



# THE ISRAELI GENERAL ELECTIONS



## THE 4HQ OF IT...

Democracy is about Freedom. The Freedom to vote, to influence the make-up of the government that decides on our freedoms. The principle of democratic elections is similar in all countries. The practical workings of each electoral system are always different! This session is aimed to understand the freedom of Israelis to make changes to Israel through a very particular democratic system.

## AIMS

Learners will:

- Discover that left-right, and intersectional alignments are very different in Israel
- Understand that coalitions are made by shared interests and compromise
- Explore the moral nature of compromise
- Pick up the basics of the how why and who of the 2022 Elections

## PART 1 - THE COMPARISONS - 15 MINUTES



Build a wordcloud:

"If someone is on the Left, what would you say they stand for?"

"If someone is on the Right, what would you say they stand for?"

**Discuss** - are there any significant disagreements? Or is it there a fairly clear alignment - if someone is "left" about abortion, they are "left" about most other things?

Let's see if these definitions apply equally smoothly to Israelis. Would you say this person is on the left, the right, or in the center?

**COMPOSITE ISRAELIS:**

Shira demonstrates for LGBTQ+ rights, believes that women should have equal access to the Kotel, and believes we should never allow Palestinians to have a State - left or right?

[~Right]

Alon believes that the State should stop offering welfare hand-outs to the poor because it discourages them from looking for work, wishes Israel would withdraw from the territories so as to give the Palestinians a State, and wants the government to stop funding synagogues. Left or right?

[~Left]

Tal believes that Israel should begin careful negotiations with the Palestinians to see whether there is a safe and gradual way to increase the possibilities of allowing them some form of independence in the West Bank. Tal is also a strong believer in an open market and thinks all government subsidies for food staples, like bread and milk, should be cancelled so that all prices reach their own level. Left or right?

[~Centrist]

After playing the left or right game, encourage the learners to look for the “rules”. Feel free to confirm their deduction: Roughly speaking, in Israel whether you are seen as left or right is almost entirely to do with your attitude to the Palestinians. If you can contemplate an independent Palestinian state, you are not of the right. No other values need align for you to be defined (and to define yourself) as left or right.

*Given that the Palestinian issue seems to be so binary, you would think there are only two parties in the Israeli Knesset – the left and the right – those in favor or against a Palestinian State. Just like the two Houses in the United States contain only two political parties, so one might expect the Israeli Knesset to contain only two parties. Instead 13 different parties were voted into the latest Knesset (Spring 2021), and even some of them are combinations of two or three other parties.*

## PART 2 - KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE AMERICAN ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND THE ISRAELI SYSTEM - 10 MINUTES

[Learners can be given a research task of finding the differences, or you can present these differences frontally, depending on time and preference]

[With teens in-person, you might wish to do a version of “The wind blows”. Run to the left or right side of the room depending on your answers. After each “American choice”, have everyone move to the “Israeli place” – in this way their bodies will experience the difference between the electoral systems.]

How is the head of government chosen (US President) – do you vote for the candidate by name, or do you just vote for their political party? – Left – by name; Right – party

RIGHT

When someone votes in the National Elections do they vote for in the polling booth?  
Left - The local candidate; Right -The party

RIGHT

How is the division of seats in the House/Knesset decided?

Left - According to the percentage of votes per party; Right - According to local results that may or may not align with the percentage of votes across the party

LEFT

How many viable political parties does your country have?

Left - three or less; Right - 13 or more

RIGHT

#### 4. VIDEO ABOUT COALITIONS AND COMPROMISE -

20 MINUTES



Screen the video, and pause or take questions whenever appropriate.

#### 5. THE POLITICAL NATURE OF COMPROMISE -

30 MINUTES

If you were your own political party, and you needed to commit to making three changes to Israel or America, what would your three policies be?

- And if you were told you could achieve only two of them, which would they be?
- And if you were told you could only achieve one?
- And if you were told you could achieve one of them, on condition of your having to vote for the exact opposite of your other two policies?

This is the process of compromise in politics, when creating coalitions.

Screen the following quotation:

"Ideals tell us something important about what we would like to be, but compromises tell us who we are." (Avishai Margalit, Israeli philosopher)

Use this quotation either as the ending to the session, or the trigger for its concluding discussion.

#### 6. ISRAELI ELECTIONS 2022

If you have time, or if you believe it to be of value, screen the following video about the way in which elections came around this time.

<https://youtu.be/cdnyd2wxCig>

