



Rabbinic Recap

The week ending March 25, 2016

ISRAEL AND THE WORLD

Israel brings in 19 Yemeni Jews in final immigration push

Israel has brought in 19 Jews from war-ravaged Yemen in what immigration officials described as the last covert operation to move members of a dwindling Jewish community dating back two millennia. According to [Reuters](#), seventeen people arrived late on Sunday, including a man who doubled up as the rabbi and kosher butcher in the northern Yemeni town of Raydah, carrying a 500-year-old Torah scroll, said officials. Two others came in a few days earlier. The sacred manuscript's departure from Yemen marked the de facto end of a community that has lived alongside its Muslim neighbors for centuries, only to be driven out by a surge in fighting and political turmoil. "This is a moment of utmost significance for the state of Israel and Jewish immigration," the head of the quasi-governmental Jewish Agency for Israel, Natan Sharansky, said in a statement. After decades of airlifts of Yemeni Jews, the latest arrivals "brought the mission to its conclusion," he added. Other operations have transferred Jewish populations from Ethiopia and, more covertly, from Arab or Muslim states with which Israel has had no formal relation.

Istanbul bomber said to have tailed Israelis from hotel

The suspected Islamic State bomber who killed three Israelis in Saturday's bombing in Istanbul followed the tour group from their hotel to the restaurant, and waited outside for them before detonating his explosives, reports said Monday. The blast killed an Iranian national in addition to the three Israelis, and injured dozens, including 11 Israelis. The victims of Saturday's bombing were identified as Yonathan Suher, 40, Simha Dimri, 60, and Avraham Goldman, 69. Suher and Goldman were also named as United States citizens by the State Department. The victims of the attack were brought back to Israel for burial on Sunday. Turkish police on Sunday identified the bomber as Mehmet Ozturk, 23, an Islamic State member from Gaziantep province who spent two years in Syria before returning to Turkey illegally. [The Times of Israel](#) reported that Ozturk followed the tour group from their hotel in the Besiktas neighborhood of Istanbul, located near Taksim Square, to the restaurant on Istiklal Avenue where they ate breakfast on Saturday morning. When the group exited, the bomber blew himself up, the report said.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Hamas stages military exercises to test Gaza readiness

Hamas staged major military exercises Tuesday to test its readiness in the event of another Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip, which has been ravaged by three wars since 2008. The exercises involving 1,000 police and emergency services personnel were not meant to be seen as an "announcement of war," said a spokesman for the Islamist movement's interior ministry. According to [The Times of Israel](#), the media was barred from approaching the area, but loud explosions could be heard from a distance, with hospitals and schools placed on alert. Israel

and Palestinian fighters in the Gaza Strip have fought three wars since 2008, including a devastating 50-day conflict in 2014. The Palestinian enclave remains under an Israeli and Egyptian blockade. Hamas, an Islamist terror group, seeks the destruction of Israel. The Israeli security blockade aims to prevent Hamas importing weaponry.

IRAN

Iran said planning statue of captured American sailors

Iran is reportedly planning to build a statue of 10 U.S. sailors it briefly detained in its territorial waters in January. The head of naval forces in the country's Revolutionary Guards said the monument would be a "tourist attraction," Britain's Daily Telegraph reported Friday. According to the report, the statue will be erected on Kharg, a small Iranian island in the Persian Gulf close to the site of the arrests. The sailors, nine men and one woman, were detained in January after they drifted into Iranian waters off Farsi Island, an outpost in the middle of the Persian Gulf that has been used as a base for Revolutionary Guards speedboats since the 1980s, reports [The Times of Israel](#). "There are very many photographs of the major incident of arresting U.S. Marines in the Persian Gulf in the media and we intend to build a symbol out of them inside one of our naval monuments," Commander Ali Fadavi told the Iranian Defense Press news agency, the Telegraph said Tehran released the 10 sailors less than a day after it seized their two small ships. The incident set off a flurry of phone calls between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to secure the servicemen's release. Iran's state television said Tuesday that the Islamic republic retrieved thousands of pages of information from devices used by the U.S. sailors.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

California to grow rice sustainably with Israeli water-tech

The first sustainable farming initiative leveraging Israel's pioneering research and innovation in water technology will begin this spring at Conaway Ranch in Woodland, California. According to [Israel21c](#), the goal of the novel project is to reduce the vast amount of water ordinarily used in growing rice. "We believe this initiative represents the first use of drip irrigation in the US for a rice crop," said Kyriakos Tsakopoulos, president and chief executive officer of Conaway Preservation Group, owner of the 17,000-acre Conaway Ranch in north-central California. "We couldn't ask for better partners: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev's Zuckerberg Institute for Water Research and Netafim USA, the world's leading drip-irrigation manufacturer, both of which have experience growing rice in arid regions," he said upon announcing the project at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) Policy Conference in Washington, D.C. on March 20. "This effort could serve as a model for other farms and potentially save hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water in California if widely adopted." As California's farmers continue to seek solutions for the ongoing drought, this project will test whether Netafim's Israeli-engineered subsurface drip-irrigation method — a series of pipes delivering water directly to the root zone — can help them grow more rice while using less water and fertilizer as it has in other Netafim USA pilots in various parts of the world.