



Rabbinic Recap

The week of May 12, 2017

U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Top U.S. Army General Aligns With Israeli Concern Over Iran and its Proxies

Iran's potential role in enforcing the Russian-proposed de-escalation zones in southern Syria has raised concerns for Israel, General Joseph Dunford, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman said on Tuesday during his visit to the country. Dunford, who was in Israel on his third official visit this week told reporters traveling with him that he discussed issues of mutual concerns in the region with Israeli military officials, including Iran's influence in the region, Hezbollah's presence in southern Syria and the presence of the Islamic State group in the tri-border area of Israel, Syria and Jordan. According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), while Jerusalem is pleased with the progress being made in the fight against ISIS, Israel is concerned of the role that Iran would play in the region and Syria "the day ISIS is defeated." "Clearly, the major concern is Iran's influence in the region—their malign activities in the region, what's happening with Iran in Iraq and Iran in Syria," the top U.S. general said according to Department of Defense news. "The greatest challenge from Iran is the Iranian threat network," which includes the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Quds Force and the support they provide for the Hezbollah, Dunford said, adding that should the Lebanese Shi'ite terror group attack, Israel "would have two fronts to deal with." "What we are doing now is prudently talking to military planners, and in our conversations with the Israelis we are asking about the proposal and what it would look like on the ground," Dunford said, adding that "it is fair to say that the Israelis would want to make sure that their security concerns are addressed."

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Launches Collaboration with Israeli Businesses

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has launched a new program to encourage American entrepreneurs to do business with their Israeli counterparts. Developed in partnership with Tel Aviv-based affiliate, the Israel-America Chamber of Commerce (AmCham Israel), the "Business Israel" program will bring executives from leading American business organizations to Israel over the next several years, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce announced on Monday. Business Israel was launched during this week's inaugural mission to Israel led by Myron Brilliant, executive vice president and head of international affairs at the U.S. Chamber, reports [The Jerusalem Post](#). "The U.S.-Israel commercial relationship supports thousands of jobs in the U.S. and drives technological innovation that benefits our companies and economies," Brilliant said. "By bringing American state and local chamber executives to Israel, we can encourage international collaboration and boost economic growth in our cities, states and country." "The strategic alliance between the United States and Israel is based on our shared values and goals, and I strongly believe that our bilateral commerce will surely guarantee further success," said Ofra Strauss, chairperson of the board at AmCham Israel as well as the Strauss Group.

HAMAS

Leading Hamas Official Says No Softened Stance Towards Israel

One of Hamas's most senior officials said on Wednesday a document published by the Islamist Palestinian group last week was not a substitute for its founding charter, which advocates Israel's destruction. Speaking in Gaza City, Mahmoud al-Zahar, a regular critic of Israel, said the political policy document announced in Qatar on May 1 by Hamas's outgoing chief Khaled Meshaal did not contradict its founding covenant, published in 1988. Triled for weeks by Hamas officials, the document appeared to be an attempt to soften the group's language towards Israel. But it still called for "the liberation of all of historical Palestine", said armed resistance was a means to achieve that goal, and did not recognize Israel's right to exist. "The pledge Hamas made before God was to liberate all of Palestine," Zahar said on Wednesday. The charter is the core of (Hamas') position and the mechanism of this position is the document." According to [Reuters](#), many Western countries classify Hamas as a terrorist group over its failure to renounce violence, recognize Israel's right to exist, and accept existing interim Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements. In its new document, Hamas said it agrees to a transitional Palestinian state within frontiers pre-dating the 1967 Middle East war but continues to oppose recognizing Israel's right to exist and backs an armed struggle. "When people say that Hamas has accepted the 1967 borders, like others, it is an offence to us," he said. "We have reaffirmed the unchanging constant principles that we do not recognize Israel; we do not recognize the land occupied in 1948 as belonging to Israel and we do not recognize that the people who came here (Jews) own this land. "Therefore, there is no contradiction between what we said in the document and the pledge we have made to God in our (original) charter," Zahar added.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Israel Soon to Announce Innovation Visa Program Hosts

The Israel Innovation Authority is set to publish in the coming weeks the names of the 12 incubators and accelerators selected to host foreign entrepreneurs in Israel as part of its Innovation Visas pilot program. The idea, announced in December, is to enable foreign entrepreneurs to learn from the Israeli ecosystem and eventually also benefit from government support should they set up a startup in Israel. Entrepreneurs who want to come and work in Israel need to apply for an expert visa and be sponsored by a company they work for. "We believe that entrepreneurs can benefit from working in our ecosystem and seeing how things are done here," said Salit Lev, the Industry Relations Manager at the Israel Innovation Authority who heads the Innovation Visas track. "But Israel will also benefit from this interaction, as it will lead to cultural diversity and expose our entrepreneurs and startups to different ways of thinking." According to [The Times of Israel](#), the entrepreneurs will be able to stay in Israel for 24 months while receiving support from the authority's Tnufa program, which aims to help inventors with good ideas at a pre-seed stage. The program was not set up to intentionally attract entrepreneurs to Israel, said Lev. "We have more than enough of our own," she said. But the initiative aims to provide a framework, lacking until now, to enable entrepreneurs to come to set up their ventures in Israel if they wish to do so, she said. The Innovation Authority will choose some 12 organizations, among which are local incubators and accelerators, that will act as "landing pads" for the entrepreneurs and guide them through the local high-tech ecosystem, Lev said. "We don't want these entrepreneurs just to come here; we want them to succeed," Lev said. "Within a month we will announce the names" of the selected hosts, she said.