



Rabbinic Recap

The week ending May 13, 2016

U.S. – ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Senators Urge Designation of U.S.-Israel Center of Excellence

The Energy Department should work to establish a U.S.-Israel Energy Center, as suggested by law, Sens. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) wrote in a May 6 letter to Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz. The U.S.-Israel Center of Excellence in Energy and Water was authorized under the U.S-Israel Strategic Partnership Act, signed by President Obama in December 2014. The law calls for greater defense and energy cooperation between the two countries, including the possibility of creating a center that would foster innovation. Following Secretary Moniz's recent trip to Israel, Sens. Murkowski and Cantwell, the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, respectively, are pushing the department to move forward in authorizing the center. "As we noted last year, such a center has potential to be a leading hub for innovation and research and development for global energy and water issues," the senators wrote, adding later that they "respectfully request that you commence work on the center."

Bipartisan Letter Urges United States to Denounce Anti-Israel U.N. Resolution

In a May 9 bipartisan, bicameral [letter](#), four members of Congress urged Secretary of State John Kerry and U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman not to comply with a U.N. Human Rights Council resolution calling for foreign divestment from Israel. Spearheaded by Sens. Rob Portman (R-OH) and Ben Cardin (D-MD) in the Senate and Reps. Peter Roskam (R-IL) and Juan Vargas (D-CA) in the House, the letter highlights a March 24 resolution that calls for the 'blacklist' of several companies in areas of Israel. The letter called the resolution "unprecedented in scope," stating that it "threatens significant damage to both Israel and the United States, thus warranting a vigorous response." "Congress has long combatted boycotts and other discriminatory treatment of Israel. 'Blacklists' are among the most nefarious, as they serve only to isolate and stigmatize," wrote the members of Congress. "This new 'blacklist' is reminiscent of the Arab League boycott against Israel, and companies dealing with Israel, which for decades was used to strangle Israel's economy and coerce Israel into unilateral concessions. Any foreign company, including American ones, could be targeted by this effort even if they are conducting completely legal activities under U.S. and international law." In 2015, Portman, Cardin, Roskam and Vargas authored language in the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) law that discourages prospective U.S. trade partners from engaging in economic discrimination against Israel. "We urge you to quickly, publicly and forcefully commit that the United States will not comply with the UNHRC resolution," wrote the members of congress. "Great Britain has already taken this step. The United States must send the same signal, and should work with our other European allies to do the same – particularly the members of the European Union who desire free trade with the United States and are impacted by the TPA guidelines."

Editorial—Direct Talks, Not Imposed Solutions

In late May, France intends to host a conference to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—but Israeli and Palestinian representatives are not invited to attend. The French initiative comes on the heels of an unsuccessful Palestinian effort to present a one-sided anti-Israel resolution at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). These steps are harmful distractions that undermine efforts to resume serious Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy. As President Barack Obama said during his March 2013 trip to Israel, “There is no question that the only path to peace is through negotiations—which is why...the United States will oppose unilateral efforts to bypass negotiations...It has to be done by the parties.” On Dec. 30, 2014, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Samantha Power reiterated this message saying that “Peace will come from hard choices and compromises that must be made at the negotiating table.” AIPAC has continuously supported specific guidelines to achieve peace. Talks must be direct and bilateral, a solution cannot be imposed on the parties, both sides must be willing to make key compromises, disagreements should be resolved privately, and the United States must support and work closely with Israel.

[Click here to read the full editorial.](#)

IRAN

Iran revs up for its latest Holocaust cartoon contest

This weekend, Iran will stage its third cartoon exhibition about the Holocaust. The images on display, pooled from submissions that came in from various parts of the world, mock a history of genocide and Jewish suffering. The event has garnered global notoriety and is a persistent mark against an Iranian regime that has tried over the past year to show that it's ready to emerge from international isolation. “Senior Iranian officials have for many years systematically promoted Holocaust denial and distortion,” said Tad Stahnke, who heads the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Initiative on Holocaust Denial and Antisemitism. According to [The Washington Post](#), he added that the contest “discredits Iran and its people” and is an “affront” to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, which include some Iranians themselves.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

As Independence Day begins, Israelis move from commemoration to celebration

Israel abruptly crossed over from mourning to celebration on Wednesday night, as Memorial Day came to a close at sundown and Israel’s 68th Independence Day began. Mourning and somber speeches gave way to fireworks, concerts and parties across the country as the nation transitioned to Independence Day, with flags raising from half-staff back to full. The juxtaposition of the two days is a key part of Israelis’ experience of national mourning, ensuring that no commemoration completely excludes the achievement wrought by the sacrifice, and that the elation of independence is never far removed from an awareness of its cost, reports [The Times of Israel](#). Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recorded a short video that was screened at the start of the ceremony, just ahead of the speech by Knesset speaker Yuli Edelstein. In his message, Netanyahu said that the creation of the State of Israel ended the Jewish people’s dependence on others for its protection. “Sixty-eight years ago the State of Israel was founded; it was a tremendous historic event. For thousands of years, the Jewish people longed to regain their independence and sovereignty. Today, we have it. We control our destiny, we protect our lives,” he said.