

December 1994      Sus, France

The Sports Spirit

*Letter from ha-emeq*

Dear Daniel,

Yoneq wanted me to write to you about a very serious subject. It is concerning *SPORTS!* It is so difficult to imagine exactly what is happening there in Judah concerning this. We only have Qashab's story of *life at the farm* to go by, but this alone is quite disturbing.

After all that we went through last year there with the youth and their varied, complex problems, it seemed to us that the whole subject of our mind about sports was well established. But Qashab says that the *sports spirit* is still in Judah. I use the term *spirit* because it is surely a spirit. It is not the Spirit of our Father!

Qashab is a sensitive disciple who truly desires to please our Master in every area of his life. He expressed the deep grief he felt at the lack of spirituality of the youth there. He talked about the relief he had felt when he had been sent for a time to Manasseh where things are different with the youth, as it also is here in Sus. But, actually it was here in Sus where that sport's spirit was first exposed. This spirit effects people of all ages, but it comes in through the adults. For Qashab was here in Sus when the whole Edah had to repent from becoming completely immersed in the evil way.

Oh, it comes in innocently. They certainly didn't mean to do evil. But, nonetheless the end result was very bad. Yoneq thought that everyone had heard about this, and it was an example to all the tribes. But actually their repentance was not *COMPLETE*. They allowed a little bit to remain. And this is where we need so much wisdom.

Yoneq also does not want to make any law. He does not want anyone to say that you can *NEVER* play any game. But it seems as if people cannot judge themselves well. This is a very subtle spirit. It is a spirit that has almost entirely captivated the world. It dominates the world's news broadcasts on TV and radio, along with all the newspapers. It is so attractive and luring. *WE* must beware how we introduce our children to this spirit — as a friend or a foe!

Since we have been here in Sus, we have learned how deeply the brothers here fell into this idolatry (for idolatry is giving the space in your heart reserved for our Master to any other occupation). Formerly we had only heard that they had gotten heavily into a silly game called *Chinese checkers* — the leaders even getting to the point where they had carved out giant wooden figures in order to play the game in *life-size* on a field. We did not realize that they were also playing ping pong — having carved out paddles and made a big table, setting it up in the woodshop where they had tournaments late into the night involving most of the leaders and men (who were good players that is, for the sport's spirit always seems to exclude and causes others to feel worthless whose physical ability does not enable them to attain to the *star* category). The men were involved in screaming ping pong matches well into the night (sometimes until two or three in the morning). Their screams could be heard far in the distance, as neglected wives and children only tried to sleep. (This sounds rather dramatic, but to our shame it is true!)

When our Father's piercing light shined upon this situation, the tribe of Reuben repented and had a giant bonfire, burning all their game equipment (including the ping pong paddles and tables). The incredible thing to Yoneq about this thing with the ping pong is that he clearly established in the very beginning here at Tabitha's Place that we should never get into playing this useless game. For when we moved into Tabitha's Place in the beginning, although there was not very much furniture here, there was one nice ping-pong table with all the equipment. This Little Flock right away got into playing on it and when Yoneq found out he clearly exposed the folly of this game. They cut the table in two and made it into their dining room tables for eating. He thought this would be the last he heard of ping pong in Sus. But somehow it subtly came back. The shepherds were not on guard.

But though they dealt with these obviously vain and futile games, they kept some others under the guise of *being good for your health — good exercise*. They kept soccer and basketball. The *BAD FRUIT* of these games began to manifest itself. The discerning among the disciples began to express their disgust. Qashab, who was here at this time, expressed to his shepherd that he did not enjoy these games (although he was quite a good player). His shepherd, who was

himself really into the games, did not like Qashab's attitude, and told him that if he did not show up to play on the team he was in rebellion to authority. Qashab submitted because he had received the teaching that said, "It is better to be wrong together than right alone."

Yoneq corrected Qashab, saying that he should have stood by his conscience and said, "You will have to kick me out of the Edah, but I have a conviction that what we are doing here is not right!"

Soon, as they started taking more and more time out of their daily work schedules for basketball games (which became very competitive and furious), some others became disturbed at what was going on. They called Yoneq and asked what he felt about basketball. He communicated the vanity of such a game: "I am here trying to establish the 12 tribes of Israel, and you are there wasting your time with games!" . . . They tore down the basketball hoops from the Celebration room. The playing of soccer still remained on a limited (yet increasing) measure. Also they played some volleyball . . .

We arrived here in Sus and were surprised a little by the lack of progress they had made in finishing the lodge. We had heard about how busy they were and how they did not have one extra man to help Chanowk on the roof (which was taking *A LOT* more time than expected because they were not able to work on it often). But we learned that they carefully guarded the time set aside for their *Sunday soccer game*, where all the men devoted hours of strength each week . . . and the house of God was lying in ruin . . .

It was very sad to see that all that strength was put into playing and not into building. Now we find a generation of children growing up with a zeal for games and for work. It is leaven . . . and it is like a virus . . . it is contagious. It saps the strength of the Body. It robs God, whom we are to love with *ALL OUR STRENGTH*. Oh, the wasted hours what could have been used to put the shingles on the Lodge, dig the trenches for the plumbing . . . what a waste.

Since we have been here we have redirected the strength, and much has already been accomplished. It is amazing what can be accomplished in a day of hard work in unity.

It would be better for the leaders to organize a community project to build something or fix something, rather than to organize good times.

Cut a tree and split the wood, build a barn, dig a septic tank, paint a house. All these build, restore, establish something good between fathers and sons who work together. Go jogging, do aerobics, take brisk walks and talk to your children as they accompany you — this builds bodies and something good between fathers and sons. Sometimes a game can be good . . . a wise man will know when that time is (Prov 28:5; Dan 12:10 distinguishes the wicked from the wise).

To introduce your children to sports is very dangerous. It has been the downfall of some. It gets into their blood and becomes an addiction, an obsession. Thus, you will certainly lose your child.

Qashab said that soccer has become a frequent sport again at the farm. We were surprised. He even cited an example of one elder there who had to repent because he had expressed a *concern* (or *judgment*) that he felt a certain brother there was getting too into sports. Qashab obviously felt that elder was right in his concern for that brother. Was this a misunderstanding on Qashab's part or did this really happen? It is certainly a difficult subject to judge. Hopefully, Qashab's appraisal of the situation was not right and this did not really happen. I hope you understand the situation I am talking about without getting into the specifics.

Perhaps the spirit of sports is too strong a defiling force, and we will not be strong enough to touch it at all without being defiled ourselves. Please be careful with this. Yoneq does not want to say that we should never kick a ball around a field without having to repent publicly.

There is no game playing at all in Sus right now. We are very busy. It seems that no one is suffering for the lack. Perhaps the leaders there should get together to organize projects which can provide good hard work for boys and men who are craving activity to do together, but will not be a waste of their strength. This will take some thought and organization, and maybe money, but just pray and look for our Father's provision. Surely he will help if we ask.

Well, I just needed to communicate this. I hope you can respond right away so we will know the situation there. Yoneq has made everything clear here in Sus. But he is quite disappointed with the leaders who were in charge here at the time, that they let this get so out of hand.

There are more things to say but we need to go to Spain and then to Bordeaux. Grace to you . . .

In our Master's name

ha-emeq

P.S.

Please review the training curriculum on physical training (especially *Full of Sap and Very Green*), and see if it has the right mind on sports for our children. There have been some questions here about that book.

P.P.S.

Yoneq asks, "Who is it that had the incredible lack of wisdom to put the story of *The Horse Wagon* (page 100 of the Oak Reader) in our reading material for our children?" It glorifies the faith of the *faithless*, unfaithful people who have left us. It shows a standard of child training that we do not have (in letting children play and be adventurers). There are a couple of other stories in that book which people have questioned — perhaps these books should be recalled and revised.