

Standing Together Without Becoming a Whip

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 20 October 2026

Cohesion, Covenant, and the Elections of 27 October 2026

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · Jerusalem · 9 Cheshvan 5787 / Tuesday 20 October 2026

A blank envelope is not a majority. It is the only object the remaining seven days can still honor. Israel votes on Tuesday, 27 October 2026, for all 120 seats of the 26th Knesset. A forecast published on 6 October 2026 mapped a nationalist turn across Europe and treated several calendars — Spain soon, France in 2027, Germany and Britain in 2029 — as if polling leads were already diplomatic facts. A reply conditioned that forecast: the turn happens only if nationalists and the several kinds of conservatives cooperate inside their electoral rules, and do not split the vote as French, Canadian, and British camps have done. The same sentence was applied to Israel: vote only for the active coalition parties.

Both texts see something true. Proportional systems with thresholds punish fragmentation. Two-round systems punish failure to consolidate for the runoff. First-past-the-post punishes divided camps in single-member districts. Neither text is sufficient. Coordination is necessary. It is not identity. Reuven Hazan's distinction between organic cohesion and imposed discipline, the republican demand of non-domination, and the covenantal account of a free and imputable public act together explain why a bloc arithmetic fails when partners are treated as instruments. This essay does not endorse a list. It measures the remaining days by turnout quality, institutional integrity, and the refusal to let a house-effect become a mood.

1. What kind of question this is

The parent forecast was a map of hope and warning. Spain's government, it said, had collapsed toward a snap election, with the right in momentum. France in 2027 would see Marine Le Pen leading Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Austria's right looked competitive toward 2029. Germany's AfD had already passed the governing party in national surveys, with a federal contest only in 2029 and a public that doubted the chancellor would last. Britain, having chosen Labour, would remain isolated until 2029, a left island on the wrong side of a coming history. Belgium would stay polarized between Flemish nationalists and a French-speaking left, ungovernable through a distant election. Italy under Giorgia Meloni was scored as a disappointment: right in register, moderate in act, unwilling to take a hard line when Israel's case was pressed. The conclusion was that most of Europe would become right, national, and harder, and that Israel should prepare for a world angry at Muslim migration and newly usable as a diplomatic partner.

The reply did not dispute the direction. It disputed the mechanism. A lead is not a government. A mood is not a coalition. The French, Canadian, and British cases were offered as warnings against camps that lose because they will not share a ballot, a runoff, or a district. Israel, then three weeks out and now seven days out, was placed under the same rule.

The sharper question is civic rather than partisan. Under rules that punish fragmentation, when is coordination a public good, and when does the call to coordinate become domination by the camp? Success is not a larger number for one column. Success is an imputable act: a voter who

has looked at the letter, accepted the threshold risk, and has not been told that leaving the bloc is betrayal. A republic can want coordination and still refuse the sentence that only one address is safe.

2. The Israeli record as of 15 October 2026

The Central Elections Committee's standing fact is that election day is Tuesday, 16 Heshvan 5787, 27 October 2026. Lists and ballot letters were approved on 27 September. Surplus-vote filing closed on 16 October. Voting at Israel's diplomatic missions abroad has already opened (Times of Israel). The last day a poll may be published is 23 October. Ordinary Israelis abroad must be in the Land to vote. Polling stations close at 22:00, when the television channels publish exit polls. Official confirmation is reported for 4 November. Counting from Tuesday, 20 October, seven days remain. The envelope is still blank.

No bloc has 61 on the houses a careful reader averages.

The seat math first, because every number below is a share of it. In 2022, 4,764,742 valid votes elected 120 members, so one seat cost about $4,764,742 \div 120 = 39,706$ votes. The 3.25 percent bar on that base is $4,764,742 \times 0.0325 =$ about 154,854 votes, roughly 3.9 seats, which is why the smallest list a poll can print is 4. A majority is 61. The 2026 base will differ with turnout; the ratios will not.

Channel 13 / HaMadad, fielded 13 October with 1,018 respondents and published 14 October, had Yashar at 20, Likud at 18, Together at 12, the Democrats, Yisrael Beytenu and the Joint List at 9 each, United Torah Judaism and Otzma Yehudit at 8, Shas at 7, Religious Zionism–Zehut and Ra'am at 6, and both threshold lists — Amcha Yisrael (Winter) and the Reservists–Economic list (Hendel–Zelekha) — at 4. The outgoing coalition parties sum to $18 + 8 + 8 + 7 + 6 = 47$, and 51 with Winter. The four Zionist opposition parties sum to $20 + 12 + 9 + 9 = 50$, and 54 with Hendel–Zelekha. Arab lists are $9 + 6 = 15$. Check: $51 + 54 + 15 = 120$. Channel 12 / Midgam on 12 October, 509 respondents, had Yashar 23, Likud 20, Together 13, and a coalition column of 49 against a Zionist opposition of 54, with Arab lists at 13 and Hendel–Zelekha at 4 ($49 + 54 + 13 + 4 = 120$). Kan / Kantar on 11 October, 553 respondents, had Yashar 22, Likud 20, and both threshold lists in. Zman Yisrael / Tatika, fielded 14–15 October with 500 respondents ($\pm 4.4\%$), had Yashar 26 and Likud 20, the anti-Netanyahu Jewish-led bloc at 54 against 49, Arab lists at 13 and the Reservists at 4 ($54 + 49 + 13 + 4 = 120$), with Amcha Yisrael at 2.8 percent and Blue and White at 1.2 percent, both under the bar.

Lazar / Maariv, fielded 7–8 October with 700 respondents, had Yashar 21, Likud 20, Together 13, and the outgoing coalition at 48, or 52 with Winter, against 52 for the four Zionist opposition parties, Hendel–Zelekha at 4 outside both, and Arab lists at 12. Tatika / Zman Yisrael on 8 October had Yashar at 24 and Likud at 20. Direct Polls for i24 on 13 October and Filber for Channel 14 on 12 October put Likud at 27 and 29, and Filber's sitting column at 61. Those two are house-effects. They belong in the file. They do not set the mean.

The Petek's average of the last ten polls, updated 13 October, with pollster lean removed, had Likud 22, Yashar 22, Together 12, a Netanyahu bloc at 52 ($22 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 6$), a change bloc at 51 ($22 + 12 + 9 + 8$), and Arab lists at 13 — nine and ten short of 61. In that average the Reservists–

Economic list clears in five of the last ten polls and Amcha Yisrael in four, and both round under the bar. The Middle East Forum's average, through the 14 October Channel 13 poll, printed Likud near 23 and Yashar near 22. The uncertain eight is the threshold pair, not a bloc.

Largest list is not a government. Reporting on 4 October in *The Week* and the *Jewish Chronicle* framed the race as whether Gadi Eisenkot can assemble 61, not whether Yashar leads a table. That sentence binds both columns. Eisenkot's advantage on the non-aligned houses is real and narrow. Netanyahu's advantage on the friendly houses is also real, and it has not closed 61 on the mean. Naftali Bennett's Together, in a band from 7 to 13 across the last ten polls, is a hinge those means cannot resolve, because a hinge is a decision, not a residual.

3. Thresholds, surplus, and the price of a split

Israel's electoral rule is closed-list proportional representation for a single nationwide constituency, with a threshold of 3.25 percent, roughly four seats. Votes for lists that miss the bar are discarded. Surplus agreements, filed before the deadline, pool the remainder of two lists that both clear, and can move a seat. They do nothing if either list fails. A voter who marks a letter polling at 4 in order to "keep the camp alive" may be casting the vote that disappears.

This is the mechanical content of the reply. Gantz's 3 October message, reported by Ynet, told Blue and White voters that internal research found more than five seats of people who wanted the slip and were afraid to waste it, and that their votes were safe. The five is a party claim. Every public table that still names the list has it under the bar; Channel 13 / HaMadad on 14 October measured Blue and White at 1.2 percent, against a bar of 3.25. The civic fact is the sentence already being said in the queue: I want to, and I am afraid. A procedure that cannot speak to that sentence has left the quality of participation to rumor.

The same mechanic cuts both ways. By the eve of the 16 October deadline, five pairs were reported signed: Yashar with the Democrats and Together with Yisrael Beytenu in September, then the Joint List with Ra'am, Likud with Religious Zionism, and, most recently, Shas with United Torah Judaism. Each is a real instrument, and each matters only if both parties in the pair clear. On that eve, Otzma Yehudit, Amcha Yisrael, and the Reservists–Economic list were reported without a partner; Blue and White was also reported without one (single source, not yet confirmed). Filing closed on Friday, 16 October, eleven days before the vote. Every filed pair should be published and explainable in one sentence a voter can repeat.

Winter and the Reservists–Economic list (Hendel–Zelekha) sit on the edge in the non-aligned houses and vanish in others. Channel 13 / HaMadad on 14 October put both at exactly 4 and ran the counterfactual: if both miss, Yashar rises to 22, Likud falls to 17, and the coalition column loses Winter's 4 outright. A column that needs the four to reach the low 50s does not have a strategy until it says, in public, what happens if the four miss. Pretending the four will clear because the camp requires it is the French error in Israeli dress.

4. Hazan: cohesion is not the whip

Reuven Hazan's 2003 delineation remains the cleanest academic tool for this week. Cohesion is the organic homogeneity of preferences. Legislators vote together because they agree, or because they represent a public that agrees. Discipline is the artificial enforcement used when

agreement is absent: the whip, sanctions, committee assignments, the threat of deselection, the threat of bringing down the government. Commentators collapse the two whenever a party votes as one. The collapse hides the thing that will break.

Israeli coalitions have long survived on discipline. Strategic absenteeism lets a member avoid both rebellion and consent: the member is not in the plenum when the vote he cannot defend is called, and the government still passes. Applause, in Hazan's later acoustic work, maps the same boundary from the other side. Parties applaud their own. Cross-applause is rare. Extremes self-applaud more. A tracker that shows a united column can be describing a discipline machine with almost no cohesion.

The 2017–2019 Conservative–DUP confidence-and-supply arrangement is the clean comparative case. After Theresa May lost her majority, the Democratic Unionist Party's ten members became a monopoly supplier of survival. The price was about a billion pounds for Northern Ireland. The arrangement lacked organic agreement on Brexit. When the backstop threatened the DUP's extra-parliamentary identity, the whip failed. Likud–Haredi arrangements over draft exemptions and yeshiva funding have the same structure. The budget reading in March 2026 already showed the split inside United Torah Judaism: Degel HaTorah held, Agudat Yisrael voted against, and the measure passed only because the fracture was not total. When the core preference — Torah study set against equal conscription — is threatened, no committee assignment restores unity.

A voter told to “vote only for the active coalition parties” is being asked for electoral coordination. That request is rational inside a threshold system. It becomes something else if the parties cannot state a shared preference on conscription, the courts, or the day after the count. The request then produces discipline at the booth and fragmentation the morning after. Surplus agreements pool leftover votes. They do not pool consciences.

5. Four habits, and what each misses

Power realism reads the freeze as logistics. Sixty-one is the only moral fact, and every pairing, late withdrawal, and surplus file is justified by it. There is a truth inside the habit. Israel does not award the government to the largest list. The error is to treat the partner as an instrument. A citizen with a limit is not a remainder to be pooled.

Procedural liberalism reads the freeze as none of its business. The slip is secret, the threshold is published, the count will be official, and virtue-talk is an imposition. This habit protects something the covenantal account also needs: a ballot no neighbor can open. It fails when it pretends the rules are self-executing. A 3.25 percent bar does not announce itself in the queue. It is learned as fear. Gantz's video is the exhibit, not because he is uniquely at fault, but because the sentence “your votes are safe” is the form every camp uses when its list is near the line.

Identity mobilization reads the freeze as a drum. The bloc is the people, the other bloc is the threat, and turnout is loyalty. Some of this is simply how mass electorates move, and a republic that pretends otherwise will be surprised in the last week. The cost is domination by the camp. A voter who is told that leaving the bloc is betrayal is not a free agent in Maimonides' sense, even if the law still lets him mark another letter. Non-domination, in the republican line that

runs from the mixed regime to the modern argument against arbitrary power, is not only a limit on the state. It is a limit on the faction that claims to be the only safe address. Both columns are currently offering that claim. Neither has 61 on the houses a serious reader averages.

Quietism reads the freeze as permission to wait. The booth will sort it; the festivals were the real work; politics is noise until the envelope. Isru Chag can be misheard this way, because the day really is smaller than the day before. The mishearing is the problem. The song ends so that the keeping can start. Quietism outsources accountability to the calendar. The calendar has already done its part. It has named 27 October.

6. France, Germany, Italy, Britain: leads are not governments

The European forecast is directionally attentive to polling and chronologically loose about causation.

France. Odoxa-Backbone for Public Sénat, fielded 24 September–7 October 2026 with 12,005 respondents, places Marine Le Pen at 37 percent in the first round, against 18 for Jean-Luc Mélenchon and 17 for Édouard Philippe. Toluna Harris Interactive for M6 and RTL, fielded 5–8 October, has her between 35 and 37 percent across five scenarios. The second-round opponent remains contested; Odoxa has her beating Mélenchon 68 to 32 and Philippe only 53 to 47. The election is set for 18 April and 2 May 2027. A first-round lead has twice failed to become a presidency when the rest of the system coordinated against her. The reply's warning about French fragmentation applies in reverse. The right's own splits have historically capped the first-round share. The republican front has been the other camp's coordination. Coordination is not a right-wing monopoly. A 37 percent first-round share is a fact about April 2027 only if the field, the courts, and the runoff behave as the autumn surveys assume. They have not always done so.

Germany. INSA for Bild, fielded 9–12 October 2026 with 2,006 respondents, put the AfD at 30 percent, ahead of CDU/CSU at 18.5, with the Greens at 14 and the SPD at 13.5. State results, including Saxony-Anhalt's 43.8 percent for the AfD earlier in the season, are real. So is the cordon. Reporting on 27 September recorded that National Rally, Brothers of Italy, and British right figures kept distance even as other right leaders congratulated AfD gains. A party can lead surveys and still be uncoalitionable. That is cohesion failure at the European level, not a polling error. Federal timing remains years away. A 2029 destiny is not a 2026 fact. YouGov's window of 10–23 September had Friedrich Merz near –73 net favorability and Emmanuel Macron near –60. Unpopularity is not a writ of regime change. It is a warning that the governing parties are spending legitimacy faster than they are building a successor coalition.

Italy. Swg for TgLa7 on 12 October 2026 had Brothers of Italy steady at 27.7 percent and the center-right sum at $27.7 + 7.3 + 5.4 + 1.0 = 41.4$ percent, and an extended center-left still slightly ahead. Meloni governs. She has also declined to embrace the AfD and has spent political capital on mainstream European placement. The forecast's "disappointment" is one reading of moderation. Another is that governing coalitions require partners who will not blow up the budget or the alliance system. A republic is not scored by how closely a government matches a rally. Meloni's own net favorability in the same YouGov window was negative. Governing and popularity are different instruments. Israel's relations with Rome are a diplomatic file, not a costume test.

Britain and Spain. Labour holds until a contest no earlier than 2029 on the ordinary calendar. Reform UK's favorability, in Pew's spring 2026 comparative, sits near the old UKIP mark. Isolation of a government is not isolation of a country. Spain's snap-election hypothesis remains a scenario, not a writ. Belgium's linguistic split is an old fact about that state, not a new prophecy. Canada's recent splits, invoked in the reply, belong to a first-past-the-post system in which two parties on one side of a district can elect the third. The mechanism differs from Israel's threshold. The lesson is the same only at the level of wasted coordination, not at the level of institutional design.

The useful extraction is narrower than the map. Where thresholds or runoffs exist, split camps lose. Where cordons exist, large pluralities do not become governments. Neither fact crowns a camp. Neither fact tells an Israeli voter which letter to mark on 27 October. A colored map is not a foreign policy.

7. Covenant, free will, and non-domination

Maimonides, in *Hilchot Teshuvah* 5, is blunt. Permission is given to every person. Nothing pulls the hand. A person can be righteous or wicked, and the same permission runs to a people in its public acts. The festivals train the will. They do not replace it. *Isru Chag* is the halakhic name for the morning the extraordinary obligation ends and the ordinary one begins. *Bereishit*, read on Shabbat, 10 October, says the world is given and the naming is then human. A poll is a naming. It is not the keeping.

The Tanya's two-soul account blocks two sentimental errors. The animal soul seeks the camp's victory as an extension of self. The divine soul is oriented to what is true and commanded, not to the mood of the tracker. A voter who marks a letter only because leaving the bloc was called betrayal is not acting as the free agent Maimonides describes, even if the law still lets him mark another letter. A voter who withholds a slip from quietism outsources an imputable act to the calendar. The calendar has already named the day.

Covenant at Sinai is not a one-party state. It is a people constituted by obligation, with offices, judges, and a king under Torah, not above it. The republican reading of that architecture is non-domination. Philip Pettit's formulation — freedom as the absence of arbitrary power, not merely the absence of interference — meets the older mixed-regime language without requiring the reader to adopt either school whole. No faction, including the one that claims to be the only safe address, may treat the citizen as an instrument whose agency is already spoken for. Edmund Burke's traditionalism, read narrowly, adds a further limit: a tradition that cannot be criticized from inside becomes domination wearing the mask of inheritance. Martha Nussbaum's capability language, also read narrowly, adds the other limit: a capability with no shared obligation becomes a market of fears.

Isaiah's quarrel, applied without stretching the verse into a slogan, is not that the nation lacks a count. It is that the count is offered in place of justice, and the assembly in place of attention. A people can know its blocs to the seat and still not know whether it will stand.

The moral condition Maimonides sets on national life is not prosperity and not victory. It is that the public act remain imputable. A people can be blamed, and therefore can be called, only if it could have stood otherwise. The threshold-fear video is a small document and a large symptom. It shows voters already bargaining with their own agency, and a leader offering assurance in

place of a published number. The right answer is not to scold the fear. The right answer is to separate the claim from the instrument: invite the data into the open, keep the slip voluntary, and refuse the sentence that a vote is safe because a chairman has said so. Safety is the count. Courage is the casting.

8. What the reply gets right, and where it overreaches

The reply is right that coordination inside the rules is the condition of any bloc shift, in Israel and in the European cases it named. French first-round leads that never became presidencies, Canadian and British district splits, and Israel's 3.25 percent bar are the same family of facts. A camp that will not file a surplus agreement, or that runs two lists where the system rewards one, is not being principled. It is being arithmetically careless.

The reply overreaches when "only the active coalition parties" is offered as the whole of the civic duty. That sentence can function as discipline without cohesion. It does not tell the voter what shared preference the coalition actually holds on the draft, the courts, or the day after the count. It does not say what the voter should do if the active list he prefers is at 3.1 percent on every non-aligned house. It also does not address the symmetric risk on the other side of the aisle. An opposition that preaches unity and then misses the bar with its second list has committed the same error.

A cleaner formulation keeps the mechanical warning and drops the camp ownership. Vote a list that can clear, or say out loud that you are willing to miss. File the pairs in public. Do not call a wasted slip a moral act, and do not call a coordinated slip a confession of faith. The covenant asks for a standing that can be imputed. It does not ask for a drum.

9. What the forecast gets right, and where it overreaches

The forecast is right that several European incumbents are unpopular and that the AfD and National Rally command large shares. It is right that Meloni's government is not a photocopy of a rally speech. It is right that Britain's calendar does not deliver a new parliament before 2029 on the ordinary timetable. It is right that Israel's foreign relations will look different if Paris, Madrid, or Berlin change hands.

It overreaches when it treats 2029 calendars as near-term diplomatic revolutions, when it reads Meloni's moderation as mere costume, and when it isolates Britain as if a Labour government through 2029 were civilizational suicide rather than an ordinary outcome under fixed terms. Cordons, courts, and coalition math remain. A map colored by hope is not a foreign ministry. The same overreach appears whenever an Israeli column is told that Europe is about to become friendly if only the right people vote at home. Foreign governments do not cast Israeli ballots, and Israeli ballots do not appoint European prime ministers.

Neither text is served by treating Arab lists as noise. They sit in the low teens combined on every serious Israeli table. Whether any Zionist column can or should speak to them after the count is a coalition question. It is not settled by a Sunday average, and it is not settled by a European analogy about migration.

10. The remaining days

Seven days will not invent a majority the houses do not print. They can still do ordinary things.

Publish the surplus agreements filed by 16 October. Both partners must clear, or the pool is nothing. A graphic is not a filing.

Tell the traveler the structural truth. Diplomatic posts are already voting. Everyone else who is on the roll and outside the Land must be in the Land on the day. A republic that wants the expat's standing has to say so in time for a ticket, not in a speech on the Monday.

Separate party claims from instruments. Invite internal research into the open. Do not adopt a five-seat claim that no house prints. Name the pollster, the date, and the sample, and then stop. Direct at 27 and Filber at 29 are allowed to exist. They are not allowed to console a column Channel 13 has at 18, or to panic a column The Petek's average has tied at 22.

None of this crowns a candidate. The haredi lists, Otzma, Religious Zionism–Zehut, Winter, and Hendel are not decoration around the hinge. They are the difference between a projection and a Knesset. The Arab lists are a post-count question, not a rounding error.

The covenant was never a promise that the count would be kind. It was a demand that the standing be real. The envelope is still blank. That is the dignity of the morning after the song.

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House-effects are reported and not averaged into the central claim. European 2029 scenarios are treated as forecasts, not facts. No list is endorsed.

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