

ISRAEL

Date of Elections: December 31, 1973

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament upon the normal expiry of their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Israel, the *Knesset*, consists of 120 Deputies elected for 4 years.

Electoral System

Every Israeli national, of either sex, at least 18 years of age may vote. Although no persons are expressly disqualified from voting, certain may not practically do so because they are not provided with polling facilities; this includes prisoners or persons abroad who are not seamen.

The electoral register is drawn up at the national level by the Ministry of Interior and is prepared anew each year. Voting is not compulsory.

Every eligible voter at least 21 years of age may be a candidate to the *Knesset*. The following people, however, are barred from being candidates: the President of the State; the State Comptroller; salaried rabbis; judges; and senior civil servants and army officers of a certain rank, unless they cease to hold their posts 100 days before election day. Where a more junior civil servant or army officer becomes a candidate his service is suspended until election day and, if he becomes a member of the *Knesset*, so long as he is a parliamentarian.

A list of candidates may be presented either by 750 members of the electorate or by a party group represented in the outgoing *Knesset*. In the former case the representative of the list must deposit I£ 15,000, which deposit is returned if the list obtains 1 % of the total valid votes cast in the country.

Deputies of the *Knesset* represent the entire nation, which forms one constituency. Voting is for fists of candidates, with proportional distribution of seats effected according to the d'Hondt method of highest average between all lists having obtained at least 1 % of the valid votes cast.

Within each list, the seats won are allotted to the candidates according to their order of appearance on the list. The next-in-line of the list concerned fills a vacancy which arises in the *Knesset* between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The general elections, originally scheduled for October 30, 1973, were postponed until the end of the year because of the outbreak of the fourth Middle East war.

A total of 21 parties (including 11 new ones) competed for the 120 seats in the *Knesset*, the two main contenders being the Alignment, consisting of the Labour Party (*Mapai*) — which in one form or another had ruled Israel through its 25 years of existence — and the *Mapam*; and the *Likud* or Front, a new right-of-centre grouping of parties (the largest of which were *Herut* and the Liberals), formed just before the elections. Two religious parties — the National Religious Party, partner of the outgoing coalition Government together with the Alignment and the Independent Liberals, and *Agudat Israel* — also figured as important contestants.

In view of the originally scheduled election date, campaigning initially emphasized the hardship inflation had caused the poorer classes, with national security and foreign relations being discussed secondarily. The October conflict naturally reversed the order.

The announcement of the definitive results — delayed because of the defense forces' vote — bore out the fact that the Alignment, led by Prime Minister Mrs. Golda Meir, suffered enough losses to prevent its parliamentary majority, although it retained its standing as the central parliamentary bloc that would again compose the Government. The advances of *Likud*, led by Mr. Menahem Begin of *Herut* and Major General Ariel Sharon, were nevertheless seen more as a protest vote and therefore as not upsetting the electorate's traditionally stable voting patterns.

On March 6, 1974, after 65 days of inter-party negotiations, a coalition Cabinet comprised, once again, of the National Religious Party and the Independent Liberals was formed.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Knesset

Number of registered voters.	2,037,478
Voters.	1,601,098 (78.6 %)
Blank or void ballot papers.	34,243
Valid votes.	1,566,855

Political Group	Votes obtained	n/ %	Number of seats
Labour Party (<i>Mapai</i>) and <i>Mapam</i> Alignment	621,183	39.7	51 (—5)
<i>Likud</i> [<i>Gahal</i> (<i>Herut</i> and Liberal Party), State List and Free Centre]	473,309	30.2	39 (+7)*
National Religious Party. <i>Torah Front</i> (<i>Agudat Israel</i> and <i>Poalei Agudat Israel</i>).	130,349	8.3	10 (-2)
Independent Liberals	60,012	3.8	5 (-1)
New Communist Party (<i>Rakah</i>).	56,560	3.6	4 (=)
Arab lists affiliated to <i>Mapai</i>	53,353	3.4	M+1
Citizens' Rights List (<i>Aloni</i>).	48,961	3.1	3 (-1)
<i>Moked</i> (<i>Maki</i> and " New Left ").	35,023	2.2	3 (+3)**
Others.	22,147	1.4	M=)
	65,958	4.2	- (-2)
			120

* The addition of 7 seats reflects those received by the groups which joined forces in 1973.
 ** Ran in 1973 for the first time.