

PARSHA GAMES

Thankful Seat

by Sammy Schaechter

GOAL: To teach the kids about being thankful and having hakarat hatov.

TYPE: Moderate, indoor, group game.

HOW TO PLAY: Keep everyone sitting in one big circle. Bring in one person into the middle and everyone must go around and say something awesome or something they are thankful for about the person in the middle. It could be that they're good at basketball, help them with their homework, they're very funny, etc.

DISCUSSION: In these games, we learn all about being thankful for things and appreciating what we have. In this week's Parsha, Hashem told Moshe to tell Aharon to

stretch out his staff over the waters of the Nile and all other sources of water and they will turn to blood. The frogs came from the river and the lice from the dust that aided Moshe to hide the Egyptian when he smote him. This is an important principle in Judaism known as HAKARAT HATOV, appreciation for the good someone does for you. What is especially noteworthy here is that this principle applies not only to other humans but also to inanimate objects. The water and the dust could not know the difference if Moshe or Aharon performed the action causing the plague. What is important is that Moshe and Aharon knew the difference. Everything is the creation of Hashem and we have to treat it as such with respect.

TEFILAH TREASURES

Shemona Esrei - Re'e V'anienenu

The opening words, r'ei b'anyeinu ("behold our suffering" or "observe our affliction") are a paraphrase of words used by David HaMelech. He first uses them in Tehillim 25: r'ei anyi v'amali, see my affliction and my work. David expresses this idea again in Tehillim 119: r'ei anyi ... u'g'aleini, see my affliction ... and redeem me. We ask Hashem to redeem us speedily not for us necessarily but for the sake of His Own Name so that we should be empowered and able to serve Him. Also, the Talmud in Sanhedrin says that when we are in pain, Hashem metaphorically "suffers" with us, like any parent hurts when their child is injured. Redeeming us from our troubles helps relieve Hashem Himself of this metaphorical "pain." The bracha continues that Hashem is a "strong Redeemer." That is to say that He has ultimate power to redeem, as we saw in Egypt, where He redeemed the Jews through miraculous signs and wonders. The bra-

cha concludes "Go'el Yisrael," that Hashem continuously redeems Israel. This is in differnt to the bracha of "Ga'al Yisrael" before Shemoneh Esrei. That bracha is in the past tense and refers to something that Hashem did. The bracha were talking about in Shemoneh Esrei refers to an ongoing process that Hashem does.

Further discussion for older kids...

Some people use the word "na" (please) in the middle of "r'ei b'anyeinu." Some opinions think this version is inappropriate because David did not say it that way. Other opinions think that this is proper because Yaakov said "na" when asking Hashem to save him from his brother Esav. We ask Hashem to redeem us speedily not for us necessarily but for the sake of His Own Name so that we should be empowered and able to serve Him.



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The Wonderful Treasure

And he said to him: I am Hashem (6:2)

The story takes place during the time of the Beis Hamikdash. The Jews were making their pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festival of Succos, to rejoice before Hashem and to pray in the Beis Hamikdash.

That year had been a very dry one. Rain falls only during the winter in Eretz Yisrael, and the winter before had not been blessed with rains. The water cisterns had not been filled. Throughout the hot summer, people had hoarded every drop of water in their wells and cisterns very carefully. But, by now, there was hardly anything left. Rain had not yet fallen.

The pilgrims, the olei regel, were thirsty after their long journey in the hot sun. The old men and the young children, the donkeys which they had ridden and the animals which they had brought for their sacrifices — all these were very thirsty. But, there was no water.

A wealthy Jew named Nakdimon ben Gurion saw the plight of his people and wept. He longed to help them, to quench their thirst. But how? Finally, he thought of a solution. He knew of a Roman officer who lived in Jerusalem and owned twelve fresh springs of water. These springs bubbled up from the ground, winter and summer, though less so in the summer. If only he could borrow these springs.

Nakdimon visited the Roman officer and explained his predicament. "If you allow me to have the use of those springs, I promise to return the water that the people drink."

"But how will you pay back the water?" the officer demanded.

Nakdimon replied, "It is autumn now. My people have come here to pray in our Beis Hamikdash for rain. We will pray harder than ever for plentiful rain to fall. This will replenish the underground sources and your fountains will bubble forth stronger than ever!"

"That is fine and well. But, what if it doesn't rain? What if we have a drought like last year? How can you guarantee my water?"

Nakdimon had an answer for this too. "If it does not rain within one month, I will pay you twelve talents of silver, one talent for each fountain."

This was a huge sum! Enough to sway the hardest of Roman officers. If rain did not fall, he would still have his springs and a tremendous fortune besides! "Very well. I accept your offer," the Roman said.

Nakdimon now led the thirsty travelers to the twelve springs and let them drink their fill from the fresh underground water. Refreshed, they were able to enjoy their festival to the utmost.

Succos was over and everyone returned home. Days and weeks passed and it was already well into autumn but there still was no rain! The skies were as blue as ever with no trace of a raincloud. The land was parched. The water cisterns were bone dry. Even the fountains and springs were down to a bare trickle. There was no water to be had anywhere now.

What about Nakdimon's agreement? The day was fast approaching when he would have to produce rain or else pay the penalty. The Roman officer was not disturbed in the least. He preferred the money to the water. He would be rich!

On the morning of the appointed day the Roman officer sent a messenger to Nakdimon saying, "Today is the day. Water or money."

Nakdimon answered, "The day is still young. I have plenty of time!" He had not yet given up hope. The morning passed. It was noon. The officer sent another reminder, demanding either water or money.

"It is only noon," Nakdimon said, firm in his faith that Hashem would come to his aid.

Towards evening, the messenger came for the third time, demanding immediate payment. Nakdimon noted that the sun had not yet set.

Certain that the money was already as good as in his treasury, the officer mocked, "If it has not rained until now, what makes you think that it will rain in the next hour? Surely not! Get your money ready."

The Roman sent out invitations to all his friends to come to a celebration that evening. He expected to be rich and wanted to share his good fortune with them. While his servants were busy with the preparations, he went to the bathhouse to bathe for the joyous event.

Nakdimon was very sad. What could he do? He went to the Beis Hamikdash and wrapped himself up in his tallis.

Then he lifted his voice in prayer, "Master of the world! Surely, You are aware that what I did, I did not do for my name or my family's honor. I did it for Your glory, so that the olei regel would be able to drink and rejoice properly on our festival, as You Yourself have commanded in the Torah. Without water, they would not have been happy; they would have suffered. But now, how am I to return the water that they drank to the Roman officer? How can I pay my obligation?"

As soon as he finished his prayer, the sky darkened. The clouds began to drop their heavy burden onto the ground. It rained. It poured. Soon all of the cisterns were filled and overflowing. The ground soaked up the rain greedily and the underground reservoirs were filled; the fountains gushed forth with plentiful water.

Just then the officer emerged from the bathhouse. Rain! He could not believe his eyes. Minutes ago, the sky had looked so blue. As he stood there, dumbfounded, Nakdimon came by, on his way back from the Beis Hamikdash. He found the officer wet, confused

PARSHA STORIES

STORIES MY GRANDFATHER TOLD ME

A Long-Remembered Debt

"So that you will know that there is none like Hashem, our G-d." (Shemos 8:6)

Even the gentiles knew of R' Menachem Mendel of Riminov, and the most ignorant boor recognized him as a man of G-d.

Just before Rosh Hashanah 5643 (1903), the 80-year-old exalted nobleman, Metzislav Daravski, came to see R' Menachem Mendel. All the other noblemen and well-known personages in the district used to come to pay their respects to Daravski and not vice versa. But he explained his reason for the turnabout.

As a boy of 8, Daravski fell sick with a horrible illness. His mother brought doctors from all over the world, famous physicians whose sole job was to keep the boy alive. An old woman who lived nearby saw the mother wringing her hands and weeping. She comforted the mother and told her of a wonderful Rebbe who lived in Pristik. He would be able to save her son.

It was a cold winter's night, but immediately, the horses were harnessed to the carriage. The horses had covered the distance to Pristik by 5 o'clock the next morning. The carriage pulled

up in front of the Rebbe's house, where bread was being baked for the town's poor. The servant who announced their arrival was told that the Rebbe would see the woman at 9 o'clock, right after Shacharis.

The Rebbe spoke Polish fluently and was able to converse directly with the woman. When the distraught mother appeared before him with her request, he asked, "Do you believe that I am a wizard of some kind?"

"No!" she answered. "You are a man whose actions and lifestyle are closer to G-d than those of other men, and your prayers are heard."

"In that case," the Rebbe said, "I will pray for your son."

The mother left the room. The door was left slightly ajar behind her, and she was able to peek inside and see the way the Rebbe went to stand in a corner, praying so hard that beads of sweat covered his face. This went on for three long hours.

At the end of that time, the Rebbe summoned the woman back to his room. The clock on the wall sounded noon as the Rebbe told her, "Now, with the sounding of noon, your son is on the mend. When he is completely

cured, bring him to me and I will bless him."

With a parting blessing from the Rebbe, the mother started back for her home.

On her return, she asked her maid whether there had been any change in the boy.

"No," the maid replied. "Except for one thing. Your son was lying, motionless, all this time. But when the clock struck 12, he woke up and asked for a little water."

"I recovered completely," Daravski concluded his story, "and I even returned for the Rebbe's blessing. The Rebbe instructed me to be good to the Jews. I have obeyed this order, and in my old age I desire to visit his grave."

The nobleman was taken to the grave and cried copiously. He wrote a note in Polish, and placed it on the stone. The note said, "May the prophets Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob pray for the departed, Mendel Tarim. And you, Mendel, if you are already before G-d, pray for mercy for the nations who dwell in darkness, for the Jews and the Poles, and for me, my children and my grandchildren.

"Metzislav, son of Victoria."

STORIES MY GRANDFATHER TOLD ME

In the Merit of Torah

"And [he] said, 'Entreat Hashem'" (Shemos 8:4)

A woman came to see R' Dovid, author of the Taz. She could not control her tears.

"What is the matter?" R' Dovid asked.

The weeping intensified. "My son is very ill," she managed to say between sobs. "He has been growing weaker and weaker and is near death. Please, Rabbi, save my son!"

"What can I do for him?" R' Dovid

asked. "Can I take Hashem's place?"

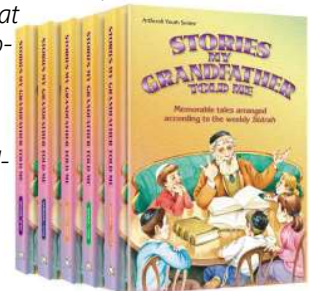
"I am crying out and pleading to the Torah that the Rabbi learns. After all, Hakadosh Baruch Hu and the Torah are one!"

"In that case," replied the Taz, "I will do this for you: All the Torah that I am learning with my students now will be given to your son, for it says, 'For in return for this thing your days shall be lengthened!'"

And, indeed, salvation came to the

son, and he was cured of his illness.

Stories My Grandfather Told Me by Zev Greenwald (Author) Libby Lazewnik (Translator) and Tova Katz (illustrator) is packed with short pleasant stories that teach children important life lessons from the weekly Parsha. The five-volume set is available from your favorite Jewish book store, or at artscroll.com.



Why Be Boastful?

continued from page 3

The Rebbe answered the question. Soon he was ready for the next person. This time a Jew entered asking the Rebbe for some business advice. The Rebbe turned again to the man sitting close at hand and said, "Per-

haps you can give him some astute advice?"

The man shook his head, "I have no talent for business," he confessed.

The Rebbe dealt with him too and dismissed him. Then he turned to the

overly proud man and said, "I do not understand. You have no money, no learning and no business acumen and still you boast. What, pray tell, do you have to boast about?!"

PARSHA PUZZLERS

TEST YOUR PARSHA KNOWLEDGE

by Sammy Schaechter
and Dovid Saleman
Answers on page 7.

EASY Qs

1. In which country were the Jews enslaved?
2. What reason did Moshe give to explain why he shouldn't go to Pharaoh?
3. What was Hashem's response?
4. What did Moshe want Pharaoh to do?
5. What miracle did Aharon do in front of Pharaoh before the plagues started?
6. Why was Pharaoh not impressed?
7. What did the water turn into?
8. How were the Egyptians able to drink?
9. Who didn't suffer from the makkos (plagues)?

10. List the ten makkos

MEDIUM Qs

11. How many makkos (plagues) are in this week's parsha (Vaera)?
12. How many makkos (plagues) are in next week's parsha (Bo)?
13. How old were Aharon and Moshe when they went to Pharaoh?
14. Who were Moshe's parents?
15. What happened by tzefardea (the plague of the frogs)?
16. Why did Aharon, and not Moshe, take the staff to start the first three plagues?

HARD Qs

17. How long was Pharaoh warned before each makkah (plague) [except for the last 2
18. How long did each makkah (plague) [except for the last two] last?
19. What are the four leshonos (expres-

CRACK THE PARSHA CODE

by Rabbi Yaakov Levine
Answers on page 7.

1. There are 7 M in this P
2. M was 80 Y O and A was 83 Y O when they W before P
3. A S S the S of the M
4. P went to the N to go to B
5. The F M was D
6. M didn't H the W, because it S his L
7. When the F D, they S in M and S
8. P M couldn't C K
9. B was F and I together
10. The 4 L of G are V, V, V, V

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- sions) of geulah (redemption) that Hashem used?
20. What do we do on the seder night to commemorate these words?