

Hope and responsibility

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I was six years old when a night of joy and hope became an era of uncertainty and confusion. My parents let us stay up late and watch the biggest peace rally in Israel's history. I won't lie. At first, I had no idea why my father asked my younger brother and me to go to our rooms and stay there. A child is not used to seeing his parents breaking down in tears. Little did I know that night, how this sense of care and responsibility would follow me my entire life.

I remember our first visit to Kings of Israel Square (now Rabin Square) as a family in the first week after the assassination. My parents were trying to make us live history while it was still being written, lighting the candles, leaving a painting I made in school, wearing white. Groups of youths sitting together and playing sad songs. When you are young and don't understand, you build yourself stories, with heroes and a villain, and do your best to explain to yourself the 'why' and, mostly, 'who'.

I grew up in Alfei Menashe, a small settlement near Kfar Saba. Although my extended family is Orthodox (and my cousins were involved in Bnei Akiva), my own family is secular. I was the first to be involved in the Scouts. We lived in harmony. In contrast, Israeli society struggled to pick up the pieces after the assassination. Accusations were levelled on each side. I was blind to resentment towards those different from me, or to any other group accused of being against the dream for peace—such a naïve teenager.

Today, 25 years have passed and, alongside the national narrative of the character of Yitzhak Rabin and my personal experience; I also nurture Rabin's legacy, with responsibility and pride, as a member of the Tzofim—Israeli Scouts.

When I became a Tzofim madrich for the first time in year 10, I vowed to be the best. I wanted to create meaningful relationships. To teach them about the State of Israel while hiking on Mount Carmel, to make sure they understood what it means to be tolerant, to accept each other and to be a good scout. I did an outstanding job, up until my first summer camp. That's when the disengagement from Gaza started. On one side of the country, my friends and I were pretending to be pioneers, building kingdoms from logs. On the other, kids my age were losing their homes and land. It felt surreal.

I spent the following months learning and reading about the role of the youth in Israel. Going back to our Zionist founders, especially David Ben Gurion, I inspired myself with the image of the ultimate Hanoar Hatzioni—productive youth—doing his best for society, building the future. But then I found this 1994 quote from Rabin, speaking to a youth movement and answering the question, “What is the role of the youth in Israel?”

Do not accept existing conventions, neither in society nor in other areas. Society needs to know how to change. A society or country that does not change degenerates. Reality is not what it was 50 years ago. Suppose there is one thing that should set youth apart. In that case, it is rebellion against conventions, not rebellion for rebellion, but rebellion for change. Maintain what deserves to exist, change what deserves to change. Many things require change.

For the first time, I understood that I did not understand a thing about my role as a youth leader. I realised that I had missed the political part of being part of a youth movement. It does not mean just taking a stand, or trusting a certain ideology, but being active, being socially involved, asking questions. I wasn't supposed to just highlight the strengths of Israel, but also teach about its weaknesses, to help myself and others face them head-on. That speech, read 11 years after it was delivered, changed my purpose and gave me the confidence to raise my voice and be active within the

youth movement and outside it. Through my shnat sherut, my IDF service, my work as a director in the Tzofim, and today, as the executive director of Hatzofim Australia and Garin Tzabar. Whenever our madrichim and madrichot are preparing the annual ceremony for Rabin, or teaching about Israeli leaders, or when I prepare young olim before moving to Israel with Garin Tzabar, we learn about Israel, its complexity together with its remarkable achievements. And, as Rabin also taught, we'll keep a place for hope.

I find a second example of the power of Rabin's words in the decision of the youth movements in Israel to commemorate Rabin together. You could feel that society was broken and separated into groups, more than ever. Israel's numerous youth movements operate under different ideologies, from all points of the political map. Rabin's murder saw them unite, for the first time in many years, for a common cause. In one voice, they practiced Rabin's most crucial legacy: To fight for ourselves—to make our society stronger, united, more democratic. Since 2016, we have stood there, year after year, avoiding the politics of the day, wearing our khaki, blue, white, green shirts. We argue, of course, but all are there to remember that, as the leaders of tomorrow, we must remember Rabin. To tell his story to not give up on our country, “change what deserves to change”, fight for our democracy and, above all, to never accept violence. It's hard to exaggerate how emotional it is to bring my madrichim and chanichim to these events.

Finally, I believe that Rabin left us with two essential values; it is our duty to pass these onto future generations. The first is responsibility. Our responsibility as a society and as individuals, to study, correct and bear the consequences of our choices. Responsibility will give us the confidence to follow our beliefs and shape our way of life. Responsibility requires us to exercise discretion, not to take for granted what we were told. Not to follow shrewd politicians and not to chase alternating stars. It requires us to see each other as equal, despite any differences of opinion,

culture, religion, gender or ideology. It is the obligation to conduct dialogue, sometimes to get angry, but always to be forgiving.

The second imperative is hope.

The hope that Rabin instilled in us was not just about peace and prosperity as a Jewish and democratic state, at peace with its neighbours. He also instilled in us the hope that this peace would bring with it a new spirit of Israelism, of strengthening Israeli society and the Jewish/Zionist/Israeli character. People that live together, in unity.

In the last few years, we have witnessed the most significant split in Israeli society. Whole groups are moving away from each other. Our society is in an uprising, protesting, complaining, and it might not change.

We must not accept today's Israel as the best it can be. True, nothing is simple. But look at Israel's youth. The youth that continues to volunteer, to initiate, to plough the land length and breadth. Youth who enlist in the best units or do a year of service and preparation, encouraging discourse, educating others. On their way, they criticise, ask questions, confront.

This Israeli youth is different. They are not of a generation that grew up with the loss of hope. They are the generation that is suffering from its affects, but are still looking for new opportunities in all walks of life. The generation that commands us to believe in change and to go in new ways.

From the sense of mission, the sense of belonging and responsibility, we will continue to mark the day of Rabin's assassination. Rabin's legacy is not just his murder. It is his yearning for peace and the reminder of how vital it is to protect our democracy, to resist incitement and violence. And we have our youth to remind us.