



A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

The Road to the Israeli Elections

Understanding Israel's Political Landscape

IDEAS. CONVERSATION. COMMUNITY.

BIG PICTURE

As Israel heads to the polls, two Shalom Hartman Institute faculty members, Dr. Masua Sagiv and Tani Frank, sat down to talk about what is really on Israeli voters' minds and what this election reveals about Israeli society.

This guide accompanies short video clips from their conversation. For each clip you'll find a short summary and a set of guiding questions. The questions are not a script. They are lenses for helping your learners notice what is at stake, wrestle with the big questions, and connect Israel's debates to their own communities. Choose the parts that serve your group best.

KEY QUESTION

What do we **owe one another** as members of a shared society, and what does it take to **build that society together**?

How to Use This Guide

01

Watch

Show one clip at a time. Each runs only a few minutes, leaving room to pause and discuss.

02

Notice

Use the summary to frame the clip before or after viewing. Read it aloud or use it to prepare.

03

Discuss

Pick two or three questions that fit your group. Let the conversation go where your learners take it.

VIDEO ONE

Building Together or Playing to Win?

VIDEO TWO

What Is This Election Really About?

Meet the Speakers

MS

Dr. Masua Sagiv

Senior Faculty, Shalom Hartman Institute · Academic Advisor, Center for Shared Society · Senior Fellow, Helen Diller Institute, UC Berkeley

Masua's work addresses fundamental challenges facing both Israeli society and North American Jewish communities, from rising antisemitism and campus tensions to Jewish peoplehood and the complex relationship between Israel and world Jewry. Her scholarship focuses on the development of contemporary Judaism in Israel as a culture, religion, and nationality, and as part of Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state. Her research explores the role of law, state actors, and civil society organizations in promoting social change across issues including shared society, religion and gender, religion and state, and Jewish peoplehood.

Masua recently returned to Israel after four years in Berkeley, California, where she was senior faculty at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America and the Koret Visiting Assistant Professor at the Helen Diller Institute at UC Berkeley. Previously, she was academic director of the Menomadin Center for Jewish and Democratic Law at Bar-Ilan University and taught at the law schools of Bar-Ilan and Tel Aviv University. She co-led a leadership program for high school students, for which she received the Israeli Hope in Academia Prize from former President Reuven Rivlin, and she was awarded the Gorney Prize for Young Scholar in Public Law. Her book *Radical Conservatism* (Hebrew), on the halakhic feminist struggle in Israel, was published by Carmel in 2024.

TF

Tani Frank

Director, Judaism and State Policy Center, Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem

Since 2013, Tani has worked with MK (Member of Knesset) Elazar Stern (Maj. Gen., Res.) as a senior consultant on economic and legislative affairs, including drafting bills and advancing ideas on religion and state. After the 2015 elections, he was a founding director of "Judaism for All," an initiative to create and strengthen alternative religious services such as the Giyur K'Halacha private conversion courts and the Tzohar kashrut organization. At the same time, he led the State & Religion Department of the Ne'emanai Torah Va'Avodah movement, advocating for changes to the status quo on religion and state in Israel. Earlier, he worked as a freelance economic consultant for Binot on economic development in municipalities.

After serving as an officer in a special operations intelligence unit in the IDF, Tani earned a BA in Philosophy, Political Science, and Economics from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and an MA in Public Policy from its Federmann School of Public Policy and Government.

About Wellspring

Through Wellspring, the Shalom Hartman Institute offers a growing suite of educational initiatives for young Jews ages 15–25 and the professionals, educators, and institutions that serve them on college campuses and in day schools, summer camps, congregational schools, and youth groups.



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Building Together or Playing to Win?



SCAN TO WATCH

FRAMING QUESTION

What does it take to turn our commitments into political reality?

Masua argues that political engagement should be driven by our deepest commitments. But she cautions that public discourse in Israel has increasingly turned into a contest. When politics stops being a shared way of building society and becomes a high-stakes game that one side must win, it gets harder to think carefully about how to realize those commitments in practice. She contrasts two ways of doing politics:

01

Politics as a Contest

Every election becomes a high-stakes game one side must win. There is little room for compromise, and collaboration starts to look like defeat.

02

Politics as Building Together

Compromise and coalition building, essential to Israel's parliamentary system and to democratic life more broadly, become the way commitments are realized.

NOTICE PARADOXICALLY, WHEN WE RESIST POLITICAL COLLABORATION, WE END UP EVEN FURTHER FROM MAKING OUR COMMITMENTS A POLITICAL REALITY.

Discussion Questions

- 1 What stood out to you or surprised you about Masua's perspective?
- 2 Masua describes a shift in which political disagreements have become more personal and polarized. Do you see similar dynamics in your own communities or in North America? What does this look like in your life?
- 3 What is the difference between treating politics as a game to win and treating it as a shared project of building society?
- 4 What makes compromise possible, and what gets in the way?

IDEAS IN ACTION · LISTENING FOR COALITION

As you follow coverage of the Israeli election, notice where people are working to build coalitions or find common ground, and where the conversation is mostly about winning. What does each approach make possible? What does it close off?

What Is This Election Really About?



SCAN TO WATCH

FRAMING QUESTION

What does it mean to be part of a society, and what responsibilities come with belonging?

In conversation with Tani, Masua argues that the upcoming election is not primarily about security or Israel's standing in the world. Instead, she suggests, voters are focused on pressing internal questions about Israeli society and governance. She highlights three key issues:

01

Accountability

Many Israelis are still grappling with October 7: how it happened, who is responsible, and what accountability from leadership should look like.

02

Peoplehood & Shared Responsibility

The ongoing debate over Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) military service raises broader questions about civic obligation, fairness, and what different groups owe one another.

03

Democracy & the Judiciary

Debates over judicial reform and unequal enforcement of the law have led many Israelis to ask fundamental questions about the democratic character of the state.

NOTICE THE DEBATE OVER HAREDI MILITARY SERVICE RAISES QUESTIONS THAT GO BEYOND THE ARMY, TOUCHING ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

Discussion Questions

- 1 Is there a difference between *sharing the burden* and *showing up for one another*? If so, how would you explain it?
- 2 What responsibilities come with having a say in decisions?
- 3 Is it possible to belong to a society on your own terms? Where is the line between protecting a community's distinct way of life and opting out of shared responsibility?
- 4 How might these questions look different for each of the three issues Masua raises?

IDEAS IN ACTION · CLOSER TO HOME

Think of a community you belong to, such as your school, synagogue, camp, or city. What do you owe it, and what does it owe you? How is that similar to or different from the Israeli debates Masua and Tani describe?
