

JEWISH IDENTITY

The State of Israel is a Jewish country, the one and only home of the Jewish people, and the initial modern-day embodiment of prophecies spoken long ago. During our long years of exile, we always yearned to return to the land of our fathers. We did not merely seek a safe haven or a country of refuge. We yearned for our homeland, the place where our forefathers lived, the land where our ancestors journeyed after they left Egypt, the land where David and Shlomo ruled, the place that they aspired toward, dreamed of, and pined for. We are privileged to live in a time and a place in which this vision has been transformed into our reality; a generation lucky enough to return home. The founding fathers of the State of Israel agreed that this country would not be a country like all others, since the Jewish people are not a nation like all other nations. They determined that the State of Israel would be a Jewish state, governed by the principles of democracy.

The Religious Zionist Party's vision is intrinsically linked to this synthesis - the conviction and desire to build a glorious country that enjoys economic and political stability, alongside deep belief in the country's distinct spiritual role and the religious obligation to infuse the state with profound character and soul. We are committed to strengthening the Jewish character of the State of Israel. We are committed to Shabbat, to kashrut, to halakhic conversions, to maintaining the unity of the Jewish people and the family unit, both for our sake and for the sake of future generations.

PRESERVING THE 'STATUS QUO'

Since its inception, the State of Israel has struggled with what it means to be a Jewish state governed by the principles of democracy. As part

of its attempt to integrate these different elements, a fundamental agreement known as the 'Status Quo' was adopted with regard to issues of church and state. In the realm of religious affairs, the 'Status Quo' was a balanced public arrangement that protected an individual's right to privacy in his personal domain, while maintaining the distinctly Jewish nature of the public sphere. It marked a realistic balance between the Jewish character and democratic nature of the state. Over the past several years, the 'Status Quo' has been eroded, primarily on account of the Supreme Court's excessive intervention. The 'Status Quo' prevalent in the country's early years, and the principles that stand behind this doctrine altogether, form an important anchor that preserves the distinct Jewish nature of the State of Israel.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET TO MAINTAIN THE 'STATUS QUO' AND PRESERVE THE JEWISH CHARACTER OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL?

- We will protect the sanctity of Shabbat and Jewish holidays.
- We will safeguard the institution of marriage and family.
- We will preserve national kashrut standards.
- We will continue to promote the Jewish character of the State of Israel while engaging in ongoing dialogue with all sectors of the population.

THE EROSION OF THE 'STATUS QUO' BY THE SUPREME COURT

In recent years, the Supreme Court has taken advantage of its position and harmed the distinct Jewish character of the public sphere in the State of Israel time and again, by intervening excessively in the legislature's prerogative to enact laws and upsetting the prevailing 'Status Quo'.

Reestablishing that the general public and the political establishment is responsible for determining the nature of the public sphere marks the first important step in strengthening the Jewish character of the State of Israel.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET TO PRESERVE THE JEWISH CHARACTER OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL?

- We will pass 'The Override Clause' and thus give the legislature the final word when it comes to passing laws.
- We will take a strong stand against the legal loopholes exploited by the Supreme Court with regard to Shabbat, conversions, kashrut, the independent functioning of rabbinical courts, and defining the State of Israel as a Jewish state.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL AS THE STATE OF THE JEWS – THE NATIONAL CONVERSION BILL

Conversion to Judaism is the gateway into the Jewish people.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET TO PRESERVE JEWISH CONTINUITY?

- We will shore up the conversion system by passing the National Conversion Bill that will ensure that all conversions are conducted in accordance with Torah law and under the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate.
- We will promote necessary improvements to the conversion system. We will improve the services offered and make them more accessible.
- We will bolster the system by adding rabbinical judges and opening additional rabbinical courts. We will also cut back on the bureaucracy encountered by those who come to the courts.

- We will set aside funds to establish mikvaot and initiatives that support prospective converts both during and after the conversion process, as well as broad outreach programs that encourage conversions.

CANCELLING THE 'GRANDCHILD CLAUSE'

Israel is the one and only home of the Jewish people, a Jewish State which by definition must retain an absolute Jewish majority. The Law of Return's 'Grandchild Clause' created a breach within the system that allowed thousands of non-Jews to emigrate to Israel. According to data from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, in recent years hundreds of thousands of non-Jews have emigrated to Israel on account of the 'Grandchild Clause', which enables a non-Jew with a Jewish grandparent to emigrate, even if he has no connection to Israel, and even if his parents and grandparent through whom he is entitled to attain Israeli citizenship, do not live in the State of Israel.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET TO PRESERVE THE JEWISH MAJORITY IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL?

- We will pass an amendment to the Law of Return that annuls the 'Grandchild Clause'.
- We will work to promote the emigration of Diaspora Jews, including offering them significant financial support (sal klita) during their initial transition to ensure that the State of Israel remains a Jewish state.

AMENDING LIEBERMAN'S 'PASSPORT LAW'

The 'Passport Law' passed by Avigdor Lieberman led to another breach in the system that presents an additional threat to the Jewish character of the State of Israel, in addition to a genuine security risk. Every year, thousands

of people around the world who have no intention of emigrating to Israel take advantage of this law and acquire an Israeli passport. Beyond the inherent problem presented by this law, this law also mandates the State of Israel to dispense absurd amounts of money in the form of generous grants to people who show up in the country for a few days and return to their homes, instead of investing the country's money in initiatives that actually promote aliya and support new immigrants upon their arrival in Israel.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET TO ENCOURAGE JEWS TO MAKE ALIYA?

- We will abolish Lieberman's 'Passport Law' and stop handing out Israeli passports to nonJews who exploit the law to scam the State of Israel.

STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL KASHRUT SYSTEM

Uniform standards and better business practices, specifically ensuring that the individual providing kashrut supervision will not be dependent on the food establishment for his salary, are essential for the kashrut industry. By and large, Jewish people prefer to eat kosher food. In order for the masses to trust that the food they consume aligns with objective kashrut standards and take confidence in the integrity and transparency of the national kashrut system, it is necessary to have full transparency with regard to kashrut standards. This will ensure that every individual knows what he is eating, and every food establishment understands what it is paying for.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET TO IMPROVE KASHRUT IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL?

- We will pass the 'Kashrut Law' and establish uniform and transparent kashrut standards, according to different levels of kashrut.

- We will establish uniform pricing in the kashrut industry, in accordance with the size of the food establishment and the hours of supervision relevant for each business.
- We will eliminate the dependency that traditionally exists between the kashrut supervisor and the food establishment and ensure that the kashrut supervisor is not beholden to the business owner who pays him in order to prevent corruption.
- We will establish an independent agency that will employ all the kashrut supervisors and provide them with regulated salaries and full employee benefits.

STRENGTHENING THE CHIEF RABBINATE, ALONGSIDE ADDRESSING FAILURES WITHIN THE RELIGIOUS SERVICES SYSTEM, SPECIFICALLY NEPOTISM AND CORRUPTION

Since the days of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook אר"ל, the Chief Rabbinate has been the body charged with regulating the application of Judaism to the public sphere. This has most notably been expressed in its governing of kashrut, conversion, marriage and divorce, and rendering halakhic decisions in matters of public concern. It is important at this time to strengthen the Chief Rabbinate and rabbinical court system, while simultaneously addressing the failures within the Ministry of Religious Services, most notably issues of nepotism, in which close associates and family members are appointed to public positions, and eliminating corruption.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET TO BOLSTER THE STATUS OF THE CHIEF RABBINATE?

- We will work to appoint rabbis who are talented Torah scholars and connected to the realities of everyday life in Israel, individuals who

feel responsibility for, and commitment to, the State of Israel and all its citizens.

- We will promote transparency in the way business is conducted in the Chief Rabbinate, like any other service provider in the State of Israel, to prevent possible corruption, nepotism, and bribery. These changes will not only foster a kiddush Hashem, but they will also improve the Chief Rabbinate's public image.
- We will strengthen the status of the Chief Rabbinate by increasing its power and increasing its insufficient funding.
- We will work to appoint rabbis to vacant rabbinic positions and support communal rabbis who serve as social and spiritual anchors for their communities.
- We will pass legislation to authorize rabbinical courts to decide monetary disputes.

STRENGTHENING FAMILY VALUES

The family unit is man's strongest anchor in the world, and it is a cornerstone of Jewish tradition. In recent years, the winds of post-modernism have slowly chiseled away at the status of the family unit.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET TO STRENGTHEN THE INSTITUTION OF FAMILY?

- We will pass legislation and approve funding that strengthens the value of family.
- We will block laws that seek to undermine the fundamental foundations of the family unit.
- We will allocate funding for centers that support the resilience of the family, as well programs that provide professional guidance to parents and couples.

- We will work to promote the birthrate and reduce the cost of living, specifically the cost of food and daycare.
- We will pass legislation that upholds a couple's right to own private property specifically external assets.
- We will promote programs that address the issue of older singles in the community.

STRENGTHENING SHABBAT IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Shabbat is the ultimate source of blessing. The sanctity of Shabbat is one of the cornerstones of the Jewish people and it forms the basis of the State of Israel as a Jewish state.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET TO STRENGTHEN SHABBAT OBSERVANCE IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE?

- We will insist on the enforcement of the 'Work and Rest Hours Law' that ensures that every citizen is entitled to a day off.
- We will work to reduce nonessential work carried out on Shabbat and find alternate solutions for work on complicated infrastructure.
- We will work to reduce the amount of commerce conducted on Shabbat, to ensure equal opportunities in the workplace, and promote legislation that prevents exploitation and discrimination against Shabbat observant workers.
- We will work to enable athletes and sports fans to rest on the day of rest together with their families, in line with their wishes and rights.