



My Football **GOAL**

I wanted to play on a competitive team, but maybe the price was too high.

By Timothy Herzog

I love playing football. I am now 14 years old and have been playing football since I was 5. Playing sports has taught me to hold to the high standards and values I have set for myself, even if the decisions are hard at times. One of those tough decisions was whether or not to play football on Sunday.

When I was nine, I really liked and respected my coach, Coach Hashem. However, I wanted to play on the same team as a school friend, so I tried out for a different team. This team was really competitive, and I knew that if I made it, I would be expected to be very dedicated and play hard. A lot of boys wanted to be on this team, but I was fortunate to make it through several cuts.



The day of the final tryouts came. I played my hardest, and I felt good about it. Afterward, the coach approached my mom and me and said that he would really like me on the team. I was excited. But then he asked, “Can you play on Sundays? I have to be able to field a team for tournaments, and that means that sometimes there will be Sunday play.”

My mom let me reply to the question.

“No, sir, I don’t play on Sundays.” I knew that was the right answer, but it probably meant I wouldn’t get to be on this team.

That night, the call telling me that I was chosen for the team never came. I was very disappointed.

Instead, I joined a neighborhood team with lots of friends. We had a great time the first year and were successful, but the second year the team struggled and sometimes lost focus on the game. I became frustrated. I put my best effort into every game, but we almost always lost.

After one very bad game, Coach Hashem, whose team was doing well, approached me on the football field. He asked me how things were going. I said, “Not so good.” I told him I missed my old teammates. Hashem coached with a great deal of skill and always seemed to get the most from his players.

“How would you like to be a guest player for our team when we go to the next tournament?” Hashem asked.

“I would really like that!” I responded excitedly.

“Great!” Hashem said, smiling. “I need to ask you one

question though. Can you play on Sundays?” My stomach muscles tightened. I suddenly felt sick. I remembered what had happened that last time this question had been asked.

I looked at my mom. I looked at my dad. They too waited for my answer. I looked at Hashem.

“No, I’m sorry. I don’t play on Sundays,” I said. “Will that make a difference?”

Hashem stood there for a moment. He had seen the expression of hope on my face fade quickly as I had answered his question.

“No, that’s OK,” Hashem responded. “We probably won’t get to the Sunday finals. We’d love to have you play with us.”

Soon I started practicing with Hashem’s team. The team played with a great deal of intensity, and they welcomed me back. I loved playing with them.

We didn’t win all of our games at the tournament, but we all tried our hardest, and we had a good time. Soon I became a permanent member of Hashem’s team. Though they knew I didn’t play on Sundays, they still appreciated me for what I added to the team on the other game days.

I am now a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood. I still play competition football and still choose not to play on Sunday. It has not been a problem for me or for the teams I have played on. I believe in honoring the Sabbath day and keeping it holy. For me this means not playing sports on Sunday. ■