



## **ISRAEL'S PUBLIC AGENDA – ELECTIONS 2019**

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First of all it is important to clarify that just as the proverb goes "Justice, justice shall you pursue" (Deuteronomy 16:20), in the same way we can say, "Democracy, democracy shall you pursue". The current government in Israel was democratically elected; this has to be emphasized and respected. In parallel, precisely due to this democratic essence, we have the right to criticize it, to see other points of view and especially to suggest other alternatives. And from this perspective, we will analyze Israel's public and political agenda as we look toward the elections on Pesach 2019 .

### **Liberal Democracy**

From the 5th of Iyar, 1948, with the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, the moral and ideological foundations of the State of Israel were set. These values clearly mark the style, type and limits of the future state's regime: a liberal democracy that is humanist and based on the values of the Jewish heritage and legacy ("The State of Israel... will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel..."). And this is precisely, in my opinion, one of the main, critical topics that will be at stake in the next elections.

I am aware of the fact that it may not seem this way, but at the core of the dispute will be the perception of a liberal democracy versus a majoritarian democracy. This is the dispute that the current outgoing government has created, with a myriad of laws (or proposed laws which did not pass) and behaviors. Extreme populism and nationalism have led to the attempt to derail the country from the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

In the midst of Ehud Olmert's (former prime minister who served time in prison for corruption charges) criminal investigation, it was current Prime Minister Netanyahu (then in the opposition), who urged the resignation of Olmert, arguing that even without a conviction, it is unethical for a Prime Minister faced with corruption allegations to keep his role .

And this is exactly the same Netanyahu who does everything possible to do the opposite of what he preached against Olmert. Does he care? Of course not. The only thing he cares about is to save himself and his wife (who is currently on trial). If he has to be a hypocrite, he will do so. Be inconsistent? He has no problem. Discredit the values of truth, justice and equality before the law? Of course. I am optimistic and believe that the citizens will finally evaluate him and decide in favor of the Declaration of Independence .

### **The safety of being the strongest**

Israel longs for peace, for living in a Jewish and democratic national home, after centuries in exile and in the diaspora. After having been second-class or classless citizens who were persecuted, discriminated and murdered, this is exactly the Zionist dream which was the light at the end of the tunnel. A hope. A Hatikvah .



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For more than a hundred years we fought. In the last seventy years, we continue to do so as sovereign citizens, having a national home, and despite our neighbors' hostility, we believe in good neighborliness. This is the axiom. Yet we must be aware of the reality of those surrounding us—Islamist fanatics who see the existence of Israel as illegitimate. We must also mention messianic Jews who perceive ancient laws and a divine promise as the mere legitimacy of our right to live here and, excuse my simple interpretation, to live here as superiors and owners of this land. Between these two poles lies the complexity and the imperative need to seek a solution and not only a way to "administrate the conflict". We must explicitly set the boundaries of our national home, acknowledge our neighbors as equals and try to reach honorable coexistence for all. We have the power, the determination and the justification to do so, with the condition that we respect, tolerate and ensure our safety. The international community will give us their recognition if we do so.

In my opinion, these are the three main topics of the upcoming elections, which will define Israel's near future. We must also stress that on the public agenda, there are other issues no less important for the continuation of the process of consolidating and strengthening the Israeli society: IDF conscription for all, separation of powers, religion-state relations, minority rights, the controversial nation-state law, humanist education and many others.