
censured by the American rabbinate. The rhetoric of violence should no longer be tolerated in our synagogues, community centers and schools. We must make public the true nature of groups raising money for the radical right-wing fringe groups that are causing so much mischief in Israel and in the Diaspora. Any settlement that engages in ongoing violence against Arabs or Israelis should be disbanded.

These extremists should not be allowed to stifle legitimate debate by continuing to poison the political atmosphere with their outrageous rhetoric. Public debate and non-violent political action on the issues of peacemaking must go on. There will not be peace if a significant number of Israeli Jews feels that its concerns have not been heard and taken into consideration. If the Peace Process is to work, as I hope and pray it will, it must be as the result of a free and open debate on the issues with all of the risks responded to. The ultimate success of the Zionist enterprise must be based on the security interests of Israel as well as on the prophetic principles of justice and peace which equally fired the commitment of Israel's founders. □

Of sad ironies and deadly bullets

Aaron I. Reichel

We now realize that the Prime Minister would have been spared his personal and fatal tragedy, and the nation would have been spared its unprecedented trauma, had the Labor government bowed to the will of the people and called for new elections or at least reassessed the "Peace Process" when it became apparent that a majority of the Jews in the Israeli Parliament voted against "Oslo II," in light of the realities and disappointments caused by Arafat's consistent violations of the spirit and the letter of "Oslo" and by his inability and/or unwillingness to stand up to the terrorists who are honest enough to at least be consistent.

I mourn the loss of a soldier and a statesman who rose to the top of both chains of command in service to his country, but I mourn, also, the fact that, after his Arab "partner" in "peace" openly and repeatedly revealed in Arab forums that his goal of annihilating the Zionists had not changed, a man as bright and as perceptive as the Prime Minister of Israel did not want to believe what he had heard, and did not opt to hear or heed the will of his co-religionists, but succumbed instead, to the will of an assassin, a will to kill, whose now infamous implementa-

AARON I. REICHEL, a rabbi, practices law in New York City.

tion of this desire is likely, ironically, to serve only to give the Labor government further rationalizations to try to kill the spirit of Israel's most idealistic heroes on the West Bank, the settlers, many of whom left the comforts of home and the luxuries of America, *at Rabin's personal request*, and based on his personal promises of assistance and eternal appreciation.

Notwithstanding the most unsettling manner in which Rabin's voice has been silenced, let the further irony not go unnoticed that what most opponents of the late Prime Minister's policies objected to were not merely his unilateral concessions to Arafat in exchange for Arafat's unilateral violations of the letter and the spirit of the "Peace Accords." The people who are now in the Opposition are especially aggrieved, as well, by the Labor government's flagrantly anti-democratic and sometimes cruel and selective censorship of some media and suppression of some dissent and political rallies of opposition groups even after these groups went to the trouble of painstakingly obtaining permits to demonstrate and/or formally requesting permission to conduct peaceful demonstrations in situations wherein permits were and are not required by law. How ironic that Rabin might still be alive today had the Labor government, like its predecessor governments, simply permitted free speech and assembly without exceptions for political reasons. How further ironic that the assassination occurred precisely at a demonstration the likes of which the Labor government was denying to many of its Jewish political opponents. □

Of zealots and hanukkah

Cary Kozberg

As we come to terms with the meaning and repercussions of the Rabin assassination, an act that most Jews view as heinous and virtually unthinkable, we find ourselves in the midst of a holiday commemorating a war of survival which began when the observant, faithful Jew Matithias (a *kohen*, no less!) did "the unthinkable"—he killed a fellow Jew.

But in the Hanukkah story, it was not unthinkable; it was "a *mitzvah*". The account in *I Maccabees* compares the action of Matithias to that of an earlier "fanatic", Pinhas ben Eleazar, whose zeal for God during an earlier time of chaos and confusion also motivated him to kill

RABBI CARY KOZBERG is Director of Rabbinical and Pastoral Services at Wexner Heritage Village, Columbus, OH.

one of his own people. Like Matithias, Pinhas is regarded by tradition as a hero. He was rewarded with a promise that the priesthood will always be in his family, because he was “zealous for My sake among them” (cf. *Numbers* 25:1-13).

Pinhas ben Eleazar haKohen, Matiyahu ben Yohanan haKohen, Yigal Amir: all three deeply religious men; all three believing that the present situation of Judaism was most precarious; all three convinced that circumstances posed a mortal danger to the collective physical and spiritual well-being of the Jewish people; all three acting on the tenet, “drastic times justify drastic measures.”

Yet the former two are remembered as heroes and holy men. The last is regarded (at least by most of us) as a criminal. Does time transform so completely?

On further consideration, we are given even more pause, remembering that while Pinhas and Matithias took the law into their own hands and are praised for the spontaneity, Yigal Amir seems to have been more deliberate in going through the normal, *halakhic* channels.

We read that as a consequence of the Golden Calf, Moses commanded the Levites to slay those of their kinsmen who had participated in that act of apostasy. Three thousand died. Commenting on this episode (*Exodus* 32:29), Rashi explains that by slaying their fellow Jews, the Levites had dedicated themselves to God’s service. The word Rashi uses for “dedicate” is *tithankhu*—related to the word “*hanukkah*.” Commenting on the weekly portion “Pinhas,” and why it is never paired with another portion in the reading cycle, Rabbi Y. Eger states it is because Pinhas was a zealot, a loner, He did things his own way. But woe to the generation in which zealots unite.

This year, as we observe the Festival of Lights, we are beckoned to own up to, to confront and to ponder the phenomenon of zealotness in our tradition, to understand what summons it, and when it is appropriately summoned. May the Holy One bless us with the zeal our ancestors felt for Judaism, but enlighten us to know when using it is not a desecration, but a truly sacred act. May this be the Great Miracle that happens for us. □

But others say about...

Yitzhak Rabin

In his forceful reminder that assassinations can and do happen even in democracies like Israel and the United States (*Sh'ma* 26/502), Irving Greenberg unfortunately

Ta sh'ma

We invite you to send us your favorite text and comment. Submissions should not exceed 200 words. Be sure to include proper citation of sources. Hebrew will appear in transliteration.

Marc Baker

Simmeon, his son said, All my days I have grown up among the wise, and I have found nought of better service than silence; not learning but doing is the chief thing; and whoso is profuse of words causes sin.

MISHNA AVOT, CH. 1, V. 17

Rabbi Hertz, former Chief Rabbi of the British Empire comments that “not learning but doing” gives expression to a main characteristic of Judaism. It does not dispute the high place assigned to learning the Torah; right doing depends on knowing what to do and how to do it. “Study is most important, because it leads to deed,” was the decision of the historic synod at Lydda, in 133 CE. This principle is a *drash* on the meaning of the covenantal formula that “one must do what is just and right”. Judaism’s distinguishing characteristic is its insistence on the integration of one’s thoughts and deeds, that ideas must be actualized in order to test the validity of moral principles. The aim of the Torah is practical not theoretical; above all else its purpose is to regulate conduct. Not knowledge, but practice is of decisive importance; but the practice flows from knowledge.

MARC BAKER is a businessman in Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

makes a mishmash out of a melancholy dimension of American history.

He writes: “Every American president elected in the 20 year intervals from 1860 to 1980 was shot or died in office; six of the seven were shot.” Actually, this peculiar 20 year cycle began in 1840 and ended in 1960. Moreover, of the seven presidents elected in those years divisible by 20, four (Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley and Kennedy) were killed while three (W. H. Harrison, Harding and F. D. Roosevelt) died in office peacefully. Although Greenberg’s theme is clearly assassinations, perhaps he includes 1980 because of the *attempted* killing of Reagan—something that tragically happened to presidents elected in other years as well—but, as we know,