

Maoz Israel: The New Government, Obama and Turkey

I just couldn't wait for the new Israeli government coalition to form. Boy, was I going to write a doozie! Nothing like these politics had ever been seen before. No one knew from day to day what the new government was going to look like. Would it be ultra-Orthodox? Labor? Far left? Or would it be some weird combination?

For 39 days, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu fought, wooed, bluffed, enticed and threatened the leaders of two other major political parties, *Yesh Atid* (translated "There's a Future") and *Bait Yehudi* ("The Jewish Home").

The rules of the game were known to all. Twelve parties had won seats in the Knesset. Netanyahu and his merged co-partners gained a total of 31 seats out of 120. They needed another 30 seats to form a government.

I can't go into all the details, because then I would be writing you the article that I'm not going to write. But what Netanyahu wanted more than anything else that this world has to offer (except his family) was to have his old buddies, the two ultra-Orthodox parties, with him in his government.

The reason isn't hidden from any Israeli living in this country. The ultra-Orthodox demand only two things:

1. Not to have to serve in the army.
2. To receive billions of shekels for its population that does not work.

That's all. If they receive these two benefits, Netanyahu has friends that stick closer than a brother. The only problem was the two ultra-Orthodox parties won only a total of 18 seats.

Still, Netanyahu was determined to have them in his

government. Maybe he could entice the leftist Labor party with 15 votes to join him and the ultra-Orthodox? The Labor leader would hear none of it.

The Two Brothers

Two young, inexperienced politicians won a total of 31 seats: First-time secular politician Yair Lapid (*Yesh Atid*) won 19 seats on the basis that the ultra-Orthodox would be obligated to serve in the army for the first time ever. He also campaigned to restructure Israel's incompetent coalition system and its deteriorating education system, and help small businesses in a shrinking middle class—all areas that would rile up the petrified stick-in-the-muds used to doing things the bureaucratic way.

The second first-time politician, Naftali Bennett (*Bait Yehudi*), is the modern and moderate Orthodox face of the settlers' party. However, as an experienced entrepreneur who made millions in a startup company, he endorses many of the same common-sense values as Lapid. (Note: The ultra-Orthodox have no love for the Orthodox and vice versa.)

To make an incredibly long story short, Yair and Naftali joined together in an unusually strong pact that Bibi was not able to break apart. They literally forced Bibi Netanyahu to include them and to exclude the ultra-Orthodox in the new government. Together with Tsipi Livni and her six-member center-leftist dovish party (who was promised the office of conducting peace negotiations with the Palestinians), the government was born—literally minutes before the 40-day deadline was breached, which would have triggered new elections.

Two Days Later

Before I was able to get to my computer to write about the dazzling negotiations, President Obama came to town. As our daughter Shani has written, Israel had never seen the likes of

such a celebratory hosting of a visitor before in all its modern history.

Before Obama's arrival, a reputable poll in *Ma'ariv* (an Israeli Hebrew news daily) showed that Obama had a 10 percent approval rating among the Israeli public.

And then Obama arrived! An Obama that Israel had never seen before. He never once mentioned forcing Israel back to the 1949 armistice lines, nor giving up the ancient city of Jerusalem. He didn't even demand Israel discontinue building homes in the West Bank—although he did say he thought it would be wise to stop. All of the above Obama had demanded in the past—or else! It was a 180-degree U-turn.

Most of all, he assured Israelis that they have U.S. backing, that the U.S. would not let Iran get nuclear weapons under any circumstances, and that the U.S. would supply Israel with the weapons she needs. He talked about Israel's rich heritage in the Holy Land (Muslims profess to believe that Israel has no history here), and on and on. He astonished and literally dumbfounded the Israeli people.

The polls found a huge drop in Israelis who see Obama as hostile.

Israelis Crave Love

Ra'anana Gissin, Ariel Sharon's former spokesman, explained it like this: "Jews always need warmth. It has to do with our history. We crave for others to love us because we were always hated and castigated."

Don't get me wrong. We are glad that, at least for now, Obama has decided to stand with Israel. We know that the nations are being weighed in the balance by a God who sees everything. The evil that is spreading in ever-increasing waves across North America will one day bring judgment. Yet I believe that God will delay the most devastating judgments yet for a while as

He remembers His promise to bless the U.S. and Canada and every other nation—there are so few—that stand with Israel.

Obama's trip was so stunning that it was important for me to write an article that would enable you to catch a sense of the euphoria in this country. But before Obama left town, the TV and radio and Internet blared the latest breaking news.

Turkey Is Our Friend Again?

Just before he left, Obama joined Netanyahu, who got on the phone with Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to apologize for the deaths of nine Turkish activists among the hundreds who tried to break Israel's naval blockade of Gaza in 2010.

If justice were the issue, Erdogan should have been apologizing to Israel—for approving the clubbing of Israeli soldiers who had boarded to inspect the MV Mavi Marmara ship. Under international law, Israel has the right to enforce a blockade in order to keep Hamas from receiving arms by sea to attack Israel.

But justice was not the issue. With so many enemies everywhere, Israel needs and wants Turkey's friendship. In fact, for many years there were extremely close relations between the two nations until the Islamic Prime Minister Erdogan was voted in office.

Slowly but surely, Erdogan began to pull away from the Jewish nation. Then when the Israeli soldiers, attempting to defend their own lives from hundreds of vicious attackers aboard the ship, killed nine activists on the boat, Erdogan broke diplomatic relations with Israel, and since then has taken every opportunity to demonize Jews.

"Zionism must be regarded as a crime against humanity," the Turkish premier said. "Israel is a terrorist state," etc., etc., etc. Turkish movies portrayed Jews as killing Gentile

children in order to use their blood in Passover matza and the like.

But Obama had been working on reconciliation between the two countries—of national interest to the U.S. because both are strong allies of America. And so, wonder of wonders, with Obama listening, Erdogan accepted Netanyahu's apology. Euphoria knew no bounds in Israel! Israelis who used to love to go to southern Turkey for vacations started calling tour agencies to once again book flights to that exotic country.

But just as I was about to write this story, Erdogan decided that he had additional demands before there would be an exchange of ambassadors. Namely, he insisted on a million dollars to the families of each activist killed by the Israel Defense Forces. But the real non-starter was his demand for a complete removal of the Gaza blockade—meaning that Hamas would be free to bring in all the weapons they wanted. Israel's officials called for "patience" with the Islamic prime minister.

Actually, Erdogan has gotten a lot of mileage out of this phone call. Large billboards were put up by the Ankara municipality to thank Erdogan following Israel's apology. "Israel apologized to Turkey. Dear prime minister, we are grateful that you let our country experience this pride," the billboards read.

One thing is sure: There's nothing like Islamic pride! Bennett posted on his Facebook page that if Erdogan keeps this up, Israel will regret the apology. Well, we tried.

Syrian Update

But before I could put together information about Turkey, we learned that Syria had started shooting across the Israeli Golan Heights border and actually struck an army vehicle, although thankfully not injuring any Israeli.

News also leaked out that Israel has set up a field hospital on the Syrian border, caring for wounded Syrian opposition rebels, whose last hope is to beg the Israelis for medical help. Israel greatly fears a deluge of wounded Syrians. But on the other hand, Jewish values cannot allow them to lay there at the border and die.

Today U.N. officials are warning that the Syrian bloody conflict might spill into the Jewish state sooner rather than later. The U.N. Security Council expressed grave concern at all violations of the "Disengagement of Forces Agreement" between Syria and Israel.

If the 1,000 U.N. peacekeepers are forced to leave for their own safety, then this becomes a very dangerous situation. Remember that both Syria's President Assad and the opposition are enemies of the Jewish state. Remember, too, that Syria is floating in chemical and biological weapons.

Oh, well. I better stop now before something else happens and I end up writing an article.

Stop the Presses

Wait until you hear this. Israel has gone from rags to riches. From a tiny country that had almost no natural resources, our country discovered natural gas three years ago 50 miles off the coast of Haifa. Today, the first piped-in flow of natural gas reached the shores of Israel through its new pipeline.

And it is only the first of even massively larger reserves discovered that will allow Israel to move toward not only an energy independent nation, but also an exporter of natural gas. There's that euphoria again!

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Messianic Jewish congregations in the Tel Aviv area and sponsored national conferences for the Israeli believers.

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