



Rabbinic Recap

The week of March 31, 2017

U.S. - ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

David Friedman sworn in as U.S. ambassador to Israel

President Donald Trump gained his first ambassador Wednesday when attorney David Friedman was sworn in as America's envoy to Israel. According to the [AP](#), Vice President Mike Pence administered the oath of office to Friedman and hailed Trump's decision to nominate his former bankruptcy attorney for the sensitive diplomatic post as "one of the clearest signs" of the president's commitment to the state of Israel and the Jewish people. "The president of the United States of America is a lifelong friend of Israel and the Jewish people and, under his leadership, if the world knows nothing else the world will know this: America stands with Israel," Pence said as Friedman's wife, Tammy, their five children and most of their grandchildren watched. Ron Dermer, Israel's ambassador to the U.S., also attended the ceremony. Friedman, said he was "humbled" by the trust Trump had placed in him. He also noted his standing as the first of Trump's ambassador nominees to win Senate confirmation and be sworn in to office. "Those facts speak volumes about how highly the Trump-Pence administration prioritizes our unbreakable bond with the state of Israel," Friedman said.

Ambassador Nikki Haley vows to defend Israel against BDS

U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley received a standing ovation at the General Assembly Hall on Wednesday as she vowed to fight alongside Israel against the BDS movement. The Israeli Mission hosted its second annual summit against the boycott movement at the U.N. headquarters on Wednesday, titled "Ambassadors against BDS." The first such event was held in May last year with some 1,500 people in attendance, making it the largest anti-BDS gathering to date. "Know that the United States has Israel's back, and know that you now have a fighter and a friend in the UN to help you," Haley told the audience of more than 2,000 pro-Israel activists, students and representatives of Jewish organizations. "We should boycott North Korea, we should sanction Iran, we should divest from Syria, not Israel," she said. "It makes absolutely no sense and it has no connection to any reasonable definition of justice." [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported that Haley, who in her former position as governor of South Carolina was the first in the US to sign anti-BDS legislation, said she felt "privileged" to do so in 2015. "In our state we said we will not use taxpayers' funds to do business with any company that discriminates on the basis of race, color, religion, gender or national origin," said Haley, who was introduced to the podium as "a born leader." "And make no mistake, that is exactly what the BDS movement does." "What a tragic irony that today I am once again engaged in a fight against those who seek to harm Israel, but this time as the US ambassador to the United Nations," she said. Israel's permanent representative to the international body, Danny Danon, thanked Haley for recognizing the dangers of BDS and also being the first U.S. governor to sign legislation against the movement.

HEZBOLLAH

Israel prepares for next war with Hezbollah in mock village

Between a collection of concrete buildings with Arabic graffiti that are designed to simulate a typical Lebanese village, dozens of Israeli officers are gearing up for their next battle with Hezbollah guerrillas. It's a mission the Israeli military has focused on intensely in the decade since it fought an inconclusive month-long war with the Iranian-backed group, said [AP](#). But this drill at a base in northern Israel takes on added significance in the wake of rising tensions between the old adversaries. The friction includes a rare clash along the Syrian border this month in which Israel shot down an anti-aircraft missile fired at its planes as they were carrying out an airstrike on a suspected Hezbollah weapons convoy from Syria to Lebanon. In the past month alone, Hezbollah's chief Hassan Nasrallah has also threatened to strike Israel's nuclear facilities if Israel were to attack, and Israel has detailed a contingency plan to evacuate up to a quarter-million civilians from border communities to protect them from attacks from Hamas, Hezbollah or other Islamic militant groups. In another sign of the escalating feud, Israel's military chief, Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot, revealed intelligence that Hezbollah's top military commander was killed in Syria in May 2016 by rivals within the group — perhaps even on orders from Nasrallah himself.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Pulling water from air, making calls without touch

At the Israel Innovation Showcase at the annual [AIPAC Policy Conference](#) in Washington, DC earlier this week, more than 18,000 Israel advocates learned about a technology to extract water from air; an Arab-Israeli business accelerator; and a touch-free smartphone. To kick off the showcase on March 26, Prof. Alan Dershowitz introduced [Water-Gen](#) of Rishon LeTzion, whose patented GENius technology generates clean drinking water from the air. Water-Gen's "plug and drink" Atmospheric Water Generator, said to be the world's most energy-efficient module of its kind, can serve the water needs of single households to entire countries, requiring only electricity or solar power. [Israel21c.org](#) reported that Fadi Swidan and Eitan Sella came from Nazareth to talk about [Hybrid](#), the Israeli Ministry of Economy and Industry's accelerator for startups in the Arab sector. Swidan and Sella co-direct this unusual accelerator that leverages the expertise and connections of alumni of the famed IDF Intelligence Corps' Unit 8200. This elite group of veterans has spawned some of Israel's most successful high-tech executives. Hybrid favors startups with at least one Arab cofounder, but above all seeks to build thriving businesses. As Sella noted, "We're not doing anyone a 'favor' except the industry of Israel." Oded Ben-Dov, cofounder and CEO of [Sesame Enable](#), came onstage with Gary Fisher, a user with multiple sclerosis from Washington State, to demonstrate how the company's [touch-free](#) smartphones and tablets allow mobility-impaired people to make calls, read email, go on social networks, play games – activities most people take for granted. Two years ago, Caesarea-based Sesame Enable teamed up with [Google](#) and Israel's Beit Issie Shapiro to distribute its revolutionary motion-tracking technology free of charge to every Israeli who needs it. "Now we have hundreds of active users in Israel and in other countries, and we're looking forward to penetrating the US market," says Ben-Dov. There's even a user in Saudi Arabia.