

How Should Rabin Memorial Day be Commemorated?

An array of activities for educational staff and teachers rooms
(state and state religious schools)

Rationale

On the 12th of Cheshvan 5756, November 4, 1995, at the end of the rally held at the Kings of Israel Square, Prime Minister and Defense Minister, Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated. The murder shocked the Israeli public and cast a heavy shadow over our lives as a democratic society. The Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Day Law states that schools shall highlight this day with programs that reflect the character and activities of Yitzhak Rabin and with activities dedicated to the importance of the Israeli democracy and the dangers of violence to society and the state. Pouring contents into this legal ordinance is by and large in the hands of educational faculties. At the same time, the three central focus points of Memorial Day: Yitzhak Rabin, the man and his accomplishments, the murder and its socio-political-sociological implications, pose educational challenges stemming from various sources; Our subjective feelings, the personal and national significance of the day, and the educational contents we wish to pour into the Memorial Day for Yitzhak Rabin.

A clarification of ideology among teachers is important because the public issues raised by Remembrance Day give rise to dilemmas not only among the youth, but first and foremost, among the adults. Therefore, in order for us to conduct a meaningful inspection with the students, we must first devote some time to clarify the painful issues among the teaching staff.

The question, "what do we wish to remember on Rabin Memorial Day" has been raised repeatedly in many educational institutions. The law gives a number of answers, and reality teaches us even more answers. The workshop attempts to examine among the educational staff what the important educational goals these days are. These goals can vary from one school to another and from one staff to another. The important thing is to clarify them in a sincere and genuine manner, despite the difficulty involved. This clarification is preferable to perpetuation of the existing character of these days of remembrance, without rethinking them.

Goals

1. To allow expression of thoughts and feelings regarding Memorial Day and the murder itself
2. To clarify the attitude of each of the participants to Memorial Day and to Yitzhak Rabin
3. To discuss the educational challenge presented by the Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Day to the educational teams.



Procedure

Part One: Pairs Activity with 7 Narratives

In consistence with the goal: to allow expressions of thoughts and feelings in regard of the day of remembrance and murder it self

To the moderator: A narrative is a concept with several different and changing meanings. A narrative is the interpretation of a particular viewpoint of the world, formulated by a cultural or personal perspective. In recent years the meaning of this term was broadened, and it also implies building a story through a particular point of view. The use of narratives that is the way people tell themselves and the world about events, is a familiar and important way of dealing with events that have various viewpoints. Therefore, we proposed to examine the significance of Memorial Day through the stories of different members of the Israeli society who have different perspectives on the event.

Divide the crowd into pairs. Each pair is given two narratives cards. (Attached as an appendix to this document)

The narratives cards contain references, from personal angles written by various individuals who responded to Rabin's assassination and to the mourning period immediately following the murder. Each narrative contains a personal story with broader social and normative statements. In each pair, the narratives are to be read to one another and they are both asked to express their feelings about the texts they will have read. Sample questions that can be asked in pairs:

- How do you feel about this narrative?
- The narratives you are presented with portray the personal tale of each of their authors. Based on the excerpt you've read, make three statements that, in your opinion, the author choose to convey to you.
- The excerpts reflect various feelings in the Israeli society. Which sectors to you believe is represented by the excerpt you chose. Does the narrative, in your opinion reflect broad feelings of the public? Have you come across narratives that reflect a totally different sense, in your group? If so, present it.
- Does the narrative remind you of your personal feelings?
- The personal stories are also intermingled with social statements. In two statements express the social idea presented by the writer. Do you agree with it or does it make you feel uncomfortable?

Part two: Group Activity

In accordance with the goals: To allow expressions of personal thoughts and feelings in regard to the Memorial Day and to the assassination itself to verify the attitude of each participant to the Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Day

Questions for General Discussion:

- How did you feel while feeling the various stories?
- In your opinion, do the different narratives represent the different points of view of the Israeli society in its regard to Rabin's assassination and/or to the Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Day?
- Is it possible to associate the narratives to clearly identified groups in the Israeli society?
- Were there narratives that were missing anything?
- Is it possible to conduct such an exercise concerning other Israeli memorial days? (IDF Fallen Soldier's Memorial Day and the Holocaust Memorial Day)

To the coordinator: You may wish to conduct a comparison between the other national memorial days using the chart attached to this document to point out the similarities and differences between the three official memorial days in Israel

- Do the narratives differ fundamentally from one another? Why?
- In this exercise we chose to portray narratives written closely after the murder. What, in your opinion, if at all, has changed in the attitude of various sectors, to the murder and to Memorial Day?
- In your opinion are there differences between attitudes towards the murder to those concerning the Memorial Day? If so, why are there such differences?

Part Three: Study Session

In accordance with the goal: To verify the attitude of each of the participants to Yitzhak Rabin's Memorial Day

You are being presented with a source page for group study.

To the moderator: The sources in the compilation portray dilemmas, questions and issues concerning ways to deal with the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin.

The page presents general questions for contemplation and in-depth study - also reflected in the summarizing questions. The purpose of the study is to enhance the initial discussion about the narratives (being, on the most, personal and emotional) in order to arrive at an in-depth sociological and cultural discussion in light of the variety of sources gleaned from Jewish tradition and culture.

For this activity you are provided with an appendix, which is an excerpt of an essay, "We Shall Search our Ways and Inspect them" by Rabbi Aaron Lichtenstein, that expounds on the question raised in source no. 2. It is recommended that the text is read as a preface for this activity.

1. That although there are transgressions worse than bloodshed, there is none that entail the destruction of the world's existence as bloodshed does. Even idol worship, and needless to say, incest or desecration of Shabbat – are not like bloodshed: Since these are sins between man and the Holy One Blessed be He, but bloodshed is a sin between man and his fellow man. And whoever has committed this sin, is a totally wicked person; And none of the commandments he had observed throughout his entire life shall overweigh this crime and they shall not save him from judgement – as it says, "A man is oppressed by the blood of a soul..."

Mishneh Torah of Maimonides, Book of *Nezikim*, Chapter 4

2. In the Gemara, in Yerushalmi, in Tosefta and in Sifrei, it states:

"Our rabbis have taught: There is a story told of two priests who were equal and had simultaneously ascended the ramp leading to the alter. One of them neared the other and stabbed him in the heart. Rabbi Tzaddok stood on the steps leading to the Temple hall and said: Brethren of the House of Israel listen: it says, 'If you find a corpse in the field – your elders and judges shall go out'. On what do we bring a beheaded heifer, on what occurs in the city or – in the Temple courts? So the entire crowd burst out crying. A father of a man who was having convulsions came close and said: Here is your atonement, my son is still quivering and the knife has not yet been defiled. To show you that the issue of purified vessels was more severe in their eyes than bloodshed. Likewise, it is written, "And also Menashe spilled clean blood that filled Jerusalem completely from one edge to another". (Yoma 23)



3. "And shall you be angry with the entire community?"

I have Never Baked with Blood Yosef Ozer

In the Tel Aviv Square there is a sign:

"Killed by a donner of a skullcap" and anyone who came near –move away

I arrive with a transparent skullcap, I am directly suspected of murder.

I know that my Matzot are white,

That I have never baked with blood

And how is the skullcap of Maimonides, leader of kingdom and spirit,

Is blushing of suspicion

In a cruel identification procession

The *Tallit* of the Gaon of Vilna also seeps,

The *Shtreimel* of the Rabbi is burning somewhere

And the safety pin the Jewish virgin stuck in her thigh is dragged throughout history

Of all like a glance in the eyes of "the Eternal Jew" of Samuel Hirshenberg

running barefoot through crosses in Sheikh Munis, which is Ramat Aviv

And my grandfather, may he rest in peace; the tarbush on his head is probably turning red,

in the black and white portrait from Bagdad

Yet the inscription in the square has not calmed down, it still shoots bullets

At the time the Jew is quickly baked out of flour and water

Oh, Zionism you have hidden behind the corpse of Yitzhak

Oh, a wound of entry

And my white Matzot are white,

Oh, I, who have not baked with blood

And what does my heart tell me

From: <http://www.notes.co.il/uripaz/14393.asp>

4. The Story of Cain and Abel

Genesis 4, 8

And Cain said to Abel his brother, and when they were in the field, Cain got up to Abel his brother and slew him. And G-d said to Cain: Where is Abel your brother? And he said, I do not know, am I my brother's keeper. And he said, what have you done, the voice of your brother's blood screams to me from the earth².

: "Cursed are you from the earth that opened its mouth to take the blood of your brother from you, When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.(4:11-12)

"And to Cain and to his offering, he did not turn" (4,5)

Said Cain: I had believed that the world was created with kindness, and now I see that there is no honesty and justice, there is no judgement and no judge, there is no reward and no compensation, rather, the creator is sovereign in his world and prejudice prevails before him, since if this was not the case, why did he favor Abel and accepted his offering and did not receive my offering nor did he greet me graciously?¹¹

L. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews (Rabbi M' HaCohen translator, Ramat Gan 5766, page 71.

What is the feeling of a public or an individual who senses his voice is not heard?





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

5. The Tension Between a Structured Doctrine and Complexity

The Place Where We are Right /Yehuda Amichai

From the place where we are right

There will never grow

Flowers in spring.

The place where we are right

Is hard and trampled

Like a yard.

Yet doubts and loves make

the world as loose

as a mole, as ploughed earth.

And you shall hear a whisper in the place

where the house that that was destroyed

had been.

From Yehuda Amichai – Several Poems



Machon Ha'Chagim
www.chagim.org.il



Jewish Holidays site
www.buja.org.il



6 .From the Verdict in the Court Case of Yigal Amir – Murderer of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin

Judge Edmond Levi:

"The commandment to honor the leader is from the Torah –" You shall not revile G-d, nor curse a ruler of your people" (Exodus 22:27), and it is not superfluous to emphasize that the verse saw fit to deal in the same verse with " God "and the " ruler" ...

More important is the fact that life was sanctified in the cradle of our birth as a people, when we were commanded in Horev, "You shall not murder." This precept must beat in the heart of every civilized individual. Let alone the heart of a Jew who took upon himself willingly to fulfill the 613 commandments. The importance of this command led our Sages to add to it layer upon layer, in order to fortify its position and give it more validity.

- A. "If one sheds blood it is as if he minimizes the image of G-d and the countenance of G-d" (Shabbat 33: 5)
- B. "The first Temple was destroyed due to bloodshed" (Yoma 9: 6)
- C. "The shedding of blood defiles the land and causes the Divine Spirit to depart from Israel" (Yoma 85: 1)
- D. "The Almighty is distressed about the blood of the wicked that is spilled, let alone the blood of the righteous" (Chagiga, 15: 7)
- H. Finally we will quote Maimonides' words in the Mishneh Torah, The Book of Nezikim, Laws of a Killer and the Preservation of the Soul, 4: 9.

"That although there are transgressions worse than bloodshed, there is none that contain the destruction of the world's existence such as bloodshed. Since those are sins between man and the Holy One Blessed be He, but bloodshed is a sin between man and his fellow man. And whoever has committed this sin, is an absolute evil person; And none of the commandments he had observed throughout his entire life could outweigh this crime and shall not save him from judgement"...

What is evident from this is that the actions of the defendant, and especially the ridiculous attempt to argue that there is a distinction between harming Rabin as prime minister and harming him as a human being, is a crude attempt produced by a distorted calculation, to justify the murder as a religious order or as a moral mission. There is no greater blasphemy than this act since the defendant tried to find in the Torah a reasoning to justify the terrible deed.

The defendant standing before us and the likes of him, are the nightmare of any democracy promoter, regardless of which camp he belongs to. At the same time, we saw the need to stress that the trial that was just conducted was not a "political trial" but that of an ordinary criminal offense. Therefore, the aura that the defendant wished to wrap himself in, as someone who sacrificed himself on the altar of his faith, is false.

Neither the philosophy of the accused regarding the sanctity of the land was put to test or the question of whether the Israeli government's actions were correct since the signing of the Oslo Accords. The only question upon which our decision was made was whether the defendant committed a murder offense as

defined in the Criminal Code, 5737-1977 and we answered this question affirmatively.

Every murder is a despicable act, but the subject before us is despicable sevenfold. Since not only did the defendant not express remorse or regret, but he rather displayed that complacency about his deed. Anyone who takes the life of someone coldly and calmly, only proves the depths of the lowliness of values that he has deteriorated to, and he deserves no treatment other than compassion, for losing his humanity.

The fact that such wild crops have grown among us requires us to examine - what segments of the Israeli education system had failed when they failed to instill and consolidate the principles of democracy among portions of the younger generation. The actions of the defendant are not only his personal failure, and we are not confronting him alone today, but also anyone who directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, was given to understand that it is permissible to cut off human life on the altar of an ideology.

And another matter that we thought should be emphasized - the Israeli society, in all its diversity, has repeatedly sinned with unfounded hatred and has declined to engage in brotherly love. In a democratic regime it is permissible, and sometimes even desirable, to disagree with the government's view and the political policy it has adopted. But everyone has to review, day and night, that a nation that chooses life does not replace actions with the bullets of an assassin, and the only way to do so is by free and democratic elections or a vote of no confidence in the Knesset. As long as no decision has been made in this spirit, the elected government is the only one responsible for the affairs of the state and everyone must accept its authority.

In this latter issue, our hearts are filled with anxiety lest the horrors of the eleventh day of Cheshvan 5756 (November 4, 1995) are forgotten. These days are days of decision, and we are already hearing the echoes of political confrontation, and we wonder what else should happen after the terrible disaster that has befallen us. So that everyone learns the necessary lesson.

The ongoing debate among us is difficult and penetrating because it deals with fundamental and existential questions of the State of Israel, not only in our generation but also, and especially regarding future generations. And yet, all have one common denominator - genuine and sincere concern for the peace of the state on the one hand, and for peace with our neighbors on the other. This debate should be conducted as it is customary to do so when unpopular opinions are voiced by a minority. Moreover, segmentation of the people will not cease to exist, and will not become consolidated merely by words, but by actions, first and foremost by those of the leaders of the public of all echelons of the political spectrum, who must repeat to themselves day and night - "wise men, be cautious about what you say".

What challenge does educational system face according to Edmond Levi?



Discussion following the session: (Suggestions for moderating questions)

- ☒ According to source 4 – does the question about who is the victim as a result of the murder also dependent on the position of whomever the question was directed to?
- ☒ From the page – what is the proper relationship between the courtyards and the city (source 3)? What was the mistake of the father of the infant?
- ☒ From the song of Yehuda Amichai – did the believer experience imminent tension between a structured doctrine and various narratives?
- ☒ Can you find in the source page a position that surpasses all narratives in regard to Rabin's Memorial Day? A principal position? A position shared by various narratives? (You may look at source 6 – the verdict given by Judge Edmond Levi)
- ☒ Which additional tensions that did not show up on the source page or that hadn't emerged from the narratives exist in regard to the Memorial Day.



Part Four: Summary in Group Forum

In adherence with the goal: To discuss the educational challenge Memorial Day poses for educational staffs.

Every participant is given the slogan of the tenth Memorial Day of Yitzchak Rabin – "Do not forget". Copies of the slogan are located at schools and on the Rabin Center site: www.rabincenter.org.il



Stage One – Questions for Collective Discussion:

- ☒ What is your personal "Not to Forget"?
- ☒ What is the "Not to Forget" you wish to instill in your students?

To the moderator: With the various points that are raised, you can possibly map and even categorize the themes (the levels of memory and the connection to the murder): "Do not forget" regarding the man, the murder itself, and regarding the broad context of Rabin's murder: The breach of and the fragility of Democracy, gaps in society, implications of the murder on society, the murder as an event that deepened gaps etc.

You can give as an example, The Fast of Gedalia, for creation of a collective historical remembrance following the assassination of a leader.

Stage Two – Activity in Small Groups or by All

Every group is instructed to come to an agreement over three components of "Do Not Forget", which are unanimously agreed upon by all members of the group, meaning, three items that all members of the group propose as important to mention on the Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Day. In this activity all members of the smaller group or the entire group must engage in negotiations regarding the collective memory.

- ☒ Have the groups or the entire forum arrived at such an agreement?
- ☒ Were there differences of opinion? Why?
- ☒ What typified this procedure in a group?
- ☒ What is typical of the final choice, if it was reached at? (Choice of less problematic components of memory, addressing the broadest common grounds etc.)
- ☒ Can you point at signs of concession, appropriation, or reflection of the power balance within the group in regard to defining the type of memorial?
- ☒ If so, what is the significance and implications of this on the possibility of shaping a general social memorial?

To the moderator: It is important to note that the "Do not Forget" activity intensifies the potential tension between personal memory and collective memory. This is an activity that illustrates the politics surrounding the memory, and therefore it is important to be aware of several elements:

1. *Is the teachers' room homogeneous or heterogeneous? When agreement is quick and immediate, you can try to create a possibility in which the group contains members of religious, secular, Arab, Jewish, immigrant, veteran, etc. sectors that should reach an agreement.*
2. *Has the balance of power in the group permeated into the discussion of the construction of collective memory? In this phase it is possible and important to raise the discussion from the level of the teachers' room to the macro level – the Israeli society. Do we feel that the balance of power in society was reflected in the struggle over the nature of Rabin's Memorial Day?*
3. *Did the decision of the nature of memorial and perpetuation serve as an excluding technique? Has the chosen type of memorial been appropriated? What are the social implications of this?*



Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

Part Five: Collective Summary

- ☒ **What feelings and thoughts does the murder of Rabin and the Memorial Day arouse in me?**
- ☒ How did you feel during the workshop? Have the various activities made a contribution to you personally or professionally?
- ☒ How do I view my role as a teacher, an educator on the Memorial Day? What do we plan to do differently with the students in light of what we had experienced in the workshop?



Narrative Cards



With the Grace of G-d

"Dear Leah,

When they showed the last moments on television, with Miri Aloni at his side and the rest of the people on the stage raising the hands and singing, only he, in his captivating roughness stood with his hands ahead of him, something hit me in my deepest soul and I was filled with opposite feelings: Love and sorrow. I had never felt like this, this contrast of loving the living and sorrow over the dead is the most painful thing that exists!

.... My opinions oppose yours, and to those of your husband, may his memory be blessed. The murder of your husband caused me to halt the mad race of the debate and polarity, and when I stood, on the night between Sunday and Monday, near the Knesset with a large crowd, I began with this stoppage to try to delve deeper and more genuinely into the thoughts and views of the leftists, after hearts were joined, and that actually happened to me. I believe I have succeeded in this difficult task. No, I have not altered my views, I still oppose the moves lead by your husband. But this experience has greatly benefited me. And particularly I would like to try to assist you, if you wish (and I hope you wish it), to get acquainted with my way of thinking and understanding in the past three years. I'll begin with introducing myself: My name is.. and I live the settlement of Ofra in the region of Benjamin. I wear a knitted skullcap, go to Bnei Akiva, study at a Hesder Yeshiva, perhaps the average model an individual that you are angry at, and perhaps even hate, but nonetheless I'd like you to learn about me a bit, perhaps at the end, you will not hate me, and perhaps, who knows, you will even love me.

You see, it's difficult for me to write, I fear your responses, yet I'll continue nonetheless. (I hope my deliberations are perceived as honest and not fictitious)

Yes, I have attended several times, demonstrations opposing the government, and I had argued with people yelling, "Rabin is a Traitor" and "Rabin is a Murderer", I heard you tell people that it is too late now, I only wish that you know that we have been active when it was still possible, but probably the scum cannot be stopped in a cultural manner. I would like, at this point to share you with some of the thoughts that brought me to the demonstrations and afterwards, with the thoughts that came back to me: my home, its beauty, with the garden that were endangered. These thoughts predominated the ideologies and were deeper and stronger than anything else. My neighbor was killed by terrorists, and a good friend of mine was orphaned from her mother and her murderers were released in the framework of the agreement.

I was infuriated, I tried, in every way I had to prevent awful things from happening to my house. There are demonstrations, and what else is there to do. I went with hundreds of my friends to the massive demonstration in the Zion Square, and I felt that aside of a handful of extremists, we had succeeded in making an impact and to show how much we really hurt and afraid. On the following day, I opened the newspaper and my eyes darkened: It's difficult for me to even put this in writing, the picture of your husband in an S.S. uniform. The most terrible think I could ever imagine. I was angry, but, I thought to myself, everyone will understand that these are extremists that do not represent anyone, but no - The demonstration attended by thousands was represented as that of the extreme rightists. That's it, extreme is not legitimate. I do not come into consideration. This was a feeling of extraordinary frustration, helplessness...

It is necessary, in general, that an absolute division be made between people and factors. There is only a single guilty individual: Yigal Amir, who will undergo his punishment. There are many factors: The frustration that I had previously seen, on the one hand, the criminal calls on the other hand. I tried, I hope you hate me less. I hope you have read my letter and perhaps you have understood it and - me. With great respect, with genuine love and with consolations, Thank You.





With the Grace of G-d

"Dear Leah,

When they showed the last moments on television, with Miri Aloni at his side and the rest of the people on the stage raising the hands and singing, only he, in his captivating roughness stood with his hands ahead of him, something hit me in my deepest soul and I was filled with opposite feelings: Love and sorrow. I had never felt like this, this contrast of loving the living and sorrow over the dead is the most painful thing that exists!

.... My opinions oppose yours, and to those of your husband, may his memory be blessed. The murder of your husband caused me to halt the mad race of the debate and polarity, and when I stood, on the night between Sunday and Monday, near the Knesset with a large crowd, I began with this stoppage to try to delve deeper and more genuinely into the thoughts and views of the leftists, after hearts were joined, and that actually happened to me. I believe I have succeeded in this difficult task. No, I have not altered my views, I still oppose the moves lead by your husband. But this experience has greatly benefited me. And particularly I would like to try to assist you, if you wish (and I hope you wish it), to get acquainted with my way of thinking and understanding in the past three years. I'll begin with introducing myself: My name is.. and I live the settlement of Ofra in the region of Benjamin. I wear a knitted skullcap, go to Bnei Akiva, study at a Hesder Yeshiva, perhaps the average model an individual that you are angry at, and perhaps even hate, but nonetheless I'd like you to learn about me a bit, perhaps at the end, you will not hate me, and perhaps, who knows, you will even love me.

You see, it's difficult for me to write, I fear your responses, yet I'll continue nonetheless. (I hope my deliberations are perceived as honest and not fictitious)

Yes, I have attended several times, demonstrations opposing the government, and I had argued with people yelling, "Rabin is a Traitor" and "Rabin is a Murderer", I heard you tell people that it is too late now, I only wish that you know that we have been active when it was still possible, but probably the scum cannot be stopped in a cultural manner. I would like, at this point to share you with some of the thoughts that brought me to the demonstrations and afterwards, with the thoughts that came back to me: my home, its beauty, with the garden that were endangered. These thoughts predominated the ideologies and were deeper and stronger than anything else. My neighbor was killed by terrorists, and a good friend of mine was orphaned from her mother and her murderers were released in the framework of the agreement.

I was infuriated, I tried, in every way I had to prevent awful things from happening to my house. There are demonstrations, and what else is there to do. I went with hundreds of my friends to the massive demonstration in the Zion Square, and I felt that aside of a handful of extremists, we had succeeded in making an impact and to show how much we really hurt and afraid. On the following day, I opened the newspaper and my eyes darkened: It's difficult for me to even put this in writing, the picture of your husband in an S.S. uniform. The most terrible think I could ever imagine. I was angry, but, I thought to myself, everyone will understand that these are extremists that do not represent anyone, but no - The demonstration attended by thousands was represented as that of the extreme rightists. That's it, extreme is not legitimate. I do not come into consideration. This was a feeling of extraordinary frustration, helplessness...

It is necessary, in general, that an absolute division be made between people and factors. There is only a single guilty individual: Yigal Amir, who will undergo his punishment. There are many factors: The frustration that I had previously seen, on the one hand, the criminal calls on the other hand. I tried, I hope you hate me less. I hope you have read my letter and perhaps you have understood it and - me. With great respect, with genuine love and with consolations, Thank You.





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

"The State of Israel has been suffering from wars and terror and it seems to me that there is hardly a family in the country, of which one of its sons was not hurt in one of the wars or in terrorist attacks." My sister..., her husband ... was killed before her eyes in a bus bombing, she was injured and her three sons stood with me at that rally, laughing, singing and full of hope. I went home when the square was still full of people. As soon as I got in my son called and we spoke about the rally, and he was just watching a sports program, and suddenly he shouted on the phone: "Mom, they shot Rabin! I yelled to him: "What? how? Impossible!" "I was just there, Mom, they announced it again, they shot Rabin", he shouted again on the phone.

And the nightmare began.

...Again, and again I find myself trying to reconstruct small details. Only small details. A chronicle of small details. This cool and collective man with his perpetual half-smile, half-angry look, stood there on the stage and had laughed. He hugged Shimon Peres. He spoke loudly and heatedly for peace and against violence. He looked happy. He sang. He shone.

Then he went down the three steps.

The crowd called out to him: Hello, we are with you.

Just across him stood his car. The car door was already open. The engine was on. Then three shots were heard from a distance. He collapsed on the asphalt floor.

Thrown wounded on the backseat of the car, alone, his last words were: It hurts, but it's not terrible. No car with a siren drove ahead of his car.

... He was received by a doctor on duty without warning. For the first few minutes, even the surgeon did not know that he was resuscitating the prime minister ... In the basement, in the operating room, he was connected to the most advanced and sophisticated apparatuses and was given 21 units of blood. But his spine, spleen, and blood vessels were shattered, and the dead could not be resurrected. All that remains is to bury them. Once again I recall small details. The pistol was a short 9 mm pistol, a pistol that had a good grip, a low recoil, was small in size, with hollow, lopped bullets that had increased stopping power and slow penetration speed. The price of each bullet is 1.4 ILS

... Everyone knows this from his experience, and I learned it on my own flesh, that when the person who is most precious to you dies suddenly - time stands. You do not understand how the world continues to behave as if nothing had happened, how people walk around the streets, sit in a cafe, buy clothes and buy shoes, go to the movies and watch performances and applaud when the show is over, while your sense of time has changed, there is only before and after, you do not understand anything and you see it turning every corner, alive? Why? how? What caught a whole nation like that by the throat? I ask myself. I do not know. I answer myself a thousand answers. But I do not have an answer."

"I'm torn ... I did not agree with his policy in the beginning, I'm very much in the middle, I still do not know where I precisely hold ... I thought (before the murder) that he does not care about the people, but this is a person who actually cares about the state, so how do I dislike the policy of someone who cares about this state?... He is an individual who has done a great deal for this country and after he had died I learned to appreciate him differently. Nonetheless, though, I still did not like his strategies. After all, I had not known him, so I cannot hate him ... What's the deal ...? He was murdered and okay, it's sad because he's just a human being and it's sad when someone is killed, let alone a prime minister, but it's not like just killing anyone, rather, it's a person whom everyone knew to some extent. "



Macon Ha'Chagim
www.chagim.org.il



Jewish Holidays site
www.buja.org.il





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

I was at the rally on November 4, 1995. I remember most of all, the profuse love I felt in the air of the square. People with children, older people, teenagers ... everyone smiling and happy. The general feeling was: "Here it comes, the peace that we have so much hoped for." My husband and I were strolling and on the way, we met acquaintances from here and from there and we exchanged a few words: "What an atmosphere! How nice!"

I held my eldest child - then three months old - and whispered in her ear. I told her. I felt that it was a unique historical moment that she had to absorb, along with us. Unfortunately, I did not know to what extent.

On the way home, we listened to the radio. We wanted to know how many arrived because it seemed to us that there were a lot of people in the square this evening. Then we heard what had happened.

At home we were glued to the television. We were in shock. We could not understand. We wanted to believe that Yitzhak Rabin was only wounded. It didn't help.

The next morning, I got up with a bitter taste in my mouth. I hoped so much that it was a nightmare, that I had merely dreamt about this terrible night. For a week I could hardly talk to my baby. I walked with her like on automation. We went to the square every day. We sat with the 'children of the candles'. I was crying nonstop. I felt that something very deep was broken within me and - within the country. I went with her to Leah Rabin's house and waited there. I did not know what to do with myself in this immense grief. Who am I? Just a young mother on maternity leave who hurts the death of Yitzhak Rabin. At the end of a week, I noticed a change in the baby; she stopped smiling. This, of course, startled me a lot. So I started to recover and try to get back to normal functioning. I'm not sure I've totally succeeded.

In January 1996, I was supposed to return from maternity leave to my position as an officer in the air force. But I decided to leave the army and start working in the field of education for democracy. That is what I'm doing to this day.

"I was 11 when Rabin was killed. I believe, I recall it was on Shabbat, but I'm not sure – it's possible that now I'm more aware of it and know the story better.

My elder sister was just about to get married and the entire family was in excitement and under the pressure of preparations.

On Sunday when I went to school (I was in grade 6), we were told that the prime minister was killed.

I remember the teacher explained to us exactly what had happened, while pointing at the picture that was in the classroom.

I remember I was sad, since the rumor was that he was killed because he wanted peace. And this brought me to believe that the Jews do not wish for peace – if they had wanted peace, why did they kill?

I do not remember any extraordinary event taking place at home and in the village – my parents continued with their everyday chores and so did - our surrounding neighbors. The head of the local council, hung up a huge obituary sign (I think he was a member of the labor party). As I grew up a bit older, things turned more complicated; I understood that my assumption that Jews murder since they do not want peace, is a bit naïve and even primitive; as part of my growing process and as a result of reading newspapers, I understood that in general, people murder even if they merely do not agree with others. Simply spoken, so stupid and so sad.

Currently, I am facing exams the Law Bureau of on my way to become a lawyer. I am sure that one of the sources of my professional aspiration stemmed from that very understanding, the simple and cruel one, that we must educate people by power of the law, to enforce it and to jail the offenders.



Macon Ha'Chagim
www.chagim.org.il



Jewish Holidays site
www.buja.org.il





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

"There is no doubt that a great disaster has befallen the State of Israel, and in its wake the Israeli society is liable to arrive at a very dangerous crisis, no one can predict how and when it will emerge from it. In this situation there is no worse advisor than feelings of anger and vengeance, and there is no more a poisonous recipe than the Arlozorovian argument concerning who is collectively to be blamed for the murder.

The days of Arlozorov are gone, and in the Jewish public in today's Israel the right wing has a fairly strong majority which is quite organized and quite self-confident. In such a situation, collective blame for the murder could degenerate into terrible feelings of rage on both sides, an irreparable rift, and who knows if not, heaven forbid, mutual murders. The brain would have dictated - to hold hands, to avoid polemics and accusations and to condemn the atrocity unanimously. Yet the brain has difficulty functioning in such situations and the test is actually not easy.

Of course, the situation is not symmetrical. The big and difficult test is that of the left. The left wing is the one who is imbued, in a very natural and human way, with feelings of anger and revenge. It is the one in the position of the accuser, and it is the one that naturally the microphones and cameras are targeting, giving it (and this time, justly) almost unlimited permission to speak.

This combination of givens creates a great temptation, and temptation is always the enemy of the mind. A sign of this could be found yesterday by very intelligent writers who did not feel ridiculously logical contradictions of their words. They say that the hands of Bibi Netanyahu spilled the blood, because he did not protest hard enough against the calls, "Rabin is a murderer."

After all, there is no difference between "Rabin is a murderer" and "Bibi's hands spilled the blood." But that's just the absurd example. The main, and most troubling victory of emotion over logic is expressed in the fact that most of the speakers at this terrible time, according to my impression, do not even feel that there is anything controversial or items that warrant proof. As if they do not know that there are hundreds of thousands of loyal citizens of the State of Israel, who share the terrible grief and shock, but they have the exact opposite feeling as to where this evil came from. These hundreds of thousands have already accumulated a counter-charge of resentment and anger that could poison the air for many years.





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

We received the news about the assassination when our three children were already asleep. We had a very concrete plan for the next day. We were supposed to celebrate the fifth birthday of our son in the kindergarten. All Shabbat long the children spoke about the planned birthday party and anticipated Sunday impatiently. I had no idea how it is possible to celebrate a birthday on such a day. In the morning I woke Maor, and told him that something terrible had happened, that the prime minister was killed and I do not think that we could celebrate his birthday that day in the kindergarten... Maor naturally, wept bitterly... I called the kindergarten teacher and I notified her that we are cancelling the birthday party in the kindergarten until further notice. I left the house on Sunday with a very heavy heart, it was difficult to conceive the enormity of the tragedy.

On the bus, none of the nice people I had known sat besides me, at work I was attacked with remarks, 'so what happened, you became murderers?... You don't agree with someone so you murder him?' Only then had I understood why everyone looked at me strangely. I took my things from the office and left. I went back home by foot, I was incapable of taking any more 'poisonous arrows' from anyone else. I left, running my thoughts through my mind and crying... For three days I didn't go to the office, I sat across the T.V. set, and I saw a procession of people paying last respects and passing by the coffin, I listened to songs of the old and good Israel that were broadcasted for two days in a row... I watched and cried... After three days of endless phone calls from the office, which I did not answer, my boss came over to my home and apologized. On that day, I made a resolution not to feel humiliated when faced with accusations. In conversations with people, they would get appeased when I told them that I had cancelled my son's planned birthday party in kindergarten..."



Macon Ha'Chagim
www.chagim.org.il



Jewish Holidays site
www.buja.org.il





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

They believe it is not good that "harsh expressions are voiced in the right-wing demonstrations, and they think that it is terrible and shocking that a Jew murdered our prime minister, but they do not comprehend the causal link between these two items. At the onset of winter, people first wear coats and then also put on boots. This does not mean that the coat is the reason for the boots, there is a third item, which is a trigger to the both of these. Many people think that the murder might have been avoided had the government responded to the demand for a referendum, or at least - adhered the president's call to reduce the pace of the process. We may have not reached the terrible position we are in, had the government refrained from making such a heavy decision with a such a slim majority. With a behavior that seems at least subjective, conceited and arrogant, and in creating the feeling in quite a large minority that it is being trampled on.

It is easier to deal with a murder committed by some ignorant brute who was incited by political leaders, but unfortunately this is not reality. This man does not appear to be too impressed by Bibi Netanyahu, or a person who would have been appalled by Rafal's scorn. He is educated, cool, and determined. Coping with this terrible reality is more difficult because it requires a two-sided soul-searching. To sit together out of a willingness to find out where we were wrong and where you were wrong.

I accept that the occasion of this rethinking has not yet arrived. Meanwhile, in the tense and difficult climate of these terrible days, polemics are irrelevant. No matter who is right, and there is no point in arguing as we will not convince each other, it is very important to listen and to know that there is a different opinion that the people are divided in the depth of their feelings,





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

"In the months following the assassination, many people feared to go out with skullcaps... I wished to participate in the funeral, not because I felt guilty, since I have no connection to the murder, but because I wish to mourn for a person, for the prime minister of Israel, that was murdered, such a terrible thing, and I am angry I was not allowed to do so...

Every person must do some self-searching on a daily basis, but when we were told that we must do some soul-searching, it sounded like only we have to do the soul-searching... that since we held fierce demonstrations, we had effectuated the killing. That was the self-searching they wished us to do. And I also say there must be recalculation, but - by all of the people of Israel, why is there such a rift... and what brought such a man to commit such a crime... Naturally, he crossed the red line, but what brought our public to such sharp demonstrations...

The first stage, was that of shock. Let us call it that, which entailed the shock of the assassination of the prime minister. It was the first minute shock. There was an additional aspect by which our public, the one I belong to, was accused, and did not exactly comprehend what it was accused of. There was a public that was pursued, that is the public that felt itself pursued... and it was suddenly turned into a public of gangsters... And the third response was the media exposure that our public was given...

The important aspect is the trial to exercise a general clarification – where, where was the failure, where was the error? Where is the point of crime?... So, there was a trial of what I would define as such – if that is what we are accused of. Let us see at which point we actually leave the highway we were pushed into, in other words, at which junction do we exit. We were forwarded into the Jerusalem Tel Aviv highway, and let us say, that we are not allowed to arrive at Tel Aviv – So at which junction to we leave, at that of Gate of the Valley, or do we leave at the Latrun junction, or at that of Lod...

I would have like to mourn over Yitzhak Rabin, I had wished to be part of the funeral procession. And I wished to give him the honor, and I did not attend, since the message was immediately – They killed the peace and they killed its process...I said that with his death he left us the unity of the nation of Israel, that's what he left us. We have such a rift. He did not command us to proceed with the Oslo Accords... Why don't you relax this for a moment. Let the people unite and mourn over him."



Machon Ha'Chagim
www.chagim.org.il



Jewish Holidays site
www.buja.org.il





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

"Like everyone else, the murder took me by total shock, I felt deep sorrow and terrible frustration. In the week following the murder, the clerk of the battalion commander approached me and shouted angrily at me, 'You are to blame' for you, because of people like you, with opinions like yours, Rabin was murdered ... I did not know how to respond. Her stupidity enraged more than I had been enraged for a long time. I told her I was not willing to speak to her and ... If this had been a single response I could have handled it but that was not the end of it. At the end of the week on my way home, I hitched a ride. During the trip I was asked which battalion I was serving in. After the driver received the answer, he stopped abruptly and told me to get off. 'Both Golani, and Battalion 13' (the regiment in which Yigal Amir served), both religious and also wearing a skull cap, I will not drive you!!!! I have never felt such humiliation!!! It is needless to express, the

"(When I saw the homicide on TV, I trembled all over my body, K.A.) because it was not just an ordinary crime ... In Russia I lived in an atmosphere of crime, I am used to violence, but the idea that he shot him in the back shocked me, it is not merely murder, a terrible thing in itself, but more than that, it's killing a person for being prime minister ...

(After the murder, K. A.) "They started to incite and silence people and you could not talk about what you were thinking and I felt that I did not make *Aliya* to Israel, that it was exactly the same regime that was there ... I had hoped that when I get to Israel, I'd meet a truly free people who could talk, And I wanted to say, guys wake up, they're shutting your mouths ... and it (the attempt to silence) is painful no less than the murder of the prime minister. "

(About the youth in the square, K. A.) "It reminded me of a youth movement there, that they go and do not understand what is going on at all and who he was and what he did at all, but they go with flags and flowers and do not know what, and it was related to policy, well, not to communism but to the regime".

"I do not feel connected to Israel and not to Russia. I often regret that I was not born Israeli ... Unfortunately, I did not feel like Israelis who said how he was dear



Machon Ha'Chagim
www.chagim.org.il



Jewish Holidays site
www.buja.org.il





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

To the Moderator: In the lecture held at the Yitzhak Rabin Center a few years ago, Dr. Vered Vinitzky Seroussi conducted a comparison between the Memorial Day of Yitzhak Rabin and other memorial days. The comparison illustrates the uniqueness of Memorial Day of Yitzhak Rabin and the difficulty in commemorating him. On various levels, such as the perception of the "enemy" (external or internal to the collective), the perception of the victim, the existence or absence of heroic motifs, a message for the future and aspects of commemoration such as sirens, are significant differences between the three national commemoration days, and especially in comparison to Yitzhak Rabin's Memorial Day. Moreover, the agreement over the facts, the interpretation of the facts and the general consensus around the various memorial days are also different.



Machon Ha'Chagim
www.chagim.org.il



Jewish Holidays site
www.buja.org.il



The Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Day

Memorial Day of Yitzhak Rabin Law, 5757 – 1997 ⁽¹⁾

- | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Day | 1. (A) The 12 th of Cheshvan, the day of the assassination of Prime Minister and Defense Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, shall be a national memorial day that is to be commemorated in states institutes, at IDF bases and in schools.
(B) If the 12 th of Cheshvan falls on a Friday or a Saturday, the Memorial Day shall be held on the preceding Thursday. | | | |
| The State Flag | 2. The flags in government institutes and in army bases shall be lowered to half-mast. | | | |
| The Memorial Service
IDF Army Bases | 3. A memorial service shall take place on Mt. Herzl, near Yitzhak Rabin's gravesite.
4. A day ordinance of the Commander in Chief shall be announced in army bases. | | | |
| Regulations | 5. In schools the Memorial Day shall be marked by –
(1) Activities that commemorate the image and achievements of Yitzhak Rabin.
(2) Activities dedicated to the importance of democracy in Israel and to the dangers of violence to society and the state.
6. The Minister of Education, Culture and Sport is charged with the execution of this Law and may issue regulations for its implementation. | | | |
| | <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; width: 33%;">Ezer Weizman
Tichon
President of Israel
Speaker of the Knesset</td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 33%;">Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister</td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 33%;">Dan</td> </tr> </table> | Ezer Weizman
Tichon
President of Israel
Speaker of the Knesset | Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister | Dan |
| Ezer Weizman
Tichon
President of Israel
Speaker of the Knesset | Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister | Dan | | |

(1) Published in Law Book 5757 No. 1630 on Date 7.17. 1997, p. 186 (Bill 5757 no. 2618 p. 342).



We Shall Search Our Ways and We Shall Examine them

Rabbi Dr. Aharon Lichtenstein

I address this gathering today, with mixed feelings. On the one hand, there were those who had approached me and had said that straight from the plane, instead of heading directly to the yeshiva to deliver a class on the issues studied at the time in the yeshiva, that it was important that I go straight to the *beit midrash* to discuss the current events. On the other hand, there are others who feel that after a week or so, everyone is already too deeply involved in the turmoil surrounding the terrible event and all of its implications that we wish to restore some type of routine. From this point of view, the fact that the tragic events had caught up with me overseas, I had missed the response in a timely manner, and there was no point in coming at this point and speaking about it.

And yet, despite the mixed feelings, I feel a need to relate to the situation, to the events and circumstances.

When I was in the United States, almost every community with self-respect held a memorial ceremony on one level or another. In one community, near New York, I was asked to speak, and I geared my messages in two directions. I opened by referring to the verse read in this week's portion, "And Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and weep." It is appropriate to distinguish between eulogy and weeping. While eulogy deals mainly with the assessment of the person, his personality and his achievements: it refers mainly to the past, weeping relates to the shattered and broken heart associated with his death. As a result, I saw a double task awaiting me. First, to describe, as much as my minimal acquaintance has perceived, the character and philosophy of the prime minister, of blessed memory, and in addition, to address the aspect of the loss and deterioration that follow the murder with all of their components.

Here, in a community whose acquaintance is much deeper, where there are certainly people, like Rabbi Amital and others, who knew the prime minister to a greater degree than I knew him, I will not relate to the first aspect. Here, at the yeshiva, I would like to focus on the second aspect, with its various elements, including the tragedy itself and what has emerged from it.

When you're out to cry and lament, there are different layers and components involved. Of course, first and foremost there is a personal aspect. There is the grief of a bereaved family, a widow, children and grandchildren; It is certainly forbidden to lose awareness of this aspect, in the midst of public and national uproar. But when a big minister falls, when a famous personality is assaulted, this point, despite its importance, is mitigated by other aspects unique to this case. In such a situation,



when dealing with such a personality, naturally, public attention is primarily focused on the public aspect.

We have been confronted undoubtedly, with a severe loss, a source for weeping for the present and a potential crisis for the future. It's not common that a leader with the stature of Yitzhak Rabin ascends the national stage. A person with a personal background and skills, both by his own merits and such that he had attained from his experiences, who could have, by virtue of this combination, in the complex reality in which we live, as a captain, steered the national ship and navigated it in difficult times, while on the one hand, the efforts to reach a safe haven, was a mission he and the entire nation faced, while on the other hand, the fear of storms, when perhaps the coast is not so safe, probably concerned many. The combination of a military career of more than twenty years, on the one hand, and a second period, for over twenty years as well, of political activity, when it comes to difficult and fateful decisions, of which their political and security aspects are attached as fire to a flame, the ability to assess things correctly, and to relay authority and leadership to the public in both fields, each separately and both combined, this combination is certainly uncommon. It is hard to think of another person in which the blend of skills and of background in both fields were equally intertwined and on the same level. This is a difficult loss from a national point of view, and indeed woe is to the ship that had lost its captain.

*An address delivered in the Har Etzion Yeshiva on the 20th of Cheshvan, 5756

Beyond this point, and regarding the apprehension that must fill the whole nation at the loss of the captain, there is special concern for those whose interest in settling in the Land of Israel is close to their hearts. There may be some, to whom this statement will sound a bit exaggerated and strange, since the fierce and vigorous opposition to the prime minister's policy and personality emerges precisely from those who see themselves as the carriers of the settlement flag. But from an objective viewpoint, the one whom this public – if it had recognized that, in any case a certain move was in the making, although it be to their dismay – was able to rely on to do his best to take care of the security aspects, and accordingly to preserve the settlement regions, was the prime minister. Consequently, it is both for them and for us that he is missing. But not only that. As far as we are concerned, the whole peace process, with all its victims, is not just a political process. The peace process is a process that is connected to moral and spiritual aspects, that not only the practical results – what is returned, what is not returned and whether it is returned, but also how it is returned, in what spirit and feeling it is done – is significant. Is this a process of relinquishing, an act of joy in getting rid of a heavy burden, or a willingness to compromise, considering all the pain it entails? It seems



to me that an objective viewpoint – capable of overcoming resistance to the very policy that examines the “degree of joy and tranquility” in the act of return and concession – as opposed to the sense of recognition of the circumstances necessitating the process, with a heavy heart and a strong connection to the Land of Israel, of the Covenant of the Pieces, shall recognize the fact that the prime minister of blessed memory felt this pain. True, not as much as we would like it, but his attitude was to handle it with a clenched fist rather than with a generous heart, and this point stems from moral and significant roots...

... The absence of Yitzhak Rabin, who passed away, would have been felt even if he had died a natural death in his bed. But this was not the case. The terrible and dreadful circumstances, the way in which he was murdered in cold blood, must become a source of deep pain and sorrow – beyond the loss of the captain in itself – to every citizen of the country, that we have come to this. I was in New York last Tuesday, and I went to see Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik, and I imagine that there are some people in this crowd who are well aware of how fierce his opposition is to the entire peace process. He expresses himself strongly and sharply at any occasion. And despite his physical difficulty to move, he came to Israel especially to express his opposition to this. It is hard to find a person who is more opposed to it. I had just arrived to see him and before I had a chance to open my mouth to speak, I had only said “*Shalom Aleichem*,” he repeated over and over, “a badge of shame, a badge of shame” He did not shut his eyes for two nights out of feelings of shame and embarrassment.

This feeling, that our country, the apple of our eye, has deteriorated to this extent, that our nation has reached such an abject level of lowliness that until now we had thought exists only overseas, “which G-d your Lord has given them,” that we have descended to such a level of resolving political conflicts, disputes and internal rifts with murder and violence; this shame must encompass everyone: from the right and the left wings, religious and secular, to the extent that a Jew feels, as he should feel, any degree of unity and entirety of the nation of Israel, then even if it is a different segment of the people, one must feel to some extent a sense of shame of the image of our society that is currently, resolving (or thinks it is resolving) disputes. But naturally, the feelings of embarrassment and shame must fill us, our public especially. To whatever extent every Israelite is a bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh, in this case, in regard to the sector called, “National Religious” – that we pride ourselves in being part of – this statement is mostly and directly relevant.

This is a man who was nurtured in the best of our institutions. Ten days ago, we would have marked him as a symbol of success, a story we would all be proud of. This is the product of a good family; His father being a scribe and his mother, a kindergarten teacher. He was educated in a high school yeshiva and in one of the senior Hesder Yeshivas, he was enrolled to study the most sought-after subject at



Bar-Ilan University and was a diligent student at "Collel". Ten days ago, we would have run to secular people and told them," Fellows, look at your image, where your youth spend their time, what kind of culture or sub-culture or lack of culture do they maintain, and as to us – look: "What crops we have grown!"

The mishnah in the Ketubot says that a betrothed girl (who has defiled herself sexually) is stoned at the door of her father's house because of her connection to her parents: "Look at crops that you raised." Now we hear voices among us claiming: "What is 'That you raised'? We raised? God forbid, some wild weed, a wild flower, one that grew up on the edge of the flowerbed, an outcast that was ostracized: "We raised him?" But, gentlemen, it is not possible that one who is willing to take credit when the sun rises, suddenly shakes off responsibility when it begins to rain. If, ten days ago, we would be showing off the young man with pride, "Look at the crops we raised", we must say also today, "Look at the crops we raised."

After the underground affair, some 12 years ago, I published an article in "Maariv" titled "Where Did We Go Wrong?" The gist of the article is a call for soul-searching following the events that took place, and the emphasis on the fact that these were not people who came from the margins, but rather a group of people who are among our best, and that we refrain from deluding ourselves into thinking that there is something marginal here in the periphery that can be shaken off, rather there is a need of genuine and serious self-criticism, directed, not only at the branches, but also at the roots.

If that was the case then it is all the more so the case today. There are voices of disavowal, "weed" and the like; However, we must see these things in the perspective of our sages, in the perspective of our sages, these are terrible things. I'm almost afraid to verbalize them. I do not intend, G-d forbid, that they should be enacted as stated, but we must understand from which angle and out of what attitude the sages approached such severe cases. Following the issue of the Molech the verse (Leviticus 20: 5) states that if the public does not see to it that the affliction is removed and the evil is eradicated and the sinner – punished, then "I shall turn my face to that man and his family." The Gemara in Shavuot (39) asks: "Rabbi Shimon said: If he sinned, what is the sin of his family? To tell you, there is no family in which there is a tax collector where the rest of the family are not tax collectors, and there is no family in which one member is robber that the rest – are not robbers, because they cover up for him". Let us not deceive ourselves. To a large and true extent – we are the family.

Covering up takes on two shapes. There is a cover up that protects a person so that he is not discovered and that no sanctions be imposed against him. In this sense, the cover up comes after the act. But we recognize in the Jewish Law a type of protection that comes before the act is committed, a protection that enables growth and development: "He who covers up hybrids – is beaten". And in this case, to a





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

certain extent, to our great dismay – but if we do not regret it, we will not recognize the truth – there is a degree of covering up that enabled and the tumor and the development. I wish we could say that what had happened was not done because of the upbringing and the education the boy received, but in spite of it. But we must ask ourselves, "Is it true?" If a person stands up and says, "Well, what can I do? I am indeed a Rosh Yeshiva, an educator, a teacher or a rabbi, and out of my community emerge also young men who violate Shabbat. So am I responsible for their desecration of Shabbat?" "the answer is, heaven forbid. In Volozhin, there were yeshiva principals who had stronger minds than you do, yet, there too, there were not one or two, not a dozen or two of those who completely through off the yoke of observance. But there it was clear, and likewise today, if a young man violates the Shabbat from any high school yeshiva or a high yeshiva, these cases occur in spite of the education. And at this point we must ask ourselves is it all despite, or partially due to the education.

In the Gemara, Yerushalmi, in Tosefta and in Sifri, it is written:

"Our rabbis have taught: There is a story told of two priests who were equal and at the same time – ascended the ramp leading to the alter. One of them neared the other and stabbed him in the heart. Rabbi Tzaddok stood on the steps leading to the Temple Hall and said: Brethren of the House of Israel listen: it is said 'If you find a corpse in the field – your elders and judges shall go out'. On what do we bring a beheaded heifer, on what occurs in the city or – in the Temple courts? So the entire crowd burst out crying. A father of a child who was having convulsions came nearby and said: Here is your atonement, my son is still quivering and the knife has not yet been defiled. To show you that the issue of purified vessels was more severe in their eyes than bloodshed. Likewise, it is written, "And also Menashe spilled clean blood that filled Jerusalem completely from one edge to another".

(Yoma 23)

Further, the Gemara asks, what kind of a heifer was Rabbi Tzaddok referring to, since Jerusalem does not bring a heifer. The Gemara also asks, why a beheaded heifer is brought only when one does not know who the murderer is, but in this case they all witnessed it. "And it was not known who had killed him, yet in his case it is known, who had done it?!". "The answer is – to increase the weeping". So the question arises, "What is the purpose of increased weeping?" Is this a good enough reason to interpret the Torah incorrectly? Could it be that Rabbi Zadok would stand in the hall and distort the proper meaning?! It is inconceivable!



Machon Ha'Chagim
www.chagim.org.il



Jewish Holidays site
www.buja.org.il





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

The answer is quite clear. There was a message here. What is the story of the "Beheaded Heifer"? This is the case of guilt and collective responsibility, from elders of the court to the last of the servants.

In the modern world there are great liberals who know how to speak about the fact that there is a particular guilty person and that so and so is guilty, the family is guilty and the society is guilty, and the grandmother is guilty. The Jewish view intensifies the sense of personal responsibility. A person is responsible for his fate and is responsible for his actions, and, heaven forbid, that the collective guilt, that instilling the feeling that we are all to blame, should dull the sense of personal responsibility of the actual offender.

But if it is a sense of collective responsibility beyond personal responsibility - this is the message of the issue of the Beheaded Heifer. And in this case, Rabbi Tzaddok felt as one of the two young priests ran and drew a knife and stuck in the heart of his colleague; What will the elders and the people who stand in the Temple court say? They will say, "Well, a weed, a wild flower, a lunatic, who stuck a knife in the heart of his colleague so that he does the service instead." And then everyone shakes off responsibility and goes home and carries on as normal...

Rabbi Tzaddok understands that the piercing of someone's heart is not a mistake of a wild flower, done despite the education he received, but to some extent, because of it. What made one priest thrust a knife in the heart of the other one? Was he rebelling against the world of the Temple and its sanctuaries? Did he disregard the service and everything that the Temple represents? Quite contrarily! Out of enthusiasm, out of passion, out of devotion to arrive first to perform a holy service; that was why he arrived at what he did. That's what energized him and what encouraged him!

Of course, one cannot say that it was his rabbis, guides, parents and teachers who taught him and instructed him that in order to be first at a service, it is permissible to thrust a knife in the heart of a friend. God forbid! But in terms of factors and elements that had penetrated his consciousness and personality and had led him to that terrible act - certainly it is. They made sure that "the envy of scribes shall increase wisdom," and they forget that it is also increases jealousy. They had emphasized the importance of service and did not emphasize enough the importance of caring for others, the feeling of friendship, the need for a balanced world view and balanced lifestyle, in which concern for the life of others goes hand in hand with the awe of working in the Temple and with the sincere, genuine, good, beautiful, sublime and the holy will to carry out the service.

Further on, the Gemara doubts what this constellation was. What had happened? The Gemara understands that there was a loss of balance. The more important and sanctified the work in the Temple is, the lesser it should be involved with bloodshed. What was the educational failure? As the knife is still stuck in the heart of the priest, his father comes and says worriedly: "Take out the knife, he is still fluttering, so that it will not be defiled!" To teach you that purification of vessels is more important to them than





Shittim Center

Home for the
Jewish Holidays

shedding blood. The Gemara asks what has transpired here? "Bloodshed is an order of the sages, but the purity of vessels is as long as it is viable it is viable, or perhaps bloodshed is viable as long as it is viable while the purity of the vessels is more severe." Where was the failure? Was it due to the attention that should be given to purifying the vessels, they had reached the desired level, but they underrated bloodshed, to the extent that bloodshed became inferior to purifying tools, or perhaps in the realm of bloodshed they had received the necessary and normal education, yet they exaggerated with the issue of purified vessels to the extent that led to such devastation. Either way, the youth died; Rabbi Tzaddok rised said to them: "Gentlemen, we have educated ourselves to good and beautiful values, but the bottom line is that there is bloodshed here. Let us not delude ourselves that actually this merely a weed", continued Rabbi Tzaddok, "And let us not say that we realize who the killer is, and he is the one to take the blame.

Everything is he and he is the only one. There is no one behind him, at his side, and no one above him. What have we to do with the beheaded heifer? You ought to know that, from a practical *halachic* point of view, since the condition of 'no one knew who slew him' does not exist here, for it is known who struck him and the heavy, initial and basic responsibility lays on him – and not a single hair will fall from the personal responsibility required by virtue of the fact that there were others at his side and above him – nonetheless, basically, there is room in his case for the beheaded heifer". Because he was nurtured with part of this – and there is no knowing with how much, and who knows whether it is due to downplaying bloodshed or due to preference of the severity of other values – some of this was endowed on him in his upbringing, and now the priest who competed with him, is slain. And then Rabbi Tzaddok was aroused with the terrible question, the question that the public did not have an answer for, and the only response was that "they all broke out crying". His question was who would bring the beheaded heifer, who is liable, to whom shall we assign this, to the cities or to the courtyards?

What is the significance of assigning the city or the courtyards? Gentlemen, that very fellow, that very murderer, that very criminal was nurtured from two frameworks and two circles. There is one wide circle – the city, the general culture, the country's moods, verbal violence in the Knesset and the murder of women in their homes, intolerance and a feeling of conceit. There is something in the city, in the broad society, perhaps it should bring the beheaded heifer. But on the other hand, Rabbi Tzaddok was imbued with the truth and morality that drove him to realize that perhaps there is room here, in the courtyard for the beheaded heifer, not particularly from the city but from the courtyards. Precisely in the world of the Temple, the world of sanctity, particularly, the priests in their service, the Levites with their songs and melodies, perhaps the courtyards need an atonement and they ought to be the ones responsible to bring the beheaded heifer. Perhaps they are responsible for the 'eclipse of the luminaries', being the root of the crime.



Why did everyone burst out in tears? Not because they did not know whether to answer 'the city or the courtyards,' but because they understood instinctively and intuitively that the real answer to Rabbi Tzaddok's question was that a beheaded heifer should be brought - both by the city and by the courtyards. Both the city must be shaken up and the courtyards must awaken. When a young man is bathed in his blood near the altar, in the midst of the courtyards, both the city, and the courtyards need a beheaded heifer Let us ask ourselves, what are our problems as residents of the courtyards? After all, we educate, and try to educate in a way promoting holy matters, to the connection to the Land of Israel, to the nation of Israel and the Torah of Israel. The legacy of the past and the vision of the future - these are our directives. Is there something wrong or invalid in this? Is there anything we'd like to rule out? God forbid! We will not give up the courtyard of the Israelites nor the courtyard of women, nor the Temple Hall nor the Holy of Holies. We are hoping for the entire Temple, with all its layers and constituents; the Temple, the Temple Mount, Jerusalem and all the ten holy places of the Land of Israel. However, the question of the overall picture is the obvious one. Have we sufficiently seen to it that the balance in the overall system would be proper or not. Or perhaps, as in that horrifying Gemara tale, even if bloodshed is severe and the awareness to it is sufficient, there is an imbalance and disproportion between bloodshed and purity of vessels. Perhaps the education for adherence to laws concerning the courtyards broke the balance and proportion even within the courtyards.

There are several elements that can be addressed.

First, the self-confidence, which, on the one hand, stems from sacred things, attachment to the world of eternity, from devotion to the values of faith and worship of G-d, but on the other hand, it has sometimes taken on alarming and shocking proportions. From the attitude that "we are *Neturei Karta*, we are the guardians of the courtyards" - and the courtyards can refer to items sanctified by the Torah of Israel, and the courtyard can be the Land of Israel - sometimes our pupils and we have arrived at situations in which absolute certainty turned into a feeling of conceit. Conceit that had led to the fact that we did not see ourselves as responsible to other groups, and sometimes not - to other values. I remember ten years ago, when I was a member of an internal review committee, among the quorum who showed up, there was a person who assumes a prominent position within our public. The public that he represents, who resides in the places it resides, he said, is so wonderful - "there is no group compared to it in the world" -and that, in fact, there is no one worthy of being its governor and ruler. I left, shocked. Over the past decade, this tone of "us and them" - we are the good ones, we who those who care, we are those with the values - is only, unfortunately, expanding.

Secondly, occasionally we taught our students to simplify thinking. Simplification, that on the one hand is enough to arouse enthusiasm and excitement.



When you come to a person with a sharp and clear message, you speak only in a single tone and shout "after me", it is more likely he will run than if you tell him, "Think, consider, look into it and investigate" being that there are difficult, complex and diversified problems, conflicting spiritual interests or conflicting national interests. More than once have we transmitted, in an effort springing out from sacred roots, to rush the male and female youths to the altar to do the work, not just simplistic messages, but also a simple way of thinking and a plain way of acquiring habits. This simplicity is expressed, sometimes in the ways of thinking and sometimes in the abandonment of contents and considerations. About 10–15 years ago, shortly after we made Aliya to Israel, I once left a meeting of yeshiva teachers, shocked to the depth of my soul. The subject spoken about there was about teaching, how to teach the generation and to promote it.

One of them rose to his feet and said: "While we know that there is a disagreement between Nachmanidies and Maimonides regarding the Land of Israel – whether it is a commandment, not a commandment, etc., this should be a hidden secret that we will keep between us. If they hear about this, something of their passion, the burning enthusiasm in their bones may fade, the burning coals will only dim and hiss. In this case it is not merely scoffing Dizengoff – it was avoidance of Maimonides!

Third, we have often educated quite a few members of our public, perhaps with good intentions, to look down on others. Anyone who does not think like us, who does not act like us, is not presented as a mistaken or straying individual, but as a man of malice. If there was an opportunity to attribute to a public figure or an entire public good intentions or wrong intentions, the instinctive tendency—though not always, of course—was always to attribute to them – evil intentions. Not whims but wickedness. Not a mistake in judgment, but alienation. Instead of the usual truism passing on from one generation to the next: "Honor him and suspect him," many of them scrawled on their flag: "Suspect him, suspect him and suspect him." Not only suspect him: 'Suspect him' is – considering it questionable, instead, they adopted a sense of absolute certainty!

These ways of thinking, both messages that are conveyed and messages that are not conveyed, may lead to terrible reactions.

"From this you say, if a person has transgressed a simple commandment, he will end up committing a severe sin, and a person has violated 'love thy neighbor as thyself', shall consequently transgress, 'you shall not seek revenge or bear a grudge', 'and your brother shall live with you', to the extent that he commits bloodshed." (Deuteronomy 19:10, 22:13)

It is no doubt that there is a great deal of positive factors and the wonderful things in our educational system, and, God forbid, for anyone to tarnish the entire system, but to believe that it is all due to wild crops and weeds without any responsibility of the courtyards and that the entire issue occurred in spite of the courtyards – I'm afraid this cannot be said.



The difficult and terrible question that is asked is, then, is it necessary to close the courtyards, to dismantle the system and to give up values? On the plane to Israel, a Jew had asked me, don't I think that the situation that emerged is the result of an education in which people are taught that there are things that are more important than human life. I replied to him that the existence of values that surpass human life is not a matter that depends on this or that stream, yet this is a fundament rooted in the works of the Sages and the Shulchan Aruch. If there is a law of, 'he be killed and not transgress', this means that there are values that surpass human life.

But the question is, of course, how to apply this. What is the balance and what is the halachic and philosophical guideline, when is human life is at the pinnacle and when is it secondary to other values. If this point is adherence to items of sanctity, their esteem and admiration, we certainly need not be embarrassed and ashamed, and we should not erase even one small letter from our Torah. In this respect, we will not give in to any city, and we will not delete any clause regarding the realm of beliefs and opinions, adherence to the Torah and the worship of G-d. As far as our mission goes as bearers of these precepts, we will not give up and will not become dispirited. The values are those of the eternal Torah and G-d forbid that we renounce or erase anything. However, in terms of implementation and balance, viewing the overall picture, development of practical thinking and the examination of ways to implement this wonderful Torah with all its values and layers, in this there is certainly a need for a renewed and deeper thinking. And we may well have to reconsider priorities.

In the Tractate of Yoma (p.22) it is told: "There was a case in which two priests ran up the ramp to the alter and one pushed the other to the extent that the latter fell and broke his leg. Since the rabbinical court became aware of the danger they issued a regulation that the offering to the altar be conducted by casting lots". The Gemara tells two different tales: The tale brought in Tosefta and in Yerushalmi, regarding the case in which a priest struck his fellow in the heart of his colleague, and the leg breaking tale, told in the Mishnah. The Gemara discusses the relationship between these two tales and the shift to the method of casting lots. Its conclusion is that the story of the murder had preceded the one in which the priest broke his leg. At the time the first story occurred, purity of vessels was more severe than bloodshed. But, despite the warning of Rabbi Tzaddok and the entire crowd breaking out in tears, routine activities were resumed with the people reassuring themselves that this event was, albeit shocking, but an exception to the rule, "In the first case they figured it was an exception to the rule", and therefore they made no changes. "Since they realized that even inadvertently there is a danger", in other words, they understood that something was foul in the prevailing system if people are hurt even without an intentional act of a person taking a knife and thrusting it in the heart of his comrade, and thereupon "the rabbis issued the regulation of the lots."



Why did not they enact the lottery system in the first instance? The answer is clear. Ideally, what is preferable, that people do the job and achieve their turn as it took place in the first story or as it was carried out in the second story? The first system was based upon individual ambition, on personal effort, on a man running, getting ahead and hoping. It cultivated dedication to values and devotion to the service. This was the first method. Whereas the lot-casting was a mechanical method. A fellow sits and types on a computer, prints out lists and hangs them on the wall. What is better, that people work out of identification, aspiration and 'envy of scribes' that would enhance their service, or, since some typist determined when they are to be on guard and when – in the kitchen? The answer is clear. But if one sees a single murder and feels that the method is connected to this since "in any case it is dangerous to him," so even when it comes at an educational expense – and it is not insignificant – our sages changed over from the method of motivation and personal incentive, with all its superiority, to the method of casting lots.

I do not know what in our situation is equivalent to such a move. But it is clear that we must do what our sages did:

1. To cry over of the matter.
2. To rethink the matter regarding the city and the courtyards and the method used in the courtyards.

There is no doubt in this, at least as far as the public sphere is concerned. Certainly, in a world of beliefs and philosophies, we will not relinquish a thing, but when it comes to evaluating reality on the public and social plane, we must develop tools and approaches that differ from those currently prevalent...

... We have spoken so far about the courtyards, that is, the system, but there are also difficult and penetrating questions about the leadership of the system and its administrators. I do not wish to go into questions such as, "What did x say," "What did y say," that will divert the discussion and soul-searching from their proper course, but also if we ignore this stratum, our conscience must be engaged in the point showing up in the work of the sages in different contexts: "Anyone who can protest against the people of his household and does not protest takes the blame of the people of his household. If this is true regarding the people of his city – he carries the blame of the people of his city. If this is true regarding people all over the world – he takes the blame of people all over the world" (The exact quote is from the clear and concise wording of the Gemara of Shabbat 54:). To what extent someone who had the power to protest and he did or didn't protest, each person much reckon for himself and must engage in his own accountability. Yet I believe that I will not err if I claim – and I include myself in this rule – that it is very clear that the degree of protest was insufficient. Some did not protest, since they didn't understand the gravity of the situation and figured that there were merely some eccentrics, that at one time there was a situation in which an underground had been in



existence. Some failed to protest, since we are in a struggle, it is not easy with the city, with the general culture, they did not wish to discredit and tarnish our name, and therefore preferred to pass by with a degree of silence or a weak protest, even over serious acts.

Beyond the entire system and the leadership responsibility of those heading the system, this fact in itself, that they had the power to protest and had not protested, entails a special responsibility, beyond the city, and perhaps even beyond the courtyards ...

... We have expanded on the weeping based on the Gemara one in Yoma, and now we must mention an additional Gemara there. The Mishnah relates that a high priest, during the period of the Second Temple was suspected of not doing the work properly, but in the manner of the Sadducees, and therefore "they would have him take an oath with the One who bestowed the presence of His name in this 'house', that you are not to change anything we have told you'. He steps aside and weeps and they step aside and weep" (18) He withdrew and wept due to the suspicion cast upon him, and they withdrew and wept that they are in a world where one must suspect. In a world where it is not self-evident that such a thing is unthinkable. A transition from a healthy, organic society, built on the foundation of trust, from a society that lives in the courtyards, to a society that, G-d forbid, is incited and suspected - is a disastrous transfer ...

... At this time, out of the agony, we are required to face a spiritual, moral and educational challenge. We are required to deal with the key question. A man may come and say, "Gentlemen, you yourself say, says the Head of the Yeshiva, "that bloodshed may be cultivated from within the courtyards". Close the courtyards! Abandon the Sanctuary!" Under no circumstances shall we close, even a single chamber, whether it be in the secular area or in a sacred location. But the challenge we are faced with is whether we are able to excite and arouse, to admire and to encourage love and attachment to sacred things while preserving their moral balance, without loss of the ethical balance and without loss of spiritual judgment. No, God forbid, to educate the public to indifference, but to awaken it to understand the order of the day, the significance of the state and the historical processes in which we stand, and yet to maintain the proper balance between the different values. It must be understood that in order to purify the courtyards, we must be dedicated and to handle things positively, without whitewashing and without blurring, to understand what the problem is and how to act accordingly. To purify our hearts to serve Him truly and to purify our camp so that we serve Him in truth ...

