

The Well on the Table

Four countries met in Tehran, and Iran said they agreed the region should guard itself. This week's Torah reading has something to say about how a pact between neighbours begins.

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · Jerusalem · Tuesday 27 October 2026 / 16 Cheshvan 5787

On Monday 26 October 2026, three men flew into Tehran: Saudi Arabia's defence minister, Prince Khalid bin Salman; Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir; and Turkey's intelligence chief, Ibrahim Kalin. Their countries signed the Mecca defence pact in August, under which an attack on one is an attack on all. They met Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian, its foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, and the secretary of its Supreme National Security Council, Mohsen Rezaei.

Riyadh said the trip was meant to open channels to "prevent the return of military escalation." Late that night the four countries issued a joint statement: they "agreed to continue the dialogue." Nothing concrete was announced.

Rezaei gave the meeting its slogan. Security in the region, he said, "should be achieved by the countries themselves," and "we must prevent any kind of foreign intervention."

Here's what else happened in those same hours. On Monday the Houthis, who are aligned with Iran, claimed another attack on Riyadh's airport and on Saudi oil pumping stations. On Monday evening the Saudi-led coalition said it downed three drones over Riyadh and the south of the kingdom. Early Tuesday it intercepted three ballistic missiles aimed at the Eastern Province and four more drones. Earlier this month a Houthi strike on King Khalid International Airport killed at least 13 people.

And the "foreign" part? A Pakistani official told Reuters that Munir came to Tehran with President Trump's blessing to pursue diplomacy, carrying a proposal meant to offer something to both Washington and Tehran.

So I have two questions. If the region should keep its own peace, does that include the missiles fired at Saudi cities while the Saudi defence minister sits in Tehran? And if the American role is the problem, why did the mediator arrive with an American blessing?

Regional choice is a fair principle. On 15 September 2020, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed the Abraham Accords at the White House. Washington brokered them, and the signing states chose them, for their own reasons and with open eyes. Choice and an outside broker can live together. What a pact can't live without is honesty about what's hurting you.

This week we read Vayeira. Avimelech, king of Gerar, comes to Avraham and says, "G-d is with thee in all that thou doest," and asks him to swear (Bereishit 21:22–23). Avraham answers, "I will swear" (21:24). But before any covenant is made, "Abraham reproved Abimelech because of the well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away" (21:25). The seized well goes on the table first. Only then do the two men make a covenant at Be'er Sheva (21:27).

A pact that skips the seized well is a photo opportunity. If the talks in Tehran continue, as all four countries say they will, the first item belongs to the country being shot at.

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