

From “Last Barrier” to Covenantal Accountability: Distinguishing Politicized Insubordination from Collusion in the October 7 Failure

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An Updated and Expanded Essay Synthesizing Orthodox Jewish Theology and Thought with Academic Theories and Republican Political Theory

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Abstract

This essay examines the debate over the Israeli security establishment’s role in the October 7, 2023 failure. It focuses on the distinction between claims of intentional collusion with Hamas (rejected by Gadi Taub and others as unsubstantiated by public evidence) and a narrower but consequential form of institutional failure: politicized insubordination, in which professional security chiefs came to understand themselves as a “final barrier” against an elected government they viewed as illegitimate, and treated its military directives with systematic suspicion. The analysis centers on Yuval Diskin’s September 9, 2023 public address at Kaplan, which explicitly named Ronen Bar and the other serving chiefs as the last line of defense and instructed them to be suspicious of offensive military operations initiated by the government. It incorporates contemporaneous reporting on long-term Hamas arrangement tracks (single source, not yet confirmed) and the publicly contested night-of notification record. These empirical claims are synchronized with Orthodox Jewish sources on limited kingship, prophetic critique of failed shepherds, and covenantal accountability (Deuteronomy 17, Rambam Hilchot Melachim, Ezekiel 34), and with republican political theory on non-domination, civil-military relations, and the risks of an unelected professional apparatus becoming a veto player. The essay maps the spectrum of approaches, critiques both maximalist conspiracy readings and minimalist shared-analytical-error accounts, and advances a covenantal-republican synthesis for institutional design.

I. Research Question and Scope

The central question is whether the pre-October 7 posture of parts of the Israeli security establishment—particularly the Shin Bet under Ronen Bar—is best understood as (a) intentional collaboration with Hamas to enable an invasion for political effect, (b) a catastrophic but shared analytical and operational failure rooted in an outdated conceptzia, or (c) a form of politicized insubordination in which professional duty was subordinated to a prior political reading of the elected government as an adversary. Sub-questions address the evidentiary weight of Diskin’s public “last barrier” address (especially its instruction on military operations), the significance of arrangement-focused documents dated 5 October 2023, the contested night-of notification record, and the implications for institutional design. Scope draws on public materials through 16 October 2026, classical Jewish sources, and republican and civil-military relations theory.

II. Immediate Context: Taub’s Argument

In October 2026, Gadi Taub published a post rejecting the “betrayal theory” that Ronen Bar and others intentionally allowed the Hamas invasion. Taub argued that the security chiefs associated with the Kaplan protest camp came to believe the prime minister was planning a preemptive war to suppress protests and strengthen his rule; consequently, they thought a war would help rather than weaken him, and their role was to prevent him from obtaining any excuse for escalation. He cited Diskin’s September 9, 2023 address and pointed to Ayala Hasson’s reporting of documents showing Bar’s focus, on 5 October 2023, on a long-term arrangement with Hamas (single source, not yet confirmed). This distinction is decisive. Taub’s argument correctly targets the stronger claim of intentional enablement, for which public evidence of coordination with Hamas remains absent. On the narrower claim of politicized resistance or selective professional caution, the public record is more ambiguous and more substantial. Both the government and the security services have acknowledged intelligence and conceptual failure; what remains disputed is intent, transmission, and the relative weight of containment policy.

III. Diskin’s September 9, 2023 Speech: The Public Formation of the “Final Barrier”

The full public text of Diskin’s address (delivered at Kaplan and published shortly afterward, based on a joint article with former Shin Bet legal advisor Eli Bahar) is addressed directly to the serving chiefs: Chief of General Staff Herzl Halevi, Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai, Shin Bet Director Ronen Bar, Mossad Director Dedi Barnea, and Katy Perry, head of the Israel Prison Service:

I am addressing you this evening because you are truly the last line of defense before we go from being an essential democracy to being a dangerous autocracy.

Diskin declares that a constitutional crisis is already underway. He describes the government as having lost legitimacy, with each of its actions suspect and tainted by irrelevant considerations. He then offers seven principles the chiefs should uphold more meticulously than ever. Point 4 is the most operationally pointed:

4. Under the current circumstances, you must be suspicious of offensive military operations initiated by the government, and you must carefully examine their necessity. If you reach the conclusion that such an initiative is tainted by irrelevant considerations, you must oppose it, both as individuals and together.

He closes by returning to the barrier language, naming Bar explicitly:

Herzi, Shabtai, Ronen, Dedi, Katy, and those under you – At the present time, you are truly the final barrier before the collapse of the democratic Jewish state of Israel, in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence!

This is not a private professional memorandum. It is a public address, four weeks before 7 October 2023, in which a former Shin Bet chief tells the sitting chiefs that they are the residual guardians of democracy against a government he has already declared illegitimate, and that they must treat its offensive military operations with suspicion and oppose those they judge

tainted. That public ideological formation is the backdrop Taub invokes and the public statement that makes the narrower claim of politicized insubordination more plausible than either pure shared analytical error or intentional collusion.

IV. Orthodox Jewish Theology: Limited Kingship, Prophetic Critique, and the Duty of Guardians

Deuteronomy 17 and Rambam’s *Hilchot Melachim* establish the architecture of limited kingship: the king must not lift his heart above his brothers, must write a Torah scroll and read it daily, and is forbidden excess accumulation. Authority is bounded by higher law and exists for the covenant, not above it. The prophetic books repeatedly rebuke kings and officials who fail to protect the people or who subordinate justice to power. Ezekiel 34’s critique of the shepherds who feed themselves rather than the flock is particularly apt: guardians—whether priests, prophets, or later institutional officers—are accountable to the people; their legitimacy derives from fidelity to the covenantal purpose, not from self-conception as a counterweight to elected leadership. When professional security chiefs publicly or operationally treat the elected government’s military preferences as presumptively illegitimate, they risk inverting this order. The “last barrier” language, however sincerely held as defense of democracy, functions in practice as a claim of superior standing over the people’s chosen authorities. Torah sources do not require blind obedience to every executive directive, but they do require that institutional power remain subordinate to the covenantal structure rather than becoming an autonomous veto. Prophetic critique applies equally to executive failure of containment and to elite guardians who withhold or soft-pedal protection under the cover of political judgment. Chassidic teaching on the elevation of the animal soul and the principle of *dirah betachtonim* adds that true service elevates rather than dominates. Selective application of professional caution according to the political identity of the government risks becoming a form of internal domination.

V. Republican Political Theory and Civil-Military Relations

Philip Pettit’s non-domination defines freedom as security against the capacity for arbitrary interference, even if unexercised. When an unelected professional apparatus possesses the capacity to withhold or shape threat assessment according to its reading of the elected government’s legitimacy, that capacity itself constitutes a form of domination relative to the people and their representatives. Classical republican thought emphasizes freedom from dependence. Modern civil-military relations literature (Huntington’s objective control, Feaver’s principal-agent model of shirking, and related work) stresses that professional security institutions must remain subordinate to civilian political authority while retaining professional autonomy in execution. The risk is not professional judgment per se, but the conversion of professional judgment into a standing political veto. Diskin’s address and the broader Kaplan atmosphere illustrate the danger that parts of the security establishment came to view themselves as residual guardians of democracy against an elected government they deemed illegitimate. Republican theory does not require that security chiefs endorse every government policy; it does require that their professional assessments not be systematically filtered through a prior political judgment that the government itself is the primary threat. Eric Nelson’s work on the Hebrew Republic shows how Jewish sources historically shaped early modern European thought toward popular consent under higher law; the same sources now supply a corrective

when professional elites claim superior standing. Daniel Elazar’s covenantal federalism reads biblical polity as overlapping vertical and horizontal covenants that both enable and limit collective action; when professional institutions treat the elected authorities as adversary, the covenantal architecture is inverted.

VI. Spectrum of Approaches and Critical Analysis

One approach treats the failure as intentional collusion or deliberate enablement. This reading draws on the strength of the warning signs, the decision not to elevate alerts or disperse the Nova festival, and the political atmosphere of open hostility to the government. It is weakened by the absence of public documentary evidence of coordination with Hamas and by Bar’s public statements that he issued repeated warnings and operational recommendations. Taub correctly notes that the security chiefs’ own stated fear was that war would strengthen the government—an orientation inconsistent with a plan to allow an invasion for political damage. A second approach treats the failure as shared conceptual and analytical error. Hamas was assessed as deterred and open to long-term arrangement; economic and humanitarian measures were believed to moderate it; night-of signs were interpreted as exercises or limited probes. This reading is supported by decades of containment policy, the reported focus on arrangement tracks as late as 5 October 2023 (single source, not yet confirmed), and the broader intelligence literature on mirror-imaging and the Agranat Commission’s earlier conceptual critique. It is incomplete to the extent that it underweights the political atmosphere in which those assessments were formed and maintained. The Agranat Commission itself has been criticized for focusing on military and intelligence failures while largely exonerating political leadership; a future October 7 inquiry will face the inverse risk of reversing that emphasis without examining how political strategy and professional self-conception interacted.

A third approach locates the failure in politicized insubordination or selective professional caution. Diskin’s speech supplies public evidence that serving chiefs were urged to treat the government’s military directives with suspicion and to oppose those judged tainted by irrelevant considerations. Arrangement-focused documents and the disputed night-of notification record are compatible with a disposition to avoid handing the government a *casus belli*. This reading does not require collusion with Hamas; it requires only that political distrust shaped what counted as actionable intelligence and how urgently it was transmitted. Both the executive and the professional apparatus face critique. Containment policy and delayed responses to warnings are the government’s responsibility. Selective filtering or under-transmission of threat assessment is the professional apparatus’s responsibility. Responsibility runs in both directions. Torah’s limited kingship and honest weights (Deuteronomy 25) forbid both arbitrary executive power and arbitrary institutional veto. Republican non-domination requires that neither hold unaccountable capacity.

VII. Implications for Institutional Design

If the failure was limited to shared analytical error, the remedy is improved collection, analysis, and challenge processes. If it included a standing disposition to treat the elected government’s military preferences as presumptively illegitimate, the remedy must also address the self-conception of professional institutions as residual guardians of democracy against the people. Covenantal republicanism supplies the criteria: professional security institutions must remain subordinate to elected authority (Rambam’s limited kingship applied to modern offices), non-

arbitrary in their interference (Pettit), and accountable through transparent inquiry and contestatory mechanisms. A state commission of inquiry, universal service burdens, and term limits address parts of the problem; they do not substitute for clarity about the proper subordination of professional judgment. Elite institutions that wrap themselves in the language of patriotism or democracy while subordinating the people’s elected authorities invert the covenantal order. The language of insubordination can be applied not as a claim of collusion with Hamas, but as a judgment that professional duty was subordinated to a political reading of the moment, producing a failure of covenantal responsibility.

VIII. Conclusion

The October 7 failure remains a catastrophe whose full causal account is still contested. Taub correctly rejects unsubstantiated claims of intentional collusion with Hamas. The narrower account of politicized insubordination—professional judgment filtered through a prior political reading of the elected government as adversary—remains compatible with the public evidence of Diskin’s “last barrier” address (especially point 4), arrangement-focused operational attention on 5 October 2023 (single source, not yet confirmed), and the disputed night-of record. Orthodox Jewish sources on limited kingship and prophetic critique of failed shepherds, synchronized with republican theory on non-domination and civil-military subordination, supply the measure. Neither maximalist conspiracy nor minimalist shared-error accounts fully capture the institutional problem. Professional institutions must protect the people without becoming an autonomous veto against the people’s chosen authorities. Accountability under higher law, not narrative domination, remains the practical test.

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