

## Two Jews, Three Opinions: Lessons from Rabin's assassination - 20 years on

### 1. דברים כא, ז-ט

ז ועבו, ואמרו: יְדִינוּ, לֹא שִׁפְכָה (שָׁפְכוּ) אֶת-הַדָּם הַזֶּה, וְעֵינֵינוּ, לֹא רָאוּ. ח. כִּפָּר לְעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר-פָּדִיתָ, יְהוָה, וְאֶל-תִּתֵּן דָּם נָקִי, בְּקֶרֶב עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל; וּנְכַפֵּר לָהֶם, הַדָּם. ט. וְאַתָּה, תִּבְעֵר הַדָּם הַנָּקִי--מִקֶּרְבְּךָ: כִּי-תַעֲשֶׂה הַיָּשָׁר, בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה. {ס}

#### 1. Deuteronomy 21:7-9

They shall answer and say: ‘Our hands did not spill this blood, nor did our eyes see. Grant atonement to Your nation, Israel, whom You redeemed, O God, and do not place innocent blood amongst Your nation Israel, and let the them be forgiven of the blood.’ Thus shall you remove the innocent blood from your midst, when you do that which is right in God’s eyes.”

Our *limmud* starts with the Biblical text of the unresolved murder. The leaders of the community are commanded to go to the scene of the crime and proclaim that they did not murder the decedent. Our sages ask whether one can really suppose that these community leaders committed such a heinous act and continue to explain that the ceremony is meant to ask forgiveness for any act of omission which may have led to the murder. Sins of omission are sins.

When we fail to stand up against incitement and שנאת ח״נם, we are complicit in their dissemination.

### 2.



(from

<https://www.facebook.com/tamazandberg/photos/a.285232038273637.1073741844.28477563498594/4/722604594536377/?type=3&theater>)

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As the threat of terror intensifies, threats against “the other” have also surfaced – especially on social media. This montage of Facebook comments comes from the page of Tamar Zandberg MK (Meretz), and calls for her murder and rape, and, most shockingly, includes a mock-up of her dressed as a Nazi with a Hitler moustache.

Haaretz reports (<http://www.haaretz.com/news/israel/.premium-1.679990>) that Meirav Bornstein, strategic vice president at Buzzilla, which scans and maps Internet conversations, says that the amount of violent discourse on social media (especially Facebook) has risen dramatically in recent weeks.

3. "I think if Rabin himself were alive for his memorial, he would insist that not all his life was Oslo. But the left wing has done something risky with his memory. It has glued together the killing – for which he was almost deified – and the legacy of his policy. But if Rabin was Oslo and Oslo was a disaster, was Rabin a disaster? I think not." (Dan Meridor, quoted in <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/11/05/world/in-marking-slaying-of-rabin-in-1995-israel-seeks-lessons.html>)

But how do we remember slain prime minister and defense minister Yitzchak Rabin ל"ר? Perhaps those rallies which talk of the so-called “legacy” of “soldier turned statesman,” “warrior turned peacemaker” or “soldier in the army of peace” simply alienate Oslo’s ideological opponents from the importance of 12 Heshvan. If memorial gatherings become left-wing protest rallies then perhaps we will falter. If we demand that people support Rabin’s peace process we might distance them from condemning his assassination.

Rabin was so much more than Oslo – a distinguished service record of 27 years in צה"ל and the פלמ"ח, a successful stint as Ambassador to the US, which helped lay the foundation for securing the future Memorandum of Understanding with the US, and involvement as prime minister in the Entebbe rescue operation. His resignation in 1977 in the wake of the dollar account affair demonstrated a level of accountability so unfortunately lacking in many current Israeli politicians. Let us remember him for his more than half-century of uncontroversial public service before Oslo together, united as one people.

4. JUST AS I fast on Tzom Gedalya each year, I also fast on the 12th of Heshvan, the anniversary of Rabin’s assassination. To me, the similarities between the fates of Gedalya and Rabin are simply too stark to ignore.

Two Jewish leaders supported by the majority of the people, yet considered collaborators with external powers by their opponents. The complete disbelief that a Jew could harm another Jew led both to dismiss warnings that an assassination was being planned.

Although the message of the two days is similar, there is a significant difference between them – at least for the moment. To signify this difference, instead of fasting until nightfall as we do on

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Tzom Gedalya, I only fast until halachic mid-day on the anniversary of Rabin's assassination.

Perhaps in the future, if we do not learn to heal the fissures in Israeli society – religious/secular, liberal/conservative, rich/poor, Ashkenazi/Sephardi, immigrant/sabra – our society will implode, and we too will lose Jewish political control in the Land of Israel.

Then this fast will also extend until nightfall.

But, if we can use the tragedy of 12 Heshvan as a wake-up call to ourselves to work towards *ahavat chinam* (baseless love) among and between all sectors of Israeli society, then maybe we can bring about a *tikkun*, a repair, which will lead to the canceling of this fast altogether.

(from: <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/On-Rabin-and-Gedalya>)

Perhaps this quarter-day fast could serve as a meaningful ritual for all Jews (and perhaps even Palestinian citizens of Israel), regardless of their religious and political affiliation. Perhaps religious ritual, as opposed to national-political rallies, can facilitate a more long-term, meaningful and unifying memorial for Rabin ז"ל. (This year's fast takes place on Sunday, October 25, ending at חצות יום.)

5. אע"פ שנחלקו ב"ש וב"ה בצרות ובאחיות בגט ישן ובספק אשת איש ובמגרש את אשתו ולנה עמו בפונדק בכסף ובשוה כסף בפרוטה ובשוה פרוטה לא נמנעו ב"ש מלישא נשים מבית הלל ולא ב"ה מבית שמאי ללמדך שחיבה וריעות נוהגים זה בזה לקיים מה שנאמר (זכריה ח, יט) האמת והשלום אהבו. (יבמות יד ב)

5. Although the students of Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagreed... Beit Shammai did not abstain from marrying women of the families of Beit Hillel, nor did Beit Hillel refrain from marrying those of Beit Shammai. This is to teach you that they showed love and friendship towards one another, thus putting into practice the scriptural text, "Love truth and peace." (Zech. 8:16) (BT Yevamot 14b)

6. יהודה עמיחי (בתוך שירים שונים) "מן המקום שבו אנו צודקים לא יצמחו לעולם פרחים באביב"

"From the place where we are absolutely right, flowers will never grow in the spring." Yehuda Amichai

Yehuda Amichai seeks to completely avoid the "I am right" position ". He feels this it does not allow dialogue and does not allow growth. Amichai gives up this kind of argument because in his mind it not useful to society and the world

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7. "תמיד האמנתי שמרבית העם רוצה בשלום, מוכן ליטול סיכון לשלום. ואתם כאן, בהתייצבותכם בעצרת הזו, מוכיחים, עם רבים אחרים שלא הגיעו לכאן, שהעם באמת רוצה בשלום ומתנגד לאלימות. אלימות היא כרסום יסודות הדמוקרטיה הישראלית. יש לגנות אותה, להוקיע אותה, לבודד אותה. זו לא דרכה של מדינת ישראל. יש דמוקרטיה, יכולות להיות מחלוקות, אך הכרעה תהיה בבחירות דמוקרטיות. יצחק רבין, מתוך נאום ב"עצרת השלום", כיכר מלכי ישראל, תל-אביב, 04.11.1995

"I have always believed that the majority of the people want peace, are prepared to take risks for peace. And you here, by coming to this rally, along with the many who did not make it here, prove that the people truly want peace and oppose violence. Violence is undermining the very foundations of Israeli democracy. It must be condemned, denounced, and isolated. This is not the way of the State of Israel. Controversies may arise in a democracy, but the decision must be reached through democratic elections"

The Last Speech- Address by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at a Peace Rally Kings of Israel Square, Tel Aviv November 4, 1995

On Friday, shopping for Shabbat, I met a couple in line at the supermarket and, as ירושלמים are wont to do (especially in these troubling times), we started talking politics. It turns out that in the last election the husband voted Meretz and the wife Habayit Hayehudi. When I told my wife she couldn't believe the story. The separate tribes of Israeli society are suffering from self-inflicted separation which is growing day by day.

This is not to say that we must embrace false and unhelpful notions of **אחדות ישראל**! We may well feel more of a bond with a non-Jew (including a Palestinian) with whom we share academic, professional and socio-economic similarities in our respective lives, than with a neo-fascist Jew who supports so-called "price tag" terrorism. But, whether we like it or not, we are destined to live together (whether in the State of Israel or under the auspices of the organized Jewish community in the Diaspora) and we therefore need to be able to learn how to dialog constructively and, most importantly, peacefully.

יהי זכרו ברוך.