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Chaos

Under the guise of democracy, Netanyahu has sown the seeds of chaos from which there is no way back

David Grossman

Everything that has happened in Israel since the election is ostensibly legal and democratic. But under its cover – as has happened more than once in history – the seeds of chaos, emptiness and disorder have been sown in Israel's most vital institutions.

I am not talking merely about the enactment of new laws, extreme and outrageous though they are, but about a deeper, more fateful change, a change in our identity, a change in the character of the state. And the election wasn't fought over this change; this isn't what Israelis went to the polls to vote on.

Throughout the negotiations to form a new government, a verse from the book of Isaiah has been constantly running through my head – “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that change darkness into light, and light into darkness; that change bitter into sweet, and sweet into bitter!” In the background, like a Chinese water torture, I constantly hear MK Moshe Gafni proclaiming, “Half the people will study Torah and half will serve in the army.” And each time, my brain chafes, this time in part for completely personal reasons.

The negotiations, which more closely resembled a



Incoming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Ohad Zwigenberg

looting spree, have flickered before our eyes in rapid pictures, in flashes of an alien, provocative logic – “the override clause,” “the discrimination law,” “Smotrich will be the ultimate arbiter on construction in the West Bank,” “Ben-Gvir will be able to set up a private militia in

the West Bank,” “The serial criminal Dery will be able...” In the blink of an eye, with increasing freneticism, with the sleight of hand of a streetwise card sharp.

We know that someone is deceiving us at this very moment. That someone is pocketing not just our

money, but our future and that of our children, the existence we wanted to create here – a state where, despite all its flaws and shortcomings and blind spots, the possibility of becoming a civilized, egalitarian country, one that has the power to absorb contradictions and differences, one that

in time will even manage to free itself of the cursed occupation, occasionally shines through. A country that could be Jewish and believing and secular, a high-tech power and traditional and democratic, and also a good home for its minorities. An Israeli state where the multiplicity of societal

and human dialects won't necessarily create fears and mutual threats and racism, but will instead lead to cross-fertilization and flourishing.

Now, after the dust storm has settled, after the dimensions of the catastrophe have been revealed, Benjamin Netanyahu may be telling

himself that after his sowing of chaos has achieved its goals – destroying the legal system, the police, education and anything that emits a whiff of “leftism” – he will be able to turn back the clock, erase or at least moderate the crazy, dishonest worldview he himself created and go back to leading us in a proper, legal, rational fashion. Back to being the responsible adult in a well-run country.

But at that point, he may well discover that from the place to which he has brought us, there is no return. It will be impossible to eliminate or even tame the chaos he has created. His years of chaos have already etched something tangible and frightening into reality, into the souls of the people who have lived through it.

They are here. The chaos is here, with all its suctioning force. Internal hatreds are here. Mutual loathing is here; as is the cruel violence in our streets, on our highways, in our schools and hospitals. The people who call good evil and evil good are also already here.

The occupation also evidently won't end in the foreseeable future; it is already stronger than all the forces now active in the political arena. What began and was honed with great efficiency there is now seeping into here. Anarchy's gaping maw has bared its fangs at the most fragile democracy in the Middle East.

Dreaded ‘Smotrich law,’ ‘Dery law’ pass in Knesset

Noa Shpigel

The Knesset on Tuesday approved amendments to the Basic Law on the Government that pave the way for Religious Zionism leader Bezalel Smotrich to appoint a minister in the Defense Ministry who will oversee the West Bank. The minister's authority includes responsibility over the Civil Administration and coordination of government operations there, as agreed between Smotrich and incoming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Knesset on Tuesday also passed the so-called “Dery law” to allow Netanyahu's ultra-Orthodox ally Arye Dery to be appointed minister despite his criminal conviction over tax offenses. The amendments explicitly define in law that only a member of the Knesset who has actually been sentenced to prison cannot be appointed as a minister. MKs who have been sentenced to probation – like Dery, who was convicted at the beginning of the year, will be able to be appointed. According to the coalition

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Likud MKs get cabinet posts

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Kochavi set down his red lines – but does Netanyahu have any?

Amos Harel

It's not especially difficult to get hugged these days by the Israeli media, which is riled and panicked by the events surrounding the negotiations to form the new government coalition. Huge companies such as Israel Discount Bank and Microsoft were given exceptionally positive coverage

this week after their much-needed announcements on preventing discrimination in their businesses, and refusing to work with racist and homophobic boycotters. IDF Chief of Staff Aviv Kochavi also knows how this method works. A well-timed leak on Monday evening from an anonymous source to the television stations was enough to arouse great excitement in the press. Kochavi, so it was reported,

had a harsh conversation last week with incoming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu following his concessions to MK Bezalel Smotrich, head of the Religious Zionism party who is expected to appoint a minister having authority over the Coordinator for Government Activities in the Territories. Accordingly, Kochavi immediately earned a place of honor among the order of defenders of democracy.

On Tuesday, as expected, the tempestuous responses began to arrive from the right. Smotrich and his partner Itamar Ben-Gvir put on the mask of the robbed Cossack and acted shocked by Kochavi's words – which supposedly pollute the IDF with politics, as if their parties are not the ones insisting on dragging the military to precisely that same place.

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Asalam Faroukh in court.

Ohad Zwigenberg

Shin Bet arrests suspect behind twin bombing attack in Jerusalem

Yael Freidson

The suspect in last month's twin bombing in Jerusalem, which killed two and injured more than 20, is a mechanical engineer from East Jerusalem, with no criminal re-

cord, who learned to prepare explosives online, according to police who on Tuesday revealed that they had arrested Asalam Faroukh for the attack.

Faroukh, a 26-year-old resident of the East Jerusa-

lem neighborhood of Kafr Aqab, has an Israeli identity card. He carried out the attacks alone influenced by his identification with the Islamic State, according to the

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Journalist detained on suspicion of inciting terrorism

Josh Breiner

Israeli police arrested journalist Israel Frey on Tuesday on suspicion of inciting terrorism and violence following tweets he posted a few months ago claiming that “attacking security forces is not terrorism” and calling a Palestinian who planned an attack a “hero.”

The police said that the state attorney's office approved opening an investigation of Frey in November, but after he refused to appear for the investigation, the court issued an arrest warrant against him.

One of Frey's friends said that a man who identified himself as a source called Frey and asked to meet him on the Tel Aviv promenade for a story on Tuesday morning. The friend said that

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Online now

Medals for oligarchs
Israel's sanctions-busting wine contest

Reconciliation in pain
Bereaved Israelis and Palestinians find common ground on screen



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