

## TORAH "GAMES" IN THE CLASSROOM

What does the panel think of Rabbeim/Moros playing games with their classes such as "Chumash baseball" or "Torah Jeopardy"? On the one hand, such games can be useful tools to break what children may feel as the tedium of regular learning, and can also serve as fun drills to retain what is being taught. On the other hand, using high-profile secular games in conjunction with Torah may tend to diminish the *Kedushas HaTorah*, which may not be appropriate even for Kiruv purposes? I am asking this as a longtime Rebbi.

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*Torah* cannot be taught as any other subject. It must be taught with *Kedusha*. If the game diminishes the '*Kedushas HaTorah*' in any way, then I don't see any difference in where the lesson is being taught - in Lakewood, Boro Park or Oshkosh Wisconsin. It should not be used anywhere. I understand that people think and act differently in Lakewood, Boro Park or Oshkosh Wisconsin and, therefore, one might assume that there would be different styles for different locales. But the teaching of *Torah* is universal and *nizchius* no matter where one teaches.

The Rebbi who teaches *Torah* must infuse as much *Kedusha* as he possibly can into every lesson he gives, depending on the level of the students he is working with, and no matter where in the globe he finds himself. Therefore the rules are the same everywhere. The question is, whether or not the use "Chumash baseball", "Torah Jeopardy" or other secular games in conjunction with Torah study diminishes the *Kedushas HaTorah*.

My opinion is that it depends on the approach of each individual Rebbi. If he is able to *mekadesh* the game to fit the *Torah* lesson so that the students will perceive it with *kedushah* and therefore the Rebbi can give a much better lesson, then great. If he is unable to *mekadesh* the game to fit the *Torah* lesson in the eyes of his students, then he should not use these games.

Unfortunately, even if the Rebbi was able to be *mekadesh* the games but lives in a community that does not understand that these are simply tools to teach *Torah*, there could be a backlash from members of the community intimating that he is assigning importance to sports, or, *chalila*, equating the game with *Torah*, etc. Then he would not be able to use these games because no matter how he explains their effectiveness, it will never be accepted. In the end, the Rebbi and the school will lose. *Yotsah secharo behefsaido*.

This in no way exempts the Rebbi from being creative and doing his own little games or exercises that will help to get the lesson across or help in the student's retention process. Even if the Rebbi has to work harder in creating these games, they will bring *simcha* to the learning process. The Rebbi and his students will be the winners.