

REVIVAL

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General Elections on March 28

Amir Peretz: Only Labor will bring Peace and Social Justice

“Israel is at one of the most important moments in its history, a moment that will define its future.

Unfortunately, over the years, many have known how to diagnose the strategic threats facing Israel, and suggest merely tactical measures, which do not offer an overall solution to the ills of Israeli society. I intend to act differently, and offer the Israeli public a complete moral road map that includes a political chapter and a social-economic chapter, which will guide the entirety of the political and economic measures I propose.

The chapters are interconnected because there will be no peace without social justice and there will be no social justice without progress in the peace process.” *Party Chairman Amir Peretz at the Herzliya Conference on the Balance of Israel’s National Security, 24th January 2006*



Party Chairman Amir Peretz with King Mohammed VI of Morocco at a recent meeting in Fez. The two discussed regional developments and Morocco’s role in the peace process.

Election Special

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The Campaign Heats Up

by Guy Spigelman, Revival Editor



Israel goes to the polls at the end of March in an election where three parties are fighting for a mandate to lead the next Government. Amir Peretz's victory in Labor's leadership primary in November changed the political landscape in Israel with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon calling for new elections and breaking away from Likud to form a centrist party Kadima (Forward).

Since Peretz' victory the political dialogue in Israel has been transformed as more and more parties present and debate socio-economic issues. Of course, diplomatic events such as Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections and the developments in Iran are of fundamental concern to the Israeli public, but they are not the only item on the agenda this time round.

In January Ariel Sharon suffered a heavy stroke and is in a deep coma in a Jerusalem Hospital. Ehud Olmert MK is serving as acting Prime Minister and will be Kadima's candidate for Prime Minister. Veteran Labor leader Shimon Peres left the party and joined Kadima, along with former Ministers Haim Ramon and Dalia Itzik.

Labor conducted a party-wide primary to select its Knesset list. Close to 70,000 party members participated in the most democratic candidate selection process of any party in Israel. Highlights of the primary included the election of former Ministers Isaac Herzog and Ophir Pines at the top of the national list and the placement of 5 women in the top 20 slots – unprecedented in Israeli history. In another first, Nadia Hilo, an Arab-Israeli woman, was elected to the national list.

New faces include Ami Ayalon – the former head of Israel's security service, Avishay Braverman – esteemed economist and former President of Ben-Gurion University, as well as one of Israel's top broadcast journalists, Shelly Yahimovitz. The top 20 can be found on page 6.

The situation is very fluid. The campaign has just started, with Kadima leading in the polls. Labor plans to run a lean and aggressive campaign focusing on two central themes – first on the fight against terror and the battle for social justice with slogans such as:



“Amir Peretz: Fighting Terror, Beating Poverty” (see above)

“Amir Peretz: Fighting Terror, Beating Corruption”

“Amir Peretz: Fighting Terror, Winning with Education”

The second theme will highlight Olmert's conservative socio-economic policies and connection to big-money under the slogan: “Olmert will divide Israel between the rich and poor”.

For updates on the elections, please visit www.avoda2006.org.il, www.jpost.com or www.haaretz.com.

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Speech by Amir Peretz MK to the Socialist International Council Meeting in Athens

(Excerpts)

30th January, 2006

Mr. President of the Socialist International, my friend George Papandreou
Mr. Secretary General Luis Ayala. Heads of State, Heads of Opposition, Ladies and gentlemen. It is such an honor to be here. I feel at home, among friends. Your kind words, your warm welcome, gives me energy and strength.

As you know, I have come to Athens from the middle of critical elections in Israel. In two months time, Israelis will go to the polls to make a historic decision. Because for the first time in recent memory Israelis will have the chance to vote for a true social democratic platform that tackles all of the relevant issues.

The Labour party under my leadership has two main goals – one, social justice and two, promoting peace. From issues of peace and national security to issues of education and personal security.....

...For too long, Israelis were told that they have to make a choice, a terrible choice – and they were told this by politicians from across the political spectrum. Even from our own camp.

At last voters will be able to say: “We want peace and we want the best education for our children. We want security and we want guaranteed pensions for our parents!”

I am taking responsibility for making both a priority; and we have a team that is committed to the path....

...We are facing a new reality in the Palestinian authority – “ Hamas” has won the leadership. We are obligated first to the security of the people in Israel and cannot conduct any negotiations with any organization that doesn’t recognize Israel and calls for its destruction. I came to Israel and I grew up in Israel. During my service as an officer in the Israeli army, I was severely wounded and spent two years in hospital. I left the hospital in a wheelchair and when I first stood on my feet again I swore to my self that the next war I was going to fight was the war for peace.

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Speech by Amir Peretz to SI in Athens continues....

But a true peace cannot be just about decisions around land and fences and borders. Peace can only be achieved if we ensure that there are equal opportunities for all people: Education must be accessible. Young boys and young girls must have the chance to achieve their dreams.

That is the promise we must offer both of our peoples if we are to achieve a better future.

And don't let any one say that advancing both peace and the economy is impossible.

I would like to finish by quoting Yitzhak Rabin :

“The meaning of security is not just tanks, planes and battleships. Security is also, and primarily – people. Security lies in the education of the people, in their homes, their schools, their streets and their neighborhoods. Security is the community in which the people grow.”

What to do?

MK Ephraim Sneh on how Israel and the world should respond to the rise of Hamas

The two main reasons for Hamas' victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections were one, the Palestinian people were fed up with the incompetent and corrupt regime established by Yasser Arafat and two, the power struggles inside Fatah. That leadership struggle, between those who led the Intifada and those who came with Arafat from Tunisia, decimated and weakened Fatah before the crucial elections.

But there were two other reasons: The Israeli unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, which was interpreted by the Palestinians as a victory for Hamas and not as the achievement of Abu Mazen and Fatah, and the fact that the Israeli government did practically nothing to strengthen the government of Abu Mazen, which was identified with Fatah, while some of its actions actually deliberately weakened it.

These are the basic facts that we must remember when we consider what action Israel should take:

- The elections were democratic and non-violent, under international inspection. So the legitimacy of the elections cannot be challenged.
- Hamas is an Islamic political-religious movement, whose ideology rejects the existence of Israel and regards terror as the primary means for achieving its goals.
- Despite Hamas' victory, most Palestinians in the territories do not want a renewed Intifada.
- It is impossible to rule and manage the PA without daily contact with Israel. Issues like trade, water, energy and environment require every Palestinian government to maintain a permanent liaison mechanism with Israel.
- In the long run there is no way to sustain a modern Palestinian society with a growing economy without economic cooperation with Israel. Israel's per capita GDP is at least 20 times that of the Palestinian territories. Only through dynamic cooperation with the Israeli economy can the Palestinian economy substantially grow.

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What to do with Hamas by Ephraim Sneh continues....



From left: International Secretary Colette Avital MK, Party Leader Amir Peretz, newly elected SI President George Papandreou and Ephraim Sneh MK, at the recent SI meeting in Athens

That is why Hamas is unable to adhere to its ideology and its boycott on Israel and to successfully run a Palestinian state.

Israel's goal is to force Hamas, as the largest political power in the PA, to change its doctrine and its terrorist ways. If Hamas refuses to do so, Israel's goal will be to prove to the Palestinian people that Hamas, despite its electoral victory, cannot govern and lead a Palestinian state. We cannot accept, under any circumstances, an Islamic terror state at our side.

What should Israel do now? It should not conduct political negotiations with any government that includes Hamas as long as it keeps its doctrines and its weapons. No aid should be provided to such government, except for humanitarian needs relating to the population in the territories. The Israeli government should declare that it is ready to renew negotiations for a permanent status agreement with any Palestinian government that is committed to the Oslo accords and to the Roadmap.

Israel must evacuate the illegal outposts in the West Bank - not as a goodwill gesture toward the Palestinians but out of respect to our own rule of law, and in order to increase the international pressure on the Palestinian Authority to disarm the militias. No unilateral withdrawals should be made in the West Bank in order to avoid further strengthening of Hamas. The security fence must be completed, as a vital defensive measure that saves lives.

The international community should act like Israel with regard to a Hamas-led government. If European governments talk to Hamas, before Hamas changes its doctrine of terror and destruction of Israel, it will only encourage the Islamic extremists elsewhere. Egypt and Jordan have a clear interest in preventing an Islamic terror movement from leading a legitimate government.

It must be stated that the struggle against Islamist extremism is not the role of Israel alone.

The writer is the Chairman of Labor faction in the Knesset

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Labor's new top 20



Amir Peretz MK
Chairman, Israeli Labor Party



Isaac Herzog MK
Former Minister of Housing and Construction



Ofir Paz-Pines MK
Former Minister of the Interior



Prof. Avishay Braverman
Former President of Ben Gurion University



Prof. Yuli Tamir MK
Former Minister for Immigration and Absorption



Ami Ayalon,
Former Head of the Israeli Security Services



Eitan Cabel MK
Secretary General



Binyamin Ben Eliezer MK
Former Defence Minister



Shelly Yahimovitz
Former Broadcast Journalist



Rabbi Michael Melcior
MK, Former Minister for Diaspora Affairs

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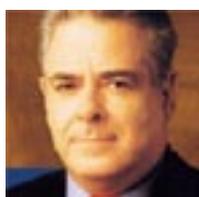
Labor's new top 20



Matan Vilnai MK
Former Minister of
Science



Colette Avital MK
International Secretary,
Chairperson Knesset
Immigration and
Absorption committee



Ephraim Sneh MK
Chairman Labor Knesset
Faction



Danny Yatom MK
Former Head of the
Mossad



Nadia Hilo
Vice Chair of the
Histadrut for Coexistence



Shalom Simhon MK
Former Minister for the
Environment, Moshav
Movement Representative



Drit Noked MK
Former Deputy Minister,
Kibbutz Movement
Representative



Yorum Marsiano
Former Advisor to PM
Rabin, Neighbourhoods
Representative



Raleb Majadla MK
Chairperson of Knesset
Interior and Environment
Committee, Arab Sector
Representative



Shaqib Sha'anani
Former Advisor to the
Interior Minister, Druze
Sector Representative

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Outline of the Labor Party Platform for the 17th Knesset

Presented to delegates of the Party Convention
Jerusalem, Jan. 22, 2006

A Jewish Democratic State

The State of Israel is a Jewish state, the home of all Jews wherever they are. As the bearers of Zionism, we view ourselves as the heirs of the magnificent Jewish and Hebrew cultures and feel responsible for its continuation. One single path leads from the roots of our religious heritage to the future of the State of Israel. The proper solution for relations between religion and State must be formulated, in cooperation and agreement with all public streams. The preservation and strengthening of the Jewish identity will help maintain relations with the Diaspora. At the same time, the foundations of democratic government will be strengthened and the authority of law will be reinforced.

Economy and Society

The Israeli society faces the challenges of accelerating economic development and the growth process, while dividing fairly their fruits among the entire population. This should stem from a realization that there is a connection between closing the gaps in the distribution of income and economic growth. A Labor-led Government will conduct a social-economic policy, which will combine the increase of the national "pie" and its fair division among the citizens of Israel. It will set the goals of reducing unemployment, raising the minimum wage, and efficient implementation of employment laws in order to reduce social gaps: in income per capita; in education; and in the quality of life. A mandatory pension law will be enacted, and the old age pension fund will be increased. At the same time, A Labor-led Government will invest in the development of national infrastructures and new jobs, and the encouragement of small businesses.

Foreign Affairs and Security

A political settlement is in Israel's national interest. There is a close link between a political settlement, economic growth and social reform. A Labor-led Government will endeavor to renew the political negotiations with our neighbors, while purposefully combating violence and terror. It will complete the security fence in one year, and maintain Israel's military superiority. If the political negotiations come to a standstill, Israel will take independent steps to guarantee her security and political interests.

The negotiations will be based on the following principles: two states for two nations, with a border to be agreed upon during negotiations; the large settlement areas in Judea and Samaria will be a part of Israel; the isolated settlements outside these areas will be evacuated; Jerusalem, with all its Jewish neighborhoods, will be the eternal capital of Israel, and the places holy to Judaism will remain in Israel; There will be no further investment in settlements, and the Sasson Report conclusions will be implemented immediately, including the evacuation of all illegal outposts.

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Education

The Labor Party will act to move from a policy of gap reducing to a policy of gap avoidance. The future of the State of Israel will be determined by the quality of education given to its citizens. Israel's social crisis shows that the present education system has failed. To improve achievements we will need to redesign an educational system based on openness and quality. A Labor-led Government will ensure free and first-rate education for preschoolers and up, education geared to future needs with an emphasis on science, studies of democracy and the humanities, a long school day and the integration of handicapped pupils into the educational system. To achieve these purposes, the State sponsored -feeding program will be renewed – in the first stage in the social and geographic periphery, and will gradually be implemented to include every pupil in Israel.

Higher Education and Science

Every young person will be entitled to study for an academic degree regardless of economic abilities; higher education and academic research will be strengthened; the autonomy of the academic system will be respected; the government will increase its investment in technological education at every level; the Chief Scientist's budget will be increased.

The Legal System

The legal system is the democracy's show window. Maximum of equality in the system should be maintained. A Labor-led Government will promote a reform to increase accessibility to the justice system in Israel. It will ensure full access for all citizens to the Courts, regardless of their economic situation.

Religion and State

A Labor-led Government will work for the establishment of fair relations between religious and secular Israelis, based on strengthening Jewish identity through educational means: the separation of religion from politics; ensuring freedom of religion and conscience for all citizens; maintaining free access to places holy to all religions; providing for the public's various religious needs, for every religious stream and congregation.

Health Administration

Health is a public resource. The Labor Party guarantees that all society members will enjoy equal access to the system and to a proper Health Basket. The Labor Party will endeavor to attain this goal.

Violence and Crime

The rising level of violence and the dramatic increase in crime on the streets, in the schools and in the homes is a threat to cohesion of the Israeli society – no less dangerous than the threat of terrorism. A Labor-led Government will form a national task force, which will recognize the extent of this threat, and deal with it, by allocating suitable funds for restoring the public faith in the police's ability to help.

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Wealth and Government

The connection between wealth and government leads to a situation in which public officials are more concerned with their own well being and that of their friends, rather than being concerned with the welfare of the citizens in Israel. This results in moral degradation of the public system in Israel. A Labor-led Government will increase administrative transparency, and will conduct a severe punitive policy, in order to break the link that harms equality of opportunities.

Center and Periphery

Strengthening the Periphery is a national goal so as to fulfill the dream of populating the country and spreading its population. A Labor-led Government will setup a national plan, to implement this agenda.

Settlement and Agriculture

Agriculture and rural life in Israel are important in balancing the economic, social and ecological outline in the State of Israel. It will be an integral part of a policy ensuring agricultural stability and protecting the income and welfare of agricultural workers.

Aliyah and Absorption

Aliyah is the key to growth and future strengthening of the State of Israel. A high priority of the Labor Party is the encouragement of Aliyah and the creation of appropriate employment for the olim, welfare conditions for the underprivileged populations – including retired workers – and integrating olim in centers of power and influence in Israeli society.

Equality of Women

Equality between men and women is an important principle in the Labor Party's policy. Indeed, the basis for every action the Labor Party takes includes fighting for equality in every part of the society, in the economic system, the family – especially in single-parent families.

Arab Citizens of Israel

The Labor Party will act to fundamentally change the government's policy regarding the Arab citizens of Israel. It will fight for full equality so as to close the gaps between the Arab and Jewish citizens in education, employment, construction of advanced industrial areas, infrastructures, health, welfare and social services.

Ecology

The Labor Party, which has led the development of the country since its independence, is committed to continue developing the State of Israel, while maintaining social responsibility, ecological justice, and the country's unique appearance and natural resources.

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