



Rabbinic Recap

The week of February 9, 2018

PALESTINIANS

Israel Foils Smuggling of Explosive Materials to Gaza in Medical Crates

Israeli authorities at the Kerem Shalom Crossing foiled an attempt to smuggle explosive components into the Gaza Strip to be used for long-range projectiles, the Defense Ministry said in a statement on Sunday, the [Jerusalem Post reported](#). The explosives, hidden inside packages of medical supplies, were intercepted by security authorities this past week after crates with containers of medical equipment destined for the Strip were removed and packages inside the containers were taken to a laboratory for additional testing. The laboratory test was carried out using advanced equipment that checks a wide range of materials such as gases, liquids, powders, solids, metals and other materials. The materials seized by authorities were then identified as a central component in the preparation of explosive charges and in the high-trajectory projectiles fired toward Israel from the Gaza Strip. The laboratory that identified the materials removed in the medical shipment was set up several months ago at the Kerem Shalom crossing in order to locate contraband whose entry into the Strip is forbidden for fear of reaching terrorist groups like Hamas or Islamic Jihad. The laboratory is a joint project of the Crossings Authority, the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) and the Israel Police's crossing department, whose operational purpose is to identify the type of material within a short period of time. Israeli authorities, including the Crossing Authority, together with Shin Bet, COGAT, Israeli Police and Israel Tax Authority, regularly intercept illicit goods heading for Hamas at crossings from Israel into the Strip, including an attempt to smuggle explosive material hidden inside spools of medical material at the Erez Crossing in May.

HEZBOLLAH

U.S. and Argentina to Work Together to Drain Hezbollah of Funding

The [Times of Israel reported](#) that United States and Argentina are to work together more closely to cut off Lebanese Hezbollah's funding networks in Latin America, both nations' top diplomats said Sunday. Argentina has a large Lebanese expatriate population and U.S. authorities suspect groups within it of raising funds through organized crime to support the Iranian-backed terror movement. U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was in Buenos Aires for talks with his Argentinian counterpart Foreign Minister Jorge Faurie, and afterward they confirmed that the issue had come up. "With respect to Hezbollah, we also did speak today in our discussion about all of the region about how we must all jointly go after these transnational criminal organizations—narcotics trafficking, human trafficking, smuggling, money laundering—because we see the connections to terrorist financing organizations as well," Tillerson said. "And we did specifically discuss the presence of Lebanese Hezbollah in this hemisphere, which is raising funds, obviously, to support its terrorist activities. "So it is something that we jointly agree we

need to attack and eliminate,” Tillerson said. Faurie, standing by Tillerson’s side at a joint news conference, agreed, saying that South America had become a “zone of peace” and that outside groups must not be allowed to jeopardize this.

JORDAN

Jordan King Says No Israeli-Palestinian Peace Without U.S. Role

King Abdullah II of Jordan said Sunday that the United States remains essential to any hope of a peaceful solution between Israel and the Palestinians, despite criticism of the new U.S. stance on Jerusalem by Arab states and the Palestinians, according to a [report in the Times of Israel](#). “We cannot have a peace process or a peace solution without the role of the United States,” the monarch said on the CNN program “Fareed Zakaria GPS.” This was true even after President Donald Trump decided to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv—where nearly every other country has its embassy—to Jerusalem, he said.

U.S.-ISRAEL ALLIANCE

Amid Rising Tensions, U.S. Troops in Israel for Missile Defense Drill

With tensions high on both the northern and southern fronts, U.S. troops are in Israel and have deployed anti-missile defense systems across the country ahead of the biennial Juniper Cobra military exercise. The large-scale, five-day drill will simulate a massive missile attack on Israel from both fronts and will be led by the Israel Air Force, the IDF confirmed to [The Jerusalem Post](#) on Sunday. “Such exercises are part of a long-term strategy and part of the ongoing cooperation between the IDF and the U.S. military,” read the statement by the IDF’s Spokesperson’s Unit. The joint exercise with the U.S. Army European Command (EUCOM) is aimed at strengthening military cooperation against regional threats and promoting long-term security for Israel. The last Juniper Cobra exercise in June 2016 saw more than 3,000 American troops taking part in what is considered the flagship exercise of the IAF Aerial Defense Division. While the IDF said the drill, which has occurred every two years since 2001, is part of the annual training to maintain the readiness of troops, it comes amid a war of words with Hezbollah, which is thought to have an arsenal of between 100,000 and 150,000 missiles.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Israel’s Largest-Ever Winter Olympics Squad Heads to Korea

Ten Israelis athletes will represent Israel in four sports at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, February 9-25: short-track speed skater Vladislav Bykanov, Alpine skier Itamar Biran, skeleton racer Adam (AJ) Edelman, and figure skaters Alexei (Oleksii) Bychenko, Daniel Samohin, Evgeni Krasnopolsky, Paige Conners, Adel Tankova, Ronald Zilberberg and Aimee Buchanan, according to [Israel21c](#). This is Israel’s largest-ever Winter Olympics delegation since its first participation in the Games in 1994. Three of the current teammates also competed in 2014: Bychenko, Krasnopolsky and Bykanov. Israel has never won a medal in a Winter Olympics. This year, many fans have their hopes pinned on Bychenko, who earned the silver medal in the 2016 European Figure Skating Championships and is known for mastering difficult moves such as the quadruple jump.