

Israel moves civilizational

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The citizens of Israel have finished casting their ballots. Now, after officials have counted 90 percent of them, Benjamin Netanyahu looks to get his Prime Ministership back. But this time will be different – because his coalition partner is an unabashed proponent of Israel as a civilization. Their detractors can detract all they want. But if these results hold, Israel will take a giant step to becoming a civilizational state.

Current results in Israel

Reportage on elections in Israel comes from [CBS](#), the [BBC](#), [NPR](#), and [Reuters](#). The Knesset, of course, has 120 seats. Election officials allocate those seats in proportion to the total vote across all Israel. Under this *proportional representation* scheme, every member of the Knesset is elected at-large. In fact, no one “runs for a seat” in the Knesset. Instead, party leaders run for *slots*, which the Israelis call “mandates.” The party leader winning the most slots, receives a summons from the separately elected President of the State of Israel. That worthy instructs the leader to “form a government,” combining his own slots with those of other leaders with whom he can get along – and form a coalition. Almost never does one party leader win the sixty-one slot majority outright.

Benjamin Netanyahu's party seems to have won 32 slots. The Yesh Atid party, which led the anti-Netanyahu coalition last year, will come in second with 24 slots. The Religious Zionism Party, with its unabashed platform for Jewish civilization, will be third with 14 slots. The vote-counters at the BBC seem to calculate that Netanyahu has the support of a collection of Orthodox Jewish parties that together would own 19 slots. These would make a Knesset majority of 65 slots, more than enough to form a government.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, a follower of Meir Kahane before the latter's assassination in New York City in 1990, leads the Religious Zionism bloc and its most prominent party, Otzma Yehudit (translation: Jewish Power).

An odd choice of symbolism

Netanyahu ran his campaign with an odd slogan. Campaign posters throughout Israel depict him, with the Flag of Israel in the background. Off to the left-hand side, the slogan appears. In English it translates in part: "The Likud begins with Netanyahu." But above those words are the Hebrew letters Mem, Chet, and Lamed. They spell the acronym *Machal*, which stands for *Mitnadvei Chutz La'Aretz* – Volunteers from Outside the Land. These were the four thousand officers and enlisted, not all of whom were Jewish, who fought alongside Israeli forces during the 1948 Israeli War for Independence. The Israeli Defense Forces remember them to this day, and they have another organization dedicated to preserving their memory.

Did Netanyahu seek to evoke memories of the War for Independence with this reference to that "foreign" allied force? Or do those letters carry a different meaning? The answer is unclear. But this much *is* clear. To win, he has embraced the most explicit set of civilizational values the State of Israel can have. As such, the Likud-Religious Zionism coalition strikes liberal commentators, in and out of Israel, with consternation.

Values of civilizational Israel

Netanyahu has long supported building Jewish "settlements" in Judea and Samaria – the lands the world calls "The West Bank." Indeed he wanted to annex outright large tracts of Judea and Samaria. But President Donald J. Trump's willingness to broker peace with the "Palestinians," if that were possible, dissuaded him from that plan. (Trump did broker the Abraham Accords between Israel and Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates.)

Itamar Ben-Gvir lives in Kiryat Arba (literally, Town of the Four), outside Hebron in the south of Judea-Samaria. Kiryat Arba has seen more than its share of political murder of ordinary residents. Only recently an Arab (and member of HAMAS) shot and killed a Jewish resident of that town. HAMAS, whose name translates as "Islamic Resistance Movement," is an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood. The far-left Member of Knesset who actually said the residents

were *not* innocent civilians, did *not* help matters. With a background like this, naturally Itamar Ben-Gvir takes a hard line. Already he and his partner Bezalel Smotrich will demand the Ministry of Public Security as a prize.

Tellingly, two far-left parties failed to qualify for slots: Balad, a “nationalist Arab party,” and Meretz, a party with a platform friendly to “alternative lifestyle participants.” Netanyahu specifically campaigned on “national pride” in an explicitly Jewish state. The coalition that opposed him included an Arab party. But that coalition proved fragile, and broke apart with withdrawals that cost it a majority.

Reaction

Everyone seems to expect Netanyahu, Ben-Gvir, and Smotrich to govern with an emphasis on nationalism and religious values. The only disagreement is whether that’s good or bad. Complaints against the likely direction of a Netanyahu coalition sound remarkably like complaints in the United States against anyone who professes American civilizational values. They speak of “erosion of Israeli democracy,” just as American leftists speak of “threats to [American] democracy.” Likewise, the enthusiasm Netanyahu commands from his voters mirrors that of “MAGA Republicans.” (But at least Yair Lapid, outgoing Prime Minister, never delivered a speech in front of a blood-red backdrop with two armed IDF in the background! Then again, the man who wrote this essay twenty years ago can’t be all bad.)

Speaking of whom: Yair Lapid refuses to concede “until the last envelope is counted.” Of course, he’ll be lucky to have fifty slots to fill.

CBS and Reuters make much of Netanyahu alienating Jews still living in America. Of course, 72 percent of them vote Democratic anyway. Besides, Ben-Gvir and Smotrich might encourage Netanyahu to remember that only Jews who *reside* in Israel, *vote* in Israel. (Three and three-quarters years ago, *The Jerusalem Post* published their own perspective on this matter, and it was *not* pretty.)

Conclusion

At time of writing, no news has broken to reverse the trend toward victory for the Likud-Religious Zionism alliance. In evaluating the weeping and gnashing of teeth by American legacy media, readers should consider the source. Neither the legacy media, nor the Democratic Party, nor “J Street” has any taste for or understanding of civilizational values. Perhaps the only Jewish people born in America who *did* appreciate Israel as a civilization, have already “made *Aaliyah*.” They are, therefore, Israelis.

The crucible of constant warfare and repeated acts of murder and sabotage have hardened the Israeli people in a way no leftist can understand. The election of a civilizational coalition in Israel became inevitable, for the same reason that Judge Jephthah, who began as the

leader of a gang of misfits (because he was a – er – natural son), became the leader of ancient Israel at a critical juncture, three hundred years after the ancient Israelites arrived in their Promised Land.

Time and events will tell whether Israel's new leaders will succeed in transforming Israel from just another attempt at "democracy" (which is two wolves and a lamb voting on what's for dinner) into a true republic. Americans, Jews and Gentiles alike, will be watching.