



Rabbinic Recap

The week ending August 26, 2016

U.S. – ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Israeli aid for Louisiana flood and Canada fire victims

Israeli non-governmental organization IsraAID is sending eight highly trained volunteers to Louisiana this weekend to help flood victims return to their homes, salvage personal belongings and get back into a normal routine as soon as possible. “We watched the storm developing in the last few days and with the help of our local partners we got a snapshot of the enormous damage and the great need for assistance and rehabilitation,” said delegation head Naama Gorodischer, Global Programs Director for IsraAID. At least 13 people were killed and more than 60,000 houses were damaged in the Louisiana floods, which could be the largest natural disaster in the United States since Hurricane Sandy in 2012. IsraAID helped US communities after Sandy and five other calamities including Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and last year’s wildfires in Washington State. Seven Israeli volunteers joined veterans and aid workers from Canada and the United States in clearing debris and sifting through the toxic ashes, assisting local authorities and offering professional psychosocial support. According to [Israel21c](#), Even now, as thousands of Fort McMurray families are still not allowed back into their homes, the Israeli volunteers are continuing to provide specialized psychosocial training to several local agencies that give direct services to those most affected by the fire.

IRAN

Iran vessels harassed U.S. destroyer near Persian Gulf, Navy says

Four ships from Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps harassed a U.S. destroyer near the Persian Gulf in what the U.S. Navy called an “unsafe and unprofessional” interaction. The USS Nitze, an Arleigh-Burke class guided-missile destroyer, was transiting international waters near the Strait of Hormuz on Tuesday when the four Iranian vessels approached at high speed and failed to respond to 12 separate radio communications, according to Cdr. William Urban, a spokesman for the U.S. Fifth Fleet. The USS Nitze blew its whistle in five short blasts on three occasions—signaling the Iranian vessels were on a dangerous course—and fired off 10 flares in the direction of the approaching ships before altering course to avoid a potential collision, Cmdr. Urban said. As two of the Iranian vessels came within 300 yards of the destroyer, the quartet finally slowed speed and motored away from the U.S. ship, according to Cmdr. Urban, who characterized the interaction as a dangerous, harassing situation that could have led to further escalation. The incident was one of many interactions between Iranian and American ships in and around the Persian Gulf in recent months. But it was one of few the U.S. Navy has deemed unsafe or unprofessional. According to a U.S. defense official, the Navy deemed about 10% of the hundreds of interactions between Iranian and American ships unsafe or unprofessional in 2015 and the first half of 2016. According to [Reuters](#), the official said the number of interactions—both safe and unsafe—has increased this year compared with 2015.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Soldier lightly wounded in stabbing attack near Nablus

A soldier was lightly wounded in a stabbing attack at a junction on Highway 60 near Nablus on Wednesday afternoon, reports [Ynet](#). Palestinians were hurling stones from a travelling vehicle on a section of the highway between Kedumim and Yitzhar, hitting the windshield of a military vehicle and prompting troops from the IDF's Nahal Brigade to chase after them. During the chase, the Palestinian car made a U-turn and found itself blocked by the military vehicle, causing it to stop. The driver, who claimed he doesn't speak Hebrew, alighted the vehicle and stabbed a soldier in the neck. The stabbed soldier then shoots the stabber, neutralizing him. The soldier was treated at the scene and then evacuated to Beilinson Hospital in Petah Tikva and was released shortly thereafter.

ISRAEL AND THE WORLD

Netanyahu phones Putin to talk Middle East peace

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday night and discussed regional issues and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Just two days after Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said Moscow wanted to host talks between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Netanyahu spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday about the diplomatic process. According to the Kremlin presidential website, "It was agreed to continue intensive Russian-Israeli contacts at various levels." Netanyahu and Putin, who have met face-to-face four times in the last year, speak regularly on the phone, reports [The Jerusalem Post](#). Russia, which is currently taking a much more muscular role in the Mideast – and is perceived by many as trying to replace the US as the central foreign power in the region – has since 2005 expressed an interest in hosting Israeli-Palestinian talks. With Washington leading the diplomatic process, however, that idea never gained any traction. Asked about holding talks in Moscow, the prime minister's spokesman, David Keyes, replied that Netanyahu "is ready to meet President Abbas anywhere, anytime for direct peace talks without preconditions." Unfortunately, Keyes said, "Abbas continues to say 'no' and continues to present preconditions for such a meeting."

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Afghan baby's heart surgery story captures hearts worldwide

Baby Yehia has enormous chocolate-brown eyes. His family, Afghani refugees living in Pakistan, nicknamed their little boy "Yaya." They almost lost Yaya because he was born with multiple severe heart defects that doctors in India and Pakistan could not repair—or at least not for a price the family could afford. Yaya is now a 16-month-old walking miracle. Pediatric cardiologists from Israel's [Save a Child's Heart](#) nonprofit organization, based at the Wolfson Medical Center in Holon, performed a complex eight-hour operation. Yaya and his father are staying in SACH housing as he heals, and they should be able to return home in two or three weeks to meet Yaya's newest sibling, born just before the surgery. Since 1995, SACH doctors have repaired the hearts of more than 4,000 children from 51 countries, at no charge. About half these children are Palestinian Arabs from the West Bank and Gaza. Others, like Yaya, live in countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel, including Iraq and Syria. According to [Israel21c](#), no children from Afghanistan had been treated by SACH previously.