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News Articles for Episode 245

Ben Gvir faces dilemma as activists ask to hold Passover sacrifice on Temple Mount | The Times of Israel

#bibleprophecy, #israel, #templemount, #sacrifices

Jan 3, 2023

Each year, fringe group tries to slaughter a lamb in line with its interpretation of a biblical edict, and is always denied. But now it's asking a different kind of police minister

A fringe religious group on Monday night asked newly installed National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir for permission to perform the Passover ritual sacrifice on the Temple Mount this coming spring.

The "Returning to the Mount" group makes this request every year, to no avail. But Ben Gvir, who [ascended the Temple Mount](#) on Tuesday morning, is no normal police minister, and they stand a better chance than ever before to get permission to perform the controversial animal sacrifice ritual.

"Each year, we make many efforts to advance the Passover sacrifice, both in national educational campaigns and in practice, as each year we attempt to make the sacrifice in its proper place and time," the group said.

Most Israeli security officials believe that permitting the Passover sacrifice on the Temple Mount would prompt fierce protests by Muslims, in Jerusalem, the West Bank and in neighboring Arab countries, who would see it as a major change to the status quo on the holy site. As a result, these requests have always been denied, though activists have been permitted to perform the ritual slaughter of a lamb within the Old City, but outside the Temple Mount.

"This year, in light of the political situation and the formation of a 'fully right-wing' government for the first time in a long time, there is real potential that the Passover sacrifice could be performed in a respectful way, with approval from and coordination with all of the different authorities, principally the Israel Police, which are under your power as the new national security minister of the State of Israel," the group wrote.

In the past, Ben Gvir has allegedly attempted to perform the Passover sacrifice himself, and more recently he has defended in court other activists who have tried to do so, arguing that it is undemocratic to forbid Jews from performing a religious commandment.

Returning to the Mount referred to this in its letter, noting that Ben Gvir "knows well the importance of the Passover sacrifice from his activities in the past."

The group said it planned to file a formal written request to the Israel Police on Wednesday.

Returning to the Mount has repeatedly sought official permission to perform the sacrifice and its members have also tried to do it illegally when they were inevitably rebuffed, attempting to smuggle lambs onto the Temple Mount. This often results in police detentions or [arrests](#). Last year, the group caused a stir when it offered a cash prize to anyone who succeeded in performing the ritual and compensation to those arrested in the process.

In the Book of Numbers, God commands the Jewish people to sacrifice a one-year-old male lamb on the eve of Passover, which this year falls on April 5. This was performed in the courtyard of the Temple. Following the destruction of the First and Second Temples, most Jews stopped performing all animal sacrifices, waiting to resume the practice once the messiah comes and the Third Temple is built.

However, while most other animal sacrifices can only be performed in a temple, some rabbinic sources — notably the 19th Century Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer — have argued that the Passover sacrifice could or even must be fulfilled today, at least in theory.

Many of the technical questions of how exactly such a sacrifice must be performed remain unresolved — such as the precise location on the Temple Mount where it must occur, how the money to purchase the lamb should be raised, and whether the commandment should be performed if it potentially endangers human life — and therefore most rabbinic authorities do not believe that the sacrifice must be carried out.

The Returning to the Mount group, however, not only believes in the need to perform the ritual but is convinced that it has the answers to those technical questions and can conduct the sacrifice in line with Jewish law.

This is an exceedingly fringe belief. While there is some support — in theory — for the notion that the sacrifice must be performed today, the overwhelming majority of religious authorities maintain that the unanswered questions about how to practically perform it makes it an entirely moot point.

While this belief is far from commonly held, it is apparently held by Ben Gvir, or at least was in the past.

In 2006, Ben Gvir was stopped by police as he and a number of other far-right activists attempted to perform the Passover sacrifice, according to a Channel 13 news report from the time.

Ben Gvir said at the time that “anywhere else it would be called antisemitic” to forbid Jews from performing the Passover sacrifice.

In 2017, Ben Gvir — then an attorney for a far-right legal defense group — represented a group of Returning to the Mount activists when they were arrested for planning to perform the Passover sacrifice.

“The police must allow Temple Mount activists the freedom of worship. Israel is losing its democratic character. It is unimaginable that people are being arrested in the middle of the night because they want to perform a Jewish religious commandment,” Ben Gvir said in a statement.

Ben Gvir’s office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In an interview Tuesday evening with Channel 12 news, Ben Gvir was asked whether he would permit the sacrifice but dodged the question.

Attacks on American Churches Have Increased 174 Percent Since 2018: New Report - Michael Foust (christianheadlines.com)

#bibleprophecy, #churches, #attacks, #persecution

Dec 19, 2022

The number of documented attacks on churches has steadily increased in recent months and years, with a dramatic uptick in 2022 in abortion-related vandalism related to the U.S. Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v. Wade, according to a landmark new report.

The [report by the D.C.-based Family Research Council](#) uncovered a total of 420 documented acts of hostility against 397 individual churches between January 2018 and September 2022. There were 50 in 2018, but that quickly increased to 83 in 2019, 96 in 2021 and 137 in 2022 (through September). There were 54 documented incidents of hostility against churches in 2020 – a decrease from the previous year that the report's authors attributed to the pandemic when much of the country was on lockdown or not traveling much.

The number of attacks on churches from 2018 to 2022 represents a 174 percent increase.

The report examined vandalism, arson, arson attempts and shootings. Most of the "acts of hostility" – 342 of the 420 – involved vandalism, the report said.

The report's findings mirror similar data by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which found an increase in anti-Christian hate crimes: from 172 in 2018 to 217 in 2019, to 240 in 2021.

"Criminal acts of vandalism and destruction of church property are likely symptomatic of a collapse in societal reverence and respect for houses of worship and religion – in this case, churches and Christianity," the report said. "Americans appear increasingly comfortable lashing out against church buildings, pointing to a larger societal problem of marginalizing core Christian beliefs, including those that touch on hot-button political issues related to human dignity and sexuality."

Many of the acts of hostility in 2022 involved abortion-related violence. The report found 57 instances that "were directly tied to pro-abortion protests or contained pro-abortion messages" during that year. For example, four Catholic churches in Wisconsin this summer were vandalized with pro-choice graffiti. By contrast, there were only five incidents of abortion-related attacks on churches between 2019 and 2021.

Arielle Del Turco, the report's author and the assistant director of the Center for Religious Liberty at the Family Research Council, said the report's findings are troubling.

"The problem of acts of hostility against churches in the United States is widespread and growing," Del Turco said. "This is not a trend that should be shrugged off. When churches are targeted for acts of destruction, arson, or threatening messages, it has the potential to be intimidating – and sometimes, that's the intention. Within the past few years especially, outpourings of political anger have sometimes correlated with vandalism and other acts against churches. When faced with such blatant violence and disrespect against churches (and religion more broadly), our response must be to condemn these acts and reaffirm the right of all people to worship and live out their faith freely – including the freedom to live without fear that they will be the next target of such an attack."

Blinken tells Israel's new FM: US will oppose steps that undermine 2-state solution | The Times of Israel

#bibleprophecy, #blinker, #america, #israel

Jan 2, 2023

In first call with Eli Cohen, secretary also discusses American commitment to Israel's security, Abraham Accords and Iran nuclear threat

Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday stressed US opposition to policies that undermine efforts to reach a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, during his first call with new Foreign Minister Eli Cohen.

The United States has repeatedly stressed this position before and after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government was sworn in last week. Netanyahu's right-religious coalition has agreed to expand Israeli settlements in the West Bank and legalize dozens of wildcat outposts. The first clause of its overall government [guidelines](#) specifies: "The Jewish people have an exclusive and inalienable right to all parts of the Land of Israel" — an area that includes the biblical Judea and Samaria, today's West Bank.

Netanyahu's Likud party has also agreed in principle with the far-right Religious Zionism faction to work to annex large parts of the West Bank. However, those two parties' coalition deal includes a clause giving the premier an effective veto, which he is likely to maintain, as he seeks a normalization deal with Saudi Arabia.

For the Biden administration, any moves toward West Bank annexation or changing the status quo barring Jewish prayer at the Temple Mount represent "red lines," according to two Israeli and US officials familiar with the matter.

Besides the State Department's emphasis on the administration's "continued commitment to a two-state solution and opposition to policies that endanger its viability," the US and Israeli readouts on the roughly 40-minute Blinken-Cohen call were largely the same.

According to the statements, Blinken and Cohen talked about the US commitment to Israel's security, as well as efforts to strengthen the Abraham Accords and advance Israel's integration in the region. They also discussed the Iran nuclear threat.

Blinken told Cohen that US efforts to revive the Iran nuclear agreement were currently on hold, due to Tehran's intractable stance, the ongoing protests in the Islamic Republic and the latter's intensified cooperation with Russian forces invading Ukraine — a reality that the new Israeli government is likely satisfied with, given its opposition to the nuclear deal.

The readout from Cohen's office said he also used the call to explain his approach to the Palestinians and emphasized his opposition to Palestinians' effort to bring the conflict to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). He thanked Blinken for the Biden administration's opposition to last week's vote mandating the ICJ craft an opinion on the legal status of Israel's "occupation."

Jewish American protest today outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington DC against the racist authoritarian new Israeli government organized by @PeaceNowUS pic.twitter.com/1yO3OEVwvt

— Gili Getz #SaveMasaferYatta (@giligetza) [January 2, 2023](#)

Meanwhile, dozens of American Jews staged a protest Monday outside Israel's embassy in Washington against Netanyahu's new government. The demonstration was organized by the left-wing Americans for Peace Now group.

US President Joe Biden plans to dispatch National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan to Jerusalem next month for meetings with senior members of the new Israeli government, an official familiar with the matter told The Times of Israel on Friday.

The coalition's policy plans for the West Bank have been a cause for concern in Washington, an official told The Times of Israel, adding that the Biden administration is particularly focused on maintaining prospects for a two-state solution by preventing further Israeli expansion in the West Bank, but that there is also unease regarding the impact the next government might have on Israel's Arab and LGBTQ communities.

The official said dates for Sullivan's visit have not been set and other matters are still unclear, but that he is expected to meet with Netanyahu, his National Security Council chairman Tzachi Hanegbi and Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, who the premier has [reportedly](#) tapped as point man for ties with the Biden administration.

Singing 'Shir LaShalom,' the song of peace outside the embassy. pic.twitter.com/wkKybmjqSa

— Americans for Peace Now (@PeaceNowUS) [January 2, 2023](#)

Israeli officials told Axios that Netanyahu hopes to use the meetings to discuss cooperation on Iran as well as the effort to coax Saudi Arabia to normalize ties with Israel.

The report said Blinken may also follow Sullivan with his own visit to Israel in February.

The Israeli officials said that Sullivan's visit could also lay the groundwork for Netanyahu to fly to Washington in February.

Pew Report: Newly elected Congress 88% Christian - Israel365 News

#bibleprophecy, #congress, #america, #christian

Jan 5, 2023

Like channeled water is the mind of the king in Hashem's hand; He directs it to whatever He wishes.

Proverbs 21:1 (the israel bible)

Pew Research Center [released a report on the religious composition](#) of the recently-elected 118th Congress.

Christians make up 88% of the voting members of the new Congress compared with only 63% of US adults overall. 469 out of 534 total members self-identify as Christians. This is the lowest number since the Pew Research Center began analyzing the religious affiliation of the House and Senate for the 2009-2010 session. Of these, 303 identify as Protestant, 148 as Catholic, 9 as Mormon (CLS), 8 as Orthodox Christian, and 3 as Muslim.

Rep. Anna Paulina Luna (FL-R) identified as a Messianic Jew but she [has publicly described herself as a Christian](#).

Only one member of the new Congress, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (Independent-Arizona), identifies as religiously unaffiliated. Rep. Jared Huffman(D-Calif.) [describes himself as a humanist](#), and 20 are categorized as having unknown religious affiliations.

20 members of Congress have unknown religious affiliations, either because they declined to answer CQ Roll Call's query or because the answers were inconclusive.

Pew noted that the Senate and House members are "largely untouched" by the ongoing decrease in the portion of Americans who identify as Christian and the comparable increase in the share of those who say they do not have a religious affiliation.

63% of Americans currently identify as Christian as compared to 78% in 2007. 29% of Americans currently say they are religiously unaffiliated as compared to 16% in 2007.

33 identify as Jewish, one less than the previous Congress, accounting for 6% of the Congress, as compared to the general population which has a Jewish population of 2%.

Both chambers are dominated by Christians numerically. 268 out of 271 Republicans identify as Christians as compared to 201 of 263 Democrats. All nine members of Congress who are Mormons are Republicans while Orthodox Christians are evenly split, with four from each major political party. Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of newcomers to Congress are Protestant; a bit more than half (55 percent) of incumbents

identify with that branch of Christianity. There are fewer Catholic first-timers than returning members of Congress (22 percent compared with 29 percent).

Are COVID vaccines effective? Study shows chances of contracting COVID increase per dose | Israel National News - Arutz Sheva

#bibleprophecy, #covie, #vaccines, #effectiveness

Dec 22, 2022

A new [study](#) that followed over 50 thousand working-age people has revealed that far from reducing the chance of contracting COVID, the vaccines actually make it more likely that an individual will contract the virus. Not only that, the risk of contracting COVID was actually shown to increase dramatically in relation to the number of vaccine doses a person received.

The study involved 51,000 employees of the Cleveland Clinic between September and December of 2022. The primary aim of the research was to assess the effectiveness of the new "bivalent" vaccine which was designed to protect both against the original COVID strain (or "Wuhan" strain, which is no longer circulating) and the BA.4/BA.5 variants of the Omicron mutation. The study found that the bivalent vaccine was 30 percent effective in preventing infection, during the period when the BA.4/BA.5 variants were circulating.

A secondary aim of the study was to examine the effectiveness of each succeeding vaccine dose, and the results were, the researchers write, "unexpected." There was an "increased risk of COVID-19 with higher numbers of prior vaccine doses" as illustrated starkly in the cumulative incidence plot below. People who had three or more doses were around three times or 300% as likely to contract COVID than those who were unvaccinated. Another way of describing this is that the vaccine has a negative efficacy of minus-200%.

The authors suggest various explanations for their findings but find them all unsatisfactory:

"A simplistic explanation might be that those who received more doses were more likely to be individuals at higher risk of COVID-19. A small proportion of individuals may have fit this description. However, the majority of subjects in this study were generally young individuals and all were eligible to have received at least three doses of vaccine by the study start date, and which they had every opportunity to do. Therefore, those who received fewer than three doses (over 45% of individuals in the study) were not those ineligible to receive the vaccine, but those who chose not to follow the CDC's recommendations on remaining updated with COVID-19 vaccination, and one could reasonably expect these individuals to have been more likely to have exhibited higher risk-taking behavior. Despite this, their risk of acquiring COVID-19 was lower than those who received a larger number of prior vaccine doses."

The authors also note that “this is not the only study to find a possible association with more prior vaccine doses and higher risk of COVID-19.”

Unlike the vaccines, natural immunity was found to be effective at preventing re-infection, the study finds – though less and less with each new variant and as time passes, as might be expected.

Israel's Christian Population Grew 2% Last Year: Central Bureau of Statistics | Jewish & Israel News Algemeiner.com

#bibleprophecy, #israel, #christians, #arabs

Dec 25, 2022

[*i24News*](#) – To mark Christmas 2022, Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics released data about the 182,000 Christians who live in the Jewish state.

According to the data, as of Christmas Eve, Christians comprise less than 2 percent of the Israeli population. Of those 182,000 Christians, 75.8 percent were Arab Christians – who constitute 6.9 percent of the total Arab population of Israel.

The vast majority (70.2 percent) of Arab Christians reside in the Northern District or the Haifa District (13.6 percent). Additionally, 39 percent of the non-Arab Christians live in the Tel Aviv and Central Districts, compared to 36.3 percent in the Northern and Haifa Districts.

Nazareth – known as “the Arab capital of Israel” – has the largest Arab Christian population, at 21,100 people. However, only 30.9 percent of its predominantly Arab population is Christian. The other localities with large Arab Christian populations are Haifa (16,700), Jerusalem (12,900), and the northern city of Shefa-Amr (10,500), which has a Sunni Muslim majority.

ESPN's Dan Orlovsky — a 'follower of Jesus' — prayed out loud for Damar Hamlin on 'NFL Live' broadcast. Marcus Spears, Laura Rutledge also bowed heads, said 'amen.' - TheBlaze

#bibleprophecy, #prayer, #espn, #hamlin

Jan 4, 2023

ESPN analyst Dan Orlovsky — a "follower of Jesus" as noted on his [Twitter bio](#) — prayed out loud for Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin during the sports network's "NFL Live" broadcast Tuesday, an unusual gesture for television.

What did Orlovsky say?

Hamlin, 24, [collapsed on the field in cardiac arrest](#) during a Monday Night Football game against the Cincinnati Bengals after he appeared to take a hit to his chest while tackling Bengals wide receiver Tee Higgins.

Orlovsky, a former NFL quarterback, spoke on the "NFL Live" broadcast with fellow analyst Marcus Spears and host Laura Rutledge at the table with him.

"Football gave me everything, you know, and I think even through the midst of the absolute tragedy last night, I think you saw some of the beauty of football as well, that it's brought us all here together," Orlovsky began.

He continued, saying that "this is a little bit different. ... I've heard it all day ... 'thoughts and prayers' ... 'all we can do is pray for him.' I've heard the Buffalo Bills organization say that we believe in prayer, and maybe this is not the right thing to do, but ... it's just on my heart that I wanna pray for ..."

"It is," Spears affirmed.

Orlovsky continued: "... Damar Hamlin right now. I'm gonna do it out loud, I'm gonna close my eyes, I'm gonna bow my head, and I'm just gonna pray for him."

Rutledge and Spears bowed their heads along with Orlovsky.

Then Orlovsky began to pray:

God, we come to you in these moments that we don't understand, that are hard, because we believe that you're God, and coming to you and praying to you has impact. We're sad, we're angry, and we want answers, but some things are unanswerable. We just wanna pray, truly come to you and pray for strength for Damar, for healing for Damar, for comfort for Damar, to be with his family, to give them peace. If we didn't

believe that prayer didn't work, we wouldn't ask this of you, God. I believe in prayer, we believe in prayer. We lift up Damar Hamlin's name in your name. Amen.

Spears and Rutledge added an "amen" each after Orlovsky's prayer, while Rutledge remarked that it was "beautiful."

Check it out:

ESPN's Dan Orlovsky Praying for Damar Hamlin on NFL Live [youtu.be](#)

What is the background?

After Hamlin's collapse, medical personnel rushed to the field and gave him CPR and oxygen, after which he was taken by ambulance to the University of Cincinnati Medical Center. He remained in critical condition Wednesday morning.

Players were visibly distraught on the field, the game was paused after the teams' head coaches conferred, and the NFL officially suspended the game around 10 p.m. ET.

[Sports Illustrated said](#) Hamlin was on a ventilator at the hospital. Dorrian Glenn, Hamlin's uncle, said Hamlin had to be resuscitated twice, once on the field at Paycor Stadium and once after he arrived at the hospital, ESPN said in an [updated story](#). There is also concern surrounding potential lung damage, the sports network added.

But Glenn told ESPN's Coley Harvey outside the hospital Tuesday evening that Hamlin is sedated and "improving from where he was yesterday." Hamlin's agent, Ron Butler, told ESPN's Jeremy Fowler that Hamlin's oxygen levels have improved.