

Israel News Desk

With
David Hoyle

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PARTY	LEADER	VOTES	%	Seats	+/-
Likud Yisrael Beiteinu	Benjamin Netanyahu	884631	23.3%	31	11
Yesh Atid	Yair Lapid	543280	14.3%	19	19
Labour Party	Shelley Yachimovich	432083	11.4%	15	2
Jewish Home	Naftali Bennett	345935	9.1%	12	9
Shas	Eli Yishai	331800	8.8%	11	0
United Torah Judaism	Yaakov Litzman	196038	5.2%	7	2
Hatnuah	Tzipi Livni	189168	5.0%	6	6
Meretz	Zahava Gal-On	172382	4.5%	6	3
United Arab List-Ta'al	Ibrahim Sarsur	138362	3.65	4	0
Hadash	Mohammad Barakeh	113610	3.0%	4	0
Balad	Jamal Zahalka	96926	2.6%	3	0
Kadima	Shaul Mofaz	79487	2.1%	2	26

The Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses' Daniel 4:17, 4:25, 4:32 & 5:21.

As leader of the largest party Benjamin Netanyahu therefore retained the right to form a coalition Government and his position as Prime Minister of Israel. This will require a block of 60+ seats to maintain a majority Government. Although right wing parties are now reckoned to hold a small majority, Mr Netanyahu has the task of deciding which will play a part in his coalition. He has 28 days to do this with Presidential discretion to extend it by another 14 days if necessary.

In prophetic terms the election campaign was significant in Mr Netanyahu's commitment to the settlement policy (see separate report), the arrival on the scene of Naftali Bennett and the Jewish Home party who are opposed to any concessions on Israeli territory and also the arrival of Yair Lapid and the Yesh Atid party. Considered centrist left it does support negotiations over the so called West Bank (Judea/Samaria) but also supports Israel's retention of Ariel and other major settlement blocks and perhaps most importantly is opposed to the division of Jerusalem (Zechariah 12 :2&3).

We await to see which individuals the Most High now seeks to rule over His land in the foreseeable future. In the meantime as believers, let us continue to pray in accordance with Psalm 122:6-9.

Settlements: Prior to the Election PM Netanyahu approved 200 new settlements in the so called West Bank (Judea/Samaria) following earlier approval for construction of 1500 housing units in East Jerusalem. These are part of a surge in new buildings since the Palestinians sought recognition for their state in the UN. All to the chagrin of US President Obama who is reported to have said in several private conversations that "Israel doesn't know what it's best interests are". One well connected American journalist recently stated in his column that "Mr Obama viewed Mr Netanyahu as a political coward held hostage by the Jewish settler lobby and whose policies threatened Israel's long-term survival". During the Election campaign Mr Netanyahu affirmed that he would not abandon settlements for peace. He declared that "the days of bulldozers flattening settlements are behind us, not in front of us".

Israel's economic growth forecast: Israel's Ministry of Finance and Economics has declared growth forecasts of 3.5% for 2013 and 3.9% for 2014. These are underpinned by the recent discoveries and production of gas fields which have caused an uprating from previous estimates. These figures if attained are likely to make Israel the number one growth economy among all the countries of the developed Western world.

Heavy rain and snow in Israel: Heavy rain causing some flooding fell in the second week of January falling as snow on Mount Hermon. The Sea of Galilee rose 22 cm within 24 hours, the fastest rate ever recorded. This was followed by up to 6 inches of snow which coated much of Jerusalem and Israel causing schools, businesses and government offices to close. Many roads throughout the country were closed for a time including Highway 1 between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The Galilee is now just 2.4 metres below capacity.

Dead Sea rises – at last! : The Dead Sea rose 10 centimetres during December. This is the first increase in volume for the endangered body for 10 years. The Dead Sea is fed by the Jordan River and a series of streams from the Judean Hills. Extracts for industrial purposes and the extremely arid climate had previously contributed to a 20 metre drop since the 1970's.

Egypt to receive F-16s: The US State Department has refused to cancel or postpone delivery of sixteen F-16 fighter jets and 200 Abrams tanks to the Egyptian Government due before the end of 2013. They are to be given to Egypt under a foreign aid deal signed in 2010 with the then Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The State Department have gone on record that the arming of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood serves the U.S's "regional security interests". In response in writing to a Republican Senator they also stated that "Egypt continues to play an important role in the regional peace and stability.... In all our engagements with President Morsi and his staff they have reaffirmed Egypt's commitment to its international agreements including its peace treaty with Israel". The naiveté is staggering if indeed that is what it is!

Muslim population of Israel: At the end of 2011, the Muslim population of Israel was estimated to be 1.354 million. The largest number live in Jerusalem, around 251,000 and 35% of the city's population. Nazareth also has a high concentration of Muslim residents with 51,000. Whilst the rate of growth of the Muslim population has been falling – from 3.8% in 2000 to 2.5% in 2011 it is still higher than the Jewish birth rate of 1.8% per annum.

'Site 911' Mystery construction in Israel: The Washington Post reports of an oddly named 'Site 911' construction facility to be built by the US Army Corps of Engineers planned for the IDF at an Israeli Air Force base near Tel Aviv. At a cost of up to \$100m it is expected to take more than two years to build. The facility is to have classrooms on Level 1, auditorium on Level 3, a Laboratory, shock resistant doors, protection from non ionizing radiation and very tight security. The report adds that the employment of Palestinians is forbidden.

David's Sling missile defence: The recently commissioned 'Iron Dome' that performed successfully during the recent Gaza conflict may soon be backed up by another missile defence system known as David's Sling. The former was designed to intercept short range rockets while David's Sling has now been successfully tested and is designed to prevent more sophisticated long range missiles with guidance systems such as cruise missiles. It is believed that Hezbollah possess such missiles with ranges of up to 300km. The system is designed to detect and shoot these down. Israel also possesses the Arrow system designed to intercept long range ballistic missiles.

CIA Director refers to Jerusalem as Al-Quds: In a speech at New York sponsored by a Muslim Brotherhood related body, John Brennan, nominee for Director of the CIA said "And in all my travels, the city I have come to love most is Al-Quds.... Jerusalem, where three great faiths come together...'

Ritual temple and sacred vessels discovered at Tel Motza: Rare evidence of the religious practices and rituals in the early days of the Kingdom of Judah has been discovered at Tel Motza to the west of Jerusalem. A ritual temple building, altar and a cache of sacred vessels some 2,750 years old were uncovered during preliminary works for the construction of new Highway 1. The site also yielded pottery figurines. Biblical archaeologists speculate that this is the site of Mozah referred to in Joshua 18:26.

Invitation to the King of Belgium: A local councillor of the Islam Party in Anderlecht in Belgium sent an open letter to the Belgian King Albert in January 2013 inviting him to convert to Islam. The letter effectively cherry picks elements of the nativity and biblical narrative, mentioning Abraham, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, Angel Gabriel. It suggests that Jesus and early versions of the Bible announced the arrival of a final Prophet Mohammed and that Abraham had announced a monotheistic God. It suggests that all of this is fulfilled in Islam and urges the King to convert or he will carry on his shoulders the burden of sin together with that of his subjects. Peace is however promised should he choose to follow Islam.

Israel joins UNICEF Executive Board: Israel assumed membership of the UN Children's Fund Board on 1 January 2013 after a 40 year break. UNICEF operates in 200 countries and is concerned with children's health around the world and supplies them with clean water, proper nutrition, education and humanitarian relief in disaster zones. The organization was originally established in 1946 by Ludwig Rajchman a Jewish-Polish paediatrician and Holocaust survivor. The Israeli Fund for UNICEF, operating from Tel Aviv has raised millions of shekels for the organization's activities for the benefit of children around the world. Israel also cooperates with the organization in various assistance projects in Third World countries.

Arab spring, surrounding nations and threats: In **Egypt** the fundamentalist Islamic takeover through the Muslim Brotherhood following the recent uprising continues. Whilst the wider population wakes up to what is happening with some significant backlash there is no sign of the Brotherhood being willing to loosen its grip. (Isaiah 19:4 in the making ?). Meanwhile videos of a 2010 interview and speech by new President Morsi have surfaced in which he describes Jews as bloodsuckers, warmongers and the descendants of apes and pigs. A limited amount of backtracking is currently underway. In **Gaza** Hamas leader in exile Khaled Meshaal in moments of high theatre made a supposedly 'victorious' return for the first time in 37 years following the conclusion of the Operation Pillar of Defence operation by Israel. In his speech Meshaal urged Gazan's to 'keep your finger on the trigger' and reiterated Hamas claims that all of Israel including Jerusalem belongs to the Palestinians and that they will 'liberate' Jerusalem inch by inch. The Emir of **Qatar** recently made an historic visit to Gaza and volunteered \$400m to Hamas. In **Syria** President Assad appears to be hanging on and digging in bolstered by Iran amid an increasing number of atrocities by both sides. Israel remains alert to the possibilities posed by Syria's possession of chemical weapons and has promised a swift response to any such incursions or transfers into Hezbollah hands. Assad is rumoured to have ordered military chiefs to launch ballistic missiles at Israel should he be killed by rebel forces. (Isaiah 17:1 in the making ?) Meanwhile the mass migration of refugees into **Jordan** is giving concern over the stability of that country and the Hashemite rule, the only neighbour of Israel that does not currently present an overt threat. The Muslim Brotherhood are also active in Jordan. (Psalm 83 ?)

Israel youths to train for cyber war: Israel has commenced a national programme to train young people in cyber warfare at Ashkelon Academic College. Israel faces increasing threats from such attack and plans to develop a digital equivalent of 'Iron Dome' to defend her computer systems.

First Frankincense tree for 1500 years: Dr Elaine Solowey of the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies at Kibbutz Ketura has cultivated the first frankincense tree to be seen in Israel for 1500 years. Dr Solowey's greenhouse also houses plants that produce myrrh together with other biblical plants. Frankincense trees were extremely valuable in ancient times but died out. Hopefully they will flourish again in Israel.

BBC Trust upholds anti-Israel complaint: The Trust has upheld a complaint from a leading anti-Israel activist that a Radio 4 report inaccurately described the impact of the creation of Israel on Palestinians. In reporting on "Nabka day" last May when Palestinians mourn the creation of Israel, it concluded that the Corporation guidelines on accuracy were breached when it 'failed to note the degree of force or coercion in the manner of the departure' of Palestinians.

Places are still available on our October tour to Israel. For further details telephone David Hoyle on 01423 881803 or Bob Waughman on 01243 771802.