



SPEECH: NOT JUST A SPECTATOR SPORT: A PARENT-CHILD STUDY GUIDE

Appreciating the Loss of the Mikdash

Haven't been to your favorite sports stadium in a while? Haven't been able to attend that game you really wanted to see? Imagine you are told that the stadium is opening up to live audiences in two weeks. But it's only allowed to fill to 30% capacity, so you need to act quickly. Your parents buy the tickets and you are ready to go. You can't believe this is actually happening! It's been such a long time and feels like it's been hundreds of years since you went to the stadium! There are fewer cars than

usual due to capacity limits. Within minutes you get to your seats early and wait. As the start time approaches, the seats begin to fill to the new capacity. But it's five minutes until the start time and you still don't see any players. After twenty minutes people begin to wonder what's going on. Finally, after forty minutes, a message appears on the board: "Thank you for visiting. You have twenty minutes left." What? What is going on? There is no game. The tickets you paid for were simply to visit the place you missed so much.

Questions for Discussion:

1. If this happened to you, what would your reaction be? Would you be satisfied showing up to the stadium without seeing a game? Why?
2. If you are lucky enough, you may have had the opportunity to visit the Kotel. Isn't it amazing? We celebrate the fact that we can visit a site with so much kedusha. So what are we doing sitting on the floor crying or trying to feel sad on Tisha B'Av? We have Eretz Yisrael! We have the Kotel!
3. How do you think the stadium analogy relates to Tisha B'Av?

The Kotel is just like that empty stadium. It may be nice to visit, but it is missing everything that was supposed to be there. In fact, we don't even have the physical structure of the Beis Hamikdash that was the epicenter of the kedusha. When visiting the place where the Beis Hamikdash once stood or looking at pictures, we should be stricken with at least the same disappointment as if we were visiting a barren stadium. Why aren't we? Maybe because we never saw the live show. We never experienced what it was really like during the times of the Mikdash. It is hard to miss something when you don't really understand what you are missing.

I hope it's fair to assume that all of us appreciate that our religion is far more valuable than any sport or entertainment. It would follow logically that we should be devastated that we are lacking a Beis Hamikdash and that we don't even have the physical structure that once served as the center of our religious life. Just thinking about this alone can make the day of Tisha B'Av more meaningful.

Standing Up To Peer Pressure

If we start to delve into the events of Tisha B'Av, we must ask ourselves how we got to this point. How did we lose the holiest structure that represented our connection with Hashem? What was so terrible that it left us with this empty stadium with no game to go to? One answer may be to look at the very first Tisha B'Av, even before there was a Beis Hamikdash. Let's explore the *chet hameraglim* and the *chet of lashon hara*.

After the meraglim return from spying out the Holy Land, the Torah tells us:

ותשא כל העדה ויתנו את קולם ויבכו העם בלילה ההוא.

The entire nation raised their voice and cried out on that night.

Bamidbar 14:1

This was as a result of being informed that they would not physically be able to conquer the inhabitants of the land that they were promised. The Gemara has the following comment on this pasuk:

אמר רבה אמר רב יוחנן: אותו היום ערב תשעב באב היה. אמר הקב"ה הן בכו בכיה של חנם ואני אקבע להם בכיה לדורות.

Raba says in the name of Rav Yochanan: That night (when the meraglim returned) was the eve of Tisha B'Av. Hashem said, "You are crying for no reason, I will give you a reason to cry in future generations."

Sotah 35a

That day became synonymous with destruction and devastation for generations to come. The meraglim spread fear among Bnei Yisroel by speaking lashon hara about Eretz Yisroel, and because of that *chet*, Tisha B'Av became a day of destruction and mourning. However, there were two meraglim who didn't follow the rest of the crowd: Yehoshua and Calev. They did not succumb to the ideas of the other meraglim and withstood the pressure. If we explore the differences between Yehoshua and Calev, we can learn important lessons on how to approach situations of lashon hara, and through this, we can hopefully play a part in bringing the geula.

Questions for Discussion:

4. Moshe changed the name of Hoshea to Yehoshua so that Hashem would help him along the way. Why do you think that the name of Calev was not changed?
5. Rashi tells us that Calev went alone to daven in Chevron at the burial site of the Avos to save him from the plot of the meraglim. Where was Yehoshua? Why didn't Yehoshua go with him?
6. Have you ever been in a situation when somebody pressured you to do something wrong? How did you deal with it? Were you successful?

In a footnote in the 19th chapter of section two in *Shemiras Halashon*, the Chafetz Chaim explains that there are two ways to stand up for what is right when people are failing to do the right thing. One method is to vehemently protest, argue, and clash with these individuals. Another method is to remain quiet, and maybe even initially pretend as if you agree with the wrongdoers, only to reveal your true colors at the last minute.

The first person puts himself at great risk, subjecting himself to both verbal abuse and physical harm by taking an unpopular position. By revealing his true feelings, however, he guards himself from being influenced by others. This was the personality of Yehoshua. Although the second person is safe from physical harm, he is quite vulnerable to succumbing to the influence of the others. This was the personality of Calev.

Through *ruach hakodesh*, Moshe was able to recognize the strengths of both Yehoshua and Calev. Because Yehoshua was at great risk at the beginning, Moshe davened that Hashem should protect him. Calev did not need this prayer at that moment. Fast forward to the encounter between the meraglim and the giants of Eretz Yisrael. Fear and trepidation immediately fell upon the ambassadors of Klal Yisrael. Realizing that he might follow suit with the other meraglim, Calev went to Chevron to daven for help.

Both reactions are appropriate. Some people are more inclined to act like Yehoshua — outwardly bold — and some people are inclined to act like Calev — behaving a quieter way. The important point is the result: not joining

the people doing the wrong thing. Some people feel the need to speak up immediately while others feel it is better to remain quiet at first and react at a later point.

Perhaps we can apply this idea beyond situations that are directly connected to lashon hara. If we emulate the midos of Yehoshua and Calev in other scenarios we can also repair the sin of the meraglim. Any time we are faced with adversity, and the peer pressure is building, we need to make the right decisions. It is not always easy; in fact it is rarely easy, but we can't fall into the same trap that the once highly respected meraglim fell into.

Are you like Yehoshua? Will you tell sinners that they are doing the wrong thing and that you will have no part? Or are you like Calev? Will you go with the flow and then stop and protest when the moment is just right? The Chafetz Chaim is telling us that there is often more than one way to tackle problems. What works for one individual may not necessarily work for another.

Let us try to take these thoughts to help make our Tisha B'Av more meaningful. On this inauspicious day, let us appreciate that there is something missing from our lives. Baruch Hashem we are able to visit Eretz Yisroel and have access to the Kotel. But this is surely not where we want to be! Let us try to learn lessons from those who stood up to the meraglim and apply them to our lives. The challenge of both these tasks is to take what we learned to not only make Tisha B'Av more meaningful, but to enhance our lives moving forward. And then IY"H we can appreciate "game day" at the Beis Hamikdash in its full glory.



Looking to learn more about Megillat Eichah?

Find hundreds of shiurim at yutorah.org/nach/eichah