



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

News Articles for Episode 257

[Panera will offer Amazon One palm scanner as a payment method : NPR](#)

#bibleprophecy, #cashless, #panera bread, #money

Mar 28, 2023

This palm reader will not be able to tell your fortune, but it will figure out if you are part of Panera's loyalty program.

Over the next few months, the bakery-café chain will roll out scanners that can access customers' credit card and loyalty account using their palm. The biometric-gathering technology, developed by Amazon and called Amazon One, is already popular in airports, stadiums and Whole Foods Market grocery stores. Panera is expected to become the first national restaurant company to use it.

[Panera Bread CEO Niren Chaudhary said](#) in a press release last week that the contactless payment method is meant to serve as a convenience. But there has been growing concern about palm-recognition technology.

In 2021, a group of U.S. senators questioned Amazon's data collection practices and specifically whether biometric data is being used for advertising and tracking purposes.

"In contrast with biometric systems like Apple's Face ID and Touch ID or Samsung Pass, which store biometric information on a user's device, Amazon One reportedly uploads biometric information to the cloud, raising unique security risks," the senators' [letter](#) to Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said.

Earlier this month, a shopper based in New York City filed a [lawsuit](#) against Amazon claiming that the company did not properly notify customers in Amazon Go stores that their biometric information was being collected.

Panera said that the palm scanner is optional for customers, and the company itself does not store personal palm data. The food chain also stressed that any private and personal data shared with Amazon One is never stored on the device.

Customers who opt in will also be able to pay by hand-scan

Here's how it will work: After a brief palm scan, Panera customers can expect to be greeted by name and receive tailored meal recommendations based on their preferences and previous orders. They will also be able to pay by simply rescanning their palm. According to the company, guests can link their credit card to an Amazon One ID in "a minute."

"Our philosophy has been centered around leveraging best-in-class technology to create a better Panera experience," Panera's CEO, Chaudhary, said.

Panera has not specified which locations will include the gadgets, but they have already been piloted at some restaurants in St. Louis, Mo., where the chain is headquartered. Panera's loyalty program includes about 52 million members.

[Banking stress puts U.S. and Europe on watch for credit crunch | Reuters](#)

#bibleprophecy, #banks, #credit, #failures

Mar 26, 2023

WASHINGTON/FRANKFURT, March 26 (Reuters) - Stress in the banking sector is being closely monitored for its potential to trigger a credit crunch, a U.S. Federal Reserve policymaker said on Sunday, as a European Central Bank official also flagged a possible tightening in lending.

Authorities around the world are on high alert for the fallout from recent turmoil at banks following the collapse in the United States of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and Signature Bank ([SBNY.O](#)) and the rescue takeover a week ago of Credit Suisse ([CSGN.S](#)).

Last week ended with indicators of financial market stress flashing. The euro fell against the dollar, euro zone government bond yields sank and the costs of insuring against bank defaults surged despite assurances from policymakers.

In the latest effort to calm investors, the U.S. Treasury said on Friday that the Financial Stability Oversight Council agreed that the U.S. banking system is "sound and resilient".

"What's unclear for us is how much of these banking stresses are leading to a widespread credit crunch. That credit crunch ... would then slow down the economy. This is something we are monitoring very, very closely," Minneapolis Fed President Neel Kashkari [said Sunday](#) on CBS show "Face the Nation."

"It definitely brings us closer," said Kashkari, who has been among the most hawkish Fed policymakers in advocating higher interest rates to fight inflation.

He said it remained too soon to gauge the "imprint" bank stress would have on the economy and therefore too soon to know how it might influence the next interest rate decision of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC).

Meanwhile in Europe, the ECB believes that recent banking sector turmoil may result in lower growth and inflation rates, its vice president Luis de Guindos said.

"Our impression is that they will lead to an additional tightening of credit standards in the euro area. And perhaps this will feed through to the economy in terms of lower growth and lower inflation," he told Business Post.

'CONCERNING SIGNS'

After the Swiss government engineered the rescue [takeover](#) of Credit Suisse by Zurich-based rival UBS ([UBSG.S](#)), Germany's Deutsche Bank ([DBKGn.DE](#)) moved into the investor spotlight.

Shares in Germany's largest bank fell 8.5% on Friday and the cost of insuring its bonds against the risk of default jumped sharply and the index of top European bank shares ([.SX7P](#)) fell.

The sudden spike in tensions for banks has raised questions about whether major central banks will continue to pursue aggressive interest rate hikes to try to bring down inflation, and prompted some to speculate on when rates will start to fall.

Erik Nielsen, group chief economics advisor at UniCredit in London, said central banks should not separate monetary policy from financial stability at a time of heightened fears that banking woes could lead to a widespread financial crisis.

"Major central banks, including the Fed and the ECB, should make a joint statement that any further rate hike is off the table at least until stability has returned to the financial markets," Nielsen said in a note on Sunday.

The Fed raised interest rates a quarter of a point this week but opened the door to pause further increases until it is clear how bank lending practices may change after the recent collapse of SVB and New York-based Signature Bank.

"There are some concerning signs. On the positive side is deposit outflows seem to have slowed down. Some confidence is being restored among smaller and regional banks," Kashkari said.

Turbulence among banking stocks on both sides of the Atlantic continued into the end of the week, despite efforts by politicians, central banks and regulators to dispel concerns.

"We've seen that capital markets have largely been closed for the past two weeks. If those capital markets remain closed because borrowers and lenders remain nervous, then that would tell me, okay, this is probably going to have a bigger impact on the economy," Kashkari said, adding: "So it's too soon to make any forecasts about the next FOMC meeting."

The Fed has rolled out an emergency lending program meant to keep other regional lenders out of trouble. Recent data showed money moving from smaller to larger banks in the days after SVB's March 10 collapse, though Fed chair Jerome Powell said last week he thought the situation had "stabilized".

[Patriots owner Robert Kraft on antisemitism in America: "It shouldn't happen here" - CBS News](#)

#bibleprophecy, #jews, #anti-semitism, #robert kraft

Mar 27, 2023

Like many Jews growing up in America, New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft remembers the first time he faced antisemitism.

"It was in high school, and there was a kid. He made a comment. It was laced with expletives, and 'dirty Jew' at the end," he recalled. "It came very close to being a physical fight, and we both were held back. But you know what? I wound up making a friend of that guy. You can make friends of your enemies by dialogue, education."

According to the Anti-Defamation League, 2022 saw the [most antisemitic incidents](#) ever recorded in the U.S., and while Jews make up less than 2.5 percent of the population, they are victims of more than half of all religious-based hate crimes.

Kraft said he's never seen this level of antisemitism in the U.S. before, and is afraid for his country. He is responding by investing \$25 million in the "Stand Up to Jewish Hate" campaign. Public service ads ask all Americans to say "no" to antisemitism, and show how people can do their part to combat hate.

At the center of the campaign is a blue square, taking up roughly 2.4% of a screen – the same percentage of the U.S. population made up by Jews.

Kraft said, "We're asking all fellow Americans to use this blue emoji on their iPhones, their iPads, and wear this as a symbol that they're partnering with us and standing up against anti-semitism."

But Kraft knows he cannot do it alone – it takes a team. "You don't win unless everyone's pitching in. Yeah, any team sport, any business, anything you want to win at, you need people from all places and all pitching and [putting] team first," he said.

As the owner of a storied football team, Kraft has made some influential friends and influencers (including a former quarterback). "We also have a lot of good people who will recognize that this is something they want to partner with."

"CBS Saturday Morning" co-host Dana Jacobson asked, "Why do you need it to be more than just the Jewish population?"

"Because we are so small," he said. "We did some research and it showed that over 50% of Americans believe that we can handle this problem on our own. And we know we can't."

The campaign springs from Kraft's [Foundation to Combat Antisemitism](#), which he created after [antisemitic rhetoric in Charlottesville, Virginia](#) in 2017, and the [deadly 2018 attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh](#).

A big part of the foundation's focus: antisemitism found online and on social media. Those incidents are tracked in a command center built in Gillette Stadium, in Foxborough, Mass., steps away from Kraft's office.

Why so close? "Because I knew I wanted to have access and be hands-on and check what they're doing," Kraft said.

What they are doing is monitoring conversations across 300 million data sources. They can see in real time spikes in antisemitic rhetoric, and share information with other organizations fighting hate.

Kraft said, "It's going on constantly, and there's no let up, and it makes me sad, actually. This is the United States of America. I mean, it shouldn't happen here."

And that is the goal behind the foundation and the Stand Up to Jewish Hate campaign: to stop it.

Jacobson asked, "Why are you the right person to do this?"

"I don't know that I'm the right person!" he laughed. "I think it's important to show people that you're proud of your heritage. And some people don't know I'm of Jewish heritage. Well, I'm not ashamed to tell them that, and I'm proud of it."

Kraft said while this campaign is about antisemitism, it affects us all, because hate doesn't stop with targeting Jewish people.

[Many Millions Die without Clean Water or Sanitation, UN Says | Newsmax.com](#)

#bibleprophecy, #water, #death, #sanitation

Mar 23, 2023

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — A lack of drinking water and healthy sanitation infrastructure is dire around the world and getting worse, United Nations experts warned in a report issued Thursday.

The report finds that many millions of the world's 7.78 billion people don't have enough clean water or sanitation infrastructure that helps keep humans healthy by taking waste away from their homes.

On the second day of a U.N. conference on water, the report calls on the world "to talk about water and take water seriously," in order to achieve global development goals, said Kaveh Madani, who trained as an engineer with a focus on water resources in Iran and directs the United Nations University, a global think tank.

The report "has some alarming statistics and results but it is better to disclose that early on, while we still have time," Madani told reporters at U.N. headquarters in New York.

Report authors pointed out that the lack of access to basic water-related services kills more people globally than floods, droughts and other disasters, even in the age of global warming.

"Far more people die from lack of access to water, then die from from lesser climate disasters ... I'm not saying that people aren't dying," said Dr. Charlotte McAlister, a British-trained hydrologist and senior researcher at the U.N. University Institute. "But far more people are dying from lack of safe water, safely managed water and safely managed sanitation."

One of several reports issued by U.N. agencies on water this week, it contains no overarching solution. But Thursday's report tries to go beyond despair, saying that "important progress can be achieved in the remaining years." Progress can occur even in countries without the infrastructure or the resources to match wealthier nations' ability to provide their people with clean water and sanitation, the report says.

Nearly three-quarters of the world's people fall into the category of water-insecure, meaning they score below 65 out of 100 on an indicator that combines 10 water-related factors. The report says that over 0.61 billion people (8%) are critically water-insecure.

Of water-insecure people, 4.31 billion people live in the Asia-Pacific region, 1.34 billion in Africa, 415 million in the Americas, and almost 66 million in Europe.

[Mississippi tornado given EF-4 rating, tore deadly 59-mile path of destruction, weather officials say | Fox News](#)

#bibleprophecy, #tornado, #death, #mississippi

Mar 26, 2023

EF-4 tornado flattened neighborhoods; 25 killed in Mississippi

As crews [in Mississippi](#) continue to dig through decimated neighborhoods in the aftermath of a deadly tornado, weather officials released preliminary information on the powerful storm early Sunday.

The National Weather Service (NWS) in Jackson said [the tornado](#) that devastated the Mississippi Delta town of Rolling Fork Friday night was given an EF-4 rating, which has top wind gusts between 166 mph and 200 mph.

The tornado had ripped a 59-mile path of destruction beginning in northern Issaquena County before ending in northern Holmes County, according to the NWS. The twister lasted over an hour and had a maximum path width of three-quarters of a mile.

At least 25 people were killed and dozens of others were injured in Mississippi. One man was killed after his trailer home flipped several times in Alabama.

[BIDEN DECLARES 'MAJOR DISASTER' IN MISSISSIPPI, ORDERS FEDERAL AID FOLLOWING DEADLY TORNADOES](#)

Hundreds of people have been displaced after the twister flattened entire blocks, obliterated houses, flipped over cars, ripped a steeple off a church and toppled a municipal water tower.

Crews on Sunday resumed digging through the wreckage of flattened and damaged homes, commercial buildings and municipal offices as NWS officials warned more [severe weather](#) could be hitting the region.

High winds, large hail and potential tornadoes were possible in eastern Louisiana, south-central Mississippi and [south-central Alabama](#), officials said.

[METEOROLOGIST PRAYS FOR MISSISSIPPI RESIDENTS IN PATH OF TORNADO WHILE ON AIR: 'DEAR JESUS, PLEASE HELP THEM'](#)

[President Biden](#) declared a major emergency in Mississippi and made federal aid available to the state early Sunday, making federal funding available to Carroll, Humphreys, Monroe and Sharkey counties.

A house on Meadowbrook Circle in Amory, Miss., has eight large trees uprooted and resting on various parts of the roof on Saturday following a severe storm the night before. (AP Photo/Jim Lytle)

Federal funding was available during recovery efforts for temporary housing, home repairs, loans covering uninsured property losses and other individual and business programs, the White House said in a statement.

Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Deanne Criswell was scheduled to visit the state on Sunday to evaluate the destruction.

[Putin's attack on Ukraine's Christians deserves this punishment | Fox News](#)

#bibleprophecy, #putin, #persecution, #christians

Mar 26, 2023

Russian troops have murdered at least 26 religious leaders in Ukraine and Putin needs to pay

On March 17, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for [Russian President Vladimir Putin](#) for war crimes, including his involvement in the abduction of children. Previously, a United Nations inquiry found evidence that Russia has committed a wide range of war crimes, including the deportation of children and "systemic and widespread" use of torture. All wars involve casualties, but no wars should involve crimes.

[Russia's war in Ukraine](#) has led to tens of thousands of deaths and injuries as well as the displacement of at least 14 million people. In addition, the Russian military has created untold suffering, specifically among Christians and religious minorities in Ukraine, going out of its way to systematically target Christians and destroy houses of worship. Putin and Russia must be held accountable for their crimes — especially those perpetrated on the basis of religion.

Human rights experts say Russian soldiers have targeted pastors and churches when invading regions in eastern Ukraine. The Russian military has [disproportionately sought out evangelical Christians](#), destroying, damaging and looting nearly 500 religious buildings and sacred sites. The Institute of Religious Freedom (IRF) has documented numerous cases where Russia has seized religious buildings and used them as military outposts to conceal firing positions.

As if those atrocities weren't enough, Russia has murdered at least 26 religious leaders and tortured and imprisoned many others. Russian soldiers have labeled Ukrainian Christians as "American spies" and "enemies of the Russian Orthodox people."

In just a five-month period in 2022, the IRF recorded 20 cases of illegal imprisonment of Ukrainian religious leaders, accompanied by attempted rape, mock executions, deprivation of food and water and threats of violence against family members. Last year, Russia jailed four church members for illegal meetings and raids were conducted among a series of Pentecostal churches.

All of this is lamentable, but it's also ironic. While Russia lauds itself as "pro-Christian," its behavior belies its claim at propaganda.

Most Christians in Russia belong to the Russian Orthodox Church, which views the breakaway Orthodox Church of Ukraine as illegitimate and its members as apostates.

This errant classification helps lay the foundation for the pretext to mistreat, abuse and persecute evangelicals and other non-Russian Orthodox believers in Ukraine.

If history is education, then the Russian Orthodox Church should know better than to stay silent. During the Cold War, the Soviets attempted to crack down on religious organizations and the Orthodox church bore the brunt of the persecution. Its property was nationalized and many of its schools were shut down. More than 50,000 bishops, priests and other clergy members were slaughtered or imprisoned. So how can Russian Orthodox leaders and members turn a blind eye when their government carries out similar atrocities?

Our allies are also not immune from being called out for instances of potential persecution. Zelensky's government in Ukraine is attempting to evict Orthodox monks from an 11-century monastery because of its links to Russia. The monks claim they broke away from the Russian Orthodox Church and deny any links to the government in Moscow.

As with any war, the international community must vigilantly hold bad actors accountable for atrocities. The UN is rightly scrutinizing the numerous human rights violations Russia has been accused of committing and has compiled a list of individuals to hold accountable. The U.S. State Department has designated Russia as a Country of Particular Concern for engaging in continuous systematic violations of religious freedom, which allows us to impose targeted sanctions on government officials and agencies.

While calling attention to war crimes is a positive step toward accountability, talk is cheap and must be accompanied by action. It's our call as Christians to seek justice and defend the oppressed, Christian and non-Christian alike. Russia and Putin must stand trial for their crimes so that others will be deterred from similar barbaric behavior in the future.