

Netanyahu's Next Power Grab Is Coming. Here's How to Prepare

The coalition's attempt to dismantle Israeli democracy has been halted temporarily by an unprecedented show of public opposition. But it will try again, and we must be ready for the worst-case scenario



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From the very establishment of Israel, our democracy has lacked strong mechanisms of self-defense. We have no constitution, no upper house of parliament, no division of powers between the central government and the local government, and no limit on the prime minister's term in office. There is no robust system of checks and balances to limit the power of the government. The only brake on its power comes from the Supreme Court.

Israeli democracy has nevertheless survived for 75 years, for one simple reason: A large majority of Israeli citizens and Israeli leaders wanted democracy. No significant force seriously challenged the democratic system in an attempt to gain unlimited power for itself. There have been governments in Israel that enjoyed a huge majority in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, with its 120 members. Levi Eshkol's government (1963-1969), for example, started off with the support of 75 MKs and later increased its majority to a staggering 111 MKs. The government of his successor, Golda Meir, started with 102 MKs, which later dropped to a still-formidable 76 MKs. But the weak defenses of Israeli democracy held, because all these governments respected the limits of their power.

In recent weeks, the picture has completely changed. Today we know that there is a significant group in Israel that wants to dismantle our democracy and grab unlimited power for itself. Though its majority in the Knesset consists of only 64

MKs, this is what Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition is attempting. Thanks, however, to the unprecedented resistance that has emerged from all avenues of Israeli society, it seems that Netanyahu's coup is failing, at least in this current round. But the writing is already on the wall. Those who failed in the coup attempt of winter 2023 have already said they will try again in summer, and if they fail once more, they may well keep trying in later years, with even greater force.

Therefore, we must not be satisfied with merely freezing the antidemocratic bills the Netanyahu coalition has been attempting to pass. And under no circumstances can we agree to half a coup, or even a quarter-coup. We must not allow any further weakening of the already weak defenses of Israel's democracy. On the contrary: Israeli democracy must emerge from this crisis with a much stronger immune system – one that will be able to withstand future coup attempts, even if they are instigated by coalitions of 76 or even 111 MKs.

To accomplish this objective, we need to pass through two main stages.

Stage 1: Stopping the coup

We are currently at the first stage, which has one clear goal: We must stop the coup. A temporary freeze on the antidemocratic bills is not enough. It is important to discuss potential compromises, but it's no less important to prepare for the worst-case scenario. Netanyahu and many members of his coalition have stated clearly that the legislation that would give them unlimited power has not been shelved: It has only been temporarily suspended. In the current state of affairs, the proposed coup package remains like a loaded gun in the hands of the government, which can pull the trigger at any moment. In particular, the government has already completed preliminary work on the law that would give it control over the appointment of Supreme Court judges: It could arrange for this bill to gain final approval in the Knesset with only a few hours' notice.

If the government resumes its attempt to pass laws that would in effect give it unlimited power, the Supreme Court must use its authority to strike these laws

down, one by one. First and foremost, the Supreme Court must strike down any legislation that gives the government control of the Supreme Court itself. The Court must do this not in order to protect itself, but to protect the liberties of all Israelis.

If the Supreme Court strikes down such undemocratic laws, and the government refuses to accept its rulings, then the police, army and other branches of the security forces, as well as all public-service employees, must protect democracy and support the Court. They should not obey the illegal orders of a government that is trying to establish a dictatorship.

In such a scenario, every citizen has an important role to play. Demonstrations, protests and strikes would provide popular support for the justices of the Supreme Court, the security forces and civil servants. All of them are human beings, and no sane person wants to bear alone the enormous burden of responsibility. No sane person wants to make by themselves the decisions that will shape Israel for generations. Therefore, every time someone has to make a fateful decision about the future of Israeli democracy, it is essential that hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets and declare: “We are with you, and we expect you to defend democracy. The responsibility lies with all of us, not just with you.”

Among the hundreds of thousands of people who have already come forward in defense of democracy, the reserve soldiers stand out. These dedicated citizens, who for years have said “Yes!” every time Israeli democracy called on them to perform difficult and life-threatening tasks, are now the first to have said “No!” to the dictatorial demand for blind obedience. Going to war requires great courage of one kind. Standing up to a dictatorship requires great courage of a different kind. Today we know that Israeli society is blessed with men and women who possess both types of courage.

Reservists have several good reasons to say “No!” to a tyrannical government that is attempting to obtain unlimited power for itself while demanding at the

same time that everyone else continue to serve as usual. For one, the coup creates new legal dangers for all members of the security forces – both reservists and members of the standing army. As long as they serve a democratic country with an independent judiciary, this significantly reduces their chances of being arrested by a foreign legal authority while traveling overseas, and prosecuted on suspicion of having committed war crimes. But if the government eliminates the independence of our domestic judiciary, such risks will increase dramatically. Israel's security personnel endanger their health and their very lives for the sake of the state – at the very least, they can expect the state to provide them with adequate legal protection.

Another reason to resist the coup is that it endangers members of the security forces from a moral perspective. When soldiers are ordered to attack a target, to bomb a building, or to kill a person, they do not usually have the time and ability to check whether the order meets a reasonable moral standard. How can a fighter pilot or a gunner make sure the target they were ordered to attack is a legitimate military target? How can they be sure that the order doesn't stem from a racist worldview of a superior who wants to “wipe out” entire towns and villages (a desire recently expressed by Israel's finance minister)? In a democratic country with an independent judiciary, soldiers can at least hope that their orders have been vetted by responsible moral authorities. But in a dictatorship without an independent justice system, soldiers may find themselves committing terrible crimes that will haunt them for the rest of their lives.

The third reason for reservists to say “No!” to a dictatorial regime is the simplest. Members of the security forces have a contract with Israeli democracy. They have no obligation toward a government that is set on destroying democracy.

Some say that all of this may be true, but the brave stance taken recently by more and more reservists endangers the very existence of Israel at this time. But in reality, it's the government that has placed Israel in existential danger, not the reservists. The Netanyahu government has taken the State of Israel hostage, and

then blames everyone but itself for the consequences. If the government believes we are facing a dangerous security situation, it is its responsibility to halt the coup attempt by scrapping the legislation it started pushing through.

Stage 2: Establishing a new contract

Once the coup attempt is stopped, the second stage should be the establishment of a new social contract for the State of Israel – one that will ensure stronger protections for our democracy. There are many ways to do this, but the key question that should guide us is simple: “What limits the power of the government?”

The public should not be distracted by detailed, technical discussions about the composition of the Judicial Appointments Committee, or the wording of this or that legal clause. In every newspaper, in every television studio, on every radio program, and in every cafeteria conversation, we should insist on asking again and again: What mechanism will prevent the ruling coalition from disenfranchising Arab citizens, depriving workers of their right to strike, or closing down all independent media outlets? What is the mechanism that will prevent the ruling coalition from criminalizing same-sex love, forcing women to cover their hair in public, or banning schools from teaching about evolution?

Today, the State of Israel has only one institution that protects our rights and liberties from racist or oppressive legislation. That institution is the Supreme Court. The government is currently trying to dismantle the independent power of this body – something we cannot give in on, even partway. There can be no compromise on this matter. The government must not be given control over the appointment of judges, and the power of the Supreme Court must not be reduced. The battle is not over the Supreme Court per se. The battle is about the only mechanism that protects people against the arbitrary power of the government.

However, once we enter the process of drafting a new social contract for the State of Israel, there is of course no necessity in continuing to sanctify the

mechanism of the Supreme Court in its present form. What is crucially important to the opponents of the coup is not the Supreme Court, but the liberties it protects. We can certainly consider alternative mechanisms to limit the government's power and protect our liberties.

Other democracies have a wide variety of mechanisms that protect human rights and civil rights, and prevent the over-concentration of power. The United States is a prominent example of a country that has a robust system of checks and balances. For example, what happens if a majority of members of the U.S. House of Representatives votes to deny African Americans the right to vote, or to ban Jews from ritually circumcising their sons? Even if such a bill were to be passed by a majority of House members, it would still face a whole series of additional hurdles.

First, the bill would also have to be approved by the Senate, whose members are elected separately from those of the House. At present, the House of Representatives is controlled by the Republican Party, while the Senate is controlled by the Democrats. And those familiar with the intricacies of the American system will realize that such a bill would likely have to overcome the filibuster. For that, 60 percent of Senate members would need to support it.

Let's say the bill has passed the Senate, too. The obstacle course does not end there. The president, who is elected independently of both House and Senate members and by yet a third method, can still veto the bill. Another major obstacle is the American Constitution. A temporary majority in the House of Representatives cannot change the Constitution, and a law that denies African Americans the right to vote or prohibits ritual circumcision is unequivocally unconstitutional.

And of course the United States also has a Supreme Court. To justify its power grab, the Netanyahu government has repeatedly told Israelis that in the United States, "it is politicians who appoint the Supreme Court justices." This is true, but misleading. First, a Supreme Court appointment must have the support of both the president and the Senate, which, as noted, are elected separately.

Second, the Court is not the sole brake on the power of the U.S. government. If in Israel we were to give politicians the power to appoint judges, but at the same time we also adopted a constitution, established a senate-like upper house, and gave the president veto power over new laws – that’s a scenario opponents of Netanyahu’s coup would likely be very happy to discuss. But this is not what the government is suggesting.

Let’s return to the United States. Let’s say that some extremist law somehow managed to pass the entire obstacle course of both houses of Congress, the president, the Constitution and the Supreme Court. That’s not the end of the story. The United States is a federation. It consists of 50 states, each with its own bicameral legislature, a governor, constitution and supreme court. There are significant restrictions on the ability of the federal government to interfere in the internal affairs of the 50 states. In Israel, if the same people who want politicians to appoint judges also proposed turning the country into a federation of autonomous districts – this could well be something that opponents of the coup would be happy to explore.

Some may feel that the United States has too many systemic brakes, and that this makes it overly difficult to introduce positive changes. That may well be the case. In Israel, we don’t have to adopt the entire battery of checks and balances that the United States possesses. But it would be good if we had at least two or three safeguards. As of today, we have but one. For historical reasons, Israel never adopted a constitution, we have no senate, no filibuster, the president has no veto power, and there is no federal system. The only mechanism limiting the power of the ruling coalition, as created by our founding fathers and mothers, is the Supreme Court.

This unique situation, in which the Supreme Court is the only body with the authority to limit the ruling coalition, explains one of the common questions heard these days in Israel: “Why does the Supreme Court interfere in everything?” If the Knesset passes a law that discriminates against women, or if a government official harasses a citizen, or if a government office decides to

build a dump on the nature reserve next door, we immediately run to the Supreme Court. We do so because we simply have nowhere else to turn, which is definitely not an ideal situation. It would have been better to establish additional limits on the power of the government. Imagine a car that has only a single brake, and someone wants to disable that brake on the grounds that it has too much power. Wouldn't it be far safer to first install a few additional brakes, and then gradually release some of the pressure on the dominant one? Neutralizing the lone brake without first creating alternative safety mechanisms is a sure way to crash and burn.

Aren't elections a kind of additional brake?

According to a common argument, the above description ignores the existence of another important limit on the government: our national elections. If the government passes laws or takes actions that the public doesn't like, the public can replace the government at the ballot box at the end of its four-year term. Since we have regular elections, why do we need more brakes?

It's hard to know whether those who make this argument really believe it, or if they are being disingenuous. But, clearly, in a system where nothing limits the government's power, then there's nothing to stop it from changing the electoral system at will, to ensure that the public can never replace it. There are many examples of countries with such systems, including Russia and Iran, both states where elections are held regularly but are a dictatorial ritual, rather than a truly democratic mechanism.

In recent weeks, we've learned that the ruling coalition in Israel is seeking to postpone the next scheduled elections from 2026 to 2027, by creatively interpreting an obscure passage in existing electoral law. MK Eliyahu Revivo (Likud) has submitted an additional bill that would allow, under certain conditions, for the "gifting" of 12 additional MKs to the ruling coalition. If that bill becomes law, then in certain situations, the public would elect 120 MKs, and the coalition that emerges would then receive a heavenly gift of 12 more MKs. In the absence of any limits on its power, the ruling coalition could also prohibit

opposition parties from participating in elections, deny voting rights to entire communities, or require anyone showing up to vote to first sign some sort of “declaration of national loyalty,” to be drafted, naturally, by the coalition.

In fact, with no limits on the government’s power, it doesn’t need to pass any laws to rig the outcome of an election. Ministerial regulations and decrees would suffice. For example, the minister of national security could announce that, unfortunately, as he is not able to provide adequate security at polling stations in Arab communities, residents of Arab towns and villages who wish to vote must travel to Jewish towns to do so. Israelis are very creative people, and if there are no restrictions facing them, coalition members could invent a thousand and one tricks for tilting election results in their favor. The bottom line is that if there is no limitation on the power of the government – then there will be no such thing as a democratic election.

What about the power of the Supreme Court?

Another common argument is that while giving unlimited power to the government sounds like a very bad idea, allowing the Supreme Court to enjoy unlimited power is equally bad. According to this argument, the laws that the government is trying to pass are simply designed to curtail the unlimited power that the Supreme Court allegedly enjoyed in the last decades.

This argument is so far-fetched that one can only wonder if those making it actually believe it. What can they mean when they declare that the Supreme Court possesses unlimited power, when the opposite is the case?

Let’s ask a few trivia questions about Israeli history and politics. Which of Israel’s many wars were launched by order of the Supreme Court? What military operation in Israeli history was directed by justices of the Supreme Court? Which peace agreement was signed by the Supreme Court? When was the last time the Supreme Court prepared and passed the state budget? Which city in Israel was built by the Supreme Court? What is the Court’s plan for solving the country’s housing crisis? Or dealing with climate change?

We can go on asking more such questions, but you get the point. The Supreme Court does not have unlimited power. Unlike the government, the Supreme Court cannot declare war or make peace; it doesn't control the budget and doesn't build cities; and it cannot solve the housing crisis or the ecological crisis.

It's the government that controls the state's formidable executive apparatus. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers, police and civil servants are recruited and financed by the government, and obey its orders. This executive apparatus gives the government immense power: to declare war and make peace; pass budgets and build cities; and (if it wants to) solve the housing and climate crises. The Supreme Court does not control any such executive apparatus. It is no accident that throughout history there have been many examples of dictatorships established by governments, but few if any examples of a dictatorship established by a court. The court simply doesn't have the power to do it. Those who insist that the court commands unlimited power probably don't understand the meaning of the words "power" and "unlimited."

In exceptional cases, Israel's Supreme Court does have the power to compel the government to act, if the government has neglected its legal obligations to its citizens. In 2007, for example, the Court forced the state to fortify inadequately protected schools in communities close to the border with the Gaza Strip. And even in this case it was the government itself that initiated the action, and the judges only made sure that the government implemented its own decision. In the vast majority of cases, the power of the Supreme Court is only preventive. When someone in the sprawling governmental apparatus – from the prime minister down to a local official – does something that we think is unfair, we can run to the Supreme Court and ask it to hit the brake.

You may wonder whether this doesn't give the court too much power. Even if the Supreme Court cannot initiate much, isn't it excessive to allow it to stop any action or decision of any government official? Doesn't that give the Court the ability to completely paralyze the country? Well, not really. Recently, Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir bragged that every day he makes 90 executive decisions. Maybe

that's true. But let's assume for a moment that he was exaggerating, and that he only makes nine decisions a day. Just like Ben-Gvir, the foreign minister, the Interior Ministry's director general, the head of the Treasury's budget division, and hundreds of thousands of other public servants make nine decisions every day. That would amount to over a million decisions a day. In theory, it's possible to submit a million petitions to the Supreme Court every single day, asking it to stop each one of these million decisions. But does anyone think this is really practical? And can 15 Supreme Court justices conduct a million hearings every day? The truth is that the Supreme Court only rarely uses its ability to invalidate laws or stop government decisions. In its entire history, the Court has only invalidated 22 laws or components of laws.

It's true that relative to other supreme courts around the world, Israel has a court with great power. But that's because the state never created another mechanism to limit the government's actions. The kind of matters that are brought before the Israeli Supreme Court never reach the U.S. Supreme Court, because they end up on someone else's desk – perhaps in the U.S. Senate, or in the office of the governor of California, or the Texas House of Representatives. It would be ideal for Israel to have more brakes built into its system, but before we neutralize the Supreme Court, let's first install those other brakes.

Is the Supreme Court the protector of the elites?

Another story circulating in Israel these days says that the Supreme Court is a mechanism that preserves the power of “the elites,” and hampers any attempt to achieve social justice. There is no doubt that Israel suffers from high levels of social inequality, and that we need to tackle this problem as quickly as possible. But is it really the Supreme Court that is thwarting change?

Have you heard of cases in which the Knesset passed laws in order to reduce social inequalities, but was thwarted when the Supreme Court intervened and invalidated them? Of the 22 laws struck down by the Supreme Court, the only one that could perhaps be described as a law intended to reduce social inequality was

the bill that imposed a special tax on ownership of a third apartment, and the reason for its disqualification, in 2017, was improper legislative procedure.

If the Netanyahu government had a deep and genuine concern about social justice, it could have started its term of office by passing a comprehensive package of laws to reduce inequality. If the Supreme Court had intervened and invalidated these laws, hundreds of thousands of Israelis would have taken to the streets to demonstrate – against the Court, not the government. But since the government chose to launch an assault on the Supreme Court as soon as it came into office, it's much more likely that its real aim is to eliminate the only brake on its power, and any talk of “social justice” is just an excuse to justify its dictatorial power-grab.

What is democracy?

Taking a much broader view, what is currently happening in Israel stems from a lack of understanding of what democracy is all about. Too many people in the ruling coalition, in the media and in the street think that democracy is simply the tyranny of the majority. They think that once 51 percent of people say they want something, there should be no limits on them. But this is not democracy.

If 51 percent of voters want to shut down all independent media, is that democratic?

If 51 percent of voters want to take away voting rights from the other 49 percent, should they be allowed to do so?

If 51 percent, or even 99 percent, of voters, want to send the remaining 1 percent off to concentration camps for extermination, is that democratic? A few days ago, the Ugandan parliament passed a law that will impose the death penalty on LGBTQ people. The law passed with a majority of 387 supporters, against two opponents. Does that make it a democratic law?

Such moves are not democratic, because democracy is not the tyranny of the majority. Democracy is the rule of the people. And “the people” also includes

minorities. The propaganda of the Netanyahu government, and of dictatorial regimes throughout history, claim that only the majority are the people, while the minority are not part of the people. They claim that minorities are either alien elites, or a bunch of traitors, or foreign agents. This is not true. “The people” are all the citizens of a country – including both the majority and the various minorities. And in a democracy, even minorities – even very small minorities – have rights.

In a democracy, of course, the majority does have many rights and privileges. The majority is entitled to form the government, and to set policy in a wide variety of fields. If the majority wants war – the country goes to war. If the majority wants peace – the country makes peace. If the majority wants to raise taxes – taxes are raised. If the majority wants to lower taxes – taxes are lowered. If the majority wants to increase the education budget at the expense of the defense budget – that’s the law. When it wants the opposite – the opposite is done. It is in the hands of the majority to decide many things. But there are two places where the hands of the majority are not allowed to go, two baskets of rights that are protected from the majority.

One basket contains human rights, such as the right to life. Even if 99 percent of the population wants to kill the remaining 1 percent, in a democracy this is forbidden, because it violates the most basic human right – the right to life. There are several other rights in the basket of human rights, such as freedom of expression, freedom of religion and freedom of movement.

A second basket is the one containing civil rights. These are the basic rules of the democratic game. An obvious example is the right to vote. If the majority were permitted to deny a minority voting rights, then democracy would be over after a single election. The winners would immediately deny the right to vote to the losers, and thus would forever retain power in their hands. To safeguard democracy, the majority must not touch the basket of civil rights, unless the minority also agrees to make some change there.

Of course, in every democracy, there are lengthy discussions concerning the limits of human rights and civil rights. Even the right to life has limits. There are democratic countries that sometimes impose the death penalty, thereby denying criminals the right to life. And every country allows itself the prerogative to declare war, and send people to kill and be killed. So where exactly does the right to life end?

There are lengthy discussions concerning the list of rights that should be included in the two baskets. Who determined that freedom of religion is a basic human right? Should internet access be defined as a human right these days? And what about animal rights? Or the rights of artificial intelligence?

We will not solve these thorny dilemmas here. The world is a very complex place. Precisely because of that, and because there are no simple and absolute answers to such fundamental questions, a healthy democracy must have a system of checks and balances, in which no party can decide on its own which human rights and civil rights to recognize.

Where do rights come from?

Let's consider where all these rights come from in the first place. They do not come down from the sky, nor from the laws of biology. Human rights and civil rights are not inscribed in our DNA. Human rights and civil rights are something that human beings invented themselves, through a long process of trial and error, in order to secure peace and prosperity. This process is based on broad agreement between the majority and the minority.

But why would any majority be interested in reaching such a broad agreement? Even if society needs to recognize some human rights and civil rights, why doesn't the majority simply ignore the opinion of the minority, and decide by itself what is to be included in the baskets of human rights and of civil rights? There are three reasons.

First, every sane person understands that even if I find myself in the majority in some situations, that doesn't guarantee I will not be part of the minority in other

situations. True, there are minorities that I will never be a part of. But all of us, if we live long enough, will become old and frail, and find ourselves among the minority of people with disabilities. Therefore, even when we are still young and healthy, we should safeguard the rights of people with disabilities.

There are also many less predictable examples. Perhaps for years I was part of the majority in my views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but when coronavirus broke out, I unexpectedly found myself among a small minority that shared my views on how to tackle the pandemic. And what will happen in coming years as artificial intelligence is perfected, and can make more and more decisions about human life? Maybe I'll find myself on the side of the minority in the political discussion about A.I.? So even if today I am part of the majority, it's still in my interest that we establish strong protections for the rights of minorities.

A second reason to respect the opinions of the minority emerges from humility and wisdom. In the heat of debate, the majority always wants to trample the minority. But in moments of quiet introspection, people generally become aware of their own mistakes and weaknesses, and of the dangers inherent in unbridled power. Those who want unlimited power for themselves are either evil or stupid or both. Only fools believe they are never wrong. The wicked may know they can be wrong, but just don't care. Wise people know they are sometimes wrong, they care about it, and are therefore interested in placing limitations on their own power.

The third and perhaps most important motivation for the majority to respect minority opinions, is the need to secure the peaceful cooperation of the "underdog." When the minority is trampled, it has no reason to accept the will of the majority. When two wolves chase a doe with the aim of devouring her, the doe does not say to herself: "They are the majority, I am the minority, so I must obey them." Similarly, when people hate each other or try to run each other over, the minority has no reason to submit to the will of the majority. If there are many people who hate me, is that a reason to obey them?

We should also remember that when countries deteriorate into civil war, the minority often wins. A civil war is not fought with paper ballots. In the civil war in Syria, the Alawite minority won. In the civil war in Rwanda, the minority Tutsis won. In the civil war that took place in Palestine at the end of the British Mandate, the Jewish minority defeated the Palestinian majority.

Therefore, there are good reasons for the majority to reach peaceful agreement with minorities about the basic rules of the democratic game, and about the exact contents of both the human-rights and civil-rights basket.

The way forward

How will this situation in Israel end? There is no telling, but one thing is certain – there's no way back to November 2022. Over the last few weeks, we've discovered two important things about the State of Israel that we didn't know before. We discovered that there is a significant group in Israel that wants to dismantle the checks and balances on our democracy and take unlimited power for itself. And we also discovered that a large portion of Israel's citizens do not really understand what democracy is, and confuse it with the tyranny of the majority.

There are therefore two important conclusions we can draw from the current crisis. First, we shouldn't agree to the weakening of the already fragile defenses of Israeli democracy. On the contrary: We must add more defenses and better defenses at that. Second, we need a comprehensive and deep reform in our educational system, so that schools can start instilling in future generations the values of democracy and human rights. If we don't do that, Israeli democracy will not survive for long.

How can we implement these two conclusions? How can we change the education system, and how can we build stronger defenses for Israeli democracy? The only way to achieve either of these goals is through broad agreement. It will be difficult to reach such an agreement through a hasty discussion between the representatives of the coalition and the representatives

of some of the opposition parties, especially when the government keeps waving a loaded gun.

We should therefore convene a constituent assembly, one that will give adequate representation to all sectors in Israel, and that will be tasked with drawing up a new social contract for our country. The government, the Knesset and the courts will continue to manage the current affairs of Israel, while the constituent assembly works to create a new social contract that may serve us for the next 75 years. If we fail to reach a broad agreement on such a new contract, the days of Israeli democracy will be numbered. And without democracy, the days of the State of Israel may also be numbered.

There is one immediate step that many of us can take in preparation for the convening of a constituent assembly. In the coming week, most Israelis will begin celebrating Passover, the Jewish festival of freedom. It's an ancient Jewish tradition for families to gather together on Passover and read texts that deal with the theme of liberty. I'd like to suggest that this year, families also read Israel's Declaration of Independence. And I would also like to suggest that in addition to the traditional "Four Questions" that Jews are required to ask themselves at the Seder table, we pose the following additional, new questions for every family to ponder:

- What limits should there be on the power of the government?
- When we talk about "the people" – does this mean only the majority, or also include minorities?
- What things should the majority never be allowed to do to minorities?
- And why should the majority compromise with minorities?

May we all have a happy festival of freedom, and may we celebrate many more feasts of liberty in the future State of Israel.

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