



Rabbinic Recap

The week ending March 18, 2016

U.S. – ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

U.S.-Israel Cyber Security Cooperation to Increase

On March 14, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Ya'alon agreed to increase U.S.-Israel ties in the cyber domain. According to a Department of Defense (DoD) press release, Sec. Carter reaffirmed America's "unshakeable commitment to the security of Israel and the importance of the U.S.-Israel defense relationship." "Following the October visit of Minister Ya'alon to Washington, the secretary and the minister discussed a number of ways to further strengthen cooperation on a range of issues including regional security," said the DoD. "The secretary and the minister also discussed developments in the region and agreed to continue to work closely to maintain the strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship." As the existing U.S. security assistance to Israel expires in 2018, discussions between the two allies are underway to conclude a new package. During his visit, Ya'alon told the media that he hopes the two nations will "finalize the aid agreement with the U.S. as soon as possible, during the terms of the current administration."

[Click here to read the full press release from the U.S. Department of Defense.](#)

Members of Congress Request Funding for U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperation

Members of Congress have called for additional funding as part of the U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperative Agreement in the Energy and Water Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2017. On March 15, a group of 135 representatives sent a bipartisan letter to Reps. Mike Simpson (R-ID) and Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), the chairman and ranking member of the House Appropriations subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, calling for continued funding for binational energy cooperation with Israel.

Led by Reps. Brad Sherman (D-CA), Peter Roskam (R-IL), Eliot Engel (D-NY), Bill Johnson (R-OH), Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Peter King (R-NY) the representatives wrote that "continued funding for the program will provide for collaborative U.S. and Israeli research and development efforts in areas critical to both the United States and Israel and unite our countries in the pursuit of increased energy security, energy independence and water efficiency."

On March 11, a bipartisan group of 21 senators sent a similar letter to Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, requesting "at least \$2 million, and up to \$5 million" for the agreement. The letter, led by Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), declared that "collaboration between the American and Israeli private sector and academia will significantly enhance U.S. efforts to develop alternative technologies and increase energy efficiency, to the benefit of our national security." "This program is an

important tool in our efforts to achieve greater energy security and independence,” wrote the senators. “It leverages small grant dollars to incentivize private sector innovation and new partnerships in the pursuit of a critical objective. Through this program, for example, companies across the United States are developing cutting-edge technologies with new partners in Israel. Since 2009, the program has issued awards for R&D in bioenergy, solar, wind, energy management and controls, fuel cells, and energy storage systems.”

IRAN

Iran preparing to dispatch snipers, commandos to Syria

According to [The Times of Israel](#), Iran signaled that it was training commandos and snipers to send to Syria, days after Russia announced it was pulling most of its troops out of the country to allow a diplomatic process to take hold. Iran, which said it would also send the troops to Iraq, characterized them as “military advisers.” General Ali Arasteh, deputy chief liaison of the Iranian Army’s Ground Force, told reporters in Tehran that the first group was undergoing preparation and may be sent soon, according to the semi-official Fars news website on Wednesday. “At some point we might decide to use our commandos and snipers as military advisers in Iraq and Syria,” he said. The Tasnim news site, regarded as close to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, reported Wednesday that the first contingent of “rapid reaction” commandos and snipers had attended a ceremony to mark the end of a two-month intensive course training with an Iranian-made sniper rifle. Iran has been backing Syrian President Bashar Assad in the Syrian civil war, providing troops, training, logistical support and cash.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

UN ranks Israel 11th-happiest country worldwide

Israel is the 11th-happiest country in the world, ranking behind Switzerland, Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Canada, and above the United States, which placed 15th, according to the UN’s 2015 World Happiness Report, released last week. According to [The Times of Israel](#), the results come from 2012-2015 Gallup polling data, which included between 2,000 and 3,000 respondents from each country. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their lives on a scale from 0 to 10. Most of Israel’s neighbors ranked low on the index, including the Palestinian territories (108), Egypt (135), Jordan (85), and Lebanon (103). The five unhappiest countries in the 2015 report were Rwanda, Benin, war-torn Syria, Burundi and Togo. One of the goals of the World Happiness Report was to challenge the assumption that happiness is directly correlated to wealth. While the countries that are happiest by and large do tend to be the wealthiest ones, it is social factors that play a larger role in the happiness of those countries, including the absence of government corruption and the degree of personal freedom.