Ep. 27: The Trillion-Dollar Bet: U.S., Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Future of Defense Tech

written by Misgav Institute | 21.01.2026

In this episode of *Misgav Mideast Horizons*, we sit down with Isaac "Yitz" Applbaum – one of the most experienced investors in Israeli technology and a key figure at the intersection of Israeli, American, Saudi, and Emirati innovation – for a wide-ranging conversation on the future of defense tech, regional cooperation, and the U.S.–Israel relationship.

Yitz, Chair of Kinetica Partners and Senior Advisor to the Saudi Minister of Communications, IT, and Space, shares his remarkable personal journey from Brooklyn to Israel to the GCC, and explains why he believes Israel–Saudi normalization is coming sooner than most people think. Drawing on years of firsthand experience in the Gulf, he outlines where cooperation between Israel and Saudi Arabia could be transformational – particularly in defense, healthcare, AI, agtech, and water – and why the combination of Israeli innovation and Saudi scale could be a true "100X" moment.

We also dive deep into the global defense tech boom following October 7, and what it means for Israel's economy, innovation ecosystem, and international standing. Yitz explains why countries like Germany, Japan, and the United States are increasingly looking to Israel not just to buy systems, but to co-develop and co-invest in next-generation defense technologies. He discusses the rise of early-stage defense startups, the role of elite IDF talent, and what Israel's government can do to better support this rapidly growing sector.

In the latter part of the conversation, we explore how U.S.–Israel defense cooperation could evolve beyond traditional military aid toward deeper partnerships, joint projects, and large-scale initiatives. Yitz also reflects personally on October 7, the surge in antisemitism on both the Left and the Right, and how it has changed the way he engages with the world.

In the first part of the episode, we go beyond the headlines to discuss the latest

developments related to President Trump’s Board of Peace, Gaza, the Iran protests, Josh Shapiro and the Harris campaign, and deepening UAE–India ties.

This is a candid, insider discussion on technology, alliances, and the future of the Middle East—with someone who is helping shape all three.

👉 **Spotify**: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0gNfCcZvCLp43dXMSrqfp5?si=A9nQTVn3ScCGxEhaWMmKeA&nd=1&dlsi=cb3d6e6bc17c4565

👉 **Apple:** https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/countdown-to-snapback-sanctions-on-iran/id1822734204?i=1000727151332

Ep. 26 – Time to End U.S. Aid to Israel? Michael Oren Makes the Case

written by Misgav Institute | 21.01.2026

Is it time for Israel to wean itself off of American military aid? According to former Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Oren, the answer is a resounding yes.

In this episode of **Misgav Mideast Horizons**, hosts **Lahav Harkov** and **Asher Fredman** are joined by **Dr. Michael Oren**—historian, diplomat, and former deputy minister—for a provocative conversation on the future of the U.S.-Israel alliance, Iran, and potential flashpoints between Trump and Netanyahu. Oren argues that U.S. aid has rendered Israel “less than sovereign” and exposed the Jewish state to dangerous pressure during wartime.

Oren also provides a historian’s perspective on the collapse of the Iranian regime and Israel’s current geopolitical strength, and sets the record straight on one of the most controversial conspiracy theories in U.S.-Israel history: the **USS Liberty incident**.

👉 **Spotify**: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0gNfCcZvCLp43dXMSrqfp5?si=A9nQTVn3ScCGxEhaWMmKeA&nd=1&dlsi=cb3d6e6bc17c4565

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Ep. 25: Inside the New Iranian Revolution

written by Misgav Institute | 21.01.2026

As we kick off 2026, the Iranian regime finds itself at its most vulnerable point in 47 years. Following the devastating “12-Day War” that exposed the regime’s military weakness, and amidst a crushing economic collapse, the Iranian people are rising up with renewed courage.

In this episode of Misgav Mideast Horizons, hosts Lahav Harkov and Asher Fredman are joined by Mehrdad Marty Yousefiani, an Iranian-American strategic communications expert and former chief strategic counselor to Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi. Drawing on his deep ties to actors on the ground and in the Iranian diaspora, Marty takes us inside the current protests, explaining why this wave is fundamentally different from the past – and what the Day After could look like.

In the opening segment, Lahav and Asher take stock of the start of 2026—looking

at Israel's surprising economic and societal resilience, the political and demographic debates shaping the year ahead, and the fast-moving regional dynamics that are putting Tehran under unprecedented pressure.

Topics Discussed:

- The "Emperor Has No Clothes": How Israel's air superiority during the "12-Day War" shattered the regime's image of power.
- It's the Economy: Why the collapse of the rial and the "Bazaar strikes" are posing an existential threat to the Ayatollahs.
- The "Do No Harm" Doctrine: Marty's critical advice for President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu on how to support the Iranian people without tainting their movement.
- The Day After: Visions of a pluralistic, democratic Iran and the restoration of "fraternal relations" with Israel.
- Israel at 2026: Lahav and Asher analyze Israel's economic success—boasting a $64k GDP per capita—and the internal political shifts as the country moves past the war.

Don't miss this insider's look at the crumbling of the Iranian regime and what a free Iran could mean for the entire Middle East.

👉 **Spotify**: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0gNfCcZvCLp43dXMSrqfp5?si=A9nQTVn3ScCGxEhaWMmKeA&nd=1&dlsi=cb3d6e6bc17c4565

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Ep. 24: Inside the Room: Trump & Netanyahu

written by Misgav Institute | 21.01.2026

Following Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's high-stakes meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump, the world is asking: What really happens when the cameras turn off and the doors close?

In this episode of Misgav Mideast Horizons, hosts Lahav Harkov and Asher Fredman are joined by Ari Harow, former Chief of Staff and diplomatic advisor to Prime Minister Netanyahu. Drawing on his years of experience in the room where it happens, Harow takes us inside the dynamics of the Trump–Netanyahu relationship and explains how their ties and interests will shape what comes next in Gaza, Iran, and beyond.

In the first part of the episode, Lahav and Asher discuss the strategic implications of the ongoing anti-regime protests in Iran, the growing tensions between Israel and Turkey, and Israel's bold diplomatic recognition of Somaliland.

Topics Discussed:

• The "Three Ps": Harow reveals the formula that defines foreign policy success—policy, politics, and personal—and how Trump and Netanyahu are currently aligned on all three.

• What Comes Next: The American and Israeli positions on the "day after" in Gaza, the realities of disarmament, and the threats from Iran.

• The Florida Strategy: Why Netanyahu's extended stay in Palm Beach is about more than just winter weather—it's a strategic move to solidify ties with evangelicals and the Jewish community

• The Public Diplomacy Crisis: Harow offers a candid critique of Israel's public diplomacy, arguing for a total overhaul of how the Jewish state communicates with the American public.

• Politics vs. Security: A look at the accusation that Netanyahu's war decisions

are politically motivated—and the complex reality of governing during an existential conflict. Don’t miss this insider’s guide to Israeli decision-making and the future of U.S.–Israel relations.

👉 **Spotify**: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0gNfCcZvCLp43dXMSrqfp5?si=A9nQTVn3ScCGxEhaWMmKeA&nd=1&dlsi=cb3d6e6bc17c4565

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Ep. 23: Are Iran and Israel Heading Toward War?

written by Misgav Institute | 21.01.2026

Is a new war between Israel and Iran approaching—and what could trigger it? In this episode of Misgav Mideast Horizons, Asher Fredman speaks with Dr. Yossi Mansharof, one of Israel’s leading experts on Iran, about the growing risk of an Iran–Israel war and the possibility of wider regional conflict. As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prepares to meet U.S. President Donald Trump, Dr. Mansharof argues that the key question is no longer if Israel and Iran will clash again—but when. He analyzes Iran’s efforts to rebuild its military capabilities, the regime’s deepening internal crises, and whether regime change in Iran is a realistic strategic objective for Israel and the United States. The discussion also explores Iran’s evolving tactics, including cyber operations, recruitment of Israeli citizens, and threats to Israeli and Jewish targets worldwide—along with what Washington and Jerusalem must do now to avoid being strategically surprised. The conversation then turns to Hezbollah and Lebanon: whether the Lebanese state has the will or capacity to disarm Hezbollah, how Iran is working to rebuild

its most important terror proxy, and a strategy for weakening Hezbollah's grip on Lebanese society. A clear-eyed and urgent conversation about Iran, Israel, Hezbollah, and the most dangerous security challenges facing the Middle East today.

👉 **Spotify**: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0gNfCcZvCLp43dXMSrqfp5?si=A9nQTVn3ScCGxEhaWMmKeA&nd=1&dlsi=cb3d6e6bc17c4565

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Ep. 22: Bondi and the Battle Against Antisemitism

written by Misgav Institute | 21.01.2026

In the wake of the horrific antisemitic terror attack at Bondi Beach in Sydney—and amid a global surge in anti-Jewish violence— Lahav and Asher speak this week with former Israeli Special Envoy for Combating Antisemitism Michal Cotler-Wunsh about the "eighth front" of the war that Israel and the Jewish People are facing. Cotler-Wunsh—now CEO of the International Legal Forum—delivers a bracing, no-holds-barred assessment of how antisemitism has been normalized, why anti-Zionism is today's most dangerous strain of this ancient hatred, and how governments, universities, and social media platforms are failing to enforce their own laws and policies.

Cotler-Wunsh lays out the concrete legal, policy, and law-enforcement measures democracies must adopt now—starting with the full implementation of the IHRA definition of antisemitism—and explains how international law has been hijacked

and weaponized against Israel and other democracies fighting terror. Cotler-Wunsh also warns about the malign role of state actors such as Qatar and Turkey, whose Islamist propaganda and funding fuel extremism.

In the episode's opening segment, Lahav and Asher reflect on how the Bondi attack hit close to home, including the injury of Misgav Senior Fellow Arsen Ostrovsky. Asher also shares firsthand insights from recent reserve duty in Gaza, recounting the discovery of Hamas uniforms, training manuals, and stolen pillows from an Israeli hospital inside the home of a Hamas terrorist.

This is a sobering but urgent conversation about courage, effective action, and why antisemitism is not just a Jewish problem—but a warning sign for every democracy.

👉 **Spotify**: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0gNfCcZvCLp43dXMSrqfp5?si=A9nQTVn3ScCGxEhaWMmKeA&nd=1&dlsi=cb3d6e6bc17c4565

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Ep. 21: Yuval Steinitz on Iron Beam and the laser defense revolution

written by Misgav Institute | 21.01.2026

In this episode of Mideast Horizons, Lahav Harkov and Asher Fredman speak with Dr. Yuval Steinitz, former cabinet minister and now chairman of Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, about how Israeli technology has shaped the multi-front war of

the past two years. Steinitz discusses how Iron Dome, developed by Rafael, has prevented mass casualties and national paralysis by maintaining an exceptionally high interception rate. He describes the recent 12-day war with Iran as “the most technological conflict ever in human history,” highlighting Israel’s surprise strikes and rapid achievement of air superiority over Tehran.

Steinitz presents Rafael’s next breakthrough: the Iron Beam, the first system capable of downing rockets, missiles, mortars and drones with lasers. He outlines how the technology will push interception rates toward 100 percent while reducing the cost of each shot to only a few dollars. He also discusses deepening U.S.-Israel defense cooperation.

In the opening segment, Lahav and Asher examine instability along both the Gaza and Lebanon borders. They describe the realities on both sides of the “yellow line” inside Gaza, note Hezbollah’s increased activity a year after the Lebanon ceasefire, and address Iran’s economic and water crises. Domestically, they analyze Prime Minister Netanyahu’s unprecedented request for a presidential pardon and the political questions surrounding upcoming elections.

👉 **Spotify**: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0gNfCcZvCLp43dXMSrqfp5?si=A9nQTVn3ScCGxEhaWMmKeA&nd=1&dlsi=cb3d6e6bc17c4565

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Ep. 20: Why the West must fight

Muslim Brotherhood influence

written by Misgav Institute | 21.01.2026

In this episode of Mideast Horizons, Lahav Harkov speaks with Haras Rafiq, Vice President of the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, about ISGAP's new report on the Muslim Brotherhood's strategic expansion into the West. Rafiq traces the Brotherhood's evolution from Hassan al-Banna to Yusuf al-Qaradawi and outlines Tamkeen, its long-term doctrine for gaining institutional influence in liberal democracies. He explains how the movement pursues political entry, narrative control, and the reshaping of Muslim communities, and further discusses how groups such as CAIR emerged from this ecosystem. He warns that antisemitism framed as anti-Zionism has become a key recruitment tool and that Islamist ideas have spread in part because Western societies hesitate to confront them.

Rafiq highlights Qatar's central role as the Brotherhood's remaining state patron, from Al Jazeera's dual-track messaging to extensive funding of U.S. universities and describes how ISGAP investigations have begun exposing these soft-power networks. He addresses President Trump's directive to explore designating Brotherhood chapters as foreign terrorist organizations and discusses methods for effectively pushing back against Islamist influence.

In the introductory segment, Lahav maps the history of the Muslim Brotherhood in Israel, tracing its early influence under the Grand Mufti, the emergence of Hamas from its Gaza branch, and the later split between the Northern Branch and the Southern Branch (Ra'am) inside Israel. She explains how the Southern Branch positioned itself as a pragmatic political actor while the Northern Branch was banned for its ties to Hamas and discusses the recent uproar over Islamic Movement charities accused of funneling funds to Hamas-linked entities.

👉 **Spotify**: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0gNfCcZvCLp43dXMSrqfp5?si=A9nQTVn3ScCGxEhaWMmKeA&nd=1&dlsi=cb3d6e6bc17c4565

👉 **Apple:**

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Ep. 19: Benny Gantz Speaks Out: Gaza, the Palestinians, Politics – and Securing Israel's Future

written by Misgav Institute | 21.01.2026

Former Israeli Chief of Staff, Defense Minister and Alternate Prime Minister **Benny Gantz** joins *Mideast Horizons* for one of his most candid and comprehensive interviews since October 7. In this wide-ranging conversation with **Asher Fredman**, Gantz lays out his **new security doctrine**, insists that Hamas will be disarmed, and discusses Israel's evolving strategy toward **Iran**, **the Palestinian Authority**, and the **Abraham Accords**.

Gantz breaks down:

- Why Israel cannot return to the **pre–October 7 security paradigm.**
- Whether an **international force** can really demilitarize Gaza.
- What happens if Hamas refuses to disarm.
- The day after **Mahmoud Abbas** and the looming crisis in the West Bank.
- How Israel should prepare for a **regional defense alliance** with Saudi Arabia and its Abraham Accords partners.
- The strategic lessons from past Gaza wars — and why Israel must adopt a new **"strategic initiative" pillar.**
- The future of U.S.–Israel military cooperation and debates over American aid.
- Israeli politics and the need for a State Commission of Inquiry into the events that led to October 7.

Direct, thoughtful, and at times blunt, Gantz offers a rare inside look into his

thinking about **the next five years**, the risks ahead, and what it will take to secure Israel's future.

👉 **Spotify**: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0gNfCcZvCLp43dXMSrqfp5?si=A9nQTVn3ScCGxEhaWMmKeA&nd=1&dlsi=cb3d6e6bc17c4565

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Ep. 18: Setting the record straight on Iraq, Israel and neoconservatism

written by Misgav Institute | 21.01.2026

In this episode of Mideast Horizons, Lahav Harkov speaks with Dr. David Wurmser, who served as senior advisor to U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and special assistant to Under Secretary of State John Bolton. Wurmser offers a rare, behind-the-scenes portrait of Cheney during the Iraq War, recalling his frustration with policymakers who distanced themselves from the conflict when it became politically difficult, and his enduring sense of duty toward the soldiers serving there.

Wurmser reflects on divisions within the Bush administration that shaped the Iraq War strategy. The conflict between advocates of overwhelming force and those favoring a lighter footprint, which relied on supporting a local or exile Iraqi army to take the lead, left the United States caught between conflicting approaches, ultimately harming the war effort. He critiques the broader American impulse to

pursue rapid social transformation in the Middle East, arguing that genuine reform must be gradual and organic. Addressing claims that Israel encouraged the invasion, he stresses that Israeli officials “vehemently opposed” it and repeatedly warned Washington that Iran, not Iraq, was the true danger.

Exploring the intellectual roots of neoconservatism, Wurmser traces its evolution from the moral clarity of the Reagan era to its post–Cold War misapplication, suggesting that one of the Iraq War’s central flaws was “overconfidence in the Iraqi people.” Finally, he revisits the much-debated “Clean Break” paper he co-authored for Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996, clarifying that it did not advocate an American war but called for Israel to assume greater strategic self-reliance and act as a confident, integrated Western ally. “It was the inversion of what people say it was,” he concludes, arguing that Israel had matured from a state in need of protection to a strategic pillar of the West.



Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0gNfCcZvCLp43dXMSrqfp5?si=A9nQTVn3ScCGxEhaWMmKeA&nd=1&dlsi=cb3d6e6bc17c4565



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