

The Line at 22:00

Why the voting hours should stay where they were set. Tuesday 27 October 2026 / 16 Cheshvan 5787.

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Full disclosure: I have a bias. I voted for the Religious Zionist Party.

At about 17:24 Israel time today, Likud asked the Central Elections Committee to keep voting open past 22:00 at every voting station. Its letter, as Arutz Sheva reports it, pointed to unusual crowding, long lines and rain. Shas joined and asked for one more hour, until 23:00. Only the committee chair, Justice Noam Sohlberg, can decide.

By 20:30: Justice Sohlberg turned the request down. Voting ended at 22:00, and everyone already in line was allowed to vote. (ynetnews, Times of Israel)

My view: that was the right call. Here's why.

The rule already covers the people in line

The worry behind the request is a fair one. By 16:00, 55.7% of eligible voters had voted, against 47.5% at the same hour in 2022, and many voting stations had long lines. Nobody should lose their vote because they waited.

The committee already handled that. Din Livneh, its acting director-general, said at 13:22: "If there is a line at 10 p.m., the [voting] stations will continue to operate until everyone who arrived by 10 p.m. has voted." Anyone who reached the ballot box by 22:00 votes. Nobody who came on time is turned away.

So an extension adds nothing for the people already in line. It mainly helps people who haven't left home yet.

Likud's letter makes one point the in-line rule doesn't fully answer: some people might stay home because they think they won't make it in time. That's a real concern. I think the answer is to tell them plainly, in every language, that if they're in line by 22:00 they vote. Moving the closing time is a bigger step.

Brazil showed what a late change costs

Two days ago, on Sunday 25 October 2026, Brazil held its presidential runoff. Voting was due to end at 17:00 Brasília time. Both campaigns asked for more time: Lula's citing public-transport failures, Flávio Bolsonaro's citing heavy rain in the south. Supreme Court Justice Cristiano Zanin extended voting to 19:00 nationwide, by an order that reached the courts close to 17:00 (G1, Folha).

By then many voting stations had closed. In São Paulo state, the order reached the election judges at 17:18, when about 80% of sections had already shut (BBC News Brasil). Zanin then clarified that only stations still open would continue. Closed ones weren't reopened, and the count was paused until after 19:00 (TSE, Folha).

The extension changed almost nothing in the count. BBC News Brasil counted 33,866 presidential votes cast after 17:00, about 0.026% of 128,236,074. Lula won by 4,401,534. Kassio Nunes Marques, president of Brazil's electoral court, said the extension changed nothing in the result (BBC News Brasil).

It still became the story of the night. Flávio Bolsonaro said that same night he would ask to annul the election, citing the extension and the justice's past work as Lula's lawyer (Al Jazeera, CNN Brasil). By Monday he had dropped that, and his Liberal Party formally recognized the result (Straits Times, NPR). Did the extension change the outcome? The numbers say no. Did it cost Brazil a night of doubt it didn't need? I think it did.

That's the real cost of changing the rules on the day. The question isn't whether anyone meant harm. Once one side asks for a change and gets it, the other side can always ask why.

Fixed times protect everyone

Candle-lighting times for Shabbat are printed weeks ahead, on every calendar in every shul. Nobody moves sunset because the shops are crowded on Friday afternoon. Everyone knows the time and plans around it. That's what makes it fair.

Elections work the same way. 07:00 to 22:00 was known to every party, every voter and every voting-station worker long before today. A rule known in advance can't favor anyone, because nobody knew in advance whom it would help. A change at a party's request, made in the last hours, raises that question, whatever party asks.

Today it was Likud and Shas. Next time it could be any party, and I'd say the same thing.

We are not Brazil

Israel's system did its job today. The hours were set, the lines were long, and the committee kept its promise that everyone in line by 22:00 would vote. That's a promise to voters, not to any party.

When the results come in, every side should be able to look at them and say the rules were the rules. A fixed time, held, is part of that.

Sources: Maariv and ynetnews (Likud request); Arutz Sheva (Likud letter, 17:49); Jerusalem Post (Shas joins, 17:47); 0404 (Shas until 23:00); Kan (committee: not extending for now); Times of Israel (Livneh, 13:22); Central Elections Committee via Arutz Sheva (16:00 turnout); G1 and Folha (Zanin order, 25 Oct 2026); TSE note (25 Oct 2026, 18:44 Brasília); BBC News Brasil (33,866 votes after 17:00); Al Jazeera, CNN Brasil, Straits Times, NPR (annulment call and its withdrawal).

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