



| | | | | | | |
|---|---|----|------|------------------------|---------|------------|
| 25.73x29.7 | 1 | 11 | עמוד | the jerusalem post int | 09/2023 | 87471612-6 |
| בנימין זאב הרצל - בהקשר לציונות - 80790 | | | | | | |



A man wearing a T-shirt saying 'We're brothers' blows the shofar near an anti-judicial reform protest close to the Supreme Court in Jerusalem in July. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

and when this failed, they persisted in passing just one part of the reform.

This is not only legal under Israeli law but has two precedents: When the Rabin government in 1993 passed the Oslo Accords, which entailed a significant change to the borders of Israel and the creation of a Palestinian state, it passed by a single vote. In 2005, prime minister Ariel Sharon, after losing a referendum on the Disengagement Plan from his own voters, railroaded it through with a majority of his ministers, leaving 9,000 citizens homeless.

Personally, I believe that it is wrong for any party to make such major decisions that alter either the accepted norms or the borders of the country without a referendum, or at least a broad consensus.

Concerning the present judicial reform, only broad consensus will serve to defuse the situation.

The issue of judicial reform has been on the table since 1995. The Likud argues that the court changed the rules in its favor 30 years ago.

However, 30 years is a long time. Even changing things back to the way they were is a change, and Israelis



Russian Mountain Jews Matatyahu Bogatyrev and Shlomo Mordekhaev pose with Theodor Herzl (center) at the First Zionist Congress in 1897.

(Beth Hatefutsoth Photo Archive/Wikimedia Commons)

declared itself non-Zionist.

Among the Orthodox, new Zionist yeshivas were sprouting as young Jews from the United States, Canada, England, Australia, and France were coming to Israel for year-long programs and as immigrants. The religious parties were growing, and so was the traditionalist community. Political changes took place as well. The Israeli Left – Mapai and Mapam – were historically social-Zionist in the classical 20th-century sense. This meant that they were suspicious of the values preached by Western capitalist countries.

In the 1960s, Golda Meir was opposed to an Israeli television network, arguing that it would just import shallow Western Hollywood values. In the end, she allowed only news programs and educational television for children.

However, the new Left aborted socialist ideals and instead wanted the state to pattern itself after American and Western European values, making Israel a part of this larger community. Zionism was tolerated as long as it harmonized with the liberal values of the West.

The new Left gained influence after the Lebanon War and eventually dominated the Labor Party. By the 1990s, they rose to power represented by a centrist, Yitzhak Rabin, who was considered a moderate politically and a hawk militarily.

The passing of the Oslo Accords, which were voted in on a single vote in the Knesset, came as a shock. Even voters of the Labor Party were surprised to see Labor adopt the platform of the Meretz Party but gave it a chance.

The failure of the Oslo Accords created a new Israeli Right, which wanted a government that would reflect the values of Israel as a Jewish country. From the 1980s, this

change began to be felt with the rise of the Shas Party, which drew more and more traditionalist Mizrahi Jews to its fold.

The National-Religious Party replaced the leadership that had previously collaborated with Labor and replaced it with Religious Zionists who saw themselves as the new pioneers of Zionism. The Agudat Yisrael Party grew naturally as a community, aided by a new aliyah of ultra-Orthodox Jews from around the globe.

The Likud distanced itself from its revisionist past and now catered to traditionalists and the new pioneers to meet the changing social demands. This created a new dichotomy of ideals in Israeli society and a new Right and Left in politics.

More recently, there have been some interesting developments. The new Left now contains centrist elements that identify with both the traditionalists and the new Left and their Western values. In the Right camp, there are also many who have no problem with Western values if these are not antagonistic to what are seen as "Jewish" values.

The term "Jewish and democratic state," not found in the 1948 Declaration of Independence, has become a widely accepted political affirmation for both the centrist Right and the centrist Left. However, both terms are understood by each side differently.

The Right understands "democracy" as a form of government based on the general will of the people as Rousseau termed it; and "Jewish" means a state with a Jewish majority and one that is based on Jewish values to some extent.

The further Right one identifies religiously, the more one tends to feel the state should be imbued with Jewish values. The Left, in its extreme form, sees the term

"democracy" not just as a form of government but as a value system. It is a euphemism for "Western liberal values."

"Jewish state" refers to a state where Jews live and are protected. The more centrist Left is willing to accept certain Jewish values if they do not curtail personal freedoms.

At the end of the day, the political views of most Israelis hover around the centrist ground, whether Right or Left. It is thus possible and incumbent upon these groups to meet on common ground. Only real dialogue and understanding, not empty slogans, can bring the country together. The demonstrations of the Left and the rallies of the Right serve only to destabilize the country.

In the Diaspora, this type of problem never existed. Secular Jews never had to bump into religious or haredi Jews, and religious Jews did not need to include secularists in their way of life. The ingathering of exiles in Israel has brought both blessings and challenges. We live here in the same boat, even if on different decks and in different cabins. We have no other option but to get along. We all have to understand that every single one of us has a right to be here.

AS I WRITE this article, the Knesset just passed a law limiting the Supreme Court's use of the "reasonableness" standard. Those familiar with this concept know that it is a minor issue that was included in the president's compromise proposal, but some on the Left fear what the future could bring. Some on the Right argue that attempts were made to reach a consensus

have the right to an explanation. This was never forthcoming, and the anti-Netanyahu movement capitalized on it, promoting fears of a totalitarian society and creating near-mass hysteria among the more Left-leaning groups in Israel.

Therefore, at this point, it does not matter who is right, but it is important that no side "wins."

We need broad agreement, to the chagrin of both sides, in order to create peace.

In addition, the first member of the Israeli opposition who successfully forges a sustainable agreement and helps calm the public's fears will be the next leader of the Israeli Left. People love a leader who can dispel their fears.

Going forward, we need a new social contract in Israel. We need to discuss the future of the state and how to balance a Jewish state with personal freedoms. We also need real leadership on the Right and on the Left, one that does not see the political arena as a place to win or lose, but as a place to propose a vision of the future.

Our diversity is our strength, and our ability to unite is our secret of longevity as a people. This is the call of the moment. Who will rise to the challenge?

Raphael Shuchat, PhD, is a rabbi and senior lecturer at Bar-Ilan University.