

1. **landscape** (noun) – the distinctive features of a field of activity.
2. **kick off** (phrasal verb) – begin, start, get going.
3. **crumble** (verb) – disintegrate/collapse, fall to pieces, fall apart.
4. **ultra-orthodox** (adjective) – extremely/very conservative, traditional, observant, conformist.
5. **designate** (noun) – nominate, induct, depute.
6. **at stake** (phrase) – at risk, at issue, in question.
7. **Haredim** (noun) – a group of people within Orthodox Judaism characterized by a strict adherence to their interpretation of Jewish law and values as opposed to modern values and practice.
8. **exempt** (verb) – free from, release, exclude.
9. **aide** (noun) – assistant, deputy, subordinate.
10. **precondition** (noun) – necessary condition, imperative, requirement.
11. **before one's eyes** (phrase) – in person, in front of one, in one's presence.
12. **amend** (verb) – change, modify, adjust.
13. **allegation** (noun) – charge, accusation, indictment.
14. **dent** (verb) – damage, impair, undermine.
15. **elite** (noun) – high society people; the group of most powerful people in a society.
16. **rhetoric** (noun) – bombast, loftiness, hyperbole/extravagant language.
17. **appeasement** (noun) – conciliation, pacification, concession/accommodation.
18. **burnish** (verb) – enhance, improve; shine/brighten.
19. **electorate** (noun) – all the people who entitled to vote in an election.
20. **subsequent** (adjective) – following, ensuing, later.
21. **rift** (noun) – division, split, difference of opinion.
22. **centrist** (noun) – a person whose political opinions are not extreme, falling between those of liberals and conservatives.
23. **hawkish** (adjective) – aggressive, combative, belligerent.
24. **back** (verb) – support, endorse, uphold.
25. **conscription** (noun) – compulsory enlistment for military service.
26. **secular** (adjective) – non-religious, worldly, earthly.
27. **odds** (noun) – (difficult/tough) probability, chances, conditions.

A second election for Israel

Israel goes back to voters within six months in a changing political landscape

When the results of the April elections in **Israel** were announced, Benjamin Netanyahu, whose Likud party won 35 seats in the 120-member Parliament, was the winner. He was set to form a government with support from right-wing and religious parties to kick off a record term as Prime Minister. But his plans crumbled as the ultra-orthodox Jewish parties and right-wing nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu failed to come on board. When the deadline to form the government expired on May 29, Mr. Netanyahu had the support of 60 lawmakers, one short of majority. For the first time in Israel's history, a Prime Minister-designate

failed to form a government, and the country will go to the polls again in September. The issue at stake is a military service bill. The ultra-orthodox Jews, the Haredim, are exempt from mandatory military service. Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Lieberman, a former Netanyahu aide, has submitted a bill to the Knesset that would enable the government to draft them. Mr. Lieberman, who has five lawmakers, made it a precondition for his support that the bill be passed. On the other side, the orthodox parties, which have 16 legislators, wanted the bill to be amended. Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing religious coalition collapsed before his eyes.

Mr. Netanyahu is a survivor. He will continue to lead the Likud in the September elections and appears better-placed than his rivals to form a coalition government. However, his challenges are rising. The new **election** will be held around two weeks before his pre-indictment hearing on corruption charges. The allegations have already dented Mr. Netanyahu's image. For decades, he had presented himself as a stronger, better alternative to Israel's old establishment elite. His war rhetoric, strongman policies and appeasement of orthodox Jews all burnished his appeal at a time when the Israeli electorate was steadily moving to the right. But the April election and the subsequent rift within Mr. Netanyahu's coalition suggest that the political landscape may be changing. The Israeli left is no longer Mr. Netanyahu's main political threat. The Labor party won only 4.43% votes and six seats in the April elections, while the Blue and White, a centrist coalition that is as hawkish on national security as the Likud, won 35 seats. The Blue and White didn't stand a chance to form the government this time because it lacked allies. By refusing to back Mr. Netanyahu over the conscription bill, Mr. Lieberman is further trying to weaken this left-right battle and bring into focus secular-versus-religious issues. Mr. Lieberman says he is fighting to prevent Israel becoming a religious state, and by saying so he is attacking Mr. Netanyahu's ties with religious parties. The challenge before Mr. Netanyahu is to fight growing political and legal odds in an election just months away.