

The Inverted Bow of Non-Domination

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Free Will, Limited Kingship, and the Contested Majority on the Eve of the 26th Knesset

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · Jerusalem · 11 Cheshvan 5787 / Thursday 22 October 2026

Abstract

Five days before Israel's 27 October 2026 Knesset elections, the week after Parashat Noach was read, and with the last mid-October polls showing a persistent deadlock (neither camp at 61), a sharp exchange on X between Channel 14 commentator Erel Segal and Gadi Eisenkot crystallizes competing narratives of domination. Eisenkot describes Netanyahu as a panicked liar whose "string of lies is sickening" and dangerous to Israel; Segal mocks Yashar as the party of the "deep state." This essay subjects the exchange, Yashar's platform (universal service with limited exemptions, term limits, a stated balance between the Knesset and the judiciary), and the broader campaign to rigorous analysis through the Torah's architecture of the inverted bow (Noach's rainbow as divine self-limitation), free will (Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 5; Nitzavim), limited kingship (Deuteronomy 17; Rambam, Hilchot Melachim), and honest weights (Ki Teitzei), synchronized with Philip Pettit's non-domination (capacity for arbitrary interference even unexercised), Yoram Hazony's biblical particularism, Daniel Elazar's covenantal federalism, and related scholarship (Eric Nelson on the Hebrew Republic, Quentin Skinner on neo-Roman liberty).

It maps the spectrum of approaches, deepens critiques of both camps for risks of arbitrary power, and advances a synthesis in which the people's free standing under covenant—exercised in turnout and accountability—prevents both personal and institutional domination.

I. Research Question and Scope

The central question is how the contested narratives of power in the final weeks of the 2026 Israeli election campaign—exemplified by the Segal–Eisenkot exchange and Eisenkot's mid-October statements—reveal the requirements of non-domination in a covenantal polity, and how Orthodox Jewish sources correct and deepen republican theory when applied to leadership, institutions, and the people's free choice. Sub-questions address the precise content of Yashar's platform, the limits of both "continuity" and "replacement" critiques, the role of free will and teshuvah in the voting booth amid a deadlock, and the implications of threshold parties and surplus agreements. Scope draws on public polling and reporting through 15 October 2026, primary Torah and classical sources, and republican theory. Speculative claims without corroboration are noted as such.

II. Immediate Context: The Exchange, Recent Statements, and the Tight Race as of 15 October

On 13 October 2026, Gadi Eisenkot posted that Netanyahu's interview left no room for doubt: he is in absolute panic, a liar, and dangerous to Israel, with "another 14 days" remaining. Erel Segal responded that Yashar is the party of "piggy pensions and the deep state" and of "tyranny of

officials,” and that those who want these things should vote for “this toaster.” Is that a description of a platform, or a mood? Voters can ask Segal to show which Yashar policy he means. Subsequent replies criticized the personal tone toward a bereaved father and former Chief of Staff. By 14 October, Eisenkot sharpened the critique in a Radio 103FM interview, calling Netanyahu’s claims a “string of lies” that is “sickening” and rejecting assertions that he had supported a nuclear Iran or opposed conquering Gaza.

He outlined first-week priorities, among them a universal mandatory draft law “with no loopholes” and an eight-year limit on the prime minister’s term. Yashar activists received messages urging the party to overtake Likud as the largest list so as to receive the first mandate to form a government, while campaigning in dozens of cities and warning against wasted votes on threshold parties. Eisenkot has repeatedly challenged Netanyahu to a televised debate; Netanyahu has not accepted. Haredi representatives have approached Eisenkot regarding possible postelection cooperation, according to his statements (single source, not yet confirmed). This exchange condenses long-running debates over the locus of arbitrary power. The last polls before this essay confirm a deadlock short of 61: Channel 13 (published 14 October 2026) had the Netanyahu bloc at 51 and Eisenkot’s at 50, with Yashar 20 and Likud 18; Zman Yisrael (fielded 14–15 October) had the Jewish-led opposition at 54 and the Netanyahu bloc at 49, with Yashar 26 and Likud 20; KAN/Kantar (11 October) had 53 and 50, with Yashar 22 and Likud 20.

Averages across pollsters place both camps near 51–54, with Yashar and Likud near parity in the low twenties. Threshold parties (Hendel-Zelekha, Amcha Yisrael, Winter) and Arab lists remain pivotal; house effects are visible (Channel 14 higher for the right). Turnout and surplus agreements will decide governing capacity. Yashar’s platform remains consistent: national service for all (military or civilian, with limited yeshiva exemptions), opposition to a Palestinian state, and term limits.

III. The Inverted Bow of Noah: Divine Self-Limitation as the Model of Non-Domination

Parashat Noach places the rainbow as the sign of the covenant after the Flood: G-d hangs His bow in the clouds, inverted, no longer aimed at the earth. Ramban (on Genesis 9:12) and the midrashic tradition read this as divine self-limitation—the Master of the universe restraining His own power so that the world may endure. The covenant is not the abolition of judgment but its bounding under higher commitment. This is the Torah’s foundational image of nonarbitrary power. See Genesis 9. Applied to human politics, the inverted bow demands that no agent—king, bureaucrat, institution, or faction—hold unaccountable capacity to dominate. Rambam, *Hilchot Melachim*, codifies the biblical limits of Deuteronomy 17: the king must not lift his heart above his brothers, must write a Torah scroll and read it daily “all the days of his life,” and is forbidden excess accumulation of horses, wives, or silver.

Authority serves the covenant; it does not stand above it. See Deuteronomy 17 and *Mishneh Torah*, *Kings and Wars*. Free will (*Hilchot Teshuvah* 5:1–3; Nitzavim’s “See, I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil... therefore choose life”) is the pillar without which reward, punishment, and repentance collapse. The people stand nitzavim—able to choose and accountable for the choice. See *Mishneh Torah*, *Repentance* 5. Chassidic teaching (Tanya on the beinoni’s restraint of the animal soul, the Rebbe’s emphasis on *dirah betachtonim* and *zikui ha-rabbim*) locates true freedom in the capacity to elevate rather than flee or dominate. See Tanya.

Honest weights (Ki Teitzei 25:13–16) establish the sequence: corrupt the public measure of trust, and the straggler becomes prey (Amalek). Selective exemptions or institutional overreach both place two stones in the bag.

IV. Spectrum of Approaches and Critical Analysis

Supporters of the current coalition and Segal-style critiques argue that the primary threat of domination is institutional: unelected bodies that expand beyond their remit into policy veto, and a “deep state” continuity that treats elected majorities as temporary obstacles. Are Eisenkot’s military background and his institutional emphasis vehicles for relocating power to unelected guardians, as they claim? That is their question, and it deserves an answer rather than a sneer. The personal charge of “toaster” is crude; the underlying concern about unaccountable capacity (Pettit’s definition of domination as the capacity for arbitrary interference, even if unexercised) is not. Channel 14 polling that shows a stronger right bloc reflects this constituency’s prioritization of elected continuity over institutional constraint.

Supporters of Eisenkot and the opposition argue that the primary threat is personal and factional: an executive that has delayed accountability for October 7 (Eisenkot’s “string of lies” charge), coalition arithmetic that freezes enforcement of shared defense burdens on one sector while others bear multi-year reserve loads, and rhetoric that treats institutions as enemies rather than constrained servants. The “panicked liar” and “sickening” charges are harsh; the demand for universal service “with no loopholes” and term limits addresses documented manpower, trust, and concentration-of-power deficits. Eisenkot’s refusal to serve under Netanyahu and challenge to debate frame the contest as one of accountability rather than mere personal rivalry. Both readings contain partial truths and risks of domination. Coalition exemptions that freeze ordinary civic duty for one sector while others continue to pay constitute the arbitrary interference Pettit identifies as the core of unfreedom.

Institutional expansion that treats elected majorities as presumptively illegitimate relocates rather than eliminates arbitrary power; it risks the public domination by those in office that Pettit later warns against. Bad faith exists on both sides: instrumentalization of Oct 7 for electoral gain, and instrumentalization of “deep state” language to dismiss legitimate oversight. Torah supplies the correction neither side fully owns: power is bounded by higher law (limited kingship), free will requires institutions in which the people’s standing is not subject to hidden veto, and teshuvah is available to both leaders and voters. As of mid-October, neither camp has secured the arithmetic of non-domination; the deadlock itself is the practical test of free standing.

V. Republican Theory and the Torah-Corrected Synthesis

Pettit’s freedom as non-domination—security against the arbitrary will of another, even unexercised—requires that power track the interests of those subject to it, with contestatory voice and robust constraints. See *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford University Press, 1997), especially chapters 2–3. The intensity of non-domination takes priority over mere extent of choice; the state must promote it without itself dominating. Hazony recovers the biblical particularism of peoples formed by covenant, language, and memory against universal empire (*The Virtue of Nationalism*, Basic Books, 2018). Elazar’s covenantal federalism reads the biblical polity as overlapping vertical (G-d–people) and horizontal (tribes,

rulers-ruled) covenants that both enable and limit collective action (Covenant and Polity in Biblical Israel, Transaction, 1995; full Covenant Tradition series). Eric Nelson's *The Hebrew Republic* (Harvard University Press, 2010) shows how Jewish sources transformed early modern European political thought toward republicanism and popular consent under higher law.

Quentin Skinner's *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1998) recovers the neo-Roman emphasis on freedom from dependence. Torah does not dissolve these frameworks; it judges and deepens them. The inverted bow and limited kingship supply the higher constraint that republican theory alone cannot generate. Free will (Rambam, Nitzavim) requires that the people be able to appear and choose without being predetermined by either executive concentration or institutional guardianship. Honest weights forbid both the arbitrary will of a faction's exemptions and the arbitrary will of unelected capacity that overrides the ballot. The synthesis is neither quietist trust in existing institutions nor maximalist rejection of all constraint. It is the architecture in which paper trails of accountability (transparent service burdens, contestable review, published rules) and the people's free standing ensure that no hidden or arbitrary will permanently dominates the covenant.

VI. Implications for the 26th Knesset in the Last Week

With blocs short of 61 in the last published polls and Yashar competitive, the election is not a predetermined coronation or restoration. It is an exercise of free will. Turnout is the people standing nitzavim. Intracamp negativity that wastes aligned votes treats partners as obstacles rather than covenant participants. Yashar's claim to "uprightness" (yashar) will be tested by whether its governance bounds power—including its own institutional preferences—or merely relocates domination. The coalition's claim to continuity will be tested by whether it restores honest measures of shared burden or continues selective exemptions. Both face the inverted bow: the capacity for self-limitation under higher law. Threshold parties and surplus agreements will determine whether the arithmetic of nondomination is achievable or whether post-election bargaining reintroduces arbitrary will. The Segal-Eisenkot exchange and Eisenkot's subsequent "sickening" critique illustrate the temptation of narrative domination.

Crude personalization risks *sinat chinam* and erodes the possibility of covenantal repair. The underlying institutional and accountability questions remain real. The path of *tiferet* rejects both the arbitrary will of unaccountable guardians and the arbitrary will of unaccountable majorities or executives. It preserves the sanctity of Torah study while insisting that study not become a structural exemption from the covenantal burden. It designs pathways of graduated integration, transparent inquiry, and constrained authority.

VII. Conclusion

The inverted bow of Noach is not a decorative sign. It is the constitutional image of power that restrains itself so that the world—and the covenant—may endure. On the eve of the 26th Knesset, with free will set before the people and both blocs short of an easy majority as of mid-October 2026, the test is whether Israel's institutions and leaders will hang the bow or aim it. Orthodox theology supplies the criteria: limited kingship under Torah, free choice and *teshuvah*, honest weights, and the refusal of permanent domination. Republican theory supplies the institutional language of nondomination, particular peoplehood, and layered covenants. The

synthesis is the sober accounting of a people that knows it may choose, is commanded to choose life, and must build forms in which no hidden or arbitrary will permanently dominates the standing of the covenant.

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