



**Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 7/19
Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen**

1.-15- April

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1. Israels Parlamentswahlen

Mehr Macht für weniger Parteien ist ein Ergebnis des Zweikampfes zwischen Benjamin Netanyahu vom Likud und Benny Gantz, dem Vorsitzenden von Blau-Weiß. Der extrem auf die beiden Spitzenkandidaten konzentrierte Wahlkampf zahlte sich aus. Er ging zu Lasten der kleineren Parteien, die an der Sperrklausel scheiterten, und auf Kosten der Arbeitspartei. Machtlos mussten die Sozialdemokraten zusehen, wie ihre Wähler zu Blau-Weiß überliefen, denn nur Gantz hatte eine reelle Chance, Netanyahu vom Thron zu stoßen. So sehr Netanyahus Kampagne die Lager auseinander zu treiben versuchte, so sehr setzte Gantz auf die Einheit im Volk. Immer mehr Israelis waren Netanyahus Führungsstil leid geworden. Das von Gantz erreichte Ergebnis ist der seit 1992 größte Erfolge für eine Partei der Mitte. Mit ein Grund dafür dürfte die militärische Laufbahn der Führungsgruppe von Blau-Weiß sein – drei der ersten vier Listenplätze, einschließlich der Position des Parteivorsitzenden, werden von ehemaligen Generalstabschefs bekleidet. Andererseits ist Gantz an dem Ziel, dem rechten Lager Stimmen abzugewinnen, gescheitert. Stattdessen sind vom linken Lager in Israel nur noch klägliche Reste übrig. Ganz knapp gelang Meretz mit vier Mandaten der Einzug in die Knesset, und die Arbeitspartei landete mit nur sechs Mandaten auf ihrem historischen Tief. Die Sozialdemokraten sind unter ihrem Spitzenkandidaten Avi Gabbay in eine Führungskrise geraten. Besonders fatal dürfte sich die unilaterale Aufkündi-

gung des Bündnisses mit der früheren Justizministerin Zipi Livni ausgewirkt haben. Dazu kommt eine Orientierungslosigkeit, die viele sozialdemokratische Parteien andernorts durchlaufen. Friedensverhandlungen und ein Ende der Besatzung spielten bei den Wahlen keine Rolle. Viele Israelis glauben nicht mehr an einen Frieden mit den Palästinensern und setzen deshalb auf strikte Maßnahmen gegen Terror und Krieg. Der Unterschied zwischen Netanyahu und Gantz ist ihre politische Streitkultur, der Umgang mit Minderheiten, ihre Haltung zu Demokratie, Menschenrechten, Pluralismus und Rechtsstaatlichkeit. Dazu gehört auch die Rolle der Ultraorthodoxen. Blau-Weiß versprach Wehrpflicht für alle, teilweise öffentlichen Verkehr am Sabbat und Familienrechte für LGBT und den Einfluss der jüdischen Religion auf das Alltagsleben einzudämmen. Dennoch sind die Ultraorthodoxen auf dem Vormarsch. Schon kommt jeder vierte Erstklässler aus dem ultraorthodoxen Sektor. Die einzigen Gewinner unter den Kleinstparteien waren die ultraorthodoxen Parteien. Besorgniserregend ist auch die niedrige Wahlbeteiligung der arabischen Bevölkerung. Nur knapp 50% der arabischen Wahlberechtigten gingen diesmal zur Wahl, wobei die Mehrheit der Nichtwähler Enttäuschung an der Politik und mangelndes Vertrauen in die Parlamentsabgeordneten als Grund für das Fernbleiben von den Wahlurnen angaben.

Joints on the Temple Mount

(...) Despite being an extreme-right party (...) Zehut's future voters include young people, many of them secular, who support libertarian values and in particular the legalization of marijuana. Feiglin isn't trying to hide his vision and his dangerous plans; just the opposite. He published the party platform in "To Be a Free Jew: An Operating Manual for the State of Israel," a book that has become a nonfiction best-seller. His plan is described in detail in more than 300 pages. Anyone who votes for him won't be able to say they didn't know what they were getting. Feiglin is a revolutionary with an organized extremist ideology (...). His economic vision is extreme. Zehut is proposing to greatly restrict government intervention in the economy, to cut corporate taxes, eliminate customs duties and import quotas, reduce state intervention in public transportation, reduce taxes on private cars, introduce school vouchers, eliminate the current method of distributing land, eliminate all special taxes on land and more. Zehut wants to totally subordinate the courts to the legislative branch and to neuter the gatekeepers, primarily the attorney general. At the same time, it calls for establishing a voluntary (...) judicial system that would operate in accordance with Jewish religious law, or halakha. (...) Anyone who doesn't fully subscribe to this vision ought to be wary of him. Whoever yields to ridiculous dreams of liberty and cannabis for all will pay dearly when he is enslaved by an apartheid, halakha state whose capital is the Third Temple.
Editorial, HAA, 02.04.19

Netanyahu's policy of divide and rule

(...) Netanyahu's tactic in all recent elections is to divide Israeli society into two distinct camps: "us" versus "them." The people who work and shop in the markets are an integral part of Netanyahu's camp - the "us". They are an essential component of his base. (...) The market people who are part of the struggle against every group that threatens the continued rule of the right-wing, the "us," the right-wing-traditional-religious-Mizrahi etc. (...) The spirit of struggle is necessary because (...) the "us" is not actually a distinct group, but rather a diverse coalition of different streams whose sole connection is the struggle. After all, there is not necessarily a natural link between the vendors of a market in Tel Aviv and the settlers of the West Bank hilltops. Nor is there an obvious connection between the residents of a development town, the Likud supporters of the free market and the members of the right-wing conservative intellectual elite (...). These are disparate groups by nature – and makes them a cohesive

force is the struggle against "them." (...) Netanyahu keeps repeating again and again the messages that warn against complacency by the "us" camp. This is not your regular eve-of-elections campaigning – the fear is real. (...) this "us" has led him to victory once again.

Shlomo Pyuterkovsky, YED, 04.05.19

National unity – elections a celebration of Israeli democracy

(...) Election Day should be applauded as an example of Israel's democracy and the long way it has come since the 1940s in establishing a robust system and institutions that support democracy. (...) in turnout and diversity of parties, there is a very healthy democracy in Israel. (...) Israelis have grown more cynical over the years regarding the chances for peace. The generation coming of age in this election to vote for the first time, many of them while in their military units serving the country, were born when the Second Intifada broke out. Their parents may have believed in the peace promised by the Oslo Accords, but they saw those hopes dashed in the bus bombings and horrid battles of the early 2000s. (...) The parties which stand a chance of forming the next coalition mostly do not believe that a magic wand will create peace. (...) They understand that Israel must continue to invest in its defense technology to confront regional threats, such as Iran. Israelis have less trust in politicians, the courts and the media. This erosion of trust should be confronted by the next government, lest Israel drift the way of other Western democracies in becoming too divided. The next government must also confront issues of religion and state. The crises with the Diaspora over the Western Wall and other Diaspora-Israel issues are important to resolve. (...) Other challenges await, such as postponed plans to regulate land settlement in the Negev and unrecognized Bedouin villages. Also, Israel must continue the march toward closer relations with regional states. That includes listening to Jordan's concerns while continuing to foster the bond that has grown with India. There is a broad consensus in Israel regarding many issues. Despite our divided party system, most average Israelis are united on core issues. This should be celebrated. Israel knows how to display impressive national unity. Now is the time to do that.

Editorial, JPO, 10.04.19

Labor's fiasco is on Gabbay

Labor Chairman Avi Gabbay is personally responsible for his party's dismal showing (...). Labor voters not only refused to come home but also ran away from the party and embraced the center-left bloc Blue and White, headed by former Chief of General Staff Benny Gantz. Yes, Gantz drew votes away from Labor, making it impossible to maintain its size in the next Knesset, but Gabbay should have done much better. The New Right experienced a similar ordeal after Likud zeroed in on its potential voter base. (...) Netanyahu had a clear path to a fifth term, with more than 60 seats going to Likud and its allies. (...) Blue and White failed to meet its overarching objective of outnumbering Likud by at least five seats. (...)

Gideon Allon, IHY, 10.04.19

If we can't get a new government, let's get a new Left

The Israeli Left failed yesterday in its attempt to change the leadership and the direction of the country. Maybe it's time to change the Left instead. (...) The disastrous results of yesterday's election for the Israeli Left should serve as its wake-up call (...). When faced with a shock defeat on this scale, we can learn something from the experience of Israel following the Yom Kippur War. The establishment of the Agranat Commission and the implementation of at least some of its recommendations was a good thing. The careers of a number of military and political leaders were ended. But lessons were learned, the country was made safer, and the end result was a peace agreement with Egypt. The broad Left in Israel today needs to learn from that experience. It is not enough for each individual party to sack its leaders and criticise its campaign. All of us were part of a catastrophe and all of us should be talking together about what happened and why. Labour, Meretz and Hadash need to have a conversation and that conversation needs to include others – trade unionists, social change activists, feminists, gay rights activists, environmentalists. And this cannot be a conversation only among Jews. The Right may want to exclude Arabs from the political life of the country, but we do not. We need to understand why so many Israelis, Jewish and Arab, who suffer terribly from the policies of a Netanyahu government voted Likud and its satellite parties – or did not vote at all. We need to be open to new ideas, rather than endlessly repeating the same slogans. During this campaign, the Left seemed tired, lacking in energy and enthusiasm and young people. And as election night

proved, that was exactly the case. (...) It is time for a change in Israel, and if we can't get a new government, let's get a new Left.

Eric Lee, TOI, 10.04.19

The view from the Left

(...) Israel is a very divided society. Yet it is difficult to determine that the division is over ideology and visions for the future of Israel. (...) the bad news is the shrinking of the Labor Party and its more ideological sister, Meretz. Both Labor and Meretz need to rethink their futures. Israel continues to move to the Right. Gantz and his party of generals will bring new life to the opposition, where they will primarily focus on bringing down Netanyahu after his hearing regarding his criminal indictments. (...) within a year, he will be forced to resign, and then Israel will most likely head to the polls once again, this time without the unbeatable Netanyahu heading the Likud. For now, it seems that what there was is what there will be. (...) None of the real issues on Israel's agenda were even discussed during the election campaign. The critical issues – of determining Israel's borders, the future of the occupied territories, the Palestinian issue, and the issue of peace – have never been further from the public political debate than in this election campaign. (...) The Israeli elections were about one main issue: Benjamin Netanyahu, and here is where the public seems most divided. Those of us who see Netanyahu as corrupt, divisive against Arabs and leftists, an annexationist without any hope in the world of ending Israel's occupation over the Palestinian people, are extremely sad this morning. (...) What I see from the Left side of the political map is the continuing weakening of the rule of law; increasing threats to Israel's Supreme Court; continued provocation with the Palestinian Authority that will lead to a sharp increase in violence; little chance of changing the situation vis-à-vis Gaza; and no changes regarding the regional threats. (...)

Gershon Baskin, JPO, 10.04.19

Investors will expect change from new gov't

The new government will have to take painful decisions that were postponed because of the election campaign, especially regarding the budget deficit. (...) Once the political fog lifts, the Israeli economy will await economic developments that will affect most sectors, and consequently the pricing of debt instruments and shares. The incoming government's main decision, which will affect price of shares on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE) in the long term, is what to do about the emerging large deviation from the government deficit target. In the exist-

ing fiscal situation, it is no longer possible for the government to hide its head in the sand and pray for a large-scale exit that will improve the numbers. (...) Increasing the direct and/or indirect tax burden on the public will detract from the pace of growth in private consumption and the feeling of wealth, while raising corporate tax will affect corporate profits, reduce the incentive for investment, and directly influence share prices on the TASE. Cutting government spending is likely to result in lower investments in essential infrastructure, which needs more spending. Confining changes in the state budget to minor ones will result in an increase in government debt raising and higher financing costs for the government debt. (...) The housing market (...) is also waiting for regulatory clarity. Without continuity in increasing the supply of housing, prices will resume their upward climb. (...) In the collapsing local communications market, investors are waiting for measures by the Ministry of Communications aimed at restraining the uncontrolled competition in mobile communications, which is threatening to cause the collapse of a major operator and bring about stagnation in communications investments. (...) here also, government intervention to stabilize the market means higher communications prices, which will affect consumers' pocketbooks. (...) For investors in the Israeli capital market at least, the election results are far from indicating what the economic future holds in store for us.

Yaniv Pagot, GLO, 10.04.19

Bibi wins again – Its implications

(...) Short term the arrangement is perfect for Israel. There is simply no better career diplomat politician for Israel than Benjamin Netanyahu. His accomplishments in foreign policy were nicely arrayed for him in the last month and from his good friends US president Donald Trump and Russian president Vladimir Putin playing an active role. (...) As US Trump unveils his long awaited “deal of the century” and with the Russians at our doorstep in Syria, having a leader that is personal friends of both leaders is an extremely important strategic asset. (...) Israelis have never been richer (...). Food is plentiful, most Israelis have big screen tvs and the most up-to-date gadgets. Many have become some of the world's most active travellers. (...) Nevertheless, long term the status quo can quickly turn into a dangerous situation. (...) Another problem is one of Israel's rule of law and its legal institutions. If Netanyahu will now attempt to enact legislation that will provide him immunity from prosecution (...), Israel risks a slippery slope turning it into an elitist power

state similar to Erdogan's Turkey. (...) while diplomatically it is favorable that Bibi is still Israel's leader he cannot be Israel's premier in his current management style for much longer. Let him oversee the Trump peace plan and produce a stabilizing relationship with the Russians. Let him create meaningful alliances with the Arab world and continue to keep Iran at bay. However in the long term we cannot risk the erosion of the institutions of the Israeli state over a constant fear of diplomacy. One day someone will have to address all the other problems. (...)

Gil Lewinsky, TOI, 11.04.19

The magician strikes again

This was supposed to be the election that Benjamin Netanyahu was going to lose – three criminal investigations; a decision of intent to indict him for bribery, fraud and breach of trust; and three former IDF chiefs of staff who joined together with the sole purpose of taking him down. (...) He refused to be beaten. There were those in Israel who referred to him on Wednesday as a magician. Considering the challenges he overcame (...) he might well deserve the title. (...) If Netanyahu decides to form a narrow haredi (...), right-wing coalition, he will be vulnerable to extortion like never before. Each party will potentially hold in its hands the key to his political survival, and will use it accordingly. (...) From a national interest perspective, the best government would be one that is the most stable, represents the largest portion of the population, and could be the most effective in grappling with the military, diplomatic and security challenges on Israel's horizon. A Likud-Blue and White unity government – the parties have very little ideological differences – would also be more acceptable to the world. It wouldn't have Kahanists or far-right parties, which are only interested in advancing their constituents' narrow interests. But (...) Netanyahu (...) needs a government that will not bolt the moment Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit indicts him, as is expected to happen sometime in the coming year. Gantz would not be able to stay inside a government with a prime minister under indictment. But the haredim and small right-wing parties can. (...) Israel once again proved that despite living in the most dangerous region in the world, next to dictatorships and enemies bent on its destruction, it is a nation that celebrates life, freedom and democracy. (...) You don't have to agree with whom Israelis elect, but don't patronize a people who have the freedom to do so.

Yaakov Katz, JPO, 12.04.19

2. Netanyahu will Teile des Westjordanlandes annectieren

Noch kurz vor der Wahl hat Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu die Annectierung von Teilen des Westjordanlands in Aussicht gestellt. "Ich werde nicht eine einzige Siedlung räumen. Und ich werde natürlich dafür sorgen, dass wir das Gebiet westlich des Jordans kontrollieren", sagte er. Netanyahu sagte, er habe erreicht, dass US-Präsident Donald Trump die Golanhöhen als israelisches Gebiet anerkenne. Man wolle nun "zur nächsten Phase übergehen" und die israelische Souveränität auch auf das Westjordanland ausweiten. Dies war bisher vor allem eine Forderung ultrarechter Koalitionspartner. Netanyahu hatte sich in der Vergangenheit für die Einrichtung eines entmilitarisierten Palästinenserstaates ausgesprochen. Israel hatte 1967 im Sechstagekrieg unter anderem das Westjordanland und Ost-Jerusalem erobert. Vor allem Bildungsminister Naftali Bennett drängte immer wieder darauf, weite Teile des Westjordanlandes zu annectieren. Saeb Erekat, Generalsekretär der Palästinensischen Befreiungsorganisation PLO, nannte Netanyahus Äußerungen kaum überraschend. "Israel wird das Völkerrecht weiterhin und so lange schamlos brechen, wie die internationale Gemeinschaft Israel mit Straflosigkeit belohnt", teilte er über Twitter mit. Israel unterscheidet selbst zwischen illegalen und mit Genehmigung errichteten Siedlungen. Aus Sicht der internationalen Gemeinschaft sind alle Siedlungen rechtswidrig.

Israel must forever be wed to the West Bank

(...) The lessons of the past and the present led us to the conclusion that such a formula will inevitably lead to war and terror, so now the left has come up with a new solution: no longer is peace our main goal in life, rather disengagement. They warn that demographics will triumph if we stay here in the West Bank. They say we will have to give the Palestinians Israeli ID cards and the right to vote in the Knesset elections. (...) Scary times indeed. But we are all too experienced by now. Threats of a diplomatic tsunami against Israel never came true (...). We cannot continue ruling over a population without letting them vote in our elections. But anyone who knows the region well also knows the Palestinians have had such a right for 25 years. Under the terms of the Oslo Accords, they run their own civilian administrations by voting for their representatives to the Palestinian parliament in Ramallah and municipalities in areas A and B. The Palestinians living in those areas have their own government, governmental services, police and judicial system. Granted,

the security control is in Israeli hands and it must remain so in order to prevent an extreme Islamic takeover over the region. The Palestinians will continue to vote for whoever is to run their lives while we will continue to vote for our representatives to the Knesset. We do not need to give them further voting rights. True, it is not an ideal reality for us or for them but what else can we do after years of failed peace attempts and Arab refusal to accept any proposals. Withdrawing from the West Bank will only make the demographic situation worse. Around six million people in the Middle East call themselves Palestinian refugees, and the Arab countries that currently host them refuse to give them civil rights in order to keep them as such. If God forbid a Palestinian state were established on the West Bank, those countries would flood the region with refugees. In a short time they would be climbing the fences into Israel, en route to the homes they left behind in Jaffa, Ashkelon, Haifa and Safed. (...)

Yigal Dilmoni, YED, 01.04.19

Annexing the West Bank: Why we must take Netanyahu's pre-election stunt seriously

(...) there is opposition within Israel to any extension of Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank. (...) Commanders for Israel's Security (...) warned that even partial annexation could lead to (...) the termination of security coordination and the dismantling of the PA [Palestinian Authority], leading to the occupation by the IDF of the entire West Bank (...). International pressure on Israel to withdraw from the territories has long receded. But annexation would only harm Israel's interests: it would conclusively demonstrate that the occupation was just a smokescreen, and that Israel was never really interested in peace. (...) Annexation of the West Bank, even if it were limited to Area C, would face far more opposition from the Palestinians, the Arab and Muslim world, and the European Union, than their reaction to Trump's statements on Jerusalem and the Golan Heights to date. Annexation in whatever form it takes would likely kill off the prospects of establishing a Palestinian state. There could be unrest in the West Bank and Gaza, which could lead to the collapse of the Palestinian Authority, with Israel re-occupying the West Bank. Netanyahu knows this, which is why his remarks should be given a heavy dose of scepticism. Yet words matter. The fact that annexation is openly being supported by Israel's prime minister is significant. If Netanyahu wins the elections on Tuesday, he will be put under significant pressure to put his words into action.

Victor Kattan, HAA, 07.04.19

Of compromise and betrayal: From the Golan to Brexit

(...) The Palestinians have a non-negotiable agenda: the total destruction of Israel as a Jewish nation-state and its replacement by "Palestine." As they have not only repeatedly admitted and consistently made clear by their insignia and maps, their education materials inciting the murder of Jews and the theft of Israeli land, and their repeated refusal to accept a state when offered to them, their aim remains the extermination of Israel. The "two-state solution" is merely a feint. Yet (...) reality is denied by those who tell themselves the lie that compromise is possible. The outcome of those momentous examples of self-deception in the name of "compromise" is the permanent war waged against Israel's existence (...) In Palestine, the British tore up international law by rewriting the Mandate to carve out from the homeland promised to the Jews territory they then offered to the Arabs bent on blocking that Jewish homeland. (...) Rewarding the Arab aggressors incentivized the war against the Jewish homeland, which continues against Israel to this day. (...) Many have pointed out that, throughout history, all who have tried to destroy the Jewish people have not only failed but ended up being destroyed themselves. (...) The Jewish people not only survived but out of the ashes of that catastrophe have created a vigorous, flourishing and optimistic country. (...) Melanie Phillips, IHY, 07.04.19

Annexation will free Israel from the fake commitment to liberty and equality

Two hard slaps, one on each cheek, is what we need to give ourselves in order to wake up from this dream of the only democracy in the Middle East. (...) Two smacks in the face will wake us up, not just from the illusion that we are living in a democracy but also the illusion that it really bothers us one way or the other. It's simply not true. Is there anything that can convince us not to busy ourselves with the psychoses of the candidates and return to the reality of the checkpoints and arresting children? Yes, there is such a thing. Annexation of the Palestinian territories and imposing Israeli law on 2.5 million people without rights will convince us. Only then will we be able to look in the mirror and admit sadly – though with a certain amount of relief – that we are finished with democracy. Because only annexation will force us to realize that even now we are a country without any borders, and that 20 percent of its residents lack rights. (...) Annexation will remove the restraints of having to act like a normal country. It will be some-

thing liberating, wild, uninhibited – we will be the crazy, violent guy who fled the hospital, we will not be embarrassed about anything, we will be like Donald Trump, like Itamar Ben-Gvir, like South Africa. Annexation will free us from the fake commitment to liberty and equality, rescue us from the lie of "the most moral army in the world," and enrich the dictionary with words like "transfer," "expulsion," "exile," and "voluntary emigration." Nothing will stop us; one who doesn't stop at red lights no longer pays any attention to stop signs. (...) We will be an island of Sicilian protection rackets in the middle of a shark-filled sea. Tough men in sunglasses will then pass through the neighborhood, everyone will know who they are, and they won't deny it. True, they'll say, we're not saints, but show us someone who'll protect you better than we will. (...)

Yossi Klein, HAA, 04.04.19

3. Sterbliche Überreste von Zachary Baumel zurückgeführt

Die sterblichen Überreste des israelischen Soldaten Zachary Baumel sind 37 Jahre nach seinem Verschwinden während des ersten Libanon-Krieges nach Israel gebracht worden. Baumel war seit dem 11. Juni 1982 während eines Kampfes bei Sultan Jakub vermisst worden. Der erste Libanon-Krieg begann am 6. Juni 1982. Ziel der von Israel "Frieden für Galliläa" genannten Operation war es, eine 40 Kilometer breite Pufferzone gegen Terror-attacken auf Israel zu schaffen und die Kämpfer der Palästinensischen Befreiungsorganisation (PLO) weiter nach Norden zu verdrängen. Sultan Jakub ist ein libanesisches Dorf nahe der Grenze zu Syrien. Staatspräsident Reuven Rivlin schrieb auf Twitter von "bewegenden und schmerzlichen Nachrichten". 37 Jahre des „schmerzvollen Wartens, Fragens und Zweifelns sind endlich vorbei“. Die Suche wurde vom Militärischen Nachrichtendienst geleitet. Russlands Präsident Vladimir Putin machte seinen Einfluss auf die syrische Führung geltend, und russische Soldaten halfen bei der Suche nach den sterblichen Überresten des vermissten Soldaten. Laut Armeeangaben seien Baumels sterbliche Überreste bereits vor einigen Monaten entdeckt und durch israelische Experten zweifelsfrei identifiziert worden. Das Timing der Übergabe Baumels an Israel scheint nicht zufällig gewählt worden zu sein. Wenige Tage vor den israelischen Parlamentswahlen verschaffte Putin Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu eine willkommene Gelegenheit, seine guten Beziehungen zur Regierung in Moskau unter Beweis zu stellen.

Secret burial place, intel feat, and a 3rd country: Behind the retrieval of the Israeli soldier's body

The retrieval of Staff. Sgt. Zachary Baumel's body was the climax of a 37-year effort. Israel, via its intelligence agencies, has invested much effort, millions of shekels and above all an inconceivable number of work hours for the mission of returning the remains of missing Israelis to their families. The retrieval of Baumel's body, one of three of the missing soldiers from the Sultan Yacoub battle is a great and impressive accomplishment for the IDF, other intelligence agencies and the political echelon. (...) On the sidelines, this political achievement of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's will certainly also be expressed at the electoral level. It seems as though the return of Baumel's body is proof of his strong personal ties with foreign leaders. (...) The confidential details are still under censorship. (...) It seems the chances of making progress on retrieving these remains increased against the backdrop of the chaos in Syria during the civil war and especially after the Russians entered Syria, from September 2015. The Russians who rescued Assad's regime, with their decision to get involved in the war, created a great bargaining position vis a vis the regime and a capability to do almost whatever they wanted in Syria. Netanyahu took care to cultivate effective ties with Putin. They had a relationship that permitted the establishment of a mechanism to prevent friction between the two countries' air forces. (...) Last year Israel put together a credible picture of the possible burial place, where intelligence efforts were expanded, under a veil of secrecy. (...) To date Katz's and Feldman's bodies have not been found but the retrieval of Baumel's body has somewhat stirred optimism that the uncertainty regarding the other two soldiers' fates may also be resolved. (...) It doesn't look as though Netanyahu will be able to resolve the Goldin and Shaul cases before the election takes place. But retrieving Baumel's body supplies him with an alternative achievement and proves to the public that the prime minister is not indifferent to the fate of missing soldiers. Furthermore, Netanyahu can say that only his experience and contacts permitted Israel to involve a third country and retrieve the body of Baumel who had been buried as an unknown person for years in enemy territory.

Amos Harel, HAA, 04.04.19

A nation's embrace

The IDF has always held a longstanding tradition of being the people's army. We send our sons and daughters to serve at the age 18, and we ourselves

spend years in reserve duty. (...) In return, a pact exists. (...) in the case of soldiers falling into enemy hands, everything will be done to bring them home. (...) There was certainly no closure for the family of Zachary Baumel who, together with fellow soldiers Yehuda Katz and Zvi Feldman, went missing in June 1982 in a battle near the Lebanese village of Sultan Yacoub. (...) Baumel's name, along with that of his comrades, faded from the headlines and the public's consciousness. But, as we learned on Wednesday, the IDF, the Mossad and Israel's government did not let his memory die. The dramatic news that – in an operation conducted by intelligence agencies – Baumel's remains had been discovered and returned to Israel, was a watershed moment demonstrating that the pact is still alive and strong. (...) This was an emotional event – not just for the family, but for all of Israel. The people of Israel are indeed embracing the Baumel family, and many fathers and mothers will undoubtedly be giving their soldier children an especially forceful hug when they return home for Shabbat. We, their parents, send our children to the army aware of the pact – but seeing it in action, especially after 37 years, is a salient reminder that we're not going through this journey alone. Israel is indeed a special place.

Editorial, JPO, 04.04.19

We're still waiting for the call to tell us my brother is coming home

We had mixed feelings when we heard that the remains of Zachary Baumel, who went missing 37 years ago along with Zvi Feldman and my brother, Yehuda Katz, had finally been found. We felt tremendous pain for the tragic ending of Zachary's life and the family's loss, but also great satisfaction that they will know no more doubt, and that Zachary will finally have a Jewish burial. (...) Our family has never given up hope. Knowing that the remains of Zachary were found makes our faith that our brother will also be found even stronger. I know and believe that he will be found alive, and we're all certain that he will return to Israel safe and sound, despite the 37 years that have gone by. (...) It is our responsibility and what is expected of us as the family of a soldier who went out into battle. Israel has been doing its best to get our soldiers home and the finding of Zachary's remains proves that. We expect they keep up the good work until all of our missing soldiers come home. (...) In two weeks we will celebrate the first night of Passover. That's when the pain gets harder to bear. Since Yehuda went missing, we have no Saturday nor a holiday that is complete. Not a summer nor a winter, it's all one long

painful moment. But we will not give up. I long for the day when the phone rings and someone on the other side of the line tells me that my brother is also on his way home.

Pirhiya Hyman, YED, 05.04.19

No stone left unturned

(...) In the world of intelligence, the saying goes, reality often exceeds the imagination, and yet – the operation to return Zachary Baumel's remains to Israel, in a mission that spanned the globe, can easily be considered one of the most impressive in the country's history. Israeli officials have long known where Baumel was buried. (...) A little over a year ago, the issue was again raised by then-Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman. If the reports are true (...) the Russians agreed to lend a hand. (...) In a series of intelligence operations, the Military Intelligence Directorate and Mossad pinpointed Baumel's exact resting place. All the information was gathered into a classified file under the codename "Bittersweet Song." According to the reports, we can assume Israel and Russia exploited the fact that Syria was mired in a civil war. (...) The Russian defense ministry spokesman confirmed that Russian soldier worked on the matter for months. In retrospect, it sounds simple, but Russia did something that many countries likely wouldn't have: put its own people in harm's way for another country's humanitarian cause. If this is what happened, it means Russian soldiers were the ones to carry out, over a significant period of time, the physical search for Baumel's remains. (...) Beyond the enormous operational drama and personal story that has now been closed with Baumel's return home, this chapter also provides a unique lesson about Israel: There are very few countries in the world, if any, that after 37 years would continue searching for their missing soldiers, let alone jeopardize intelligence assets in the process. Israel proves time and again that it is extraordinary, and doesn't spare any effort to solve even the most daunting mysteries. This won't bring the dead back to life, but it will give their families a burial place over which to mourn, and the soldiers currently serving the knowledge that if heaven forbid something were to happen, the country would turn over every stone for them.

Yoav Limor, IHY, 04.04.19

4. Medienquerschnitt

Offene Wiedergutmachungszahlung

Germany still owes Israel \$19 billion for the Holocaust

(...) Germany's debt to Israel is now estimated to total \$19 billion and wise use of this sum would have spared us the submarines scandal as well as spay for new and essential deals. In light of the latest findings, the question arises as to why the prime minister would have had a conflict of interest given his official obligation was to exact this debt from Germany. (...) The submarine affair could have been prevented if the deal had been conducted between Israel and Germany (...) in the same way the first two submarine deals were conducted, with Israel receiving them as gifts from Germany, with no mediation. (...) East Germany's portion of the reparations deal remains unpaid. (...) The original reparations deal was signed with the former West German government which refused to pay East Germany's debts. Therefore the sum that was set at the time was just two thirds of the total deal, proportional to the population and the land area of the two former countries. The portion not paid by East Germany has long been referred to as the "missing third." The Israeli government has never formally given up on the "missing third," nor has it received anything else in its stead. (...) The impression is that this issue is a hot potato, tossed from one agency to another. (...) There is no doubt that the moral lessons of the Holocaust require action and the prime minister should immediately demand Germany pay its debt to Israel. It's inconceivable for Israel to give up on such a large debt without trying to claim it and the threat of Case 3000, must not be used as a reason for making any such concession.

Aharon Mor, HAA, 07.04.19

Mondlandung fast gelungen

The Beresheet Spacecraft Crashed. What Next?

It was a small step for Israel, on the way to a bigger step. (...) when it became clear that the spacecraft would not land as planned, IAI engineer Lee Morton, who was sitting next to me, shed a tear when I interviewed her. When, before Beresheet's launch, I asked project director Dr. Ido Antebi how excited he was from 1 to 10, he replied: "11." Beresheet was not just a scientific project, it was much more than that. It was a soulful initiative. Entrepreneurship and

innovation, Israeli and Jewish – these were the components of the Spacecraft Bereishit, even before the addition of state-of-the-art instruments and engines. And this was the most important message of all: seconds, just seconds after the failure, it was clear to everyone in the control room in Yehud that we are going to be doing it again, big time. In Jewish tradition, we learn that the Jewish people are like the moon. Just as the moon renews itself every month, disappearing and then becoming revealed yet again – so too does the Jewish people know ups and downs, periods of light and darkness. This feature of renewal has been characteristic of our nation for thousands of years, at times of far greater trouble than a spacecraft crash. This resemblance to the moon will continue and will accompany us, also, all the way to the moon.

Sivan Rahav Meir, TOI, 14.04.10

HAA = Haaretz

YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

GLO = Globes

Veröffentlicht im: April 2019

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