



# Canfei Nesharim

Sustainable Living Inspired by Torah ▪ [www.canfeinesharim.org](http://www.canfeinesharim.org)

## 17th of Tammuz: Warning Signs Charades Game A Program for Children Ages 8 - 12

This program is designed for upper elementary school or middle school children to be held either an activity in a youth minyan, a synagogue youth group, or in a summer camp.

The purpose of this activity is to have the children learn about the significance of the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz as it relates to becoming aware of environmental warning signs all around us. The aim is for the children to heed these warning signs by beginning to think about their responsibility to the environment and to hopefully begin an action to plan to help make a difference.

### **Discussion:**

Tell the children that the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz is coming this year on July 9<sup>th</sup>. Ask them what they know about this holiday.

Instruct and elicit answers such as:

-The 17th of Tammuz commemorates five calamities:

- \* The first tablets were broken in the desert.
- \* The offering of the daily sacrifice was suspended in the time of the first Temple.
- \* The wall of the city breached in the time of the second Temple.
- \* Apustamus, the wicked, burned the Torah during the time of the second Temple.
- \* An idol was placed in the sanctuary.

-It is a minor fast day.

-It begins a period of mourning called "The Three Weeks" culminating with the solemn major fast day of Tisha B'Av.

-Restrictions include listening to live music, holding weddings, shaving or getting haircuts, and reciting Shehechyanu.

Discuss how the purpose of any fast day is to examine our deeds and repent. We are called on to change our ways and come back to ways of the Torah, coming closer with Hashem. The 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, as minor fast day and the beginning of the period of mourning, The Three Weeks, serves as a time to wake up and heed the warning signs that Hashem gives us to prevent our spiritual downfall and physical destruction. These warning signs also include environmental signs of the threat of destruction of our planet.

Today we are facing an environmental crisis which presents us with numerous warning signs. These warning signs are a call for us to wake up and change our ways before we cause irreparable harm to our planet. We are in danger of over-using the precious resources (such as clean air, clean water, trees, fish, and healthy foods) that Hashem has granted us, which would make life much more difficult for us and especially for people who already live in poverty.

This exercise is an opportunity to identify warning signs and signs of teshuva in response to the warnings, as it relates to protecting the environment.

Divide the children into two or more groups (each led by an adult or leader) and have them think of "warning signs" they have seen in the environment. Answers should include signs of pollution by man and environmental destruction such as erosion, a pond containing no life, or a tire tossed on the side of the road.

Next, have the children think of positive signs they have seen in the environment, such as a bus running on natural gas, a group of people carpooling, or a solar panel on a house. This second category aims to help the children recognize that many people are in fact changing their environmentally harmful ways and may serve to encourage them to do the same.

Discuss the significance of both types of answers. For example, ask why it is bad to find an aluminum can in a creek. The children should think of answers such as: the can was not recycled, it is not pleasant to look at garbage in nature, it may ruin the natural ecosystem, etc. Also discuss the significance of the environmentally friendly “signs” that indicate that our society is doing teshuva, finding its way back to the derech (path) of Hashem, respecting nature and taking care of environment. Some of the answers may require or initiate further study.

### **Activity: Warning Signs Charades Game**

Like a typical charades game, the group members act out something and the other groups guess what they are acting out. Only in this charades game, the children are acting out environmental warning signs that they have either come up with in their earlier discussion or from a secret card (see below) they have drawn from a pile.

The game may be divided into two parts (un-environmentally friendly warning signs and eco-friendly teshuva signs) to avoid confusion. Or, the group could announce prior to acting it out which type of sign they are presenting.

The group at the end of the allotted time period (suggested between 10 and 30 minutes) that has the most points is the winner. If the activity is being played on Shabbat, score can be kept with dry beans or some other counter. You may want to provide eco-friendly door prizes for the winning group.

The following “warning signs” are to be printed out onto card stock and cut into cards.

### **Follow-Up Discussion**

Ask, “What we can do to help the environment? Why is it everyone’s responsibility?”

Perhaps have each child say one thing he or she will personally do to “wake up” and change in the merit of the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz.

Plan an optional group project to help the environment.