

THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS OF 2019-- A PRIMER

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A. HOW THE ISRAELI ELECTION SYSTEM WORKS—A PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION, PARTY LIST SYSTEM

1. People vote for a party list (a list of candidates), not for an individual.
2. The percentage of votes a party list gets determines the number of seats in Israel's Knesset(Parliament), but a minimum of 3.25% of the vote[the vote threshold] is needed to obtain Knesset seats. The Israeli Knesset has 120 seats. Thus if a party list gets 10% of the vote, it will receive 12 Knesset seats.
3. The higher up on a party list a person is, the more likely he or she will get a Knesset seat. Therefore, there are intra-party struggles among the party factions to get their people as high up on the party list as possible.
4. If a person is unhappy with his position on the party list, or is unhappy with the party's leadership, he or she has the option of leaving the party and starting a new one.
5. A party needs 61 seats of the 120 in the Knesset to rule, and since no Israeli party has ever achieved 61 seats, the formation of a coalition government is necessary.
6. Following the election the Israeli President (Reuven Rivlin), in one of his few powers, after consulting with all the parties, chooses the party list leader most likely to be able to form a coalition government.

B. THE TECTONIC PLATES OF ISRAELI POLITICS

1. Security issues:
 - a. How to deal with the threats from Gaza (Hamas and Islamic Jihad), Lebanon (Hizbollah) and Iran
 - b. The debate between a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and partial Israeli annexation of the West Bank, including the expansion of Jewish settlements.
2. Netanyahu's police indictments
3. Ashkenazi-Sephardi differences
4. Conflict between the Haredim (Ultra-Orthodox) and non-Haredi sectors of Israel:
 - a. Required military service in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces)
 - b. Opening of stores, and the operation of buses, on the Sabbath
 - c. Control over marriage and divorce
 - d. Negative impact on Israel's relations with American Jews
5. Relations between Israel's Arab and Jewish communities
6. Socio-economic problems including the growing gap between rich and poor.

Annex four: Israeli election results, April 9, 2019

PARTY	SEATS IN THE ISRAELI PARLIAMENT (KNESSET)
1 LIKUD.....	35
2 KAHOL VLAVAN (BLUE AND WHITE)	35
3 SHAS	8
4 UNITED TORAH JUDAISM	8
5 HADASH-TA'AL	6
6 LABOR	6
7 YISRAEL BEITEINU	5
8 UNITED RIGHT – JEWISH HOME AND JEWISH POWER	5
9 MERETZ	4
10 KULANU	4
11 UNITED ARAB LIST-BALAD.....	4
TOTAL	120

Source: Ha'aretz, April 15, 2019

Annex five: Results of the September 17, 2019 Israeli elections: Knesset seats

1 KAHOLV'LAVAN (Blue and White)	33
2 LIKUD.....	32
3 JOINT (ARAB) LIST	13
4 SHAS	9
5 UNITED TORAH JUDAISM	7
6 YISRAEL BEITEINU	8
7 YAMINA	7
8 LABOR-GESHER	6
9 DEMOCRATIC UNION	5
TOTAL	120