

The Knesset

**Member of Knesset Yuli-Yoel Edelstein**

Yuli-Yoel Edelstein was born in Chernivtsi (in Ukraine, former USSR) in 1958. In 1979, as a fourth year student at the Institute for Foreign Languages in Moscow, he filed an application to immigrate to Israel, but the application was denied.

As a "refusenik", Edelstein worked in Zionist circles in Moscow, learning Hebrew in the underground. In 1984, he was arrested by the KGB on false charges of drug possession and sentenced by the court to three years in a Soviet forced labor camp. When he was released, in 1987, he immigrated to Israel with his family. Between 1987 and 2008, Edelstein lived with his family in Alon-Shvut in Gush Etzion, and later moved to Neve Daniel, also in Gush Etzion.

In Israel, Edelstein attended the Jerusalem Fellows program for educational leadership and worked in several educational institutions. He was one of the founders and leaders of Yisrael BaAliyah. The party first ran for the 14th Knesset in 1996, winning seven mandates.

After Yisrael BaAliyah joined the government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, MK Edelstein was appointed Minister of Immigration, a position he filled until 1999. In this capacity, in years when many immigrants arrived to Israel from the former Soviet Union, Edelstein set up hostels for new immigrants who were unable to afford housing, worked to include immigrants in Israeli society, worked to increase budgets earmarked for them and was involved in the integration of immigrants into the job market.

In the 15th Knesset, between 1999 and 2003, during various periods of time, Edelstein served as Deputy Speaker of the Knesset and chair of his faction in the Knesset. Between 2001 and 2003, as part of the government of Ariel Sharon, Edelstein served as Deputy Minister of Immigration. Between 1999 and 2006, he served as chair of the Golan Lobby, in which he acted to thwart plans to transfer the Golan Heights to Syria.

In the 16th Knesset, between 2003 and 2006, Edelstein again ran on the Yisrael BaAliyah list. The party won only two seats in the election and joined the Likud. In this Knesset, Edelstein served as Deputy Speaker. Between 2006 and 2007, he initiated and established the Public Committee Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Struggle of Soviet Jewry. In 2007, as part of the committee's activity, the State of Israel marked the immigration of Soviet Jews with a number of events in Israel and abroad.

In the 17th Knesset, from March 2007, Edelstein served as Deputy Speaker of the Knesset. As part of his parliamentary activity, Edelstein established the Lobby for Regulating the Issue of Conversions in Israel, which aims to increase the number of converts every year.

During the 18th Knesset, Edelstein was appointed Minister of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs and was placed in charge of Israel's ties with the Diaspora. In this capacity, he headed the struggle against anti-Semitism and was in charge, among other things, of public diplomacy projects aimed at improving Israel's image. Two years following his election, Edelstein was ranked 10th among the 50 most influential Jews in the world by the Jerusalem Post.

During the 19th Knesset, Edelstein was elected Speaker of the Knesset.

During the Likud primaries ahead of the elections for the 20th Knesset, which took place on 31 December 2014, Edelstein won the second spot on the national list, which placed him on Likud's list for the Knesset, after Benjamin Netanyahu and Gilad Erdan.

On 31 March 2015, the day the 20th Knesset was sworn in, Edelstein was elected for a second term as Speaker of the Knesset.