



Cubs Win, Do *Teshuvah*!

Topic

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur

Grade Level(s)

3rd Grade – High School

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will:

- Consider what it means for a community to do *teshuvah* (repent/return)
- Reflect on how individuals can make amends for the errors of a group
- Play ball!

Materials needed

- Ball (to play [500](#)) and Hebrew Numbers Chart (separate JTeach.org download)
- Video clips
 - [The Steve Bartman Play](#)
 - [The Cubs win the World Series](#)
- Cubs' statement about giving a World Series ring to Steve Bartman and Steve Bartman's acceptance statement (included at the end of the lesson)
- Mahzor (optional)
- Popcorn (optional but encouraged)

Technology needed

- Computer or device to show videos.

Prepare in Advance

- Set up the classroom like a baseball diamond with three bases and a home plate. [This could also be four corners of the classroom.]
- Pop some corn and find an appropriate point in the lesson to serve a tasty snack!

Background for Teachers

The Cubs

October 14, 2003. A city is ready to celebrate an occasion that has not occurred in nearly 60 years. The Chicago Cubs are five outs away from reaching the World Series for the time since 1945. (They haven't won the World Series since 1908.) Down 3-0 with a runner on 2nd base in the 6th game of the National League Championship Series, Luis Castillo of the Florida Marlins hits a pop fly down the left field line. With the ball heading out of play, the Cubs' left fielder, Moises Alou, gives chase. Alou reaches up towards the stands, but a fan reaches out and touches the ball first. No interference is called because the ball was in the stands when it was touched. Alou reacts in anger, throwing his glove to the ground and screaming at the fan.



Cubs Win, Do *Teshuvah*!

The incident might have become a footnote in history, but the Cubs immediately began to unravel. With the help of several Cubs miscues, the Marlins proceeded to score 8 runs in the inning and win the game 8-3. In Game 7, the Cubs took a 5-3 lead; but the Marlins came back to win 9-6 and advance to the World Series instead.

Cubs fans would blame the fan for costing them the World Series. Game 6 would become known as the Bartman Game, named for Steve Bartman, a 26-year-old lifelong Cubs fan and Little League coach, who just happened to be sitting in a seat along the left field line when a foul ball came his way with the Cubs five outs away from the World Series. Bartman would need a police escort on his way out of the game, and his name would become a part of the Cubs' Curse vernacular.

Fast forward 13 years. Not only do the Cubs make it to the World Series for the first time in 71 years, they also win the World Series for the first time in 108 years, the longest drought in American sports history. Steve Bartman has not been seen or heard from publicly since the incident in 2003, but he is reportedly still a Cubs fan. When it comes time for the Cubs to distribute World Series rings to the players and other members of the organization, the Cubs give a ring to Steve Bartman, an act that many would describe as *teshuvah* on the part of the Cubs for the team and the team's fans.

תשובה (*Teshuvah*)

People often see the יָמִים נוֹרָאִים (*Yamim Nora'im*, Days of Awe/High Holidays) as an opportunity to do *teshuvah*, be forgiven for what they have done in the last year, and evaluate how they can be better people in the upcoming year. However, the liturgy points to a communal approach. The וִידוּי (*Viduy*, confession of transgressions) section of the liturgy, which includes both the אָשָׁמְנוּ (*Ashamnu*) and עַל חַטָּא (*Al Cheit*) sections (probably codified by Rav Amram Gaon in the 9th century) is written in the plural, we have transgressed. While this could be seen as including everybody's transgressions and not embarrassing individuals for what they have done, the plural language could also indicate a desire for the community to do *teshuvah* together and move forward together.

This idea of communal expiation (the act of making atonement) goes back as far as the Torah. According to the Torah (*Vayikra* 16), the entire community of בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (*B'nei Yisrael*, the Israelites) would receive expiation through a special service* performed by the individual *Kohein Gadol* (High Priest) on the 10th day of the 7th month, Yom Kippur. Note, however, that the entire community of בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל was also expected to observe the day as a day of complete rest and to practice self-denial on the day. (See Tractate *Yoma* 86b, cv. "תניא היה ר"מ אומר" "It was taught that Rabbi Meir would say..." for a later reference to individual *teshuvah* working for a larger audience).

*Side note: This service is the source for the modern term "scapegoat." During the service, the *Kohein Gadol* would place the transgressions of the community onto the head of a goat and send this scapegoat into the wilderness.



Cubs Win, Do *Teshuvah*!

Description of Activities

1. Go outside and play the game [500](#). [This could also work in a large indoor room.]
 - a. Hebrew Option: Students call out numbers in Hebrew.
2. Reflect with students about the relative difficulty of catching a ball while others are trying to catch the ball as well.
3. Set the scene of Game 6 of the 2003 National League Championship Series (see Background for Teachers) and show the clip of Steve Bartman and Moises Alou both trying to catch the ball. Discuss:
 - a. How did Moises Alou react after the play? How could he have reacted differently? How should the rest of the team have reacted? When, if ever, does “the heat of the moment” justify certain actions?
4. Recap the rest of what happened during and after the game. Discuss:
 - a. Who, if anyone, was to blame for the Cubs losing Game 6 (and Game 7)?
 - b. How should people react when faced with adversity that might have been caused by others?
5. But, eventually, there was a happy ending. Show a clip of the Cubs winning the World Series in 2016.
6. Discuss the concept of individual and group *teshuvah*. (Optional: Students look at the *vidui* in a *mahzor* to focus the discussion.)
7. Have students stand up, stretch, and sing “[Take Me Out to the Ballgame](#).” (Notice the correlation between step 7 and the 7th-inning stretch yourself.)
8. Explain that the Cubs gave a World Series ring to Steve Bartman. Read the Cubs’ statement about giving the ring and Steve Bartman’s acceptance statement.
9. Play 4 Bases. For each statement, students walk to and stand on a base from the baseball diamond that was set up before class. Students who completely agree with a statement stand on home plate. Students stand further away the less they agree with a statement, 1st base being furthest away. For each statement, discuss with students why they decided to stand where they are standing. [Note: Some other suggested follow-up questions are included as well.]



Cubs Win, Do *Teshuvah*!

- a. I have felt bad about something that a group I was part of did.
Follow-up: How might/did you fix it?
- b. An individual's gesture of *teshuvah* can make things right for a group.
- c. An individual's gesture works even if the individual performs the *teshuvah* without the group's knowledge or blessing.
- d. Imagine that you are Steve Bartman. I would have accepted the ring.
Follow-up: How does the Cubs' gesture affect your feelings towards the team and other Cubs fans?
- e. The team and fans have done appropriate *teshuvah*.
Follow-up: How might this change how people feel about Steve Bartman?

Post-Game Optional Activity: Students hold a team meeting to decide on a common thing that they will do better as individuals in order to improve the class in the upcoming year.



Cubs Win, Do *Teshuvah!*

Chicago Cubs' Statement

"On behalf of the entire Chicago Cubs organization, we are honored to present a 2016 World Series Championship Ring to Mr. Steve Bartman. We hope this provides closure on an unfortunate chapter of the story that has perpetuated throughout our quest to win a long-awaited World Series. While no gesture can fully lift the public burden he has endured for more than a decade, we felt it was important Steve knows he has been and continues to be fully embraced by this organization. After all he has sacrificed, we are proud to recognize Steve Bartman with this gift today."



Cubs Win, Do *Teshuvah!*

Steve Bartman's Statement

"Although I do not consider myself worthy of such an honor, I am deeply moved and sincerely grateful to receive an official Chicago Cubs 2016 World Series Championship ring. I am fully aware of the historical significance and appreciate the symbolism the ring represents on multiple levels. My family and I will cherish it for generations. Most meaningful is the genuine outreach from the Ricketts family, on behalf of the Cubs organization and fans, signifying to me that I am welcomed back into the Cubs family and have their support going forward. I am relieved and hopeful that the saga of the 2003 foul ball incident surrounding my family and me is finally over.

I humbly receive the ring not only as a symbol of one of the most historic achievements in sports, but as an important reminder for how we should treat each other in today's society. My hope is that we all can learn from my experience to view sports as entertainment and prevent harsh scapegoating, and to challenge the media and opportunistic profiteers to conduct business ethically by respecting personal privacy rights and not exploit any individual to advance their own self-interest or economic gain.

Moreover, I am hopeful this ring gesture will be the start of an important healing and reconciliation process for all involved. To that end, I request the media please respect my privacy, and the privacy of my family. I will not participate in interviews or further public statements at this time.

Words alone cannot express my heartfelt thanks to the Ricketts family, Crane Kenney, Theo Epstein, and the entire Cubs organization for this extraordinary gift, and for providing the City of Chicago and Cubs fans everywhere an unforgettable World Championship in 2016. I am happy to be reunited with the Cubs family and positively moving forward with my life."