



Sportsmanship and Jewish Ethics

Mishnah <i>Pirkei Avot</i> 1:14	משנה אבות א:יד
[Hillel] would say, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am [only] for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"	הוא הִזָּה אֹמֵר, אִם אֵין אָנִי לִי, מִי לִי. וְכֵשׁ אָנִי לְעַצְמִי, מָה אָנִי. וְאִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו, אֵימָתַי?

What might Hillel say about playing team sports? Why would a person play on a team? What is the individual's responsibility to a team? A team's responsibility to an individual?

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate <i>Shabbat</i> 31a	תלמוד בבתי מסכת שבת לא.
[Hillel] said, "What is hateful to you, do not do to [others]."	אמר לו דעלך סני לחברך לא תעביד

What does this statement say about fair play? How should one treat one's teammates? How should one treat one's opponents? What might Hillel say about winning at all costs?

Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate <i>Hagigah</i> 2:1	תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת חגיגה פרק ב הלכה א
Rabbi Yosi ben <u>H</u> anina said, "One who elevates oneself at the expense of a friend's shame has no share in the world to come.	א"ר יוסי בן חנינה המתכבד בקלון חבירו אין לו חלק לעולם הבא

<i>Kohelet</i> (Ecclesiastes) Rabbah, Chapter 7	קהלת רבה (וילנא) פרשה ז
Rabbi Tan <u>h</u> um bar <u>H</u> iya [said], "On the day of your friend's success, rejoice with him."	ר' תנחום בר חייא פתר... ביום טובתו של חברך שמח עמו

Mishnah <i>Pirkei Avot</i> 2:10	משנה מסכת אבות ב:י
Rabbi Eliezer said, "Let the honor of your friend be as dear to you as your own."	רבי אליעזר אומר יהי כבוד חברך חביב עליך כשלך

How are the messages of Rabbi Yosi ben Hanina, Rabbi Tanhum bar Hiya and Rabbi Eliezer similar? What do you think they would say should be the ultimate goal of playing sports? Why might it be difficult to follow their messages? Why might it be helpful to remember their messages?



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Babylonian Talmud, Tractate <i>Bava Metzia</i>, 58b	תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא מציעא נח.
One who embarrasses his friend is as though he spills blood.	כל המלבין פני חברו ברבים כאילו שופך דמים .

What might the Talmud say about running up the score (i.e. trying to score as many points as possible after it is clear that you will win the game)? What should someone do when winning by an insurmountable margin? What kind of celebrating, if any, is appropriate when one defeats an opponent?

“I was hoping they’d give [me and Aliya Mustafina] both the bronze medal, but obviously they didn’t, so it’s definitely upsetting, but I’m still happy for the girls who were on the podium. I’m happy for [gold-medal-winner] Gabby [Douglas] and really excited for her.”

–Gymnast Aly Raisman after she made a mistake in her routine that left her in a tie for 3rd place at the 2012 Olympics. She left without a medal because of a tie-breaker.

How is Aly Raisman's statement a display of good sportsmanship? How could you imagine her reacting after making a mistake and then losing a medal on a technicality? Think back to a particular event where you were able to muster a display of good sportsmanship. What do you think enabled you to react in the way that you did?

Jackie Robinson broke Major League Baseball’s color barrier in 1947. This article is taken from *The New York Times* during his first season.

How did Hank Greenberg show sportsmanship in his interactions with Jackie Robinson? Why might it have been difficult for him to support Jackie Robinson?

Hank Greenberg was one of only a few Jewish Major Leaguers up until that point. How might that have helped him feel empathy for an opponent? What does it mean to show class on the sports field?

Hank Greenberg a Hero To Dodgers’ Negro Star

By The Associated Press.

PITTSBURGH, May 17— Jackie Robinson, first Negro player in the major leagues, has picked a diamond hero—rival First Baseman Hank Greenberg of the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Here’s why:

Robinson and Greenberg collided in a play at first base during the current Dodger-Pirate series. The next time Jackie came down to the sack Hank said:

“I forgot to ask you if you were hurt in that play.”

Assured that Robinson was unharmed, Greenberg said:

“Stick in there. You’re doing fine. Keep your chin up.”

This encouragement from an established star heartened Robinson who has been the subject of reported anti-racial treatment elsewhere and admits he has undergone “jockeying—some of it pretty severe.”

“Class tells. It sticks out all over Mr. Greenberg,” Robinson declared.



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20th MACCABIAH BASIC REGULATIONS

6. Code of Conduct

a. Rules of Conduct:

Participants of the 20th Maccabiah Games shall:

- 1) Respect the rules and spirit of fair play and non-violence, prioritize the physical and emotional well-being of others and behave accordingly;
- 2) Respect the spirit of sport and all teammates and members of other teams, follow all rules and regulations of the sport, respect the authority of the officials and referees, and communicate with them in an appropriate manner;
- 3) Prepare for and participate in the Maccabiah by maintaining the best possible physical fitness and health to perform at the highest possible level at the Games;
- 4) Observe and comply with all reasonable directions of the respective Head of Delegation and any person appointed by him/her;
- 5) Adhere to the anti-doping policies, procedures and regulations put forward by the World Anti-Doping Authority ("WADA"), including refraining from all banned substances and practices;
- 6) Conduct himself/herself in a proper manner so as not to bring himself/herself, Team Management or his/her Team into disrepute or censure;
- 7) Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all participants, regardless of their age, gender, ability, social, economic or cultural background;
- 8) Demonstrate good sportsmanship before, during and after games. Be courteous to opposing team members. Treat all players, coaches and officials with respect. Set a positive example for others, particularly young athletes and supporters and avoid all forms of gamesmanship, poor sportsmanship and/or time-wasting.
- 9) Encourage and exercise good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, officials and supporters at games, practices and other sporting events;

What seems to be the focus of the Rules of Conduct? What, if anything, is missing? What, if anything, seems particularly Jewish? Are you surprised?



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Suggestions for Activities:

Play

Organize a game (e.g. kickball outdoors, Pictionary in the classroom) that pits two teams against each other. After playing for a little bit, look at the sources. Discuss how players can manifest the suggestions for sportsmanship as they play. Return to playing the game. At the end of the game, reflect with players about how they played differently before and after reading the sources.

Cut and Paste

Cut out the traditional sources and hand them out to students. Students read the Rules of Conduct from the Maccabiah Games and match the traditional sources to statements in the Rules of Conduct. Discuss what classic Jewish sources have to teach about playing sports today.

Editorialize

Students present an editorial (written or videoed) about a time that they played in a game and demonstrated particularly good or bad sportsmanship and how that game can be a teaching tool for good sportsmanship. Students use the texts given to support their arguments. If students do not want to editorialize about their own experiences, they can choose an example from the world of sports.

Be the Commissioner

Charge students with starting a new sports league. Provide them with the classic texts and instruct them to create their own sportsmanship code for the new league. When students are done creating their own, they can compare their ideas with the actual Rules of Conduct from the Maccabiah Games.

Reflect on Rules

Invite students to bring in the Codes of Conduct from their own sports leagues and compare them to the Maccabiah Rules of Conduct. How are they similar? How are they different? To what do students attribute the similarities and differences?