



# Rabbinic Recap

The week of April 27, 2018

## IRAN

### **Recent Iranian Shipments to Syria Concern U.S. Intelligence**

U.S. intelligence is monitoring a series of cargo flights from Iran into Syria that the U.S. suspects may be carrying weapons systems into Syria for potential use by Bashar al-Assad's regime or Iranian forces, [CNN](#) has learned. An administration official confirms to CNN that the flights took place and the U.S. and Israel are both concerned the cargo could potentially include weapons that could eventually be used to threaten Israel. While weapons shipments into Syria are not uncommon, these flights involving Iran have caught the attention of U.S. intelligence because they occurred in the days after the April 13 U.S. airstrikes on Assad regime targets. Rhetoric between Iran and Israel has also escalated in recent weeks over Tehran's involvement in areas of Syria that can be used to potentially launch missiles or aircraft that could target Israel.

### **Iran's Navy Commander Threatens to Sink U.S. Ships**

A top Iranian general has threatened to sink the United States Navy's ships, warning that the U.S. would find itself in a "catastrophic situation" amid an ongoing war of words between the countries over the possibility President Donald Trump could exit a landmark nuclear deal. "The actual information that the Americans have about us is much less than what they think they have. When will they figure this out? When it is too late," the Revolutionary Guard Corps's navy commander, Admiral Ali Fadavim, told Iranian television on Saturday. "They will definitely figure it out when their ships are sunk, or when they find themselves in a catastrophic situation," Fadavi threatened in an interview with IRINN TV, according to a translation by the Middle East Media Research Institute, as reported by [the Times of Israel](#).

## SYRIA

### **Russia Says Will Deliver New Air Defense Systems to Syria Soon, Escalating Tensions with Israel**

Russia plans to deliver new air defense systems to Syria in the near future, RIA news agency cited Russia's Defense Ministry as saying on Wednesday, [Haaretz](#) reported. The ministry added it plans to study a U.S. Tomahawk cruise missile captured by Syrian forces in a recent attack, in order to improve Russia's own missiles, RIA reported. The announcement comes a day after Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said that Israel may strike the Russian-made S-300 anti-aircraft defense systems in Syria if they are used against Israel. "One thing should be clear - if someone fires on our planes, we will destroy them," Lieberman said in an interview with the Israeli website Ynet. "What's important to us is that the weapons defense systems that the Russians transfer to Syria are not used against us. If they are used against us, we will act against them."

## U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

### Senior U.S., Israeli Defense Officials Conduct Bilateral Talks

This week, U.S. and Israeli senior defense officials conducted a series of bilateral meetings aimed at bolstering military cooperation. On April 24th, Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman traveled to the United States to meet with U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis and newly-appointed National Security Advisor John Bolton. Their meetings focused on Iran, Syria and U.S.-Israel cooperation in the Middle East. [AIPAC New Hub](#) noted on April 23rd that U.S. Army Gen. Joseph Votel arrived in Israel to meet with senior Israeli officials including Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot, National Security Adviser Meir Ben-Shabbat, and other senior Israeli defense officials regarding Syria and Iran. As the leader of CENTCOM, Gen. Votel oversees U.S. military operations across the Middle East. Votel has previously criticized Iran's behavior. "It is my view that Iran poses the greatest long-term threat to stability in this part of the world," he said in recent testimony to Congress. Votel is the second head of a U.S. Unified Combatant Command to visit Israel in recent months. In March, U.S. Army Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, commander of the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) traveled to Israel for the joint U.S.-Israel Juniper Cobra military exercise. "The U.S. is deeply committed to the defense of Israel. We will continue to work alongside the IDF to promote stability throughout the region, not only for the purposes of this exercise, but in the event of any real-world contingency," Gen. Scaparrotti said during the visit.

## ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

### Israeli Scientists Generate Atlas of The Human Genome Using Stem Cells

An atlas of the human genome using state-of-the-art gene-editing technology and human embryonic stem cells, which explains the roles that genes play in health and disease, has been created by Hebrew University scientists, according to [the Jerusalem Post](#). Prof. Nissim Benvenisty, director of the university's Azrieli Center for Stem Cells and Genetic Research and the senior author of the study, and colleagues published their findings in the prestigious journal *Nature Cell Biology*. Embryonic stem cells, which can become an adult cell in our bodies, are a unique resource. Their versatile nature puts them at the center of attention in the fields of regenerative medicine, disease modeling and drug discovery. In addition, the sequencing of the human genome and the identification of the entire set of genes responsible for our genetic identity are another milestone that has led to a new challenge of understanding the function of the genes in the human genome. The new Hebrew University study provides a novel tool to map the function of all human genes using human embryonic stem cells. The researchers analyzed virtually all genes in the human genome by generating more than 180,000 distinct mutations, combining CRISPR-Cas9 screening technology with a new type of embryonic stem cells that was recently isolated by the same research group. [...] "This study creates a new framework for the understanding of what it means to be an embryonic stem cell at the genetic level," said Dr. Atilgan Yilmaz, a postdoctoral fellow and a lead author on the paper. "The more complete a picture we have of the nature of these cells, the better chances we have for successful therapies in the clinic."