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New online course explores rebbe's approach to Torah study

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by JNS and Israel Hayom Staff Published on 2019-07-11 11:35 Last modified: 2019-07-11 14:35

New online course explores rebbe's approach to Torah study

The late Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson | Photo: Creative Commons

A new online course on the teachings of the Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, recently became available as part of the worldwide commemoration of the 25th anniversary of his passing.

Presented by Rabbi Menachem Feldman, each of its four segments will highlight another unique aspect of the rebbe's approach to Torah study.

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"The rebbe approached Torah holistically, seeing links and parallels between seemingly unrelated nuances," explains Feldman, author of a book summarizing the rebbe's teachings and director of adult education at Chabad Lubavitch of Greenwich, Conn. "To join the rebbe in finding the hidden patterns and overarching themes in the Torah is a delightful experience of discovery."

Feldman is quick to note that the classes will not be a discussion about learning, but will be focused on actual learning. Through following the rebbe's analysis to two commentaries of Rashi, participants can grasp firsthand how the rebbe unpacks layers of meaning hidden behind seemingly simple words.

"This is not only an opportunity to learn about the rebbe's teachings," said Rabbi Yaakov Kaplan, who produced the course. "Rather, this is a chance to learn the rebbe's teachings themselves. It is a guided tour through a complex and nuanced Torah study."

The course will be streamed on Chabad.org and then be available for enrolled students to watch at their own pace. Each lecture will be accompanied by texts, discussions with fellow students on Facebook and quizzes, with student support at every step of the way. Although the course is offered free of charge, sign-up is required.

Photo: AP

U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korea's ruler Kim Jong Un.

Photo: AP

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Trump becomes 1st sitting U.S. leader to enter North Korea

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. president get together in famous Demilitarized Zone - with Trump briefly crossing into North Korean territory - for third time in little over a year 'just to shake hands and say 'Hello'

Associated Press|Published: 06.30.19 , 08:43

With grins and handshakes, President Donald Trump welcomed North Korea's Kim Jong Un at the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone Sunday, seeking to revive talks on the pariah nation's nuclear program in a bid for a legacy-defining accord. Trump then became the first sitting American leader to step into North Korea.

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The meeting, another historic first in the yearlong rapprochement between the two technically warring nations, marks a return to face-to-face contact between the leaders since talks broke down during a summit in Vietnam in February. But it does little to erase significant doubts that remain about the future of the negotiations and the North's willingness to give up its stockpile of nuclear weapons.

Trump and Kim shake hands (Photo: Reuters)

Trump and Kim shake hands (Photo: Reuters)

Trump's brief crossing into North Korean territory marked the latest milestone in two years of roller-coaster diplomacy between the two nations, as personal taunts of "little rocket man" and threats to destroy the other have been ushered out by on-again, off-again talks, professions of love and flowery letters.

"I was proud to step over the line," Trump told Kim as they met in a building known as "Freedom House" on the South Korean side of the village. "It is a great day for the world."

Kim hailed the moment, saying of Trump, "I believe this is an expression of his willingness to eliminate all the unfortunate past and open a new future." He added that he was "surprised" when Trump invited to meet by a tweet on Saturday.

What was originally expected to be a brief exchange of pleasantries over the raised line of concrete marking the border between North and South - Trump had said it would last "two minutes" - turned into private talks stretching beyond a half hour. Trump was joined in the Freedom House conversation with Kim by his daughter and son-in-law, Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, both senior White House advisers.

Trump and Kim meet in DMZ (Photo: AFP)
Trump and Kim meet in DMZ (Photo: AFP)

Peering into North Korea from atop Observation Post Ouellette, Trump told reporters before meeting Kim that there has been "tremendous" improvement since his first meeting with the North's leader in Singapore last year.

Trump claimed the situation used to be marked by "tremendous danger" but "after our first summit, all of the danger went away."

But North has yet to provide an accounting of its nuclear stockpile, let alone begin the process of dismantling its arsenal.

The meeting at the truce city of Panmunjom also represented a striking acknowledgement by Trump of the authoritarian Kim's legitimacy over a nation with an abysmal human rights record.

As he stood beside Kim, Trump told reporters he would invite the North Korean leader to the United States, potentially even to the White House.

"I would invite him right now," Trump said. Kim, speaking through a translator, reciprocated that it would be an "honor" to invite Trump to the North Korean capital of Pyongyang "at the right time."

Trump's summit with Kim in Vietnam earlier this year collapsed without an agreement for denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. He became the first sitting U.S. president to

meet with the leader of the isolated nation last year, when they signed an agreement in Singapore to bring the North toward denuclearization.

Moon Jae-in President of South Korea (Photo: AP)

Moon Jae-in President of South Korea (Photo: AP)

North Korea's nuclear threat has not been contained, Richard Haas, president of the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations, tweeted Sunday. Haas added that the threat of conflict has subsided only because "the Trump administration has decided it can live (with) a (North Korean) nuclear program while it pursues the chimera of denuclearization."

Substantive talks between the nations have largely broken down since the Vietnam summit. The North has balked at Trump's insistence that it give up its weapons before it sees relief from crushing international sanctions. The U.S. has said the North must submit to "complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization" before sanctions are lifted.

Every president since Ronald Reagan has visited the 1953 armistice line, except for George H.W. Bush, who visited when he was vice president. The show of bravado and support for South Korea, one of America's closest military allies, has evolved over the years to include binoculars and bomber jackets.

Trump kept to his blue suit and red tie, but ever the showman, sought to one-up his predecessors with a Kim meeting.

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The leaders met at a time of escalating tensions. While North Korea has not recently tested a long-range missile that could reach the U.S., last month it fired off a series of short-range missiles. Trump has brushed off the significance of those tests, even as his own national security adviser, John Bolton, has said they violated U.N. Security Council resolutions.

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Iran to boost uranium enrichment level in new challenge for nuclear pact

Tehran to raise fissile purity of enriched uranium after July 7, plans to return Arak heavy-water reactor to previous uses, as nuclear deal with world powers frays further

Reuters|Published: 07.04.19 , 09:09

GENEVA - Iran said on Wednesday it will soon boost uranium enrichment beyond the level set in the landmark 2015 nuclear deal it struck with world powers, in an announcement that is likely to further enflame tensions with the United States.

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President Hassan Rouhani said Iran would after July 7 enrich uranium beyond a fissile purity of 3.67%, a level which is deemed suitable for electricity generation and is the maximum allowed by the deal.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani inspecting one of the country's nuclear plants (Photo: AFP) (Photo: AFP)

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani inspecting one of the country's nuclear plants (Photo: AFP) (Photo: AFP)

It is the second time this week that Tehran has announced a breach of the nuclear accord, which has been in trouble since President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of it last year.

"Our level of enrichment will no longer be 3.67. We will put this commitment aside by whatever amount we feel like, by whatever amount is our necessity, our need. We will take this above 3.67," said Rouhani, according to IRIB news agency.

Enrichment to 90% yields nuclear bomb-grade material.

Experts said Iran has no legitimate use for uranium enriched beyond the level permitted by the deal.

"There is no justification," said Kelsey Davenport of the Arms Control Association, a Washington advocacy organization.

The move, she said, was aimed at increasing pressure on European powers, China and Russia to compensate Iran for the impact of U.S. sanctions reimposed by Trump after he renounced the deal.

"These are political decisions to increase leverage. They are no indications that Iran is about to dash to a bomb or pursue nuclear weapons," □ Davenport said.

Tehran has denied any intent to develop nuclear weapons.

Rouhani added that the Islamic Republic's actions were reversible. "All of our actions can be returned to the previous condition within one hour, why are you worried?" he said.

Tough tone

His tone was unusually tough. Rouhani was the Iranian architect of the nuclear pact and is seen as a pragmatist, unlike senior clerics in the ruling elite who opposed his opening to the West and have kept up their denunciations of the United States.

Rouhani further urged the Trump administration to "adopt a rational approach again" and return to the negotiating table.

Weeks of tensions with Washington crested last month when Tehran shot down a U.S. military surveillance drone and Trump responded with

a decision to launch air strikes only to call them off at the last minute. Washington also accused Iran of being behind attacks on several oil tankers in the Gulf, which Tehran denies.

Iran on Monday said it has amassed more low-enriched uranium than the 300 kg (661 lbs) permitted under the nuclear pact, prompting Trump to warn it was "playing with fire".

European nations who are part of the nuclear deal said on Tuesday they were "extremely concerned" by Tehran's stockpiling announcement while Israel said it was preparing for possible involvement in any military confrontation between Iran and the United States.

Rouhani said that if the nations in the pact did not protect trade with Iran promised under the deal but blocked by Trump's reimposition of tough sanctions, Tehran would also start to revive its Arak heavy-water reactor after July 7.

As required by the accord, Iran said in January 2016 that it had removed the core of the reactor and filled it with cement.

"From (July 7) onward with the Arak reactor, if you don't operate (according to) the programme and time frame of all the commitments you've given us, we will return the Arak reactor to its previous condition," said Rouhani.

"Meaning, the condition that you say is dangerous and can produce plutonium," he said, referring to a key potential component of a nuclear bomb. "We will return to that unless you take action regarding all your commitments regarding Arak."

He kept the door open to negotiations, saying Iran would again reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium below the 300-kg limit set by the pact if Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China honoured their deal pledges.

Iran will gain nothing by departing from the terms of the deal, the French foreign ministry cautioned on Wednesday.

"Putting (the deal) into question will only increase the already heightened tensions in the region," ministry spokesman Agnes von der Muhll told reporters in a daily briefing.

Tensions between Washington and Tehran have escalated since Trump pulled Washington out of the pact in May 2018 and acted to bar all international sales of Iranian oil, the Islamic Republic's economic lifeblood.

Donald Trump with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (Photo: Reuters)

Donald Trump with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (Photo: Reuters)

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif denies that Iran is in violation of the nuclear accord by exceeding the cap on low-enriched uranium, saying Iran is exercising its right to respond after the U.S. withdrawal.

The nuclear accord lifted most global sanctions against Iran in return for curbs on its uranium enrichment capacity.

It aimed to extend the time Tehran would need to produce a nuclear bomb, if it chose to, from roughly 2-3 months to a year.

Photo: Shutterstock

Britain prevented seizure of tanker by Iran

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U.S. defense officials: Iran attempts to seize British tanker foiled

U.S. officials say The Royal Navy HMS Montrose, which was on sight, pointed its guns at the boats and warned them over radio, at which point they dispersed"

Reuters|Published: 07.11.19 , 08:15

Five boats believed to belong to Iranian Revolutionary Guards approached a British oil tanker in the Gulf on Wednesday and asked it to stop in Iranian waters close by, but withdrew after a British warship warned them, U.S. officials said.

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Britain's Ministry of Defense issued a statement saying "'HMS Montrose was forced to position herself between the Iranian vessels and British Heritage and issue verbal warnings to the Iranian vessels, which then turned away,"

Iranian Revolutionary Guards attempted to seize British Tanker

Iranian Revolutionary Guards attempted to seize British Tanker

The incident occurred almost a week after British Royal Marines boarded an Iranian tanker, Grace 1, off Gibraltar and seized it on suspicion that it was breaking sanctions by taking oil to Syria.

British warship foiled Iranian attempt to seize tanker (Photo: Shutterstock)

British warship foiled Iranian attempt to seize tanker (Photo: Shutterstock)

Earlier on Wednesday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said Britain would face "consequences" over the seizure of the Iranian tanker.

Tensions between Iran and the United States and its allies have risen sharply since Washington stepped up economic sanctions against Iran and moved to bring the country's oil exports to zero as part of a "maximum pressure" policy to make Iran halt actions that it said undermined regional security.

Iran has responded to the sanctions by starting to breach limits put on its nuclear activities under a 2015 deal with world powers.

Several oil tankers were attacked in waters near Iran's southern coast in May and June, for which the United States blamed Iran. Tehran denied any involvement.

Last month, Iran shot down a U.S. drone near the Strait of Hormuz, prompting President Donald Trump to order retaliatory air strikes, only to call them off.

The U.S. officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said Wednesday's incident happened as British Heritage was at the northern entrance of the Strait of Hormuz.

"The Royal Navy HMS Montrose, which was also there, pointed its guns at the boats and warned them over radio, at which point they dispersed," one of the officials said.

"It was harassment and an attempt to interfere with the passage," the other official said.

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The United States hopes to enlist allies over the next two weeks or so in a military coalition to safeguard strategic waters off Iran and Yemen, Marine General Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on Tuesday.

Yair Netanyahu: Ethiopian community's protests funded by 'German Money'
Prime minister's son causes outrage among Ethiopian-Israeli activists, MKs, who call him 'a spoiled boy who lives off the public,' spreader of fake news; 'it's easy being a virtual bully, far more difficult to go out and protest'
Itamar Eichner|Published: 07.07.19 , 14:30
Yair Netanyahu, son of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, stirred a commotion over the weekend when he said in a tweet that the Ethiopian community's wave of protests was "funded by German money."

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"Everything that happened this week was fueled by the New Israel Fund and the Standing Together organization with the use of German money," said the prime minister's son, referring to aid organizations that often support the Ethiopian Israeli cause.

Ethiopian-Israeli protesters in Jerusalem (Photo: AFP)

Ethiopian-Israeli protesters in Jerusalem (Photo: AFP)

"I wonder what would have happened if the Israeli government funded a German organization that burns police vehicles, blocks roads and acts violently in the streets of Berlin," said young Netanyahu.

Many Ethiopian descendants around the country were outraged by the tweet. "No Yair, everything that happened this week was fueled by racism and oppression that my community has been going through for many years," tweeted Avi Yalo, one of the protest's leaders.

"You can keep spreading lies about the New Israel Fund and about German money, but you know it has no connection what so ever to reality. Our struggle, which you cannot understand from the bubble you live in, is a daily struggle for an equal, secure life."

Yair Netanyahu

Yair Netanyahu

Itzik Time, another leader of the protests, also responded with a fierce tweet: "I wish we had had funding for protests, we would have protested for a whole week," he said.

MK Pnina Tamano-Shata from the Blue and White Party said in response that "This spoiled demagogue will never be able to understand the weak. Sit quietly, don't stir cheap and false politics over the back of a community that went out to protest from the bottom of its aching heart."

MK Pnina Tamano-Shata (Photo: Courtesy of Yesh Atid)
MK Pnina Tamano-Shata (Photo: Courtesy of Yesh Atid)

"Where were you during the rightful protests against police violence and the killing of Solomon Tekah? Where were you during the protests after the killing of Yehuda Biadga?" tweeted Alon Lee Green, chair of the Standing Together movement.

"It's easy sitting back in an airconditioned room and being a virtual bully. It's far more difficult protesting for justice and against a government who hurts its citizens," he said.

Blue and White MK Gadi Yevarkan, who is of Ethiopian descent, also slammed Yair Netanyahu: "Those young teens on the streets have contributed to this country a thousand times more than did, you a rich boy who lives on the backs of the public."

MK Gasi Yevarkan (Photo: Eli Segal)
MK Gasi Yevarkan (Photo: Eli Segal)

"I didn't expect you to understand what discrimination is, since you grew up in a home that is a factory house for discrimination," said Yevarkan.

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"Go and learn about values, respect, Zionism and the love of the motherland from Ethiopian Israelis," he concluded.

Thunder Moon to pass through Earth's shadow on Tuesday during partial lunar eclipse
By Brian Lada, AccuWeather meteorologist and staff writer

Thunder will fill the sky on Tuesday night as July's full moon, known as the Thunder Moon, glows brightly.

Onlookers stepping outside on Tuesday night will be able to see Saturn and Jupiter just off to the right of the moon most of the night, making it a great night to set up a telescope.

thunder moon

“This full Moon [is] known as the Thunder Moon because thunderstorms are so frequent during this month,” the Old Farmer's Almanac explained on their website.

July's full moon is also referred to as the Buck Moon, as this is the time of year when new antlers begin to grow on bucks' heads. Other names for this month's full moon include the Ripe Corn Moon, the Hay Moon and the Old Moon.

Additionally, this month will also feature a partial lunar eclipse for part of the globe.

partial lunar eclipse

A plane passes by as the moon sets over trees during a phenomena that combined a supermoon, a blue moon and a lunar eclipse in Charlotte, N.C., Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2018. (AP Photo/Chuck Burton)

During a partial lunar eclipse, only part of the moon passes through Earth's inner shadow (umbra), so only part of the moon appears dark while the rest remains illuminated by the sun.

The partial lunar eclipse will last for nearly three hours, starting at 8 p.m. GMT and ending around 11 p.m. GMT Tuesday night.

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The partial phase will be surrounded by the penumbral phase when the moon passes through the Earth's outer shadow (penumbra). However, this phase is difficult to detect and is not as noticeable as the partial phase.

Unfortunately, North America will be the only area of the world that will not be able to see the eclipse. The next time that a large swath of North America is able to see a lunar eclipse will be on the night of July 4 into the early morning of July 5, 2020.

Two weeks after the Thunder Moon Eclipse, July will conclude with a Black Moon.

A Black Moon is the second new moon in a calendar month. This is similar to a Blue Moon, which usually refers to the second full moon in one month.

However, unlike a Blue Moon, this month's phenomenon will not be visible as the part of the moon that is illuminated by the sun during a new moon is facing away from the Earth.

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Former Fed. Judge: Trump's Decision on Citizenship Question 'Smart Move'

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President Donald Trump (Carolyn Kaster/AP)

By Jeffrey Rodack | Friday, 12 July 2019 01:55 PM

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Former federal Judge Walter Kelley praised President Donald Trump for not continuing to push for a citizenship question on the 2020 census.

But Kelley, who was appointed to the bench by President George W. Bush, said Trump should have been more open about his intentions.

"I don't want to be flip, but tell the truth," Kelley said during an interview on Hill.TV.

And he added: “There are perfectly good reasons to have this (question) — it had been done before.”

Kelley said he was surprised by Trump’s decision and had expected the president to follow through on his threat to sign an executive order to force the citizenship question on the form.

Trump’s decision not to push ahead with the question came after the Supreme Court blocked his efforts to include it and as the government already had begun printing the census questionnaire without it.

“Everybody expected an executive order that was going to impose the citizenship question irrespective of the Supreme Court — I didn’t see a chance in the world that it would sustain,” Kelley said. He added it was “a pretty smart move.”

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