

Israel's Election Points to Change, but Not a Clear Government

Opposition parties gained ground, yet no bloc appears able to form a majority without difficult compromises.



An empty voting booth and ballot box stand before two diverging hallways, suggesting an uncertain political path.

Israel's latest **election** produced a sharp political message but not a clear government. According to PBS NewsHour reporting from Tel Aviv, projections show that parties opposed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won more seats than the **coalition** he leads. Even so, Netanyahu's opponents do not appear to have enough seats to form a **majority** in Israel's 120-seat **parliament**. That means the country may face weeks, or possibly longer, of negotiations before it knows who will govern.

The election was Israel's first since the October 7 attacks and the war in Gaza, and PBS reported record turnout. That matters because voters were not only choosing parties; they were judging leadership during a period many Israelis describe as a turning point. Netanyahu is Israel's longest-serving prime minister, and his supporters and opponents see him in almost opposite ways. To supporters, he represents strength and experience in a dangerous region. To opponents, he represents a government they believe has harmed Israeli democracy and deepened divisions.

Israel's system makes the result more complicated than a winner-take-all election. In a parliamentary system, voters choose parties, and parties receive seats. A government usually forms when several

parties agree to work together in a coalition, which means a group of parties that share power even if they do not agree on everything. Because there are 120 seats, a coalition needs 61 seats to form a majority government. PBS reported projections of about 50 seats for Netanyahu's coalition and about 53 for the coalition led by **opposition** figure Gadi Eisenkot.

That sounds like an opposition advantage, but it is not enough by itself. Arab parties, which oppose Netanyahu, were projected to win a record 17 seats. If those seats supported an anti-Netanyahu government, they could help change who leads the country. But PBS reported that Eisenkot's coalition allies are unlikely to agree to work with those Arab parties. That is the central trade-off: the opposition may need support from parties some of its own members reject in order to replace Netanyahu. Refusing that support could leave Netanyahu with a chance to remain politically relevant even after his bloc lost seats.

One possible path would be a **minority** government, which means a government that has fewer than 61 seats but survives because other lawmakers agree not to bring it down. In this case, that would likely require some kind of support from

Arab parties. Minority governments can allow rivals to remove a leader without fully joining forces, but they can also be fragile. Every major vote becomes a test of whether outside supporters will continue cooperating. For a country facing war, security threats, and deep social disagreement, some voters may see that as too unstable.

Another possible path would be a **unity** government, in which major rival parties govern together to avoid paralysis. PBS reported that President Trump and his aides would like to see Netanyahu and Eisenkot work together. But Eisenkot and leading opposition figures have refused that idea. Their refusal shows another trade-off. A unity government could give Israel a broader base for decision-making, but it could also disappoint voters who backed the opposition specifically to end Netanyahu's rule. **Compromise** can look like responsibility to one side and betrayal to another.

The election also shows how political **legitimacy** can mean different things. Netanyahu's party ar-

gues it won the most votes and that the opposition lacks a workable path to power. Eisenkot's side argues that anti-Netanyahu parties gained more seats overall and therefore have a **mandate** for change. Both claims can be partly true. One focuses on the largest party or bloc's staying power; the other focuses on the wider vote against the current leadership. In a divided parliament, the question is not only who voters preferred, but who can assemble enough trust to govern.

For now, the result is uncertainty rather than resolution. Israelis turned out in large numbers for an election many saw as historic, but the projections did not produce a simple answer. The next stage will be bargaining among parties whose disagreements are not minor. The hardest question may be whether removing a leader, preserving a coalition's principles, and forming a stable government can all happen at the same time.

Written from reporting by PBS NewsHour.

THINK IT THROUGH

1. If a majority of lawmakers oppose a leader but cannot agree on a replacement, what should matter more: the desire for change or the ability to form a stable government?

A strong answer: A strong answer should weigh democratic mandate against practical governability rather than treating one as automatically decisive.

2. Should opposition parties accept support from parties they deeply disagree with if that is the only way to replace a government they oppose?

A strong answer: A strong answer should consider coalition compromise, voter expectations, and the risks of normalizing or excluding certain partners.

3. What information would you want before judging whether a unity government is responsible compromise or a betrayal of voters?

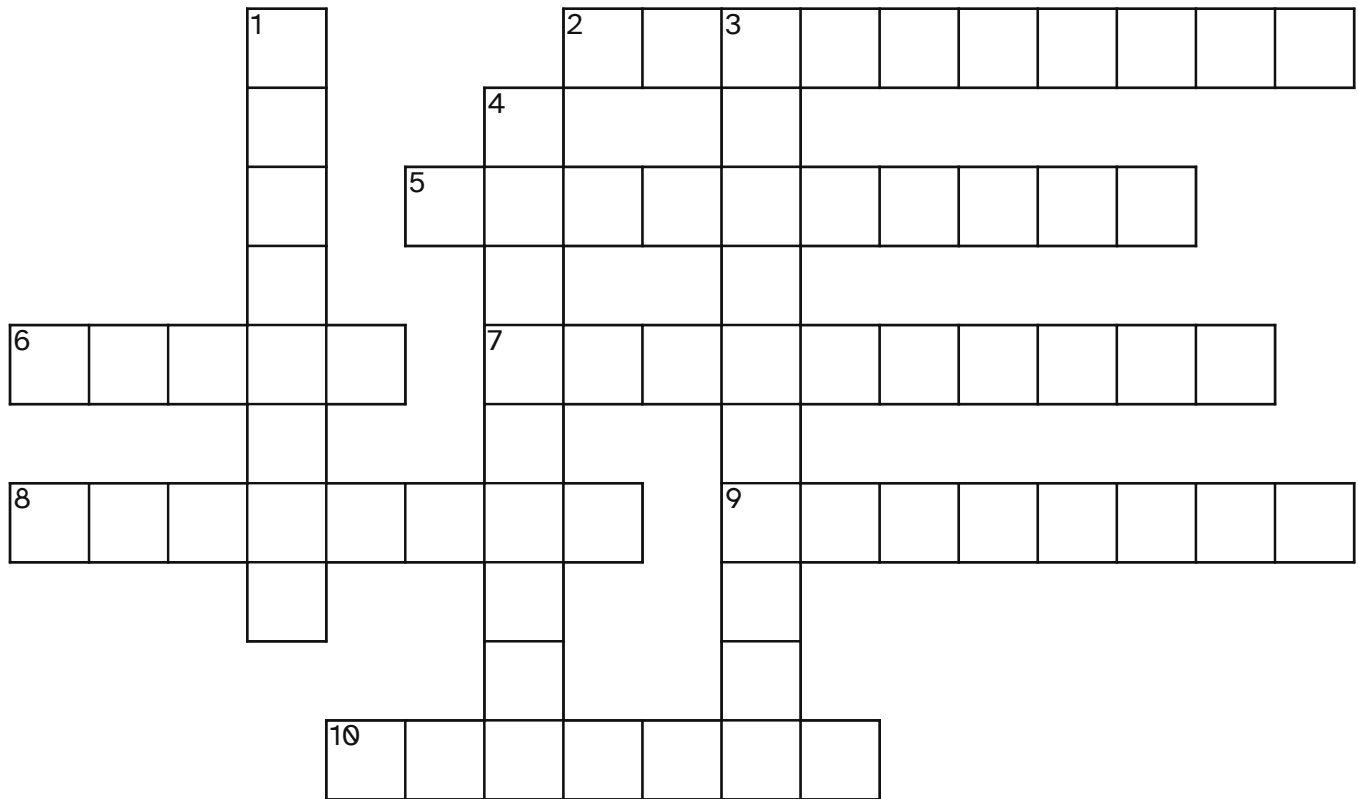
A strong answer: A strong answer should identify missing evidence about party platforms, voter priorities, emergency conditions, and possible alternatives.

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COALITION COMPROMISE ELECTION LEGITIMACY
 MAJORITY MANDATE MINORITY OPPOSITION PARLIAMENT
 UNITY

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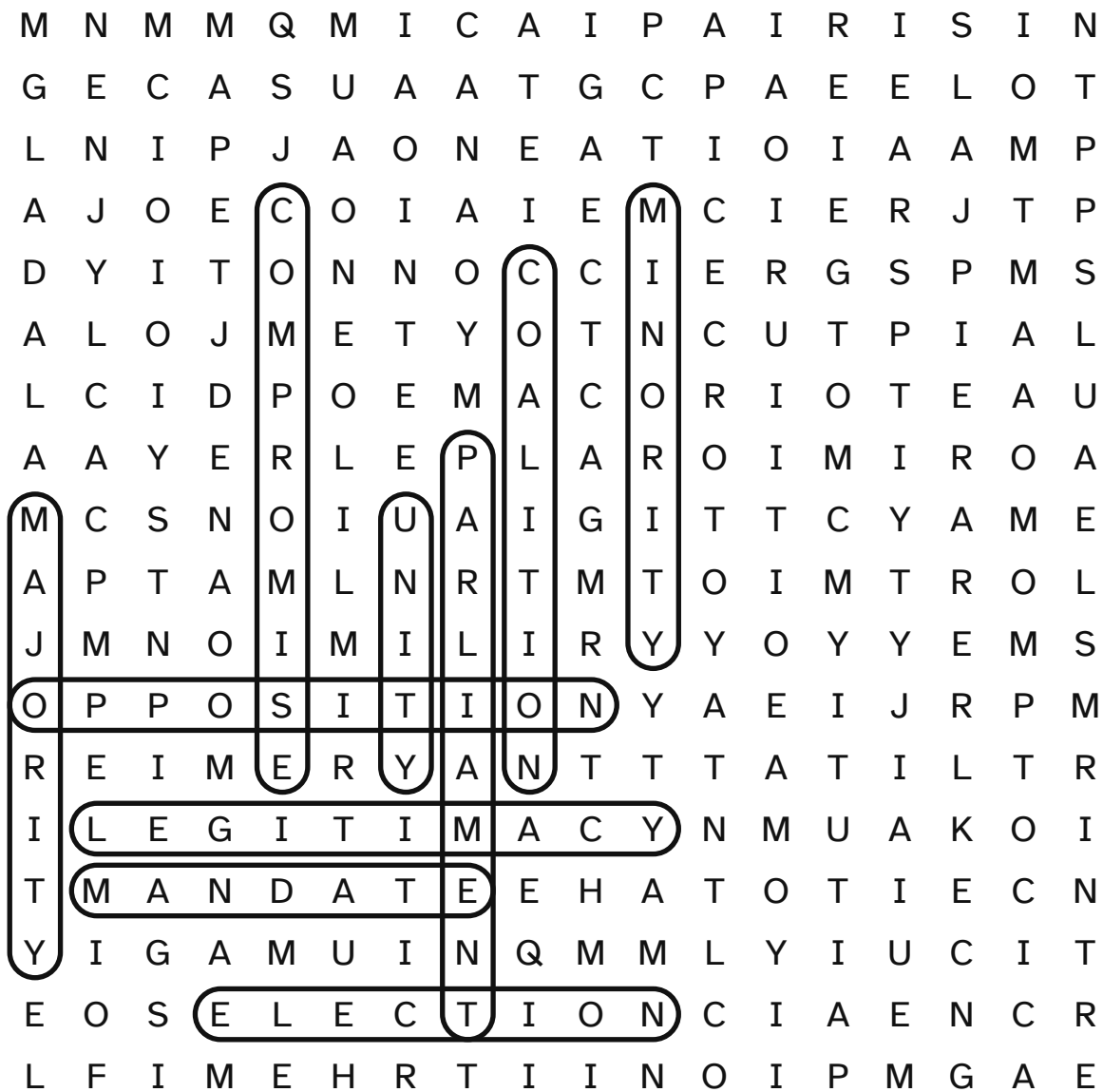
ACROSS

- 2 Political parties that challenge those in power
- 5 Deal reached when each side gives up something
- 6 Rivals working together for a common goal
- 7 Public belief that a leader has rightful authority
- 8 More than half of all votes or seats
- 9 Group holding fewer than half the seats
- 10 Voter support to carry out a political plan

DOWN

- 1 Citizens' vote to choose political leaders
- 3 National group of elected lawmakers
- 4 Power-sharing alliance of political parties

Israel's Election Points to Change, but Not a Clear Government — answer key



COALITION

COMPROMISE

ELECTION

LEGITIMACY

MAJORITY

MANDATE

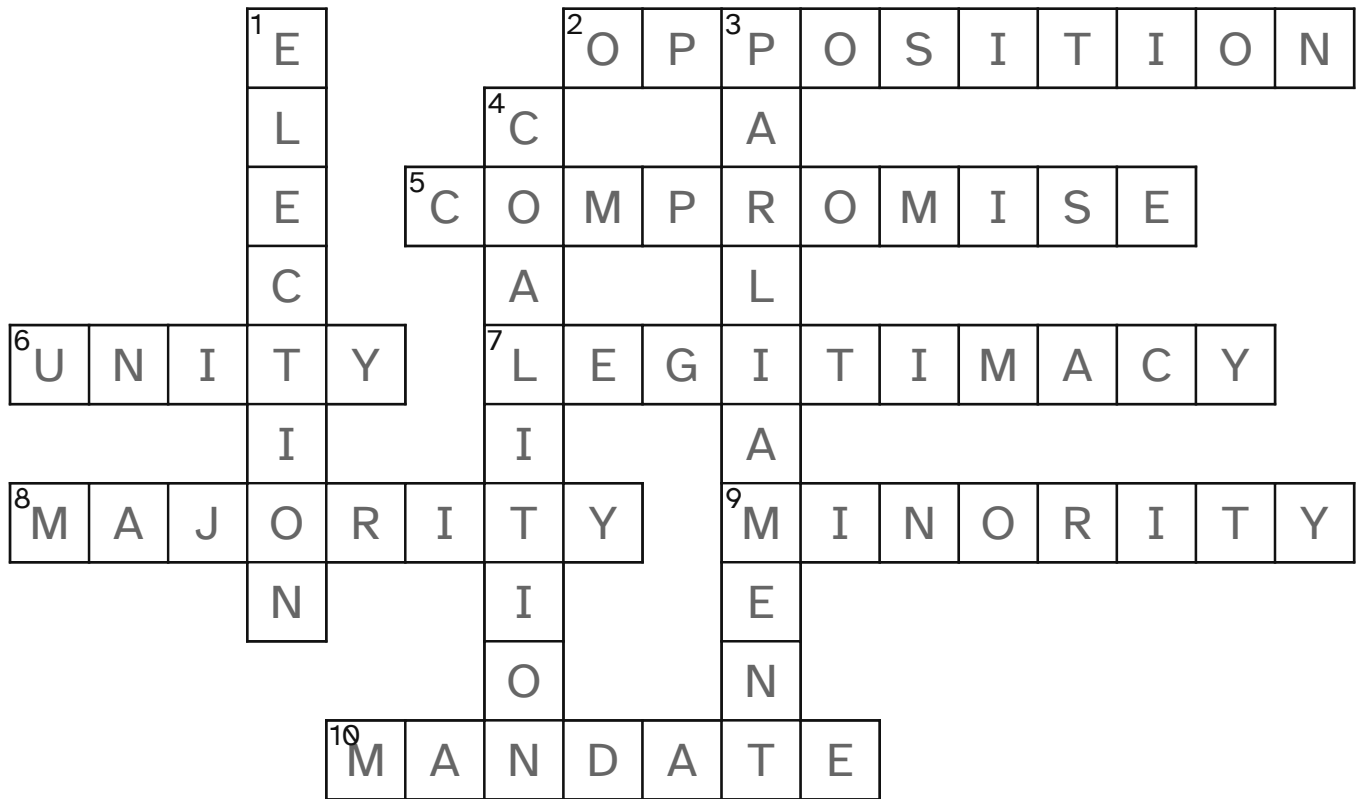
MINORITY

OPPOSITION

PARLIAMENT

UNITY

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Where this came from

This article was written for 3andB from the reporting below. It is not a reprint — the wording is ours and the facts are theirs.

PBS NewsHour

“Projections show no clear winner in Israel's election”

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<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/projections-show-no-clear-winner-in-israels-election>

WHAT IS IN THIS PACKET

The article with a note on each question, a word search, a crossword, and the answer key to both.

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