



**THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE RABIN ASSASSINATION  
AND THE LESSONS FOR TODAY**

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# **WORDS CAN KILL**

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**DVIR KARIV & RABBI DOV LIPMAN**

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of the Rabin Assassination,  
and the Lessons for Today

**Dvir Kariv**

**Rabbi Dov Lipman**

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Adapted from Hebrew by Rabbi Dov Lipman

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Contact: [karivlipman1@gmail.com](mailto:karivlipman1@gmail.com)

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# **Preface**

By Rabbi Dov Lipman

November 22, 1963. Dallas, Texas. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. The United States of America was plunged into mourning.

November 4, 1995. Tel Aviv, Israel. Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin was assassinated. The State of Israel was plunged into mourning.

President Kennedy was a young, charismatic, and optimistic leader who filled the people of the United States with hope, and dreams for a better future.

Prime Minister Rabin was an elderly statesman and a war hero who was determined to attempt to lead Israel toward a better, more peaceful existence.

Both assassinations robbed these two countries of their innocence, and both had a dramatic effect on their respective lands.

Imagine the following scenario: There was a young, idealistic secret service agent in Dallas that day whose family was active in the Democratic Party, with a close relationship with President Kennedy. In fact, the officer's family had worked tirelessly to get him elected. In September, 1963, the president addressed the agent and his bride by telephone at their wedding. President Kennedy filled this young man with

hope for a better future for the United States, and the officer took pride in his responsibility to protect the president during his upcoming visit to Dallas.

His pride and joy was shattered when those three shots rang out and killed the president on that fateful day. Soon after Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested for carrying out the assassination, this agent found himself alone in a room with Oswald, charged with guarding him until the start of the interrogation.

He had only one thought—taking out his gun and shooting Oswald. This assassin had robbed the agent of his leader, and a better future for his country. He was willing to sit in jail for the rest of his life to punish the assassin, and he believed that most U.S. residents would agree with that action taken on their behalf.

Had this agent existed and shot Oswald, the United States would have understood, and no one would have shed a tear. We know this because Jack Ruby shot and killed Oswald just one day later. He wasn't a secret service agent and he wasn't close to President Kennedy. But the U.S., albeit shocked, understood.

Dvir Kariv grew up as an active supporter of the Labor Party in Israel—first a member, and then a counselor in its youth movement. His family held a prominent place in the party, had a close connection to Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin, and had worked hard to help him win election to the premiership in June, 1992. Dvir served as an intelligence analyst for Israel's Internal Security Agency, also known as the "Shin Bet." His specific unit was responsible for

identifying Jewish extremists and preventing them from carrying out any attacks against Arabs or Jewish government officials trying to advance a peace agreement with the Palestinians. The number one potential target was Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin. Dvir's unit was responsible for protecting the prime minister's life.

Dvir got married at the end of the summer of 1995. Prime Minister Rabin called during the ceremony and wished the couple well on speakerphone for all in attendance to hear. In Dvir's words, the prime minister concluded his call by expressing his hope for better days for the country: "In actuality, he wished us good luck in watching over his own security and his own life. He knew that my partners in the unit—those responsible for protecting him—were there celebrating with me."

Two months later, three shots rang out in Tel Aviv and Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish extremist, Yigal Amir. Dvir found himself alone in the interrogation room with the assassin for much of that night. Devastated with grief over the loss of his lifelong idol, shocked—along with the rest of his nation—over the assassination of his leader, and overcome with guilt because of his unit's failure to protect the prime minister, Dvir decided to kill him.

This book relates the remarkable story of a young Shin Bet agent faced with the greatest dilemma of his life. It is a story of tragedy. It is a story rife with moral questions. It is a story of heroism. It is very much the story of the State of Israel, with all the challenges this young-yet-advanced state faces as it continues to establish and develop its reborn soul on this ancient and developing land. And it is a story that has

important implications and lessons for the entire world in modern times, and particularly the United States.

# Acknowledgements

## **Dvir Kariv:**

My first thank you is to you for taking this book into your hands and taking the time to read it. I believe that you are doing so out of a love for the state of Israel and your hope in its future, our future, and see everyone who reads this book and internalizes its message as my partner with the hope that together we can strengthen Israeli society and its democratic principles.

This book could not have come into fruition without a long line of people who helped, supported, and understood the importance of its publication.

Thank you from the depths of my heart to the anonymous and unseen people, among them the people of the Shin Bet, my professional home, to Roni, and many people who are not allowed to be named in my unit. This book would not have been possible without them.

To the people in the unit during the most difficult of days when Israel's democracy was in danger who worked to the best of our abilities against these grave threats. This begins with Eli Barak, the head of the unit, and dear "Saul," to the last of the field and intelligence officers.

To the leaders of the agency and its representatives who took the time to approve the book, understanding that it contains a critical message for the public.

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Thank you to my many friends, most who have been by my side for many years.

To my parents, Leah and Amiram Kariv who established my roots and values.

Thank you from the depths of my soul to my beloved family, the source of my strength and courage. To Yifat for not giving up on me for 15 years and five additional years of pushing me upward with faith, and for being my partner in building our special family and for our joint decision not to give up on our state despite the challenges.

To my children Omer, Rom, Idan, and Noga, the fruits of our love. You are a source of tremendous strength and great pride and a very good reason to continue building a strong, democratic and united society here in Israel, which preserves its internal strength for future generations. For you!

### **Rabbi Dov Lipman:**

My first thank you goes to God for giving me and my family the gift of living in Israel. We are living a life my ancestors could only dream about during 2,000 years of exile and through God's great gift we have come back to our home.

I thank God for giving me the opportunity to contribute towards the future of our wonderful state and for introducing me to the special people of Israel like Dvir Kariv. I had the great privilege of sitting next to Dvir's wife, former MK Yifat Kariv, in the Knesset, and am honored and thankful that a great Israeli like Dvir asked me to partner with him in publishing his Hebrew book, "Yitzchak," in English. I have learned so much about Israel, the Shin Bet, and Dvir while translating and adapting the book and have gained an even deeper appreciation for what Dvir and the Shin Bet officers and agents do to protect the people of Israel. They don't hear our appreciation enough and I want to take this opportunity to say thank you. I must also thank Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked for her assistance in paving the way for the Hebrew version of the book to be published.

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inspiration and passion to work to improve our special state.

My parents raised me to strive to live according to the lessons of this book and Dvir's story – the values of tolerance and coexistence. I miss my father Judge Ronald Lipman, of blessed memory, but hear his advice on a daily basis and thank him for his love and inspiration. Thank you to my mother, Leah Lipman Zeiger and her husband, Dr. Allen Zeiger, and to my in-laws, Rabbi Moshe and Cheryl Abramowitz for their constant love and support.

I am blessed to have a wife who provides me with continuous encouragement, support, and love. Thank you, Dena, for being my partner. We have been blessed with four wonderful children – Shlomo, Devora, Chaya, and Zahava. I thank them for being such a source of pride and strength and for being the inspiration which drives me to try to make Israel an even better country than it already is.

# **Chapter One—The Night Everything Changed**

At the end of October, 1995, the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians had yielded a draft for a permanent peace agreement. The Israeli Left believed that, despite the difficult times and bloodshed, the only choice was to try to make a breakthrough toward a lasting peace. The Israeli Right protested strongly against this development, fearing that an agreement with the Palestinians, which included allowing them to arm themselves, would result in more Jews being killed. The wave of horrific, ruthless terror attacks from the Palestinians that claimed the lives of hundreds of innocent Israelis lent much credence to this stance. A small group of Right-wing extremists called for violence against Prime Minister Rabin.

Pleas for restraint against violence and for strengthening democracy were not being heard, and the Israeli streets were becoming wild and uncontrollable. A decision was made to hold a massive rally in the Kings of Israel Square in Tel Aviv on Saturday night, November 4, 1995. For my unit, this was an additional demonstration in a long list of protests, this time with the message “Yes to peace, No to violence.”

The rules for those, like myself, who worked in the Internal Security Agency (the Shin Bet), were very clear. We were permitted to attend such rallies as observers, but we were not allowed to hold signs, or even express an opinion—

certainly not on stage. These rules had been formulated to create a balance between the rights of agents as regular citizens and the need to preserve the organization as a national institution, completely neutral politically. Agents generally do not turn up at these types of rallies, but this time, I decided to attend.

When I was a counselor in the Labor Party youth movement, I never rested until I was sure the buses filled with members were lined up to attend demonstrations, and I always made certain the rally was covered with my party's blue and red colors. I thought it would now be nice to go and meet those youths, who were grown-ups serving as counselors themselves. It had been quite a while since I met my friends in the Labor movement and this could be a wonderful meeting place.

This rally, according to its designation, was supposed to be a message against violence—an issue that was unanimously supported. So, I figured there was no problem in participating, despite my being an agent.

Fridays in Israel are generally a day off. On that Friday before the rally, I sat in my office and reviewed the intelligence. For many months, most of us had been working on Fridays to minimize the time gap between our receiving intelligence reports and analyzing them. We usually worked on the Sabbath, as well.

Reading the materials, I discovered that demonstrators from the Israeli Right were scheduled to be there to hold a counter rally. It became clear that this was really a demonstration of the Left. On second thought, I concluded that

despite the seemingly pure message of “Yes to peace, No to violence,” the rally was becoming political and would not reflect a unified message.

Since I worked in the most sensitive unit in the agency, I decided it would be best to remain at home.

It wasn’t easy to stay in the house. I really wanted to be there as a citizen who was aware of the extremism brewing in our midst, to declare “No to violence” and urge that we stick to the rules of democracy.

However, I stayed at home—the home of a young couple, just two months after our marriage. It was a cool night in the old Arab home that we rented in the mountains of Jerusalem. There was a lot of romance and love in the air, along with a great deal of warmth and sweet optimism. It was a wonderful time for us.

As hard as it was to remain at home, I was happy to hear that the square was filled with tens of thousands of people. I stayed busy with some housework as my wife, Yifat, was immersed in her studies. The television was on, the movie *Crocodile Dundee* flickering on the screen.

My beeper vibrated on the living room table. Like many other times, it intruded on the calm in our home. I went to look at it, assuming it was a mundane issue—perhaps a change in the coming week’s schedule or something like that.

I was not expecting the following message:

First report: The prime minister has been shot at the Kings of Israel Square. His condition is unknown.

Details to follow.

I took a second look at the tiny screen on the beeper—that continued to rattle—and read it again, this time with disbelief:

First report: The prime minister has been shot at the Kings of Israel Square. His condition is unknown.  
Details to follow.

“No, no, it can’t be,” I muttered. I read it a third time to make sure I was not dreaming. No, I was not. Our worst nightmare had become reality.

During those first seconds, my head was filled with many thoughts, spinning around and around: *Everything is going to change here. Everything is over. Our world has been upended.*

I began pacing back and forth from wall to wall in our living room, small steps that turned into larger ones. *No, no, it can’t be. This isn’t true. Something is off. There must be a mistake in the report.* I felt like a raging storm was going to explode inside of me as I was overcome with dizziness and shortness of breath. Suddenly, the walls of the apartment began to spin. Vertigo. I felt like I was suffocating while drowning under a giant wave. Cold sweat dripped down my entire body.

As I held the beeper with my shaking hands, its words piercing my eyes, Yifat asked, “What happened? You are as

white as a ghost!”

I mumbled the words of the report to her, as well as those that followed. There was no question. It was crystal clear. *A Jew shot Rabin. A Jew shot the prime minister.* The beeper did not say that, but it was clear that the worst of our fears had happened. Rabin was shot. It was over. A Jew shot the prime minister and the only questions were “Who was this Jew?” and “What is the prime minister’s condition?”

Regardless, within the first few seconds, it became clear that the reality in Israel had changed, and things would never be the same again.

Trembling from this earthquake, I grabbed onto the doorjamb so I wouldn’t fall.

A few minutes later, the movie stopped and the first news reports about the shooting appeared on television. It was around 10:00 p.m.

“The prime minister was shot three times at close range. His condition is unknown.”

My body shook. I was not able to stand, but I also could not sit. It felt like my insides were burning up.

I quickly got ready, grabbed my bag, and, on autopilot, left to go to Shin Bet headquarters. Driving like a maniac, I made my way toward the office in Jerusalem, listening to the radio filled with reports and updates. The newscasters were not able to piece together the details and their tone was cautious, if not fearful. Conflicting reports kept emerging.

“What in the world is going on here?” I asked myself over and over again as I pressed down on the gas pedal. I

knew the answer, but refused to accept it.

There was no reason to speed, because everything already happened. It was a dangerous and dark highway at 10:00 p.m., yet I drove fast, without focusing on the road. I thought about the young people who had been at the rally, especially those whom I once had led. I imagined them screaming, crying, lost. I tried to picture the scene right then at the square, and the distraction led me to nearly lose control of my car. I could have easily ended my life right there—on one of Jerusalem's mountain slopes. A part of me felt like doing so, as both my personal and professional lives had been crushed.

I entered our headquarters, where most of my colleagues had already arrived. The rest were on their way. Each one asked the same one-word question. The terse reply from an agent who was holding a small, green note was, "Yigal Amir, single, identification number 027790088, born in 1970, from the city of Herzliya."

"Who?" everyone asked again. The name meant nothing to us—zero. This was not a person whose name was heard in the unit's hallways, nor an individual flagged as someone to follow.

I repeated the information to myself: "Yigal Amir, born in 1970, single, from Herzliya, identification number 027790088."

Then there was silence. Everyone went quiet in the traumatized reaction of the agents to the news that was impossible to digest. The shock of failure hung in the air like a thick, black, threatening cloud that remained in that hallway

years later, even after the unit moved to another building. A screaming, yet silent, shock.

None of the unit's previous actions and operations had any value if, in the end, we had failed to prevent this disaster. At that moment, whatever happened in the past was of no importance. *It happened on our watch.* On our watch, the prime minister was shot. On our watch, democracy was slaughtered.

The shock prompted us all into action. We had to be busy, to find something to do. Everyone went to our computers to find out more about who the attacker was and what our unit knew about him—if, indeed, anything was known. It turns out, in fact, that we knew very little.

The first notation in Yigal Amir's file was from March 1995 from an agent named Champagne to his handler. "Champagne" was the code name for Avishai Raviv, a right-wing extremist that the Shin Bet recruited. He provided inside information regarding what was transpiring within the Jewish extreme right-wing organizations and reported on individuals we should follow.

The agent had outlined his plan to arrange a Sabbath program for students in Hebron together with Yigal Amir, the future assassin. Champagne emphasized these were not extremist students, indicating that there were no plans to cause trouble: "The Sabbath will pass without any unusual occurrences."

The gathering's date was the only reason it was noteworthy on any level—the first anniversary of the day Baruch Goldstein killed 29 innocent Muslim worshipers in

Hebron.<sup>[1]</sup> But Champagne noted the type of people who planned to attend would not cause problems—“calm and respectful students,” in his words.

In mid-July, close to four months after that first reference, Champagne gave his handler an additional piece of information. The report was sent to me, since I was responsible for the Jerusalem region and the Temple Mount. In the report, Yigal Amir was mentioned in connection with a Sabbath get-together for singles in Jerusalem. Amir and Champagne organized a walk that would begin opposite the Orient House, a building located in East Jerusalem that served as the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

For right-wing activists, the Palestinian flag flying over that building in Jerusalem was a major issue. A group had set up a permanent protest near there, and this march had the potential to create significant tension. I looked more carefully at the report and found a notation I had made at the bottom asking Champagne’s handler for more information about Amir, since he was not recognized or flagged. I shuddered when I saw this note in my own handwriting and continued searching for more information about this assassin.

On August 15, 1995, a Shin Bet meeting was held with Champagne. We later discovered it was the most critical conference during Champagne’s service as an agent and, perhaps, in the history of the unit. Per my request, he was to provide more information about Amir. The written report from this was sent to me, but it was forwarded to someone who replaced me when I took leave for my marriage. I found out later the summary was actually sent on my wedding day—the

day Prime Minister Rabin blessed me and my wife at the ceremony.

In the report, Champagne provided detailed information regarding the future assassin's background. He mentioned that both Amir and his brother, Hagai, held very extreme views. Amir was very active in right-wing demonstrations at Bar Ilan University and in other locations. Champagne also reported that the future assassin was not a member of the extreme right-wing Kach party, but supported extremist Baruch Goldstein's murder of the Muslims in Hebron. He said that in one of his conversations with Amir, the latter revealed an idea to organize a group of serious students from the university "who are interested in taking action." Champagne assessed at the time that this referred to attacks against Arabs.

The agent made it clear that Amir did not ask him to participate in any of this new group's activities, since it was well known that Champagne was involved with extreme groups and therefore was being watched by the Internal Security Agency. Amir, who had managed to slip below our radar, did not want to raise the unit's suspicions and end up being followed. Champagne noted that the future assassin did not inform him of any concrete plans, nor reveal if he actually had a group of interested participants. He simply mentioned general ideas. The account ended with the notation that Champagne had been instructed by his handlers to continue observing Amir.

It is important to place this report in the context of the time the meeting took place in and to understand the unit's limited manpower for dealing with much more serious

suspects. There were a few extremist groups that were active and violent, with some having already carried out acts of terror against Arabs. The unit was tasked with dealing with a wave of information, most of it more concrete and concerning than this morsel regarding the future assassin.

But no one thought to ask why Champagne waited to be asked about Amir, a young extremist who supported Baruch Goldstein's act and also had plans to mobilize a group of serious students "to take action." The fact that Amir did not want the agent involved because he did not want to be followed by our agency should have set off alarm bells. *Why didn't Champagne report this on his own? Why did it only come to our attention after we called him in for interrogation? Was he not focused on his responsibility? Was Champagne so overwhelmed that his senses were dulled?*

In the intelligence world, there is a big difference between information an agent brings on his own versus revelations made during routine meetings with him. Was there something wrong with Champagne? In addition, we did not question him as to why, in earlier reports, he described the future assassin as involved in a student group that was "not extreme," and now he was labeling him ideologically as "very extreme." All of this should have raised questions.

In addition, the fact that the agent was instructed to continue reporting about Amir—after he himself declared that he would not keep Champagne in the loop—was very problematic. They should have replaced him with another agent to get close to the future assassin, or formulated a different plan of action to deal with the situation. But that didn't happen.

Of course, all of this was in hindsight, and could now only be used as a lesson for the future. I read the file over and over again. The information had been sent because I asked for the agent to be questioned about the future murderer. The report landed on my desk while I was on leave, so someone else dealt with it. I was plagued by the question “Would things have been different if I were not on vacation?”

I continued to read what the computer could tell me about the assassin. On August 28, 1995, Champagne told his handler that he and Amir were planning a Sabbath get together in Hebron for college students a month later. He specified that “there is no intent to cause any provocations, and the Sabbath will pass quietly.”

On September 14, 1995, he reported that the date for their Sabbath gathering in Hebron was set for September 20, and he added that its purpose was not to create tension with the Arabs. (The notes did not indicate whether that Sabbath passed peacefully or not.) On October 2, Champagne indicated that he was going to protest against the October 5 Knesset<sup>[2]</sup> vote regarding the impending Second Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinians. The plan was to arrange an ongoing protest outside the home of Deputy Minister Alex Goldfarb, since his vote would be the deciding one in the Knesset. Champagne reported that he turned to Amir for help in recruiting participants for the protest.

He also stated that he and Amir were planning a holiday get-together for students and that, just like their previous Sabbath in Hebron, they had no intention of causing trouble with the Arabs.

On October 12, 1995, Champagne filed his last report about the future assassin, in which he simply repeated the plans the two of them had made to hold a holiday get-together for students. This report also raised questions for me since, as I will explain later, Champagne was suspended from activity for an unrelated reason and was not supposed to be an active agent for the month of October unless a life-or-death issue were to arise. This information was far from being life or death, so why was he reporting in October? *Did one of the handlers break protocol and reach out to the agent? Why?*

That was it—the entire file in the hands of the Internal Security Agency regarding the prime minister’s shooter as of Saturday night, November 4. While we reviewed the information, he was still just a suspect in an attempted assassination, since Rabin continued to fight for his life. I asked myself if we could have handled these bits of information better, or if the agent could have acted differently. But there was nothing there—not a hint to Amir’s being a threat, not a mention of providing additional security for anyone, and not a word about the prime minister. We simply had no information to serve as a red flag.

Throughout that night the unit’s handlers were talking to their agents. Other officials were busy trying to identify people who knew the assassin—friends, family, and colleagues.

The prime minister had been shot and everything had changed. While there was a great deal of work to do, there was an eerie silence at the office. Suddenly, the phone rang, breaking that silence. I rushed to answer it; the caller was the head of the interrogation division. He asked me to inform the

head of my unit that he was on his way to speak with Champagne, that the shooter was being held in Tel Aviv and that he would be moved to a holding facility in Petach Tikva, where his official interrogation would begin.

I asked what he planned to do about arranging for an intelligence analyst to be present to keep all steps of the interrogation centralized within our agency. I asked this as someone who was looking for something to do while the storm surrounded me. He was pleased that I reminded him of this requirement and instructed me to tell our director to send an analyst to the facility in Petach Tikva. I did so, and then informed our director that I was going to serve as the intelligence analyst. A force that I cannot explain—somewhat like a moth being pulled toward a burning flame—compelled me to be present for the interrogation.

The director was remarkably focused, despite the very difficult circumstance. He looked up at me. I will never forget the deep sadness reflected in his face. He simply said, “Drive safely.”

It was around 11:00p.m. I grabbed my bag and left. I drove through the empty streets of Jerusalem with my window open. The radio broadcaster reported that the prime minister’s condition was “serious, but stable.” I thought there was still room for hope. *Perhaps this is not the end.* As I passed the Harel Interchange on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway, an intersection named for the Israel Defense Forces unit that Rabin commanded during the War of Independence, reports of the prime minister’s condition kept coming in. I imagined images from my childhood in the Labor Party youth movement, mixed with replays of Rabin’s voice blessing us at

our wedding, while in the background, the radio broadcast reports from journalists outside Ichilov Hospital.

The wind blew on the car's windshield. I suddenly thought about my wife, Yifat, and her shock when I read her the beeper message. She was probably frantic. A cold sweat beaded on my forehead and the drops trickled down my face. I opened another window, needing the cold air to blow on me. I felt like it was the only way I could breathe while everything was collapsing around me.

At 11:15 p.m., Eitan Haber, the government's secretary and Rabin's close advisor, spoke on the radio.

The government of Israel announces with shock, with great pain, and with deep sadness the death of Prime Minister and Defense Minister Yitzchak Rabin, who was killed by an assassin this evening in Tel Aviv. The government will convene in one hour in Tel Aviv for a mourning meeting. May his memory be a source of blessing.

*That's it. It is over. It is all over. There is no chance. There is no hope. He won't come out of this. We won't come out of this.*

I held on to the steering wheel and raised the volume on the radio, but I didn't really know where I was. It was like gliding in a black hole. The radio was on, but I was not listening to what they were saying. I trembled and cried all the way to Petach Tikva. I cried over the failure. I cried over the loss. I cried over the death of the person. I cried over the death

of our democracy and the death of what was good and beautiful in our country.

The tears I shed were from grief over the death of innocence and optimism. It was the death of childhood and hope. I cried for him, for us, and for me. Along the way, I noticed shock on the faces of fellow drivers and people waiting at bus stops. People silently asked, “How could this be?” and “Is it possible?” Even those who disagreed with the prime minister’s ideologies saw him as the country’s democratically elected leader. They were certainly against violence, and especially a political assassination. Those people also cried that night. How could one not cry?

But I was also very well aware that a tiny minority in Israel was celebrating that night.

I arrived at the facility.

## Chapter Two—Meeting the Murderer

I entered this particular prisoner holding compound for the very first time. At the entrance, a blue sign said it was forbidden to enter the facility bearing a weapon. I immediately realized my pistol was in my bag. I showed the guard my identification badge and he let me in without any questions. I figured that the gun restriction was primarily police related and did not pertain to Shin Bet interrogations that happened to take place in a police building.

I climbed the stairs to the interrogation area. Without knowing it, I was about to embark on a journey that would destroy me for years.

I halted in front of a brown door and suddenly began to ask myself questions. *How can it be? How can the murderer still be alive? How was he able to leave the public square without being shot? Where were the secret service agents, and how is it possible that they permitted him to leave while still breathing?*

I took a deep breath and knocked on the door. One of the administrators of the interrogation unit opened it and I took four or five steps in. The door of the first room on the right was open. I looked in, and there he was.

Yigal Amir sat on a small chair, quiet and smiling. He was actually beaming—literally glowing. I felt as if I were observing the sun from a close distance, blinded by his smile. I will never forget that first glance he gave me. It took many years for the scar to heal.

I just wish someone had prepared me for that smile.

I placed my bag in the nearby staff room and called my superior to update him—that I was there with the murderer. He then said one of the strangest sentences I ever heard in my life. It has never left me, and most likely never will: “Make sure to preserve a good atmosphere over there. We want to start off with him in a positive manner.”

A sharp, short, decisive order from my superior. *A good atmosphere? How? Is that even possible? How can I do that? Why me?* Someone with my background was somehow supposed to preserve a “good atmosphere” with the man who killed a human being, killed democracy, killed the leader of my party, killed a state, killed a prime minister, killed our optimism and hope, killed the peace process, killed my youth, killed my adulthood, killed me, killed my soul.

A “good atmosphere” with this smiling murderer?  
*How?*

I replaced the phone and took a seat, needing to get my bearings. Then I stood up, pulled myself together, took a deep breath, and entered the room that held the murderer. His legs and hands were chained to the chair.

“Do you want some coffee?” I asked this individual who deserved nothing. The murderer said, “Yes,” with a smile still on his face. I went to the coffee table in the hallway and prepared a cup of coffee for this evil person.

I poured a spoonful of sugar into the cup and began to stir. As I looked into the coffee that I was mixing, I saw the storm I had just entered. As I thought about this storm and the fact that I was preparing a cup of coffee for the person who

created it, a question entered my mind: Should I spit into his coffee? He would never know. No one would ever know. *But he deserves it! He deserves saliva from my mouth in his coffee.*

No, I decided not to spit. However, I felt it lodged in my throat for many years to come. The act would have been such a good catharsis for me, liberating me from some of my pent-up anger. I regretted not spitting in the coffee, and it took a very long time to realize that I actually did the right thing.

I returned to the room, bringing the murderer his coffee. The room was almost completely empty—two chairs, a table, a computer. The walls were bare and cold. One small window overlooked the dark courtyard of the compound. It was freezing.

Our eyes met. He was still smiling from ear to ear. I looked into the black in his eyes—they were so black. We had always been taught to look into the whites of the eyes of the people we were interrogating. However, in this case, all I saw was black.

He said, “Thank you,” as I handed him the coffee, continuing to smile. Outside, there was a massive storm in Israeli society. Inside that room there was quiet, calm, and pleasant conversation.

“Were you afraid?” I asked him.

The murderer answered immediately and decisively. His answer surprised me. “I was very scared,” he replied in a serious voice.

I looked at him in shock and he remained silent for a few seconds, the gloating smile not leaving his face. “Yes, I

was very scared,” he repeated with an expression of self-worth, “scared that I would not succeed.”

He sipped the coffee and smiled again.

I looked at him in astonishment. *What should I do the next time he smiles? How can he be smiling?*

“No, no, you obviously didn’t understand my question,” I said to the murderer. “I wanted to know if you were afraid of dying.”

He fired right back at me, “That is not relevant. It does not matter whether I am alive or dead.” He seemed very satisfied with himself. “The difference is forty years of studying in jail,” he said with a philosophical expression. “That is nothing compared to the vast difference between success and failure. Between a national catastrophe and saving the nation of Israel.”

He continued, explaining that had he failed, a catastrophe would have befallen the nation of Israel because the peace process would have continued and accelerated. “My only fear was that I would not accomplish my goal. I was prepared to die in order to succeed!” he declared in the clearest of terms. “My only fear was that I would not prevail in doing what had to be done.”

At the time of his arrest, all he had known was that he fired three shots into the prime minister’s back, but he did not know the outcome of those shots. “I saw the stripe on his suit and aimed for it,” he told me with a boastful look. “I literally saw the thread in the seam of his suit.”

I thought he was exaggerating. It was only later, when a videotape where he is seen committing the act emerged, that I understood. What he described was not far from the truth.

By the time he was sitting across from me, he had already learned of his success. The chief of the Tel Aviv police informed him during his initial interrogation at a local police station. The official protocol records the chief telling the murderer, “Today, at approximately 9:30 p.m., you shot toward the prime minister with a pistol that was in your possession and you caused his death.”

“He died?” Amir asked.

“Yes,” replied the chief.

In his report, which I saw later, the chief noted that the murderer reacted with great pleasure, speaking the chilling words, “I did my part.”

The video of the initial interrogation, later released, shows that then, the murderer took in a deep breath of tremendous satisfaction. He even asked again, “So he died?” And when told that was accurate, he took another deep, satisfying breath.

“You know that you could have died,” I told him. “In less than two seconds, the prime minister’s security detail could have killed you. They are trained to react quickly.”

The murderer replied with a sneering look, one like I had never seen before. “Even at this very moment, if they stood opposite me, I would shoot first.” And then he laughed.

I quickly recognized the enormity of his ego. Even more, I realized he wanted others to see it so that he should not

be perceived as someone with a mental illness. He had the ability to create a sense in the room that it was those who sat across from him who were mistaken. He spoke in a pleasant manner, projecting the image that he was saving you from your flawed beliefs and that, sooner or later, you would recognize he was correct. His boastful laugh declared: "I understand what you don't, but you will." It was obvious that there in that cold interrogation room, he was waiting for us to bend over and whisper in his ear, "Between you and me, my brother, you are right, and you did a good thing."

He clearly enjoyed hearing himself speak. At times, his smiles and laughs appeared to be for his own amusement. He seemed to be observing himself from the outside, and he was obviously very satisfied with the performance.

It was important to know if Amir had been influenced brainwashed by others, or if he was the one doing the brainwashing. My first impression was that he was brainwashed. It was clear from the outset that, like other zealous people in history, this was a murderer who would never regret what he had done. He was completely at peace with himself, with no hint of modesty or desire for forgiveness.

We continued talking for a few minutes, not as an interrogation. As we were chatting, I kept asking myself how it was possible that he was still alive. This major mistake was so ironic. No matter how you looked at it, an entire nation was in mourning while the murderer sat there smiling, filled with self-confidence and pride.

“Tell me... Are you still dangerous?” I asked, out of naïveté and curiosity after I’d been asked to “preserve a good environment” with this murderer who was chained in place in this cold and quiet room.

He looked at me and laughed again. My superior would have been proud of me for the atmosphere I’d managed to create—coffee, chatting, laughing.

“Now I am not a threat, but until just a few hours ago, I was extremely dangerous. A few seconds elapsed. With a huge smile and his blackest of black eyes, he looked at me and said, “You know what? It actually depends. If you brought Peres in here now, then I would still be dangerous.” He chuckled again.

I was not emotionally prepared for his amusement. My soul burned.

“So why didn’t you kill Peres at the square?”

Shimon Peres was the foreign minister in Prime Minister Rabin’s government and one of the architects of the Oslo Accords—a peace agreement signed between Israel and the Palestinians.

“I could have easily killed Peres since he came down the stairs before Rabin,” the murderer replied. “Had they come down together, I would have killed Rabin first and then tried to kill Peres. But Rabin was the right leg of the government—the stable and strong leg. If I cut off Peres, the left leg, the government would not fall. But now that I have cut off Rabin, Peres won’t survive politically. His government will fall.”

It was extremely difficult to process these words. The calm and clear manner he replied in was chilling.

“Why couldn’t you have done something else?” I asked.

He looked straight into my eyes with a soft, bright, and serene look. “It was a matter of what would stop the process from moving forward. I understood that if I brought Rabin down, that would stop the Oslo peace process.”

On May 29, 1996, Benjamin Netanyahu defeated Shimon Peres in the election that took place because of the Rabin assassination and the subsequent collapse of the government. Sometimes people take action to change history, but they don’t know if they will succeed. This murderer was absolutely convinced that his act would change the course of history, and it did. He knew exactly why he was laughing.

Our conversation continued on and off for around an hour, perhaps a bit longer. The lead investigator then entered with his staff and they began the official interrogation, creating the first official version of what had transpired.

Morning came and I felt as if I could not tolerate hearing Amir’s voice or seeing his face anymore. Other investigators, some of whom had completed a search of the murderer’s home, joined us in the room.

My conversation with Amir seemed simultaneously short and long. It was an exchange that had a profound, long-term impact on my life. I left that room with a deeply wounded soul.

## Chapter Three—The Decision

A new day dawned: November 5, 1995.

It was hard to believe that the sun actually rose. I went into the staff room to be alone. I felt terribly uncomfortable—as if there were no oxygen. My heart pounded rapidly and I felt my pulse in my skull's veins. Lowering my head into my hands, I began to weep a silent, internal cry. My heart rate sped up wildly. I felt that at any moment, my heart would burst from the speed. *Why is he still alive? How dare he still be alive?*

It felt wrong to permit this person to remain on the planet. He deserved death. It would have been better for him never to have arrived at this compound alive. A message needed to be sent to potential future attackers—that death is the proper punishment for a crime like this.

*It is forbidden for him to be alive. I cannot accept that he is still among the living.*

These thoughts raced through my mind as Amir sat, unscathed, in the nearby room...smiling from ear to ear. He hadn't even been punched in the face! Not only that, to add insult to injury, a Shin Bet officer prepared his coffee. And instead of spitting into it, the agent added a spoonful of sugar. Who could possibly believe this scenario? It was absolutely surreal, and not acceptable!

My breathing became more and more labored as I told myself, *The person who murdered another human being and shattered our democracy does not deserve to breathe one more*

*breath. While the body of our prime minister is being refrigerated in the hospital basement, he is sitting here, alive?*

I was concerned about my parents, mourning at home. I thought about the effect on the students who'd attended such an inspirational rally the night before, and the shock and sadness they were probably now experiencing back at the public square. I thought about my wife, Yifat, crying at home alone.

*How in the world did they not kill him there? He needs to die!* My mind was racing. *This disgrace cannot continue!*

And then I made the decision. It was as if a storm was swirling all around me, but I was suddenly in the hurricane's quiet and calm eye. Everything became clear and silent abruptly. Every angle of logic dictated that he must not remain among the living.

I imagined myself reaching into my bag, which rested under the table. Taking my pistol in my hand, getting up, and walking to the right into the hallway. Turning into the first room on the left, across from the kitchenette. *Boom, boom, boom.* I could actually hear the shots ringing and echoing off the walls. *Boom.* I visualized the windows rattling from the force. *Boom, boom.* The murderer's blood dripped down his blue shirt and continued to spill, creating a pool around his body.

Only then did my imaginary shooting cease. I could see how I'd brought an end to the living disgrace. The murderer stopped breathing. His calm expression and wide smile were permanently spread on his face, with his black eyes

opened wide—perhaps from the shock that he was shot. He would no longer be able to laugh.

I awoke from that moment of imagination and began to ensure that this was what I truly wanted to do. It was.

The moment I made that decision, my body calmed. My breathing returned to normal and, once again, I became functional. With a clear mind, I was determined to kill Yigal Amir.

With this newfound clarity came the sudden realization that now, indeed, was the wrong time to kill him. It was premature because we needed to obtain a great deal more information from him. The interrogation had just begun: Did he act alone? Did someone else send him? Were there plans for further attacks? Additional data was needed about Amir's background, aside from the little that he told the police in the initial interrogation and what he revealed to us during that first night. For the state's benefit, we had to extract every possible bit of information from him. Then the time would be right and I could kill him. It was just and proper—only not yet. But his end was definitely drawing near.

How could I— an upstanding civil servant responsible for protecting and upholding the law—possibly decide to take the law into my own hands and kill Amir? In order to understand this dramatic decision, some personal and professional background must be provided.

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When I was seventeen years old, I served as a leader in the Labor Party youth movement. I rode to all activities on my bicycle, and during the ride, planned that day's activities. One

evening while riding, an idea came to me. That evening I decided to test how far these youngsters would go in protesting against those who sought to damage democracy. The question was essentially this: Are there situations in which, to preserve democracy, they would violate the rules and laws of that democracy? I was convinced I could generate a deep, meaningful, and educational conversation on the subject.

This was during the time leading up to the elections for the 11<sup>th</sup> Knesset in 1984, when Rabbi Meir Kahane's Kach party was running. Rabbi Kahane had emigrated to Israel in 1971 and he quickly gained notoriety for his extreme right-wing views. His party platform's ideas included transferring the Arab population out from the Land of Israel and revoking Israeli citizenship from non-Jews. The Knesset Central Elections Committee banned him from being a candidate on the grounds that Kach was a racist party. The Supreme Court overturned the ban, stating in its decision that the committee was not authorized to ban Kahane's candidacy. The Court did suggest, however, that the Knesset pass a law excluding racist parties from future elections. In 1988, the Anti-Racist Law was passed.

I hurried into the building and made my way to our room. I asked these young teenagers a question to get the conversation started: "What actions do you believe are permissible—keeping in mind that we live in a democratic state—to try to prevent someone like Rabbi Kahane, who sought to undermine democracy, from being democratically elected to the Knesset? Where do we draw the line between that which is permitted and that which is prohibited? In addition, can one justify violating the law for the cause of

preventing Rabbi Kahane's anti-democratic values from entering the Knesset?

"In essence, do the ends justify the means?"

An explosion of conversation erupted. I loved the moment when I succeeded in igniting young minds. They ran wild and the rest of the session took care of itself. I wrote down some of their opinions and interrupted occasionally to calm things down and enable everyone to be heard. I tried to work toward a compromise conclusion that was accepted by all.

The ideas that were raised included bringing whistles and noisemakers to Rabbi Kahane's rallies to try to silence his voice. Some suggested disconnecting the electricity so the microphones would not work.

"But what about free speech? Don't all citizens have the right to state their opinions in a democracy?"

Most of the youngsters spoke in favor of interrupting Rabbi Kahane's speeches in many different ways, but expressed concern over the possibility that the situation would get out of control. That fear led to the conclusion that perhaps it would be better to let Kahane's voice be heard and then proceed to contest his ideologies with our own voices.

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That youth group activity in 1984 was not the first time I'd dealt with that specific issue. During the elections of 1981, there was significant tension throughout the country especially since, in the previous elections of 1977, the Right won and

took control of Israel's leadership for the first time in our history.

Shimon Peres, a candidate for prime minister for the Labor Party, was scheduled to speak in the northern town of Kiryat Shmonah. My mother told me there was information that some right-wing activists were planning to interrupt his speech. The Labor Party was putting a group together to support Peres and it was clear to me, at the tender age of fourteen, that I was going to participate.

My entire family drove up north and when we arrived, we could feel the tension in the air. There was so much shouting between the groups that when Peres finally did appear, it was nearly impossible to hear him. Suddenly, some of the right-wing activists threw tomatoes at him and he was quickly rushed to his car. It was hard to watch that scene play out before my eyes.

On the way home, we discussed the incident as a family. Collectively, we agreed that quieting the voices of those with whom we disagree is an anti-democratic act, and that all appropriate lines were crossed at that rally.

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I related this story to my youth group in 1984 and asked, "Why is there any difference between the two situations? If we act in a violent manner to quiet those with different opinions, aren't we acting like those whom we condemn? Couldn't whistling and screaming over Rabbi Kahane's voice lead to someone throwing tomatoes? Wouldn't that, perhaps, ultimately lead to actual violence?"

I explained to them that just a year earlier, someone threw a hand grenade into a crowd at a peace rally, killing one person. So clearly, trying to quiet “the other side” could certainly lead to violence.

Most of the participants opined that they could not remain silent. The group said that Kahane was “like Hitler” and that the Jewish people must do whatever was necessary to expel a person of this kind. They felt his ideologies would lead to the destruction of Israeli democracy. They insisted they could not remain complacent in the face of someone who acted against the essence of the State of Israel by seeking to dismantle democracy. Some contended that, as important as democracy was, certain lines should never be crossed. However, the majority favored crossing those lines.

If the reader takes a step back for a moment, note how this debate reflected the battle for Israel’s soul. On the one hand, Rabbi Kahane and his followers, on the extreme Right, including many young people, believed the only way to save Israel was to find a way to rid the country of its Arab population. On the other hand, young members of Israel’s left-wing Labor Party viewed Kahane as “Hitler” and saw his stance against democracy as the greatest threat to Israel’s essence.

Kahane’s side was passionate enough about their point of view that they were willing to resort to violence to succeed in their objective (as discussed in Chapter 4). But the Labor Party youth were willing to violate the law in an attempt to silence Kahane’s voice.

I summed up the session by warning the group of the dangers of acting undemocratically and explaining how it was a slippery slope. I pointed out the contradiction—their criticism of the extreme right-wingers for their approach in silencing others, while they themselves condoned the same behavior toward those they disagreed with. I felt like the session ended without any clear answers, but I loved the intensity and passion expressed in that room.

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Later that same day in 1984, I spent some time with my girlfriend and raised the identical question. Then I expressed my opinion, which I had held back from the youth group. I believed that not only was it permissible to violate the law, but there was also an *obligation* to violate the law and, if necessary, pay a personal price on behalf of the state to protect democracy from those who sought to destroy it.

Around that same time, I heard a debate on talk radio on this very topic. I called in anonymously and declared that all means must be used to stop Rabbi Kahane from spreading his poison in public, including screaming, whistling, and damaging the sound equipment. The radio host sought to temper my radical views, but I persisted. My pulse felt like I'd just completed running a marathon as I hung up the phone. I wiped the sweat off my forehead, realizing how important it was to have stated my ideology out loud.

From that moment on, I decided to guard this secret—that I believed, and had even expressed out loud, that there was an obligation to violate the law. My love for my state

demanded my being in favor of violating the law on behalf of it.

Just a week after that radio talk show experience, we got word that Rabbi Kahane was coming to speak in an open area in our neighborhood. We mobilized immediately. A counter rally was impossible because we did not have time to apply for and receive the requisite permits. We were, however, prepared to scream and whistle in an attempt to disrupt his speech. We tried to discover the source of electricity for his microphone, but the owner of the apartment that was supplying the electricity refused to open his door. In addition, my superiors in the youth movement—who were also in attendance—forbade us from doing anything that violated the law.

Close to 150 youngsters from our group showed up, and the demonstration itself drew approximately 250 additional people. We did all we could—legally—to interrupt Rabbi Kahane, who was clearly a very charismatic and passionate speaker. Earlier in the day, I'd cut branches off an olive tree in our yard, and we handed them out to people at the rally. I even had the nerve to hand a branch to Rabbi Kahane as he left.

He threw it onto the ground, stepped on it, and declared, "You have now opened an account with me."

The next month he returned, and I again took a leading role in trying to silence his voice. We explored many ideas, including shooting water toward the loudspeakers to short them out. Our superiors stopped us once again, and without my realizing it, the police were taking note of my leadership

role in these anti-Kahane activities. Before I knew it, I found myself being shoved against a police car and being asked for my identification card. The police ordered me to calm down and then let me go after telling me that if I continued along this course, I would find myself “seeing what the inside of the police car looks like.”

The message was clear and I continued attending rallies against Kahane, but tempered my activity and became more moderate in my approach.

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These experiences and ideologies that I developed in my youth played a role in my decision to kill Yigal Amir. For years I had been thinking about the issue of breaking the law to protect democracy. While at the age of seventeen, the fear of getting in trouble with the police calmed me down and prevented me from taking action, my passion for Israeli democracy never left.

Now, at the age of twenty-eight, I was ready to act.

## **Chapter Four—Professional Background**

My decision to kill the murderer cannot be understood without recognizing the professional failure that this assassination represented. It was not only problematic for me on an individual level, but it was also a catastrophe for the unit I worked in and the agency I'd dedicated my life to.

My army years were spent serving in an intelligence unit, commanding a group that observed what was happening in the Palestinian areas and participating in special operations. I was in regular contact with operatives in the Internal Security Agency, the Shin Bet, which functioned in this region, primarily around the city of Shechem (Nablus). During this period, I discovered my interest in the realm of intelligence. I was even selected to speak on the radio when, in acknowledgment of my success in numerous secret intelligence-gathering operations, I was named an Outstanding Soldier on Independence Day. It was required that I remain anonymous for security reasons. At that time, it struck me that this was my second time on the radio, and I was obligated to conceal my identity both times while discussing the protection of the state from very different angles.

During the weeks leading up to my army discharge, I held many discussions with Shin Bet members and decided to apply for a position with that organization. The agency accepted me and I successfully passed the training period. It is difficult to describe the feeling of elation I had walking into the building of this mythical and heroic agency for my first

day of work. I felt tremendous pride over the fact that the State of Israel found me worthy of serving it in this capacity.

My first assignment was a field agent in the Arab sector, but since I had difficulty learning Arabic, I did not continue on that path. I served as a security guard in various settings, but in the summer of 1994, I was invited to an interview with the director of the intelligence unit for the “preservation of democracy.” At the end of that conversation, it was decided that in September, I would begin working there as an intelligence analyst. I could not have been happier. I was going to be working for the very department responsible for preserving the soul of our democratic state.

Oddly, the unit was known as the “Jewish division” despite its negative connotation—being taken from a department in the Nazi regime of the same name. That particular Nazi unit was responsible for carrying out the Final Solution—the extermination of the Jewish people. This name was even used by the press and, surprisingly, by some who worked in the Shin Bet. Our official task was to prevent terror and underground political activity among non-Arabs. These groups ranged from anarchists and left-wing activists to right-wing religious extremists, but most of my time was going to be spent dealing with right-wing Jewish extremists.

Israel was involved in negotiations with the Palestinians at this time. A few words of background are necessary to fully understand the situation.

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On November 29, 1947, the United Nations voted to divide the land known then as Palestine into two states—one

Jewish and one Arab. The Jews accepted this plan; the Arabs did not. As soon as Jewish independence was declared in May 1948 within the boundaries designated by the United Nations, armies from seven Arab countries attacked the Jewish state, beginning the War of Independence. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs living in Palestine fled the new Jewish state to live in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), which was controlled by Jordan, and to the Gaza Strip, which was then under Egyptian rule. At the conclusion of the War of Independence, Israeli borders were drawn and the many Israeli-Arabs remaining within the borders were granted citizenship, since the Declaration of Independence clearly stated that all minorities would be granted equal rights despite the country's self-definition and character as a Jewish state. Sure enough, since the state's inception, they have been provided with free education, the right to vote for the Knesset—Israel's parliament—and can even form their own Arab parties and elect parliamentarians to represent them in the Knesset.

In 1964, Yasser Arafat established the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which carried out terrorist attacks—including the first airplane hijackings—to drive the Jews out and destroy the State of Israel. In 1967, all the Arab armies in the region massed along the border and declared their intent to annihilate Israel once and for all. The Israeli army, under the leadership of then-Chief of Staff Yitzchak Rabin, bombed the Egyptian air force in a preemptive attack. The Arab armies invaded. At the end of the Six-Day War, Israel found itself controlling the entire Sinai Desert and the Gaza Strip in the south; the West Bank, which includes eastern Jerusalem; and the strategic Golan Heights in the north, an area that was

formerly under Syrian control. This created a significant increase in the country's size. The quick and decisive victory also gave Israel control over the revered Western Wall and the holiest site for Jews, the Temple Mount, where the two Jewish temples once stood and where the al-Aksa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock shrine now stand.

Religious Zionists saw Israel's miraculous victory as a Divine gift and a continuation of the fulfillment of Biblical prophecies declaring the people of Israel will return and re-establish themselves in the ancient homeland. Aside from Jerusalem, many of the reconquered areas held both Biblical and strategic importance: Hebron—where Abraham purchased the Cave of the Patriarchs to bury his wife, Sarah; Shechem (Nablus)—where Joseph is buried; and Beit El—where Jacob had his famous dream. In addition, the West Bank incorporates the high ground overlooking the plains that include Tel Aviv and the most populated parts of Israel.

Despite the Biblical and strategic importance of these lands, at the conclusion of the war, Israel conveyed the message that it was willing to withdraw to international borders in exchange for peace but the Arab League made its famous “Three No's” declaration in Khartoum: No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with Israel.

[\[3\]](#)

This closed the door on peace, and Israel suddenly and unexpectedly found itself in control of over one million Palestinians who rejected the State of Israel and whose leadership continued to call for the destruction of the Jewish homeland and its inhabitants. In the face of complete unwillingness from the Arab side to explore peace, Israel

began to populate its newly expanded, unofficial boundaries by constructing settlements. Hundreds of thousands of Jews have since moved into these areas, and Israel officially annexed East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

The ensuing decades brought continued war—including the devastating Yom Kippur War in which Israel lost over 2,000 soldiers.[\[4\]](#) Increased Arab terrorism targeted innocent Jews, both on Israeli soil and abroad. Israel continued to be open to the idea of peace, exhibited by its 1979 agreement with Egypt including returning the Sinai Desert to Egypt, uprooting the Jews who lived in flourishing communities there.

Significant controversy existed in Israel over the idea of trading land for peace; however, the overwhelming majority of Israelis supported this approach. It was actually the right-wing Likud government, led by Prime Minister Menachem Begin, that signed the above-mentioned agreement with Egypt. Many religious Zionists viewed giving up control of any land within Israel's borders as sinful and a rejection of God's gift to the Jewish people. But most, including many in the religious establishment, disagreed and viewed peace as a goal worth paying a heavy price for.

The Egyptian peace treaty, which has lasted for close to 40 years, included a commitment to resolve the issue of the areas that Israel captured during the Six-Day War, leaving Palestinians living under Israeli rule but not as citizens. To clarify, the Palestinians have no desire to be Israeli citizens, and many want to see the destruction of Israel. But continuing to live under Israeli rule without being citizens is also not a situation they are willing to accept.

In the early 1990s, attempts to resolve this conflict were renewed when the Palestinians indicated that they were open to negotiations and some form of recognition of Israel. This led to the signing of the Oslo I Accord in September 1993 and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, which provided the Palestinians with a mechanism to establish a form of self-governance in their areas, with the ultimate goal of a possible Israeli pullout from these locations.

Unfortunately, not only did terrorism not abate but it also increased in intensity, with some of the most horrific and violent attacks imaginable against innocent Israelis in Israel proper. In the wake of these Palestinian terror attacks throughout the streets of Israel in 1994, polls indicated that more than 50 percent of the Israeli population believed that particular peace process had been a mistake and were opposed to its moving forward. Some demonstrated vocally, and others protested quietly.

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This brings us to the focus of my small unit in the Shin Bet. Given the tension from at least half the country being against the negotiations, including some inspired by religious fervor, we had our hands full as the unit tried to prevent Jews from taking the law into their own hands. We had to prevent extremist reaction that sought to circumvent Israeli democracy and force changes not in line with the policies decided by Israel's democratically elected government. In addition, violence against Arabs simply incited further retaliatory acts. Thus, our unit was mandated with protecting Israeli democracy and saving Jewish lives.

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On my first day, everyone looked very busy as I walked into the small hallway that somehow managed to hold every member of our unit. I was welcomed warmly, but I could tell they were all under a tremendous amount of pressure. A tall and smiling young man with a slight French accent, “Jonathan,” greeted me. He apologized that he had to keep moving, but he directed me to a room filled with binders that contained the unit’s history and a description of its central goals. He told me that I had to first study the roots of Jewish extremism, and then I could learn the actual profession.

I looked at the huge number of files with bewilderment. He smiled and said, “Okay... You do not have to learn all of it in one day.”

I smiled back and he related that he’d been working there for less than a year and had spent a good many weeks studying in that room.

As I began poring over the material, my new family—how I sincerely felt about them—buzzed with activity all around. I came across a folder dedicated to Rabbi Kahane’s party—eight years after I had demonstrated against him and three years after a Muslim terrorist killed him in New York. I immediately thought back to his words, “You have now opened an account with me.”

I wondered if we were still dealing with that account.

As I read, it became clear that I had been transferred to this unit—the same as many of my new colleagues—due to the conclusions of a government investigative committee into the slaughter carried out by Baruch Goldstein. As briefly mentioned earlier, on February 25, 1994, a fervent supporter of

Rabbi Kahane's ideologies entered a Muslim prayer site in the Cave of the Patriarchs and opened fire with an automatic weapon.[\[5\]](#) He killed twenty-nine Muslims and injured over a hundred others. The investigating committee recommended expanding the unit responsible for preventing Jewish acts of terror.

As I read further, I learned how passionate ideological disagreements and extremism on both the Israeli Right and the Israeli Left threatened its democratic status, beginning with the state's inception.

Prior to the establishment of Israel, there were a few different underground groups involved in trying to re-establish Jewish autonomy in our ancient and Biblical homeland. They worked against the many forces that wanted to prevent a Jewish presence there. Later on, once the state was firmly established, the groups united into one force—the Israel Defense Forces.

The *Altalena* was a cargo ship loaded with weapons[\[6\]](#) for one of those groups—the Irgun, which was led by future Prime Minister Menachem Begin. The ship arrived at an Israeli port in June 1948, a mere month after Israel became a state, when the various armed groups were still in the process of merging. Begin informed the new Israeli government that it would not hand over these weapons unless they were used in accordance with the conditions and directives stipulated by the Irgun. David ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, rejected Begin's demand because he felt the government had to be the body making such decisions regarding the use of arms.

When the Irgun refused his requirements, Ben-Gurion ordered his soldiers to fire on the ship, which was ultimately anchored on the shores of Tel Aviv. Nineteen Jews lost their lives in this battle of Jew versus Jew, and a civil war could have easily broken out. But Begin would have no part of it. He told his men to hold their fire with a powerful and famous declaration: “A civil war—never!” That great moment of inspired leadership put a stop to the first threat to the young Israeli democracy.

In March 1949, a new immigrant named Abraham Tzarfati burst into the temporary home of the Knesset and aimed a gun toward the government members. Ushers neutralized him before he could open fire. Tzarfati sought to force the government to move forward with the construction of the Third Temple.[\[7\]](#)

In January 1951, the Knesset dealt with the issue of reparations from Germany in the aftermath of the Holocaust, a contentious issue throughout Israel. Menachem Begin led the voice of the opposition, which wanted no German “blood” money or goods to enter Israel since no material payment could—or should—appease Israel for the slaughter of six million Jews. The government understood the moral dilemma, but believed that the fledgling state desperately needed the money and goods included in the deal.

Thousands of Israelis converged on the Knesset and began to break the glass in the building. Ben-Gurion called upon the army to restore order. A firefight broke out and resulted in injuries to ninety-two police officers and thirty-six civilians. Ben-Gurion said, “An attempt was made to destroy our democracy by violent people and political assassination.”

He labeled Begin as the leader of “the armed revolt,” but there is no evidence that Begin intended for any of the protestors to open fire. Begin, as demonstrated by the *Altalena* Affair, was completely against Jews physically attacking other Jews.

As I absorbed the information in these files, I took note that once flames are ignited by these passionate issues, it is difficult to contain them and keep things under control.

I continued to read.

In 1951, it was discovered that for two years, a religious underground organization called “The Covenant of the Zealous” had been operating with the goal of transforming Israel into a state run according to Jewish law. As explained further in the addendum titled “The Unique Challenges of the Jewish State,” Israel is defined as a Jewish state, but was not founded as a religious state governed by Biblical law. Dozens of young people, including a future Chief Rabbi of Israel and a future Knesset member, were involved in trying to change this status. They stole arms and explosive materials and carried out operations against those who desecrated the Sabbath. The members of this group were arrested after a failed attempt to throw smoke bombs in the Knesset during a debate regarding drafting women into the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces), a move that the religious community vehemently opposed and viewed as a violation of religious law. Another religious group called “Kingdom of Israel” was also active at that time, with the exactly the same goal.

Lest readers think that this reign of terror of Jew versus Jew was limited to the religious side acting out against the secular, nonreligious extremism reared its ugly head in 1952.

The state needed to trim the train schedule because of high gas costs, so Transportation Minister David Pinkas decided to reduce the number of trains operating on the Sabbath. The religious community did not use the trains on that day anyway, resulting in fewer riders. A group of secular activists viewed this as capitulation to the religious sector and decided to assassinate Pinkas by placing a bomb on his porch. The explosive failed to detonate, but then they threw a bomb toward his house, which exploded without hurting him.

A worse event took place in October 1957, which led to the creation of a Shin Bet unit to provide personal protection for dignitaries. Moshe Douek, a mentally disturbed twenty-six-year-old, threw a hand grenade inside the main chamber of the Knesset. Moshe Sharet, the minister of religious services, was severely injured and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, Foreign Minister Golda Meir, and Transportation Minister Moshe Carmel were among those wounded. Douek, who had stolen the hand grenade from the IDF, acted out of personal distress and not political ideology.

Until I engaged in reading through these binders, I had assumed that extremism and confrontations among Jews erupted only during the most challenging moments, such as when Jews were vacated from their homes in the Sinai as part of the peace agreement with Egypt. But now I was learning that from the time of the establishment of the state, there was a history of Jews acting violently—even attempting to kill other Jews—simply because of ideological disagreements. I was happy to be able to confront this challenge on behalf of our state.

I continued to read.

March 1957 saw Israel's first political assassination—Rudolph Kastner, who served as a spokesman for the Ministry of Trade and Industry and was known for having helped Jews escape Europe during the Holocaust. In 1953, a freelance writer named Malkiel Gruenwald accused Kastner of having been a Nazi collaborator. The Israeli government sued Gruenwald for libel on behalf of Kastner and, in 1955, Judge Benjamin Halevy ruled that Kastner had, in fact, “sold his soul to the devil.”[\[8\]](#) On March 3, 1957, Zev Eckstein, a veteran of a pre-state underground organization called Lechi shot Kastner and he died twelve days later.

The details of this case clearly demonstrate that the threat of political assassination had existed in our country for quite some time. Ironically, Eckstein had been a Shin Bet agent and penetrated a specific terror cell to prevent them from carrying out political terrorism. Somehow he connected to their ideology, cut off contact with the Shin Bet, and became a member of their group.

Prior to receiving my new assignment, I would never have connected the words “Jewish” and “terrorist” because, in my mind, the two simply did not belong together. Terrorists were Arabs – responsible for targeting and ruthlessly murdering thousands of innocent Israelis. But I learned Israel had to continuously fight terror from external sources while simultaneously expending resources to deal with a small percentage of its citizenry that was wont to engage in terrorism from within—against Arabs, as well as fellow Jews.

I left that binder-filled room covered in dust and overwhelmed by all the new information about the history of Israeli extremism. As I looked around at the huge amount of

activity in the unit, it was clear something specific was going on. “Jonathan,” the French immigrant who greeted me when I first arrived explained that two extremist brothers as well as the rabbi who served as their spiritual leader, had been arrested. This was the climax of an investigation into a specific act of Jewish terrorism. A month before, on August 29, 1994, the unit received concrete intelligence that Eitan and Yehoyada Kahalani were planning to attack Arabs. Specific information regarding the relationship the brothers had with Rabbi Ido Elba was uncovered.

The rabbi had written an essay arguing that the commandment “Thou shall not murder” did not apply to Arabs during wartime—even if a specific Arab did not pose a threat to anyone. The rabbi did not simply teach, though. He actually helped the brothers prepare for their attack and was found to have two silencers in his home. He also instructed them how to steal weapons from IDF weapons facilities.

I heard this and was in shock. *A rabbi in Israel is actually guiding young people to steal weapons from the army to use in attacks against Arabs?* Then I heard that an IDF officer from their town was providing them with weapons as well. *An IDF officer is involved in organized terror? What is happening here is no joking matter,* I thought as I tried to come to grips with the magnitude and seriousness of the challenge facing my unit.

The intelligence indicated that the brothers were planning to kill an Arab riding on a bike near the Biblical Zoo in Jerusalem. They were apparently also exploring a larger scale attack. However, once the Shin Bet knew they wanted to kill someone, a plan was implemented to prevent that incident

and arrest them. To summarize, when one of the brothers aimed the gun and pulled the trigger to shoot the Arab on the bicycle, the gun failed to discharge due to Shin bet interference, and they were both arrested after being caught red-handed.

I was amazed by the unit's professionalism and hoped that one day soon I would be able to participate in similar interesting and challenging operations. I returned to the binders and continued studying, even though I would have preferred hanging around with my fascinating and exciting new colleagues out in the hallway. Little did I know that it would not be long before I would experience the adrenaline highs—not from storytelling, but from actual field operations.

The chronological files brought me to the 1970s and Rabbi Kahane. Our brief “conversation” took place less than a decade before and it was quite remarkable how things evolved. Now I had the opportunity to learn in greater depth how he, his ideology, and his movement developed.

Rabbi Kahane's organization, the Jewish Defense League (JDL), was formed in the '60s in the United States as a Jewish group designed to be on the offense rather than on the defense. It began acting against anti-Jewish sources in the U.S., and then expanded its activities to include the former Soviet Union. Rabbi Kahane initiated violent attacks against Russian diplomats. He was very public about his activities and he very quickly became a problem for the United States' leadership. The FBI charged Kahane with committing violent actions and using illegal weapons. He was warned that if he did not leave the United States, he would sit in jail for a long time. Rabbi Kahane took the hint and emigrated to Israel.

When he first arrived, Rabbi Kahane focused on education. Rather quickly, he and his activists identified the Arabs as a target for their activity. They labeled them as the source of all the state's problems. Rabbi Kahane's group threatened to take revenge against the Arabs with a clear declaration that Jews and non-Jews could not possibly live together in the land. He began pressuring the Arabs to leave. Members of the JDL broke into the Finnish embassy, tried to organize a "public judgment" against the mayor of Hebron, and were even involved with arming Jewish terrorists who intended to attack the Libyan embassy in Rome. In the beginning of the 1980s, Rabbi Kahane and another activist were arrested and held for half a year after planning to fire a rocket at the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount.

After a long first day of studying, I went home and turned on the television to clear my head. That was a major mistake. The nightly news featured a story that reported Shin Bet agents were torturing Jews, persecuting a rabbi, and acting improperly toward an IDF officer. I immediately understood that my agency was under attack from the media, which explained the tension I had sensed at the office earlier that day.

During the next few days, public figures used the media to exert significant pressure to release the Kahalani brothers, Rabbi Elba, and the IDF officer. Rumors abounded that they were being tortured in a Shin Bet facility and that the brothers had been enticed by a Shin Bet provocateur to try to kill the Arab. Allegations continued to spread even after police investigators checked into them and cleared the agency, and after a court sentenced the brothers to twelve years in jail and the IDF officer to five years. It frustrated me to see my new,

dedicated brothers being smeared in this manner when they were engaged in such important work for the state.

The next day, I went to work and my good friend “Jonathan” who greeted me on my first day did so again, looking like he had not left his chair for hours. He took a few minutes to become better acquainted with me. We quickly became close friends, and over the years, he became like a family member. He was an all-around excellent person—value centered, rooted, loved others, and blessed with a fantastic sense of humor. He became my mentor. He explained the wave of accusations from the press and the effect it was having upon him. He also related how difficult it was to remain quiet about it—an imposed silence, since no one in his private circle knew what he did professionally. He could not defend his colleagues or himself out loud. He told me the truth about what happens in investigations and how inaccurate the press reports were. I could sense that the people closest to him in his personal life were vocal about the accusations, and it tore him apart inside. I knew the work would be complex, sensitive, and challenging, but until that morning, I did not realize to what degree this was true and how difficult it was to be in this line of work where the rules prevented others in your life from knowing what you did for a living.

It wasn't just his explanations that helped me internalize this. I understood it even more based on what occurred in the next few hours.

That morning, I managed to exchange a few words on the telephone with my girlfriend and future wife, Yifat. She was staying at her family's house near Dizengoff Center in Tel Aviv. She related her schedule for the day and said she was

getting ready to go out for her morning shift as a café waitress. I really missed her. Since I began working for the Shin Bet, I barely saw her during the week. We parted ways with a “kiss” via the telephone and promised to speak that night. In those days, most people did not have cell phones, and waiting to be able to talk just at night was difficult for both of us.

Once again I immersed myself in my studies. Around 9:00 a.m., a storm erupted. Beepers were going off all over the office as the first reports came in of a suicide attack by a Palestinian terrorist in a bus in the center of Tel Aviv. The information emphasized that the bomb had injured and killed many people. After the first few minutes, there were no further updates. Those moments were fraught with confusion and fear. I immediately called Yifat’s apartment, but there was no answer. She had obviously left already. I called repeatedly and kept getting no answer. Each passing minute was more and more stressful.

Finally, we got more information. The attack had taken place on the No. 5 bus—the same one Yifat took to get to work. The bus blew up one stop after Dizengoff Center, approximately 150 meters from Yifat’s home—and she was not answering the phone. *The explosion took place one stop after Yifat would have gotten on.* I began trembling from fear.

“Answer the phone!” I yelled in my head.

Aside from my worries for Yifat and my unsuccessful attempts to locate her, I began to recognize the difficulty our unit was going to have in fulfilling its mission of preventing Jewish acts of violence in retaliation for a Palestinian terror attack of this kind. On television, we began seeing the horrific

pictures broadcast from the scene. Our blood was boiling with anger as it was clear that many people had been killed.

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The first thing that comes to the Jewish mind when seeing that type of carnage is “Arabs must die!” This gut reaction is the result of 2,000 years of being slaughtered and tormented throughout the world and, after finally returning to our ancient homeland and demonstrating a willingness to share it with our Arab neighbors, experiencing the hell of Arab terrorists blowing us up in our buses and pizza parlors. This thought also enters the minds of Shin Bet agents working in the unit tasked with finding and restraining the people who would act on those sentiments—extremists. It is only natural that the same thoughts were in my head. And that is the precise moment when the unit must begin the process of sorting through what is natural and acceptable behavior and what goes beyond the anger that we all feel. We must use our wisdom and training to know what statements will not incite extremist activity and which declarations require action to restore calm. The field agents must figure out which individuals, from among those who surround them, will take the law into their own hands because of this terrible attack—an act of retribution that may feel good for those who carry it out but, in reality, will only exacerbate the situation.

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Minutes ticked by and all kinds of horrific ideas went through my mind until Yifat finally answered the phone. I could not comprehend anything she was saying during those first few moments because of her trembling voice except for the one important detail—she was home and alive! Later in the

day, when things calmed down and the color returned to both of our faces, I began to understand the miracle that happened that morning.

Yifat left the house a bit late and went to the No. 5 bus stop at Dizengoff Center—the line she rode twice daily for years. When she arrived, the vehicle, which just a few seconds later would become a death trap, was pulling away. She chased after it and her eyes caught the driver's gaze in the right side mirror as he pulled away and left her on the sidewalk. Yifat was angry. She knew he recognized her as a regular rider, and in those situations, he and his colleagues always stopped for her. This time he kept driving.

Less than one minute later, at the next stop, the Palestinian terrorist blew himself up inside the bus. Twenty-two innocent people were killed in the attack, including the driver who, just moments before, caused Yifat to miss the bus and decided her fate to remain alive. Scores more were injured, in many cases resulting in loss of limbs. This horrific attack took place precisely two weeks after the signing of the Oslo II Accords between Israel and the Palestinians.

This was one of the first in a string of suicide bombings carried out by Palestinian terrorists which killed and maimed thousands of Israeli citizens. It was also the last time Yifat used public transportation. To this day, whenever she boards a privately organized bus, her visceral reaction reminds her of the reverberation she felt from the explosion of the No. 5 bus she failed to board that horrific morning. It seems she will never again be able to ride a public bus.

I returned to the history files to learn more about extremism albeit with great difficulty. It is a good thing this unit trains its new recruits by letting them learn about what has happened in the past. A Shin Bet agent, especially in this unit, must understand the state, its history, and the environment in which he functions in order to do the job properly and thus carry out the unit's goals. Understanding the inner workings of the society we seek to penetrate including research about its roots and its leaders is critical to be effective. Agents must know who the central rabbis are—even among the non-extremists. Familiarity with Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, the spiritual leader of the settler movement, was necessary. We had to understand the importance of the Mercaz HaRav rabbinic seminary that he headed. We needed to comprehend the ideology that attributed Messianic importance and significance to the victories of the Six-Day War, as well.

I began to delve deeper into the settler movement, known in Israel as “Gush Emunim.” Adherents believed with fervent passion that a settlement had to be established in central Samaria, known to the world as the West Bank. After many failed attempts to do so—some of which included confrontations with the IDF—in December of 1975, they pressured the Rabin government to come to a compromise and the establishment of the settlement of Elon Moreh was given the green light. It must be highlighted that as passionate as these settlers were about their ideologies, they focused on constructing new settlements and refrained from violent activity.

The success of Gush Emunim and their nonviolent, goal-oriented approach left Rabbi Kahane and his activists

very much in the shadows. They did not succeed in entering the consciousness of Israeli society in the 1970s. Kahane was perceived as an oddity, and his political path did not take root. To survive, he became even more extreme and was the first Israeli to openly call for violence in a brutal ideology that became known as “Kahanaism.” Even though this movement was considered to be on the fringe—both then and now—it is one that could not, cannot, and should not be ignored.

By 1974, Rabbi Kahane had organized a militant group called “TNT,” the Hebrew words for which mean “Terror Against Terror.” This organization primarily caused minor damage to Arab property and published broad proclamations against them. Their actions in the ’70s were insignificant, with the exception of several instances of burning Arab buses and throwing a Molotov cocktail into the offices of an Arab newspaper. Kahane himself was actually arrested and held in custody for a year upon attempting to visit the United States.

Israelis may have thought that a unit to prevent non-Arab terror could have been closed down in May 1977, when a democratic revolution occurred, with the right-wing Likud party ascending to power—after twenty-nine years of the more left-wing Labor Party ruling since Israel’s inception. The Israeli Right gaining command should have, in theory, obviated the need for a unit focused mostly on right-wing extremism. It quickly became clear that the opposite was true.

The extreme Right viewed the leadership of the right-wing Prime Minister Begin as traitorous, particularly when he and his government moved forward with a peace treaty with Egypt in 1978—an agreement that included the dismantling of settlements in the Sinai and agreeing, in principle, to a process

that would give the Palestinians some form of autonomy in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). The extreme Right fought against that agreement despite the overwhelming support of the nation, and they felt the need to intensify their extremism. Rabbi Kahane's statements became harsher and he was arrested and held for half a year in 1980 for planning to attack the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount.

A thick binder with no dust on it was labeled "The Temple Mount." The people and organizations seeking to taking action in this specific location were always in the sights of the unit's agents. The binder compiled the huge numbers of groups that were focused on the Temple Mount and the Temple. The Shin Bet knew very well that the issue was explosive in nature—even a rumor or an unchecked piece of information could ignite a firestorm leading to catastrophe. The professional assessments declared that Jews causing damage to this site—holy both for Jews and Muslims—could push the entire Middle East into a new destructive reality. And in the Middle East, changes to existing reality usually take place only after paying a heavy price in blood.

I learned about the attempts made by Yoel Lerner to blow up the Dome of the Rock. In 1978, he had established an underground movement called "Redemption to Israel" with the goal of transforming Israel into a state run by Jewish religious law. When he heard about the decision to return the Sinai to the Egyptians, he decided to blow up the Dome of the Rock in 1982 in retribution.

At the beginning of the 1980s, three different Jewish terror organizations were working simultaneously to try to blow up the dome. One attack in 1984, was attempted by four

men who sought to destroy the shrine to pave the way for cleansing the Temple Mount and heralding the arrival of the Messiah. None of these plans succeeded, and I quickly learned it wasn't simply luck that prevented it. The unit's network of agents and their canny ability to step in and stop attacks before they happened worked to perfection.

After a second day on the job that was difficult on so many levels, I went home with an even deeper understanding of the dangers these extremist groups posed and the massive consequences that could result from their actions.

The next day, I focused on a group that was established as a response to the peace treaty Begin signed with Egypt. The specific intent of this underground movement, founded by the second generation of Gush Emunim members, was to prevent the agreement's implementation. The members were quietly active underground for five years, from 1979 until 1984, before they were discovered by our unit. Many different actions were attributed to them, including revenge attacks against Palestinian mayors for a Palestinian terror strike targeting worshipers in Beit Hadassah, killing six students of the Hebron Rabbinic Seminary, and for Palestinian terrorist shootings at a Hebron school. But their primary goal was the destruction of the Dome of the Rock.

The agency worked extra hard on the intelligence front to arrest the members of this underground group. They were caught red-handed when they trapped five buses filled with Arabs. Their plan was to blow them up with the people inside as revenge for the hijacking of Israel bus No. 300, which had been traveling from Tel Aviv to Ashkelon, in which a young Israeli passenger was killed.

That night, after hours of reading, I went to the cafeteria with some other members of the unit. Our director joined us and the conversation flowed. The deep voice of the director fascinated me and his unique sense of humor piqued my curiosity. He was small in height, yet large in stature, with his mustache yellowed from the cigarettes he smoked. He wanted to know how I was adjusting and what deeper insights I had acquired from what I read up until that point. I responded that I was in middle of gaining some understanding into the activities of the Jewish underground.

This prompted him and others to begin telling me about the four years they spent trying to infiltrate and catch that organization. They had stories from the night when they arrested its members and memories from the interrogation room. They spoke with enthusiasm, in a manner similar to the way a commando would describe a challenging operation he participated in twenty years beforehand. They enjoyed telling the story because even the members of the underground that they arrested actually praised and commended them for their professionalism.

The director explained that in those days, the entire unit sat around the small table we were currently using and occupied only four chairs. The budget of the unit was increased, but it only became a full division when the extremist Left began flexing its muscle. This occurred during the Lebanon War in the early 1980s, and after a zealot tossed a hand grenade into a crowd at a Peace Now rally in February 1983, killing peace activist Emil Grunzweig.

For years, this small Shin Bet group worked independently in an attempt to deal with the underground and

Jewish extremism. I was amazed that they functioned so well and were successful, despite being seriously understaffed. Even much later, after I began working there, the sense was that there wasn't nearly enough manpower to deal with the challenges.

I returned to the office to read about the hand grenade attack at the Peace Now rally. A year of strenuous investigations, in partnership with the police, led to a drug dealer named Amos Shingloff. He in turn was able to identify Yona Avrushmi, the man seen holding the hand grenade. This led to the arrest of Avrushmi. During his interrogation, he admitted having thrown the grenade.

Grunzweig's death at that rally led to a great deal of self-reflection, and even admissions of guilt from some on the extreme Right. After all, a Jew ended up killing a fellow Jew in the streets of Jerusalem because of political disagreements—a new and extremely shocking development for that generation.

I read about other Jewish terror attacks that occurred during the '80s, including one perpetrated by David ben Shimol, an IDF soldier who shot at a bus filled with Arabs in Jerusalem. He also threw a hand grenade at a café in East Jerusalem. Altogether, he killed one person and injured eighteen others, later explaining that he was taking revenge against Arabs who murdered Jews. That same claim of revenge led to three youngsters killing an Arab cab driver in 1985, two days after a Jewish cab driver was killed.

This increase in Jewish extremism in the 1980s empowered and emboldened Rabbi Kahane, and his speeches

now found fertile ground. He was able to generate a massive following and in July 1984, he won close to twenty-six thousand votes in the national elections, enough for one seat in the Knesset.

The idealistic youth of the time—youngsters like me, who handed out olive branches at their rallies—failed to prevent it from happening. But the reading material now stacked up in front of me evidenced that the rise of Rabbi Kahane, the revelation of the Jewish underground, and the murder of Emil Grunzweig all led the state to wake up and take action to preserve democracy. This included passing legislation restricting anti-democratic political parties and problematic educational activities in the school system and in the IDF. These restrictions had a massive effect in reducing Jewish extremist activity toward Arabs during the First Intifada (Palestinian uprising) in 1987, with almost no serious incidents taking place. The fact that a national unity government was established in 1984 also reduced the danger to Israeli democracy posed by the extremists, because it created a strong political center. The Left and the Right both moderated and moved toward the center, leaving the extremists marginalized.

By 1988, it was illegal for Rabbi Kahane to run for the Knesset because his party was deemed racist and a new law banned racist parties from running. Israeli society seemed to feel that the IDF was responding appropriately to the Arab uprising, and Israelis were satisfied with Defense Minister Yitzchak Rabin's manner of handling the security situation. Thus, the extreme Right felt no compulsion to act. This did not last long.

In the Kahane file, I reached a section dated November 5, 1990—the day the rabbi was killed by an Arab terrorist in New York. The rabbi's murder led to his movement splitting into two parties: "Kahane Lives" and "Kach." The split revolved around who was more dedicated to the preservation of Rabbi Kahane's legacy of extremism, and also from a personal leadership battle. The infighting and division hurt the Kahane cause. They resorted to very extreme, headline-grabbing actions, usually around the anniversary date of his murder. As an example, four members of Kahane Lives, who called themselves the "Revenge Commandos," threw a hand grenade into the Arab market in the Old City of Jerusalem on one anniversary: one Arab was killed and ten were injured.

The clear fact that emerged after thoroughly reading all the materials about Rabbi Kahane and his activists was that they failed to achieve very much on behalf of the Jewish people other than fomenting more hate in Israeli society on all sides of the political spectrum. That seemed to be their legacy and was in stark contrast with the Gush Emunim movement, which planted roots throughout the land and changed realities on the ground in Judea and Samaria.

The information I gleaned during these weeks helped prepare me for the challenging years ahead, when significant hate reawakened between opposing political ideologies in Israel. My unit became essential in the fight for Israeli democracy, leading to that fateful night in November 1993.

## **Chapter Five—Professional Failure**

Yitzchak Rabin became Prime Minister on June 23, 1992. For the first time in fifteen years, there was a left-wing government. This led to open-channel negotiations with the Arabs—producing no substantial results—and to negotiations through secret channels, which actually bore fruit in the Oslo Accords.

Rabin had to fight two internal battles. The first was against the right-wingers, who were vehemently opposed to his direction. The other conflict was with his longtime intra-party nemesis, Shimon Peres. He served as Rabin's Foreign Minister and led the secret talks with the Palestinians. The tension between the two was tangible. Rabin's biggest fear concerned the kind of deal Peres was advancing behind his back.

The Oslo I Accord was signed on September 13, 1993, with PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) Chairman Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin shaking hands on the White House Lawn. Immediately, events began to spiral out of control. The Shas party pulled out of the coalition due to a corruption scandal. This left Rabin with a government that did not have a majority in the Knesset and was now forced to rely on support from the Arab parties outside the coalition for its survival. It was the first time an Israeli government was dependent on the Arabs in this manner.

The official agreement with the Palestinians—along with the political reality in which the Arabs were the only

means of survival for the government—created a totally new set of challenges for our unit. The anger and passion being expressed in the Israeli streets was palpable to all.<sup>[9]</sup> Rabbis, public figures, reporters, and politicians seemed to be competing to determine who could be harsher and more extreme in their speech, which fueled the fires of extremism.

At the same time, the Arab groups who opposed the deal, especially Hamas, flexed their muscles with violent attacks that had horrific, tragic results.

The ground was burning and shaking. Arab suicide bombings and Palestinian terrorist shootings which took the lives of hundreds of Israelis and injured thousands more were near-daily occurrences. Shock and fear could be felt in the streets. There was not a trace of the hope and optimism one would expect to see as peace was about to dawn.

The combination of potential progress in formulating an agreement with the Palestinians along with a deteriorating security situation, complicated even further by occasional disparaging statements by Prime Minister Rabin against the Israeli settlers who opposed any agreements, fanned the flames of extremism. Rabin declared:<sup>[10]</sup> “We’ll fight terror like there is no peace and make peace like there is no terror.”

Statements like these infuriated those who opposed him. The anger against him was bubbling below the surface like a volcano, just waiting for the right moment to erupt.

Horrible caricatures emerged showing Rabin washing his blood-soaked hands. Rabin and Peres were personified as men committing war crimes.

Our unit was confronted with new levels of incitement to violence and attacks. Difficult situations arose, such as hundreds of Arab cars that were stoned, and in some cases, even burned. Arabs were injured and there were some fatalities.

Shots were fired at the car carrying Rabbi Druckman, one of the spiritual leaders of the settler movement. The rabbi was injured and his driver was killed.

At the end of September, Mordechai Lapid and his son, Shalom, were murdered. Dr. Baruch Goldstein, referenced earlier, attempted to save the lives of these two innocent victims, whom he personally knew. People close to Goldstein reported it was this specific attack—where he was unable to save the lives of his close friends—that pushed him over the edge and later led him to kill Muslims in revenge.

A prominent example of the chaos resulted from the October 29 murder and subsequent burning of the body of Chaim Mizrachi, a resident of the Beit El settlement. Hundreds of extremists entered Palestinian villages in the area and damaged considerable property. They also fired their guns indiscriminately, resulting in many injuries. These actions raised the ire of the Palestinians and led to a string of terrorist attacks against Jews.

On December 13, the Palestinians were slated to be given autonomy in the Gaza Strip and in the city of Jericho. Israeli society was on fire. Agents in my unit were on high alert, constantly monitoring the situation and trying to distinguish serious threats from more simple civil disobedience used to express anger and protest. When settlers

decided to block public roads for hours, it was an expression of such ire. At times, we even needed to look the other way when stones were thrown because of the more serious situations we were confronting.

Our primary goal was to identify people who were planning extreme terror attacks rather than these minor, spontaneous actions. The “smaller” actions were natural reactions to the anger, mourning, and sadness over the wave of Palestinian terror attacks which struck Judea and Samaria, as well as central Israel. Our focus was on Jewish-based terror.

I must express my pride that Israel even had such a unit. On the Palestinian side, massive celebrations were held when Arab terrorists struck and killed Jews. The “martyrs” who carried out these attacks were viewed as heroes. Palestinian leaders by their unwillingness to condemn terror attacks against Jews and their naming public squares and schools after Palestinian terrorists<sup>[11]</sup> inspired young people to board buses in Israel to detonate themselves, killing and maiming innocent Israelis. But Israel had a unit dedicated to preventing any attacks against Arabs. When these strikes did take place, the perpetrators were punished by the Israeli justice system and viewed by Israeli society as criminals and troublemakers.

The incitement toward murdering the prime minister began in November 1993, a full two years before it actually happened, with a sticker circulating with the words “We must kill Rabin.” At the end of 1993, the settler leaders held meetings to discuss how to break Rabin’s spirit and cause him to give up his peace efforts with the Palestinians. Approximately twenty people took part in these discussions,

including psychologists and experts in the realm of public opinion. They decided to attack Rabin's image as the leader who was best for Israel's security.

Some say that Rabin contributed to the situation by not giving the settlers a chance to have their voices truly heard. Instead, he responded to them in a degrading and dismissive manner. The message he sent was that any discussions he held with them were really pro forma—just for show. That really stung them.

The morning of Friday, February 25, 1994, was overwhelmingly shocking for the country. The level of violence soared when Dr. Baruch Goldstein, committed an act of mass murder in the Cave of the Patriarchs. Wearing his IDF uniform—adorned with pins displaying his rank of captain—he went into the “Isaac Hall,” where 800 Muslims were praying prior to the fast of Ramadan. He unloaded a few cartridges from his machine gun, killing twenty-nine people and wounding over one hundred. The moment he stopped firing—seemingly because he ran out of ammunition, or possibly because his gun jammed—the worshipers overpowered him and killed him with a fire extinguisher.

Goldstein, married and a father of four, was born in Brooklyn, New York. He had studied under the tutelage of Rabbi Kahane and was a member of the Jewish Defense League in the United States. He moved to Israel in 1983 and enlisted in the IDF as a doctor. As a physician, he treated soldiers and civilians. Goldstein's friends related that a series of terror attacks against Jews in his neighborhood—and the horror of treating the wounded in every one of those assaults—induced him to carry out this retaliatory act of vengeance.

Some said the warnings of potential Arab terror strikes around the upcoming holiday of Purim led him to shoot Arabs to prevent them from attacking Jews.

Whatever his motivation, the result was an incensed Arab population. Revenge came in the form of a wave of suicide bombings.

The political establishment was also engulfed in a storm because the government had planned to remove the Jews living in Hebron. Rabin decided not to carry out the project, but took other actions instead. He ordered arrests and declared that Kahane's movement and ideology were illegal. An investigative committee that looked into the slaughter determined that Goldstein acted alone, with no assistance from any organization or other individuals. Because it was a "lone wolf" attack, the chances of our learning about it before it occurred were close to nil. The committee did, however, recommend expanding the size of our unit.

In March 1994, shortly after the Goldstein massacre, demonstrations continued against Rabin and his policies. Benjamin Netanyahu, who then served as head of the opposition, led a march in which activists walking behind him carried a coffin wrapped in black. On the coffin were the words "Rabin is burying Zionism." One of the participants was seen holding a hangman's noose.

Hundreds of signs calling Rabin a "traitor" and a "murderer" could be seen at these protests. Pictures of Rabin wearing an Arab *keffiyeh* on his head plastered with the word "Liar!" were the next escalation. From that point on, the word "traitor" became common when referring to Rabin. Thousands

of signs hung throughout Israel showing Rabin's hands covered with blood as Arafat lurked behind him. Photos of Rabin and Peres in court were displayed with the caption "The criminals of Oslo." The Right accused Rabin of treating the blood of the settlers lightly by giving the Palestinians guns as part of the agreement with them, some of which were used in attacks against Jews.

The rules of the game had changed. The Shin Bet was confronted with a new level of extremism. On one hand there was movement toward an agreement, while on the other, massive and horrific acts of Palestinian terrorism alternated with Jewish violence—all aimed at trying to stop the peace process from moving forward. Palestinian violence emanated from Hamas and some members of the more moderate Fatah, who wanted to stop the agreement dead in its tracks. Jewish right-wing extremists tried as hard as they could to stop the agreement progressing.

Despite the decision to increase the size of our unit even further, that took time. The unit was forced to deal with the deluge of information, an increase in suspicious activity, and the accompanying fears without any additional manpower or resources.

I began working as an analyst in the unit in September 1994, when extremism was at an all-time high. The days ran into one another as we worked nonstop, subject to overwhelming pressure. At a glance, it probably looked superficially calm—each person with their intelligence material in front of them, reading, dissecting, taking out certain pieces and sending them to the relevant authorities, issuing warnings, and making assessments. I was now part of

that group of hardworking individuals who had so much riding on their shoulders. We could not pass the buck onto anyone else's desk—the responsibility was ours alone.

A narrow, third-floor hallway housed the heart of the mission. Our supervisor, “Saul,” was a veteran of the unit. He had dealt with the Jewish underground in the '80s and was well-acquainted with the people we were looking for, as well as their parents and neighbors. He was also familiar with the looks on the faces of their children when we arrived to arrest their parents in middle of the night. He'd lived and breathed this issue for years, so Saul was the ultimate authority on dissecting the intelligence and acting on it. There could not have been a better candidate for the job—especially during those cursed days. He was very tall man, modest, and caring, with a giant heart. Saul's devotion to his work was total and he became like a father to me.

The number of hours we worked was not to be believed—more than two full-time jobs, and on Friday and the Sabbath as well. Even once we went home, our telephones rang continually, twenty-four hours a day: “Agent X has to transfer emergency information and something needs to be done.” Update after update, story after story. The extremism grew and it was becoming more and more difficult to decide what crisis was more pressing and important than something else. We tried to latch onto every piece of intelligence to prevent extremists from carrying out their missions.

And during all this, the streets ran red with Jewish blood. Palestinian terrorists were blowing up one bus after another, hate spread, tension was at its peak, and the state was on the verge of boiling over. Many voices asked why our unit

even existed, and why were resources being wasted on it? Some suggested we should not be working to stop attacks against Arabs—especially during that time. They felt there were more important things we could be doing.

Within the unit, we did not have any second thoughts. It was clear our work was necessary and we proceeded with great dedication. When the blood of our murdered brethren was splattered all over buses, we also felt the drive for revenge. We had to pick ourselves up and set aside our personal emotions so we could find the activists—who did not have the ability to control their anger and planned to take the law into their own hands for revenge. We felt compelled to preserve Israeli democracy despite our anger and sadness, and we were obligated to protect Israeli society during this time of crisis. We understood that revenge attacks fomented deeper hostilities with our enemies, thus guaranteeing even greater national and personal suffering in the future.

Our agents faced specific challenges. For example, some agents' friends were killed in terrorist attacks. Handlers needed to request that those agents remain alert and keep their eyes on their friends who were still living to make sure they would not take revenge. This was a tall order for someone who had experienced a personal loss.

It was also difficult to be social during this time. I recall sitting in a living room with friends who had no idea what I did professionally. They mocked and denigrated Jews who arrested other Jews. I forced myself to remain silent, even though I desperately wanted to explain how important my unit was to the state and how it was protecting all of us—and our democracy.

While the storm outside was growing, inside the Shin Bet, we were hard at work doing our jobs—trying to make sure that Jewish extremists refrained from doing anything catastrophic. Other units were attempting to stop our external enemies from doing the same. There were additional divisions preparing for the implementation of the Oslo agreement, which would include transferring control of certain areas to the Palestinians. We felt like an isolated island, dealing not with an external enemy, but with our own brothers.

Few, if any, citizens of Israel don't hold political views, especially when it comes to the future of the state, and especially when it comes to the type of people working in a unit like ours. Among us was found the full range of the Israeli spectrum—settlers, *kibbutzniks*, some fervently religious and others secular, socialists, and capitalists. For the most part, we knew what other agents believed—and the unit seemed to have a clear tendency to lean to the Right—but we avoided discussing these delicate topics. In the country at large, the populace was split approximately 50–50, with an inclination toward supporting the agreement. One poll showed as many as 62 percent in favor of the Oslo Accords.

An ironclad rule in the unit was to avoid mixing politics with our activity. We refrained from engaging in political debates and were extremely careful not to confront agents in the field. The same went for dealings with colleagues and friends in the army and the police, with whom we worked very closely. In a way, it was as if we had no political stance. We strived toward the same goals whether the prime minister was Begin or Peres, Shamir or Rabin. I can honestly say that

every prime minister received the best protection services our unit could provide.

The summer of 1995 was very difficult as the language used in the public sphere got worse and more inflammatory day by day. We examined and acted on hundreds of leads and interventions, and the unit nearly collapsed under the workload.

During the early morning hours of June 15, Shlomi Halevi was on his way to IDF reserve duty in the center of Israel. Later he told his commander that he had been at the old bus station in Tel Aviv the previous Saturday night, close to midnight, and used a stall in the public restroom.

Two people walked into the restroom after him and spoke to one another. He did not see them and they did not see him. He heard one say to the other, “Did you see that small Yemenite guy? He wants to kill Rabin!”

The second one responded, “Yes, and he has a pistol.”

The two exchanged a few more words about the chances “the small guy” had of being successful. One of them said the man had already recited confession in the synagogue. After several minutes, they left.

The commander immediately relayed the information to our unit. There was no question that this was a lead to be taken seriously. Even though we were receiving many similar and equally grave reports, we sensed that this one had to be dealt with quickly.

The unit ordered the police in Jerusalem to call the soldier in promptly for interrogation. Keep in mind that

Halevi, who worked in the field of intelligence, volunteered this information. He arrived and verified the accuracy of his statements. In the conclusion, the police interrogator wrote that Halevi came across as a serious man with a good head on his shoulders. He again noted that Halevi initiated the report of his own volition.

There was no reason to believe he was hiding any additional information. But how were we supposed to identify and find one “small Yemenite guy”? There was no chance. We notified all the relevant authorities, including the personal bodyguards of high-ranking officials. There was nothing more we were able to do. We later learned that Halevi actually knew a lot more, but by then, it was too late.

At the end of June 1995, the unit released an analysis of the general situation, which was filled with harsh statistics and dark prophecies. It provided details about the escalation in the level of attacks, about the dangerous extremism in language that was being used, and about the intentions to act with violence in efforts to halt the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The evaluation, which was unusual in its severity and unnerving by any standard, contained many gloomy predictions. First and foremost was the possibility of an assassination attempt on one of our most protected leaders. Prime Minister and Defense Minister Yitzchak Rabin was identified as the most likely target.

Not just any ordinary position paper, this was a strategic warning. There was a real fear that the atmosphere was ripe for a political murder. We alerted all the relevant authorities that the conversation among the extremists included the conclusion that killing the prime minister was

permitted according to Jewish law. The writing was on the wall in very bold letters.

This document's release generated a great deal of attention. Some suggested the new unit director authorized it simply to cover himself if something happened. He ignored such nonsense, since his real motive in sharing the information was to enable all the relevant authorities to act on it and protect the targets. The report was distributed to the highest officers in the IDF and the police. The Shin Bet director asked Rabin to allow him to take the extreme step of presenting the report to the head of the opposition. He hoped it would lead the opposition to change course—calling for a tempering of language and an end to the attacks. The prime minister granted permission.

Meetings were held between the security establishment and high-level Justice Ministry officials. The Shin Bet felt that many extremist criminal charges were not being pushed through the justice system. As a result, people who should have been tried and punished were still roaming free.

July came with intense heat and the demonstrations became stormier. We worked hours upon hours and succeeded in preventing some attacks against Arabs. We also followed the activities of many extremists who were planning violent strikes. Many of the hundreds of leads we were pursuing came from Champagne. As I mentioned earlier, some reports dealt with Yigal Amir. None, however, indicated anything serious. We had no idea that by that point, this seemingly innocent “arranger of Sabbath events for students” had already attempted to assassinate the prime minister—not once, but twice.

August 1995 arrived. The unit's agents rarely made it home because the workload was enormous. This was particularly difficult for me, because my wedding was scheduled for August 22. I had almost no time to share with the woman of my dreams, whom I had known for two years. Like all young couples, we imagined a unique, magical wedding and had decided to hold it in the courtyard of my childhood home, which was in a small town called Ganei Am. My mother, a Labor Party activist her entire life, invited her close friends and the leaders of the party, including Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres.

So, in mid-August I left work for my "wedding vacation." We had much to do to prepare, including setting up the courtyard for hundreds of guests—cleaning it, cutting brush, putting up lighting, and more. Leaving work at that time was not ideal and it put a great deal of pressure on the small unit staff. In most businesses, August was normally a time when the workload decreased and people went on vacation. For us, it was the exact opposite, with the volume of work increasing by the day. My colleagues were supportive and totally understood the reason I was taking time off, but it was still very difficult. The person who filled in was quite impressive, assuming my responsibilities while keeping up with his own.

The most important and fateful meeting with Champagne took place on the day I took my leave. At that meeting, his handler tried to gain more information about the young student at Bar Ilan University who was coordinating these Sabbath events—whom the agent insisted was not

extreme. As mentioned earlier, the handler prodded at my request, after some information I received raised red flags.

On my wedding day, the agent substituting for me focused a great deal on this issue. I could not have done better than he did. Everything asked of him while I was celebrating was accomplished with extreme competence. I knew I could rely on him.

The sun set over the fields of my hometown, Ganei Am. I stood, filled with emotion, taking pictures with Yifat overlooking the home where I grew up. All my dreams were coming true. At that moment, there was no one happier in the world. I was bursting with pride about the wonderful lot that had come my way—a challenging job that helped protect the country and a marriage to the love of my life.

While watching the setting sun, tears welled up in my eyes over the wonderful life I was blessed with and I felt like I was floating. As someone who believed in the prime minister and approved of his balancing act of protecting Israel's security while having the courage to try to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians, I also felt like I was getting married and establishing a family just as peace was finally coming our way. Perhaps we would have the opportunity, in our lifetime, to see the fulfillment of the Biblical verse, “no nation will raise a sword against another,”[\[12\]](#) and there would be no more wars. Perhaps we would bury no more dead—not on our side, nor on theirs. Okay, I must come clean—in my mind, it was as if I were hearing John Lennon's song, “Imagine.”

Yifat was born in the winter of 1973, right after the terrible Yom Kippur War.[\[13\]](#) We believed our children would

not have to enlist in the army. We sang “Song of Peace” together. That was the environment in those days, resulting from the Second Oslo Accord and that famous handshake between Arafat and Rabin. An outburst of hope occurred, thinking we were establishing a family at the best possible time—the most optimistic period Israel had ever seen. The sun was setting over the fields and it was getting dark, but Yifat continued to radiate light. Her eyes shone like two lit candles and her beauty overwhelmed me.

Our guests began to arrive, including all my colleagues in the unit, who felt like part of the family. Most came straight from work, while others managed to stop at home to pick up their spouses. As the violinist played beautiful music, the flow of guests increased. Among them were a wide range of politicians, ministers, Knesset members, security officials, and young women—Yifat’s friends. Foreign Minister Peres arrived near the start, looking like someone with time on his hands. He was very relaxed and did not rush to leave. I looked at him and flashed back to my youth: I was just thirteen in 1981 and my mother took me to a Peres rally in Kiryat Shmonah. I’d felt lucky—being so young and yet having the opportunity to meet the chairman of the party. We even had lunch with him. I recalled how I sat at the table looking at this leader and being impressed by his remarkable energy.

Suddenly, while I was flashing back, Peres approached me and asked what I was doing in the agency. I stood close to him and whispered in his ear. My parents, who were standing close by, did not know. Peres nodded, understanding the gravity of my work and why I had to whisper. I got the feeling that he valued our work, although not a man of many words.

His expression of comprehension and his smile sufficed. His two security guards seemed calm, protecting him from afar. It was a friendly environment and the minister felt at ease. He drank a bit and seemed happy to mingle with the many people who came near to share a good word.

The prime minister's office had informed us that Rabin would not be able to attend. The day before the wedding, August 21, there was a suicide bombing on the No. 26 bus in Jerusalem and four passengers were killed. The prime minister did not attend happy occasions on the same day that victims of terror were being buried. He promised to offer us words of blessing via a telephone hookup. Days later, the prime minister's chief of staff, Eitan Haber, told me that before the call, his office checked to see what unit I worked in and about my specific duties.

The wedding ceremony began. We had asked the rabbi to keep it brief, but that wasn't happening. Apparently, the minister of religious services was there and the rabbi felt the need to impress him, so he made the ceremony last much longer than we had planned. All of us, especially Yifat and I, were becoming antsy—waiting for the final moment so we could storm onto the dance floor. All we wanted to do was dance and let loose with happiness. When he finished, I took Yifat's hand and we walked together to the open space, which we transformed into a dance floor.

Everything was absolutely perfect. I recall thinking that I could not possibly love Yifat more than I did. I was wrong—my love for her continued to grow stronger. While standing in the middle of the dance floor, I was asked to take a phone call from the prime minister's secretary. She asked if

she was speaking to Dvir and when I said, “Yes,” she replied, “Please hold for the prime minister.”

I was trembling with emotion. Rabin himself was on the line. The music stopped and I could see many guests feared something tragic had taken place. Then they heard a voice they recognized with a tone that could not be mistaken. The prime minister offered a blessing to me—a young groom working in the special unit whose most important task was gathering information to protect the prime minister’s life. He knew that, and knew my colleagues were standing there alongside me. The photographer, who had no idea who they were, nor the deeper meaning behind the prime minister’s words, filmed them and their reaction as the prime minister spoke.

Rabin alluded to the difficult period Israel was experiencing and spoke about his hope for better days. He offered me and my colleagues words of blessing, subtly wishing us success in our tasks. In retrospect, his words had a sad and chilling meaning: He was wishing us best of luck in protecting his own life and, by extension, Israeli democracy. Whenever I think about that conversation, I am overwhelmed with emotion.

It is hard to believe. Seated at just a few small tables at my wedding were all the members of a unit that had such major tasks: Protecting the life of the prime minister, protecting Israeli democracy, protecting Israelis from a civil war, protecting the holy sites, and stopping terror attacks.

It was a magical night. We celebrated until the wee hours of the morning. Behind the great happiness was an

optimistic sense that we, as a country and as a nation, were headed toward better times. It felt like anything was possible, and that while it would be challenging and difficult, Israel had the ability to accomplish whatever it wanted.

I still felt that way when I went back to work just a day later. I could not even dream about a honeymoon at that moment, but I also did not need it. Yifat and I were building our own home and we could not have been happier.

At work, we discovered that the heads of the Israeli settler movement realized that they had to re-engage with their followers and demonstrate leadership. While those efforts did not cause any direct problems for us—these leaders were nonviolent and did not call for any attacks on anyone—they, no doubt, caused zealots to become even more extreme, and we were busy dealing with that. The extremists felt secure in their backing when large numbers of protestors turned out for right-wing demonstrations. Even Yigal Amir would reveal at a later point that when he killed Rabin, he felt as if “the entire nation was pulling the trigger with him.”

At the end of August, a twenty-two-year-old man drove past the car of left-wing Education Minister Yossi Sarid. When he realized who was in it, he tried, unsuccessfully, to force the minister’s car off the road. Shockingly, the young man’s father criticized his son’s action in this manner: “I condemn the fact that my son did not succeed in sending Sarid to the depths. Many people would have been happy to part ways from that garbage.”

He was actually upset with his son for failing to cause the death of another human being—for not killing an Israeli

minister. This was a normal family from a moderate neighborhood. The young man was a counselor in a youth movement and the father was a reserve military judge with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

We did not actually have hundreds of reports regarding extremists who wanted to kill the prime minister—as reported by one of the agency’s directors after the assassination—but there were, in fact, dozens. Each was treated with utmost seriousness and none of the people who were identified as having such intentions ended up killing the prime minister. That’s how it worked—if we stopped an attack from happening, no one heard or knew about it. If we failed in our efforts, however, all our past successes were irrelevant.

There were many Israelis who wished that the prime minister would die, or that someone would kill him. Even some rabbis and public figures spoke in this manner. New signs posted throughout the land spoke volumes. A picture of Rabin’s face in a bull’s-eye with the word “Traitor” underneath was probably the one that stood out the most. Chants of “Rabin is a traitor” and “Rabin is a murderer” became the mantra of many numbers on the Right.

At the end of August, a poll was taken among those who lived in the settlements. To the question “Is Rabin a traitor?” 26 percent responded yes. To the question “Is it permissible to do whatever is necessary to stop the agreements with the Palestinians from moving forward?” 21 percent said yes. Sociologist Kalman Geyer, a friend of the prime minister who commissioned the poll, wrote, “There are between a few hundred and one thousand people who are seeking to do an extremist act with the goal of stopping the progress of the

agreement. It is not impossible that we will experience a political assassination.”

Close to 1,000 people? A political assassination was not out of the question? And that was just among those who lived in Judea and Samaria? Most Israelis did not live in those areas. And since this was an academic study, it was possible that people spoke with greater extremism than they actually felt. Perhaps they wanted the poll results to generate a politically influential atmosphere, but they themselves would never actually take the law into their own hands. The results of the poll were presented to the prime minister and subsequently published in the newspapers.

It is important to note that this meant that the overwhelming majority of people living in the settlements who disagreed with the prime minister’s policies did not view the prime minister as a traitor, and would never agree to anyone taking the law into their own hands. However, our unit needed to worry about those who did, in fact, view Rabin as a traitor, and those who did support taking the law into their own hands—whether they numbered 20 percent, 1 percent or 0.1 percent.

*Hashavua*, a newspaper read by 18 percent of the extremist population—and by Yigal Amir—fought a nonstop battle against Rabin, accusing him of being a traitor, a murderer, and even a crazy person. They reported—falsely, of course—that Rabin was being treated in a mental hospital. In addition to what they wrote about him, they hosted a public discussion regarding whether he should be killed and how it should be done. At the end of August, they actually declared that due to the danger they were leading Israel into, Rabin and Peres must be “brought before the firing squad.”[\[14\]](#)

This was not secret intelligence information being received from our agents and analyzed in the unit. It was printed for the entire world to read.

The daily protests usually blocked intersections. Monitoring the participants was required in case a potential assassin appearing in one of our reports was among them. Every single one of them was followed in a variety of ways. We tried to always have them in our sights so someone could be there and stop them if and when they decided to act.

In the intelligence community, there is no such thing as 100 percent. You try to get as close as possible to it, knowing that perfection can never be attained. In 1995, we were far from 100 percent.

What an understatement!

As September began, demonstration frequency dwindled, with no daily occurrences. Rumors spread by many suggested that our unit had wiretapped phones throughout Judea and Samaria to gather intelligence, which was far from the truth. We listened into the phone conversations of only a few individuals even during the most difficult of times, and all of them were extremists involved in violent activities.

On Friday night, September 22, Channel One aired a report that included video from a swearing-in ceremony for an extremist group called “Eyal.” The nature and intentions of the group were obvious—its participants were swearing an oath of violence. The young people, with covered faces, stood close to the grave of Eliyahu Hakim<sup>[15]</sup> and were packing pistols in their waistbands as they were sworn in. They stated that, if necessary, they were prepared to kill fellow Jews. During the

ceremony, the leader—whose voice we knew as that of Avishai Raviv, our agent “Champagne”—spoke about dogs being raised near Hebron who were trained to smell Arabs. He made it clear that right-wing activists were prepared to take the law into their own hands.

There was only one problem—it wasn’t true. Raviv had orchestrated a fake ceremony for a fake organization to scare the country, doing so without the input or permission of his handlers. The report shook up the country and the director of our unit was furious with Raviv. Condemnations were quick to come from across the political spectrum.

On the morning of September 29, the prime minister came to the Shin Bet offices for a pre-Jewish New Year toast. Rabin felt very much at home there, as it was one of the few places where he could walk around freely in a large crowd without hovering security guards. Many agents approached to shake his hand and wish him a happy holiday. It was important for me to thank him for the blessing he offered us at our wedding just one month prior, and to give him a personal message of appreciation from my mother. I tried to push my way toward him, but was unsuccessful.

Rabin approached the podium to offer his New Year wishes, expressing his great appreciation for our work and also clarifying what was hoped for from us in the coming year. There were terror and fear in the streets at this time, and Rabin told the agency he expected us to stand strong in the face of these challenges. When he finished speaking, I tried once again to reach him as he was exiting, but he entered his car and it drove off before I could get close to him.

In October 1995, each day seemed to break a new record in intolerance and violence. The month started off with an extremist named Avigdor Eskin casting a public “spiritual” curse against Rabin and praying publicly for the prime minister’s death “within a month.” We were not afraid of Eskin taking action, simply because he declared his intentions in public. We knew, though, that anyone speaking in such a way could certainly have a very negative influence on others.

On the morning of October 5, the prime minister was verbally assaulted by a bereaved father at a memorial service for soldiers at the national military cemetery at Mount Herzl in Jerusalem. The grieving man came close to the prime minister and yelled out to him, “Murderer! Traitor!” The Shin Bet director was there and witnessed it with his own eyes. In light of this experience, he asked the prime minister to start wearing a bulletproof vest whenever he appeared in public. His request fell on deaf ears—Rabin refused.[\[16\]](#)

That same afternoon, the Knesset began its deliberations about approving the Second Oslo Accord. At the end of a contentious debate, the agreement was approved by a majority—with a margin of one vote. That single vote was from MK Alex Goldfarb, who had switched his allegiance in the issue for unexplained reasons. Many said he was enticed to do so for personal gain—including being named a Deputy Minister—and not because he was on the same page ideologically.

The agreement’s approval also hinged on support from five Arab Knesset members. These two legislative anomalies—that determined the outcome of the vote—added to the tension in the streets of Israel.

Members of the Kach party worked hard to garner every possible moment of airtime in an attempt to inspire a civil war in Israel. Itamar ben Gvir, an extremist who stood out in these efforts, proudly held up a Cadillac hood ornament on television that had been removed from the prime minister's car. The message was clear: if someone can get to the prime minister's car, someone can also get to the man.

Labor Party Minister Benjamin ben Eliezer was attacked in his car as he pulled into the Knesset parking lot. He emerged unscathed, but immediately entered the building and sought out Benjamin Netanyahu, who was then the leader of the opposition. He demanded of Netanyahu, "You need to restrain your people. If not, this will end with a murder! They just tried to kill me." Netanyahu did not respond.

MK Chanan Porat from the religious Zionist party was standing nearby and tried to explain the extremists' actions in light of what Rabin was doing. Ben-Eliezer responded, "Someone is going to get killed here. If not today, then in a week or in another month."[\[17\]](#)

The date was October 5—precisely one month before Rabin's murder.

There was a strong sense of dread that an assassination, indeed, was going to happen. It was felt everywhere—not just at demonstrations, but even in the hallways of the Knesset and the Shin Bet.

That night, tens of thousands protested against the Second Oslo Accord in Zion Square in Jerusalem. The speakers stood on a long balcony above protestors, who

chanted “Rabin is a traitor!” and “With blood and fire, we will expel Rabin!” and “Rabin is a murderer!”

More moderate right-wing leaders standing on that porch—including Benjamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon—chose to remain silent, not saying anything that might moderate the extreme declarations. They did not attempt to reduce the volume of the extremism, or take hold of the microphone to try to calm things down. They saw it, they heard it, and they remained silent.

The awful climax of that protest came when signs featuring Rabin in a Nazi uniform were suddenly hoisted. Amazingly, some falsely claimed they were the work of the Shin Bet, despite not having a shred of evidence to back up the allegations. Right-wing extremists tried to spread the rumor to beef up their claim of an internal conspiracy to kill the prime minister, thus deflecting any criticism or responsibility from themselves.

The facts, of course, were completely different. Two young religious extremists made those signs using a simple copying machine. Both were arrested and, after admitting their culpability to the police, were prosecuted and punished. Champagne took a sign from one of the youngsters and gave it to Nitzan Chen, a Channel One reporter who publicized it in the media. Champagne was interrogated about this and put through a polygraph exam to ensure he was not part of the signs’ production. He passed, thus proving that he had no role in making the signs.

The dangerous rhetoric continued to grow.

On October 11, the prime minister arrived at the Wingate Institute in Netanya to deliver a speech. Some of the attendees greeted him with screams of “Behold, the dog has arrived!” and “Rabin is a murderer!” One of them, a rabbi at Hebrew University, ran toward Rabin and got very close. He was pushed aside by one of the security officers, while many in the crowd cheered him on. Theoretically, he could have been carrying a pistol, and did get within touching distance of the prime minister.

Some referred to this event as the “dry killing of the prime minister.” Although weaponless, this rabbi clearly exposed how weak security was. If Yigal Amir had been watching this on television, he could have felt fully confident that he would be successful in carrying out his plan. Those in charge of the prime minister’s security saw firsthand how easy it could be for someone to kill him.

The weeks before the murder were filled with demonstrations, including a regular Friday protest outside the prime minister’s home in Tel Aviv. Carcasses of doves were sent to his Jerusalem office and to his home. The streets echoed with chants of “Rabin is a traitor!” and “Rabin is a murderer!” The scene was ripe for an assassination attempt, and those of us in charge of protecting the prime minister knew nothing about the person who would eventually murder him.

Given all this background—the months, weeks, days, and hours that I, along with my colleagues, spent trying to make sure no one killed the prime minister—surely you can understand why I felt the need to execute his assassin.

## Chapter Six—The Interrogations

My decision to hold off killing Amir for a few days, enabling us to gather information from him, was the correct one. He talked to his interrogators—a lot. It was my first time taking part in an official questioning. I usually received the information after interrogators did their job and analyzed the information. The murderer's brother, Hagai, was arrested that first night, immediately after the murder, when the Amir home in Herzliya was checked by the authorities.

It took just a few hours for the picture to become clear—and it was a very dark one. The two brothers did not stop talking. This was unusual, because in most interrogations, the suspects or criminals do not speak, and hours are spent trying to gain tidbits of information from them. Both Yigal and Hagai Amir decided to speak. Their mouths did not close—to the point that one of the interrogators quietly joked that the brothers would become hoarse if they continued this way.

They spoke with extremism and passion from their belief in the righteousness of their ways. It seemed that, without realizing it, they were in a competition to see who could be the first to tell a certain story or relate information that was previously unknown. They took pride in the assassination and spoke openly about how they destroyed Israeli society and hurt our souls, thoroughly enjoying themselves.

There was nonstop outside pressure for the interrogation results. Everyone in the country wanted to know

how this could have happened, and the directors of all the various security agencies and leadership offices—including the prime minister’s office—called the holding compound for updates constantly.

The picture became clear very quickly. The murderer succeeded in killing the prime minister after three previous attempts failed—beginning in January 1995. From September 1993 until January 1995, Amir studied two areas of Biblical Jewish law intensively. One was the law of a “*rodef*,” meaning the “pursuer”—when a person is pursuing someone else to kill him, Jewish law allows the killing of that person to prevent the murder. The other were the laws regarding a “*mosar*”—a person who hands fellow Jews to the authorities for arrest (or worse), and how one should punish them or act to prevent them from doing so. Amir saw Rabin as fulfilling both roles since, in his eyes, the prime minister was causing Jews to be killed through his dealings with the Palestinians. Amir even talked about the issue with friends, and this religious research helped him act on his anger toward Rabin.

The first time Amir saw the prime minister was at a wedding of the chief rabbi’s daughter in Tel Aviv, at the end of September 1993—soon after the Oslo I Accord was signed and the handshake occurred between Rabin and Arafat on the White House lawn. This historic gesture brought hope to many Israelis, while, at the same time, scaring and angering the Israeli Right—especially extremists.

“I did not shake his hand at the wedding,” Amir related, regarding his meeting the prime minister face-to-face, “because I despised him due to the Oslo Accord. I could have shot him then, but I was not spiritually prepared for it at that

time.” He explained that Rabin was still perceived as a “security guy” during that period and was popular in the Israeli public. Therefore, there wasn’t a proper public atmosphere encouraging his assassination. But he explained that, while standing at the wedding, he said to himself, “One day I will regret it if I don’t kill him.”

Listening to Amir speak, the understanding of how the security establishment failed deepened even further. He’d stood right next to the prime minister—and could have shaken his hand if he wanted to—armed with a pistol. Amir only refrained because he personally wasn’t ready.

As I listened to the brothers speak, I lost myself in even deeper reflection. I thought back to my wedding, two and a half months before the murder. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was there—with just two security guards—and he had been publicly threatened just as much as the prime minister. Not one person at the event went through a security check before entering. Did we know if anyone who was there, including people who attended that were armed, were against the government’s steps with the Palestinians? We didn’t. Anyone who wanted to could have killed Peres at my own wedding.

I returned my focus to the interrogation. The murderer explained that according to his ideology, he saw no reason to continue with screaming and demonstrations. He came to the conclusion that he had to take another, more active step—killing the prime minister.

He told us about his first three attempts.

On January 22, 1995, Amir decided it was time to take action and felt he was ready to do so. A few days beforehand, he found out the prime minister was planning to be present at an event at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, together with a high-ranking government official from Germany. The plan was for Rabin and his guest to remove the cover from a train car that had been used to transport Jews to concentration camps. It had been donated to the museum to serve as a permanent part of the display.

Amir decided to attend and assassinate the prime minister. He arranged for students from Bar Ilan University to show up at the event by bus so they could protest against the peace process. Champagne informed us about the rally at the time. His information stated that the students attending were not extremists. We, of course, notified the prime minister's private security detail of the scheduled protest.

The murderer left his house with a loaded pistol. As he did during all his attempts to kill the prime minister, Amir made sure to put a bullet in its loaded position while still at home. This would enable him to simply withdraw the gun and pull the trigger without any delay when the moment came. Amir went to the university, got onto the bus with his friend, and traveled to Jerusalem. To any onlooker, he was simply participating in a demonstration.

In the end, the prime minister did not show up at Yad Vashem because of a change in plans. That morning, one of the worst terror attacks the state has ever known took place. Two Palestinian terrorists blew themselves up—one after the other—at a major intersection. The first, dressed in an IDF uniform, blew himself up at close to 9:30 a.m. at a bus stop

populated with soldiers. Three minutes later, while soldiers and civilians were tending to the many wounded, the second suicide bomber blew himself up. Twenty-two people were killed, including twenty-one soldiers, and sixty-six people were injured. One of the injured men died many years later as a result of his injuries.

So the prime minister never arrived where the assassin was waiting for him. Due to tragic circumstances, Rabin was saved from the first attempt on his life.

On the bus on the way back to the university, a debate erupted. Amir told interrogators that, for the first time, he said outloud that the law of the pursuer applies to Rabin and he must be killed. Many students disagreed and an argument began.

Among the students on the bus was none other than Champagne, like an intelligence gift from heaven. One of our secret agents was sitting on a bus when a potential assassin was talking with passion about the need to kill the prime minister. He was there by coincidence, not having been sent by the agency. But Champagne heard the information, which was the very reason why our unit existed. He heard words that were enough to light all possible red warning lights.

But he did not report it. Not a hint.

As the interrogation after the assassination continued, we found out Amir had told a few people, including a young woman named Hila Frank, that he went to Yad Vashem that day with the goal of trying to kill Rabin. Another friend of Amir's, Margalit Har-Shefi, was eventually imprisoned for not stopping the murder and keeping all the information she had

about it to herself. By May 1995, Amir himself had told her that he'd wanted to kill the prime minister at Yad Vashem in January.

Three months after that, on April 22, 1995, the murderer tried for a second time. The media reported that the prime minister was going to participate in the post-Passover Mimouna celebration at the Nof Yerushalayim Hotel in Jerusalem. Amir left his home armed with a bullet in place.

When he arrived at the celebration, Amir took note of the security detail's professionalism. They were carefully checking every person who entered. He realized that they were being extra careful and understood that he did not have a good chance of entering the hotel without his gun being taken away. He decided to leave.

We had no idea, then, that the high level of security prevented an attack. Later, it reminded us of the fact that in the security business, we are not recognized for the attacks we prevent. Many times we don't even know when an attack has been prevented. It is simply the job—and in this case, the job was done well.

On July 24, 1995, a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up on the No. 20 bus near the entrance to Ramat Gan. Six people were killed. Amir related that he thought about showing up at the scene of that attack to try to kill the prime minister, who arrived at the scene later that day, but it didn't happen. He never even tried and, therefore, it was not counted as an assassination attempt. But it demonstrates the frame of mind Amir was in—seeking any opportunity to kill Rabin.

On September 11, 1995, Hagai Amir, the murderer's brother, called Yigal's attention to an announcement in a newspaper. It said Rabin was planning to participate in the dedication ceremony of a new highway interchange at Kfar Shmaryahu. Hagai pointed out that it could be a good opportunity to assassinate him, and the murderer decided to try. This was two weeks before the signing of the Second Oslo Accord. Yigal Amir left his house in the early morning hours and went to the location to explore how he would be able to get to the prime minister, even drawing a diagram of the site.

When he found out the ceremony was to begin at 12:00 p.m., he went back home to rest. He left later in the day to go to the location, with the pistol all ready to shoot. But he left the house late and arrived at approximately 12:30 p.m., in time to see the prime minister's convoy pulling away. Had he arrived ten minutes earlier, he would have attempted the assassination. The next day, he told Margalit Har-Shefi that he'd gone to the location to kill Rabin.

When the murderer began speaking about the night of the actual assassination, Saturday night, November 4, 1995, he made himself sound like a commando reporting on the results of a mission. Amir knew that Rabin would attend the major peace rally at the Kings of Israel Square. He prayed longer than usual during the evening service that night, asking for success in his mission. He left the synagogue and went home. He loaded his pistol with regular bullets mixed with hollow point bullets. The first was a hollow point, and he put the cartridge into his 9 mm Beretta. To make sure everything was in working order, he emptied the cartridge and put each bullet back into place. The cartridge was filled with improved bullets

that his brother had prepared in the storage room of their family home in Herzliya. When Yigal finished ensuring all was ready, he confirmed the first bullet was in place. He stuck the pistol into his pants at his right hip and put on a blue shirt. He said it was designed to make him “look like a left-winger.”[\[18\]](#)

He rode a bus to Tel Aviv. Along the way, he took off his skullcap and put it in his pocket. He arrived in the area around an hour and a half before the shooting, milling around with the demonstrators in the square. Then he went to the parking area next to Tel Aviv City Hall and determined that it was the best place to hide, since a lot of people were standing around the cars there. He suddenly noticed Amit Hempel, a student with him at university who was left wing. He knew that if Amit saw him without his skullcap, it would arouse suspicion, so he moved back even further in the lot. At first he planned to hide among the cars, but then he realized that if he aroused anyone’s suspicion, he would be arrested at that stage—without having fulfilled his mission.

He told interrogators that he did not know until seconds before he shot if he would really take out the pistol and pull the trigger. He was constantly on the lookout for the location that would give him the best chance at success, understanding that from the moment he pulled out the pistol, he would not have a second opportunity. As long as he did not lift up his shirt and take out the gun, he could fabricate a reason as to why he was standing there, and then he could leave. It was clear that if a security guard or policeman approached him with any suspicion, he would leave quietly and find another time to get close to Rabin and kill him.

Amir decided to lean against one of the parked vans that had brought a group to the rally. The van was close to a staircase leading down from the stage, where the prime minister would stand during the rally. Amir figured he would blend in among all the production people, vans, and security personnel. He actually engaged in small talk with one of the policemen and raised a point about the singer, Aviv Geffen, who walked past them. The policeman moved on to his business and Amir sat on a large flowerpot, which was even closer to the staircase.

We found out from interrogations of the policemen that some of them spoke about Amir just minutes before the assassination, thinking he was an undercover officer! One even turned to him and asked him if a certain person, who was standing nearby, was also an undercover officer. Amir answered that he didn't know, but that the person seemed to be working with one of the van companies.

The murderer moved about freely and acted like he was part of the rally production staff. There was even a citizen named Binyamin Avroshmi who asked a policeman that Amir be moved away from that location. The policeman turned to Amir and asked him to go back to his vehicle.

Amir obeyed and went back toward the parked vans. But after a short time, he returned to the flowerpot he'd been sitting on earlier. The policeman did not look toward him again. This demonstrates how comfortable and free the murderer was in an area that was supposed to be "sterile"—clear of any unauthorized people.

Amir spoke with two photographers who sat down next to him. He asked them how they managed to get into that section, because it was not designated for the media. One of them answered that he simply asked a policeman's permission. That was how simple it was to get through the belt of security for this "sterile" area. The murderer told us that he "felt at home" there and had no fear of anyone asking him why he was in that vicinity, or forcing him to leave.

It turns out a lot people were in this zone who were not supposed to be there. The section had been designated for dignitaries—including the prime minister—to exit at the end of the rally.

The demonstration that night featured a crowd of tens of thousands and top performers onstage, alongside leading political leaders. They came together to declare that "violence is dangerous" and "we have to preserve democracy." Prime Minister Rabin appeared very satisfied with the rally and even veered from his normal behavior and sang "Song of Peace" together with the crowd. After the singing of the national anthem, he did not leave right away. He moved around the stage area thanking the organizers and speaking with people. It was a night of hope and optimism.

No one could have imagined that a murderer was waiting at the bottom of those steps.

Foreign Minister Peres went down the stairs before Rabin—one security guard was with him and two more joined him near his car. Peres shook hands with some supporters who stood near the parking area, and after a few seconds, he went to his car, passing within four meters of the murderer. Amir

could have easily shot the foreign minister, but he saw him as the “second target.”

In his own words: “I could have brought him down easily, but preferred to wait for the number one target.”

That “number one target” began descending the steps at approximately 9:42 p.m. Four security guards accompanied him and an additional one walked slightly in front of the group. Dozens of people were in the parking lot, and dozens more on a porch across the street. An assassin could easily have been waiting in either of those locations. The prime minister and his entourage were passing from one secure area—the stage—to another—his car. The path was a clear weak point in protecting Rabin. This should have been realized beforehand and yet, only four guards were around him. This was not a circle of security. It was a breach in security.

As the guards came down the steps, they were clearly more preoccupied with the right side, where hundreds of unauthorized people were gathered. On the left, there were just dozens of people in what they thought was a vetted area. As Rabin descended, the murderer had been there for an hour, and no one had found him to be suspicious. People thought he was a van driver, an undercover policeman, or a photographer.

Amir moved to about a meter and a half from Rabin’s back, who was just two meters from his armored car.

He lifted his shirt with his left hand and drew the pistol with his right. All of this had been thought out in advance—he did not need his left hand to shoot. He stretched out his right arm as far as possible and pointed the gun at the prime

minister's back. There were fifty centimeters between the barrel of the gun and Rabin's back.

Amir later related that he had planned to shoot the prime minister in the head, because he thought that was the only way to kill him. But when he saw how close he'd gotten to his target, he made a split-second decision to shoot Rabin in the back. The murderer described all this—especially how close he got—with pride, and in a boastful manner.

The shooting was very quick. All it took was a few seconds to destroy everything—the basis upon which Israeli democracy rested and which we so desperately sought to preserve.

*Boom! Boom! Boom!* Three shots. A small barrage, a major catastrophe. And all around Rabin were people who did not believe something like this was possible. They could not accept it was playing out before their eyes. Tens of thousands of citizens, four security guards, a few policemen, and one prime minister—all stunned. The only one prepared for it was the lowly murderer, who was not surprised that it happened, but was shocked that he emerged from it alive. He could not understand why not one security guard drew their gun immediately—while he was still a threat.

What happened at that point was not so important—it could not be undone. The bullets left the gun and lodged in Rabin's back, breaking the nation's hearts. The "Day of Atonement" for the Shin Bet, and for the entire country, began at that moment.

Rabin was rushed to the hospital and the murderer was arrested and brought in for initial interrogation. From the very

first moments, Amir emphasized that he felt no regret. It was important for him to make it clear that he carried out the murder for ideological reasons, and he was not mentally disabled or insane. He declared, “Any person who is responsible for the deaths of Jews deserves to die.” He chillingly added, “I took the prime minister out and expected to be killed.”[\[19\]](#)

Ultimately, the two brothers explained that three people were actively involved in planning the assassination: Yigal and Hagai Amir, together with a family friend named Dror Edni. They met and discussed various ideas for how to kill Rabin. The options they came up with included: placing a bomb underneath the prime minister’s car, putting nitroglycerin into the water pipe of the Rabin home in Tel Aviv, shooting a missile at his car, and shooting at the prime minister from a sniper’s range.

Shooting a missile at the vehicle was removed as an option when the prime minister began to travel in an armored car. Their favorite option was the sniper shooting. Hagai received sniper training during his IDF service so, according to this plan, he would be the one to shoot Rabin. As time went along, they added another option—placing an explosive device in the gas tank, which was situated right behind the prime minister’s seat in the Cadillac. They also looked into another creative option—making a gun look like a microphone. Rabin often spoke to the press after giving a speech or attending an event. The idea was for them to dress up like reporters and then direct the “microphone” toward him as he answered media questions, assassinating him with just one bullet from point-blank range.

They also explored—and even tested—turning a recording device into an explosive, having it detonate right in his face. In addition, they thought about trying to arrange for a student interview, killing Rabin once they were in the room with him.

Hagai was the wizard who put together the various options from the technical side. While they did not make progress, the history demonstrates how much time and effort they put into the question of how to assassinate Rabin.

Those initial days of interrogations enabled us to identify and bring in other individuals who had knowledge of Amir's plot.

One was a young woman named Hila Frank. During her interrogation, she talked about a conversation she had with a friend named Shlomi Halevi. She claimed she told him that she was afraid Yigal Amir might kill the prime minister, and that Amir had said he'd already tried to do so in the past. Hila also told interrogators that Halevi went to authorities and reported Amir's intentions.

I did not recognize the name Shlomi Halevi. I went right to the computer to check and immediately found two reports. The first was from the morning of June 15, 1995, and was [referenced earlier in the book](#). The statement said a reserve soldier told his commander that late at night in the bathroom of the old bus station in Tel Aviv, he heard two young people talking about a “small Yemenite guy” who wanted to kill the prime minister. The reader may recall that Halevi said he never saw the two men.

The second report was from that same date, but later in the day. The police interrogated Shlomi Halevi and he reported the same information with no significant differences. As I read this, my eyes became moist. I looked at the words without believing what I was seeing. My heart began to beat faster and I could feel the pulse in my earlobes. The “small Yemenite guy” was sitting in the next room, chained to his chair after killing the prime minister.

Now that we had the murderer in custody and knew more about him, I realized this was information that could have served as the very beginning of a lead to preventing the assassination. It was just a little bit of information, but that’s how it starts.

I immediately passed this on to my superiors, who were waiting for regular updates. I included the fact that this report was distributed to all the relevant authorities at the time, including the unit of personal bodyguards for our dignitaries. I could tell from their reactions that they were shocked and saddened. We’d had this information, but weren’t able to do anything with it. Many asked for more facts and continued updates about Halevi’s report.

Halevi was called to the facility for further questioning. He very quickly supported Hila Frank’s report, but admitted that he knew a lot more—and that he had fabricated the bathroom story, lying when he said he did not know the murderer. He gave different explanations for why he withheld this information, but at this point, I already knew we could not trust a word he was saying.

The sad part was that we could do nothing about it. This person—who worked in the intelligence field and who even had a degree of security clearance—had real information about a possible assassin who had already tried to kill the prime minister twice. Yet he decided to share only partial intelligence, which made the tip almost impossible to follow up on. Through his silence, he allowed the murderer to continue exploring the right time and place to kill Rabin. We could see it written all over Halevi's face—he was beginning to realize that he could have prevented Rabin's murder.

His tears didn't help anyone at that point. They just made everyone feel sadness and pain. I met one of my superiors in the agency some time later and he told me that when I called to notify him about Halevi's report, he all-out cried that we had somehow missed that little piece of intelligence.

The interrogations unveiled that this small group of extremists had been planning attacks other than killing the prime minister. Hagai was responsible for gathering weapons and hiding them in his family's home—some in the walls, some in a double floor in the chicken coop in the yard, and some under the sandbox in the kindergarten run by the family. Hagai loved weapons. During his army service, he stole hand grenades and other arms. Starting at the end of 1993, Hagai started creating all kinds of weapons by modifying and specializing existing ones.

In 1995, he made changes to around seventy bullets for a 9 mm gun. He drilled a hole in the tip of each bullet and inserted small ball of metal. He explained that it would “improve the preciseness of the bullets and their strength.”[\[20\]](#)

Hagai tested a few of the bullets at gun ranges and gave some to his brother Yigal. One of the reasons for creating these special bullets was to penetrate a bulletproof vest, should the prime minister be wearing one. He even made a silencer for another member of their group, Dror Edni. Many of these weapons were found in their home after the murder. Other armaments connected to this story were found in the possession of two extremists named Avshalom Weinberg and Arik Schwartz. The two of them stole guns and other ammunition that were even hidden for them by their parents, or by them near their parents' homes. The number of firearms captured as a result of these interrogations was unprecedented.

This small terror group—less than ten members—did not succeed in carrying out any attacks against Arabs or other targets. Some of them backed away from involvement in actual attacks. These young people remained secretive and all were involved—in one way or another—with the murder of a sitting Prime Minister in a democratic state.

Two of them, Dror Edni and Margalit Har-Shefi, were more involved. Edni planned the murder with the brothers and loaned them his Uzi machine gun so they could try out the silencer Hagai produced. Har-Shefi received updates from Yigal himself. He told her about his plans and all the amassed weapons. He disclosed his first attempt to kill the prime minister at Yad Vashem a few months afterward, and told her about the endeavor at Kfar Shmaryahu just one day later. She even asked a rabbi if she was obligated to turn a person who tried to kill the prime minister in to the authorities. The brothers asked for her help in dressing up like a secular woman and gathering information in preparation for stealing

various weapons. Har-Shefi agreed to help organize attacks against Arabs, but preferred not to take part in the actual strikes.

She was very difficult to interrogate because of her ego and the way she expressed her extremist ideologies. All the interrogators were negatively affected when she refused to stand for the siren and moment of silence for the fallen prime minister. She was the only one to boycott the observance. While everyone around her stood, she sat with a smile, seemingly happy with her act of provocation. As difficult as it is to comprehend, even Yigal Amir himself rose for that minute.

The relationship between Har-Shefi and Yigal Amir was very helpful during the interrogation and the investigation. Both spoke very openly and revealed that the murderer not only told Har-Shefi about his intentions to kill Rabin, but even told Hagai that she was going to help as a lookout while camouflaged in secular clothing.

As the interrogation widened, it became clear that a larger number of people knew about Amir's extremism and that he openly said that the prime minister had to be killed. He talked about Jewish law demanding it because of the "pursuer" angle, viewing Rabin as a murderer. Sadly and painfully, many knew even more—not just Hila Frank and Shlomi Halevi.

A very sensitive part of the interrogation dealt with the rabbis. The murderer told us that he had questioned rabbis—either directly or through others—to clarify whether the prime minister should be killed according to Jewish law. The head of our agency knew there was no way they would be able to

prosecute any rabbis for having been involved in a consultation about what Jewish law said about the situation, especially since the meetings were initiated by Amir. Therefore, we settled for very basic, police-led interrogations to try to glean some information from them.

We brought in an additional person to be interrogated right at the very beginning—Avishai Raviv, our agent with the code name “Champagne.” Yes, a Shin Bet agent was interrogated. Various hints revealed during other interrogations indicated there was a strong possibility that Raviv knew more about the assassination plans than he had reported. We needed to ascertain if we should prosecute him for double-crossing us, whether he’d told us everything he knew, and, if he did know more, why didn’t he relay it? Was he, in fact, a traitor?

Avishai Raviv was born in 1967. As a teenager, he was very aware of and in tune with politics. He saw Zionism, as he understood it, as a value of the highest level. He believed strongly in the ability of each individual to do their part in contributing to the state. After adopting extremist, right-wing ideologies and becoming a member of Rabbi Kahane’s Kach party, he enlisted in an IDF combat unit. During his training, he was accidentally shot in the leg and was subsequently hospitalized for nearly half a year. His recuperation took another year. Upon his release from the hospital, the army categorized him as “an injured soldier,” and that ended his IDF combat service and his dream of being either a career officer in the IDF, or a security guard for the Shin Bet. He related that his inability to serve his country in one of these meaningful ways saddened him greatly.

He continued serving in the IDF in a desk job, and upon his release from that service in 1987, he was recruited to serve as an agent in the Shin Bet. He saw this as a way to contribute to his country despite not being able to serve as a combat soldier. He had a clear desire to be part of Israel's security system, and as an agent, he felt he would be part of the heroic, secretive organization that has provided for Israel's security for decades.

Raviv loved the secret meetings, and also the sensation of power that came from what he was doing. These gave him a feeling of tremendous self-worth—something he'd been lacking ever since his injury.

Raviv worked as an agent for the Shin Bet for eight years. During this time, he reported a lot about extremist activity and became a very important source of information. At the end of 1993, around the time of the signing of the First Oslo Accord, he got divorced and his activity as an agent intensified. His work on behalf of the Shin Bet developed into his entire world—on a certain level, he was married to the unit. His meetings with his handlers became more intense and he spoke to them via telephone a few times a day. They met often—sometimes once a week, and at times, even more frequently. He presented as a dedicated, accessible agent who was fulfilling the role and the tasks he was given. Raviv continued working for us even when it led to his peers' suspicions that he was cooperating with the Shin Bet.

Undoubtedly, Raviv was a big help to the Shin Bet and provided valuable information. As a result, we were able to prevent many violent acts and actually save both Arab and Jewish lives. But at the same time, he was problematic. While

serving as a Shin Bet agent who was to prevent crimes from being carried out, he himself executed criminal acts associated with his extreme right-wing ideology. The agency was forced to suspend his activity as an agent numerous times to investigate his illegal activity—which he did not report. As mentioned earlier, at one point he was suspended for a full month—the month leading up to the Rabin assassination.

Dealing with an agent of this kind is very complicated. He needs to be involved in the extremist world to provide the agency with information. This means that he has to be involved—to a certain degree—in extremist activity. That line can be a very difficult one to draw and toe. He cannot go too far in his extremist activities and must find a way to be less active without blowing his cover, which involves a continuous balancing act of weighing positives and negatives.

We often reviewed the positives and negatives of Champagne's involvement and generally concluded that the positives he brought to the table outweighed the negatives. This is why the agency continued to employ him as an agent instead of prosecuting him for his criminal activity. The Justice Department agreed, and Shin Bet always works together with the relevant authorities.

Our interrogations about Raviv during this time revealed that he threatened many people at Bar Ilan University and other schools, and that he took part in slashing the tires of Arabs, as well as physical assaults against Arabs—beatings with weapons. He also threatened public figures by telephone, including Knesset members. He admitted to instructing two other people to carry out nationalistic attacks with stone throwing.

The climax of Champagne's inappropriate activity came with the fake swearing-in ceremony of extreme Jewish terrorists that was covered by Channel One on September 22, 1995. As mentioned earlier, the video shocked and scared the entire country. The agency decided he had crossed a boundary and he was fired. Communication was left open in case he had life-saving, critical information to share.

The Shin Bet had been his entire life. For an agent like Champagne, it was a heavy punishment—but there was no choice. It certainly was not a simple decision. At that time, ideological violence and threats against the lives of leaders like the prime minister were at an all-time high because of the agreements signed with the Palestinians.

During the first month, Champagne was so desperate to be involved that he continued to send us information, including a completely meaningless and insignificant report about Yigal Amir.

On October 31, 1995—just four days before Rabin's murder—Raviv signed a document promising not to engage in any criminal activity and to act appropriately, and was thus rehired. In retrospect, reinstating him then was a blessing. If he had not been active when the assassination took place, we would have been asking ourselves for all eternity whether an active Champagne could have provided us with vital, last-minute information that could have prevented the murder.

While he said that he never heard Amir say he wanted to hurt Rabin physically, Champagne did reveal some details we had not heard from him about the murderer before.

We sent Raviv into the assassin's cell as a fellow incarcerated extremist to see if he could get any further information out of Amir. During their conversation, we noticed clues that made us suspect Raviv was withholding details about the murderer. This led to the difficult decision to criminally interrogate our own agent. Sure enough, it became clear that he had suppressed important evidence about Amir. As a result, Raviv, a Shin Bet agent, was indicted for complicity in Rabin's murder.

The most important thing clarified in the first days after the murder was that while other people were involved, the murderer was the leader of the terror group and was not sent by any specific person. Amazingly, though, he told us over and over again that he was, in fact, sent by the nation of Israel—but only in his distorted mind.

There wasn't much more to add to the story. We had the information we needed, and the horribly dark picture of why he did it and how he did it was all too clear.

Now it was time to act.

## Chapter Seven—A Time to Kill

We had been through three grueling days of nonstop interrogation, searching for the truth behind what happened. The time had come to kill Yigal Amir, the evil person who murdered Yitzchak Rabin.

I knew that by doing so, I could put an end to the shame that this gloating criminal brought upon our state and society. I was sure that I'd thought through every facet of the act and that I understood all the ramifications. As I searched for the right moment, I was consumed with the desire to fire bullets into his chest—the bullets that he himself should have absorbed on that bitter night at the square... A night when the security guards stood like stone and never even drew their guns as the murderer got close enough to see the stripes on the prime minister's suit and pull the trigger three times. That disgrace would end.

I was at peace with my decision.

Or so I thought. But my mind would not stop racing.

*Am I truly prepared to pay a heavy personal price for the state that is so dear to me?*

*Yes, I am willing to do so. I will take my gun and act on the truth that I feel so viscerally. I will fulfill my mission and make the sacrifice for my state. I will be seen as a person who took the law into his own hands to fulfill the truth as he understood it—a truth that goes back to his roots.*

If such a truth actually did exist...

There are times when a person finds themselves in a situation where what they sense cannot be expressed in words; when the words cannot possibly capture the strength of the feelings. It was possible that twenty years after Rabin's murder, my killing of Amir would not be understood. It could be deemed illogical, or even insane. It could be that people looking in from the side would question my sanity—and rightfully so, from their perspective. But to me, there was one clear justification: To end the shame, and to do so as quickly as possible. I needed to bring an end to this murderer's existence on this earth. I had to execute the person who boasted that he “executed the prime minister.”

The questions swirled around in my head. *When are humans, in general, prepared to sacrifice themselves? When will I be prepared to do so? Will sacrificing myself in this situation accomplish the intended goal? Will shooting bullets into the murderer's heart serve to remove the disgrace?*

I wasn't afraid to kill him—I was just searching for the truth. When the assassin killed Rabin, he went to the very limits with his truth. He was prepared to die for it. Remember that he said to me, “I was very scared...that I would not succeed.” But he was not afraid to die and did not care about his own life. He was only scared that something would go awry and he would not complete his mission. That is how convinced he was regarding the righteousness of the path he was taking.

I would not actually die physically. As for my soul, it had already died after that cursed night at the square.

There are times when people set out on a mission that they believe will change history. They don't always succeed. Amir shot the prime minister because he knew it would alter the course of history. In retrospect, he was correct. But how did he know? There is no one absolute truth. *Will my executing the killer change history? Will it change history for the better?* I was not convinced. I was clearly not nearly as confident as the murderer of our leader.

*How can I compare myself to him? What values were taught to him in comparison to the values instilled in me in my home, and in youth movements? What is the essence of education? Is there something called "truth of education," or is there "falsehood in education" by virtue of it being a form of indoctrination? How is it possible that, at the same moment, two men of approximately the same age, native-born Israelis, both of whom served in the army and loved their country, saw the truth so differently?*

His truth was molded for him by his parents, and by his rabbis in religious seminary. Mine was inculcated by my parents, by my counselors in youth movements, from what I experienced during the youth movement activities, from my training in the Shin Bet, and from the leaders of the movement I grew up in. One of them, at that very moment, was lying in a coffin, wrapped in a flag, making his way toward his final resting place.

*What is better right now? Should this vile person live or die? What is best for the state, for the next generations, and for societal lessons?* This was not about what was best for me. I was not the subject of the decision. I would serve time in jail

for a certain number of years and then I would move on with my life. That was what I thought.

But my mind continued to race. *What will the love of my life, my new bride, think? Will she remain my wife? How much backing and support will I receive from her after I kill Amir? Putting aside whatever damage I will cause to myself, will I also destroy her life?*

We were a couple in love, with dreams and plans for the future. Suddenly, we would find ourselves separated by prison walls—she on the outside, me incarcerated on the inside. I recalled how, just the previous day, she stood crying while waiting in the long line to give honor to Rabin, whose coffin lay in state outside the Knesset. And during those same hours, I was waiting for the moment to put the murderer into a different coffin. She was the love of my life. I planned to build a family with her and, together, contribute toward the state. What would my parents say?

*Will my students in the youth movement condemn me and my action? How will the Israeli public see my act? What will it do to the agency? To the state? What is correct? Will I later regret it if I don't shoot him? Am I even capable of carrying out a murder—to kill a person for the state?* My head was exploding.

Rabin's blessing at our wedding kept echoing in my mind. Images from my youth came flashing back to me—our demonstrations against Rabbi Kahane, my anonymous call to the radio when I declared that I was in favor of violating the law, and the officers who shoved me against the police car. I also imagined the shocked and saddened faces of everyone at

the Shin Bet the moment they discovered that one of their own killed the murderer. I was pretty sure they would assume I was temporarily insane. I figured I would make that claim in court and it would be accepted. After a relatively short period of time, I would be released. That was what I thought.

The truth is, I *was* temporarily insane. I'd spent hours sitting across from the assassin who killed my prime minister. I had to serve him coffee, and in the process, stirred up my soul as I stirred the sugar in his cup. I was in spiritual and physical pain.

The trauma of that that horrific night had been experienced by all Israeli citizens who believed in keeping democracy alive as a tool for preserving the Jewish people and the State of Israel. However, I felt that it was much worse for me, given my family and professional background. I even thought that the very fact that I decided to kill the murderer demonstrated that I was not in a normal emotional state. But there was nothing "normal" about what was happening in the state at that time.

The bottom line was that that the interrogation yielded fruit. A clear picture had emerged, and there was no reason for the murderer to take another breath in our world. Of course, we could continue interrogating him and perhaps glean a few more minor details here and there, but we knew he headed the conspiracy. We knew who else was involved, and some of them actually sat in nearby rooms, while others were on their way. There was simply no reason for him to remain alive. But again... *What about the values upon which I was raised and then shared with my students? What about the values I learned at the agency?* Lots of confusion.

The moment of truth arrived.

Monday, November 6, 1995—the day of Prime Minister Rabin’s funeral. During the morning hours, the interrogation continued and I was processing the information.

But then the time came to act. *This is it*. I put aside all the thoughts running through my head and decided, again, to follow through and kill Amir.

The television on the wall was broadcasting the preparations for the funeral ceremony, which was to begin in the afternoon. The media at the airport broadcast the arrival of airplanes carrying world leaders who were coming to pay their respects to Yitzchak Rabin. I sat in the room and tried, unsuccessfully, to write the update from that morning’s interrogation.

A siren sounded throughout Israel for a minute of silence and mourning. The interrogators stopped their work to stand in silence. As mentioned, the murderer rose as well.

The funeral began and everyone gathered in the staff room to watch the ceremony at the national military cemetery on Mount Herzl. Amir was brought into the staff room for a few minutes. He stood in the entrance and watched the screen, not smiling. The room’s sad and heavy atmosphere actually seemed to stop that behavior for a few moments. He simply stood in the doorway victoriously, watching the result of his act with satisfaction.

I was frozen in my chair, unable to move. My brown leather bag was open, sitting on the floor under the table. My gun was inside—a silver Czech CZ–85. It was a good model for a person like me, who is left-handed. I moved my leg

toward the bag under the table as if to confirm that I was not dreaming, and that the bag was actually there. The pistol was within reaching distance from my left leg. In a second or two, it could be in my hand.

The funeral began. The nation was in shock, still not believing that this happened. There was surely not a dry eye in the state. Yifat, my parents, my friends, my colleagues at the agency—each were grieving in their own way.

The moment of truth arrived. There would be no better time. *Our shame must end. I must act.*

I was two meters away from Amir. Two meters away from the individual who brought such disgrace upon our nation and imprinted a stain on Israeli society that would last for generations. I'd made up my mind. Now I just had to do it.

The loudspeakers in my mind declared that it would happen in a second. I was totally prepared, and the countdown began.

My left hand shook, but did not move from its place.

I felt cold sweat on my forehead and anticipated the nonstop thoughts that would run through my mind immediately after I took the shot—the one not yet taken.

I decided to act. *Now!*

Just then, Noa, the teenaged granddaughter of Prime Minister Rabin, appeared on the screen:

You will forgive me, for I do not want to talk about peace. I want to talk about my grandfather. One

always wakes up from a nightmare. But since yesterday, I have only awakened to a nightmare—the nightmare of life without you, and this I cannot bear. The television does not stop showing your picture; you are so alive and tangible that I can almost touch you, but it is only “almost” because already I cannot.

Grandfather, you were the pillar of fire before the camp and now we are left as only the camp, alone, in the dark, and it is so cold and sad for us.

I know we are talking in terms of a national tragedy, but how can you try to comfort an entire people, or include it in your personal pain, when Grandmother does not stop crying and we are mute, feeling the enormous void that is left only by your absence?

Few truly knew you. They can still talk a lot about you, but I feel that they know nothing about the depth of the pain, the disaster, and, yes, this holocaust, for...at least for us, the family and the friends who are left only as the camp, without you—our pillar of fire.

Grandfather, you were, and still are our, hero. I want you to know that in all I have ever done, I have always seen you before my eyes. Your esteem and love accompanied us in every step and on every path, and we lived in the light of your values. You never abandoned us, and now they have abandoned you—you, my eternal hero—cold and lonely, and I can do nothing to save you, you who are so wonderful.

People greater than I have already eulogized you, but none of them was fortunate like myself to feel the caress of your warm, soft hands and the warm embrace that was just for us, or your half-smiles, which will always say so much—the same smile that is no more and froze with you.

I have no feelings of revenge because my pain and loss are so big—too big.

The ground has slipped away from under our feet, and we are trying, somehow, to sit in this empty space that has been left behind in the meantime, without any particular success. I am incapable of finishing, but it appears that a strange hand, a miserable person, has already finished for me.

Having no choice, I part from you, a hero, and ask that you rest in peace, that you think about us and miss us, because we here—down below—love you so much.

To the angels of Heaven that are accompanying you now, I ask that they watch over you, that they guard you well, because you deserve such a guard. We will love you, Grandfather, always.[\[21\]](#)

There wasn't a dry eye in that small room. Actually there were—the dark eyes of the murderer standing near the door. His eyes actually shone. But just as he stood there, frozen in place, so did my left hand. It was trembling and shaking, but it did not move from its place.

Noa's sweet words jolted me into reality. I recalled the beauty of the State of Israel and why I love it so much. After 2,000 years in the diaspora, the Jewish people had returned to its ancient, biblical homeland and had successfully built a Jewish state where Jewish granddaughters could live as free and unafraid Jews along with their grandfathers. We'd succeeded in building a free, civilized democracy—an island of freedom in the Middle East built on core Jewish values. Two of those principles were not to murder and not to take revenge. Those beliefs also included adhering to the rule of law, no matter how difficult a challenge it might be, and the need to reject extremism, a trait that my unit tried to combat and that drove the assassin to act.

I was also jolted back to my youth and the morals I was raised upon. Despite my strong political views and connection to Prime Minister Rabin, I could not allow myself to become an extremist.

That was it. I would not kill the prime minister's murderer.

Those moments highlighted the chasm between the values of that most despicable of men and the principles shared by the Shin Bet personnel who surrounded him. It was almost impossible to fathom the difference. These seconds were indescribable—what almost occurred and what actually took place.

The murderer stood near the door and, like everyone else in the room, he didn't have a clue that the moment of truth passed. My hand still shook, but the gun remained in the bag under the table, still resting near my left leg.

Seconds earlier, Amir was close to his end. He was, in fact, closer to dying than when he shot Rabin and the security guards remained immobile, with their guns still in their holsters.

But the moment passed and once again, the murderer gained a reprieve from death.

How long does a moment of truth last? What, in essence, is time? While it seemed to take forever—time with no end—it actually took just a few minutes. But those eternal moments lasted for years—much longer than the intense three days I spent in that facility. The effects lasted forever.

In a split second, I decided not to bend down and take the gun out to end the disgrace—or, mistakenly, perhaps exacerbate the disgrace. The decision not to pull the trigger won out. Restraint won. Reason won. The rule of law won. Understanding won.

Democracy also won. Amir failed to destroy our democracy.

The values of the agency won. The education that I received in my home won. When I was a youngster, I thought it was correct, permissible, and even an obligation to cross that line for a goal. As a mature adult and a member of the Shin Bet, crossing that line could have led to an even greater catastrophe than the lengthy death sentence the murderer deserved.

The State of Israel and its values won.

And in the end, I won. After it was all was said and done, I also won.

I chose correctly. Amir had no right to live. However, in examining all sides of the question, I concluded that it was actually better that he remained alive, buried away in jail forever. *Let him serve as a warning sign when we face difficult days ahead. He can be our “scarlet letter” for years to come. Let him rot away alone in his isolated cell while knowing that outside those walls, the upstanding and democratic state that he sought to destroy continues to function. It is a state licking its wounds, but its heart is still beating. It is a state that did not kill him, even though he deserved to die after committing a heinous crime on that cursed night.*

And yet, when I had the chance and could have easily brought his life to an end, the values of our state won out. A civilized state does not take revenge. A civil servant of a civilized state does not take revenge. A Shin Bet agent who analyzes intelligence dealing with people who take revenge does not reduce himself to their level. Revenge is an act of the weak—those whose emotions overtake their intelligence.

In that moment of truth, I came to understand that no good would come out of my killing him and, in actuality, it would have spiraled us into a degraded society from which there would be no return. In addition, I understood that killing the murderer would not have prevented the next murder, especially if, just like Amir, a potential murderer had no fear of death while carrying out his mission.

It took many years to realize that I can be proud of my decision. I now truly understand the magnitude of the control I exercised by not killing Amir. The values of our state won.

This is the kind of state we want to preserve—a moderate, ideological, value-centered democracy. A society that knows there are boundaries between what is permitted and what is forbidden, even during difficult times. This is the path Rabin fought for his entire life—won just three days after his murder. He may have been killed, but not what he stood for. The Shin Bet won as well, in educating its workers regarding what is and what isn't acceptable. Not one agent acted violently toward this despicable murderer. The punishment for assassins in other countries—even in some other democracies—would have been different. But not here in Israel. Here, our values won.

That was the also the difference between me and Amir: the understanding that protecting boundaries, even when that protection is difficult to implement, is the basis for our right to exist here.

The moment of truth passed, but I continued to suffer for a long time—many years. Nights were very difficult. I could not restore silence and calm to my mind. In my dreams, I wallowed in the blood of shots: *Boom! Boom! Boom!* The shots that I chose not to take rang out endlessly. The sweat dripped from my body. I constantly woke up from nightmares. I was also tormented by questions. “How did we not prevent the murder? How did we not stop Amir?”

Intellectually, I understood that it was far better to suffer for many years over my inaction than from having acted. There was really no gray area here. I did the right thing.

So, this is the story of how Yigal Amir remained a living, breathing symbol of disgrace, and he will remain being

that symbol until his dying day. The horrendous act he committed will continue to exist in the public consciousness, and his remaining life in that dark cell will serve to remind us of the terrible deed he perpetrated.

For three days I planned, thought, and waited to carry out my decision. In the end, I came to the understanding that it would not be the right thing to do.

I passed the most difficult test to my values that I could possibly imagine. The result was that it allowed the national healing process to begin—a long and arduous trek from the assassination. Some may argue it has, unfortunately, not even truly begun.

Quite amazingly, Amir thought the country perceived him as a hero. He told us that one evening, while he lying in his cell, he felt an earthquake. He thought God was causing it so the walls of the jail would collapse and he could go free. I looked at him to see if he was joking. He was completely serious.

I asked him, “What do you think would happen if the walls of the jail fell and you went free?”

He answered with a big smile that he was sure he would be welcomed with open arms and the nation of Israel would thank him for what he did. I told the murderer that, in my opinion, nine out of ten people would turn him into the police immediately, or would beat him up if he was found walking around outside.

He looked at me and said, “So I will go free for the tenth.”

I thought to myself that the tenth person would kill him, while the other nine would be satisfied with just hitting him or turning him in.

On November 16, a week and a half after the assassination, the question of how Amir would be received by the public was put to the test when he was taken to the scene of the murder to show us how it all happened. He wore a bulletproof vest because we feared someone would try to kill him during the re-enactment. Dozens stood and screamed curses at him as he showed us in detail how he carried out the murder. Amir maintained his composure despite the shock he must have felt from the hostile public reaction.

Yet, despite the trauma, the hurt, the pain, and the anger, no one killed him. Once again it was proven that Amir was a deviation from the population of Israel, whose Jewish state is based on core Jewish and human values, including “Thou shall not murder.”[\[22\]](#)

## Chapter Eight—Personal Trauma

Prime Minister Rabin's murder was already a thing of the past. An investigative committee completed writing its suggestions and the murderer, Yigal Amir, was already sentenced and serving his time. One would have thought that I would be able to resume a normal life. But it was not meant to be. My life was not even close to normal.

I wondered, *Do all my colleagues in the unit feel shaken and are simply being quiet about it?*

The unusual calm present with all of us trying to cope with what happened was palpable. I felt as if the walls around me were shaking. The security guards who surrounded Rabin that night certainly could not sleep. I knew other people in the agency, from young workers like myself to managers to the agency directors, had to have been struggling with the return to normal life while a storm raged internally.

I asked myself, *What is happening with them? Is anyone worrying about them? I cannot be the only one who is trying to digest it all alone while staying quiet. It surely is not only me who cannot stop looking at the photographs of Rabin hanging on every wall, hallway, and corner in the unit.* Or so it seemed.

In a secret organization, there is an organizational culture of quiet. "Shh... We don't talk unless we have to." I figured that if I attempted to talk about it, it would not be taken well. Did the fact that people were not discussing it

mean that everything was okay, or was the organization acting like an ostrich burying its head in the sand?

For many years I remained silent, pretending as if whatever was happening was just my issue. I assumed that what I was experiencing was a natural result of being in such close proximity to the murderer in the holding facility. No one bothered to ask if I needed any help—or even thought to ask. We were accustomed to remaining silent and refraining from expressing our feelings and anxieties. They taught us to “be strong”—even if we had to pretend.

But then “the blue” began to take control.

Every day, flashbacks occurred more and more frequently. Day after day, and usually many times a day, memories flashed deeper into my soul. My depression increased. It grew into a vicious cycle—imagining the events led to additional remembrances flashing through my mind that got worse as time went by. As my memories became sharper, the flashbacks intensified and increased my pain. I wanted to scream from the torment...but remained silent.

My ability to sleep was greatly affected. I had trouble falling asleep every night and once I fell asleep, I knew that as soon as I woke up—for any reason—it meant the end of my night’s rest. I was unable to fall back asleep. If the baby cried at 1:00 a.m., that was it—my night was over. If our child woke up from a bad dream and came to cuddle in our bed, I was up for the rest of the night. I would stroke his head and my thoughts would once again begin to drive me crazy. When the phone rang with an important update from work, my night was over. I may have slept intermittently between dreams about the

murder, but the thoughts and the flashbacks flickering behind my eyes did not go away.

And everything was in blue.

The color of the shirt that Amir deliberately wore that night was blue. Blue was the color of my youth group uniform. Blue consumed my thoughts.

And the blue won.

Slowly but surely, I was conquered and overwhelmed by it, and held up my arms in surrender. From the first light in the morning, I saw only blue. I was like a person thrown into the heart of the sea, and no matter which direction they swim in or look around, all they see is blue—around them, above them, and below them. For years I woke up to this color, and for years I could not sleep because of it. Every time I saw blue, I was flooded with flashbacks from that cursed night.

I woke up in the morning and looked out the window and the sky was blue. I went into the bathroom to brush my teeth and the blue mouthwash on the shelf chuckled at me with the murderer's horrible laugh. I left the house and looked up at the sky and the murderer smiled at me from within the clouds. I drove on Highway 6 on my way to work, where the blue signs read "Rabin Highway," and from the sign, Amir joyfully giggled.

It was as if he decided to make me crazy from the blue. I wondered if he would ever stop laughing. There was no escaping the all-consuming internal battle. If I saw a highway worker on the side of the road wearing a blue shirt, I imagined the murderer had been released and was working in a field next to the highway. When I finished meetings with agents—

while searching for the next possible murderer—I then sat at my computer and read material about potential threats to the new prime minister. There was practically no significant meeting where the subject of the Rabin assassination did not arise.

Fortunately, the flashbacks did not affect me while in middle of important tasks at work—apart from two exceptions. One time while meeting with an agent, flashes from the night of the murder surged forward, but I managed to regain my composure quickly. The agent did not notice anything unusual.

The second time occurred on the day of the circumcision of Amir's son. After a long and drawn-out court battle, Amir was permitted to marry via a proxy who gave the ring to his bride. Amir and his wife managed to bring a son into the world and the baby's circumcision coincided with the twelfth anniversary of the murder—November 4, 2007. At the same time the circumcision was taking place, I was delivering a presentation about the murder. I had given it many times, but during this speech, the dreadful images that I knew all too well from the constant nightly flashbacks hit me hard. I apologized to the audience and explained what was happening at that very moment in the prison. They demonstrated patience and understanding regarding the difficult circumstances. They could not possibly know, however, what was actually happening in my mind at that moment. They did not know that for over ten years I had been hostage to nightmares in blue.

After that speech—which I left on shaking legs—I decided that if that kind of attack recurred while I was in the midst of working, I would go into the office of head of my department, place my keys on the table, and submit my

resignation. I feared that my emotional fragility would have a negative impact on my work. I was fortunate that up to this point, my condition only afflicted my soul and had not yet led me to make any serious mistakes. But I feared that it was only a matter of time.

Later I found out that what I was experiencing were classic symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). While they were getting worse, fortunately they had not yet had a negative impact professionally. In fact, they may have had the opposite effect, as it is quite possible that my drive for excellence was a normal reaction to the abnormal situation I found myself. I delved deeply into every piece of intelligence that came my way. I understood the degree of responsibility that rested on my shoulders with each new situation that arose. My reactions and responses to people I met with, and how I dealt with new information, determined how the entire Shin Bet infrastructure dealt with the intelligence.

While I continued to work hard, I managed to keep the recurring, horrendous flashbacks to myself, only having the guts to discuss the situation with my wife, Yifat. Every night I tossed and turned in my bed, remaining silent. But she heard. My life's partner proved over and over again that she was there for me. It was not easy for her.

It was actually a challenging time at work as well. A new manager decided to make drastic changes to our division. I always believe in giving adjustments a chance to succeed, but when I saw the ones he made were completely mistaken, I did not hesitate to express my opinion. This resulted in a bitter rivalry between the two of us. He, of course, had the upper

hand, and he was not a person who hesitated for a moment to exercise his power.

After thirteen years passed since the murder, I felt as if I had only taken steps backward. The assassination affected every aspect of my life. Once, while sitting at the Sabbath meal, my aunt Sarah said, “Where is that beautiful laugh that you used to have? Where has it gone?”

I remained silent, not having the strength to explain. I also did not believe anyone at the table was capable of understanding.

But she pressed on: “Where is the happiness in life of the boy that I loved so much? Where have you gone, and what has caused the real you to fade away?”

I knew the answer I should have given her: “The Dvir you knew, the one with the beautiful laugh, no longer exists. He no longer has the ability to laugh. The meeting with the assassin, the murderer who laughed in his face, killed that Dvir. The murderer who decided that Yitzchak Rabin would no longer be able to laugh also killed his laugh.”

But I didn’t say that. I just thought it.

Aunt Sarah was not the only one who asked questions. Those closest to me recognized that something was not right. My wife made it clear that she was very concerned and afraid of the worsening of my condition.

And then our third child was born—a wonderful boy with red hair and green eyes. Every single night I woke up when he cried ending my night’s sleep. Somehow, when my older children were babies (they were both born within five

years of the assassination), the sleepless nights did not feel traumatic to me. They seemed to be “natural” and I simply dealt with the difficult nights. This was different.

During the first few months after this child’s birth, I barely slept. By that point, despite the thirteen years that had passed since Rabin’s murder, the flashbacks were getting worse. I knew that I was deteriorating. I felt like my mind was screaming “Save me!” “Enough!” “I am tired thinking about the murder, the assassin, and the entire situation!”

Yifat continued to ask how she could help, and I just kept retreating further and further within myself. In total silence.

When we got married, we planned on trying to have four children. Three had already been born and we began discussing a fourth. It became clear that I would not be able to handle it. I did not have the strength. Aside from the color blue which had control over me wherever I looked—including the blue on the Israeli flag—I started seeing people on the street who resembled the murderer and, oddly enough, Champagne’s handler. While driving, I suddenly thought I spotted his handler driving behind me. I stopped at a red light and looked to my right, and Yigal Amir would be sitting at the wheel of the next car, laughing at me. I looked up at the sky in hopelessness, and there was that blue again.

I was defeated, with no more strength. I could not find any respite, any calm.

I asked myself, “Am I upset at myself for not shooting him when I could?” Fifteen years had now passed. Why did I

deserve this? Why did my wife deserve this? Why did my children deserve this?

Around this time, I was chosen to represent our unit as part of a Shin Bet delegation to Poland. Shin Bet Director Yuval Diskin joined us for the first two days of the trip. Visiting the extermination camps in Poland is a powerful and emotional experience for any Jew. It is even more so for Shin Bet workers, who dedicate their lives to protecting the Jewish state. My grandparents on both sides lost most of their relatives in that cursed land. I walked there in the freezing cold, experiencing the path to hell taken by my own family.

This type of trip breaks down many barriers that we create for ourselves and exposes us to evil in the clearest of terms. For those of us in the Shin Bet, it helps to clarify and sharpen our place and our responsibility.

Asher, an eighty-five-year-old Holocaust survivor, accompanied us. He described the selection process that left him alive as a thirteen-year-old, but sent his mother and brother, Gabriel, to their deaths. There he was—a thirteen-year-old boy left to survive on his own in Poland's Lodz ghetto. He told us that since that day, he saw the looks on the faces of his mother and brother when they were separated from him. Asher said their expressions still haunted him—decades later.

It struck me, as he described the scene so vividly, how the images from his past remained the nightmare of his thoughts to that day. I connected with Asher on a deep level and engaged in many long conversations with him. It turned out that when he moved to Israel, he worked at a chicken coop

that belonged to my grandparents. I realized we did not meet simply by chance. He appeared in my life just when I needed to meet a person like him with his specific life story.

We arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau, one of the worst of the extermination camps. Approximately 100 Shin Bet workers marched in, row by row, proudly holding aloft flags of the State of Israel and of the Shin Bet. Standing on the side was another group of Israelis visiting there. We could see their pride when they saw this unfold before their eyes.

Suddenly, while I was feeling such strength and national pride, horrific scenes started running through my mind. I imagined myself as a prisoner marching through the concentration camp on a death march. The people standing on the side were yelling at us, the Shin Bet workers, “Nazis! Nazis!” Among the screamers stood the protagonists of my private nightmare. The murderer, in his blue shirt, shrieked “Nazi!” at me while laughing. I had experienced being called a Nazi before; when I was involved in operations dealing with some of the extremists, they shouted it at us. But at those times, my position enveloped me and protected me from their harsh taunts. This time, I was alone with my thoughts—with no defense.

At the end of that day, we parted ways with the Shin Bet director. He and Asher exchanged a very warm hug. The next day, we continued on to more camps. I spied Asher sitting to the side, looking very tired. I sat down next to him and asked how he was doing. He looked at me with tears in his eyes and told me that he had slept very little the previous night. Saying good-bye to the agency director reminded him of the day he was separated from his mother and brother, and he

could not sleep all night. The image of that separation would not leave his mind. He then told me about all of his difficult nights, the flashbacks, and the heartaches and headaches that never went away.

Suddenly, in a conversation with an eighty-five-year-old man whose childhood years were had been a nightmare, I understood that the same situation had now been imposed on me. *In forty years, I still won't succeed in falling asleep at night. Time will not cure or heal me—unless I stop trying to deal with the situation alone and ask for help.*

After my conversation with Asher in the freezing cold of the Majdanek concentration camp, the idea that I needed to seek help began to percolate. I started to understand that I had to throw off the mask and stop pretending as if everything were fine. There, on the cursed land of Poland, I realized that I was losing control of my life for no reason.

Upon my return to Israel, everything went back to normal—work and very difficult nights. At home, we resumed discussing having a fourth child, and each conversation reminded me of my fear of more horrific nights. The possibility of a fourth child kept me awake night after night. Then I made the final decision—as a result of my conversation with Asher. *I am going to ask for help.*

I asked to speak to the head of my division—a straightforward, honest, professional, former educator who'd known me for many years and, as far as I could tell, valued me both on a professional and personal level. At the outset I made it clear that this was a pressing, personal conversation, and he agreed to meet me the next morning.

Red-eyed and tired from another sleepless night, I made my way into the office. He met me in the hallway and I could tell that something had come up. He explained that there was a real-time report about a threat on a public figure's life and he needed to postpone our meeting. I understood that type of threat took priority, but I told him that we had to find the time to speak that day. He tried to engage me in conversation while we were standing in a side room off the hallway, but my red eyes and mumbled words apparently made him realize that the issue was more serious than he realized, and it couldn't be treated casually or delayed too long. He checked his schedule for the day and explained that until midday, he was busy in critical meetings. Then he had to travel to Tel Aviv to approve the plans for a Shin Bet operation.

If I were now permitted to describe that mission even a little bit, you readers would understand the sense of urgency in our work to preserve democracy in Israel. He told me he simply had no time to meet that day, so I asked him if I could join him for the ride to Tel Aviv, and we could talk while traveling. He agreed to that suggestion, knowing instinctively that this could not wait.

There we were on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway—the same road I traveled on that horrible night en route to meeting Yigal Amir. The director drove and I sat in the passenger seat. It was not an ideal scenario to be crying out for help, without the ability to look straight into my boss's eyes, but the two of us had learned over the years to adapt and have all kinds of conversations in many different venues. It took me some time to be able to open up, but I finally found the inner strength to do so as we passed the Harel Interchange—the spot

where, at 11:15 p.m. on the night of the murder, I first heard the announcement that Rabin had died from his wounds.

I told my boss about the gun. The director turned to me with a penetrating look. I narrated the story of the saliva in my mouth, which I did not spit, that I still felt stuck in my throat. I confessed how I almost killed Amir, but chose not to. I described the sleepless nights and told him that I needed help finding air to breathe, because I felt like I was choking.

We reached the office in Tel Aviv, where he had to run into his meeting. We agreed that the conversation would remain between us and that he would schedule a meeting between me and the professionals who deal with these types of situations.

The relief was instantaneous. I'd found a listening ear within the Shin Bet and I now knew someone would take care of me and protect me. I could have gone directly to the professionals without going through the director, but I chose to arrange it through him so I would have someone in authority in my corner. I knew there would be difficult days ahead.

When it was time for the next step, with shaking legs I entered the office of Roni. He was a psychological professional with a wealth of experience treating Shin Bet personnel. He made me feel comfortable immediately—as if we were simply having a business conversation. I discovered right away that he was a nice, sweet person who oozed empathy.

I unburdened myself to Roni, telling him everything—and surprising myself. It felt like I was dumping a truckload of

garbage upon him as I spoke without stopping for at least an hour and a half.

He explained that, in most cases, the symptoms of PTSD first appear after several years. He told me he was happy that, as opposed to other cases he had dealt with, my family remained intact and was not destroyed—yet. Had he known my wife and her inner strength, he would have understood why this did not occur.

Roni told me the good news—there was a great deal of experience with similar cases and help was available. He explained about a treatment called EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing),[\[23\]](#) which worked by using associations. He suggested we start during our next session.

I agreed and went home, knowing that seeking help was the right move. Despite that, I experienced another sleepless night.

Treatment began the following week. It was more difficult than I thought it would be. Roni asked me to select three images from the story I told him during our initial meeting. The first was the closed door of the facility in Petach Tikva—closed, before I entered it, when I had no inkling what awaited me on the other side and I had no idea that my life was about to change. It was an old brown door with numerous bolts.

The second image was from the kitchenette as I stood with my back to the murderer and prepared a cup of coffee for him. The third memory was in the staff room—sitting there

with my bag on the floor while the murderer stood and watched Rabin's funeral along with us.

Roni explained how the system worked. He placed a device that shook and lit up into each hand. I was supposed to follow the light, which would flash from hand to hand. The devices would vibrate the entire time. At the same time, I was supposed to concentrate on the first image. I was permitted to close my eyes after a few seconds, but I had to continue focusing on the first mental picture until he shut the devices off.

I told him I was ready to start while actually thinking to myself that this was likely the weirdest thing I'd ever been asked to do in my entire life. I recall asking myself, "Which idiot devised this idea?" and "How can two tiny vibrating devices with flashing lights possibly help me leave behind the hell I am experiencing?" It was too late to back out of this exercise and I could not bring myself to tell Roni that he had lost his mind. After several seconds, I told myself to just go through with it, since I had nothing to lose.

Roni asked me to think about the first memory: the door leading into the holding facility on that night of horror. He explained that when he started up the devices, I had to look at the flashing lights and think about that image. He reminded me that after a few seconds, I could close my eyes, but must continue thinking about the scene until he shut off the devices.

Roni turned them on. I looked at the light that flashed in my right hand. Then it lit up in my left, and returned to the right. My eyes were going back and forth, back and forth. I felt like a referee in a very fast-paced tennis match who cannot

stop watching the ball. Right, left, right, left—over and over again with the device vibrating.

After twenty seconds, I closed my eyes and my head began to work. All it took were those twenty seconds and the devices and I flew back in time fifteen years. A motivated young man stood outside a door, about to go up the stairs on the night between November 4 and 5, 1995, to a situation that would change his life.

I imagined the door opening—a door that led to an abyss. I opened it. There was no floor and I jumped, without hesitating, into an endless free fall until I landed in a sea of blood. Many sharks were chewing on a body. I felt very hot and I began to sweat and tear up.

A few seconds went by, or perhaps it was a few hours—I had no idea. Roni shut down the devices and gave me a handkerchief. I tried to restore a normal pace of breathing and began to tell Roni what went through my mind.

Roni asked, “On a scale of one to ten, how difficult was the sensation?”

I said, “Nine,” only so it would not appear as if it were too difficult for me, despite the fact that the memory brought me right back to that holding facility the moment the devices turned on. I told Roni about the images that ran through my mind. He looked at me with a quiet and calm expression on his face and nodded with understanding.

When I completed telling him my experience, he suggested that we continue from that precise point in the story. He restarted the devices. Again, I looked right, left, right, left,

with the vibrating in my hands. My mind began to race while my eyes teared nonstop.

Roni stopped the devices and, once again, I told him what I experienced. I drank some water, dried my face, and talked some more. The cycle repeated at least six more times and I felt like I was fighting for my life during those difficult moments, while at the same time attempting to escape from my personal hell.

After approximately an hour and a half, Roni said, “That’s enough for today.” He suggested we end the session with some light meditation. He understood that he could not send me directly outside, given my current state of mind, without doing something to calm me down. Roni asked me to sit quietly with my eyes closed and to imagine that I was relaxing on the beach with a nice, warm sun; clear blue skies; and a calm, blue sea with no waves.

“Stop!” I yelled as I opened my eyes. “Not blue! No way! Do not say blue to me!”

I explained my association with the color and that there was no chance I could calm down through a story in which everything was blue. Roni asked me what color I liked the best.

“Green. Deep, bright green is my favorite color,” I answered quickly to push out the blue.

Roni started the meditation once more. He asked me to imagine that I was surrounded with green leaves in a quiet, grassy garden in the heart of a green forest.

He sent me home once he was certain I had calmed down. I left Roni's office and, with very heavy legs, walked toward my car. I was convinced that everyone on the street was staring at me with the same sort of pity reserved for an aimless, strange-looking wanderer.

It was late at night and the trip to my house was far too short. While driving in an agricultural area, I left my car in the dark and roamed into the middle of a field. It was a cold night and drops of light rain fell onto my head. I felt like I needed air. I urinated there and had the unusual sensation of experiencing the combination of rain, urinating, and sweating all at once.

I began to breathe normally again and started thinking. I looked toward a nearby horse barn and the large, black eyes of one of the horses caught my attention. They were gentle—so unlike the satanic eyes of the murderer who was rotting away in his prison cell. The horse's look was comforting, and it was as if he were whispering to me, "I understand. I understand that it's hard."

I caught myself and thought, *What is happening to me? Have I sunk so low that I have begun talking to horses?* The days ahead would be very telling.

Upon entering the house, I gave Yifat a hug. With her great wisdom, she did not ask me any questions. I went into bed for a long night filled with many thoughts and little sleep. I hugged and caressed my children. The week ended on Friday with the one escape from my challenges—three hours of acting in a drama club, an activity that enabled me to detach from everything else in life.

A new week began—another week of staring at my computer. I had reached the point where my supervisor stopped giving me work that included being involved in anything significant. I had raised my hands in surrender since one war—the war for my life—was enough. Things were quite calm during this time, so I didn't feel like my lack of involvement was hurting anything or representing a slacking off on my part. All week, I simply waited for my next meeting with Roni on Thursday.

"It's good that we meet on Thursdays," I told Roni as I entered his room. "This gives me two days to recuperate before my colleagues at work see me."

He smiled and said without pausing, "Let's begin with the second image today. Can you describe it?"

"I was standing and preparing coffee, and the murderer was behind me, looking at me with his victorious smile. I prepared coffee for him."

Roni said, "We are beginning. Are you ready?"

I nodded my head and the treatment began.

It felt like I was riding a roller coaster in an amusement park. The devices were turned on and my mind began to go wild from the vibrating and flashing lights and the back and forth movement of my eyes, and I lost control of my imagination.

Roni turned off the devices. I needed air very badly. I told him about the storm that erupted in my mind.

"I was stirring the coffee and looking into the cup and the liquid inside the cup was blood. My hand was mixing and

creating a big whirlpool of red.” I stopped for a moment and drank some water and wiped away my tears. “Inside the whirlpool, I saw myself. I was alone, being sucked in farther and farther with no ability to escape or to breathe. I was drowning in the depths of the coffee that had turned to blood.”

“How difficult was this for you on a scale of zero to ten?”

“Nine, I think—maybe ten,” I replied.

“Okay,” Roni said, “we will continue. Let’s start again with that image from the beginning.” He restarted his torture devices.

In my mind, the murderer arose and stood on my right, with me on his left. I stirred the coffee toward the left, counterclockwise, attempting to turn time backward while he stirred the coffee toward the right—as far right as it could possibly go. Both of us were aggressively mixing the coffee in opposite directions. The spoons we were using were attached to a thin, strong string that was twisting around the palms of our hands as we mixed, getting tighter and tighter.

The murderer laughed while he was mixing and tightening the string on his hand, feeling no pain. With a very serious face, I continued stirring. The string was tightening around my hand and my face showed that I was in a great deal of pain. Blood began to drip from our hands, trickling into the coffees, turning them red. He laughed out loud while looking into the whirlpool in his cup. Inside the whirlpool, Yitzchak Rabin was painfully suffering and was drawn into the bloody whirlpool. Inside my cup, the assassin was swimming with an

arrogant expression on his face, refusing to be drawn into the depths of the sea of blood in my cup.

The blood kept dripping from my hand until my body felt weak from losing so much blood. Fortunately, Roni then stopped the devices. It was as if it all ended, as if I had yelled, “Enough!” I may have actually done so.

I took a sip of water and wiped away the tears. In a choking voice, I told Roni what I had visualized.

“How bad?” Roni asked.

“At least ten.” I was still gasping.

“Are we continuing?”

I regained my ability to breathe normally. “Yes, I am ready. Let’s go.”

“Okay, again from the beginning of the memory.” He turned on the horrific devices.

There I was—a young man at the peak of his glory, two months after his wedding, preparing a cup of coffee for Yigal Amir, the murderer. My imagination ran amok as my hand shook from the vibrations. My eyes dripped tears while my mouth trembled in a silent cry. Roni did not turn off the devices. I felt as if all my strength was ebbing, but he let it continue. After around a minute and a half—which felt like forever to me—he turned off the devices, permitting me to leave November 1995 and return to the present in his office.

“During those few minutes, I was standing and mixing the coffee for the murderer, who was clad in the blue shirt, sitting behind me, shining like the sun. I was stirring and spitting, stirring and spitting, until most of the liquid in the cup

was my saliva. I turned around to my right with the cup filled with spit in my left hand. I threw the contents of the cup at the murderer, who was chained to his chair. He looked petrified and his laughing ceased. The sticky spit from the cup began to trickle down his face.”

I stopped and looked at Roni. He gazed at me with his gentle eyes and asked me to continue.

“As the murderer looked at me, shocked, I drew my pistol and shot two short bursts—each burst containing three bullets. Three bullets hit to the left of his chest. The holes appeared one on top of the other, and three to the right, one on top of the other...perfectly.”

I wiped my nose and eyes and continued to describe what happened. “The murderer’s eyes remained wide open. He wasn’t smiling anymore. Because he was chained, he was unable to fall from the chair onto the dirty floor—where he belonged. I looked at the bullet holes that put an end to our national disgrace. Blood began to pour out of those six holes and onto his blue shirt. And he sat there, wearing that blue shirt that was intended to resemble the uniform of my youth movement with its red lacing. Now his shirt was blue and trimmed with red blood and he was drawing his last few breaths. He was no longer smiling. He was no longer laughing. He was dead!”

“How much was this from zero to ten?” Roni asked.

I was drained and in so much pain that I could not answer. My haggard appearance said it all.

“I understand,” he said. “Should we continue?”

I took a moment or two to compose myself. “We are continuing!” I declared. I had come to save my life and that of my family. I was not going to give up.

“Okay, back to the beginning of that memory again,” he said as he turned on the devices.

During the previous round, my brain allowed me to shoot Amir. This time, I imagined turning toward the murderer with an M-16 machine gun in my hands, firing round after round with no end. The walls all around his dead body were dripping with his blood, and his body was so destroyed that it was virtually impossible to identify him—nor was there a need to do so.

As long as the devices vibrated, I kept shooting and shooting without stopping. Actually, I continued crying while shooting—until all the walls of the room were covered with chunks of flesh that, just hours beforehand, had been parts of a human being who, in one split second, shamed the Jewish people, shamed the state of Israel, and shamed the Shin Bet.

Roni turned off the devices and the shooting stopped. I could actually smell the burning dust from the shooting in that room. Roni looked at me and said quietly, “Okay, I think that is enough for today. Let’s shift now to meditation.”

He colored the world green again—a green that sought to erase the blue ruling over my soul.

“What’s my prognosis?” I asked him. “Please explain what is happening to me.”

In a sweet and kind voice, Roni told me that I was making good progress and was experiencing a typical state of

PTSD. He explained that, on the one hand, my situation was unique, while, on the other hand, it was manifesting as regular PTSD.

“The uniqueness of your situation is the reality of a value and ideological conflict that is taking place in your head. The situation—in which no matter what you would have decided, you would have been left conflicted—has abandoned you to a state where these thoughts won’t leave you.”

Roni continued explaining that PTSD usually occurs because of something that came to pass—an accident, for example. “In your case, nothing actually occurred while, at the same, time a lot happened. But everything that took place was in your head.”

As I did after every treatment, I felt the need to halt and gather myself together before returning to my family. On the way home, I once again stopped in that open field. I urinated and cried and saw that horse again—as if it had waited there all week. I don’t know if the horse actually meant to convey a message, but from his expression, it felt like he was telling me, “Be strong.”

I felt like a rag. I reviewed the images that had run through my mind in the room of “the witch of EMDR” and realized that some of them had been doing so for years, while others were fresh from that evening. With a broken heart, feeling exhausted, and with my strength sapped, I returned home. Despite being drained, I understood that I could not stop now. I needed to continue to fight. Surrender was no longer an option.

I was so tired when I returned home that night that I desperately begged God to be kind and allow me to fall asleep. However, the thoughts did not stop. When I closed my eyes, a series of flashbacks assaulted my soul. I opened my eyes and the room was completely dark. It felt like the murderer was standing above me, laughing, while stabbing my stomach with a pitchfork. He kept moving it up and down.

I rolled off the bed and onto the floor. Lying there, crunched up in a fetal position, I cried silently from the torment. I felt actual pain in my stomach from the pitchfork's stabbing, over and over. I did not know what was happening to me, but it felt like someone had torn open my stomach. The night would not end and morning was refusing to come. The ticking of the clock in our room seemed to keep the beat of the stabbing of my stomach. It was a nightmare. I thought, *Who is the person actually in prison—me or the murderer? Is it the individual sitting in his cell and smiling right now while saying midnight prayers, or preparing for early morning services, or is it me?*

Yifat lay on the bed while I was on the floor. She held my hand and asked, "What can I do to help?"

I answered her with great difficulty, "You just have to be."

She held my hand all night and, as morning came, I looked at her, torn apart with pain. Her loving look said to me, "I am here with you. I am not going anywhere. You are not alone. Ever."

Redemption arrived in the morning. It was Friday and life went on. Most of the day, I walked around like a zombie,

totally exhausted. I tried as much as I could to stay busy with little things so as not to think.

On Friday night, the children went to sleep, but I did not. Together with my wife, we tried to figure out what was happening. We talked a bit, and then another nightmarish night on the floor began. The next morning, the Sabbath day, we decided that we had to leave the house to visit people—to see smiles and try to be normal. My wife was fighting as hard as possible to make sure I would not fall all the way to the bottom of the pit.

I had called Roni earlier that morning and left him a message to please call me back. When he did so, I said, “Roni, is this how it is going to be? I am suffering.”

I described what had happened the last two nights. He calmed me and suggested that I come to see him right then, saying we could meet at a café and assuring me that what I described was a reaction he was accustomed to. It was natural. He was encouraged by the fact that the second night was somewhat easier than the first. He estimated that the next would be even easier.

I asked myself, “He is prepared to see me right now, on the Sabbath morning? He has dealt with so many cases of PTSD. Is my case that serious?”

Since my entire family was already in the car to head south, I thanked him for his willingness to see me, but I decided to remain with my family for our outing.

After another difficult night—which was slightly easier than the previous nights—I went back to work. I was on “automatic pilot,” and not truly there. The head of my division

visited during that week and asked how I was doing. When I told him a little bit of what I was experiencing, he offered to come up with a cover story to get me some time off. I let him know that work was one of the few things that gave me strength in those days.

During the next few appointments with Roni, we continued to focus on that second image—the one that started with coffee and wound up with blood. Those stormy sessions always ended with the calming gaze of that horse on the way home and a weekend of recuperation with helpful family by my side. Gradually, from session to session, the intensity level on the scale of zero to ten decreased. Finally, Roni told me, “We will be moving on to the third scene.”

I was sitting in the staff room and my bag with its contents sat under the table. The television was on, showing the broadcast of the funeral procession of the prime minister of Israel. Among those in the room were the interrogators, some sitting and some standing. The murderer stood near the door. Everyone was watching the screen.

Roni turned on the devices and my mind began racing with images like it was running a marathon. At a certain point, he turned the devices off. While crying and feeling the emotional storm, I told him what I saw.

“I am lying on a bed in jail and looking at the window. Everything around me is black and white, and in the sky, there is a colorful ball flying. On the ball I see images of all my friends from the drama club, smiling and enjoying themselves as if they are showing me how much I lost because of what I did.”

By that time, most of the experiences only had intensities of five or six, despite the fact that this third scene evoked the most difficult moment for me—the seconds before the shooting that never actually happened, and the climax of the trauma.

We continued and I described the next scenes to Roni.

“It is a big room, a vast courtroom, with a large jury sitting to judge me. Among the jurors I recognize my parents, members of the Labor youth movement for whom I served as a counselor, my worried-looking aunt Sarah, and my wife. Rabin, of blessed memory, is sitting in the front row. Next to him I see my superiors in the Shin Bet. In the back, as if he is hiding, sits Avishai Raviv—Champagne.”

Roni said, “Okay. Let’s continue from that spot.” He turned on the vibrators. When they stopped, I related:

“I see people speaking, but I cannot hear what they are saying. In his seat, Rabbi Kahane is laughing about something, but I have no idea what. I cannot figure out if the trial I see is taking place after I shot Amir, or if it is a court case over the fact that I did not shoot him. The murderer is not in the room. I don’t know why, or what that says about him.”

We continued with many rounds of this scene. Family pictures—including my children visiting me in jail and Yifat’s sad and trembling silence (she is paying a steep price but staying with me)—were included. Then I saw pictures of family outings in nature where, in the background, I saw the prison. Observing us from behind the bars was the face of the murderer.

My feelings became calmer from session to session, and even the horse whom I would meet on the way home looked less and less worried.

My mind slowly regained its quiet. I won!!! I returned to life.

At the end of this process, which lasted less than fifteen long sessions, the suffering had eased. I cannot explain how it happened, and perhaps no one can explain it. The murder never left me, and there is not a day when I don't think about it—even after the treatment. But the pain, the trauma, the nightmares, the pessimism, the sadness, and the depression are all gone. Roni revealed that at a certain point during the treatment, he considered extending the process while making each session less intense, because he was concerned about my extreme reactions. Ultimately, we were both happy that he did not.

Daily, as I think about the assassination and its implications for our country and the need for us to learn from it, it no longer causes me any pain. The flashbacks are gone.

I returned to life. I returned to sleeping. I was able to function once again. Yifat, who was so patient and loving during those terrible years, was entitled to have her husband back. We had earned the opportunity to return to each other, and my children deserved to have their father back.

Together, we brought a fourth child into the world, precisely as we had hoped and planned. I was reborn. Our new daughter was the result of my ability, with the help of my loving wife and my dedicated therapist, to return to life—to be able to wake up at night and tend to her without weeping. I

was able to hug and caress her with love for a few minutes, and then go back to sleep.

Everything around me was green. The green had defeated the blue.

## Chapter Nine—National Trauma and Soul Searching

I was not the only person to experience trauma as a result of the Rabin assassination. In fact, the entire country was traumatized. The legitimate question that immediately arose sought to determine who was responsible for allowing it to happen. The question is often asked out of anger, but Israel is a civilized society that tries to learn from its mistakes and improve itself accordingly. So, who *was* to blame for the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin?

Answering that question will not totally eliminate the national pain, but it will certainly go a long way toward dealing with the national trauma. The answer may also help prevent something like this from happening in the future.

The first situation to address was the Shin Bet—the agency I proudly served never hid or ran away from taking responsibility. This was part of the agency's world view and way of life. We knew it would have been wrong to evade the painful question of whether guilt could be found within the organization. An agency that strives for excellence and wants to always improve must ask itself tough questions to learn lessons for the future.

Many, including myself, viewed this as the “Day of Atonement” for the agency. It was the greatest failure in its history. While it is true that an organization like ours gets no thanks or respect for its successes—preventing bad things from happening—and no one on the outside actually knows

when and how often this happens, one failure is all it takes to bring full attention to its failings.

We ourselves didn't even always know when we prevented an attack. Shin Bet workers could have gone to sleep some nights without knowing that a harsh exchange of words with an extremist that day, or instructions that a handler gave to an agent, were responsible for stopping a potential assassination plan. The guards at the Jerusalem hotel protecting the prime minister when Yigal Amir arrived, but who then turned around after seeing the tight security, had absolutely no idea that, with their presence, they prevented an assassination attempt that evening.

But none of that ultimately matters. The bottom line is that from September 1993 until November 1995, an extremist living in Israel believed it was the correct decision to kill the prime minister, and even tried to do it three times before succeeding on the fourth try. He wasn't a lone wolf assassin. He didn't hide his views from those around him. He had shared this idea with a group. The fact that we didn't know about him was a failure.

We knew the threats were serious and had even released a report just four months before that clearly warned an attempt to murder the prime minister was a distinct possibility.

The director of the agency, Carmi Gilon, turned in his resignation almost immediately after the murder. That set the standard for what it means to take responsibility. Shimon Peres, serving as acting Prime Minister, asked Gilon to remain in the position for a while longer. Agreeing, he remained as

Director until January 1996, soon after the Shin Bet killed Yahya Ayyash, a Hamas leader in Gaza responsible for engineering bombs used to kill hundreds of innocent Israelis.

Gilon took responsibility since, despite being a fantastic director and the right man for the job, the agency failed while under his watch.

Looking back, the report we received from Champagne on August 15, 1995, was rife with information about Yigal Amir. We knew he supported the massacre carried out by Baruch Goldstein, and that he wanted to take action. We were aware that Amir preferred that Champagne not be involved in his activities because the Shin Bet was trailing Champagne. In addition, a report that referenced Hagai Amir should have been taken more seriously. We failed to follow up, including placing other agents in contact with these brothers.

We should have also taken special note of the fact that the report on August 15 was not initiated by Champagne but resulted, rather, at our request. We called him in for questioning about Amir and should have realized that, if he was sitting on this information without coming to us on his own volition, perhaps there was much more to the story, and something was off.

We were not proactive enough with the report from Shlomi Halevi, who volunteered information about the “small Yemenite guy” who planned to kill the prime minister. Had we pressed him then, perhaps we could have gleaned additional information. With those bits of intelligence, maybe we could have gotten to Yigal Amir.

As for Shlomi Halevi himself, the additional information he withheld could have helped us prevent Rabin's murder. Unfortunately, Halevi has never been brought to justice for this failure. Had he been justly punished, it would have sent a strong message to anyone intentionally withholding information of this sort. It would have served as a harsh incentive for others to cooperate fully, or wind up paying a price. To this day, Halevi's sole punishment is to bear the burden of guilt he must feel for not having told us the full story—guilt he surely experiences every time he lays his head down on a pillow.

Significant soul searching took place regarding the Shin Bet agents in the field who did not provide us with the information we needed about Yigal Amir. The interrogation of Avishai Raviv, "Champagne," led to the conclusion that he also did not tell us everything he knew about the murderer. Therefore, he was indicted. The Shin Bet opposed this because of the ramifications it could have for all our agents, but the new agency director, Ami Ayalon, overruled their reservations and Raviv was brought to trial. While standing in court, he did not deny anything—what he had disclosed and what he did not. He explained that some of what he told interrogators was false and some was true, and he could not remember if other information was true or false.

Did he know about Amir's plans to assassinate the prime minister? If he did know, why didn't he tell us? It felt uncomfortable for us at the agency to see him on the stand in court because we were the ones essentially on trial. All of the witnesses were Shin Bet workers. I found myself as a prosecution witness, while his handlers served as defense

witnesses. We had worked together, shoulder to shoulder, and now, all of a sudden, we found ourselves on opposing sides in a trial. How were we supposed to pretend that this was not happening and be able to continue working together after it ended?

In the end, Champagne was acquitted. I believe it was the right decision because I had no doubt that, had he known with certainty that Amir was going to shoot Rabin, he would have told us. I also recognized that his failure to pick up on the signs that Amir was dangerous was largely our fault. We did not succeed in steering him to focus on what was vital information. Raviv claimed in court that he was never instructed by his handlers to report extreme statements that people spoke against the prime minister. He even claimed that, had he been asked immediately after the assassination to make a list of 1,000 extremists whom he believed might have carried out the murder, Yigal Amir's name would not have appeared.

But he did have information that the Shin Bet needed. For example, he revealed that, at the Sabbath gathering for students, Amir declared that the Jewish laws of "the pursuer" applied to Rabin and, therefore, he had to be killed. Since he never specifically said, "I will kill him," Champagne did not give us that information. He revealed that Amir went so far as to tell him that he "went looking for the prime minister" when he arranged the bus ride for students to demonstrate at Yad Vashem on the day he planned to attempt to assassinate Rabin, as we later learned.

Amir never actually told Champagne that he wanted to kill the prime minister that day. But when an extremist who has already told you that the prime minister is a "pursuer" and

that “he must be killed” reveals that he “went looking for the prime minister,” shouldn’t it all add up? Shouldn’t you report it to your handlers?

Champagne also revealed that Margalit Har-Shefi told him that she suspected Yigal Amir could be sent to jail for life. He did not report this to his handlers, either. For what crime would Amir end up with a life sentence? Why didn’t he connect the dots himself, given all that Amir had already told him?

It was revealed that Hagai Amir, Yigal’s brother, told Champagne about all the special weapons he had gathered and produced, including bullets that would immediately kill anyone who was hit by them—after Hagai had also referred to Rabin as a “pursuer.” Champagne explained to the court that he thought these weapons were meant for use against Arabs, and it never occurred to him that the target was the prime minister.

Had our unit been told any of this, we could have undoubtedly initiated numerous operations and prevented Rabin’s assassination.

Several weeks after the murder, while the interrogation was still ongoing, I mentioned during an agency meeting that it seemed as if Champagne had messed up. I said he was aware of certain facts and did not report everything he knew.

Suddenly, someone banged on the table—one of the directors whom I did not know. In a fury, he pounded the table, standing up with a very red face.

“Young man, there is no such thing as ‘the agent made a mistake.’ Never say that again. Such a concept does not exist

in the agency. At the end of the day, the agent is a tool, a messenger. If he made a mistake, we all made a mistake. We are the ones who are activating him and we have the responsibility to guide him. We messed up when we did not guide him properly. And if he was the wrong person for the job, then we messed up in choosing him. We failed to vet him properly. We did not recognize that he was not up for the task. In any case, the responsibility is ours and the blame does not fall on the agent.”

Avishai Raviv was rightfully acquitted of “not preventing a crime.” The burden of responsibility was on us at the agency for not guiding him to provide the information he knew. The pain was immense—knowing that if we’d had any of that information, we could have changed everything and protected the prime minister. But this did not happen...and the buck stopped with us.

The second subject addressed in attributing blame was the unit for protecting dignitaries—the security guards themselves. I don’t believe the specific guards serving that night can be blamed. No matter which guards were on duty, the result would have been the same. Many in the security field have said that if they knew in advance that a murderer was going to come to the square to kill the prime minister that night, the very same guards who were there would have been the ones chosen to defend Rabin. The flaw was in the strategy designed to protect him.

Review the many events where protestors were able to get very close to the prime minister—such as the ceremony at the Mount Herzl cemetery on October 5, one short month before the murder. One week later, a demonstrator got within

touching distance of the prime minister. The security agents should have realized it was imperative to change the entire approach for protecting the prime minister. Given the threats that were swirling around, adjustments should have been made immediately.

The third blame went to political leaders and other prominent figures who did not distinguish between free speech and incitement to violence. Those who led the march that included people carrying a coffin with Rabin's name on it, with a hangman's noose nearby—must take responsibility for not speaking out against the extreme actions. The politicians standing on a porch in Zion Square in Jerusalem while people below were chanting “Rabin is a traitor!” and “Rabin is murderer!”—and choosing not to speak out against it—must accept the burden of guilt for failing to do so. I am certain they did not imagine those chants or actions would lead to an assassination, just as we agents did not know that our failure to check into certain pieces of information, or our insufficient guidance of our agents, would lead to an assassination.

The Shin Bet learned from its failings and accepted blame—including the resignation of the agency's director. I firmly believe that the political leaders of the opposition at that time, as well as extremist leaders who called for “civilian rebellion,” also bear responsibility. The leader of that march never specifically called for violence against the prime minister but, in retrospect, terms such as “rebellion” and calls for the country to “shut down,” illegally, in protest, crossed the line between democratic protest and incitement.

Let us remember that Amir stated many times that he could not have done what he did without the support of the

nation—which expressed itself during protests such as those mentioned. Because of the demonstrators’ chants and the large number of followers of extremist leaders, he honestly believed that he had murdered Rabin with the backing of the nation.

A fourth group assigned blame is the Israeli judicial system, which failed to prosecute and incarcerate the huge numbers of inciters and protestors who violated the law. This weakness gave the extremists the sense that they could get away with whatever they wanted to do, and nothing would happen to them. We provided information to the prosecutors regarding those who screamed “Rabin is a traitor!” and “Rabin is a murderer!” as well as about those who blocked intersections and tried to damage other parts of the state’s infrastructure. Our unit handed over approximately 300 cases to the Justice Ministry that were ignored. The lack of prosecution allowed the environment of violence to flourish.

A fifth party that can be blamed is the press. The newspapers and television newscasts minimized the ferocity of the hatred toward the prime minister by not placing much emphasis on the issue. They chose not to film or report this phenomenon. Most of the footage we have of the urgings for violence against Rabin came from foreign reporters. The Israeli media obviously assumed that by ignoring it, they would succeed in bringing it to an end or, at the very least, lowering its volume. Unfortunately, the opposite occurred. Real, in-depth coverage highlighting the depth of hatred could have helped to bring focus on the seriousness of the situation.

So, how did it happen? How did we at the Shin Bet not follow every single tiny lead to its end while providing maximum guidance to all its agents? How did the security

guards permit Amir to get so close to the prime minister? How did prominent political leaders of the right-wing opposition fail to rebuke the tone and language of violence? How did the judicial system not make these crimes a priority and allow so many cases of incitement and related offenses go unprosecuted? How did the press make the mistake of failing to report the extremism in the clearest of terms?

After many years of thinking about these questions, I have come to a conclusion of the bottom line: deep down inside, none of us believed a Jew would kill the prime minister of the Jewish state. None of us—not those of us who worked in the Shin Bet, not the security guards, not the leaders on the Right, not the prosecutors, and not the press.

We in the Shin Bet talked about it, wrote about it, and warned about it, but we did not believe it would actually happen. This may have led, subconsciously, to our dropping the ball—not following leads or guiding agents properly.

Despite our warnings, the security guards were nonetheless still on the lookout exclusively for potential Arab assassins. Even after they saw, with their own eyes, how demonstrators got close to Rabin, and were alerted to the “small Yemenite guy” who said he would kill the prime minister, they could not imagine a Jew would actually take a gun and shoot the prime minister of Israel. Therefore, they did not revise their security arrangements. Carmi Gilon checked with every guard on duty on the night of the assassination, and each one said that they did not even consider it a real possibility that a Jew would kill Rabin.

Prime Minister Rabin himself heard from the Shin Bet director that there were serious threats to his life and was asked to ride in an armored car and wear a bulletproof vest. He was also told by a good friend in academia that an in-depth study suggested that nearly 1,000 people were prepared to perform an extreme act to stop the peace process, including a political assassination. Nevertheless, he did not believe it would actually happen.

The political leaders on the Right were not people who would ever commit or condone acts of violence toward their political opponents. They never made the connection between all the calls for violence, and extremism in the demonstrations and posters, and a Jew actually killing the prime minister. Had they made that connection, there is no doubt they would have spoken out against it.

Prosecutors and the judicial system were dealing with all types of crimes and downplayed the significance of the cases we brought their way because they, too, did not believe there was a real threat to the prime minister's life. The press had the same mind-set. If they truly thought the prime minister's life was at risk, they would have been all over the story.

When we all heard about the assassination, we said to ourselves, "I don't believe it," or "It can't be!" But a moment later, many of us in the business thought, *I knew it would happen*. Professor Ehud Sprinzak, one of the greatest experts on right-wing extremism, wrote in a column after the murder: "Perhaps they understood the threat in their heads, but not in their guts."[\[24\]](#) That says it all.

What does this tell us about Israel and ourselves? Why didn't we believe that a Jew would kill the prime minister?

Apparently, when a person doesn't want something to happen, human nature actually causes that person to believe that it will not happen. The Middle East is awash with countries led by dictators and gripped by civil wars. There, citizens taking the law into their own hands is the norm, and not the exception or an aberration. Israel, less than fifty years old at the time of the assassination, is very different. We have built a beautiful society in our land, despite being surrounded by enemies who seek to destroy us. It is a vibrant democracy in which the best of friends can have heated ideological disputes and remain the best of friends—or, at the very least, respect that democratic elections determine political leadership. It is a society where we are taught to take a bullet for one another—without questioning political affiliation—because that is how a civilized democracy functions. Therefore, we did not want to believe this innocence could be violated.

We did not want to live in an Israel, in a Jewish state, where this ideal could fail. Where there could be a political assassination. And therefore, we did not allow ourselves to believe “in our guts” that it could happen.

While I am obviously heartbroken that the murder occurred, and have written extensively about the personal trauma, the professional guilt, and the national tragedy resulting from the assassination, I am also proud.

I am proud that I live in my state, a Jewish state, where everything around me—my upbringing, my professional

surroundings, and the societal norms—preach the value of “Thou shall not murder.” This led to my decision not to take the law into my own hands and kill Yigal Amir.

I am proud to live in our special state, where we believed that a fellow Jew would not kill the prime minister—certainly not because of ideological or political disagreements. I am proud to live in a land where we did not want to believe that anyone would violate the tenet of “Thou shall not murder” that Judaism brought to the world.

But sadly, it did happen. Now, as the only democracy and truly free society in our region—and the only Jewish state in the world—we are obligated to ensure it never happens again.

# Chapter Ten—Lessons for Today

By Rabbi Dov Lipman

Lee Harvey Oswald hated the United States of America.

Aside from all the conspiracy theories about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy—whether he did or did not do it, whether he did it alone or not—one thing is for sure: Oswald hated the United States of America. [\[25\]](#)

The Warren Commission, tasked with investigating the 1963 assassination, issued an inconclusive report regarding Oswald's motives, but did include the following:

His avowed commitment to Marxism and communism, as he understood the terms and developed his own interpretation of them; this was expressed by his antagonism toward the United States, by his defection to the Soviet Union, by his failure to be reconciled with life in the United States even after his disenchantment with the Soviet Union, and by his efforts, though frustrated, to go to Cuba.

[\[26\]](#)

Oswald came from a troubled background and was searching for something to belong to. He wrote in his diary, “I was looking for a key to my environment, and then I

discovered socialist literature. I had to dig for my books in the back dusty shelves of libraries.”

He tried to join the Socialist Party’s Youth League, but there was no chapter in his city. Oswald eventually joined the Marines, where he was court martialed twice: once for illegal possession of a firearm, and once for attacking a sergeant. He was put into military prison and left an angry man. During this time, Oswald also began learning Russian—and telling fellow Marines about Marxism.

After Oswald’s service came to an end in 1959, he made his way to Russia and attempted to defect, writing, “I am a communist and a worker, and I have lived in a decadent capitalist society where the workers are slaves.”

The Soviet Union initially denied Oswald’s request for asylum, causing him to attempt suicide. He showed up at the U.S. Embassy to renounce his citizenship, informing the U.S. consul that he would tell the Soviets everything that he knew about the U.S. military.

Oswald eventually came to hate life in Russia, writing in his diary, “The work is drab. The money I get has nowhere to be spent. As my Russian improves, I become increasingly conscious of just what sort of a society I live in.”

His requests to leave the Soviet Union and return to the United States were rejected by both Soviet and U.S. authorities. After eighteen persistent months, however, both sides relented, and Oswald returned to the U.S. in June 1962 with his Russian wife, Marina, and their baby daughter.

Settling in Texas, Oswald subscribed to extreme left-wing newspapers and became enamored with Fidel Castro’s

1959 revolution in Cuba. He told people that he saw Cuba as the Marxist ideal, and was very critical of the U.S. administration's policies toward Castro.

Oswald then learned that President Kennedy had recently fired anti-communist Gen. Edwin Walker for preaching right-wing extremism to his troops.

Investigative writer Gerald Posner reported that Oswald decided to kill Walker because he viewed him "as an up-and-coming Adolf Hitler, and that he [Oswald] would be the hero who stopped him on his rise to power."

Oswald posed for pictures of himself dressed in all black, holding his rifle proudly with the Russian words "Hunter of Fascists" written on the back of the photo which was also signed by Oswald.

On April 10, 1963, a single shot was fired through Walker's study window, narrowly missing him. The bullet was later linked to the gun that Oswald used to assassinate President Kennedy.

Oswald continued to be a pro-Cuban activist, and even tried unsuccessfully to defect to Cuba during a visit to Mexico City. A friend of his, Michael Paine, described Oswald's ideology leading up to the Kennedy assassination in November 1963:

He thought capitalism was rotten, it was a fraud, and it needed to be overthrown. Lee wanted to be an active guerrilla in the effort to bring about a new world order. We discovered we were both interested

in the activities of right-wing groups in Dallas, which were common rumors of that time. And I think he described his activities as spying on them, and thought of himself as doing that. In that conversation, the name of General Walker was raised ... [H]e believed violence was the only effective tool. He didn't want to mess around with trying to change the system.

Hate of country. Extremist ideologies. Written materials espousing these beliefs to the masses, which he read and distributed.

That was enough to set someone with a disturbed background on a path toward believing that violence was the answer—and ultimately killing the president of the United States.

Fast-forward to 2016.

On June 30, a thirteen-year-old Israeli girl named Hallel Dafna Ariel slept in after getting home late the previous night following a dance recital. Her siblings left for school and her parents went to work. Muhammad Nasser Tarayrah, a seventeen-year-old from a nearby village, breached the fence surrounding Hallel's neighborhood, slipped into her house via an open window, found her asleep in her bed, and butchered her in the most gruesome and monstrous way imaginable.

What could lead a teenager to slaughter another teenager to death in cold blood? Yes, there is a conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, but teenagers waking up in the morning and deciding to stab other teenagers to death is

not a normal course of action, even in a time of conflict. How could this have happened, along with dozens of other Palestinian teens stabbing innocent people in the streets of Israel in 2015-2016?

The answer lies in the incitement to violence that Palestinian children hear from birth onward. The Palestinian version of “Sesame Street,” called the “Children’s Club,” teaches children to hate, encouraging them to grow up to become martyrs, willing to die as long as they kill innocent Jews.[\[27\]](#)

On November 1, 2015, Raafat Alayan, the Fatah spokesman in Jerusalem, declared on official Palestinian Authority television that Jews are “the sons of apes and pigs.”[\[28\]](#)

On November 5, 2015, the official Palestinian Authority daily newspaper, *al-Hayar Al Jadida*, compared Israel to “vampires” who seek to kill all Palestinians.[\[29\]](#)

The Palestinian Authority regularly honors terrorists with mourning tents for murderers whom they call “heroic martyrs.” They name soccer tournaments after them, such as the “Ahmad Masasrah Football Tournament” in honor of a thirteen-year-old terrorist who repeatedly stabbed an Israeli boy.[\[30\]](#) Twenty-five Palestinian schools, and dozens of sporting events and summer camps, have been named after cold-blooded terrorists.[\[31\]](#)

Is it any wonder that a teenager who has gone to schools named after “heroic martyrs,” has played in sports events named after “heroic martyrs,” has been taught on television to strive to be a martyr, and then hears that Jews are

“apes, pigs, and vampires” would sneak into Israel to kill innocent women and children in their homes?

Hateful words. Extremist ideologies.

They kill.

They are killing innocent Israelis, Christians in Syria, and victims of terror around the world.

While extremism is, in the words of the *Chinese Times*, “spreading across political fields all around the world,”[\[32\]](#) I find it most shocking to see how it is hurting the United States of America, the leader of the free world. I have lived in the U.S. for most of my life. Its flag flies outside my childhood home in Silver Spring, Maryland, 365 days a year. And I am deeply concerned about the United States that I love.

A brief look at the words being thrown around in the 2016 presidential election campaign demonstrates that an environment of extreme language has emerged as acceptable in our United States society.

On the political Right, Jason Wilson of the *Guardian* reported extremist “Twitter talk about immigration in terms of ‘white genocide’.”[\[33\]](#) Dan Cassinho, a Fairleigh Dickinson University political scientist and the author of a new book, *Fox News and American Politics*, explained that the extreme Right feels that the rest of the country is “actually oppressing white men” and that the number of people in the U.S. who feel this way “is expanding.”[\[34\]](#)

A group of people who believe they are being “oppressed” and that a “genocide” of sorts is being carried out

against them is an invitation for someone within that group to act out with violence, taking the law into their own hands.

Rhetoric about left-wing policies coming from the Right can also lead to similar tragic results. Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, a pro-life political action committee, wrote on Time.com[\[35\]](#) that the Democratic Party used to at least “pay lip service to pro-life Americans” by “indicating that abortion isn’t something to be celebrated.” But, she wrote, the party’s 2016 platform will “mean abortions for Medicaid recipients, paid for with taxpayer funds. Forcing Americans to pay for the abortions of others hardly respects conscience rights; it’s a direct assault on them.” [Emphasis added.]

The Democratic Party becoming more liberal regarding these issues certainly captures the attention of people being pulled to extremes within United States society. And that, of course, leads to a pushback from the religious Right. It may be an accurate depiction of how the religious Right views the abortion policies of the Democratic Party, but words like “a direct assault on them” can inspire religious fanatics to take action to protect their moral values.

Columnist Charles Boyd called the 2016 Democratic platform “communist extremism.”[\[36\]](#) He argued that the Democratic candidate for president will “finish the destruction of the Republic of the United States by transforming it into a large copy-cat version of a third world European or South American socialist/communist country. The framework of that plan is described in detail in the Democratic Party’s 2016 Platform. The proposed Platform moves toward full-blown

extremism and totalitarianism, and contains a resplendent array of extreme anti-constitutional proposals.”

Boyd goes on to say that the committee that drafted the Democratic Party platform included “key communists and radical anti-American socialists,” and a “cabal of evil America-haters belonging to a group of ‘innocent sounding’ organizations whose only purpose is to destroy the United States and its Constitution.”[\[37\]](#)

The suggestion that a presidential candidate nominated by a mainstream party will introduce “totalitarianism” and is working with “America-haters” who will “finish the destruction of the...United States” is language that can lead to someone acting violently to protect the country that they love so much.

Freelance writer Rich Berdan brought the former Soviet Union into the election discussion in his article, calling Bernie Sanders “the most dangerous man in America.”[\[38\]](#) Berdan first equated Sanders to Lenin: “Lenin’s century old epitome calling the masses to revolt against capitalism is much the same as Sander’s campaign to rally a new and gullible generation against the tyranny of corporate America.”[\[39\]](#) And then he went one step further, saying, “Sanders has dangled a worm that has been gobbled up hook, line, and sinker by an uninformed generation of young voters fascinated with a cloaked brand of socialism that stretches much further than Lenin’s singular capitalist villains.”[\[40\]](#)

It should be noted that extreme radicalism on one side of the spectrum has the potential to lead to dangerous responses on the other. For example, Beth Hallowell, PhD,

*Communications Research Director at the American Friends Service Committee* suggested that coverage of ISIS and al-Qaeda has been too harsh.

This coverage also frames groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda as either coldly calculating or as irrational barbarians, and sometimes as both in the same article. Why does this matter? Because flat, ahistorical representations of these groups set them up as natural military targets: Either because they are cunning, state-like organizations that must be stopped by military means, or because they are monsters who only respond to force.[\[41\]](#)

Then Hallowell suggested that the media doesn't acknowledge these radical jihadists as the monsters that they are, and instead, "they can cover violence in ways that explore both the historical roots of the conflict and the many different solutions that are possible, including the nonviolent ones."[\[42\]](#)

This type of reaction—suggesting that nonviolent solutions be explored to deal with the ruthless murderers of ISIS—is another form of extremism that endangers civilized society.

The language used by the Left in response to the Republican Party's shift to being more extreme has been fierce, with language and terminologies equally as dangerous as the beliefs espoused by the extreme Right.

But lest one think this is a recent change in response to the strange developments in *this* election cycle, David French,

a staff writer at *National Review*, [\[43\]](#) pointed out this is hardly a new approach for the U.S. Left. In 2012, an advertisement produced by the Democratic Party suggested that Romney didn't care about letting people die without health care coverage. Talk about hate speech that can inspire violence!

As French points out, this dangerous rhetoric goes back even further, to the 2000 elections.

Consider this infamous NAACP campaign commercial from 2000. The ad is directed at that notorious racist monster George W. Bush. Its voiceover is done by Renee Mullins, daughter of murder victim James Byrd:

“On June 7, 1998, in Texas, my father was killed. He was beaten, chained, and then dragged three miles to his death, all because he was black. So when Governor George W. Bush refused to support hate-crime legislation, it was like my father was killed all over again.”

The images accompanying Mullins' narration were dark and disturbing, showing the back of a pickup truck with chains leading off the screen. A radio version of the ad was even more vivid, with Mullins describing her father's death: “I can see skin being torn away from his body. I can hear him gasping for air. I can feel the tears in his eyes.” [\[44\]](#)

The depiction of George W. Bush as a monster responsible for the horrific death of an African American male could enrage someone who believes the falsehood, leading to horrific results.

This last example relates closely to the most dangerous form of extremist speech that has emerged in United States society: the “race card.”

The Democratic election campaign in 2016 has identified itself with Black Lives Matter,[\[45\]](#) a movement that calls for reparations and free college education for African Americans.

Heather Mac Donald, author of *Are Cops Racist?* and *The War On Cops: How The New Attack on Law and Order Makes Everyone Less Safe*, explains that “For almost two years, Black Lives Matter has convulsed the nation...the movement holds that racist police officers are the greatest threat facing black men today. This belief has triggered riots, ‘die-ins,’ the murder and attempted murder of police officers.”[\[46\]](#)

The Republican campaign has linked itself with the “alternative right” (aka “alt-right”),[\[47\]](#) which includes people who call themselves “racialist.”

French wrote the following to describe the alt-right in *National Review*: “Many of them are unapologetically white-nationalists, hate interracial adoption and other ‘race-mixing’ practices, and think about the issue of immigration primarily, if not exclusively, in racial terms.”[\[48\]](#)

Both campaigns have used the race issue in an extreme, divisive, and even hateful manner. This rhetoric has already triggered violence, including a little-reported street fight in Sacramento, California, on June 26, 2016, between neo-Nazi white supremacists and self-proclaimed anarchists dressed in all black.[\[49\]](#) Seven people were stabbed.

Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Nicholas Kristoff wrote quite powerfully: “The upshot is that [in] this election year [2016], Americans are divided not only by political party

and ideology, but also by identity. So the weave of America's national fabric unravels.”[\[50\]](#)

Sadly, all of this extreme rhetoric translates into hatred of country. On August 26, 2016, San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick refused to stand for the U.S. national anthem prior to a game.[\[51\]](#) “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses Black people and people of color,” Kaepernick explained. “To me, this is bigger than football, and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.”[\[52\]](#) Additional players followed Kaepernick's example.[\[53\]](#)

Quite shockingly, Kaepernick's action was found to be acceptable by some in the media. Ray Slover of *The Sporting News*, who describes himself as “a white man whose family has been in this country since the first member arrived in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam,” wrote, “[Kaepernick's] country oppressed a large group of its citizens, making men, women, and children seem less than the privileged few. So he protested... Maybe it would be best if more people would take a seat with Colin Kaepernick.”[\[54\]](#)

It is difficult for me to recognize a United States in which anyone is suggesting that people should not stand for the national anthem. Demonstrate? Sure. Speak out against actual injustice or perceived injustice? Absolutely. There will always be political disputes, and countries that protect freedom of speech must allow for public debate.

But, in my opinion, refusal to stand up for the national anthem translates into hatred of country, and using such words

as “there are bodies in the street” and “people are getting away with murder” is extremism. And when hatred of country and extremist language is left unchecked, it can lead to violence, assassination, and the breakdown of democracy as we know it.

Given the current environment—in which police officers have been executed in multiple cities, where studies indicate that the number of militia and white supremacist “patriot” groups have risen to the thousands from a mere 150 in 2008,[\[55\]](#) and in which professional athletes are refusing to even stand for their country’s national anthem—it would serve the current leadership of the United States and leaders worldwide well to learn from the example of President Lyndon Johnson and Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater.[\[56\]](#)

The two ran against each other in the 1964 elections. Goldwater fought hard against the Civil Rights Act that Johnson signed into law on July 2 of that year. Goldwater believed that legislation of that kind should have been determined on a state-by-state basis, instead of by the federal government. He could have easily won the support of southern Democrats, who were also against the law, and achieve his difficult goal—defeating an incumbent president—by using the “race card.” In fact, negativity against the law was rampant nationwide, and racial tensions and unrest were spreading throughout the country. In the words of presidential historian Mark K. Updegrove, “In 1964, America was a tinderbox of racial tension.”[\[57\]](#) Both candidates—especially Goldwater—could have easily tapped into those emotions to help their campaigns.

But on July 25, Goldwater visited the White House to talk to Johnson and during that meeting, the two agreed not to

use race as an issue in their campaigns. In a recorded phone call the next day to one of his cabinet members, Johnson related that Goldwater “came in, just wanted to tell me that he was a half-Jew, and that he didn’t want to do anything to contribute to any riots or disorders or bring about any violence; because [of] his ancestry, he was aware of the problems that existed in that field, and he didn’t want to say anything that would make them any worse.”[\[58\]](#)

In an oral history that Goldwater recorded for the LBJ Presidential Library, he explained, “I told [Johnson] I wanted to discuss the racial problem, that I thought it would be wise not to be pushing it. Those were hot days, you know. And he agreed with me.”[\[59\]](#)

Updegrove explained that “Goldwater and Johnson made good on their pledge. Yes, the campaign got ugly ... But neither candidate bowed to the extremist elements of either end of the racial divide... Yes, Goldwater went on to lose the 1964 election to Johnson by one of the biggest landslides in presidential history, but he did so with his dignity intact, knowing he hadn’t fanned the flames of bigotry.”[\[60\]](#)

The United States—and, indeed, the entire world—is in desperate need of leaders from the Goldwater-Johnson mold.

The Bible teaches that “life and death can be found in the tongue.”[\[61\]](#) It is a clear warning regarding the dangers of extremist language.

The great medieval philosopher Maimonides taught[\[62\]](#) that extremism is the most dangerous path for any individual, and that one should always strive to function in the

balanced center. History has proven this idea to be true regarding nations, as well. Empires have fallen as a result of shifts to either the extreme Right or the extreme Left, on political or religious matters.

This book has described the impact that extremism has had on the State of Israel. Political extremism and dangerous use of words created an atmosphere that led to the assassination of a prime minister, and almost led to the murder of the assassin, which could have spiraled the country into even greater chaos.

Fortunately, that tragedy shook up the country. It continues to learn from that event and strives to keep in check extremist personalities and movements on both ends of the political spectrum. As described in the next chapter, Israel is working hard to make sure that religious extremism does not ruin the delicate balance between the Jewish and democratic nature of the state. Tragically, it took a political assassination for many in Israel to this important lesson. Some still have not internalized it.

World leaders and people of influence must constantly reflect on their actions and words to ensure they do not inspire fringe personalities to take action. They must demand civility in the political sphere, and do whatever possible to quiet voices or movements that deliberately try to incite violence and use hateful and extremist terminology.

They must not wait for a major catastrophe to teach them the lesson that words can kill. History has already proven that words can kill people—and destroy one of the wondrous blessings of modern civilization: democracy itself.

# **Addendum—The Unique Challenges of the Jewish State**

By Rabbi Dov Lipman

Only one Israeli leader has ever been assassinated. But the significance, depth of meaning, and the implications for Israeli society and the state's future in that one murder is massive. Political assassinations are generally carried out by deranged madmen and, in some instances, by people who disagreed politically with the leader. Israel's one assassination was carried out by a religious Jew who believed that he was fulfilling a Divine commandment by killing a prime minister violating Jewish law. It was a blow to Israeli democracy and went to the heart of the challenge of balancing religion and state in Israel—a challenge that does not exist in the United States, where there is separation of church and state.

On May 14, 1948, David ben Gurion courageously declared Israel's independence. The Declaration of Independence says:

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious, and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom... By virtue of or natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations general assembly, hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in the land of Israel... The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations... We appeal—in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months—to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the building of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.

A “Jewish state,” with “full rights for all minorities” meant and continues to mean different things to different groups in Israel. There are essentially four separate Jewish

sectors within Israel, each with its own perspective regarding what it means to be living in a Jewish state.

The State of Israel was established by and large by a secular leadership that escaped persecution in Europe. These leaders were primarily the product of the Enlightenment,<sup>[63]</sup> who sought to create a new Judaism built on humanistic values but without the rules and restrictions of Jewish religious law. To them, a Jewish state exists primarily to provide a safe haven for Jews from around the world. It is a place where Jews are in control of their own destiny and defense, not subject to the whims of foreign leaders on foreign soil and no longer victim of the ruthless anti-Semitism that Jews experienced during two thousand years of Exile. The nearly one million Jews from the former Soviet Union who emigrated to Israel in the 1990s generally subscribe to this perspective.

A second group also involved itself in the establishment of the State of Israel—the religious Zionists. This group saw and still sees the establishment of a Jewish state in the Biblical homeland as a fulfillment of the prophecies in the Bible which declared that, in Messianic times, the people of Israel will return to the land from the four corners of the Earth. Upon their return, the land will once again flourish, leading to the restoration of the dynastic monarchy established by King David 3,000 years ago and the building of the Third Temple. They refer to the state as the “beginning of the flowering of the redemption,”<sup>[64]</sup> and believe that there is a Biblical obligation for Jews from around the world to move to Israel. In addition, they view military service and working the land as religious obligations.

The third group has actually been in the country the longest. In the late eighteenth century and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, students of two great European rabbis—Baal Shem Tov and Vilna Gaon—settled in the Land of Israel as the spiritual emissaries of world Jewry.[\[65\]](#) They did not seek to build a state and they did not work the land. Instead, this group focused on studying religious texts and prayer, and they were supported by Jewish communities throughout the world. This group views living in the land as a fulfillment of an optional Biblical commandment, but does not perceive a Messianic significance in the establishment of the state. In fact, it sees the secular leadership and the values of the state as a desecration of the Holy Land.

The fourth group came to Israel from Middle Eastern countries—such as Iraq, Morocco, and Yemen—soon after the establishment of the state. The communities, in their countries of origin, were very religious and spiritual, and also viewed their return to Israel as a fulfillment of Biblical prophecies. They certainly consider serving the state as one of the highest ideals. Their commitment to observance of full-fledged ritual Jewish law has diminished. In some cases, it has been proactively stripped from them by the secular establishment, but they remain traditional and very spiritual.

The ideological clashes between these groups could be tangibly felt in the pre-state debates regarding the nature of the emerging state. These clashes continue today. The small ultra-Orthodox population that had been living in the Land of Israel since the late eighteenth century saw secular Zionism as a force contaminating the Holy Land and a threat to their spiritual way of life. Therefore, they circled the wagons and

took no part in the developing state. When the Zionist movement began to take shape in nineteenth-century Europe, many in the religious establishment abandoned that group because it lacked religious and spiritual content.

The tensions between the secular and religious establishment can best be highlighted via a disagreement regarding the Declaration of Independence itself. The religious Zionist leaders wanted it to mention God. After all, they argued, “How can we return to our Biblical homeland and establish a state in fulfillment of God’s promise that we would return and resettle the land without mentioning God?” The secular establishment did not want this, since the new state was intended to be secular—without religious observance, and without God appearing in the public sphere. Ben-Gurion wanted to shore up total support for the state and avoid polarization between the religious and secular sides. Therefore, a compromise was reached. The declaration says “Rock of Israel”—a phrase that the secular side can interpret as the might of the Israeli armed forces, and the religious side can interpret as referring to God.[\[66\]](#)

The ideological divide between the two communities was spotlighted in a famous meeting between Ben-Gurion and Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz—known as the “Chazon Ish”—on October 20, 1952. Ben-Gurion visited the rabbi in the ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Bnei Brak to discuss the issue of women in the IDF. Ben-Gurion believed that all young people must serve, and it was the best way to take Jews from around the world and mold them into Israelis.

Ben-Gurion had already made accommodations to the religious establishment by granting 400 exemptions from

military service for rabbinic scholars, and he understood that observant women would refuse to serve in the army for religious reasons. However, he believed religious girls should participate in civilian national service as day care workers, teachers' assistants, and nursing home aides. In that way, they could serve the country without compromising their religious standards.

The religious side was against any rules and obligations for religious girls, so Ben-Gurion met with Rabbi Karelitz to describe the perilous situation resulting from Arab attacks against the fledgling state. He maintained that defending the state required the presence of ultra-Orthodox women, even if that meant simply helping on the home front without taking part in actual hostilities. The added contribution of these women in national service would be a great assistance.

The meeting focused less on the specifics that Ben-Gurion requested and more on the general issue of secular and religious Israel getting along with one another in Israel. Yitzchak Navon, who later served as the fifth president of Israel, was present at the meeting as Ben-Gurion's aide. He describes the conversation as follows: [\[67\]](#)

Ben-Gurion: "We have to find way to live with one another. How can we make this happen?"

Rabbi Karelitz: "The Talmud teaches that when two camels meet on a path, and one of the camels is weighed down with a load and the other camel is not, the one not carrying the burden must give way to the

one who carries a burden. The ultra-Orthodox community is like a camel that is burdened down with a full package of hundreds of laws, tradition, and customs, while the camel of the secular community is bearing no package, no burden, and therefore, preference should be given to the ultra-Orthodox community.”

Rabbi Karelitz essentially said that there was no room for compromise and that coexistence could be achieved when secular Israel yields to the needs and demands of religious Israel.

Ben-Gurion (tapping himself on the shoulder): “You think this camel has no burden? Settling the land, absorbing immigrants, etc.—that is nothing? These are not religious acts?”

Rabbi Karelitz: “All of that is happening and successful in the merit of our community studying the religious texts. Because of us, you are able to do everything that you are doing.”

Ben-Gurion: “Those who sit on the borders and guard over you, they are not fulfilling a religious obligation?”

Rabbi Karelitz: “They exist because we here are studying the religious texts.”

Ben-Gurion: “Without those soldiers protecting you, the enemy would slaughter you.”

Rabbi Karelitz: “They are able to guard the borders because of the merit of our study.”

Ben-Gurion: “I do not mean to denigrate the value of religious study, but if soldiers were not protecting the borders and no one in the country would remain alive, then who would be able to study?”

Rabbi Karelitz: “The Bible is the tree of life.”

Can a Jewish state survive with such opposing views regarding its nature? These religious disagreements are not simply academic. They go to the essence and soul of the state’s very identity.

The subject of military service is one of the most contentious issues in Israeli society. As the ultra-Orthodox community has grown, the small number of 400 exemptions from service for religious study has now ballooned to 55,000 young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. This has created significant tension in Israeli society, as all other eighteen- to twenty-year-old males serve in the military, with many of them risking their lives or dying in battle.

There are many other societal tensions that have arisen as a result of the religion/state issue.

The Sabbath day is a classic example. Saturday is the official day of rest in Israel—consistent with the traditional Jewish Sabbath. For religious Jews, it is a day of prayer, study, rest, and quiet family time. They refrain from driving cars, shopping in stores, watching television, and using computers, cell phones, and the Internet. On the other hand, for secular

Jews, Saturday is their only full day off in the week (Sunday is a workday in Israel, Friday is a school day and often a half-work day) to travel, go to the beach, attend a soccer match, visit family, or shop in the malls. Traditional Jews balance the day by infusing it with religious meaning and prayer while combining it with recreational activities, thus enjoying their one day off. Three different modes of observance and practice for one Sabbath day!

The conflict is best reflected by the continuation of the aforementioned conversation between Ben-Gurion and Rabbi Karelitz in October 1952, just four years after the establishment of the State of Israel.

Rabbi Karelitz: “I see the desecration of the Sabbath everywhere. People go to the sea instead of studying the religious texts. It is shocking and upsetting to see this type of Sabbath desecration in the Holy Land.”

Ben-Gurion: “I myself do not travel to the sea on the Sabbath, but laborers, who work hard all week, do. Shouldn’t they be allowed to relax on the beach on the Sabbath? We cannot force them if they do not want to study the Bible, but they are Jews, too. If they do not go to the beach, do you think they will go to the synagogue?”

Rabbi Karelitz: “I believe that the day will come when everyone in Israel will observe the Sabbath and pray.”

Ben-Gurion: “If they choose to do so, I am not opposed to it, but there should not be religious

coercion, and there should not be anti-religious coercion.”

This is a fascinating and enlightening discussion, but what does it mean in practical terms? One group would like to see public transportation on Saturdays so they can get to their chosen destination. The other group views public transportation on the Sabbath in a Jewish state as a disgrace, and is disturbed by buses traveling near their homes on this holy day.

Another example is the issue of soccer. Religious players want to have the opportunity to play in the highest leagues and, therefore, want no games played on the Sabbath. Secular team owners say forbidding games on Saturday will destroy their revenue, since it is the one day that families are able to attend.

Another source of friction relates to small businesses. Religious small supermarket owners want all such shops to be closed on the Sabbath so that they can be competitive despite their choice to stay shut for religious observance.

These issues can become explosive in Israeli society at any moment—the only day people can relax and enjoy the freedom Israel provides, while being a religiously significant day in a Jewish state, with the violation of the Sabbath being a capital offense according to the Bible. This thrusts decision-making into the middle of a heated religious battle.

The issue of marriage in the Jewish state is another major subject where passionate ideologies conflict. Marriage in Judaism has always been a spiritual, religious ceremony

bringing together a man and a woman. Therefore, the religious, traditional side insists that marriages be performed under the aegis of the chief rabbinate of Israel—a strictly Orthodox institution—and that civil marriages and homosexual marriages should not be permitted. But the secular side points out that democratic Israel should give everyone the right to determine how they live—including the freedom to marry as they choose.

Again, the issue has the potential to become quite explosive since it sets love and a desire to live a certain lifestyle against the Bible, which teaches that certain behaviors are “an abomination.”[\[68\]](#) Strong rhetoric about it can rile up extremists on both sides.

The challenge of opposite Jewish values is constantly highlighted in the Israeli army and in combating terrorism. Jewish tradition teaches that “one who rises to kill you, kill him first.”[\[69\]](#) But the Bible says “Thou shall not murder”[\[70\]](#) and clearly states that all people are created in God’s image. [\[71\]](#) Respecting and valuing the life of all human beings is a core Jewish value. In an army, or when combating terrorism, there are times when one must kill.

Israel struggles with this moral contradiction every time it is forced into all-out operations to deal with missile fire from Gaza. Hamas bombards Israel with rockets—targeting innocent Israelis—even after the state has pulled out of the Gaza Strip. Not a single Jew lives there anymore and not one Israeli soldier is based there.

But they don’t simply fire missiles. They do so from residential neighborhoods while using innocent women and

children as human shields. So what should Israel do? We must try to kill those who shoot missiles at us—“one who rises to kill you, kill him first”—while saving the lives of innocent civilians who are “created in God’s image.” The constant tension between the two religious mandates forces the army brass to work very hard on at finding a delicate balance.

Colonel Richard Kemp, former commander of British forces in Afghanistan, observed and studied the actions of the Israel Defense Forces in Gaza and determined that “No other army in the world has ever done more than Israel is doing now to save the lives of innocent civilians in a combat zone.”[\[72\]](#) Nevertheless, Israelis on both sides of the political aisle complain about the army’s policies. Those on the more extreme Right want to see the army take action and protect Israeli citizens without concern about loss of innocent life on the other side. They feel the state must do whatever necessary to restore quiet and protect Israeli lives, even if it means significant loss of innocent life. That, they argue, is the meaning of “one who rises to kill you, kill him first.”

The more extreme Left counters “kill him,” but not the innocent civilians who are “created in God’s image” and, sadly, are caught in the crossfire.

Again, an issue of Biblical and Talmudic interpretation.

Again, an issue of life and death.

A similar problem arose with the “terror with knives” campaign Israel experienced in the fall of 2015. Palestinians of all ages and both genders stabbed innocent Jews with knives in nearly every major Israeli city, leaving citizens open to attack in any place at any time. As in most countries, police resources

are limited, and officers cannot patrol every street twenty-four hours a day. In response, Israeli leaders called for citizens with gun permits to carry their weapons and be alert to shoot any attacker to prevent them from seriously wounding their victims.

Some on the Left referred to this as creating an environment like the Wild West and warned that innocent people would be killed as a result, thus violating “Thou shall not murder.” Others, generally on the Right, said that “murder” is prohibited, but “killing” in self-defense is permitted. They felt people should try to kill the terrorists, regardless of their age, to protect innocent Israelis.

Then the question became, “What happens when the terrorist has been shot or neutralized, but is not dead?” In such a case, both Jewish values and Jewish law do not allow someone to execute the attacker. Israel, as a Jewish state, takes this very seriously. Many in Israeli society wanted to see the attackers killed on the spot. In a few cases, the police had to protect a terrorist from a mob that wanted to lynch him. Israeli doctors were busy during this period, trying to save the lives of the Israeli victims and the Palestinian attackers—at times, in rooms right across the hall from one another.

Thus, Israel wrestles passionately with issues of life and death, often finding itself in dilemmas where core Jewish values and the standards of the Jewish state are put to the test.

The Jewish people built their state in the Land of Israel because it was the ancient and Biblical homeland. The idea of a Jewish state being established in Uganda was raised at the

beginning of the twentieth century, but the proposal was rejected.

Israel is the land that God promised to Abraham and Sarah for their descendants, and Abraham walked the length and breadth of the land to stake the claim. For 2,000 years, three times a day, Jews faced Israel and Jerusalem while praying, and both the festive meal on Passover (the Seder) and the final prayer on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, declare, “Next year in Jerusalem.” [\[73\]](#)

Israel declared its independence among the borders dictated by the United Nations Partition Plan. [\[74\]](#) Israel accepted the borders, despite the fact that they fell far short of the ones dictated by the Bible. The Arabs rejected the Partition Plan and the establishment of the State of Israel. The war that they unleashed on Israel resulted, somewhat, in the widening of Israel’s borders.

The Six-Day War in 1967, which began when Arab armies amassed on all of Israel’s borders in preparation for an all-out attack, led to an astonishing Israeli victory. Israeli control then extended to include Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), the massive Sinai Desert, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and all of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount.

The question then became “Does Israel exchange land for peace with its neighbors and the Palestinians?” The Israeli Left argued that peace is the greatest Jewish value. The religious Left pointed out that we pray for peace three times a day and argued that it would be immoral to remain in control of millions of Palestinians. To stay true to core Jewish values and the belief that all people are created in God’s image, they

insisted it was imperative that Palestine be granted their own state and self-determination.

The Israeli Right argued that giving our enemies land would only empower them and provide them with a base to destroy us from. The religious Right declared the land had been given to us by God, and we should not give it up.

The reunification of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, as well as putting holy Biblical cities such as Hebron and Bet El into Israeli hands, added additional religious, Biblical, and spiritual components—with Messianic elements—into the mix.

To be clear, this conflict was not clearly split between secular and religious residents. Many religious Israelis still believe that the value of saving lives by giving up land for peace is the highest religious value and we should do so despite the belief that God has given us this land. Many secular Israelis believe that we cannot give up these lands—not because of a religious imperative but, rather, for strategic reasons.

This leaves us with religious arguments on both sides of the equation and a great deal of confusion regarding what Jewish values, and even Jewish law, demand. The burning issue regarding what to do with these territories is not merely a political or tactical issue, but also has religious ramifications.

The world views the problem as a simple land dispute, but it has much deeper connotations. The challenge of determining which side to follow in a Jewish state is much greater than any land dispute elsewhere in the world.

This brings us to Yigal Amir, the Rabin assassination, and Dvir Kariv. Because of the mix of religious and secular sides to many Israeli issues, a leader can make decisions, while extremist citizens—like Amir—may believe that they have been religiously commanded to take action. They can convince themselves that any particular situation is one not included in “Thou shall not murder,” and it is an act of killing that is simply not just permitted, but actually required, by Jewish law.

The assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin was a wake-up call for Israeli society. It proved that the challenges inherent in the establishment of a Jewish state had reached a boiling point and could explode even further if not addressed one way or another.

The only way these threats can be solved is by strengthening and protecting Israeli democracy and the rule of law, and by a coming together of all the moderate forces in the country. It requires dialogue, compromises, and reaching understandings on all the difficult issues, thereby marginalizing extremists’ power and impact. Different factions, ideologies, and groups must break down the barriers that Israeli society has erected and find a way to work together. Ben-Gurion made the effort to meet with Rabbi Karelitz. At the end of their meeting, they parted ways with ideological disagreements, but with what Yitzchak Navon described as a “warm handshake.”[\[75\]](#)

After all, if both sides simply dig in and continue to do battle, then—God forbid—we may see another Israeli political assassination. The importance of this lesson is not limited to geographic Israel. This message also applies to supporters of

Israel from around the world—both Jews and non-Jews alike—who often push specific extreme agendas on both political and religious issues relating to Israel. That approach only hurts Israel—not only hindering progress on solving conflicts and problems, but actually exacerbating them.

In his moment of truth, Dvir Kariv demonstrated the true soul of the Jewish state. He had every reason and justification to kill Yigal Amir, and the years of personal anguish and agony he experienced afterward demonstrate how deeply he desired to kill the assassin. He wrestled with the passions and conflicts that the challenge aroused. But had he executed Amir, Israel could have easily spiraled into a civil war of Right versus Left, and religious versus secular. Instead, the moderate voice of our beautiful Israel won.

It is important to remember that today, in 2016, Israel is just sixty-eight years old. In terms of world history, it is still in its infancy. Think for a moment about the identity challenges of the United States in 1844, just sixty-eight years after its founding. At that time, the nation consisted of only twenty-six states, and African Americans were slaves!

In Israel—a country the size of the U.S.'s smallest state, Rhode Island—people from all religions, races, and sexual orientation are treated equally under the law. Most of the resources, time, and energy of its initial decades needed to be focused on security and physical survival.

The Rabin assassination was a reminder that alongside those struggles for physical survival, Israel must engage in a process of clarifying and securing its internal soul. Doing so will prevent further political assassinations, preserve its lofty

status as a Jewish and democratic state, and enable Israel to move on to its ultimate destiny—a wondrous society that serves as a true “light unto the nations.”<sup>[76]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave\\_of\\_the\\_Patriarchs\\_massacre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave_of_the_Patriarchs_massacre), accessed September 10, 2016.

<sup>[2]</sup>The legislative branch of the Israeli government.

<sup>[3]</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khartoum\\_Resolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khartoum_Resolution), accessed October 15, 2016.

<sup>[4]</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom\\_Kippur\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_Kippur_War), accessed October 15, 2016.

<sup>[5]</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave\\_of\\_the\\_Patriarchs\\_massacre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave_of_the_Patriarchs_massacre)

<sup>[6]</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altalena\\_Affair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altalena_Affair), accessed September 15, 2016.

<sup>[7]</sup>Two Jewish Temples stood on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in the years from 828 BCE to 423 BCE and from 352 BCE to 70 CE. Given the Biblical prophecies about a Third Temple on that site when the Messiah arrives, some Jews believe the State of Israel should be proactively building this Third Temple.

<sup>[8]</sup>In January 1958, the Supreme Court overturned most of the judgment against Kastner.

<sup>[9]</sup>Incidentally, it was later confirmed that Yigal Amir began to think about murdering the prime minister when he saw Rabin hesitantly shake hands with Arafat, even though it came about at the prodding of President Clinton.

<sup>[10]</sup><http://www.azquotes.com/quote/1197850>

<sup>[11]</sup>See <https://www.palwatch.org/> for hundreds of sources on this topic.

<sup>[12]</sup>Isaiah 2:4

<sup>[13]</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom\\_Kippur\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_Kippur_War)

<sup>[14]</sup>*Murder in the Name of God*, Michael Karpin and Ina Friedman, p. 121

<sup>[15]</sup>Killed by the Egyptians in 1945 after he carried out an attack against them.

<sup>[16]</sup>*Murder in the Name of God*, Karpin and Friedman, p. 128

<sup>[17]</sup>*Ibid*, p. 134-135

<sup>[18]</sup>The uniform of the Labor Party youth movement included a blue shirt.

<sup>[19]</sup>498/95 – State of Israel vs. Yigal ben Shlomo, item 12

<sup>[20]</sup>8019/96 – State of Israel vs. Yigal ben Shlomo, items 18 and 19

- [21] <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfa-archive/1995/pages/rabin%20eulogy%20by%20noa%20ben-artzi.aspx>
- [22] Exodus 20:13.
- [23] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eye\\_movement\\_desensitization\\_and\\_reprocessing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eye_movement_desensitization_and_reprocessing)
- [24] *Shabak between the cracks*, Carmi Gilon, pages 262-264
- [25] All of the information regarding Oswald and the Kennedy assassination is based on a chronology of Lee Harvey Oswald's life, drawn primarily from PBS's FRONTLINE's three-hour investigative biography, with links to photos, writings, and documents gathered by the 1964 Warren Commission investigation and the 1978-79 House Select Committee on Assassinations.  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/twenty-four-years/>
- [26] Warren Commission Report, Filibust Edition, p. 56 Conclusion 11e
- [27] <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/180408>, accessed September 27, 2016.
- [28] <https://youtu.be/GDMuqFObIIs>, accessed September 27, 2016.
- [29] [http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=1095&doc\\_id=16588](http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=1095&doc_id=16588), accessed September 27, 2016.
- [30] [http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc\\_id=16376](http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=16376), accessed September 27, 2016.
- [31] <https://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=608>
- [32] <http://watchingamerica.com/WA/2016/03/23/the-us-election-a-new-risk-in-extremist-trends/>, in the original Chinese:  
<http://www.chinaitimes.com/newspapers/20160311000046-260202>.
- [33] <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/23/alt-right-movement-white-identity-breitbart-donald-trump>
- [34] Ibid.
- [35] <http://time.com/4424971/democrats-extreme-abortion/>
- [36] <http://www.lakelandtimes.com/main.asp?SectionID=10&SubSectionID=10&ArticleID=30863>
- [37] Ibid.
- [38] [http://jewishvoiceny.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=13690:bernie-sanders-the-most-](http://jewishvoiceny.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13690:bernie-sanders-the-most-)

[dangerous-man-in-america&catid=113:oped&Itemid=29](#), accessed August 20, 2016.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/american-anthropological-association/why-we-need-to-change-the\\_b\\_11569032.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/american-anthropological-association/why-we-need-to-change-the_b_11569032.html) /

[42] Ibid.

[43] <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/438354/democrats-donald-trump-attacks-ineffective-extreme-rhetoric>

[44] Ibid.

[45] <http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-democrats-black-lives-matter-20160727-snap-story.html>

[46] <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-deadly-cost-americas-anti-cop-ideology-16728>

[47] [https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/08/18/the-breitbart-alt-right-just-took-over-the-gop/?utm\\_term=.184e72dabc5e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/08/18/the-breitbart-alt-right-just-took-over-the-gop/?utm_term=.184e72dabc5e)

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