Episode Book

EPISODE #6085

Israel Votes, Part 5: Rent and Noise, Side by Side

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SYNOPSIS

Israel's renters and the sleep-deprived finally get the side-by-side treatment. We dug through every party platform on the ballot for what they actually wrote — not what they said on a campaign slide — about rent caps at renewal, broker fees, long-term rental supply, and noise enforcement. Three parties have tabled a renewal cap in the Knesset in writing. Exactly one mentions noise in its current platform, in a single sentence. And the only noise bill actually moving through the Knesset targets mosque loudspeakers, not the 657,000 calls the police get about everything else. We also retract a couple of numbers from last time — including a claim about renewal caps that turned out to be wrong, and some Liberman rental figures that aren't in his own platform. Better to analyse slim pickings than nothing at all.

TRANSCRIPT



Herman

Six hundred and fifty-seven thousand. That's how many times people in this country rang the police about noise in two and a half years. The State Comptroller counted them. It's the second most common reason anyone calls the police, after traffic.



Corn

And roughly one call in seven ended with anybody getting a fine.



Herman

About fifteen percent, in the one year the Comptroller broke it down.



Corn

That's the hole Daniel wants us to climb into today. He came back after the series with the two things he thinks decide whether daily life here is bearable. What you pay to rent a flat, and how loud it is once you're inside it. When we went looking for what the parties had actually written on either, we came up remarkably short, his words. And his instruction is, better to analyse slim pickings than nothing at all. Take whoever has said anything, put them side by side, and then, as a sideline, what else those same parties stand for.



Herman

Two corrections first, because some of the pickings turned out thicker than we said and some thinner. Last time, I said nobody on this ballot had ever proposed a cap on rent rises at renewal. That's wrong. And the Liberman rental figures we gave, twenty thousand units a year and a rent-to-buy scheme, I can't find in his own platform. Strike them.



Corn

You're retracting a donkey's worth of numbers.



Herman

Half a donkey. Rent first?



Corn

Rent first. Because I want to know who wrote the renewal cap down.



Herman

This is the find of the week, honestly. In December twenty twenty-two, Naama Lazimi, then Labor, now the Democrats, tabled a private bill. Rent can only go up when a lease ends, never in the first year, and the rise is capped. Inflation plus two percent on a short lease, inflation plus four on a longer one. Anything above that, the tenant can claw back.



Corn

A cap at renewal. He'd have signed it himself.



Herman

It gets better. Six weeks later, an identical bill went in from Yesh Atid. First signature Ron Katz, and second… Yair Lapid.



Corn

The Yair Lapid who is now number two on Beyachad.



Herman

The same one. Hadash tabled its own rent cap bill too, under Ayman Odeh. So three parties have, at some point, put a renewal cap into the Knesset in writing.



Corn

What happened to them?



Herman

Nothing. All of them were tabled for a preliminary reading and never came up. When the Knesset dissolved, they died.



Corn

Tabled is a word that sounds like furniture and behaves like a drawer.



Herman

Here's what I'd ask you, though. Does a bill from three years ago count as a position? Or is it just a record?



Corn

I'd count it as... a lead. It tells you who's willing to say the words. What it doesn't tell you is whether they'd still say them with a coalition to build. So, Herman, what's in the platforms now? Not the drawer.



Herman

Going by how much is in writing, the Democrats are top, and by some distance. Their platform makes long-term rent at a regulated price the anchor of the market. It bans passing the broker's fee on to the tenant. It promises a Fair Rental Law, quote, with teeth, a fast track for breaches, and lets local authorities set stricter rules than the national ones.



Corn

With teeth. A law has to promise teeth when the last one was a smile.



Herman

That's not unfair. The twenty seventeen law had the cap stripped out before it passed.



Herman

The Democrats also have the research behind it. Lazimi chaired the Knesset's youth committee and commissioned the study showing renters under thirty-four spend about forty-two percent of their income on rent. Other renters, twenty-eight.

L

Larry

Teeth. Introducing Fair Rental Teeth, the monthly subscription for tenants who want their lease to bite back. Every month, a fresh set of novelty dentures arrives at your door, pre-signed by a broker. Basic tier, one set of gums. Premium tier, upper and lower, plus a laminated sticker that says, with teeth, quote. Platinum members receive a second set to give to their landlord as a gesture of goodwill. Prices rise at renewal, and also before renewal, and during. To cancel, mail your teeth back to us in the original box, which you threw away.



Corn

He said with teeth, quote. That's what you said. Just now. The quote and everything.



Herman

I'd rather not think about how. The point is the Democrats' plan has a mechanism. What it doesn't have is a number. No cap figure, no minimum lease length.



Corn

Beyachad, then. If Lapid wrote the cap three years ago, I assume it's front and centre.



Herman

You'd assume. It isn't. Beyachad's housing plan is the biggest on supply. About a hundred thousand long-term rental flats, forty percent of them subsidised at thirty percent below market.



Herman

On the private market, tax breaks for landlords who sign leases of five years or more, and a line that says they'll tie rent updates to the consumer price index.



Corn

Tie updates to the index. Is that a cap?



Herman

I genuinely don't know, and I don't think the platform knows either. It could mean a ceiling, inflation and nothing more. Or... it could mean the index is the default in a standard contract that a landlord can ignore. Lapid's own bill was stricter. Inflation plus two or plus four, and money back if you're overcharged.



Corn

So the party's platform is softer than the party's own number two.



Herman

That's how I read it. Nobody on brokers, nothing on deposits.



Corn

Yashar. Last time we put them top on rent, because they were the only ones talking about limiting rises during a lease.



Herman

And here's where I have to take some of that back. That line came from a campaign slide. We will limit rent increases and move brokerage fees to landlords. TheMarker read it as rent control, and Yashar denied it, said the slide had been misread. Meridor, who runs their economics, talks about incentives for developers and institutional investors instead. The plan they actually published talks about rules limiting how fast rent rises during the lease, plus real price data by region, longer leases, faster legal help for tenants, and closing what they call the broker loophole.



Corn

So the one sentence a renter would put on a fridge is the one they said was a misunderstanding.



Herman

Yes. And we said last time it only protects the part of the year when nothing happens anyway.



Corn

Liberman, with the bits you've struck?



Herman

What's on his own site is a homeowner's plan. Ninety percent mortgages over up to forty years, on homes up to two and a half million shekels, if one spouse served in full and is an active reservist. Land tenders judged on the final price to the buyer. And one line about expanding long-term rental to moderate rents. No number.



Corn

A rental policy that's mostly about not renting.



Herman

Likud has a record rather than a platform, and we did it last time. State long-term rental going entirely to reservists and IDF widows until the end of twenty twenty-eight. Degel HaTorah, one half of UTJ, says long-term rental at fair prices, and nothing about how. Gantz, Ra'am, Hendel and Zelekha, nothing on renters that I could find.



Corn

Before noise, let me guess how you're going to react, because you've had a face on since the Comptroller.



Herman

Go on.



Corn

You're going to tell me noise is a public health issue, with a body count, and you're going to be cross that nobody's treating it like one.



Herman

That's... yes, more or less. The Environment Ministry's own estimate is about four hundred deaths a year here from the indirect effects of noise. Heart disease, sleep. And the Comptroller found the ministry has no written national noise policy and has never mapped the country's noise. Europe has a legal duty to map it. We don't.



Corn

How many parties mention it?



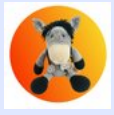
Herman

One. One sentence. The Democrats' environment platform promises to strengthen enforcement and toughen punishment for environmental offences and pollution, including noise and radiation that harm public health.



Corn

Noise and radiation. Filed under hazards you can't see, which is a strange place for a motorbike.



Herman

Everyone else I checked, nothing. Yashar's chapters on the environment, local government, transport and planning, nothing on noise. Beyachad's environment plan is climate, air, waste, coal and Haifa Bay. Liberman's platform page doesn't use the word environment at all. Shas, UTJ, Otzma and Ra'am haven't published platforms.



Corn

Why, though? Rent at least has a constituency. Renters vote.



Herman

My guess... noise has no lobby. Everybody suffers from it and everybody makes it. The man with the leaf blower is the same man who rings the police about the wedding hall on Thursday night. You can't build a voting bloc out of people who are all each other's problem.



Corn

There's a noise source in this flat, Herman, and he's a donkey with a DJ rig.



Herman

That's a professional sound system, and it's on a timer.



Corn

The timer beeps.



Corn

So on paper it's one sentence. What about what they've done in the Knesset? That's where the rent stuff turned up.



Herman

There's one noise bill that's actually moving, and you won't guess which.



Corn

Construction. It's always construction.



Herman

Mosques. Zvika Fogel from Otzma has a bill on unreasonable muezzin noise that's now in preparation for its first reading, and Tzvi Sukkot from Religious Zionism tabled a matching one. Monthly inspections of mosque loudspeakers, and police entry without a warrant.



Corn

How many complaints are we talking about?



Herman

The police told a committee in January there were one thousand nine hundred and twenty calls about mosque noise in all of last year. And the ministry's own head of noise prevention told the same committee that the existing law was enough.



Corn

Six hundred and fifty-seven thousand noise calls, and the bill is for nineteen hundred of them.



Herman

I'll be fair to them. A muezzin is a single source you can point at, and that's a lot easier to legislate for than a city. But you're right about the proportion.



Corn

Where's the rest of it going, then? The car horns, the exhausts, the ones who drill on a Friday afternoon.



Herman

Regulation. Ministers acting without a law. There was a cross-party motion about motorbikes rigged to imitate air raid sirens, with sponsors from Shas, Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu, plus Matan Kahana. The committee told the Justice Ministry to get moving on higher noise fines. Then last November Idit Silman, Likud's environment minister, put eight and a half million shekels into a call for cities to install cameras that catch illegal honking. She called it the quiet revolution.



Corn

A revolution, at eight and a half million, is a reasonably priced revolution.



Herman

You're laughing, but it's the only thing on noise any government here has done at scale lately. Nobody had to promise it. On noise, Likud has the record and the Democrats have the sentence.



Corn

What about the stuff that actually lives in your walls? Renovations, neighbours.



Herman

That's all municipal. National rules bar construction and renovation noise in homes from eight at night until seven in the morning, and from five in the afternoon before Shabbat and holidays. Enforcement is the city's job.



Herman

The Comptroller found eighteen local authorities out of two hundred and fifty-nine have no environmental unit at all. Two of the cities it audited, Afula and Safed, issued no noise tickets whatsoever.



Corn

Zero. Which is one way to get your complaint numbers down.



Corn

Side by side, then. Because Daniel asked for the comparison, so let's lay it flat. On rent and noise together, who's actually written something?



Herman

The Democrats are the only list with something on both, in their current platform. Regulated long-term rent, no broker fees for tenants, a Fair Rental Law with enforcement, and that one sentence on noise. Plus Lazimi's renewal cap bill on the record.



Corn

Beyachad?



Herman

Strongest on building. The hundred thousand flats is the most serious supply plan on the ballot. On the private market, longer leases and that vague index line. Lapid's renewal bill sits behind it, unmentioned. On noise, nothing.



Corn

Yashar sits somewhere in the middle on rent, and I'd say lower than we had it last week.



Herman

I'd agree. Price data, longer leases, the broker loophole, legal help. The in-lease limit is something they say and then don't. Nothing on noise. Liberman, a homeowner's plan for reservists. Likud, the cameras and the reservist rental flats, by ministerial decision, with no platform behind either. And on the far right the only noise policy is the muezzin.



Corn

Which makes noise, in this election, a religion-and-state issue. Nobody campaigning for the quiet.



Corn

The sideline he asked for, then. These lists come as packages. What else is in the box?



Herman

Quick version. The Democrats are the bigger-state party. Shorter work week, public childcare, public housing. On the conflict, they're the one Jewish party still saying two states, and on Iran, Golan called the killing of Khamenei a strategic mistake. They want the judicial overhaul reversed outright and they'd openly include Ra'am.



Corn

Beyachad?



Herman

Bennett and Lapid. Mandatory Haredi enlistment, no state money for schools without the core curriculum, breaking up the food monopolies, Shabbat transport city by city, civil marriage. A written constitution rather than a curb on the court. Bennett says no to a Palestinian state, and Lapid has said possibly, so they haven't settled it between them.



Corn

And Yashar's the hawk with the national service plan.



Herman

National service for all, enforced by taking away benefits from draft evaders. An independent judiciary and term limits. Eisenkot calls the two-state solution a grave mistake and wants Palestinian autonomy under Israeli security control. And Liberman is civil marriage, Shabbat transport outright, a much bigger defence budget, and Gaza handed to Egypt.



Corn

So the list that wrote the most about Daniel's front door is the one furthest from him on Iran.



Herman

Leave Iran for a second. Corn, if you could make a party write one line on noise, what would it say?



Corn

That they'll map it, so we know where it is. And that somebody turns up while the noise is still happening.



Hilbert

Sonomark four hundred. Class two. Eleven hundred and forty shekels.



Corn

The sound meter.



Hilbert

The sound meter's the small bit. It's on a mast, on an ex-municipal monitoring trailer, which is parked in my mother's driveway in Mevaseret, because it won't fit on Agrippas. She charges me for the space. She raised it at renewal. Inflation plus four, Herman, which you'll be pleased to know is legal under the bill you've been talking about, if it had passed. It didn't, so she could have done anything. She chose four. She says it's because she's fair. I think it's because she read the bill. The trailer's for a client. Gidi Ben Shoshan, from Kiryat Yovel. Gidi wants his upstairs neighbour measured for the municipality, properly, with a calibrated instrument, so the inspector can't say it's his word against the ceiling. He pays me by the decibel. Four shekels each, above fifty-five.



Herman

Per decibel is an odd contract. The scale's logarithmic. Ten more decibels is ten times the sound energy.



Hilbert

Gidi doesn't know that. Gidi thinks it's a ruler. I told him. He said a ruler's fine. The difficulty is the neighbour. The neighbour is quiet. The neighbour is a retired cantor called Mordechai who goes to bed at nine. So last month Gidi bought Mordechai a drum kit. As a gift. Left it at his door with a card. Mordechai has taken it up, and he's quite good, and Gidi's bill to me has gone from nothing to three hundred and sixty-four shekels. Gidi says the investment is paying off. He means the complaint. I don't ask. Herman, you popped your p on platform about forty times this afternoon. I'll take it down two in the edit. Mordechai plays at seven in the evening, which is legal, so Gidi now wants the measurement for something else. He won't say what. My nephew Doron says it's for leverage.



Corn

Doron's the inspector.



Hilbert

Doron is a municipal noise inspector, eleven years, and he says, at length, at Friday lunch, that nobody gets fined on the first visit. Not on the second either. You ring, the noise is on, he drives out, the noise has stopped by the time he's parked, because people hear the car. He says the meter takes forty minutes to settle anyway, and by forty minutes everybody's asleep or sorry. He says you get a ticket on the third visit, if the person's stupid, and he says most people aren't. He says honking cameras are the end of his profession and also that he'll be the one emptying them, so it's fine. He says the motorbike sirens are one man in Holon with eleven bikes. I wouldn't trust Doron with the car keys. He fined a church bell in twenty nineteen. It was ringing in a shop window as a display piece. He made the shop sign for it. The buttons on the Sonomark are made for a fingertip, not a claw, so I work it with the end of a teaspoon, and Doron says that voids the calibration, and he says that about everything I own.



Herman

He's right about the forty minutes, though. If enforcement only works while the noise is still going, a car that has to drive across Jerusalem has already lost. That's the case for the cameras, honestly. They don't need to park.



Corn

And they don't come to Friday lunch.



Hilbert

Mordechai's started teaching. Two pupils, a Tuesday and a Thursday. Gidi's paid for both of them. I used to calibrate the meters at the cattle auction in Ramle, and the cows were quieter. Gidi's bill this month is six hundred and twelve shekels.



Herman

Can I ask you the obvious one, Corn? If Daniel weighed only these two issues, would he vote differently from what we told him last time?



Corn

On rent and noise alone... yes. The Democrats. They wrote the most down on both, and Lazimi's bill is the renewal cap he actually wants. Last week we put Yashar first, and Yashar's best rent line turned out to be a slide they disowned.



Herman

I'd go along with that, on these two issues. The problem is the package. Daniel backed the war's aim of removing the Iranian threat, and Golan called the killing of Khamenei a strategic mistake. For him that's not a footnote.



Corn

Then it's a trade he has to make himself. Rent and noise point one way, Iran points the other, and Beyachad sits in the middle with the biggest building plan and Lapid's old bill in a drawer.



Herman

Corn and I lean right, and I'd struggle with the Democrats on Iran myself. But on the two issues he sent us, they're the only list that did the homework.



Corn

The misconception I'd name is that rent control is a fringe idea in Israel, that nobody serious has ever put it in writing.



Herman

Yair Lapid co-signed a cap on rent rises at renewal in twenty twenty-three. So did Labor and Hadash. It never got a vote, but it's been written down several times.



Corn

What I'd watch, after the twenty-seventh, is the bit that doesn't need a Knesset at all. Whether Jerusalem asks for those cameras. Because an inspector who arrives forty minutes late is a witness, not enforcement.



Herman

Cameras don't need sixty-one seats, either.



Corn

Our thanks to Hilbert Flumingtop, who produced this series and kept its levels honest.



Herman

This has been My Weird Prompts. The whole Israel Votes series is at my weird prompts dot com.



Corn

See you tomorrow.