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The Vision of Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home

Before every election, parties tend to publish their various platforms. Until the 1980's, all parties kept to this tradition, which was expected, and every word, comma and period were heatedly debated.

However, since then, there has been a diminishing of interest and attention to party platforms and frequently they were only published because of necessity and they paid lip service to issues of importance. Therefore, most party platforms have been eerily similar with very generalized references and meaningless slogans.

At Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home, we are used to upsetting the trend and thinking differently. So instead of merely spouting 'headlines' and mere slogans we have chosen to present the Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home worldview in a serious and thorough manner.

It is impossible to relate to every area or issue, but we present the basic principles that we believe in and where we differ from others.

The basic founding principles of Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home are based on the words and teachings of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, considered the father of Revisionist Zionism. Although there are other movements which make a similar claim, remaining faithful to these principles is at the core of Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home's worldview and we do not change our views to suit changing circumstances or trends.

The three basic principles that have long been the cornerstones of our worldview are:

- 1) Unity of the Nation
- 2) The State of Israel as the National Homeland of the Jewish People
- 3) No Citizenship Without Allegiance

Unity of the Nation

Throughout history, we have learned that baseless hatred, civil strife and internal battles have led Israel to some of our worst disasters. It is possible to find countless examples of this in the history books. In recent times, since the reconstitution of our national sovereignty and especially from 1967 to the present, this has sadly been reflected in the divisive debate about Judea and Samaria and the fate of the settlements.

As those who have grown up on the concept of "Two Banks of the Jordan River" and the belief in Greater Israel, some of our hardest dilemmas concern these questions and what would the head of Beitar have said about this issue.

Without giving up on the dream and principle of Greater Israel, we need to reach an understanding and compromise that will ensure the unity of the people, which remains the most important principle.

The Revisionist approach has always been one of realism and even those who sang "Two Banks of the Jordan River" understood the other bank is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and nobody seriously talks about it becoming part of Israel.

This was also the basis for the decision taken by Menachem Begin at Camp David in 1978.

The conclusion is that in the debate over unity of the land or the unity of the people, the unity of the people must take precedence, because over the unity of the people there can be no compromise and a deep fracture will not be overcome.

The State of Israel as the National Homeland of the Jewish People

The reestablishment of Israel after two thousand years is certainly a miracle which has no historical precedent. The common thread to all waves of immigration and Zionist movements is the desire to live in a Jewish State. Any ideological debates between various groups never disputed the Jewish People's right to their own state. This was the basic unifying principle.

For two thousand years our ancestors dreamed about the return to Zion. Millions of Jews were murdered around the world because they did not have a country of their own, a country that protects them. We, the lucky ones, need to keep our country at all costs. Even our Jewish brothers who live today in the Diaspora are more secure because they know that the Jewish State which will always be open to them.

Therefore, we must stand firmly without compromise against attempts to change the nature of the Jewish State and take away the national rights of the Jewish People, because without this there is no point to Israel's existence. Anyone looking for quality of life, economic advantage, peace and quiet, could perhaps find a better alternative to our relatively young state located in the complex and turbulent Middle East.

In practice, the meaning of the State of Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish People is that the country and the vision that our founding fathers built takes precedence. This also means that having a 'Law of Return' for Jews around the world does not make the country any less democratic. Each country maintains its character. *(There are many democratic nations which have nationality laws based on the principle of Lex sanguinis, providing immigration privileges to individuals with ethnic or national ties to those countries (so-called leges sanguinis)).*

Israel has the right to choose its own character as a Jewish and Zionist state and this right should not be subject to any compromise.

This is also our view on the issue of religion and state. It is impossible to separate between the Jewish religion and the Jewish nation and thus there can be no separation of 'church and state'. However, everyone should be able to live by their own set of beliefs in the spirit of "live and let live".

No Citizenship Without Allegiance

One of the most difficult and profound disagreements in Israeli society relates to the role of minorities, especially regarding their rights and obligations. Also here, our worldview is influenced by Jabotinsky. There should be no difference in the attitude of the state to any citizen, be they Jews, Christians, Muslims, Druze or anyone else. Every Israeli citizen should be subject to the same duties and the same rights.

We have a simple answer to those who cynically ask about how an Israeli Arab or other member of a minority can identify with Israel's national symbols. The Jewish people were always loyal to the nations where they lived, so there is certainly a place to demand similar loyalty from minority groups in Israel. During the First World War, Jews fought on both sides, and unfortunately even killed each other with the differing uniforms of various armies. Jews in Arab countries served in senior positions in

government, even as ministers in the governments of Iraq and Morocco, and were loyal to those countries and its symbols of state. These are just a few of many possible examples.

It is therefore legitimate to expect minorities from various groups in Israel to express solidarity, identify with, and respect the symbols of the state in which they are citizens with equal rights and expect every youth, including members of the ultra-Orthodox or Arab communities, to undergo military or civilian national service.

This is also why a person who lives in Israel, and turns Independence Day into 'Nakba Day', is something that we have to fight practically and unequivocally.

Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home has already enacted legislation which determines that any local authority which commemorates 'Nakba Day' will receive no financial aid from the State of Israel. We will continue with these types of legislation until the idea is fully inculcated that we will not accept the sight of a black flag on Independence Day, or lack of respect for the siren on Memorial Day by Arabs or extreme ultra-Orthodox factions.

We should also not accept the dangerous phenomenon of Arab Members of Knesset who incite against the state from the parliament where they serve. Arab Members of Knesset have sadly learnt that incitement against Israel pays off.

As a result of their incitement they receive fame, a fair financial return from Arab countries like Qatar and extremists in the wider Arab world. We must put an end to this phenomenon without hesitation and without delay. We must provide the legal system with legislation and an appropriate punishment which would be a sufficiently deterrence. We also must prevent a recurrence of the case in which the Supreme Court overturned the decision of the Election Commission after Yisrael Beytenu successfully called for the disqualification of the Balad list.

These are the basic principles in which we believe. The practical application of these principles first requires proper management. Proper conduct is the basis for leadership.

Leadership and Management

Since no one has a monopoly on wisdom or justice, and political issues are not necessarily a matter of right or wrong, proper and correct management is the basic condition for success and proper leadership of the country. A good leader is one who first of all makes decisions based on common sense and not according to polls. A leader acts by the truth in which they believe, is not afraid to enunciate it and is not afraid to swim against the current, if necessary.

Proper management and governance of the country should be similar to managing a business. The government should be run like a board of directors, the Prime Minister is the Chairman of the Board and the Knesset is the 'Shareholders Meeting', which represents the people in all its diversity. This way it is possible to achieve results, like lowering the cost of living, eliminating bureaucracy and ensuring a better life for its citizens.

Today, because of the problematic government system, the state is run like a business where executive members of the board are engaged in power struggles, fighting and feuding among themselves and slandering each other.

A business like this has no chance of succeeding. The result of this behavior is that during Israel's 66 years of existence, there have been 33 governments. Only one government, that of Golda Meir's, has completed its term, and that was largely because it coincided with the Yom Kippur War.

There is no doubt that under the current system, when the average tenure of a government in Israel is two years, there is little possibility of the advancement of a long term strategic vision which does not benefit the public. So under the current system, the state is not governed properly.

Thus, it is necessary for a complete separation of powers:

The Government should govern.

The Knesset should enact legislation and act as a check and balance.

The Court System should apply the law.

The current situation, where a significant number of Members of Knesset also serve in the government, is an unhealthy situation which violates the 'separation of powers' and does not allow for the efficient functioning of the government or effective oversight. Additionally, a situation whereby the Supreme Court extends the limits of its jurisdiction, appropriates additional powers and forces its opinions on the Knesset is problematic in a democracy.

Separation of Powers and Healthy Governance

Ministers should be professional people and not Members of the Knesset. Knesset should legislate and supervise the government and a Constitutional Court should be established.

Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home has already passed legislation for better governance.

This is an important first step on a long road to create a better government system that functions properly for the benefit of the citizens.

The Peace Plan of Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home

Efforts to achieve peace have been made by the State of Israel since its very inception, if not before. In 1947, Israel accepted the United Nations 'Partition Plan'. However, the Arab world has forced on us war after war. As part of its desire for peace, past Israeli Governments even gave away territory over 3.5 times the size of the State of Israel.

Therefore, the accusations by those among us that there is no peace agreement because of Israel is unsubstantiated by facts. There are those who blame the lack of peace on Israel having a Right-wing government. However, since 1993, many of Israel's leaders have tried to reach a peace agreement, including left-wing leaders like Shimon Peres, Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert, where they offered Palestinian leaders ever more attractive and generous offers.

On each occasion, the Palestinians refused.

Even the Disengagement and unilateral evacuation of settlements in Gaza by Ariel Sharon was a resounding failure.

In order to reach an agreement we must first understand that the diagnosis is incorrect. Without this understanding, there is no chance of achieving the correct results.

It is not enough to say what is not the correct path, but we must also declare what can be achieved.

Contrary to other parties' worldview, Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home understands that Israel's conflict is not only a territorial dispute with our neighbors but a three-dimensional conflict involving the Arab world, the Palestinians and the Israeli Arabs. Therefore, any agreement with the Palestinians must

be part of an overall agreement that would include peace agreements with Arab states and the exchange of populated-territories.

The Left believes that first we need to reach an agreement with the Palestinians and only then can we reach an agreement with the Arab nations. This formula, that has been tried for more than 20 years and has failed, also gives the Palestinians excessive power and means that there will be no willingness to compromise on their demands.

In our view, the opposite is true. There is no point in reaching an agreement with the Palestinians on their own because it will not solve the problem of allegiance among Israeli-Arabs, will not provide diplomatic and economic benefits from relations with the Arab countries and will not bring an end to the conflict between Israel and the Arab world. Only a package deal would bring the desired result.

An agreement such as this is possible because many today already understand the Palestinian problem is not the main problem or the basis for instability in the Middle East. The events known as the 'Arab Spring' in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere prove this.

Moderate Arab countries understand this, and understand that the threat to them is not from the State of Israel or Zionism, but radical Islamic organizations such as the Islamic State, the al-Nusra Front, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and others. So today, for the first time, it is possible to reach a comprehensive agreement whose terms will be reasonable and acceptable for Israel.

Any agreement must include a populated-territories exchange. Such an agreement would allow Israeli-Arabs who identify with the Palestinians and not Israel to become part of a Palestinian state. Such an arrangement would first solve the challenge of the Arab-Israelis in the 'Triangle' and Wadi Ara region which is adjacent to the Palestinian Authority. They would be able to become citizens of a Palestinian state without having to leave their homes, and allow Arabs from other places in Israel, who fully identify with the Palestinian people, to end the duality from which they suffer. They will be able to decide, in a conscious and practical manner, if they want to be part of the State of Israel or Palestine.

Those who decide that their identity is Palestinian will be able to give up their Israeli citizenship, move and be citizens of a future Palestinian state. The State of Israel can also encourage them to do so through a system of economic incentives.

Social and Economic Positions

Today, the economic outlook of various parties, from Hadash to Habayit Hayehudi – The Jewish Home, are merely invested in simplistic slogans like 'strengthening the middle class, assisting the disadvantaged, lowering the cost of living, etc. All of these issues are important and we must ensure that everyone is positively affected, but to bring about real change we must define and clarify what and who is our highest priority.

We must first take care of the citizens who contribute to the state, like those citizens who served in the military or underwent national service, those who work and pay taxes.

We must focus on the two most important areas that need urgent attention, housing and education.

Housing

Many young couples have the ability to pay a monthly mortgage payment, but do not have the initial capital required to buy an apartment, which leads them to waste their money on high-rent apartments. This situation, when both partners in a couple work and served in the army or national service, are only able to receive a bank loan for 75% of the purchase of a first apartment. It is a problem that because they lack the remaining 25% they can not buy an apartment.

Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home is working so that these types of couples would be able to receive a 90% mortgage loan for the purchase of a first apartment. Such a move expands the purchasing options of young couples looking to buy their first apartment and allows them, unlike other plans, to also buy second-hand apartments, not just apartments from a contractor. Claims that these types of plans created the mortgage crisis in the United States are incorrect because those mortgages were given to everyone, regardless of earnings. In our plan, these mortgages will be offered only to those that can afford them.

Education

The state should provide after-school activities, until 5:00pm, for children aged from six months to 6 years old.

Such a plan would encourage people to work and increase the number of families in which both spouses could work full-time instead of part-time, and will significantly improve the economic situation of young couples who spend thousands of shekels a month on private kindergartens or private after-school programs. It will also ensure that young children will receive a hot meal and enriching courses or programs that contribute to the development of the young child. We at Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home believe that expanding the family should not involve excessive economic considerations for young couples.

The Trachtenberg Committee discussed the just demands that arose during the social protests to extend kindergartens until late afternoon. However, the decision made by the Committee was only partial and only applied to children from the age of five and will run until 4:00pm only and that the programs will be implemented only in communities that are considered lower socio-economic, which are mostly found in the ultra-Orthodox and Arab communities and where the labor force participation rate is low. Hence, the decision missed the goal of helping families who work and fully contribute to their country.

The implementation of these programs in the fields of housing and education will save thousands of dollars a month for each family and thus ease their economic burden.

The bottom line is whether we want to be a welfare state that involves only a concern for the weak, or a nation which cares also for the middle class, couples where both partners work, serve in the army or national service, pay taxes and contribute to the state.

We at Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home know the answer.

Aliyah (Immigration), Absorption and Diaspora Jewry

Yisrael Beytenu “Israel Our Home sees Aliyah to Israel as a strategic asset to the state and an essential and necessary element in the building of our country, state and society. The essence of the Zionist dream is the ‘ingathering of the exiles’.

During its early years the young State of Israel was assisted by world Jewry. However, now the Jews of the Diaspora need our help.

We are witnessing worrying phenomena in the Diaspora; assimilation, the diminishing centrality of Israel in Jewish communal life around the world, a smaller number of Jews in the Diaspora participating in Jewish and Zionist activity and the rising threat of Antisemitism. The assistance provided by Diaspora Jews to Israel during its early years and the help we need to give them today is the essence and the practical expression of the Talmudic saying: 'All of Israel are responsible for one another.'

The biggest problem of the Jewish People in Israel or abroad is demographic. Today, there are around 6.1 million Israeli Jews, and around 5.4 in the United States and according to recent surveys intermarriage is increasing and is currently at around 58%.

For many years, Israeli officials have called on our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora to invest their time, their energy and money on Israel. Now it's time to help preserve Judaism in the Diaspora and increase Aliyah by strengthening their connection to Israel.

The solution to the problem of assimilation, intermarriage and cultural disengagement is education. The cost of a Jewish education in the U.S. is prohibitive and this prevents many from sending their children to Jewish schools. We believe that there should not be a situation in which a Jewish boy or girl would not be able to receive a good quality Jewish education because of financial considerations. This is not particular to the U.S. and is similar in places with high numbers of Jews like France, Russia and Argentina.

If the current situation continues, we will lose most of our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora within a few generations. To prevent this tragedy all Jewish children should have the ability to be educated in a school where they will learn about the history and values of Judaism and Zionism, in order to strengthen their identity and connection to Israel. These schools should be at least as good as the American international school network so parents would want to send their children to learn there.

The Israeli government should implement a program to save the Jewish People whereby every Jewish child in the Diaspora will be able to receive a Jewish and Zionist education of the highest level.

When discussing a possible increase in Aliyah, it is also important to remember that each wave of immigration which came to Israel, and with all the difficulties involved, brought economic growth and strengthened Israeli society. So our goal should be to bring millions of Jews in the coming years to Israel, so, along with the natural growth, there will be over 10 million Jews in Israel.

Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home

Since we created Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home sixteen years ago, we always recognized the challenges and problems long before others and suggested solutions which led to many attacks against us from different parts of society and the media. Most of what we said over the years was subjected to virulent attack. Today these views are part of the consensus.

This is how issues like "No Citizenship Without Allegiance", government reform and the need to exchange populated-territories have now become acceptable. This will also be true of our peace plan based on an overall regional arrangement and about other issues that we continue to advance until fully implemented.

That is how we used to doing things at Yisrael Beytenu – Israel Our Home, setting the agenda and swimming against the current.