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REPORT

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# Why So Many Elections in Israel?

By Shira Sorko-Ram

**O**n the first day of November, Israel will have held its fifth election since 2019!

For the most part, when outsiders consider Israeli politics, they look at one major issue—land. But running a nation is always more than merely defining its boundaries, which is why few people understand Israeli politics outside of Israel. With its historical and spiritual significance, Israel is by no means an easy pill to swallow. Complicated, intricate, arduous—there's not a single word that can effectively describe the complexity of the system used to rule this ancient bit of real estate.

While political parties in Israel are referred to as “left” and “right” in ideology, the multifaceted nature of Israel's issues means there is no “normal” left or right as in other democracies—only parties where one tries to weigh the most good and the least bad to comfortably pick a side and vote.



On the bright side, this means you may find you can agree with virtually every party on something—and when they are in power you can pray they will advance the areas in which you agree. On the downside, this also means the party you inevitably vote for may stand

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The Knesset, Israel's Parliament building in Jerusalem

for things you also seriously oppose. For Israel's Messianic Jews, the conundrum is more than theoretical. How should we vote as Messianic Jews? How would you vote if you were in our shoes?

Should we vote for those wanting to secure all the land of Israel, as the Bible teaches? Or should we go with the party most tolerant of Messianic Jews and our activities?

Which party will give us the most freedom to preach the Good News in Israel and crack down on persecution of Messianic Jews across the country?

And what about party attitudes toward LGBTQ and abortion?

What if the party that has the "best" ideology, comparable to God's promises of the Land, is also known to be the most corrupt? Or the most violent and hostile toward others?

Also, who would be the best prime minister to represent us around the world? And who would be the best to supervise security against Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, Syria and terrorists from everywhere?

The hard reality is—no one person or one party is ideal for all these issues.

## How it Works

There are always many political parties formed to try to gain Knesset seats in an election. However each party knows that they must have some chance to reach a threshold of 3.25% of the total votes to win seats in the Knesset. Most learn by the polls that they have no chance, and so fall by the wayside. In this election "only" 13 parties managed to register for this election, and yet there is no guarantee that all of the smaller parties will win seats.

Power can fluctuate drastically as the dominance or even existence of a political party can change from election to election. The general results are known fairly quickly after polls close, but there is always a seat or two that shift parties, depending on the final count, which takes about a week. Assembling a coalition of at least 61 votes, however, may take weeks or months—or not at all, resulting in re-elections.

In the meantime, Yair Lapid will continue to serve as Interim Prime Minister until Israel is able to form a new government.



# PARTIES ON THE RIGHT

**Likud:** Largest party, led by Benjamin Netanyahu. Likud has consistently emphasized the right of Jewish settlements in the West Bank but has not explicitly ruled out a Palestinian state. The party is considered more moderate, having less “religious” candidates, compared to its fellow right-wing parties. However, the Likud must have all religious parties join them (including the ultra-Orthodox and extreme right-wing parties) in order to potentially create a ruling government of at least 61 Knesset members. For them, LGBTQ and abortion are not areas of concern.

Ideology aside, Netanyahu’s 15-year rule has resulted in numerous charges of corruption which have yet to be resolved in court.

**Religious Zionism:** Leader is Ben-Gvir, popular among Israeli youth. Pro-Land of Israel, uses violent threats and purposely stirs up rioting among Arab Israelis and Palestinians. Ben-Gvir’s faction calls for a one-state solution (no Palestinian state), which includes annexing the West Bank into Israel proper.

Their goal is to “deepen Jewish identity in students” and they are against “freezing construction of Jewish settlements, releasing

terrorists, or negotiating with the Palestinian Authority.” Ideologically, Ben-Gvir believes the way to protect Israel is primarily by the sword. He has spoken favorably about people like Baruch Goldstein who murdered 29 Arabs and injured 125 in the 1994 Hebron massacre.

**United Torah Judaism:** Mostly right-wing Ashkenazi (European) rabbinical Jews. Led by an authoritative Rabbinical elite who demand complete control over citizenship and authorizing marriages and funerals for Israeli Jews. Demand welfare for half of ultra-Orthodox men who will not work or serve in the army. Demand funding for their schools, but refuse to teach math, Hebrew, English, etc. or subjects that will prepare children for the civilian workforce.

Have organizations that search out Messianic Jews, to deny them Israeli citizenship, marriage and burial services. Have been the preeminent persecutors of followers of Yeshua. Don’t like abortions or LGBTQ, especially gay parades in Jerusalem, but as Knesset members, tolerate both and do little to legally oppose it. Do not believe in the legitimacy

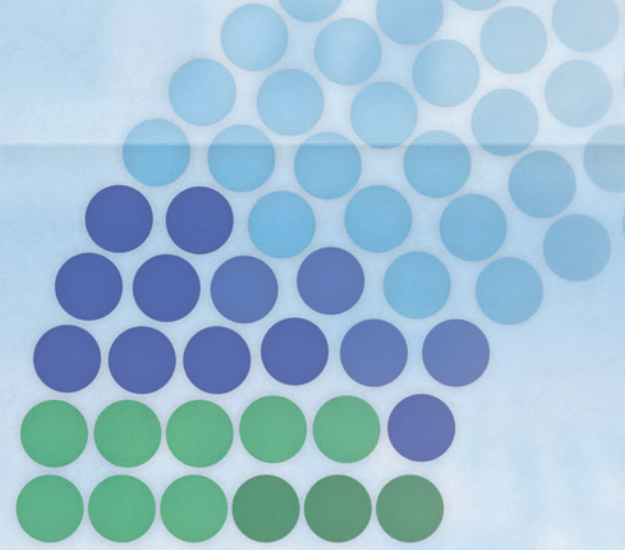
of Israel as a democratic (secular) nation. UTJ is the only non-Zionist right-wing party, and therefore, has no formal opinion on increasing Jewish population in the West Bank.

**Shas:** Mostly Sephardic (Latino/Middle Eastern) Jews also led by Rabbinical elite. Right-wing, but somewhat less extreme. Most Sephardic Jewish men work. Nevertheless, their leaders have no tolerance for Messianic Jews concerning aliyah, marriage or burial rights.

Both Shas and UTJ parties are usually compliant toward the Likud party’s coalition politics if they receive large financial benefits—far more proportionally than the rest of the Israeli population. Shas opposes any freeze on constructing Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Condemns violence against the LGBTQ community, but is anti-LGBTQ and against Pride parades in Jerusalem.

If these four parties produce a minimum of 61 out of 120 Knesset seats, they intend to accept Benjamin Netanyahu as the next Prime Minister.





# THE “NEVER NETANYAHU” PARTIES

The “anyone-but-Netanyahu” parties are comprised of the outgoing coalition. The incredibly unlikely union of eight parties, ranging ideologically from conservative, to center, to liberal, plus an Arab party united simply to get past the gridlock of three consecutive inconclusive elections and years of an interim government that couldn’t address important domestic issues.

These party leaders did what never had been done in the history of modern Israel. Although coming from all the different streams of ideology, they put aside most of their platforms and humbly agreed to work together so the Israeli people could have a real government. The coalition was told it wouldn’t last a week. The coalition lasted a year. These same eight parties may attempt to reconstruct the same coalition.

**There is a Future:** Led by present Interim Prime Minister, Yair Lapid. Centrist Liberal party. Good, charismatic personality, honest and hard-working. Advocates a two-state solution but emphasizes it must be a peace that will lead to security, not peace that will destabilize the Middle East. Aims to advance women’s issues for high-level working positions in business and politics. Has been accused of working against Jewish believers as well as quietly collaborating with some.

**National Unity Party:** Headed by interim Minister of Defense, General Benny Gantz. Center-Right party. Some of his party members would be tolerant of Messianic Jews, and others not. Views Israel as the nation-state

for the Jewish people. If both Netanyahu and Lapid are unable to form a government of 61, Gantz will offer himself as an alternative.

**Jewish Home:** Headed by Ayelet Shaked. Very right-wing but left Netanyahu’s party and joined the most recent “never-Netanyahu coalition” as former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett’s right-hand assistant. She is now being punished by right-wingers for leaving Netanyahu and joining a coalition with an Arab party. Her party may not pass the 3.25% threshold of votes, and if it doesn’t, the votes she does get will be spread across all the other parties. The question is what will Netanyahu do if she can offer the crucial 61st seat in a coalition?

**Israel Our Home:** Headed by Avigdor Liberman, who is originally from Russia. Secular nationalist right-wing. Pro-Land. Tolerant of Messianic Jews, but outspoken against rabbinical religious sects who demand disproportionate funding for their communities. He was Minister of Finance in the last government and diverted much of the funding to many other critical areas that, in the past, had been dished out to non-working ultra-Orthodox.

In the next Knesset, Liberman said the first bill he would push would be to make it harder to topple a government. Israeli governments succeed or fail by a majority of 61 lawmakers in the 120-seat Knesset. Liberman proposed a 90-vote majority to topple a government in its first



two years. He said that when you promise two years of political stability, the citizens of Israel profit.

Maintaining political stability in Israel is critical. This country has had 36 governments in its 74 years. Though Liberman has a sketchy record in other areas, this is the kind of creative out-of-the-box solutions one could appreciate about him.

**Labor Party:** Ultra-idealistic center-left social democratic and Zionist, tolerant of Messianic Jews. Supports a mixed economy of capitalism with strong social welfare programs. Supports same-sex marriage, legalization of cannabis, advancing surrogacy rights for gay couples, and some public transportation on Shabbat (which is good for believers who need it to get to their congregation's services on the Sabbath).

Labor supports a two-state solution and the creation of an independent, demilitarized Palestinian state—while supporting Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.

**Meretz:** Left-wing; wants a peace agreement with Palestinians, peace with Arabs; Jerusalem to be two capitals for Israel and Palestinians; actively promotes LGBTQ; tolerant of Messianic Jews. (What a mixture!)

**Ra'am:** Leader is Mansour Abbas, who made history as the first Arab party to join a governing coalition last year. He was able to work with the Jewish parties when he said, "I recognize Israel as a Jewish state!" All the more surprising because he is a religious Arab from the Muslim Brotherhood. Because of his religious beliefs, he kept the liberal parties of the recent coalition from pushing LGBTQ agendas, because they respected Islam's conservative values. Refused to cooperate with the coalition until Israel ceased trying to move Bedouin squatters from public land in the south. As an Arab, he wouldn't oppose Messianic Jews.

**Arab parties that have never served in a governing coalition:**

**Balad, Hadash and Ta'al** are three parties who sometimes join together to pass the 3.25% threshold and then separate once elected. They are voted in by primarily middle-class and secular Arabs along with far-left Jewish voters. Due to their support of the "return" of millions of Palestinian Arabs into Israel proper, as well as the forming of a Palestinian State and refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state—no parties in the center or right will even consider them for a coalition.

## Possibilities and Rumors

Israelis go to the polls for round five since 2019, skeptical but hopeful that it resolves the current gridlock. Technically speaking, Israel's Knesset has not completed a four-year term since 1996. But the issue is only getting worse as the last four elections have offered up only a limping and short-lived coalition, at best.

There is a very real possibility that no one will be able to form a new government this time around. If so, we will then prepare for a sixth election costing millions of shekels, with no assurance it will be successful.

Rumors that if this election does not produce a ruling government, Likud members would probably be forced to oust Netanyahu, as it is widely believed if he were out of the Likud party, Knesset members would quickly form a government. November is the crucial time of coalition negotiations, and the prayers of righteous men and women are promised to avail much. It's time to PRAY for God to establish a government in Israel for His glory! ■



John Theodor / Shutterstock



# ISRAEL'S BEDOUIN DILEMMA



Kotek / Alamy

By Shira Sorko-Ram

I had just arrived in Israel thinking I would stay for a couple of months to help an Israeli minister leaving for meetings abroad.

As I love languages, I immediately signed up for a course in Hebrew. It was just after the Six-Day War, and my class was full of new immigrants, plus a few Arabs who grew up in Judea and Samaria, under Jordanian rule. Now these Arabs were dealing with a new world, a new government, and learning a new language.

The Israeli government wanted these students to also learn something about Israel's history and culture. Our first outing hosted by the university took place on Tu B'Shvat, the holiday when Israelis plant trees. So, on that foggy winter day in February 1968, our class was driven to the newly-

liberated Judean hills where we all planted a tree under the protective eyes of Israeli soldiers just a few meters away. Planting trees became part of the new identity of early Jewish pioneers.

Some of the most spectacular scenery in Israel's southern desert contrasts the waterless rocky mountains with gorgeous swaths of trees. Israel has learned how to plant and grow trees, even in the desert.

As Jews began to return to the Holy Land in the late 1800's, they found a very desolate landscape. Trees were literally non-existent. A few Arabs would migrate into what was once Israel, and begin to farm a patch, but then roaming Bedouin tribes would also enter the land, often murder the Arabs, and steal their crops. They would then remain long



*Even the wilderness and desert will be glad in those days. The wasteland will rejoice and blossom with spring crocuses. Yes, there will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy! The deserts will become as green as the mountains of Lebanon, as lovely as Mount Carmel or the plain of Sharon. There the LORD will display his glory, the splendor of our God. Isaiah 35:1-2*



enough to graze their sheep and camels until the land was again bare, and then move on from the Holy Land for new grazing.

Since the early twentieth century, the Jewish people have planted 250,000,000 trees! The Jewish National Fund, in charge of tree-planting, is proud to point out that Israel is the only country in the world that ended the twentieth century with more trees than there were in 1900.

### Life as a Bedouin

This year, the Jewish National Fund began to clear another area in the desert to plant another swath of trees in the Negev. But these few acres were one of the triggers that began the dissembling of Israel's last government. It was all about the Bedouin tribes living in the desert.

When the Bedouin saw the saplings, they began to riot, clashing with the police and damaging cars, and even a train. The leader of the only Arab party in the ruling government, Ra'am, threatened to quit the coalition if the trees were planted. That would have brought the government down. The planting stopped.

### The Bedouin and the Land

When Israel was established, there were 12,000 Bedouin living mostly in the Negev. Israel gave them all Israeli citizenship. The Bedouin, however, have one of the highest birth rates in the world due to their multiple wives. As such they have already multiplied exponentially to some 300,000.

The government has sought for years to relocate the Bedouin into

organized, recognized cities, but most tribes and extended families have refused, insisting they stay where they are. They regard forestation work as an attempt to keep them from taking over more of Israel's state lands. They see the Negev as their land and accuse the Israeli government with trying to depopulate the Bedouin.

Most people do not realize that the Negev desert composes 60% of all of Israel's landmass. As such, Joel Rivlin, son of the former President Reuven Rivlin and head of the Bedouin government division, explains that in order to fulfill the Zionist vision, Israel must protect state lands from illegal squatting.

Nevertheless, Israel does not disregard their claims. When a Bedouin family makes a claim that an area is theirs, they are summoned to the courts and

Aerial shot of Israel's afforestation efforts in the Negev desert near a Bedouin encampment





Des E Gershon / Alamy

Bedouin women and a child in the maharama (women's area) of a tent pitched on an Israeli farmer's land in the Negev

asked to prove their ownership. In fact, 50% of the land Bedouin communities say is theirs, is now going through legal proceedings to determine ownership. Usually, they don't have anything to show, citing "oral tradition."

### The Mafia and Islamification of the Bedouin

Though the Bedouin are famous for their hospitality and warm culture (being hosted in a Bedouin tent is an amazing experience!) their communities live by their traditional laws of polygamy and honor killings. And because the Bedouin refuse to recognize the laws of the State of Israel, their communities are ruled by mafia-type lords.

Over one third of the Negev Bedouin population lives in impoverished shanty towns which were built without careful planning—with no schools, electricity, sewage or running water. Their unrecognized townships—45 in all—are scattered

across the desert. As squatters, they have no police or formal government control.

Radical Islamists, seeing an opportunity, have infiltrated these Bedouin. Traditionally, Islam was never a prevalent factor in Bedouin life, since Islam stresses allegiance must be first of all to Allah. The Bedouin's primary allegiance has always been to the tribe. Only in recent years has this begun to change as Islamists have found rich soil to expand their religion of hate toward Israel. The Bedouin mafia fits in perfectly to cause chaos and lawlessness, terrorizing both fellow Bedouin and local Jewish Israelis in the south.

These are violent chieftains who bring in drugs, traffic women from Gaza, in effect transporting more wives for Bedouin men. Their culture is cruel, especially for women; 97% of women have suffered repeatedly by a relative, and at least 24% have been sexually assaulted. The majority say they accept it as a decree from God that they cannot change.

Officials say they have no way to stop an ethnic group that has been practicing these "traditions" for thousands of years. Meanwhile their mafia are turning once-safe Jewish communities in the Negev into violent neighborhoods. A Knesset member noted that if Israelis try to hike in the Negev, they can't leave their cars for ten minutes without returning to a shattered shell of a car.

Not long ago, there was a shoot-out between tribes in Beersheba's regional hospital!

The mayor of Beersheba, the largest city in the south, said this crosses all red lines. He continued, "The Bedouin are a ticking time bomb. Beersheba is a city built for growth. But because of the illegal encampments surrounding it, it isn't growing as it should. This bomb is waiting patiently to explode, unless it is defused now, not tomorrow," warned the mayor.

Regavim, an Israeli NGO for the protection of Israel's state lands, demanded through right-to-know laws to find out if the government is involved with payments to the Bedouin mafia. Shockingly, they found the government regularly pays millions of shekels to local mafia chiefs for non-existent "security services" for schools and public buildings. The bottom line is that government funds which should be used for the benefit and welfare of the Bedouin community are ending up in someone's pocket. Not surprising, Jewish farmers and businesses must also pay "protection money" to keep the Bedouin from stealing or destroying their properties.



## Indigenous or Nomadic

The Bedouin dilemma long ago caught the eyes of international anti-Semitic NGO's on the lookout for opportunities to prove Israel a racist and apartheid nation. They call for action by lobbying the halls of Europe's rulers, promoting a highly biased portrayal of the Bedouin issue. They demand that whatever lands the Bedouin say is theirs must be accepted by the international courts, ignoring extensive court proceedings in Israel—and ignoring the fact that the United Nations was the one that voted the Negev desert would belong to Israel in 1947.

These NGO's have recently begun to argue that the Bedouin are “indigenous” to the Negev, and that Israel's actions are a policy of “racial discrimination” and “disinheritance,” and of course the usual claim of “human rights violations.”

Israel rejects these accusations: “We are not expelling Bedouin from Israel. These are national lands and we have a right to protect them

for all citizens.” By definition, the Bedouin are a nomadic people who have wandered throughout the Middle East for thousands of years. One simply can't be nomadic and indigenous at the same time. Moreover, no one considers the Bedouin living in Egypt, Jordan or Saudi Arabia as indigenous; only as it suits, in Israel.

Regavim warns, “Our worst fear is that the State of Israel has created a state within a state. These Bedouin don't pay taxes, they don't have proper addresses; people are living off the grid and are not accountable under the law.” But as Israeli citizens, they have legal rights to welfare and other social services!

Joel Rivlin makes it clear: “Planning in the Negev cannot be separatist, serving just one population. One must promote other groups beside the Bedouin. There will either be Jewish communities here in a few years, or neglect, pollution and garbage, as is already happening.”

And yet, even the most right-wing extremists understand that the Bedouin need much attention and hard work. Knesset Member Bezalel Smotrich remarked, “The Bedouin population should be encouraged to live in towns, get formal educations and join the workforce.” However, while the state has invested in several five-year plans for the Bedouin, nothing has come of them, because of lack of cooperation from the Bedouin.

Thankfully, though Israel has struggled to find a way to address the complexity of Bedouin society, the introduction of the Gospel to this Islamic-dominated people group is proving to be fruitful. It is happening slowly, as those who enter the Bedouin communities from the outside must take time to build trust. They do so at risk to their own lives, as we know Islam doesn't take kindly to those who leave its ranks—or those who assist in the exit. But as long as the God of Israel has messengers willing to go, His truth will reach every city, town and tent in Israel. ■

Bedouin children  
ride a donkey cart

ZUMA Press, Inc. / Alamy



Shalom from Jerusalem!

**Deep in the south of Israel lies a beautiful little town...Arad.** It is a fairly “new community” by Israeli standards. But there is a growing community of believers there—both **Jewish and Arab.**

Surrounding that town are thousands of **temporary tin shacks where Bedouin live in terrible poverty.** Their children are born and raised in dust with little to no stimuli. They are minimally educated and grow up unable to read or write Hebrew or even Arabic.

They are a people trapped in time. When they are told of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or Moses and Yeshua—they ask if they are still alive. They know nothing of our modern world or cities even just hours away.

While Bedouin loyalty has historically been tribal, **in recent decades the Islamic movement has flooded their villages and turned them into a radical community** that is incredibly controlling of its people, devoted to Allah and inevitably hostile to Israel.

Violence against women is the standard. Those who escape it are the exception. Girls above middle school are no longer allowed to play sports and must cover their heads and take on the duties of a woman. **Thankfully, there are still those alive who remember the days when they did not live under such extreme Islamic domination,** and they want out. **But time is of the essence.** Those who grow up entirely in bondage are much more accepting of it as “just the way things are.”



Silvia Boarini / Alamy

Among the many relationships we have developed with believers in Israel over the years, is a group in the Negev desert who have spent over a decade reaching out to the Bedouin tribes in the Arad area.

These believers have found creative ways to reach into these closed,





neglected communities. They offer not only food and clothing, but lessons in reading, writing (in Hebrew, English and Arabic) social skills, and even music! Most importantly, they offer **a way out of Islam and into the truth of the Gospel** (including their current efforts of recording an audio Bible in the Bedouin dialect for those who can't read).

These are not short-term operations, these are operations that can change the course of an entire demographic; one that has an incredible impact on more than half of Israel's land mass. The fruit is there. Those who have found redemption are being disciplined—even if in secret. **This is not just an outreach, this is a rescue mission—and we want to help them in this endeavor!**

Will you come alongside us as we touch lives in southern Israel?

This month, add a special gift with your general giving to Maoz, and we will make sure that it reaches the lowliest of the low—bringing them hope, love, care, and the truth of their Messiah, too!

For the restoration of Israel,

*Kobi and Shani Ferguson*

**Kobi and Shani Ferguson**







# Define your Legacy

## Make a Lasting Difference in the Future of Israel

When it comes to defining your legacy, your options are many.  
Here are just a few of the ways you can express your values  
through a gift to Maoz:

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for Maoz in your will can help future generations.

**Establish a life income gift** – Receive fixed or variable  
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create a life income gift.

**Donate life insurance** – You can easily support Maoz by  
naming us as a beneficiary on a policy you already own.

**Consider your retirement plan assets** – By making  
a simple designation on your plan's beneficiary  
designation form, you can save your loved ones from  
a heavy tax burden while supporting Maoz' future.



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