



Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 06/13

Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

11. – 31. März 2013

1. Israels neue Regierung

Nach sechswöchigen Koalitionsverhandlungen ist am 18. März die 33. israelische Regierung vereidigt worden. Sie besteht aus dem Wahlsieger Likud-Yisrael Beitenu, Yesh Atid unter der Führung Yair Lapids, Naftali Bennets nationalreligiösem HaBayit HaYehudi sowie Tzipi Livnis zentrumsnaher HaTnuah. Benjamin Netanyahu übt neben dem Amt des Premierministers auch das des Außenministers aus – und hält das Ministerium damit frei für Avigdor Lieberman, Vorsitzender von Yisrael Beitenu, gegen den zurzeit ein Gerichtsverfahren läuft. Im neuen Kabinett gibt es 22 Ministerposten, deutlich weniger als die 34 der letzten Regierung. Eine verkleinerte Regierung war eine der zentralen Forderungen von Yesh Atid im Wahlkampf und in den Koalitionsverhandlungen. Lapid und Bennet, nun Finanz- und Wirtschaftsminister, hatten außerdem die Integration von Ultra-Orthodoxen in den Arbeitsmarkt und in die Armee auf ihre Agenda gesetzt. Zunächst gibt es jedoch ein dringlicheres Thema: Innerhalb von vier Monaten müssen ein Haushalt verabschiedet und ein Haushaltsloch von 40 Millionen Shekel (ca. 8 Millionen Euro) gestopft werden.

Voice of reason returns

"Something important has happened in Israel, and for the first time in many years it seems that the voice of reason has returned to politics. There are plenty of examples: The education minister is a man of education, the social affairs minister is a resident of the periphery, the finance minister is the person who promised to make things easier for the middle class which bears the tax burden, the interior minister is a secular man of our generation who is aware of civil rights, the minister of economy knows a thing or two about a free market, [...] and the justice minister – as well as the transportation minister and culture and sports minister – are very familiar with the ministries they already served in previously. [...]"

Right now we can all look at the new government with gratification – even if reserved – and say to ourselves: Indeed, the glass is only half full, but we have definitely managed to close quite a few of the holes."

Merav Betito, JED 19.03.13

A small, right-wing government

"The coalition agreements [...] promise constitutional and social reforms [...]."

But as much as the new Netanyahu government might long for change domestically, its foreign policy is a concern. The right wing will enjoy a clear majority in the cabinet and in the ministries in charge of planning and construction in the West Bank; defense, housing, interior and economy have been given over to the settlers and their political allies.

This portends a concerted effort to expand the settlements and deepen the creeping annexation of the West Bank. Such policies will thwart the two-state solution, worsen Israel's international isolation and perpetuate the conflict. Lip service on 'renewing talks' will not conceal the harmful facts on the ground. The extreme right has become significantly stronger in the third Netanyahu government."

HAA 15.03.13 Editorial

The new government, full half of the cup

"No doubt the strengthening of the settlers is one of numerous changes in the political reality following the recent elections, but there are many other changes – many of them positive. [...]"

We have Tzipi Livni, leader of Hatnuah, as justice minister and chairwoman of the ministerial committee on legislation. For all those who worry about the status of the rule of law, this is certainly good news. [...]"

In the economic sphere, [...] it is certainly good news that the prime minister, finance minister and economics and trade minister are of a single mind

regarding the required economic policy to get Israel out of its current financial predicament. [...]

As to government-Knesset relations, the best news is that after many years we shall have a strong and effective opposition, made up of 52 Knesset Members. [...] An active opposition will certainly increase its prestige after many years of disrepute. There is nothing dishonorable about being in opposition – it is part of what makes the democratic process work."

Susan Hattis Rolef, JPO 17.03.13

Will Netanyahu navigate?

"The stewards of the economy and those who set policy on socio-economic and defense matters now must switch gears; they must put the grueling campaign and ensuing coalition talks behind them and work in harmony, despite all the strains of the past several months. [...]

The first order of business is to build mutual trust among all members. Failing to do so would make this government go down as a flash in the pan, an amateur project."

Mati Tuchfeld, IHY 19.03.13

A capitalist government

"Netanyahu has facilitated the creation of a government that reflects a majority consensus among Israelis. [...]

Because the vote was so heavily determined by domestic issues, it revealed that a strong majority of Israelis in a nation designed and built by socialists has moved decisively away from the economic dogma of its founders.

[...] Now with Lapid as finance minister and Bennett as economy and trade minister [...] the two newcomers to politics are in a unique position to do away with aspects of the economy that are either remnants of the Jewish state's socialist roots or the product of special entitlements conceded to the haredi population when it was still a tiny, embattled minority.

Let us hope that petty infighting and personal feuds do not get in the way of the important domestic goals the 33rd government was voted into office to accomplish."

JPO 17.03.13 Editorial

Netanyahu and his partner-rivals

"For all that this is not the government he would have chosen, it still finds Netanyahu personally where he wanted to be: at the center of a coalition that runs from Jewish Home to his right, via Likud Beytenu, to Yesh Atid and thence to Hatnua at the

center-left. Mr. Survival will not want to alienate Jewish Home and his own Likud base with overly dramatic moves on the Palestinian front, but neither will he want to lose Lapid and Livni — and such support as remains in the international community — by obviously dragging his feet. If Obama pushes for some kind of settlement freeze in an effort to get Mahmoud Abbas back to the peace table, Netanyahu may well go along, and should be capable of pushing that through, especially if it is limited to building outside the main settlement blocs. In the unlikely event that any such talks yield genuine possibilities of substantive progress, however, the coalition will likely be strained beyond breaking point."

David Horovitz, TOI 14.03.13

A coalition of virgins

"The advantage is the government will include people who think outside the box. They will be new people full of enthusiasm, rather than the old cynics. [...] It's a dramatic turning point in the history of the Israeli government: the mass entry into politics of a new generation born after the founding of the state and not weighed down by the burdens of the past — a generation free of complexes and scores to settle."

Yoel Marcus, HAA 15.03.13

Lapid and Bennett still face stern tests

"[Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett] will find out quickly enough that while the political situation made it easy to squeeze Netanyahu, the most difficult struggles are still ahead, when the time comes to cut the budget or social services. Then the real powerhouses in the economy will emerge: the defense establishment, the major unions, the Histadrut labor federation, the government monopolies, Israeli bureaucracy.

Lapid and Bennett will find out that it is easy to plan the sale of land for tens of thousands of apartments, but much harder to overcome hundreds of bureaucratic obstacles to actually build them. [...]

And of course, conflicts of interest will show up between Yesh Atid and Habayit Hayehudi. [...]

Most of the key economic posts in the new government will be filled by new and inexperienced people. That is not bad when the goal is to generate change, but it could be a very costly tutorial."

Sami Peretz, HAA 14.03.13

2. Barack Obamas Israel-Besuch

Zum ersten Mal seit er im Amt ist, hat US-Präsident Barack Obama Israel besucht. Im Mittelpunkt seines Besuches stand eine zentrale Botschaft: Die USA stehen fest an Israels Seite. So betonte er die "unzerbrechliche" Allianz zwischen beiden Ländern, Israels historische Wurzeln im Heiligen Land und sein Recht auf Selbstverteidigung.

In seiner Jerusalemer Rede vor hunderten von israelischen Studenten richtete Obama seine Worte nicht an die israelischen Politiker, sondern an das israelische Volk, dessen Vertrauen und Sympathie er gewinnen wollte. Er forderte es auf, selbst aktiv zu werden und die Politiker zum Handeln zu drängen, da es sonst keine Veränderungen geben würde. Israel müsse anerkennen, dass der fortgesetzte Siedlungsbau nicht der Sicherheit diene und es nicht fair sei, wenn Siedlergewalt gegen Palästinenser ungestraft bleibe. Frieden sei nicht nur eine Sache der Fairness, sondern eine Notwendigkeit, denn ein jüdisches und demokratisches Israel sei nur möglich, wenn es auch ein lebensfähiges und unabhängiges Palästina gäbe.

In einem Treffen mit dem palästinensischen Präsidenten Mahmud Abbas rief Obama diesen ebenfalls dazu auf, an den Verhandlungstisch zurückzukehren.

Listen to Obama

"Obama penetrated the hearts of the Israeli people yesterday with his moving and compelling speech [...].

His emphasis is clear [...]. Security will not be attained by military means and weapons systems alone; rather, it will be achieved first of all through a fair and just peace. [...]

Obama's goal in coming to Israel has been achieved: He won Israeli hearts and gave Israelis a sense of security, in the hope that now they will take charge and push the leadership toward a peace agreement with the Palestinians. Let us hope that Obama's call falls on attentive ears."

HAA 22.03.13 Editorial

What young Israelis wanted to hear

"This was the speech that these young Israelis not only needed but wanted to hear. A speech that radically redefined centrism in Israel, bringing it down to extraordinary common denominators in directions Israelis have learned to think of as diametrically opposed.

He spoke of security and peace as inextricably and necessarily linked, not a narrow choice between options, but a conscious choice for both. [...] [The students responded] with a huge reservoir of unaddressed, pent up emotional energy. [...]

An event like this [...] gives new strength to the world-weary and the habitually trashed. [...] It creates momentum. [...] This is not the same country after this speech."

Bradley Burston, HAA 22.03.13

First love, then war?

"The charm offensive will fail. It won't turn Israelis against Netanyahu the way Obama hoped for. It won't bring peace.

Israelis are unlikely to buy into Obama's 'trust me' paradigm because, by and large, their reading of Middle East strategic and security realities jives with Netanyahu's, not Obama's. Israelis aren't going to give Obama leeway to push Netanyahu because the president's record is, frankly, unimpressive. He has been wrong about the Palestinians until now, and he hasn't handled the "Arab Spring" so brilliantly either. [...]

When Obama acts decisively against Isfahan and Fordow he'll gain our trust. The president shouldn't expect Israelis or Netanyahu to all-of-a-sudden become 'pliant' because he gave a few good speeches in Jerusalem."

David M. Weinberg, JPO 21.03.13

Obama encouraged Israelis to rebel

"The truth cannot be ignored: In his speech, Barack Obama encouraged the Israeli public to rebel; to rebel against the concept that has existed here for the past 20 years, [...] according to which there is no one to talk to on the other side [...] and settlement construction must continue. [...]

Obama proved that he is not a hater; but a very concerned friend who does not believe one word that comes out of the politicians' mouths. [...]

It seems that the message has been heard. Now we just have to wait and see how it all plays out on the chessboard of the reality in the Middle East, which will remain in place after Air Force One takes off for Washington."

Attila Somfalvi, JED 23.03.13

Freedom to do nothing

"Scolding from our good uncle in America is not the thing that will convince us to change our outlook, our way, our reality. This is not what may move us towards the end of the occupation, the evacuation of

settlements and an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. All that can happen, Heaven forbid, through an American ultimatum with practical repercussions – a budgetary gun to the head, an existential economic threat. Or more likely and as cruel – through another such intifada, which will stir us up and force a change, as the first Intifada did at the time. Let's admit it: Until things don't go up in flames, bleed and hurt – we won't budge."

Ziv Lenchner, JED 28.03.13

Obama is not that nice

"Obama is not so nice. What interests him is only the American interest, and that is what he came here for.

Obama may have wanted to achieve peace in the Middle East [...] because it will bring quiet, promote trade and most important: allow the free and cheap flow of oil to the United States. But as soon as it became clear to him that [...] Netanyahu does not intend to keep his promises on 'two states for two peoples,' [...] he opted for an alternative plan: strengthening Israel militarily so it can continue to serve as the U.S.'s biggest terrestrial aircraft carrier in the region. [...] That, too, is a way to control the Middle East. [...]

What the two said to each other on the peace process with the Palestinians was only poetic license. Obama will not stop Israel's continued wallowing in the swamp of occupation on its way to a binational state."

Nehemia Shtrasler, HAA 22.03.13

Burden of proof is on the Palestinians

"Palestinian leaders were extremely reluctant to welcome U.S. President Barack Obama to Ramallah on Thursday, as if they assumed that they were simply extras in a show focused solely on showering Israel with affection. [...]

The burden of proof was laid squarely on the shoulders of the Palestinians, and [Obama] demanded that they resume the peace talks with Israel immediately. [...] Obama urged them to take charge of their own fate, instead of expecting others, namely the U.S., to do it for them. [...]

But it is doubtful that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas — and with him the entire Arab world, which is knee-deep in its own quagmire — can comprehend and internalize, let alone act, on Obama's message."

Eyal Zisser, IHY 22.03.13

The region: The Obama visit, a parable

"Make no mistake: Obama's visit to Israel and the Palestinian Authority did mark an important shift, but only on part of his policy. He has given up on promoting the 'peace process' as a high priority. [...]

That means Obama understands that pushing on the peace process won't work, and that trying to bully Israel will damage him in several ways. American public opinion and Congress, including most of the Democrats, are supportive of Israel. He has no interest in throwing away much-needed political capital to pursue a goal he knows cannot be attained."

Barry Rubin, JED 24.03.13

3. Normalisierung zwischen Israel und der Türkei

Als ein wichtiger Erfolg von Barack Obamas Israel-Besuch gilt der Beginn der Normalisierung der angespannten israelisch-türkischen Beziehungen. Seit 2010 herrschte eine diplomatische Eiszeit zwischen beiden Ländern, in deren Mittelpunkt die Stürmung eines Schiffskonvois („Mavi Marmara“) stand, der mit Hilfsgütern in Richtung Gaza unterwegs war. Dabei waren neun türkische Staatsbürger getötet worden. Auf Vermittlung Obamas hat sich Premier Netanyahu für diesen Vorfall beim türkischen Präsidenten Recep Tayyip Erdogan entschuldigt und eine Entschädigung für die Opfer angeboten. Die 2010 abberufenen Botschafter sollen auf ihre Posten zurückkehren. Präsident Obama äußerte seine Zufriedenheit über die beginnende Normalisierung. Israel forderte außerdem, dass juristische Schritte gegen seine Soldaten eingestellt werden sollen. Zu einem solchen Schritt sieht Ankara sich jedoch nicht in der Lage, da es sich um von Privatpersonen angestregte Prozesse handelt. Analysten vermuten, die Krise in Syrien sei der Hauptgrund für den Beginn der Normalisierung zwischen beiden Ländern.

Reconciliation, rehabilitation with Turkey

"The bitter aftertaste of the affair will not disappear overnight, but the heads of the two countries have already shown that they can shape public opinion, and so we may expect that they will know how to heal the trauma.

[...] As both countries have learned, public declarations, the attitude of the media and mutual gestures have huge power to destroy ties or to build them rock-solid.

After the destruction, the work of rehabilitation is now the challenge on the doorstep of the two leaders. They cannot lose any more time."
HAA 24.03.13 Editorial

Senseless & spineless: Speaking truth to power

"Given the recent apology [...] one is compelled to question whether there is any limit to the depths of self-defeating stupidity and self-debasing servility that the Israeli leadership is willing to sink to. [...]

The Turkish Islamist premier is [...] brashly strutting around, brandishing his achievement of coercing the infidel adversary to submit to his will. [...]

Unsurprisingly, Israel's enemies across the region are jubilant. [...] By submitting to Erdogan's demands, Israel has sent an unequivocal message to its foes and friends: If confronted with sufficient resolve, the Jews will capitulate to the will of their adversaries, no matter how absurd or outrageous their terms."

Martin Sherman, JPO 28.03.13

How Turkey views Israel's apology

"Virtues such as apology and forgiveness are rarely encountered in diplomacy. That is why such moments linger in memory more than wars and slaughter in politics. Because these moments are generally turning points. [...]

Apologizing sends a message of friendship. It is not like international agreements. It is another way for friends to say, 'I want to remain friends.' [...] The two countries have always been friends. The only thing that has changed is that circumstances have reminded them that this friendship is even more important now."

Aylin Kocaman, JPO 27.03.13

The sheikh and the sulha

"Erdogan seeks Islamic-Turkish hegemony in the Middle East, at our expense. [...] Erdogan's government supported the terrorist voyage of the IHH flotilla [...]. This act took place outside the purview of Turkey's legitimate interests and against every political and ethical protocol customary between countries at peace with each other. For this, Turkey has not yet apologized. [...]

The agreement, apology and renewal of relations all took place because of the joint interests of the U.S., Turkey and Israel. Their purpose was to solidify an operative front to combat Syria and Iran. Since Erdogan has not changed his vision, goals or desires, it may be expected that he and his associates

will try to hammer a few wedges into the agreement, and use them to break it later on."

Reuven Berko, IHY 29.03.13

Struggling to change his tune

"One would have had to be very naive to think that [...] Erdoğan would turn into an enthusiastic lover of Israel overnight. [...] Although Erdoğan agreed to accept Israel's apology this time, he is struggling to change his tune. [...]

We didn't expect to feel that only several days after Israel's apology, Erdoğan would already be making us feel that we had eaten a frog [...]. And that's even before mentioning that the Turks have now declared that they can't stop the legal proceedings underway against Israel Defense Forces officers and the naval commandos who boarded the Mavi Marmara.

But not everything in Turkey is bad. Israel has many friends in the Turkish defense and diplomatic communities. [...] In the overall Israel-Turkey relationship, it seems that Erdoğan is the main problem."

Boaz Bismuth, IHY 28.03.13

Turkey and Israel: interests over grudges

"Netanyahu's apology has paved the way for a massive joint pipeline project carrying natural gas from Israel to Turkey and from there to Europe. There is no overestimating the influence joint economic interests can have on stable relations between countries. [...]

Despite [...] Erdoğan's seeming attempts in recent years to turn Israel from a friend to an enemy [...] it turns out that our common economic interests have been maintained and even gained momentum. It would be safe to say that beneath the outward hostility, a lot of positive energy has been flowing between the two countries."

Samadar Bat Adam, IHY 27.03.13

Righteousness of our cause

"Even if at a certain point in time something appears to be a valuable diplomatic or political interest, it hurts the basic sense of the righteousness of the cause and of the nation's morality. The long-term damage is far greater than the momentary benefit [...].

I think of the IDF commandos who risked their lives on the 'Mavi Marmara' ship and of how they must have felt upon hearing of Israel's apology. The apology turned them into the guilty party. By apologizing to Turkey, the State abandoned these soldiers, who risked their lives and acted in self-defense during a mission they were sent on by the State."

Avigdor Lieberman, JED 26.03.13

Turkey was right

"Even after Israel's phone apology [...] no Israeli official has admitted in full and as required that the raid of the Gaza-bound flotilla involved criminal and unnecessary violence, or that Israel was punished for it and the punishment was effective. [...]"

It's too bad [Netanyahu] didn't tell them that other countries are likely to follow Turkey's lead and punish Israel for the occupation to make it change its ways. [...] Israel once again proved that it understands nothing but force. It took three years of punishment for Turkey to get an apology that Israel should have made immediately."

Gideon Levy, HAA 28.03.13

4. Medienquerschnitt

Die Vielfalt der in Israel relevanten Themen kann in einem Medienspiegel nicht umfassend wiedergegeben werden. Um den deutschen LeserInnen dennoch einen Einblick in das breite Themenspektrum, das in den Medien behandelt wird, zu gewähren, veröffentlichen wir in dieser Schlaglichtausgabe wieder eine kleine Auswahl an weiteren Themen, die in den vergangenen zwei Wochen die israelische Gesellschaft bewegten.

Über Österreichs Verhältnis zu seiner Geschichte:

Austria's legacy

"Forty-two percent of Austrians believe that 'not everything was bad under Hitler,' according to a poll conducted by the Viennese newspaper Der Standard.

That's very telling. [...] In the postwar years, Vienna sought to shirk all responsibility for the Holocaust by pretending that it was merely another conquered and victimized European country [...]. But not all truth can be conveniently rewritten. [...]"

The [...] poll exposes an old mindset that [...] appears to survive vibrantly among significant portions of the population. [...]"

But perhaps most disturbing was the finding that 61% of Austrian adults want to see their government headed by a 'strong man.' This relates not to perceptions of the past but to the here and now. [...]"

Austria is still quintessential Europe and its moods reflect sentiments elsewhere on the continent [...]. It indicates just how fragile European democracy is, despite copious political correctness and seductive lip service to human rights. [...]"

Three-quarters of a century after the Anschluss, too much of its noxious legacy lingers."

JPO 14.03.13 Editorial

Über den neuen Papst Franziskus:

Francis & the Jews

"Is the choice of Bergoglio good for the Jews? [...] Bergoglio is undoubtedly a conservative. [...] Conservatives often have a fundamentally unique and quantitatively different relationship with the Jewish faith even while being more theologically critical of other forms of monotheism [...]. That's because Judaism, which predates Christianity, is viewed as authentic. If the Church is pure, then its roots – Judaism – must also be pure. [...] And the new pope undoubtedly has deep ties with Argentina's Jewry. [...]"

In 2005, Bergoglio was the first public personality to sign a petition for justice in the AMIA Jewish community center bombing case. [...] Pope Francis has maintained a sustained and very positive relationship with a living, breathing community in Buenos Aires. Judging from that positive relationship, his appointment appears to be good for both Catholics and Jews."

JPO 14.03.13 Editorial

HAA = Haaretz

JED = Jedioth Ahronoth

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

GLO = Globes

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