



Rabbinic Recap

The week ending February 28, 2014

THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Kerry, Lew to address thousands of pro-Israel supporters

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Treasury Secretary Jack Lew will both [address](#) the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. “The two influential cabinet secretaries are leading the administration’s efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon,” AIPAC said in a statement. “Secretary Kerry is also leading the United States’ effort to achieve peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.” Kerry is expected to defend the administration’s diplomatic push with Iran, after blunting an aggressive effort by AIPAC to push a new sanctions package against Iran through the Senate throughout the fall. Kerry is also expected to pitch his peace push between Israel and the Palestinians. His speech will come weeks before a deadline on the peace talks, and nine months after they began last July. Lew’s speech will likely focus on sanctions against the Islamic Republic, which are enforced by the Treasury Department. He and the White House have repeatedly said that Iran is “not open for business.”

Netanyahu, Obama meet in Washington next week

President Barack Obama and Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will [meet](#) in Washington next week. Israel officials said it is not expected that Obama will present the much-discussed framework document for negotiations with the Palestinians. The officials said it was unlikely Washington would roll out the paper before Obama also meets with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas next month, though no final date was reported. Obama and Netanyahu last met in Washington in September, and before that they met several times in Israel last March when Obama visited. In addition to his session with Obama, he is expected to meet with congressional leaders, and possibly meet with other senior administration officials as well. On Tuesday morning, he is scheduled to address the AIPAC conference and then fly to Los Angeles. In the evening he will take part in the premiere of CBS travel editor Peter Greenberg’s one-hour special *Israel: The Royal Tour*, which is part of a series the newsmen is doing on tours of various countries led by their leaders. The next day, Netanyahu is scheduled to fly to San Francisco for meetings in nearby Silicon Valley with the “heads of global companies at the forefront of hi-tech development.” He will then return to Los Angeles for a gala event with Hollywood personalities, before flying home on Thursday.

IRAN

Iranian oil exports rise in February, more to ally Syria

Iran's oil exports have [risen](#) further in February for a fourth consecutive month, according to sources who track tanker movements, adding to signs that the easing of sanctions pressure on Tehran is helping its oil exports to recover. The increase in shipments is around 100,000 barrels per day (bpd), according to one tracker company, which would

take Iranian exports to at least 1.30 million bpd for February. The rise in shipments follows an interim deal agreed in November with world powers in return for curbs on Iran's nuclear program. This, say industry sources, has improved sentiment and reduced uncertainty for buyers. A second tracking source familiar with Iran's shipments said extra cargoes had headed to Syria and South Korea in February. Two cargoes were unloaded in Indonesian waters—a location sometimes used by Iran for ship-to-ship transfers. "While February is a shorter calendar month, we have seen more cargoes moving to Syria," the second tracking source said. Sales to Iran's top two buyers, China and India, have remained at firm levels. A sustained increase in exports from Iran, as well as a recovery in Libyan exports, could weigh on oil prices in 2014. So far, though, the rise in Iranian supplies is modest and output is still much reduced from the pre-sanctions rate.

Netanyahu urges Germany not to allow Iran to enrich

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday [urged](#) Germany to help bar Iran from enriching uranium, as it works along with five other world powers to hammer out an agreement with Tehran on its nuclear program. "The goal is to prevent Iran from having the capability to manufacture and deliver nuclear weapons," Netanyahu told German Chancellor Angela Merkel during a joint press conference the two leaders held in Jerusalem. "I believe that means zero enrichment, zero centrifuges, zero plutonium, and of course an end to ICBM development. Because none of these elements—none of them—is necessary for developing civilian nuclear energy, which is what Iran has claimed that it wants," he said. Iran has insisted that the ability to enrich uranium is critical for its civilian nuclear power program. Over the weekend, US Under Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, who heads her country's team at the P5+1 talks, told reporters in Jerusalem she prefers Iran not having an enrichment option, but it is likely Iran would have a limited capacity to do so. Merkel said her country, which is also a party to the talks, would accept a limited Iranian enrichment of uranium. "We will take it step by step and see which compromises can be made and which are the ones that cannot be made," Merkel said, adding that the activity would be monitored to ensure that Iran doesn't achieve a nuclear breakthrough.

SYRIA

Syrian Forces Kill Dozens in Ambush

[Reuters](#) reported that Syrian government forces ambushed and killed 175 rebels near Damascus, according to state news media reports which alleged the fighters were part of a new offensive to squeeze the capital and pressure the regime to accept a political solution to the war. There were conflicting reports on the death toll and who was killed Wednesday in a desert area on the fringes of the rebel-held suburb of Eastern Ghouta. Regime forces have been besieging the suburb for more than seven months. State news agencies said 175 were killed and all the dead were rebels from the al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front, an Islamist extremist group. They reported the fighters came through southern Syrian from neighboring Jordan, where rebels say they are receiving sophisticated weapons from Gulf Arab states, including shoulder-fired missiles capable of taking down jets. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a U.K.-based opposition group that relies on a network of activists inside Syria, said 152 people died, all rebels belonging to Islamist factions including the Nusra Front.