**Chapter 5**

**The Fat Man Doesn’t Sing – The Politicization of the Civil Service**

1. **Rule of the Advisers? Delegitimizing the Civil Service and the Debate over the Public Interest**

Dina Zilber, Deputy Attorney General, argued during a hearing of the Committee on Education, Culture and Sports on the subject of the Loyalty in Culture bill:

During the past hour, I was attending a Constitutional Committee hearing on the Legal Advisors Law, a law that converts a public-federal legal counsel model, into a position of confidence, legal counsel not to but on behalf of the Minister, a law might as well be renamed “Loyalty in Justice.” Now, in this room, we shall discuss the Loyalty in Culture Law. Culture is imagination running free, it is beauty and diversity and a plurality of voices and courage and defiance and honesty and excitement and expression that does not seek to ingratiate itself to anyone and does not contort itself to fit any measures of patriotism or pass any state-approved suitability test. The two rooms are separated by one floor, but as the poet said, one straight line passes between two points. It like a puzzle: put the pieces together and the big picture unfurls before us and takes on visible meaning. We are changing. And the country too has changed its face. These are complicated days and they bring with them not only new times but also new words. Governability, loyalty, override. This is antagonistic discourse that cuts into and scars the common social tissue. It labels, tags, who’s with us and who’s against us, and if there are those who are loyal—are there also those who betray us? The fifth column? Give us obedient legal advisors, neutered artists, muzzled media, a compliant, well-behaved people with uniform thought.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Whereas the Loyalty in Culture Law applies to one specific field, the Legal Advisors Law—the proposition to replace the legal advisors to the various government ministries from professional advisors, under the supervision of the Attorney General, to advisors appointed by the ministers themselves, subordinate to their will and expected to display personal loyalty—has a wide-reaching, systemic effect on the entire public sector. The concept of governability, entailing inherent loyalty to the minister, stands to transform entirely the scope of civil service in Israel. The basic worldview behind it is that there is no such thing as legal professionalism. Every legal advisor adheres to one party ideology or another, which informs their every action; therefore, they must be chosen by the minister, to be a trusted associate. While it would seem to reason that, in that case, the legal advisor must resign whenever a new minister is chosen, they are instead accorded a seven-year term. The bill was submitted as a private piece of legislation, signed by 24 members of the Knesset, as well as Amir Ohana, Netanyahu’s minister of justice during the government-in-transition period and later minister of interior security who is responsible for the police. The explanatory statement attached to the bill read thus:

Recent years have seen far-reaching changes in the role and status of legal advisors in government ministries. Today, the legal advisor is perceived not only as a counselor, but also as someone with the authority to disqualify ideas and processes promoted by the minister in charge if, to the best of his or her understanding, they are legally or constitutionally flawed…. This bill is intended to change the method of appointing legal advisors to government ministries, so that the advisor is selected by the minister as a person placed in a position of confidence, as is the case today for the appointment of ministerial chiefs of staff. This change will empower governability and strengthen the governmental ministries in order to allow them to implement the ministerial policy entrusted to them in a more effective and harmonious fashion, while eliminating conflict and frustration. The outlook underpinning this bill is that the function of the legal advisor is to assist the minister in realizing their policy by providing them with the appropriate legal tools. The functions of monitoring and control are already carried out by numerous other bodies—ministry comptrollers, the State Comptroller’s office, the courts, and the law enforcement agencies.

Former Supreme Court Justice Yitzhak Zamir said of the Legal Advisors Law: “This bill, more than the Override Clause or the Nation-State Law which are on everybody’s mind, is a very grave danger to the rule of law in Israel.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Why does Zamir see this bill as a serious danger to the rule of law? What does it matter if the appointment of legal advisors takes place through a tender published by the Civil Service Commission or, according to the new proposal, through a search committee headed by a ministerial chief of staff? Former Supreme Court Justice and former Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein provides the answer to this question in his letter to the constitutional committee:

What the bill proposes is an outright politicizing of legal advising to the government. A legal advisor is not a position of confidence. Under no circumstances is it that…. His job does not depend on “loyalty” to minister so and so, who in our country tends to get replaced rather frequently, but on loyalty to the law…. The very fact of being appointed by the minister, even if it is with the consent of the Attorney General, which is the current proposition, stamps the legal advisor with a political seal…. The resulting creature will inherently be identified as the “minister’s crony,” as someone who is “indebted” to the minister even if he is a decent and competent person all circumstances aside. And that is not the purpose of a legal advisor.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The problem, then, with turning the job of ministerial legal advisor into a position of confidence is that it transforms the system itself, by restructuring the relationship between the executive branch and the civil service, from one based on the professional, impartial, highly qualified, and well-trained maintenance of the rule of law, to one based on personal loyalty to the minister in charge. This is the same paradigm shift we saw earlier in the case of Miri Regev’s Loyalty in Culture bill, however, when it comes to the Legal Advisors Law, the transformation applies to the entire system of governmental appointments.

Evidence that the Legal Advisors Law is not a lone example, but rather part of an active attempt to change the system itself, can be found in Article 13 of the 34th government’s coalition agreements: “As part of the effort to empower governability, we shall examine the proposal for increasing the number of positions of confidence in government ministries for the purposes of rendering them more efficient. This proposal will seek to extend the position of confidence definition to posts such as: deputy chief of staff and their equivalents, vice chief of staff and their equivalents.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Changing the position of the deputy chief of staff in government ministries— the highest ranking professional in a government office, since the chief of staff is already a position of confidence—and adding the position of vice chief of staff as a position of confidence constitutes a veritable revolution in the nature of the civil service. As Amir Ohana explains, in defending the Legal Advisors Law:

This bill doesn’t pretend to be merely technical or trivial in nature. When you are talking about detriment to the rule of law, what you are really referring to is detriment to the rule of lawyers. When has anyone made a decision against the advice of the legal advisor? They are the ones who decide these days, the legal advisors. When we talk about rule of law, there are no right and wrong answers, or exact science; it is all a matter of worldview and interpretation. Not only does this bill do no harm to democracy, it in fact consummates democracy. It says no to the tyranny of the minority.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Rule of lawyers, rule of law as a matter of worldview and interpretation, the tyranny of the minority: these are all hefty accusation that shatter the basic assumptions of the democratic regime in Israel, and accuse the legal advisors themselves of ruling the country undemocratically. The worldview that underlies the government’s conception of governability was aptly explained by the Minister of Justice at the time, Ayelet Shaked, in her written response to the committee:

Essentially, the State of Israel has undergone a “lawyerization” process in recent years. The balance of power that prevailed for years in the relations between the elected and the official ranks has been violated, the power of the elected rank has been weakened and the power of the official—mainly legal—rank has been strengthened at the former’s expense.... Needless to say, **it is the political rank that represents public interest**.[[6]](#footnote-6)

This battle over the balance of power between the two ranks, what she termed elsewhere the “rule of advisors” or the “rule of clerks,” takes place first and foremost in the appointment of legal advisors. Her argument elucidates the dispute between the two sides: according to Rubinstein’s statement quoted earlier, the role of legal advisors is to be “loyal to the rule of law,” while according to Shaked’s claim, their loyalty should be to the elected representatives of the public alone. That is, loyalty to the appointed and—if the proponents of unfettered governability have their way—appointing minister, since the elected rank is the one that represents “public interest.” Shaked’s legislative advisor, Gil Bringer, also spoke out against Dina Zilber’s claim that legal advisors are meant to be public servants, rather than the regime’s “consiglieres,” who have committed themselves to carrying out a public mission out of loyalty to the public in general, rather than to the minister’s individual interests.[[7]](#footnote-7) Bringer argued that viewing the confidence-appointed advisor as a “consigliere”—a derogatory term referring to a mafia lawyer—defines all elected officials as a priori potentially corrupt, and the legal advisors as their adversaries. The problem, to his mind, lies in the argument over public interest. While Zilber would have the legal advisor determine the public’s agenda, Bringer argues that this is precisely what elected officials are elected to do: to represent the public interest. He adds:

I suppose the Ministry of Justice and other offices can put their finger on the public’s interest in a way that publicly elected officials simply can’t? And since there are also conflicting interests, who should be the one to balance them? Not the government, heaven forbid, but the lawyer in the room, he’s the one who’ll balance them out, prioritize them, and pinpoint the interest of the general public.[[8]](#footnote-8)

This sarcastic, derisive statement mocks the culture of civil service in Israel as a service that is loyal to the public and to the law, and paints it instead as part of the deep-state elite. It is Bringer’s way of explaining what Erez Tadmor of Im Tirtzu defined as the paradox of why the people vote right and get left: civil servants, headed by the attorneys at the Prosecutor’s Office and the Attorney General’s Office, are seen as acting systematically and deliberately to thwart ministers’ policies.

Whereas the ethos of civil service in general, and of legal advisors in particular, is one of loyalty to the rule of law and the representation of public interest, Ohana and Bringer maintain that the rule of law is not a matter of legal professionalism but of interpretation fed by ideology, and that the representation of public interest is the function of elected officials alone. In fact, according to Bringer, the relationship between legal advisors and government officials should be nothing but a special case of the attorney-client relationship.

1. **Public Trustee vs. Loyal: Pledging Allegiance to whom**

The argument became more heated when it came to writing the Civil Service Code of Ethics. The vision that opens the Code of Ethics was drafted by a broad committee of civil servants led by former Deputy Attorney General Malchiel Ballas, after extensive rounds of consultation. It states:

The civil service, through its employees acts as a public trustee, and by way of its actions contributes to shaping the culture of a prosperous and fair, exemplary society in Israel, for the common good, and in the spirit of the principles defined in the declaration of independence of the State of Israel.[[9]](#footnote-9)

As we can see, while the civil service is a public trustee that acts for the common good, the Civil Service Code of Ethics says nothing about loyalty to the ministers and to the Israeli government. This provoked Shaked’s anger, so much so that she was compelled to respond:

We often witness clerks imposing a political agenda under the guise of professionalism and neutrality, and fighting, presumably, in the names of those values, to thwart government initiatives as if they were sitting on the opposition bench and seeking to create an alternative regime.[[10]](#footnote-10)

As a matter of fact, the civil service’s obligation to promote government policy without bias is actually stipulated in the second sentence of the Code of Ethics, as part of the civil servant’s function. However, Shaked interprets it as if the Code of Ethics suspects all ministers of corruption and the role of the civil servant is to prevent them from violating the rule of law.

What is loyalty to the rule of law and how is it different from loyalty to a minister? How does the Legal Advisors Law express the basic concept of governability as promoted by the Netanyahu government; that is, loyalty to the regime? While the Civil Service Code of Ethics refers to government employees in general, and legal advisors in particular as “trustees,” those who have been put in place to protect public interest and the rule of law, Shaked, Lieberman, and Regev wish to replace the word “trustee” with the word “loyal.” That is to say, those who used to be **entrusted** with responsibility by the public, will from now on be charged with **loyalty** to the minister. Loyalty, in the unfettered governability worldview, is the key concept that links the minister, as an elected official, with his ministry’s employees. However, while loyalty can be interpreted to mean personal loyalty as well as loyalty to a principle or to one’s office, the Netanyahu government’s conception of governability—and particularly that of the prime minister himself—is entirely based on personal loyalty. The Civil Service Commissioner, the Attorney General, the Chief of Police, and others in a long string of top officials, are viewed by Netanyahu as appointments based on personal loyalty, and when they perform their duties as trustees of the office or to the law—rather than to the person who appointed them—they are denounced as traitors. This logic has led the prime minister to denounce President Rivlin, Tzipi Livni, Gideon Sa’ar, and lately even Avigdor Lieberman—all of whom are members of the nationalist-liberal right—and accuse them of being “leftists,” aka traitors. The sole reason for this is that they showed a lack of personal loyalty to him, to Netanyahu, the man. Not to the ideology of the Likud or of the right, but rather disloyalty to an individual. That is what loyalty in government means, and these are the dangers it entails.

If so, the dispute between Shaked and Ohana, on the one hand, and Zamir and Rubinstein, on the other, over the issue of the legal advisors, is really about the concept of loyalty as a proxy of governability. The latter would have legal advisors be loyal to the law, as trustees, whereas Shaked and Ohana—the two most recent ministers of justice—and proponents of the Legal Advisors Law perceive loyalty to mean allegiance to a minister, to an individual and his or her worldview. The transition from trustee of the public, in the sense of a public trustee, to loyalty to a minister, in the sense of allegiance, is at the core of the Netanyahu government’s push for unfettered governability. The Shaked-Naveh affair demonstrates the ease with which loyalty to principle can transform into loyalty to a person, and the catastrophic price the system can pay for the lack of checks and balances and for changing the rules of the game.

1. **Appointing Judges – In Practice and Through Changing the Rules of the Game**

“Instead of respecting the judicial tradition and conservatist approach which characterized the judicial giants, a new worldview has taking hold: court rulings as all-embracing and the supreme court as the superior ruler” analyzed Ayelet Shaked, the greatest adversary minister of justice against the system she is responsible for, after four years in power. “From a splendid parliamentary democracy the state of Israel turned into one led by the council of the religion watch-dog, the religion of essentialist democracy”. The people became irrelevant and the replacement for the people was the public. The enlightened public that represented one to one the values of the judges, she insists.[[11]](#footnote-11) In her analysis, one of the keyholders to maintaining the power of the judicial elites, is the system of appointing judges: “the committee for appointing judges became a powerful tool in implementing the revolution”. Shaked argues that the constitutional revolution preserved its power by the way the committee worked “a friend brings a friend” system. A candidate that did not match the agenda, be him the knight of civil rights as he may be, lost his chances to enter the temple” she explicates. Summing up her own revolution in the justice ministry she proudly describes: “we broke the thought monopoly by appointing 6 judges to the supreme court and 330 judges to all courts. The courts today are more diverse, more representative and more balanced”. Setting her 100 days plan for her next term in office she sets the goal of changing not just in practice, who is appointed to be a judge, but also transforming the system itself: “it is time to speak of changing the system. My first move would be to change the way judges are being appointed. In most democracies, politicians choose judges, it is impossible that judges will have a veto right over choosing their colleagues.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Thus, in her first term in office she de facto transformed the arena by actively recruiting hundreds of judges who in her eyes hold a conservative agenda. In her second term – she hoped to transform the system itself by changing the rules of the democratic game and replacing the system by which judges are being appointed to office and placing it in the hands of the politicians – that is the government, a typical emblem of her vision of governability. Political judges subjected to the will of the (Jewish) people instead professional judges who represent public interest. Public interest, she emphasizes, is embedded in those chosen by the people – the government; rule of law, human rights, judicial precedents – she contends – represent the political views of the liberal judges hiding behind what they name ‘public interest;’ which in fact resembles their own interests.

Notice the distinctions Shaked is making: she sees her position as a counter-revolution against the constitutional revolution of Judge Barak. She wants to return to ‘respect for judicial tradition and conservatism’. She thus politicized a purely professional distinction of the community – between activists and formalist judges – and transforms it by Americanizing the debate: conservative vs. liberals. In one conceptual distinction, the ideological transformation of the right is encapsulated: if the Likud and the right were liberal-nationals, Shaked dims all liberal to be leftists, and only (neo)conservatives are right-wingers. Since the vast majority of Israelis – Left and Right – are traditionally for Israel as Jewish and democratic – namely national and liberal – she makes this majority into Left and proposes a purist position – that of conservatives – to be the only ‘right’ right position. While conservatism vs. liberalism becomes the defining feature of the Left-Right axis in Israeli politics, the concepts of governability – which transforms the roles of the executive vis-à-vis the judicial system – and the concept of loyalty – ideological and personal loyalty – replace the idea of public trustee with the notion of being ‘the minister’s man’ and putting loyalty beyond the rule of law.

1. **Uncivil Service and Deep State: from Commando Matkal סיירת מטכל to Clerks’ Sabotage חתרנות פקידותית**

The truth is that the finance ministry’ clerks are ‘terrorists’ and do not transfer the funds to the self-employed and citizens in order to provoke the people… It is a recruitment of clerks against the policy of Netanyahu” (Yair Netanyahu, Instegram).[[13]](#footnote-13)

When I joined the ministry of finance, recalls Keren Terner, the resigning general director of the ministry, Netanyahu was the minister and called the budgetary unit )אגף תקציבים) commando Matkal – the same top commando unit in which Netanyahu himself served as a soldier, the top of the top. Today, she laments, we are named ‘clerks’ – gray, bureaucratic, technocratic image.[[14]](#footnote-14) But Shaked’ slandering idiom – ‘rule of the clerks’ has turned, under Netanyahu’s rule over the last two years in office and especially during his prime ministerial role in the unity government he has, reluctantly, established with Gantz’ party in 2020 – into a direct accusation that the ‘clerks’ are sabotaging the government’s work and Netanyahu’s will to benefit the people in a time of epidemic crisis. Terner, the top official in the finance ministry and a committed general director who worked with Israel Katz, Netanyahu’s loyal finance minister, as the first ever woman general director to the transportation ministry since 2016, has resigned her office a short few months upon resuming the job, when the slandering became unbearable and when the decisions of budgetary meetings in the finance ministry were released to the press before the meeting even took place. Decisions were made in the prime minister’s office with his personal economics’ adviser with no discussion at all with the officials at the finance ministry. We became redundant, she explains.[[15]](#footnote-15)

The context is the threefold crisis of legitimation – one, the political crisis, with the third round of election which produces a stalemate between the two blocs with virtually no ability of either to establish a majority government, resulting in a national unity coalition between the Likud and Blue and White after the March 2020 election. The second, the health world crisis with the rise of the COVID-19 virus. But in the wings of these two crises rose a third one: an economic crisis. Well beyond the tremendous hardship suffered by all world’s nations in view of the pandemic, in Israel one big cloud has shadowed all others: since 2018 there was no approval of a state budget. The in-coming unity government between Netanyahu and Gantz had only one loophole which would allow the longest serving prime minister in Israel ever – surviving a decade and a half in power – from passing on through rotation, as agreed, the role of the prime minister to Gatz. The loophole was – the failure to pass a budget, which under Israeli law means immediate dismissal of the Knesset and election within 3 months. The minute the coalition agreement was signed, and the date for transferring power was scheduled – November 2021 – Netanyahu realized the only way he could remain in his role and deny it from Gantz was a failure of the Knesset to pass the budget. And this is exactly what happened: in the heat of a global pandemic, the state of Israel did not have a budget, as Netanyahu sought to remain a prime minister, albeit a prime minister in transition, going on to the fourth consecutive round of election in which he is the leader of the country.

Against this background, it was critically important for the ministry of finance to work professionally and create a responsive and responsible economic plan for the pandemic. Alas, this was also another election year in the making, and into the professional grave decisions that had to be made by the finance ministry and the prime minister, crawled also political and electoral considerations of the latter. Israel Katz himself, was quite confident that he would pass a budget and plan a two-years budget for 2021-2. However, in order to win the role of a finance minister, which was promised to another Likud member – Nir Barkat, an election promise that Netanyahu and Barkat gave their voters, Katz has probably had to swear total allegiance to Netanyahu. It did not take long before he had realized that no budget was going to be passed – not for the rest of 2020 and not for the coming years. The rift with his ministry’s officials was inevitable. However, Katz, seeking to prove his complete loyalty to Netanyahu, went far beyond professional disagreements. For once, he virtually gave up on being at the center of economic decision making: the Israeli economic policy was made personally by the prime minister and his personal economic adviser, who Netanyahu appointed to head the economic council – Prof. Avi Simchon. Katz himself, complied with the prime minister’s directions. Netanyahu, in terms of governability, has always preferred a close loyal team which is unaccountable to the public and answered directly to him. So was it with the infiltrators, and so was it now with the economics under pandemic. Second, in order to project his loyalty Katz began using Netanyahu’s deep state arguments: attacking the civil servants as detached clerks who work against the people; going out to the media with a vicious attack against his top officials; excluding his professional staff from the decision making process; and turning it into a personal fight. Katz has declared: “I was determined that I will decide the policy and the clerks would implement it the best they could. And when it was not clear enough to somebody, I showed him the way out, to his Anti-Likudnik family”.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Was it really an issue of the classic Weberian distinction between the politician, making the decisions, and the clerks, implementing them? In a detailed letter of resignation, after 19 years in the ministry of finance, the head of the budgetary unit, Shaul Meridor, with a resounding resignation, explained at length: “it is unquestionable that the role of the political rank, the minister of finance included, is to make decisions and shape policy. But with the same breath, it is basic practice in complex decision making by the government that such decision making is based on a thorough systemic professional work of the professional ranks, who master knowledge, data and the analysis of the implications of the different policy steps. I have served under many ministers of finance (including the present prime minister as a finance minister) but I have never in my life encountered such conduct as we see today.”[[17]](#footnote-17) From his perspective, it is not about implementation. It is about the fundamental role of the professionals to outline the possible outcomes of different policy lines and the consequences for the future of Israelis. Meridor details in effect the failure of the minister to pass the 2020 budget, but moreover, to even plan for the 21-22 budget. Furthermore, he accuses the minister of jeoparadising the most basic role of the professional ranks in outlining the priority order and examining the effectiveness of the varied tools of policy in the crisis. “Instead of that processes of decision making are characterized by narrow interests, short-sighted unprofessional interests, side by side with silencing the professional ranks, explicit contempt against methodical, organized and exhaustive preparation work, incidental decisions, by way of tramping the tools and budgetary rules that were the common practice in Israeli economy running for many years”.[[18]](#footnote-18) The conclusion for the business sector and the citizens of Israel, he warns, is a severe damage to the values, rules, norms of civil service for the public interest.

This is indeed a damming report of the inside processes which happened outside the public eye, as the professional ranks rarely voice their concerns through media. But the Netanyahu’s crew tactics was here, as elsewhere, to drag this discussion, which is usually confined to professional discussions behind closed doors, out to the open. Netanyahu’s loyalists have openly accused the professional rank of the finance ministry in sabotaging the prime minister’s work. Dr. Karhi of the Likud accused “clerks that try to rule the country against those chosen by the people, this is undemocratic” and pointed a finger personally at Meridor saying “the head of the budgetary unit Shaul Meridor undermines every decision of Netanyahu to transfer funds and aid to self-employed and unemployed… At a time of crisis this amounts to clerical sabotage’.”[[19]](#footnote-19) Netanyahu himself shared Karhi’s twit and added: “it is unthinkable that clerks brief against decisions made by the government and try to hinder them. We shall not accept that”. He then deleted the tweet.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The battle was on the decision Netanyahu has presented in the public media, which was thoroughly objected by the professional ranks and most economists, except of course Simchon, Netanyahu’s adviser, but never discussed with them, to hand out 6 billion shekels to each Israeli citizen without connection to whether he has really lost his job or suffered due to the pandemic. Terner, the finance director general, describes how there were intensive discussion about the whole budget, estimated at 90 billion shekels – a program that passed both the ministerial committee and the government and the Knesset vote. However, Netanyahu has insisted on adding 6 billion – which were never discussed with the economists and the ministry – without thinking about the sources, the implications and the toll on the Israel public in the long run. 6 billion that were presented in a press conference, detailing how each family would get 2500 shekels, and every individual 750 shekels, without discussing it at all with the experts.[[21]](#footnote-21) From the perspective of the professionals, this was a clear election populism, with no economic rationale and no sources to back it up. However, once Meridor expressed his doubts, Netanyahu’s loyalists orchestrated a coordinated personal attack against him, implying that his ‘anti-Likudnic’ family is the real reason for his objection to Netanyahu’s single-handed decision to give away 6 billion without on eprofessional discussion of the authorities in the finance ministry. Mind you, Meridor’s grandfather was a MK for the Herut (today Likud) party, from a revisionist home, and his father was the justice minister in Shamir’s government and a senior member of the Likud. He joined the Center Party in the 14 Knesset and served as a minister under Sharon and returned to the Likud by 2008. However, he was a liberal opposition to Netanyahu within the Likud. The victimization of Netanyahu by the elites was the story that Katz and Netanyahu tried to sell to the Likud’s base. Unsurprisingly, Katz did not back Meridor. Seeing that the days pass and the personal attack against the civil service and particularly Meridor are not being deplored by the minister, Terner, defended him. The newspaper headline read: “The Prime Minister and his son against the top officials of the finance ministry. The director general responded – and was repudiated.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Katz did not back his officials – he joined the attack against them, headed by the prime minister himself. Meridor has decided to resign when he was instructed by his minister to play with the numbers – to give a false estimation, short in 3 billion shekels. The minister explained: “underestimate so I would have money to give out”.[[23]](#footnote-23) Meridor felt this is a practice more typical of economies like Greece or Venezuela. Netnyahu’s proxy, MK Miki Zohar, then orchestrated a charade in the finance ministry. ועדת כספים In effect Zohar made the committee bypass the budgetary unit of the finance ministry. The minister was to bring directly to the government a proposal to increase the budget – without the budgetary unit involvement.[[24]](#footnote-24) The rules were undermined, and I had to resign, said Meridor. Terner has resigned shortly after him.

Rebuilding trust between the political and professional ranks was to become a key goal of the newly established Bennet-Lapid government. “If prime minister Netanyahu has chosen his people according to the level of their loyalty and then taught them the professional secrets, the new prime minister looks for the best professionals, and then builds with them trust” explains one of Bennet’s men.[[25]](#footnote-25) The rift between the civil service and the politicians was such a key to unlock Netanyahu’s governability, that changing the balance would become the central agenda of the hugely diverse government that would replaced him in power.

1. Israel, "Debates of the Education, Culture and Sports Commitee." [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Chen Ma'anit, "Former Attorney General, Prof. Itzhak Zamir: "Dina Zilber Must Be Protected"," *Globes*, November 8 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Elyakim Rubinstein, "The Counciler Is Not the Obstacle: The Danger of Emasculation and Politization of the General Council," ibid., February 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Coalition Agreement to Establish the 34th Government of Israel between the Likud and Kulanu*. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Shirit Avitan Cohen, "Damaging the Rule of the Officers of the Law," *Makor Rishon*, June 25 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ayelet Shaked, response to Law of Legal Advisers letter 2017-14439

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7. Reviat Hovel, "Shaked’s Senior Advisor against the High Echelon of the Ministry of Justice: ‘Self-Righteous Women’," *Ha'aretz*, June 20 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Malkiel Balas, "Ethical Code for Civil Servants," ed. Civil Service Commission (Jerusalem2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. "Shaked, Don't Run over the Ethical Code," *Ha'aretz*, May 25 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ayelet Shaked, "Speech at the Israeli Economy 2050 Conference," (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Yair Netanyahu, "Political Meme," (Instagram2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Keren Terner, interview by Omri Osenhaim and Matan Lamdan, January 21, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Resoponse of Israel Katz to Keren Terner's interview, ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Shaul Meridor, "Letter of Resignation," (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Shlomo Karhi to Twitter, July 16, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Yonatan Kirshenbaum, "Netanyahu Tweeted: "Inconcievable That Public Servants Brief the Press against Governmental Decisions", and Earsed It," *Davar1*, July 17 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Terner. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Gad Lior, "Pm and His Son against Senior Officials at the Mof the Secretatry General Responded - and Was Repremanded," *Yediot Aharonot*, July 19 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. interview. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Atara German, "This Is How Bennett Will Restructure the Pm's Office," *Makor Rishon*, June 15 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)