



Update . . .

November 2008

5769 Cheshvan



The Israeli Knesset: Jerusalem, Israel.

What Brought Down the Government?

by Richard D. Weisskopf, chairman

The 17th Knesset session faced serious challenges from its beginning. Within 90 days of swearing in, the Israeli government found itself in the Second Lebanon War. It was a nightmarish war, to say the least. Nobody was prepared for it.

The battleground shifted from the hills and towns of southern Lebanon to the Knesset committee chambers and court rooms. One allegation followed another ranging from corruption charges to sexual harassment to mishandling peace negotiations. However, the 17th Knesset session managed to survive and even maintain a diverse government under circumstances when most previous government sessions would have collapsed.

This begs the question, what was the straw that broke the camel's back?

What brought down the government?

During the most recent coalition negotiations, the Shas party demanded an increase for child welfare to the 2009 budget and Kadima refused. It was not a war, scandals or terrorism that finally brought down the government. It was Israeli orphans!

Why is it so hard to secure funding for at-risk kids? In a democracy, orphans are the only group with no political voice of their own. They are the only ones completely vulnerable to the whims of strangers. Even the poor and elderly exercise their rights to vote. By contrast, orphans do not have such rights nor do they have biological parents with full-time vestments in their wellbeing.

When a democratic government makes budget cuts, at-risk kids are usually first on the chopping block. When negotiating next year's budget, orphans are usually pushed to the back of the line. They cannot raise their own political voice in protest and child welfare professionals are often limited in their abilities to challenge such priorities.

Israel is a precious and unique country which the scriptures hold to a higher standard than any other democracy.

Every summer Jewish people all over the world commemorate the losses of the first two temples. We introspectively ponder our past mistakes, strive to learn from them and hope to avoid the same mistakes in our future. A verse we read during this period explains that our ancient governments failed to defend the orphans, among other things (Is. 1:23). How ironic - the same problem brought down our ancient governments also brought down the 17th Knesset session.

Each year we read a key solution to keeping a strong and secure Israeli government is to defend our orphans (Is. 1:17). In fact, this is to be a top priority. Such a priority does not make political sense – but has been a spiritual reality

throughout Jewish history.

It is commendable to see political parties like Shas stand their ground for the sake of Israeli orphans. Knesset Members like Nadia Hilo who devote their careers to advocating for at-risk children deserve our support and respect. Hopefully the 18th Knesset session will be characterized as a government that will defend the rights of at-risk children. If so - issues like peace, security and the economy might not seem so insurmountable.

Now more than ever the Love for Israel Relief Fund calls on your support as we advocate for at-risk Israeli children. This is an opportune time to lobby Knesset parties and members as they campaign for the 18th Knesset session. We rely upon your support as we raise awareness with our leaders about the importance of defending at-risk Israeli children. Together, we can be a voice for these kids who have no political voice of their own.

You can donate online at:
<http://love4israel.org/donate.html>

Send checks to:
Love for Israel Relief Fund
2020 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Suite 445
Washington, DC 20006