

# **Kiddush Hashem and Hillul Hashem**

A Jewish Response to Terrorism

By: Shoshana Glatzer

**Board of Jewish Education of Greater  
New York**  
An Agency of UJA-Federation

Dear Educators,

**Great is peace, for all blessings are contained in it...Great is peace, for God's name is peace... It is written "seek peace and pursue it" (Psalms 34:15). The Torah does not command you to run after or pursue the other commandments, but only to fulfill them at the appropriate occasion. But peace, you must seek in your own place and pursue it even to another place as well.**

*Leviticus Rabbah and Numbers Rabbah*

The above is what we all wish for. Peace. But it still eludes us...

For the past 12 weeks the focus of the world has been on the horrible terrorist attacks on America and its aftershock. The loss of human life was tragically devastating. The economic disaster result is being slowly absorbed even as America and its Allies are engaged in the war against the Al Qaeda Terror Organization and the Taliban that gave them shelter in Afghanistan.

After more than a year of terrorism, death and destruction in Israel, we Jews are especially shell shocked. The coordinate terrorist acts of at least four Terrorist organizations in Israel has resulted in the death and maiming of hundreds of young Israelis. Hundreds of families are ruined for life. The pain is so great, hearts are ready to explode. At the same time we learn of great acts of courage. We take our cues from the courageous Israelis, from Mr. Sharon, Israel's Prime Minister, from President Bush and from Mr. Guillian, the New York Mayor, who all say that we cannot allow the murderers to win, life must go on.

As Jewish educators we need to put the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> in a specific Jewish framework; a Jewish perspective. With all the proliferation of information in the media, Jewish educators need a Jewish educational response.

The enclosed unit is my effort in this direction. Please read it carefully and decide how you can use it in your Educational setting. I hope it will be helpful to you in your educational as well as your personal life.

I would like to thank the following people who read the unit and offered their comments, corrections and insights: Rabbi Neal Kaunfer, Tuvia Book, Betty Ann Ross and Debbie Seiden, many thanks to Debra Brier for her patience in typing and retyping. I would be happy to hear from you with what and how you used the materials presented here.

בברכת חנוכה שמח  
שלום והצלחה

Shoshana Glatzer

## **KIDDUSH HASHEM AND HILLUL HASHEM**

### **A Jewish Response to Terrorism**

**By: Shoshana Glatzer**

#### **Goals:**

- To be informed of who the current Islamic terrorists are and what motivates them to use terror
- To learn and discuss the sacredness of life according to Judaism
- To discuss the meaning of living according to “*Kiddush Hashem*” in the context of Leviticus 19
- To read and discuss stories of Jewish Martyrdom and courage
- To learn the Jewish point of view regarding suicide and martyrdom
- To compare and contrast the Jewish attitude to martyrdom with that of the terrorists

#### **Age: 7<sup>th</sup> grade and up**

Note: The unit is not divided into specific lessons, rather into themes. Use it as you see fit in your specific settings or as a resource for what you are already teaching.

The unit as written can be used directly with students and includes suggested discussions and activities. It can also be used as a guide for the teacher.

## UNIT CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

### **A. Terrorist Suicide Bombers: Important information**

1. Who are they?
2. What motivates terrorists to use terror?
3. The lies they tell
4. Was there Jewish Terrorism?

### **B. Living for Kiddush Hashem**

- Exploring the term
- Learning Leviticus 19 to understand the idea of living a life of holiness
- Learning biblical and Rabbinic selections related to the sacredness of life.

### **C. To Die for the sake of Kiddush Hashem - Martyrdom**

- Learning and discussing historical episodes that led to Jewish martyrdom
- Rabbinic reaction to suicide and to martyrdom
- Stories of martyrdom and courage

### **D. Concluding Activity**

## **KIDDUSH HASHEM AND HILLUL HASHEM**

### **A Jewish Response to Terrorism**

#### ***A. Terrorist Suicide bombers : Important Information***

##### **1. Who are they?**

Muslim suicide bombers are terrorists. They are not the same as freedom fighters. They do not fight as part of an army nor do they fight against armies. They are people who do not represent an official government. They use their violent acts to advance a specific political or religious ideology. Suicide bombers are terrorists who go out to kill unarmed civilians. They are trained to kill people who are riding buses, shopping, driving their cars, working, attending school, movies or sporting events – engaged in everyday activities, not soldiers at war.

As part of their attack, they commit suicide - killing themselves along with their victims. Those killed by the terrorists are innocent people, infants, children, men and women young and old, whom the terrorists do not know.

#### ***Activity: Try to answer the following:***

- *Why do you think the suicide bombers prefer to die rather than be caught?*
- *Why do they kill innocent people?*

Most suicide bombers in the last 15 years have been Muslim Arabs from countries in the Middle East. The terrorists that destroyed the Twin Towers in NY and killed 6,000 people were originally from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries. The suicide bombers in Israel are Palestinian Arabs. (This does not mean that all Muslims or Arabs believe in terrorism or support suicide bombers. Many do not, many are opposed to it.)

These suicide bombers often leave behind letters. In these letters they say that they are doing it to take revenge, and for ‘Allah’, the Arabic name for God. They are killing themselves and scores of others “for God”. According to their belief, which they feel is based on the Koran (The Islamic bible), God approves of their actions. In fact, they say that they are waging a “holy war” against the enemies of Islam. The people and organizations who send them on their mission promise the terrorists that once they kill and

are killed, they will not really die, but will go to heaven and receive the best and most beautiful rewards forever. The suicide bombers, trained to hate and kill, are called **martyrs** by their friends and relatives. They are very respected - their deaths are celebrated by the people in the street. The families they leave behind receive substantial financial support from the organizations that sent them.

**Activity:**

- *Some people call terrorists “Freedom fighters”. They say they do what they do because of oppression. Do you agree with this rationale? Please note: The difference between freedom fighters and terrorists is in their target. Real freedom fighters do not target civilians, women and children.*

**Freedom Fighters and Terrorists**

Rabbi Yotav Eliach differentiates the following three groups:

Soldiers: representing a government and bound by international laws which forbids them to fight and target civilians.

Freedom Fighters – Guerrilla fighters: with no government to lead and guide them, they use unconventional war methods to gain freedom. Their rule is usually not to target civilians. The Maccabees who fought against the Syrian Greeks were guerrilla or freedom fighters.

Terrorists – Any target, civilians or non civilians, is legitimate to achieve their goal

**Preparing to become terrorists**

Please watch two short films on the subject of training terrorists: “Jihad for Kids” and “A Quilt for Peace”. These films show how young children are trained to hate and to kill in Israel. They are trained to go on *Jihad* – Holy War. Some of these children will grow up to become terrorist suicide bombers if those of us in the free world do not do something to stop it.

The civilized world has condemned the suicide bombers who attacked the United States on September 11, 2001. The United States and its allies have vowed to fight and destroy terrorist organizations wherever they are.

**Activity: Discuss**

- *What should the free democratic countries do to rid the world of terrorism?*

**Write**

- *Please write a paragraph about your feelings regarding the terrorist destruction in the USA*

**Draw**

- *You can express your feeling through a picture if you prefer*

## **2. What motivates the terrorist?**

### **a. Religion**

The man you hear about a lot in the news, Osama Bin Laden, who the United States government says was responsible for the terror attack on the United States on September 11<sup>th</sup>, considers himself a religious Muslim. We call him a “fanatic.” His terrorist organization, Al Quaida, and the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan, also base their actions on religious foundations. They are opposed to the Western way of life, because it stands for freedom and democracy.

What does the “Western way of life” mean?

Some of the ideas which the United States and other democratic countries believe in are equal rights for women, freedom to worship any religion, freedom to vote, to read and write any book or newspaper or watch any film and dress as one chooses to. The Taliban rulers of Afghanistan, who support Bin Laden and his network, have quite a different set of rules. They do not allow girls to go to school, women are not allowed to have a job outside the home nor are they even permitted to walk outdoors unaccompanied by their husband, father or son. As you have probably seen in the pictures, women must be covered from head to toe. The citizens of Afghanistan do not vote for their leaders. No one is allowed to practice any religion other than Islam. In the religious schools the students are often taught that other religions are Islam’s enemy and must be destroyed.

The freedom that people have in the United States is not acceptable to Osama Bin Laden and others who think like him. Many of these Muslim groups consider America a leader in the free way of life that they despise so much. Therefore, they call America “the Evil Satan that must be destroyed”.

***Activity:***

- *Write a letter to Bin Laden or to one of his supporters and explain why he is wrong. You could send your letter to a local paper.*

***b. Osama and Other Middle East Arab Countries***

Bin Laden and his followers are also angry with some other middle eastern Arab countries, especially the governments of Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Why? Because although these are Muslim countries, they are open to Western ideas, and because they, are corrupt dictatorships. These terrorists are also angry that American soldiers are stationed on Muslim ‘Holy Soil’. Why is Saudi Arabia ‘Holy Soil’? Because the two holiest sites for Islam, Mecca and Medina, are in Saudi Arabia:

But the idea of ‘Holy Soil’ has another implication in the Middle East. Islam considers any country that Muslims have lived in for a good number of years to be “Islamic Land”. It then becomes their religious obligation to liberate any such land from the “infidels”- the non-Muslims who rule it. Since Muslims lived in the Land of Israel, also called “Palestine”, for many years, (since the Romans gave it this name) they consider the land an Islamic land. Accordingly, it is a religious obligation to rid Palestine of Jewish control, to liberate the land, and to establish an Arab Palestinian State there. The Palestinian terrorist groups “ Hamas” and “Palestinian Jihad” believe that with enough terrorist activity they will rid the land of the Jews.

**Activity:**

*The Muslims are not the only ones who consider Israel a holy land. Many Jews consider Eretz Yisrael their Holy Land as well. What makes Eretz Yisrael a “holy land” for Jews? If Saudi Arabia is “holy soil” how is “Palestine” holy soil for Muslims?*

### ***c. Economic Motivation***

There is extreme anger against the United States from other middle eastern countries as well, countries such as Iran and Iraq. Of all the Muslim countries in the middle east, only Turkey is a democracy, even if not perfect. Democratic countries tend to develop economically because they allow their citizens the freedom to buy and sell, employ who they want and develop the technology that helps push the economy forward. Citizens in a democratic country have a stake in the development of their country. If the country succeeds economically, so will its citizens. This is not so in the countries in the Middle East which are ruled by dictators. Their economy is based on their oil production, not on technology. Many people are unemployed and very poor. The only people who get rich from the natural resources are the leaders, and because they are dictators this wealth is never shared with the people. Because the governments in dictatorships carefully restrict what the population can say or do, the only place that the people are permitted to express their frustration is in their houses of worship, the Mosques. That is where their anger and frustration is nurtured and grows. The people of these countries feel terribly humiliated for having been defeated in wars against Israel and the US. And they see the United States with its wealth, success and freedom as the source of their problem.

### **Activity:**

*Why do you think the Terrorists picked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon as the targets for their attack? (What do these places symbolize?)*

### ***d. The Process of Creating a “Bin Laden”***

This is what Thomas L. Friedman, a very respected journalist for the NY Times said in his column of November 6, 2001:

“Arab regimes fail to build a real future for their people. This triggers seething anger. Their young people who can get visas escape overseas. Those who can’t, turn to the mosque and Islam to protest. The regimes crush the violent Muslim protesters, but to avoid being accused of being anti-Muslim the regimes give money and free rein to their most hard-line, but nonviolent Muslim clerics, while also redirecting their publics’ anger

onto America through their press. Result: America ends up being hated and Islam gets handed over to the most anti-modern forces. Have a nice day. What these Arab regimes still don't get is that September 11<sup>th</sup> has exposed their game. They think America is on trial now, but in fact it is stale regimes like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which produced hijackers, that are on trial. Will they continue to let Islam be hijacked by anti-modernists, who will guarantee that the Arab world falls further behind? Will they continue to blame others? Or will they look in the mirror, take on intolerance and open their societies to a different future?"

### **Activity**

*Please explain to a friend how "Bin Laden" is developed according to the above.*

#### ***e. Political Motivation for Terror – The Israel Connection***

A few facts:

- In 1917, the British government, which was about to take over the ruling of Palestine, issued a declaration, now known as the Balfour Declaration, which states that England "looks favorably on the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine." Where in Palestine this was to be and how large was not specified in the Balfour Declaration.
- In 1947, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into two countries - one Jewish and one Arab. The Jews accepted the partition proposal; Arabs did not and immediately attacked the new Jewish State. Since then, after five outright wars and numerous terrorist attacks, most of the Arabs have still not accepted Israel as a Jewish State in the Middle East. Peace treaties have been signed with Egypt and with Jordan, but these are exceptions to the majority. Following is what the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Arafat's terrorist organization, says in its covenant:

Article 19: "The partition of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of the State of Israel are entirely illegal, regardless of the passage of time, because they were contrary to the will of the Palestinian people and to their natural right

in their homeland, and inconsistent with the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, particularly the right of self-determination.”

Article 20: “The Balfour Declaration, the Mandate for Palestine, and everything that has been based upon them are deemed null and void. Claims of historical or religious ties of Jews with Palestine are incompatible with the facts of history and the true conception of what constitutes statehood. Judaism, being a religion, is not an independent nationality. Nor do Jews constitute a single nation with an identity of its own; they are citizens of the state of which they belong.”

Incidentally, as of today, these articles were not deleted from the Palestinian covenant, in spite of their negative tone, even during the most active periods of peace negotiations with Israel.

**Activity:**

- *What do you think of the two articles of the Palestinian covenant? Are Jews a nation? Could you explain to the Palestinians why their Article 20 is totally wrong?*
- *What do these passages tell you the Arabs really want in relation to Israel? Do they want peace?*

3. Finally: The Lies they tell..

Some say that Osama Bin Laden’s motivation for the attack on Manhattan is based on the United States’ support of Israel. According to this theory, if the United States were not supporting Israel, we would not be the targets of terrorism. How can we know if this is the case? Here are some facts to help you decide.

- Osama Bin Laden was planning this act for at least one to two years, at a time when Israel was offering the Palestinians an independent

country, including part of Jerusalem. Israel also offered to dismantle 80% of the settlements currently on disputed territory. What Bin Laden wants is not a peace agreement between the Palestinians and Israel. He wants no less than the *destruction of Israel*. If the American government were to pressure Israel for greater concessions and an agreement were to be reached, the terrorists would be even angrier.

- Bin Laden's main goal is to get America out of the Middle East entirely, and particularly out of Saudi Arabia. In this way he can get rid of the Arab regimes he hates and turn the whole region into an Islamic extremist network.
- Bin Laden and associates hate everything America stands for – democracy, modernism and freedom. It is what America *is, not simply what it does*, that makes him angry.

### **Was There A Jewish Terrorist Organization?**

To answer this question we need to learn some history. We will introduce you to a difficult period in Jewish history. Remember this is just an introduction. You will need to study further.

#### **The British Rule Over Palestine**

In 1918, at the end of World War I the British took over Palestine, which included then what we know of today as Jordan. The British, in the famous Balfour Declaration said that they looked favorably on the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The struggle over the implementation of the Balfour Declaration lasted throughout the entire 30 years of British rule in Palestine. New Declarations by the British government known as “White Papers”, which were issued between the years 1922-1939 marked Great Britain's retreat from its previous pro-Zionist policy; “The White Papers” limited Jews to purchase land from Arabs, limited the number of Jews allowed to enter Palestine and finally, in 1939, after mounting political pressure from the Arabs declared that: “His Majesty's government now declared unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State... “During the next five years no Jewish immigration would be permitted unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to agree to it.”

The announcement of this policy at the onset of the need of Jewish mass escape from Europe became the starting point for the active struggle of the Jews in Eretz Yisrael (Palestine) against the British mandatory regime in Palestine.

### **The Jewish Brigade – Jews in the British Army**

From the beginning of the second World War in 1939, the Jews of Palestine were anxious to take an active role in the war against the Nazis alongside the Allies. There were many negotiations with the British government to establish a Jewish division in the British Army. Many young men and women volunteered, were trained and formed “The Jewish Brigade.” Among the volunteers was Hannah Senesh, who, together with a group of Jewish volunteers from Palestine parachuted behind enemy lines into Europe as part of the British Army. At the same time, there were many Palestinian Arabs, including some important Arab leaders, who helped the Germans.

It was very painful to note that while the Jews in Palestine were helping the war efforts of the Allies, and the Arabs were openly supporting the Axis (Germany and its allies), the British were intensifying their fight against the Zionist enterprise through the White Paper and by establishing laws forbidding Jews to buy land in 65% of the land of Israel. Jews were forbidden to carry weapons. Even Jews who escaped the war and had nowhere to go were turned back and were not allowed to enter Palestine.

### **The Fight against the British in Palestine**

The Haganah, the organized defense force that was the predecessor of “Tzahal,” Israel’s defense force today, continued to smuggle refugees into Palestine in defiance of the British authorities. When caught, these Haganah fighters were put in British jails.

Even after World War II ended and the full horror of Hitler’s destruction of European Jewry became known, the British continued with their policy of not allowing refugees to enter Palestine. It was then that real violence erupted. In one night, the Haganah blew up eleven bridges to disrupt the movement of British soldiers. At a certain point though the Haganah decided to stop its violent resistance against the British. A few Jewish groups decided to continue to fight the British in their own way in defiance of the Haganah’s

decision. The best known of these groups were “Etzel,” also known as the “Irgun” and “Lechi”. The leader of the Irgun, Menachem Begin, who many years later, became the Prime Minister of Israel, was on the British Most Wanted List.

These groups were well trained and highly secretive. Many of their members were young men and women who were determined to drive the British out of Eretz Yisrael. They organized assassinations of British high commanders and high civil officials, especially those known for anti-semitism. They cut British telephone and telegraph lines and fired at British military posts.

In 1946, membership of the “Irgun” telephoned the offices of the British mandate government in the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, warning that a bomb had been set to go off at the hotel. Perhaps the British thought the warning was a hoax. Perhaps the message never got through. But bombs went off, destroying half of the building which housed the military wing, killing about a hundred British, Arabs and Jews. The British executed the few Irgun members who were caught.

The struggle against the British, the continued smuggling of refugees, did not end until the mandate ended and Israel was established.

Discuss:

1. Some people call the “Irgun” freedom fighters, others call them terrorists. What do you think? Base your answer on what you learned in the previous pages.
2. Compare and contrast the Irgun’s actions with the Muslim Terrorists’ actions.

**B. Living according to the principle of *Kiddush Hashem***

As Americans and as Jews, we are very sad and upset by all the devastation that the terrorists have caused and continue to cause in the United States and in Israel. We may also wonder what our tradition says about martyrdom, suicide ‘for God’, ‘Holy war’. Are these ideas that exist in Judaism? And what does our tradition have to say about life and

death. In the following activities you will learn some very interesting things about your own tradition. Some you may know already, and some may be new to you.

1. What is “*Kiddush Hashem*”?

This Hebrew term means ‘sanctifying God’ (making God holy). Most of the time we speak of ‘sanctifying God’, ‘*kiddush Hashem*’ through living - not through dying. By living a certain way, by behaving in a way that our tradition teaches us, we are sanctifying God.

How so?

We may find a good answer in the third book of the Torah, Leviticus, Chapter 19, in the beginning of the chapter we read:

You should be Holy	-	קדשים תהיו
Because I am Holy	-	פי קדוש אני
The Lord your God	-	ה' אלקיכם

What does this mean?

As God shows holiness, so should we. In a way, the Torah tells us to imitate God. But how can we imitate God? How does one get to be holy? Let’s read a few verses in Leviticus 19:

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them:

‘You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.’

‘You shall each revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I the Lord am your God.’

‘When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God.’

‘You shall not steal; you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another.

‘You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord.

‘You shall not commit robbery. The wages of a laborer shall not remain with you until morning.

‘You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

‘You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich; judge your neighbor fairly. Do not deal basely with your fellows. Do not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord.

‘You shall not hate your kinsman in your heart. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your kinsfolk. Love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

‘You shall observe My laws.

‘You shall not eat anything with its blood.

‘You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord. When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the Lord am your God. You shall not falsify measures of length, weight or capacity. You shall have an honest balance, honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin.

‘I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. You shall faithfully observe all My laws and all My norms: I am the Lord.

After you read the selections from Leviticus chapter 19, please complete the following:

What does Leviticus 19 tell us about our treatment of the poor?

\_\_\_\_\_

What do we learn here about treating the elderly? \_\_\_\_\_

Our parents? \_\_\_\_\_ The stranger? \_\_\_\_\_

---

What do we learn here about conducting ourselves in business?

---

List some other *mitzvot* in Leviticus 19, ones that you did not mention above.

---

---

What does it mean to imitate God, to be holy? \_\_\_\_\_

---

(To be holy is to be like God. God asks us to do these things because this will lead us to be *special*. By behaving according to God's instructions in the Torah we will be unique, special, holy.)

- Draw a picture of what you consider “being Holy” in life and what you learned in Leviticus 19.

## 2. Choose Life

Life according to Judaism is very precious. We must take care of ourselves, making sure not to cause any harm to each other, not to “spill blood”.

Please read the following selections and answer the questions following each paragraph.

*“See, I set before you this day life and prosperity; death and adversity. I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so your offspring would live.....” Deuteronomy 30:15&19*

- a) What choices do humans have?
- b) Why do you think we have these choices?
- c) Does God tell us what to choose? What does God tell us to choose?

*“When you build a new home, you shall make a parapet (a fence) for your roof, so that you do not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone should fall from it...”*

*Deuteronomy 22:8*

*We must remove from the roads all obstacles. No mound and river should remain on the road. Instead a bridge must be built over them.*

*Maimonides, Laws of Murder and Protecting Life, 8:18*

*We are commanded to remove all obstacles and mines from all our dwellings: We must build a wall around the roofs and pits and the life to prevent someone falling off them or into them. This is a mitzvah.*

*Maimonides, Sefer Hamitzvot, 184*

*The same rule for the roof or any other thing that is dangerous to people: it is a commandment to remove it. If it was not removed, the persons responsible are transgressing the commandment of “do not bring bloodguilt...”*

*Maimonides, Law of Murder and Protecting Life, 11:4*

a) Why would the Torah and its commentaries care how we build our homes?

\_\_\_\_\_

b) Can you think of some modern day rules that may have been inspired by this law? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c) How do you understand the reason the Torah gives for these laws?

*“When there are temporary obstacles on the highways (as when roads are being fixed), the highway authority must put up warning signs for all to see in order to avoid a danger. A gate must be put at an intersection of a road and a railroad crossing as well as stoplights until the train passes.”*

*From the State Laws of Israel*

From the Torah

**A.** *“For your life-blood, too, I will require a reckoning: of every beast will I require it; of man too, will I require a reckoning for human life, of every man for that of his fellow man.*

**B.** *Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God was man created.” Genesis 9:5-6*

*What is the difference between verse A & B? The rabbis understood verse A to be forbidding a person to take his/her own life, or to commit suicide. Please read the following:*

From Rabbinics

*I will require a reckoning: from the person who spills his own blood, from the one who kills himself...*

*Rashi & Ramban on Genesis 9:5*

*When God said that he demands a reckoning for the person’s own taking of his life, He took from humankind the ownership of their blood. This is a strict commandment not to commit suicide.*

*Rabbi S.R. Hirsch*

*The one who commits suicide is a murderer. There is no worse sinner. A person who commits suicide destroys a whole world. One is not to mourn for him. He must be buried near the cemetery fence.*

*Maimonides, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*

*The Israeli Rabbinates agree that a suicide victim be buried in any place the family chooses in the cemetery and not at the fence, as stated in Kitzur Shulchan Aruch. The Rabbis feel that there is a great chance that the suicide victim changed his/her mind in the last minute before the dying and is therefore given the benefit of the doubt.*

*A person who kills himself is a murderer. Jewish law considers a suicide even worse than a regular murderer. God gave life to humankind and it is not theirs to take away. In fact, there is a Jewish law that says that one is not to hit another person even if that person asks to be hit. Life belongs to God.*

*Summary of the words of Rabbi Zuyah*

Discussion:

- How does Jewish tradition view suicide?
- Why is suicide so disapproved of in Jewish tradition?
- According to what you have already read and studied, compare and contrast the attitude of many Muslims, including the clergy, to the Jewish attitude.

Summary:

According to Judaism, humans are like God: they were created in the image of God. They were given extraordinary intrinsic value. To take a life is in some way an attack on God. From this view the Rabbis made the claim, as we saw in the sources before, that ***one who destroys a single individual is as if that person destroyed the whole world*** (Sanhedren 4:5)

So, what does this mean for us after the horrible event of September 11, 2001? Imagine how many worlds have been destroyed with the destruction of the twin towers and part of the pentagon – these acts caused not only the death of close to 6,000 people, but of the worlds of people not yet born who would have been their descendents.

### **C. To Die for *Kiddush Hashem* – Martyrdom**

Can you think of a time when a Jew was unable to live in accordance with קדושה holiness as is demanded by Torah?

There have been times when Jews were forbidden to observe Shabbat or eat kosher food or even take care of their own people in a way that was compatible with their religion. Can you think of times like that in Jewish history? You probably remember the story of Hanukkah. What happened? Please share what you remember.

Here is a story that summarizes some of what you said. Please read it and then answer the questions. Then continue on.

A. When Antiochus decided that he wanted the Jews to follow the Greeks religion; he made certain decrees in an attempt to wipe out Judaism. He tried to force loyal Jews to disobey Jewish law and to do so publicly.

Eliezer, one of the leading scribes (men who copy the Torah, learned men), an old man in his nineties, was being forced to eat pork, a forbidden food. He decided to set an example by being strong enough to refuse to do what he knew was wrong. Those who were in charge, the Greek soldiers, took him aside and privately urged him to bring meat from his own house and just pretend that he was eating the pig which had been sacrificed. By doing this, he might escape the death penalty. But he refused to do so.

He said, “It does not suit a man of my age to pretend, and lead young people to believe that at the age of ninety I gave up and went over to idol worship. This would be misleading them and disgracing myself. For even if I were to escape torture and punishment (at the hands of the Greeks) by pretending to eat the pork, I would certainly be punished by God. Therefore, by giving up my life now, I will prove myself worthy of my great age, and leave to the young an example of how to die willingly and noble for the sacred and holy laws.”

II Maccabees 6:18-28

And so he was tortured to death, leaving in his death a lesson not only to the young, but also to the rest of his nation.

a. What did Eliezer refuse to do? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Why did he refuse even to pretend to do this? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c. If Eleazer had been asked to desecrate Jewish law in his home without other Jews around, do you think he would have done the same as he did in public? Why? What's the difference?

---

---

2. This kind of death is called in Hebrew **למות על קדושה** - martyrdom.

In the course of Jewish history there are many other examples of martyrs:

- a) Almost 300 years after Eliezer died, when the Romans controlled the land of Israel, they decreed that no Jew was allowed to study the Torah. Rabbi Akiba chose to continue teaching in spite of the decree. Because of this he was tortured to death. He died while uttering the words of the Shema: 'The Lord is One'.
  
- b) In the year 1096 the First Crusade began. The Catholic Crusaders went through Germany on their way to Jerusalem, which they hoped to liberate from Muslim rule. Along the way they killed the 'infidel' Jews who would not convert to Christianity. In Mayence and in many other Jewish communities, the Jews chose to kill themselves rather than convert. They died with these words, "We will kill ourselves for the unity of God's holy name...and will dwell with Rabbi Akiba and his companions who were killed for His name's sake."
  
- c) During the Second World War in Warsaw ninety-three Jewish young women were commanded to turn themselves over to the Nazi soldiers who would do with them whatever they wanted. Rather than submit to the Nazi soldiers, the ninety-three women said, "Together we studied God's Torah, together we shall die." They killed themselves, dying innocent and pure, rather than falling into the hands of the Nazi soldiers.

Fill in this chart for each of these examples of Dying For The Sake of Kiddush Hashem.

	<b>Who is like Eleazer?</b>	<b>Who is like Antiochus and the Greeks?</b>	<b>Over what issue did the Jews decide to die?</b>
<b>During Roman rule over the land of Israel</b>			
<b>During the crusades</b>			
<b>During World War II</b>			

**Conclusion:**

These things happened at different times and in different places during the course of Jewish history. Yet in all of these cases (and in many other cases in Jewish history) the Jews involved chose to die. What do you think was special about these cases?

---



---

Please explain the following statement:

“Martyrdom is an ideal of those who live on the margins of power”.

---



---

Does what you wrote explain why the Jews in the stories above chose to be martyrs? What is the major difference between those Jews and the Muslim suicide bombers you read about earlier?

---

---

---

---

3. There is another well-known story of Jewish martyrdom.

The Story of Masada

After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in year 70, Jewish soldiers, with their families, fled to Masada, a fortress in the Judean desert that was built by King Herod. There they entrenched themselves under the leadership of Eleazer Ben Yair. From Masada they sent out bands to harass the Romans. They may have hoped that they would be able to defeat the Romans. In the year 73, the Romans attacked the fortress. The Jews of Masada defended themselves heroically, and when they realized that they were losing the battle and that the Roman army would definitely conquer them, they committed suicide. Under the leadership of Eleazer Ben Yair, almost 1000 men, women and children chose death rather than slavery. Following are the words which the historian Josephus claims were spoken by Ben Yair:

Long since, my brave men, we determined neither to serve Romans nor any other save God. He alone is man's true and righteous Lord...let us not now...deliberately accept the irreparable penalties awaiting us if we were to fall alive into Roman hands. For as we were the first of all to revolt, so are we the last in arms against them. Moreover, I believe that God has granted us this favor that we have it in our power to die nobly and in freedom, a privilege denied to others who have met with unexpected defeat...For it is death which gives liberty to the soul, and permits it to depart to its own pure abode, there to be free from all calamity; but so long as it is imprisoned in a mortal body tainted with all its miseries, it is in sober truth, dead, for association with what is mortal ill befits what which is divine.

The story leaves us a bit uncomfortable. We can certainly respect the Jewish soldiers who held off the Romans for so long. But how do we understand that when faced with the inevitability of surrender, they killed their wives and children and then committed suicide? After this period, and for many hundreds of years longer, there were no more Jewish soldiers in Israel. **Jewish rule over the land of Israel was lost.**

When Israel became independent again, in 1948, it became the practice that when certain elite members of the armed forces are formally inducted into their divisions they are brought to Masada, where they vow:

“שנית מסדה לא תפול” - “Masada will not fall again”?

This practice was stopped in recent years. Why do you think the IDF (Israel Defense Force) stopped it?

#### 4. Laws regarding Martyrdom

Jewish law regarding martyrdom is very interesting. The following is a summary of Maimonides' view, which represents the Rabbis' thinking.

Jews have to be holy through observing God's commandments. They should live by their laws, not die by them. This is true about all the *mitzvot* except, in special circumstances, these:

- If a person is forced to worship idols, forced to kill another human being or forced to commit a forbidden sexual act, the person should choose to be killed rather than perform these forbidden acts. However, this should happen **only** if the person is forced to perform these acts in public - not if there are fewer than ten people witnessing the act.
- And if Jews are forced to desecrate these laws and do **not** commit martyrdom, do not choose to be killed? They are not to be blamed or punished since it was forced on them – the action was not their fault.

Unfortunately, during the 200 years that Jews were exiled from their land, they were placed many times in the position of having to choose life or death while living under Islamic rule or Christian rule. In Spain, under Christian rule, in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries,

Jews were forced to either convert to Christianity, face torture or death, or be expelled. Many Jews chose life and conversion over martyrdom. Some were lost to Judaism for all times, while others lived as “conversos”, hidden Jews, for many years until they were eventually able to return to practicing Judaism.

Discussion:

*What is the difference between the Muslim terrorists who are committing suicide and the Jewish martyrs you read about?*

*To learn more on the subject of suicide and martyrdom see: Body Ethics-Suicide by Kerey Olitsky and Joel Lurie Grishaver, Published by Torah Aura.*

**Hillul Hashem – Desecrating God’s Name**

“Any terrorists who visit death and destruction upon thousands of innocent people are the embodiment of evil. They claim to worship the same God we worship, but that God does not sanction these barbaric acts. They cannot use the excuse that they are acting out of religious zeal. Jewish law does not allow taking the lives of innocent people even in direct defense of one’s one life. Rav Yehuda Amital, a well-known Rabbi in Israel said in an address during a Sukkot Conference:

“The Islamic fundamentalists position of killing and being killed in a holy war for God is *Hillul Hashem*, a desecration of God’s name. Our common God could not possibly reward an act of suicide done for the purpose of slaughtering innocent civilians!”

(From Rabbi Saul Berman’s Sermon)

**5. Another kind of Martyrdom**

The Water Boy

Following is a true story of an incident that took place during the 1948 Israel War of Independence, in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was once again, 2000 years after its destruction by the Romans, under siege. The enemy this time was the Arabs. The big issues for the Jewish defenders were lack of ammunition and lack of water. The army was so understaffed it had to use boys as young as 13 as messengers.

Please read the story and then discuss the follow-up questions.

## The Water Boy

In the month of Av in the year 5708 (1948), during the days of the truce, I stayed in an encampment in the Sharon. Since the cannons were silent and the guns rested, I listened to tales told by the soldiers. This is the first story. I heard it from a young soldier who was among the defenders of the Old City of Yerushalayim.

Our position was in the southeastern sector of the Old City, behind a block of big houses, called “Batei Machasseh.” The Dung Gate, hidden by stones and sandbags.

Did you ever look down from the “Shaar Ha’ Ashpot” toward the southeast? You gaze into the depths of our history. The scene that spreads before you is so intoxicating. The area looked just like this two and three thousand years ago. Nothing has changed in this old grey vista. There, amidst the bent olive trees on the slopes, David escaped from Avshalom, his son and turned to the desert. There, opposite you on the sloping cliffs, stood the army of Sanacheriv, with bows drawn toward the City of David. And here, at your very feet, Roman camps besieged the city.

David.

Chizkiyahu

Bar-Giora

Not a sound and not a murmur. The heart trembles as one sees the past glory turned to dust, and the blood of David, Chizkiyahu and Bar-Giora acting as fertilizer for the vegetable patches planted by the Arabs.

Ra-ta-tat.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

There is no time to think. No time to dwell in the realms of history. The legionnaires, messengers of the snake of Amman, bombard us with fire from machine guns and mortars. We are shelled from Kfar Hashiloach and machine gunned from the opposite courtyard. There are four of us holding our position with two rifles and one machine gun. Their guns are firing constantly. But, “spare, spare, spare your ammunition,” warns the commander of old Yerushalayim. Our supplies are soon exhausted and yet no one can leave or enter through the city walls.

Two, then three days pass, with no word from the outside. We are caught in a crossfire. We have no more bread and our water has become slimy. Our clothes are becoming tattered and our skin is covered with a coat of stinking mud.

Oh David, oh David!

Oh David *melech Yisrael chai v'kayam!*

The rays of the rising sun illuminate the mountains each morning and the reddish purple sunset glows in the horizon at dusk. The nights, dark and thick with blackness, are full of fear and tension. Enemies are all around. My tired eyes are glued to the little window, and my finger is taut on the trigger.

“Who goes there?”

“Oshriko.”

“Who are you?”

“A messenger.”

“Quick, come up.”

“They are shooting at me.”

“Duck.. Watch out!”

“Well, I got here.”

“Are you a Jew?”

“Shma Yisrael.”

This messenger, a boy of twelve, is dressed in wide pants, and wrapped in a black cape tied at the waist with a rope. His face is indistinguishable, but his voice betrays that he is an Oriental Jew, a native of the Old City.

“Who sent you?”

“The man from the Hagana.”

“And where is Duad, the boy who used to come?”

“He was killed yesterday, on his way here.”

“And what is your name?”

“I told you already, Oshriko. I am a Jew from Salonika.”

“What did you come here for, fresh air?”

“I brought you bread and cigarettes, and greetings.”

“Who sent you?”

“The one called Avraham.”

“And why didn't he send water?”

“I got to the wall with a jug full of water on my shoulders twice, but the Arabs shot at me and broke the jugs. Only with God’s help did I escape alive.”

“It’s a dirty shame.”

“You have no water?” Oshriko asks in a quivering voice. “Don’t worry, I will get you some.”

“How?”

“From the other side.”

“From Jordan?” we ask laughingly.

“From Shiloach.”

“By airplane?”

“Why by airplane? Its not far, you can walk there in less than fifteen minutes,” Oshriko answers offhandedly, shrugging his shoulders.

“How?”

“It is very simple,” he answers and grins. “I thought about it yesterday and today I made my plans very carefully and clearly. You will lower me by rope through this little window. I’ll sneak over to the stream, fill the canteen and bring back fresh, clean water.”

“You’re talking nonsense.”

“I do it every day, really.”

“What do you mean?”

“This is the way I do it. Listen very carefully. I put the canteen on my shoulder, and jump from roof to roof through the old city. I crawl through holes and steal silently up to one of their wells, which is full of fresh water. I fill the canteens, come back and divide it among the men. Most of our wells are destroyed, and in the ones that are left the water is polluted.”

“And they don’t catch you?”

“Oh, I speak Arabic fluently, my face is black like theirs, and even my clothes resemble theirs.”

“We won’t endanger your life, Oshriko.”

“And you, aren’t your lives always in danger?”

“We have to do it.”

“You have to give your lives for us, but we can’t give anything in return?” he asks angrily.

“Four are stronger than one.”

“And aren’t four lives more important than one?”

“But, you are still a child, Oshriko!”

“I am a child?” The boy responds angrily and impatiently. “It is already a year since I became a Bar Miztvah, and I am used to all sorts of danger. Look,” he says, loosening the rope around his waist, “it will only take a minute. I will tie the rope to this turret, and the end reaches the gate. My body is thin and agile, and I will squeeze through this hole, holding the rope, and shalom.”

“Oshriko! Come back!” we shout. There is only silence – and blackness – and a great fear.

“Quiet! Out shooting will betray him to the enemy.”

The four of us sit like the sons of Jacob after they have sold their little brother Joseph to the Bedouins, ashamed and sad.

“Couldn’t you catch him by snatching the rope?”

“Why didn’t you grab him by his kerchief?”

“Why didn’t you understand what he was driving at?”

“Why didn’t you block the opening and prevent him from leaving?”

Four jackasses and not a man among us. One of us looks through the opening. Another jumps out of our hideout and without a moment’s hesitation, climbs up the hill and begins to run after the boy. Silence engulfs us.

*“Shema Yisrael!”*

Why didn’t they shoot? It seems as if all eyes are peering at the little boy as he crawls between the rocks and bushes to the stream.

“How will we explain this to the people who sent the boy?”

“We, who acted so foolishly.”

“Did the rope move?”

“No, our nerves are quivering.”

“What time is it, guys?”

“About midnight.”

“It is already three hours since he left, and still not a word.”

Finally, “Who goes there?”

“Oshriko.”

“Are you all right, you urchin?”

“I am back, but without water.”

“Hurry, tie the rope around your body and we’ll pull you up.”

“I can’t, friends. There is death in the canteen.”

“What are you talking about? Tie the rope around your waist and we’ll pull you up.”

“Better one should die, than five.”

“What did those beasts do to you?”

“They put a mine in my canteen and sent me back to you.”

“Hurry, untie the canteen, and throw it away.”

“They tied my hands behind my back and I can’t untie them.”

“Wait, we’ll come down and help you.”

“Your lives are more precious than mine.”

“All lives are precious. Wait there!”

A demolitions expert – one of our group – slides down the rope.

Before he gets down,,,

BOOM!

A loud explosion is heard, and the air shudders and thrusts us back into our hideout.

We will never forget this day. Neither will any of us who were there.

### **EPILOGUE:**

In 1948, during the War of Independence, the Old City of Jerusalem was captured by the Jordanian army. Most of the Jews living within the Old City were either killed or managed to flee to the new city. Those Jews who were captured by the Arabs were released after a few weeks and were allowed to go to the New City. All the ancient, beautiful synagogues within the Old City were destroyed.

Jerusalem became a divided city. For nineteen years, no Jews were allowed to enter the Old City. For nineteen years, not a single Jew could pray at the Western Wall.

In June 1967, during the Six Day War, Israel’s soldiers liberated the Old City. The old and new cities of Jerusalem were united; Jerusalem was reunified. Since that day, anyone of any religion is welcome everywhere in Jerusalem. Jews and Arabs alike are free to come and go as they please and to pray where they choose to do so.

Let us pray that the city of Jerusalem will never again be divided!

Water boy  
Follow-up discussion

1. Why did the Army engage the help of 13-year-old kids?
2. The story has a sad ending. It ends in terrible tragedy. Please explain.
3. Who do you think is the hero in this story? Please explain your answer.
4. Even though Oshriko was only 14, he volunteered for a dangerous mission. Can you think of other hero's you know? Who are they? What did they do?
5. Please re-read the following dialogue:

“Wait, we will come down to help you”

“Your lives are more precious than mine”

- Why did Oshriko think that?

“All lives are precious, wait there”

- On what did they base this statement?

What is the difference between the Arab suicide bombers and the Jews in this story?

6. The story of what the Arabs in Jerusalem did to Oshriko in 1948 can be read as a forerunner to today's Muslim terrorists. How so?

**D. Concluding Activity**

1. You meet a Palestinian Muslim who tells you how brave and wonderful the terrorist suicide bombers are who killed 21 teenagers at a disco in Tel Aviv. What do you say to him? (Make sure to utilize what you learned in this unit.)
2. A Saudi Prince gave Mr. Guiliani, the Mayor of New York, 10 million dollars to help the city and its victims recover from the attack on the twin towers. After visiting ground zero the Prince was sympathetic and sad. On the surface this seems like a noble action. Then, in a later printed message, he said that after the terrorist attack Americans should re-think its policy of supporting Israel in its struggle with the Arab Palestinians, implying that this must have

been the reason for the attack. The mayor was very offended and angry after learning of the Prince's published comments. After consulting with Washington he returned the 10 million dollar check.

One of your friends says that Guiliani is an idiot - that he should have taken the money no matter what. What do you think? Why?

### 3. An Israeli 8<sup>th</sup> grader speaks to the media

#### **An Israeli 8<sup>th</sup> Grader Speaks to the Media**

*We do not know who the youngster that sent it is.  
We received it in our E-mail, but we do not know from whom.*

The following is an e-mail letter that was sent to the European Media. Please read it and then discuss the following questions:

- a. What prompted the 8<sup>th</sup> grader to write this letter?
- b. This student accuses the media reporters of being untrue and biased in their reporting. What caused this accusation?
- c. There is a distinction drawn in this letter between terrorist actions and responsible government actions. What is it?
- d. Write a letter to the writer of the E-mail to tell how you feel about the content of the letter

Dear BBC, CNN, SKYTV:

I am writing to you all since you have so much power with the electronic media today.

I am an 8th grader, 13 years old in Jerusalem, Israel. My friends were killed in the summer when they were having pizza in Jerusalem by terrorists of the Arabs. My cousin, Natasha, was killed by Arab terrorists in Tel Aviv when she was waiting in line to dance in a disco during the summer too. My uncle was blown up in the World Trade Center in New York by terrorists where he worked on the 83rd floor of one of the towers. My greatgrandfather, David, was burned in Auschwitz.

I cannot understand why you keep referring in today's newscasts about the murder of our Tourism Minister Zeevi by terrorists as a revenge from the Israeli army's killing of a chief terrorist, Mustafa, during war actions.

Minister Zeevi was an elected politician. He was a head of his party. He would be like a member of the House of Commons or the US Congress in the 'Western' world. He might have had different political views than most of your leftleaning reporters who depend on Arab money gifts from the Palestinians here to give their biased reporting, but he was a member of the government's cabinet.

All day your reporters are talking about Zeevi's assassination in Jerusalem as if he was a terrorist like the ones who killed my friends and cousins and uncle over the past few months. Mr. Zeevi was a former general and military hero. He turned to politics in 1988 when he was first elected to the Knesset, our US type of Congress here.

I wish that when I grow up I could be a reporter for one of your networks. I would not talk or lie like your reporters do today that Mr. Zeevi's assassination as a politician was in response to the terrorists who murder. Mr. Zeevi did not send out his assistants to kill Arab kids in discos and pizza parlors. Mr. Zeevi did not send out terrorist pilots that worked for him to fly into the World Trade Center to kill 6000 civilians.

I hope that you don't throw out this letter even though I'm only in 8th grade. I know that killing terrorists is OK. Isn't that what Mr. Bush and Mr. Blair are doing today over in Afghanistan? They are not killing or bombing civilian politicians with differing views.

So in the future, if your reporters continue to lie and give deceitful news about the murder of a member of my government's cabinet and compare it to the killing of terrorists in Gaza and Ramallah by my country's army during wartime, I will take my whole 8th grade class and picket outside your offices here in Israel.

I know that this does not scare you as much as those Arab terrorists who threatened your reporters' lives last month when your reporters wanted to release the video footage of Arabs in the West Bank demonstrating in joy on Sept. 11 for their king terrorist Bin Laden, but at least we 8th graders can demonstrate about the truth and not the lies of your media.

I have to go back to my class now and turn off BBC, CNN, and SKYTV before I get too toxic with your falsehoods and anti Jewish rhetoric.

M. Davidson  
8th grader, Israel

\* To learn more about the Media and Israel, see Mr. Sam Bahn's article on the subject.