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PREFACES



Introduction

Temple, Words and Melodies

Goals, Basic Guidelines and Policies

Introduction to the 2026 Edition of the Platform

Israel: The State of the Jewish People



“Teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot,” demanded the foreigner who came to convert.¹ Anyone who wants to learn the entire platform of Zehut on one foot need only know what the first law is that Zehut will insist on passing immediately upon entering the Israeli Knesset: changing the name of the State of Israel to “Israel: The State of the Jewish People.” Every person—Jew and non-Jew—who resides in “Israel: The State of the Jewish People” is equally entitled to have his human rights honored by the state, but national rights within the sovereign territory of “Israel: the State of the Jewish People” are reserved exclusively for the Jewish people. Israel is not a state of all its nationalities; it is the state of the Jewish People alone.

Human rights and citizen’s rights are two different things. Human rights were given to every person by the Creator, and therefore every resident of Israel is entitled to them, while citizen’s rights were created by humans through their states, and a state is fully entitled to decide whom to grant them to and whom not. Receiving Israeli citizenship for those who are not Jewish will require signing a declaration of allegiance to the State of Israel as the State of the Jewish People, and those who do not want to sign the declaration and are not suspected of aiding terrorism or the enemies of Israel will be able to continue to reside in Israel as permanent residents whose human rights are honored.

*We will change the name of the State of Israel to
“Israel: The State of the Jewish People”*

This is not a matter of semantics. All the ills that the Zehut party platform seeks to correct stem from the blurring of our national identity and the loss of personal freedom that comes with it. Because we have left the identity of the State of Israel subject to interpretation, we have lost our national identity, our claim to justice, national security, individual liberty, and economic security.

In the 2019 elections, we presented the people of Israel with a new vision. The Zehut platform showed how Israeli society can advance from a Zionism focused solely on existence and survival to a Zionism of destiny bearing a message to the entire world, all while preserving and strengthening individual freedoms. Our guiding principle was to transfer as much responsibility as possible from the state to

¹ Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a

the citizens. Zehut maintains that the state should focus on the issues for which it was established, namely: to be a tool that provides maximum internal and external security, a legal system, and very few other necessary issues. The state must refrain as much as possible from managing the life of the individual and leave, as much as possible, the management of the public space and its character to the responsibility of the local community, while leaving the citizens with the majority of the responsibility for their lives and allowing free dialogue without fear of coercion between various groups.

Six years have passed since the Zehut party ran for the 21st Knesset and almost got in. These have been the most difficult six years the state has known. Without Zehut and without the guiding principle expressed in the platform it brought to Israeli politics, the State of Israel found itself undergoing the greatest social rift of its history, and cycling through five inconclusive election campaigns. The Corona crisis and dealing with it while the Zehut Party was outside the Knesset led to the trampling of human liberty in Israel and also added fuel to the fire. This entire combustible fabric of a society that had lost its ability to speak was ignited in wild and unprecedented demonstrations after the 2022 elections, when a national government was finally elected. The ostensible reason for the protests was the issue of the necessary reform of the legal system, but the essence of the chaos that erupted touched much deeper levels concerning the identity of the community and the freedom of the individual—that is, the very same core issues that Zehut had tried to address through dialogue and reconciliation before the spark was ignited.

The internal rift, which also included an unprecedented campaign of refusal to serve in the IDF, encouraged Hamas to launch the atrocities of October 7th. After two years of fighting, a hostage deal was signed, security authority in Gaza and beyond was transferred to the Americans, who established permanent bases in our country and are vigorously establishing a Hamas state with the involvement of Turkey, Egypt, Qatar, and others. Thus, instead of the promised “total victory,” the State of Israel finds itself transferring more and more of its sovereignty to foreigners, while Hamas and its other enemies regain their strength and prepare the next attack.

At the time of writing, Israel is in another round of fighting against Iran. Air Force pilots have killed the Iranian leader, and in cooperation with the Americans, they are grinding down the military capabilities of the terror state that has risen up against us to destroy us. However, without a clear vision that includes unconditional surrender, regime change, and the elimination of all nuclear and ballistic capabilities, even this opportunity could turn into just another round.

Had Zehut been elected in the 2019 elections, and the platform book you are holding in your hands been a guiding light to the Israeli leadership, all this horror would have been avoided.

Had Zehut entered the Knesset, a stable national government would have been established in 2019, the entire public would have understood the basic principles of solving problems, and political chaos would never have come.

If the principle of freedom and human rights in light of which the platform was written had been preserved, then the madness of Corona could not have destroyed without any opposition the most basic individual rights (and seriously harmed public health).

Had the necessary change in the judicial system been carried out through the direct election of the heads of the justice system (Supreme Court justices) by the public, as Zehut’s platform recommends, we would have avoided the clash between the government and its supporters and the justice system and the bureaucrats and their supporters, and we would not have degenerated into the passive military coup and wave of refusal to serve that encouraged Hamas to launch its atrocities.

Had Zehut participated in the key decision-making, the entire management of the war would have been different, and after two years of fighting and many hundreds of deaths, it would not have ended as an upgraded round inviting subsequent attacks.

If the current recruitment mechanism had been based on the proposal of the Zehut party, every window in Kibbutz Be'eri would have sprouted the barrel of a rifle permanently kept in the home of every reservist, and the Haredi population would have fully shared the burden in a time of emergency without unnecessary divisions in society.

The Zehut movement stands on two foundations that are one: identity and freedom, and one cannot exist without the other². Both principles are widely expressed in the party platform, and although the principle of liberty was emphasized more in the 2019 elections, the horrors of October 7th have once again brought the principle of identity to the forefront. The platform before you, therefore, based on the platform we presented in 2019³, includes important updates on various issues, and with it, we are running for the 2026 elections. The name of the platform indicates its direction:

Returning the State to the People: Israel—Operating Instructions.

The Zehut Party will run in the coming elections, and it has learned from experience and is constantly developing to address the supreme challenge of establishing for Israel a leadership of vision, a leadership that will lead the people of Israel from the dangerous abyss in which the Zionism of Survival has become stuck—to new heights with the Zionism of Destiny.

May we work together to repair the world under the Kingdom of the Almighty.

Moshe Feiglin

² For more information: My new book *Israel Is Just the Beginning* (Israel Tomorrow Ltd., 2025).

³ In the 2019 Zehut Platform, *To Be a Free Jew—The State of Israel: Operating Instructions* (Sela Meir Publishing), there are appendices that expand on various topics in the platform before you. You can read the book online in Hebrew on the "Israel Tomorrow" website.

Temple, Words and Melodies

“Fly, fly melodies
And song will approach song
Between ladders and windows
You sing, you build
You build the Temple”

(Yehoram Gaon singing the words of Haim Hefer)

“My brother, I admire you,” says the woman in front of me in line, “But I will not vote for you, because you want the Temple.”

• • •

For years I have been involved in almost every aspect of the reality of our lives, formulating plans to deal with all the main challenges of the State of Israel, speaking from every platform about the economy and security, about education and housing, about the cost of living and the judicial system—and yet, the Temple seems to be pursuing me, like a shadow over me: “The Temple! He wants to build the Temple!” Strange... I have no operational plans regarding the Temple, in the Zehut party platform you will not find a chapter dealing with the building of the Temple, and yet—that is what they see about me.

I realized suddenly that it is not me they oppose. No matter how hard I try to put on the mask of a “normal” person—that’s what they see in me: building the Temple.

You can’t escape it, I tell myself. It turns out that this is who you are: the Temple. In the end, you can’t hide behind silence and a thousand amazing plans. You have to crack this thing, because in the end, they’re right: all these plans of yours—that’s where they come from.

But... I have no words. I have no words to explain, because there is no language to understand, no consciousness to contain it, and no ability to dream.

I used to dodge the confrontation and dismiss the question with a quick explanation that this whole Temple thing won’t happen until we all want it to: “I want to build the Temple, but I can’t build it without you,” was how I once answered Rino Zror in a personal conversation. The harshness in his question gave way to a smile. “You’ll have to wait a long time,” he said. “I have patience,” I replied. “The Temple will not be built in a coalition coup, the Temple will be built the way the Torah was given—as one man with one heart. I need you to carry the stones with me to the mountain,” I concluded. Rino calmed down and moved on to the next question, and I patted myself on the back for a magnificent evasion of the question. Since then, I have been using this trick again and again...

It is not an evasion because the answer is incorrect; it is actually incredibly accurate—and also steeped in sources and references. It is an evasion because it does not actually solve the real dilemma. After all, my interlocutor continues to think to himself—“You dream of a temple, but your sweet dream is my nightmare! What are you actually telling me?> That you really are crazy, but I have nothing to worry about, because you entrust the key to the safe to me, and therefore I have nothing to fear from you? What you’re actually telling me is “Don’t worry, I’m crazy but I have it under control.” You say

that to me—the ‘Israeli’, the product of the Enlightenment, to me—the new Israeli who cast off the yoke of God and created civil sovereignty instead, to me—who is an Israeli in place of (!) being a Jew—that’s who you’re asking to trust you? You?! Who dreams of a temple?”

So instead of just giving you the key to the safe, I want to try, slowly and carefully, to open it together. I don’t know what exactly is in there either, I’m afraid too, but like a child being taught to pet a dog, I feel desire and fear at the same time. Let me share my feelings with you, let’s overcome fear together. Maybe if we banish the nightmare, love will be revealed.

*The message of liberty for humanity
will not be built by force*

“Who needs all this Vatican,” Dayan said as he tried to prevent the occupation of Old Jerusalem in 1967. They were already ahead of Ben-Gurion, who in 1948 withdrew the Palmach from the Jewish Quarter and abandoned the Old City and its Jews to Jordanian captivity. But Jerusalem did not give up on us. In the Six Days, it “forced” itself upon us, and Dayan hurried and handed over the keys to the Temple Mount to the Muslim Waqf. In 2017, after two policemen were murdered on the Temple Mount, magnetometers were placed at the entrances—but Netanyahu removed them, because the Arabs threatened not to enter the Mount...

Just don’t leave us alone with this mountain, with this identity, with this purpose from which we fled to the Land of Israel stripped of the Holy and the Message... Just don’t let the Temple Mount be in our hands! We will replace it with the Western Wall, which will become a synagogue, provided that we preserve Judaism in its diasporic religious form. We will preserve our museum religion as an opium for the masses, we will remain normal at all costs, and we will cling to our new civic identity.

The religious also cooperated with the handing over of the Mount, because there is nothing more “anti-religious” than the Temple. Without it, Jerusalem is the city of all religions, but with it—religiosity itself ends. With the Temple, the people of Israel advances towards itself: towards the culture of the Third Temple and its universal message, the message of human freedom, the message of repairing the world in the Kingdom of the One God whom we will worship exclusively, and not any king of flesh and blood.

We “made an aliyah” as a people, and our language also “made an aliyah,” but our Torah is still in exile, in its shrunken religious-communal configuration—a configuration adapted to a people without a land and without a relevant message. It is natural that it was necessary to rebel against this religious configuration in order to return to our upright national stature. That is why the religious do not want the Mount... because they want to adhere to religion. I am not religious, I am simply Jewish. So I cannot bury the Temple, and no matter how hard I try to hide it—it will always be peeking over my shoulder.

And in the end, it is the secularists who will force the religious to build the Temple. It’s like a romantic story about a girl in love who, in order to prevent her marriage, constantly slanders her lover. At first, it works, but the girl can’t find herself: there’s no point to her life, she’s offered all the boys in the world—socialism, capitalism, high-tech, substitutes and skyscrapers, and Israeli success—but inside she remains empty. In the end, all the lies fade away and love bursts forth.

Everyone is busy fear-mongering: “The Mount is a powder keg! It’s a tinderbox!” But the truth is the opposite: it’s the abandonment of the Mount and our identity that draws all the fire to us, and neglecting it is the powder keg. When Israel works with all its might to convince Islam that the Mount belongs to it, the Arabs are convinced and launch the Temple War on Simchat Torah —“Tufan al-Aqsa.” “I can get along with you,” an Arab MK once told me. “From the Nile to the Euphrates’—I’ll get

along with you, but with the Zionists? Even if they give me Tel Aviv, there will be war here!" Only with me and my Temple can he get along.

For peace, you need an identity, to know where I end and you begin. "I'll get along with you." But Israel is a country that doesn't know its borders, because there is no identity, because we are afraid of it, afraid of the message of the Temple.

I don't have words... but I have melodies.

I only have melodies. Because how do you explain in words to someone blind from birth the difference between blue and red? And I am blind too. I have a melody of love in my heart, but I am blind. The Temple was destroyed two thousand years ago; what can I remember? What the hell am I yearning for? So it's true, I haven't seen the Temple. But it is preserved in our collective memory, and not just preserved—but etched into our national soul! Until recently, even Haim Hefer and Yehoram Gaon sang songs of longing for it without concern.

I have melodies in my part of our collective soul that preserve the memory and create a longing in me, and this memory, this miraculous memory, is what has preserved our identity. The longing for this "powder keg" is actually the reason why we remained a nation on the stage of history at all and the reason why we returned and built a state. Granted, the last thing this state wants is the Temple, but without it the purpose and destiny that give meaning and validity to its existence are lost. The Temple Mount is the symbol of our nationhood. Because our whole story is that we are both a nation and a religion, matter and spirit in one essence. The people of Israel are the connecting link between humanity and the Creator, that is our entire purpose, and the Temple Mount and the Temple are the place where this miracle is wrought. Therefore, when the Temple Mount is desolate, the State of Israel gradually disintegrates in on itself. Like the heart, the Temple Mount circulates the blood stream that animates the entire national body. When the heart is sick, you feel it first at the periphery—a drizzle in Sderot and Ashkelon, until finally you receive the Al-Aqsa flood.

When I think of the Temple, I think of the human brain. I have a strong connection to this subject: a strong connection to my son, David, who lay unconscious for three months due to a severe head injury, and by the grace of the Creator came back to life; a strong connection to my wife Tzippy, who has Parkinson's but lives and lives and lives. I am very interested in this issue of the brain and life—that's where my imagination takes me. The brain is the place where thoughts meet actions, the place where physics meets metaphysics. The Temple Mount and the Temple are the brain of the world—where creation meets the Creator who animates it, the body meets the soul. The Temple is the place where the finger of God touches us and awakens humanity to life. The Temple is the royal palace of the King of kings, Creator of the world and its Master—here, with us and within us, in Jerusalem. The Temple is the message of true freedom. Flesh and blood will not rule over us, because we have a King and here is His Palace! We cannot truly be enslaved, and therefore tyrants who dream of world domination—from Pharaoh and Ahasuerus to Hitler and Stalin, may their names be erased—come to the conclusion that all Jews must be destroyed. Even in the camps and gulags, we, the Jews, will always remain free, simply because we already have a King. "God will reign," says our name—that is the whole business of the people of Israel.

Our message of monotheism—the liberation from pagan slavery, the message of freedom in the Exodus from Egypt—has been spreading its wings for more than three thousand years. That is why a statue of Moses stands at the entrance to the American Supreme Court. Just as we returned to our land and our language exactly as the prophets predicted and contrary to all the laws of history, so too

we will return and build on the Mount the Royal Palace for our God, the King of the Universe, and proclaim the message of complete freedom to all humanity—exactly as they prophesied.

“From the day the Temple was destroyed, relations between husband and wife lost their flavor,” say the Sages⁴, and fruit also lost its taste, and all sorts of other tastes disappeared as well, and in simple words—the soul separated from the body and took away the savor of life. So, does that mean today we’re not living? Apparently, not so much. We live as if with a severe head injury, as if living with Parkinson’s—struggling for the taste of life.

And how do I know this? Maybe what is now, is sufficient—and is the purpose of everything? I don’t know, but my Jewish identity, our collective memory—the memory that Yehoram Gaon cherishes—knocks on my door and insists on nudging me and telling me that there is another horizon. There is red and there is blue, there are flavors; there is an experience that I don’t know. There is life and there is a message that I miss, even though I have never lived it personally, but the collective to which I belong has preserved it in its memory.

It is constantly knocking on my door—this memory, this longing.

And not just for me.

“Maybe when the sons of the prophets return to their land and the language of the Bible resounds in their destroyed Temple, a new message and song will be sung from Zion for the redemption of the world”⁵—that’s what Lord Balfour said to himself against the backdrop of the millions of corpses of World War I—and he gave us the declaration that established our state... thanks to the memory of the Temple. Thanks to Balfour’s longing, we received a state.

“If you don’t move the embassy to Jerusalem, we won’t re-elect you,” Donald Trump’s Evangelical base tell their president, and the embassy moves because of the Temple. Because of the longing. Humanity is yearning. When it sees us returning like phoenixes, after two thousand years, like migratory birds with some powerful internal compass, it stands in awe and expects us to bring an extraordinary message. And when we run away from our message, the expectation turns to anger, and antisemitism resurfaces and rises.

“We dreamed of a place where the new Book of Books would be written for the redemption of the world, because you are the chosen people... The world had expectations, and look what you did”—this is how British intellectuals described their disappointment with us and the reason why they no longer see Israel as legitimate.⁶

I have no words. The language is sloppy. The Temple is security and it is poetry, it is the most national and the most universal, the most personal and the most public. The Temple is who we are—it is the purpose. When we deny it and force our hearts to forget it, when we stop dreaming—we lose our claim to justice, wander blindly in darkness and waste our time in gratuitous hatred.

⁴ Sanhedrin 75a. “Biya” is the term for intimate relations between a man and his wife in the language of the Sages.

⁵ “It is a noteworthy fact that priests and soldiers—men of the Bible and men of the sword—are at the center of these discussions about the return of the people of Israel to the Land of Israel” (Barbara Tuchman, *The Bible and the Sword*, Zmora Bitan 1987, p. 193).

⁶ Zeev Tzohar in an interview with “Makor Rishon”, Adar 1 5768 [Winter, 2008].

The message of freedom for humanity will not be built by force. Just as God awakened a new spirit in us and from the ashes of the furnaces we built a state, so the moment will come when another spirit will arise upon us and we will build the Temple—together.

This platform is the way to free the people from all coercion and all intimidation.

Implementation of this platform will remove from us the sword of the state that separates us and we will be able to listen to each other.

This platform will restore our liberty,
And from a place of liberty, the other spirit will come
And the Temple will be built.

Goals, Basic Guidelines, and Policies

The Zehut Party presents an orderly and detailed platform, unusual in the Israeli political landscape. The platform is based on the principles of identity and freedom as a single whole, which enables the pursuit of meaning in our national and personal lives. The platform, which refers to Zehut as a party that will lead the fundamental changes necessary to the State of Israel⁷, is not an overly detailed work plan, but it is also not an abstract manifesto: it is a practical declaration of intent that focuses on changes that can be implemented in several terms, based on the premise that only a large and stable political force will enable their implementation.

*The platform is based on the principles of
Identity and freedom as a single whole*

The policy is derived from these overarching principles:

- Freedom of choice as a gift from God,
- A historical national Jewish identity,
- And Repairing the World under the Kingdom of the Almighty.

The goals include:

- A Jewish state fulfilling its destiny,
- A free state with minimal government intervention in individual life,
- A state based on family and community,
- A free market economy of abundance and prosperity,
- Full sovereignty over the Land of Israel and Jerusalem,
- Peace through victory.

The basic guidelines emphasize:

- Careful and responsible implementation,
- Reducing coercion on the citizen and over the economy,
- Abolishing market barriers,
- The state and its institutions should observe our national identity—while citizens and private business should have freedom to determine their own affairs,
- Faith in the people of Israel and its various communities as the way to realize Jewish identity,
- And broadly inclusive faith-based moral leadership, recognizing the Sovereign of the Universe, as the key to political success and to fulfilling humanity's expectations of the message of Israel.

⁷ For more information, see in the 2019 edition of the platform, the section titled "Opening Letter".

SECTION ONE

THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT AND ITS REDUCTION



**Reducing the Number
of Government Ministries**

Opposition to Over-Legislation

The Community Model

The Judicial System

Reducing the Number of Government Ministries

“Kings are raised up initially only to do justice and wage war” (Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*)⁸

“The bigger the government, the smaller the citizen” (Dennis Prager)⁹

“The government is not the solution, the government is the problem” (Ronald Reagan)¹⁰

The problem: A big government that does not govern

In recent decades, the number of government ministries has proliferated as some ministries were split and others were invented, some responsible for nothing and others competing for the same responsibilities as existing ministries—all in order to distribute personal and coalition “honors.” Apart from the significant expense of these ministries, in salaries and budgets, the deeper problem with increasing the size of the government is that it increases the problem of governance. The default of enlarging the government and creating new ministries naturally expands the areas of government involvement into the lives of the citizens and correspondingly reduces human liberty.

The Solution:

Reducing the number of ministries

The Israeli government should be as small as possible, both in order to leave the citizen maximum liberty, and to serve him with maximum efficiency in its areas responsibility. Therefore, the solution is to reduce the number of government ministries, from about thirty ministries to eleven, as will be detailed further on. This is the practice in Switzerland (seven ministries), and it was recently implemented with great success in Argentina (eight ministries). We intend to anchor the division of ministries and their powers in the Basic Law of the Government, thereby putting an end to the policy of determining the structure of the government in accordance with irrelevant coalition considerations.

What will we gain from reducing the size of the government?

Governance. This is the primary benefit. It is important to understand that a minister in the government is not supposed to represent his ministry’s interests in opposition to other ministers, indifferent to the totality of the public’s needs. On the contrary, he must govern in his field, take into account all the considerations related to his decisions, and balance or decide between them in the name of our interest—the public that elected him and on whose behalf he works. This is also the logic

⁸ Laws of Kings and Wars, Chapter 4.

⁹ “The Bigger the Government... | 5 Minute Videos | PragerU”, YouTube, uploaded by PragerU, March 3, 2014.

¹⁰ “Ronald Reagan on Big Government: ‘Government is the Problem’”, YouTube, uploaded by Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Institute, November 15, 2024.

behind uniting fields and ministries that we have been accustomed for many years to see them as “natural rivals,” such as transportation and infrastructure versus environmental protection.

Today, each minister tries to log accomplishments in the limited field of his ministry, and decisions in overlapping fields are made according to bargains struck between the two or more responsible ministers. In contrast, in a limited government, each ministry will be responsible for a broad field, and the minister at its head will be able to—and required to—make considered and balanced decisions.

*Reducing the number of government ministries from 31 to 11
will lead to efficiency, improved governance, and freedom,
and will leave more money in the pockets of the citizen.*

Efficiency. The proliferation of ministries and ministers makes it very difficult for the government as a whole to hold substantive and in-depth discussions, and therefore the government is forced to create ministerial subcommittees for a variety of issues. Almost no real decisions are made at regular government meetings, and these meetings are used mainly to issue press releases. However, with about a dozen ministers in the government, it will be possible to clarify inter-ministerial issues at regular government meetings. The small number of participants will allow all ministers to voice their arguments and present the impact of the issue at hand on their areas of responsibility, and thus the government will be able to make more balanced decisions more efficiently.

Liberty. Abolishing unnecessary ministries and consolidating fragmented ministries are key to increasing liberty and developing a culture of civil liberty in areas such as family, community, culture, and sport. A minister in charge of a ministry in a small government will find it easier to see where the public interest requires that citizens, or the economy, operate freely, without the government trying to “manage” them. When no new government ministries are created, there will be no need to create new and unnecessary responsibilities for them, with all the bureaucracy and potential for damage and corruption that entails. Also, ministers in a small government will have more than enough important work to do and will have less interest in making unnecessary decisions just to make headlines.

Money. Of course, aside from improved governance, efficiency, and liberty, a lot of money will be saved for the public treasury, or better yet—remain in the pockets of the citizens. Savings will include the salaries of ministers, deputies, CEOs and assistants, the cost of office buildings and their maintenance, and finally and primarily: the budgets for ministries that are not needed at all.

The proposed government structure

These are the eleven proposed government ministries, and the areas of responsibility that would be transferred to them from the 21 government ministries that would be abolished¹¹ (written in parentheses):

- **The Prime Minister’s Office** (Ministry of Regional Cooperation, Ministry of Strategic Affairs, Ministry of Settlement and National Missions, Ministry of the Negev and Galilee and National Resilience, Ministry of Jerusalem and Israeli Tradition, Ministry of Information¹²)

¹¹ Ministries in the 37th Cabinet, sworn in by the 25th Knesset

¹² The State of Israel’s compulsive engagement in advocacy stems mainly from a flawed and inconsistent policy that requires explanation. Once the policy is consistent and based on a clear Jewish identity, the need to explain will be greatly reduced. In any case, the place of internal advocacy is in the Prime Minister’s Office, and external advocacy – in the Foreign Ministry.

- **The Foreign Ministry** (Ministry of Diaspora and the Fight against Anti-Semitism)
- **The Ministry of War** (formerly the Defense Ministry)
- **The Ministry of Finance**
- **The Ministry of Economy** (Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology, Ministry of Labor)
- **The Ministry of Resources and Infrastructure**¹³ (Ministry of Transport and Road Safety, Ministry of Environmental Protection, Ministry of Communications)
- **The Ministry of Education** (Ministry of Culture and Sports, Ministry of Heritage)
- **Ministry of Justice**
- **Ministry of Health** (Ministry of Welfare and Social Security, Ministry of Social Equality and the Status of Women)
- **Ministry of Interior** (Ministry of National Security, Ministry of Religious Services)
- **Ministry of Immigration and Absorption**¹⁴ (Ministry of Construction and Housing)

Abolition of the Institution of the Presidency

During the days of the establishment of the state, Ben-Gurion needed a respectable but meaningless declarative role for his rival, Chaim Weizmann. Thus, out of political considerations, the institution of the Israeli presidency was born. Today, the State of Israel pays nearly 100 million shekels a year for an institution that is completely unnecessary. Most of the president's representative functions can be transferred to the Speaker of the Knesset, while the power of pardon can be transferred to a committee that will meet on the eve of Independence Day and include the Chief Rabbi, the President of the Supreme Court, and the Speaker of the Knesset. In this way, we will completely abolish the unnecessary and expensive institution of the presidency.

¹³ The ministry currently called the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure will include the handling of all national natural resources and all national infrastructure. This will open up the possibility for the unified ministry to fulfill its role to the fullest: to balance the various national infrastructures and assets, and to balance exploitation and conservation.

¹⁴ The unified ministry will lead the formulation of a long-term policy that will address the root of the existing housing crisis, which is expected to worsen, and prepare to absorb the waves of immigration and return expected in the wake of the expansion of anti-Semitism in Western countries.

Opposition to Over-Legislation

There is a perception that the effectiveness of Knesset members is measured by the number of laws they pass. The most active legislators are seen as more involved, more caring, and as those who truly care about their constituents, and they receive praise in the media and titles such as “Legislative Champions.” **We in Zehut believe that the state should exercise as little power over citizens as possible, and therefore the necessity of each law should be examined with the utmost caution.** We do not seek to regulate every aspect of citizens’ lives through legislation—quite the opposite: we believe that the state should intervene less and leave as much freedom as possible in the hands of citizens.

The state should limit the use of its power over citizens as much as possible

In addition to harming citizens’ freedoms and their quality of life, excessive legislation has other serious consequences: it may give an unfair advantage to interested parties and cronies at the expense of their competitors and of the public, it may harm the economy in ways that are often unpredictable¹⁵, and it may even create new areas of operation for organized crime¹⁶. To all this must be added the not-insignificant cost of implementing and enforcing a new law, a cost imposed on the taxpayers.

Therefore, Zehut undertakes to seriously weigh any new bill and to vote against any bill that is not truly necessary. Zehut will also work to repeal unnecessary or harmful laws that have already been passed. We also intend to actively advance a demand that a representative from the Finance Ministry assess the cost of each new bill and present it to the Knesset plenum during the first reading.¹⁷

¹⁵ For an example of the damage caused by excessive legislation, see “The Cobra Effect: Lessons in Unintended Consequences,” by Anthony Davies and James R. Harrigan, on the Foundation for Economic Education website.

¹⁶ For example, the bottle deposit law (Yossi Eli, “‘I worked with the Ministry of Environmental Protection’: A Turnaround in the Fight of Criminal Organizations over the Bottle Business, Walla News, December 3, 2015). [Hebrew]

¹⁷ Today, only a private bill is required to do so.

The Community Model

Returning Authority to Communities

Since the establishment of the state, one of the most magnificent institutions established by the Jewish people has gradually disappeared—the institution of the community. The leaders of the state in its early years, who held a highly centralized statist worldview, believed that the citizens of the state must adopt a common culture and shared values, and in effect become one large community working for a common goal. In their view, there was no room for anything that might jeopardize this unity, such as small and diverse communities. This led the authorities in the country to disregard community identity and force the adoption of the “Israeli identity” they created in the name of this melting pot idea.

We believe that just as individual freedoms are the tool through which a person expresses his or her personal identity, and just as the state is the tool for expressing national identity, so too the community is the tool for expressing the identity of those who choose to live side by side and share a common public space. **Within the framework of the Zehut Party's community model, local authorities will be divided into small communities, and some of the powers of state and local authorities will be decentralized and transferred to the communities.**

Mutual respect instead of legislative struggles

The current situation, in which the use of public space is decided by the state, or even by the local authority, creates tensions and hostility between the various communities and sectors. It turns out that it is precisely the policy that came to unite that has caused division. The alternative is for each community to determine the nature and use of its public space and to reduce the influence of outside agents. In this way, legislative struggles will cease, and tensions between different groups within the Israeli public will begin to dissipate, giving way to mutual cultural fertilization and the discovery of common ground.

The community model is just and fair, because it will allow local residents, who are most affected by the nature of the public space in their environment, to agree among themselves on its use.

Division into communities

The entire issue of communities, including the issue of division into communities, will be the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior. Responsibility for creating the initial division into communities will lie with the local authorities, and the Minister of the Interior will be given the authority to reject a division proposal. Both the directive to the Ministry of the Interior and the language of the law will stipulate that the division should create communities that are as homogeneous as possible. A division made with the intention of dispersing the power of a particular segment of society and preventing it from uniting into an independent community under the law may be invalidated for this reason by both the Minister of the Interior and the court.

Each community will elect its own leadership to represent it. The method of selecting the leadership and its powers will be determined from the outset by the Ministry of the Interior. These will then be subject to change by a vote of community members, subject to the approval of the Ministry of the Interior, so long as the proposed method and the proposed powers do not deviate from the rules of proper administration and do not harm the representation of the will of the majority in the

community. Communities will have the option of splitting and uniting with other communities adjacent to them, subject to the vote of the community members and the approval of the Ministry of the Interior.

*Local authorities will be divided into small communities,
and some of the state's powers will be transferred to them*

The budget to finance the activities of the community leadership will be allocated by the local authority from the property tax payments of the community members. The community leadership will receive a budget for renting an office and a meeting room, as well as a limited budget for the salaries of administrative employees, office equipment, and administrative expenses. The members of the leadership themselves will not receive a salary, but will be entitled to reimbursement of expenses for their service to the community, the amount of which will be determined by the Ministry of the Interior.

Community Powers in the Community Model

The community model will allow communities to enact community bylaws, in the same way that local authorities are currently allowed to enact municipal bylaws, and they will also be enforced in the same way. Like municipal bylaws, community bylaws will only come into effect after they are approved by the community leadership and by the Minister of the Interior. It will be impossible to pass a bylaw that contradicts Israeli law.

Municipal bylaws will only apply to areas that are not associated with a particular community.¹⁸ Upon their formation, the new communities will inherit the bylaws of the local authority to which they are associated, and these will thus become community bylaws that the community leadership can change. State laws that concern the use of public space and are appropriate for decision at the community level will be repealed, while providing sufficient preparation time for communities interested in enacting community bylaws to replace them.

Along with the authority to enact community bylaws and the informed repeal of state laws that override them, communities will be given additional significant powers, including:

1. The authority to set building restrictions within their area, as detailed in the Housing Plan chapter of the platform.
2. The ability to appoint the local police chief, as detailed in the Internal Security chapter.

What laws will be passed at the community level?

At the national and municipal levels, laws that deal with the nature of public space and its use will be repealed, to make way for community bylaws to replace them. We will present a small number of examples:

- **Laws concerning the nature of the Sabbath.** The ongoing debate over the nature of the Sabbath in Israel will be resolved by each community establishing regulations that are appropriate to the nature of the Sabbath within its jurisdiction. Each community will be able to choose whether to accept them within its jurisdiction and under what conditions. Of course, everything said about Shabbat and Jewish holidays can also apply to other days of rest, as determined by the local community.

¹⁸ Except for certain bylaws that will be exempted, such as laws dealing with municipal infrastructure.

- The decision which events a local community will host or observe will be solely up to the residents, and will not be imposed on them from above.

The Judicial System

From the Sovereignty of the People to the “Rule of Law” and Back

Democracy: Sovereignty of the People

In a democracy, the people are sovereign, and they express their choices, values, and culture through the representatives they elect. This is the primary characteristic of a democracy. Democratic governments are also characterized by the separation of powers, which means that the state must maintain a separation between the three branches operating within it: the legislative branch (Knesset), the executive branch (government), and the judiciary. Each branch is responsible for its own sphere and is not permitted to interfere in the others. In this way, the branches are supposed to restrain each other and prevent any single one from taking over and concentrating all of government’s powers within itself.

What is the place of the judiciary in this strict balance? Montesquieu—the French philosopher who conceived the idea of the separation of powers in the early 18th century—took for granted that the judiciary was **the most modest and “incomparably weakest” of the branches of government**, understanding that excessive power for the judicial establishment could jeopardize the people’s ability to govern.¹⁹ This “modesty” is expressed in the restraint of judicial criticism of the other two branches, and especially of the legislative branch. Therefore, democratic thought developed doctrines that define that restraint and the issues that with which the judiciary should not occupy itself.

The Current Situation: Judicial Activism

In the early decades of the State of Israel, the High Court of Justice recognized the principle of the separation of powers and refrained from intervening in issues of a political or security nature. However, starting in the 1980s, under the leadership of Justice Aharon Barak and under the banner of judicial activism, the balance between the branches was blatantly violated. In 1992, the “constitutional revolution” was completed, with the enactment of two basic laws—the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, and the Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation. These laws effectively gave the court extensive scope for subjective legal interpretation, allowing it to grossly interfere in the other branches on the grounds of the supremacy of the Basic Laws (the basis for a future constitution) over ordinary laws.

As a result, a situation has arisen in which the court and various legal advisors intervene in substantial public questions concerning policy, by the following means:

- Invalidating laws.
- Using the “reasonableness” and “proportionality” test on many issues.
- Expanding the definition of “legal standing”.
- Giving far-reaching opinions without a basis in law.

¹⁹ See his book **The Spirit of the Law**, as cited by Alexander Hamilton in **Federalist Paper #78**.

*The Supreme Court Justices must understand
that not everything is justiciable.*

*They will be directly elected by the people,
And the judicial system will be subject to oversight*

*Fundamental questions will be decided
via referendum*

However, though the High Court derived its right to annul laws from the overriding authority of the Basic Laws, the court has since then allowed itself to annul even Basic Laws that it did not like. On January 1, 2024, the High Court of Justice overturned the change in the Basic Law: Judiciary (abolishing the criterion of reasonableness), thus removing the dependency of its powers on the Basic Laws and establishing itself as the supreme authority over the other branches—just like that. **This is a serious violation of the principle of separation of powers, to an extent that is unparalleled among democratic countries.** With this violation, which caused incessant blocking of the actions of elected officials, the first principle of democracy was also violated: the rule of the people.

The Solution:

Back to the Sovereignty of the People

Zehut believes that in essential public questions and issues of a political, security, social, or ideological nature, there is no place for the intervention of the court. The High Court of Justice, the Attorney General, and the prosecutorial system must be prevented from exceeding their duties and paralyzing the policy-making of elected officials. Zehut will work to restore the balance between the branches of government in order to allow the elected authorities to promote policy in accordance with the worldview they were elected to represent. Below we present the key measures that must be enacted for this purpose.²⁰

As mentioned, the judges of the High Court of Justice have also appropriated the authority to block any decision of the government and any law of the Knesset that does not align with their worldview, **without their bearing any responsibility for the outcomes of these decisions. By doing so, the justices have effectively placed themselves over and above the rest of the government.** Therefore, Zehut will work to restore the High Court of Justice to its proper position: that of a special court whose role is to hear petitions against state authorities and public bodies that are alleged to have acted unjustly or contrary to the law.

- The right of standing—the right to appeal to the High Court—will once again be granted only to those who have been harmed or are likely to be harmed themselves by the actions of the state.
- The High Court will not be permitted to issue a decision without its reasoning being included in the ruling.

²⁰ The proposed reforms are essentially a summary of the main points raised in the book *The Purse and the Sword: The Trials of Israel's Legal Revolution* written by former Minister of Justice, Professor of Law Daniel Friedmann (Oxford University Press, 2016). In his book, he described and explained the processes that the Israeli legal system has undergone since the establishment of the state, which have led to the current situation.

- Neither the High Court nor the Attorney General will any authority other than that defined for them by law.
- A “ruling” determined by the High Court will be brought to the attention of the Knesset, so that it can enact a law to replace it.

Invalidation of laws by the High Court

The High Court—or any other judicial body—will not be permitted to invalidate a law passed by the Knesset.

- If a judge finds a gap or contradiction between laws, he must state this in his ruling so that the Knesset can correct the defect.
- If the High Court finds that a law enacted by the Knesset is fundamentally unacceptable because it contradicts one of the Basic Laws, it can only determine this by an absolute majority of two-thirds of all sitting Supreme Court justices.
- In such a situation, the law will need to be re-approved by the Knesset, or amended through legislation. Until then, the law will be suspended.
- The High Court will not be able to invalidate a law that was re-approved.

The scope of the judiciary

- The State Attorney’s Office and the Military Advocate General’s Office will not have the authority to interfere in security-related decision-making and its implementation. Their role is to advise before and after security activities, but not during them.
- Security actions will be subject to operational investigation, trial by a military court according to the Military Jurisdiction Law, and public criticism, but there will be no trial by the court.
- The court will not be authorized to judge on issues of culture, national identity, and security beyond what is defined by law. These are matters to be determined by the public and its elected representatives.
- The criterion of reasonableness will be abolished.²¹
- Lawyers and judges will be able to base their advice and rulings on international law only if they have shown that they rely on an Israeli law or a government decision that binds Israel to an international treaty on the subject in question.
- A judge who interprets laws in a way that materially contradicts their meaning, or who imposes sentences that contradict the gravity or lack thereof of the offenses committed, may be summoned for a hearing before the Knesset Constitution Committee, after which a qualified majority of the committee members may order his removal from office.
- A judge who refuses to honor the national anthem and symbols of the State of Israel will be removed from office.

²¹ Israeli Supreme Court Justice Asher Grunis also criticized the widespread use of the criterion of reasonableness, HCJ 3997/14 [Hebrew].

Appointment of judges

- The committee for selecting judges will be abolished.
- Once every ten years, Supreme Court justices will be elected directly by the public, after a public hearing in the Knesset Constitution Committee (as is done in various ways in about half of the states in the United States).
- Candidates for the position of court judge or district judge will be subject to public scrutiny before the hearing on their candidacy. They will be selected by a committee elected from among the Supreme Court judges.

The Attorney General

- The government alone appoints and dismisses its attorney general.
- The positions of attorney general and chief prosecutor (state attorney) will be split, due to an inherent conflict of interest, and will no longer be held by the same person.
- The government will be entitled to appoint a lawyer to represent it in court.
- The attorney general's term of office will end with the end of the government's term of office.
- Elected officials such as ministers and mayors are obligated to act in accordance with the law, but are not obligated to obey the advice of their legal advisors.
- The attorney general will be entitled to issue "guidelines" only with the approval of the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister.
- The attorney general and the chief prosecutor will be subject to a cooling-off period during which they will not be able to be appointed as judges in the Supreme Court, due to an inherent conflict of interest.

Appointment of senior public servants

- Elected officials will be entitled to appoint to senior positions and positions of trust whoever they want, provided that they meet the threshold conditions set by the Knesset. They will be able to use a search committee and legal advice, but they will not be required to comply with their recommendations. The duration of the appointment will depend on the appointee, and when the appointed minister changes, the new minister will be able to appoint another person.
- The candidacy of a person whom a minister or another elected official wants to appoint to any given position will not be disqualified unless there is a specific suspicion of criminal conduct.
- The Knesset will be able to dismiss senior officials, including judges, after a hearing (as is the case in the United States).

Audit of the judicial system

The State Comptroller will submit to the Knesset and the public an annual report containing statistical information that will reflect a variety of indicators of the work and rulings of judges in Israel, the State Attorney's Office, and legal advisors.

The status of Jewish civil law

Zehut's policy concerning Jewish civil law will be detailed in the chapter "Jewish Law" under the heading "Judaism, Culture, and State." To summarize its main points: Zehut will take steps to establish a system of civil courts that will rule according to Jewish law and will operate in parallel with the existing court system. These courts will deal with civil law only, and both parties must consent to participate before the court may issue any adjudication. The status of the Hebrew court system in civil law will be identical to the status of the existing state court system, and its rulings will be equally valid and binding, as long as its rules are consistent with existing laws regarding permitted penalties and damages. After both parties have consented to a ruling according to Jewish law, it will not be possible to appeal such a ruling in a government civil court.

Referendum as a tool for resolving crises

Today, the drafting of laws is often influenced by a concern over whether the High Court of Justice will allow the proposed law to stand. In contrast, a law approved by referendum would need ask only **whether the proposed law or the existing situation is acceptable to the people**. The option of transferring the decision to the public would mold the system and oblige it and the legislators to take the people's opinion into account in advance.

A "Referendum Law" transforms the sovereignty of the people from an empty theoretical idea to the public's ability to influence and make actual decisions. Thus, in the event of a constitutional crisis or other fundamental dispute between the branches of government that cannot be resolved through ordinary legislation, the Knesset would submit the decision to a referendum. Once a law has been passed in a referendum, the High Court of Justice would not be able to annul it, even if it contradicts a Basic Law.

Referenda will apply to those political and security decisions and issues concerning the definition of the state's identity which have historical implications, such as the handover of state territories or the signing of far-reaching political agreements.²² In the past, such decisions have been made by Israeli governments—within the framework of processes such as the Oslo Accords, the disengagement plan, the maritime border agreement with Lebanon, and the establishment of the renewed "technocratic authority" in Gaza—without a clear mandate from the people, and sometimes in opposition to the majority position and bypassing the law and the Knesset. In addition, the demand for public approval will strengthen the leaders' position in political negotiations and in the face of international pressure. When it is clear at the outset that any agreement or withdrawal requires the people's approval at the ballot box, leaders are given "strategic depth" that allows them to stand firmer against heavy external pressures, or prevents them in advance.

For a referendum to fulfill its purpose, the public must be assured of comprehensive, reliable, and balanced information. It is proposed to establish a mechanism that will require the media to allocate equal time and exposure to the positions of supporters and opponents. The public will receive access to objective data on the consequences of each decision, similar to the model implemented in advanced democracies around the world such as Switzerland and Denmark.

²² The 2014 Referendum Basic Law requires a referendum only on the handover of "sovereign territory." This definition leaves the strategic homeland territories in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza—and in fact the entire State of Israel—exposed to destructive decisions by political "hijackers" without direct and clear public approval.

In conclusion, through the proposed referendum law, it will be possible to achieve:

- Relief from crises arising from conflicts between the different branches of government, relief implemented by the public and thus increased public confidence in the system.
- The strengthening of democratic principles and the reduction of government and corporate power.
- Responsible and balanced legislation serving the public interest, acting as a safeguard against excessive interference in individual rights and freedoms.
- A broad consensus on fateful decisions.

SECTION TWO
THE SOCIAL PROGRAM



Education

Restoring the Status of the Family

National Insurance and the Welfare System

Public Health

Communication

Education

“The father is required... to teach his son Torah... and to teach him a trade”
(Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 29b)²³

The Current Situation: High Expenditure, Low Performance

The education system affects our lives and the lives of our children in every possible aspect: ethical, cultural, economic, social, national, and of course political. According to the current law, **the party responsible for the education of our children is not us, the parents, but rather the Minister of Education**. National spending on education currently stands at approximately 160 billion shekels per year.²⁴ This is the second largest expenditure in the state budget, and it is also large compared to what exists in other developed countries. But despite this enormous budget, the performance of the education system is poor.²⁵

Zehut’s basic premise is that a parent wants the best for his children and knows what that is, more than any bureaucratic-governmental system. Parental responsibility and control of their children’s education will greatly improve the level of education relative to its current state, and parents will be able to educate their children according to their children’s abilities and inclinations—and, of course, according to the parents’ worldview.

The Solution: The Voucher Method

Zehut advocates adopting the voucher method in the Israeli education system, which combines public funding and free competition. All parents will receive a voucher with monetary value from the Ministry of Education, which they can redeem at any school they wish, or establish, along with other parents, a school that meets their educational aspirations. Schools will only receive a budget from the Ministry of Education by redeeming the vouchers they receive from the parents of their students. As a result, a school that wants to attract students will have to convince the parents that this school in particular is the one that will offer their children the best education when compared to the alternatives. The principal will be able to truly manage the school, and will not be bound by cumbersome bureaucratic rigmarole. This will create a wide variety of schools and their overall level will rise, as happens when a market is opened to competition.

Indeed, one of the areas in which the voucher method is already being used today, here in Israel, is in maternity wards: in the past, maternity wards in Israeli hospitals were like any other internal medicine units, or worse. Then the National Insurance Institute decided to leave it to mothers to decide where

²³ The Talmud states that the primary responsibility for the education of the son—both from a moral and spiritual perspective and from a professional and economic perspective—belongs to the father and the family. The family is, of course, entitled to appoint emissaries to carry out this duty, in the form of teachers and institutions.

²⁴ According to CBS data (“National Expenditure on Education in 2024”, Central Bureau of Statistics, September 11, 2025) [Hebrew].

²⁵ For example, we are located in the bottom quarter in relation to children in developed countries (OECD), according to the results of the PISA tests (PISA 2022 study, Ministry of Education).

they wanted to give birth, and to funnel the government funding for childbirth to the hospitals they chose through vouchers from the National Insurance Institute: A “birth hospitalization grant.”²⁶ In other words, the expectant mother receives a kind of voucher, which is redeemed in the hospital where she chooses to give birth. As a result, hospitals began to compete with each other for mothers, and maternity wards became “five-star hotels.”

*Zehut will adopt the voucher method in education—
public funding for the voucher,
but redemption of the voucher in the hands of the parents*

According to the proposed method, the Ministry of Education will still be in place, but its powers and bureaucracy will be reduced.²⁷ Therefore, a much larger percentage of the current education spending will be transferred from the public coffers **directly to the educational institutions** themselves, depending on the number of students studying in them. Most of this amount will be used to pay teachers’ salaries, and the rest will be for recurring expenses (electricity, water, maintenance), for the centralized purchase of textbooks, and for various educational services. In other words, the money from the education budget will be spent directly on educating students, and not on financing an ever-proliferating bureaucracy as is the case today.

Implementation plan

The implementation of the voucher method will enable the establishment of private schools that will meet the needs of students and their parents, **alongside the public education system: they will all receive budgets from the state only by redeeming the education vouchers of the students who choose to study there.**

The administrative independence of schools will be expanded, to allow schools to better adapt to the needs and characteristics of the local population. Principals will have full control over the curriculum, enrichment activities, schedules, and vacations, subject to the guidelines and standards that will be formulated by the Ministry of Education. However, the most significant change will be the **granting of independence in hiring teachers**. Principals will be the ones who will decide which teachers to hire and under what conditions.²⁸ In accordance with this concept, principals will be able to adequately reward the best and most sought-after teachers, and forgo the services of teachers who are not suitable for the school they run, without being subject to obligations and instructions imposed on them from above.

Shortening school vacations

Giving schools freedom of action will open up healthy competition on many issues. A simple and important example can be seen in the issue of vacations: the number of vacation days in elementary schools in state education is more than two months greater than the number of vacation days in the economy—a huge number that makes it extremely difficult for families in Israel to function. When the voucher system is adopted, the situation in Israel will be similar to the reality in most states in the United States: an American school can independently determine the vacation schedule, beyond the

²⁶ Approximately 13,644 shekels per birth as of April 1, 2018.

²⁷ Some of it will be transferred to the education networks. See below.

²⁸ Research in the field of education shows that the most significant factor influencing the quality of education is the quality of the teachers. In order to improve the quality of teachers, they must be rewarded and allowed freedom in managing their class and in bringing their strengths to the classroom.

holidays customary in the economy. This will encourage schools in Israel to try to adjust their vacation days to take into account those in the Israeli economy. In the existing education model, adjusting vacations is not possible because parents are captive customers of the education system, and their bargaining power is significantly less than that of teachers' organizations. The system of incentives in the current situation encourages the Ministry of Education to accept "industrial peace" from teachers' organizations, instead of trying to bring about a reform for the benefit of students and their parents.

The incentive system for schools that operate according to the voucher system is completely different. Schools that do not provide an adequate response to the needs of parents and students will lose their students to competitors. But not only the students: schools that do not adapt themselves to the standards required by the market will lose budgets and, ultimately, teachers as well. Therefore, **under the voucher method, the student's well-being and the parents' satisfaction will have much greater weight in decision-making.**

Beginning of the School Year

A problematic situation has arisen: school starts on September 1st according to the international calendar, but there are multiple vacation days at the beginning of the school year for holidays according to the Jewish calendar. Since the Israeli economy goes on vacation according to the Jewish holidays, we now risk the absurd situation of uncoordinated vacation schedules between children and their parents. This discrepancy also impedes our passing on their heritage to the children of Israel, as it concerns the holidays in the month of *Tishrei*. Therefore, Zehut will make it possible to set the beginning of the school year according to the Jewish calendar on the first of *Elul*—both as a value statement of pride in Israel's heritage, and as a response to the logistical problems arising from combining the schedules.

Homeschooling

Zehut recognizes the right of every parent to raise their children in a way they believe in, including through homeschooling. Therefore, the Ministry of Education regulations restricting homeschooling will be updated, so that the option will be open to all parents who are interested in it and who proves their ability to educate their children themselves without its harming them or their children. The education voucher will then be used directly by the parents under close supervision of the Ministry of Education, which will ensure that the parents' time is indeed invested in the systematic education of their children.

Teachers' Salaries: "The Envy of Scribes Increases Wisdom"

According to 2025 data, the Ministry of Education budget is 91 billion shekels for 2.8 million students (average monthly expenditure of about 2,700 shekels per student), but due to the cumbersome mechanisms of government, a teacher in Israel who teaches a crowded class of about 30 students earns an average salary of 13,000 shekels (employment cost of 16,000 shekels). Under the voucher system, when the responsibility is transferred to parents and the need for mountains of supervisors and subordinate departments is eliminated, the share of the budget that will be directed to bureaucracy will be reduced to a maximum of 15%. Of the budget, 26% (which is NIS 24 billion) will be allocated to 390,000 special education students, and their parents will be able to choose between continuing within the state system or receiving a significantly increased personal voucher adjusted to the real cost of caring for their child. The remainder of the budget (NIS 67 billion), which will be

directed entirely to vouchers for 2.4 million regular education students, will allow for a basic voucher of nearly NIS 2,000 per student per month.²⁹ This means that even in a small class of only 20 students, the monthly budget they will receive will be NIS 40,000 per class,³⁰ which will make it possible for the first time to reward quality teachers with unprecedented salaries, similar to standards in the high-tech industry.

Simplifying the “unofficially recognized” procedure

Any person or company should be allowed to establish a school. The “budget procedure,” that is, the process required to gain the status of a school, including a license to operate and eligibility for funding from the Ministry of Education, should be made much simpler. The cumbersome procedure that currently exists for obtaining a license and funding for institutions not operated by the Ministry of Education or the local authority, known as the “unofficially recognized procedure,” will be greatly simplified, which will allow for the establishment and funding of privately owned educational initiatives with greater freedom.

Reducing core requirements

Today, public discourse is saturated with talk of core studies, mainly in the context of clashes with the education system of the Haredi public. In truth, a closer look reveals that this “core” is largely a misrepresentation. Seven compulsory subjects make up the core curriculum: Civics, English, History, Mathematics, Literature, Hebrew, and Bible. These subjects are supposed to constitute a uniform standard for every graduate of the official education system in Israel, but in fact each segment of the population defines a different standard for matriculation and the study of these subjects, such as one kind of History for a state school, one for a state-religious school, one for a Haredi school, and one for an Arab school, and so on.

Zehut will reduce the core curriculum to the technical areas required to create a graduate with the ability to function properly in Israeli society. Zehut will leave the value choices to the parents.

“Free” and “compulsory” are not dependent on one another

In September 2012, the State of Israel determined that the Free Education Law would apply from the age of 3, but at the same time it was also determined that education would be **compulsory** from this age, thus making parents who do not wish to send their children to pre-school criminals.³¹ It is important to emphasize the stark difference between **free education** and **education as a legal requirement**. Zehut will put a stop to this dangerous trend, and allow parents to raise their young children until they reach kindergarten age as they see fit.

²⁹ 67 billion shekels multiplied by 0.85 divided by 2.4 million students divided by 12 months.

³⁰ Including management and maintenance expenses.

³¹ In practice, the implementation of this section has been repeatedly postponed to date.

Restoring the Status of the Family

The Foundation of Freedom in Israeli Society

The Current Situation:

Government Intervention in Family Autonomy

The family is the oldest and most stable social institution in human history. Even before the state was founded, even before systems of government and laws were established, the Jewish home was the place where education for responsibility, kindness, and belonging was formed. In the modern State of Israel, the family is the “microcosm of the Temple” where the values of the next generation are molded. But in recent decades, the status of the family in Israel has been eroding. Instead of seeing it as the foundation of a healthy society, increasingly it has been argued that the state and its institutions know better than parents how to raise children, how to educate them, and even how to manage family life. This view has led to an unprecedented expansion of government intervention in family life. The Jewish marriage covenant—which sanctifies the family unit, parental responsibility, loyalty, and intergenerational connection—is being replaced by judicial parenting, subject to the intervention and control of a centralized justice system operating through welfare systems with too broad a power.

We reject this view entirely. The family is not an arm of the state, but an independent institution that constitutes the cornerstone of society and the state. The role of the state is to protect the freedom of citizens, maintain their safety by protecting them from external enemies, administer justice and manage national resources—to enable and help families to prosper, and not to engineer the human character and lifestyle from above. **When the state arrogates to itself the management of the life of the individual and the family, it weakens personal responsibility, harms parental authority, and undermines social stability.** Therefore, as we noted in the education chapter, we will return to parents the responsibility for the education of their children. Our policy will focus on restoring authority and responsibility to parents and strengthening the independence of the family unit.

The Solution:

A strong society begins with the family

The family is not merely a private institution—is the basis for the existence of a free and stable society. Where the family is strong, citizens grow up who are responsible, who know who they are, and who are able to bear their share of the common burden. Therefore, restoring the status of the family is not just a sectoral or social issue; it is a national goal. The State of Israel must once again see the family as a central partner in building its future, and not as an entity to be supervised and managed.

Strong families creates a strong society, and a strong society is the basis for a free, stable, and prosperous state.

Financial independence for families

The family is also an economic unit. Spouses make decisions together regarding work, livelihood, investment in their children, and their shared future. But the existing tax system ignores this, and sometimes even punishes families who choose to share the burden of livelihood in a way that is not consistent with the dual career model.

*The family is the basic unit of society;
state intervention in it should be a last resort only*

We will work towards simplification of the tax system and reduction of the distortions in it that harm families. A simpler and more transparent tax policy will allow spouses to choose for themselves how to divide economic responsibility between them—through careers, raising children, education, or entrepreneurship (as detailed later, in the chapter on changing the tax system). A free state does not interfere in the life choices of its families.

Justice and fairness in family law

When a family breaks up, the state is required to intervene to protect the best interests of the children. However, in practice, the existing legal system often encourages difficult struggles between parents, intensifying the conflict rather than resolving it. We will work to establish a clear principle of shared parental responsibility: the child's best interests generally require a significant presence of both parents in his or her life, and therefore the legal system must encourage cooperation between parents and not grant a built-in advantage to one of them. In addition, clear and transparent rules must be established for the division of financial responsibility for raising children. A system in which the results are unpredictable and discretion is too broad creates injustice, distrust, and unnecessary legal battles.

Protecting victims—and preventing injustice

Domestic violence is a serious phenomenon that must be fought with determination. The state must protect victims of violence and ensure their safety. In addition, false complaints about domestic violence sometimes cause serious and immediate harm to suspects, harm children, enable and even encourage parental alienation, and undermine public trust in the system. It seems that this issue, known in the legal and social world as the "Potiphar's wife phenomenon," lacks an adequate deterrent response to women who file false complaints against men. It would be appropriate to promote a policy of getting to the bottom of the case, ensuring that a person filing a false complaint bear full responsibility for the damages caused to an injured party and be required to pay compensation for them.

National Insurance and the Welfare System

Current Situation

Insurance That Isn't Insurance

The National Insurance Institute, despite its name, is not run as an insurance institution at all but rather as an “economic safety net” for Israeli residents, which is to say, as a welfare system. A large part of the National Insurance Institute’s role is to provide a kind of uniform basic insurance to Israeli residents—an essential service, but most of which the private market can provide more successfully. In fact, private insurance companies are already doing this successfully and efficiently today. The efficiency of private companies and the quality of the service they provide have often been proven to be superior to that of government-owned companies. We must take advantage of our ability to rely on them to reduce the complex and wasteful mechanism of the National Insurance Institute.

Although the National Insurance Institute collects funds directly, it has no real economic autonomy and remains dependent on the state. The state dictates the amount of the citizen’s payments to the National Insurance Institute and the amount of the benefits it pays, without any mechanism that requires adjusting income to expenses. Thus, the National Insurance Institute accumulates deficits that guarantee that it will eventually collapse.³² It is clear to everyone that when this happens, the state will have to cover the deficit from its budget, and it is not prepared for this.

Non-national insurance

The National Insurance Institute has become, among other things, a mechanism that supports and encourages populations hostile to the Jewish nation. As such, importing women from Gaza to the illegal Bedouin villages in the Negev has become a very lucrative business. Tens of thousands of shekels are paid to these clans, who travel in luxurious SUVs and take over large parts of the Negev. Gazan women certainly do not teach their children lessons in Zionism, and girls in Beersheba are harassed on their way to the mall by boys born to mothers who were brought from Gaza in order to receive National Insurance benefits.

Another example is the construction of high-rise residential buildings adjacent to the separation wall on the eastern border of Jerusalem. The reason for this wild and bizarre construction, which suffocates the city and constitutes a serious security problem, is that the area adjacent to the separation wall is administratively included in the municipal territory of Jerusalem—and those living there are therefore entitled to receive National Insurance benefits.

Needless to say, the collection of National Insurance payments from these groups is in no way comparable to that collected from the Jewish public. It is difficult to obtain precise figures from the National Insurance Institute, but according to various calculations, it is estimated that more than half of the National Insurance funds are channeled to the Arab public, which is only about 20 percent of the population. In other words, National Insurance is largely a mechanism for transferring funds from

³² It is not only economic experts who warn of the collapse of the National Insurance Institute; the National Insurance Institute itself warns of its empty coffers and its guaranteed collapse. As of 2024, the official forecast of the Ministry of Social Affairs was that the expected collapse of the National Insurance Institute would occur in 2036 (Shahar Ilan and Shaked Green, “Bankruptcy of the National Insurance Institute Will Cut Benefits”, Calcalist, March 17, 2024).

Jews to Arabs. As we saw in the examples above, these funds also create a security and sovereignty problem for the State of Israel.

The Solution:

Purchasing private insurance

Just as every citizen is obligated to set aside for himself—directly or through his employer—a certain amount for his pension, and just as every vehicle owner is obligated to purchase compulsory liability insurance, so too will every citizen be obligated to insure himself against most of the areas currently covered by compulsory National Insurance. National Insurance will supplement or cover in full benefits that it does not make fiscal sense for insurance companies to provide—such as child benefits—however, long- and short-term disability insurance, long-term care insurance, and the like, are insurances that already exist in the private market. The state will greatly reduce National Insurance premiums, and **will require its citizens to purchase these services in the private market.**

Just as every citizen is obligated to set aside a certain amount for his or her pension, so too will every citizen be obligated to insure himself or herself for most areas—in the private market.

National Insurance will continue to cover those benefits for which insurance companies cannot provide adequate insurance coverage

Employers will be obligated to insure their employees against work-related accidents. Since every resident and every employer will be able to choose their preferred insurance company, private insurance companies will compete for customers and will have to offer them good service and affordable rates. When insurance companies realize that the state intends to stop providing insurance services available on the free market, they will have an incentive to develop new insurance services that can replace the existing services provided by the state.

We emphasize: Those who are entitled to a pension will continue to receive it. The state, like any other insurance entity, will not be able to disavow the financial claims of its insured persons. All residents of Israel who were entitled to a National Insurance benefit before the reduction in insurance services³³ will continue to receive those benefits and will continue to be insured by the state as they were before the reduction in insurance services.

Those who are not Jews and have not made a declaration of loyalty to the State of Israel as the State of the Jewish People, or who have acted against the security and sovereignty of the state—will have their citizenship revoked. If they do not pose a security threat, they will become **permanent residents who are not entitled to National Insurance payments.**

Innovation and efficiency in the welfare system

The state will continue to be the ultimate party responsible for welfare, but this does not mean that the welfare system will continue to work without change. The failure of welfare programs in the Western world has led many countries to rethink their welfare policies and examine alternative

³³ This also refers to anyone who was injured while the insurance was in effect and whose claim had not yet been received at the time the insurance services were terminated, but was later found to be justified.

models of assistance to the needy. Zehut will examine the applicability of these ideas in the State of Israel, and will focus on these issues:

- **Preventing welfare fraud.** We will examine methods that reduce the receipt of unjustified benefits from the welfare system, provided that they do not make it unnecessarily difficult for those in real need and prevent them from receiving assistance.
- **Maximizing earning capacity and avoiding “welfare traps.”** A welfare trap is a situation in which the welfare program financially incentivizes welfare recipients to continue to depend on welfare and not maximize their earning potential. This harms the economy and burdens the state budget, and worse yet—it harms the recipients themselves. We will examine methods that avoid such harmful incentives and do not punish welfare recipients for maximizing their earning capacity.
- **Alternative welfare systems.** We will examine methods in which alternative welfare systems—municipal, community,³⁴ and others—can fulfill some of the functions of the national welfare system and exist in parallel with it. Alternative welfare systems give residents a certain freedom of choice, allowing them to choose the system that is most successful or most suitable for their needs. Such welfare systems tend to serve a smaller public, which allows them to become better acquainted with those in need of assistance. In addition, local welfare systems and mutual aid funds allow members of the same community or city to support each other, thereby helping to solidify and actualize a community identity.

Strengthening the rights of the elderly

Eliminating the deduction from the income supplement allowance

The National Insurance Institute deducts from the income supplement allowance of pensioners any additional income they may have, according to the laws of the National Insurance Institute. A small employment pension that a person has saved himself (even if it is a few hundred shekels), or a “long service bonus” (given for years of work)—pensioners are “fined” for savings such as these. The problem is particularly severe among immigrants who immigrated at an older age, who managed to accrue only a very small employment pension in Israel. When they reach retirement age, this small pension does not improve their standard of living—it is simply “swallowed up,” because it is offset against their income supplement, as mentioned. The net amount they receive remains the same as that of someone who did not save at all, so in effect, the state “punishes” them for working and saving. Zehut will eliminate this offset, so that retirees can enjoy the money they saved or their seniority bonus along with the income supplement.

Discrimination among Holocaust survivors

Survivors who immigrated to Israel before 1953 (the year of the reparations agreement with Germany), or who were in concentration camps or ghettos, are recognized under the “Disabled by Nazi Persecution” Law (1957). They receive a respectable monthly allowance of thousands of shekels per month from the state, complete exemption from paying for medications, financing treatments, and more. In contrast to those “disabled by Nazi persecution,” people defined as “Holocaust refugees” are people who fled the Nazi army (for example, deep into the Soviet Union) and did not live under

³⁴ Such as the fully implemented model of Free Loan Societies in Haredi society, which fulfills the role with considerable success.

direct Nazi occupation, or who immigrated to Israel after 1953—like most Holocaust survivors who immigrated in the great wave of immigration from the Soviet Union in the 1990s. While the state recognizes them as victims of the period, they are not entitled to a fixed monthly allowance, but to much lesser benefits: a single annual grant of several thousand shekels once a year, and a partial exemption from paying for prescription drugs.

It is an absurd situation, where two people who experienced similar trauma in the Holocaust may receive completely different financial support from the State of Israel, simply because one immigrated in 1952 and the other in 1992, or because of the geographical definition of their different escape routes. Zehut proposes to grant all refugees and survivors comparable benefits, equal to those of the “disabled victims of Nazi persecution” who have high pensions, and to eliminate bureaucratic discrimination resulting from the year of their immigration or their country of origin.³⁵

Protection against crime and enhanced access to services

To our horror, in recent years, crimes against the elderly population, which is more vulnerable, have expanded. Zehut will work to make punishment more severe in all matters concerning this type of heinous crime.

Elderly people also have more difficulty with administrative matters, filling out online forms, and more. Zehut will work to promote the accessibility of National Insurance services and other organizations that work with the elderly, and will promote accessibility in foreign languages.

³⁵ There is a bill on the subject, and Zehut will work to advance the issue.

Public Health

Background:

What have we learned from the healthcare system's handling of the Coronavirus?

The healthcare system in Israel has been blessed with excellent medical teams, but it suffers from centralization that exacts a heavy toll on the country's citizens. The citizens' most challenging encounter with the healthcare system took place during the Corona period, when the system took on a central role in running our lives: it adopted a very narrow policy, aiming to minimize the spread of the virus, without regard to the other components of the public's health and liberty. To achieve this goal, the Israeli government, led by the Ministry of Health, took very harsh measures against the population—from lockdowns to forced vaccination.

Two months after the identification of the coronavirus in the country, repeated and prolonged lockdowns began to be imposed,³⁶ looking like military curfews. These lockdowns exacted heavy tolls on Israeli citizens—in physical and mental health, in the fraying social fabric, in public trust in the health system, in the collapse of businesses, and in an economic slowdown.³⁷ As soon as the virus appeared, it was clear that it primarily endangered older people with pre-existing conditions—but if so, why was the entire public subjected to a curfew? The voices of senior doctors in the relevant fields were silenced,³⁸ and discussions by a professional advisory committee in the field were not convened.

Within a short time, the pharmaceutical company Pfizer came out with a new coronavirus vaccine.³⁹ Horrifically and contrary to protocol, Israel was one of the first countries in the world to force the injection of the new experimental substance on all its citizens.⁴⁰ This was done by exploiting the Israeli medical infrastructure (health funds, etc.), which is among the most advanced and well-organized in the world, and by trampling on the rules of medical ethics, with a corporate contract with Pfizer, governed by a thirty-year confidentiality clause. The scientific discussion regarding the balance between the danger of the virus and the risk from the injection quickly turned into a question of values: Which trumps the other—individual rights or collective responsibility? Already in the early stages, it became clear that the injections did not prevent the continued infection and spread of the virus (nor were they intended to do so), and it became clear as well that the side effects of the injection were far more dangerous than those considered acceptable in other vaccines. It also became clear that young people were not in any danger from the coronavirus. Therefore, why force the entire population, including children, to be vaccinated against their will, using the draconian “green passport”? This leads to some fundamental and extremely disturbing questions:

³⁶ Starting in March 2020.

³⁷ For more: Moshe Feiglin, *Israel is Only the Beginning*, in the chapters “The Virus of the Revolution” and “How the Lie Became the Truth.”

³⁸ “Founding Document—Basic Principles,” Public Emergency Council for the Corona Crisis, December 23, 2020.

³⁹ As of December 2020, the emergency vaccine was approved in England, by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) (“Britain approves use of Pfizer vaccine; will be available starting next week,” *Calcalist*, December 2, 2020) [Hebrew].

⁴⁰ Indonesia was the first country to impose sanctions on people who did not get vaccinated, in February 2021 (Mtimkulu-Eyde et al, “Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination”, PubMed Central, 2022).

- Why did the contract with Pfizer include strict confidentiality provisions?
- Why were the protocols of the Ministry of Health's Corona Cabinet sealed for thirty years?
- What is the relationship between the heads of the Israeli health system, the pharmaceutical companies, and the World Health Organization (WHO)?
- What information about Israeli citizens was passed on to Pfizer?
- Why were protocols requiring that participants in a trial provide their "informed consent" ignored?
- Shouldn't we have expected full transparency from the heads of the healthcare system, both in order to avoid error and in order to earn the public's trust?
- Given the fact that the pharmaceutical company did not claim that their product prevented infection, why was the injection forced on the majority of the population who were not at risk?

In vaccinate the entire population, and thereby create a unique scientific experiment for Pfizer, the healthcare system implemented draconian measures. The "green passport" separated the population that decided to submit to the injection and participate in the experiment from those who avoided them—and were subsequently deprived of their basic rights of movement, livelihood, education, and more. The administration of the Pfizer vaccine was carried out amidst extremely serious conflicts of interest and the subordination of the State of Israel to American emergency approvals that have no legal or judicial validity in Israel. A very large number of vaccine victims, especially among young people⁴¹—a phenomenon that was nicknamed "Long Vax"⁴² (patterned after Long Covid)—found no help in the institutionalized healthcare system. The conduct of the healthcare system caused large parts of the public to lose trust in the medical establishment and its recommendations.

After more than two years, the healthcare system declared victory over the virus, and it was accorded the status of another flu. Thus the madness passed, and the mouth that forbade (civil liberties) became the mouth that permitted.⁴³ If it was possible at the beginning to argue that the strict policy was a necessity in the face of a global pandemic, as time went on it became clear that countries that acted in a balanced manner—and even countries like Sweden that almost completely ignored the virus—achieved good "performance" in terms of mortality during those years, in addition to the fact that their populations continued their lives without closures and without compulsory vaccinations.

⁴¹ Recently medical researchers reported that at least one in every 939 adolescents (aged 12–15) who received the Pfizer vaccine had a myocardial infarction in the weeks following the injection.

(Yaakov Ophir, Yaffa Shir-Raz, David Shuldman, Nicolas Hulscher and Peter A. McCullough, "Cardiovascular safety signals in Israeli adolescents following COVID-19 Vaccination: Evidence from an unprocessed FOIA dataset", *International Journal of Cardiovascular Research & Innovation*, vol. 3, issue 4, 2025, pp. 1–5).

⁴² Shin Jie Yong, Tiff-Annie Kenny, Alice Halim et al., "Post-COVID-19 Vaccination (or Long Vax) Syndrome: Putative Manifestation, Pathophysiology, and Therapeutic Options", *Reviews in Medical Virology*, vol. 35, issue 5, 2025.

⁴³ Mishnah, Ketubot 2.

The Zehut Party will demand the following reforms to the healthcare system following its poor performance during the Coronavirus pandemic:

- In direct response to what went on during that period:
 - Opening the confidential protocols;
 - Establishing a committee to examine what considerations prompted the heads of the healthcare system and the government to adopt the policy of closures and compulsory vaccination;
 - Punishment for those found guilty of making decisions in response to foreign parties or representing foreign interests;
 - Reference to the findings of US Congressional Review of the Covid-19 Pandemic;⁴⁴ and
 - Removal from the healthcare system of anyone who violated the physician's oath.
 - We will examine the functioning of the Committee for the Investigation of Misleading the Public, the public warning letters that the Committee issued against doctors and therapists, and the Committee's compliance with procedures.
- Exit the World Health Organization (WHO) and discontinue any subordination to other international organizations. The State of Israel will reserve the right to examine and approve medicines and vaccines based on scientific indicators.
- Guidance and encouragement for a healthy lifestyle and preventive medicine, and not just drug treatment to treat illness. This approach leads to improvements in public health indicators through the simple means of sports activity, prevention of addictions, a healthy diet, and a healthy mind.
- Strengthening community-based hospitalization and diagnostic services (such as home hospitalization), with an aim towards transitioning to advanced remote medical services. In this way, we can significantly improve the quality of life of citizens at a low cost.
- No forced vaccinations will be given, and no economic or social sanctions will be applied to those who choose not to vaccinate. The Ministry of Health will provide the public with all available information regarding vaccine effectiveness and expected side effects.⁴⁵
- All vaccines will be subject to a control and monitoring system, and those who are vaccinated will be able to report directly using this system, without needing to go through a physician. In this way, all vaccines will be constantly tested and monitored in order to re-evaluate the effectiveness and, above all, the safety of routine vaccines.

⁴⁴ U.S. House of Representatives, "After Action Review of the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Lessons Learned and a Path Forward", December 4, 2024.

⁴⁵ As done by the US Department of Health in December 2025

("Keeping Education Accessible and Ending Covid-19 Vaccine Mandates in Schools", The White House, February 15, 2025).

A Sick System: From Over-Centralization to Privatization

Central Bureau of Statistics data shows that in 2023, about 35 percent of total national health expenditures came from private sources.⁴⁶ When unofficial private spending is also taken into account,⁴⁷ **at least half of national health expenditures come from private spending.** This means that the market is voting with its feet; citizens have already privatized half of the system. This privatization is necessary, both because of the long waiting times for tests, treatments, and surgeries, and because of the shortage of hospital beds and the alternative solutions to this shortage. However, this privatization is being done in opposition to the policies of successive Israeli governments, and while overcoming the obstacles they have erected.

Zehut's path to designing a better healthcare system begins with maintaining the threshold of healthcare services currently provided, and then encourages the development of a variety of transparent, efficient, and free-market based private healthcare services. We believe that concerning their health, people should have the exclusive right to determine their own priorities.

Encouraging medical immigration: Opening the healthcare market to competition will also attract entrepreneurs and investors from around the world to Israel. It will create new and rewarding jobs, which will encourage Jewish doctors and medical professionals to immigrate to Israel and settle here. Zehut will ensure the regulation of absorption and encouragement of immigration of medical professionals from developed countries, while fully recognizing their professional experience: qualifications that were earned in developed countries should be recognized in Israel. Today, the requirements of the Israeli healthcare system make it very difficult to absorb Jews from abroad who wish to immigrate and be accepted as practitioners into the Israeli healthcare system.

Abolition of affirmative action: As part of the plan to improve the quality of medical teams in Israel, "affirmative action" as is currently practiced with respect to the Arab sector, prioritizing the absorption of those with lower grades into the medical professions, will be ended.

Privatization of hospitals: Zehut's healthcare reform will leave the health funds in their current structure at this stage, including health insurance premium payments. The proposed reform focuses mainly on hospitals, which will be privatized through an open tender process; the health funds and the government will not be allowed to own hospitals. The developers who purchase the hospitals will commit in a long-term contract to maintain the current price level and not reduce the medical services of the hospitals they have purchased. The developers' holdings in the hospitals will be limited in a way that will require them to compete in the national market against other developers. The health funds will purchase services for their insured patients from private hospitals in the same way and at the same cost as they did from state-owned hospitals.

Opening the health market to competition will result in better service

Each private hospital will be allowed to engage in medical tourism and private surgeries, and will be able to dedicate regular hours to them from the beds it has and from the working hours of its medical staff. In this way, hospitals will gain access to a new and profitable source of income that will encourage them to raise their level of care and allow them to offer competitive salaries to doctors.

⁴⁶ "National Health Expenditure in 2023", Central Bureau of Statistics, Press Release, August 20, 2024.

⁴⁷ Such as unreported payments to doctors and therapists, and expenses incurred in hospitals outside of Israel.

The expected increase in salaries for qualified doctors will encourage them to stay and work in Israel, and will even encourage the immigration of medical staff from abroad.

Under the same license, each health entrepreneur will receive the right to establish a hotel and a commercial center near the hospital that will constitute an alternative source of income, in addition to its direct income from health funds and private surgeries. At the same time, the state will allow entrepreneurs to establish new private hospitals, and the only restriction will be compliance with medical standards.

In conclusion, the reform is expected to bring tens of billions of shekels into the state coffers immediately from the sale of government hospitals to entrepreneurs, contribute to the economy by developing the areas of medical tourism and private medicine, and save the state hundreds of millions in deficits each year. Privately owned hospitals will be managed efficiently and will become profitable and developing service providers. The potential profit in the areas of medical tourism and private medicine and the need to compete in the national and global arena will encourage health entrepreneurs to invest in raising the level of health services and the quality of the medical staff in hospitals, which will benefit all citizens who use their services.

Regulating the use of cannabis

Cannabis is used as a natural medicinal product, as well as for recreation, similar to alcohol and cigarettes. In Israel, its use is prohibited, although there are hundreds of thousands of active users, and until recently its medical use was very limited. The activity of the Zehut Party since 2019 has raised public awareness of the issue of medical cannabis, and today, obtaining it has become much easier: most of those who seek cannabis for medical purposes receive it.

Zehut does not encourage the use of cannabis for recreational purposes, especially among young people—on the contrary: we believe that every miracle product comes at a price, and that those that are not necessary should be avoided. **But Zehut does not see the state as having the right to prevent adults over the age of 21 from using this substance wisely.** Moreover, it has repeatedly become clear that precisely in places where the use of cannabis has been permitted—the tendency to consume it is smaller, in accord with the proverb “stolen water is sweet.”

Therefore, **Zehut will work for responsible legalization on the use and trade of cannabis and its components, while establishing appropriate regulations similar to those accepted in other countries around the world.** These are the primary terms that the Zehut party will adopt:

- The use of cannabis and its components, its cultivation, possession, and purchase will not be defined as offenses.
- The legal age for purchasing cannabis will be 21.
- The sale of cannabis and its components in places of recreation will be prohibited.
- A business that wants to sell cannabis or its components will need an appropriate business license, similar to the one currently required to sell alcohol, including the obligation to inform customers that they are purchasing cannabis products. Violation of the regulations will be defined as grounds for revocation of the license.

Communication

The Current Situation:

Government Control and Coercion of Values

Freedom of expression is one of the essential values of any free state. The state may not prevent the expression of an opinion simply because it is not to its liking. It may only do so in cases where there is a real harm to the life of another, such as defamation or the disclosure of classified security information. However, **to truly protect freedom of expression, it is not enough for the state to allow the expression of opinions; it must also refrain from interfering with the way in which an opinion is expressed.** In other words, every person must be allowed to express anything that he is legally permitted to express, by any means by which he can express it. Communication free from arbitrary restrictions and state interference is a necessary condition for the existence of freedom of expression.

*Zehut will work to close the Press Council and Public Broadcasting,
and to eliminate the need for government licenses to establish media
organizations*

The media in Israel is not free. Only those with franchises may broadcast on the radio, meaning that approval from the Second Authority for Television and Radio must be obtained. The Second Authority is willing to grant franchises only to those who meet a long list of dictates regarding the content being broadcast. This is in accordance with its role by law: beyond granting franchises and supervising franchisees, the Second Authority must promote cultural and social values in commercial media. For example, the Second Authority is committed to “giving expression to the culture of peoples, to human creation, and to the values of civilization for generations” and “to fostering good citizenship and strengthening the values of democracy and humanism.”

We believe that a body with this role has no place in a free state. The authorities should not impose their opinions and values on the public through the media, especially when this is done by restricting freedom of expression and using the resources of private bodies. Zehut will work to free private media bodies from the severe restrictions imposed on them, promote free communication, and protect freedom of expression.

The solution:

Separation of the media from the state

Open and free broadcasting for all

Broadcasting will be authorized by license, not by franchise. The franchise system will be abolished. The right to use the broadcasting frequencies will be leased at an equal price to everyone for a period of four years. The only condition for holding the license will be to refrain from publishing content prohibited by law. There will be no other restrictions on broadcast content.

Unlike the reform that Minister of Communications Shlomo Karhi has put forward, in which full supervision remains intact and is even extended to Internet broadcasts, most of the functions of the Second Authority will be abolished. It will continue to deal solely with distributing frequencies and broadcasting licenses to entrepreneurs who win the tender, collecting money from the winning

entrepreneurs, and supervising the broadcasts solely with the aim of ensuring that license holders do not violate the law and punishing those who have violated it.

Free press

Protecting freedom of expression means not only prohibiting the state from interfering in the content of newspapers, but also prohibiting interference in their business model. The attempt to pass a law whose sole purpose was to harm the publication of a particular newspaper demonstrates the importance of this prohibition.⁴⁸ Zehut will oppose any bill that imposes restrictions on the press or harms the free press in any way.

Closing state-owned media outlets

We believe that a free state cannot use media outlets to try to shape the culture and values of its citizens and residents. The state is supposed to be the instrument for expressing the identity of its citizens through political discussion and democratic decisions while preserving their individual rights—it is not supposed to be an actor that molds their identity by controlling their consciousness. Therefore, **the state must not be allowed to own media outlets**. Zehut will work to close or privatize all state-owned media outlets: Galei Tzahal, Galgalatz, the Israel Public Broadcasting Corporation, and Kol Israel.

⁴⁸ “A bill to promote and protect the written press in Israel,” or by its more familiar name, the “Israel Hayom Law,” was intended to harm the newspaper “Israel Hayom” by prohibiting the distribution of free newspapers—the unique business model of this newspaper among all the mainstream newspapers.

SECTION THREE

JUDAISM, CULTURE, AND THE STATE



Introduction and Basic Guidelines

Institutions of the State of the Jewish People

State Conversion and the Law of Return

The System of Jewish Civil Law

Identity and Independence in Culture

Funding for Yeshivas and the Humanities

Introduction and Basic Guidelines

Judaism and the State—Creating Distance in Order to Meet Freely

From **the complete Torah of Israel**, the **Jewish religion** developed—a diminished construct aimed at preserving the identity of the Jewish people in exile. Miraculously, the Jewish religion succeeded in preserving our national identity under impossible conditions. Despite the destruction of our Temple, the loss of our homeland, and the disintegration of our nation into isolated communities and their widespread dispersion in all possible and usually hostile exiles, the religion's miraculous durability succeeded in meeting the challenge of preserving the identity of the nation of Israel. This remarkable immortality completely deviates from the laws of nature and the history of other peoples.

However, when the people returned to their homeland, the Jewish religion alone was no longer sufficient to sustain—culturally and spiritually—a whole and living people in its land. Moreover, religion and its outward manifestations were considered a stumbling block in the eyes of a significant portion of the movements⁴⁹ that actually had the energies required to gather up the dry bones and rebuild the living body of the nation in its homeland. The process of returning to Zion and adherence to the Jewish religion have often been perceived as contradictory—both by many among the religious and by the pioneers of secular Zionism.⁵⁰

*We have a clear national identity,
and we advocate for personal freedom without compromise.*

Today, most sectors of society find themselves in **a fundamental identity crisis**.⁵¹ As we saw in the violent protests of 2023, this crisis poses the greatest danger to the future of the State of Israel, but it also contains the greatest potential for progress, as deep and great crises do.

The main obstacle preventing this opposition from evolving towards a healthy synthesis is **coercion**—cultural coercion, religious coercion, and secular coercion, **coercion that pushes both parties away from one another**. An example is the use of public funds to subsidize artists who are at odds with the culture of significant sectors of the public, sectors that feel culturally discriminated against to the benefit of other groups. Alternatively, ultra-Orthodox publics are exempt from military service and receive certain benefits, and this issue arouses the ire of the secular public.

Israeli citizens are able to tolerate and accommodate expressions of views that contradict their own, provided that the expression is not made in their name and is not financed with their money. Thus, on the one hand, there is a law in Israel that prohibits the sale of leaven on Passover, but anyone interested in selling leaven does so to their heart's content.⁵² On the other hand, there is no law in

⁴⁹ The reference is to movements and their tendencies. The people who filled these movements have always been diverse in their positions. The distance between the people of Israel and their original identity is never as great as it appears on the surface and in public statements.

⁵⁰ For more: Moshe Feiglin, *Israel Is Just the Beginning*, in the chapter "Israel's Challenge of Purpose."

⁵¹ The crisis came into full view during the protests against the judicial reform, in which many of the demonstrators openly admitted that they were motivated by fear of a "state run according to Jewish law."

⁵² This was also done under the auspices of the High Court of Justice, which in a move of judicial activism greatly narrowed the definition of the public sphere in which it is forbidden to sell *chametz*, blatantly distorting the legislator's intention. For the flaw in this form of conduct, see the chapter on the judicial system, in the first section above.

Israel that requires Jews to circumcise their sons—and yet the vast majority happily perform Jewish circumcision, which is not viewed as symbolizing “religion” but simply as being part of our identity.

The purpose of the State of Israel: A state of all its nations—or a Jewish state?

The State of Israel was established explicitly to be the state of the Jewish people, and as a national state it is intended to reflect this people and to be an expression of its values, culture, religion, aspirations, direction, and purpose in the world. In the last three decades, the struggle has intensified between those who seek to transform the State of Israel into a state of all its nationalities—a state alienated from the Jewish people, their teachings and culture, and instead part of a progressive worldview—and those who seek to maintain and strengthen a conservative, Jewish state, with ties and connection to the destiny of the Jewish people. The debate between the parties is usually occupied with questions of religion and state, but according to Zehut’s perspective, most of those discussions should take place between the individual and the community in which he lives, rather than between the individual and the state.

The politicians’ solution has been to try to find some point where both sides of the dispute could “tolerate” each other and lay down their weapons, so to speak. But the status quo was a default solution, and over the years its power has eroded. In order for their Jewish identity to be the property of the Israeli public and for a true and living culture to take root and flourish here, the correct approach is to remove the coercive power of the state from the playing field:

- **The citizen’s lifestyle**, his Sabbaths, his marriage, his diet, his culture, his education, and his religion—are his private affairs and the affairs of the community in which he has chosen to live, and it is best to minimize state interference in them as much as possible.
- On the other hand, **the character of the state**—that is, the law, the ethics of war, foreign policy, domestic policy, the gathering in of exiles, conversion, the attitude toward the Land of Israel, the language of the state, and the conduct of its official institutions—all of these are the arena in which the true Jewishness of the state as a state should be expressed.

Institutions of the State of the Jewish People

State Commitment to Halacha

In the areas of Shabbat, holidays, and kashrut, all state institutions and government organizations will continue to operate according to the laws accepted by the people of Israel throughout all generations, as a simple and fundamental expression of the State of Israel being a Jewish state. This is not a compromise intended to enable the integration of the religious in these and other institutions, but rather a basic and simple national principle.

The principle of the state institutions' obligation to abide by Jewish law is not the first step in imposing Jewish law on the entire state, but rather the opposite: state institutions are obligated to abide by Jewish law precisely because they are state institutions, and if they were not state institutions they would not be obligated to do so.

As we see it, the food in the Knesset cafeteria must be kosher, while the choice of whether to provide kosher food to all employees in a private business will be up to the business owner. Israel Railways and the Electric Company must observe Shabbat in their daily operations (so long as they are arms of the government), while private companies and enterprises will decide whether to do this without government intervention.

Fewer government companies—Less coercion

In the State of Israel, there are public transportation companies. So long as these organizations operate with taxpayer money and represent the official State of Israel—they cannot ignore everything that is involved in this representation. We will promote the privatization of these companies, which will lead to the question of their operation on Shabbat being subject to local communities⁵³ and not to a binding state law.

Israel Defense Forces

Lifestyle

As was rightly decided by David Ben-Gurion and Rabbi Shlomo Goren at the time of the establishment of the IDF,⁵⁴ the food served in the army will be kosher only. No non-operational activity will take place on Shabbat. An order requiring the desecration of Shabbat without an operational reason will be considered a patently illegal order⁵⁵ that justifies refusal to comply with the order.⁵⁶ The army will guarantee the right to maintain a lifestyle that adheres to Jewish law within the framework of military service. This basic framework, which at the time was a kind of compromise intended to allow religious soldiers to serve in the IDF not in separate religious units but as regular soldiers, is not seen by Zehut

⁵³ The question of the local community is not relevant to Ben-Gurion Airport, and to a large extent not to the trains either.

⁵⁴ Contrary to the opinion of both religious (part of the then National Religious Party) and secular (Mapam led by Ziesling), who acted against these agreements and did not see the unity of the Jewish people as a value worth striving for and sacrificing for.

⁵⁵ This also resulted from the decision of David Ben-Gurion, which supported the position of the Chief Military Rabbi at the time, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, in opposition to the view of the then Chief of Staff, Chaim Laskov.

⁵⁶ Jewish law states that carrying out necessary military orders is a mitzvah that must be observed on Shabbat and Yom Kippur.

as a compromise but as necessary morally, nationally, and statutorily. Since this national framework represents the Jewish people, and since it forcibly recruits everyone, it must provide all those who join its ranks with conditions in which they can live according to the dictates of their Jewish culture.

*State institutions do not act contrary to Jewish law,
but citizens are free to live as they choose*

Units involved in the army

The IDF's role is to win wars and maintain the security of the State of Israel.⁵⁷ Its role is not to serve as either a melting pot or a human laboratory. **Just as in competitive sports there is a separation between men and women, due to men and women's different abilities, so too is this the case in war.** Male fighters' close proximity to women diverts their attention from fighting to issues that are not appropriate for a combat force. The motivation to integrate women into combat units with men is not related to security—but to social processes and to the trend of introducing progressive ideas into society through the army. **The manner** in which women are integrated with men in combat roles in particular and in the army in general will be carried out while taking into account the values of all soldiers, and the norms of modesty to which society is committed. There is no reason to oblige a soldier to listen to women's singing, and there is certainly no justification for obliging soldiers to serve in mixed units that do not allow for minimum modesty.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ On this subject, see later, in the chapter "And Do Good: The Moral Code of the Israeli Army".

⁵⁸ Joint night watches, joint night patrols in pairs, mixed sleeping in the field—these are just some of the situations that the direct integration of women and men in combat roles brings. The norms that the army manages to enforce within the framework of rear units are not applicable within the framework of field units.

State Conversion and the Law of Return

Background:

Jewish Demography and the Boundaries of Identity Determination

The Zehut Party sees the continued ingathering of the Jews of the Diaspora as being of paramount importance. Their waves of immigration are of strategic importance in fostering the resilience of Israel—the State of the Jewish People. Soon this ingathering of the People of Israel will be complete, and even now, the majority of the Jewish people already live in the Land of Israel. Most of the Jews living abroad today are at real risk of persecution on the one hand, and are disappearing due to assimilation on the other. As a result of all this and for other reasons as well, large Jewish communities may come here in the coming years and decades. The fact that the Jewish population abroad is rapidly assimilating, while the bulk of the world’s Jewish population is located in the Land of Israel and is stable in its Judaism, requires a change in attitude towards the issue of conversion.

The State of Israel was not established only for the sake of those Jews who were in the Land of Israel at that time, but rather for the entire Jewish people. In this sense, **the State of Israel was established in order to enact the Law of Return**,⁵⁹ and it therefore rightfully constitutes the central anchor that legislatively binds the State of Israel to the Jewish people. Israel is committed to making every Jew a citizen,⁶⁰ but the definition of a person’s Judaism is a definition that depends on Judaism itself; that is, on Jewish law. Therefore, the State of Israel must have a state source of Jewish law that determines the question of who is a Jew.⁶¹ The authority to define Judaism, with regard to eligibility for the Law of Return, was entrusted to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, and rightly so, as it is the closest thing to a national body with decision-making authority that represents Judaism.⁶²

Judaism, as is well known, is neither racist nor missionary. The path to conversion to Judaism is open to every person on earth. As such, conversion in the State of Israel and abroad is also entrusted to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and its supervision. The debate over the general framework of the conversion courts and the nature of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel’s supervision of the process in Israel and abroad is largely a complex and professional debate. But beyond the tangle of slogans, the general principle is: **Conversion which grants eligibility for immigration to the Land of Israel and the acquisition of Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return must be carried out in accordance with accepted Jewish law, by Jewish religious courts that have been authorized to do so or that have been recognized by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel.**

⁵⁹ The Law of Return was formally adopted only after the time of the actual absorption and naturalization of hundreds of thousands of Jews, which further expresses its axiomatic nature to the State of Israel.

⁶⁰ Except for Jews who converted to another *religion*, thereby excluding themselves from identifying with the Jewish *people*.

⁶¹ The question of “who is a Jew” is relevant to the State of Israel in a variety of other areas, among the most important of which is mandatory conscription into the IDF, which is quite rightly applied based on national affiliation. This is because the State of Israel is indeed the state of the Jewish nation in particular, and in any case, the fundamental responsibility for its existence—expressed in the obligation to serve—is the heritage of this people. However, in practice, the halachic criterion is not taken into account in mandatory conscription, which creates additional complications.

⁶² Even if it is still very far from that.

When the Law of Return was enacted, there was an emphasis on the apparent illogic that people who were persecuted by the Nazis and survived the concentration and extermination camps as Jews would not be allowed to immigrate to the Land of Israel and become naturalized if they were not Jews according to Jewish law.⁶³ As a result, the Law of Return was defined on the basis of the definition of Jewishness in Jewish law while actually including the spouse of the Jew,⁶⁴ his children, and his grandchildren—an inclusion that was enshrined in the law in 1970 as part of the “grandchild clause.” Thus, a Jewish man married to a non-Jewish woman grants his wife and all his children and grandchildren and their spouses the right to naturalize, even though he is the only Jew among them in terms of Jewish law, and even if he himself does not immigrate to the country.

The Zehut Party sees the utmost importance in the continued ingathering of the Jews of the Diaspora to their homeland, and if need be will support conversions done entirely according to Jewish law—but without unnecessary stringencies

In Zehut’s eyes, this expansion of the Law of Return could have been better addressed if they had avoided naturalization and only allowed immigration and permanent residency, as was determined in relation to Jews who converted to Christianity following the case of Brother Daniel.⁶⁵ However, what happened, happened, and what was determined then has already been determined, and we are now looking to the future.

The Current Situation:

The Law of Return as an economic incentive for conversion

Fundamentally, conversion is based on the assumption that a person who wishes to convert is apparently an idealist, because life as a Jew is much more difficult than life as a non-Jew. However, today, since Israel has become a highly developed and prosperous country and thanks to the generous immigration benefits it offers, an Israeli passport that grants freedom of movement and the social welfare benefits that Israel’s citizens enjoy has become an excellent and often preferred immigration destination in the eyes of people from around the world, particularly from places where the Jewish population has assimilated.

An expression of this phenomenon is found in the current ripples of the massive wave of immigration from the countries of the disintegrated Soviet Union, which hit the State of Israel in the early 1990s. Everyone is aware of the enormous contribution of that mass immigration to the development of the country in so many areas, including the economy, science, culture, security, sports, and more. At the beginning of the wave of immigration, the majority of immigrants were Jewish according to Jewish law, by a rate of more than two-thirds, while a decade later the number of Jews according to Jewish law among immigrants from the CIS had dropped to only a third. Thus, over time, and especially recently—in light of the geopolitical changes in the region of the CIS countries, such as the Russia-

⁶³ That is, in practice, if they were not born to a Jewish mother.

⁶⁴ Provided that the marriage preceded the receipt of Israeli citizenship.

⁶⁵ Brother Daniel is the nickname of Shmuel Oswald Rufeisen. He was born a Jew and survived the Holocaust, converting to Christianity during it. After the Holocaust, he wanted to immigrate to the Land of Israel, but it was decided that he was not eligible for aliyah under the Law of Return, since the Law of Return does not apply to Jews who have converted.

Ukraine war—some of the potential immigrants are quite distant not only from Judaism and the Jewish way of life, but also from identification with the Jewish nation. The motivation of those who lack a connection to the Jewish nation is essentially material: they arrive as labor migrants and as people seeking an improved quality of life. Therefore, this reality should be treated as migration, and not as part of the process of the ingathering the exiles. In fact, this phenomenon actually endangers the character of Israel—as the state of the Jewish people, and creates a real potential for an assimilation crisis within the country.

The Solution:

Modifying the Law and Encouraging Aliyah

Zehut believes that the issue of eligibility for Aliyah within the framework of the Law of Return is of great moral and practical significance, and therefore it should be decided in the Knesset through legislation, and not based on court rulings and government decisions. The time has come to change the Law of Return and narrow the gap between it and the national-Jewish law definition of Judaism. We believe that the requested amendment to the Law of Return must take into account the human needs of those eligible and prevent the creation of insurmountable obstacles to them when they seek to exercise their right to immigrate to Israel, but at the same time, it must prevent the law from blurring the framework of belonging to the Jewish people and reduce as much as possible its use for economic migration.

Therefore, we propose:

- To make fundamental changes to the “grandchild clause,” which grants grandchildren of Jews and their spouses the automatic right to naturalize in the State of Israel under the Law of Return.
- To add to the Law of Return an explicit reference to the status of all eligible family members.

Zehut does not seek to retroactively apply the amendment to the Law of Return and will not support a change that would harm citizenship or residency status already granted by the Ministry of the Interior.

Likewise, in many places, the potential for immigrating has already been exhausted. The proactive effort of state bodies to continue and bring all eligible people in these places to Israel as immigrants does not stem from the value of the return to Zion, but from other interests.

Every Jew has a place in the State of Israel. The immigration of Diaspora Jews is expected to increase in the wake of the October 7th massacre, with the renewed outbreak of anti-Semitism in Western countries. The state must make this possible by completing the application of sovereignty throughout our country, releasing land reserves for construction, recognizing the professional licenses of those seeking to immigrate, removing barriers to the development of the economy, and creating many work opportunities. All of these will accelerate immigration and Jewish settlement in all parts of the country.

The System of Jewish Civil Law

A Voluntary Identity-Based Alternative

“Jewish civil law’s hold on us is many layered:

It is both our religion, a hereditary foundation, and an essential expression of our identity...

Just as we want the Land of Israel and the Hebrew language in particular, should they be good or bad (were such a thing possible), so too do we want the renewal of Jewish civil law!”

(Shabtai Ben-Dov)⁶⁶

The Vision

Law and justice are not a neutral technical tool for regulating the conduct of our lives, but are the state expression of the **culture, values, and national identity of each people in its state**. This is doubly true in relation to the people of Israel, whose original legal system, Jewish law, was understood by them throughout all periods and throughout the Diaspora as a fundamental expression of the Jewish way of life—not only in ritual matters but particularly in the areas of civil law.

Zehut will work for the practical revival of Jewish civil law, in its entirety, as a voluntary alternative civil justice system, existing in parallel to the current civil justice system, and available for use **provided that such use is agreed upon by both parties**.⁶⁷ This system will be fully recognized by the state.

The Current Situation:

Lack of an independent legal identity and distortion of the values of Israel’s heritage

Jewish civil law, which due to many circumstances has not taken its rightful place in the State of Israel, should have been the foundation of the Israeli legal system, being **our** law, and thus part of our identity as a Jewish state. This is especially true because it has advantages over existing law, even from a practical utilitarian perspective.⁶⁸ **As of today, Jewish civil law as a whole does not have any official status in the State of Israel.**⁶⁹ Not only that: the state’s judicial system is based on an *ad hoc* combination of the judicial systems that preceded it, primarily on English Common Law.

⁶⁶ “Jewish Law and the State of Israel,” in *A Ladder to the Destined Kingdom of Israel: The Writings of Shabtai Ben Dov*, edited by Yehuda Etzion (Sulamot Publishing 2007), vol. 3, p. 64 [Hebrew].

⁶⁷ The existence of such a dual legal system is not in actual contradiction to Judaism, as it may seem at first glance. Jewish law recognizes in advance the duality of the legal system in a Jewish state and the completion of the halachic legal system by the civil one, as is clearly expressed in the book *Derashot HaRan*, Drush 11.

⁶⁸ In particular, it is worth noting the firm position of Jewish law against the intolerable protraction of trials without limits, which in Jewish law is called “judicial torture.” Jewish law does not recognize the legitimacy of the hyper-prolongation of the legal process as is accepted in existing civil law.

⁶⁹ The existing courts for property matters have the status of arbitrators only, as does any private body engaged in arbitration.

It is true that those who wish to may bring property disputes to private courts that rule according to Jewish law, and which have the status of arbitrators whose rulings (like those of any other arbitrator) are backed by the state. This option is certainly important, and within its framework many Jewish courts have sprung up and serve an increasingly diverse public.⁷⁰ However, it should be remembered that this option has nothing to do with the identity of the State of Israel *as a state*, since it is possible in exactly the same way to open a court for property disputes that will rule according to the laws of Hammurabi, or according to Turkish law, with the status of an arbitrator, so long as its rulings do not conflict with the laws of the state.

The flaw in the attempts at integration

“The attempt to introduce the spirit of the Torah into
laws that contradict the Torah only creates an illusion...
There is nothing gained by this. There is even corruption in it.
Half-truths are worse than lies...
Our primary efforts should be to expand the powers of the Jewish courts.”
(Rabbi Shaul Israeli)⁷¹

Since the establishment of the state (and even before that) and up until today, there has been much talk about the need to integrate Jewish law into the official law of the State of Israel. The “Basic Law: Judiciary” states as follows:

“When the court finds a legal question that requires adjudication, and finds no answer thereto in legislation, in binding precedent, or by analogy, it shall decide the matter in accordance with the principles of liberty, justice, equity, and peace embodied in the heritage of the Jewish People.”

Ostensibly, this is a real commitment to treat Judaism’s legal tradition as Israeli judicial sources as defined by law. However, a closer look at the precise wording clearly reveals that this commitment is not concrete at all and is not even indirectly related to any content, and in particular not to the specific laws and principles of Jewish civil law as they are written and worded. Furthermore, even when Jewish civil law is introduced into the Israeli state legal system, this is always done by taking the parts of Jewish civil law that correspond to the worldview of “justice, equity and peace” as understood by the judges, while they very easily omit the parts that they do not perceive as such, essentially distorting the original content. This is what Aharon Barak, whose approach to the subject has been the dominant approach—during his time, before it, and after it—wrote on the subject: “It would be wrong to replace English law with Jewish civil law as a source for interpreting legislation... In my view, not only does granting priority to Jewish civil law offer no benefit—it actually runs counter to the very the very nature of the interpretive task.”⁷²

The problem of coercion

The State of Israel is prevented from adopting Jewish civil law in its details as a binding and exclusive law, because this would be the imposition of an essentially religious institution on all citizens of the

⁷⁰ There are currently about forty such active courts throughout the country.

⁷¹ “Torah Law and State Law,” in *Rabbinat and State* (Rabbi Kook Institute, 2015 edition), p. 316 [Hebrew].

⁷² The Hendelles ruling against Kupat Am.

state. Only those who wish to ignore this fundamental problem can honestly promote an agenda for adopting Jewish law in the state as a binding law on all citizens.⁷³

It would be illogical for judges who are not committed to Judaism to judge according to its laws. It would be naive, and even unjust, to demand from a judge like Aharon Barak that he judge according to Jewish civil law, and to expect him to agree to do so in a manner faithful to the source.

The Solution: An Identity-Based Alternative

“It turns out that the judges (the Sanhedrin) were appointed only
to judge cases of Torah law...
whereas the king (the government) was appointed to perfect the political
order and to address all that was necessary for the exigencies of the time.”
(Derashot HaRan, Drush 11)⁷⁴

Recognizing that replacing existing state law with Jewish civil law is unrealistic, and recognizing the existential need to give a principled, practical, and official state expression to Jewish law as an expression of the Jewish identity of the state, Zehut is paving a new-old path that makes room for both systems simultaneously.

Jewish law has always recognized the essential need for a parallel state civil state legal system that operates according to rules that do not strictly conform to Jewish law. This system is meant to function alongside—and subordinate to—the Jewish religious legal system, in order to address practical issues in Jewish public and political life that cannot be easily resolved within the confines of purely Jewish law.

*Zehut will work for the practical revival of Jewish civil law,
in its entirety, as a voluntary alternative civil judicial system*

Zehut will act inspired by this position, although without the subordination of one system to another. We propose defining Jewish civil law as a recognized parallel official state judicial system in the State of Israel, autonomous from Knesset legislation, just as religious legislation has always been autonomous from state intervention. The validity of the rulings of the Jewish courts recognized by the state will be the same as the validity of the rulings of civil courts—subject to two reservations, which are detailed below.

⁷³ In truth, this is quite convenient for all concerned. Those who would expand the role of Jewish law can claim to their constituents that they are advocating on its behalf, and those who are opposed to it can always block it due to its coercive nature.

⁷⁴ A classic medieval text by Rabbi Nissim of Gerona. This idea appears in other sources as well, such as the classical formulation of Maimonides: “Anyone who takes a life without clear evidence (so that they cannot be convicted under Torah law) ... the king is permitted to execute them and to restore order to the world according to the needs of the time (not according to Torah law, but according to the king’s law)”, Mishnah Torah, Laws of Kings, Chapter 3.

Jewish law will apply only in the civil sphere

The jurisdiction of the Jewish courts will be limited to civil matters only and will not extend to criminal law. In other words, the state will not prosecute thieves and murderers via the Jewish courts, but exclusively through the existing state judicial system. This stems not only from the practical compromise required by the difficulty of running a country with two parallel and potentially conflicting legal systems, but also from a fundamental principle.

True, rabbinical courts historically did handle criminal cases and mete out punishments. However, it is well known that Jewish law has not engaged in institutionalized state criminal justice for nearly two thousand years—due to a deliberate waiver of its authority in the sphere, and even more so because of restrictions by foreign rulers. Consequently, today, Judaism has relatively little to offer in the realm of criminal law. On the other hand, when it comes to civil law and monetary disputes, the situation is the reverse: the continuous involvement of Jewish courts in these matters has never been interrupted.

Appeal to the Jewish Court—Only with the consent of both parties

The Jewish courts authorized by the state will be authorized to hear only cases in which both parties are expressly interested in presenting their claims before the Jewish court. In any case where one of the parties is not interested in doing so, the Jewish court will be prevented from addressing the other party's claim, and the litigants will be referred to general civil law.

The practical implication: State backing and autonomy

The essential difference between the situation that Zehut seeks to achieve and the current situation concerns the sovereignty of Jewish law. In the situation we propose, when the Jewish court rules in a legal case between two parties who agreed upon using its services, its ruling will be binding according to the laws of the State of Israel, regardless of the existing legal system. The legal authorities will be obliged to implement the rulings of the Jewish Courts by virtue of their status as state courts, just as they are obliged to implement the rulings of civil courts today.

Furthermore, in the event that one of the parties wishes to appeal against a ruling of the court, he will be able to appeal only to a higher instance of the Jewish courts. Once he has decided that his case will be decided in the Jewish court, he will not have the right to turn to another legal system to adjudicate the matter, and the general civil legal system will not have the authority to deal with the case.

The revival of Judaism as a relevant national culture

When the average Israeli today—secular and religious alike—comes to understand that the Jewish civil law offered by the Torah provides better solutions to the practical legal issues of daily life than the current state systems imported from other nations, this will mark the real breakthrough of Judaism into the realm of national relevance.

Identity and Independence in Culture

The Vision:

Independent Cultural and Spiritual Flourishing

The state must not interfere in matters of culture and religion, neither by funding them nor by directing them. This is in the best interest of culture, of religion, and especially of the people from whom both culture and religion spring and to whom they ultimately return. We envision a magnificent national cultural flourishing and the emergence of extraordinary creative energies in the State of Israel, all growing directly from the people themselves, without any need for government intermediaries. We want to witness a culture come into being that is deeply rooted in the people, one that the people themselves invite and consume, and through which they express themselves to the highest possible levels. These peaks lie dormant within the people, waiting for the creative works that will turn that potential into reality.

“As long as even one sketch hidden in the depths of the soul is missing, which has not yet been realized, there remains a duty on the part of the artist to draw it out,” wrote Rav Kook,⁷⁵ and indeed **this is the duty of art and artists—but that does not mean that the public has an obligation to finance them.** Culture should not be a tax imposed on the public by force. Cultural creation based on taxation of the population and distribution according to government criteria produces a culture that sees no need for to engage with the values and desires of the public. Instead, it sees the public as an object to be educated—at that same public’s expense. In Zehut’s view, this position is immoral. If an artist wants to educate the public, as artists with a moral mission often do, he is free to do so with his own money or with the money of his supporters and patrons—but not with the money of the public he seeks to shape. The same applies to religion and tradition. Indeed religion is part of culture and culture is part of religion, especially among the Jewish People.

The Current Situation:

Funding culture creates ideological coercion

In the State of Israel, funding cultural activity at the national and municipal levels from tax money is considered a given, and anyone who opposes it is denounced as an enemy of culture in general. The conflict in Israeli public life is not about the government’s involvement in funding culture, but rather about the goals of this funding. Beyond that, the question of the government’s goals for culture occasionally makes the headlines, but the bulk of the organized funding for cultural institutions, which passes through municipalities from funds derived from property taxes, flows without anyone wondering how it is distributed, so long as no real scandal makes the headlines.

But the scandals that surface every day are nothing more than an expression of a fundamentally flawed reality, in which at any given time every citizen finances—from the national and municipal taxes he pays—cultural, ethical, and religious content with which he does not identify at all, and even opposes vehemently. Why would a Haredi person participate in financing a soccer stadium that

⁷⁵ Rav Kook’s introduction to the Song of Songs, which appears in the book *Olat Rai’ah* on the Jewish prayer book.

neither he nor his children nor grandchildren will ever enter, when after all, he is also fundamentally opposed to the entire culture that this stadium represents? Why would a person who has nothing to do with observing the commandments of Judaism finance cantorial performances in synagogues? Why should a national-religious person fund the Israel Museum's archaeology department, which tells those who enter its gates that the people of Israel are descendants of the Canaanites, and that the God of Israel is the reincarnation of a Canaanite idol? And beyond that, why should citizens' money be directed, as part of cultural funding, to political channels that fundamentally contradict their values?

For the benefit of culture and of religion, the state should not involve itself in either of them.

In 1978, after a film adaptation of *Khirbet Khizeh* was produced by the Israel Broadcasting Authority, a major controversy erupted. Critics argued that it should be forbidden to use public funds to produce a work so far removed from the mainstream ethical and political consensus of the time.⁷⁶ Opponents of this view raised the familiar arguments about artistic freedom, the dangers of censorship and silencing dissent, and the importance of open cultural discourse. In 2010, the Habima National Theater announced that it would refuse to perform in Ariel, claiming to do so would contradict the moral convictions of its actors. This sparked a fierce public debate, as Habima is a government-funded institution. Eventually, a compromise was reached. In 2016, the Minister of Culture announced that she planned to impose heavy fines on state-funded cultural institutions that refused—for political reasons -- to perform in places like Ariel and Kiryat Arba.⁷⁷

Zehut believes that both sides are absolutely right. "Anyway, who wants to go to a performance and see actors who are only acting because they're compelled?" Zehut Chairman Moshe Feiglin asked at the time.⁷⁸ It's clear that artists—like all humans—are supposed to act according to the dictates of their conscience, and it is clear that those who receive a budget from the government must perform the role the government hired them to perform. The problem is with the system, not the people. Stage actors should not have to appear in Ariel if they do not want to, but the citizens of Ariel should not have to finance Habima's activities out of their own pockets.

This simple truth has been forgotten in Israel: freedom of conscience and free, revolutionary, and avant-garde artistic creativity are completely and structurally incompatible with government funding. Either the citizens' money is directed against them and their values, or the artists are forced to forfeit their integrity.

The solution:

Ending government funding and moving to a municipal "voluntary tax" model

Today, people are forced to regularly finance activities that contradict their own values—in order for activities that are consistent with his values to receive funding as well. This reality is immoral and is

⁷⁶ There had not been outrage prior to this because when Mapai ruled the State of Israel, the use of public funds for cultural and political needs was taken for granted and surprised no one. The affair of the film adaptation of *Khirbet Khizeh* took place after the Likud came to power in the "upheaval" of 1977.

⁷⁷ Yonatan Rieger, "First Publication: Regev Threatens to Fine Cultural Institutions", MAKO, February 23, 2016 [Hebrew].

⁷⁸ From a Facebook post by Moshe Feiglin, October 25, 2016.

in complete opposition to genuine moral independence, which is the basis of a deep culture. Zehut will act to change this. **We will gradually close the Ministry of Culture**, thereby largely ending direct government involvement in cultural matters, including its financing and its direction. Cultural funding from tax revenues will be shifted to the municipal and neighborhood level, rather than remaining a national government responsibility.

Although the Ministry of Culture has a large budget and extensive influence, the majority of cultural funding in Israel still comes from local authorities through property taxes (*arnona*). We believe this is both appropriate and correct—with one important reservation: Zehut maintains that every citizen has the right not to finance, **even at the municipal level**, cultural and ideological activities that he is not interested in and even opposes. The Zehut Party's plan is to separate taxes for culture and religion from regular municipal taxes and make them voluntary.

In Zehut's voluntary financing model, public bodies will be prohibited by law from financing cultural institutions with funds that do not come either from the voluntary cultural tax or from private donations. Voluntary cultural tax funds will be authorized for disbursement only for cultural purposes. The amount of the voluntary cultural tax will be determined by the local authority—which may divide it into several tiers, or even make the amount entirely discretionary—and every resident will be free to choose not to pay at all. The local authority will also have the right to provide cultural services (such as subsidized tickets) only to those who pay the voluntary culture tax or to use the voluntary tax funds to subsidize cultural services for residents who cannot afford them. If residents are not satisfied with the way the municipality allocates the cultural budget, they can choose not to contribute to it.

Funding Yeshivas and the Humanities

The Vision: Striving for Independence

Torah study is a foundational national value. The State of Israel—the state of the Jewish People—must recognize this and avoid harming those who dedicate their lives to it. At the same time, it is highly desirable that Torah study not depend on government budgets or political institutions. Dependence of this kind produces a partial and distorted Torah.

One of the most heated topics in Israeli public discourse over the past thirty years has been the funding of yeshivas. Zehut's approach to this complex issue is derived from its broader principle of keeping the state out of cultural and religious affairs, while simultaneously recognizing the existing reality on the ground, and treating the world of Torah on par with the world of the humanities. Zehut envisions independent worlds of Torah and the humanities, which are not dependent on government favor, either financially or spiritually. Instead, they will be supported by private and community capital—from students and spectators who come to learn, and from the public that wishes to contribute to the advancement of the goals embodied in these institutions of study and research. When the worlds of Torah and the humanities in Israel are freed from the incubator of public funding, both Torah and the humanities will benefit—but above all, the Israeli public will benefit, as it will reap the authentic fruit of a free, vibrant, and independent national culture.

The Current Situation:

Loss of Spiritual Independence and the Decline of the Elites

Even if it seems convenient for all parties involved, government funding for Torah institutions and institutions of higher education in the humanities causes profound damage. This damage does not stem from any ill will on the part of those receiving the funding, but from the very nature of government funding and its influence. The funding provided to yeshivas requires an entire army of inspectors and agents whose purpose is to enforce the eligibility criteria. Beyond that, these criteria—however logical they may be—effectively act as brakes on the ability of yeshiva students to achieve financial independence, and confine them to a path where they remain dependent on government funding.

A far more serious phenomenon is the anti-elitism that develops in institutions that receive funding on a per-capita basis. Yeshivas throughout Jewish history have always been rigidly elitist institutions, and yeshiva students were a symbol of self-sacrifice and boundless dedication. All of this has been damaged in Israel, largely due to the corrupting influence of funding. When expelling a student means not an increase in the available budget but a decrease in funding, it's no wonder that yeshivahs cling to every student willing to remain under their roof. All of this pales in comparison to the loss of spiritual independence that this funding dictates. When the weapon of funding is held by the state and constantly brandished, yeshiva heads comply with whatever speech is permissible in order to continue receiving funding.

*Direct funding for both yeshivas and the humanities should be ended,
for the sake of a free market of ideas*

In the humanities, the situation is similar. Despite the tradition of academic freedom, which supposedly allows for greater freedom of expression, in practice faculty members and students are severely limited in their ability to express themselves and conduct research outside the boundaries set by the prevailing progressive consensus. Research and statements that do not conform to the progressive line encounter resistance—from the grades students receive on exams to the acceptance of candidates for research positions. Once a researcher is accepted as a faculty member, his or her advancement in academia depends on securing research grants, publishing papers, and climbing the academic ladder—all of which are decided in closed committees, essentially a trial in which the defendant does not know who the judges are and is not even allowed to appear before them. Once a majority is formed in these closed committees, a built-in bias is created that dictates the accepted line of research through which one can advance. This bias makes it very difficult to develop research that does not toe the line. Thus, under the guise of academic freedom, a structure has been created that encourages uniform thinking and homogenous creativity and blocks new ideas and genuine dialogue. In addition, the unjustified inflation of the humanities faculties is a direct result of the funding policy of the Council for Higher Education, which funds them in direct proportion to the number of students who choose to study there.

Contrary to popular belief, the golden age of the humanities in the 19th century was accompanied by very little public funding. Today, however, every humanities student receives a generous government subsidy, and universities and colleges encourage people who are not particularly suited to these abstract fields to pursue degrees that offer limited employment prospects. The predictable result is that across the Western world—and in Israel as well—there is a growing number of unemployed academics, graduates of the humanities faculties, whom the state must then support through various government-initiated employment programs and welfare initiatives.

The solution:

Equal treatment for yeshivas and the humanities

“My situation does not allow me to complain
about the funds given to those studying the Torah,
because it seems that I myself receive more from the public coffers
than yeshiva students do for engaging with the very same Torah.”
(Prof. Yehuda Liebes, one of the leading scholars of Jewish studies)⁷⁹

Zehut believes that the one-sided focus on the funding of the Torah world is fundamentally flawed. There is no essential difference between the funds given to Torah institutions and those given to the humanities faculties of academic institutions. In both cases, public funds are being transferred to educational institutions engaged in fields that offer no direct economic benefit on the one hand, and which express spiritual pursuits that supposedly require public funding for their cultivation and

⁷⁹ Yehuda Liebes, “Reflections on the Religious Significance of Kabbalah Research,” in: *Derech Ruach: Sefer HaYovel l’Eliezer Shaviv* (edited by Yehoyada Amir), 2005.

preservation on the other. Contrary to a widespread view in Israel, funding of the Chair of Egyptology at the Hebrew University is no more self-evident than funding the Mir Yeshiva.

But the issue does not end there. The comparison between funding yeshivas and funding the humanities runs even deeper. Although it didn't have to turn out this way, the fact is that currently the humanities faculties at academic institutions in Western countries do not represent the prevailing views of the general public. In the United States, for example, more than 90 percent of faculty members in the humanities consistently support the Democratic Party.⁸⁰ A horrifying demonstration of this fact was seen following the October 7th massacre, when progressives at Western universities joined forces with Islam against the Jewish people. This phenomenon also exists in Israel—and even more intensely. The historical roots of Israeli humanities are planted in the radical left “Brit Shalom” organization, which united the founding fathers of Israeli humanities research. As a result, the leftward bias is much smaller in the exact sciences. This leads to the conclusion that public funding for the humanities is not self-evident, and in any case, it should be balanced by parallel funding of yeshivot.

Zehut maintains that government funding of the humanities in Israel justifies the funding of yeshivas, and vice versa. The desired direction is a gradual and symmetrical reduction in the dependence of these institutions on government support. This will open the way for research in the humanities and Torah study that are more independent, respectable, and authentic, for the benefit of us all.

⁸⁰ Mitchell Langbert, “Homogenous: The Political Affiliations of Elite Liberal Arts College Faculty”, *Academic Questions*, 31, 2018, pp. 186–197.

