



Rabbinic Recap

The week of February 23, 2018

IRAN

Iran, Deeply Embedded in Syria, Expands ‘Axis of Resistance’

When an Iranian drone flew into Israeli airspace this month, it set off a rapid series of strikes and counterstrikes that deepened fears over whether a new, catastrophic war was brewing in the Middle East. That flare-up ended quickly, if violently, with the drone destroyed and an Israeli jet downed after bombing sites in Syria. But the day of fighting drew new attention to how deeply Iran has embedded itself in Syria, redrawing the strategic map of the region, the [New York Times reported](#). Tactical advisers from Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps are deployed at military bases across Syria. Its commanders regularly show up at the front lines to lead battles. Iran has built and continues to back powerful militias with thousands of fighters it has trained in Syria. And it has brought in new technologies, like drones, to spy on enemies and perhaps to attack them from the sky. Both Israeli officials and Israel’s enemies say that any new conflict between Israel and Iran, or any of its allies, could mobilize Iran’s expanding network of militant proxies in multiple countries, what Iran refers to as “the axis of resistance.” “If there is a war, it will be regional,” said Kamel Wazne, the founder of the Center for American Strategic Studies, in Beirut, who studies the policies of the United States and Iran in the Middle East. “Any confrontation will be with the whole resistance front against Israel and its backers.”

Holding Iran Drone Part, Netanyahu Challenges: Do Not Test Israel's Resolve

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, during a speech at the Munich Security Conference on Sunday, brandished a piece of the Iranian unmanned aerial vehicle that Israel downed a week ago after it entered Israel’s airspace and warned Iran “not to test Israel’s resolve,” as reported by [the Jerusalem Post](#). Israel, Netanyahu said at the conference that was attended by Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, “will act not just against Iran’s proxies that are attacking us, but against Iran itself.”

PALESTINIANS

Haley to Abbas: U.S. Wants a Peace Deal but Will Not ‘Chase After You’

The [Times of Israel reported](#) that U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley on Tuesday said Washington would not “chase” the Palestinians to the negotiating table with Israel, following Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’s speech to the U.N. Security Council. [...] Although Abbas left the chamber after his speech, she dedicated a sizable portion of her time addressing the PA leader. “The United States stands ready to work with the Palestinian leadership,” she said to Abbas. “Our negotiators are sitting right behind me, ready to talk. But we will not chase after you. The choice, Mr. President, is yours.” Earlier in her speech,

she referenced the top Palestinian negotiator's admonishment of her earlier this month that she should "shut up." "I will decline the advice I was recently given by your top negotiator Saeb Erekat," she said. "I will not shut up. Rather, I will respectfully speak some hard truths." Haley told the Palestinians they had two choices: either go on a "path of absolutist demands, hateful rhetoric, and incitement to violence" or a "path of negotiation and compromise." The latter, she said, "remains open to the Palestinian leadership if only it is courageous enough to take it." "You can choose to denounce the United States, reject its role in peace talks, and pursue punitive measures against Israel in international forums like the U.N. I assure that path will get the Palestinian people exactly nowhere toward the achievement of their aspirations," she went on. "Or you can choose to put aside your anger about the location of our embassy and move forward with us toward a negotiated compromise that holds great potential for improving the lives of the Palestinian people."

EGYPT-ISRAEL RELATIONS

\$15 Billion Worth of Israeli Natural Gas to Be Sold to Egypt

The operators of the Tamar and Leviathan natural-gas fields have signed decade-long contracts to sell \$15 billion worth of natural gas to Egypt, according to documents made public by Delek Drilling LP on Monday, a sign of strengthening diplomatic ties, the [Jerusalem Post noted](#). The companies that operate the fields, which include Israel's Delek Drilling and Houston-based Noble Energy Inc. among other smaller partners, reached an agreement with Egyptian company Dolphinus to ship the gas over the first 10 years after production starts and no later than 2030. With the news, Israel will now be providing both Egypt and Jordan with natural gas, cementing ties with its two neighbors despite historically "cold" peace treaties.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

What the World's Top 10 Tech Firms Have in Common

The world's top ten tech companies—Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Google, Facebook, Alibaba, Intel, Oracle, Samsung and Baidu—increasingly have something in common: they're doing mission-critical work in Israel that's core to their businesses back at HQ, according to [Forbes](#). Let's take a look at how this trend is playing out. Earlier this year, Microsoft hired a 34-year-old cyber-security prodigy --a hacker essentially--as its new head of R&D in Israel. The young man, a veteran of the country's elite Unit 8200 (Israel's version of the NSA), will be responsible for future-proofing Microsoft's defense of its crown jewels in the cloud. Microsoft is a cloud-first company now, everything is there: Azure, Cortana, Office, even Minecraft. In other words, Microsoft's cloud has to be an absolutely critical part of the company's core business going forward, and the Redmond-based company is entrusting its security to a 34-year-old Israeli. Up until some six months ago, Amazon had only two lines of activity in Israel, one for its AWS business, and a drone R&D facility in Herzliya, just north of Tel Aviv, for its Prime Air business. Those are two pretty big lines of business for Amazon in and of themselves. But now Amazon is hiring 100 Israeli engineers and natural language processing experts to boost Alexa, its smart virtual assistant. The idea here is to significantly advance Alexa's vocal search capabilities for Amazon's core business: retail. Once again, we're seeing a global company, one of the most successful firms of all time, giving Israelis the toughest, most important, mission-critical challenges: Bring Alexa to life faster and better than anyone else, including Siri, Cortana, the Google app, or Bixby. [...] American tech giants aren't alone. China's Alibaba and Baidu are increasingly doing more -- and more important work -- in Israel too.