



**Response Lesson to be used to understand the
Jewish Response to the death of Osama bin Laden
by Robyn Faintich, JewishGPS, LLC**

Watch the following videos (20 minutes)

9-11-2001

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQI798fUL2s&feature=related> (3 minutes 46 seconds)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdOfaMoDwWY&feature=related> (1 minute 49 seconds)

Osama threatens Israel

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJhau40A2m4&feature=related> (2 minutes 15 seconds)

Obama announces Osama killed

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNYmK19-d0U> (9 minutes, 28 seconds)

Crowd Celebrates

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FmHti8iBQM> (includes a brief pre-commercial, 2 minutes 16 seconds)

Discuss: (8-15 minutes)

- Where were you when you heard the news of September 11, 2001?
- Do you remember the emotions you felt at that time?
- Did anyone here lose someone on September 11, 2001? (If so, allow them a moment to speak about this person and have the group recognize the loss).
- Where were you when you heard the news that Osama bin Laden had been killed?
- What emotions did you feel at the time?
- If you had been in DC or NYC, would you have liked to have join the celebrations in those locations?
- Do you believe America should be celebrating the military killing of Osama bin Laden?
- Do you think Jews (in any country) should be celebrating the military killing of Osama bin Laden?
- In your recollection, are there times in our history where we have celebrated the demise of an enemy?



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Text Study Options

The follow texts help us frame the Jewish response to the celebration of the death of an evil-doer. They sit in conflict with each other. Our job is to help our learners wrestle with the conflict.

Polar Opposites:

1. The following texts are paired in contrasting couplets.
2. Place the first two texts on one wall on 11x17 posters and the third text on the opposite wall.
3. Have everyone stand in the center of the room.
4. Give the instructions that you will read the texts out loud and they should go stand near the text that they agree with most as it applies to the death of Osama bin Laden.
5. Be sure that they understand the context of the texts in Jewish life.
6. Allow people to stand in the middle along a continuum.
7. Ask people to share why they are standing where they are.

❖ Do no rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when your enemy stumbles. If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if your enemy is thirsty, give water to drink. Happy are those who always have a sense of fear, but those who harden their hearts will fall into evil. Proverbs 24:17, 25:21, 28:14.

AND

❖ My children are drowning and you sing songs to me? Megillah 10b

❖ My handiwork [the Egyptians] is drowning in the sea, yet you want to sing a song before me!" Sanhedrin 39b

❖ When the wicked perish there is glad song. Proverbs 11:10

Retaliation

1. Divide the group into chevruta pairs or triads.
2. Give them the following texts to learn together
 - ❖ Let him slay you rather than you commit murder. Who knows that your blood is redder? Perhaps his blood is redder? [That is, who is to say that you deserve to live more than he does?] Sanhedrin 74a
 - ❖ If someone comes to slay you, forestall slaying that person. Sanhedrin 72a
3. Ask them to consider based on these texts, how they believe Jewish people should or should not respond to retaliation.
4. Bring everyone back together to discuss:
 - a. How did your chevruta respond to these retaliation texts?
 - b. Do you believe there should be exceptions to this?
 - c. Is the situation with Osama bin Laden an exception? Why or why not?



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Justice

1. Ask the learners to think quietly to themselves: What are the differences between seeking retaliation and seeking justice?
2. Break the group up into two groups: Retaliation and Justice
3. In their subgroups, they should make a list of the characteristics/purposes of the role they were assigned.
4. Have the groups present their lists and compare/contrast.
5. Based on the characteristics they generated, was the killing of Osama bin Laden an act of Justice or an act of Retaliation?
6. The following texts can be used as a backdrop of this conversation:
 - ❖ *Tzedek Tzedek, Tirdof.* Justice, justice shall you pursue. Deuteronomy 16:20.
 - ❖ Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. Psalms 34:15
 - ❖ *Limdu heitev dirshu mishpat ashru chamotz; shiftu yatom rivu alamanah*
Learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice; aid the wronged. Isaiah 1:17
 - ❖ *Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel omer: al shlosa divarim haolam omed. Al hadin v'al ha'emet v'al hashalom.*
R. Shimon Ben Gamliel: "On three things the world stands: by justice/judgement, by truth and by peace." Pirkei avot 1:18

Texts About Life:

1. It is important to remember the value of life itself.
2. Ask the group to generate a list of attributes they believe the military personnel who carried out the order to take down Osama bin Laden have. Create this list one side of the board.
3. Ask the group to generate a list of attributes they believe that Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda operatives have.
4. Are there any commonalities?
5. Have them go back to the list, ask the questions:
 - a. Do they both have families?
 - b. Do they both have friends?
 - c. Do they both have knowledge?
 - d. Do they both have a mind?
 - e. Do they both have a body?
6. Discuss: Why is it important to find these similarities too? (B'tzelem Elohim)
7. Hand out the following texts:
 - ❖ Thou shalt not kill (murder). Exodus 20:13
 - ❖ Whoever saves a single life, is as though he/she saved the entire world. Sanhedrin 4:5



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8. Discuss:

- a. Do you believe that these apply to evil-doers? Why or why not?
- b. How do these texts make you feel about the killing of Osama bin Laden?
- c. What alternatives did the U.S. Government and Military have?

Text about War: (contact JewishGPS for a full lesson on Ethics of War)

- ❖ Nation shall not lift of sword against nation, neither shall we have war any more.
Lo Yisa Goy el Goy Cherev, Lo yilmedu od milchama Isaiah 2:4

Bearing Witness:

- ❖ When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. Psalms 37:34