

ISRAEL

Date of Elections: 30 June 1981

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament following premature dissolution of this body. Previous general elections had taken place in May 1977.

Characteristics of Parliament

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

Electoral System

Every Israeli national at least 18 years of age is entitled to vote. Although no persons are expressly disqualified from voting, certain cannot do so because they are not provided with polling facilities; these include prisoners or persons abroad who are not seamen.

The electoral register is drawn up at the national level and revised annually. Voting is not compulsory.

Every qualified voter at least 21 years of age may be a candidate for the *Knesset* unless he has been sentenced to imprisonment of five or more years for violation of national security, where five years have not elapsed since the prison term was completed. The following people are also 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 1,500 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\$20,000, which is returned if the list obtains at least 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 lists 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" candidate of the list concerned fills a vacancy which arises in the *Knesset* between general elections.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The June election date was set by the *Knesset* on 10 February 1981; the parliamentary term would normally have run until November 1981.

Early dissolution and a fresh mandate from the people had in fact been sought by Prime Minister Menachem Begin, whose right-wing *Likud* coalition had ruled Israel since 1977 but had met with increasing political difficulties and diminishing support in Parliament.

The election campaign was marked by sporadic violence; debate focused largely on economic issues and foreign affairs, particularly the policies to adopt as regards Israeli settlements on the West Bank of the Jordan River and the Gaza Strip, as well as towards the Arab world as a whole. The opposition Labour Party, led by Mr. Shimon Peres, was troubled somewhat by internal strife. A new centre party, known as *Telem*, was led by former Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan. In all, an unprecedented number of 31 different lists of candidates were submitted to the electorate.

Final polling results were close, no one party gaining a majority and—as has become the tradition in Israel—a coalition thus being necessary. *Likud* allied itself with religious parties (National Religious Party, *Agudat Israel*, *Tami*); the coalition thus formed had 66 *Knesset* seats. Mr. Begin continued as Prime Minister.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	2,490,014
Voters.	1,954,609 (78.5%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	17,243
Valid votes.	1,937,366

Political Group	Number of Candi- dates	Votes obtained		Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
<i>Likud (Herut, Liberal Party, Loam) Front</i>	120	718,941	37.11	48	●	43
<i>Maarakh (Labour Party and Mapam) Alignment.</i>	120	708,536	36.57	47	33	32
National Religious Party	104	95,232	4.92	6	12	12
<i>Agudat Israel.</i>	93	72,312	3.73	4	4	4
<i>Rakah Front (Communists)</i>	120	64,918	3.35	4	5	5
<i>Tehiya*</i>	121	44,700	2.31	3	2	
<i>Tanii**</i>	41	44,466	2.30	3		
<i>Telem*</i>	115	30,600	1.58	2	4	
<i>Shinui*</i>	120	29,837	1.54	2	5	
Citizens' Rights Movement***	119	27,921	1.44			
Others		99,903	5.15			
				120		

* Formed during the outgoing *Knesset*.

**New list.

*** Joined the *Maarakh* Alignment shortly after the election.

2. Distribution of Members of the Knesset according to Professional Category

Lawyers. . . . .	.19
Farmers. . . . .	.18
Managers. . . . .	.13
Journalists and writers. . . . .	.12
Teachers. . . . .	.11
Political and public service officials.	9
Economists.	9
Social scientists.	6
Engineering and academic professions.	6
Clerical and administrative workers.	5
Rabbis.	3
Manual workers.	3
Others.	6
	120

3. Distribution of Members of the Knesset according to Sex

Men. . . . .	.111
Women.	9
	120

4. Distribution of Members of the Knesset according to Age Group

30-39 years. . . . .	.11
40-49. . . . .	.44
50-59. . . . .	.42
60-69. . . . .	.20
70-79.	3
	120