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Kushner, Greenblatt: Peace will 'Take Time'

By JTA

Arriving at an Israeli-Palestinian peace will "take time," President Donald Trump's top two negotiators said after meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "The United States officials and Israeli leadership underscored that forging peace will take time and stressed the importance of doing everything possible to create an environment conducive to peacemaking," the White House said in a readout after the meeting Wednesday between Netanyahu and Jared Kushner, a senior adviser to Trump and his Jewish son-in-law, and Jason Greenblatt, his special envoy to the region.

The cautious tone appeared to defer to Netanyahu's preference to go slow in advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace. Netanyahu does not believe that the Palestinians are fully committed to coexistence and accuses their leadership of continuing to incite violence.

For their part, Palestinian Authority officials have enthusiastically embraced Trump's hopes of reviving the talks and have dropped some previous prior demands, including that Israel freeze settlement building.

Greenblatt and Kushner are tasked with reviving peace negotiations. Greenblatt has visited the region multiple times since Trump became president in January, while Kushner was making his first visit as an envoy. He accompanied Trump during his one-day visit to Israel and the Palestinian areas last month.

Also present at the meeting was David Friedman, the U.S. ambassador to Israel. "The three United States officials discussed Israel's priorities and potential next steps with Prime Minister Netanyahu, acknowledging the critical role Israel plays in the security of the region," the readout said.

At week's end, Greenblatt and Kushner are to return to Washington and bring their summary of meetings in the region to Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. After that, discussions will be held about the next steps the administration intends to take, while the American side makes it clear that the desire is to bring about a meeting between Netanyahu and Abbas in the near future.

IAF Chief: We Can Do in Under 3 Days What IAF Did During Entire 2006 War

By DEBKAFfile, YnetNews.com & The Jerusalem Post

The commander of the Israeli Air Force, Maj. Gen. Amir Eshel, said in a speech on Wednesday that the IAF now needs no more than 60 hours, and possibly only 48 hours, to achieve as much as it did during all 34 days of the 2nd Lebanon War in 2006.

If another war with Hizbullah breaks out on the northern front, Israel's forces including the IAF will need to deliver as powerful a strike as possible in the limited time available, according to the general. He said the IAF now has powerful weapons that it did not have in the past. As to the risk of civilian casualties during such a conflict, he called on Lebanese civilians to leave their homes if they are being used by the terrorist organization to hide missile launchers. Eshel added it is important that most of the IAF's operations go unreported because the difference between success and failure is sometimes a matter of seconds.

Israeli politicians and generals have spoken often of an intention to hit hard in Lebanon if war breaks out, in an apparent bid to deter Hizbullah. Eshel said in 2014 that another conflict could see Israeli attacks 15 times more devastating for Lebanon than in 2006. But he added that "many elements busy achieving their goals" in Syria's civil war were interested in preventing any fresh hostilities in Lebanon, where Israel says Hizbullah has built up an arsenal of more than 100,000 rockets.

Although Israel has kept to the sidelines of the war in Syria, Israeli aircraft have targeted suspected Iranian arms shipments to Hizbullah, operations complicated by Russian and US air activity in the region. "The skies of the Middle East are a lot more crowded than before, with lots of players," Eshel said, pointing to the need for the air force to operate "surgically" to avoid "mistakes."

About 1,200 Lebanese, mostly civilians, and 160 Israelis, most of them troops fighting Hizbullah, were killed in the 2006 war, which displaced a million people in Lebanon and up to 500,000 in Israel.

Former deputy defense minister Ehpraim Sneh warned that Israel should be prepared to react to unforeseen aggression from Lebanon by hitting it where it hurts the most. "If Hizbullah fires at Israel," the IDF "should strike Iran's infrastructure" in response, former deputy defense minister Sneh said on Wednesday.

Explaining the logic of this strategy as part of a panel on Iran at the Herzliya Conference, Sneh said that Iran uses Hizbullah to attack Israel without having to consider any deterrent that it cares about. "Iran does not give a damn if Lebanon's infrastructure is destroyed" as Israeli retaliation for Hizbullah rockets, he asserted.

The Silent Tragedy of Men That Suffer from Recalcitrant Wives

By IsraelNationalNews.com

Rabbinical courts pride themselves on helping women chained to recalcitrant husbands - but what about the men chained to recalcitrant wives? On Tuesday morning, the rabbinical court publicized 2016's divorce statistics, including those on "chained" spouses, whose spouse refuses to grant a religious divorce.

Statistics show that over 200 women were refused a get by their husbands, but what about the men whose wives refused to accept a divorce? Arutz Sheva spoke with family attorney Ido Divon about the issue. According to Divon, the issue of "chained spouses" does not only affect women, since Jewish law requires the woman to accept a divorce willingly for it to be valid.

"Men suffer from get (religious divorce) refusal no less than women do," Divon said. "Usually, we think of women as chained spouses, for whom no solution can be found, because men have to grant the divorce willingly. People think that because men can technically receive permission to remarry, they can refuse to grant a divorce but cannot be refused a divorce.

"The problem is exactly the opposite: Rabbinical courts look for ways to allow women to remarry despite their husband's refusal to grant a divorce, but they ignore the problem of men being refused a divorce by their wives. It's very rare for a man to be granted permission to remarry before his wife accepts a divorce.

"Statistics show that more men are punished for refusing to divorce their wives than are granted permission to remarry despite the wife's refusal to divorce. Allowing someone to remarry is a long process. The rabbinical courts are war of it, and they're afraid of being criticized. Former Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau was famous for refusing to allow men to remarry if granting the permission required the approval of Israel's chief rabbis.

"In addition, religious men who are refused a divorce are considered married by society - even after they receive permission to remarry. They really suffer. Men are often jailed for refusing to grant their wives a divorce - but wives are rarely, if ever, jailed for refusing to divorce their husbands. And this is true even though Jewish law considers coercing a husband to grant a divorce worse than coercing a wife to grant a divorce.

"I've been working for dozens of years to change the way the rabbinical courts work. There's a lot of pressure from feminists and from women's organizations, and there's a lot of awareness of chained women in the media. I agree that it's worse for a woman to be denied a divorce, because society is more accepting of married men who are involve in extramarital relationships than of married women who involve themselves in the same. But the risk is there for men, too, and society is not always forgiving.

"Men's organizations need to speak up and to put pressure on the public and on the organizations involved. They need to say their opinion, and they need to do exactly what the women's organizations have done: Scream about the issues."

Divon says he doesn't know how widespread the phenomenon is, but he expects that if a woman is sent to jail for refusing to divorce her husband, it'll make it to the media. "When the rabbinical court puts a recalcitrant husband in jail, everyone celebrates. But if they would have done the same thing to a recalcitrant wife, the women's organizations and the media would have had a ball 'proving' how women are discriminated against in the rabbinical courts - even though that's absolutely not true, since rabbinical courts give women preferential treatment, especially in divorce cases."

The Man Who Nearly Killed Hitler: An Incredible True Story

By JTA

What if Adolf Hitler had been assassinated shortly after his armies invaded Poland to start World War II? How would global — and Jewish — history have played out? The question is not answered directly in the German film "13 Minutes." But the movie, based on an actual, lone-wolf plot to kill the Fuehrer that nearly succeeded, is both a classical thriller, pitting one man against the system, and an exploration of how minute circumstance can affect the fates of millions.

"13 Minutes" is directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel, who is perhaps best known for his remake of "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" with Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig, as well as "The Downfall," which re-created Hitler's last days in a Berlin bunker.

At the heart of the film's plot (See <https://youtu.be/X5-Ndl9Lr3o>) is Georg Elser (played by Christian Friedel), a 35-year-old carpenter and tinkerer in a small Swabian village who played in the town band and was popular with the local girls. He's a communist sympathizer — but not a party member — who observes with growing concern how his village gradually transformed during the early years of Nazi rule.

Elser sees an acquaintance who is forced to sit on the street — surrounded by Brownshirts and townspeople — with a sign around her neck reading, "In the village I am the greatest swine and consort only with Jews" (it rhymes in German). He attends a propaganda film in which Hitler proclaims that under his rule every German will have a radio, then a luxury, and the rutted village roads will be paved and lighted.

At a time when "expert" statesmen and pundits maintained that Hitler represented a temporary aberration or could be appeased, Elser becomes convinced that the Fuehrer will plunge Germany into war — and that if nobody else will stop the Nazi dictator, he must do the job himself.

Elser knew that Hitler addressed his followers at Munich's largest beer hall every November 8, the date of his foiled 1923 putsch to seize power in the Bavarian city as a base to overthrow the Weimar Republic. So, starting in late 1938, he repeatedly visited the hall, taking careful measurements of the columns flanking the speaker's podium. He took a job in an armaments factory, smuggling out explosives, dynamite and detonators.

As November 8 drew closer, Elser labored night after night on his knees, holding a flashlight in his mouth, to insert the homemade bomb into the column. He connected the bomb to two clocks timed to trigger during Hitler's typically lengthy tirade.

On the evening of the putsch anniversary, Elser took a train to the Swiss border to await news of Hitler's death. Instead, however, he learned that the Fuehrer had unexpectedly cut short his speech. Exactly 13 minutes after Hitler left the podium, the bomb exploded at the precise spot where Hitler had been standing. The blast killed seven Nazi officials and, to Elser's lifelong regret, an innocent waitress.

As Elser tried to cross the border into Switzerland, something about his behavior aroused the suspicion of a German border guard, who arrested Elser and sent him, under guard, to a Gestapo prison in Berlin.

Hitler was convinced that Elser was but a tool in a vast conspiracy orchestrated by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and demanded that Elser be tortured until he revealed the masterminds behind the assassination attempt. But even under the most brutal torture, Elser refused to give even his name and birth date. Only after the Gestapo drags in his longtime lover, who is pregnant with his child, does he acknowledge the plot, with himself as the sole author.

Nobody believed Elser's story, but instead of being executed on the spot, he was shipped to various concentration camps, ending up in Dachau. In April 1945, however, as Hitler's dream of a 1,000-year Reich came crashing down, the Fuehrer remembered Elser — and ordered that he be executed with a pistol shot through the neck. Two weeks after Elser was killed, U.S. troops liberated Dachau.

"13 Minutes," released in Germany in 2015 with the title "Elser — He Would Have Changed the World," was well received by German critics and the public, Hirschbiegel said by phone from Vienna. The influential magazine Der Spiegel noted that because of the film, Elser became recognized as "a true German hero" after having been largely ignored by historians.

Israeli Company Makes Water from Air

By JTA

Large parts of Florida are suffering from severe drought, and hurricane season threatens to make things worse. Enter Water-Gen, an Israeli company whose technology captures humidity to extract drinking water from the air. On Monday, the South Florida city of Miami Gardens announced it was launching a pilot program with the company to address its water problems — the first U.S. city to do so.

Over the next two weeks, Miami Gardens will use a midsized Water-Gen generator to produce drinking water for its residents. Water-Gen officials said they hope the pilot leads to contracts with Miami Gardens and other parts of Florida. The company's largest generator yields as much as 825 gallons of water per day for only 10 cents a gallon, mostly in energy costs, according to the company.

Florida gets much of its drinking water from the Floridian Aquifer and the Biscayne Aquifer, as well as from surface water from Lake Okeechobee and other lakes, but population increases have strained available sources. Because of the drought, Miami-Dade County, where Miami Gardens is located, has put restrictions on water use, including banning residents from watering outdoors between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, in an interview last December with CBS's "60 Minutes," touted the technology to counter worldwide water scarcity and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel. "There is no weapon more powerful in the fight against BDS than for Israel to develop technologies that the world cannot live without," he said. "You cannot boycott products that you can't live without."