

The Count Speaks

Serbia and Brazil voted on Sunday 25 October 2026. In one country the loser conceded within hours. In the other he has not. Israel votes on Tuesday 27 October. What the count asks of all of us.

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · Jerusalem · Monday 26 October 2026 · 15 Cheshvan 5787

Two elections ended on the same Sunday night, an ocean apart, and they ended differently.

In Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić went on television before the official results and said, according to The Guardian: "On the basis of a sample ... it is clear that we have lost these elections, the Student List has won, they will have between 135 and 140 seats and we will have 105." He had led the country for twelve years.

In Brazil, the Superior Electoral Court counted every one of its polling sections and declared Lula the winner. His challenger, Flávio Bolsonaro, has not conceded and says he will challenge the result.

I am not writing about who should have won either race. That belongs to Serbs and Brazilians. I am writing about the moment after the count, because Israelis reach that moment at 22:00 on Tuesday 27 October 2026.

The math, shown

Serbia's parliament has 250 seats, so a majority is 126.

- Vučić's own estimate gave the Student List 135 to 140. That is 9 to 14 seats above a majority ($135 - 126 = 9$; $140 - 126 = 14$).
- The CeSID-Ipsos sample, reported by The Guardian, had 138 for the Student List and 104 for Vučić's camp. $138 - 126 = 12$ seats above a majority. $250 - 138 - 104 = 8$ seats left for the smaller lists.
- Turnout was 67.6% by 19:00, the highest since 1992, per the same sample.
- These are projections from a sample. Official results come later, and the monitoring group CRTA reported irregularities on the day, including ballot photographing and vote-buying.

Brazil's runoff, per the court's final count:

- Lula 51.79%, Flávio Bolsonaro 48.21%. $51.79 + 48.21 = 100$, because only valid votes count toward the percentage.
- The gap is $51.79 - 48.21 = 3.58$ points, about 4.4 million votes.

A 3.58-point margin is narrow, and it is also clear. Every vote in it has been counted.

Where accountability lands

Serbia's campaign began, in large part, with a roof. In November 2024 a concrete canopy at the Novi Sad railway station collapsed and killed 16 people. Students turned grief into a movement, and the movement turned into a list on a ballot. In Serbia the answer to that failure was given by voters, in a count.

That is what a count is for. When voters believe a government has failed, they can replace it with paper, in boxes, counted in public by neighbours from different parties.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel taught: *על השלום ועל האמת ועל הדין ועל העולם עומד*, "The world stands on three things: on justice, on truth and on peace" (Avot 1:18). He brings a verse from Zechariah: "Judge truth and the justice of peace in your gates."

An honest count is the truth. The process behind it is the justice. The concession is the peace. Leave out the last one and the first two can still be argued over in the street.

Israel, Tuesday 27 October 2026

Israel votes on Tuesday 27 October 2026. I will not quote a single poll here; the law forbids publishing them until 22:00 that night, and I think that rule is wise.

What I will say is this. When the exit polls air at 22:00, they are estimates. The double-envelope ballots of soldiers and others come later. The official results are due by Wednesday 4 November 2026. Whoever comes out short on the real count, I hope says what Vučić said, in his own words, and then lets the next steps run.

In Brazil, the losing side says he will challenge the result, which the law lets him do. In Serbia, the losing side conceded on a sample. Both are lawful. A concession lets a country move on sooner.

I am praying for a calm day, an accurate count and a peaceful Wednesday.

Sources

- The Guardian, "Serbian leader Aleksandar Vučić concedes defeat in fiercely contested parliamentary election," 25 October 2026.
- Associated Press, Serbia election report, 25 October 2026.
- Brazil Superior Electoral Court (TSE) final results, as reported on 25 to 26 October 2026; The Times of Israel, runoff report, 25 October 2026.
- Pirkei Avot 1:18 (Sefaria).
- Association for Civil Rights in Israel and Ynet on Israel's results timetable.

All glory to the Ribono shel Olam · Errors are mine.

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