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Sonderausgabe zu den israelischen Parlamentswahlen

vom 22. Januar 2013

1. Die Wahlen zur 19. Knesset - Ergebnisse

Aus den vorgezogenen Parlamentswahlen zur 19. Knesset ist das Parteienbündnis Likud-Yisrael Beitenu unter der Führung von Premier Netanyahu mit 31 Sitzen als stärkste Kraft hervorgegangen. Allerdings gewann das Bündnis 11 Mandate weniger als bei den Wahlen 2009, zu denen sie getrennt angetreten waren. Den zweiten Platz mit 19 Sitzen erzielte überraschend Politikneuling und Ex-Journalist Yair Lapid mit seiner neugegründeten Partei Yesh Atid. Die Arbeitspartei erreichte unter Führung von Shelly Yacimovich mit 15 Mandaten nur den dritten Platz. Tzipi Livnis neue Partei Hatnuah und die linke Partei Meretz erhielten jeweils sechs Sitze, während die nationalreligiöse Partei Habayit Hayehudi unter Naftali Bennett, der im Vorfeld großer Erfolg vorausgesagt wurde, 12 Sitze gewann. Kadima, die 2009 noch die stärkste Kraft im Parlament gewesen war, stürzte auf nur noch zwei Mandate ab.

Man of the past

"Israel [...] expressed no confidence in [...] Netanyahu. After four years at the country's helm, together with his natural partner, MK Avigdor Lieberman, Netanyahu lost about a quarter of his strength despite – or perhaps because of – the merger with Lieberman. [...] He has failed in the political sphere, the foreign policy sphere and the socioeconomic sphere. His failure is a failure of leadership [...]. Netanyahu plunged [...] because the Israeli public felt that his government had not understood the deeper significance of the protests of the summer of 2011. The results show that the public balked at the right-wing radicalization of Likud. [...] The isolation into which Netanyahu and Lieberman led Israel worried the voters."

HAA 23.01.13 Editorial

Netanyahu's mistake and opportunity

"The people continue to prefer the path of the Right. All that happened was that the 28 seats that Kadima had in the 18th Knesset were dispersed, mostly to Lapid's Yesh Atid, rather than to The Tzipi Livni Party or Labor.

At least half of those who voted for Lapid define themselves as on the Right of the political spectrum. [...]

When you analyze the voting patterns among Israelis, what stands out most is that young people abandoned the Likud. [...] The stagnation in the Likud's candidates list put people off; new and relevant faces did not appear. The youth were drawn in recent months to Naftali Bennett's Bayit Yehudi party." Ronen Shoval, JPO 24.01.13

And the loser is – the victor

"Netanyahu not only failed to strengthen Likud, he led to its regression. [...] It is not only that most of the public did not vote for him – he lost the faith of some Likud voters as well.

So how did he still manage to win? The reason for this is that three prime ministers who served since 1999 - Barak, Sharon and Olmert – had to give up their posts unexpectedly. Netanyahu suddenly became the only prominent figure in the political arena. The emerging leaders – Lapid, Yachimovich and Bennett – have yet to succeed in creating a public image of potential candidates for prime minister."

Baruch Leshem, JED 23.01.13

Prepare for the next elections

"The big winner benefiting from the Likud-Beitenu union is Lieberman who knows that breaking it will leave Netanyahu without a majority. [...] Lieberman is holding Netanyahu on a very short leash. The defeated Bibi will not have any base from which to exert a commanding role."

Yoel Marcus, HAA 25.01.13

Bibi and Shelly: Hubris and nemesis

"Hubris led to the downfall of Shelly Yacimovich [...]. Since the day she was elected to lead the Labor Party, she never really comprehended the essence of her role and her status. [...]"

When she suddenly declared that Labor isn't part of the left, and actually never was, as she wended her way toward the settlers and the ultra-Orthodox, she lost all those who could still tell their left hand from their right."

Yossi Sarid, HAA 25.01.13

Israel's elections: What just happened?

"The 'revitalized' Labor party under social justice champion Shelly Yachimovich fared only two seats better than the tired old Labor Party under security expert Ehud Barak four years ago. Many Israelis care a great deal about economic and social inequalities, but they wanted a party inside the coalition to champion them, and she had ruled out a partnership with Netanyahu. Other potential Labor voters felt the lack of compelling policies from Yachimovich on peace and security. The hard-core peaceniks went to Meretz; Lapid [...] may well have attracted many of the Yitzhak Rabin-style Labor hawks. Livni took some Labor votes too. Yachimovich [...] has a fight on her hands to retain the party leadership. Nobody saw her as a credible prime ministerial alternative to Netanyahu."

David Horowitz, TOI 23.01.13

Israel's fractional reality

"Public opinion polls consistently show that Jewish voters do not feel Israel can make a deal with the PLO or Hamas.

The so-called 'peace process' was only an issue in the mind of Shimon Peres, Livni and Amir Peretz, none of whom will be prime minister.

That is why Kadima has evaporated, and that is why Livni got fewer votes than Meretz or the [ultra-orthodox] parties."

Michael Widlanski, JPO 23.01.13

Lapid is the key

"When Lapid announced his entry into politics, there was fear on the Right that he would be able to move votes from the Right to the Left. When the election campaign began, it seemed this would not happen. Lapid was automatically attached to the Left, even though he did not want to be included there; however in the end, he did draw some seats from the Right."

Mati Tuchfeld, IHY 23.01.13

2. Innenpolitische Themen prägen die Wahlen

Während Wahlkämpfe in der Vergangenheit stets vom Thema Sicherheit geprägt wurden, waren es dieses Mal vor allem sozio-ökonomische Themen, die die Wähler bewegten. Zurückzuführen ist dies zum einem auf die von der Mittelschicht getragenen sozialen Proteste von 2011, bei denen hundertausende Israelis gegen hohe Mietpreise und Lebenshaltungskosten sowie soziale Ungerechtigkeit demonstrierten. Zum anderen scheint die Mehrheit der Israelis den Glauben an den Friedensprozess verloren zu haben, der somit eine untergeordnete Rolle in den Wahlentscheidungen spielte. All dies zeigte sich in den Wahlergebnissen, explizit im Erfolg Yesh Atids. Die Partei präsentierte sich als Anwalt der Mittelschicht und erhielt für ihren Anspruch, „Wandel“ und eine „neue Politik“ herbeizuführen, enormen Zuspruch. Auch die relativ hohe Wahlbeteiligung (67,8%) spricht dafür, dass die sozialpolitischen Themen die Wähler mobilisierten.

Only himself to blame

"Lapid's accomplishment [...] shows that the upper middle class, which constitutes his electoral backbone, remains solid [...]. This electorate went to the polls with a purely domestic agenda in mind, which overshadowed Bennett's 'Greater Israel' agenda on the one hand, and Livni's 'peace in our time' message in the other."

Amotz Asa-El, JPO 23.01.13

Yair's torch

"The 2013 national elections produced a [...] very clear message: Many Israelis from both the Right and Left, particularly the younger voters, have had it with the spin doctors and the zigzagging; they are less impressed by eloquent speeches and impressive body language and are waiting for something different, new, fresh and clean. They are waiting for people who say what they mean and mean what they say. [...]"

The high voter turnout indicates that even within the indifferent and desperate Israeli public there is a growing desire for an Israeli version of Tahrir Square."

Emanuel Rosen, JED 24.01.13

Israelis are no fools

"It was enough to espouse two vague slogans — concern for the middle class and demanding that haredim be drafted into the army — for a former

spokesmodel for Bank Hapoalim (Yair Lapid) to gain on Labor leader Shelly Yachimovich, a woman who for years has fought the real fight on behalf of the proletariat. There's social justice for you."
Mordechai Gilat, IHY 23.01.13

Not a make-or-break election

"Despite the two different directions the state could take in terms of economic policy, the global financial situation tempers the tendency, and the courage, to take on the risk inherent in making a change, despite the force of the social protest movement. A majority of Israelis, having recovered from a blind faith in either one of these directions, recognized the complexity of the situation and hesitated in their choice until the last moment. That is also one of the reasons for the success of the centrist parties that refused to propose a definitive path."
Avi Shilon, HAA 23.01.13

Political gridlock and frailty

"The social justice protests of 18 months ago proved to be a real and live presence in this election, and Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid party reaped the benefits of this. Apparently, not a few traditional Likud voters view the Netanyahu government as insufficiently attuned to their economic pain, and as beholden to business-sector tycoons and ultra-Orthodox politicians. Netanyahu's new government will have to reorder government spending priorities away from long-entitled sectors and confront sensitive issues of religion and state — a herculean, if not politically impossible, task."
David Weinberg, IHY 23.01.13

Israel is still a red state

"The hawkish Knesset majority reflects the frustration caused by the 20-year-old Oslo Process. [...] The disillusionment with the 'peace process' catapulted the domestic agenda to dominance. The Israeli constituency expects the next governing coalition to forge a domestic common denominator, notwithstanding deep national security and foreign policy disagreements among the coalition parties. The key issues [...] are the need to prevent a global-like economic meltdown; carefully manage severe budget cuts; [...] introduce significant rental housing; expedite the integration of ultra-Orthodox youth into military conscription; and overhaul the entire political system. Averting the threat of a nuclear Iran is the only front-seat national security issue."
Yoram Ettinger, IHY 25.01.13

When Oslo became a four-letter word

"There are many interpretations to the surprising election results in Israel. But one, perhaps overlooked thing, is clear. The Oslo Accords have lost all relevance. Thirty-five political parties participated in the election campaign and not one dared link the Oslo Accords to their political platform. [...] Today, Israel's overtaxed and underprivileged middle class is completely fed up, and voted accordingly. Confronting internal rather than external challenges now sets the day. [...] The election results may present a unique window of opportunity for a secure and fairer society in Israel."
Ophir Falk, JED 24.01.13

3. Koalitionsverhandlungen

Zur Regierungsbildung ist eine Mehrheit von 61 Mandaten notwendig. Die bisher regierenden rechten und religiösen Parteien (Likud, Yisrael Beiteinu, Habayit Hayehudi, Shas, United Torah Judaism) erreichten gemeinsam genau 61 Sitze. Allerdings wird davon ausgegangen, dass Premier Benjamin Netanyahu eine möglichst breite, sprich stabile Regierung, bilden möchte. Deshalb gilt eine Regierungsbeteiligung der zweitstärksten Partei Yesh Atid als ausgemacht. Dies könnte jedoch den Beitritt der ultra-orthodoxen Parteien erschweren, da eines der zentralen Ziele von Yesh Atid die Integration der Ultra-Orthodoxen in die Armee und den Arbeitsmarkt ist. Shelly Yachimovich, Vorsitzende der Arbeitspartei, hatte im Verlauf des Wahlkampfes schon erklärt, sich an einer Regierung Netanyahu nicht zu beteiligen. Im Gegensatz dazu erklärte sich Yesh Atids Yair Lapid zu einem Regierungsbündnis mit Netanyahu bereit und sprach sich gegen ein mögliches Bündnis der mitte-links Parteien aus.

Only himself to blame

"Netanyahu has three choices: Ignore reality and stick to his historic allies in the 'national camp'; seek a coalition with Lapid, Bennett and Livni; or seek a secular coalition with Lapid and Labor's Shelly Yachimovich that will draft legislation for political reform. Netanyahu is not likely to immediately seek the latter option. However, several days of negotiation with his plethora of newly emboldened potential partners might make him change his mind."
Amotz Asa-El, JPO 23.01.13

Netanyahu will push haredim aside in Lapid's favor

"The question is: Will Netanyahu agree to relinquish joint participation with ultra-Orthodox parties for the sake of Lapid?"

The answer is probably negative, though Netanyahu will push the haredim aside in favor of handing Lapid and members of his coterie prominent portfolios in the next government."

Mati Tuchfeld, IHY 24.01.13

The end is nigh

"The election results have put Bibi in a difficult position. With each partner he takes into his government, he will face a contradiction with another. Bibi, who likes to make broad, large governments (because it gives him more power to maneuver), finds himself this morning in the narrowest of coalitions. [...]

Bring in the Haredi parties [...] and he'll annoy Yesh Atid. Bring in Labor or Kadima [...], he'll annoy Bayit HaYehudi and have to make promises about settlements that will shake his coalition. One side won't accept renewed building; the other is likely to protest a continued freeze. [...]

If I were to predict a future, it would likely include new elections."

Paula Stern, IHY 23.01.13

Political gridlock and frailty

"The Israeli election result is disappointing and worrying, because of the continuing divisions in Israeli society it exposes [...].

Israel is going to have a badly bifurcated parliament, and the coalition government likely to emerge will be hobbled by internal contradictions. In fact, this time the coalition politics may be mission impossible. It's hard to see a stable, long-term government emerging from this election. [...]

You can be certain that Lapid will join Netanyahu's government — but Lapid may be in the driver's seat, not Netanyahu, and Netanyahu will be handcuffed on all sides by the other parties that Lapid will insist on adding. [...]

His coalition 'partners' will be looking for every chance to aggrandize themselves at his expense, and an early opportunity to force repeat elections where Likud could be completely knocked off its first-place pedestal."

David Weinberg, IHY 23.01.13

Netanyahu and Lapid first, others later

"Given Habayit Hayehudi's moderate position on enlisting yeshiva students into the military, it seems that it would be easiest for Netanyahu to get Lapid and Bennett to join his coalition as quickly as possible, which would allow the Knesset to pass an equitable enlistment law. Only afterward, Shas could join the government with its 11 MKs. This coalition would include 64 MKs (including Kadima) at first and later grow to 75 MKs.

The main obstacle to forming a coalition won't be achieving a majority in the Knesset. Rather, distributing the ministerial posts will raise the highest hurdle."

Dan Margalit, IHY 25.01.13

Mofaz needs a home, and it's Likud

"Getting Kadima to join Likud will enlarge the ruling party's Knesset faction to 33 seats. [...] That would drastically lower the price that Lapid can demand in coalition negotiations, especially regarding the matter that most perturbs Netanyahu: limiting the number of ministers in the government. If a right wing-Mofaz government holds a solid majority in the Knesset, Lapid will have to become more flexible, and stuff all the weekend headlines that described him as [...] a political genius."

Aluf Benn, HAA 27.01.13

Lapid's mental block

"Lapid rejected the possibility up front of joining forces with other parties to prevent [...] Netanyahu from forming the next government. Referring to MK Hanin Zuabi of the Arab party Balad, Lapid declared that he would 'not join a blocking majority with Hanin Zuabis.' [...] By rejecting her out of hand as a partner to any kind of political activity, Lapid joined those responsible for the dangerous trend of excluding Arabs from the Israeli political process. [...]

The mental block is actually Lapid's. He cannot conceive of a partnership with an Arab party even on an issue as fateful as heading off the formation of a right-wing government."

HAA 25.01.13 Editorial

Common ground

"Beyond the mathematical problems that the election results pose and the complex balance of power that will characterize the next coalition, there is another point of concern: All 19 Yesh Atid MKs and nearly all 11 of Habayit Hayehudi MKs will be entering the Knesset for the first time, lacking any parliamentary experience, not to mention ministerial expe-

rience. This means that the coalition, and the entire government, will have quite a few MKs and ministers who are essentially rookies. They will be learning from their mistakes at our expense. It would be better if they didn't get their training in positions that are so pivotal for our futures."

Ron Breiman, IHY 24.01.13

Campaign hopes to coalition realities

"What is on the table is not the national order of priorities, but rather the number of cabinet ministers and deputy ministers that each hitchhiker will receive. What is worth more to Yair Lapid, 'sharing the burden' or being minister of education? Where does Tzipi Livni prefer to be, inside the Foreign Ministry or standing out in the cold with a sign calling for a freeze on settlement construction? [...]

There is nothing new about opportunism, but this time it has consolidated into a value in and of itself. We won't get mad at Lapid, Livni or Yacimovich if they join a coalition headed by Netanyahu; we expect it. We'll ridicule them if they sell out too cheaply, not for giving up their principles in the first place."

Zvi Bar'el, HAA 23.01.13

HAA = Haaretz

JED = Jedioth Ahronoth

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

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