran's stubborn insistence on holding an election for political theater was [cited](#) as one of the driving forces in that country's horrific coronavirus outbreak. The effects of pandemic emergency measures on the 2020 U.S. presidential election will be debated for years to come.

"Since the coronavirus outbreak began, the condition of democracy and human rights has worsened in 80 countries, with particularly sharp deterioration in struggling democracies and highly repressive states, according to the experts surveyed by the project. More than 60 percent of the respondents predicted that the pandemic's impact on political rights and civil liberties in their countries of focus would be mostly negative for the next three to five years," [Freedom House](#) warned in October. "What began as a worldwide health crisis has become part of the global crisis for democracy. Governments in every part of the world have abused their powers in the name of public health, seizing the opportunity to undermine democracy and human rights," charged Freedom House President Michael J. Abramowitz.

The pandemic was generally useful for political repression and nourished authoritarianism around the globe, including the democracies of the Western world. Arguably all of the other ways in which rulers and elites used the coronavirus to crush human rights contribute to the erosion of political freedom – restricting free speech and association inevitably weaken democracy, for example.

**Expanding government power:** In America and around the world, opportunistic politicians and ideologues are using the pandemic to permanently increase their power and wealth. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) [believes](#) the virus it unleashed upon mankind will usher in the final triumph of centralized authoritarian power over free-market democracy because it supposedly proved that only authoritarian regimes can deal with a massive crisis like the Chinese coronavirus.

Coronavirus lockdowns created power structures that can be used to enforce the will of the State in [countless other areas](#). Skepticism that any of those "emergency" dictatorial powers will be relinquished after the Wuhan coronavirus recedes is warranted.

Modern history suggests it is more likely those mechanisms of control will be repurposed, finding new missions after the pandemic is over – if, indeed, the political class is ever willing to declare it "over." Once people have grown accustomed to life-changing emergency measures, their rulers will be reluctant to let that highly useful state of emergency end, at least not until an equally useful emergency comes along. The very nature of human rights and civil liberties [could be redefined](#) by the pandemic and its aftermath. At the very least, it is likely that governments across the free world will use the pandemic to argue that they should consume and control more of the private sector's wealth, so they have enough resources to deal with a menace on the scale of the Chinese coronavirus. The "right" to be protected from pandemics – and other crises deemed comparably important by politicians and media – will be said to trump every other right, and unlike the other rights it displaces, it will require ever greater concentrations of power in national capitals to administer.

# Another Israeli Lawmaker Enters Temple Mount, Calls for Building 3rd Temple

*A new Member of Knesset, a resident of the Golan, firmly established his political path with a powerful act of faith by praying on the Temple Mount.*

Likud won 36 seats in the last elections but recent infighting led to longtime Likudnik Gideon Sa'ar breaking away to form his own party. Rather than weaken the party, the move allowed new and enthusiastic members to step into the breach.

Nissim Vaturi, as the 40th candidate on the Likud list, stepped up, representing a unique and necessary voice in the government. Sworn in two weeks ago, Vaturi made a bold declaration of his intentions by ascending to the Temple Mount on Sunday and praying.

"This was my first time on the Temple Mount," Vaturi told Israel365News. "I wanted to go sooner, but since I was sworn in two weeks ago, I haven't had a free moment. I felt it was important for my new function to connect to the source, the basis of our sanctity as a nation.

The Knesset is based in the Biblical mandate to establish an assembly of leaders. It is, of course, different than what we had in the Bible but someone who represents Israel cannot be disconnected from the Creator. We are all anticipating the Redemption. This is far more important than anything material."

Vaturi, religiously observant, admitted that the experience was powerfully personal but he took the opportunity to make a nationalist expression.

"I was fortunate to pray and to also say the shema (the one-line declaration of God's kingship). I don't know if they allowed it just because I am an MK but to cover my eyes and to recite that basic and all-encompassing prayer. Nonetheless, it is disturbing that we are not really expressing our rights as was hoped when we first returned to the site in 1967."

## **BEFORE ASCENDING, VATURI RECITED A SIMPLE PRAYER OF INTENT:**

"In the Holy Name and for the Holy Presence, in His mercy, and for the sake of all Israel, behold, we are about to perform the Mitzvah (Torah commandment) of turning to the Temple, as it is written, 'There you are to go'."

This is taken from a verse in Deuteronomy:

But look only to the site that Hashem your God will choose amidst all your tribes as His habitation, to establish His name there. There you are to go. Deuteronomy 12:5

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"On the merit of this act, may we merit full Redemption and may we merit redeeming this place for the Shechina (holy presence) to dwell, and to build the Holy Temple quickly and in our days."

Vaturi is the second Likud Knesset member to not only enter the Temple Mount, but to call for the construction of the third Temple this month.

Earlier in December, Israel365News reported that fellow Likud parliamentarian Amit Halevi lit Chanukah candles on Tuesday outside of the Temple Mount and said that step-by-step, Israel is getting closer to the Temple.

Vaturi then recited the 'Shehecheyanu" blessing which is recited upon auspicious and joyous occasions.

"It is the right of every Jew to be able to go anywhere in the Holy Land, especially in the Holy city of Jerusalem, this place where we were before anyone else."