



Naftali and the Unfair Grade

Ages 6-9
A story and 9 activities

Naftali and the Unfair Grade

Naftali stares at the paper on his desk. Right at the top, in red pen, is a 78.

He has studied for the whole week. He has read the chapter twice. He knows every answer. And now he has a 78?

His eyes land on question six. He has written the right answer, but the red pen has put a big X next to it. Naftali is sure it is correct.

His ears go hot. His fists tighten around the edge of the desk. A loud voice inside him says, That isn't fair! Rabbi made a mistake! Tell him right now, in front of everybody!

He starts to stand up. He opens his mouth.

Then he notices his hands. They are shaking. His heart is pounding like a drum.

When he's this mad, thinks Naftali, I'll say something I'll be sorry for.

He sits back down. He presses both palms flat on the desk and takes a breath in, and a longer breath out. Once. Twice. Three times. The hot feeling in his ears goes down, just a bit.

Rabbi Berger is walking around the room, handing back the last of the papers. Naftali looks at the clock. Ten minutes until recess. He decides to wait until then.

For ten minutes, he does the next thing on the board. His mind keeps returning to question six. But each time, he takes one more slow breath and lets it go.

When the bell rings, the other boys run for the door. Naftali stays in his seat. His heart still beats fast, but now it feels steady, not wild.

He walks up to Rebbi's desk with his paper in his hand.

"Rebbi," he says. His voice comes out a little shaky. "May I ask you about question six?"

Rebbi Berger looks up and smiles. "Of course, Naftali. What's on your mind?"

"I think my answer might be right. I wrote 'the Mishkan was finished in the month of Kislev.' You marked it wrong. But I looked in the chapter, and it says Kislev on page forty."

Rebbi takes the paper and the book. He reads the page slowly. He runs his finger down the line.

"Hmm," he says. "You're right. I was thinking of a different sentence. Thank you for checking."

Naftali lets out a big breath.

Rebbi crosses out the X and writes a check mark. He fixes the grade on the top. "Eighty-four. Well done. I appreciate that you came to me calmly and showed me the page. That's exactly the right way."

"I was really mad at first," Naftali admits.

"I could tell," says Rebbi. "Your face showed it. But you waited, and you kept your voice respectful. That's a sign of real strength."

Naftali walks out into the yard. The air feels cool and clear. A little part of him still feels a bit annoyed that the mistake happened. But the large, hot

anger has melted away.

His friend Mendy runs up. "Did you get a good grade?"

"I got an 84," says Naftali. "It was a 78, but there was a mix-up."

"How did you fix it?"

"I waited until I was calm, and then I asked."

Mendy blinks. "I'd have yelled."

"I almost did," says Naftali. "But then I knew that the yelling would feel good for one second, and then it would feel bad for a long time."

That night, he tells his Totty the story at dinner. Totty nods slowly. "It's okay to feel angry when something seems unfair. But the feeling is the doorbell. It doesn't decide what you do next."

Naftali thinks about that the next day, when his sister borrows his markers without asking. Doorbell, he thinks. He counts to three before he goes to find her.



Activity 1 of 9

Remember the story

1. What grade does Naftali get at first?

2. What does Naftali do instead of shouting?

3. What does Naftali show Rebbi?

4. What is Naftali's final grade?



Activity 2 of 9

Fact or guess? (circle one)

1. Question six is marked wrong by mistake. Fact / Guess
2. Rebbi Berger is angry at Naftali. Fact / Guess
3. Naftali's friend Mendy says he would have yelled. Fact / Guess
4. Naftali's Totty says anger is like a doorbell. Fact / Guess



Activity 3 of 9

Think and write

1. What happens in your body when something feels unfair?

2. Why is waiting until recess a smart choice for Naftali?

3. How could you ask a teacher or parent about something that seems unfair?

Activity 4 of 9

Word search (find all 6)

Words: GRADE, RECESS, CALM, REBBI, PAPER, FAIR

O	V	U	V	F	U	A	R	C	B	B
G	H	C	U	A	O	K	O	T	G	R
H	V	J	A	P	A	W	C	S	O	V
I	N	S	C	L	Y	I	K	S	H	R
J	A	C	T	D	M	M	D	E	J	M
C	A	W	A	G	G	B	P	C	M	I
Y	M	N	C	T	V	G	W	E	F	B
I	P	A	P	E	R	K	C	R	A	B
J	K	G	R	A	D	E	A	N	I	E
D	E	H	Y	D	A	B	O	P	R	R
F	W	S	G	O	R	G	E	N	V	M



Activity 5 of 9

Scrambled words (from the story)

1. GAERD = _____

2. EPRPA = _____

3. RESCSE = _____

4. ATRHEB = _____

5. LELOODBR = _____



Activity 6 of 9

Say it out loud

Practice each line in a calm, steady voice:

"May I ask you about this, please?"

"I was upset, and I waited until I was calm."

"Can I show you what I found?"

Activity 7 of 9

My chart

My Cool Down Chart

Day / moment	What felt unfair	What my body did	What I did to cool down
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			



Activity 8 of 9

Draw it

Draw a doorbell with a little flame, and Naftali pressing pause before he answers.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin green border, intended for drawing.



Activity 9 of 9

Answers

Remember the story:

1. 78
2. He takes slow breaths and waits until recess
3. The sentence on page forty of the chapter
4. 84

Fact or guess: 1 Fact; 2 Guess; 3 Fact; 4 Fact

Scrambled words: GRADE, PAPER, RECESS, BREATH, DOORBELL

Think and write: answers will vary; talk them over together.