



Center for Israel Education

2019 Elections

Parties, Platforms, & Leaders



CIE
Center for
Israel Education

2019 Elections

Parties, Platforms, & Leaders

Enduring Understanding:

Israel's political system requires its political parties to reach compromises and agreements in order to effectively govern the country.

Activity Objectives:

Engaging in research and role play, participants will:

- Learn about the major parties and leaders running in the 2019 Israeli election
- Uncover elements of each party's domestic and foreign policy agendas
- Understand how and why compromises are made in creating alliances between different parties.

Suggested Grade Levels:

- 7th – 12th

Suggested Time: 40-60 minutes

Background for the Facilitator

Basic Features of Israel's Election System

Israeli elections operate on the democratic principle of one person, one vote for all citizens age 18 or older, regardless of sex, ethnicity or religion.

Each Israeli voter steps into a booth on Election Day, a national holiday, and selects a paper ballot representing one party. The voter seals the ballot in an envelope and drops it into a box, to be counted by hand.

Any party that gets at least 3.25% of the national vote will receive seats in the Knesset.

This takes place in three steps:

- First it is determined how many parties passed the threshold (3.25%)
- The total number of votes for all the parties that passed the threshold is then divided by 120 (the number of seats in the Knesset) to determine how many votes equal one seat in the Knesset.
- The votes of each party are then divided by that number to determine how many seats they will get.

Following the election, the President of Israel (who is elected for a seven year term by the members of the Knesset) meets with the heads of all the parties that have gained seats in the Knesset. During those meetings, the President asks each party who they recommend to be the Prime Minister. The President then tasks the preferred choice with setting up a government. The President's choice is the leader of the party that he or she believes has the best chance of forming a coalition of at least 61 members. This is usually (but not always) the party that won the most seats in the election.

After being tasked by the President, the candidate then has 28 days (plus a 14 day extension if needed) to reach agreements with other political parties to form a government. If the candidate cannot create a coalition within the 42 day time-period, the President can then ask another candidate from another party to try and form one. If that candidate also fails a majority of the Knesset can ask the President to turn to a third candidate. That individual will then have 14 days. If he or she fails, there are new elections in 90 days.

Part of the negotiations that the candidate for Prime Minister has with the other parties is who will serve in the various cabinet positions in the government as well as who will get to lead certain government committees. Once a party agrees to be a part of the government, it consents to follow the main party's platform. If the ruling party and the parties that become a part of the coalition disagree and decide not to keep working together, a party can decide to leave the government (or be removed by the Prime Minister).

Guiding Questions:

What are the platforms of the major Parties running in the 2019 Knesset Elections?

Who are the leaders of the major Parties?

Which Parties are likely to form coalitions with each other?

Instructions:

1. Print and cut the party cards found on the pages below. When printing, select double sided and short edge binding to ensure that they align properly. Cardstock works best.
2. Divide students into groups of 2-3 and distribute one party card to each group.
3. In their groups, students should:
 - A. Read the biography of the party leader
 - B. Research about the party's foreign and domestic policies and fill in the appropriate boxes on their card. Suggested websites for research include:
 - The Israel Democracy Institute - <https://en.idi.org.il/>
 - The Israel Policy Forum - <https://israelpolicyforum.org/>
 - The website of the party
 - Websites of Israeli newspapers such as *Haaretz*, *Times of Israel*, *Jerusalem Post*
4. After they have done their research, each group should then create a campaign commercial for their party highlighting the leader and the party's policies. These can be presented as skits or filmed.
5. Have each party group share their commercial with the rest of the group.
6. Following the presentations of the commercials, each group should then fill out the boxes on their cards labeled "potential alliances" and "unlikely alliances" based on what they learned about the other parties.
7. Finally, see if the different groups can create alliances with each other.
8. Discuss: What in their platforms were they willing to compromise on and what assurances did they seek from other parties?

This excerpt from the *Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems* explains the Israeli structure in more depth:

"The Israeli electoral system is based on three main characteristics: a proportional allocation formula, the exclusive use of a single nationwide district for seat allocation, and a rigid closed-party-list system (Rahat and Hazan 2005). The system, still in use today, was initially adopted in 1948 by the Provisional State Council, the legislative body that served from the May 1948 Declaration of Independence until the first elections in January 1949. In those days there was a clear preference for proportionality, a recognition that a nationwide district was a necessity justified by immediate circumstances, and little concern over the lack of any personal element. Furthermore, the system that was adopted was seen as a provisional mechanism that would have no bearing on the future, since the newly elected Constituent Assembly would formulate the electoral system within the framework of its constitution-making mission (Brichta 1988; Medding 1990). Nevertheless, almost seventy years after it was first implemented, the main features of the extremely proportional electoral system that was adopted in 1948 have been preserved, with only minor changes."

Reuven Y. Hazan, Reut Itzkovitch-Malka, and Gideon Rahat, "Electoral Systems in Context: Israel," *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*, Edited by Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Matthew S. Shugart, June 2018, p. 5.

Likud (Unity)

Benjamin Netanyahu

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

● Potential alliances

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● Unlikely alliances

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Kachol Lavan (Blue and White)

Benny Gantz, Yair Lapid

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

● Potential alliances

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● Unlikely alliances

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Kachol Lavan (Blue and White)

Benny Gantz, Yair Lapid

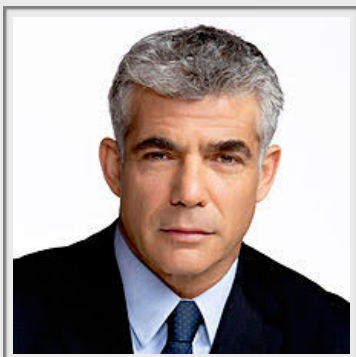


In February 2019, it was announced that Yesh Atid and Hosen L'Yisrael will run as a merged slate called Kachol and Lavan or Blue and White.

In 1959, Benny Gantz (top) was born in a village in Israel's south. The son of a Holocaust survivor, Gantz began his IDF career in the Paratroopers unit in 1977.

Gantz quickly rose through the ranks of the IDF and became a commander for many of the army's most specialized units. In 2011, Gantz was unanimously approved by the Knesset to become the Chief of General Staff, the commander of the entire IDF.

As Chief of Staff, Gantz oversaw the release of captured Israeli soldier Glad Shalit, appointed Orna Barbivai as the country's first female Major General, and led both Operation Pillar of Defense in



2012 and Operation Protective Edge in 2014 in response to frequent rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza.

Yair Lapid was born in 1963 in Tel-Aviv. His father Tommy Lapid was a journalist and Member of Knesset for the Shinnui Party, a center-left party for which he was the leader.

Like his father, Lapid was a journalist and television personality who entered politics. In 2012, he founded the Yesh Atid Party with an agenda focusing on social and economic issues that appealed to younger voters. The Party won 19 seats in the 2013 election.

From 2013-2014, Lapid was Minister of Finance before being fired from the government by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over policy disagreements.

Likud

Benjamin Netanyahu



Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's current Prime Minister, is the only Prime Minister in Israeli history to win a fourth term for the position.

Prior to entering politics, he served in the elite Sayeret Maktal unit of the IDF. He worked in the Israeli Embassy in Washington D.C. from 1982-1984, which led to him becoming the Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations from 1984-1988.

In 1988, Netanyahu was elected a member of the Knesset by the Likud Party, becoming the Party's leader in 1993. In 1996, in Israel's first direct election for Prime Minister, Netanyahu defeated Shimon Peres. Plagued by a series of scandals involving himself and some of his ministers, he was forced to call for new elections in 1999 where he was soundly defeated by Ehud Barak. After leaving politics, he returned to the Knesset in 2002, becoming Minister of Foreign Affairs and then Minister of Finance under Ariel Sharon. He resigned from the government over Israel's unilateral 2005 disengagement from Gaza.

He became Prime Minister again in 2009.

Kulanu (All of Us)

Moshe Kahlon

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

● Potential alliances

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● Unlikely alliances

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Kulanu

Moshe Kahlon



Born in 1960, Moshe Kahlon earned degrees in law and political science. His political career began with activities in local politics in and around Haifa in the 1980s.

Kahlon was first elected to the Knesset in 2003 as a member of the Likud Party. In 2009, he was appointed Minister of

Communications by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. As Minister of Communications, he led the successful reform of Israel's cell phone industry, opening it up to more competition and ultimately lowering prices on cell phone plans by nearly 90 percent.


After taking a leave from politics in 2013, he announced in 2015 the creation of a new political party, Kulanu. Kulanu won ten seats in the 2015 election and joined the governing coalition with Kahlon serving as Minister of Finance.

Hadash (New) - Ta'al (Arab Movement for Change)

Ahmad Tibi

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

 Potential alliances

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 Unlikely alliances

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Hayemin Hahadash (New Right Party)

Naftali Bennet/Ayelet Shaked

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

 Potential alliances

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 Unlikely alliances

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Hayemin Hahadash

Naftali Bennet/Ayelet Shaked



Naftali Bennett (top), born in Haifa in 1972, was the leader of the Jewish Home Party from 2012-2018. He has served as the Minister of Education since 2015, and the Minister of Diaspora Affairs since 2013.

Bennett is a former tech CEO who also served in the IDF's Sayeret Matkal special operations unit. Bennett is opposed to a two-state solution with the Palestinians and advocates for applying Israeli sovereignty to those areas of the West Bank currently under Israeli control.



Ayelet Shaked (bottom), born in 1976, is a former software engineer with degrees in electrical engineering and computer science.

Shaked was an office director for Benjamin Netanyahu before leaving Likud with Bennet in 2008. Since 2015, Shaked has served as Minister of Justice where she has supported legislation aimed at restricting the Supreme Court's independence and power.

Hadash - Taal

Ahmad Tibi



In February 2019, Hadash, a predominantly Arab Communist Party and Ta'al, a party focused on the interests of Israel's Palestinian citizens agreed to run as a merged party.

Ahmad Tibi (below right) was born in 1958 in Taibe, an Arab village in the Triangle region of Israel. A gynecologist by profession, he was first elected to the Knesset in 1999 as a member of the Balad Party. He is currently the longest serving Arab Knesset member. In the past, Tibi has advocated for Palestinian right of return to Israel, supported Israeli withdrawal from all the territory acquired in 1967, and opposed the recently passed Basic Law defining Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people.



Ayman Odeh (below right) was born in Haifa in 1975 to a secular Muslim family.

As a teenager, he identified strongly with the struggle of the Palestinians and took part in numerous rallies and demonstrations against the government, before shifting his focus towards achieving greater rights for Israeli Arabs and advocating for a two state solution.

Odeh, a lawyer by profession, served on the Haifa city council and has held leadership positions in numerous organizations aimed at improving civic equality for Israeli Arabs. In the Knesset he has opposed the demolition of unrecognized Bedouin villages, argued for recognition of Arab villages destroyed in 1948, and promoted increasing the number of Arab citizens in the civil service.

HaAvodah (Labor)

Avi Gabbay

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

● Potential alliances

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● Unlikely alliances

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United Torah Judaism

Yaakov Litzman/Moshe Gafni

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

● Potential alliances

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● Unlikely alliances

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United Torah Judaism

Yaakov Litzman/Moshe Gafni



United Torah Judaism is a merger of two ultra-Orthodox parties, which have run together since 1992. Moshe Gafni is the leader of the Lithuanian-based Degel Torah. Yaakov Litzman is the leader of the Hasidic Agudat Israel which has its origins in Poland. Litzman serves as the leader of the merged list.



Yaakov Litzman (top) was born in a displaced persons camp in Germany in 1948. After spending his early years in the United States, Litzman immigrated to Israel in 1966 to become the head of a Hasidic girls school in Jerusalem. As a member of the Ger Hasidic sect, Litzman became a close advisor to the sect's leader, Rebbe Alter, who encouraged him to enter politics. He was first elected to the Knesset in 1999. In the most recent government, Litzman

served as the Minister of Health where he advocated for healthier food to be served in schools.

Moshe Gafni (bottom) was born in Tel-Aviv in 1952 and was first elected to the Knesset in 1988. From 1990-1992, he was Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs. During his tenure in the Knesset, Gafni has served on a number of committees, including the Finance Committee, which he chaired in the most recent Knesset. Gafni has been outspoken in his support for army deferrals for Torah scholars and has come under fire for being critical of non-Orthodox movements in the diaspora.

Labor

Avi Gabbay



Avi Gabbay was born in a Jerusalem immigrant camp in 1967, the son of Moroccan immigrants.

Following his army service, Gabbay attended Hebrew University earning degrees in economics and business administration. Gabbay briefly worked for the Ministry of Finance

before entering the private sector with Bezeq, Israel's largest telecommunications company, in 1999.

Gabbay developed a reputation as an excellent manager, and he rose quickly through the ranks of Bezeq becoming the company's CEO in 2007.

In 2013, he left Bezeq, having amassed a personal fortune; and in 2015, he joined Moshe Kahlon to develop the Kulanu Party. Following the 2015 elections, Gabbay was appointed Minister for Environmental Protection. He resigned a year later in response to the Prime Minister's decision to appoint Avigdor Lieberman as Defense Minister. The move led to a break with Kahlon. Ultimately Gabbay joined the Labor Party and was elected leader in July 2017.

Shas

Aryeh Deri

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

● Potential alliances

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● Unlikely alliances

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Meretz (Vigor)

Tamar Zandberg

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

● Potential alliances

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● Unlikely alliances

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Meretz

Tamar Zandberg



Tamar Zandberg was born in 1976 in Ramat Gan. She has been a Member of Knesset since 2013 and was elected the leader of Meretz in March 2018.

A psychologist by training, Zandberg served as a member of the Tel-Aviv city council before being elected to the Knesset. In the most recent Knesset, she served as

the chairperson of the Committee on Drug and Alcohol Abuse, where she promoted the legalization of cannabis. An avid cyclist, Zandberg created a special lobby for sustainable transportation, advocating for the creation of additional bike paths and increasing efficiency in public transportation. She is also a proponent for increased availability of public transportation on Shabbat.

Zandberg has participated in Women of the Wall demonstrations against restrictions on women's prayer at the Kotel, and has also fought for environmental protections.

Shas

Aryeh Deri



Aryeh Deri was born in 1959 in Morocco, and made aliyah in 1968. Among the founders of Shas, the ultra-Orthodox Sephardi party, Deri was first elected to the Knesset in 1992.

Deri served as the leader of Shas for most of the 1990s. He served as Minister of the Interior and was a member of the Knesset from

1992 to 1999. In 1999, he was convicted of taking bribes and sentenced to three years in prison. Shas' official position regarding Deri's conviction was that it was part of the State's persecution of the Sephardim, and that Deri's guilty verdict reflected discrimination.

After his release from prison, Deri took some time away from politics. In 2012, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the spiritual leader of Shas, appointed him again to be Chairman. He was elected to the Knesset in 2013.

As Minister of the Interior in the current government, Deri has been the architect of controversial policies to deport African asylum seekers from Israel.

United Arab List - Balad

Ayman Odeh

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

● Potential alliances

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● Unlikely alliances

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Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home)

Avigdor Lieberman

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

● Potential alliances

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● Unlikely alliances

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Yisrael Beiteinu

Avigdor Lieberman



Avigdor Lieberman was born in the Soviet Union in 1958, and made aliyah in 1978. Lieberman first became active in politics as a student at Hebrew University. In 1988, he was among the founders of the Zionist Forum for Soviet Jewry together with Natan Sharansky and others. The group, which represented several different political factions in Israel, advocated for and supported recent

immigrants from the Soviet Union to Israel.

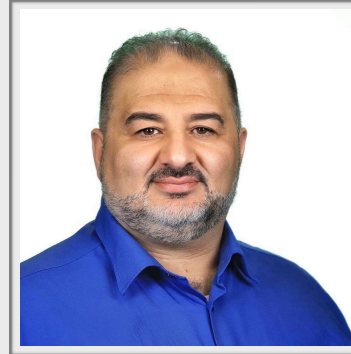
Lieberman became the Director-General of the Likud Party in 1993, working closely with Benjamin Netanyahu who had recently become the Party's leader. Following Netanyahu's election as Prime Minister in 1996, Lieberman managed his office.

In 1999, Lieberman established Yisrael Beiteinu as a right wing party representing the interests of immigrants, and was elected to the Knesset that year. He served as a cabinet minister for both Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert, resigning both times over disagreements on Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and its participation in the 2007 peace summit in Annapolis.

He was appointed Defense Minister in the most recent government. His resignation in November 2018 helped set the stage for early elections. Among his nationalist positions, he has been an advocate for requiring Arab Israeli citizens to take an oath of allegiance to Israel.

United Arab List - Balad

Mansour Abbas, Mtanes Shihadeh



The Joint List had been formed as a coalition of four predominantly Arab parties prior to the 2015 elections. Two parties, Ta'al and Hadash left the coalition in 2019. The two remaining parties, Balad, an Arab nationalist party, and the United Arab List or Ra'am, an Islamic party popular among Israel's Bedouin, agreed to run together in February 2019.



A dentist by profession, Mansour Abbas (top) is the chairperson of the United Arab List. Abbas was born in 1974 in the village of Maghar in the Galilee. He is a long serving leader of the Israeli Islamic Movement's Southern Branch, and has been Vice President since 2010. The

movement split into a northern and southern branch in 1998 with the southern branch choosing to participate in Israeli politics. In the past, Abbas has called for reinforcing Arab participation in the Knesset as a means to improve equality for the country's Arab citizens.

Mtanes Shehadeh (bottom) was elected chairman of Balad in February 2019. He represents new leadership for a party that has been defined by taking positions which reject Israel's legitimacy as a Jewish state. Shihadeh is a former pollster and research fellow at the Mada al-Carmel, a Palestinian research center in Haifa. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in political science from Hebrew University.

Habayit Hayehudi (The Jewish Home)

Rafi Peretz

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

● Potential alliances

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● Unlikely alliances

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Zehut (Identity)

Moshe Feiglin

Domestic Policies

Foreign Policies

● Potential alliances

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● Unlikely alliances

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Zehut

Moshe Feiglin



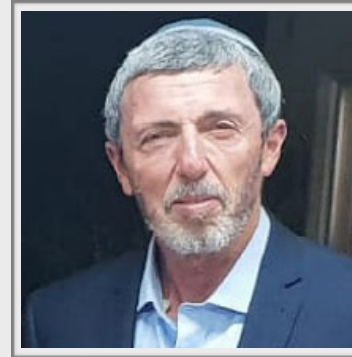
Moshe Feiglin was born in 1962 and raised in Haifa. After serving as a captain in the Army during the 1982 Lebanon war, Feiglin has had a long journey in politics. In 1993 he became one of the leaders of the Zo Artzeinu (This is Our Land) movement, which fought against Israeli land concessions, especially the 1993 Oslo Accords. In the summer of 1995 Zo Artzeinu supported demonstrations against the

government of Yitzhak Rabin, accusing Rabin of "selling Israel to the Arabs and pushing the country towards war." In 1996, Feiglin helped found the Manhigut Yehudit movement, which became a faction within the Likud Party.

Feiglin unsuccessfully challenged Benjamin Netanyahu for Likud leadership several times, eventually leaving the party in 2015 after falling to the 36th position on the party's list. He served in the Knesset from 2013 - 2015, holding the role of Deputy Speaker. Feiglin has been outspoken in his views that only Jews deserve to be full citizens of Israel.

Habayit Hayehudi

Rafi Peretz



The Jewish Home Party list includes members of two smaller right-wing parties, the National Union Party and Otzma-Yehudit which joined with the Jewish Home in February 2019. Both of these parties espouse positions which would either limit Palestinian rights in Israel, or in the case of Otzma-Yehudit, expel Palestinians from Israel and the West Bank. On March 17, Israel's Supreme Court banned Otzma-

Yehudit leader Michael Ben-Ari, number 5 on the merged party list, from participating in the election due to incitement and racism. Other members of the party were allowed to remain in the list.

Rafi Peretz was born in 1956 in Jerusalem. Following his yeshiva studies, Peretz became a helicopter pilot in the Israeli Air Force achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

A religious Zionist, Peretz established a pre-military Torah academy in 1993 in the Gush Katif area of Gaza. The program provides young men with both Torah learning as well as preparing them for life in the IDF. Peretz himself lived in Gaza until the 2005 Disengagement Plan forced the relocation of both his home and the yeshiva. Despite opposing the Disengagement Plan, he gained national attention during that moment for embracing the soldiers who came to evict his community believing in the importance of unity in the IDF.

In 2010, he was appointed as the Chief Rabbi of the IDF and elevated to the rank of Brigadier General. He was appointed the leader of Habayit Hayehudi in February 2019.

Party Platforms

Likud

Domestic Policies: Likud wants a free economy with social sensitivity, budgetary discipline, an effectively managed stock market, and a strong private sector. It seeks to create economic opportunities for the general population, increase the amount of people in the job market, ease the allocation of land to lessen the housing crisis, and lower taxes while investing in education and national infrastructure.

Foreign Policy and Security Issues: The party has emphasized preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. It is against unilateral withdrawals, but is willing to withdraw from land as part of a compromise for real and dependable peace. Any peace agreement must include an exchange of land for peace, mutual recognition of the legitimacy of the states involved, a just settlement to the refugee problem, and a united Jerusalem. It cannot have a Palestinian right of return. Likud also refuses to release terrorists from prisons, and in regard to the Temple Mount and Western Wall it intends on maintaining the status quo. Recently, many Likud MKs have expressed interest in annexing the West Bank.

Kachol Lavan

Domestic Policies: Believing that religious practice is a matter of personal choice and not government regulation, Kachol Lavan advocates for public transportation and open commerce on Shabbat. They support implementing the agreement over same-sex prayer at the Western Wall. The party wants to overhaul the state's health system by opening new hospitals and offering incentives to those who enter medical studies. The party supports gay rights, increased equality for women, and inclusion for those with disabilities and seeks to legalize same-sex civil unions and allow for surrogacy by same-sex couples. Economically, the party will empower innovation, invest more in research and development, and expand the number of innovation centers to peripheral parts of the country. The party also seeks to invest in more computer science education in Israeli

schools and extend opportunities in high-tech to ultra-Orthodox and Arab sectors.

Foreign Policy and Security Issues: The party supports a united Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel. It advocates entering into negotiations with the Palestinians but the party seeks to maintain Israel's control over the Jordan Valley as a security buffer and retain all large settlement blocs in the West Bank. They are opposed to Palestinian right of return. The party is opposed to any unilateral withdrawals and supports a national referendum on any agreement. Kachol and Lavan seeks to engage with pragmatic Arab states through a regional peace conference. The Golan Heights is an inseparable part of the country and its return to Syria is non-negotiable.

Kulanu

Domestic Policies: Kulanu focuses on socioeconomic issues, particularly on decreasing the cost of living in housing, food, and finance. It will do so by fighting the growing social and economic inequalities that exist in Israel by breaking the power monopolies and cartels have over the economy, for example; and supporting the business sector, entrepreneurship, and economic freedom. It desires improved access to employment, health services, education, and transportation, as well as higher wages for soldiers, students, and the young. It wants to improve government transparency and to combat corruption.

Foreign Policy and Defense Issues: It strives for a peace settlement through a collaborative effort of regional and international actors. In a peace agreement, Israel would keep the main settlement blocs, there would be no Palestinian right of return, and Jerusalem would remain united. It seeks to strengthen the US-Israel relationship, and to double the budget for public diplomacy. It wants to combat the Palestinian Authority's internationalization of the conflict, help the Palestinian Authority with administration in the West Bank, demilitarize the Gaza Strip, and achieve greater international classification of Hamas as a terrorist organization.

Party Platforms

Foreign Policy and Defense Issues: The party desires a strong and secure Israel in a dangerous region and will defend itself from threats from Iran and Hezbollah. The party favors not only holding onto the large settlement blocs in the West Bank, but strengthening them. Jerusalem will remain as the country's undivided capital, and the Golan will remain as an integral part of Israel. Gantz is open to a negotiated peace with the Palestinians, with Israel maintaining control of the border with Jordan, and will not block the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza provided it is not being used for terror or incitement.

Hadash-Ta'al

Domestic Issues: Both parties seek to reduce the social and economic gaps between Jews and Arabs in Israel. Hadash also advocates for socialism while both would like to end the right's control of Israeli politics. The parties are opposed to the Basic Law defining Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people.

Foreign Policy and Security Issues: Both parties seek an end to the Israel-Palestinian conflict through the creation of an independent Palestinian state and a just resolution to the issue of Palestinian refugees.

Haymin Hahadash

Domestic Issues: The newly formed party advocates for a full and equal partnership between religious and secular Jews, restraining the activism of the judicial system, and removing regulations to promote a free-open economy. The party vows to both protect minority civil rights yet is explicit in its belief that Israel is the nation of the Jewish people alone.

Foreign Policy and Security Issues: The party is against the creation of a Palestinian state and calls for annexation of the mostly Jewish populated Area C of the West Bank, and to grant Areas A and B (The West Bank was divided into these areas in the Oslo Accords (1995)) self-governance under the auspices of the Palestinian Authority.

Labor

Domestic Issues: Labor wants a responsible free market economy with strong public services that benefit the entire population. It wants to subsidize land cost for housing and allow partial ownership of apartments to ease the housing crisis; improve the education system by reducing costs, improving teacher status, reducing the amount of students per class, and incorporating technology into the education system; and to improve the health system by incentivizing doctors to stay in the public health system, and by having a multiyear health budget. It will reduce the cost of living by decentralizing the banking system, increasing competition in the food market, making it easier for smaller businesses to get loans, and encouraging innovation across all economic sectors. It wants to decentralize the government, and create roundtables of government and non-government actors to improve civil service flexibility. Through digitization, the party intends on reducing bureaucracy, and improving accessibility and transparency. It wants to increase aid to senior citizens, and to launch a national savings program for children.

Foreign Policy and Security Issues: The party wants to reduce Israel's international isolation, partly through restoring good relations with the United States and Europe. It wants to restart the peace process through a regional platform to create two states for two people, in which the settlement blocs would be part of Israel, there would be no Palestinian right of return, Jerusalem would be strengthened as Israel's eternal capital, and there would be restitution for the Jews expelled from the Arab world. Additionally, the Jordan Valley would be Israel's eastern security border.

United Torah Judaism

Domestic Issues: UTJ wants Jewish education to be present at all levels, as well as additional funding for Ultra-Orthodox education. It wants continued deferment of military service for Ultra-Orthodox males and an end to drafting women. It is against secularizing society, such as civil marriage, limiting the religious authorities, or



Party Platforms

opening business on Shabbat. It wants to make the country more halakhic by changing the Law of Return so only halakhic Jews qualify for it, and by negating the Conservative and Reform movements. UTJ demands an end to the Ultra-Orthodox housing shortage through the allocation of state land and the free housing of those eligible for State Housing. The party wants to decrease government involvement in the economy by reducing the public sector and taxes, and to develop the private sector. It supports technical and engineering modernization, as well as the improvement of factories to increase efficiency and productivity. In addition, the party wants to limit inflation and labor disruptions.

Foreign Policy and Security Issues: It believes that the Land of Israel was given to the Jewish people by God and belongs to the Jewish people forever, but is obligated to consider the principle of saving life over all else. UTJ wants to boost aliyah, and is gravely concerned over yeridah - Israelis leaving Israel. Overall, the party's foreign policy is centrist and is decided more on religious concerns than those of security or diplomacy.

Shas

Domestic Issues: Shas works to end economic and social discrimination against Sephardi Jews. It wants to require that 7.5% of all building plans be devoted to public housing, with construction for different income levels to be integrated across the country rather than be segregated by them. It desires a state run according to halakha - Jewish law - and is opposed to public expression of homosexuality and any effort to secularize Israeli society, such as civil marriage. Shas does not let female candidates run for office.

Foreign Policy and Defense Issues: It opposes any freeze in settlement construction and wants a united Greater Jerusalem. It demands that a compensation package for the Jews expelled from the Arab world after 1948 be included in any peace agreement. Shas does not believe that there is currently a true partner with which peace can be negotiated, but in the past has been open to a two-state solution.

Meretz

Domestic Issues: Meretz wants to create a social-democratic welfare state with far reaching social services that will be effectively regulated and monitored. It wants a strong labor movement, reduced power and influence for tycoons, and a more egalitarian society. It desires to reform tax policy to reduce inequality, and more balanced investment amongst the four different Israeli education systems. It believes in full separation of religion and state, and wants laws that grant freedom of religion and rights to all citizens, such as civil marriage and divorce, and same sex marriage. It would like to recognize the Arab people as a national minority with collective rights. It values environmental preservation over development and will combat gender inequalities. It wants to regulate campaign financing and lobbying, as well as to fight corruption. Lastly, it seeks to end the disproportionate investment in settlements and the security budget.

Foreign Policy and Defense Issues: Meretz believes that ending the Occupation is the only way to reach a two-state solution based on the pre-1967 borders with land swaps. The party also believes that UN recognition of the Palestinian state is a pathway to negotiations. It wants an immediate freeze to settlement building, and will pay Israeli residents of the West Bank to leave willingly. It advocates for a gradual and coordinated end to the Gaza blockade.

United Arab List - Balad

Domestic Issues: Both parties call for the recognition of Israeli Arabs as a national minority. The United Arab List calls for closing the gaps in the Arab educational system and supports both the establishment of an Arab university and the development of industrial zones near Arab communities. Balad supports an end to the Zionist institutions of the country.

Foreign Policy and Defense Issues: Both parties support the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, an end of the occupation and dismantling of the settlements, and the

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right of return of Palestinian refugees. Balad rejects Israel as a Jewish state and favors a unitary democratic state.

Yisrael Beiteinu

Domestic Issues: It believes in maintaining Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people, as well as the Law of Return. It does not believe in the separation of religion and state, but abides by the principle of “live and let live.” In regard to governance, the party is a proponent of a full separation of powers: Ministers of Knesset would not serve in the government, instead only creating legislation in the Knesset and acting as a check and balance on the government; and the Supreme Court would only apply the law, while a Constitutional Court would be established. The party focuses on helping those who contribute to the state through military and national service and who work, by providing a favorable mortgage to young couples who both work and fulfilled their service, and more after school activities for infants and young children. Yisrael Beiteinu also advocates for all citizens to have the same rights and duties, meaning the Ultra-Orthodox and Israeli-Arabs would be obligated to serve in the IDF or do national service. The party opposes the celebration of Nakba Day and incitement against Israel by Israeli Arab MKs.

Foreign Policy and Defense Issues: A peace agreement must include the Palestinians, the greater Arab world, and Israeli-Arabs. It would have to include a populated land swap, in which the settlement blocs would become part of Israel, and predominantly Arab populated areas bordering the West Bank, such as the Arab Triangle and the Wadi Ara region, would be incorporated into the Palestinian state. Israeli-Arabs involved in the swap would choose whether to gain Palestinian citizenship and forfeit their Israeli citizenship, or to move to remain in Israel and keep their Israeli citizenship. Israel would also provide economic incentives for Israeli-Arabs to join the Palestinian state. Yisrael Beiteinu wants to build Israel’s relations with the Diaspora and to help fund Jewish education abroad to fight assimilation.

Habayit Hayehudi



Domestic Issues: Habayit HaYehudi is a national-religious party which is strongly Zionist and whose followers are predominantly the Israeli equivalent of Modern Orthodoxy. As a result, the party champions the Jewish nature of the state, while upholding democracy and the rights of Israel’s minorities. It wants the state to be run according to Jewish principles, but without impugning on individual choice. It seeks to boost the status of the national-Zionist movement by increasing its budget and power in religious affairs relative to the Ultra Orthodox, which includes having Ultra-Orthodox Jews be gradually incorporated into military and national service. It also desires to improve the Jewish education of Israelis, and to curtail the powers of the Supreme Court and State Attorney. On economic issues, it favors a free economy, but one that provides a safety net. It seeks to increase competition, break up monopolies, cut taxes on the middle class, and double the incentives given to small businesses. It will end illegal construction in the Negev and Galil by the Bedouin, as well as illegal migration from Africa to Israel. The party also works to end the incitement by segments of the Israeli-Arab population, while supporting those who contribute to the country.

Foreign Policy and Defense Issues: It strongly opposes the creation of a Palestinian state on any of the land west of the Jordan River, but opposes a one-state solution. Instead, it wants to annex the mostly Jewish populated Area C of the West Bank, and to grant Areas A and B (The West Bank was divided into these areas in the Oslo Accords (1995)) self-governance under the auspices of the Palestinian Authority. It intends on strengthening relations with other countries as well as the Jewish Diaspora. It wants to legislate protection for IDF soldiers from international lawsuits as well as to stop funds from reaching anti-Israel organizations. Some segments of the party call for limiting Palestinian rights in Israel, or in the case of Oztma-Yehudit, expelling Palestinians from Israel and the West Bank.

Zehut

Domestic Issues: Zehut calls for a flat tax in addition to the legalization of weed. The party advocates revamping Israel’s

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education system to resemble the US voucher program, the introduction of aggressive free-market economic policies, and the eradication of recently introduced biometric identification cards. The Zehut platform declares that “state institutions must be committed to Jewish law and tradition,” and says that only Orthodox Jewish conversions and streams of Judaism should be recognized by them. The Zehut platform also wishes to curtail the authority of the Supreme Court and the attorney general. Zehut advocates moving the entire Israeli government complex from the western part of the city to the east, placing the Knesset and Supreme Court inside “the Old City in the areas adjacent to the Temple Mount,” which the party calls “the beating heart of the entire nation.”

Foreign Policy and Defense Issues: The party advocates imposing a sweeping one state solution which would annex all post-1967 land currently in Israel's hands while offering financial incentive for Palestinian families in these areas to emigrate to other countries. Of implementing this deal, Zehut says that they believe that “the Land of Israel belongs to the people of Israel alone by Divine choice.” The platform calls for a decisive end to Iranian threats, saying that “The State of Israel must use technological means to eliminate the enemy’s leaders and thereby create real deterrence. This is according to the Jewish principle: “He who comes to kill you, kill him first.” Zehut wishes to do away with mandatory Army service, saying that “the IDF needs a smaller, more quality force that has undergone prolonged training.” Zehut wishes to end accepting American military aid, arguing that “receiving aid creates Israeli dependence on America, which then receives legitimacy to intervene in Israeli security matters. A foreign element that regularly interferes in Israel’s decisions and prevents the freedom of military action is a serious blow to Israel’s security.”