

What's Next for Israel After Prime Minister's Party Implodes?

On June 13, 2021, Naftali Bennett was sworn in as Israel's 13th prime minister.

Exactly one year and one week later, Bennett is done.

Yamina—the political party he founded and is supposed to lead—has imploded.

And so has Bennett's hold on power.

One member of Yamina after another refused to follow his lead.

Rebellions were ubiquitous and, ultimately, fatal.

What Bennett Did Right

To be sure, he certainly achieved important accomplishments.

Among them, Bennett:

- ended the COVID-19 pandemic crisis in Israel
- re-opened the Israeli economy, leading the country to 8.1% growth in 2021 and likely around 5.5% in 2022
- re-opened Israel's borders to tourists and foreign business executives
- made Israel's first state visit to the United Arab Emirates to strengthen and deepen the Abraham Accords
- made Israel's first state visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain
- made Israel's first publicly reported and photographed visit to Cairo in years
- directed the IDF to continue striking Iranian targets in Syria

- was willing to work with an Israeli Arab party, and invested significantly in improving the life of Israeli Arabs

All good.

But not nearly enough.

What Bennett Did Wrong

Bennett's central problem was that he never learned to lead his own troops.

He devoted so much of his time to economic, foreign and national security policy—yet so little of his time to caring for and nurturing his political base, listening to the frustrations of his closest political allies and finding a way to keep his team happy.

It was not opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud Party that did Bennett in, though they certainly loved to stir the pot.

No, this was an implosion of Bennett's own making.

Tone Deaf Toward 600 Million Evangelical Christians

On top of all this, I remain astonished that Bennett and his team were so unwilling to make time for interviews with Christian journalists.

Indeed, over his entire year as prime minister, Bennett refused to give an interview to a single Christian media outlet.

Yes, he recorded a brief video that was shown at the Christian Media Summit last November.

But that was it.

I made repeated requests to the prime minister's press team

for Bennett to do an interview with me to be published on *All Israel News*.

What's more, working with the executives at TBN—the world's largest Christian TV network—I requested a sit-down interview with Bennett that would have served as the centerpiece of a one-hour prime time special to be aired during Hanukkah and in the lead-up to Christmas.

This would have given Bennett, the first religious, Orthodox, kippah-wearing prime minister in Israel's modern history, to speak directly with Evangelical Christians in North America and around the world.

To brief Evangelicals on his efforts to re-open the Holy Land to Christian tourists.

To brief Evangelicals on his efforts to strengthen and expand the Abraham Accords and advance regional peace.

To brief Evangelicals on his efforts to prevent Iran from building or acquiring nuclear weapons, and the importance of building a strong regional alliance against the terror masters in Tehran.

Yet despite one request after another, Bennett and his team kept saying no.

Was he busy?

Of course.

But would such an interview have taken more than 15 or 20 minutes of his time?

Of course not.

Yet Bennett simply failed to make it a priority to invest in the strategic alliance between Israel and the 60 million Evangelical Christians in the United States, much less than

600 million Evangelicals worldwide, most of whom love Israel dearly.

He and his team seemed tone deaf to the need to continually educate Evangelicals about the challenges, threats and risks facing the Jewish state and the Jewish people, and to mobilize Evangelicals to keep praying faithfully for the peace of Jerusalem, to keep coming to visit Israel to discover their spiritual roots, and to keep investing in Israel to bless the Israeli people by blessing the Israeli economy.

I don't believe for one moment that Bennett is hostile to Evangelicals.

I do believe that Bennett and his team were failing at the fundamentals of politics.

Feed your base.

Care for and nurture your closest friends and allies.

Clearly, Evangelicals were far from the only friends Bennett neglected.

Now What?

What does Naftali Bennett's future hold?

Will he and what's left of his shattered Yamina party even run again in the fall elections?

Will they merge with another party?

Can they survive if they run alone?

All good questions—and I honestly have no idea what the answers are.

Bennett may have been a special forces commando in the IDF.

And talented in business, making a fortune in the high-tech

world.

But he certainly has not proven to have mastered the political game.

I like him, and respect him.

But I could not possibly venture a guess at this point as to what his future holds. {eo}

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