

SNAPSHOT
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Understanding Israel's Upcoming Election

BY RACHEL NELSON, SASHA GHOSH-SIMINOFF AND HENRY ROGERS



**Middle East
Policy Council**

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Contents

Israel’s Upcoming Election _____ 3

Major Candidates _____ 3

Projected Results _____ 3

How the Election Works _____ 4

Party Alignments _____ 4

Party Stances on Major Issues _____ 5

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Israel’s Upcoming Election

On Oct. 27, 2026, Israel's voters will choose which political parties are to be seated in the Knesset.

Turbulent times

The term of the government under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the farthest right in Israel's history, is ending. The past four years, which have marked some of the country's most turbulent period in decades, have included:

- **Oct. 7 massacre** and subsequent conflicts.
- **Mounting international pressure** against Israel for alleged war crimes committed by the Israel Defense Forces in Gaza.
- **Extension of the military draft** to Haredi citizens.
- **Attempts at major judicial reforms** to limit the power of the Supreme Court and increase the power of the ruling government.
- **Corruption charges** against Netanyahu.
- **Escalating tensions** in Gaza and the West Bank.
- **Calls for an official and independent investigative commission** appointed by the Israeli High Court of Justice to impartially examine alleged government failures related to the Oct. 7 massacre.

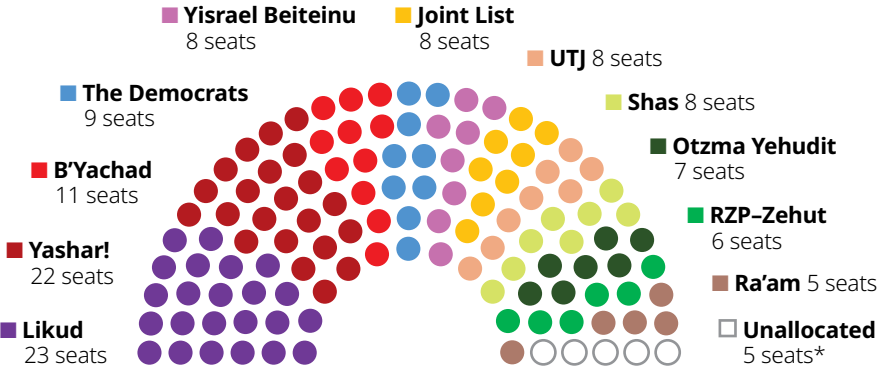
At stake

- **The Netanyahu government** paints the election as an opportunity to advance its conservative agenda.
- **The opposition** frames it as a chance to exact accountability for tumultuous events under Netanyahu.
- **The 38 parties** on the ballot are vying for 120 seats in the unicameral parliament.

Projected Results

According to Oct. 5 opinion polls.

The formation of any governing coalition will be unlikely, due to various parties’ red line issues.



*Two parties, the Reservists-Economic Party and Amcha Yisrael, are expected to get close to the 3.25% threshold but not reach it. If either does meet the threshold, it will get some seats currently expected to be unallocated.

Major Candidates



Benjamin Netanyahu

- Party: Likud
- Current prime minister
- Prime minister for 19 of the past 30 years
- Increasingly conservative policies



Naftali Bennett

- Party: Together
- Former prime minister and Netanyahu political aide
- Has united with Yair Lapid, former prime minister and head of centrist party Yesh Atid, to form an anti-Netanyahu bloc



Gadi Eisenkot

- Party: Yashar!
- Former IDF chief of staff under Netanyahu
- Campaigning on the status quo for Palestinian affairs and reform for Oct. 7 accountability



Yair Golan

- Party: The Democrats
- Major in the IDF Reserve
- Praised for heroic actions during the Oct. 7 massacre
- The only prominent liberal in the race

Getty Images; Yahav Studio; handout photo

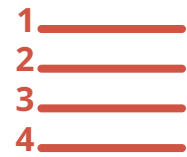
How the Elections Work

Israeli elections are unusual, prioritizing the party over the candidate and stratifying power within a single legislative body.

Voting

Parties

■ **Each party submits a list of candidates,** ranked by preference.



Voters

■ **Each voter casts a ballot** for one party, not individual candidates.



Seat Allocation

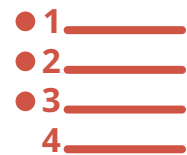
Seats per party

■ **Each party gets a number of seats** based on its share of the total vote. The total vote is divided by 120 — the number of seats in the Knesset. The result equals roughly one seat allocated. A party that gets 10% of the vote gets 12 seats, a party that gets 15% gets 18 seats, and so on.



Seating candidates

■ **Those seats are given to candidates** from the party's list — one seat going to the first on the list, then the second, and so on until all of the party's seats are allocated



"Leftover" seats

■ **A party must get at least 3.25% of the vote** to qualify for a seat. As most parties will not meet this threshold, some seats are not initially allocated. Those seats are distributed using a formula that awards them by comparing how close to getting another seat a party was in the first allocations. As a result, a party with, say, 10% of the vote may get 13 seats rather than 12.

Party Alignments

Bold = Expected to meet the 3.25% threshold and win seats (with projected number of seats according to Oct. 5 opinion polls).

Left/Center Left

- **The Democrats (9 seats)**
 - **Joint List (8)**
 - **Ra'am (5)**
- Beyachad Natziach
 - Brit Olam
- Partnership for Everyone
 - Ani VeAta

Center

- Betach
- Blue & White
- Reservists-Economic Party
- HaTikun
- New Order

Center Right / Right

- **Together (11)**
 - **Yisrael Beiteinu (8)**
 - **Yashar! (22)**
- Amcha Yisrael
 - Bitachon Ishi
 - Israel First
- Orot Hashachar
 - Sharshar
 - Shema

Hard Right

- Likud (23)

Religious-Nationalist / Hard Right

- **Otzma Yehudit (7)**
- **RZP-Zehut (6)**
- Bible Bloc
- Mishpat Tzedek
- Noam
- Tekuma
- Tzomet–Beit Yisrael

Haredi

- **Shas (8)**
 - **UTJ (8)**
- HaKahal
 - The Haredi Public
- Tzeva Shachor
 - Achi

Unclear/Protest/Independent

- Gan Eden
- Kol HaNashim
- Pirates

Party Stances on Major Issues

This scorecard examines the major parties' positions on key issues for Israeli voters and U.S. policymakers. The first section highlights the complete consensus within Israel's current far-right governing coalition. Government parties align on support for expanding settlements and West Bank annexation, as well as rejecting Palestinian statehood. Haredi military conscription is a potential exception. If Likud needs opposition partners to form a government, it could shift to support Haredi conscription. The Religious Zionism Party (RZP-Zehut) has also expressed some openness to compromise. Meanwhile, several opposition parties have ruled out forming a government with Haredi parties unless the draft is implemented, making Haredi conscription a potential coalition spoiler.

An Oct. 7 investigation and the future of Israeli security control in Gaza present a major division between the government and opposition. Opposition leaders have called for accountability for the Netanyahu government's failures related to Oct. 7. However, opposition parties differ on the scope and continuation of Israel's occupation of Gaza.

Opposition positions on the West Bank are more complex. Yisrael Beiteinu supports both a two-state solution and annexation under leader Avigdor Lieberman's plan, which proposes annexing major Jewish settlement blocs in the West Bank while transferring Arab-majority areas in Israel to Palestinian control. While Yashar! does not explicitly endorse settlement expansion and has rejected annexation of the West Bank, it also rejects Palestinian statehood. Its approach points to continued occupation, with more limited settlement expansion and efforts to temper settler violence. These distinctions are especially important, as a new government in Israel does not inherently mean fundamental policy shifts, particularly toward Palestinians.

Support

GOVERNMENT	10/7 investigation	West Bank annexation	Settlement expansion	Gaza permanent security	Haredi draft	Judicial reform	Palestinian state/2-state solution
Likud							
Otzma Yehudit							
RZP-Zehut							
Shas							
UTJ							

OPPOSITION	10/7 investigation	West Bank annexation	Settlement expansion	Gaza permanent security	Haredi draft	Judicial reform	Palestinian state/2-state solution
The Democrats							
Joint List							
Together							
Yashar!							
Yisrael Beiteinu							





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ewehbe@mepc.org

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Policy Council's publication process,
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A: 1660 L St. NW, Ste. 450
Washington, D.C., 20036

P: (202) 800-7302