

The Gate at Alumim: Memory, Non-Domination, and the Third Anniversary of a Massacre

A learned essay on the footage of Karin Vernikov and Sapir Bilmes, the politics of October 7 memory, and the meeting of Orthodox political theology with republican theory

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Eve of the third secular anniversary of 7 October 2023

Abstract

On the evening of 5 October 2026, a widely circulated post on X returned to surveillance footage from the gate of Kibbutz Alumim. The clip shows two young women, Karin Vernikov, twenty-two, and Sapir Bilmes, twenty-four, both of Rishon LeZion, who had fled the Nova music festival and reached the kibbutz gate a little after 7:00 a.m. on 7 October 2023. By about 7:10 a.m. they were dead. The post named the attackers “Palestinists from Gaza,” described the chase as predation, and closed with the injunction “Never forget.” Within a day it had passed a million views.

This essay treats that post, and the replies it drew, as a primary document of third-anniversary memory rather than as a self-sufficient history. It reconstructs the verified record of the Alumim gate and of the wider massacre at and around the kibbutz, including the murder of Thai and Nepalese agricultural workers whom no “settler” narrative can absorb. It then maps the principal schools of interpretation now contending over October 7: documentary witness, denial and inversion, contextualization-as-excuse, internal Israeli accountability, just-war revision, and the dispute over whether graphic footage should be released or withheld. Each school is stated in its strongest form and then criticized.

The constructive argument is a synchronization, not a slogan. Orthodox sources — *zachor, lo ta’amod al dam re’echa*, the law of the pursuer, *milchemet mitzvah* as rescue of Israel from an attacker, the limits on siege and on collective punishment, and the dignity of the dead — converge with a republican account of non-domination. A people subjected to arbitrary violence of the kind filmed at Alumim has been thrust out of the status of free civic life. Memory is not vengeance. Memory is the refusal to let that expulsion be renamed resistance. The subsequent war has its own ledger, and Israeli policy failure before the attack has its own. Neither ledger cancels the agency of the men who chased two unarmed women to a fence and killed them.

I. The question, and why the gate is the right scale

Three years after the attack, the argument about 7 October is no longer an argument about whether something happened. It is an argument about what kind of thing it was, who may name it, and which facts are permitted to remain in the sentence after the word “but.”

The large numbers are not in serious dispute among institutions that have examined the evidence: about 1,200 people murdered, 251 taken hostage, a coordinated assault by Hamas and allied organizations, sexual violence documented by the Civil Commission on October 7 Crimes and by earlier UN and journalistic inquiries. On 4 October 2026, Military Intelligence chief Maj.-Gen. Shlomi Binder told the security cabinet, and on 5 October Defense Minister Israel Katz stated publicly, that some 6,000 attackers had crossed, that about 4,000 had since been killed, and that about 2,000 remained. Those figures revise earlier IDF estimates of roughly 5,600 infiltrators and should be cited as official Israeli assessments, not as neutral census data. Gaza casualty totals remain politically administered and methodologically contested; this essay does not treat any single wartime figure as settled.

Large numbers, however, are where denial hides. A gate is harder to rename. At Alumim the camera is fixed, the minute is known, the names are known, and the victims include young Israeli women who had been at a festival and foreign farm workers who had no part in any Israeli political project. The scale of a gate disciplines theory. If a framework cannot describe what the camera recorded without dissolving the agent or the victim, the framework has failed, whatever else it explains about occupation, deterrence, or the later conduct of the war.

The research questions are therefore these.

- What, on the best available evidence, happened to Karin Vernikov and Sapir Bilmes, and how does their murder sit inside the Alumim battle as reconstructed by the IDF probe and by Israeli reporting?
- What are the live schools of interpretation on the eve of the third anniversary, and where does each become an alibi?
- How should Orthodox political theology and republican non-domination theory speak about this footage without collapsing into collective essentialism on one side or exculpatory “context” on the other?
- What is the duty of memory when the image itself is an injury, and when Israeli self-criticism about the years before the attack is both necessary and constantly misused?

II. The primary record: two friends, a fence, a minute

Karin Vernikov was twenty-two. Sapir Bilmes was twenty-four. Both were from Rishon LeZion. They had met on a post-army trip in South America and had become, in the words of the reporting, inseparable. Sapir’s parents, Leon and Ina Bilmes, have told *Israel Hayom* that her decision to go to Nova was spontaneous and that she went with Karin; that at about 6:30 a.m. on 7 October, as the first rockets were launched, they called and urged their daughter home; and that Sapir said she would head back and sent her location. Her parents watched the signal move, and then stop.

Surveillance at Kibbutz Alumim shows Nova escapees reaching the gate a little after 7:00 a.m., hoping the perimeter was safety. It was not. Nukhba attackers were already at the kibbutz. The

group scattered. Reporting based on the footage, published by *Ynet* on the second anniversary, and earlier descriptions of the same video when it was released in November 2023, describe one terrorist closing on the two women. One was seized and shot as she tried to get away. The other reached a fence, turned, sat, and pleaded. The gunman fired at others who were fleeing and lingered over her; by the count of the *Ynet* writer who reviewed the footage, she waited about twenty-three seconds with her hands over her head. She was then shot at close range. The family's account and the probe's timeline place the murder at about 7:10 a.m.

The families did not know this in the hour it happened. In the account the Bilmes family gave *Israel Hayom*, there followed days of lists, a search near the festival area and at Barzilai Hospital, and then, on 11 October, the call to come and collect Sapir's belongings. Ina Bilmes has said that the family fights every day to keep going and to preserve Sapir's memory, and that the world lost a young woman of unusual heart. Leon has told *Ynet* that where he once had a son and a daughter, he now has many children — her friends, who still come to eat. Karin's mother, Luba, recalled to *Ynet* Karin saying that this party would be her last before she turned toward her future. Near the same spot, the brothers Noam and Yishai Slotki of Be'er Sheva, reservists who came south on their own, fought the attackers and fell.

Two cautions belong in the record itself. First, the widely shared clip is real footage of a real murder, but viral posts compress and moralize it. The October 2026 post says the second woman "froze, turned around, and begged." The anniversary reporting adds the hair, the fence, the long seconds of waiting, the shot to the head. Those details come from journalists who reviewed the surveillance, not from the caption. Second, the claim that the particular gunman was later killed is, in the *Ynet* account, a suggestion rather than a demonstrated identification. Memory does not require that uncertainty to be resolved. It requires that the uncertainty not be used to blur the fact of the murder.

This is the minute the post of 5 October 2026 asked its audience not to forget. The ask is legitimate. The caption's language is a separate question, taken up below.

III. Alumim as microcosm: the defended homes and the undefended gate

Alumim does not fit the story in which October 7 was only a war against soldiers, or only a war against "settlers," or only a jailbreak by the oppressed against their guards.

The IDF probe published in March 2025 found that the kibbutz civil-defense team, together with arriving forces, stopped a major invasion of the residential kibbutz. No kibbutz member was killed inside the community, though an Israeli civilian was mistakenly killed by the local security team and an unidentified Thai man was mistakenly killed by soldiers — facts that belong in any honest account, because friendly-fire error is not the same thing as the massacre and must not be folded into it. Around the kibbutz the toll was of a different order. *The Times of Israel*, reporting the probe, gave 57 civilians and five members of the security forces killed in and around Alumim, and five hostages taken. About 100 terrorists reached the area. Most of the early killing was done by a smaller group, on the order of ten men on motorcycles, who came in before 7:00 a.m., moved to the workers' quarters and the cowsheds, and then to the front gate where Nova fugitives were arriving.

The foreign workers are the fact that breaks the occupation alibi. Seventeen, or in some counts twenty-two, Thai and Nepalese agricultural workers and students were murdered in the

workers' quarters and nearby. Wikipedia's narrower massacre entry records 16 or 17 Thai and Nepali dead, plus four soldiers and a police officer, and notes that of 41 foreign employees a substantial fraction were killed or kidnapped. Ten of the dead were Nepalese agricultural students. Bipin Joshi, a Nepalese student, was kidnapped and later murdered in captivity; his body was returned in October 2025. Phonsawan Pinakalo was released in the November 2023 deal. The probe's hardest institutional sentence was that there had been no real plan to protect the workers, whose quarters lay closest to the border, and that no such plan had been built even by the time of the inquiry.

That sentence is an Israeli failure. It is not a Hamas mitigation. A state that did not extend its defensive plan to the people laboring its fields bears a debt of *arevut* and of ordinary political responsibility. The men who shot those workers, and who chased Karin and Sapir from the gate to the fence, bear a different debt. Confusing the two is the characteristic move of the third-anniversary argument, and it has to be refused in both directions. Families who in September 2026 released the "Case 7/10" dossier, a twelve-page compilation of public reports and statements — accusing successive Netanyahu governments of preserving Hamas rule, permitting Qatari funds, and ignoring warnings — are engaged in a republican demand for accountability. They are not, if one reads them carefully, engaged in transferring the trigger finger. The dossier landed six weeks before the 27 October 2026 election. Its timing is political. Its underlying question, whether a long policy of calibrated containment helped build the army that came through the fence, is a question a self-governing people is obliged to ask. Asking it does not rename the gate.

Among those abducted from the road at the Alumim junction were Romi Gonen, who came home in January 2025, and Ofir Tzarfati, who was murdered. The probe's reconstruction relied on body-camera footage, residents' messages, surveillance, and interviews. This is not a fog-of-war story. It is a documented story with remaining arguments about counts, about the precise identity of individual gunmen, and about the distribution of blame between the local team's courage and the state's prior neglect.

IV. The post of 5 October 2026, and the word "Palestinian"

The post by @Average_NY_Guy is itself a text of the anniversary. Timestamped 5 October 2026, 23:50 UTC — already 6 October in Israel — it attached the footage and wrote that two young girls had been chased "like prey," that the first was shot in the back, that the second begged and was executed without hesitation, that this is what "Palestinists from Gaza" did on October 7, and that one must never forget. Engagement by the next afternoon exceeded a million views, with tens of thousands of likes and more than ten thousand reposts. Some of the replies folded the clip into American domestic politics.

Three features of the post matter for analysis.

The first is the return of the image on the eve of the day for which bereaved families and civic groups had called a nationwide silence at 6:29 a.m., the hour the attack began, with events at some 400 sites and an evening national families' ceremony in Tel Aviv hosted by the former hostage Eli Sharabi. Memorial and viral witness are not the same practice. The ceremony's organizers described an aspiration to a unifying, hopeful, all-Israeli event. The post is accusatory. Both can be truthful. They do not serve the same office.

The second is the diminutive “girls.” Karin was twenty-two and Sapir twenty-four. The word does moral work: it stresses vulnerability and steals adulthood from the victims in order to heighten the crime. The crime does not need the theft. They were young women, old enough to have finished army service, to have traveled, to have chosen a friend’s spontaneous plan. Speaking of them as women is more exact and, in the end, more respectful.

The third is “Palestinian.” The neologism is an attempt to name an ideology rather than a people: the formation that treats the deliberate murder of civilians, the abduction of families, and the killing of foreign workers as a politics. In that narrow use it resembles other ideological suffixes — fascist, communist, jihadist — that name a program. The danger is the slide, already visible in some replies, from the program to the nation. A republican and halakhic vocabulary has to keep the distinction. The men at the gate were not an abstraction. They were armed members of a commanded assault, participants in a force whose founding covenant contains eliminationist language about Jews and whose operational orders, as the March 2026 second edition of the British 7 October Parliamentary Commission report has underlined by way of a Sinwar memorandum, planned civilian massacre rather than stumbled into it. That is an ideology with agents. It is not a license to speak of every Palestinian as the gunman at the fence, nor to treat Palestinian civilian death in the subsequent war as morally weightless.

The post is therefore half-right in a way that needs guarding. It refuses the euphemism. It risks a counter-euphemism. “Never forget” is a Jewish sentence with a long halakhic and historical life. It should not be subcontracted to a slur.

V. Schools of interpretation on the eve of the third anniversary

The argument around the footage is not a two-sided quarrel. It is a field. The main schools, stated fairly and then pressed, are these.

1. Documentary witness

This school holds that the antidote to denial is the record: names, minutes, cameras, forensic work, the 47-minute IDF compilation still withheld from the general public, Sheryl Sandberg’s *Screams Before Silence*, the Civil Commission’s *Silenced No More* (a 2026 report drawn from more than 430 testimonies, interviews and meetings and more than 10,000 photographs and video segments, presented at the United Nations by Cochav Elkayam-Levy). Andrew Roberts, writing in March 2026, put the claim sharply: the only antidote to denial is telling the true story. The February 2026 appearance of Hamas official Osama Hamdan on Norwegian television — denying that Hamas killed civilians, and blaming Israel for the deaths at Nova — is the exhibit. Against that sentence, the Alumim camera is enough.

The criticism of this school is not that it is false. It is that witness can become a politics of endless exposure, indifferent to *kavod ha-met* and to the families’ unequal wishes, and that a record of the initiating massacre does not by itself adjudicate every later strike. Witness is a floor, not a ceiling.

2. Denial and inversion

This school asserts that the massacre did not happen, or that Israel perpetrated it, or that the videos are fabricated, or that civilians died only as collateral of a military raid. Hamdan’s 2026 statement is a pure case. Online variants trade on the real existence of Israeli operational failure

and friendly fire to imply that the dead at the gate were killed by their own side. The Alumim probe does record mistaken killings. It does not record Karin and Sapir being killed by Israelis. The camera shows the opposite. Denial at this point is not a historical hypothesis. It is a refusal of evidence, continuous with the methods Deborah Lipstadt analyzed in Holocaust denial: the demand for an impossible standard applied only to Jewish victims, the conspiracy that would have to include the families, the hospital, the surveillance system, and the attackers' own cameras.

3. Contextualization as sufficient cause

This school does not always deny the dead. It places a "but" of occupation, blockade, or prior Israeli strikes so close to the murder that the murder loses agent and verb. The strongest version cites real history: the blockade, the wars since 2008, the failure of Palestinian national politics, the misery of Gaza under Hamas rule and under Israeli constraint. The weak version treats that history as a moral solvent. It cannot survive the foreign workers, who were not parties to the conflict in the sense the solvent requires, and it cannot survive the seconds at the fence, which are not a battlefield confusion but a decision. Context explains why a conflict exists. It does not explain why a man who has already scattered a group of unarmed fugitives pauses, looks back, and fires. Causes are not permissions.

4. Armed resistance without massacre

A more careful cousin holds that Palestinians have a right to resist occupation but that October 7's methods were criminal. This position is available inside just-war theory and, in a different key, inside parts of Palestinian and Arab dissent that Hamas has suppressed. It should be distinguished from school 3. Its limit is empirical. Hamas's governing documents and the operational pattern — festival, homes, shelters, workers' quarters, hostages — show that massacre of civilians was not a deviation from the resistance but a chosen instrument. One may affirm a people's political claims and still identify a particular movement as having forfeited the name of resistance for the name of atrocity. The republican tradition has language for this: domination is not liberty, and a politics whose first act in a moment of breakthrough is the hunting of fleeing civilians is not a politics of non-domination.

5. Internal Israeli accountability

The September 2026 "Case 7/10" dossier, the Alumim probe's admission about the workers, and three years of argument over warning, conception, and Qatari cash, constitute a domestic school. It argues that the massacre was the fruit of a long policy, not only of an hour's intelligence failure. Critics of the dossier call it an election document. Both can be true. A serious republican reads the dossier as a claim about preventive responsibility and then asks whether its authors have kept the perpetrators in the foreground. The halakhic analogue is the difference between a watchman's liability and a murderer's. Both can be guilty. They are not guilty of the same offense, and the remedy is not the same.

6. Just-war revision after the fact

Michael Walzer, in an interview with Gid'on Lev published in *Haaretz* in January 2026 and in English by K. in April, reaffirmed that the war after October 7 was just in its opening: every country would have fought after such an attack, and the Iranian axis made the war wider than Gaza. He then argued that once a political path existed to defeat Hamas and free the hostages,

the war became unjust. This is classical Walzer method — *jus ad bellum* separated from *jus in bello*, and from the duty to seek a political end. It is the strongest external criticism that still begins from the reality of the massacre. The criticism of Walzer, in turn, is that “a political path” is not a fact in the world simply because diplomats name one. A path that leaves the remaining perpetrators in arms, and that leaves Hamas able to reconstitute coercive rule over Gazan civilians, is not yet the path his criterion assumes. The Binder figures of October 2026 — two thousand participants still alive, in the IDF’s telling — are part of that dispute, not a footnote to it. Nor does a later injustice, if established, reach backward to launder Alumim.

7. The withheld film

A smaller school, represented in late September 2026 by calls to release the IDF’s 47-minute compilation, argues that graphic evidence belongs to the public record, as other atrocity films have. The counter-school argues that the film’s rape footage, murdered children, and burned bodies cannot be broadcast without a second violation. This dispute is real, and it is not solved by the existence of the Alumim clip, which is already public. It is solved, if at all, by distinguishing archives, restricted records, and mass spectacle. An archive can be complete while a feed is restrained.

VI. Orthodox political theology: memory without intoxication

A yeshiva-trained reader does not need October 7 translated into a foreign moral language before it is intelligible. The sources already know the pursuer, the civilian, the duty to remember Amalek’s method, and the ban on becoming Amalek in response.

Zachor et asher asah lekha Amalek (Devarim 25:17) is a command about method as much as about a nation: the attack on the faint and the rear, the refusal of ordinary war’s constraints, the targeting of those who cannot fight. The command to remember is paired with a command not to forget, and it sits beside the more general duty of *rak hishamer lekha u-shemor nafshekha me’od pen tishkach* (Devarim 4:9). Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi’s *Zachor* argued that Jewish memory is liturgical and communal before it is historiographical. The third anniversary makes the tension concrete. Israel is about to stand at 6:29 for a silence that is almost liturgical, while a feed circulates the footage as proof. Both are forms of *zechirah*. They fail in different ways if they become, respectively, a ceremony without perpetrators or a clip without names.

The law of the pursuer, *habba lehorgekha hashkem lehorgo* (Sanhedrin 72a; Rambam, *Hilkhot Rotze’ach* 1:6), is an individualized duty to stop a present lethal threat. It is not a mood and not a collective curse. The man at the Alumim fence is, in the classic category, a *rodef*. Stopping him is not revenge. Failing to distinguish him from the unarmed person in Rafah or Khan Younis who is not pursuing anyone is a failure of the same law, which is strict about who counts as the pursuer. Halakha is poorly suited to the slogan and well suited to the discrimination the slogan refuses.

Rambam’s class of *milchemet mitzvah* includes the war to save Israel from an enemy who has come upon them (*Hilkhot Melakhim* 5:1). A massacre in progress, and the recovery of captives, sit inside that duty of rescue. The same Rambam, in the laws of siege, forbids gratuitous destruction and requires an opening for those who would surrender (*Hilkhot Melakhim* 6). The tradition therefore contains, in one legal personality, the duty to fight and the duty to limit. Modern poskim who addressed the Jewish state’s wars — Rav Sha’ul Yisraeli among them —

extended this double structure into a framework where war is neither pacifist nor messianic. The intoxication that calls every Palestinian Amalek, and the intoxication that calls every Israeli response a desecration, both leave this structure.

Lo ta'amod al dam re'echa (Vayikra 19:16) binds the bystander. It binds the civil-defense team that held Alumim's homes, and it binds the state that had no plan for the workers' quarters. It also binds the distant commentator who, seeing the fence, changes the subject. Ina Bilmes's sentence — that the world lost Sapir — is a claim under this verse as much as under any theory of recognition.

Venahafoch hu (Esther 9:1) is not a promise that the dead return. It is a claim about reversal of intended domination. The Simchat Torah of 2026, when Israelis danced with Torah scrolls on the Nova ground where the murder began, was meant by those who danced as a lived midrash on that verse. Many bereaved families experienced it as a wound to ground they regard as soaked in their children's blood, and their pain belongs in any account of that day. It is a dangerous midrash if it is asked to mean that grief has been solved. Dancing there does not erase Karin and Sapir. At its best it refuses the attacker the last word about what that ground is. Bitachon without hishtadlut would have been the wrong lesson of the gate; hishtadlut without bitachon becomes the mere technical pursuit of the remaining two thousand, cut off from any account of what kind of people is doing the pursuing.

Kavod ha-met cuts against unlimited circulation. The dead are not an argumentative resource. Families differ. Some have asked the world to see, because denial is a second killing. Some cannot bear the image. A serious practice of memory asks, where it can, and does not treat virality as consent. The essay you are reading describes the minute and does not reproduce the clip. That is a judgment, not an evasion.

What the sources will not support is the teaching that Jewish blood is a detail in someone else's liberation story. Particularism here is not contempt for the stranger. The workers from Thailand and Nepal are the halakhic stranger in the plain sense, *ger* and *nokhri* under Israel's practical responsibility, murdered for being in the way of a raid whose announced enemy was the Jew. A theology that cannot mourn them alongside Karin and Sapir has shrunk the covenant. A theology that mourns only them, and treats Jewish particularity as an embarrassment, has counterfeited it.

VII. Academic theory: what it can carry, and where it bends

Memory studies gives the anniversary a vocabulary and a warning. Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* names sites where memory crystallizes as living milieu thins. Nova and the Alumim gate have become such sites, with the ambiguity Nora feared: the site can replace the knowledge. Avishai Margalit's *Ethics of Memory* distinguishes thick relations, in which memory is a duty of care, from thin relations, in which it is a moral hope. The families live in the thick relation. The viral post speaks as if the whole audience does. That excess is part of why the post spreads, and part of why it can become cruel. Paul Ricoeur's account of memory, history, and forgetting is useful against both denial and obsession: the duty is a just memory, not an unlimited one, and forgetting can be either a wound or a commanded rest. Commanded rest is not available on the eve of a silence at 6:29.

Denial studies, above all Lipstadt, supply the method for reading Hamdan and his amplifiers. Denial is not doubt. Doubt asks what the camera shows. Denial arranges the requirements of proof so that the camera is never enough, then inverts authorship. The presence of real Israeli failures is a gift to this method, which is why those failures must be stated plainly and then fenced off from the question of who fired at the fence.

Just-war theory divides. Walzer's traditionalism grounds the right of national defense in the survival of a political community and separates the justice of resort from the justice of conduct. Revisionists such as Jeff McMahan thin the collective and judge individual liability more strictly. Applied to Alumim, traditionalism has the cleaner fit: a community was invaded for the purpose of massacre, and the right of defense does not wait on a philosopher's allocation of liability among the attackers. Revisionism is more useful later, in arguments about who inside Gaza may be targeted. Using revisionism to cloud the gate is a category error. Using traditionalism to bless every subsequent strike is the mirror error. The academic contribution is the distinction, which halakha reached by another road.

Frantz Fanon's defense of anticolonial violence, and Edward Said's critique of Orientalist framing, are the theories most often conscripted to make the gate intelligible as resistance. They should be answered at their level. Fanon described a specific colonial situation and did not, in any responsible reading, issue a warrant for the execution of a pleading woman at a fence, still less for the murder of Nepalese students. Said's demand that Palestinians be seen as agents with a history is compatible with seeing Hamas's agents as responsible for a massacre. The abuse of both thinkers is the conversion of a critique of erasure into an erasure of the victim. When a theory cannot see Sapir Bilmes except as a symbol of the opposing side, the theory has become what it claimed to oppose.

Hannah Arendt's distinction between power and violence does different work. Violence, she argued, appears where power — the capacity to act in concert — has failed. Hamas's assault was not power in Arendt's sense. It was violence deployed to produce a spectacle of domination and to tear a political community's ordinary life. The Israeli argument since has been, in part, about whether the response rebuilds power, which for Arendt is not the same as accumulating the means of violence. The dancing at Nova in 2026, whatever one thinks of it and however deeply it pained many bereaved families, belongs to the question of power; the clip does not. The clip is evidence of violence. A people that has only the clip, and not the capacity to stand together at 6:29 without devouring itself, has not yet converted evidence into political life.

VIII. Republican political theory: non-domination at a fence

Republican theory, in the line from the Hebrew Bible's suspicion of concentrated arbitrary power, through Locke's natural right of defense, to Philip Pettit's account of liberty as non-domination, fits this minute more tightly than liberal theories that reduce injury to pain alone.

Pettit's claim is that unfreedom is not only interference but exposure to the arbitrary will of another. The man at the fence had the arbitrary power of life and death over a person who was unarmed, pleading, and already stopped. For those seconds that power was exercised as delay, which is itself a form of domination: the choice of when she would die remained his. Non-domination is not a metaphor here. It is a description of what was taken.

Locke's state of war begins where force without right is used against a person (Second Treatise, chapter 3). The fugitives at the gate were not in a state of war of their own making. A polity that cannot or will not end that condition at its border has failed a founding charge. The charge does not expire when the tactical situation becomes urban, complicated, and full of human shields. It does change its instruments. Republican self-defense is not a blank check. It is a purpose: the restoration of a condition in which citizens, residents, and guests are not subject to a private will with a rifle.

The biblical contribution to this tradition is the insistence that the king, too, is under law, and that bloodguilt is not healed by victory. A covenantal republicanism therefore holds two offices open at once. One office pursues the attacker and restores the border. The other office calls the watchmen to account: the conception that treated Hamas as a manageable address, the missing plan for the workers, the political habit of postponing a decision until the decision arrived as a massacre. The October 2026 election, whatever else it is, is a mechanism for the second office. It does not reopen what was done to Karin and Sapir.

Non-domination also constrains the vocabulary of the anniversary. To call a people, as such, the enemy is to propose a new domination in speech, and speech of that kind prepares worse. The ideological formation that celebrates the gate, teaches it, funds it, and denies it may be named and opposed. The child in Gaza may not be folded into the gunman. This is not a Western scruple added to a Jewish argument. It is the argument of the sources that limit the war they also command, and it is the argument of a republic that intends to remain one after the war.

Pittsburgh taught a civic habit that is easy to under-theorize: reciprocity, suspicion of cant, loyalty to named people rather than to abstractions. Jerusalem teaches that those habits sit inside a covenant older than either city. The gate at Alumim is where the habits are tested. An abstraction called resistance did not die at 7:10 a.m. Two women with names did. An abstraction called security did not fail the Thai and Nepalese workers. A state did. Theory that cannot keep both sentences is theory in the service of a side.

IX. The anniversary as a political fact, 3–7 October 2026

The week of the third anniversary has already produced its own archive.

On Simchat Torah, Israelis returned to the Nova site and danced with scrolls. The images circulated on 3–4 October, and so did the anguish of bereaved parents who had asked that the site be kept for remembrance alone. Read one way, the dancing is a refusal of a different kind, a refusal to let the site remain only a killing ground. Read another, it is an unbearable proximity of joy and absence. *Venahafoch hu* can bear that contradiction if it is not asked to resolve it.

On 4 October, Binder's figures entered the cabinet record, and they were made public the next day: 6,000 crossed, 4,000 killed, 2,000 still sought, in the IDF's current telling, against an older estimate of about 5,600 infiltrators. The same weekend the Defense Ministry put the number of Israeli security personnel fallen since 7 October 2023 at 1,318, a number that includes local response teams. These are not anniversary rhetoric. They are a claim about unfinished pursuit, and they will be used by every school above for a different conclusion.

On 6 October, *Ynet* described the next day's map: silence at 6:29, hundreds of local events, a Nova-site gathering in the evening, a national ceremony at Yarkon Park hosted by Eli Sharabi.

The ceremony's third iteration aims at a shared Israeli voice. The viral post of the night before aims at an accusatory one. A mature politics of memory needs both, and needs each to be corrected by the other. Ceremony without the fence becomes sentiment. The fence without ceremony becomes a weapon in someone else's culture war, which is how such clips are often used.

The withheld 47-minute film remains withheld. The Civil Commission's report is public. The Parliamentary Commission's second edition, with the Sinwar memorandum, is public. The families' Case 7/10 dossier is public. There is no shortage of text. There is a shortage of readers willing to hold more than one ledger.

Gaza's dead are a ledger this essay will not pretend to close. Figures administered by Hamas-run institutions, independent estimates with wide intervals, and Israeli claims about combatant ratios have diverged since the first months of the war. The count of Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry passed 70,000 in late 2025 and stood above 74,000 by late September 2026, with continuing dispute over classification, indirect death, and verification. Any of those numbers, if even partly true, is a moral weight on Israeli conduct and on Hamas's use of civilian space. None of them is a retroactive description of the Alumim gate. A covenantal account says so plainly, because a double standard in either direction corrupts the faculty the covenant exists to train.

X. Synthesis: what may be said, and what the gate forbids

The footage is true. Karin Vernikov and Sapir Bilmes were murdered at the Alumim gate at about 7:10 a.m. on 7 October 2023, after fleeing Nova, by a Hamas attacker, while one of them pleaded. Thai and Nepalese workers were murdered in the same assault, in and around a kibbutz whose own homes were largely held by a civil-defense team the state had not adequately prepared for the quarters nearest the fence. Denial of these facts is false. Contextualization that removes the agent is an alibi. Naming the ideology is legitimate. Naming a people as that ideology is a path back into domination.

Orthodox political theology and republican theory converge on a limited, demanding conclusion. There is a duty to remember method, not only outcome. There is a duty to stop the pursuer and to discriminate the pursuer from the person who is not pursuing. There is a duty of the watchman that Israeli self-criticism rightly presses and that election season will distort. There is a dignity of the dead that limits spectacle. There is a ban on letting the attacker write the vocabulary. Non-domination is the civic name of what the fence destroyed, and the restoration of non-domination is the only aim that can justify the force used in answer, for as long as that aim is actually served and no longer.

The post that circulated on the eve of the anniversary was right to refuse forgetting and wrong to need the word it chose. Any reply that converts two dead women into a club against domestic opponents repeats, in a smaller key, the instrumentalization they claim to oppose. The silence planned for 6:29 and the ceremony that evening are right to gather a people and incomplete if they cannot say the names. The dancing on Simchat Torah, which so many bereaved families felt as a wound, is at most a reversal, not a verdict.

A Simple Jew, formed between the reciprocity of a steel city and the walls of a much older capital, does not need a new theory to know what the camera shows. He needs the discipline not to look away, and the further discipline not to become, in the looking, a person who can see

only enemies. Karin was going to turn toward her future after that party. Sapir's friends still come to eat. The gate does not get the last sentence. Neither does the feed.

Methodology note

This essay integrates reporting available as of 6 October 2026 (*Ynet*, *The Times of Israel*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *JNS / Israel Hayom*, Wikipedia's summary of the Alumim massacre with its internal range of counts), anniversary documents (Case 7/10; the Civil Commission report *Silenced No More*; the Parliamentary Commission's second edition as discussed by Andrew Roberts), and the primary viral text of 5 October 2026. The author's own earlier essays of 2026 — in particular "Covenantal Clarity," which already treated October 7 memory as a problem of selective moral accounting, and the sequence on covenantal free will, limited dominion, and non-domination (Ha'azinu, Ki Tavo, Elul) — supply the standing framework, not anonymous color. Where counts diverge, the divergence is preserved. No claim about the identity of the individual gunman beyond the footage is treated as settled. Gaza casualty figures are reported as contested. The theological argument is an Orthodox synthesis, not a ruling.

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All glory to the Ribono shel Olam · Errors are mine.