



*Lesson Plan (50 minutes)*

# Inside Israel's Knesset

## Step 1: Start with the goals/questions

### Goals: What are the goals of this lesson?

**Affective** – Students will appreciate the diversity of community and ideologies found in the many different Knesset parties.

**Behavioral** – Students will be able to actively follow Israeli politics and identify which party (or parties) reflect their values.

**Cognitive** – Students should understand how Israeli elections and Knesset coalitions work, and the advantages and disadvantages of this method of government.

### Essential Questions/Big Ideas:

*What deep questions and enduring understandings do we want students to be grappling with?*

1. How can the Knesset teach us about the diversity of communities and ideologies found in Israeli society?
2. Should Israel prioritize being a Jewish state or a state of all its citizens?
3. How might Israel's electoral system operate in a more efficient way?
1. The diversity of opinions and ideologies found in Israel's political parties are reflective of the different viewpoints that always existed within Zionism.
2. Israeli governments typically require the formation of a coalition of different political parties in order to rule.
3. An existing tension within Israeli politics is the balance between Israel being a Jewish state and a state of all of its citizens.

## Step 2: Learning Plan

### Hook/Trigger: (10 minutes)

*Will I use a UED video, question, scenario...*

**Video and Kahoot:** Watch the [Knesset video](#) and play the [Kahoot](#)/review questions.

Ask students:

1. What are 2 questions they have about the Israeli Knesset?
2. List 1 advantage to the Israeli Knesset system and 1 challenge.

### Learning Activity: (25 minutes)

*What am I using from UED resources (video, discussion question, game, debate)? Do these materials fit the unit goals/essential questions?*

1. Discussion: Choose one question (5 minutes)
  - a. Israel's electoral system

Watch this [video](#) from 0:00-2:08 to understand how Israel's electoral system functions. Israel's electoral system is often scrutinized because the electoral threshold to enter the Knesset is low (3.25%). Therefore, it is often difficult to form and maintain a ruling coalition. But some people make the [opposite argument](#). Read the following quote from journalist Haviv Rettig Gur: "There is more to Israel's electoral system than meets the eye. It doesn't just magnify the tribal divides; it allows Israeli society to mediate and manage them in ways that help prevent political violence. It forces majorities to pay heed to minorities – sometimes too much, sometimes not enough, but the simple fact that Haredim, religious-Zionists, Sephardi Jews, Russian-speakers, and so on and so forth all get a seat at the table, to the boundless frustration of prime ministers who resent the political juggling act this entails, has shaped some of the best features of Israeli society, from its cohesion to its very democracy.

Compare the differences between the electoral systems of the country where you grew up and Israel. Do you believe Israel's electoral system needs to change (ie. fewer parties, raise the electoral threshold, have political

representation for geographic areas), or should it be left as is?

b. Arab-Israeli participation in Israeli politics

Traditionally, Arab parties have refrained from joining governing coalitions in Israel's Knesset. In fact, the first time that an Arab party did join a ruling coalition was in 2021 when Mansour Abbas's Ra'am party joined the government. Some critics from the Arab community accused Abbas of abandoning the Palestinian cause while Abbas [explained](#) that (based on the teachings of his mentor Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish) he believed that the route to improving the situation for Arabs in Israel and pursuing peace was through actually participating in Israeli politics. From an Israeli-Arab perspective, what do you think is more effective: joining a ruling coalition to make change or to make change from outside of the coalition?

2. Learning activity: mock elections (25 minutes)

Divide your students into small groups and give each the name of an existing [Israeli political party](#). Each group must create an advertisement for their party on three key issues: religion and state; negotiations with the Palestinians; the economy. Once each group has presented their party's vision to the larger group, conduct a vote using [paper ballots](#) as done in Israel to determine your imaginary government. For a more detailed overview of how to facilitate mock elections, use this [framework](#).

### **Reflection: (5 minutes)**

*How can I help students connect with the material on a deeper and personal level?*

### **Dilemmas related to coalition building:**

Many members of Knesset are faced with serious challenges when they need to decide whether they should join a government coalition that doesn't align with their values. Put yourself in the shoes of a member of Knesset facing this scenario. Would you join a ruling coalition knowing that you would have to make concessions on some of your values and campaign promises? What's more important: your own values or preventing another round of elections?

## Step 3: Assessment

### Checking for Understanding: (5 minutes)

*Were my learning goals met?*

Ask students to list the name of the Israeli political party they would vote for (and that best suits their interests). Explain why they would vote for that party.

### What to think about when lesson planning:

- Is my lesson being driven by the goals/essential questions?
- Is the UED video the hook or the learning activity?
- Do I have to adjust for the age levels of my students (excerpts, simplify the questions...)?