

Israeli election ringtones make a splash

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An Israeli mobile operator announced some early returns on Tuesday, ahead of the March 28 general elections: Shas has the most popular political ringtone.

Cellcom, the mobile operator, said that the small, right-wing, ultra-Orthodox party's ringtone garnered 30 percent of the 3,000 downloads requested since the company made the ringtones available on its Web site last week, according to a report on the Hebrew news Web site Ynet.

Once the company saw how popular Shas' ringtone was, it added a remix version, the news site reported.

What is a political ringtone? During election season, the Israeli government grants equal television air time to each party running for seats in the country's parliament, the Knesset. The commercials invariably feature jingles, which Cellcom made available as downloadable ringtones.

The win wasn't a total surprise to Cellcom. A musical version of an ultra-Orthodox prayer had already proven a popular ringtone download for the company, the news site said.

Second place in the ringtone race went to Meretz, Shas' polar opposite on the political spectrum. While Shas is a religious party, Meretz's platform calls for greater separation between religion and government in the Jewish state, including the recognition of civil marriages.

The parties favored by more traditional opinion polls -- acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's Kadima, Amir Peretz's Labor and Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud -- did significantly less well in the ringtone arena.

Kadima, universally expected to win the most seats, garnered only 22 percent of the downloads, while Labor and Likud attracted a paltry 8 percent each, the news site said.

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