

On November 4 of 1995, I was in Washington, D.C. for a United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism convention. It had been an incredible day—it was Shabbos, and if you have ever experienced Shabbos at a convention like that one, you know that the *davening* and learning experiences with so many other committed Jews are deeply moving and exciting. Then came the news of the Prime Minister's assassination. If you'll forgive the analogy, I can imagine that the experience had to be like that of a user of crack cocaine—one moment you are on an incredible high, and then within seconds, you are plunged into indescribable pain and despair.

All throughout the hotel, people walked aimlessly, looking dazed. The rabbis got together and organized an all-night vigil for the entire convention. We would gather in shifts and say *מִילִיָּהַת* (Psalms) by candlelight. I purposely signed up for the 2:00 a.m. shift. I had been a *רמוש* (one who sits overnight with the dead) when I was in rab school, and I knew firsthand the power of the post midnight, predawn hours. I feel like I remember every second of that vigil.

When we learned more, when we learned that the assassin was a Jew, it was salt in the wound. Of course, we all know there are Jewish extremists. But with only two exceptions that I can think of, neither of whom I will honor by referring to them by name tonight, Jewish extremists simply tend to live in controversial areas. They do not generally kill innocents in cold blood.

Over the years, I began to think about the Israelis who were children in 1995. I was a five year old in kindergarten on November 22, 1963. I remember precisely where I was in the room and what I was doing when

our principal announced over the loudspeaker that President Kennedy had been shot. His murder profoundly affected my life, even to this day. Surely the same would be true of the Israeli children who heard the news of November 4, 1995.

Over the past fifteen years, I have pondered the two assassinations in contrast and comparison to one another. I was struck by one glaring difference. The assassination of President Kennedy spawned an incredible number of conspiracy theories. Even today, after it has been proven not merely beyond a reasonable doubt but beyond a shadow of a doubt that Oswald did indeed murder the President, some still cling stubbornly to the belief that there had to be a conspiracy. I understand why they do so, but with the Rabin assassination, there was no deluge of conspiracy theories. I began to wonder why not, and I will share my conclusion with you now.

When President Kennedy was killed, it seemed almost disrespectful to his memory to accept that Oswald was the lone assassin, even that he was involved at all. Surely an act that caused such monumental, irreparable harm could not have been perpetrated by such a nothing. Now we know that it was.

Not only that, but it continued to happen. We lived through the murders of Dr. Martin Luther King, Senator Robert Kennedy, and President Anwar Sadat. By November 4 of 1995, we had come to accept that one previously anonymous person could be evil enough to take the lives of some of society's great public servants, and in so doing, do immeasurable harm to so many others.

My friends, let us not allow ourselves to accept what the world has become. In memory of Yitzhak Rabin, I pray that we tirelessly pursue peace in the Middle East. In memory of Yitzhak Rabin, I pray that we accept nothing less than a full and true peace, preceded by the complete abandonment of violence and terrorism by the Palestinians and their bloodthirsty leadership. To abandon the quest for peace would be a desecration of the Prime Minister's memory. To relax our insistence on security issues would be at least as much of a desecration. Rabin died trying to bring peace to the Middle East. Countless others have died going about their daily lives, simply because of the moral bankruptcy that allows those who have declared themselves our enemy to pursue their political objectives through the use of terrorism. Still more have died protecting their fellow Israelis, among them Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, and Gilad Shalit continues to languish in captivity.

My friends, if we judge by the calendar and not the conditions in the region, it is far past time for there to be peace in the Middle East. Some hunger so desperately for that peace that they urge Israel to make concessions that would jeopardize the security of the state. Would Rabin have done so? Would he want Israel to do so now? I conclude with those clearly rhetorical questions.