

The Daily Portion • Sivan Rahav-Meir



A Personal Account of the 1st Israeli Elections in 1949

This is how Rabbi Moshe Alpert of Jerusalem's pre-State Old Yishuv described the first Israeli elections to the Knesset in 1949. To give us some perspective, the day before Israel's elections, above all the blaring headlines and non-stop noise:

"At 5:35 AM we woke up, my wife, my brother Reb Shimon Leib and my brother-in-law Reb Natanel Solduchil. And after we drank coffee we put on Shabbat clothing in honor of this great and holy day, because 'This is the day the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be happy on it.' After 2000 or more years of exile, you could say that from the six days of Creation until this day, we have not merited to see a day like this, that we are holding elections in a Jewish state. Shehechyanu! Blessed is the One that kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this day! So we went to the voting station near Chabashim Street with our identity cards in hand. With great and mighty joy we walked the short way there, and the entire way I walked like it was Simchat Torah and I was circling with a Torah scroll, because I was holding the identity card of our new Jewish State in my hand.

My happiness and joy knew no bounds! The assistant at the voting station brought the ballot box, and the chairman called out to me and said 'V'Hadarta Pnei Zaken' - 'And you shall honor the old man', And he told me that since I was the oldest person present, I would be the first to vote. With a thrill of awe and holiness, I handed my identity card over to the chairman, and he read out my name from my card and from the book of voters.

And the deputy chairman wrote down my name and handed me the number 1. Then he handed me an envelope and I went into the other room, where there were ballots from all the parties. And with a shaking hand, moved with holiness, I took one ballot marked "B," for the Religious Union party, and I placed the ballot inside the envelope I had received from the deputy chairman.

I reentered the polling room, and I showed them that I held only one envelope. Then the holiest moment of my life arrived. The moment that neither my father nor my grandfather had the privilege to experience in their lifetimes. Only me, in my time, in my lifetime, did I merit to experience such a holy and pure moment as this... What joy for me and my portion!

At 6:28 AM, we returned home and went to pray. What a great holiday!"

Sivan Rahav-Meir is the author of #PARASHA • To receive 'The Daily Portion' straight to your mobile phone, SMS your name to 058-679-9000